



**MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION PRIZE FOR
INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS AWARDED TO DIANA SACO FOR
*CYBERING DEMOCRACY: PUBLIC SPACE AND THE INTERNET***

New York, NY – 16 November 2003– The Modern Language Association of America today announced it is awarding its twentieth annual Prize for Independent Scholars to Diana Saco, of Dania Beach, Florida, for her book *Cybering Democracy: Public Space and the Internet*, published by the University of Minnesota Press. The prize awards distinguished published research in the fields of modern languages and literatures, including English, and recognizes achievements and contributions of independent scholars. Saco will receive a \$1,000 check, a certificate, and a year's membership in the association.

The MLA Prize for Independent Scholars is one of seventeen awards that will be presented in San Diego. The members of the selection committee, appointed by the association's Committee on Honors and Awards, were Julie Abraham (Saint Lawrence Coll.); Lou Charnon-Deutsch (State Univ. of New York, Stony Brook), chair; Betty Sue Flowers (LBJ Library); Diane Krumrey (Princeton, NJ); and Catherine Peebles (Univ. of New Hampshire, Durham). The citation for Saco's book reads:

Cybering Democracy reconceptualizes the relations among participatory democracy, technology, and space, while cogently addressing important questions about whether the forms of communication central to a democracy are possible under conditions of electronic mediation. Anyone interested in trying to make sense of the cultural as well as the political importance of the World Wide Web will want to consult this brilliant assessment of the controversial issues revolving around both the linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects of cyberspace. Both apologists for the liberating potential of the Web, as well as those who worry about the Web's possible alienating and otherwise negative impact on culture, will embrace Saco's thorough and theoretically sophisticated analysis.

Diana Saco is an interdisciplinary theorist with a BA and an MA in communications from Florida Atlantic University and a PhD in political science from the University of Minnesota. An analyst of discourse and power, she has published studies of masculinity in the media, the United States encryption debate (both for edited volumes), Elizabethan sovereignty (for the *European Journal of International Relations*), and United States foreign policy toward Cuba (coauthored with Jutta Weldes, for *Millennium*). Her subsequent exploration of online fandoms as culture-debating publics led to her interest in the politics of cyberspace, culminating in her 2002 publication *Cybering Democracy: Public Space and the Internet*. Drawn increasingly toward the technical side of computers and networking, she now works as manager of information systems for a law firm in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where she continues her study of the Internet as an avid reader of fan fiction and as an independent scholar of politics and culture in the digital age.

The MLA, the largest and one of the oldest American learned societies in the humanities (est. 1883), promotes the advancement of literary and linguistic studies. The 30,000 members of the association come from all fifty states and the District of Columbia, as well as from Canada, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. *PMLA*, the flagship journal of the association, has published distinguished scholarly articles for over one hundred years. Approximately 9,500 members of the MLA and its allied and affiliate organizations attend the association's annual convention each December. The MLA is a constituent of the American Council of Learned Societies and the International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures.

The MLA Prize for Independent Scholars, awarded under the auspices of the MLA's Committee on Honors and Awards, was first presented in 1983. The winners have been Zdzislaw Najder, Gloria C. Erlich, Edward Brunner, Paul van Caspel, Wayne F. Cooper, Keith W. F. Stavely, Harriet Blodgett, Emily W. Sunstein, William Merrill Decker, Marie-Laure Ryan, Hans J. Rindisbacher, Olga Augustinos, Kenneth M. Cameron, Nora Sayre, Graham Robb, Gary Schmidgall, Janet Galligani Casey, Stephen J. Holmes, Joe Snader, and David Roessel. Charles Musser, David B. Morris, Carl Hill, Mary Price, and Carolyn Burke have received honorable mention.

Other awards sponsored by the Committee on Honors and Awards are the William Riley Parker Prize; the James Russell Lowell Prize; the MLA Prize for a First Book; the Howard R. Marraro Prize; the Kenneth W. Mildemberger Prize; the Mina P. Shaughnessy Prize; the MLA Prizes for a Distinguished Scholarly Edition and for a Distinguished Bibliography; the Morton N. Cohen

Award; the Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize; the Lois Roth Award; the William Sanders Scarborough Prize; the Fenia and Yaakov Leviant Memorial Prize; the MLA Prize in United States Latina and Latino and Chicana and Chicano Literary and Cultural Studies; and the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prizes for Comparative Literary Studies, for French and Francophone Studies, for Italian Studies, for Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures, for Studies in Slavic Languages and Literatures, for a Translation of a Literary Work, for a Translation of a Scholarly Study of Literature, and for a Manuscript in Italian Studies.