

Minutes of the 2024 Meeting of the MMLA Executive Committee

Date: November 14th, 2024

Location: Hilton Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

Attendees

Olga Bezhanova, Nathan Jung, Joe Keener, Jack Kerkering, Gaywyn Moore, Darío Sánchez-González, Eric Wistrom, and Krislyn Zhorne

The meeting was called to order shortly after 9:30 a.m. and began with approval of the minutes for the 2023 Executive Committee meeting and approval of the agenda for this 2024 Executive Committee meeting. The Executive Director then presented a report on expenses for and income from *JMMLA*, emphasizing not only expenses reduced by discontinuing the practice of mailing print copies of the journal to members but also royalties earned from longstanding content distribution agreements with Project MUSE and JSTOR. The prospect of entering an additional content distribution agreement with EBSCO was presented to the Executive Committee and unanimously endorsed by them. The *JMMLA* discussion then turned to strategies for recruiting guest editors and co-editors for spring issues and to the question of whether the journal's submissions management system, Manuscript Manager, should be retained. The merits of Manuscript Manager were widely acknowledged, so its continued use was unanimously endorsed. Next, the Executive Director updated the Executive Committee on implementation of two initiatives, one to draft a Memorandum of Understanding for each *JMMLA* issue stipulating roles for that issue's multiple editors, and the other to create an Editorial Board for the journal, both of which initiatives proved successful. The *JMMLA* discussion concluded with an announcement of success in expanding the journal's copyediting staff and a status report on each of the issues currently in production (fall 2023, spring 2024, and fall 2024), including helpful suggestions for more effectively distributing calls for submissions to faculty at colleges and universities across the Midwest.

The discussion then turned to the topic of the 2025 convention, which will occur at Marquette University. It was noted that this location, a university rather than a hotel, begins the implementation of a plan to alternate annually between convention venues at hotels in Chicago (in even years) and convention venues on Midwest university campuses outside Chicago (in odd years). The discussion then turned to possible themes for the 2025 convention, but the topic of the 2025 convention was then briefly interrupted in order to welcome to the meeting the MMLA's Program Manager, Annette LePique, so that she might present reports on the association's 2023-24 revenues and expenses. Highlights of these reports included noting the MMLA's success in gaining assistance from Loyola University Chicago in paying graduate assistants' summer salaries as well as noting the MMLA's anticipation of likely cost savings from using Midwest university campuses as convention venues (since those venues help avoid the high actual costs of hotels' audio-visual contracts and the high potential costs of penalties for failure to sell enough rooms to meet the "block" stipulated in a contract with a hotel). This discussion concluded with an update on efforts to formalize an extension of the MMLA's hosting relationship with Loyola University Chicago, a proposal for which has been forwarded to the university's administration.

The discussion of the 2025 convention theme then resumed, and the theme ultimately endorsed was “The Humanities is Where Hope Lives.” Next, the Executive Committee turned to discussing the format of the 2025 convention, and after considering a variety of options, it was ultimately decided to hold an in-person convention in which a limited virtual component would be made part of every convention day (as distinct from the 2022 and 2023 “sequential hybrid” format, which consisted of an all-virtual Thursday followed by an all-in-person Friday and an all-in-person Saturday). It was noted that incorporating a virtual component into every day of an otherwise in-person convention might be achieved by having one or more physical rooms at the convention venue dedicated to projecting virtual panels; there, in-person attendees as well as virtual attendees could come together to share the same space. The time now approaching noon, the discussion concluded here to adjourn for lunch, and it was agreed to reconvene at 1:00 p.m.

Shortly after 1:00 p.m., the meeting resumed with continued discussion of plans for the 2025 convention, now turning to the topic of whether the MMLA would provide money for travel or lodging awards. After extended discussion, it was decided to allocate \$2,500.00 for 2025 convention travel awards, with the total number and exact amount of individual awards to be determined by the Program Committee. The discussion then turned to possible special events (for instance, a gathering for drinks after the keynote, or a networking breakfast to help graduate students meet faculty members), but no commitment was made at this point to scheduling any particular type of special event at the 2025 convention. Next, the discussion turned to the convention’s Professionalizing Sessions and how to assess their usefulness to convention attendees, the post-convention survey being the chief means for this in the past. The Executive Committee next turned to preparing announcements of this year’s winners of the book prize and graduate-student paper prize.

Discussion of the 2025 convention having concluded, the Executive Committee next looked to future conventions. The 2026 convention will occur at voco, a hotel in Chicago, and conversation turned to possibilities for a university venue in 2027; potential locations mentioned included University of Wisconsin—Madison, Loyola University Chicago, and Kansas University (Lawrence). It was anticipated that the experience with holding a MMLA convention at Marquette University in 2025 will assist in identifying other universities as venues for non-Chicago and non-hotel conventions in future “odd” years (i.e., 2027, 2029, etc.). Discussion next turned to ballots cast by the MMLA membership to ratify an addition to the MMLA bylaws of language outlining a procedure for addressing vacancies in officer positions, and since all 118 ballots submitted on this matter approved of this change, the Executive Committee voted unanimously to deem the amendment to have been ratified by this vote of the membership.

The Executive Director next reported a remarketing of the MMLA’s liability insurance and proposed adding a Director’s and Officer’s policy, which was unanimously endorsed by the Executive Committee. The possibility of additional insurance policies in the areas of media and cyber liability was then discussed, and the Executive Committee instructed the Executive Director to investigate those possibilities further. Next, Krislyn Zhorne provided an update on the Undergraduate Research Symposium, which continues to be a robust component of the convention program. The Executive Committee next voted unanimously to endorse the AAUP’s 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure. Discussion next turned to

clarifying language on the MMLA website describing the distinction between Permanent Sections and Associated Organizations.

Discussion next turned to personnel matters, beginning with evaluating the performance of the MMLA executive and administrative staff at Loyola University Chicago, and the Executive Committee expressed approval with that staff's performance. It was next noted that elections of new members of the Executive Committee will occur early in the new year. Finally, an election was held for a new Vice President of the MMLA: Eric Wistrom put his name forward as a candidate, and a unanimous vote of the remaining Executive Committee members elected him as the MMLA's next Vice President. All business having been transacted, the meeting adjourned shortly before 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Jack Kerkering