

Minutes
2022 Meeting of the MMLA Executive Committee

Date: November 17th, 2022

Location: Hyatt Regency Minneapolis, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Attendees

Present in Person: Tisha Brooks, Michelle Medeiros, Gaywyn Moore, Jack Kerkering, Shanna Salinas, and Eric Wistrom

Present Remotely: Justin Hastings, Sheila Liming, and Dana Schumacher-Schmidt

The meeting was called to order shortly after 8:00 a.m. and began with postponing approval of the minutes from the 2021 Executive Committee meeting in Milwaukee and approval of the agenda for this year's meeting. Next occurred a review of the "Summary of Revenue and Expenses 2021-22"; it was noted that other revenue reports normally presented annually to the EC (i.e., a "Cash Flow Forecast Report" and a "Report of Income and Subscriptions for *JMMLA*") were unavailable this year due to an abrupt staff departure and a delay in finding a replacement. Discussion addressed expenses associated with a recent increase in summer salaries paid to graduate student staffers and penalties associated with renegotiating contracts with hotels due to pandemic-related cancellations and rescheduling. Also discussed were the implications of the convention's virtual format for "travel" awards: rather than enforce exclusive use of these funds for travel to present at the convention in person, perhaps the award could be renamed to emphasize encouraging and enabling participation, regardless of the mode (in-person or virtual) in which winners of these awards should happen to present their work. No motion or vote on this question occurred.

Turning to a report on membership, the Executive Committee voted to discontinue offering multi-year memberships due to the accounting challenges and business-ethics liability associated with the practice. The EC also voted to approve a motion to consider a proposal, which shall be prepared by the MMLA staff, that would shift the association away from tying membership fees to employment classifications (e.g., a \$70.00 membership fee for all full professors, a \$55.00 membership fee for all assistant professors, a \$25.00 membership fee for all graduate students, etc.) and toward tying membership fees to self-reported individual income (following the model of organizations like the MLA or the ACLA).

Turning to the *JMMLA*, the Editorial Committee requested that Executive Committee members suggest potential guest editors for the spring 2024 issue of the journal. There ensued a broader discussion of strategies for increasing the number of submissions to the journal, particularly spring issues devoted to special topics, in a post-pandemic context in which support, energy, and time for scholarly writing has diminished for many people. Next, after a discussion of improvements in the implementation of Manuscript Manager as the journal's submissions platform, the Executive Committee voted to continue using the platform for another year (and thus purchase additional credits sufficient for doing so), at which point the question of continuing to use it will be revisited. Next, there an ad-hoc committee on forming an Editorial Board for the journal reported progress in establishing how such a board would be structured and

receiving preliminary commitments from several scholars who might serve on it; this process is ongoing. A related discussion followed about whether and how to specify the responsibilities and roles of members of the Editorial Committee vis-à-vis those of a given issue's designated editor; the best approach to addressing these concerns was agreed to be one that involves flexibility in defining roles and responsibilities, with those definitions clarified in writing in advance for all parties participating in a given issue's production. A motion was then approved endorsing the following two procedures: a) to produce for every journal issue a memorandum of agreement among the issue's editors and the Editorial Committee in which roles are defined, expectations are set, and timelines are specified; and b) to have the masthead of each issue of the journal reflect the roles actually played and work actually performed by that issue's editorial personnel. Next, two strategies for increasing the number of book reviews submitted to and published in the journal were discussed: 1) soliciting from an issue's editor(s) the titles of books that he/she/they would like to see reviewed in their issue, and then highlighting those titles in newsletters and social media platforms in advance of that issue's production; and 2) focusing on graduate students as a population who might be productively tapped to write reviews of recent critical books. A final point of discussion relating to the *JMMLA* concerned a question about its mode of publication: whether it should be, and how it could be, shifted away from the current practice of printing and mailing hard copies of the journal to subscribers. and toward, instead, prioritizing publishing and distributing issues primarily if not exclusively electronically. The Executive Committee voted a) to make receiving mailed physical copies of the journal optional for members henceforward; and b) to research the implications of publishing and distributing electronically the two issues of *JMMLA* to which all MMLA members are entitled as a benefit of their annual membership.

Turning next to the 2023 convention in Cincinnati, a theme and associated call for papers was proposed to the Executive Committee and endorsed by them. The Executive Committee then discussed whether the all-virtual format being employed on Thursday at the 2022 convention should likewise be part of the format for the 2023 convention. This discussion led to three separate motions and votes. First, a motion was approved to charge the Program Committee to draft a statement of principles on equal access which would then be presented to the Executive Committee for their endorsement; if endorsed by the Executive Committee, that statement would then be posted publicly to announce a commitment to making future decisions about convention format in accordance with the principles of equal access articulated therein. A second motion was then approved to adopt the 2022 convention's delivery format (a "sequential hybrid" mode consisting of, first, an all-virtual Thursday and, next, an all-in-person Friday and Saturday) for the 2023 convention in Cincinnati, with the understanding that every effort would be made—technology and budgets permitting—to expand virtual access in Cincinnati beyond what was being provided in Minneapolis via its sequential hybrid format. Third, a motion carried to require all Cincinnati 2023 presenters (whether they will be submitting individual abstracts, proposing a special session or complete panel, or convening a permanent section's panel or panels) to commit to one presentation format or another (either virtual Thursday or in-person Friday or Saturday), a commitment to which they would then be held by the MMLA staff producing the 2023 convention program.

The next item on the agenda was the Undergraduate Research Symposium; a winner of the year's undergraduate paper prize was named. Next, there was an update from an ad-hoc

committee charged with revising the bylaws to clarify language about the procedures for electing new members to the Executive Committee; a successor committee was named to continue this committee's work. A motion carried to acknowledge that all members of the Executive Committee are elected, have equal voting rights, and are permitted to fulfill their three-year terms regardless of a change in status (such as, for instance, the graduate-student representative on the Executive Committee defending his/her/their dissertation during the course of his/her/their term and thus ceasing to be a graduate student). Next, it was reported that Loyola, after months of the position being unfilled, had just hired a new staff person to serve as the MMLA's Program Manager, this more advanced position title representing an increased commitment from Loyola to supporting the needs of the MMLA. Next, members of the Executive Committee whose terms are ending nominated candidates to succeed them. It was reiterated that those nominees' names will be combined with those of individuals who nominate themselves for election subsequent to the convention; that after these post-convention self-nominations have been received, an election will occur in which new Executive Committee members shall be selected from among candidates in that combined pool of nominees (i.e., nominees from outgoing Executive Committee members combined with self-nominees); and that outgoing members of the Executive Committee remain eligible to cast a vote in this post-convention election, which constitutes their final official act as a member of the Executive Committee. The final action was to choose a new Vice President from among existing members of the Executive Committee; Gaywyn Moore was duly nominated and elected.

Two agenda items that were postponed to a future meeting were 1) an update on progress in the MMLA's ongoing racial equity initiative, and 2) an evaluation of the platform and phone app (Whova) used to provide a mobile convention agenda. The meeting then adjourned shortly after 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Jack Kerkering