

Biblio File

The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded **Margaret McMullan** a 2010 fellowship in literature. McMullan will use the \$25,000 grant to complete *The Aftermath Lounge*, a collection of stories about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. McMullan and her work will soon be featured in the NEA's Writer's Corner at: <http://arts.endow.gov/features/Writers/index.html>. ... **Jack Ridl** shared his experiences, poetry and advice to aspiring writers early in November at Saginaw Valley State University and Kirtland Community College, both in Michigan. Ridl and his new book, *Losing Season* (CavanKerry Press, see New Books, October, 2009), were a featured segment on NPR's "The Story" and "Only a Game." The book will be



Jack Ridl

named "Sports Book of the Year" by the Institute for International Sport. And Ridl will be keynote reader at Springfield College's tribute celebration of James Naismith's inventing basketball at the college. "It's fun stuff to have poetry intersecting with the sports world, two worlds that don't often hang out with one another," Ridl told Biblio File. Ridl's poetry also was scheduled to be on Garrison Keillor's radio show, "The Writer's Almanac," on Dec. 1. ... The Lincoln (Neb.) Journal Star said Nov. 4 that **Carol Fisher Saller**'s new book, *The Subversive Copy Editor*, is a "treasure house of advice, stories, suggestions and how to handle the difficult author." ... **Betsy Green** has moved to Santa Barbara. ... **Sel Yackley** is getting the word out that



Carol Fisher Saller

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Donald Whitfield

Janice Metzger

Alan P. Mammoser

Aric Lasher

Robert Samuel Roche

Five authors offer new views of century-old Burnham plan

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Five local authors offered insights into Daniel Burnham's *Plan for Chicago* on Nov. 10 at the Society of Midland Authors' monthly program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The plan by Burnham and his co-author, Edward H. Bennett, is responsible for much of Chicago's public character, including its open lakefront and expansive park system. The plan also envisioned a network of broad avenues.

The SMA program marked the centennial of the plan's publication.

Because of a scheduling conflict, the program was held in the club's smaller Louis Sullivan Room, where SMA President Robert Loerzel noticed that Sullivan's *Autobiography of an Idea* was one of the books on the shelves and read a quote from it as part of his introduction.

The panelists at the program were **Donald Whitfield, Janice Metzger, Alan P. Mammoser, Aric Lasher and Robert**

Samuel Roche. After Loerzel's introduction, Whitfield acted as moderator of the program. The program was recorded by Chicago Public Radio under a new arrangement that will allow the public to access SMA programs online.

Whitfield, who is the director of higher education for the Great Books Foundation, which has just released a new version of Burnham's *Plan for Chicago*, said the original is hard to find because only 1,600 copies were printed.

"It was very difficult to get," Whitfield said. "I started teaching seminars on the *Plan for Chicago* several years ago. At that time, you just couldn't get the book. It was one of those great books that everybody seems to have heard of but nobody read, but not because they didn't want to, it just wasn't available. So with the help of the Commercial Club and the Centennial Committee, we were able to publish a replica of the entire plan."

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Marcus Sakey

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Books

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Richard Cahan, Michael Williams

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Stephen Kinzer, who has reported from perhaps more countries than any other SMA member, will speak at 6 p.m. Jan. 26 on "Iran, Turkey and the U.S.: Power Triangle of the 21st Century." The lecture, presented by International Women Associates, will be at the Film Row Cinema of Columbia College Chicago, 8th floor, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago. Kinzer (see New Books, Page 9) sees Turkey, and a future democratic Iran, as logical partners for the United States. Cost: \$20 per person in advance, \$25 at the door. Reservations at www.iwachicago.org or (312) 263-1421. ... **Alzina Stone Dale** was scheduled to have a "double" book signing at 10 a.m. Dec. 9 at the Newberry Library bookstore and at 57th Street Books in Hyde Park that afternoon beginning about 3 p.m. ... Illinois Poet Laureate **Kevin Stein** read a



Kevin Stein

selection of poetry, answered questions, and signed copies of his books at the Morris (Ill.) Area Public Library on Nov. 12. He also donated money for the purchase of books by Illinois poets via his laureate Poetry Now project. (Morris is the 36th Illinois library to receive such funds.) Also, on Sept. 27, Stein took part in the Gold Star Mothers

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www.midlandauthors.com

Editor: Thomas Frisbie
tomfrisbie@aol.com

Copy editor: Steve Huntley
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images from photos by Gerry Souter

Burnham

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One of the first things people will notice when they read the new edition is that it is much more than a collection of conceptual illustrations, Whitfield said.

"There is a lot to read, there is a lot to ruminare on, there is a lot to digest," he said. "I encourage you to read it. It reads well. It is kind of an interesting distant mirror on Chicago as we know it now."

Roche, co-author with Lasher of *Plans of Chicago* (which on the evening of the SMA program was about to be released by the University of Chicago Press), said the book compares Burnham's *Plan of Chicago* to other proposals, including those by Frank Lloyd Wright, Jens Jensen, Walter Burley Griffin, Eliel Saarinen and Ludwig Hilberseimer.

"One of our original thoughts was everyone knows the [Burnham] plan," Roche said. "It is full of beautiful drawings. But perhaps even for that reason, it is not necessarily taken seriously as an urban plan. And why is that? Could close analysis of the plan yield something fruitful for contemporary conditions in Chicago specifically, but maybe more largely in American cities?"

Lasher, Roche's co-author, said the authors studied plans that came both before and after Burnham.

"We discovered there were plans subsequent to Burnham's plan that addressed more localized conditions than his overarching approach for regional origination and enrichment of the civic center," Lasher said.

Some of the later plans took into account the advent of the automobile, "something that was highly disruptive to the earlier industrial-era plans, including Burnham's plan," he said.

Metzger said her book, *What Would Jane Say? City-Building Women and a Tale of Two Chicagos* (Lake Claremont Press), took a different approach. In the book, she imagines that Burnham had asked the women behind the settlement house movement, including Jane Addams' Hull House, to participate in a planning process and had asked them to meet and

comment on drafts of the plan.

"What difference would it have made if these women, these city-building women who were on a separate but a parallel path, had actually been involved in the Burnham Plan of Chicago?" Metzger said. "I think that it would have made a huge difference."

The illustrations in *Plan for Chicago* are "lovely," but "emphasize this above-the-people point of view, this bird's-eye view where people are really small and insignificant," Metzger said.

"The people who were promoting the Burnham plan were really looking for business investment at taxpayers' expense and they were looking for a ready labor pool that was only marginally healthy and well-fed," she said. "People needed

from their point of view to be somewhat hungry to work."

Mammoser was added to the program at the last minute because he is co-author with DePaul University professor Joseph P. Schwieterman of *Beyond Burnham:*

An Illustrated History of Planning for the Chicago Region (Sept. 1, Lake Forest College Press). Mammoser said he learned how difficult it is to

devise and implement urban plans while he worked for the former Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission from 1999 to 2005. (NIPC has since been merged into the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.)

"It was a tough agency to work for because we were so powerless," he said. "We were an advisory agency, and we made a lot of good plans."

Beyond Burnham is a "good introduction to everything that happened after Burnham," he said. "We wanted to bring recognition to all those unsung, hard-working planners, many of them dead, many of them still living, but most of them forgotten, who really tried their best to create this regional vision for metropolitan Chicago and never attained the glory of Burnham."

Note: The Society of Midland Authors' Oct. 13 and Nov. 19 programs may be heard in their entirety at www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified.



Daniel Burnham

'I just focus on trying to tell stories I would like to read'

Marcus Sakey has won critical acclaim for his novels *The Blade Itself*, *At the City's Edge*, *The Amateurs* and *Good People*.

Along with Laura Caldwell, Sakey will present the Society of Midland Authors' Jan. 12 program on the craft of writing crime fiction.

Here's what he tells Literary License about that craft:

Literary License: *Chicago's cityscape forms an intriguing backdrop for your novels. Could you have been as effective writing in another city?*

Marcus Sakey: I hope so, but I think I would have written different books. Especially my first two, *The Blade Itself* and *At the City's Edge*, which were both so rooted in Chicago that it was practically a character.

The book I'm working on right now isn't set here, and it's an interesting challenge. Fun to have some new locations to play with, but a little daunting as well.

Literary License: *The Chicago Tribune has called you "the reigning prince of crime fiction." What sets your stories apart from other crime fiction authors?*

Marcus Sakey: That was a fun quote. I've been trying to get my wife to refer to me as Your Highness, but so far, no luck.

I'm not sure I'm qualified to speak on that, as I don't really write with others in mind – I just focus on trying to tell stories I would like to read. I think as long as you're doing that, you're going to be heading the right direction.

Literary License: *Your characters struggle with issues of good vs. evil. How do you develop your characters?*

Marcus Sakey: I don't think you should ever write about someone who isn't at the end of their rope. So that's a crucial component – I need to figure out what kind of person is likely to have the most at stake, and then how I can make it

January 12, 2010, program

Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor

6 p.m. - Social Hour
7 p.m. - Program

Free - donations accepted

worse for them.

I also focus on trying to make sure that I believe in these people. I'm not interested in novels with white hats and black hats, nor in fantasy fulfillment stuff. I like to read about people I could have a beer with.

Literary License: *In a time of a changing media landscape, do you have advice for authors trying to get attention for their books?*

Marcus Sakey: Yeah – focus on writing it.

There's too much attention put into the marketing aspect these days. A better book will promote more easily. It's just that simple.

A better book will land a better editor at a better publishing house that will give you better support.

That said, once you've written the best book you can, then promotion is part of the job. Certain things are mandatory – a Web site, for example – and others are optional, like touring and Twittering. Participate to your comfort level, but don't stress too much on it. You're always better off working on the next book.

Literary License: *What's your next book?*

Marcus Sakey: It's about a man who wakes up on a Maine beach in November, naked and half dead, and unsure of who he is or how he got there. It's a love story and a crime story and a thriller. I'm having a good time with it.

Q&A
with
Marcus Sakey



Letters to the Editor

Thank you for the recent piece on **Kevin Mattson's** *What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?* – a copy of which I promptly ordered and devoured. Speaking as a former Carter volunteer (campaign chief on my college campus), I can report that Mattson perfectly captures – and astutely analyzes – the era, the personalities, the forces at work both above and below the surface, and the missed opportunity that was both President Carter's salient speech and, more generally, his prophetic presidency. In addition, at this time when another bright, idealistic commander in chief finds himself assailed by a (possibly) resurgent right, this "historical" book offers vital lessons for today.

Paul McComas



Thank you for such a great issue! Literary License is always informative, entertaining and filled with hopeful news, inspiring tips and great stories. Makes me proud to be an SMA member. Since I can almost never make the meetings, I thoroughly enjoy and appreciate the recaps. You outdid yourselves this month with superb articles about Luis Alberto Urrea and the interview with **Jeffrey Zaslow** who worked with Chesley B. Sullenberger III. And as always, helpful publicity tips by **Tom Ciesielka**. He is a gift to our organization.

Again, I say thank you.

Charlene Ann Baumbich



I have just read my first issue of Literary License. I appreciate the work you put into such a publication.

I also enjoyed reading about the literary scene in Chicago. Plus, I found two of my former students prominently positioned: **Rich Lindberg**, of course, who brought me his first manuscript in the early 1970s – and **Tom Ciesielka** who is still offering good ideas, in the present case ideas regarding publicity.

J. Fred MacDonald



It is always a great pleasure to read about our members' involvement. You do a very good job.

Sel Yackley

'Our books are based on hidden treasures'

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Few people familiar with the publishing business would tell **Richard Cahan** and **Michael Williams** that they are being sensible.

Authors are often advised to find a niche, but Cahan and Williams keep leaving their tried-and-true projects behind and looking for even better stories.

"We keep doing completely different books, which is really fun," Cahan said.

Cahan and Williams, who between them have also written 11 other books, have collaborated on six striking, photo-driven books since 2004. The first two, *Real Chicago: Photographs From the Files of the Chicago Sun-Times*, and *Real Chicago Sports* (2005), were co-authored with **Neal Samors** and brought to light 60 years of Chicago's history through long-unseen photographs from the newspaper archive.

Samors wasn't the only one to assist. Nicholas Osborn helped to write *Who We Were: A Snapshot History of America* (2008), and Bruce Moffat was a co-author of *Chicago: City on the Move* (2007). The one book in the series without a third name on the cover is *Richard Nickel's Chicago: Photographs of a Lost City* (2008). Nickel also was the subject of Cahan's 1995 book, *They All Fall Down: Richard Nickel's Struggle to Save America's Architecture*.

The unifying theme among the titles is that "one leads to another," Cahan said. "Most of them are projects we have thought about for years and talked about for years."

In fact, it's unusual that right now the two writers don't already have their project in mind.

Meanwhile, they are busy promoting their latest book, the 400-page *Edgar Miller and the Hand-Made Home: Chicago's Forgotten Renaissance Man*. Illustrated largely with 400 photographs by Alexander Vertikoff, the book tells the story of a talented but obscure artist [he is

not among the 15 Millers listed in the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*] and the stunning visual legacy he left Chicago, including four Old Town-area studio complexes he created in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the Dec. 15 Booklist, **Donna Seaman** wrote, "Cahan and Williams ... vividly recount Miller's story of genius and audacity, from his Idaho youth to his meteoric rise in Chicago. Architectural photographer Alexander Vertikoff's sharp and lustrous images elegantly capture the extraordinary details, rich colors, and profound connectivity of Miller's spectacular creations."

One of the challenges in writing the book, Williams said, is that numerous myths about Miller had taken root, so that

the authors had to go through thousands of documents to get accurate information.

"There were so many things wrong about who did what that it took a lot of sorting out," he said.

Another challenge is that Cahan and Williams are their

own publisher: CityFiles Press, which has published their last four books.

"I think that to do expensive, serious books is becoming more difficult because the price is going up and what people are willing to pay for books is going down," Cahan said. "The Edgar Miller book, [priced at \$50] could have sold out for \$70 a couple of years ago. Now, book stores are leery of taking books over \$50."

"It is getting much more difficult to make a worthwhile profit," he added.

The authors don't expect to make a killing on any of their projects, but that also means they run a big risk if a title doesn't do well, because there are no reserves from other books to cover a loss.

"We are careful on what we do because we can't afford a book that doesn't work," Cahan said. "If we had a warehouse full of books, it would kill us."

Nevertheless, Cahan and Williams do not pursue a book idea just because it seems like a potential moneymaker.

"Our priority is by far to do worthwhile books, to show readers worlds they never

"We really don't put out a book unless it all comes together."

noticed," Cahan said. "All of our books are based on hidden treasures. But when you are starting with hidden treasures, you start at a commercial disadvantage."

To offset that disadvantage, Cahan and Williams work to create an image of CityFiles books that everything from the story to the photographs to the top-quality printing is first class.

"We have really striven to create a perception that people know there is a certain level of quality and to create a high level of expectation," Cahan said. "We have a remarkably strong group of book buyers, and every year we send an e-mail that we have another book. We have a high level of response because they know what a CityFiles book means."

Big New York publishers produce many great books, but because they sign up authors early, often after seeing only a chapter and an outline, they also print numerous titles even if they don't live up to early expectations, Cahan said.

By contrast, Cahan and Williams have walked away from projects even after investing a lot of work because they recognize the initial ideas weren't as good as they first appeared.

"We really don't put out a book unless it all comes together," he said.

As a result, a common response they get from readers is something like: "My father hasn't read a book in 45 years, but when we gave him your book for Christmas we couldn't get him to get out of his chair to come to dinner," Cahan said.

Even Curt Matthews, CEO of Independent Publishers Group in Chicago, which distributes CityFiles books, was impressed by the quality of the printing of the Edgar Miller book, Cahan said.

"He told us, 'I haven't seen a book like this in 20 years,'" Cahan said.

Is it a lot of work?

"If we are still standing when we finish a book," Cahan said, "then we have done something wrong."

Literary Life:

Richard Cahan, Michael Williams



From the Society archives: 94 years of literary events

While cataloging additions to the **Richard Frisbie** Collection of the SMA Archive at the UIC Richard J. Daley Library's Special Collection, I came across a package of Xeroxes of clippings of old Sun-Times, Tribune and Chicago Daily News articles mentioning the Society of Midland Authors. Here are a few tidbits that may be of interest to SMA members.

The Jan. 6, 1931, Sun announced that SMA had a new permanent home, the "Midland Author's room" in the Hotel Sherman "for luncheon, tea or dinner or all three, for whoever literature has produced that much lucre." The paper noted that the "new room is lined with bookcases, and authors are invited to fill them with properly autographed copies of their work."

The Nov. 13, 1943, Sun announced a SMA luncheon at the Casino Club. From the Sun on April 20, 1943, a notice said that the SMA luncheon would be held at the Seneca Hotel, with SMA President Arthur Meeker Jr. presiding. Meeker presided over another 1943 luncheon in the Little Tea Room at

Carson, Pirie Scott & Co. An April 25, 1943, Sun article entitled, "Lost, Stolen Or Strayed, One Library, Midland Authors Much Distressed," noted that SMA had donated its extensive library to the Newberry Library. But when they went to transfer it, the books were missing, last seen in boxes in the cellar of the Sherman Hotel. "The society met in a small clubroom in the hotel for years, surrounded by its library." SMA offered a \$25 reward to any hotel employee who could locate the missing treasures.

The March 22, 1944, Sun announced a SMA luncheon at the Normandy House.

An April 28, 1945, Sun article revealed that SMA President Mary Hastings Bradley would not preside over a luncheon because she "was abroad as a war correspondent with the WAC, but is sending her greetings to be read."

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The Nov. 15, 1956, Chicago Daily News said that Jerry Lewis would address the SMA "monthly luncheon" at the Old Heidelberg restaurant on the topic of "The Delicate Delinquent."

From May 18, 1957, Chicago Tribune, readers learned that SMA had established a \$500 annual award for the best creative writing produced in the Midwest, named after Thormond Monsen, in memory of the pioneer Chicago printer and cultural leader. The first award was presented at the annual SMA banquet held at the Fortnightly Club, 120 E. Bellevue. Judges that year were author and columnist Vincent Starrett, Pulitzer winner Pearl S. Buck and New York Herald Tribune literary critic John K. Hutchins, among others. A screen committee consisted of Van Allen Bradley, past SMA president and literary editor of the Chicago Daily News, Tribune literary critic Fanny Butcher,



*Literary
Lore
Craig
Sautter*

magazine.

The Oct 21, 1959, Sun-Times notified the public that the SMA would kick off its 44th year with a dinner meeting at the St. Clair Hotel. The May dinner at the Fortnightly awarded its Monsen prize to Pulitzer Prize winning poet and critic Mark Van Doren, Columbia U. professor from Hope, Ill. Van Doren's book was selected from among 39 books that were nominated. (In 2009, several hundred books were nominated for various SMA prizes.)

The Sept. 27, 1961, Chicago Daily News noted that SMA President James McGuinn would dedicate the club library at the Press Club, 162 E. Ohio.

More material from the SMA archives will appear in the January Literary License. Craig Sautter is a past SMA president.

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Day ceremony honoring those mothers who have lost a child in service of country. Gov. Quinn asked Stein to read a poem, and Stein wrote a new one and read it: "To Illinois' Gold Star Mothers, Who Have Lost a Child in Service of Country." The poem and story can be found at <http://www.bradley.edu/poet/poems/goldstarpiecefromBUweb.mht>. "The experience of being in the presence of so many who had lost children to war in the past year was powerful and memo-



Beryl Satter

orable," Stein told Biblio File. ... **Beryl Satter's** book *Family Properties* was listed by New York Times' book critic Dwight Garner as one of his top 10 books of 2009. Satter talked about her book Nov. 12 at Chicago's John Marshall

Fair Housing Clinic Conference Room, did a reading Nov. 13 at Women & Children First, also in Chicago, and spoke at a meeting of United Power for Action and Justice at the Third Baptist Church of Chicago on Nov 14. She'll be back in Chicago on Feb. 9 to speak at the Rush University Medical Center. Also, on Jan. 15, she'll give the keynote address for the "Fit for a King" event (celebrating Martin Luther King's birthday) at the Greater New Orleans Fair Housing Action Center and on March 10, she'll give the Barry Ricco Annual Lecture at Eastern Illinois University. ... The Chicago Tribune reported Nov. 13 that new evidence supports **Glennette Tilley Turner's** longheld belief that Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., was a stop on the Underground Railroad for decades. "Turner said she used to believe that the Underg-round Railroad had operated only in states east of Illinois, and she was curious to learn more," the



Glennette Tilley Turner

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New Members

Angela Jackson teaches at Kennedy-King College. She is author of *Where I Must Go*, a novel, and the poetry collections *Dark Legs and Silk Kisses: The Beatitudes of the Spinners* (winner of the 1994 Carl Sandburg Award for poetry) and *All These Roads Be Luminous: Poems Selected and New*. Besides the Sandburg Award, she has won numerous other literary awards.



Angela Jackson



Owen Hurd

Owen Hurd is a former editor at several Chicago publishers. He is author of *Chicago History for Kids: Triumphs and Tragedies of the Windy City* (2007, Chicago Review Press).

Kristina Riggle lives and writes in West Michigan. Besides her debut novel, *Real Life & Liars*, she has published short stories in the *Cimarron Review*, *Literary Mama*, *Espresso Fiction*, and elsewhere.



Kristina Riggle

She is also a freelance journalist writing primarily for the Grand Rapids Press, and co-editor for fiction at *Literary Mama*. Kristina was a full-time newspaper reporter for seven years before turning her attention to creative writing and freelancing. As well as writing, she enjoys reading, yoga, dabbling in (very) amateur musical theater, and spending lots of time with her husband, two kids and dog.

Real Life & Liars is set in Charlevoix, Mich., a town close to Kristina's heart as the home of her grandparents where she has visited often over the years. Some recognizable Charlevoix landmarks appear in the novel, as well as fictionalized versions of real places. The home of the Zielinski family on Dixon Avenue is

based loosely on the house where her grandmother grew up.

Her next novel, *The Life You've Imagined*, is due out in August 2010. It will tell of the three friends and a mother brought together by a failing family business in the fictional town of Haven, Mich.

Originally from Peoria, Ill., fiction writer **James Klise** was educated in Washington, D.C. and Columbia, Mo., and he now resides in Chicago. He earned his MFA from the Bennington College Writing Seminars, and his short stories have appeared in many journals, including *StoryQuarterly*, *New Orleans Review*, *Ascent*, *Sou'wester*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. His nonfiction has appeared in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Booklist*, the *Readerville Journal*, and elsewhere. *Love Drugged*, his debut novel for young adults, will be published by Flux in late 2010. Klise works as a high school librarian on the Far North Side of Chicago, where he also advises the student literary journal, book club and the gay-straight alliance. "If nothing else," he says, "I know my audience."



James Klise

James V. O'Connor is a freelance writer and the author of *Cuss Control*, a book devoted to helping America break its addiction to swearing. He has appeared on Oprah and the CBS Evening News and has been profiled in *Maxim*, *Harper's Men's Fitness* and a *New York Times* editorial. He also is president of O'Connor Communications, a public relations firm in Lake Forest, Ill., specializing in books and authors.



James V. O'Connor

Lynda O'Connor is executive vice president of O'Connor Communications. Before joining O'Connor Communications

in 1993, she managed special projects, events and publicity for the Chicago International Film Festival. She conducted publicity for a \$20 million fund-raising campaign for the Field Museum of Natural History and was the co-founder and publicity director of the Children's Legal Clinic.



Lynda O'Connor

Award-winning journalist **Daniel P. Smith** left his second career as a high school English teacher in 2004 to pursue writing.

He is author of *On the Job: Behind the Stars of the Chicago Police Department* (Lake Claremont), inspired by his roots in a Chicago Police family. He is working with photographer and fellow Chicagoan Brian Palm on a project sharing the stories and images of Chicago's disappearing buildings.

A 2003 graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he was an accomplished track and field athlete, Smith lives in the Chicago area with his wife, Tina, and dog, Dublin.

Janice Law has had four careers: journalist, attorney, judge and author of five books. In her 2007 nonfiction book



Janice Law

Strangers in Blood: Distanced Lives, Law chronicles her early years in Flint, Mich., when, from the age of 8, she wrote material for the Saturday Flint Journal children's page: the Wide Awake Club. After graduating from the University of Michigan, she worked

for the CIA in Washington and then married an Air Force officer and wrote for small papers across the United States where he was stationed. In 1976, she entered law school, working at the night police desk at the Fort Lauderdale News with classes during the day. She worked as a state prosecutor and federal prosecutor and became a criminal court judge in Houston.

It's time to fire up your blog and get it off the back burner

Blogs seem to have gone on the back burner thanks to other fast-developing social media applications.

This doesn't mean that blogs are less important though. Let's revisit them this month and discuss ways to spruce them up with some fun programs.

Give your blog a face.

An icon or slogan that ties your blog together is a great way to add character to your blog and unify your online presence. Genfavicon is a program you can use to upload your own image to create a "favicon," or favorite icon, that will appear to the left of your blog's URL address. This icon could be anything from your latest book cover to an image or a photo of something you write about (e.g. a magnifying glass, if write mysteries). Using a favicon will give your blog personality and make it easier for people to remember you.

Twitter-fy your blog.

Linking your Twitter account to your blog not only spices it up, but it shows your readers that you are active on other social media levels. Perhaps you don't blog everyday, but if you tweet everyday, your readers will be able to see each updated tweet on your blog. A program called Twitter Tools allows you to completely integrate your blog and Twitter account by allowing such things as automatically sending a tweet when you write a new blog post or creating a blog post from one of your tweets. Bringing your blog and Twitter together will do great things. Like create the words Twog and Blitter.

Get your readers opinion.

Allowing and encouraging interaction on your blog is a great way to connect with your readers. Everyone knows you should give others the opportunity to comment on your posts, but you can also do more. Programs such as Poll Daddy or Quibble allow you to create your own polls or surveys about the topics you blog about. This

can do a number of things: 1) get readers interested about a topic that's important to you. 2) encourage them to revisit to find out the results 3) give you material to blog about once you collect a number of responses.

A name-building event

If you want to go beyond your blog and stage an event, lots of planning and preparation are required. Big events are planned a year or more in advance, giving ample time to make sure the day is flawless.

What you could do now is choose 1) a day 2) a venue 3) a theme and 4) a goal. Ask yourself: What time of year is best? What place would be big enough or unique? What do I want to gain from having this conference or event? What audience should we target? Answering these questions and planning out your basic roadmap will help keep you on track all the way to the big day.

It's never too early to start the buzz on all levels of media. As soon as you have the basic details finalized, promotion can begin. First, add an announcement to your Web site home-

page that directs visitors to a subpage devoted solely to the event. This will serve as your event's home base, where people can find all the information and updates they need. Make them search too much, and they will lose interest. Next, write a blog post about the creation of this event. Get people excited. Talk about how awesome it's going to be and tell your readers why they should attend. Then, use Facebook to create an event page and invite folks to attend. Tweet about the event. Include the info in your newsletter. Write a media alert announcement with the basic information. Create a postcard invitation. Ignite the promotional match, and watch the fire spread.

E-mail Tom Ciesielka at tc@tcpr.net or call (312) 422-1333.

PR Tips
from
Tom
Ciesielka



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Tribune reported. "In a guide to DuPage County written about 1940 and in a history of Glen Ellyn, Turner found brief references to the Underground Railroad and to anti-slavery efforts in the area." ... A unscientific Cleveland Plain Dealer survey found a writers' colony in northeast Ohio that has more than 30 writers with national readerships or major publishing contracts. Many, including **Thrity Umrigar** and **Kris Ohlson**, live in Cleveland Heights within walking distance of one another. ... **S.L. "Sandi" Wisenberg** appeared Nov. 15 at the Miami Book Fair International, talking about her book, *The Adventures of Cancer Bitch*. She also joined a Nov. 13 panel at the National Women's Studies Association conference in Atlanta. She did readings at Nov. 3 at Creighton University and Dec. 1 at Lewis University in Romeoville, Ill. ... **Jeffrey Zaslow** has had success lately, but authors awaiting their big break can take heart: In a Nov. 9 interview with the Indianapolis Star, Zaslow reminds us, "I wrote two books before *The Last Lecture* that nobody bought." His most recent book, which he discussed in Literary License's October Q&A, is *Highest Duty: My Search for What Really Matters* (William Morrow), co-authored with Capt. Chesley B. Sullenberger III. ... In a Nov. 3 commentary, **John Wasik**, writing on the same topic as the SMA's November program, said: "Inspired by Haussmann's Parisian boulevards and L'Enfant's Washington grid, [Daniel] Burnham and [Edward H.] Bennett made Chicago one of the most elegantly planned cities in North America." ... **Richard Cahan** on the day President Obama was elected co-created an audio snapshot of the some 3,000 people living at Altgeld Gardens, the Chicago public housing development where Obama started as a community organizer. Cahan returned with radio reporter Linda Paul almost a year later to create another audio snapshot. A narrated photo gallery is at www.wbez.org/program_848.aspx ... **Arnie Bernstein's Bath Massacre** and **Mardi Link's Isadore's Secret** have been

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named Notable Books of the Year by the State Library of Michigan. ... **Scott Turow** (See New Books, Page 9) will deliver the University of Iowa College of Law's Levitt Lecture at April 8, 2010, at the Iowa Memorial Union. Turow's lecture, "It's Only Words: Thoughts of a Lawyer and Novelist," will examine voice and rhetoric from the perspective of a lawyer and novelist. ... Two items on SMA's mob coverage front: **Richard Babcock** wrote an article for the November issue of Chicago Magazine on the mysterious 1920s mob hit on Tribune reporter Jake Lingle, one of Chicago's nagging murder mysteries. And in the Nov. 5 Library Journal, Barbara Hoffert said **Jonathan Eig's** book due out next April, *Get Capone! The Secret Plot That Captured America's Most Wanted Gangster*, draws "on everything from the memories of Capone relatives to the papers of the U.S. attorney who prosecuted the gangster. Eig (*Luckiest Man*) delivers the story of the man who, he argues, wasn't behind the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. With a six-city tour to Baltimore, Chicago, Miami, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Not, I think, simply for true-crime fanatics." ... On Oct. 30, **Paul McComas** was scheduled to perform at the studio TV taping of "Evanston Idol" at Evanston Community Media Center in his occasional stage-persona as the Blue-State Cowboy, "singin' a li'l pro-health-care-reform ditty I recently co-wrote (with the ghost of Patsy Cline), name of 'Coughin' After Midnight.'" ... To mark the National Survivors Awareness weekend, **Sel Yackley** was the keynote speaker at the "Harvest of Hope" brunch Nov. 22 at Pipers Banquet Hall in Aurora, Ill, attended by 175 persons. The event benefitted Suicide Prevention Services, which runs a suicide hotline. ... **George Beam** invites SMA members to check out his Web site: www.george-beam.com. ... The Federal Reserve Bank has invited **Edward E. Gordon** gave the keynote address at the Federal Reserve's 23rd Annual Economic Outlook Symposium on Dec. 4. To reduce high unemployment, he proposed expanding small business

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New Books

WHEN THE POSTWAR WORLD WAS NEW

Alzina Stone Dale's *When the Postwar World Was New* (Tate Publishing) draws on Dale's trip diary and letters home when, as a new college graduate in 1952, she volunteered to help war-torn Europe and found herself at a Finnish work camp on the Arctic Circle where she helped clear wooded fields for farms with volunteers from all over Europe. When work camp ended, she met some of her college friends to backpack through Western Europe, ending up in London where she stayed several months.

CDs are "in process" and will be available at some point. A date will be set for a signing in Hyde Park.

THE HISTORY SHOPPE

J. Fred MacDonald's first novel, which came out last spring, is called *The History Shoppe*.

It's a pedagogical novel about a high school boy who learns, through the proprietor of an obscure store called The History Shoppe, that memorization is not the key to knowing history



J. Fred MacDonald

A former professor, the old man challenges the student to think, using a coin from the French Revolution to ads for slaves in antebellum U.S. newspapers, from new-car brochures from the Depression and Cold War bubble gum cards. Most importantly, the old man has a magical machine that transports the young student into vintage films, where he observes the filmmakers and questions them and other bystanders.

All of the visuals are in the online book. Thus, MacDonald says, *The History Shoppe* may be first multimedia e-book in Internet history.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: AMERICAN GENIUS

Brandon Marie Miller has written a new biography for middle grade readers, *Benjamin Franklin, American Genius*, published by Chicago Review Press.

New York Times best-selling author Walter Isaacson wrote, "This smart and delightful book captures the magic of Benjamin Franklin and shows why his life is so inspiring. Above all, it celebrates his creativity, which was the source of his genius."

The October issue of School Library Journal said, "Miller does an excellent job of presenting Franklin's life in a highly readable manner."

Miller told Literary License that, while writing the book, she had to do her own photo research, pay for images and get permissions for at least 60 images.

"With a limited budget, I learned to ask nicely for images that were out of reach, but were truly necessary to make the book richer. I was thrilled to get many of the images for free or for a small fee – people were very understanding and enthusiastic about the project.

"I even asked a local DJ traveling to England to take photos of Franklin's house in London. I was shocked when she actually e-mailed me photos of his Craven Street home!

"This was a hard book to finish. I lost my mother and a dear aunt during the writing of this book, but the kindness of others was a great lift! So, go ahead and ask for what you need, you may be pleasantly surprised."

Other books by Miller, an author of U.S. history for young people, are *George Washington for Kids*, *Declaring Independence*, *Dressed For the Occasion*, *Growing Up in Revolution* and *the New Nation* and *Growing up in a New World*.



Brandon Marie Miller

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New Books

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THE BLUE SHOE: A TALE OF THIEVERY, VILLAINY, SORCERY, AND SHOES

The Blue Shoe: A Tale of Thievery, Villainy, Sorcery, and Shoes by **Roderick Townley**, illustrated by Mary GrandPre, (2009, Alfred A. Knopf) tells the story of a mysterious man who commissions the local town shoemaker to create a beautiful shoe from the exquisite jewels he gives the shoemaker. The man tells the shoemaker he will return for the shoe, but when he doesn't, the shoemaker places his extraordinary work in his shop window, and his business takes off like a shot.

Apprentice Hap Barlo steals a gem from the shoe to save a starving beggar girl and is sentenced exile on the far side of Mount Xexnax, rumored site of trolls, volcanoes, bitter cold and evil run wild.

INNOCENT

Writing in the Dec. 3 *Library Journal*, Barbara Hoffert said, “[**Scott**] **Turow** virtually invented the legal thriller genre with *Presumed Innocent*. It took him awhile, but now he's back with a sequel. Rusty Sabich's wife has met a questionable death, which (once more) puts Rusty up against prosecutor Tommy Molto. Turow hasn't faded in 20 years, so this should be big.”

The new book, to be published by Grand Central Publishing next May, opens with a prologue in which Sabich, now the chief judge of an appellate court, sits on a bed where his dead wife, Barbara, lies. She has died under suspicious circumstances, which triggers a plot that again pits Rusty, now 60, against Tommy Molto, the district attorney who tried to prosecute him for the murder of his lover in the first novel.

RESET: IRAN, TURKEY AND AMERICA'S FUTURE

Turkey and Iran are America's logical partners in building a 21st century peaceful, democratic Middle East, Stephen Kinzer writes in his new book, *Reset: Iran, Turkey, and America's Future* (Times Books), due out in June.

Besides proposing this new “power triangle,” Kinzer also recommends that the U.S. reshape relations with its two traditional Middle East allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Kinzer is a master storyteller with an eye for grand characters and telling historical detail. In this book he introduces us to larger-than-life figures like a Nebraska schoolteacher who became a martyr to democracy in Iran, a Turkish radical who transformed his country and the Muslim world forever, and a colorful parade of princes, politicians, women of the world, spies, oppressors, liberators and dreamers.



Stephen Kinzer

MOJO SNAKE MINUET

John Litweiler's new novel, *Mojo Snake Minuet*, focuses on the disappearance of a stolen charm – the historic Kaida mojo.

Chief Kaid, autocratic publisher of the Chicago Daily Messenger, assigns the young third-string pop music reporter and entertainment critic Yakub Yakub to find the stolen charm.

Mojo Snake Minuet is a thriller that takes place in an alternative America where black people are the majority, and white people are the oppressed minority. The story includes TV news griots, black minstrels in whiteface, private witches, defrocked voodoo priests and inner-city symphonic joints, among other monstrousness.

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credit sources and allowing businesses to capitalize training and education expenses as they currently can for plant and equipment investments. His proposals were enthusiastically received by an audience of economists and business leaders from the United States and other nations. ...



Edward E. Gordon

... **Rosina Neginsky** is back from France, having given a talk in Lyon on the topic,

“The Hidden Motifs in Works of a Russian Turn of the Century Painter, Michael Vrubel.” She also gave a talk in Aix-en-Provence on “Michael Vrubel: Between Dante-Gabriel Rossetti and Gustave Moreau.” Finally, she did a presentation and signing of her book of poetry *Juggler* at the bookstore, Rue Saint-Honore, in the center of Paris. “The book had a lots of success. The public loved it,” Neginsky told Biblio File, who would have shown up for the Paris signing – or at least for wine at a sidewalk cafe – were it not for the column deadline. ... **Marc Smith** writes to say Chicago Slam Works is teaming up with the Lethal Poetry Inc. and a few other groups to bring back to life the annual Chicago Poetry Festival. The organizers hope to stage a one- or two-day event dubbed “OUTSPOKEN: Chicago's Poetry & Spoken Arts Festival” this coming September. ... **Jacquelyn Mitchard** wrote an article in the Dec. 8 *Parade* magazine titled “When all your money disappears, can love and dreams pay the bills?: The richest woman in town.” ... **Carol Felsenthal** mentioned **Kevin Mattson's** new book, “*What the Heck Are You Up To, Mr. President?*” in a November post on Huffington.

SMA Support

Dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but the Society always needs more money for programs such as the awards at the annual May banquet. Thanks to **Helen Lambin**, who made a contribution since the last newsletter.

AWARDS ENTRY FORM

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: February 1, 2010

Note to members: Judge information was not available at press time. Check our Web site at www.midlandauthors.com.

Duplicate this page. Make three copies for each book entered. Send one book and one copy of this completed form to each of the three judges in the book's category. Please type or print clearly.

Name of book: _____

Publisher: _____

Publication date: _____

(If publication date differs from copyright date, please explain in "Comments" section below.)

Author: _____

Author's address: _____

Category of entry (circle one). Entries improperly categorized will be disqualified.

ADULT FICTION

POETRY

CHILDREN'S FICTION

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BIOGRAPHY

CHILDREN'S NONFICTION

I nominate the above work for a Society of Midland Authors Award. (An author may nominate his or her own work.)

Your name: _____

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