

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[*Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its February 2016 meeting.*]

THE COUNCIL MET ON 30–31 OCTOBER 2015 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Roland Greene presided. The officers present were First Vice President Kwame Anthony Appiah, Second Vice President Diana Taylor, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Samer M. Ali, Emily Apter, Brian Croxall, Gaurav G. Desai, Donald E. Hall, Margaret R. Higonnet, Lanisa Kitchiner, Lutz Koepnick, Paula M. Krebs, David Palumbo-Liu, Elizabeth Schwartz Crane, Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Mecca Jamilah Sullivan, and Vicky Unruh. The MLA staff members present were Director of Administration and Finance Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen (30 Oct. only), Associate Executive Director and Director of Scholarly Communication Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Director of Information Systems Micki Kaufman, Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, Director of Programs and ADFL Dennis Looney, Director of Outreach Siovaahn Walker, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses. Controller Arlene Barnard was present for discussions of the MLA budget (see item 1, below).

In the morning on 30 October, the council began by meeting with the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), which had convened on 28–29 October to review assembly and other association business. Stephanie Louise Kirk, the chair of the DAOC, reported to the council on the activities of the four Delegate Assembly (DA) subcommittees that the DAOC had established the previous year as a model for conducting assembly business through the year (see May 2015 *PMLA* 872). The DAOC members who chaired the subcommittees explained the work that had been carried out on *MLA Commons* and noted ways in which the subcommittee model might be modified in the future. Kirk also reported on the implementation of the DAOC's plan that allowed the proposers of two conflicting resolutions on academic boycotts to withdraw their resolutions from consideration by the 2015 DA (see May 2015 *PMLA* 872). She said that the proposers of the two resolutions had requested DAOC moderators for the sessions in debate format that they had organized for the 2016 convention and that the committee had begun to discuss arrangements for the town hall meeting to be held before the assembly meeting at the 2017 convention. Kirk then presented the topic that the DAOC had chosen for the open-discussion portion of the assembly's agenda, The Tenured and the Precariat, and the two subtopics, Governance under Siege and The MLA and Professional Identity. She concluded the committee's report by announcing that Margaret A. Noodin had been elected chair of the DAOC for the term 11 January 2016 through

8 January 2017. The president concluded the joint meeting of the council and the DAOC by thanking the members of the committee for their report. In addition to the DAOC chair, the members of the committee who participated in the joint meeting were Noodin and Julie Rak.

After the meeting with the DAOC, the council convened in executive session until lunch. After lunch, in regular session, the council began working through its agenda. In late afternoon, the small groups of council members that had met in May to translate the results of the membership surveys conducted by the Jenks Group into strategic-planning priorities (see Jan. 2016 *PMLA* 212) met again to continue the strategic-planning process (see item 7, below). In the morning on 31 October, the council convened first in regular session to hear the reports of the small groups' chairs and discuss next steps. After another executive session, the council reconvened in regular session before and after lunch to complete work on the action items on its agenda. The council adjourned at 2:20 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The council received a report from the staff Finance Committee on the fiscal year just ended (2014–15) and on the final budget for the current fiscal year (2015–16). The committee projected that the association would conclude the 2014–15 fiscal year with a deficit of \$694,300 in the association's unrestricted and restricted funds. The costs associated with the relocation of the MLA headquarters office contributed to the deficit, as did the postponement of the release of the eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook* from the summer of 2015 to the spring of 2016 and lower-than-projected revenue from the *MLA International Bibliography*. Feal explained the factors that contributed to the shortfall in bibliography revenue: institutions that joined consortia paid less for their subscriptions, the strong dollar resulted in lower income from subscriptions quoted in foreign currencies, and several large institutions renewed their subscriptions after the close of the fiscal year.

The council reviewed the final budget for the fiscal year 2015–16, which projected a deficit of \$452,510 in the unrestricted fund. The committee noted that its projections for both revenue and expenses had been lowered since May and that projections of cost recovery from external sources had been increased. The council voted to approve the final budget for the fiscal year 2015–16.

The council adopted the following resolution relating to financial management. [Note: The president certified the council's action by signing the original document containing the resolution. The document was then stamped with the association's corporate seal.]

WHEREAS, article 4, section E, of the constitution of the Modern Language Association provides as follows: "The permanent fund of the association and its other endowment funds shall be administered by a board of three trustees, each appointed by the Executive Council

for a three-year term, the three terms to be staggered by one year. One of the trustees shall be designated the managing trustee"; and

WHEREAS, Malcolm Smith, Domna Stanton, and Catharine Stimpson have been appointed by the Executive Council as the three trustees with authority to administer the permanent fund of the association and its other endowment funds, and Malcolm Smith has been designated the managing trustee of this committee (the "Permanent Fund Committee");

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that, upon the direction to Rosemary G. Feal as executive director, Kathleen Fitzpatrick as associate executive director and director of scholarly communication, and Terrence Callaghan as director of administration and finance of any member of the Permanent Fund Committee to effect the purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition of any security or securities held in the permanent fund or any other endowment funds, the executive director, associate executive director and director of scholarly communication, and director of administration and finance be and hereby are authorized and directed to take all such steps and to execute and deliver all such documents as they shall deem necessary or appropriate to effect such purchase, transfer, sale, or other disposition; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the president of the MLA be and hereby is authorized and directed to certify this resolution to any third party requiring delivery of same in order to substantiate the proper authority for the disposition of the securities of the permanent fund or any other endowment funds.

The council also adopted a resolution authorizing Rosemary Feal, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, and Terrence Callaghan to execute agreements and other documents that are necessary for the conduct of the association's business with Bank of America and U.S. Trust.

The council authorized the following staff members to sign nonpayroll checks: Terrence Callaghan, Barbara Chen, Rosemary Feal, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Micki Kaufman, David Laurence, Dennis Looney, and Siovahn Walker. Two signatures are required on checks in amounts over two thousand dollars. The council also authorized Terrence Callaghan, Rosemary Feal, and Kathleen Fitzpatrick to sign payroll checks.

2. *Development of a New Platform for the MLA International Bibliography.* The staff reported that the seventeen-year-old platform that the bibliography uses to create and store data is unable to support enhancements that would improve the comprehensiveness and timeliness of updates and provide seamless access to full text. The current platform also imposes limits on the automation of processes and on the internal sharing of data with the editorial and membership departments, sharing that is needed for the development of new member services, new revenue models, and increased efficiency

across the organization. With the help of a consultant, the staff developed a request for proposals for submission to vendors of other platforms; three proposals were received. After vetting these proposals extensively, the staff identified Innodata as the preferred vendor. The council authorized the staff to conclude an agreement with Innodata to develop and implement a new platform for the bibliography.

3. *Trustee Appointment.* The council reappointed Domna C. Stanton, distinguished professor of French at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and a past president of the MLA, as a trustee of the association's invested funds for the term 2016–18.

4. *Appointment of an Editor for PMLA.* The council appointed Wai Chee Dimock (English and Amer. studies, Yale Univ.) to succeed Simon Gikandi as editor of *PMLA*. Dimock's three-year term will begin in July 2016.

5. *Approval of the May 2015 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its May 2015 meeting for publication in the January 2016 issue of *PMLA*.

6. *Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings.* The council took four actions between its May and October meetings. (1) In June, the council agreed to sign on to an American Historical Association statement responding to proposals under consideration in the Wisconsin legislature that threatened tenure and academic freedom. (2) Also in June, the council appointed Rebecca Moore Howard to the Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*. (3) In July, the council agreed to sign on to a letter that was circulated by the Association of College and Research Libraries and that encouraged President Obama to issue a strong policy to ensure that educational materials created with federal funds are made available to the public as "open educational resources." (4) At the beginning of October, the council agreed to sign on to a letter that the Coalition for International Education was preparing to send to a House committee and a House subcommittee and that included a proposal for federal funding to support data-collection projects like the MLA's surveys of enrollments in foreign language courses.

When these actions were proposed, the council's procedure for making decisions between meetings was implemented (see Oct. 2010 *PMLA* 1102), and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the actions on its electronic discussion list. Since the council was unanimous in its approval of the proposed actions, its advisory committee did not have to act. At the present meeting, the council confirmed these decisions.

7. *Strategic Planning for Membership Initiatives.* The council received the planning document that it had requested in May (see Jan. 2016 *PMLA* 212). Based on the council's previous discussions, the staff developed specific recommendations in four areas (expanding the association's audience; the job market, career development, and the convention; advocacy; MLA publications) and assigned priority ratings (low, medium, high) to the recommen-

dations. During the small-group discussions on Friday, council members revised some of the recommendations and priority ratings. During the full council's review on Saturday, council members noted that the priority ratings needed further clarification. After the full council's review on Saturday, the council accepted the changes to the planning document put forth during the small-group meetings and asked the staff to provide additional information for the council's February 2016 meeting: an analysis of the three dimensions of the priority ratings and a list of the recommendations that would be easiest to implement, to be based on council members' rankings of the importance of the recommendations.

8. *Statements on Campus Carry Legislation.* The council was asked to join several other scholarly societies in signing an American Political Science Association (APSA) statement opposing state laws, including Texas's recently adopted SB11, that facilitate the carrying of handguns on college campuses. The council agreed to endorse the APSA statement but also decided to draft an MLA statement that focused on the Texas law. Two council members volunteered to draft an MLA statement and circulate it on the council's electronic discussion list for the council's consideration. [Note: A draft statement was circulated to the council in November, and the council approved it. The statement was copyedited and posted with the APSA statement on the Executive Council Actions page at the MLA Web site.]

9. *Policy on Exhibits and Advertisements.* The council approved the following policy on exhibits and advertisements:

1. The Modern Language Association of America complies with the provisions of applicable federal laws prohibiting discrimination.
2. The Modern Language Association of America will accept advertising in its publications (including but not limited to books, journals, membership and promotional material, the *Job Information List*, and the MLA's online platforms) or items for exhibition that, at its sole discretion, it deems to fall within its mission and scope. All items exhibited or advertised under the auspices of the MLA are subject to the approval of the executive director or her or his designee. The MLA reserves the right to reject advertisers, ads, applications to exhibit, and job listings for any reason at any time. Placement of advertisements in MLA publications and the location of booths in the MLA convention's exhibit hall will be at the MLA's discretion, although the purchasers' preferences will be met whenever possible.

10. *Policy on Reporting Vote Tallies to Candidates.* At its May meeting, the council considered the question of revising its 1991 policy on reporting vote tallies (see Jan. 2016 *PMLA* 214). At the present meeting, the council reviewed and approved the following revised policy:

Published voting results will include the names and affiliations of the successful candidates and the level of membership participation in the voting (i.e., the number of eligible voters, the number of ballots submitted, and the percentage of voter participation). Vote tallies will not be published, but a candidate may request information about the vote tally in his or her contest. In response to such a request, the staff will refer to the first round of voting and tell the candidate where he or she placed among all candidates and how many votes separated him or her from the next highest vote getter. If the next highest vote getter was not a winning candidate, the information provided will also include the number of votes that separated the candidate from the closest winning candidate.

11. *Review of the Executive Council's Report to the 2016 Delegate Assembly.* At its February 2015 meeting, following the provisions of article 7.B.2 of the MLA constitution, the Executive Council had considered as a recommendation a motion approved by the Delegate Assembly in January 2015 (see May 2015 *PMLA* 888–90) and determined that it could not make decisions on the implementation of the motion, which called for increasing the representation of part-time faculty members in MLA governance roles and on MLA committees, until the meaning of *part-time* was clarified. At the present meeting, the council reviewed, revised, and approved a draft of its report to the assembly on the need for clarification of the motion.

12. *Recommendation to the Delegate Assembly on Revising the Criteria for Life Membership.* According to the current criteria for the granting of life membership, which are part of the association's dues structure, members of more than twenty years' standing who have retired from teaching and all members who have paid membership dues for forty years are eligible. The staff asked the council to consider recommending two revisions to these criteria to the Delegate Assembly, which is constitutionally responsible (see art. 9.C.5) for determining the dues structure. In making this request, the staff noted that the current criteria have been in place since at least 1974 and that the profession has changed over the years since then. Members are able to continue to teach and work actively in the profession well past the age of 65, the mandatory retirement age in the United States before 1978, because Congress changed the mandatory retirement age to 70 in 1978 and then abolished mandatory retirement altogether in 1986. The council agreed that the criteria should be revised and recommended increasing the eligibility criteria mentioned above from twenty to thirty years and from forty to fifty years. The council's recommendation will be forwarded to the 2016 Delegate Assembly.

13. *Annual Reports from Standing Committees.* The council received annual reports from the editor of *PMLA* and from the following standing committees: Publications Committee, Committee on Scholarly Editions, Committee

on the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*, Committee on Honors and Awards, Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada, Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, Committee on Information Technology, Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, Committee on Community Colleges, Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession (CSGSP), and Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession. The council accepted these reports with thanks. The council also asked the staff to look into the CSGSP's suggestion that the MLA's hotel-cancellation policy be made more flexible for graduate students who attend the MLA convention and to encourage committees to transmit their requests to the council at any time, not just in their annual reports.

14. *Revision to the Charge of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR).* CAFPRR requested that the council approve revisions to the committee's charge that were prompted by the committee's assessment of its recent work. After making its own revisions to CAFPRR's draft, the council approved the following revised committee charge:

The Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities addresses the general conditions of MLA members' professional lives as teachers and scholars, whether in universities, colleges, or schools, or as independent scholars. The committee is concerned with the rights and responsibilities of scholars and teachers in all MLA fields, specifically the right of academic freedom and the responsibility of ethical conduct toward colleagues, students, and institutions. This includes the right and responsibility to understand and participate in institutional governance, planning, budgeting, and resource oversight. The committee monitors activities connected with the recruitment and promotion of faculty members, especially the Job Information Center at the association's annual convention, and receives comments and recommends actions to ensure fairness. In addition, the committee considers the relations among research, teaching, and professional advancement. Specific professional concerns include transparency in the funding of research and teaching, the use and abuse of adjunct instructors, and the recruitment of minorities into the profession. The committee will develop strategies for dealing with bigotry and prejudice on campus and with inappropriate invocations of academic freedom whose effect is restrictive. These concerns engage questions of philosophy, methodology, and politics in the teaching of all fields encompassed by the MLA. The committee is charged with initiating relevant projects and publications but is not empowered to hear individual grievances.

15. *Request from the Committee on Scholarly Editions (CSE).* The CSE requested that the council approve as an MLA statement its white paper, "Considering the Scholarly Edition in the Digital Age," which the CSE had published for comment on its *MLA Commons* site in September. The council approved the CSE's request and renamed the white paper the MLA Statement on the Scholarly Edition in the Digital Age.

16. *Revision of Submission Requirements for Honorary Fellow Nominations.* At its May 2015 meeting, the council decided that members who wish to recommend nominees for honorary fellowship need to provide more information about the potential nominees than is currently required (see Jan. 2016 *PMLA* 214). At the current meeting, the council reviewed and approved the following revised submission requirements:

Members who would like to recommend individuals for consideration by the Committee on Honors and Awards should write a statement of 500 to 750 words describing the proposed nominee's contributions and detailing specific qualities or features of the proposed nominee's record that distinguish it and constitute its originality. They should also compile and submit a 1- to 2-page list of the proposed nominee's works and honors or a list of up to 5 URLs where descriptions and lists of the proposed nominee's work may be found or both.

17. *Recommendations from the Program Committee.* The council received and acted on the Program Committee's recommendations regarding allied organizations and the establishment of new convention forums. The council renewed for seven years the allied organization status of fourteen societies: American Portuguese Studies Association, Association for the Study of Dada and Surrealism, Association of Departments and Programs of Comparative Literature, Cervantes Society of America, College Language Association, Doris Lessing Society, Ernest Hemingway Foundation and Society, GEMELA Grupo de Estudios sobre la Mujer en España y las Américas (pre-1800), Graduate Student Caucus, Henry James Society, International James Joyce Foundation, Modern Austrian Literature and Culture Association, Modernist Studies Association, and North American Society for the Study of Romanticism. The council renewed for three years the allied organization status of the Romanian Studies Association of America (RSAA) and authorized the Program Committee to transmit to the RSAA the committee's concerns about broadening members' participation in RSAA activities and about the relation between the RSAA and the MLA forum LLC Romanian. The council agreed to postpone for one year the review of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. Pursuant to a request from the Ellen Glasgow Society, the council discontinued the society's allied status.

The council also received the Program Committee's recommendations on petitions to establish new convention forums. At the current meeting, the council approved

the establishment of four forums in the category Languages, Literatures, and Cultures: Ming and Qing Chinese, Modern and Contemporary Chinese, Japanese to 1900, and Japanese since 1900. Because of an oversight, the committee's recommendations on two additional forum petitions, for Creative Writing in the category Rhetoric, Composition, and Writing Studies (RCWS) and History and Literature in the category Transdisciplinary Connections (TC), were not transmitted to the council until after the council meeting. The council authorized the establishment of RCWS Creative Writing and TC History and Literature by means of its electronic discussion list. The six new forums will organize their first sessions for the 2017 convention.

The Program Committee considered several questions about the current guidelines on the nomination of executive committee candidates, which provide that executive committees select one of the two candidates from a list of suggestions from the membership. This requirement has proved difficult to fulfill in recent years because the number of membership suggestions has been quite low. To alleviate the difficulties, the committee recommended that membership suggestions from the previous year be included in the current year's list of suggestions, provided that the suggestions brought forward continue to meet the MLA membership requirement. The committee also recommended an additional guideline to address the situation where an executive committee receives fewer than three membership suggestions. The council approved the committee's recommendations.

Finally, the committee took up a question about forum representatives in the Delegate Assembly. The earlier policies for divisions required that divisional delegates be members of the divisions they represented, but this requirement was not enforced. The committee recommended the establishment and enforcement of a new policy requiring forum delegates to designate the relevant forum as one of their primary affiliations. The council approved this recommendation.

18. *Committee Appointments.* The council made one committee appointment. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear at the MLA Web site.

19. *Request from the Coalition for International Education (CIE).* The council received a request to sign on to a letter that the CIE was preparing to send to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the United States Senate endorsing proposed amendments to Title I of the Higher Education Act (HEA) that would expand the definition of an "institution of higher education" to include not just institutions physically located in the United States or its territories but also American colleges and universities abroad that are fully accredited and licensed in the United States and meet all other requirements for program eligibility under the HEA. The council agreed to sign the letter.

20. *Endorsement of Guidelines for Accessible Books.* An MLA member wrote to the council on behalf of a coalition of disability studies scholars and faculty members to

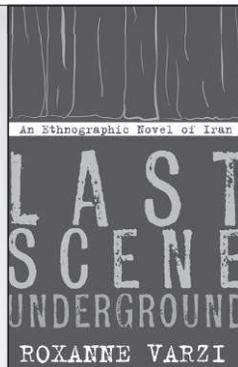
request that the council endorse a set of guidelines on accessible formats for books that the coalition had created. The guidelines take the form of a letter specifying technical requirements for accessibility that authors can send to their publishers. The council agreed to endorse the guidelines.

21. *Request from the MLA Subconference.* One of the organizers of the MLA Subconference requested that the MLA provide financial assistance to subsidize the costs of the subconference meetings in Austin. The council authorized a donation of \$1,000 to the subconference.

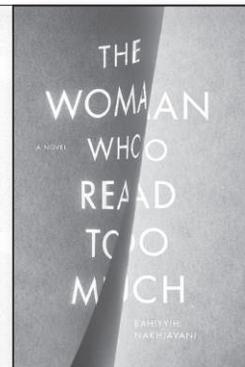
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