

Minutes to 2019 Executive Committee meeting (Thursday, 14 November)

Present: KC Dolan, Gaywyn Moore, Eloise Sureau, Sheila Liming, Michelle Madeiros, Justin Hastings, Shannon Derby, Tisha Brooks, Dana Schumacher-Schmidt, Chris Kendrick (via phone), Jack Kerkering (for first two hours), Linda Winnard (for report).

Announcements of Chris Kendrick's retirement and subsequent succession by Jack Kerkering were made.

After introductions, the committee reviewed the "Summary of Revenue and Expenses 2018-19" along with a report on future projections. Thanks in part to an increase in revenue from the *JMMLA*, the organization remains in sufficiently sound fiscal health to have merited a vigorous discussion about prudent expenditures to support our members and advance our mission to support the study of modern languages and literatures in the Midwest.

A brief report on Membership was made by Chris Kendrick.

From here, the committee discussed in detail why having audio-visual equipment available in all rooms at this year's convention was financially imprudent, requiring the organization to prioritize the allocation of funds to the keynote address and the new media panels, for which A/V capabilities were deemed essential.

This, in turn, led to a robust discussion about hosting the convention in Chicago. The increase in the number of attendees at this year's convention speaks to the fact that Chicago is a draw; the committee speculated on the relative ease and low cost of travel to Chicago as a component of this increased attendance. At the same time, however, the committee recognized that this greater number of attendees needs to be evaluated against certain factors that increase the overall cost of hosting the convention in Chicago; foremost among these are the higher sales taxes in Chicago and Illinois, the necessity of using unionized labor at hotels in the city, and the issue of higher room rates and the contractual need to fill our hotel block. After Linda Winnard gave a brief report on the already signed contracts with hotels for 2020-23, a motion was made to host the convention in Chicago in 2024 to get data by which to assess the desirability of hosting the convention regularly in Chicago. If data suggests that hosting the convention in Chicago is desirable, it was suggested that we return to Chicago every third year. This series of motions was passed unanimously.

To address the higher costs associated with hotel rooms in Chicago, the increased availability of other options like AirBNBs in Chicago, and our contractual need to fill our block to avoid incurring heavy financial penalties, a motion was made to explore possibility of a database to allow potential roommates to locate one another. It was agreed that part of this should require paying for appropriate legal counsel to ensure that the organization be properly indemnified in the case of any individual attendee's malfeasance.

A motion was made to fund two bursaries for graduate students who are not presenting papers to attend the convention for the first time. In exchange for an as-yet determined service to the organization, the two recipients will receive a night in the hotel covered by the organization, \$200 for travel, and waivers for registration and membership fees for the year. Interested candidates will submit a cover letter addressing research interests and what they hope to get out of conference and a CV by 30 April. The award will be listed in the convention's program. A reflection submitted by 15 December in which each awardee details their experiences at the convention is the final component. The motion passed unanimously.

The committee then discussed the possibility of migrating to an app for the convention's program. In response to the fact that many institutions require hardcopy of the program both for reimbursement and for promotion and tenure files, it was suggested that we could do as other organizations do and rely on an app while making hardcopy available for a fee on the magnitude of ten dollars. It was agreed that Linda Winnard would gather information on possible vendors and associated costs before the committee would vote next year.

Justin Hastings gave a report on this year's undergraduate forum. It was agreed that this year's eight panels remain a suitable number. He and Michelle Medeiros reported on the committee's decisions to award an honorable mention (without monetary award) this year in addition to the agreed-upon award for best paper in the undergraduate forum and its one-hundred dollar honorarium. The committee also included Chris Kendrick.

Eloise Sureau gave a report on this year's inaugural Book Prize winner and affirmed the plan to feature scholarly and creative works in alternating years.

From here the committee discussed the *JMMLA* extensively. After a brief report on the declining number of submissions we have been receiving for the journal and discussion of the journal's perceived reputation, the committee determined that we would expeditiously bring to press a Spring 2020 special issue on the theme of "In the Middle" with a CfP to appear in early December. This general issue will consider what it means to occupy, exist, move, or migrate through middle spaces and will contemplate themes of intersectionality playing out broadly across the realms of art, activism, politics, institutions, and cultures. While we are inspired by the middle spaces, or "flyover country," that form our institutional home, we actively seek to build upon the connections linking interior or liminal spaces and their populations on a global scale. It was agreed that Jack Kerkering would act as general editor aided by a committee composed of Sheila Liming, Michelle Medeiros, Chris Kendrick, and Justin Hastings. To reduce as much as possible the delays inherent to publication, it was agreed that all on the executive committee would draw on their areas of expertise to help encourage submissions and suggest peer-reviewers. An initial deadline of 15 January 2020 for submissions was deemed prudent. This Spring 2020 special issue will be followed in the Fall by submissions drawn from this year's convention in the usual way.

Sheila Liming presented the theme for the 2020 convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin: "Cultures of Collectivity." It was unanimously approved after brief discussion.

A motion was made and unanimously approved that there be a workshop on Public Humanities at the 2020 convention.

A motion to adjournment was made, seconded, and unanimously affirmed at 14:42.