Target Organization Application Form

Those suggesting organizations for the council to consider for a liaison relationship should complete and submit an application packet that includes:

1. a cover letter
2. a completed application (below)
3. brief description of organization (number/type of members date founded, address and URL)
4. and a minimum of three letters of support (letters from, for example, relevant ACRL committees, sections, roundtables, ACRL leadership and, when possible, the targeted association)

The application packet content should describe–in short–why the organization should be an ACRL liaison organization. Once complete, application packets should be submitted to acrl@ala.org

ACRL Council of Liaisons

Application submitted by: James R. Kelly, David Oberhelman, Sarah G. Wenzel

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Name/Title of Organization/Association, etc;

Modern Language Association of America

Organization Mailing Address:

26 Broadway, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10004-1789

Phone: (646) 576-5000; Fax: (646) 458-0030
E-Mail: execdirector@mla.org

Organization Web Address: http://www.mla.org

1. Contact within Organization (if applicable): Rosemary G. Feal, Executive Director,
   execdirector@mla.org or Barbara Chen, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and
   Editor, *MLA International Bibliography*, bchen@mla.org.

2. How was this organization identified for the ACRL Council of Liaisons application?

   There has been a burgeoning interest in the mutually related areas of endeavor of the MLA and
   ACRL (particularly the Literatures in English Section (LES) and the Western European Studies
   Section (WESS)) since at least 1975 when the first WESS Newsletter recommended "... a
   possible affiliation with the Modern Language Association."
   (http://wess.lib.byu.edu/index.php/WESS_Newsletter_January_1975) While the MLA and ACRL
   have not yet established a formal relationship, members of both organizations share interests
   and work together on an *ad hoc* basis.

   An area of sustained collaboration and development has been on the *Modern Language
   Association International Bibliography* (*MLAIB*).   By the early 1980's, librarians became
   increasingly curious about the effects of computer technologies (especially as evidenced by the
   Modern Language Association International Bibliography (*MLAIB*) on libraries, indexing
   organizations, and scholarly research. As LES and WESS grew, so too did their interest in the
   evolution of the *MLAIB*. Meetings at ALA annual and midwinter began to include regular reports
   from the editor of that publication/database.

   As the years have passed and technological advances have become an increasingly integral part
   of librarianship (in particular with the advent of the Internet), it is clear that strong and active
   lines of communication between such entities as the MLA and the ACRL will bring discernible
   benefits. Those benefits clearly include the development, enhancement, and expansion of the
   MLAIB and its thoroughgoing and effective implementation in academic libraries. However, as
   research becomes more interdisciplinary, the *MLAIB* is no longer the sole tool used by literature

faculty, and it is important for libraries and the MLA to have a forum to discuss other resources and methods of research.

The 'digital humanities' are an increasingly important area for collaboration between librarians and faculty. As faculty research develops in directions that rely on digital resources from libraries, e .g., collections of digitized texts, and look to libraries for guidance in the creation of metadata and preservation of ephemeral digital entities, it is crucial that the MLA and ACRL share information about trends, best practices and, as organizations, advocate for recognition of new forms of scholarly communication.

The discussion of open-access publishing in relationship to the humanities is relatively new, and it behooves ACRL and the MLA to join in the discourse as stakeholders in academic production, both as producers and consumers of scholarship. The two organizations have much experience to add to the ongoing debates and much interest in the outcome.

Changes in teaching, both in pedagogy and content, also affect both organizations. Much information literacy instruction occurs in introductory-level English classes; however, as yet there has not been a concerted effort of ACRL and the MLA in support of librarians and faculty instructors.

As a result of these common interests, an increasing number of ALA members have become members of the MLA. In addition, quite a few of those dual members have gone on to serve as field bibliographers for the *MLAIB* , to sit on the Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*, or to sign the pending petition calling for MLA to add a library interest group. Librarians also regularly present at the MLA Annual Convention on critical bibliographic issues in the literary field, such as the MLAIB, and other related topics.

3. In what ways does the target organization reflect a direction of ACRL as articulated in ACRL's Strategic Plan (be specific, citing Plan statements)?

    Pursuing a partnership with the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) reflects the following goals and strategic areas:

    Strategic Area: Higher Education and Research

    A. Goal Area: Learning

        Strategic Objective 2: Strengthen ACRL's relationships with higher education organizations that are important to faculty, administrators, and scholars in order to develop institutional understanding of librarians' roles in enhancing teaching and learning.

B. Goal Area: Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity

Strategic Objective 1: Strengthen ACRL's role in serving as a catalyst for and supporting transformative change in scholarly communication systems.

Strategic Objective 3: Enhance ACRL members' understanding of how scholars work and the systems, tools, and technology to support the evolving work of the creation, personal organization, aggregation, discovery, preservation, access and exchange of information in all formats.

Strategic Objective 4: Strengthen ACRL's relationships with learned societies to expand membership knowledge of disciplinary practices in scholarship.

C. Goal Area: Advocacy

Strategic Objective 3: Strengthen partnerships with other organizations.

Strategic Objective 7: Expand ACRL research on the value of the library, the value of the librarian, and the value of information.

Strategic Area: The Profession

A. Goal Area: Continuous Learning

Strategic Objective 5: Continue to play a leadership role in promoting research and publication in academic and research librarianship thereby creating and disseminating tools and a body of knowledge for the field.

B. Goal Area: Leadership

Strategic Objective 3: Increase recognition of the value of libraries and librarians by leaders in higher education, information technology, funding agencies, and campus decision makers.

C. Goal Area: Information Technology

Strategic Objective 2: Build ACRL's capacity to partner with other technology-oriented higher education organizations to identify standards and best practices for managing digital libraries and digital library services.

Strategic Area: The Association

A. Goal Area: Organizational Vitality and Effectiveness

Strategic Objective 3: Increase and improve ACRL's organizational use of information technology.

4. Describe the alignment in the vision, strategy, and goals between the target organization and ACRL.

The MLA and ACRL declare similar visions on their respective websites regarding learning, teaching and research. ACRL is 'dedicated to enhancing the ability of academic library and information professionals to serve the information needs of the higher education community and to improve learning, teaching, and research.' The MLA, for its part, 'provides opportunities for its members to share their scholarly findings and teaching experiences with colleagues and to discuss trends in the academy…[and works] to strengthen the study and teaching of language and literature.' They are both dedicated to supporting scholarship and promoting access to information and resources necessary for education and research.

Given the constant pressure and increasing need to be aware of what our academic clientele is doing, the directions in which their research is going, and the ways in which technology is being developed and implemented now and in years to come, the more contact that can be fostered among the academics who comprise the MLA, the librarians who represent the ACRL, and the systems developers and vendors who upgrade and market such tools as the *MLAIB*, the better will be the circumstances and outlook for us all.

5. What current issues do the target organization and ACRL share? In what ways will an ACRL liaison with this organization advance academic library issues?

Both organizations need to work within the constraints of diminished times and circumstances. Budgets are tight and disposable income is scant, and yet the promise of technological innovations is such that much can be accomplished nonetheless. But what needs to be accomplished and how best to address those issues (information literacy, Web. 2.0, distance learning, discoverability of online resources, decisions on what to digitalize and preserve, etc.) can most usefully and powerfully be confronted by cooperation and collaboration between the ACRL and the various professional organizations and societies which represent teaching and research faculty. However, the ACRL and the MLA are very much aware of each other, that intelligence of one another's doings is by no means as widespread or as deeply linked as it could or should be. Neither organization can fully realize its goals in isolation from the other, and while there have been informal connections for years, there now need to be formal ties and formal lines of communication in both directions so that we can plan together to anticipate future developments rather than merely react together to the challenges of the present.

6. How would this relationship position ACRL/academic libraries to address and prepare for future issues facing the library and information profession and/or related professions?

A formal relationship between the two organizations will foster increased dialogue on critical issues facing both libraries and academe today. Both the MLA and ACRL have committed many resources to studying trends in scholarly communication and in the academic publishing market. Increased communication between the two groups will allow academic librarians, literary scholars, and publishers to discuss the future of scholarly research and information exchange in the humanities. Thus they may jointly explore the complex issues involving print and online journals, trends in monographic publishing, alternatives to traditional publishing models, and the increasingly important role of digital collections in this time of shrinking materials budgets and changes in the academic publishing market. Better ties between the organizations will encourage increased cooperation in assessing the information needs of faculty and students in the literary fields. It will enable us to address collaboratively shared areas of concern such as support for the difficult academic job market, information literacy standards for literature students, improved bibliographic control of publications in literary studies, the ongoing development of indexes and database resources such as the *MLAIB* and vendor products, and the use of Web 2.0 and other technologies to facilitate the exchange of information in the humanities. At a time when libraries as well as English and foreign language departments face many challenges in funding and in (re)defining their roles within the academy, a partnership between ACRL and the MLA will help librarians and academics support each other professionally as they work on common goals.

7. What are the specific goals and planned outcomes of the liaison relationship with the target organization?

Our overarching goal is to build formal lines of communication between the MLA and ACRL, in order to fulfill our goals of strengthening the MLA-ACRL relationship, articulating common areas of interest, jointly creating initiatives that benefit both organizations, presenting a united front to publishers on issues of access and cost, raising the profile of librarians among the faculty and scholars we serve, and exploring new opportunities for collaboration.

For the short-term, e.g., one-three years, planned outcomes :

- Identify specific areas of interest of concern to both the MLA and ACRL
- Together address one or more of those areas
- Advocate for a forum at the MLA conference for the discussion of open access
- Advocate for a broadly-based program at the ACRL conference to discuss changes in humanities scholarship and faculty tenure

Over the long-term, planned outcomes :

- Increase organizational support from the MLA for libraries, and issues surrounding access to information
- Increase awareness among MLA members of the need for, and library role in, digital curation and preservation
- In conjunction with other initiatives, support and advocate for publishing models that fill the needs of both faculty and librarians
- Identify needs for information literacy and discuss discipline-specific criteria, seeking endorsement from the MLA

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