

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its May 2009 meeting.]

THE COUNCIL MET ON 27–28 FEBRUARY 2009 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Catherine Porter presided. The officers present were First Vice President Sidonie Smith, Second Vice President Russell A. Berman, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Carlos J. Alonso, Charles Altieri, Sara Scott Armengot, Dorian F. Bell, Jennifer Crewe, Anne Ruggles Gere, Jane Harper, Francis Abiola Irele, George Levine, Paula Rabinowitz, Karin C. Ryding, Lynne Tatlock, Alexandra K. Wettlaufer, and Kathleen Woodward. The MLA staff members present were Director of Operations Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Director of Programs and ADFL Nelly Furman, Managing Editor of MLA Publications and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Financial Operations Amilde Hadden, Director of Convention Programs Maribeth T. Kraus, Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, Director of Book Publications David G. Nicholls, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses.

The council began its morning session on 27 February by meeting in executive session to review council members' fiduciary responsibilities. Following the executive session and for the rest of the morning, the council convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. After lunch, the council met in subcommittees. The Subcommittee on Administration and Finance reviewed four staff reports, the report from the trustees of the MLA's invested funds, and the council's investment policy and considered appointments to five MLA committees. Attending were Catherine Porter, chair; Abiola Irele; Lynne Tatlock; Alexandra Wettlaufer; and Kathleen Woodward. The Subcommittee on Projects (Sidonie Smith, chair; Dorian Bell; Jane Harper; George Levine; Paula Rabinowitz; and Karin Ryding) met to discuss four staff reports and to consider appointments to five MLA committees. The Subcommittee on Meetings and Publications (Russell Berman, chair; Carlos Alonso; Charles Altieri; Sara Armengot; Jennifer Crewe; and Anne Gere) reviewed five staff reports and considered appointments to seven MLA committees. At the conclusion of the subcommittee meetings, the full council reconvened to hear the reports and recommendations of its subcommittees and to take action on the various requests before it. On 28 February, in morning and afternoon regular sessions, the council continued working through its agenda. The council adjourned at 2:40 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The council received the independent auditor's report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2008, which showed

that the association concluded the fiscal year with a surplus of \$442,666 in the unrestricted fund. Rosemary Feal said that the surplus had been added to the association's cash reserve.

The council also received the Finance Committee's report, which reviewed the budget for the current fiscal year using four-month projections. The committee noted the most significant changes to date in revenue and expense projections and explained that it was too early in the fiscal year to make other changes to budget projections. Rosemary Feal said that the staff was concerned about the effects of the national economic recession on the budget and had initiated some cost-saving measures.

The Finance Committee asked the council to consider several matters relating to the preparation of a budget for the fiscal year 2009–10, and the council authorized the staff to prepare a balanced budget.

The council adopted the following two resolutions relating to financial management. [Note: The president certified the council's action by signing the original documents containing the resolutions. These documents were 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, Herbert Lindenberger, Malcolm Smith, 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 written direction to Rosemary G. Feal as executive director, Judy Goulding as managing editor of MLA publications and director of publishing operations, and Terrence Callaghan as director of operations 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, managing editor of MLA publications and director of publishing operations, and director of operations 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.

RESOLVED: That Rosemary G. Feal as executive director of the corporation, Judy Goulding as managing editor of MLA publications and director of publishing operations for the corporation, and Terrence Callaghan as director of operations for the corporation be and hereby are authorized jointly to open a custody account with the United States Trust Company of New York in the name of the corporation and deposit therein such property of the corporation as they may deem advisable.

It is FURTHER RESOLVED: That Rosemary G. Feal, Judy Goulding, and Terrence Callaghan be and hereby are authorized jointly to direct all changes of investments and authorize the delivery of any securities or cash, and the property therein shall be subject to such control until further action by this board.

It is FURTHER RESOLVED: That United States Trust Company of New York be and hereby is designated a depository of this corporation and is authorized and directed to pay checks and other orders for the payment of money when signed in the following manner: [manner of signing specified].

The council also authorized the following staff members to sign nonpayroll checks over \$1,000: Terrence Callaghan, Barbara Chen, Rosemary Feal, Judy Goulding, Maribeth Kraus, and David Laurence.

Finally, the council appointed Jennifer Crewe and reappointed George Levine to join the officers of the association on the council's Audit Committee in 2009.

2. *Discontinuation of the Print Edition of the MLA International Bibliography.* The staff requested that the council authorize the discontinuation of the print edition of the *Bibliography*. This request was based on an analysis of sales and a survey of MLA members who subscribe to the print edition of the *Bibliography*. The staff noted that income from the print volumes had declined substantially since the introduction of the electronic version in the 1990s; in 2006 income from the electronic version outpaced income from the print edition by a factor of sixty. In addition, the preparation of the print edition is time-consuming for staff members in several departments and reduces the amount of time that *Bibliography* staff members can spend on indexing. The print edition is also less valuable to users, since many of the recent enhancements to the electronic version (e.g., links to electronic full text) cannot be transferred to print. It was also noted that the vast majority of humanities indexes are now available only electronically. The staff reported that it had already begun investigating access solutions for print customers, who are mainly MLA members and small libraries, and that there were several promising options. At the conclusion of the council's discussion, the council approved discontinuing the print *Bibliography* after the current (2008) edition is published.

3. *Report of the MLA Trustees.* The council received the trustees' annual report, which showed that at the end

of the calendar year 2008 the association's endowment fund and two of the six donor-restricted funds that support a number of association prizes had decreased in market value. This decrease was in keeping with the general downward trend of the stock market in 2008. The trustees conducted their annual review of the performance of the various mutual funds in which the MLA had investments. Because one of the two socially responsible mutual funds held by the association had not performed as well as the other, the trustees decided to sell the association's shares in the worse-performing socially responsible fund and invest the proceeds in the other socially responsible fund. The trustees also reviewed the council's investment policy (see Oct. 2005 *PMLA* 1674–76) and noted that the current investment allocation between fixed-income instruments (52%) and equities (48%), slightly less aggressive than the 45-55 allocation recommended by the council, was a consequence of the weak stock market and would return to the recommended ratio when the market strengthened. Because of the fragile state of the economy, the trustees said they planned to consult more frequently to ensure that the MLA's portfolio is well positioned. The council thanked the trustees for their work and their careful attention to the association's investments.

4. *Review of Executive Council Statement on Investment Policy.* In conjunction with the report of the MLA trustees, the council reviewed its statement on investment policy. The council saw no need to make changes at this time.

5. *Approval of the October 2008 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its October 2008 meeting for publication in the May 2009 issue of *PMLA*.

6. *Departmental Reports.* The council accepted staff members' annual departmental reports with thanks and asked the chairs of the three council subcommittees that had reviewed the staff reports to summarize the questions discussed during the subcommittee meetings. During this general review, the council encouraged the staff to disseminate more widely an essay on the humanities workforce that the director of research had written for the Humanities Indicators Project.

7. *Academic Workforce Issue Brief.* Catherine Porter asked council members to comment on a document that summarized a number of academic workforce issues in such a way as to allow faculty members to pursue these issues in their departments and institutions. She planned to disseminate the document and other relevant materials to the membership in conjunction with her next *MLA Newsletter* column. Council members made suggestions for revisions.

8. *Request from the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession (CSGSP).* The CSGSP requested that the council make two modifications to the MLA grant program that provides travel assistance for advanced graduate students who attend the MLA convention for professional development and to pursue job interviews. The committee was concerned that the grant program did not provide for graduate students who were members of the

Delegate Assembly, which holds its annual meeting at the convention, or who were members of MLA committees, which sponsor sessions and other convention activities. Without grant support, many graduate students were reluctant to serve on committees or in the assembly. The committee therefore asked the council (1) to expand eligibility for assistance to include active members of MLA committees and the Delegate Assembly regardless of ABD status and (2) to waive for committee and assembly members the provision that limits receipt of a grant to only once in five years, so that these members can seek assistance from the MLA during their full terms of service. The council agreed to these modifications. The council also modified the association's two other grant programs, one for non-tenure-track faculty members and unemployed members and one for regular and life members who reside outside the United States and Canada, so that members of MLA committees and of the Delegate Assembly will be able to apply for and receive these grants during their full terms of service.

9. *MLA Statement on Academic Freedom.* At its February 2008 meeting, the council responded to a Delegate Assembly motion calling on the Executive Council "to pursue the revision of the 1990 'Statement on Censorship and Academic Freedom' from the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities" by asking the committee to draft a new statement for the council to use as the basis for an MLA statement (see Oct. 2008 *PMLA* 1768–70). At the present meeting, the council reviewed the committee's draft statement, made revisions, and approved the revised draft as an MLA statement. The statement the council approved appears below.

Statement on Academic Freedom (2009)

Despite a long history of the defense of academic freedom, each generation of scholars faces new challenges to its protection. The increasing number of contingent faculty members without the protection of tenure; political pressure on curriculum, faculty appointments, and policy; intrusive processes of standardization and accreditation; erosion of traditional faculty governance structures; and the impact of economic challenges on our institutions are among the new concerns that threaten academic freedom.

The central statement of academic freedom is the "1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure" created by the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges and Universities. This statement has been revisited and reaffirmed over the years. Between 1941 and 2006 more than two hundred organizations in higher education signed the 1940 statement. The Modern Language Association endorsed it in 1962 and has a long activist record of supporting the principles of the 1940 statement. The MLA reaffirms its 1962 signature of this document.

When academic freedom is curtailed, higher education is compromised. The MLA works with the AAUP, the AFT, and other professional organizations to ensure the

academic freedom of adjunct, temporary, part-time, non-tenure-track, probationary, and tenured faculty members. The MLA encourages accrediting bodies to guarantee academic freedom at their reporting institutions and to reinforce its importance. The MLA also calls on college and university administrators and faculty members to support a culture of academic freedom for all teachers, regardless of rank and status.

10. *Recommendations from the 2008 Delegate Assembly.* The council received and acted on a report on the two motions approved by the Delegate Assembly during the assembly's meeting on 29 December 2008 in San Francisco. [Note: For a full account of the Delegate Assembly meeting, including the text of each motion, see May 2009 *PMLA* 980–94.]

First, the assembly approved a motion calling on the Executive Council to establish a committee that would address a variety of issues relating to the use of contingent labor in the fields of literature, languages, and writing. The council decided to implement the motion by creating the Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession, a standing committee with an initial term of five years. The council approved the following committee charge.

The Committee on Contingent Labor in the Profession is charged with considering a range of issues that affect teachers of modern languages and literatures in institutions of higher education who hold non-tenure-track appointments (e.g., salary and benefits, workplace issues and conditions of employment, demographics, participation in departmental and institutional governance, academic freedom, professional development). The committee should collect information useful to individuals and departments and identify effective policies and practices. The committee should organize convention sessions and should consider proposing association publications and other projects that will address the concerns of non-tenure-track faculty members and the departments that employ them. The committee will report annually to the Executive Council.

The council also discussed the composition of the committee and decided that five of the seven committee members should hold non-tenure-track appointments. The council asked the staff to develop a Web-based self-nomination form for MLA members who hold non-tenure-track positions to use to signal their interest in serving on the committee. The council planned to review the self-nominations and other suggestions and make initial committee appointments in May.

The second motion called on the MLA to endorse and disseminate two resolutions, one from the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and one from the American Historical Association (AHA), that condemn the United States invasion and occupation of Iraq. The council agreed to implement the motion by publishing links to the AAA

and AHA resolutions on the MLA Web site along with the following statement: "The MLA joins the American Anthropological Association and the American Historical Association in calling for the end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq."

During the discussion of the second motion, council members discussed the use of the MLA's resolutions process to put forward statements like those of the AAA and AHA and noted that the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC) planned to review the resolutions process and propose changes. The council's representatives on the DAOC will transmit council members' ideas for changes.

11. *Review of the Resolution Approved by the 2008 Delegate Assembly.* In accordance with article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution, the council reviewed the resolution that the 2008 Delegate Assembly had approved (see May 2009 *PMLA* 990–94) to determine whether to forward the resolution to the membership for ratification. Resolutions that (1) do not impede the council's ability to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities, (2) do not contain erroneous, tortious, or possibly libelous statements, (3) do not pose a threat to the association's continuing operation as a tax-exempt organization, and (4) are consistent with the provisions of articles 2 and 9.C.10 of the MLA constitution may be forwarded to the membership.

The council determined that the resolution, which is a statement of support for members who pursue teaching and scholarship about Palestinian culture, posed no constitutional, legal, or fiduciary problems. The council therefore authorized nonsubstantive copyediting changes to the wording of the resolution and forwarded it to the membership for the required ratification vote.

12. *Election of a Council Member to the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC).* To widen the pool of council members eligible for service on the DAOC, the council suspended provisionally its own requirement that one of the council's two DAOC members represent the field of English, including American, and the other represent another field. The council then elected Sara Scott Armengot to the DAOC for a two-year term (2009–10).

13. *Appointments to MLA Committees.* The council made fifty-four appointments to the standing committees of the association and appointed ten committee chairs or cochairs. The names of all new and continuing committee members will appear in the September 2009 (Directory) issue of *PMLA* and at the MLA Web site.

14. *Request from the Fédération Internationale des Langues et Littératures Modernes (FILLM).* The executive board of the FILLM, of which the MLA is a member, requested that the MLA sign an open letter to UNESCO that asks UNESCO to increase its annual subsidy to the Conseil International de la Philosophie et des Sciences Humaines, through which UNESCO provides funds for humanities publications and conferences around the world. The council authorized the president to sign the open letter.