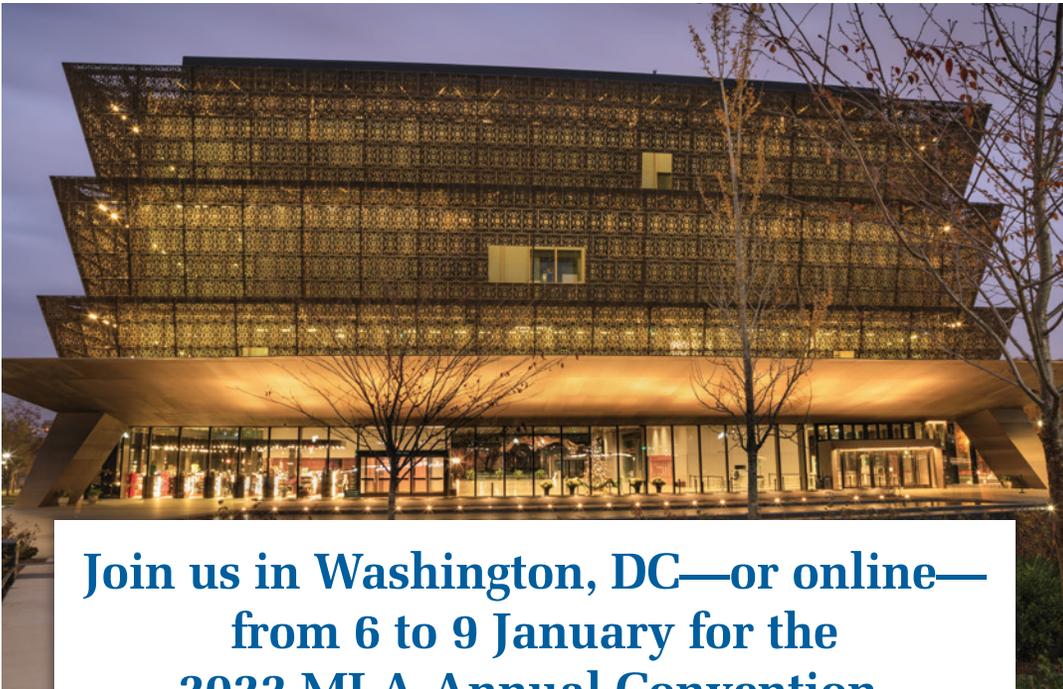


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MLA Newsletter



**Join us in Washington, DC—or online—
from 6 to 9 January for the
2022 MLA Annual Convention.
View the program at mla22.org.**

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Strength in Numbers

Membership in a disciplinary association is about community. Your MLA membership shows you believe that humanities knowledge workers, in academe and outside it, can accomplish more together than we can working separately. Thank you for joining this community.

It's understandable that some people think humanists' work is essentially solitary, autonomous work. After all, most humanities professionals don't work in labs with other researchers (although I see you, DH folks). And most of us develop our courses on our own and teach them fairly independently (although that's not necessarily true for many contingent faculty members).

But the work of the humanities, the defense of that work, the setting of standards for it and the holding of one another to standards, the sharing of pedagogy and the sharing of research tools and of writing—that's all the work of community. As MLA members, we function as community. Heterogeneous and yet cohesive community.

When communities evolve, it's usually because the call for change has come from inside the group. That's true for the MLA, whether the changes have been in governance structure or staffing or even organizational focus, whether we are talking about changing the way we conduct association elections or the way we work to hold academic institutions accountable for maintaining good employment practices or for remaining committed to language instruction. The impetus for change comes from the membership, and the association is its members.

Association is strength. One faculty member can have a lot of clout in a department or maybe even in a college. But beyond that, it's difficult for one person to speak for a discipline or a profession. Disciplinary associations, with their elected governance structures,



Photo credit: Nat Seymour / Be Good Event Photography

make it more possible to speak with one voice. The Executive Council of the MLA weighs in on issues of national importance that affect MLA members professionally, and the committees of the MLA take on issues they are charged to address. When the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights issues guidelines for the conduct of academic job searches, for example, or an ad hoc committee on graduate education issues a report on creating better conditions for advising doctoral students, those documents are meant to be used—to be shared with departments and institutions as statements of the standards of our profession.

No one pretends that a professional association can enforce standards (unless it is an accreditor), but neither do institutions want to find themselves in flagrant violation of what can be seen as the norms of a discipline. That's why disciplinary organizations can be helpful to departments and even to individuals who want to challenge bad behavior at institutions or in systems. We often get

appeals from faculty members at institutions that are making drastic cuts to languages or to the humanities in general, and we always respond—writing to deans and provosts and presidents and boards with data and arguments in favor of what our members do.

We are not simply reactive to attacks on our fields, however. We also work actively to shape the professions in which our PhDs work and how the value of that work is seen. We have developed institutes to bring together faculty members from access-oriented institutions with doctoral students who want to learn to teach at such institutions. We work to change doctoral programs to help broaden career paths for PhDs. We know that our members are committed to knowledge creation

in our fields, and we also know that they are committed to their students, that they want to know how better to retain students of color, that they need help navigating their departments and their institutions, and that they have help to give one another. The job of the MLA staff and the elected representatives in the association's governance structure is to determine and then meet the needs of the members and the needs of those who should be members—so that they become members.

Any association is only as powerful as its membership allows it to be. Thank you for being a member and helping us do the work that needs to be done. If we represent more people, we can get more done. So please take five minutes now to e-mail a colleague and suggest that they think about rejoining the MLA. Share one or two reasons you're a member. And if you succeed in getting a member or two, drop me a line. I'll send you a present. There's strength in numbers.

Paula M. Krebs



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Return, Reset

Comment on this column at
president.mla.hcommons.org.

THERE WAS A CERTAIN RIP VAN WINKLE

feeling to stepping into my office on campus for the first time in eighteen months. Or perhaps it was more like emerging from the Cave of Montesinos to see the world in a different light. I am clearly among the fortunate: not required to return to the classroom until I was vaccinated and now reassured by boosters and masking requirements in a state that has largely followed scientific recommendations (not to mention that I have an office, and one with a function-

the attack on the Capitol that we could not go back to business as usual. What, then, does this new world look like? Where is the change?

The pandemic and the protests made clear the need to recommit to access for all students and to redouble our advocacy for the humanities as a key pillar of democracy. Critical thinking about representation, agency, and the public good has never seemed more urgent. How will we take on these commitments in the university and beyond when the

While the MLA has been a leader in this space and has long advocated for these changes, especially in the wake of the Great Recession, the pandemic (and the appearance of these ideas in book form) feels like a turning point. Certainly we must continue to advocate for tenure-track positions, as we did in the context of the [College for All Act](#), yet we must also continue to expand how we think of our professions (“Statement”).

As Leonard Cassuto and Robert Weisbuch state in *The New PhD*, “We need a PhD that looks outside the walls of the university, not one that turns inward” (13). Katina Rogers forcefully counters the idea that the solution to ever fewer tenure-track positions might be to further shrink our programs. In *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work*, she notes, “The cost-cutting measure of using more and more contingent faculty members can and does operate entirely independently of the number of PhDs on the market” (33). Both books recommend a turn to diverse careers, in which humanities PhDs might find not only economic security but also a sense of purpose in society. The alternative to precarity, these scholars argue, is a willingness to imagine a broader range of career outcomes as the prerogative of the extraordinarily talented and capable people in PhD programs. The right question is not “So what are you going to do with that?” (borrowing the title of Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius’s popular guide) but, as Cassuto and Weisbuch ask, “Is there anything you can’t do with this?” (120). If students and faculty members together can take this imaginative leap, what has for so long seemed like a dire landscape of scarcity suddenly appears in a much different light. A key part of our impact, in this view, lies in the role that PhDs trained in critique can play when seeded

“The pandemic and the protests made clear the need to recommit to access for all students and to redouble our advocacy for the humanities as a key pillar of democracy.”

ing window). Yet as I looked around at piles of photocopies, old course packets, and accumulated mail from another era, I had a distinct feeling of caesura—a strong break between then and now, a rupture that could not and should not be papered over, even as we attempt to put the world back together.

Who will write the chronicle of our return, our ambivalence and sadness, our feeling of walking through molasses as often as walking on air? Whatever the complex psychic baggage of our predicament, there is also a collective political load to shoulder. We agreed amid protests for racial justice and in the wake of

pandemic has taken a significant toll on so many of us?

There is greater clarity in some corners. Paradoxically, the further erosion of the tenure-track job market amid the convulsions of 2020 offers an opportunity to deepen our commitment to the ethical training and support of graduate students. Returning to the way things were seems unimaginable, and it is heartening to read the work of colleagues who, in the middle of the pandemic, published powerful calls for diversifying graduate training and promoting a broad range of career options for humanities PhDs within and beyond higher education.

across a range of nonprofit institutions and for-profit companies.

These insights and recommendations formalize conversations long underway and involve many MLA members beyond those who train doctoral students. They may reassure mentors who hesitate to encourage undergraduates to pursue graduate study, instructors who wonder how much longer to tolerate impossible work conditions, and current graduates who have feared disappointing their mentors by seeking opportunities beyond academia.

Could this rethinking be one of the strange affordances of the pandemic? Will we recognize in this changed world what was harder to see before? The visionary words of Heather Christian, who wrote one of my favorite pieces of lockdown theater, seem apposite here: “Let yourself get unused to how it was. The night will wipe your memory if you let it. Let it. We will not be going back.”

Barbara Fuchs

“Will we recognize in this changed world what was harder to see before?”

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Quick Guide for MLA 2022

Registration is underway, the program is live, and DC awaits. Stay informed about the 2022 convention—visit our website and the online program to get session information, event highlights, exhibitor information, and more.

INFORMATION FOR ATTENDEES

Visit www.mla.org/Information-for-Attendees to get all the information you need to plan your convention.

ONLINE PROGRAM

Access the most up-to-date session information at mla22.org. Browse by day, look for sessions sponsored by your forums, or search the participant list. Log in with your registration ID to save sessions to your calendar, connect with other attendees, and more.

EXHIBIT HALL

You can also use the program to locate your favorite presses and publishing houses ahead of time. Click the Exhibitors link on the left side of mla22.org to see in-person and virtual exhibitors.

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

Are you a graduate student or a non-tenure-track faculty member? Are you unemployed or living abroad? If so, you may be eligible to apply for one of our travel grants. These \$400 grants help cover travel expenses to our convention. For more information, visit www.mla.org/financial-assistance.

PLANNING A CONVENTION SESSION

Need help preparing for or running your session? Visit www.mla.org/Planning-a-Session.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

1 Dec. 2021. Deadline for applications for convention grants

4 Dec. Regular convention registration deadline

16 Dec. Convention hotel reservation deadline

Year 2: MLA's Institute for Teaching Reading and Writing at Access-Oriented Institutions

Funded by an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant, with additional support from Macmillan Publishers, the MLA's Teaching Institute for Reading and Writing at Access-Oriented Institutions (AOIs) held its second round of sessions this past summer (postponed from summer 2020 because of the pandemic). The Mellon grant funds the establishment of nine regional institutes over three years, each with the mission of preparing graduate students and early-career faculty members in the teaching of reading and writing at two- and four-year institutions that prioritize access over selectivity. Preparations had been underway to conduct in-person institutes, but because of the pandemic this year's series were held virtually over *Zoom*. Hosts for this year's regional institutes were Sonoma State University (5–9 July), East Tennessee State University (19–23 July), and Columbia University (21–25 July).

These five-day institutes provided early-career and future faculty members with an understanding of the needs and circumstances of students at AOIs—who are primarily first-generation collegians, Pell Grant recipients, and students of color—and intensive training in pedagogical theory and practices for the teaching of writing and reading together to improve writing instruction at AOIs and to nurture the study of the humanities in diverse educational settings.

The institute teachers for this past summer's series were Stacey Donohue, professor of English at Central Oregon Community College, member of the MLA Committee on K–16 Alliance, and former president of the Association of Departments of English; Howard Tinberg, professor of English at Bristol Community College, Massachusetts, and former chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication; Nicole Wallack, director of the undergraduate

writing program at Columbia University and senior associate at Bard College's Institute for Writing and Thinking; Yndalecio Isaac Hinojosa, assistant professor of English at Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi; and Jessica Edwards, associate professor of English at the University of Delaware, Newark. Among the questions raised and answered at the institutes were the following:

- What do we know about students who enroll in AOI's and about approaches to teaching reading and writing at these institutions?
- What is Deep Reading and how do we teach it?
- How do we move students from deep and mindful reading to deep and mindful writing?
- How do we build an inclusive culture of teaching and assessment?
- What assessment practices can we use that accurately and appropriately measure the success of our teaching and that are equitable and just?

These questions were addressed at all three institutes but did not preclude addressing additional areas of relevance, such as the application of Latinx rhetoric to the teaching of reading and writing at AOIs or the implementation of anti-racist assessment practices in literacy instruction.

At the East Tennessee institute, facilitators homed in on the importance of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Framing the history of these colleges as access institutions—and making clear that HBCUs, founded between 1865 and 1964 to provide safe learning spaces for Black students, continue to welcome students from all races, backgrounds, and creeds—participants were encouraged to think through the significance of HBCUs as learning cen-

ters. Participants were assigned readings and engaged in conversation about the 101 HBCUs in the United States, nine of which are community colleges. By learning about the legacy of HBCU spaces, access-oriented institutions in general, deep reading strategies, writing prompts, approaches to teaching writing using virtual platforms, teaching resources that encourage critical engagement, and more, participants fostered accessible deep reading practices in preparation for teaching in writing classrooms.

Feedback from institute participants has been uniformly positive. Here are a couple of responses from the post-institute survey, offered anonymously:

I will say that this institute was one of the best professional development opportunities I have been lucky enough to participate in. The sense of community and networking was invaluable, and I often turn to the assigned texts and materials when I am creating or revising materials for use in my classes. The research project also provided valuable insights into my students' connections with their writing and with each other in my classes.

I found the institute to be an incredibly valuable experience. The reflections, insights, and strategies that were shared have made me a more effective teacher, and I do feel as if it has helped me better identify students' needs, and to work collaboratively with them, particularly on the level of providing effective feedback and establishing a safe and inclusive space for classroom discussion.

Planning for the 2022 institutes is well underway, and they are sure to be exhilarating and rewarding for participants and facilitators alike. Check the MLA news page for information.

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Editing and Publishing Demystified

Editing and publishing are essential parts of many academic careers. Despite their importance, however, these fundamental practices often remain mysterious. The seven MLA convention sessions below are designed to introduce you to different aspects of the editing and publishing process—from querying an editor, submitting a book proposal, and publishing your first journal article to editorial collaboration, digital editing, and online editions—thereby making it less daunting and more accessible.

258. GETTING YOUR BOOK PUBLISHED

Friday, 7 January, 12:00 noon–1:15 p.m.

University press editors and series editors discuss the publishing process from proposal to publication and offer detailed, constructive advice on how to select the right press, when to contact an editor, how to write an effective proposal, peer review and revisions, copyediting and production, and audience and promotion. The session will also cover current trends and challenges in publishing in literary studies.

299V. DEMYSTIFYING MONOGRAPH PUBLISHING AND PURCHASING: CONVERSATIONS WITH A PUBLISHER, VENDOR, AND LIBRARIAN

Friday, 7 January, 1:45–3:00 p.m.

Have you ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at university presses, vendors, and libraries? Panelists from key stakeholders in this ecosystem share their experiences and demystify the workflows of publishing, selling, and buying academic monographs.

320. HOW TO GET PUBLISHED

Friday, 7 January, 3:30–4:45 p.m.

Editors of leading journals in languages and literatures provide advice for scholars seeking to publish articles in the humanities. Topics include selecting journals, querying editors, understanding the peer-review process, and revising for publication.

366. JOURNALS IN COLLABORATION

Friday, 7 January, 5:15–6:30 p.m.

Journal editors and writers sometimes seem to labor in isolation: journal editors work with editorial boards but may

seek other contexts for collaboration, and the disciplinary or period-based boundaries that define many journals, or the anonymity of journal processes, can stymie efforts at collaboration. Participants share ideas that encourage collaboration between authors and journal editors.

446. NAVIGATING THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF SCHOLARLY BOOK PUBLISHING IN LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Saturday, 8 January, 10:15–11:30 a.m.

Editors from major academic presses acquiring in literary and cultural studies reflect on strategies for navigating the conflicting pressures that authors (especially junior faculty members) and editors face—market pressures on one side, pressure to publish on the other—so that both groups can work together most effectively in the face of these challenges.

489V. MAKING YOUR WORK WORK FOR YOU: PUBLISHING YOUR FIRST ACADEMIC ARTICLE

Saturday, 8 January, 12:00 noon–1:15 p.m.

Speakers share their experiences transforming graduate work into articles for publication and supporting graduate students in the publication process before joining audience members in breakout rooms for further discussion.

580. FROM CANONS TO COLLECTIVITIES: DIGITAL EDITIONS AND SCHOLARLY LABOR

Saturday, 8 January, 5:15–6:30 p.m.

Arranged by the MLA Committee on Scholarly Editions, this session addresses collective creation in the digital humanities, editorial collaboration, microeditions, and more.

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3. Paid Distribution outside the Mails including Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution outside USPS®	1,727	1,747
4. Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)	37	40
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17. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

Paula M. Krebs, Executive Director