Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*  
Annual Report for 2014–15  
Submitted by Carla Zecher, chair  
21 September 2015

**Committee Charge**  
The Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography (MLAIB)* examines and assesses the direction and philosophy of the *Bibliography*; advises the staff on policies and procedures for compiling and producing the *Bibliography* and on changes in its scope, methods, technology, or form; and aids in identifying and recruiting bibliographers from the academy.

**Annual Meeting**  
The committee held its annual meeting on 17 and 18 November 2014, at the MLA office in New York. The committee members present were: Laura Braunstein (English language and literature librarian, Dartmouth Coll.), Dawn Childress (humanities librarian, Penn State Univ.), Liorah A. Golomb (librarian, Univ. of Oklahoma), Shirley Wilson Logan (professor and associate chair, Department of English, Univ. of Maryland, College Park), David D. Oberhelman (librarian, Oklahoma State Univ.), Phillip J. Wolfe (professor of modern languages, Allegheny Coll.), and Carla Zecher (director of the Center for Renaissance Studies and curator of music, Newberry Library). Dr. Oberhelman recorded the minutes of the meeting. This was the final meeting for Professors Logan and Wolfe, whose terms on the committee ended on 30 June 2015.

The following *MLAIB* staff members attended the entire meeting: Barbara A. Chen (director, Bibliographic Information Services [BIS], and editor, *MLAIB*), Mary Onorato (associate director, BIS), and Gregory M. Grazevich (associate editor and senior thesaurus editor). David W. Wright (editor, *Directory of Periodicals*) also joined us for a portion of the meeting.

In her director’s report to the committee, Chen described the reorganization that BIS had undergone (e.g., the addition of Onorato to the staff). Chen discussed recent findings about how the *MLAIB* is presented across different discovery platforms. These findings are presented in an article that she coauthored with Aline Soules, Liorah Golomb, and James R. Kelly, which committee members had the opportunity to read before the meeting: “Navigating the MLA Bibliography—Redux: Performance across Vendor Platforms and Discovery Tools,” *Journal of Library Administration* 54 (2014): 107–26. The article explains that our aim is to find ways to optimize the *MLAIB* for use across all search interfaces, so that results will be more uniform and complete. Chen also updated us on the tutorials the MLA has been developing to help users understand the bibliography, and she reported on enhancements coming in 2015.
David Wright met with us to review the guidelines for handling peer-reviewed journals and for the inclusion of electronic journals in the *Directory of Periodicals* and also to discuss the problem of predatory journals. The committee confirmed that author fees must be specified on the journal’s Web site. Predatory journals could be removed from the directory and could possibly have their records removed from the *MLAIB*.

The committee discussed middle-state publishing at length. In today’s digital environment, it is increasingly difficult to determine what constitutes published material and what is part of the scholarly record. We considered the problem of how to distinguish between a Web site and an electronic book, the question of how to index Web sites, and the issue of what to do about blogs that evolve into electronic journals. We concluded that the current *MLAIB* guidelines for the inclusion of electronic publications and the modes of indexing them are working reasonably well but that the staff and the committee need to keep in mind that new forms of publication and communication are challenging the status quo. We agreed that this will require continuing discussion.

With regard to indexing, the committee felt that it would be desirable, wherever feasible, for the *MLAIB* to work with institutional repositories to capture more dissertations (as it already does with ProQuest). We also recommended that the MLA continue its current policy of doing selective indexing of nonliterary journals.

We discussed the indexing rules for capitalization, and we recommended that the indexers continue to capitalize significant words and clean up the metadata they receive. However, we encouraged the bibliography staff to explore the possibility of automating the process when the new *MLAIB* platform is in place.

We considered the bibliography’s treatment of topics related to rhetoric and noted the need to remind indexers that discourse studies is a specific field. They need to be careful when classifying citations from that field.

Chen had prepared a draft questionnaire about discovery tools, and the committee suggested changes to the wording of some of the searches included in the questionnaire. The final version will be shared with various librarian groups. The questionnaire will allow us to see how *MLAIB* entries are appearing in different discovery tools.

The committee believes that it would be helpful to develop profiles of the various users of the *MLAIB* and their search habits. This would help us to identify and prioritize improvements to the bibliography.

Chen outlined the priorities that are given to indexers to help them with their workflow. The committee suggested that book collections might be indexed before monographs to increase the discoverability of essays.
Committee-Sponsored Sessions Held at the 2015 MLA Annual Convention in Vancouver

The committee sponsored two sessions at the 2015 convention:

176. What Does It Mean to Publish? New Forms of Scholarly Communication
The panelists were Barbara Chen, MLA; Harriett Green, Univ. of Illinois, Urbana; and Amanda Licastro, Graduate Center, City Univ. of New York. Committee member Dawn Childress chaired the session.

483. MLA International Bibliography: Relevance, Retrieval, Research
Gregory Grazevich, MLA, made a PowerPoint presentation, and Barbara Chen, MLA, chaired the session.

Committee-Sponsored Sessions Planned for the 2016 MLA Annual Convention in Austin

During winter 2015, in consultation with the other members of the committee, Dawn Childress and David Oberhelman took the lead on organizing the committee’s two sessions for the 2016 convention. As is traditional, one of the sessions in 2016, to be led by Chen and Grazevich, will introduce MLA members to the bibliography, provide further training to field bibliographers, and draw attention to current issues and trends.

The topic for the second session, The Evolving Scholarly Record, grew out of our discussions at our November 2014 meeting. Childress and Oberhelman will preside, and the speakers will be Jeffrey R. Di Leo (Univ. of Houston, Victoria), Kathleen Fitzpatrick (MLA), Mike Furlough (HathiTrust), Edward Jones (Oklahoma State Univ.), and Raymond G. Siemens (Univ. of Victoria). Although scholarship relies on the scholarly record, models for scholarly publishing evolve, traditional methods of fixing the scholarly record are affected by financial pressures, and alternative forms are often expensive and untested. The panelists’ remarks will focus on the question of how to identify what the scholarly record is and on what needs to change and what needs to remain the same in order to preserve it.

Conclusion

Our annual committee meeting brings an eclectic group of librarians, curators, and college and university professors into dialogue with the senior staff of the Bibliography. We consider large, overarching topics (e.g., the role of middle-state publishing in the profession) and very precise ones (e.g., how to handle metadata). Our committee charge makes room for both, the big picture and the nitty-gritty details. As a second-year committee member, I note that the staff members who work on the Bibliography are always extremely well prepared for the meeting and are a pleasure for all of us to work with.