



How to Become an MLA Field Bibliographer

Faculty members, independent scholars, librarians, and graduate students are welcome to contribute to the *MLA International Bibliography* as field bibliographers and assistant field bibliographers. Through their contributions to the bibliography, they provide an important service both to individual scholars and to the international scholarly community.

Bibliographers are grouped together in sections according to their area of scholarly expertise, and their work is coordinated either by a section head (a senior bibliographer in the field) or by an index editor from the MLA staff. Bibliographers describe scholarly publications so that bibliography users interested in a given topic will be led to relevant source documents. Describing particular documents will involve both identifying the facts of their publication (providing bibliographical citations) and defining their subject content and form.

Although field bibliographers are not paid for their work, they do receive a complimentary copy of the bibliography. On request, their dean, department head, or supervisor is informed of their contribution. All bibliographers are listed in the print bibliography, on the MLA Web site, and in the annual September issue of PMLA as contributors.

Reasons to Become a Bibliographer

The Advisory Committee on the *MLA International Bibliography*, at its annual meeting on 20-21 October 2005, discussed the essential value of the work done by field bibliographers and the prevalent misunderstandings and confusion regarding indexing. The committee resolved to summarize the many reasons for becoming a bibliographer.

1. Service to the profession--students, scholars, teachers, and researchers.

Indexing for the *MLA Bibliography* allows one to contribute to literary scholarship by ensuring that important texts are accessible to present and future scholars.

2. Deepened knowledge of a specialty.

Bibliographers have the opportunity to read publications in their fields regularly, allowing

them to keep aware of current interests, trends, and scholarship.

3. Exposure to new areas of inquiry.

Indexing forces bibliographers to broaden the scope of their knowledge. It educates them on new topics, which later become part of their teaching and their curriculum decisions.

4. Sharpening of research skills through notation and classification.

Bibliographers gain invaluable insights into using libraries, the *MLA Bibliography*, and other scholarly resources, insights that would be difficult to achieve any other way.

5. Institutional recognition.

A yearly letter from the MLA to an administrator at the bibliographer's institution underlines the value of the work being performed and the scholarly skills required by the job. This record of service may prove useful during promotion and tenure reviews.

If you are interested in becoming a field bibliographer, please send your resume and a letter indicating your area of interest to:

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