

# Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

VOLUME 37

SUMMER 2023

NUMBER 1





# THIS ISSUE

- 1*            **President's Column: Harry Wonham**
- 4*            **A Note on the *Annual***
- 5*            **Featured: Jim Leonard**
- 6*            **Minutes: MTC Business Meeting 2023**
- 9*            **Twain Talk: Jarrod Roark**
- 14*           **Membership Renewal Form**
- 15*           **Publication information**





# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Harry Wonham, University of Oregon



Dear Fellow Twainians,

It was a pleasure to see several of you at the American Literature Association conference in Boston last month. The Mark Twain Circle of America hosted two panels, both of which were well attended, and many Circle members later convened at Joe's American Bar and Grill for libations, calamari, and conversation. A week before the Boston conference, the Circle held its annual open Business Meeting via Zoom, and those "present" expressed gratitude to members of the Executive Board who have come to the end of their terms in office. It seems fitting to repeat some of that gratitude here, and thus I'd like to say "thank you" on behalf of the entire membership to Jarrod Roark, Rebecca Nisetich, and Ben Click. As the Circle's Executive Coordinator, Jarrod has managed our finances and our membership records with a degree of professionalism and integrity rarely found among Twainians, Rebecca has served nobly in the "Emerging Scholar" position on the Executive Committee, and Ben, as editor of *The Mark Twain Annual*, has ensured that a prominent venue exists for new scholarship on the life and works of Samuel L. Clemens. Thanks are also due to the Circle members who were elected to take over these roles. Megan McNamara replaces Jarrod as Executive Coordinator, and our new Emerging Scholar is Elizabeth Cantalamessa, a Ph.D. candidate in Philosophy at the University of Miami. Editorship of the *Annual* is now in the capable hands of Joe Csicsila, who will be supported by Nate Williams as Associate Editor and James W. Leonard as Managing Editor. Together with continuing members of the Executive Committee, this leadership team is poised to advance the mission of the Circle by fostering an awareness of Mark Twain's irrepressible relevance as a cultural force.

Another piece of business undertaken at the annual meeting was the formalization of awards administered by the Circle. Our organization has always sought to acknowledge extraordinary contributions to scholarship and to the maintenance of Mark Twain's legacy, and one way of doing so is by conferring awards that are clearly defined and rigorously adjudicated. Deliberations at the Business Meeting were aimed



# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Harry Wonham, University of Oregon

at codifying the Circle's awards along these lines, and as a result we now have a clear and transparent process for administering three major awards, which will be presented once every four years at The State of Mark Twain Studies conference in Elmira, New York. These are **The Louis J. Budd Award for Distinguished Scholarship**, offered in recognition of significant scholarship in the field of Mark Twain Studies; **The Thomas A. Tenney Award for Service**, offered in recognition of service to the field of Mark Twain Studies and on behalf of the mission of the Mark Twain Circle of America; and **The Olivia Langdon Clemens Award for Scholarly Creativity and Innovation**, offered in recognition of new, innovative directions in Mark Twain scholarship. Circle members also voted to formalize **The Mark Twain Circle Travel Grant**, which is designed to provide travel support for graduate students, independent scholars, and early career faculty who are presenting research focused on Mark Twain Studies at conferences, symposia, or other scholarly venues. Additional information about each of these awards, including application instructions for the Travel Grant, is available on the Mark Twain Circle website.

It is a nice gesture to create awards that honor extraordinary contributions to Mark Twain Studies, but we sometimes forget to celebrate the recipients with adequate fanfare. Three suitably modest plaques were presented to honorees in Elmira last summer, but I would like to take this opportunity to commemorate the event by saying something here about why and to whom these awards were given. To begin with the Louis J. Budd Award for Distinguished Scholarship, I should first explain to anyone who may not be familiar with Lou Budd that this award honors a legendary Mark Twain scholar, who was one of the founders of the Mark Twain Circle of America and its first president. The winner of the 2022 Lou Budd award is Kerry Driscoll, whose long record of distinguished scholarship includes, most recently, her University of California Press book, *Mark Twain among the Indians and Other Indigenous Peoples*. This powerful study offers the first truly unflinching examination of Twain's problematic references to, and representations of, Native Americans. Kerry extends this sensitive topic by looking at representations of indigenous peoples in Mark Twain's books of international travel, especially *Following the Equator*. In the process, she sheds new light on the evolution of Mark Twain's attitudes toward indigenous peoples and on the changing ideological landscape of late 19th and early 20th century America.

The Thomas A. Tenney Award for Distinguished Service is named for another founder of the Mark Twain Circle of America. Tom Tenney was editor of the *Mark Twain Journal* for nearly three decades, and in 1987 he became the founding editor of the *Mark Twain Circular*. He also co-edited, with James S. Leonard and Thadious Davis, the important critical anthology *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on Huckleberry Finn*, published by Duke in 1992. Chad Rohman, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Dominican University, is winner of the Thomas A. Tenney Award for 2022 in honor of his tireless service, over many years, to the international community of Mark Twain scholars and enthusiasts. As editor of the *Mark Twain Circular*, he helped build this community into what it is today, and his work as Editor of *The Mark Twain Annual* from 2014 through 2018 did much to boost the journal's quality and prestige. Over the last two decades, he has taken a leadership role in organizing conferences and special events that have kept Mark Twain Studies in the public eye. In short, no one is more deserving of the Thomas A. Tenney Award for Distinguished Service than Chad Rohman.

Finally, the Olivia Langdon Clemens Award for Scholarly Creativity and Innovation honors the memory of



# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Harry Wonham, University of Oregon

an extraordinary person, Livy Clemens. I think it is fair to add that this award also honors the Langdon family and the physical splendor of their hometown of Elmira, which is an essential part of both the Langdon legacy and the story of Sam Clemens's career. The 2022 winner of the Olivia Langdon Clemens Award is Shelley Fisher-Fishkin, whose Mark Twain scholarship over many years has been marked by its boldness, creativity, and erudition. Shelley's publications as a Twain scholar go back more than thirty years and include the pathbreaking work, *Was Huck Black: Mark Twain and African American Voices*, as well as the massive undertaking of the Oxford Mark Twain facsimile edition, and many other works. More recently, Shelley's attention has focused on transnational scholarship, which has fostered her editorial work on "Global Huck: Mapping the Cultural Work of Translations of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*," a project that explores how *Huck Finn* has shaped cultural conversations about literature, racism, and vernacular language in nine different regions of the world. As this project attests, Shelley continues to forge new ground and to expand our understanding of Mark Twain's relevance as a writer and public figure.

Congratulations to the winners of last summer's Mark Twain Circle awards, and many thanks to those of you who participated in formalizing these awards at the recent Business Meeting, which will ensure that such extraordinary contributions to Mark Twain Studies are duly celebrated in the future. Have a wonderful summer!

Harry





# A NOTE ON THE ANNUAL

James W. Leonard, Managing Editor

As our new team begins its stewardship of *The Mark Twain Annual*, I would take a moment to note a few things. First, please remember that *Annuals* past and present are now available in full, digitized form to all Circle members! Our partners at Penn State and The Scholarly Publishing Collective (via Duke UP) have been unwaveringly helpful in making sure that [our website](#) acts as a secure, efficient conduit to this invaluable trove of scholarship, and I would also thank the Executive Committee for their work reviewing and critiquing the process as well as the user experience.

Along these lines, please make sure to stay current with your online Circle account! There have been a few hiccups, particularly because educational institutions sometimes block the unknown email address that sends password reset prompts. If you have any issues at all with your account, [let me know directly](#) or use the “[General Query](#)” form on the website. I am always available to help! Also remember that the address you have on file through the website is the one we will use to send physical copies of the *Annual* each year. You can update your address at any time under your account menu, and I am happy to do it for you as well should any issues arise.

Finally, as I step into my new role as the *Annual's* Managing Editor, the team and I would like to thank my father James S. Leonard (more often Jim Leonard), who leaves the position after many years of work behind the scenes. As some of you know, he has continually ensured that our press partnerships—first at Wiley-Blackwell and now at Penn State—remain strong and productive. As I am a relative newcomer, I will leave below a note on Jim's contributions penned by the *Annual's* first Editor, John Bird.

—James W. Leonard





## FEATURED: JIM LEONARD

*John Bird, Former Editor, Annual*

When a small group of members of the Mark Twain Circle gathered on a balcony in rainy Cambridge, Massachusetts at the American Literature Association conference and decided it was time for an academic journal devoted to critical articles on Mark Twain, our focus was on content rather than money. The inaugural issue of *The Mark Twain Annual* appeared in 2003, and although it succeeded in gathering together a collection of critical and pedagogical articles, it was time to think about money. Those first issues were expensive: the Mark Twain Circle had to pay for printing and postage, not a small amount. The journal's editor (me) knew that we needed a managing editor to take care of business, and thankfully, Jim Leonard volunteered his services by the second issue. Jim took care of problems with subscription services, always a headache, among other business matters. By the publication of the fifth issue, my last as editor, Jim wisely negotiated a contract with Wiley-Blackwell for publication of the journal. The result was not only a financial boon to the Circle (no small thing) but also further professionalization of what had previously been an in-house publication. Because of Jim's efforts, *The Mark Twain Annual* is now a money-making proposition for our organization, ending a drain on finances that would have been unendurable in the longer term. Jim made these efforts behind the scenes, with his usual quiet confidence and complete competence. The four editors (so far) of *The Mark Twain Annual*, as well as all members of the Mark Twain Circle, owe Jim Leonard a boatload of thanks for his excellent and tireless service.

—John Bird





# MTC BUSINESS MEETING 2023

22 May 2023, 3:00 EDT

Began: 3:00 p.m. (27 total attendees)

Meeting adjourned 4:30 p.m.

## I. Elections:

Susan K. Harris, Chair of the Nominations Committee, will present the slate. She will first ask for a vote on whether we should vote for the entire slate together. When that is seconded and approved, we will then vote on the slate of candidates. As the meeting is virtual, we will vote by a show of hands, hopefully using the Zoom “raise hand” function, otherwise just visually. The following slate was unanimously approved:

1. Megan McNamara, Executive Coordinator
2. Elizabeth Cantalamessa, Emerging Scholar

## II. Business, New and Old

### 1. Harry Wonham, President

President Harry Wonham will report on Circle Business since the Annual Meeting in May 2022 – no more automatic funding for officers to attend ALA. Introduction of ALA panels. Invite for happy hour during ALA.

### 2. Matt Seybold

Matt Seybold discusses the partnership with CMTS on Park Church Lecture Series and Quarry Farm Fellowships. Would like to host another graduate student workshop and another collaboration (especially financially) with the MTC. Just launched the Michael Kiskiss emerging scholar award – \$500 plus a residency. Gilded Age sesquientennial celebration to be titled “A Tale of Today”

### 3. MTC Awards

Discussion of MTC Awards: Confirm which conferences we’ll support for travel grant; \$300 max per person; establish a total budget

The Lou Budd Award for Distinguished Scholarship

The Thomas Tenney Award for Service

The John Tuckey Award for Lifetime Achievement

The Oliva L Clemens Award for Scholarly Innovation and Creativity

The Lou Budd Travel Grant for Graduate Students and Emerging Scholars



# MTC BUSINESS MEETING 2023

22 May 2023, 3:00 EDT

## III. Reports

### 1. Jarrold Roark, Executive Coordinator

1. A recap of changes to this role and that of the webmaster.
2. Current membership numbers: 166 national and 14 international members.
3. Financial status: Currently have \$21,601 in our accounts.

### 2. Ben Click, Editor, *The Mark Twain Annual*

Ben on *The MT Annual*: Joe as new editor, Nate Williams as associate editor, Megan McNamara as book editor, James W. Leonard as managing editor to replace his father.

June deadline and *Annual* is full. An exciting number of pedagogy articles, many culled from Elmira, many working with Twain to teach antiracist approaches. Joined scholarly publishing collective over JSTOR. John Bird started the *Annual* 20 years ago. His new article is about 40 years of teaching Huck Finn.

### 3. James W. Leonard, Webmaster, *Circular* Editor

James on the *Circular* and website/social media: Send James anecdotes or short research notes for *Circular*. All members need to activate accounts for renewal and database access. Website now provides more info, including who needs to renew.

### 4. Judith Yaross Lee, Vice President

Judith on plans for MLA 2024.

## IV. Announcements, including from the floor

Current descriptions of Awards pending further discussion:

### 1. The Mark Twain Circle Travel Grant

The Mark Twain Circle Travel Grant is designed to provide travel support for graduate students, independent scholars, and early career faculty who are presenting research focused on Mark Twain Studies at conferences, symposia, or other scholarly venues. Priority will be given to applicants who are attending major professional meetings with which the Circle is associated, including MLA, ALA, C19, ASA, and CMTS events. Awards will not exceed \$300. Applicants can apply by writing directly to the MTC President with a list of expenses and an explanation of the benefit to Mark Twain Studies of the proposed support. Awards will be distributed twice annually, on November 1 and on May 1. Applications must be approved by a majority vote of the Executive Committee.



# MTC BUSINESS MEETING 2022

22 May 2023, 3:00 EDT

2. The Louis J. Budd Award for Distinguished Scholarship

The Louis J. Budd Award for Distinguished Scholarship is awarded in recognition of significant scholarship in the field of Mark Twain Studies.

3. The Thomas A. Tenney Award for Service

The Thomas A. Tenney Award for Service is awarded in recognition of service to the field of Mark Twain Studies and on behalf of the mission of the Mark Twain Circle of America.

4. The Olivia Langdon Clemens Award for Scholarly Creativity and Innovation

The Olivia Langdon Clemens Award for Scholarly Creativity and Innovation is awarded in recognition of new, innovative directions in Mark Twain scholarship.

These awards are presented once every four years at the State of Mark Twain Studies quadrennial conference in Elmira, New York, or another venue considered appropriate by a majority of the Executive Committee. Once every four years, in the Fall issue of the *MT Circular*, a notice shall appear naming each of the awards and inviting nominations. Nominations will be sent to the MTC President no later than March 15th of the year in which the awards are to be conferred. The President will propose to the Executive Committee an independent Awards Committee consisting of three MTC members. The Awards Committee will review nominations and select recipients for the three awards.

Past honorees of the Mark Twain Circle of America awards:

- 1993: Thomas A. Tenney, Mark Twain Circle Lifetime Achievement Award
- 1997: Taylor Roberts, Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit  
R. Kent Rasmussen, Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit  
Kevin Bochynski, Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit
- 2005: Thomas A. Tenney, Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit  
Victor Doyno, Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit  
William Loos, Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit
- 2009: Shelley Fisher Fishkin, The Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit  
John Bird, The Thomas A. Tenney Service Award
- 2013: Bruce Michelson, The Louis J. Budd Mark Twain Circle Certificate of Merit  
Jim Leonard, The Thomas A. Tenney Service Award
- 2017: Laura Skandera Trombley, The Louis J. Budd Award  
Kent Rasmussen, The Thomas A. Tenney Service Award  
Linda Morris, The Olivia Langdon Clemens Award
- 2022: Kerry Driscoll, The Louis J. Budd Award  
Chad Rohman, The Thomas A. Tenney Service Award  
Shelley Fisher Fishkin, The Olivia Langdon Clemens Award

Meeting adjourned.





# TWAIN TALK:

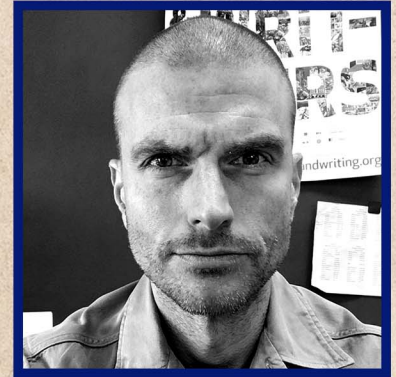
Jarrold Roark





# TWAIN TALK

an interview with Jarrod Roark



**Not to drift too far toward “The Turning Point of My Life,” but do you recall any early experiences with Mark Twain that contributed to your later scholarly interests?**

*Growing up in Kansas City, or anywhere in Missouri, actually, kids see the name Mark Twain written on signs advertising burger joints or forests or parks or writing conferences – usually printed in fonts to emulate nineteenth-century broadsides or playbills. It’s easy for such signage, and the man who inspired it, to become invisible. At least, that was my experience. Furthermore, in my area, numerous streets and historical sites exist, named after Native peoples and Indiana nations, such as the Shawnee Indian Mission (or the Shawnee Mission School District) or Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. So when we read Tom Sawyer, we understood it through a lens of conflict and prejudice in our local area and as an artifact for national biases against Native American populations. All that to say, Mark Twain was a face of local history, and maybe I longed like Luke Skywalker to encounter some people far, far away, and ideas not draped in white hair and mustache, born not too far away. Perhaps that is unfair to compare Twain to Skywalker, but I certainly did when I was young.*

**What was your dissertation topic, and who directed your dissertation?**

Beneath Mark Twain: Justice and Gender in Twain’s Early Western Writing, 1861-1873

*John Cyril Barton directed my dissertation. He was a great voice and offered knowledge and wisdom passed down from his PhD committee, which included Derrida and Brook Thomas. Thomas’s Law and Literature approach was foundational for my methods in investigating crime and punishment in the American West during Twain’s time in Nevada Territory and California.*



# TWAIN TALK

an interview with Jarrod Roark

**As many of us know, your work on Twain often focuses on the American West. This is a Twain that I sometimes feel less avid fans miss out on. Do you have a sense of what drew you to his Western writings?**

*Violence in the West, how law was interpreted or supported or ignored, and how gender played a role in crime and justice originally drew me to Twain. He wrote much about these issues in his letters, hoaxes, and journalism. His voice has echoed throughout American letters and culture for so long, I realized that I could listen and figure out some ideas about the myth of the West and the reality of that narrative.*

**Have your impressions of Twain and his work changed at all over the years? Has your perception of his contribution to the broader conversation of 19th-century American Literature changed?**

*Perhaps I've realized people have not changed very much in the last two hundred years. They can be beautiful or horrible to each other, selfish or charitable, loving or hateful – or all of these attributes simultaneously. Seems like Twain succeeded in capturing these human qualities in a way that continues to resonate with us today.*

**What common misconceptions about Twain do you strive to correct?**

*I'm not sure I've tried to redirect misconceptions about the life of Twain, at least not explicitly. But I have tried to show how Twain's early writing, especially his periodical writing, participated in a larger sensational literary marketplace. Just because we think of Twain as a Realist or as a humorist does not mean we can't read his newspaper reporting or hoaxes or even his letters within a Romantic context – within a marketplace that produced sensational writers that sold books filled with violence, sex, and gothic imagery.*

**What, if anything, have you grown to dislike about the man?**

*The man was just a man. Complicated yet simple, like the rest of us. But the words and ideas he left behind have instructed me, enveloped me, and influenced me. He's one of my teachers. I don't expect that he was always kind to others, or even that he was free of problematic ideas. If he were here today, he likely would offend some folks. But, like Salman Rushdie said, "What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist." I know that drinking a sazerac with Twain sure sounds fun, even if I dislike something about the man.*

**As a faculty member at St. Teresa's Academy, how have you come to view Twain's interaction with the high school curriculum as it stands, and what do you feel he contributes (or could contribute) to the preparatory experience?**

*I taught Huck Finn annually for well over a decade before taking a break. When I returned to the novel, I found that I wanted to focus much more on Jim than on Huck, much more on his escape than on Huck's adventure – because they are both escaping. I found that their journey across state lines offered them peril,*



# TWAIN TALK

an interview with Jarrod Roark

*and I was interested in helping students see how boundaries are created, maintained, and protected. So recently, the novel has helped me discuss how racism has divided my metropolitan area and our country. But I'm also interested in the rhetorical power of the novel and discussing Huck's and Jim's speech acts. I guess I'm saying the novel can offer different ideas, depending on when I read it and teach it.*

**As our Executive Coordinator, you've played a crucial role in the Mark Twain Circle's evolution for quite some time now. What do you believe our members can do to get more people involved in Twain Studies?**

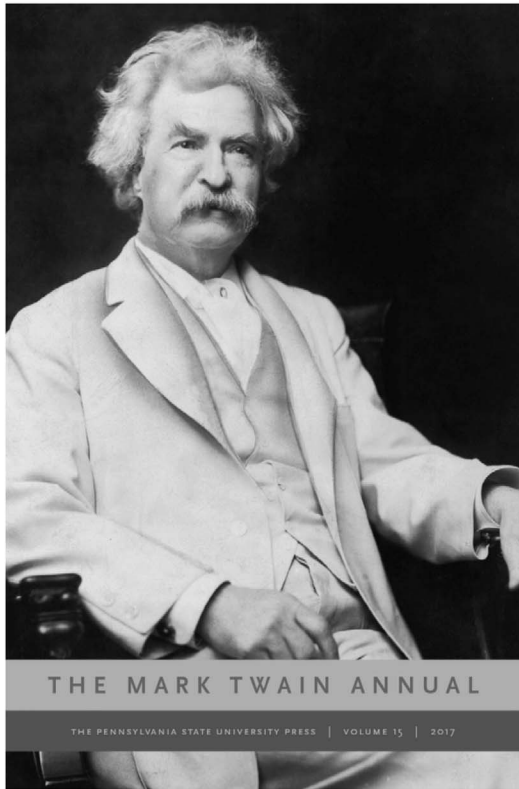
*Encourage grad students to submit proposals for conferences and publications. I know that when I took a risk in grad school, Twain scholars encouraged me and supported me. That's why I'm here today. Larry Howe, John Bird, and Ann Ryan (among others) were in the audience the first time I presented at ALA, and because of their kind words I kept writing and presenting.*

**Finally, what is your best advice for someone just starting in the field?**

*Allow your intellectual curiosity to guide your research, your questions, your whole life pursuit. Not everyone can contribute to cancer research or solve international conflicts. But everyone can invest in our human pool of knowledge. That's an interesting and invigorating pool: in it we can swim, or drink, or become refreshed. We can add to it and subtract from it. Other smart people have contributed to it, and so can you.*



# THE MARK TWAIN ANNUAL



## JOE CSICSILA, EDITOR

*The Mark Twain Annual* is the official publication of the Mark Twain Circle of America. The journal offers essays related to Mark Twain and those who surrounded him and serves as an outlet for new scholarship as well as new pedagogical approaches.

The Mark Twain Circle of America encourages interest in Mark Twain and fosters the formal presentation of ideas about the author and his work, as well as the informal exchange of information among Circle members.

ISSN 1553-0981 | E-ISSN 1756-2597

Annual | Available in print or online

*Current pricing:*

[psupress.org/Journals/jnls\\_MTA.html](http://psupress.org/Journals/jnls_MTA.html)

*Submissions:*

[editorialmanager.com/mta](http://editorialmanager.com/mta)

PENN STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.psupress.org  
journals@psu.edu





# RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE MARK TWAIN CIRCLE OF AMERICA



**\$30 Individual**  
**\$15 Graduate Students and K-12 Educators**  
**\$75 Three-year Individual**

Membership helps support the educational and social activities of the Circle, including scholarly panels at academic conferences such as MLA and ALA. It also includes our newsletter, the *Mark Twain Circular*, which will keep you connected to all things Twain, and *The Mark Twain Annual*, published by Pennsylvania State UP. Previous issues are available to members through The Scholarly Publishing Collective.

**Send queries regarding *The Mark Twain Annual* to:**

Joe Csicsila, Editor  
612 Pray-Harrold  
Department of English  
Eastern Michigan University  
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197  
[jcsicsila@emich.edu](mailto:jcsicsila@emich.edu)

**For *Annual* submission information or to submit a manuscript, visit the *Annual's* Editorial Manager website:**

[editorialmanager.com/mta/](http://editorialmanager.com/mta/)

**Memberships now payable online via PayPal (credit, debit, or PayPal account):**

[marktwaincircle.org/join-renew](http://marktwaincircle.org/join-renew)

**Or, send your check—payable to the Mark Twain Circle of America—to:**

Megan McNamara, Executive Coordinator  
Mark Twain Circle of America  
272 Rutland St.  
Carlisle, MA 01741

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Email address:**

**Academic affiliation:**



# MARK TWAIN CIRCULAR

ISSN 1042-5357

## MARK TWAIN CIRCLE OFFICERS

### President:

Harry Wonham, University of Oregon

### Vice President:

Judith Yaross Lee, Ohio University

### Executive Coordinator:

Megan McNamara, MIT

### Executive Committee Chair/Past President:

Susan K. Harris, University of Kansas

### Executive Committee Regular Member:

Ryan Heryford, CSU East Bay

### Executive Committee Emerging Scholar:

Elizabeth Cantalamessa, University of Miami

### Editor, *The Mark Twain Annual*:

Joe Csicsila, Eastern Michigan University

### Associate Editor, *The Mark Twain Annual*:

Nathaniel Williams, UC Davis

### Webmaster & Editor, *Mark Twain Circular*:

James W. Leonard, The Citadel

The *Mark Twain Circular* is the newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America.

The *Circular* is published at The Citadel (Charleston, South Carolina) and is supported by the Mark Twain Circle of America.

Drea Fournier is the *Circular's* Design Editor.

## SERIAL LIBRARIANS

The *Mark Twain Circular* is entered selectively in the annual bibliographies of the Modern Language Association and the Modern Humanities Research Association and in the American Humanities Index, Literary Criticism Register, American Literary Scholarship, and "A Checklist of Scholarship on Southern Literature" (which appears annually in the spring issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly*).

## James Wharton Leonard, Editor

*Mark Twain Circular*

English Department

The Citadel

Charleston, SC 29409

email: [jleonar2@citadel.edu](mailto:jleonar2@citadel.edu)

