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Nominations for 2009 MLA Elections

Second Vice President. The 2009 Nominating Committee has selected three nominees for second vice president of the MLA: Kwame Anthony Appiah, Princeton Univ.; Michael Bérubé, Penn State Univ., University Park; and David Damrosch, Harvard Univ. The person elected will take office in 2010 and will automatically become first vice president in 2011, serving in that office through the close of the January 2012 convention, and president of the MLA in 2012, serving in that office through the close of the January 2013 convention. A biographical summary for each candidate can be found at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/nominations2009); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

Executive Council. The Nominating Committee has selected seven nominees for the MLA Executive Council: Electa Arenal, Graduate Center, City Univ. of New York; Cristina V. Bruns, Chapman Univ.; Lawrence Buell, Harvard Univ.; Morris Eaves, Univ. of Rochester; Dorothea Heitsch, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Richard Ohmann, Wesleyan Univ.; and Pamela Morgan Redela, California State Univ., San Marcos. The three candidates elected will serve four-year terms that will begin 1 January 2010 and run through the close of the January 2014 convention. Background information on the election as well as candidates' biographical summaries can be found at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/nominations2009); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

Delegate Assembly. The 2009 Elections Committee has arranged contests to replace the sixteen special-interest delegates and the thirty-four regional delegates whose terms in the assembly will expire on 31 December 2009. The term of office of those elected will be from 1 January 2010 through the close of the January 2013 convention. The names of all Delegate Assembly candidates can be found at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/nominations2009).

Right to Petition. MLA members may propose additional candidates for second vice president, for the Executive Council, and for the Delegate Assembly by 1 July. See articles 6.E, 8.A.2, and 10.E of the MLA constitution (www.mla.org/mla_constitution; Sept. 2008 *PMLA*, 900–07) for procedures for filing petitions.

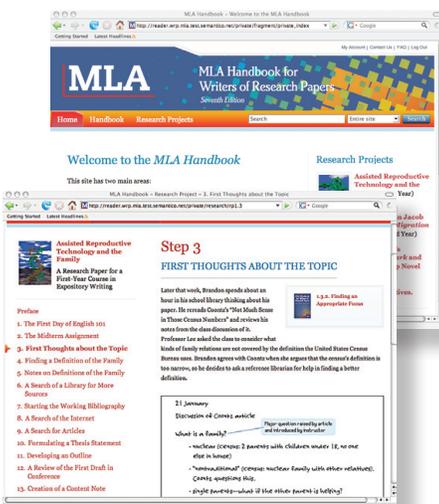
New Edition of *MLA Handbook* Published

The seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, a comprehensive and current guide to research and writing in the online environment, is now available. The new edition provides an authoritative update of MLA documentation style for use in student writing, including simplified guidelines for citing works published on the Web and new recommendations for citing works such as digital files and graphic narratives.

Every copy of the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook* comes with a code for accessing the accompanying Web site (www.mlahandbook.org). New to this edition, the Web site provides

- The full text of the print volume of the *MLA Handbook*
- Over two hundred additional examples of MLA style
- Several research-project narratives—stories, with sample papers, that illustrate the steps successful students take in researching and writing papers
- Searching of the entire site, including the full text of the *MLA Handbook*
- Continuous access throughout the life of the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook*

For more information about the *MLA Handbook* or to order a copy, visit the MLA Web site (www.mla.org).





An Agenda for These Times

Soon after my election to the second vice presidency in 2006, I was caught up short the first time someone asked about my “agenda” for 2009. The wish list in my election statement included several ambitious goals: develop or update professional standards and guidelines, assess the impact of new technologies on teaching and scholarship, work on expanding membership and forging programmatic connections with K–12 educators, defend the humanities. Distilling concrete initiatives from those long-term goals, I realized, would not be simple. A president’s agenda has to be mapped onto the ongoing agendas established by our governing bodies; it also has to be adjusted and prioritized in relation to the real-world circumstances in which the association seeks to

carry out its mission. Since 2006, I have come to believe that a reckoning with the vexed issue of faculty staffing trends is the dominant challenge for our organization and profession today. Here’s why.

Recent MLA reports show how the undergraduate population has grown significantly over the last ten to fifteen years, while the number of tenure-track faculty positions has hardly increased at all: instructional needs have been met by hiring more and more non-tenure-track teachers on a part-time or full-time contingent basis.¹ Roughly two-thirds of the teaching in English and other modern language departments is done by non-tenure-track faculty members; a strong concentration of these teachers are in first- and second-year courses. Although first- and second-year students tend to do best when they can have personal contacts with professors who know them as individuals, they have little chance of getting this support when most or all of their instructors are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. As they go through the process of choosing a major, these same students often lack regular access to the seasoned senior faculty members whose teaching is informed by ongoing research and professional development. I am not concerned here with the quality or dedication of non-tenure-track faculty members. In most circumstances, these colleagues bring excellent qualifications and a strong sense of educational purpose to their work. But the steadily increasing reliance on non-tenure-track faculty members in contingent positions has had consequences for educators as well as for students. As we have all known for a very long time, many part-time faculty members have to piece together their careers by juggling courses at two or more colleges at the same time. Facing low salaries, meager benefits, little job security, and dif-

ficult working conditions, they are often left isolated and inadequately informed about the curricular goals in the departments in which they teach. They sometimes end up with little or no time to work with students outside class, to develop professional relationships with colleagues, or to play constructive roles in the institution.

In many places, laudable efforts to professionalize institutional policies and practices for faculty members off the tenure track have established an intermediate tier consisting of full-time contingent faculty members who hold renewable multiyear contracts. While these faculty members have more job security than part-time or short-term instructors, they are still far more vulnerable to cutbacks than colleagues on the tenure track, typically have heavier teaching loads than their tenure-track counterparts, and usually play limited roles in student advising and curriculum planning. Compared with the opportunities for professional development and institutional advancement of tenure-track faculty members, theirs are scant; their lot is to live with the frustration and resentment inherent in second-class academic citizenship.

Meanwhile, as tenured and tenure-track faculty members become less numerous in relation to the overall teaching staff, they take on disproportionate responsibilities in the areas of administration, faculty governance, and the myriad other forms of service demanded in today’s colleges and universities. Tenured humanities faculty members are increasingly a discomfited elite, caught up in awkward relationships with their less-privileged colleagues, with undergraduate majors they meet in advanced courses, with graduate students who will be facing a forbidding job market, and with administrators who represent the faculty’s activity primarily in budgetary terms. Little wonder that in many institutions the governing influence of the tenured faculty has waned along with its importance in the undergraduate teaching mission.

In May 2002, MLA President Stephen Greenblatt sent a letter to the membership (www.mla.org/scholarly_pub) urging us to face up to the crisis in academic publishing that threatened both young scholars and small fields with the loss of a professional resource essential for their survival. “Many factors are involved here,” he wrote, “but the core of the problem . . . is systemic, structural, and at base economic.” The staffing crisis is also a structural and systemic problem that has developed over decades. While this problem obviously intersects with elements of the still-unresolved publishing crisis, the dimensions of the staffing crisis are far broader,

On the MLA Web Site

Fellowships and Grants Deadlines

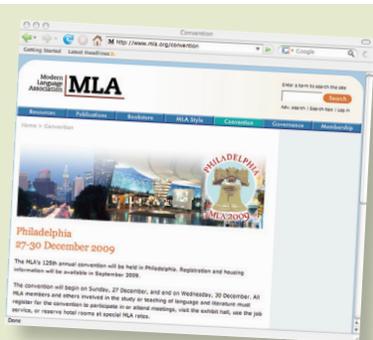
Upcoming MLA Deadlines

2009 ADE Summer Seminars

2009 ADFL Summer Seminars

MLA Committee Meetings

Letters to the Editor



and the structure at issue, that of a professoriat built around tenure as the decisive working condition and career goal, appears to be even more intractable. Owing to the current economic meltdown, which dramatizes the precariousness of staff and nontenured faculty positions in academia and which threatens not just university presses or individual departments but entire colleges and universities, the urgency of this crisis may turn out to be unprecedented.

In the absence of concerted action by the leaders of our colleges and universities, we cannot expect a structural, systemic response at the national level, nor can we aspire to a one-size-fits-all solution. But as colleges and universities of all types struggle to preserve their values and standards with dramatically diminished resources, we need to come together on our campuses as a unified community of teachers and scholars determined to transcend the divide between tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty members. We need to begin transforming our understanding of the faculty hierarchy into one that treats the full teaching corps as a collegial collective in which the participants share an entitlement to basic rights, including a decent wage and benefits package, appropriate working conditions (meaning, at minimum, dedicated office space and access to a computer, a telephone, duplicating services, and teaching tools suited to the courses assigned), support for professional development, some measure of job security, the protections of due process, and the guarantee of academic freedom. Placed in such a context, tenure eligibility would be a function of scholarly and professional achievement and, by guaranteeing for a significant portion of the faculty the possibility of pursuing indefinitely the highest level of scholarship and teaching, would serve to ensure the institution's commitment to the long-term, disinterested pursuit of knowledge and to insulate the academic enterprise against the vicissitudes of market forces and the shortsightedness of careerist views of higher education.

The Executive Council will continue to address the issue by convening groups within and beyond the MLA to propose and, where feasible, to implement appropriate corrective actions. For individual faculty members and scholars, for academic departments and programs, and for ad hoc groups of humanities teachers, the MLA has sought to make the task of pursuing enlightened institutional staffing policies less daunting than it might seem at first glance. The Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit, now available through our home page, brings together a set of reports and guidelines on faculty workload and staffing norms developed by the association since the 1990s. Armed with these facts and figures, buttressed by goals and guidelines endorsed by the largest professional association of humanities scholars in the country, we can begin to do the hard work of describing the situation in our own institutions; comparing it with the situation on the national level; confronting administrations with the facts, needs, and relevant standards; and educating the public at the local and state level. On behalf of our organization, which aims to influence federal policy and promote humanistic inquiry in higher education, let me urge you to tell us at MLA headquarters about your concerns and the efforts that faculty members are pursuing on your campus. The more activity we can report, the stronger our position will be as we press for progress on the national level.

Catherine Porter

Note

1. The MLA reports "Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English," "The Demography of the Faculty," and "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World" can be accessed through the new Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit on the MLA home page.

Members are invited to comment on the president's column at www.mla.org/fromthepres.

Convention Invitations

Invitations to the 2009 MLA Annual Convention in Philadelphia will be available online in early September. The invitation includes complete information about convention hotels, travel arrangements, and preregistering at member rates. Members will be able to register for the convention, reserve hotel rooms (with the exception of suites), and make travel plans quickly and efficiently through the MLA Web site (www.mla.org). Members will be notified by postcard and e-mail when online registration opens. Printed invitations will be mailed to members during the second week of September.

Convention Interview-Suite Arrangements

The e-mail notification about reserving hotel suites for the convention in Philadelphia will be sent in mid-August to the person who is listed as department chair for 2008–09 on the ADE or ADFL membership record as of 1 June 2009. Departments must be members of ADE or ADFL and department chairs must be MLA members by 1 June 2009 to receive the early notification. This notification is a privilege of membership in these associations, but it is not a guarantee that a suite will be available. If you will be away from your office in mid-August, please alert a staff member to look for this e-mail message. ADE- and ADFL-member department chairs who want suites for interviews are urged to make reservations immediately because the number of suites is limited. Chairs should also make certain that, if a two-bedroom suite is requested, another MLA member is listed as a second occupant and that all suite or room occupants involved in a field related to the study of language and literature are preregistered for the convention. Once registration and housing are open to the entire MLA membership (two weeks after the e-mail message is sent to ADE and ADFL members), suites will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

New Division and Discussion Group Executive Committee Members

All of the MLA's eighty-six divisions and most of the forty-nine discussion groups added new members to their executive committees in elections held last year. The lists of division executive committee members and of discussion group executive committee members at the MLA Web site have been updated accordingly (www.mla.org/dandddg and www.mla.org/dgroupexeccomm, respectively). Executive committee listings will also be published in the September and November 2009 issues of *PMLA*.

Nominating Honorary Members and Fellows

The MLA invites members and division or discussion group chairs to nominate individuals for honorary membership or fellowship. Honorary membership is given to distinguished foreign scholars, and honorary fellowship is given to distinguished men and women of letters, usually creative writers, of any nationality. A list of honorary members and fellows appears in the September 2008 (Directory) issue of *PMLA* (pp. 940–41). For details on nomination procedures, please consult page 936 of the Directory or contact Annie Reiser (646 576-5141; awards@mla.org). The deadline to submit nominations is 31 January 2010.

How to Be Included in the *MLA Bibliography*

The staff of the *MLA International Bibliography* invites you to submit information about your articles, essays, and books that appeared in 2009 and those from before 2009 that have not previously been indexed.

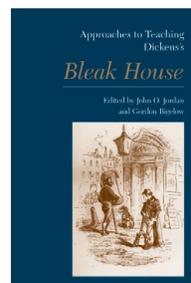
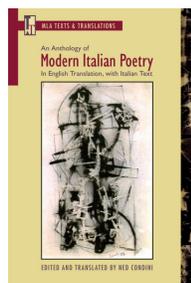
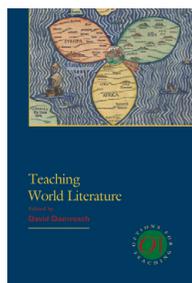
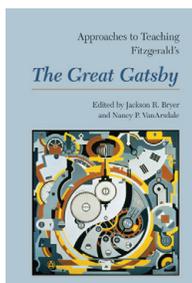
Bibliographic Information Services receives many of the periodicals on the Master List of Periodicals (found at the front of each issue of the bibliography or online through all our vendors). Authors of journal articles may assume that their material will be indexed if the MLA receives the journal; members should check with the journal editor to be sure. Authors of monographs and articles in book collections (Festschriften, conference proceedings, books of essays, etc.) should ask the publisher to send a copy of the collection to the MLA. Authors in doubt about whether the MLA has received a journal or a book should send materials according to the guidelines found online at www.mla.org/bib_inclusion.

Address materials or questions to *MLA International Bibliography*, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789 (646 576-5053; fax: 646 458-0033; bibliography@mla.org).

Four New MLA Titles

- *Approaches to Teaching Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*
- *Teaching World Literature*
- *An Anthology of Modern Italian Poetry*
- *Approaches to Teaching Dickens's Bleak House*

For complete information on these and other new titles, and to place orders, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/newtitles>.



Allied and Affiliate Organizations Online

Allied and affiliate organizations are learned societies and professional associations whose purposes are closely related to those of the MLA. Many of these organizations hold sessions at the MLA Annual Convention, enriching the range and diversity of the convention's offerings.

A directory of allied and affiliate organizations is now available exclusively on the MLA Web site. Its improved functionality allows an organization to update its listing at any time. The directory contains up-to-date information about organizations' Web sites, officers and MLA liaisons, and e-mail and mailing addresses. Please visit www.mla.org/orginfo_directory to view the new directory.

Questions and requests for information about these organizations can be sent directly to the organizations. All other correspondence concerning allied and affiliate organizations of the MLA should be sent to Lorenz Tomassi (ltomassi@mla.org), coordinator of allied and affiliate programs.

The *MLA Newsletter* (ISSN 0160-5720) is published four times a year (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter) by the Modern Language Association of America, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789. The *MLA Newsletter* is edited by the executive director of the association, Rosemary G. Feal. The managing editor is Judy Goulding. The cost of an annual subscription is \$8. The subscription price is included in the dues of all members of the association. Periodicals postage paid at Jefferson City, MO, and at additional mailing offices. All news items and letters should be sent to the *MLA Newsletter* at the above address. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *MLA Newsletter*, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789. MLA and the MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION are trademarks owned by the Modern Language Association of America.



Leave the Kleenex. Take the Data.

Humanities Advocacy Day, 2009. I am sitting in the audience with the MLA's president, Catherine Porter, and vice president, Sidonie Smith, at a panel called Making the Case for the Humanities. A university president anchors his talk with this little quip from his days as a dean: when faculty members from the sciences came to see him, he took out the checkbook; when faculty members from the humanities visited, he took out the Kleenex. Leaving aside the gendered attitudes and other biases encoded here, I wonder what made him view the humanities faculty as a bunch of whiners without a cause. Is it in part because we are without something the scientists have when they visit the dean: the data?

The scientific community enjoys the benefits of a federally funded data collection project, Science and Engineering Indicators, prepared by the National Science Foundation's Division of Science Resources Statistics, with guidance from the National Science Board (www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind08/start.htm). Our turn is coming, though. Thanks to the efforts of many, including a past MLA president (Patricia Meyers Spacks) and executive director (Phyllis Franklin), the Humanities Indicators, a project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has recently been launched in prototype form (www.humanitiesindicators.org). The academy describes the project as follows:

Organized in collaboration with a consortium of national humanities organizations, the Humanities Indicators are the first effort to provide scholars, policymakers and the public with a comprehensive picture of the state of the humanities, from primary to higher education to public humanities activities. The collection of empirical data is modeled after the National Science Board's *Science and Engineering Indicators* and creates reliable benchmarks to guide future analysis of the state of the humanities. Without data, it is impossible to assess the effectiveness, impact, and needs of the humanities.

(www.amacad.org/news/hrcoAnnounced.aspx)

The academy project has collected and analyzed data from existing sources to create a prototype set of seventy-four indicators and over two hundred tables and charts, and the results are impressive (www.humanitiesindicators.org/humanitiesData.aspx). To help readers understand the significance of the indicators, the academy also published interpretive essays covering five broad subject areas. David Laurence, director of research and the Association of Departments of English, who has been instrumental in the Humanities Indicators project since its inception, wrote one of the essays, "In Progress: The Idea of a Humanities Workforce" (www.humanitiesindicators.org/essays/laurence.pdf). What follows is an excerpt:

That college graduates earn bachelor's and higher degrees in humanistic fields of study, find employment, and go on to make successful careers hardly qualifies as news. To affirm . . . that a significant subset of these graduates defines a humanities workforce advances a novel public-policy idea. Even those who make up the humanities workforce do not customarily use the term to describe themselves, nor is the humanities workforce so named in discussions of humanists' work or of public policy as it affects the institutions and organizations where they do their work. As a normative idea informing public policy and perception, the humanities workforce has yet to

be brought into existence, whether among policy makers, the general public, or even the members of that workforce. . . .

The [Survey of Earned Doctorates, the Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR), and the National Survey of College Graduates] are ongoing federally sponsored data-collection efforts repeated at regular intervals. They stand as baseline sources of systematic trend data about the demographic characteristics, educational backgrounds, and occupations of people who have become equipped with valuable forms of specialized expertise and intellectual capital. Disciplines included in these studies have at their disposal authoritative information about how expertise is acquired, who is studying (and who gets to study) the necessary subjects, and how expertise gets applied over a working lifetime. [It should be unthinkable for] the humanities to go missing from these fundamental pieces of the government's data-collection infrastructure, whose aim is to provide an account of the intellectual resources the society has available. . . . A priority for the government agencies charged with tracking the state of the nation's intellectual resources, as well as for the humanities community, should be to see that the asymmetry, already significant, between the depth and quality of systematic information routinely available about the humanities on the one hand and the sciences on the other does not become more pronounced and is reduced as much as possible whenever possible.

As the Humanities Indicators demonstrates, substantial quantitative information about the humanities is available, but those of us in the humanities community have used it less than we might or ought to have done—in part, perhaps, because in many institutional contexts and contests for resources we humanists want to see the perspectives and analyses of our own disciplines acknowledged and credited but cannot fail to notice how frequently the advantage belongs to the quantitative tools and mappings familiar to the sciences and social sciences. The Humanities Indicators should help us see beyond this (understandable) bias and defensiveness. Much more than a data pile, the Humanities Indicators brings together in an organized way statistical documentation that gives the humanities workforce plausibility as a public idea. The idea of the humanities workforce, in turn, makes more readily apparent how the functioning of key cultural institutions and significant sectors of the national economy depends on the continued development and reproduction of humanistic talent and expertise. By collecting and presenting in an organized way what up to now have been scattered fragments of data, the Humanities Indicators makes it possible both to see and to collect under a common name the reality of an important network of social institutions and valuable pools of intellectual expertise that up to now have remained more-or-less hidden and lacking the means to gain the recognition they—and the humanities—deserve. . . .

(cont. on p. 6)

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**Dated Material
Please deliver by 13 May**

(cont. from p. 5)

Because college and university humanistic degree programs function as the chief educational source points for graduates [to acquire the forms of expertise requisite to entering humanities occupations], the Humanities Indicators gives special attention to developing a portrait of the postsecondary humanities faculty. . . . The Humanities Indicators uses the last report about humanities doctorates from the SDR to show that, depending on discipline, between 55% and 65% of the entire pool of humanities doctorate holders were employed as postsecondary teachers/professors. . . . But the account remains incomplete and potentially misleading, even about the academic workforce, absent a continuing source of information about the scale, timing, and character of advanced degree holders' movement out of professorial careers and into other types of work. Citing the 1995 SDR data, the Humanities Indicators offers a tantalizing documentary hint that something on the order of 40% of the people who have humanities doctorates move into occupations outside the academy. . . . This is a large population about which to know so little and to have so few (and diminishing) sources for tackling what must be regarded as a deplorable ignorance about where they work and how their workplaces and the wider society benefit from the advanced humanistic expertise they acquired during years of graduate education. . . .

For the public at large, the concept of a humanities workforce would broaden recognition of the reach and contributions scholarship and intellectual study in the humanities make to a surprising variety of social institutions and occupations beyond but not excluding teaching. . . . In the sphere of public policy, the concept of a humanities workforce would

open the way for recognition of the intellectual capital and forms of expertise study in humanities disciplines develops and the significant institutional, cultural, and economic investments these forms of expertise represent. From a public policy perspective, the academic humanities merit tangible support, especially for their specialized research scholarship as well as general teaching functions, in significant part because humanistic scholarship is one of the main sources of the forms of intellectual expertise and creative talent needed by an important array of cultural and educational institutions, including the news and entertainment industries.

As the MLA continues to focus attention on issues related to hiring, staffing, and promotion, it's time for our members to develop a common understanding of who makes up the humanities workforce. As Catherine Porter's column indicates, what we don't know can (and has) hurt us. It's time to put our numbers together in both senses. If we can, then perhaps during our next visit to the campus administrative offices the dean will leave the Kleenex untouched and instead take the data we present as an indicator that the humanities do indeed count.

Rosemary G. Feal

Members may write to the editor at execdirector@mla.org. Writers are asked to limit letters to five hundred words; the editor reserves the right to edit letters. Letters to the editor appear on the MLA Web site.