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*Chicago's Millennium Park*

## Nominations for 2013 MLA Elections

**Second Vice President.** The 2013 Nominating Committee has selected three nominees for second vice president of the MLA: Kwame Anthony Appiah, Princeton Univ.; David J. Bartholomae, Univ. of Pittsburgh; and Garrett Stewart, Univ. of Iowa. The person elected will take office on 13 January 2014 and will automatically become first vice president in 2015, serving in that office through the close of the January 2016 convention, and president of the MLA in 2016, serving in that office through the close of the January 2017 convention. A biographical summary for each candidate can be found at the MLA Web site after 11 April ([www.mla.org/nominations2013](http://www.mla.org/nominations2013)); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

**Executive Council.** The Nominating Committee has selected seven nominees for the MLA Executive Council: Douglas M. Armato, Univ. of Minnesota Press; Brian Croxall, Emory Univ.; Morris E. Eaves, Univ. of Rochester; Margaret R. Higonnet, Univ. of Connecticut, Storrs; Anton Kaes, Univ. of California, Berkeley; Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Vanderbilt Univ.; and Philip M. Weinstein, Swarthmore Coll. The three candidates elected will serve four-year terms that will begin 14 January 2014 and run through the close of the January 2018 convention. Background information on the election as well as candidates' biographical summaries can be found at the MLA Web site after 11 April ([www.mla.org/nominations2013](http://www.mla.org/nominations2013)); members will receive voting instructions in the fall.

**Delegate Assembly.** The 2013 Elections Committee has arranged contests to replace the seventeen special-interest delegates and the thirty-eight regional delegates whose terms in the assembly will expire on 12 January 2014. The term of office of those elected will be from 13 January 2014 through the close of the January 2017 convention. The names of all Delegate Assembly candidates can be found at the MLA Web site after 11 April ([www.mla.org/nominations2013](http://www.mla.org/nominations2013)).

**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](http://www.mla.org/mla-constitution)). Petitions must reach the executive director before 1 July.



See page 3 for information on the 2014 MLA Annual Convention.



## Of America

What does it mean, in 2013, to be the Modern Language Association of *America*? What map is covered by the MLA's location and activities? Should this map evolve? If so, how?

The MLA is the world's largest scholarly society in the humanities, and it aims to serve a worldwide community of scholars and teachers of languages, literatures, and cultures. It fulfills this aspiration well in a number of areas. The *MLA Job Information List* posts openings from universities all over the world. The *MLA International Bibliography* is the preeminent worldwide research tool for literary studies; its sales reach across 50 countries; 22 out of 120 field bibliographers work outside the United States; and there are more than 25,000 entries annually in

European, Asian, African, and Latin American literatures. The seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook* has recently been translated into Chinese. The MLA's publication series *Approaches to Teaching World Literature*, *Options for Teaching*, *World Literatures Reimagined*, and *Texts and Translations* provide teaching materials for, theoretical reflections on, as well as translations of texts written in numerous languages and emerging from diverse literary traditions. The series *Teaching Languages, Literatures, and Cultures* offers analyses of new language-teaching methodologies, research, and curriculum design for a number of commonly and less commonly taught languages. Writers from around the world are among the MLA's honorary fellows.

The MLA offers travel grants so that regular and life members residing outside the United States and Canada can attend the convention. Still, only between 4% and 5% of participants attending the last three conventions traveled from abroad. And only 13% of MLA members reside outside the United States (8.75% outside the United States and Canada).

The association divides its work into two large and inclusive parts: English and, variously, "foreign languages" (as in the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages) or "languages other than English." Only one-third of MLA members work on nonanglophone languages and literatures, and, of these, European languages are far more widely represented than languages from other parts of the planet. One need only consult the *MLA Language Map*, however, to see that none of these languages is "foreign" in the multilingual United States, and "other than" underscores a linguistic hierarchy that makes it all the more challenging to multiply language fields within the association.

I know I'm not alone in finding the MLA's imperial "of America" troubling and the split between English and "foreign" languages frustrating. What are some alternative terms? World languages? The US MLA? North America? Or simply the Modern Language Association?

These recalcitrant lexical stumbling blocks should not obscure what we all know: that a vast number of our members, including those who are ostensibly in English, are bi- or multilingual; that we have origins, as well as personal and professional ties, all over the world; and that we work in multiple languages and in numerous planetary networks of intellectual exchange. These ties are as deep as they are vast, and they are visible in our individual and collective work. But how can the association more fully reflect these interrelations?

The Executive Council has recently renewed its commitment to "internationalizing" the MLA. Efforts to expand the representation of underrepresented world languages (Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and more) and to facilitate pedagogical and scholarly work on less commonly taught languages are already under way, and membership from these fields should increase accordingly. Beyond that, we need to pause and ask what it means to internationalize a scholarly institution responsibly at a moment when *globalization* is a buzzword mobilized throughout the academy in response to economic, political, and so-called security priorities.

The MLA's multifaceted projects provide ample reasons for a broad international membership. What is more, the MLA's structure as a multilingual and interdisciplinary organization can offer models of collaboration and exchange with other scholarly associations. The humanities are neglected and underfunded in the age of economic globalization, and the MLA's advocacy work on behalf of language and literature has implications beyond the United States' borders. A growing international membership would spur more robust discussion about these urgent issues as well as promote deeper collaborations in a variety of fields at the annual convention and on *MLA Commons*, where online capabilities foster less costly networks of intellectual communication.

A project initiated by the Executive Council represents a new approach to internationalizing. In the past, the MLA has held small symposia on specific topics in various cities in the United States. The council is contemplating collaborating with colleagues in several parts of the world to organize MLA international symposia, which would be structured around pressing issues in the humanities and held every three years.

Many of us have attended international conferences and experienced the divergent approaches emerging from distinct traditions of scholarship and teaching. We have also encountered the pauses occasioned by difficulties in translation, by miscommunications and misunderstandings that

### On the MLA Web Site

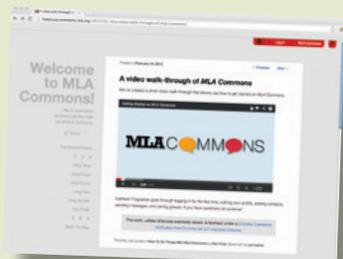
[News from the MLA](#)

[MLA Commons](#)

[Upcoming MLA Deadlines](#)

[2013 ADE Summer Seminars](#)

[2013 ADFL Summer Seminars](#)



can occur as we cross borders. For example, do colleagues in Argentina or Brazil feel included by the prepositional phrase *of America* in the MLA's name? A conference in the southern part of the hemisphere would have to address these prepositional and geographic designations. As we organize international symposia through the MLA, we need to build pauses and untranslatibilities into the discussion. Doing so, we can enrich our reflections on how language, history, and place shape the production of knowledge. And we can try to foster multilingual and multilocal professional links that begin in different locations and create new connections across borders.

In the near future, MLA international symposia might address topics such as translation, migration and diaspora, environmental criticism, medical humanities, religion and secularism, and media studies. Building on these symposia, might we envision future MLA working groups, with live and virtual participation, that would engage in active collaborations across national, linguistic, and disciplinary frontiers? Actually, the association's name does not preclude this since, according to the *OED*, *of* originally meant not "connected with" or "referring to" but "away" or "away from"—as in "south of the border," for example. Being "of America," the MLA would then also be moving outward, away from its borders, however construed. Might we thus also look toward a Modern Language Association with conventions located beyond *America*?

Marianne Hirsch

Members are invited to comment on the president's column at [president.commons.mla.org](http://president.commons.mla.org).



Lincoln Park Zoo

## MLA Convention Returns to Chicago

On 13 July 1893 the Modern Language Association paid its first visit to Chicago, convening for what was called an "extra session." Fifty-six members attended, President Francis A. March presided, and three papers were presented. Another four papers were not read, "the attendance of the authors having been unexpectedly prevented." Since then the association has met in Chicago another twenty-seven times. In 2007, when the MLA Annual Convention was last held in Chicago, 8,900 members took part in 784 sessions.

This coming January the convention returns to Chicago and will feature nearly eight hundred sessions and events, an exhibit hall, and the Job Information Center. Marianne Hirsch's presidential theme will be *Vulnerable Times*. Information about convention hotels, travel arrangements, and preregistering at member rates will be available at the MLA Web site ([www.mla.org/convention](http://www.mla.org/convention)) in early September. In the meantime, visit *MLA Commons* and check #mla14 on *Twitter* for news about the MLA convention.

## Convention Interview-Suite Arrangements

The e-mail notification about reserving hotel suites for the convention in Chicago will be sent in mid-August to the person who is listed as department chair for 2012–13 on the ADE or ADFL membership record as of 1 June 2013. Departments must be members of the ADE or the ADFL and department chairs must be MLA members by 1 June 2013 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.

## Call for Contributions to MLA Volumes

The volume *Approaches to Teaching Hugo's Les Misérables*, edited by Michal P. Ginsburg and Bradley Stephens, is now in development in the MLA Approaches to Teaching World Literature series. If you wish to contribute to this volume, please visit [www.mla.org/approaches](http://www.mla.org/approaches) and follow the link to the survey. The volume *Teaching Latino/a Literature*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, is now in development in the MLA Options for Teaching series. The call for essay proposals for this volume can be found at [www.mla.org/options](http://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.

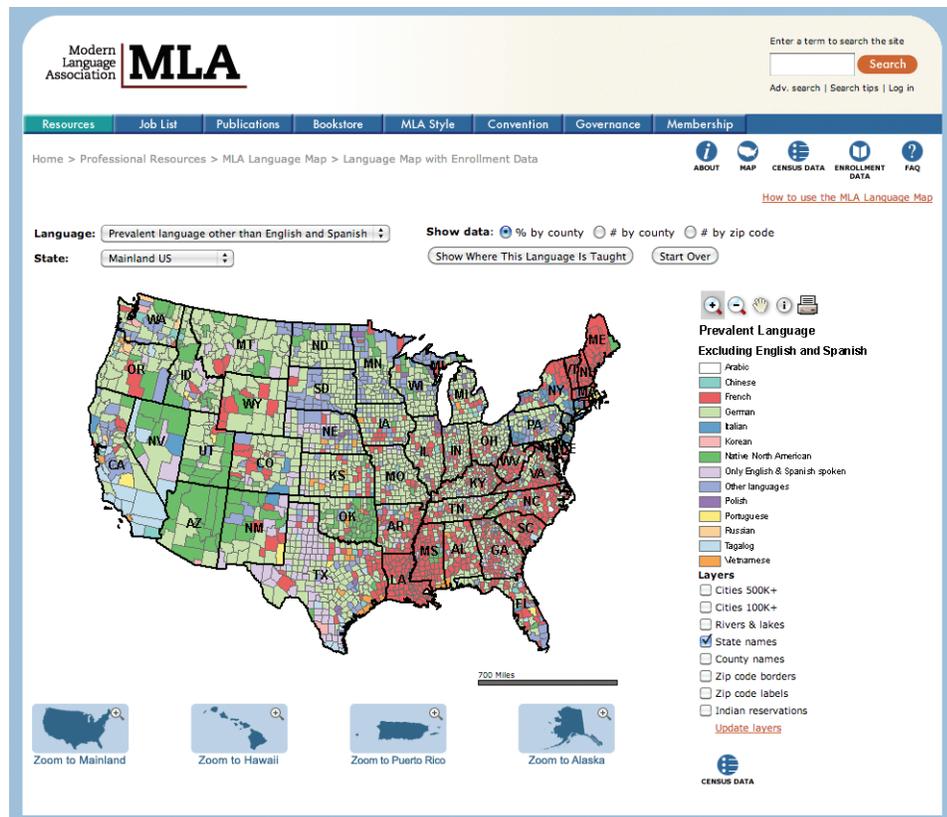
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# How to Be Included in the *MLA Bibliography*

The staff of the *MLA International Bibliography* invites you to submit information about your articles, essays, and books that appeared in 2013 and those from before 2013 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](http://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](mailto:bibliography@mla.org)).



The *MLA Language Map* now includes data from the 2010 American Community Survey.

## What's New on *MLA Commons*

Since the launch of *MLA Commons* at the Boston convention this past January, more than 1,600 MLA members have logged in to the new platform and activated their accounts. Divisions and discussion groups have begun to use the site to share materials from the 2013 convention and to start discussions about sessions for 2014, members have created blogs to circulate their work, and the MLA has published the second installment of its first all-digital anthology, *Literary Studies in the Digital Age*.

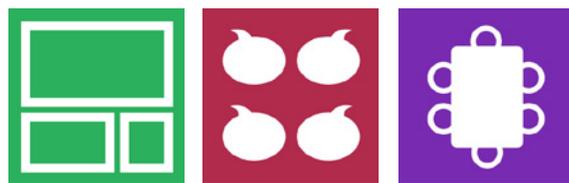
If you haven't visited the site yet, you'll find some additions that may help you learn more about how you might use the *Commons*. Blog posts about updating your profile, starting or administering a group, creating a blog, using forums, and other topics have been published in the new Welcome Group. Members who want to get ideas for using the site, pose questions, or make connections with other members are encouraged to join the group, which is open to all *Commons* users.

We have also added a brief video tour of the platform. Hosted by Kathleen Fitzpatrick, the director of scholarly

communication, the video shows how to edit your profile, add contacts, and post updates about what you're doing.

More than two hundred groups are now active on the site, so we encourage you to find out what your divisions and discussion groups are doing by going to your profile page and clicking on the Groups link on the left. You may also wish to start your own group, if there is not already a division or discussion group devoted to the subject you're interested in. To view a full list of division and discussion groups, visit the MLA Web site ([www.mla.org/divisions\\_groups](http://www.mla.org/divisions_groups)). You can also join existing divisions and discussion groups by clicking on the My MLA button on the MLA home page and editing your selections. These groups will appear in your *Commons* profile when you next log in.

As the site continues to develop, we hope you'll let us know how we can make the *Commons* more valuable by e-mailing [commons@mla.org](mailto:commons@mla.org) or by using the orange feedback button on the site.



How to identify groups on *MLA Commons*: new avatars for divisions, discussion groups, and committees



## Organic Planting at the MLA

If you hang around a campus long enough, you will become aware when the next strategic plan is in the works. Surveys will crop up in your in-box, you'll be summoned to special meetings, and, if you are in an administrative position, you'll be directed to assemble reams of data. Unfortunately, faculty members off the tenure track and graduate students might not be clued in to a strategic planning process (another by-product of the overreliance on contingent labor in the profession).

Many scholarly associations also produce strategic plans, often hiring consultants to guide them. Formal strategic plans can help when institutions or organizations undergo repositioning—that is, making major changes in mission and vision in response to shifts in the environment.

Some of these plans offer detailed goals and metrics; others dwell in noble aspirations to excel in all the organization does. I've seen strategic plans become part of the fabric of an institution, shaping major initiatives, driving the budget, undergirding capital campaigns, and pushing cultural changes. I've also seen many a strategic plan do no more than gather dust on the shelf.

The MLA Executive Council has adopted a different model, one that does not require a published strategic plan. The council has always played an important role in middle- and long-term planning for the association, attempting to balance immediate needs (choosing convention sites, speaking out about a curriculum change on a particular campus) with longer-term goals (reinvigorating the annual convention, responding to changes in faculty demographics). One of my responsibilities is to advise the council on governance matters, and, in thinking about the best ways we might do planning, I was heavily influenced by Richard Chait's *Governance as Leadership: Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards*. Chait stresses the importance of generative governance. Boards operating in generative mode don't just ask "what should we do?" or "how should we do it?"; they also ask "why should we do this?" and "why aren't we doing that?" They can formulate questions such as "where do we want to be in five years on this?" and "what data and research do we need to inform our answers?"

Because we do our strategic planning in generative mode, the result is a kind of "organic planting" of ideas that we nurture over time. Some council initiatives take root quickly and produce projects that come to fruition in a relatively short time span, often directed by groups of members (I'm thinking of the Report of the Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion). Other initiatives, once germinated, may take a full decade to mature. Certainly the shift in our scholarly communication models, an ongoing process, is one of those slow-growth strategic plantings. The major new directions the MLA has taken—for instance, the launch of *MLA Commons* and the migration of several key publications to a digital-only environment—would not be possible without years of careful tending and investment of strategic capital.

How does the council do this work? At every one of its meetings, the council receives reports from committees and from the staff and analyses of data and trends related

to our field. Council members bring to the table first-hand experience of departments and campuses. A special role is played by MLA presidents, who sit on the council for two years before their presidential year and begin spearheading projects in the months leading up to the presidency. Marianne Hirsch, our current president, began working with members on the division and discussion group structure shortly after she was elected and continues to make that project a cornerstone of her presidency. Like other presidents, she works with both her predecessor and her successor to ensure continuity on association projects.

In recent years, the council has made strategic planning a regular part of every meeting, working in subgroups that change as the needs of the association do. Some groups continue their work over a long period (for example, the academic workforce is an area in which we must always be engaged in generative thinking), whereas other groups assemble and disperse within the span of a few council meetings, often because the work rises to a broader administrative level (for example, the language consultancy project came out of a strategic planning subgroup and is now under the guidance of a joint MLA-ADFL steering committee headed by a past MLA president and a past ADFL president). The council also examines the budgetary implications of all new projects, just as it assesses ongoing projects for value to the association. The MLA staff collaborates with the council in strategic thinking; staff members serve as the day-to-day administrators of the directions the council charts.

At recent meetings, the council subgroups have focused on extending the international reach of the association, on outreach to parents and students about the undergraduate experience in humanities classes today, and on continuing improvements to participants' experiences at the MLA convention.

Members and former members often comment on what the association is (or isn't) doing. Every time I get such a communication, I think of the extraordinary work that is done by MLA committees and officers, and I reflect on the choices that the council must make every time it commits funds to one project or another. Generative explorations of "why" and "why not" allow us the free range of critical thinking that we claim the humanities is especially capable of imparting. The members of the Executive Council

(cont. on p. 6)

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ISSN 0160-5720

**Dated Material  
Please deliver by 3 May***(cont. from p. 5)*

practice what they teach. Finally, let me state the obvious: the primary reason the council works so well in generative mode is the intelligence, flexibility, creativity, and collegiality of the members whom you nominate and elect—and who, I should add, are always eager to hear from you so they can plant new seeds in the fields in which we labor.

Rosemary G. Feal

Members are invited to comment on this column at [execdirector.commonsmembers.mla.org](http://execdirector.commonsmembers.mla.org).

## 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](http://www.mla.org/honorary_members). Details on nomination procedures can be found at [www.mla.org/nominations\\_hon](http://www.mla.org/nominations_hon), or you may contact Annie Reiser for additional information (646 576-5141; [awards@mla.org](mailto:awards@mla.org)). The deadline for submitting nominations is 31 January 2014.

## 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](http://www.mla.org/danddg) and [www.mla.org/dgroupexeccomm](http://www.mla.org/dgroupexeccomm), respectively). Executive committee listings will also be published in the November 2013 issue of *PMLA*.