

MISSISSIPPI LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
Executive Board Minutes  
May 8, 2020

Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
Mississippi

**Call to Order:**

The May meeting of the Executive Board of the Mississippi Library Association was called to order by Mary Beth Applin, President, at 11:03 a.m. on Friday, May 8, 2020, via virtual meeting utilizing the Zoom Application.

**Roll Call/Signature List of Attending Members:**

Present – Mary Beth Applin, President; Mara Polk, Vice-President; Tamara Blackwell, Secretary; Lori Barnes, Treasurer; Sarah Crisler-Ruskey, Immediate Past President; Patsy Brewer, Parliamentarian; Meredith Wickham; and Ashley Dees.

Others Present – Paula Bass; Phillip Carter; Angela Mullins; Stephen Parks; Kate Distro; Rachelle Moore; Jennifer Smith; Amanda Clay Powers; Caroline Barnett; Tori Linville Hopper; Jesse Pool; Janessa Ullendorf; Mac Buntin; Joy Dubose; Jennifer Todd; Carrie-Ann Pierson; Tina Harry; Dawn Collins; and Rickey Jones.

**Approval of the Agenda:**

**MOTION: To adopt the agenda for the May 8, 2020, meeting of the MLA Executive Board as written.**

**Made by: Mara Polk                      Second: Meredith Wickham**  
**Passed unanimously**

**Approval of Minutes:**

**MOTION: To adopt the Minutes for the March 6, 2020, Board meeting of the MLA Executive Board as sent out via email.**

**Made by: Lori Barnes                      Second: Jennifer Smith**  
**Passed unanimously**

**MLA Officers and Staff Reports:**

Secretary:     Tamara Blackwell – no report.

Treasurer:     Lori Barnes reported that about \$700-\$800 of income could not be broken down into a category and reminded the Board that switching to a virtual only conference or cancelling it will greatly affect the budget. [See attached budget statement.]

President: Mary Beth Applin reported that she sent two letters as MLA President reporting on library closures and other library issues caused by COVID-19. She noted that these closures were also posted to the website, which will be updated as libraries across the state begin to reopen. She applauded Amanda Clay Powers for putting together the map with library wi-fi availability throughout the state.

Mary Beth reported that Kate Dutro sent out a survey to libraries soliciting information about how they are assisting their communities during the pandemic and thanked her for taking the lead on this project. Mary Beth recognized the hard work that Tori Linville Hopper put in planning for National Library Week, which was drastically scaled back due to the pandemic. Tori noted that she was pleased that the governor signed the NLW proclamation.

Mary Beth reported that the MLA election took place as planned despite the pandemic, thanking Jennifer and Tisha for their work on making this happen. She noted that this year members with lapsed memberships were allowed to vote due to the pandemic interfering with their ability to renew before the election. Mary Beth reported that National Legislative Week in Washington, D.C. was cancelled. She noted that a call for letters in support of the Cares Act was also adversely affected by the pandemic.

Mary Beth reported that Hester Plauché, husband of retired MS librarian Prima Plauché, passed away in April. Hester and Prima were dedicated in their support of MLA, generously donated to the Black Caucus scholarship yearly, and Hester attended the MLA conference with Prima every year until Prima retired. Mary Beth stated that she would be sending a sympathy card to Prima soon.

Mary Beth reported that due to the pandemic, work on both the Membership and Strategic Planning Committees had been put aside but was confident that they will move forward and report at the November meeting.

Vice-President: Mara Polk reported that she has been hearing from MLA membership that a virtual conference is preferred over cancelling the event. After consideration, she is confident that a virtual conference is “doable,” with sessions conducted via Zoom, to which the Board agreed. She will contact Riley Center with that decision. She will also call Michelle Thames about breaking the contract. Mary Beth noted that there is a clause in the contract allowing MLA to break the contract under certain circumstance, while Mara noted that flexibility in the contract would allow for moving the conference back up to two years. Mary Beth stated a virtual conference would help alleviate budget shortfalls, noting that public libraries have already been warned to expect a 10 percent cut from the state legislature. Meredith agreed that a virtual conference would not require hotel or travel, travel, or meal expenses, which may help some libraries afford to send more employees to the conference.

**MOTION: To authorize Mara to move forward with the planning for a virtual conference and notify the Riley Center in Meridian of that decision.  
Made by: Meredith Wickham      Second: Lori Barnes  
Passed unanimously**

Past-President: Sarah Crisler-Ruskey – no report.

MLA Administrator: Paula Bass reported 342 active memberships, 311 overdue renewals, and 11 new memberships for a total of 664 memberships. She also recognized MLA Board members and officer's birthdays that happened from January through May. [See attached handout "MLA Administrator Report" for details.]

ALA Councilor: Meredith Wickham reported that ALA had called for an advocacy letter writing campaign but withdrew the call due to the pandemic. As an ALA Councilor, the ALA Council was originally told that despite budget woes they could not hold a virtual meeting during the ALA conference in June, but due to pandemic they will in fact be allowed to have three virtual meetings that will be open to all ALA membership. She has no idea what the virtual meetings will be like with over 200 members, but they are working on a solution.

SELA Councilor: Ashley Dees reported that the Georgia/SELA conference that was scheduled for October 7-9, 2020, will now be virtual, as well. She encouraged everyone who is interested to submit a proposal, if you have not already, which are due by May 31<sup>st</sup>.

MLC Executive Director: Hulen Bivens not present – no report.

ACRL Section: Kristy Bariola not present – no report.

Public Library Section: Phillip Carter acknowledged the difficulties libraries are having with the pandemic, adding that his library is attempting to begin offering curbside service soon.

School Library Section: Angela Mullins reported that while school libraries buildings are closed, school librarians have been actively encouraging students with eBooks, online story time, and enrichment activities.

Angela noted that she is still working on the database with over 500 school librarians currently included and has had a good response from librarians with whom she has been in contact. The fee structure introduced in the last meeting in which school districts pay for memberships and individual libraries pay dues to their district is agreeable to the school districts. In response to Meredith's query, Angela replied that they had not received any guidance for the Summer Library Program and she does not expect school libraries to open before August. Tori Linville Hopper and Angela both noted they had been informed they should prepare materials for inclusion in summer packets to disseminate to patrons. Caroline Barnett asked Angela to send

details to Board members about the data she is gathering for the database, which Angela consented to do.

Special Libraries Section: Stephen Parks reported the SE Law Library Conference that was to be held in April was also cancelled.

Trustees Section: Rickey Jones not present – no report.

Advocacy Committee: Kate Dutro reported she and Jennifer Todd postponed a planned meeting about the website, but they plan to reschedule soon. She is also exploring the possibility of budgeting for MLA members to attend other organizational conferences, which is supported by Mary Beth.

A survey was sent to members about what their libraries are doing to help their communities during the pandemic, which received strong feedback from school librarians who accounted for 72.3 percent of those responding. She noted a linked Excel file with responses received was emailed to Board members. With Tori Linville Hopper's assistance, a press release was created and sent out, but it did not receive much feedback. She is still working the Wi-Fi map story.

Kate reported the committee is working on several projects. She is creating a membership survey and thinking of having virtual focus groups, some of which may include non-MLA members. She is developing advocacy materials to handout at conferences in goody bags, but lack of a budget is a problem. An advocacy session is being planned to present at the MLA conference. Kate noted that the ALA president is pushing partnerships among non-library organizations to support libraries. In response to surveys, Meredith Wickham noted that many are feeling "survey fatigue," but noted that the data gathered may be useful to directors during the upcoming budget season, with Jennifer Smith adding it would benefit academic libraries, too. The importance of justifying public library closures and the need for public libraries in general may be issues during budget season with Amanda Clay Powers noting that budget cuts are projected with many libraries facing loss of positions. In response to attending other organizational conferences, Phillip Carter noted that he had been an exhibitor at several non-MLA conferences with varied success, which with the average cost of \$500 for a booth in addition to materials, he feels that libraries need to find another way to advocate. [See attached handout "MLA Advocacy Report."]

Mary Beth asked if public libraries were eligible for PPP and Lori Barnes answered, "No." However, Meredith Wickham stated that her library applied early in the process and received PPP "grant," adding that the rules were very tight on how the money could be spent. Consensus was that most libraries would not qualify.

Awards Committee: Rachelle Moore reported that nominees for awards could be submitted online and photos of nominees could be emailed to her. She confirmed the awards ceremony will be conducted virtually this year.

Black Caucus Roundtable: Mary Ann Peoples not present – no report.

Election Committee: Jennifer Smith reported that the election was conducted solely online this year due to the pandemic. She noted that last year 50 paper ballots were mailed out with only six ballots being returned. Accordingly, the committee may suggest online only voting in the future. The slate of officers for 2020 is as follows:

Stephen Parks – Vice-President/President-Elect  
Adrienne McPhaul – Secretary  
Michele Frasier-Robinson – Treasurer  
Sarah Mangrum – SELA Councilor

**MOTION: To accept the duly elected slate of officers for 2020.**  
**Made by: Phillip Carter    Second: Lori Barnes**  
**Passed unanimously**

In response to Mary Beth's query, Meredith Wickham reported that 26 percent of membership voted in this online election. Jennifer reiterated that paper ballots were not effective and suggested online only voting be considered in the future, prompting Meredith to inquire if an online only vote would require a by-law change. Jennifer stated it would and that she would work on crafting the wording for the bylaw change. Patsy asked if it would be a bylaw change or would it require a constitution change. Jennifer will research this issue. [See attached Election Committee handout.]

Fiscal Management: Patsy Brewer reported that the account earned \$30.69 for a total of \$32,721.57 in the account.

GGNRT: Dawn Collins, Co-Chair, informed the Board that Tonja Johnson did not receive the email about the meeting.

Legislative Committee: Tonja Johnson not present – no report.

Long Range Planning: Amanda Clay Powers reported that work had not progressed due to the pandemic, but work will resume soon.

Marketing/Public Relations: Brandon Cain not present – no report.

Membership Committee: Mary Beth reported that the selection of a committee chair is forthcoming.

MS Author Awards: Caroline Barnett reported that the committee was questioning whether to have the Author Awards this year as the conference would be virtual. She noted that authors could prerecord their acceptance speeches but questioned whether MLA should pay the

honorarium that usually includes a plaque, dinner, and \$200 per author. She also noted that many committee members had not been able to obtain the books they selected to read. Meredith suggested that the MLA Board could buy eBook copies to be delivered via Overdrive or the possibility of issuing temporary library cards from libraries that have Overdrive, but Caroline noted that many of the books would not be available on Overdrive. Meredith then noted that Square Books was now open but acknowledged the problem of delivering the books to people. Meredith and Caroline will discuss this issue further later. Following discussion, the Board agreed that the Author Awards should be held this year. Caroline stated that she may extend the deadline for reading the books. Mary Beth confirmed that the \$200 honorarium would be given, noting that the cost will come out of conference fees, which will still be charged. Caroline stated that she would email a list of needed books to Board members asking them to let her know if they have copies to share.

National Library Week: Tori Linville Hopper reported that the COVID-19 response was an issue during NLW and a report of library NLW programs/events is forthcoming. With the pandemic, she was pleased to get the NLW Proclamation signed by Governor Tate Reeves [see attached Proclamation]. Mary Beth called attention to the stunning NLW poster that was created by Mississippi artist Heather Hewitt. [See attached NLW Committee handout for details.]

New Member Roundtable: Jesse Pool noted that he is working on how to conduct a RT virtual meeting. He also offered to help other RTs or sections that need help with virtual presentation, including sending email reminders to new members encouraging them to attend sessions and/or volunteer their time.

Nominating Committee: Tisha Zelner not present – no report.

Outreach Committee: Chair to be announced – no report.

Publicity Committee: Janessa Ullendorf left early – no report.

Scholarship Committee: Justin Easterday not present – no report, but Mary Beth noted that Justin now has a full committee.

Social Justice: Mac Buntin reported that as to the Summer Library Program, there is concern as how to present the Summer Library Program in a virtual environment with social distancing a priority. Questioned how to reach unserved/underserved populations, especially as this is the population mostly likely to lack internet access, which is a social justice issue and noted that these populations are the ones who need us the most. The Board agreed that connectivity for college students and even public library employees in rural areas is an issue, too. Jennifer Smith noted that she had purchased hot spots for staff and students. Mac noted, however, that hot spots are cost prohibitive for many and he is exploring other ideas to address this issue. Mac thanked Vanessa and Jennifer Todd for their work on the website. Tori wondered if connectivity issues could be addressed in Kate Dutro's report. Phillip reminded the Board that

CSpire has the master contract for the state and recommended researching CSpire's connectivity/hot spot solutions first. Kate Dutro noted that the legislation had passed a law that local cooperatives can now offer broadband, too. Kate stated that she would look at addressing this issue in the survey but noted that the data may already exist.

Technical Services RT: Joy Dubose noted that she had emailed the cataloging field guide but had not received any feedback. Mary Beth offered that she had heard from many that the field guide was "terrific." Joy stated she is planning on posting the guide online for members as soon as she made a necessary correction(s). Mary Beth thanked Joy for her hard work.

Web Committee: Jennifer Todd reported that she had given pay rights to Lori Barnes and had also created an account for herself, too, to facilitate management of AffiniPay.

YPSRT: Carrie-Ann Pierson reported that a survey was created and is ready to send out asking committee members what type of presentation they are interested in seeing and what their expectations are for the luncheon. She stated that she would share results of the survey at the next meeting.

Mississippi Libraries: Tina Harry reported that the spring issue was published with no problems and she was working on the summer issue.

**Old Business:** There is no old business.

**New Business:** Carrie-Ann Pierson asked if a press release would be forthcoming to announce that the conference will be virtual this year. Mara stated she will include it in the email she is sending next week calling for conference proposals and asked everyone to hold off sharing it until that email goes out.

*The next regular meeting of the Mississippi Library Association Executive Board is July 10, 2020, at 11 a.m. at a location TBA.*

**Adjournment:**

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting.**

**Made by: Jennifer Smith    Second: Angela Mullins**

**Pass unanimously**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55 p.m.



Tamara Blackwell, Secretary