

MLA Diversity Statement

Central to the Music Library Association's (MLA) [mission](#) to “support, preserve, and enhance equitable access to the world's musical heritage” is the diversity and inclusivity of the people, collections, and activities surrounding that access and heritage.

Colonialism, imperialism, white supremacy, and other sociocultural constructs have shaped the history of librarianship and are still marginalizing forces today. In recognition of the need to create a diverse and welcoming environment for all members, we must acknowledge and dismantle systemic oppression in our profession, libraries, and MLA. This work is inherently difficult and uncomfortable, but this pain pales in comparison to the effects of discrimination borne daily by people from underrepresented and marginalized communities.

Substantive action that has historically been lacking is imperative, and this means going beyond improving numbers and appearances. We must address existing and emerging forms of inequity; honor the multiplicity of world- and sense-making voices and experiences; and eliminate barriers to participation and resources.

Understanding the components of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) and the values that they encompass promotes a shared sense of what these fundamental concepts mean in MLA. In this context, these terms are manifested as follows:

Inclusion

- We execute proactive efforts throughout MLA to cultivate an inclusive organization and climate directed at protecting the most vulnerable people from harm and encouraging them to reach their full potential.

Diversity

- We have an expansive definition of diversity that begins with sociocultural factors related to individual and community identity, including, but not limited to, race, color, ethnicity, nationality; sex, gender, sexuality; marital status, pregnancy, family relationship(s); disability; age; genetic information; religion; military or veteran status; and political beliefs.
- We represent all types of library professionals and seek members from the full range of repository types and sizes; employment classifications and ranks (including student workers); specializations and job duties; and geographic areas.
- We know that diversity is more than increasing numeric representation, such as by implementing changes to recruitment and hiring; everyone must feel welcomed and supported during their entire career, if not before and after, and including any period of unemployment.

Equity

- We provide equitable access to opportunities, such as leadership, funding, education, and awards, and allocate our resources accordingly.
- We advocate for fair pay, benefits, and labor practices for all library workers, including students and those without a library degree and anyone [precariously employed](#).
- We work to remove policies and practices that cause inequity in music librarianship with the ambition of achieving justice and liberation within the field.

Accessibility

- We prioritize accessibility in planning because we agree that it is impossible to fully include those who do not have equal or equivalent access.

In accordance with these ideals, we and our business and organizational partners will abide by the [Code of Conduct](#) and embrace the following inclusive behaviors:

- Responsible listening: listening to the needs of current and potential members and responding accordingly.
- Fostering a shared intergenerational curiosity: being curious about and open to other ways of knowing and doing; continuously engaging in learning focused on comprehending and disassembling oppressive structures; and sharing this inquisitiveness with current and future generations (of boards, committees, members, etc.).
- Celebrating difference: actively seeking out, valuing, and celebrating diverse voices and experiences (both internal and external to MLA) and enabling them to aid in the development and implementation of MLA's strategic goals.
- Embracing a culture of care, courage, and grace: nurturing an organizational culture that centers an ethic of care as a guiding principle for all proposals and actions, fosters the courage to question long-held (albeit flawed) worldviews and challenge authority, and grants grace and guidance when honest missteps are made.

We recognize the responsibilities of citizenship inherent in our individual membership in MLA, and also in the variety of other groups that we belong to and interact with as professionals. As both individuals and members of a collective, we embed these principles within MLA, whether as an association, chapter, committee, interest group, task force, or board; whether in-person or virtual; within our institutions, libraries, and communities; and with our users and colleagues in various circles. They also govern MLA's interactions and business dealings with, but not limited to, annual meeting venues; communities of whom we are guests; financial investments; sponsors, vendors, and exhibitors; publishers; and web hosting platforms.

We strive to be a community in which everyone can thrive and openly and safely engage with their peers, encountering no obstacles that stem from any aspect of their lived experience or identities. Members' voices will be heard with respect for the fact that a multiplicity of viewpoints creates an environment that is more fair, just, and effective. We commit to examining, reflecting

upon, and eradicating discriminatory policies that have maintained inequity within MLA, as well as discriminatory ideas that have substantiated those policies.

This work is continuous and iterative, and statements alone are insufficient to accomplish our aspirations. In support of and in response to the [Strategic Plan](#), MLA will establish specific objectives to enhance IDEA, and this blueprint will be assessed and revised annually by the IDEA Committee in cooperation with the Board of Directors. This is to ensure accountability and relevance, with the aim of imbuing IDEA into every action at every level of MLA.

This statement was originally written in 2021 by the Diversity Statement Working Group of the MLA Diversity Committee. The below listed resources were collected during the course of their duties and are cited here for influencing their work. These statements were written with a view towards the broader library, archives, and museum communities and are the result of the labor of many individuals and groups.

References

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