

NEMLA Board of Directors' Meeting, March 21, 2013

MINUTES

Hyatt Regency, Boston

Dedham Room, 8:00 am

Board members present: Bill Waddell, St. John Fisher College, Past President; Ellen Dolgin, Dominican College, First Vice President; Daniela Antonucci, Princeton University, Second Vice President; Suha Kudsieh, College of Staten Island CUNY, British and Anglophone Literatures Director; Jennifer Harris, Mount Allison University, American Literature Director; Astrid Weigert, Georgetown University, German Language and Literature Director; Giovanni Spani, College of the Holy Cross, Italian Language and Literature Director; Cristina Santos, Brock University, Spanish/Portuguese Languages and Literature Director; Gillian Pierce, Boston University, 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 present: Elizabeth Abele, Executive Director, SUNY Nassau Community College; Lisa Perdiago, Florida Institute of Technology, Special Programs Coordinator; Jackie O'Dell and Diego Millan, Tufts University, Local Representatives

Regrets: Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University, *Modern Language Studies* editor; Moussa Sow, College of New Jersey, French and Francophone Director

- I. Welcome and introductions:** The meeting was called to order with a welcome to Benjamin Railton, incoming Second Vice President, Anna Rocca, incoming French and Francophone Director, and Maria Matz, incoming Spanish/Portuguese Languages and Literature Director
- II. Approval of Fall 2012 Board Minutes:** Christina Santos moved to approve the Fall 2012 Board Meeting Minutes. Margarita Vargas seconded the motion. Motion **passed** unanimously.
- III. Executive Director's Report, Elizabeth Abele**
 - a. Finances:**
 - i.** Elizabeth Abele reported that 2012's budget was tight because of payment issues with the event and registration vendor Acteva. Those payments finally came in, which afforded a surplus for 2013, which was spent on hotel subsidies for participants.
 - ii.** Added session space at the Ritz allowed more members, but likewise increased costs.
 - iii.** Hotel costs are always one of the trickier issues in planning for the convention, and this year in particular showed changing trends. Abele expected attrition charges of approximately \$6,000 at the Marriott Courtyard; the Sheraton Plymouth Wharf Courtyard was added at the last minute and people booked there instead of the Marriott. NeMLA conventions in the past have consistently

run more than one room night per attendee; in 2012 registrants were at 1.4 nights per person, but this year that number has gone down to 1.1 nights per registrant. So even though NeMLA has more Sunday participants, and in some ways this is the largest NeMLA convention thus far, but in other ways it is not.

- iv. NeMLA has a strict refund policy, which is that once the program goes to print, participants are ineligible for a refund. They are, however, eligible for a discount on a future NeMLA registration cost.
- b. **Future Conventions:** Toronto's convention is first week in May. It is an expensive city; \$219 is considered a good hotel rate for that time of year. It's worth considering the city expense as we plan our locations, perhaps rotating between second tier and major cities to offset the expenses for our participants and convention costs.
- c. **Long-range planning committee; potential summer gathering in Buffalo:**
 - i. The UB Contract is an opportunity to re-envision the organization's mission and potential. Elizabeth Abele encouraged board members to think of ways to imagine NeMLA as more than just a convention as we transition into more solid ground with institutional branding, support and staff.
 - ii. Even with the new 20 hour staff person in the contract, Elizabeth Abele recommended that the 2014 staffing be managed conservatively, and to keep the position of Convention Associate, Chair Coordinator, and others as necessary active in order to support any transitional needs.
 - iii. The Board will adopt agreement documents with the University of Buffalo.
- d. **Workshops:** Attendance in workshops shows that the right speaker will bring in registrants. We are ready to let members propose workshops, which will have the benefit of management support from the member.
 - i. Bill Waddell added that having workshops that were apropos of the four axes: pedagogy, career advancement (entry level career and mid level career) and writing or publishing might drive workshop delivery rationale and draw in more Sunday participants. Sunday afternoon programs in some way to convince people to attend Sunday morning sessions.
 - ii. Discussion about who should review the proposals for workshops resulted in an agreement that the executive board should be responsible for workshop selection.
 - iii. Suha Kusieh added that the workshop guidelines must be clear in order to prevent the workshop from failing: a contract should be in place with the workshop coordinator, it should be directed in association with a board member.
 - iv. Discussion also included the proposal that the board consider a workshop about how to make the best use of primary research.
 - v. Bill Waddell moved to open workshop proposals from members, with review from the Executive board. The motion was seconded and **passed** unanimously.
- e. **Poster Sessions:**
 - i. Jennifer Harris noted that poster sessions from those selected for the American Antiquarian Society fellowship would be an opportunity for the summer fellows to distribute their research.

ii. Elizabeth Abele remarked that NeMLA has potential for being seen as the organization that supports primary research because of the Newman library, Antiquarian society and our other research fellowships. This item was tabled as a post-convention discussion about whether NeMLA should formalize poster sessions and recruit a new person for spearhead this project.

f. **Special events:** We need to make clearer the deadlines and procedures around special events. We could use Google docs to track speakers and special events. Lisa Perdigao is creating a master form for deadlines and dates.

IV. **Revitalization of the Board:** Two specific topics have come up in our recent email exchanges and should come to a vote: **Board Members in Absencia** and **Board Contracts**. Discussion of these items included the following:

a. **Board Members in Absencia:** Elizabeth Abele remarked that Board members should be supported through lots of professional and personal issues, but that it becomes a crisis point when board members stop doing their job and don't tell anyone that they have stopped doing their job. Instead of not allowing Board members to pursue academic opportunities, they could submit a letter to the President about how they will handle their duties in absentia.

b. **Board Contracts:** Cristina Santos and Suha Kudsieh presented the following comments and recommendations:

i. Board members find it helpful, not punitive, to have a document outlining the guidelines and expectations of their service.

ii. They recommend that outgoing area directors be available to incoming directors for a year – to a reasonable extent, and in an advisory capacity only.

iii. The document outlining their area directors roles should be one that that the area directors can take to their department for their tenure files.

iv. The heavy black binders should be replaced with something more efficient and functional.

v. Area directors and panels: Board members should have sponsored panels that they ask of others to chair. Board sponsored are focused on serving the area's needs, not personal academic interests, and thus do not take away a spot in the convention but rather improve its offerings.

vi. Carine Mardorossian asked if NeMLA might invite incoming area directors to attend meetings before the take on their role. Rita Bode remarked that new Board members should stay for Sunday brunch.

V. **Officer and Committee Reports**

a. **Past President's Report, Bill Waddell:**

i. This year's Book Award winner is a standout, distinguished work; Waddell remarked that he looked forward to introducing the winner at the awards brunch.

ii. Relative to the Tufts payment still pending, the dean overseeing the contract on Tufts's side left in the middle of February, which created a lag-time. They have agreed to the payment, however.

iii. Bill Waddell noted that the principle activity in his work of late has been to approve the agreement between NeMLA and the University of Buffalo. The agreement stipulates that beginning in 2014-15, Carine Mardorossian will be

Executive Director for four years; this contradicts NeMLA bylaws, which need to be amended.

- iv. Bill Waddell moved that the bylaws be amended to allow for the Executive Director position be for a term of three years, and their tenure may be extended by one year with a two third's majority vote of the members. Motion seconded by Rita Bode; motion **passed** unanimously.
 - v. Past President Waddell closed by saying that his post on the executive board of NeMLA has been the most important element of the second half of his career – it's a wonderful scholarly experient – and that he is very happy that being involved with completing the contract with University of Buffalo is one of his last substantive contributions to the organization. He thanked the board members for their collegiality and their friendship.
- b. First Vice President's Report, Ellen Dolgin**
- i. Ellen Dolgin reported that five people are attending NeMLA 2013 from Susquehanna and will be at the brunch.
 - ii. NeMLA 2014 will mark the 60th Anniversary of Brown versus the Board of Education, and Harrisburg's Civil War museum will be featuring the 150th anniversary of Gettysburg, both of which are interesting themes to explore for the convention.
 - iii. Board members should continue to focus on interdisciplinary, cross-listed, and collaborative sessions. Possible ideas included focusing on a drama theme, developing a call for papers on Macbeth and pair it with a workshop on teaching the text; selecting a theme and offer it in different languages; hosting a roundtable on opera and interdisciplinarity; proposing a roundtable to discuss how to approach interdisciplinarity, and then expanding into the cultural and political.
 - iv. Ellen Dolgin remarked that she would coordinate a roundtable and come up with discussion issues about something like opera, and perhaps seek out Linda Hurchin, who is publishing on opera with her husband. (This may have been Daniela Antonucci)
- c. Second Vice President's Report, Daniela Antonucci:**
- i. Daniela Antonucci reported that after several readings for the fellowships, nine recipients were selected from diverse fields, including scholars and grad students. She would like to see them recognized for their award. NeMLA could invite these new recipients to come and present the results of their work – as a board sponsored panel or workshop.
 - ii. The website needs updating to ask applicants to reflect on their involvement with NeMLA and to assess their long term commitment moving forward, especially to determine if they will return to present on their work. Since this would require future involvement; the award should pay for their membership for two years. The application could as if they can return to present, ask that they acknowledge NeMLA funding in the presentation, and ask for their preference of presentation location over a period of two years.
 - iii. While this preference is a good thing, the leeway in the current rules allows the committee make choices for those not yet involved.

- iv. 2015: Preparations so far have been enjoyable and easy with Ryerson; a representative is in Boston and Bill Wadell will meet him for lunch. We need to profile the sponsorship that the university usually pays for, such as the keynote, and begin working out our collaboration with the institution.
- v. Board nominations coming up: So far we have one nomination for British literature, four nominations for member at large and one for diversity; Antonucci asked Directors to spread the word, and submit names and email addresses for follow up before the nominations deadline of June 15.
- d. Past President at Large, Carine Mardorossian:**
 - i. Carine Mardorossian reported that Caribbean Studies scholars think of NeMLA as a home, and this is something that she wants to work on and maintain. She volunteered to chair the Caribbean Essay Award committee and already has scholars who volunteered unprompted to read the essays. The deadline is July 15 will include papers from 2010 – 2013 NeMLA convention to showcase that it's an ongoing interest for our membership.
- e. *Modern Language Studies*, Laurence Roth, editor (in absentia):** Board members were referred to Laurence Roth's written report in his absence.

VI. Language Director & Caucus Reports

a. Cristina Santos-

- i. Christina Santos reported on the Area Directors meetings and remarked that there should be procedural help for proposals. Suggestions for supporting area directors included:
 1. Standardizing report formats and helping new area directors put together the reports.
 2. Revised descriptions of the areas at nemla.org, and including pictures of the area directors; revamping the website to include mini bios.
 3. Including area director info in the Newsletter: an updated description of areas, their focus, what is under-represented, and what we want members to examine or think about to increase our visibility.
 4. It would be helpful to have a publishable tools sections for area directors that defines the business meeting and how it helps you, what are the special events proposals what funds are available, deadlines, how to increase membership exposure, definitions and timelines.
- ii. As an outgoing chair, Santos agreed to put a document together for Suha Kudsieh to share with her replacement.
- iii. Area directors should have a strategic plan and short and long-term goals, but try to build them within NeMLA's plans and goals.
- iv. Santos asked the executive board to consider if longer terms for area directors might be productive, and offered to submit a document to the board for approval that could assist with training area directors.

b. American/British Directors' Reports – Suha Kudsieh, Jennifer Harris

i. American:

1. Jennifer Harris announced that she is moving from to University of Waterloo and will be very close to Toronto.
2. American sessions are healthy. There were particularly a lot of competitive digital humanities sessions. Their area is thrilled to have

Audre Lorde as a special event, as well as the sessions sparked by keynote speaker Dionne Brand. The *Raisin in the Sun* performance will be part of the Diversity and American reception.

3. Moving forward, American area studies will be promoting Asian American and Jewish Studies sessions, as well as disability studies. These sessions would be strong collaborative or interdisciplinary opportunities.

ii. British:

1. Suha Kedsieh reported that the number of British sessions has dipped down to the same number as in Montreal. There were no sponsored sessions for 2013 but she will work with Ellen Dolgin to frame out sponsored sessions next year.
2. British area studies is co-hosting the American reception and cultural event because it is about the Jew of Malta.
3. Kudsieh will work closely with Laurence in the coming year as well as work to get nominations for the new area director.

c. Italian – Giovanni Spani:

- i. Giovanni Spani reported overall 34 sessions this year. The area was able to organize an entire day dedicated to an Italian poet, who is also connected to the Italian keynote speaker.
- ii. The Middle Ages and modern Italian literature are areas of gain, in addition to one Jewish studies panel.
- iii. Spani remarked that he would like to collaborate with others to make more Jewish studies sessions possible; the NeMLA Italian Studies will be working on a volume dedicated to Jewish Studies.

d. Spanish/Portuguese – Cristina Santos:

- i. Christina Santos reported that this is her last meeting as Spanish and Portuguese director and welcomed Maria Matz as the incoming director.
- ii. In 2011, this area had a dip in sessions, but has reached a new high this year with 46 sessions. This reflects a great diversity in representation, which Santos has focused on in her tenure as area director: continental and lucyphone, Diaspora, Portuguese, Brazilian, as well as discourses not only of race and sex, but abilities and disabilities.
- iii. This is the first year the Spanish event isn't sponsored by the Spanish area.
- iv. Santos continues to mentor in the Shakespeare's Sisters program, and will be part of the program in the coming years.

e. German – Astrid Weigert:

- i. Astrid Weigert reported that the German area sessions are strong at 24 sessions. Topics have broadened into eastern European literature. One of Weigert's goals was to revive the Russian European sections and she has seen some small success on that front: 3 sessions for this convention.
- ii. Weigert asked that board members help to introduce her to their colleagues that might be amenable to being involved with NeMLA sessions, and to help her make connections with potential session chairs.

- iii. This year's special event involves a poetry reading with German poet; Weigert's department is covering the rental fee and Tufts is sponsoring the reception.
 - iv. Weigert reported that since Harrisburg is close to DC, she would advertise actively for proposals, as well as for an area director to take her place.
- f. French – Moussa Sow (in absentia):**
- i. Moussa Sow's area has 26 sessions, three more than in 2012. Future session recruiting should include more French Caribbean and North African. This year's special event is co-sponsored, and Sow is in touch with two Franco-American poets who are eager to participate in NeMLA 2014.
- g. Comparative Literatures – Gillian Pierce:**
- i. Gillian Pierce reported that the big issue for her area right now is the renaming; they are moving forward with the new title Comparative Languages and Theory.
 - ii. The special even is co-sponsored with the French area and will feature David Bellos; his remarks on how translation teaches bear out in a larger dialogue through several sessions on translation, which are listed in the written report.
 - iii. World literatures is hosting a special roundtable on Arabic, which suggests some progress in an under represented area.
 - iv. Pierce remarked that they will continue to recruit for Harrisburg, have six sessions focusing on Caribbean literature and sessions that tie in with the keynote speaker. Her report lists all of the comparative transnational sessions, and the area is hoping to attract more Arabic and Chinese sessions for 2014.
- h. Cultural Studies & Film – Margarita Vargas:**
- i. Margarita Vargas reported 31 sessions, 21 of which are in cultural studies, which reflect a range of Latin American authors. The area's special even features a local film-maker.
- i. Women's Caucus – Rita Bode:**
- i. Rita Bode reported that Johanna Rossi Wagner delegated work from ICU and Rachel Spear offered amazing support. She noted that it had been a privilege to work with both Johanna and Rachel, and gave them credit for the written report and many of the accomplishments of the Women's Caucus.
 - ii. Rita Bode is serving on Suha Kudsieh's panel on promotion and tenure.
 - iii. The Women's Caucus co-sponsored a special event, Women in French, but the co-sponsoring system in the current program template leaves the event listed as one area or another, and thus the event was not listed as a Women's Caucus event. This issue should be addressed for the 2014 program.
- j. Diversity – Donovan Ramon:**
- i. Donovan Ramon reported a lot of positive feedback on this year's panels, the meet and greet, and Saturday's Emmett Price hip-hop and pedagogy talk. Other events include the *Raisin in the Sun* theatre outing and the African American Heritage Tour event.
 - ii. Donovan Ramon noted that he is actively recruiting participants for diversity panels at NeMLA.
 - iii. A trending theme is teaching African American literature in the age of Obama, which may be a panel topic in 2014. Ramon also mentioned the *Django*

Unchained controversy, remarking that we could address literary representations of slavery representations in post 1970 (e.g. *Beloved*, *Kindred*), or how writers have been looking at slavery in conjunction with how Hollywood has looked at slavery.

k. Graduate Student Caucus – Barry Spence:

- i.** Barry Spence reported that the graduate caucus had a discussion about what ideas to implement in 2014, and a CV tutorial, drawing on resources of experienced faculty, was a popular topic. Elizabeth Abele remarked that if the Caucus organized that workshop for Harrisburg she would locate a space
- ii.** Spence reported that this year the Graduate Caucus made sixteen \$300 awards, which made a significant difference to the students. Spence thanked Michael Cadwallader for his web support, and announced the graduate caucus essay award winner was a joint paper out of Penn State University.
- iii.** Spence also announced that the Graduate Caucus set up a twitter account for the convention.
- iv.** Suha Kudsieh thanked Donovan Ramon and Barry Spence for their excellent work and creativity.

VII. Other Business

- a.** Brandi So reported on the transition to RegOnline, and proposed that its web reconciliation capabilities be used more strenuously to streamline workflow. She also remarked on the necessity of revising the media policy for similar reasons. She agreed to create a descriptive calendar and other documents to assist in training the new administrative assistant, who will functionally replace the convention associate position.
- b.** The Board had a brief discussion about adding a board position in Composition and Rhetoric, and changing the area name from Pedagogy. This item was tabled for further consideration.