

**NeMLA Board  
Meeting Minutes  
November 11, 2017**

**11:00 AM Eastern:** Phone/webcam conference

**Board Members Present:**

President, Maria DiFrancesco; Vice President, Simona Wright; Second Vice President, Carole Salmon; Anglophone/American Literature Director, John Casey; Anglophone/British Literature Director, Elaine Savory; CAITY Caucus President and Representative, Katelynn DeLuca; Comparative Literature Director, Richard Schumaker; Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Director, Christina Milletti; Cultural Studies and Media Studies Director, Lisa Perdigao; French and Francophone Language and Literature Director, Claudia Esposito; Graduate Student Caucus Representative, Nicole Lowman; Italian Language and Literature Director, Emanuela Pecchioli; Member-At-Large: Diversity, Susmita Roye; Pedagogy and Professionalism Director, Angela Fulk; Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Director, Margarita Vargas; Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative, Rachel Spear; Editor of *Modern Language Studies*, Laurence Roth

**Board Members Absent:**

Past President, Hilda Chacón  
German Language and Literature Director, Alexander Pichugin

**Non-Board Members Present:**

Executive Director, Carine Mardorossian, University at Buffalo  
Administrative Coordinator, Derek McGrath, University at Buffalo  
Graduate Assistant, Sarah Goldbort, University at Buffalo  
Promotions, Exhibits, and Professionalization Coordinator, Claire Sommers

**I. Executive Director's Report, Carine Mardorossian**

- A. Approval of Spring 2017 Board Minutes:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/xrgxgs0qyyw00il/Agenda%20Board%20Mtg%202017.7.docx?dl=0>
1. ED Mardorossian made a motion to approve the minutes for Spring 2017 minutes at 11:12 AM. Approved with a few adjustments (correcting punctuation and adding the link and correct information for the InsideHigherEd article)
- B. Staff
1. Associate Executive Director: Brandi So left us for a real job, although she has offered to help on the ground at the convention. I do not intend to hire another associate executive director. We miss her competence and wit every day!
  2. Derek McGrath continues as our wonderfully conscientious administrative assistant and marketing coordinator. A man of all trades and our social media expert!
  3. Sarah Goldbort is NeMLA's public face in many ways, because

she is the smile behind the support email. She has been amazing at responding to emails and organizing the UB fellows.

4. Claire Sommers: is our new Exhibitors and Promotions Coordinator. She took over from Brandi So with the exhibitors and has done a great job of recruiting there. She is also looking for ways for NeMLA to get sponsors. And last but not least, she took over the CV clinic, now renamed Job Clinic, and is working to expand its range to mock interviews and publishing mentorship.
5. Nicole Lowman: is joining us as a Convention and Promotions Coordinator. She brings to the table her past experience working in marketing for Microsoft. She will be helping with the purchase of swag and has already worked at professionalizing us in terms of writing better letters to sponsors. She is also the person behind early-morning yoga at NeMLA!
6. UB Graduate Fellows: Amy Greer, Ashley Byczkowski, Naila Sahar, Callie Ingram, who are all eager and willing to help advance our mission
7. Solon Morse: is the man behind the designs, logo, posters. Enjoy our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Logo!

#### **C. Financial Review**

1. Our accountant, Mark Ellmann, is now exclusively in charge of the finances and data entry, because we were suffering from a case of too many cooks in the kitchen. He did the financial statement for the fiscal year ending on 30 June 2017, and we are in good financial standing.

#### **D. Pittsburgh Convention**

- Site
  - We seem to have outgrown cities the size of Pittsburgh which is considered a mid-range convention city; or I have to book two hotels in smaller places.
- Omin Space Issues
  - Rooms that were offered in the contract as holding 25 people were too small for our purposes, so that resulted in fewer breakout rooms than I expected and very few second sessions (decisions were made on the basis of underrepresented areas). The only reason I could accept any is because I secured extra space at the Heinz Cultural Center to hold the Workshops or the August Wilson Sessions (who was from Pittsburgh) there on Friday.
- Special Events
  - Thank you for the board's great work securing speakers. We are now embarking on conventions in major cities (2019 DC; 2020 Boston; 2021, Philly) which means easier access to great writers and opportunities for co-sponsorships. Many universities have writers' series and would love, I am sure, to share the costs of

bringing someone to the area, which is exactly how Rob Nixon happened for 2018. Please consider contacting surrounding universities to see if they would be interested in such a co-sponsorship, if they have people lined up already in March of the year the convention is taking place. And get publishers involved.

- Our plan of extending \$1000 honorarium to speakers is simply not working. I would like to propose we go back to \$500 or \$600 + travel/meals (provided they are flying from overseas or CA) because speakers expect their expenses to be covered and feel cheated when given an honorarium that includes these.
  - Starting next year. It includes people coming from CA or outside the US
- Workshops
  - **Workshops** are very strong this year. One of them is offered for free by the Heinz History Center and will take place there.
    - [Documenting Culture through Digital Pedagogy: Primary Sources in the Classroom](#)
    - [Creating and Implementing a Successful Learning Community](#)
    - [Extending Learning Spaces to the Virtual World: Teaching with Technology](#)
    - [Memoir and the Erasing of Memory](#) (also by Pittsburgh-native writer John Hampsey)
    - [Digital Storytelling and the Humanities](#)
- Poster Session
  - NOW re-opened to the membership after receiving multiple requests so our exhibit room will potentially have more posters than just the Summer Fellows’.
- Job Clinic
  - **CV Clinic** has under the leadership of Claire Sommers become ***the Job Clinic***. We are requesting members to register as potential mentees or mentors as they pay for registration. We are hoping to extend the help we provide to cv/cover letter and even mocks. Claire is very enterprising and would eventually like to add publishing to the list of interactive mentoring features.
  - Claire shared updates about the new system of getting faculty to sign up and how we are adjusting the clinic to include the new options. Susmita had questions about how this would work. Carine announced that we would iron out the details and be in touch.
- New initiatives
  - Gender Neutral bathroom
  - Quiet/Zen Room for members to unwind
  - Scavenger Hunt with Diversity and Women’s Caucus
  - New prizes for oldest convention bag or program
  - Mentoring via introducing speakers

- Questions about length of introductions. Carine addressed that it is up to the area directors to decide on these factors and to choose the graduate students to introduce the speakers. Ideal graduate student would be someone who is on the market in that field. We might come up with a list of graduate students to choose from—perhaps getting students’ dissertation titles to get a sense of whether they fit
- Perhaps the WGS caucus’s mentoring program could also be some way to connect to these larger mentoring ideas
- Draw NeMLA contest for kids
  - Maybe a prize for kids connected to literature, maybe a gift certificate to Barnes and Noble
- NeMLA social at MLA on January 6<sup>th</sup>

### E. Future Convention

- Baltimore again? They are really pursuing NeMLA. Rate for 2022 = \$189
  - There is interest in doing Baltimore again
  - No objections
  - Happy to support Marriot because of how they treat their employees. We’re open to suggestions on hotels/locations.

## II. Officers’ reports

### A. Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Director, Christina Milletti

- For the 2018 Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the Creative Writing, Editing & Publishing area had a target of 12 sessions. They were right on target.
- University of Pittsburgh Full Professor and Poet, Dawn Lundy Martin, whose newly released book *Good Stock Strange Blood*—a meditation on race, the body, historical trauma—has agreed to be the guest for the Creative Writing Special Session Event.

### B. Anglophone/British Literature Director, Elaine Savory

- 24 panels were proposed in this area and 18 were approved. Here is the breakdown:
  - (17 panels and 1 roundtable)
  - 6 were cancelled because of an insufficient number of abstracts
  - 1 roundtable session remains pending, as a second panel breakout.
  - Panels which did not fill were in disability studies/postcolonial (3), climate change in contemporary fiction; 21<sup>st</sup> century historical fiction; Irish Modernist Poetry. Two of the disability panels were proposed by the same person and seem almost identical.
- Helon Habila is the special event speaker who will speak on “Art and Activism”. His prize-winning fiction engages with urgent issues, such as oil pollution in the Niger Delta in his *Oil on Water* (2010).

### C. Member-At-Large: Diversity, Susmita Roye

- Working with Dr. Elaine Savory, the new area director of Anglophone

Literatures, Diveristy organized a special event with Helon Habila as the invited speaker. Helon Habila is an award-winning Nigerian novelist and poet, who currently teaches Creative Writing in George Mason University in the US.

**D. Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative, Rachel Spear**

- The Women's and Gender Studies area program consists of the 20 NeMLA member-organized sessions. There were 27 proposals, seven were declined or folded. Our target number for the year's convention was 22.
- WGSC Special events at this upcoming annual convention include the below:
  - WGSC Mentorship Program Breakfast
  - Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Business Meeting
  - Special Speaker and Reception: Janet Lyon, Associate Professor of English and an affiliate of the Women and Gender Studies Department from Penn State College of Liberal Arts. Her scholarship focuses mainly on modernism, and especially its historical, sociological, and philosophical contexts in Ireland, Great Britain, and the global reaches of the British empire.
- What should we do about the person who was elected as our board representative for next year who is not able to fulfill the position due to a family health emergency. A solution would be to have Rachel continue in her position, but as a "member-at-large."
  - Carine asked for a vote at 12:30. No objections or abstentions. This was approved.

**E. Editor of *Modern Language Studies*, Laurence Roth**

- Organic relation being filled between the journal and the convention. For example, MLS is publishing folks from last year. Awards are always considered by the journal. The new initiative with interviewing the opening speaker as opposed to a lecture is something we are going to present to MLS as an option.
- We need to make sure that people in other countries pay for the foreign mailing fee.
- They also have a poetry podcast that everyone should check out:
  - [The Sidebar: MLS Fiction and Poetry Podcast](#). Each episode consists of a conversation between host Patrick Thomas Henry and an author published in MLS pages, along with a reading of that author's work. Episode 2 will feature Dora Malech, whose poems appeared in 47.1.
- *MLS* continues in very good editorial health overall and the issue 47.1 (Summer 2017) went out on time. Thanks to NeMLA President Hilda Chacon for helping secure Ilan Stavans' keynote address for publication.

- As was reported in the editor's email of 8/30, Angela Fulk joins MLS as the new Associate Editor: Profession & Pedagogy.

**F. CAITY Caucus President and Representative, Katelynn DeLuca**

- In conversation about amount of additional resources that CAITY might need for the awards and for the VP and Secretary positions
- Business meeting timing is usually before the keynote, but we're happy to re-think this

**G. Anglophone/American Literature Director, John Casey**

- There were a total of 76 sessions with a target number of 64. Of those proposals, 56 received sufficient abstracts to move forward. There are for this year's convention 43 panels and 13 roundtables in the American Area. The number of panels is down slightly from Baltimore (46 panels) and the number of roundtables has increased slightly (11 roundtables in Baltimore). Numbers indicate some degree of stabilization in this area, which had declined in submissions for the Hartford convention in 2016.
- Concern about disability studies, we have a speaker to solve part of this
- Special events speaker and his topic
  - For the special session in this area, I have again teamed up with Lisa Perdigao, Director of the Cultural Studies and Media Studies area. Together we have invited Christopher Pizzino, Associate Professor of Contemporary US Literature at the University of Georgia, who will be presenting a talk entitled "Touching the Comic Book" on the relationship between comics and literature.
- This is John's last year as this area director. Thank you for your work and we'll be sorry to see you go.

**H. Pedagogy and Professionalism Director, Angela Fulk**

- This year, 34 sessions will be offered in this area, which has a target number of 40 sessions. The area therefore falls short of its target. Last year, 37 sessions were offered, and 34 the previous year. 61 session proposals were initially received this year, but ten sessions that were initially accepted had to be dropped for lack of participation. On the other hand, a number of session chairs have requested to be given a second session. The sessions as presently scheduled will include 20 roundtables, 10 panels, and four workshops.
- The Special Event speaker for Professional Development and Pedagogy this year will be David Castillo, Director of the Humanities Institute and Professor of Spanish at the University of Buffalo. His tentative title for the address is "Truth, Reality in the Age of Inflationary Media."
- Request to have roundtable deadlines possible adjusted.
  - Not possible to have deadline changes for roundtables because we need them to be synchronized

**I. Cultural Studies and Media Studies Director, Lisa Perdigao**

- The Cultural Studies and Media Studies Area is in good shape as we prepare for the 2018 conference. In 2018, we received 64 proposals, had a target of 55, and are running 50 sessions. In 2017, we had 4 second sessions, which, unfortunately, we are not able to offer this year. Matching our 2017 second sessions would bring us to our target of 55.
  - More topics on fantasy, as well as more on the environment were covered this year
- The Cultural Studies and Media Studies area is teaming up with the Anglophone/American Literature area again to co-sponsor a special event, a talk by Dr. Christopher Pizzino titled “Touching Comics.”
  - This is great because it will bring a bigger audience.

**J. French and Francophone Language and Literature Director, Claudia Esposito**

- The French and Francophone area had a target of 30 sessions. It has finalized 23 sessions, distributed into 18 panels, 1 seminar and 4 roundtables.
- The French and Francophone Special Event is a talk entitled *Why Can't France Say 'We?' An X-ray of Contemporary French Fractures* with author, scholar and filmmaker Julien Suaudeau.

**K. Italian Language and Literature Director, Emanuela Pecchioli**

- For the 2018 NeMLA convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the Italian area has a total of 32 sessions divided into 21 panels, 9 roundtables, and 2 seminars. The target was 44 and the sessions approved were 44, but 12 of these sessions were later canceled because of insufficient abstract submissions. However, among the approved and running sessions there are 3 roundtables that received 12, 11, and 9 submissions.
- The Italian Area Special Event is in line with a topic that seems to interest much the Italian area convention participants this year and that has also interested them in the recent past: The culture of migration. Professor Graziella Parati, the Paul D. Paganucci Professor of Italian Literature and Language at Dartmouth College, will give a lecture titled “Recuperative Narratives of Migration and Citizenship.”

**L. German Language and Literature Director, Alexander Pichugin**

- The German Language and Literature Area had 21 sessions registered.
- 6 sessions were cancelled because of insufficient numbers of abstracts.
- The remaining 15 sessions are distributed into 12 panels, 1 seminar and 2 roundtables. Two sessions have a pending request for a second panel.
- I am very happy and proud to report that after a lengthy negotiation process I succeeded in inviting for a special event the European author Carmen Francesca Banciu from Berlin.

**L. Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Director, Margarita Vargas**

1. No report?

**M. Comparative Literature Director, Richard Schumaker**

- This is Richard's last year as the area director. He really helped the area double in terms of sessions. He also has added a focus in South Asia, which we appreciate. He will be missed.
- Last year, the target number of panels was 38. The actual number was 41 with 29 panels, 2 roundtables, 10 seminars. The number of successful sessions this year was higher-- 47 sessions.

**N. Graduate Student Caucus Representative, Nicole Lowman**

- 4 out of 5 sessions will run this year
- The GSC post-convention survey revealed that graduate students are interested in learning more about the job market and publishing.
- The Travel Award applications opened on October 15 and will remain open until December 1. As of October 26, we have received 7 submissions. The GSC is considering an even earlier deadline for 2018, so applicants would know the results before the early registration deadline. As it currently stands, applicants receive notifications in early- to mid-January.
- The Essay Award submission window is open until January 15. No submissions received yet.

**O. Past President, Hilda Chacón**

- Book award information: We received a total of 19 proposals, three of which were unqualified since they were dissertations, and unfinished manuscripts.
- We need volunteers to help Hilda for the book award committee
  - Past President, Ben Railton, has offered his help

**P. Second Vice President, Carole Salmon:**

- We need volunteers for the Summer Fellowship committee
- Preparations for the NeMLA 2020 Convention in Boston, MA:
  - Host Institution: plans to secure the 2020 convention's host institution in Boston are underway. Harvard University was contacted in September and declined the offer. I am in the process of contacting Boston University that previously served as Host Institution in 2009.
- "NeMLA Reads Together":
  - Contacted André Dubus III (*The House of Sand and Fog*, *Townie*, *Dirty Love*, etc.) and he is very interested in being our opening speaker for 2020 and the author featured in our "NeMLA Reads Together" program for the Boston convention (see Dubus' webpage: <http://andredubus.com/index.html>).

**Q. Vice President, Simona Wright**

- Speaker for D.C. secured
- We are working in concert with the Department of Italian and the College Dean of Georgetown University, Christopher Celenza, to invite the speakers for the Thursday Opening Ceremony and the Friday Keynote event. A few invitations have been regrettably declined but this has not discouraged us. An

invitation to Cameroonian author, Imbolo Mbue, whom we are hoping to have for the Thursday event, was just sent out by Prof. Francesco Ciabattini. An invitation to Prof. Roberto Dainotto was also sent in hope that he will be the keynote speaker for the Italian section.

#### **R. President Report, Maria DiFrancesco**

- Speakers for Pittsburgh are lined up: Rob Nixon and Stewart O’Nan.
- We’ve been involved in some discussions regarding elections for NeMLA’s Board. We’re acutely aware that we need to do more to recruit members. We wonder: what can we do, individually but also as a group? Should we talk more at the conference about what we do so that others will want to become involved?
- We recruited Adriana Ramirez to be at NeMLA. She is a local Pittsburgh poet, and she will also be writing a position paper for us.

### **III. Additional Business:**

#### **1. Statements on Issues**

- What is the role in NeMLA in writing these responses because we are then taking a stance for all of our members? Should we continue to have these responses?
  - Some members said that we should continue to do this.
  - Question: do we have an obligation to do this? Are there any potential problems with doing so?
    - Carine: No, because we are not telling members to vote a certain way.
  - We usually sign it as being from the executive committee. Do people have an objection to this?
  - Perhaps the issue is not that a statement is made, but what type of statement is made.
    - Perhaps statements will be shared with the board before sent out. Others are okay with just the executive committee crafting the statement.
- Decision was to do a doodle poll and discuss this later

#### **2. Classics as secondary area**

- Do we have any objections to adding this as a secondary area?
- We discussed this at our last meeting but didn’t make a decision
- Visibility for Classics would be a good idea
- The previous objections might have been in regards to it being a primary area
- Everyone is in agreement that Classics can be added as a secondary area. No one against. No abstentions.

#### **3. Sponsorships for graduate student gift cards: Vitae, Higher Ed is obviously ok but Starbucks? Amazon?**

- We don’t lose anything by asking for sponsorships
- Any objections?

- Vote: NeMLA has the option to approach potential organizations to support NeMLA provided they are okayed by the full board. Everyone in favor. Motion approved.

#### **4. Post-convention survey: rate of response 4%**

- Suggestion: offer prizes to increase survey participants.
  - Problem: we might get people to respond who don't really care if we offer prizes
- Other issue: we have more people who are unhappy respond, but from the negative ones we learn how to make the convention better (even if they are not representative of the full membership).
- We should advertise the survey more widely rather than get people to answer it no matter what
  - Solution 1: put a colored paper in the folder reminding people to fill out the survey (not a hard copy survey, but an advertisement for the survey)
  - Solution 2: Possibly make the survey available at the convention instead of afterwards when people have moved on and forgotten about it. Should we send out an email during the convention too? Or is that too many emails?
  - It would be helpful to have a simple email with the link, but make sure to have specific questions for the survey

#### **5. Readings by poets: Christina**

- “Creative critical material” as new option for sessions. This is causing confusion in terms of what kinds of panels are being proposed, as well as how readings are proposed in other kinds of organizations outside of NeMLA. For example, at other conferences, readings are often performed.
  - In order to get more collective writers to attend NeMLA more regularly, it would help to create a rubric for “readings” and revise the rubrics we have now.
- We'd like the option for writers to send pre-formed panels for readings. They're finding ways to get around it anyway by having their friends submit to certain CFPs. It causes confusion because they're not sure how or if they need to submit an abstract if they're trying to do a reading.
- Carine: I don't see a problem with splitting creative and reading, by creating a category of readings. Under the “readings” option, we could have pre-formed panels without having pre-formed panels open for the whole convention.
- Readings tend to be from the cities that where the conference is located—so this may change the way we think about having them register (perhaps with a reduced fee).
  - Carine: we can think about registration issues later. First, let's decide if we are interested in having “readings” as an option that we list on our website, etc.

- We also need to think about space issues for break-out rooms, which is also an issue for the transnational area.
  - Perhaps we could put a cap on submissions to account for space
- The issue is that the umbrella of “Creative” is confusing to people who are doing critical work versus those who want to do readings. We want to signal that we allow readings.
- Solution: making it specifically worded on website and putting a cap on participant levels.

#### **6. Book Fair:**

- Can we think about creating small press collective table(s) so folks could come sell their books there? Writers are constantly asking Christina where they could sell their books.
  - Issue is that someone would have to sit at the table for the entire convention because we don’t have the staff to do it. Also, we couldn’t have the table available for free.
  - Carine: maybe we could sell their books at registration? We’ll have to discuss this more. We could also maybe have their books for sale at the evening reception.

#### **7. We need to supplement our work by making it obvious that we are conscious of our intersections?**

- We got a lot of great proposals for transnational panels. Should we have a formal space for intersections that are not comparative literature or world literature categories.
- Carine agrees that this is important. We need to think about formal and informal ways of addressing these topics.

#### **8. The board endorsing people running for positions on the board?**

- Do we want to make a decision for our by-laws?
  - There wasn’t a consensus, so we decided to send out a survey-monkey survey to get ideas

#### **9. Policy for Board elections:** One has been that board members running again must run for a different position on the board.

- Bylaws? Any other?
- The problem might be if someone wants to run for the same position over and over again
- If we have a dedicated pool of people running again and again, maybe we could have a limit in terms of how often they could run (every 5 years, for example)
- Let’s vote on this at the Spring board meeting.

#### **10. Do we like the format of this meeting?**

- Perhaps we should shorten the reports session and only keep information in that needs to be voted on since we can read the reports online.

#### **IV. Adjournment at:**

**Motion to adjourn at 1:23.**