

FAQ Pittsburgh Chapter / Mid-Atlantic Chapter Merger

October 1, 2008

Why is Pittsburgh Chapter pursuing a merger?

Pittsburgh Chapter membership has been declining for the past decade to the point that there are too few Chapter members who are also MLA members to consistently fill the positions required of a chapter. The Chapter has 38 MLA members who are therefore eligible to hold office and, of those, 11 are from the University of Pittsburgh, resulting in a small officer pool concentrated in a single institution. Members are willing to serve but can't assume a leadership role every couple of years.

Why select MAC rather than Philadelphia or UNYOC?

MAC is an active multi-state chapter which routinely rotates its annual meetings through all members' states and maintains a strong state reporting system. This structure would easily accommodate adding a partner to the group, which is not true of Philadelphia Chapter. Much of MAC territory is no further away from Pittsburgh than Philadelphia and some is much closer – Morgantown for example. This is not true for UNYOC. Interests reflected in MAC's website, newsletters and meetings are a good match for Pittsburgh interests.

What's in it for MAC members?

MAC would add some strong and active professionals who are interested in participating in MAC thereby strengthening the Chapter. Some librarians in the Pittsburgh area already belong to MAC due to coinciding interests and existing professional connections. The Pittsburgh Chapter brings funds with it as well. And Pittsburgh has great facilities for an Annual Meeting.

How do Pittsburgh and MAC complement each other?

Our memberships are both similar and complementary. Merging the Pittsburgh Chapter into MAC would almost double the number of hospital librarian members of MAC. Pittsburgh also brings a medical school and two library science programs. Pittsburgh has always enjoyed student participation as has MAC.

What's the process for merging?

MLA's Chapter Council Manual defines a process for dissolving or merging chapters but it's a little general.

These are the basic steps in exploring the merger:

- Pittsburgh Chapter votes to proceed with merger (unanimous vote 4/11/08).
- Chairs of Pittsburgh Chapter and MAC discuss merger opportunity. (There have been two conversations and e-mail exchanges so far.)
- MAC Board meets to discuss. At the Fall 2008 Executive Board meeting, MAC officers voted unanimously to explore the merger by raising the issue among MAC members via the discussion list and at the Business Meeting in Morgantown.
- MAC members discuss the merger, with MAC, Pittsburgh and MLA representatives answering questions.
- MAC members vote whether to support pursuit of the merger
- Assuming an affirmative vote, both chapters agree to the terms of a merger and develop a written proposal to merge.

The actual merger takes place following the process described in the Chapter Council Manual:

- Conduct a vote of all **MLA members, with or without Chapter affiliation, within the geographic regions both Chapters** on the merger.
- Assuming > 50% ‘yes’ vote in both Chapter regions, forward a position paper and request to merge to Chapter Council.
- Chapter Council appoints an ad hoc committee to investigate the request and prepare a recommendation.
- Chapter Council receives the report of the ad hoc committee and votes to accept the recommendation to approve the merger.
- MAC votes to change their bylaws to incorporate Pittsburgh Chapter’s geographic region and its members.
- Pittsburgh Chapter takes steps to dis-incorporate the chapter and disburse funds.

Why is the voting done by MLA members? What if they are not Chapter members?

According to MLA’s Special Rules of Order, a Chapter becomes recognized by MLA through a petition “signed by a minimum of one-half of the Association’s Voting Members who reside or work within the area covered by the proposed new chapter.” Therefore only MLA members can participate in a vote to merge MLA-recognized Chapters. Individuals who are members of the Pittsburgh Chapter or MAC, but are not MLA members can participate in the Chapter votes to pursue the merger, but not the final vote. Information will be sent to MLA members about the vote prior to the distribution of ballots.

What issues have been identified so far?

There are questions that will have to be resolved to the satisfaction of both the Pittsburgh Chapter and MAC but none appear to be particularly controversial. It will be a matter of our two groups talking with each other until we reach mutual agreement.

Here are some of the issues that will be discussed and resolved:

- Equity for the Pittsburgh Chapter with full and equal membership as a geographic entity in MAC comparable to current member units.
- Equity for current Pittsburgh Chapter members having the same responsibilities and rights, post-merger, as existing MAC members
- Equal representation in MAC bylaws, documents, publications and logo comparable to existing MAC components (Pittsburgh Chapter does not expect any name change for MAC).
- Pittsburgh Chapter anticipates participating in the rotation schedule for annual meetings.
- Integration of current Pittsburgh officers into MAC Board activities, helping Pittsburgh members become active in MAC, and looking at short-term implications of the merger on MLA positions such as Chapter Council representative.

What’s next?

- Pittsburgh Chapter and MAC members have the opportunity to meet and talk at the MAC Annual Meeting in Morgantown.
- The issue of the merger will be raised via the MAC discussion list and at the Business Meeting at the Annual Meeting in Morgantown.

Have a comment or question?

Please contact Andrea Horne, MAC/MLA Chair, at horne@virginia.edu or 434-924-9985. We look forward to hearing from you.