

NEMLA Board of Directors' Meeting, Saturday, November 12, 2011.

Rochester: Hyatt Hotel, 8:30 pm in the Boardroom

Board members present: Bill Waddell, St. John Fisher College, President; Simona Wright, TCNJ, Past President; Natalie Edwards, Wagner College, First Vice President; Ellen Dolgin, Dominican College, Second Vice President; Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University, *Modern Language Studies* editor; Andrew Schopp, SUNY Nassau Community College, American Literature Director; Suha Kudsieh, College of Staten Island CUNY, British and Anglophone Literatures Director; Moussa Sow, College of New Jersey, French Language and Literatures Director; Astrid Weigert, Georgetown University, German Language and Literature Director; Giovanni Spani, College of the Holy Cross, Italian Language and Literature Director; Christopher Hogarth, Wagner College, Comparative Languages and Literatures/ World Literatures Director; Margarita Vargas, SUNY Buffalo, Cultural Studies and Film Director; Barry Spence, University of Massachusetts, Graduate Caucus Representative; Donavan Ramon, Rutgers University, Member at Large for Diversity.

Non-Board members expected to be present: Elizabeth Abele, Executive Director, SUNY Nassau Community College; Karen Stein, Associate Executive Director, University of Rhode Island; Amanda Lang, University of Rochester, Graduate Student Liaison for the 43rd Annual NeMLA Conference.

Absent: Cristina Santos, Brock University, Spanish/Portuguese Languages and Literature Director; Sophie Lavin, Women's & Gender Caucus Representative.
President's Welcome and Call to Order Bill Waddell

Minutes were approved with minor changes.

9:05 am Michael Hardy, Visit Rochester

Michael Hardy welcomed the Board to Rochester, presenting the value of the city to attend. He handed out restaurant guides, and VisitRochester Maps, with materials available in different languages. NeMLA will be in town during St. Patrick's Day Weekend, at the center of St. Patrick's Day Parade. Attractions of Rochester include the Erie Canal, the George Eastman House, and the Susan B. Anthony House, and the Strong Museum of Play. Rochester is convenient to the Finger Lake region and its wineries and 90 minutes from Niagara Falls. All documents are downloVisitrochester.com—all documents downloadable. Visit Rochester will be staffing the Convention to answer questions for attendees.

Because of board interest, Michael was trying to get more information for the Frederick Douglass Resource Center, which is currently by appointment only.

Executive Director's Report, Elizabeth Abele

NeMLA had unbudgeted attrition costs last years due to hotel attrition last year; however, NeMLA was able to maintain its \$100,000 reserve. Though this was NeMLA's second largest convention, fewer hotel rooms were booked for New Brunswick because many chose to just come in for the day. For Rochester, we have booked more

conservatively based on 1,350 attendees. We can go 20% below our block and not face penalties. Overall, New Brunswick featured the best local sponsor, but the worst hotel service. Simona Wright asked about the investment of the \$100,000, suggesting more be put into CDs.

For 2012, Area Directors did not have to cut sessions for the first time in 3 years, only needing to cut major duplication. This will not be the situation for Boston, where the Hyatt Regency is very excited about having us back. However, with fewer breakouts, we will be locked in to be the size of Rochester or perhaps smaller. In the October finalizing of sessions, 2012 had the highest withdrawal rate of 15% due to approved sessions that weren't as strong. Most sessions that requested extensions were successful in filling their slots. Chairs who weren't as committed, didn't reach out to get calls beyond putting something on the website. This was particularly unfortunate when underrepresented sessions i.e. Brazilian sessions) were not promoted by the recruited chair.

With professional roundtables, few abstracts are submitted. These calls and calls for creative sessions were sent to accepted 2012 presenters and filled. Overall, Rochester will have a strong creative writing component. Second sessions continue to be problematic, with it a challenge to create a helpful policy. They are as often requested by those with 7 abstracts and can't select papers, while those with 20 may not make the request. Slightly fewer requests from panels to seminars. Overall, it is important for NeMLA to have policies that assure the experience of the session type.

The Rochester hotel rates are lower, with Hyatt at \$125 and the overflows slightly higher and lower. Both the Hyatt and the Radisson price connect to the convention center. Breakouts will be held in the Convention Center and Hyatt Ballroom area. All hotel rooms will have free Internet during the convention. The Hyatt Bar has a projection screen that NeMLA can program it with operettas, classic movies.

Future Convention: For Harrisburg 2014, we have two hotels and will need a third that will require shuttle across the river. There were a few complaints in New Brunswick about being shuttled across the river. There is the possibility of collaboration with the Eastern American Studies Association.

For 2015, we will work with second vice president. In non-major cities, hotel rates are low but places like Montreal people show up and pay. It may be worth going to a big city. VisitRochester has been enthusiastic, but bigger cities like Toronto have a less enthusiastic response. Baltimore and Philadelphia have become more expensive in the last few years (\$200+/- night). Baltimore is a place with great transportation, and an easy place to get in and a get out. Pittsburgh has good rates; NeMLA has had successful conventions in Pittsburgh. Providence might be an option.

Members at Large (MAL): These positions were created as a Way for the board to deal with areas they are concerned about. With problems with caucus, in particular how the caucus elected representatives and oriented them, MAL was seen to offer advantages. However the two elected for 2011-12 had a lack of commitment from the beginning, never having a conversation with director they were replacing. Don Ramon ably replaced the MAL, Diversity. For Professional Development, a Task Force is being led by Elizabeth Foley O'Connor and Justin Cooper. They will set up guidelines for the travel awards for CAITY. The Task Force will make recommendations for Professional

Development in terms of supporting this population.

Elizabeth asked whether a Board member contract might be appropriate to make expectations clearer, including prompt email response to NeMLA business and full orientation into position. This would make it clearer that this is a working board, detailing the specific responsibilities and timelines. Some Area Directors have had better transitions from their predecessors than others. Outgoing Area Directors need to still be a resource after the end of their term. Overall, board members understood the need for more documented responsibilities but felt uncomfortable with a “contract.” A Dropbox or similar area to post past reports and materials for Board was suggested as a valuable resource.

Professional Development continues to be a challenge. Pedagogy, Theory and Composition do not have a formal Area Director, though Executive Board and Graduate Caucus Representative have ably reviewed. The CAITY Caucus has had difficulty getting an engaged membership, though their population is 20% + of NeMLA membership.

LGBTQ: Over the past 5 years, it has been a challenge to field more than 5 sessions in this area; for 2012 fell below 5. With Women’s and Gender Studies more inclusive name, and with language areas also welcoming LGBTQ sessions, a separate area may not be necessary. MLA does not have an LGBTQ area (or Women’s Studies). Activity of the Caucus has also been inconsistent. Way to make it seem that there is an interest in these issues even if it is not a primary topic. MOTION: Suha Kudsieh moved to removing LGBTQ out of the primary category menu submission form in the CFP, maintaining it in the secondary menu for 2013. Andy Schopp seconded. Motion passed.

Convention Associate: Brandi So is now answering nemlasupport. She is available to the Board for assistance.

Associate Directors Report, Karen Stein

All information from Area Directors on Special sessions should go to Special Session Fellow, Sara Murphy by Nov. 20 – including bios and photos for newsletters, and hotel reservations. A session ID will be assigned so that Area Directors can enter/edit information for the program. Suha suggested a poster to circulate to area colleges to advertise special sessions.

Four workshops are currently planned. A pedagogy workshop has been proposed by URI fellow Jenn Brandt: “Strategies for Engaging First Year Student.” The foreign language workshop sponsored by Giovanni Spani has requested the Sunday timeslot, the first workshop scheduled for Sunday afternoon. Hopefully these programs will continue to have the beginning and end sessions well attended, staying longer at the Convention.

Currently the Chair info is on two separate places on the website. It might be easier for chairs if there was a search function on the website and these two pages were linked.

Andy expressed concern that some chairs sent their own earlier deadline. Bill- likewise wondered if we should do more to make sure that deadlines and response dates are really standardized? The deadline of September 15th was considered too early, since the Call for Papers isn’t published until June 15th. The move to September 30th helped faculty who

did not review email over the summer.

There was a discussion of how chairs deal with rejected abstracts, creating a waiting list or directing to another session. Andy asked if we could go to a system where a chair could see if a participant had submitted elsewhere.

Motion: Andy Schopp moved to standardize the CFP deadline to September 30th.
Seconded and passed.

All panel chairs will abide by a September 30th and won't allow publication of early submission dates. This would allow for a set interval for sorting and communicating, a clear acceptance date. Chairs can issue invitation on October 1st- 5th, with first choice going out immediately and should issue by October 7th. All presenters must accept by October 7th. EA-no accepting undergraduates papers.

Elizabeth suggested improving communication between Chairs and Area Board Members and Chairs and Panelists. Early on chairs with similar topics should be in communication with one another. Chairs should know that if they need to shift panel title to get more abstracts, that is fine”

There was a general discussion of second sessions. NeMLA's primary responsibility is to original proposals. Interested panel chairs should contact area representatives first...if they are not in an under represented area. Suha asked if there was Second Session Information Letter, but there is no blanket policy for second sessions. Rather do you prefer original sessions, leaving it to the Area Directors' discretion. It is a challenge to making sure panelists are committed through second sessions. If chair split a session 3-3, it becomes a wasted resource.

To make the process more transparent, it might be good for Area Directors after the finalized Call for Papers to submit their “under-represented areas” to the Chair Coordinator. It was also brought up that a chair with 21 submissions might NOT want to have a second session, even though it was in a priority area. In these cases, the Area Director could step in and organize the session. Different threshold for number of submissions depending on if the abstract submissions are in areas of need.

April 15th is for session proposal deadline for Boston 2012. Board members should be promoting at the conventions they are going to through 2011-12/

Officer and Committee Reports

President's Report

This year's Convention will have a strong creative writing focus, with two workshops. Nazareth College will sponsor Cornelius Eady, as poet for the opening reading. With Keynote Address-by Pulitzer prize winner Jennifer Egan. For the first year we will have the Keynote Address offsite at Artisan Works, with a reservation fee of \$5. Buses leave from the Convention Center starting at 6:30 schedule, with the keynote at 7:30. The venue can accommodate 250-300 people.

Local events will include *A Raisin in the Sun*, which is a walkable distance. A shuttle

may be provided that will do a circuit of local restaurants. The Rochester Philharmonic will have a Pops Program, with a St. Patrick's Day theme. The Susan B. Anthony House and the Eastman House will offer ongoing multiple group tours

Bill asked about budget questions for the creative writing events, since some of these events are regular sessions and workshops likewise have a limited audience. Generally speakers are limited to \$500 plus a hotel night. But since creative writing is the focus of the Convention, Simona Wright argued that it was within the President's discretion. Though it is urged to stay within the budget when possible, there is a discretionary budget if there is someone "extraordinary." Though if we are investing this much money, it is necessary to advertise accordingly.

First Vice President's Report: Natalie Edwards

Summer fellowships for 2011 went smoothly and submitted their reports. Elections closed for board members beginning March 2012. Daniela Antonucci won Second Vice President by a large margin. Beginning in March. The new American Literatures Director will be Jennifer Harriss. Comparative Languages Director will be Gillian Pierce from Boston University.

For the 2013 Convention, Tufts will be the local institution and NeMLA will return to the Hyatt Regency, March 21-24. She is looking at writers and scholars. Ha Jin was proposed for the last Boston convention. Paul Auster, Junot Díaz, and Linda Hutchins are also being considered.

Second Vice President's Report: Ellen Dolgin

2014, Laurence Roth has volunteered to help with the 2014 convention in Harrisburg. There may be the possibility of collaborating with the Eastern American Studies Association.

The Summer Fellowship deadline is February 10, with three committee members needed. The summer fellowship had 46 applicants last year; 38 the year before. Andy and Barry volunteered for the committee.

In addition, committee members were requested for the nominating committee Elections, people going off the board so that their area is represented. The slate will include nomination for French, Spanish-Portuguese, and 2nd Vice President. Natalie volunteered for the committee.

Elizabeth Abele noted the question of keeping money to own members for fellowships. . There is a question of whether NeMLA's sponsorship of the American Antiquarian Society or Newberry Fellowship is appropriate.

Natalie is also drafting a letter about Programs in Peril, which reflects NeMLA's perspective.

Past President's Report: Simona Wright

Because of lack of notice, there was originally only one Book Award submission. The

deadline was extended and promoted through Acteva. Ellen Dolgin and Cristina Santos agreed to help with review of early submissions.

NeMLA Italian Studies was published in September – a special issue dedicated to the Italian City. Anna Strowe continues to edit as Graduate Fellow. There are currently pending CFPs, for Volume 34 and 35. *NIS* is considering how to handle subscriptions, both in print or through limited web access.

Elizabeth Abele also brought up the issue of NeMLA's relationship with Fairleigh Dickinson Press. Now that manuscripts may be under consideration, it is many years since manuscript has been published. FDU is particularly interested in Italian manuscripts. Perhaps we find other ways to channel member manuscripts to Fairleigh Dickinson. They want to partner with NeMLA but are currently under utilized. Edited collections might be a better partnership than manuscripts for our members.

Simona then presented a proposal for a relationship with the Centro Studi Leopardiani. When she was in residence, the Director of the Center inquired into the possibility of creating a Leopardi Center in the United States. The Center could be housed in NeMLA and offer every year sessions/RT/Seminars on Giacomo Leopardi as well as invite speakers to the conference, organize readings, and conferences on the Italian poet. Giovanni Spani and I will discuss the objectives of the Center, venues, and logistics and report to the organization for approval. The Centro Studi Leopardiani, in return, would open its library to North American scholars involved in research on Leopardi and host them in the Center's Foresteria (Guesthouse), in Recanati. The Board supported the concept and is open to a more developed proposal.

MLS Report: Laurence Roth

Catherine Dent has been added to the staff for fiction and poetry. MLS requests \$1500 grant support for improvements. This will allow for Web Development for MLS, supporting, a more robust presence, a unique design that brands MLS. Laurence wants people to understand what MLS is about the moment they get on the website. This could include discussion forum for readers, writer statements, sound files, and professional and pedagogy support. The Board approved the \$1,500 is web grant as well within NeMLA's support of MLS.

Language Director and Caucus Reports

American Literatures: Andy Schopp

The American Area reported 46 sessions total, down 3 from last year with 4 second sessions approved. Overall the Area is leaner yet healthier in terms of balance: African American is way up with 14 sessions. Asian and Latino are under-represented. There was more early American, poetry and drama surprisingly down from last year. The American Area is sponsoring a roundtable session with Lisa Jadwin, John Michael, Sharon Willis on new media and the humanities.

Anglophone and British Literatures: Suha Kudsieh

The British and Anglophone Area had 45 sessions, with 4 second session requests

approved. There were several South Asian sessions, as well as Australian/New Zealand sessions. The Speaker this year is Bette London, University of Rochester. Under-represented areas include drama and non-British sessions. Suha plans to write to 2013 chairs to help them market their sessions, particularly those that are under-represented. She will be updating areas of inquiry with the new American Director.

French: Moussa Sow

The French and Francophone area is doing better and better. The area has increased by 5 sessions compared to last year. At last April's African literature annual conference in Athens, Ohio, Moussa had the opportunity to promote the French and Francophone area to the Francophone caucus. I am glad to see that it has paid off as we are witnessing an increasing number of participants, including some who were at the ALA. This promotion is bringing quality in the abstracts and diversity in the subjects covered in French and Francophone areas. All the periods and geographies are represented in very specific and rich ways.

Moussa also brought up the question of retention. Some chairs who receive large numbers of submissions did not always find it necessary to either change the format, request a second session, or replace dropped papers to accommodate quality potential presenters. There is a problem balancing competitive with accessibility.

German: Astrid Weigert

The German Area has 22 sessions, with 3 approved second panels. The speaker Uljana Wolf, is a leading German poet has agreed to come. For the first time, there will be a German Area business meeting. Astrid is interested in polling the German NeMLA participants through this meeting and the survey. She is also considering a Paper Prize, as well as considering how to build the Russian/Eastern sessions.

Italian: Giovanni Spani

The Italian Area had 45 submissions, with 12 withdrawn and two requests for a second session. The Area is sponsoring one round table event, as well as approaching a potential speaker Salvo Cuccio, film director who will screen his film. At Middlebury College for a summer. The funding may be tight but there may be possibilities for collaborative funding with his other U.S. engagements.

Spanish and Portuguese: Cristina Santos

The report was received by all members. The Ministry of Culture will again be supporting an author for the 2012 Convention.

Comparative Languages: Christopher Hogarth

The speaker this year will be Robert Doran. His area is French, but he has yet to choose his topic, but it will be a conversation about comparative/world literature. Chris has been serving as an interim director for the Area. Between Comparative Languages, Transnational Literatures and World Literatures there are a total of 25 sessions. Over the past 4-5 years, the study of World (non-European languages) has been in flux, with

conversations about the role of translations. It may be appropriate for this area to target specific languages, such as Arabic and Southeast Asian literature in translation.

Cultural Studies & Film: Margarita Vargas

Cultural studies has 20 sessions, including 2 seminars, 2 round tables and 1 creative session.

Graduate Caucus: Barry Spence

The Caucus 2 is sponsoring two roundtables: “Navigating Department Politics” and “Negotiating the Changing Nature of Academia.” The graduate travel grants will be accepting applications after Dec. 1 through the end of the month. The Caucus will also offer a paper prize for the 2011 presentations, and is already receiving submissions.

Barry also reviewed Composition, Pedagogy and Professional sessions, accepting 4 composition, 12 pedagogy sessions and 6 professional. Two pedagogy sessions were given second sessions.

Diversity: Donavan Ramon

Sessions that represented theory and literature of diversity were well represented for next year, covering a wide range of areas. There were 51 panels representing African-American, Asian-American and LGBTQ. Rochester offers a range of activities that support these sessions, including the Susan B. Anthony House, Frederick Douglass House, and Lorraine Hansberry’s *Raisin in the Sun*.

Of course, there is the hope that the range of these sessions and activities will promote diversity in terms of attendees, particularly if this list of panels is promoted to diverse groups.

Women’s & Gender Studies: Sophie Lavin

The area has 22 sessions this year. Stephanie Li will be the guest speaker, presenting a talk on Toni Morrison.

New Business: The Board toasted Bill Waddell’s 60th birthday.

Several Board members accepted Bill Waddell’s invitation to Artisan Works.