

To: MLA Executive Council and MLA Delegate Assembly
From: Ann Schmiesing, Senior Cochair
Re: Annual Report from the Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession, 2011–12
Date: 2 September 2012

CDI Members, 2011–12

Susan Antebi, 2011–14
Jill Bradbury, 2011–14
Helen Deutsch, 2010–13
Ato Quayson, 2009–12
Ellen Samuels, 2009–12
Ann Schmiesing, 2009–12; 2010–12 (Cochair)
Sara van den Berg, 2010–13; 2011–13 (Cochair)

Committee Charge

The Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession is charged with considering the needs and interests of scholars who have disabilities, and with addressing issues of accessibility at the convention and other matters the committee may identify. Specifically, the committee provides ongoing advice to the MLA staff about services to be provided to disabled persons at the annual convention. It encourages awareness of technological innovations and workplace conditions that serve the needs of scholars with disabilities. It also addresses concerns about professional accessibility and advancement for scholars with disabilities and generally encourages nondiscriminatory practices in the profession. In addition, the committee addresses issues surrounding scholarship in the field of disability studies.

2011–12 Activities

- *MLA Bibliography*: In November 2011, the CDI completed its review of journals and tags used in the *MLA Bibliography's* cataloging of research in disability studies. CDI members found the disability-related journals and tags used in the *Bibliography* in need of updating and compiled a list of suggested additional tags and journals.

- Interview and hiring guidelines: Committee members began to discuss accessibility issues pertaining to the growing use of phone and videophone interviews in the hiring process.
- Convention accessibility: As per the committee's charge, the CDI routinely reviews and discusses the provision of services at and the accessibility of the MLA's annual meeting. The committee is generally satisfied with the organization's level of awareness of and commitment to creating an accessible and inclusive convention, and we will continue to monitor access issues. However, we note in particular the following:
 - The declining number of requests for ASL interpretation continues to be a concern and seems tied to recent decreases in institutional travel/research support for faculty members.
 - CDI members have also discussed the need for, and challenges related to, having real-time captioning available on request. Challenges include not only cost but also the question of captioning for papers delivered in a foreign language or with foreign language quotations. The CDI would, at the very least, like to explore the feasibility of having captioning for the Presidential Address and forums.
 - It is important that soundproof interview rooms be available at the Job Information Center for job candidates with hearing impairments.
 - The CDI struggles each year to come up with an accessible venue at the convention for an informal CDI-sponsored social gathering. Bar and restaurant areas in convention hotels are typically crowded and noisy.
- 2012 MLA convention: The CDI sponsored three panels at the convention in Seattle: "Before Normal," "Disability in the Composition Class: Inclusion and Adaptation," and "Frenemies? Medical Humanities and Disability Studies." The committee also sponsored an informal social event.
- 2013 MLA convention: For the 2013 MLA convention in Boston, the CDI is sponsoring three panels: "Old Age and/as Disability" (a collaborative session with the Discussion Group on Age Studies), "Disability and the Coloniality of Power," and "ASL Literature." As in 2012, there will also be an informal social event.

Future Activities

For future meetings of the committee, the CDI proposes the following agenda items:

- Investigate captioning for the Presidential Address and forums.
- Investigate further publication opportunities for the CDI. Committee members have discussed a possible Options for Teaching volume.
- Investigate alternative formats for CDI convention sessions, such as electronic roundtables and workshops.
- Endeavor to make the CDI-sponsored informal social event at the convention more accessible.
- Continue monitoring documents relating to access, job seekers, hiring committees, and so on.
- Continue a CDI presence at ADE and ADFL sessions, particularly at their pre-convention workshops for jobseekers.

Ann Schmiesing completed her term as senior cochair in 2011–12, with Sara van den Berg as junior cochair. Sara van den Berg will be the senior cochair for 2012–13, and Jill Bradbury will serve as junior cochair.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Schmiesing