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2009 Election Results

In the elections conducted last fall, Michael Bérubé (English, Penn State Univ., University Park) was elected second vice president of the association. Bérubé will serve in that office from 1 January 2010 through the close of the January 2011 convention and will automatically become first vice president in 2011, serving in that office through the close of the January 2012 convention. His term as president will begin after the close of the January 2012 convention and will continue through the close of the January 2013 convention.

Lawrence I. Buell (Harvard Univ.), Dorothea Heitsch (Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), and Richard M. Ohmann (Wesleyan Univ.) were elected to at-large seats on the Executive Council for 4-year terms (1 January 2010 through the close of the January 2014 convention). Jonathan Arac (Univ. of Pittsburgh) was elected to the Executive Council from the Delegate Assembly for the same term.

Fifty new representatives were elected to the Delegate Assembly. Sixteen delegates were elected to represent special-interest categories in the assembly, and thirty-four delegates were elected to represent seven geographical regions in the United States and Canada. A listing of all members of the Delegate Assembly can be found at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/del_assembly_members).

In addition, eighty-nine members were elected to the division executive committees. The listing of division executive committee members at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/danddg) has been updated to include new committee members' names.



Catherine Porter delivers the Presidential Address at the 125th MLA Annual Convention.

Winners of MLA Prizes Announced

The winners of twelve annual and six biennial awards given by the MLA were recognized at the 2009 MLA convention in Philadelphia. Sidonie Smith, then first vice president of the association, announced and presented the prizes at a ceremony preceding the Presidential Address on 28 December. A complete list of this year's prizewinners appears on the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/pdf/2009prizewinners_web.pdf).

The MLA's prizes are awarded under the auspices of the Committee on Honors and Awards, which appoints the members of the selection committee and determines procedures, deadlines, and criteria for eligibility for all prizes. Deadlines for upcoming prizes are located at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/awards_competitions). To submit books or to obtain detailed information about any of the prizes, call or write the coordinator of book prizes at the MLA office (646 576-5141; awards@mla.org).



2009 MLA vice president Sidonie Smith (left) presents the Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize to Nicolás Wey Gómez.



Beyond the Dissertation Monograph

The bleak environment for higher education has led some to call for the elimination of doctoral programs at all but elite private and Research I universities. This is not the direction we should go. The richness of doctoral education remains the distinctiveness of programs serving different missions and communities and preparing future faculty members for careers at various kinds of colleges and universities, from tribal colleges to multicampus urban universities, from religiously affiliated colleges to regional and flagship state institutions. In graduate education, the direction to go is to redefine the mission of the humanities doctoral degree by reimagining the dissertation, as David Damrosch, Louis Menand, and members of the MLA Task Force on Evaluating

Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion, among others, have urged us to do.

To be sure, there are reasons for our investment in the dissertation monograph. It is our shared measure of “promise,” a demonstration that students can complete the arduous work of conceptualizing, researching, organizing, and arguing important interventions in their fields. It is performative, a sustained set of acts through which rigorous habits of mind are practiced and internalized. It lays groundwork for the “tenure” book, the absence of which reduces the likelihood that junior faculty members will be tenured. If graduate programs introduced alternatives to the monograph dissertation that appear to erode the primacy of the monograph, would skeptics deem these options an assault on the standards in humanities education? Would candidates entering the current job market without a traditional dissertation monograph be severely disadvantaged?

But consider. Do we disadvantage our doctoral students and our profession if we do not begin to expand the forms the dissertation might take, and do so now, in this time of unrelenting turmoil? There are ethical reasons to do so. The inflationary rise in the cost of higher education has led to a rise in the debt level of graduating students. The extended time to degree (now at a national average of nine years in the humanities) has, for decades, negatively affected women’s decisions about family planning, especially as deferral extends from the years of graduate school to the probationary period for tenure-track faculty members. Apart from ethical and practical issues related to time to degree, several intellectual considerations of the quality and relevance of doctoral education motivate its redress: the failure to attract diverse cohorts of students, the changes wrought by the digital revolution, the acknowledged limitations of overspecialization, and the imperative to rethink knowledge production in the context of our networked, globalized world.

The lifeblood of our profession is its rich diversity. Overinvestment in the dissertation monograph, as Menand has recently argued, results in “a narrowing of the intellectual range and diversity of those entering the field” (153). If our programs are to be successful in recruiting and admitting students of color, first-generation students, and returning adults, we need to define scholarly structures that allow them to imagine themselves as future professors of literatures and languages. More flexible dissertation models (with the potential for a shorter time to degree) would offer students an opportunity to pursue research projects with the potential to benefit communities of affiliation.

Digital media and computational technologies are radically transforming how knowledge is produced, communicated, and evaluated. The digitalization of scholarly work in the humanities brings new modes of research; new formats of presentation; new networks for communication; and new platforms for organizing knowledge, orchestrating argument, and visualizing intellectual exchange. Doctoral students in the modern languages will increasingly create and use digital archives and invent multimodal forms of scholarly presentation and communication in the next decade. Why should the dissertation remain inflexibly wedded to traditional book-culture formats?

Experimenting with new media stimulates new habits of mind and enhanced cultures of collegiality. Future faculty members in the modern languages and literatures will require flexible and improvisational habits and collaborative skills to bring their scholarship to fruition. In this environment, the pleasures of deep reading will be challenged by and joined with the new pleasures of distributed readings across networks, as N. Katherine Hayles has suggested. Requiring the dissertation monograph as it is now defined (as a singular and solitary venture) will leave students unprepared for the increasingly collaborative scholarly world of the future and for new ventures in collaborative public scholarship, which seeks to link those in the academy to intellectuals and communities outside it.

Colleges and universities are recalibrating the balance of teaching and research for faculty members, and yet the time and stress involved in completing the dissertation monograph now absorb the psychic, affective, and intellectual energies of doctoral students, often at the expense of preparation for teaching. Our students will be disadvantaged if they do not graduate from doctoral programs as skilled teachers, adept at engaging classes of various sizes

On the MLA Web Site

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and different mixes of students and versed in scholarship on student literacies and learning environments (see Porter). Furthermore, they will need facility in digital composing, melding words, images, moving images, and sound. Many of them will produce digital scholarship that doubles as teaching tools, requiring sophisticated pedagogical approaches to concept design and platform use.

Finally, in reaction to overspecialization and the crisis in scholarly publishing, many talk of the importance of our work reaching a larger public. In response, Kathleen Woodward has suggested that we “conceptualize our work as public goods (and not just professional scholarly products).” By introducing new forms of the dissertation, we would encourage doctoral students to experiment with different scholarly voices and styles of address and to route their work through different learning communities.

Reinventing the humanities dissertation is an urgent challenge for us, not a retreat from the crises we confront. In the upcoming months I’ll suggest some alternatives to

the monograph and outline steps we might take to make change happen. I invite you to join in this conversation over the next year about expanding forms of the dissertation.

Sidonie Smith

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Members are invited to comment on the president’s column at www.mla.org/fromthepres.

Delegate Assembly News

At its meeting on 29 December 2009 in Philadelphia the Delegate Assembly took the following actions.

The assembly conducted elections for the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee, the Executive Council, the Nominating Committee, and the Elections Committee. The names of those elected can be found in the relevant committee listing at www.mla.org/governance/committees/comm_gov.

The assembly received the report of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee (DAOC), which included several proposals for strengthening the association’s resolution process that the committee had developed in response to a request from the 2008 assembly. Delegates discussed these proposals at length. The assembly also received the executive director’s report, the Finance Committee’s report, and annual reports from the association’s standing committees. Delegates had the opportunity to comment on or ask questions about all these reports.

The assembly received a recommendation from the Executive Council and the DAOC to restructure the association’s dues categories. Delegates voted to eliminate the new regular member dues category and to approve an increase in membership fees for regular members whose income is at least \$30,000 a year.

In other business, the assembly approved one resolution that was submitted by an MLA member. The resolution will be forwarded to the Executive Council in February. Following the provisions of article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution, the council will conduct a review of the constitutional, legal, and fiduciary issues posed by the language of the resolution. If the resolution does not pose any constitutional, legal, or fiduciary problems, the council will forward it to the membership for ratification later this year.

A complete report of the Delegate Assembly meeting will appear in the May 2010 issue of *PMLA*.

Department Chairs’ Hotel Reservations

In August 2010 the MLA convention office will mail chairs of departments that are paid members of ADE or ADFL by 1 June 2010 early information about making hotel room reservations for the MLA convention. These chairs will also be able to make hotel reservations online through the ADE or ADFL Web site. ADE and ADFL chairs of departments that are participating in the e-mail discussion lists will be notified. This early notification does not guarantee that department chairs will be able to reserve a suite for interviewing job candidates at the convention, but it does give them the best opportunity to do so. Please note that suites may not be reserved through the MLA Web site. Chairs who would like membership forms or information about their departments’ 2009–10 membership status should contact Roy Chustek at the MLA office (646 576-5133; rchustek@mla.org).

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Calls for Papers for the 2011 MLA Annual Convention in Los Angeles



The 2011 convention will be held in Los Angeles from 6 to 9 January (there will be no convention in 2010). Calls for papers appear on the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/conv_papers). Before writing to the organizers listed in the calls for papers, members should familiarize themselves with the guidelines for the MLA convention, which appear on the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/conv_procedures) and in the September 2009 *PMLA* (pp. 1059–66). If not provided, organizers' addresses are available in the members' directory on the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/member_search) and listed in the September 2009 *PMLA*. All participants in convention sessions must be MLA members by 7 April 2010.

Organizers are responsible for responding to all inquiries. (Please note that if you post a call for papers, you are responsible for acknowledging all submissions and inquiries regarding that call for papers. The MLA has received an increasing number of complaints about session organizers not acknowledging call for papers inquiries and submissions.) A member may participate as speaker or respondent only twice (e.g., by organizing and chairing a meeting, reading a paper, or serving as a speaker, panelist, or respondent in one or two sessions) at a convention.

All requests for audiovisual equipment must be made by the chair of the session on the appropriate program copy forms and must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on 1 April 2010. Because the need for audiovisual equipment is a major factor in the scheduling of meetings (and because the movement of equipment is both costly and hazardous), the deadline is firm. Participants must indicate their audiovisual needs when they respond to a call for papers and should check with the chair of the session or with the MLA convention office to be sure that the necessary equipment has been ordered by 1 April 2010.

Members without Internet access who need a printout of the calls for papers should write or call the MLA office to have a copy mailed to them (membership@mla.org; 646 576-5151).

PMLA Special Topic: Work

The *PMLA* Editorial Board invites essays that focus on work as an analytic category. They may address any literary or cultural genre, historical period, or region and may take any theoretical perspective. In 1883 the French socialist Paul Lafargue attacked the “love of work” as a “disastrous dogma” and “mental aberration” over which priests, economists, and moralists had cast a “sacred halo,” and he proclaimed laziness the “mother of the arts and noble virtues.” In 2009, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, the Spanish philosopher Carlos Fernández Liria resuscitated Lafargue: instead of promoting a communal “cult of work,” he wrote, Cuba should ensure the “right to laziness” as a model for the low-growth, sustainable development required for saving the planet and feeding its inhabitants. How do such crises in economic, political, or cultural authority play out in literary and artistic imaginings of work? What can site-specific cartographies of work reveal about the movement and social networks of local and transnational human communities? What is a work ethic, and what

Seven New MLA Titles Released

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- Approaches to Teaching Scott's Warverley Novels
- Approaches to Teaching Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*
- Teaching the African Novel
- Teaching Literature and Language Online
- Confessions of a Poisoner, Written by Herself
- Bekenntnisse einer Giftmischerin, von ihr selbst geschrieben

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do specific work ethics illuminate or conceal? When is a work ethic unethical? How do declarations of work as an international human right interface with globalized divisions of labor? What role do contending concepts of work and leisure play in cross-cultural transactions? What are the distinctions between the concept of work and its close relatives: labor, job, enterprise, industry, productivity, and creation? How do changes in conceptions of academic or scholarly work—within and outside the academy—register key shifts in received truths about culture, the economy, or political life?

The coordinator of the special topic is Vicky Unruh (Univ. of Kansas). The deadline for submissions is 1 March 2011. Manuscripts should be sent to the Managing Editor, *PMLA*, Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789. Submissions to *PMLA* must meet the requirements given in the statement of editorial policy, available online and printed in the January, March, May, and October issues of *PMLA*.



Three Myths about the Academic Workforce: Let's Get Real

The MLA has taken a forward-looking and forceful stance on what the academic workforce should look like (see the Executive Council's recommended standards and guidelines in the MLA issue brief "[One Faculty Serving All Students](#)"). While some people think it's unrealistic to expect that faculty members be paid a living wage or that faculty members with long-term commitments teach the majority of courses, we at the MLA believe that the minimal standards we have endorsed are worth fighting for. But to fight together, we must engage in some myth busting concerning the academic workforce. Clinging to these myths is getting in the way of our creating "one faculty serving all students." Here, from my perspective, are the top myths:

Myth 1: *Nothing has really changed over the decades.*

The academic workforce has always had members who are not on the tenure track or employed full-time, so what's different now? Put simply, we've passed the tipping point of an acceptable and functional proportion of full-time permanent faculty members to all others. Ironically, the academic workforce has grown significantly over the last several decades. But as the data in our [Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit](#) show, that growth has occurred almost entirely off the tenure track. Our academic workforce needs to be rebalanced, and long-term, appropriately compensated employment should be the hallmark of academic appointments.

Myth 2: *All contingent labor is alike.*

Say "contingent," "adjunct," "part-time," or "temporary," and we often conjure up the image of the freeway flier, eligible for food stamps and stringing together four or more courses per term at a rate of pay far below the [MLA recommended minimum](#). But these terms signal a hundred different things: the "professor of the practice" who receives a salary commensurate with his or her qualifications and experience, who has job security and benefits, and who is fully integrated into the life of the department; the full-time, non-tenure-track, three-year visiting professor hired to teach Chinese as a college determines student interest and program sustainability; the senior editor from a major newspaper who teaches an occasional course on journalism; the part-time English instructor who is not seeking a full-time job and whose annual household income exceeds \$100,000. Of course there are too many contingent faculty members who are inadequately compensated and who would prefer full-time work, as [data](#) in the advocacy kit show. We would be wise to remember that there is an appropriate role for all these faculty members. The keys are balance in the workforce and appropriate working conditions for all. We must ensure that the majority of courses are taught by faculty members who have long-term, full-time commitments from the institutions that hire them and who receive appropriate pay and benefits; and we must also ensure that contingent faculty members receive fair treatment in all ways. It's really that simple.

Myth 3: *The interests of tenure-track faculty members are in opposition to the interests of other faculty members.*

Often it is said that adjunct faculty members are the backs on which tenure-track faculty members place their teaching loads. Or that the full-time faculty members, their ranks thinning,

have to pick up the work that adjuncts are not compensated to do (serve on university committees, advise majors, and so forth). The truth is that in the current structure all faculty members are stretched, but the problems of one group are not the fault of the other. How is it the fault of a tenure-track faculty member, who must produce a book and several articles in the first six years on the job, that adjunct faculty members covering the research leave only receive \$2,500 per course? Should this faculty member have refused that tenure-track job, knowing that most of the instructional staff in the department do not have full-time tenure-track appointments? Does anyone think the current situation provides optimal learning and employment conditions for students and faculty members? It is a myth that tenure-track faculty members are content with the status quo and are indifferent to the lack of tenure-track jobs for those who aspire to them, to the poor pay for those who are not adequately compensated, or to the lack of institutional belonging to which all faculty members have a right. Most tenure-track faculty members suffer from a form of survivor's guilt, and they'd like nothing better than to see the system change. But the problem seems overwhelming, and that's where the leadership of department chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents—as well as scholarly and professional associations—comes into play. Call me simplistic, but it all starts with having the information we need to call things by their name, then working to make things how they ought to be.

I've said it before: the problem isn't the performance of individual adjunct or contingent or part-time faculty members. I'm not calling them out—quite the opposite. They are helping keep higher education as good as it can be under the circumstances and deserve respect. The problem is that we have an academic workforce in which virtually all the job growth is off the tenure track, that the majority of courses in many institutions are taught by faculty members off the tenure track, and that the future is drying up for those who aspire to make a career in teaching and research in the humanities. Is this a future any of us can embrace? The academy has changed beyond recognition. Time to give up the myths, get real, come together, and make sure our institutions face facts and take action.

Rosemary G. Feal

Members may write to the editor at execdirector@mla.org. Writers are asked to limit letters to five hundred words; the editor reserves the right to edit letters that exceed five hundred words. Letters to the editor appear on the [MLA Web site](#).

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**Dated Material
Please deliver by 23 February**

Membership Ratification Vote

In December 2008 the Delegate Assembly approved a resolution that was submitted to the membership for ratification this past fall. Also subject to ratification by the membership was the assembly's election of an honorary fellow. The results of these membership ratification votes are presented below.

Members ratified the election of Mo Yan to honorary fellowship in the association. The vote was 1,201 yes and 44 no. He has been invited to accept the honor. The membership also ratified the resolution approved by the 2008 Delegate Assembly. The vote was 863 yes and 540 no. The preamble and text of the resolution can be found at the MLA Web site (www.mla.org/governance/mla_resolutions/2008_resolutions).

2010 ADE and ADFL Summer Seminars

Each June, department chairs and directors of graduate study of ADE- and ADFL-member departments assemble at the summer seminars to develop and sustain a community of shared interests and to articulate, in a collective voice, their professional judgment on matters of interest to English and foreign language departments and humanities divisions. Each seminar features a preseminar Workshop for New Chairs, led by seasoned administrators, where those about to start or just completing their first year as department chairs can glean practical advice and have questions answered about any and all aspects of chairing. ADFL seminars this summer will also feature a preseminar Workshop for Program Reviewers.

ADE Summer Seminar East will take place 3–6 June in College Park, Maryland, and will be hosted by the English Department at the University of Maryland. ADE Summer Seminar West, to be held 21–24 June in Claremont, California, will be hosted by the English Department at Pomona College. ADFL Summer Seminar East will take place 3–6 June in Fairport, New York, hosted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures and the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Rochester. ADFL Summer Seminar West will be held 17–20 June in Colorado Springs, Colorado, hosted by the Department of Foreign Languages at the United States Air Force Academy.

For more information on the ADE seminars, visit the ADE Web site (www.ade.org) or contact David Laurence, Director, ADE, or Doug Steward, Associate Director, at the MLA office (646 576-5132; ade@mla.org). Further information on the ADFL seminars is available at the ADFL Web site (www.adfl.org) or by contacting Nelly Furman, Director, ADFL, or David Goldberg, Associate Director, at the MLA office (646 576-5132; adfl@mla.org).