

MPLA Electronic Community Moderator Duties and Goals - 2006

Thank you for agreeing to be in MPLA's first group of Electronic Community (EC) moderators!

Continuing education and networking with colleagues are two of the most important benefits of MPLA membership. These opportunities will be enhanced as we move to a more virtual model and allow members of interest groups to engage in discussion and information sharing on an ongoing basis and outside of our annual conferences. This is to provide some basic guidelines and instructions for you on how to carry out your duties as moderators of the EC's.

The Electronic Communities will have an online discussion space where members can ask questions, join in a discussion of topics of interest, find ideas, and interact with colleagues who share similar interests.

The position of Electronic Community Moderator has these major duties:

- Initiate, plan, promote, facilitate and lead electronic discussions for the group
- Participate in planning programs for the annual conference that represent your group's interests
- Help select someone to take over after your term ends and provide them with some background on how to set up and manage discussion online.

Additionally, because the idea of an electronic community is new, this year should be one of experimentation, so we are encouraging moderators to try different platforms and program ideas to engage the interest of the group and find out what works and what doesn't. Here are some places to start, and some options for you to consider and use:

Memberclicks: You can reach everyone in your EC by email through Memberclicks. You will need to do use this system to set up discussion through any of the options below, since that is the only way to reach everyone in your EC. Members have already signed up for the different ECs and those email lists are set up in memberclicks, select xxx, type your message and send it.

MPLA Web site: Discussion space for your group is available on the MPLA web site at www.mpla.us. At a minimum, you could announce a topic by email and a time when the discussion would take place using this space.

For example, you might post this on memberclicks: "The Academic Library Electronic Community will hold a discussion on preparing for a rank and tenure review on July 12, 13 and 14. To join the discussion, go to the MPLA web site at www.mpla.us and choose xxxx. The discussion will be open for three days and you are encouraged to join and participate during those days."

You should line up some colleagues to help get the discussion going so something would be posted, and others who "tune in" will be encouraged to comment as well. This arrangement will depend on members being interested enough to go to the site and join the conversation. Giving a

time span might also keep it from growing stale, so that a member won't go to the site and find the last posting is 4 months old.

Yahoo Groups: Yahoo provides discussion space for groups and you may chose to use this as the place to host your discussion. Yahoo offers features that will send any and all postings to everyone in the group as email, so it "pushes" the discussion out to the group and people don't have to go someplace on the web to find it; it is right in their mailbox. This will require that you set up a group on Yahoo, and it also requires that the members of your EC join the group; there is no way to just enroll them. So that the group includes only MPLA members, you will also need to approve people who join. Setting this up is really very simple and yahoo provides easy to follow menus of choices. For assistance in setting up at Yahoo group for your EC, contact Wes Edens who has agreed to answer questions and talk through the set up process with any moderators who need assistance. Wes is in Arizona at edensw@t-bird.edu or 602 978 7897.

You will need to use Memberclicks to initially reach all your group members if you set up a group on Yahoo to invite them to join the group. Using Yahoo groups will let you have ongoing conversations online, let group members begin new discussions, and may make it easier to participate since it can be integrated with the email systems we all use everyday.

Blogger.com: If you are more comfortable using a blog, this site is available and can also host discussions.

We have not operated the Electronic Communities before, so we need to try different ideas and see what works. Experimentation is encouraged, but we ask that if you want to try an option which is NOT among those described above, check with us first. Contact MPLA Executive Secretary Judy Zelenski to discuss your alternative strategies. And we need your reactions and conclusions about what works and what doesn't work, so stay in touch with Judy about that as well. You can also contact the other EC moderators to share ideas and seek advice through the MPLA list or from Memberclicks.

Carol Hammond
May 2006