

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

This fall at the business meeting of the Annual MHSLA Conference at Bay Valley Inn, our members will be asked to discuss and debate the following important issue: Should our state association apply to the Medical Library Association to become an official Chapter of the Medical Library Association? Since I am your President and I represent your interests, I attended and closely observed the discussion on the proposed amendments and revisions in the MLA Bylaws at the 1980 MLA Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., on June 18th and 19th.

In this column I would like to briefly summarize some of the highlights of the discussion that occurred during the Open Forum Debates and the Business Meeting in Washington on the proposed group structure. I would like to emphasize that the proposed amendments to the MLA Bylaws were approved by MLA members in Washington, and that sometime in August, a mail ballot will be sent to all MLA members for approval. The relevant articles to study in the Bylaws are Articles X and XI: "The Formation and Recognition of Chapters and Sections" and "Chapter and Sections of the Association". To summarize Articles X and XI:

- A Chapter is a group based on a geographical area.
- New chapters must meet the following conditions in order to be recognized:
 1. The stated purpose of the Chapter must be consistent with MLA's Constitution.
 2. New Chapters must demonstrate that their needs cannot be met by existing Chapters or Sections.
 3. A petition to form a new Chapter must be signed by one-half of MLA voting members who reside or work within the area covered by the proposed new Chapter.
 4. Provisional status can be granted to a Chapter for a period of 2 years. During that time, the Chapter must present to MLA a Constitution and Bylaws that is consistent with MLA's.
 5. If the above conditions are met, then MLA can grant permanent status to the Chapter.

I want to especially alert our state association members to Section 5 in Article XI: "Officers and Committee Chairmen". Section 5 states the following: "Officers and chairmen of Chapter and Section committees must be Regular Members or Institutional Members or Fellows of the Association." This is the section that generated so much debate at the MLA Open Forum and Business Meeting. There were many comments from the floor, and the arguments presented by several librarians, both pro and con, were very persuasive! How will Section 5 impact on our state association? If we become a chapter of MLA, Section 5 will automatically exclude any members of our state association from becoming an officer or chairman of chapter committees, if they are not MLA members. Requiring MLA membership will disenfranchise some of our members from actively participating and holding office in our state association. Can we afford to do this to some of our members at a time when we are striving to develop a strong association and meaningfully involve more of our members? Why can't we let individuals participate first in their state association and then get them involved so that they will see the benefits of joining MLA in the future?

MLA is also asking members to approve a dues increase which would increase membership dues to \$60.00 next year. Is this a realistic requirement to place on some of our librarians who come from institutions that already restrict their travel and educational expenses to conferences? Our goal for the state association next year is to increase our membership by only requiring members to pay \$10.00 in dues!

A persuasive argument in favor of Section 5 was the issue of professionalism. Professional librarians should support their national organization and join MLA. We can strengthen our cause, politically and economically, by uniting with MLA.

I cannot disagree with these reasons for supporting Section 5, but are these reasons appropriate for MHSLA at this time? I urge our members to support our annual conference this fall by attending the workshops and come to the business meeting to voice your concerns regarding this important issue. I encourage you to call me or talk with your board officers regarding this issue. I am looking forward to meeting and talking with members this fall at Bay Valley Inn!

-Carole Colter