

NeMLA Board Meeting, March 17, 2016
Connecticut Convention Center, Convention Center 21
Hartford, CT
8:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Board Members Present:

Ben Railton, Fitchburg State University, President; Hilda Chacon, Nazareth College, First Vice President; Maria DiFrancesco, Ithaca College, Second Vice President; Daniela Antonucci, Princeton University, Past President; John Casey, University of Illinois at Chicago, American/Anglophone Literatures Director; Emily Lauer, Suffolk County Community College, CAITY; Richard Schumaker, University of Maryland University College, Comparative Languages and Theory Director; Christina Milletti, University at Buffalo, Creative Writing, Publishing, & Editing Director; Lisa Perdigao, Florida Institute of Technology, Cultural Studies and Media Studies Director; Vetri Nathan, University of Massachusetts-Boston, Member-At-Large: Diversity; Anna Rocca, Salem State University, French Languages and Literatures Director; Marie-Eve Monette, University of Alabama, Graduate Student Caucus Representative; Gloria Pastorino, Farleigh Dickinson University, Italian Languages and Literatures Director; Angela Fulk, Buffalo State College, Pedagogy and Professional Director; Maria Matz, University of Massachusetts-Lowell, Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures Director; Susmita Roye, Delaware State University, Anglophone/British Area; Rachel Spear, Francis Marion University; Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative

Board Members Absent:

Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University, Editor of *Modern Language Studies*
Lynn Marie Kutch, Kutztown University, German Languages and Literatures Director

Non-Board Members Present:

Carine Mardorossian, University at Buffalo, Executive Director; Brandi So, Stony Brook University, Associate Executive Director; Jesse Miller, Graduate Assistant; New Board Members: Margarita Vargas, University at Buffalo, Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures Incoming Director

- I. Call to Order: The Meeting was called to order at 8:30 am by Executive Director Carine Mardorossian
- II. Approval of Spring 2015 minutes and of Fall 2015 Executive Board Conference-call minutes: ED Mardorossian made a motion to approve the minutes for Fall 2015 Executive Board Conference-call minutes and for the Spring 2015 Board Meeting minutes. Gloria Pastorino approved, John Casey seconded.
- III. Executive Director's Report

1. 2016 Convention
 - i. Issues: ED Mardorossian discussed a number of issues that arose that in the planning of the 2016 convention including: increased cost for food, transportation, and insurance due to use of four locations, difficulty scheduling off-site events to correspond with on-site events.
 - ii. Special Event Speakers: There are plans to provide the board more funds in future years for inviting speakers and urged Area Directors to create a contract for invited speakers to specify what will and what will not be covered.
 - iii. Workshops: In comparison to last year, this year fees were waived for participating in workshops. They almost completely filled.
 - iv. Keynote: Fees were added for participants for keynote this year in order to ensure that those who say they are going to attend will given limited space at Mark Twain House.
 - v. Poster Session: Although there will be no Poster session for NeMLA Summer Research Fellowship winners this year, it will be mandatory starting next year as part of the exhibitor area, to advertise the kind of good work NeMLA is supporting.
 - vi. New Initiatives: New initiatives this year include “Flash Readings” and “Meet the Author” sessions. This year all Meet the Author events were board sponsored, but ED Mardorossian clarified that next year all members will be able to apply for funds online to invite authors to their session. The applications will be reviewed by the board.
 - vii. Seminars: Half the number of seminars filled this year compared to last year.
 - viii. Second Sessions: Approved all second session requests for 2016 convention.
 - ix. Fellowships: Cancelled Newbury Library Fellowship. New fellowship for using the University at Buffalo Special Collections. This is a way of honoring the host institution. In touch with NYPL to do similar offering there.
 - x. New Database: Despite some issues to be addressed in the coming year, the new database has been a great success, saving NeMLA money, enabling easier session scheduling, and allowing members to register and access their session using only one password.
2. Future Conventions: Contracts have been settled for hotels and local institutions for 2017 (Johns Hopkins University) and 2018 (University of Pittsburgh). Incoming Second Vice President Simona Wright will be working on the 2019 convention, NeMLA’s 50th Anniversary.
3. Legal Status: NeMLA’s non-profit status is still in flux.
4. Staff: The plan is to retain all current staff members: Administrative Assistant Renata Towne, Graduate Assistant Jesse Miller, Marketing Coordinator Derek McGrath, and Assistant Executive Director Brandi So.

5. Board of Directors: There is a need for current members of the board of directors to facilitate and ease transition for incoming board members. Current board members should put together set of emails that would help new board members in positions. ED Mardorossian suggested the value of Area Directors meeting together at each convention and encouraged the Caucuses to do the same.
6. Finances and membership: All numbers are down for attendees including auditors. Partly explained by conflict with ACLA. In the future, NeMLA will need to reach out to other organizations to minimize risk of major conflicts. Also need to focus on physical promotions. Other concerns raised were the importance of location (people not wanting to come to Hartford), the coincidence of the convention and Spring Break for many potential attendees. Further, the need of building more resources for our members to make clear the values of being a member was discussed.
7. Exhibits: Concern about the shrinking list of exhibitors was raised. Some solutions discussed were focusing on local publishers, having publishers or local bookstores sell books of members or invited speakers.
8. Special Events Budget and Awards

IV. Associate Executive Director's Report

1. Previous and Projected Budget: In Toronto for the 2015 convention, NeMLA made a profit in an expensive year, in part due to exchange rate and strong contract with the Fairmont. Decrease in membership by about 400 for the 2016 convention means a loss of about \$58,000 for the organization. Need to comp fewer registrations. Grad student membership and independent scholar membership increased, but auditors decreased. There is potential to get a rebate from the state in the amount of \$35,000, which will offset these losses. For the future, it is important that we are more effective in getting all allocated funds out to members (fellowships, travel grants). AED Brandi So also recommended moving towards a multi-year strategic plans for planning NeMLA's annual budget.

V. Officer and Committee Reports

1. Past President's Report, Daniela Antonucci
 - i. Book Award: No book award was given this year due to low number and quality of submissions. Need to be more detailed about expectations, to be posted on website, and need a larger database of readers. Discussion followed on ways to improve the Book Award process including offering money to readers, having board suggest people who could read manuscripts, giving more time to readers, restructuring rubric, having readers share responses with one another, creating a database of potential readers from NeMLA members. ED Mardorossian suggested that book award should be a site of professionalization. When a book manuscript is declined the submitter should get feedback. Board Members interested in being readers for next year include: John Casey, Maria Matz, Richard Schumaker, Vetri Nathan, Maria DiFrancesco, Brandi So, Susmita Roye, and Hilda Chacon.

2. President's Report, Benjamin Railton: President Railton discussed three initiatives begun for this convention that he hopes will continue into the future: Working with public schools, addressing issues of academic labor, and addressing what is happening beyond the world of academia. AED So urged that the Board rethink how we pursue these goals given the administrative support available to NeMLA. ED Mardorossian suggested that a focus on these aims might shift the official mission statement of NeMLA and raised the issue of devoting funds to endeavors that the majority of membership won't directly participate in. 2nd VP DiFrancesco emphasized the importance of taking into account the NeMLA membership and finding out through shared governance what visions the membership wants to pursue. Discussion followed on the possibility of attracting high school teachers as member.
 3. First Vice President's Report, Hilda Chacon
 - i. 2017 Convention, Baltimore: The contract with Johns Hopkins University for the 2017 convention has been settled. The convention theme will be Multi-Lingualism and cultural proficiency. Because Johns Hopkins is a scientific institution it will be an opportunity to focus on interdisciplinary conversations as well.
 4. Second Vice President's Report, Maria DiFrancesco
 - i. Fellowship Reports: 21 applications were submitted and 5 were awarded.
 - ii. 2018 Convention, Pittsburgh: A contract with the University of Pittsburgh for the 2017 convention has been settled. The convention theme will have to do with space and community.
- VI. Language Director & Caucus Reports
1. Creative Writing, Publishing and Editing - Christina Milletti: Area Director Milletti expressed a desire to raise the profile of this new area. She asked for other area directors to send her information about Meet the Author and other sessions with writers so that she knows what is happening at the convention that are relevant to creative writing even when not dubbed as such.
 2. American/Anglophone –John Casey: There were five fewer sessions than in Toronto. Some reasons might be shift in discipline towards areas like cultural studies, the location of this year's convention, and the conflict with the C19 conference. There were good representations of panels including a number on Native American studies.
 3. British/Anglophone – Susmita Roye: Anglophone: The overall sessions increased by one this year. Anglophone met its target but not so in British.
 4. Italian – Gloria Pastorino: Location may be a reason for some areas not reaching targets.
 5. Spanish/Portuguese – Maria Matz: It was difficult to get Portuguese sessions to fill. Need to publicize better.

6. Comparative Literatures – Richard Schumaker: Special Event speaker focusing on online learning
7. Cultural Studies & Media Studies – Lisa Perdigao: There should be a way for digital humanities to stand out on its own, even if it exists under media studies. There was a problem with speakers dropping out leaving the panel with too few presenters. Emily Lauer suggested that in addition to recommending that chairs accept four presenters that if they are only going to accept three presenters, then the chair cannot be presenting so that the chair could take over at the last minute if there is a withdrawal that threatens the viability of the session.
8. Pedagogy and Professional – Angela Fulk: Pedagogy sessions fell just short of target, Rhet/Comp fell two short. But both areas are up from last year. One potential conflict is the CCCC conference.
9. CAITY Caucus – Emily Lauer: Emily Lauer announced that CAITY and the GSC are working on a research project on bias in academia, and that an unofficial meeting had been organized for interested parties to get together and discuss this initiative in Hartford.