

**Mid-America American Studies Association (MAASA)
Spring 2011 Board Meeting – Friday, April 8, 2011
The University Club, University of Wisconsin at Madison**

Present:

Jane Simonsen, president and at-large board member
Benjamin Looker, secretary and SLU faculty rep.
Ben Chappell, U-Kansas faculty rep.
Barrett Gough, U-Iowa grad student rep.
Milton Wendland (via telephone), U-Kansas grad student rep.
Laura Belmonte, at-large board member
Sherrie Tucker (non-voting), *American Studies* journal delegate
Avery Dame (non-voting), *American Studies* journal delegate
John Kinder, invited prospective at-large board member

I.) QUORUM CALL

At 7:25 p.m. CDT, President Jane Simonsen led the assembled members in a determination of whether a quorum was present. With the addition of Milton Wendland via telephone at 7:31 p.m., a quorum was established.

II.) ADDITION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Barrett offered a motion to add John Kinder to the MAASA board immediately as an at-large member; seconded by Jane; motion APPROVED unanimously. Milton Wendland left the meeting at 7:33 p.m. A quorum was maintained through the presence of new board member John Kinder.

III.) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jane moved, and Barrett seconded, a motion approving the agenda. Discussion: Laura concerned about Executive Director position. Jane clarifies that Mary Ann Wynkoop, who must end her MAASA participation due to the elimination of the UMKC American Studies program and her own retirement, is not Executive Director. Kathleen Wells Morgan will continue as Executive Director. Ben L. proposes agenda amendment adding succession plans to agenda; Jane seconds; amendment APPROVED unanimously. Amended agenda APPROVED unanimously.

IV.) APPROVAL OF FALL 2010 MEETING MINUTES

Ben L. moves approving minutes; Barrett seconds; minutes APPROVED unanimously.

V.) PRESIDENT'S REPORT

a.) President's Report: Website Matters. Jane notes that board will need to learn whether current webmaster Matt Thomas is interested in continuing. Discussion: Barrett praised Matt's work. Ben L. suggested abandoning any updates of MAASA's page on the American Studies Association (ASA) page, and merely placing a link to the main MAASA page there. Laura suggested that the board ask Matt Thomas to do search engine optimization so that MAASA main page appears above seldom-updated MAASA page on ASA site in search results. Avery noted that Randal Jelks of *American Studies* has wanted the journal to do a newsletter, and noted that a newsletter with content on regional activities, publications, conferences, and so forth will improve web traffic. Group discussed how to empower and enlist current webmaster with tasks to do on webpage and new MAASA electronic newsletter that will not require constant direction or intervention from MAASA board members. Avery and Ben C. suggested redefining the task as webmaster and publicist. Jane added that the webmaster/publicist tasks ought to include finding conferences, regional department affairs, department newsletters, voluntary syllabus bank, and regional affairs for inclusion into MAASA webpage and newsletter. Avery noted that potential grant for *American Studies* web activities could free up time to combine web and social media work for the journal with similar work for MAASA. Group proposed more web ideas, including staying in touch with departments via their newsletters and chairs to obtain content, regular checking of H-AmStudies, etc. Ben C. suggested assigning work of proposing how to assemble newsletter and enhance website content to webmaster/publicist. Ben L. suggested that new *American Studies* web resources page be shared or mirrored between MAASA and journal pages.

Discussion of how to create email list for proposed electronic newsletter. Avery has 241-person list at *American Studies*, mostly people who have joined MAASA directly (rather than via ASA membership). Ben L. noted that many ASA members in the region do not know they are automatically MAASA members, and board and/or webmaster needs list obtained from ASA. Discussion on how to obtain this. Group agreed to seek to assemble a list of all MAASA members, whether direct or via ASA membership, and begin sending a quarterly or monthly newsletter, with primary task for creating and sending such a document assigned to webmaster/publicist.

Tasks agreed to: Jane will ask ASA president for list of regional ASA members who are thereby automatically MAASA members. Ben C. will update Kim Marra at U-Iowa on our conversation on new webmaster/publicist since she is unofficial liaison between current webmaster and board. Jane will develop tasks list for Matt Thomas (Avery wishes to be CC'ed on these communications).

b.) President's Report: Board Membership. Jane noted need for serious thinking about general direction of board, particularly since reserve funds are quickly being depleted. Joint conferences are productive but expensive; MAASA generates no income and spends money on these. Conference last year in Lawrence was expensive, because KU Continuing Education did planning for a large fee due to lack of on-site planner from board. Suggestion from board members for conference only every other year. Others note importance of MAASA annual conferences for grad-student presenters. Board determined that topic will be discussed and decided at fall 2011 meeting. Jane suggested

one of two board meetings each year might become an electronic (video conferencing) meeting, especially since departments are not allotting funds for attendance by graduate board members, thus depleting attendance. Laura asked whether MAASA ought to have conferences at all.

Ben L. suggested eliminating semi-annual joint conferences, noting that the MAASA-branded conference gives the organization its identity; suggested insisting that MAASA conferences break even, and fees be determined with this in mind. Ben C. noted trend for ASA not to have national meetings in the Midwest, and emphasized importance of MAASA conferences in this context. Laura commented that MAASA conferences lacked thematic unity, unlike joint conferences with MAASA and outside organizations, and recommended smaller-scale conferences with strong theme and activities. Ben L. commented that the thematic mish-mash of MAASA-only conferences might play an important role, in allowing presenters whose topics may not fit into tightly themed joint conferences. John Kinder asked what was distinctive about the Mid-America ASA, noting strong regional-oriented identities of other ASA regionals. Ben L. suggested adopting policy that conferences may not be money-losers, and fees will be determined accordingly. Ben C. noted that cutting down frequency of conferences would help with finances, because in past if no one volunteers to host, an outside entity (for instance, KU Continuing Ed.) is hired to assemble conference. Ben L. suggested planning conference locations three years ahead at next board meeting, and not having conference for years with no volunteers. Various members suggested potential organizations for joint conferences, including Center for Ethnic Studies and the Arts at U-Iowa, and student conference at KU. Ben C. suggested arranging keynote speakers before call for paper proposals.

Motion: Fall 2011 board meeting will seek to determine next three years' worth of conferences, and eliminate conferences from years with no volunteers; conferences will be required to break even. Ben L. seconds motion. Motion is APPROVED.

Group briefly adjourns and moves from University Club to Doubletree Hotel, and meeting resumes.

VI.) FINANCIAL REPORT

Executive Director Kathleen Wells Morgan could not be present. She has sent the financial report to board members in advance. Ben L. moves to accept report; Ben C. seconds the motion; motion is APPROVED unanimously.

VII.) JOURNAL REPORT

Journal representatives Sherri Tucker and Avery Dame explain that journal expenses are going down in some areas. The shift to Allen Press for printing has saved money. The journal being behind on publication schedule has saved money. New contracts with Project Muse and other electronic subscription databases have produced funds. First payment from databases was approximately \$18,000, and other databases will be sending

payments over time. Discussion of how to manage direct subscribers' online access vis-à-vis subscription database access.

New issue has been published; journal has been doing double issues to catch up year on journal with current year. Journal representatives displayed document showing plans for next two issues: vol. 50, nos. 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2009); and vol. 51, nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2010). Journal is considering moving to electronic only, with print-on-demand option. Avery is working to prepare journal website for move to online-only future status of journal. Journal editors are considering asking editorial board to change the quarterly frequency of *American Studies*.

Discussion of Fall 2010 suggestion to produce journal issue from the Spring 2011 conference. Sherrie has not heard anything along these lines from conference organizers. If organizers propose such an arrangement to Sherrie, it will be considered, but there are no current plans along these lines.

Sherrie updated board on status of the bid process to determine home institution of *American Studies* for next ten years. KU is only bidder, and the deadline has now passed. Editors at KU for *American Studies* are assembling letters from campus supporters on how their support will be continued. KU library now buys 170 print copies per issue, does digitizing of back issues and puts them online, and maintains open-access web system. Randal Jelks has met with a KU dean who is supportive. Editors will be asking for modifications to formal offer from this dean, particularly asking for tuition credits for grad assistants assigned to journal in order to match credits offered to teaching assistants. Editors hope for and expect a strong KU bid. In response to Jane's timeline question, Sherrie commented that the bid is almost completed. Since KU has missed the bid deadline, Sherrie asks, must bid deadline be advertised as being extended for any potential bidder? Ben C. argued that it is fair not to advertise again, because KU announced intention to bid before the deadline, and no other institutions signaled a similar intention.

Barrett moved to give one month extension to KU for its journal bid, with deadline of May 8 and board voting on bid conducted electronically; Laura seconded; APPROVED unanimously.

VIII.) COMMITTEE REPORTS

a.) *Journal Review Process Committee.* Ben C. gave overview of process. Review is now separate from bid process, since the lack of competing bids made having a completed review less central to the bid process. Board was reminded that an electronic board vote had authorized a delay of the review timetable from the schedule adopted at the Fall 2010 board meeting.

Ben C. reported difficulties recruiting members for journal review committee. Matthew Mancini of SLU has agreed to serve; Pauline Turner Strong of UT-Austin has tentatively agreed to serve. Ben C. noted that assembling participants would be easier with a clear-

cut description of the task available to them. Ben C. distributed document with proposed new timetable and process.

Barrett moved to empower Ben C. to take necessary steps to implement the plan in the distributed document; Ben L. seconded the motion. Discussion: Ben L. noted that the review team should be reminded that they are reviewing on behalf of MAASA board, and the health of MAASA finances ought to be an important consideration in their recommendations. Sherrie explained that she and Randal Jelks don't fully understand *American Studies* finances, since previous editor wrote down very little and has not fully informed current editorial staff as to finances and procedures, leading to current confusion. Jane commented that review team should consider how *American Studies* can better interface with and explicitly represent MAASA. Vote: Barrett's motion APPROVED unanimously.

b.) Regional Chapter Committee (ASA). Jane reported discussions with the ASA by the Regional Chapters Committee, an ASA subcommittee. This group noted that it, unlike other committees, did not have a budget. The Regional Chapters Committee determined at its November 2010 meeting to ask the ASA for a budget, to be used in funding graduate student regional prize winners to attend the ASA annual conference. Because the ASA agreed to this request, MAASA will now be able to fund the Katzman-Yetman prize winner to attend the ASA fall conference.

MAASA chapter representative also organized the ASA conference reception. At fall 2010 ASA conference, MAASA saved money by having reception in a hotel room rather than using hotel events room and catering. This reduced attendance because the room number could not be distributed in advance. Several board members noted that large public schools in our region might be willing to co-sponsor the event this year. U-Iowa would like to explore doing so in order to counter still-circulating but incorrect rumors of the demise of their American Studies program. Sherrie noted downside of doing hotel-room informal reception: people who like to "reception-hop" do not attend. Participants suggested having normal events-room reception again, but without food and possibly with free wine and beer. Ben L. noted that someone will need to check costs on having hotel staff provide bartending and free drinks for attendees. It was decided (without a formal resolution) that Kim Marra of U-Iowa would be asked to reserve a reception room soon, so this would appear in ASA conference schedule, and Sherrie volunteered to find out how much it would cost MAASA to hire open bar (wine/beer only) from hotel for such an event.

c.) Katzman-Yetman Award Committee. Prize has been awarded.

d.) Elizabeth Kolmer Prize Committee. Prize has been awarded. Jane asked board permission for using up to \$30 of MAASA funds to order engraved glass for winner. Ben L. moved that permission be granted; Barrett seconded the motion; motion was APPROVED unanimously.

e.) Stone-Suderman Prize Committee. Since journal is not yet current through 2010, award for best journal article could not be given. Committee will wait until next issue comes out.

f.) Nominating Committee. Noted that John Kinder had been elected to MAASA board as an at-large member. Proposed Jeannette Jones of U-Nebraska as at-large board member. Jane moved to approve; Laura seconded the motion; the motion was APPROVED unanimously.

IX.) REVISIONS TO THE MAASA CONSTITUTION

Laura reported on activities of her committee charged with creating constitution update recommendations. These were distributed to MAASA board before meeting; Laura highlighted main features. Discussion on change of term length for *American Studies* editor, and on elimination of set term length for Executive Director, who under new recommendations would simply serve at the pleasure of the board.

Discussion on proposal to eliminate permanent faculty and grad-student board seats for the four regional American Studies Ph.D. programs. Laura noted there is no reason to privilege these programs. Ben L., John, and Sherrie noted that the permanent board seats created obligations for these programs, and thus helped keep them invested. If they aren't expected to send two people, they may stop participating or sending anyone onto board. Laura responded that the four programs are often not supporting organization anyway, given that many do not regularly send people to fill the eight permanent seats, and/or do not fund their board members to attend meetings. This makes it difficult to reach quorum, and eliminating such a permanent seat would create a board where seats are filled by people who want to, and are able to, participate.

Ben C. proposed a solution whereby, if a Ph.D. program does not send a representative for a permanent seat for two consecutive meetings, then an at-large member can be added to the board in the place of that permanent seat, with the Ph.D. program permitted to reclaim its permanent seat only at the expiration of the replacement (at-large) member's term, and only by explicitly stating that it wished to do so. Barrett concurred with the proposal, and noted that U-Minnesota has not sent a faculty representative to a board meeting in recent memory, despite holding a permanent faculty board seat. Laura agreed to create constitution language to reflect this suggestion. Ben L., as secretary, volunteered that once a policy is created that retains sense of obligation from permanent-seat-holding departments but allows elimination of permanent seats for departments not sending representatives, he will write a formal letter to the four Ph.D. program chairs explaining the new policy to them. Laura will develop proposed constitution language and send it to the board for an electronic vote. Discussion was raised on whether the policy will be retroactive, to include recent skipped meetings by permanent-seat holders; board agreed to include one past meeting (the one taking place right now), so that permanent-seat-holding departments would have to send representatives to fall 2011 meeting or risk losing their seats.

Ben C., Sherrie, and Avery expressed a desire for constitution language that more accurately described the relationship between *American Studies* and MAASA.

X.) RESOLUTIONS

a.) Proposed “MAASA Resolution on Labor Rights in a Time of Crisis.” Ben L. had drafted and distributed this proposed resolution to the board via email. On Milton Wendland’s prior suggestion, the phrase “graduate teachers and researchers” was changed to “graduate-student teachers and research assistants.” Laura, while noting strong support for the principles expressed, raised question of whether such a MAASA resolution might create difficulties for certain MAASA-sponsoring departments and programs in particular states due to local political climates. Brief discussion over whether MAASA as 501(c)3 can make all the statements in proposed resolution; Laura drew on her non-profit experience to assure board that it could.

Ben L. moved that board approve proposed resolution and send to MAASA membership meeting to be held Saturday, April 9, with board’s recommendation for membership to approve; Barrett seconded the motion; motion was APPROVED with two abstentions and the rest ayes.

b.) Proposed “Resolution on Labor and MAASA Meetings.” Language of proposed resolution precisely mirrors ASA language its March 2005 resolution. Ben L. supported but suggested deferring discussion to fall 2011 board meeting, due to complexity of issues; opined that hotel contract escape clause in case of ongoing hotel-worker strikes was most important piece. Sherrie and Laura agreed on importance of discussion, noting that it deserved the amount of time that could only be given at fall 2011 meeting. Proposed resolution tabled.

XI.) NOMINATION OF NEW OFFICERS

Jane noted that such nominations are complicated by the potential changes in the constitution. Jane also wants to hear, before officer elections, about institutions that may offer to hold conferences, because schools holding conferences ought to contribute an officer, such as the Vice President. Jane’s term as President ends at this meeting, though. Jane noted that if board members promise to recruit officers, she will continue as President through fall 2011 board meeting, but no further.

Ben C. commented that MAASA can draw in more participants through a meeting at the ASA national conference. Laura concurred that this would make other potential members aware of MAASA. Jane asked that Kim Marra book a room at the ASA conference for a business meeting. Ben L. asked whether this meeting would constitute a board meeting under the proposed new constitution condition penalizing missed meetings by the board’s permanent seat holders. Board decided that any such meeting at the ASA conference would be a membership or business meeting, not a board meeting, thus ensuring that permanent seat holders who missed would not incur any penalties.

Based on the consensus of the board, Jane stated that officer nominations were being set aside until the fall 2011 meeting.

XII.) CONFERENCE PLANNING

Moved to agenda for next board meeting. Board will seek to establish a three-year conference plan in the fall, or else eliminate some conferences.

XIII.) FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Barrett noted his length of service on the board, and that the current meeting was his last as a board member. He noted that he has greatly enjoyed serving, and promised to find a good replacement for the permanent U-Iowa grad-student seat. He thanked all board members for their service. Board members shared with Barrett their gratitude for his fine service.

The board voted to adjourn at 11:40 p.m. CDT.

Mid-America American Studies Association (MAASA)
Spring 2011 General Membership Meeting – Saturday, April 9, 2011
The University Club, University of Wisconsin at Madison

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 p.m. CDT. It was explained by the president that this membership meeting fulfills the condition in Article VIII of the MAASA Constitution that “[t]here shall be an annual meeting of the membership. A quorum shall consist of those members in attendance.”

A motion was made and seconded to confirm the selection of Jeannette Jones of U-Nebraska and John Kinder of Oklahoma State as At-Large board members. The motion was APPROVED unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the changes to the constitution as proposed by Laura Belmonte and the board. The motion was APPROVED unanimously. After the vote, there was discussion among the membership as to whether such an action would require further board action and a further vote at the next membership meeting, in order to comply with Article VII of the MAASA Constitution. This question will be considered by the board, which will make a determination.

A motion was made for the membership to adopt and endorse the proposed “MAASA Resolution on Labor Rights in a Time of Crisis,” which the board approved last night. The motion was seconded and APPROVED unanimously. The text will be distributed via the MAASA website, H-Net, and other channels.

The membership voted to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. CDT.