

Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
Business Meeting
Saturday, May 14, 2011

The SSML Business Meeting was called to order by SSML President Lawrence Moe.

President Moe recapped the events of the Executive Council meeting in conjunction with the people who had made the original reports:

Ken Grant reported on conference attendance. He indicated that 96 people presented at the conference and another dozen or more attended and paid. Twenty-four graduate and undergraduate students attended. Only four to date have submitted documentation for up to \$100 in SSML matching funds. Questions arose over the costs to SSML and the options for SSML support for students not receiving assistance from their colleges/universities. The Executive Council voted to continue the current system of student scholarships.

Marcia Noe reported on SSML publications, which are on-schedule and with guest edited *Midwestern Miscellanies* scheduled through fall 2012.

Marcia called the Executive Council's attention to the Contest Entry Form for this year, which failed to include the expected instruction that, in the case of the Student Prize, Essay Prize, and Creative Prose Prize, entries should be no longer than 15 pages or 3,750 words, whichever is less. Marcia said that it is essential that this instruction about word limits be included in the Contest Entry Form in the future, as previously discussed and endorsed by the Executive Council. She noted that we were able to include only the top four peer-reviewed essays in *MidAmerica* 2009, with 44 pages devoted to prize winners.

Marcia reported to the Executive Committee on the vote taken by the SSML Publication Committee supporting consideration of a contract with Ebsco Online to make SSML publications available to subscribing university libraries. At issue are: the potential loss of libraries with institutional subscriptions for SSML publications in paper if electronic copies are available to schools, the ongoing loss of institutional subscriptions being experienced by SSML, the interest in making SSML publications more widely available, and the potential royalty payments to SSML by Ebsco. Marcia supported the possibility of a contract with Ebsco, but she also emphasized the importance of maintaining a paper version of SSML publications because she feels journals operating only electronically are not widely respected. The Executive Council voted, as the Publications Committee had, to pass consideration of an SSML-Ebsco contract forward to the SSML corporate board.

Those present at the Business Meeting were positive on passing a contract with Ebsco forward to the Corporate Board for consideration.

When asked about alternatives to Ebsco, Roger Bresnahan reported that SSML had approached JSTOR five years ago, but they weren't interested because, in their view, SSML is too small.

Marilyn Atlas reported on the 2010 SSML prizes and on MLA and M/MLA sessions. (See Report on 2010 Prizes.) She reported that there were not enough applicants to award the Jill Barnum Midwestern Heritage Prize for Literary Criticism. Andy Oler of Indiana University won the David Diamond Student Writing Prize with his paper: "Accentuated by the wavering uncertain light": Sherwood Anderson's

Construction of Rural Modernity." Paul Stebleton of Lake Ann, Michigan, won the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Prize for his poem "Cutting the Cord or Leaving Factory." James Marlow of the University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth won the Paul Somers Prize for Creative Prose with his entry, "First Vision of Baseball." No honorable mentions were awarded in any category.

Marilyn Atlas reported on M/MLA 2010 and MLA 2011. (See Report on M/MLA & MLA 2010.) M/MLA met in Chicago with SSML sponsoring two sessions, "Literature, Terror, and the Unconventional Midwest" and "Heartlessness in the Heartland—Midwestern Literature and the Lure of the Grotesque." MLA met in January 2011 with SSML sponsoring one session, "Narrating Lives and Midwestern Literary Self-Consciousness: Writers in Search of a Midwest." SSML had sought a second MLA session but it was narrowly disapproved. In 2011 M/MLA will be in St. Louis. SSML currently has one session: "Beyond Mark Twain: Humor in Midwestern Literature." Another SSML session at M/MLA is possible, this one on "Comparative Literary Humor: Does Midwest Literary Humor Have a Unique Flavor?" If SSML members are interested in participating in the second session, they should let Marilyn know.

SSML has submitted the topic: "Americanism, Nativism, and/or Xenophobia in Midwestern Literature" for its guaranteed session. A non-guaranteed session on Paul Laurence Dunbar was organized and written up by Tracy Collins (and Ronald Primeau) and submitted by Marilyn Atlas (since our May 2011 SSML meeting; MLA informed us that this proposal was rejected by a substantial margin).

Roger Bresnahan reported on SSML membership and finances. (See the two financial handouts: SSML Results of Operation and SSML Membership and Receivables.) He said SSML is holding about even financially if payments by people whose dues are in arrears for one or two years are counted. SSML has a reserve fund of approximately \$50,000. It came to SSML largely through the bequest of Jane Bakerman. He hopes that others will do the same. He discussed ways for people to contribute to SSML or to make SSML part of their estate planning.

Sara Kosiba and Lawrence Moe discussed the mentoring café, which operated this year for the fourth successful year. Graduate students attending found the mentoring very helpful in a down job market. Plans are to continue this effort and to promote it more widely as a desirable SSML conference element.

Laura Julier reported that all was well with the SSML webpages. One area of concern was raised regarding the Society's webpages, the unavailability of conference information and functioning payment apparatus on the website when the call for papers came out. Efforts will be made to ensure that the website is ready early for the 2012 conference.

Phil Greasley reported on the progress of volume two of the Dictionary of Midwestern Literature. He indicated that the editorial board expects to finish the writing and review of all entries during calendar 2010. Currently 102 of nearly 130 entries in the volume are finished or very close to finished. Many more are close behind. The editorial board was slowed by defaults on a small number of critical entries. The board, however, is overcoming those issues and moving forward. The editorial board will meet Saturday after the SSML conference and continue on Sunday.

The Executive Council nominated Christian Knoeller for President Elect, to become President after Nancy Bunge, who becomes SSML President at the end of the 2011 SSML conference. Jeffrey Swenson and Dawn Comer were nominated for three-year terms on the Executive Council.

President Moe put forward the slate for SSML President Elect, Christian Knoeller, and Executive Committee Members, Jeffrey Swenson and Dawn Comer.

All were elected by acclamation. At the end of the May 2011 SSML conference Nancy Bunge becomes SSML president for the 2011-2012 year.

Sara Kosiba requested a subvention from SSML in support of the upcoming International Hemingway Conference in Petoskey in 2012. (See the Gmail e-mail from Sara to Roger Bresnahan.) The Executive Council supported a \$250 subvention.

Members present at the Business Meeting supported the \$250 subvention.

Roger Bresnahan briefly discussed the options for SSML fundraising. His first suggestion for fundraising was renewing the availability of life SSML memberships. Levels of payment were discussed. Suggestions ranged from 20 to 25 times the current annual membership with the price of life memberships rising in that same proportion as annual membership rates, now \$45, increase. The Executive Council voted to support reinstatement of life memberships at a current rate of \$900, with the cost of new life memberships rising at 20 times the then current annual membership rate.

Members present at the Business Meeting supported passing the renewed life memberships to the Corporate Board for consideration.

President Lawrence Moe adjourned the meeting.

Phil Greasley
Recording Secretary