

The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature
General Membership Meeting
Saturday, May 12, 2012

President Nancy Bunge called the meeting to order.

The membership voted Sara Kosiba SSML President-Elect, to become President in May 2013. The membership also voted Mary Catherine Harper and James Marlow to three-year terms on the Executive Advisory Council, with terms running from May 2013 to May 2016.

SSML publications are up to date. See Marcia Noe's written report.

The SSML Website and Facebook pages are working well. You can read the latter without joining Facebook. The SSML Facebook page has received over 130 "likes." Lawrence Moe sends e-mails to all students for the Mentoring Café. Sara Kosiba proposed featuring the Mentoring Café more on the SSML Facebook page.

Lawrence Moe reported that the Mentoring Café enjoyed a good session, with 13 people attending including seven or eight graduate students. He recommended continuing it and said that some students from last year returned to it this year.

Sandra Seaton suggested adding a listserv for the Mentoring Café, but there was less than complete agreement on this. The question was asked, "Who will host and maintain it? It might be better to do a one-shot e-mail announcing it, or a bulletin board posting."

Ken Grant reported on conference attendance, saying that 109 people attended, including 18 students. Eight students have requested matching funds. It was commented that we achieved this year's total number of participants in the absence of some people who are typically here every year. Among those are Joanne Isbey (and her contingent), Leonora Smith and her students, Marcia Noe and her students, Jim Gorman, and a contingent from Lansing Community College. Marilyn Atlas suggested sending notes to each of these people who typically attend but who are not here this year inviting them to return next year. Mary Obuchowski suggested the importance of also recruiting new people. She suggested that personal contact is very important and said that positive responses to people's readings tend to make new people feel welcome and valued.

Christian and Sara both emphasized the value of connecting with other writers' groups.

John Rohrkemper reported that the literary criticism sessions were stable but that the creative nonfiction, poetry, and fiction sessions were smaller. Ed Morin agreed, saying that the poet numbers are down. He proposed having a session of performance poets (as opposed to more literary poets)—people like M. L. Liebler.

Sandra Seaton suggested having an online publication for the poets, creative nonfiction and fiction writers, those not publishable in SSML's current publications. Sara Kosiba responded that doing so might not translate into increased conference attendance.

Sara Kosiba cautioned that unless we have an official webmaster, it's unwise to push too much onto it, particularly with shifting postings.

Christian Knoeller emphasized the importance of: 1) parity between the critical and creative sessions, 2) boosting membership and conference attendance, and 3) not putting too many resources into high maintenance efforts.

Ed Morin called the group's attention to the fact that in the past SSML published an anthology after each annual conference. Leonora Smith and others were involved with it in the past (until 2006). Ed called on SSML to restart that.

Mary Minock suggested the value of creating links to local writers' groups.

Marilyn Atlas reported that the MLA and M/MLA panels are in good shape. She asked people to look at the SSML website to see the panels and also to write to her with ideas for panels. Marilyn said that it is too late this year to be part of this year's panels; the deadline was April 1.

Marilyn also emphasized the importance of those giving papers to get copies of them to her so that they can be considered for awards.

Sandra Seaton suggested that when proposals are received, SSML should send out to those sending the proposals, welcoming them, and telling them about conference and membership charges. Ken Grant responded that this is already being done.

Roger Bresnahan, in his treasurer's report, indicated that the Society ended 2011 more than \$5,000 in the black.

Ed Morin suggested that there is currently nothing on the program for Thursday evening. He suggested having a social gathering on the first evening of the conference. Ken Grant agreed that Thursday evening is empty; he saw the value of moving some presentations from Friday to after 5:30 on Thursday.

The membership meeting adjourned.

Phil Greasley
SSML Recording Secretary