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LACUNY Junior Faculty Research Roundtable Meeting Minutes, June 2009

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MINUTES OF THE JUNE 2009 MEETING
LACUNY JUNIOR FACULTY RESEARCH ROUNDTABLE
June 4, 2009, 3:00 pm
Library Conference Room, Baruch College

Members in Attendance:

Maura Smale, City Tech (co-chair)
Jill Cirasella, Brooklyn (co-chair)
Janice Dunham, John Jay (special guest)
Kathleen Collins, John Jay
Daisy Dominguez, City
Sarah Aponte, City
Mark Aaron Polger, Staten Island
Karen Okamoto, John Jay
Jay Bernstein, Kingsborough
Reabeka King, Kingsborough
Jennifer King, Lehman
Dorothea Coiffe, BMCC
Kanu Nagra, BMCC
Jin Ma, Baruch
Harold Gee, Baruch
Catherine Stern, LaGuardia
Kate Angell, Brooklyn College Library intern
Wendy Chu, Brooklyn College Library intern
Barnaby Nicolas, Brooklyn College Library intern

First, we welcomed Janice Dunham, a tenured library faculty member from John Jay who has written over 100 book reviews. Janice started by asking, "Will book reviews help you get tenure?" At John Jay, the prevailing belief is that book reviews don't count for tenure, but Janice assured us that they *can* count, especially with a chief librarian's strong support. She said that, for us, the bigger question is whether we *want* to write book reviews. She went on to say that book reviews are an easy way of staying on top of a field and that they can be stepping stones to bigger projects, such as bibliographic essays. Of course, they don't have to be stepping stones to anything -- they can just be something you like to do occasionally. However, writing reviews can be a time-consuming endeavor, especially when you're new to it. Janice said that when she began writing book reviews, it would often take her a full weekend to write one.

Here are more points that Janice made:

- *Library Journal* is always looking for reviewers.
- Editors look for reviews they can trust and that don't require much editing.
- Don't look at the publisher's blurb for a book until you're almost done with your review -- it will influence you!
- If you are reviewing monographs, you really do need to read them cover to cover. If you're reviewing reference books, you don't need to read much of it. However, reviewing references books is in some ways less fun than reviewing monographs.

- Checklist of things to do in reviews of nonfiction books: 1) Describe the book's content. 2) Describe the book's organization. 3) Put the book in the context of other books on the topic, including the classics of the field. 4) Discuss the author's writing and style. 5) If writing for a librarian source, stay on point; don't go off on tangents like reviews in the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, etc. sometimes do.
- Often you're limited to 175 words. It's a challenge to squeeze in what you want to say. Make every word count! Cut adjectives!
- When you finish, let it sit for a few days so you can look at it with fresh eyes and make sure it says what you intended.
- No matter how carefully you crafted your review, editors will make changes. (Unfortunately, they'll introduce errors sometimes.)
- If you're sent something to review that isn't your field, you have several options: you can review it, talk to the magazine/journal about what to do, or send it back. If you decide to review it, look at the book's preface, history, and prior editions (if there are any) -- these will help you. But you are free to turn down books. Editors won't be angry.
- If you keep up rapport with an editor, s/he could be a person to write a letter for you at tenure/promotion time.

After a lively group conversation about book reviews, we turned our attention to the structure and activities of the Junior Faculty Research Roundtable. There were many opinions about the best name and meeting schedule for the group, so we decided to create an online poll to see how everyone feels about these issues.

Finally, we celebrated each other's successes. We congratulated Jay Bernstein for earning tenure at Kingsborough Community College and invited everyone to say a few words about their publications, presentations, and/or research progress this year.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Minutes submitted by Jill Cirasella, Brooklyn College