Book Review: Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing.* 3rd ed. New York: MLA, 2008. $32.50 cloth.

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I purchased my first copy of the *MLA Style Manual* during my first year of college, and it has had a special place in my heart since then. So sensibly organized, and so easy to skim with its effective use of typography! While I've been pressed into relationships with other style guides since then—including an ongoing, troubled relationship with the *Chicago Manual of Style*—I find myself longing for the old days, when no other style guide clouded my thoughts.

Mine was the second edition; the Modern Language Association published the third edition in May of this year, and I approached it with trepidation: returning to an old love after many years can be heartbreaking. I was afraid that the new edition would turn out to be patched-over with fixes for the digital age: new subsections without commentary on citing blog posts, Web forum postings, and mailing list messages, plus a passing reference to the controversy over whether it's appropriate to cite Wikipedia in an academic context. Much as I loved my second edition, I would have been disappointed had it changed so little over these past ten years, when so much else had.

Those fears, it turns out, were unfounded. *MLA*'s guidelines acknowledge the great changes in the way scholarship is disseminated and consumed today. While the typography and layout, especially of the table of contents, have taken a turn for the worse (making it harder to skim quickly when you have a specific topic or section number in mind), it's still far more usable than *Chicago* (whose two chapters on documentation are organized for reading from start to end but impossible to skim).

Much of the background material on the scholarly-publishing process and on legal issues remains entirely unchanged, save for a revised section on copyright and computer networks that cites the pertinent laws and cases. The section on scholarly writing has only small changes, though they're significant in my opinion, acknowledging that writing is done using computers and that manuscripts are often submitted electronically. I'm glad to see that two holdovers from the days of the typewriter have finally been put to rest:

underlining and double spacing after periods are out, and italicization and single spacing are in. The second edition assumed all languages written in non-Latin scripts would be transliterated into the Latin alphabet, whereas the third edition recognizes that non-Latin scripts are acceptable in certain cases. The section on submitting manuscripts has been entirely reorganized, though the substance of it remains almost entirely the same. Still, even small changes—such as reminders to indent using the tab key or paragraph settings and not the space bar—are welcome for anyone whose job it is to regularize author manuscripts in Word format for print or electronic publishing. Finally, the section on preparing theses and dissertations briefly discusses open-access options (depositing in an institutional repository and ProQuest's open-access option for dissertations) and multimedia content.

The most dramatic changes are to citation styles themselves—our primary interest in the manual anyway. In the second edition, as in the current editions of all other academic style guides that I could find, directions for citing electronic resources are tacked on at the end of the section on citations, and the citation format looks almost exactly like that of a print resource except that it contains a URL at the end of it. In the third edition of *MLA*, however, citations now include a medium (like "Print" or "Web") for all publications, putting electronic documents on a more equal footing with print ones. Furthermore, URLs themselves are no longer included in citations in most cases; instead, the "title of the overall Web site" and "publisher or sponsor of the site" are provided to help you locate the resource. This refreshing change in perspective is longer overdue: after all, readers are increasingly likely to search for an article by title and author rather than transcribe the URL given in a print citation or follow a hyperlink that is likely to have broken. *MLA* still insists on including a publisher in the citation for any source consulted, so an independent website or blog ends up with "N.p." ("no publisher") in the citation, which seems pedantic in the age when the role and identity of publishers is becoming less significant to readers. Unfortunately, it's difficult to make out all these changes because the section on preparing the list of works still explains how to cite print publications (first periodical and then nonperiodical) before explaining how to cite Web publications (here first nonperiodical and then periodical)).

The introduction to the list of works cited explicitly allows for improvisation "when the type of scholarly project or the publication medium of a source is not anticipated by this manual," a welcome acknowledgement missing from the second edition. The manual also makes a bold statement against reference management software like ProCite, RefWorks, and EndNote, warning that "While it is tempting to think that every source has only one complete and correct format for its entry in the works cited, in truth there are often several options for recording key features of a work. For this reason, software programs that generate entries are not likely to be useful." While I agree with the sentiment, this software is a timesaver for students and scholars that lays the foundation for improved citation analysis and sharing. I would like to have seen an endorsement of the emerging next-generation reference management software like Zotero, CiteULike, and Connotea, which provide open platforms that harness the power of citations in aggregate and allow for customization of export formats, rather than wholesale dismissal of such productivity-enhancing software. The section on citing sources has been more clearly arranged for the digital age: it starts off by explaining how to cite a resource without page numbers (which is quickly becoming the norm).

While the manual has become wiser over the past 10 years, it rushed out the door for our reunion in a hurry, showing up a bit unkempt—not quite as nice to look at and with a new outfit that didn't get ironed in time. However, the substance is what counts, and it turns out that the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* still has that special magic. While your publication venue (or professor) usually determines which style guide you'll use, it's nice to know that, for once, the humanities aren't the last to adapt to changing technology.

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