# Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

*[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its May 2007 meeting.]*

THE COUNCIL MET ON 23–24 FEBRUARY 2007 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Michael Holquist presided. The officers present were First Vice President Gerald Graff, Second Vice President Catherine Porter, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Carlos J. Alonso, Charles Altieri, Dorian F. Bell, Marilyn Gaddis Rose, Anne Ruggles Gere, John Guillory, Jane Harper, Francis Abiola Irele, Mary N. Layoun, Paula Rabinowitz, Guy Stern, and Priscilla Wald. Executive Council members Yolanda Martínez–San Miguel and Hortense J. Spillers 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 Foreign Language Programs 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 English Programs 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 23 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 though its agenda. After lunch, the council reconvened briefly in regular session and then 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 a committee request and considered appointments to five MLA committees. Attending were Michael Holquist, chair; Dorian Bell; Anne Ruggles Gere; Jane Harper; and Priscilla Wald. The Subcommittee on Projects (Gerald Graff, chair; Carlos Alonso; Charles Altieri; Marilyn Gaddis Rose; and Mary Layoun) met to discuss two staff reports and a committee request and to consider appointments to five MLA committees. The Subcommittee on Meetings and Publications (Catherine Porter, chair; John Guillory; Abiola Irele; Paula Rabinowitz; and Guy Stern) reviewed four 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 24 February, the council began by meeting again in executive session to discuss its procedures for reviewing the salaries of staff members. Then, in morning and afternoon regular sessions, the council continued working through its agenda. The council adjourned at 2:30 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The listings of forthcoming meetings and conferences and of professional announcements are no longer printed in *PMLA*. They have been moved to members-only pages of the MLA Web site, where they are updated twice a month (www.mla.org/resources).



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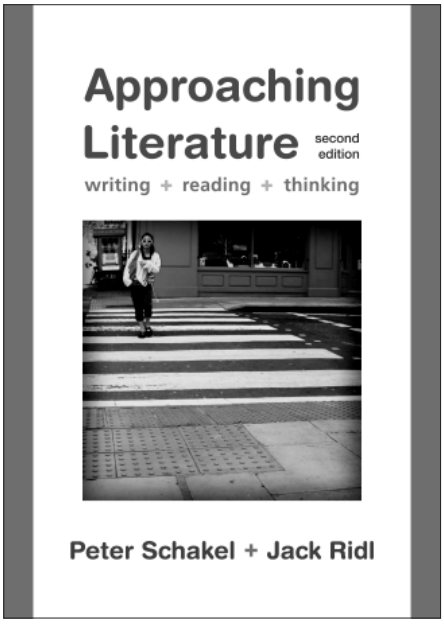
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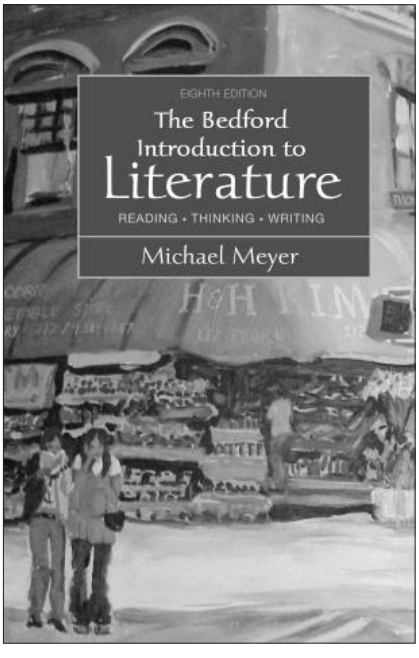
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The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The council received the independent auditor's report and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2005, which showed that the association concluded the fiscal year with a surplus of $752,065 in the unrestricted fund. The surplus is to be added to the association's cash reserve, which the council had directed the staff to build to cover four months of association expenses (see May 2004 *PMLA* 624).

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 that budget projections relating to the annual convention had been revised to reflect actual experience with the 2006 convention in Philadelphia but that it was too early in the fiscal year to make changes to other budget projections.

The Finance Committee asked the council to consider several matters relating to the preparation of a budget for the fiscal year 2007–08, 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 depositary 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.

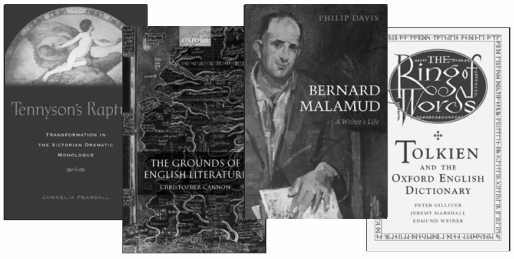
Finally, the council appointed Carlos Alonso and reappointed John Guillory to join the officers of the association on the council's Audit Committee in 2007.

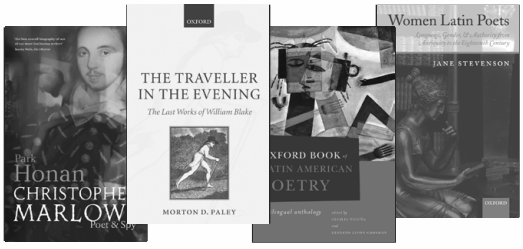
2. *Report of the MLA Trustees.* The council received the trustees' annual report, which showed that at the end of the calendar year 2006 the association's endowment fund and the six donor-restricted funds that support a number of association prizes had increased in market value. The trustees noted that the two socially responsible mutual funds in which the MLA had invested for the first time in 2005 did not perform as well as the MLA's other mutual fund investments. They recommended that the staff closely monitor these funds' performance. The trustees considered the status of several smaller prize funds and agreed that the funds had to be handled carefully so that principal was maintained and interest was enough to support the prizes. In the light of this situation, the trustees suggested that the council establish guidelines for the creation and maintenance of prize funds. 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 (39%) and equities (61%), while slightly more aggressive than the 45-55 allocation recommended by the council, was in keeping with the investment policy and was appropriate given the overall stability of the association's finances. The council thanked the trustees for their work.

3. *Approval of the October 2006 Council Minutes.* The staff noted the need for two corrections in the draft of the minutes that the council was asked to review. After authorizing those corrections, the council approved the

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corrected minutes of its October 2006 meeting for publication in the May 2007 issue of *PMLA*.

4. *Ratification of an Action Taken between Council Meetings.* At the October 2006 council meeting, the council reviewed the status of the association's grant proposal to the Teagle Foundation and asked a subcommittee of its members to identify potential appointees to the working group that would oversee the project if the foundation funded the association's proposal (see May 2007 *PMLA* 850–52). After the council meeting, when the foundation notified the staff that the association's proposal had been accepted, the council's procedure for making decisions on time-sensitive matters between meetings was implemented (see Jan. 2005 *PMLA* 278). The council subcommittee's list of proposed appointees and alternates was posted for discussion and approval on the council's electronic discussion list. No changes were proposed, but since not all council members participated in the discussion, the council's advisory committee was called on to approve the list of appointees. The advisory committee did so, thereby making the following appointments to the working group: Rita Charon, Columbia Univ. Coll. of Physicians and Surgeons; Carol T. Christ, Smith Coll.; Marshall W. Gregory, Butler Univ.; David B. Marshall, Univ. of California, Santa Barbara; John M. Norris, Univ. of Hawai'i, Mānoa; Imani Perry, Rutgers Law School; Randolph D. Pope, Univ. of Virginia; Geneva Smitherman, Michigan State Univ.; David M. Steiner, Hunter Coll., City Univ. of New York; Joan Hinde Stewart, Hamilton Coll.; Jenifer K. Ward, Gustavus Adolphus Coll. As stipulated in the council's procedure for making decisions between meetings, the council was asked to ratify the advisory committee's decision; the council did so.

5. *Departmental Reports.* The council accepted staff members' annual departmental reports with thanks and asked various staff members to elaborate on some of the information presented in the reports. In conjunction with the report on association operations, council members discussed membership recruitment and retention. After considering the report on trends in the *Job Information List*, the council directed the staff to post a version of it on the MLA Web site.

6. *Response to Report Issued by Spellings Commission.* Following up on its preliminary discussion at the October 2006 council meeting, the council reviewed a draft response to the report issued in September 2006 by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education, which had been appointed a year earlier by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. The draft response was prepared by Gerald Graff in collaboration with other council members. During the council's discussion, it was agreed that the draft would be used not only as originally intended but also as the council's comment on a Department of Education proposal to expand the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System to include information from colleges and universities on the accountability measures they use. Since comments on this proposal were due by 26 March, the council made plans to complete revisions to the draft before that date. The council asked Graff to make a number of revisions to the draft response both during the council meeting and, using the council's electronic discussion list, over the three weeks following the meeting. The council then approved the final draft by means of a unanimous vote on its electronic discussion list.

During their discussion, council members agreed that a second document was needed—a report that would talk about the values underlying humanities education and the criteria that inform teaching in the humanities. The council placed further discussion of this report on the agenda of its May meeting.

7. *Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages.* The council received the report of the subcommittee it had charged in October with making recommendations to the full council on the disposition of the recommendations put forward in the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (see May 2007 *PMLA* 852). The members of the subcommittee had begun their work but found that to continue they needed information about which of the ad hoc committee's recommendations the council would support. Council members offered their ideas on how to frame the issues that the ad hoc committee had examined and made suggestions for revisions to the recommendations section of the ad hoc committee's report. After modifying the membership of the subcommittee by adding Catherine Porter and designating Nicolas Shumway, whose council term had expired, as a consultant, the council asked the subcommittee to continue its work and develop a public document based on the council's discussion of the ad hoc committee's report and recommendations.

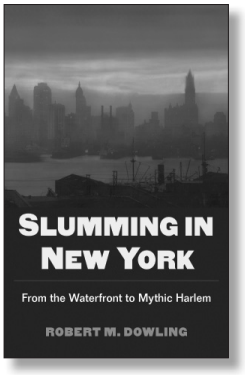
8. *Recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention.* At its October 2006 meeting, the council authorized the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention to seek the Delegate Assembly's endorsement of two recommendations: to change the dates of the annual convention, so that the first day of the convention would be the first Thursday following 2 January each year, and to eliminate two late-evening paper-reading time slots (see May 2007 *PMLA* 852). At the present meeting, Rosemary Feal reported to the council that the assembly had endorsed the ad hoc committee's recommendations. The ad hoc committee wished therefore formally to present its recommendations to the council for action. Feal explained that the MLA constitution would have to be amended before the change in dates could be implemented and that the council's approval of the ad hoc committee's recommendations would be a vote to initiate the constitutional-amendment process. The council approved the ad hoc committee's recommendations and thereby proposed the necessary constitutional amendments.

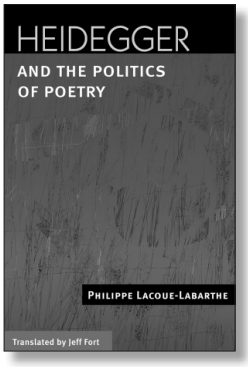
9. *Recommendations from the 2006 Delegate Assembly.* The council received and acted on a report on the two motions approved by the Delegate Assembly during the assembly's meeting on 29 December 2006 in Philadelphia. [Note: For a full account of the Delegate Assembly meeting, including the text of each motion, see May 2007 *PMLA* 838–46.]

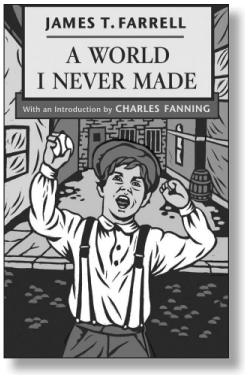
First, the assembly approved a motion calling on the Executive Council "to actively pursue the city of New

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Orleans as the site of its next open conference venue." The council stated its intention to follow the recommendation embodied in the motion. Council members noted that the MLA staff had already begun to investigate the situation and had learned that New Orleans will not be available before 2012. The council hopes to schedule the convention in New Orleans in 2012 or as soon as possible thereafter. The second motion was one of thanks to the Executive Council for "its decision to subscribe to the Informed Meetings Exchange" (see May 2007 *PMLA* 854). The council accepted the assembly's thanks.

10. *Review of Resolutions Approved by the 2006 Delegate Assembly.* In accordance with article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution, the council reviewed the two resolutions that the 2006 Delegate Assembly had approved (see May 2007 *PMLA* 844–46) to determine whether to forward the resolutions 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.

After lengthy discussion of the language of each resolution and the requirements of the constitution, the council determined that neither resolution posed any constitutional, legal, or fiduciary problems, so the council authorized nonsubstantive copyediting changes to the wording of the resolutions and forwarded them to the membership for the required ratification vote. The first resolution calls on the MLA to urge the use of the phrase "undocumented workers" in place of the phrase "illegal aliens" and to urge states to guarantee in-state tuition to undocumented workers who are residents. The second resolution calls on the MLA to condemn the dismantling of the New Orleans public school system after Hurricane Katrina and the wider privatizing movement that has sought to use the situation in New Orleans to promote its goals.

The council made two additional decisions relating to the resolution process. First, with regard to the solicitation of members' comments on resolutions before the ratification vote takes place, the council instructed the staff to notify the membership by e-mail of the opening of the comment process at the Web site. Second, in keeping with its earlier suggestion that writers of resolutions be advised not to use the future tense (see Oct. 2006 *PMLA* 1750), the council endorsed the idea of creating guidelines on the writing of resolutions and disseminating the guidelines to the membership before and after the convention.

11. *Request from the Committee on the Literatures of People of Color in the United States and Canada (CLPC).* At the May 2006 council meeting, the council received a request to adopt the "Statement on Indigenous Languages of the World in the College and University Curriculum" as an MLA statement. The council referred the matter to the CLPC and asked the CLPC to consider incorporating the new statement into the committee's existing "Statement on Native American Languages in the College and University Curriculum" (see Jan. 2007 *PMLA* 370). At the present meeting, the council received the CLPC's recommendation that the statement on indigenous languages remain a separate statement. The CLPC forwarded a slightly revised statement to the council and asked that the council approve it as an MLA statement. The council agreed to adopt the revised "Statement on Indigenous Languages of the World in the College and University Curriculum" as an MLA statement and authorized its publication at the MLA Web site.

12. *Request from the Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession (CDI).* The council approved a document by the CDI, "Disability and Hiring: Guidelines for Departmental Search Committees," for publication on the committee's page at the MLA Web site and in the section of the Web site related to the job search.

13. *Request from the Committee on Community Colleges (CCC).* The CCC requested that the council establish a travel fund to help pay the convention expenses of members who teach in community colleges. The council's Subcommittee on Administration and Finance, which had reviewed the committee's request, thought that the establishment of such a fund might be contrary to the goal of treating all members equally, regardless of where they teach. It was also noted that community college faculty members could apply for funding under the grant program recently established by the council to assist MLA members who are part-time or contingent non-tenure-track faculty members (see Jan. 2006 *PMLA* 308). The subcommittee recommended that the council and the MLA staff pursue other ways to increase the involvement of community college teachers in MLA activities. Among the possibilities mentioned during the council's discussion were holding a reception for community college faculty members at the convention, finding ways to increase their participation in convention programming, and engaging in wider outreach activities during the convention and at other times. The council decided to return the CCC's request for a travel fund to the committee for reconsideration in the light of these suggestions.

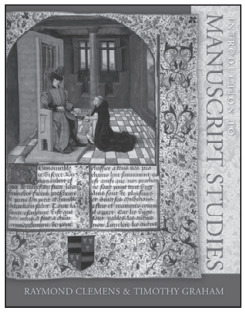
14. *Election of a Council Member to the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC).* The council elected Mary N. Layoun to the DAOC for a two-year term (2007–08).

15. *Appointments to MLA Committees.* The council made fifty-six appointments to the standing committees of the association and appointed seven committee chairs or cochairs. The names of all new and continuing committee members will appear in the September 2007 (Directory) issue of *PMLA* and at the MLA Web site.

16. *Letter to the British Library.* Rosemary Feal reported that a number of members had asked the council to comment on proposed cuts in the budget for the British Library. The council decided to send a letter to the library's chief executive emphasizing the importance of the British Library's holdings to scholars worldwide and stating the council's concern about possible budget cuts.

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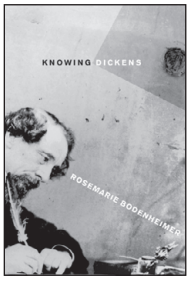
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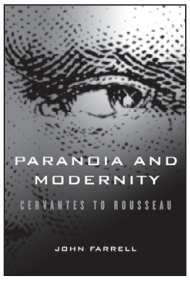
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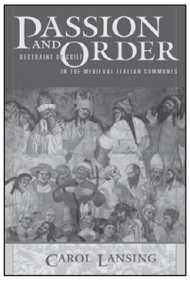
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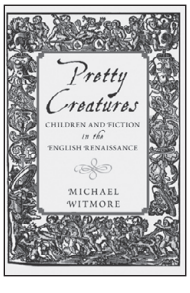
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