

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its May 2013 meeting.]

THE COUNCIL MET ON 22–23 FEBRUARY 2013 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Marianne Hirsch presided. The officers present were First Vice President Margaret W. Ferguson, Second Vice President Roland Greene, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Samer M. Ali, Barbara K. Altmann, Jonathan Arac, Alicia M. de la Torre Falzon, Donald E. Hall, Dorothea Heitsch, María Herrera-Sobek, Lanisa Kitchiner, Paula M. Krebs, Richard M. Ohmann, and Mecca Jamilah Sullivan. The Executive Council member Lutz Koepnick participated in the meeting on 22 February by telephone, because a snowstorm had caused the cancellation of his flight to New York. Lawrence I. Buell and Debra Ann Castillo were absent. 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 Scholarly Communication Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Director of Programs and ADFL Nelly Furman, Associate Executive Director and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Financial Operations Amilde Hadden (22 Feb. only), Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses.

On 22 February, the council began by meeting in executive session to review the council members' fiduciary responsibilities. Following the executive session, the council convened in regular session to begin working through its agenda. Soon after lunch, the council met in subcommittees. The Subcommittee on Administration and Finance reviewed four staff reports and considered appointments to five MLA committees. Attending were Marianne Hirsch, chair; Alicia de la Torre Falzon; Donald Hall; and Lanisa Kitchiner. The Subcommittee on Projects (Margaret Ferguson, chair; Samer Ali; Jonathan Arac; María Herrera-Sobek; and Richard Ohmann) met to discuss four staff reports and one committee request and to consider appointments to five MLA committees. The Subcommittee on Meetings and Publications (Roland Greene, chair; Barbara Altmann; Dorothea Heitsch; Paula Krebs; and Mecca Sullivan) reviewed five staff reports and considered appointments to five MLA committees. At the conclusion of the subcommittee meetings, the full council reconvened in regular session to continue working through its agenda. At the end of the afternoon, the council's three planning subcommittees held separate meetings (see item 15, below). On 23 February, in three regular sessions, the council continued working through its agenda. During the second of those sessions, it heard reports from the planning subcommittee chairs. The council adjourned at 3:25 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 2012, which showed that the association concluded the fiscal year with a surplus of \$1,260,439 in the unrestricted fund. Members of the council's Audit Committee commented briefly on their meeting with representatives of the independent auditor, EisnerAmper LLP, and the council voted to accept and approve the audit report and financial statements.

The council also received the Finance Committee's report, which reviewed the budget for the current fiscal year using four-month projections. Rosemary Feal said that it was too early in the fiscal year to make changes to budget projections but that the staff did not anticipate large variations in the projections. Feal reviewed the status of the association's reserves (the endowment plus the cash reserve) and said that it would be prudent to keep the surplus from the previous fiscal year in the cash reserve, since the staff anticipated additional expenses in the next three years related to infrastructure projects. In answer to a question, Feal attributed the surplus to conservative budgeting practices, which normally result in revenue that meets or slightly exceeds projections and expenses that are lower than projected.

The Finance Committee asked the council to consider several matters relating to the preparation of a budget for the fiscal year 2013–14, and the council authorized the staff to prepare a balanced budget.

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, 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 associate executive director 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, associate executive director 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.

The council authorized the following staff members to sign nonpayroll checks over \$2,000: Terrence Callaghan, Barbara Chen, Rosemary Feal, Judy Goulding, Maribeth Kraus, and David Laurence.

Finally, the council appointed Donald Hall and reappointed Richard Ohmann to the council's Audit Committee for 2013.

2. *Authorization to Conduct Survey of Enrollments in Languages Other Than English.* The staff reported that the unit in the United States Department of Education to which the association applies for funding to conduct the enrollments survey received no budget appropriation. The staff therefore asked the council for authorization to conduct the twenty-third in the series of surveys using funding from the association's budget. Given the importance of this survey to the field, the council provided the requested authorization.

3. *Authorization to Submit a Grant Proposal.* The staff outlined plans for further development of *MLA Commons* and requested the council's authorization to seek outside funding for one or more projects envisioned in these plans. The council gave the requested authorization.

4. *Open Access to the Job Information List (JIL).* Through the years, the council has pursued the goal of providing job seekers with free access to the *JIL*. The creation of the online *JIL* in 1997 allowed the council to take a large step toward that goal: job seekers in departments affiliated with the ADE and the ADFL were given direct access to the *JIL*. In September 2012, the council approved the posting of a PDF version of the *JIL* at the MLA Web site, where anyone would have free access to it. Given other recent changes in technology and in models of access to the *JIL*, the council took the final step toward its long-standing goal and approved full open access to the *JIL* for all job seekers. The staff was instructed to develop a plan for implementing open access starting in the fall of the academic year 2013–14.

5. *Convention Travel Grants.* Two recent council actions—the adoption of guidelines on the reading of convention papers (see Oct. 2012 *PMLA* 1032–34) and the selection of Vancouver as the site of the 2015 convention (see May 2013 *PMLA* 834)—prompted the staff to ask the council to increase from \$300 to \$400 the amount of the convention travel grants that the association provides to graduate students, to non-tenure-track faculty members and unemployed members, and to regular

and life members who reside outside the United States and Canada. The staff further proposed that the increase be implemented for the 2015 convention in Vancouver and gave two reasons for the delay in implementation: travel to Chicago in 2014 will not be as costly for most convention attendees as travel to Vancouver, and time was needed to solicit donations from members that will help cover the increased expense of the travel grants. The council approved the increase in the amount of the travel grants, beginning with the grants awarded for travel to the 2015 convention.

6. *Report of the MLA Trustees.* The council received the trustees' annual report, which showed that at the end of the calendar year 2012 the association's endowment fund and five of the six donor-restricted funds that support a number of association prizes had increased in market value. The trustees conducted their annual review of the mutual funds in which the MLA had investments. They were pleased to note that, overall, the rate of return on the association's investments surpassed that of the S&P 500 stock index. The trustees decided to watch more closely the socially responsible mutual fund in the MLA's portfolio, which had underperformed in 2012. During their review of the six donor-restricted funds, the trustees noted that the smaller funds were not earning enough interest to cover prize costs but confirmed the need to minimize risk for these funds by not investing them in equities. The trustees reviewed the council's investment policy (see Oct. 2005 *PMLA* 1674–76) and noted that the current investment allocation between fixed-income instruments (42%) and equities (58%) was in keeping with the 45-55 allocation recommended by the council. The trustees said they planned to maintain their frequent consultations on the performance of the MLA's investments.

7. *Review of Executive Council Statement on Investment Policy.* In conjunction with the MLA trustees' report, the council reviewed its statement on investment policy and decided that no changes were necessary. However, because the trustees reported that the socially responsible mutual fund in the MLA's endowment portfolio had underperformed in 2012 and because the investment policy supports the inclusion of socially responsible instruments in the portfolio provided that they do not underperform traditional instruments, the council asked the staff for a report on the performance of the socially responsible funds in the portfolio since 2005.

8. *Approval of the October 2012 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its October 2012 meeting for publication in the May 2013 issue of *PMLA*.

9. *Confirmation of an Action Taken between Council Meetings.* At its October 2012 meeting (see May 2013 *PMLA* 834), the council asked Michael Bérubé, then the MLA president, to draft a letter from the council to the administration of the City University of New York (CUNY) on the issue of faculty control of the curriculum. In early November, Bérubé asked the council to approve his draft of a letter

addressed to Alexandra Logue, executive vice-chancellor and university provost at CUNY. The council's procedure for making decisions between its meetings was implemented (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 278 and Oct. 2010 *PMLA* 1102), and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the letter on its electronic discussion list. The council unanimously approved a revised version of the letter, so it was not necessary to ask the council's advisory committee to act. At the present meeting, the council confirmed this decision.

10. *Policy Statements on Professional Issues.* At its October 2012 meeting, the council discussed the need to develop policy statements on issues that the MLA is repeatedly asked to comment on (see May 2013 *PMLA* 834). At the present meeting, the council reviewed four such statements submitted by Michael Bérubé. They dealt with the freedom of scholarly exchange, university presses, program closures, and ethnic studies. The council approved a slightly revised version of the statement on the freedom of scholarly exchange and instructed the staff to copyedit it and then to post it on the MLA Web site. The council decided that the scope of the statement on university presses, which Bérubé and the former council member Jennifer Crewe had drafted, needed to be expanded and so asked Marianne Hirsch to work with Crewe on revisions. The council decided that the statement on program closures, which is based on an American Association of University Professors (AAUP) document that is awaiting approval by the AAUP's membership, will be held until the AAUP document is approved. The statement will then be copyedited, and the staff will use it as needed. The council approved the statement on ethnic studies as submitted and instructed the staff to copyedit it and then to post it on the MLA Web site.

11. *Departmental Reports.* Council members had no questions on the annual reports submitted by the MLA department heads, and the council accepted the reports with thanks.

12. *Discussion of the Phyllis Franklin Award for Public Advocacy of the Humanities.* The council discussed the selection criteria for the Phyllis Franklin Award and reviewed several nominations. Since council members wished to make additional nominations, the council postponed the selection of a recipient until its May meeting.

13. *Profession as an Interactive Journal.* In October 2011, the council approved the transition of *Profession* to e-journal status (see May 2012 *PMLA* 692). Beginning in 2013, *Profession* was to be published as an e-book that members would have access to, and print copies were to be offered for purchase. Rosemary Feal reported that preparing for this transition led the staff to consider a new plan for the journal. In addition to publishing *Profession* in the form of an annual e-book, the staff proposed to establish *Profession* as an open-access interactive journal on *MLA Commons*. Its content will be updated online throughout the year, allowing for the publication of articles on important professional issues as they arise, and

MLA members will have the opportunity to post comments on the *Commons*. The annual e-book, an anthology of the content published on the *Commons*, will also be open-access. Print copies will not be offered for sale.

An editorial collective, headed by the executive director as editor, will be responsible for the journal's content. The collective will include a managing editor, MLA staff members who have expertise in the fields of languages and literatures, MLA staff members who have technological and social-media expertise, and MLA members whom the council will appoint. The collective will review material submitted to the journal, curate material for the journal, and decide the content of the annual e-book.

After reviewing the proposal and considering its budget and membership implications, the council approved the new plan for *Profession*.

14. *Interim Report on the Restructuring of Divisions and Discussion Groups*. Marianne Hirsch and Margaret Ferguson presented to the council a report from the working group that Hirsch had convened for the purpose of developing proposals for revising the current division and discussion group structure (see Jan. 2012 *PMLA* 156). [Note: In 2012 Hirsch invited Ferguson to join the working group as cochair.] The report contained a list of possible changes to the structure along with questions that the working group wished to pose to division and discussion group executive committees. During a regular council session and during the meeting of the council's strategic-planning subcommittee on the activities of the divisions and discussion groups (see next item), council members discussed the changes proposed by the working group and made additional suggestions for changes in structure and nomenclature. At the end of both discussions, the council authorized Hirsch and Ferguson to consult with the division and discussion group executive committees on aspects of the proposed changes. Their letter to these committees will be reviewed by the staff before being sent out.

15. *Strategic-Planning Subcommittees*. The president reconfigured for 2013 the four strategic-planning subcommittees the council had established in 2012 (see May 2013 *PMLA* 834). The subcommittee on advocacy and coalitions was adjourned, because many of the policy statements on issues the subcommittee had identified had been prepared (see item 10, above) and because the council had decided in October that MLA staff members would work more closely with their counterparts in other organizations. Council members were therefore assigned or reassigned to the three remaining subcommittees, which held separate meetings on Friday afternoon. The subcommittee chairs reported to the full council on Saturday.

The subcommittee on internationalizing the MLA (Roland Greene, chair; Samer Ali; Barbara Altmann; Alicia de la Torre Falzon; María Herrera-Sobek; Lanisa Kitchiner; Lutz Koepnick [by telephone]) followed up on its previous deliberations (see May 2013 *PMLA* 834) by fleshing out a plan for the first in a series of MLA-sponsored symposia

to be held outside North America. The subcommittee discussed a possible site, participating universities, and arrangements for both a conference program committee and a local planning committee. The subcommittee asked the staff to provide information on registration models, membership requirements, and costs.

The subcommittee on workforce issues and academic work (Margaret Ferguson, chair; Paula Krebs; Richard Ohmann) discussed a wide range of issues (e.g., the tension between advocating for more tenure-track positions and advocating for better working conditions for adjuncts; the meaning of *contingent*, given the many types of contingent faculty members; the need to focus on the quality of teaching) and what more can be done to bring these issues to the attention of all stakeholders. One option is to continue collecting data from departments and then to publish a list of model departments that employ best practices. Another option is to counter the idea that the hiring of adjuncts saves money by documenting the high cost to students and all faculty members of reducing the proportion of tenure-track faculty members in a department.

The subcommittee on the activities of the divisions and discussion groups (Marianne Hirsch, chair; Jonathan Arac; Donald Hall; Dorothea Heitsch; Mecca Sullivan) examined criteria for the periodic review of the convention entities that the current divisions and discussion groups may become. The subcommittee decided that these entities would be reviewed by the Program Committee every five years, on a staggered schedule. Items still to be addressed are the development of a mechanism for proposing new convention entities and the determination of the consequences of a negative review.

16. *Request from Members of the Presidents' Circle*. The past presidents of the MLA who had participated in a roundtable at the 2013 convention that focused on the Common Core State Standards Initiative reported to the council that the session generated much interest in the question of how the MLA might influence the future evolution of the core curriculum established by the initiative. The past presidents therefore asked the council to explore ways for the MLA to work more closely with K–12 educators or, more narrowly, with secondary school teachers and administrators. Council members agreed that this was an appropriate area for strategic planning and decided to set up a planning subcommittee charged with identifying association initiatives that would be useful for the K–12 community.

17. *Documents from the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR)*. The council received a revised version of the document on academic freedom that CAFPRR had originally submitted to the council in May 2012 (see Jan. 2013 *PMLA* 250). The council made one change in the document and authorized the staff to post it on the committee's page at the MLA Web site. The council also received a revised version of "Advice to Search Committees and Job Seekers on Entry-Level Faculty Recruitment and Hiring" that

incorporated the new language the council had requested in October 2012 (see May 2013 *PMLA* 832) as well as revisions initiated by the committee and the staff. Because the council had questions about these additional revisions, it decided to postpone action on the revised “Advice” document until its May 2013 meeting.

18. *Request from the Committee on Information Technology (CIT)*. The CIT asked the council to approve re-named and revised versions of two committee documents that the council originally approved in May 1999 and May 2000. The council approved the revised documents, *Guidelines for Authors of Digital Resources* and *Guidelines for Information Technology Access and Support for the Modern Languages*. [Note: The revised documents have been posted on the committee’s page at the MLA Web site.]

19. *Request from the Committee on the Status of Graduate Students in the Profession (CSGSP)*. The CSGSP submitted to the council the final draft of *Graduate Students in Languages and Literatures: Recommendations for Best Practices and Evaluative Questions*, which the committee had revised according to comments the council had transmitted to the committee after the October 2012 council meeting, and asked the council to approve it as an MLA document and to authorize its publication on the committee’s page at the MLA Web site. The council made several revisions to the committee’s draft, asked the staff to ascertain that the committee agreed with these revisions, and approved the council-revised document for publication as an MLA document. [Note: The approved document, retitled *Improving Institutional Circumstances for Graduate Students in Languages and Literatures: Recommendations for Best Practices and Evaluative Questions*, was copyedited and posted on the committee’s page at the MLA Web site.]

20. *Renewal of the CSGSP’s Charge*. Anticipating the expiration of its current charge in June 2013, the co-chairs of the CSGSP wrote a letter to the council outlining the committee’s past work and future projects and requesting that the council renew the committee’s charge. The council approved this request and renewed the committee for five years, through June 2018.

21. *Recommendation from the 2013 Delegate Assembly*. The council received and acted on the motion approved by the Delegate Assembly during the assembly’s meeting on 5 January 2013 in Boston. [Note: For a full account of the Delegate Assembly meeting, including the text of the motion, see May 2013 *PMLA* 814–28.] The motion the assembly approved called for increased collection and dissemination of data on the salaries and working conditions of part-time and contingent faculty members by the association, the federal government, and colleges and universities; for the MLA to support an initiative that deals with the eligibility of part-time faculty members for unemployment benefits; and for the MLA to support efforts to improve the professional conditions of

labor in higher education. The staff reviewed the work that the MLA had already done on the issues raised in the motion and put forward plans for additional work. In May the council’s strategic-planning subcommittee on the academic workforce will consider whether other measures are feasible. As required by the MLA constitution (art. 7.B.2), the council will report to the assembly in January 2014 on all the steps taken to implement the motion.

22. *Review of the Resolutions Approved by the 2013 Delegate Assembly*. In accordance with article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution, the council reviewed the two resolutions that the 2013 Delegate Assembly had approved (see May 2012 *PMLA* 822–26) to determine whether to forward them to the membership for a ratification vote. 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.

During the council’s review of the first resolution, which dealt generally with faculty control of the curriculum and specifically with the role of faculty members in the approval of a new general-education curriculum at the City University of New York, council members discussed the applicability of the provisions of article 7.B.3 to this resolution. Because the council could not resolve the questions raised, it deferred action on the resolution and asked Rosemary Feal to consult with the association’s lawyer about the council members’ questions.

The second resolution that the council reviewed called on the MLA to endorse the Statement on Gun Violence in America issued by the Association of American Universities. The resolution posed no constitutional, legal, or fiduciary problems, so the council authorized non-substantive copyediting changes to the wording of the resolution and forwarded it to the membership for the required ratification vote.

23. *Review of the Constitutional Amendment Approved by the 2013 Delegate Assembly*. As required by the MLA constitution (art. 13.D), the council reviewed the constitutional amendment approved by the 2013 Delegate Assembly and forwarded it to the membership for the required ratification vote.

24. *Election of a Council Member to the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC)*. The council re-elected Debra Ann Castillo to the DAOC for a second two-year term (2013–Jan. 2015).

25. *Appointments to MLA Committees*. The council made forty-eight appointments to the standing committees of the association and appointed six committee chairs or co-chairs. The names of all new and continuing committee members will appear at the MLA Web site.