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Boston skyline

Nominations for 2012 MLA Elections

Second Vice President. The 2012 Nominating Committee has selected three nominees for second vice president of the MLA: Roland Greene, Stanford Univ.; Djelal Kadir, Penn State Univ., University Park; and Lawrence D. Kritzman, Dartmouth Coll. The person elected will take office on 7 January 2013 and will automatically become first vice president in 2014, serving in that office through the close of the January 2015 convention, and president of the MLA in 2015, serving in that office through the close of the January 2016 convention. A biographical summary for each candidate can be found at the MLA Web site after 12 April (www.mla.org/nominations2012); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

Executive Council. The Nominating Committee has selected seven nominees for the MLA Executive Council: Ginney Carney, Leech Lake Tribal Coll., MN; Stacey Lee Donohue, Central Oregon Community Coll.; Donald E. Hall, Lehigh Univ.; Paula M. Krebs, Wheaton Coll., MA; Maria Maisto, Cuyahoga Community Coll., OH; Miles McCrimmon, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community Coll., VA; Alicia M. de la Torre Falzon, Northern Virginia Community Coll. The three candidates elected will serve four-year terms that will begin 7 January 2013 and run through the close of the January 2017 convention. Background information on the election as well as candidates' biographical summaries can be found at the MLA Web site after 12 April (www.mla.org/nominations2012); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

Delegate Assembly. The 2012 Elections Committee has arranged contests to replace the seventeen special-interest delegates and the thirty-four regional delegates whose terms in the assembly will expire on 6 January 2013. The term of office of those elected will be from 7 January 2013 through the close of the January 2016 convention. The names of all Delegate Assembly candidates can be found at the MLA Web site after 12 April (www.mla.org/nominations2012).

Right to Petition. Any member of the association may initiate a petition proposing additional candidates for second vice president, for the Executive Council, and for the Delegate Assembly. Procedures for filing petitions are described in articles 6.E, 8.A.2, and 10.E of the MLA constitution (www.mla.org/mla_constitution). Petitions must reach the executive director before 1 July.



Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members and the MLA: A Crowdsourcing Project

In my Spring column, I promised I would suggest some ways that the Modern Language Association could promote our standards and recommendations with regard to non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty members. I'm happy to report that between that time and this—a space of only two months—those standards and recommendations have generated more discussion than at any other time since we began issuing them over a decade ago.

Thanks to blogs and *Twitter* (terms I consider unfortunate, since they suggest that these media cannot support intelligent life), our work on NTT faculty issues was picked up by legions of young

scholars, including Josh Boldt, an adjunct professor of English at the University of Georgia. Boldt, pleasantly surprised that the MLA recommends salaries of \$6,800 per course for faculty members off the tenure track, used Google Docs to create a spreadsheet that can now be found on his Web site, *The Adjunct Project*, and invited people to contribute information about their employment contracts—salaries, benefits, governance, and so forth. As of this writing, Boldt has gotten over 1,500 responses, most of which suggested a pay scale in the range of \$2,000–\$5,000 per course, and his crowdsourcing initiative has been hailed widely in the higher education press.

The MLA is about to embark on a similar enterprise, one that has been in the works for months and one that we hope will bring the working conditions of NTT faculty members to the forefront of discussion. Our new [Academic Workforce Data Center](#) will present US Department of Education (DOE) data on the academic workforce in a convenient format that allows users to compare institutions for numbers of faculty members employed full- and part-time and in tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track positions. The MLA database will cover 4,246 degree-granting two- and four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Most interesting, I think, will be the data that allow for comparison between employment conditions in the 1995 and 2009 DOE surveys—although some people might say “shocking” rather than “interesting.” That fourteen-year period witnessed an explosion in the hiring—and exploitation—of NTT faculty labor: undergraduate enrollment increased by forty percent, or by 5.3 million students, and faculty appointments grew by fifty percent, but *ninety percent of those additional appointments were NTT positions*.

In other words, for the past decade and a half, nine out of every ten new faculty positions in the United States have been off the tenure track. Nor has this phenomenon been confined exclusively to community colleges and teaching

universities; even at some well-heeled, high-prestige private institutions with strong enrollments and endowments, the percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty members has dropped from eighty percent to just under fifty percent in that fourteen-year span.

In conjunction with the institutional data, the MLA [Academic Workforce Data Center](#) is launching a new survey of faculty members—like Boldt's *Adjunct Project*, an attempt to get firsthand reporting on academic working conditions across the country at the institution level. The survey will collect information about the courses individuals taught and the compensation and benefits they received; responses will be sought from those working in the sciences and social sciences as well as in the humanities and from across the entire spectrum of faculty employment statuses (full- and part-time, on and off the tenure track). Those data will be collected in future months, and we will report on them when we have a critical mass of information to make available.

Why do we have to do all this? Because we are finding that the conditions for faculty members who teach in contingent positions are still not widely regarded as a problem, especially by people in higher education who think the situation is just fine at their own institutions but may, perhaps, be a problem somewhere else.

Which brings me, inevitably, to the question of the audience for this initiative. As in Boldt's *Adjunct Project*, one important audience is made up of NTT faculty members who, because of the precariousness of their positions and the overwhelmingly local nature of the NTT job market (few such positions are advertised nationally), have had no way of finding out about NTT working conditions more systematically. We hope this information will single out the institutions that are doing things right, or that are doing things in the best possible way given all the variables involved—and of course we hope it will identify malefactors as well.

But another audience is made up of higher education administrators, organizations, and reporters, as well as the general public—including students, parents, and their elected representatives. The challenge on that front, of course, is to make the case that the exploitation of NTT faculty members is not only wrong in itself but also bad for students. For though it is a truism that the working conditions of faculty members are the learning conditions of students, it is difficult to demonstrate empirically that the overuse of NTT faculty members has had a deleterious

On the MLA Web Site

News from the MLA

Upcoming MLA
Deadlines

2012 ADE Summer Seminars

2012 ADFL Summer Seminars

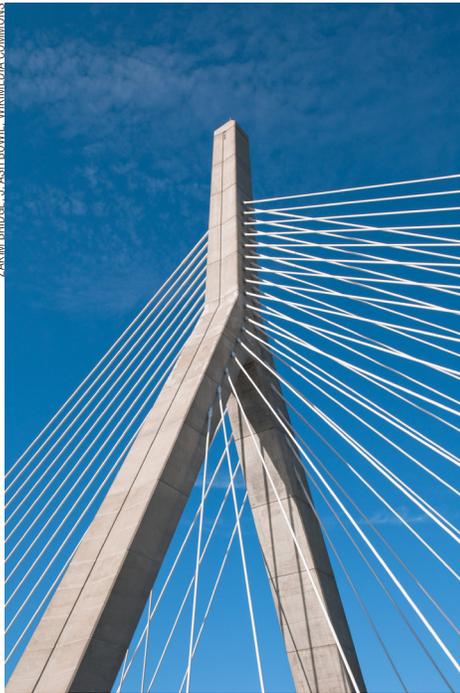


effect on undergraduate education. Indeed, it is potentially dangerous to try to make such a demonstration at all, since doing so invites observers to blame the NTT faculty members themselves, rather than the conditions under which they work, for diminished student outcomes. For that matter, it can also invite observers to blame the allegedly pampered, elite tenured faculty for spending time on research rather than teaching—as some observers are already wont to do.

I welcome your advice and suggestions as we proceed with the MLA Academic Workforce Data Center—and as we try to find ways of making the data work for all faculty members and students.

Michael Bérubé

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



MLA Convention Returns to Boston

Six decades have come and gone since the MLA Annual Convention last took place in Boston. From the MLA's founding in 1883 to 1952, Boston (or neighboring Cambridge) hosted the convention seven times.

In 1952 MLA membership stood at 7,040. That year, from 27 to 29 December, 2,555 members gathered in Boston's Hotel Statler for the sixty-seventh convention, then referred to as the Annual Meeting of the Association. Though the convention was a considerably smaller event in those days, the invitation had advised members to "preregister and avoid standing in line." Over the course of three days (the convention would not stretch out to its current four days until 1969), members participated in a meeting that, according to the proceedings published in the April 1953 issue of *PMLA*, comprised "9 addresses, 28 section papers, 180 group papers, 9 conferences, and many special reports and discussions. Twenty of the papers read were in foreign languages." There were no MLA-sanctioned cash bars, and only one session was held off-site: "Bibliographical Evidence," at the Paper Museum on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

One of that convention's general meetings featured Margaret Mead speaking on cultural bases for understanding literature. In a wide-ranging presidential address, "Justification by Works," Albert C. Baugh reflected on his forty years as a teacher-scholar and an MLA member, noting that "In my own lifetime I have seen the family group seated around the reading lamp become an audience in front of the television set" and reminding MLA members that "We are a learned society where the search for truth may be carried on with a conviction of its importance to the world . . . where our field of humanistic studies may be cultivated to the ultimate enrichment of society."

This coming January the convention will include nearly eight hundred sessions and events, an exhibit hall, and the Job Information Center. Michael Bérubé's presidential theme will be Avenues of Access. Information about convention hotels, travel arrangements, and preregistering at member rates will be available at the MLA Web site in early September. Members will be notified when online registration opens and encouraged, sixty years later, to preregister and avoid standing in line.

Convention Interview-Suite Arrangements

The e-mail notification about reserving hotel suites for the convention in Boston will be sent in mid-August to the person who is listed as department chair for 2011–12 on the ADE or ADFL membership record as of 1 June 2012. Departments must be members of the ADE or the ADFL and department chairs must be MLA members by 1 June 2012 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.

2012 Ratification Ballot

At its meeting on 7 January 2012 in Seattle, the Delegate Assembly approved two resolutions. The assembly's action is not final, however, since the MLA constitution (art. 11.C.7) requires the membership to ratify the approval of each resolution by a majority vote in which the number of those voting for ratification equals at least ten percent of the association's membership. Because the level of participation in ratification votes in recent years has been low, the Executive Council wishes to encourage all members to review the resolutions that are subject to ratification and to exercise their right to vote.

The ratification vote will be conducted in the members-only area of the MLA Web site. Members in good standing as of 11 April will have access to the ratification ballot. Notifications will be sent by e-mail to eligible voters who have e-mail addresses on file with the MLA; all other eligible voters will be notified by letter. Members who wish to vote online will be able to do so beginning 16 April. Balloting will close at 5:00 p.m. (EDT) on 1 June. There will be a link to the ratification ballot on the home page. Voters who prefer a paper ballot should contact the coordinator of governance to request one (MLA, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789; e-mail: governance@mla.org; fax: 646 576-5107). The deadline for requesting a paper ballot is 11 May.

Call for Contributions to Book Series

The Publications Committee has approved the development of two new titles in the Approaches to Teaching World Literature series: *Approaches to Teaching the Middle English Pearl*, edited by Jane Beal and Ann Meyer, and *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Flannery O'Connor*, edited by John D. Cox and Marshall Bruce Gentry. If you wish to contribute to one of these volumes, please visit www.mla.org/approaches and follow the link to the survey.

The Publications Committee has also approved a new title in the Options for Teaching series: *Teaching Australian and New Zealand Literature*, edited by Nicholas Birns, Nicole Moore, and Sarah Shieff. For information on how to propose an essay in this volume, please visit www.mla.org/options.

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 New York, NY, 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.

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New Division and Discussion Group Executive Committee Members

The MLA's divisions and discussion groups added new members to their executive committees in the last election cycle. 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/danddg and www.mla.org/dgroupexeccomm, respectively). Executive committee listings will also be published in the November 2012 issue 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 online at www.mla.org/honorary_members. Details on nomination procedures can be found at www.mla.org/nominations_hon, or you may contact Annie Reiser for additional information (646 576-5141; awards@mla.org). The deadline for submitting nominations is 31 January 2013.

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 2012 and those from before 2012 that have not previously been indexed.

Bibliographic Information Services receives a number of periodicals in the Directory of Periodicals (searchable at the MLA Web site or through all our vendors). Authors of journal articles should search the *MLA Bibliography* to determine whether their work has been included. If it has not, contact us to verify that the issue of the journal was sent to our office. Authors of monographs and articles in book collections (Festschriften, conference proceedings, books of essays, etc.) should remind 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).



Languages Required

This past February, the MLA Executive Council issued its “Statement on Language Requirements for Doctoral Programs in English”:

The MLA urges doctoral programs in English to require all PhD candidates to demonstrate, at either the admission or the exit point, advanced competence in at least one language other than English. It also urges doctoral programs to offer funding and support to students who study additional languages beyond this requirement.

Those who pursue a PhD in English are engaged in deep study of a language and its literary and cultural expressions. Most likely they will teach works in translation during their career. Knowledge of

several languages and the process of language learning offer more than research tools enabling students to read primary and secondary materials in their original form. They promote consciousness of and sensitivity to both the multilingual contexts in which anglophone literatures are written and the work of translation in which contemporary writers and readers engage on a daily basis. Proficiency in more than one language promotes the cultural literacy essential to teaching in the global university of the future.

As someone who began studying French in the seventh grade and who became bilingual (with Spanish) at age sixteen, I viewed this suggested requirement as a fairly obvious one for a scholar-teacher of any language. After all, how can we possibly understand language acquisition, literary expression, linguistic variation, and so on if we do not have at least one other language with which to compare our own? Although I recognized the pragmatic difficulties in expecting students to fulfill this requirement (indeed, the MLA has just created a task force to study doctoral education in part because it is concerned with the increasing time to degree), I did not anticipate resistance to the concept itself (being bilingual makes me think that way). Some in the Twitterverse and blogosphere have critiqued the statement's recommendation, questioning its relevance to scholarly work, teaching, conference presentations, and even cultural literacy itself. From their perspective, languages were not required as passports to other literatures and cultures, and they weren't even necessary to understand the English language *qua* language.

In *Babel No More*, Michael Erard notes that English may be the only language that has ever had more nonnative than native speakers (9). That the world sees English as the most important second language to acquire would seem to many people to be reason to let monolingual Anglophones off the hook, but it is perhaps the most compelling reason for them to acquire another language. PhDs in English will teach students (at both the graduate and undergraduate level) who are native speakers of many world languages. These students will have the benefit of translingual and transcultural competence from the get-go, and their approaches to the study of works in the English language will be informed by their native language experience.

The point of knowing a language other than English is not (necessarily) to speak to students in that language but rather to understand from the inside what language acqui-

sition is. If we accept that advanced literacy is the goal of all English classes for native speakers, then it is advantageous when the instructor looks at English as a language, with its own set of peculiarities, rather than as a seemingly transparent universal medium. It is often said that the study of an additional language causes one to look at one's native language in an entirely different light. No longer assumed to be natural, the native language reveals its structures *and its cultures* when contrasted with other languages.

The extent to which we see language and culture as inextricable will determine our willingness to accept knowledge of a nonnative language as key to a full understanding of our cultural location. There is nothing comforting about that realization. Imagine learning a language formally and then coming into contact with native speakers who use it in ways you haven't anticipated. You find out the hard way that greeting someone in an elevator is either required or frowned on. The words you use to ask questions as you are trying to get to know someone either open doors or slam them shut. Frankly, it's risky (not to mention anxiety producing) to navigate another language and its culture(s), and we can't possibly learn all the world's linguistic codes. What we learn instead is the difference language makes, and I contend we do so only when we speak more than one language.

How does this relate to what English PhDs teach and study (literature, film, and other textualities of all genres and media)? Anglophone literatures are written in multilingual contexts and circulate in multilingual cultures. Authors of English-language works have been studied in other countries, and the critical apparatus in languages other than English on these writers could bring new insights to American scholars. To understand literature written in English is to think about its place on the world stage, even if most of our interlocutors know (some) English.

Implicit in the MLA statement is the contention that a utilitarian function should not be the primary factor in determining whether PhDs in English would do well to invest time in second-language proficiency. This is also my colleague Doug Steward's view in his analysis of language requirements for English PhDs (213–14). Translingual and transcultural competencies are key. These competencies would best be demonstrated on application to a PhD program in the English language rather than as exit requirements. In other

(cont. on p. 6)

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Please deliver by 6 May

(cont. from p. 5)

words, a reasonable way for doctoral programs to respond to the MLA statement would be to make it clear that current undergraduates who hope to enter doctoral programs should devote time to acquire advanced competence in language(s) before they begin graduate study.

I've always noticed that my colleagues in English departments who know another language well seem to just "get it." They tend to make connections with those of us in language departments that they might not otherwise have made. They encourage their students to study additional languages. They sign up to guide study-abroad programs. These colleagues understand why multilingualism enhances teaching and research in one's primary discipline. Perhaps they can explain it (or defend it) better than I can. As I asked the historian Erik Loomis, does it matter that only residents of England and its former colonies can hold the highest degree in the humanities and still be monolingual? What advantages do English professors see in knowing other languages well? I'd like to hear from you on this question. I promise to keep an open, code-switching mind.

Rosemary G. Feal

Note

In an essay published after I wrote this column, L. D. Burnett provides evidence that the debates about the relevance of language study have been going on for over one hundred years.

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Members are invited to comment on this column at www.mla.org/fromtheeditor.