Gone are the days of slow summers, and the board has been very busy. Our new and very talented Membership Management Team facilitated renewals and processed the appointments to committees, offices, and task forces. As part of this process, and looking ahead to next spring, I formed and am appointing search committees for upcoming vacancies: Advertising Manager, Assistant Convention Manager, and Assistant Web Manager. The incumbents in these positions are hard acts to follow but I know we’ll discover new talent and continue our growth cycle of offering new opportunities to our members (and benefiting from their leadership).

Publicity officer: after several searches, we’ve decided to suspend the position and absorb the tasks as follows: social media posting to newsletter editor (a logical pairing, as news is moving toward a blog-style format); networking events to organizational liaisons (pending a refresh of expired positions); and library school presentations to Membership Committee, board members, perhaps others yet to be identified. We thank Jacey Kepich for her flexibility and willingness to expand her editorship midstream.

I submitted the IAML-US branch annual report and had the immense privilege of attending the first in-person IAML in three years, in stunning Prague. The location was well worth the long wait – the city is beautiful and organizers built tours and concerts into our itinerary. Amid the overwhelmingly lovely locale, we also learned much from our colleagues about Czech music, libraries, and musicians. Attending the forum of national representatives is always illuminating, as many branches struggle with declining memberships and must learn new ways to transform networking and services. We discussed the SUCHO initiative to preserve Ukrainian cultural heritage and discussed other ways that MLA may join IAML in supporting Ukraine. Pia Shekhter (IAML president) has contacted librarians in Ukraine to assess needs, and my hope is that we can collaborate with IAML’s outreach and development committees to offer donations as libraries begin to rebuild.

Circling back to newly formed groups, in the spring the Committee Recruitment Task Force submitted their compelling report, recommending a new team that will gather committee vacancies and coordinate the appointments process (with chairs and the President) using a common application, and undergirded by DEIA principles. They were charged with improving our appointments structure aimed at increasing representation, transparency. I’ve begun drafting (with enormous input from Erin Conor and her task force) a charge for a new Committee
Management Team and a yearly calendar. This shall be handed off to an inaugural team, once appointed.

On September 28 we shall hold the second of a series of “get involved in MLA leadership” town halls. This instance covers officers and editors, and will feature presentations by both sides of house, ample discussion/questions, and outline of the search process. The last of this series will be for committee chairs but at this point, it will be more productive if we delay for the rollout of new appointments process (this may require some patience).

Having met with the President-Elect, Planning Officers, and Diversity and Equity and Inclusion chairs about many areas of overlapping strategic work, I plan to soon issue an open call for a working group to revise our Code of Conduct to cover all MLA activity (beyond annual meetings).

We have reached the end of our three-year pilot of the Student/Early Career representative position and we eagerly await the outcome of the nominating committee call for candidates for the first incumbent in the permanent position (2-year cycle), as an elected, voting member of the board. I am working with Elizabeth Uchimura (the last of our pilot representatives) and Parliamentarians to prepare text for the administrative handbook as well as training materials for the (anticipated) newly-elected representative.

Strategic Planning alignments:

Objective 3.4: Reflect DEIA principles in MLA’s leadership, membership, core values, mission, strategies and operations. Devote resources to clarifying and strengthening the “E” and “I” in DEIA.

In addition to all of the above, I’d like to mention a few budding ideas that will (hopefully) improve our ability to be inclusive and equitable in our dealings with members. One is a small restructuring of the conference membership business meeting. In 2023 we’ll experiment with holding a separate town hall for new business (without the restrictions of Roberts’ Rules of Order, which have become a barrier to participation in recent years). I have scheduled a meeting with ALA’s President-Elect to explore options around inclusive governance and ombuds services (obtaining them as part of building an infrastructure for reporting microaggressions and the like). This issue (hosting a complaint forum) has come up repeatedly in our public discussion and in our strategic planning and we value doing better.

Respectfully submitted,

Liza Vick, President (2021-2023)