
**1999 REPORT TO THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE
OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
FOR RENEWAL OF ALLIED STATUS FOR THE
ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF
AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES (ASAIL)**

The members of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL), an allied organization of the Modern Language Association, petition the Program Committee of MLA to renew ASAIL's allied status.

I. HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES (ASAIL), 1972-1999.

Founded at the 1972 MLA Conference by Randall Ackley, Larry Evers, Wayne Franklin, Kenneth Roemer, Per Seyersted, and Leslie Silko, the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL) currently has more than 400 members, many of whom are actively involved in the work of the organization. During the past twenty-seven years, ASAIL has sponsored discussion panels, workshops, and readings which have attracted not only American Indian scholars and writers, but also a number of non-Native scholars as well. ASAIL has solicited proposals for these sessions through announcements in the *MLA Newsletter* and in ASAIL's two publications: *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (SAIL) and *ASAIL Notes*. At MLA 1998 in San Francisco, approximately 100 people attended a poetry reading sponsored by ASAIL. This reading, chaired by Ginny Carney, President of ASAIL, featured four West Coast Native poets: Gloria Bird (Spokane), Nora Dauenhauer (Tlingit), Janice Gould (Maidu), and Deborah Miranda (Ohlone/Costanoan). In fact, each year ASAIL-sponsored sessions draw enthusiastic crowds, after which ASAIL receives an average of 15-20 new requests for membership. [See [Appendix A](#) for a list of those elected to ASAIL's Executive Committee, 1980-1998, and [Appendix B](#) for a complete list of MLA Programs from 1980-1998.]

Thus, ASAIL's record of presenting well-organized and well-attended sessions at the annual MLA Conference alone merits continued allied status for the organization. Another impressive accomplishment, however, is its sponsorship of two longstanding publications: *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (SAIL) and *ASAIL Notes*. *SAIL*, the official journal of the association, is "the only scholarly journal in the United States that focuses exclusively on American Indian literatures. The journal publishes reviews, interviews, bibliographies, creative work, and scholarly, critical and theoretical articles on any aspect of Native American literatures, including traditional oral material in dual-language format or translation, written works, and live and media performances of verbal art." *SAIL* 9:3 (Fall 1997) also included an extensive "Guide to Native American Studies Programs in the United States and Canada," a primary resource for those seeking to teach or enroll in Native American Studies.

In its early stages, *SAIL* was edited briefly by Wayne Franklin (U of Iowa). The editorship moved to Karl Kroeber (Columbia U) who began the quarterly publication of the first series of *Studies in American Indian Literatures* in the Spring of 1977. Professor Kroeber continued to edit *SAIL* until 1987 when he published the last of the first series: Vol. 11, No. 2. Between 1987 and 1989, *SAIL* was published in two to three columns in *Dispatch*, a publication of a multicultural program at Columbia U. In 1989, under the leadership of the new editor, Helen Jaskoski (California State U, Fullerton), *Studies in American Indian Literatures* took on new life as Series 2. Dr. Jaskoski has assistance with the first two issues from Daniel Littlefield and James Parins (U of Arkansas, Little Rock), but at that time, Robert Nelson (U of Richmond) officially assumed the role of co-editor-- a position he continues to hold today. In 1992, Rodney Simard (UC, San Bernardino) took over as editor of *SAIL* when Helen Jaskoski was forced to resign, due to illness. In 1994, Professor Simard, too, fell ill, and John Lloyd Purdy (Western Washington U) was asked to serve as editor. Under the leadership of John Purdy and Robert Nelson, the journal--once a staple-bound publication of 36 pages, with no more than 40 subscribers--now has a mailing list of 400+ subscribers, representing more than a dozen foreign countries, as well as almost every state in the USA.

Another publication, *ASAIL Notes*, was initiated in January 1973 as the *ASAIL Newsletter*. Four issues followed, and in 1984, Andrew Wiget (New Mexico State U) became editor of this quarterly newsletter which served as a medium of information and scholarly resources for teachers and students of Native American literature. In 1987, John Lloyd Purdy took over as editor of *ASAIL Notes* and continued in that role until 1994, when he became editor of *SAIL*. At that time, Michael Wilson (U of Wisconsin, Milwaukee) took over. In 1997, Scott Stevens (Arizona State U) agreed to edit *ASAIL Notes*, and currently, more than 600 copies are mailed out to subscribers, special programs, libraries, and other interested individuals.

As an allied organization of MLA, the Association for the Study of American Literatures often collaborates with the American Indian Literatures Discussion Group, coordinating our panel sessions with theirs and holding a joint business meeting each year during the MLA Conference. Additionally, members of *ASAIL* coordinate their efforts with, and participate in, the activities of the Committee on the Literatures and Languages of America.

II. ONGOING ACTIVITY

Since its inception in 1972, *ASAIL* has actively and continuously participated in regional and national MLA conferences [see [Appendix B](#) for *ASAIL*-sponsored MLA programs from 1980-1998]. In order to reach a diverse audience, official communications and Calls for Papers are mailed to individuals and institutions, as well as announced in the *MLA Newsletter*, *ASAIL*'s two publications, and the *ASAIL* website.

Furthermore, *ASAIL* has an active history of publications. Series I of the official journal of the association, *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (*SAIL*), was published from 1977-1987,

and *SAIL*, Series 2, has been published regularly since 1989. *ASAIL Notes*, the association newsletter, has been published regularly since 1987. Additionally, a website, maintained by Robert Nelson (U of Richmond) can be accessed at [[faculty/asail](http://faculty.asail.org)] providing information on ASAIL, subscription forms, and a guide to Native American Studies programs in the United States and Canada.

III. DIVERSE PARTICIPATION IN ASAIL ACTIVITIES

The Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures has actively encouraged participation from scholars and writers from various disciplines, and from non-Native as well as Native backgrounds. ASAIL has emphasized the importance of involving American Indian, Alaska Native, and First Nation scholars in every aspect of the organization, and at the 1998 MLA Conference in San Francisco, six presenters/poetry readers, from a total of sixteen participants in ASAIL sessions, were tribally affiliated Natives. As noted above, ASAIL organized a well-attended Poetry Reading by West Coast Native women at MLA 1998, and plans for the 1999 MLA Conference in Chicago include a session devoted to literature published in indigenous languages, organized by Joanne DiNova (Ojibwa), U of Waterloo, Ontario, and a session on teaching American Indian literature, which will be chaired by Ginny Carney (Cherokee), U of Kentucky.

In addition to encouraging participation by American Indians/First Nation/Alaska Native scholars, ASAIL has actively involved distinguished non-Native scholars such as Helen Jaskoski, Karl Kroeber, Arnold Krupat, Ken Roemer, and LaVonne Ruoff in the ongoing work of the organization. Our policy has been to advertise Calls for Papers in *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, *ASAIL Notes*, and the *MLA Newsletter* so that a broad spectrum of creative writers and scholars, including departments other than English, are encouraged to participate in ASAIL activities.

IV. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures was founded in 1972.

The purpose of the organization shall be to promote study, criticism, and research on the oral traditions and literatures of Native Americans; to promote the teaching of such traditions and literatures, and to support and encourage contemporary Native American writers and the continuity of Native American oral traditions.

V. ASAIL' S BYLAWS

Please see [Appendix C](#) for ASAIL's bylaws, which were revised and approved by ASAIL membership in March 1991.

VI. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

ASAIL currently has over 400 members, including scholars from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, and Norway as well as from the United States. Please see [Appendix D](#) for a sample membership application.

VII. DESCRIPTION OF DUES STRUCTURE

ASAIL maintains five categories of membership:

Individual membership:	\$ 25
Institutional membership:	\$ 35
Limited income membership:	\$ 16
Sponsor:	\$ 50
Patron:	\$100

Benefits of ASAIL membership include subscriptions to *SAIL* and the newsletter *ASAIL Notes*; donations at the Sponsor and Patron level are acknowledged in the concurrent volume of *SAIL*.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Carney, President (1998-99)

Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL)