

# Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

*[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its February 2006 meeting.]*

**T**HE COUNCIL MET ON 28–29 OCTOBER 2005 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. President Domna C. Stanton presided. The officers present were First Vice President Marjorie Perloff (28 Oct. only), Second Vice President Michael Holquist, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were K. Anthony Appiah (29 Oct. only), Michael Bérubé, Marilyn Gaddis Rose, John Guillory, Mary N. Layoun, Yolanda Martínez–San Miguel, Nancy K. Miller, Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, Amada Sandoval, Nicolas Shumway, Hortense J. Spillers, and Priscilla Wald. Executive Council member Guy Stern was absent. The MLA staff members present were Director of Operations Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Director of Foreign Language Programs Nelly Furman, Managing Editor of MLA Publications and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Financial Operations Amilde Hadden, Director of Convention Programs Maribeth T. Kraus, Director of English Programs David Laurence, Director of Book Publications David G. Nicholls, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses.

The council began by meeting with the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), which had convened on 26–27 October to review assembly and association business. Lavina D. Shankar, the chair of the committee, reported that the committee had discussed the proposals—one resolution and three motions—submitted for consideration by the Delegate Assembly and that committee members had begun to convey the DAOC’s comments and suggestions for revisions to the various proposers. Committee members then reviewed the four proposals with the council. Shankar told the council that the committee had decided once again to include one hour of open discussion in the assembly’s agenda and that two topics would be considered: how to address concerns about service expectations and evaluation and how to address concerns about contingent labor. The committee wanted the assembly to contribute to the work being done by other association committees on best practices in these areas. The committee had therefore discussed ways to continue the assembly’s discussion after its meeting during the convention (e.g., using the assembly’s electronic discussion list and the assembly’s regular paper mailings). The committee also discussed with the council how to recognize the service that delegates provide for the association and the profession. All agreed that sending a letter of recognition to delegates who have completed their terms would be a good first step. The joint meeting of the DAOC and the council concluded with a review of possible council initiatives to address the Academic Bill of Rights

(for background, see Jan. 2006 *PMLA* 306). Mentioned were convention sessions, workshops on how to address legislation introduced in individual states, and the placement of op-ed pieces. The president noted that the council would consult the association's media advisers, who were scheduled to visit the council in the afternoon, on strategies for pursuing academic-freedom issues in the public sphere.

The council thanked the committee for its presentation. In addition to the chair, the members of the DAOC who participated in the meeting with the council were Michelle A. Massé (Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge), Suzanne R. Pucci (Univ. of Kentucky), and Luca Somigli (Univ. of Toronto). Also present was MLA Parliamentarian Martha S. Grise.

After the joint meeting with the DAOC, the council began to review the items on its agenda and continued its work until mid-afternoon. During its final Friday afternoon session, the council met with two representatives of the Glover Park Group, the association's new media consulting firm. On the morning of 29 October, the council first convened in executive session to discuss the reappointment of the executive director (see item 1, below). After the executive session, the council reconvened in regular session for the remainder of the morning and again after lunch and completed its review of reports and action items. The council adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The council received a report from the staff Finance Committee on the fiscal year just ended (2004–05) and on the final budget for the current fiscal year (2005–06). The committee projected that the association would conclude the 2004–05 fiscal year with a slight deficit of \$23,590 in the association's unrestricted fund. This projection was subject to change, however, since additional revenue might still be recorded for the fiscal year. Though the anticipated deficit was smaller than the one projected at the beginning of the fiscal year, it could not be avoided entirely. The projected shortfall in revenue could not be completely counterbalanced by lower expenses. During the council's discussion of the budget, it was noted that the outcome of the fiscal year depended on many factors that could not be controlled, and so the staff's careful monitoring of the budget throughout the year and efforts to reduce expenses when necessary could not guarantee a positive outcome. The council reviewed and approved the final budget for the fiscal year 2005–06, which projected a deficit of \$188,100 in the unrestricted fund. Though increases in revenue were expected, they would not fully offset anticipated increases in expenses.

In addition, the council approved a budget covering the development over three years of an electronic complement to the *MLA Handbook*. The proposed electronic complement would be included with the seventh edition of the *Handbook*, which is scheduled for release in 2008. The staff reported that the development plan was based

on a study of business models and pricing strategies for electronic publications and on the results of focus-group discussions with users of the *Handbook* held during the 2003–04 fiscal year. The plan called for the print component of the *Handbook* to be smaller and easier to use and for the electronic component to provide more examples of MLA style usage, perhaps annotated sample papers keyed to the structure of the print volume and set up in a matrix to allow different paths of navigation. The plan also called for the development of a set of frequently asked questions about MLA style and an enhanced index for online searching. Because of the importance of this development project, the council also authorized the use of monies from the MLA Endowment Fund to cover development costs in the first year of the project, which were projected to be \$99,200. This money will be withdrawn from the endowment only if the unrestricted fund cannot absorb the development expenses. This decision was in keeping with the investment policy that the council approved in February 2005 (see Oct. 2005 *PMLA* 1674–76). The council's investment policy calls for a more aggressive approach to investing the MLA endowment than the trustees had been pursuing, so that the endowment might support new association projects in addition to serving as a traditional reserve fund to be tapped in a fiscal emergency.

Domna Stanton announced that all council members had made contributions to the MLA endowment, and she thanked the council for participating in the campaign that the staff was asked to undertake in May to increase members' contributions to the association (see Jan. 2006 *PMLA* 304). She said that the involvement of the entire council in this fund-raising effort could be cited in the association's appeal to members as an example to follow.

The council reviewed a draft of the staff computer-use policy that had been developed on the recommendation of the association's auditors (see Oct. 2005 *PMLA* 1672). Council members commented on the draft and asked how the policy would be disseminated to the staff. The council assumed that feedback from the staff on the policy would be welcome. It was also suggested that the auditors be asked for their comments.

Rosemary Feal formally accepted the council's offer to extend her term as executive director through June 2012 (see Jan. 2006 *PMLA* 304) after the council reviewed and agreed on the terms of her reappointment.

2. *Charge for and Appointments to the Council Subcommittee on Long-Range Planning.* Domna Stanton and Rosemary Feal presented to the council the charge that they had offered to draft for the council's new subcommittee on long-range planning (see Jan. 2006 *PMLA* 306). The proposed charge read as follows:

The Executive Council Subcommittee on Long-Range Planning is charged with discussing issues of broad concern to the future of the association that the full council, with its heavy agendas, cannot consider in depth. The subcommittee should develop long-range goals

to meet the changing needs and priorities of the association and the changing professional and intellectual concerns of the membership; it will take up long-range-planning issues raised by the staff; it will consider how to enhance the long-term financial well-being of the association; and it will bring these and other matters, sometimes in the form of recommendations, to the full council for deliberation. The subcommittee should not be construed as operating separately from the council. A crucial component of board governance for many not-for-profit organizations, a long-range-planning committee is a new feature for the association; as such, its usefulness and effectiveness should be reviewed by the full council at the end of three years.

It was further proposed that the subcommittee meet twice each year, on the day preceding the February and May council meetings, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., and possibly through dinner.

In addition to the charge, Stanton and Feal proposed that the subcommittee be composed of the president; the first vice president, who would serve as chair; two members of the Executive Council, one who was elected by the membership and one who was elected by the Delegate Assembly; a past president of the association; the executive director; and the director of publishing operations.

The council approved the charge, the meeting plan, and the composition of the subcommittee. The council determined, however, that past presidents could not serve on the subcommittee if their presidential year was too recent (within the last five years) or too far in the past (more than fifteen years before). The council also designated an additional category of subcommittee member: consultants without vote. Such a category was needed because of the council's—and by extension the subcommittee's—fiduciary responsibilities. Non-council members, including the past president, would be considered consultants without vote.

Appointed to the subcommittee were Michael Holquist, chair; Linda Hutcheon, past president; Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel; Nicolas Shumway; and Marjorie Perloff. Shumway and Perloff will serve one-year terms (2006); the other subcommittee members will serve two-year terms (2006–07).

3. *Trustee Appointment.* The council reappointed Catharine R. Stimpson, dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Science at New York University and a past president of the association, as a trustee of the association's invested funds for the term 2006–08.

4. *Approval of the May 2005 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its May 2005 meeting for publication in the January 2006 issue of *PMLA*.

5. *Ratification of Two Actions Taken between Council Meetings.* In September 2005, in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the council and the MLA staff discussed ways in which the association could assist those affected by the hurricane. The staff proposed the follow-

ing measures for the council's consideration: (1) to offer to waive 2006 membership dues for members in the affected areas who have suffered hardship; (2) to offer to waive the 2005 convention registration fee for members in the affected areas who have suffered hardship; (3) to extend one-year free memberships in the ADE or the ADFL to nonmember departments in the affected areas, thereby providing department-wide access to the *Job Information List*; and (4) to establish a fund to which people might contribute to assist those members who suffered hardship because of the Katrina disaster. The council followed the procedure it had established for making decisions on time-sensitive matters between council meetings (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 278), and, after discussion by the full council on its electronic discussion list, the council's advisory committee approved the staff proposals. Later in September, council and staff members became concerned about the association's plans to hold the 2006 convention in New Orleans. It was not clear that the city would be able to host the MLA meeting. The staff therefore proposed relocating the 2006 convention to Philadelphia. Again after discussion of the matter by the full council, the council's advisory committee decided to change the site of the 2006 convention to Philadelphia.

As stipulated in the council's procedure for making decisions between meetings, the council was asked to ratify these two advisory committee decisions; it did so.

6. *Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities.* The council named William G. Bowen, president of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and former president of Princeton University, as the second recipient of the Phyllis Franklin Award. Rosemary Feal said she would work on arranging an award ceremony in New York in December. Council members were encouraged to attend.

7. *Council Subcommittee on PMLA Editor.* Michael Holquist, chair of the council subcommittee overseeing the search for a new editor of *PMLA* (see Jan. 2006 *PMLA* 308), reported to the council on the subcommittee's work. The subcommittee had solicited nominations widely and was gathering information on all nominees. Holquist invited council members to make additional nominations and to comment on the nominations already received. He said that the subcommittee would meet in December to review all nomination materials.

8. *Appointments to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention.* The council developed a list of possible appointees to the ad hoc committee, taking into account the various categories for appointments that the council had identified at its May meeting (see Jan. 2006 *PMLA* 308). There was not enough time for the council to make final decisions on appointments, so it asked the officers to propose a list of appointees and alternates for the council to review on its electronic discussion list. The officers did so in November, and the council's procedure for making decisions on time-sensitive matters between meetings (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 278) was imple-

mented. The council discussed the officers' list of proposed appointments on the council's electronic discussion list. Taking this discussion into account, the council's advisory committee then made the following appointments: Robert Barsky (Vanderbilt Univ.), Patrick M. Bray (Univ. of Illinois, Urbana), David Damrosch (Columbia Univ.), Roland Greene (Stanford Univ.), Linda Gregerson (Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Bette G. Hirsch (Cabrillo Coll., CA), Meta DuEwa Jones (Univ. of Texas, Austin), Lucille Kerr (Northwestern Univ.), Mary N. Layoun (Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison), and Katherine A. Rowe (Bryn Mawr Coll.)

9. *Proposal for a Web-Based Forum on Diversity and Tolerance in Teaching and Learning.* Anthony Appiah, who chaired the council subcommittee charged with reviewing the recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity and Tolerance and outlining how the council might respond to them, presented to the council a document that addressed the last remaining subcommittee task—the identification or development of best-practices guidelines and their dissemination through association publications (see Oct. 2005 *PMLA* 1678). The document outlined strategies for dealing with sensitive situations that can arise in classrooms where students and teachers are diverse in disability status, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. It focused on situations in which students are offended by the subject matter of a course or by the teacher's approach to the subject matter. Appiah proposed that the document and others like it be used to generate discussion of the relevant issues in a forum at the MLA Web site to be moderated by a panel of experienced members of the profession.

Council members thought the document was very well done, and some asked whether it could be expanded to cover other types of situations (e.g., when a teacher is offended by a student). It was also noted that the emphasis on private meetings between teachers and students to resolve problems might lead to other problems if teachers are not skilled in conflict resolution. Appiah said he would continue to work on the document; he also suggested that council members write additional statements to address the situations they had identified. Because the establishment of a Web-based forum was a long-range project for the association, the council discussed other means of disseminating Appiah's document and other guidelines for

best practices to the membership, including convention sessions and the *MLA Newsletter*.

10. *Request from the PMLA Editorial Board.* The council received a request from the *PMLA* Editorial Board pertaining to the "Correspondents Abroad" feature in the journal. When this feature was approved by the council in February 1999, the editorial board described its authors as a "group of writers (especially, but not necessarily, creative writers) outside the United States [who] serve as corresponding contributors, perhaps on a single topic. Contributors are named by the editorial board, which may give guidelines on subjects." In its current request, the editorial board noted that on several recent occasions it had found the notion of "abroad" to be constraining, since many of the writers the board wanted to invite as correspondents work and write in several locations. The board therefore asked the council to retitile this feature "Correspondents at Large," thereby redefining the feature as encompassing reports on locations anywhere in the world. The council approved the board's request.

11. *Annual Reports from Standing Committees.* The council received annual reports from the editor of *PMLA* and from the following standing committees: Publications Committee, Committee on Scholarly Editions, Committee on the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*, Committee on Honors and Awards, Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada, Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, Committee on Information Technology, Radio Committee, Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, Committee on Community Colleges, and Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession. The council accepted these reports with thanks. Council members commented on a variety of current and potential committee activities; they asked the staff to convey their comments and suggestions to the committees. The staff also responded to council members' questions.

12. *Committee Appointments.* The council made five additional appointments to *MLA* committees. The names of all new committee members will appear in the listings of *MLA* committee members in the September 2006 (Directory) issue of *PMLA* and on the *MLA* Web site.