Minutes – American Comparative Literature Association Board Meeting
New York NY 20 March 2014 1 PM-5 PM

1. Managing Growth, I: Conference Acceptance Structures (40 mins) Our conference has grown very rapidly, from 1000 participants at Princeton in 2006, to over three thousand today, and concerns have been expressed regarding whether the increased size of the conference has led to a decline in the quality of the conference experience for participants, and on how to ensure strong, cohesive, seminars continue to emerge from our selection process even at this larger size. There was an extensive conversation on these issues, with the following provisional decisions reached, with areas for further discussion noted in parentheses:

1. The ACLA will announce four rules, and one strong preference, for seminar proposals:

a. Rule #1: No seminar can include more than 2 (or 3??) people from the same institution

b. Rule #2: Seminars are limited to 50 percent participation from graduate students. (Must include faculty?) (Seminars should achieve a balance of scholars at different stages of the profession, and may include graduate students (up to 50%).")

c. Rule #3: Seminars must have at least one organizer who has a Ph.D., or other terminal degree in their field. (must normally?) (ABD? Or work with someone more experienced? Connection with listing of participants in advance?)

d. Rule #4: 3-day seminars must have 10-13 participants; 2-day seminars must have 7-9 participants

e. Preference: Seminars should include some graduate student participants.

2. People will propose seminars with a 150-word description and title **online, prior to submission deadline.** They will also be asked to list committed participants (if any, **3-5**), along with their names, ranks, institutions, and paper titles**, or previous ACLA participation.** These proposals will be due about 6 months before the conference.

2. A Conference Committee of 6-9 people, constituted mainly by people from the host institution (and possibly one or two at-large ACLA members???), will review all seminar proposals. The ACLA Program Committee will, based upon its knowledge of the conference venue's capacity and the number of total proposals, communicate clearly to the Conference Committee an ideal number of seminars to accept. (For example if we have 300 seminar proposals and room for roughly 100 3-day seminars [=1200 people] and 50 2-day seminars [=400 people] we will say so.) Seminars will be accepted or rejected as two- or three-day seminars.

We will ask the committee to make sure that each seminar proposal is read by at least TWO people. (This means for instance if we get 300

seminar proposals, that's 600 readings, meaning 100 seminar proposals per person on a 6-person committee, or 67/person for a 9-person one.) (question about whether it's an explicit goal of this process to reduce the size of the conference, or whether our goal is to enhance quality, accepting possible reduction in size as a risk).

4. Once the seminars have been accepted/rejected, all accepted seminars will be posted on the ACLA website (5 months from the conference). Each seminar will be assigned TAGS (animal studies, Slavic literature, theory, medieval, etc.) to allow for searching/sorting by tag/area. (These tags will be chosen by seminar proposers; over time we'll develop a pretty standard array of tags just by collecting the ones people propose.) (administrative need to make deadline earlier than it currently is – possible seminar deadline of Sept. 1 or 15)

5. ACLA members will then be able to submit proposals to individual seminars. Up to three submissions will be allowed per individual, but there will be no general pool for submissions. Individual seminar leaders will compose their own panels of 7-13 people, following the general guidelines/rules. We will have a 4-6 week period to submit/evaluate proposals, after which they seminar leaders will notify the ACLA of their final lineups, including one week after deadline to sort out multiple submissions, etc.

6. The full listing of accepted seminars, with participants/titles, will appear on the ACLA website 3.5-4 months before the conference.

a. **Workshops:** Another initiative to improve the conference experience for participants will be a new series of workshops, to be held on the Thursday of the conference, some open to the membership at large, others requiring registration, on a number of topics of intellectual and professional interest to our members. An example will be Tom Beebee's workshop on article publication for graduate students, which has generated considerable interest. Proposals would be welcomed for workshops on teaching, job market, technology. Workshops might be targeted at chairs, DGS's, DUS's. They might focus on teaching in translation, or other pedagogical issues. Members should be able to propose workshops, with the board organizing some, and others encouraged to do so. Workshops on unconventional and innovative themes would be encouraged. Some might require pre-registration. There will be no barrier to both running a workshop and presenting a paper at the same conference.

2. Managing Growth, II: Conference administration and organization (40 mins). A number of issues were discussed relating to improving the efficiency of the organization and its administration at this increased scale. It was agreed that the program committee needs to become more involved in the running of the conference, in order to improve the consistency of the conference experience from year to year. A Sept. 1 seminar submission deadline, and an Oct. 1 paper submission deadline, will improve the efficiency of the approval process, and will ensure that information is received and handled in a timely fashion. Email headers will be revised to spell out contents of messages more clearly. The possibility of moving from a volunteer Secretary-Treasurer to a paid Executive Director (at a time when funds permit) was also discussed.

3. **MLA Commons** (10 mins). The question of whether the ACLA should join the MLA's experimental expansion of MLA Commons to Humanities Commons was discussed. The Secretary-Treasurer reported on a meeting held at MLA headquarters to this effect. Questions of cost were raised as an issue – how much expense, including, long-term, for maintenance, would the ACLA be taking on? It was agreed to defer the discussion until more information on costs was available.
4. **Helen Tartar / First book subvention** (30 mins). It was agreed to name the First Book Subvention after Helen Tartar, in recognition of her instrumental role in launching so many first books in our field, and to solicit donations in order to place the subvention on a firmer financial footing.
5. **ACLA 2019/2020 locations** (10 mins) Possible locations discussed included San Juan, the Research Triangle, DC, Philadelphia, and Texas. Various board members agreed to report back on conversations with colleagues at relevant institutions.
6. **State of the Discipline report update** (10 mins). The report is making satisfactory progress, and lots of content is being prepared. Association members are urged to submit their own contributions to the site, as well as to comment on the pieces already on the website.
7. **Finance (20 mins).** In general, the organization's finances are strong, as a result in particular of a larger-than-usual conference. In terms of larger-scale questions, it was agreed that there was a need for conversation between the ACLA program committee and local organizing committee about plenaries, fees, and special events, in order to maintain greater consistency in finances from year to year.
8. **Fee structure (20 mins):** A modified fee structure was agreed to, as below.
Proposed fee structure:

Proposed Membership:	Current Membership structure:		
Student/under $40k: $30	Student/Ind. Scholar:		$30
$40-80k: $60	under $40k:		$40
$80k+: $90	$40-80k:		$60
	$80-100k: $75		
	$100k+: $85		

Proposed Conference registration:	Current Conference Registration:		
Student/under $40k: $60	Graduate Student: $60		
$40k-$80k: $120	Independent Scholar:		$85
$80k+: $160	Faculty: $120		

9. **Nominations committee policy update** (10 mins) It was agreed to move up the dates for ACLA board elections, with nominations due before Christmas so that they could be discussed at the ACLA board meeting at MLA, prior to elections being held in January-February.
10. Journals (10 mins). The publications committee chair gave an update on the current status of negotiations with journals.
11. ACLx 2014 (10 mins) An ACLx conference will be held this fall on the USC campus in Columbia, SC, with $10 000 granted by the Association towards the conference.

12. Graduate Student representatives (10 mins). Graduate student representatives updated the board on their activities, including their plans for the upcoming conference.

Respectfully submitted,
Alexander Beecroft,
Secretary-Treasurer