

Biblio File

A Biblio File reminder: It's that time of year when we are looking for volunteers to join the SMA board or act as one of its officers for the next fiscal year, which starts July 1. Contact President Robert Loerzel to enlist. ... **Michael J. Sheehan** was appointed by Michigan's governor last year to the state's Commission on Services to the Aging, and that position is taking up quite a bit of his time. But he's still managed to start work on a new book based on his weekly radio program, *Words to the Wise*, a call-in show about language airing in Traverse City, Mich., every Tuesday morning. ... When Orbert Davis' Chicago Jazz Philharmonic makes its Symphony Center debut on May 24, 2013, they'll play the still-untitled world premiere of a Davis work inspired by photos from **Michael Williams** and **Richard Cahan's** book *The Lost Panoramas: When Chicago Changed Its River and the Land Beyond* [See New Books, January 2012]. ... **Anastasia Royal** is editing a book of poetry about Japanese internment that is coming out next year from Four Way Press. She's also just shipped off to Simon & Schuster a book she co-wrote with her sister, who is Oprah Winfrey's veterinarian. It's due out in July. ... **Joel Greenberg**, 2004 Society of Midland Authors finalist for *A Natural History of the Chicago Region* (University of Chicago), was profiled Jan. 29 in the (Chicago) Daily Herald for his efforts to help build up awareness of the extinction of the passenger pigeon. He is working on a book on the topic. ... **Margery Frisbie** was a front-page story in the Jan. 20 (Chicago) Daily Herald prior to her addressing the Arlington Heights, Ill., Mayor's 25th Annual Community Prayer Breakfast on Feb. 2. "Frisbie's writings concentrate on Catholics and the history of Arlington Heights, where she and her husband, **Richard**, moved their growing family in 1954. While her cre-

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Authors' heart-to-heart talk: Why readers love romance

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

For a romance novel to succeed, it needs characters and a plot that readers relate to, three authors said at the Society of Midland Authors program on Valentine's Day at the Cliff Dwellers club in Chicago.

Jennifer Stevenson, **Sherrill Bodine** and **Patricia Rosemoor** of Chicago all are prolific authors. Stevenson's romance and fantasy novels include *The Brass Bed*, *Fool's Paradise* and *Trash Sex Magic*. Bodine's books include *All I Want*



Patricia
Rosemoor

Is You and *A Black Tie Affair* as well as books written under the name Leslie Lynn. Rosemoor has written 89 books, including 50 for the Harlequin Intrigue series. As Patricia Pinianski, she also teaches fiction writing at Columbia College Chicago.

During the program, Bodine – who also plans to publish a memoir this year of her life with her developmentally disabled mother titled *In My Grandmother's House* – stressed the importance of creating memorable characters to draw readers into a book.

"If I can create characters you can relate to ... you will follow me anywhere," she said.

"All characters are the sum of what has been done to them in the past and what

they have chosen to do in return," Bodine added. "I think this applies to whatever genre you are writing in. You have to be invested in your characters."

Bodine cited the example of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*.

"That protagonist, she is not a character who anybody has ever met before but [the author] created a character and you understood why she did what she did," Bodine said.

Like many novelists, Bodine said, she writes a back story for her characters – a story the reader never sees but that helps her understand what motivates an individual in the story.

"You know why she is who she is," Bodine said. "That way you will [create] a three-dimensional character who is not just cardboard. She's flesh and blood."

How do you create a hero in a romance novel?

"In every romance, there must be a wounded hero," Bodine said. "He must have ... a deep psychological wound that only the heroine can tend, soothe and make this man a whole man."

It's also possible that the heroine is wounded and that the hero is the one who



Sherrill
Bodine

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Literary Landscape
with Rick Perlstein

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dentials are very strong in both fields, she's always been a bit of a rebel, too," the newspaper said. At the event itself, the audience of 200 or 300 local officials and chamber of commerce types loved it. They laughed at the funny bits and gave her a standing ovation at the end. ... **Craig**



Paul Green

Sautter is hiding out from winter on the ocean in Miami Beach for the sixth year. He's teaching two "Ethics and Critical Thinking" classes. For the 20th year, he and his wife, Sally, are researching, writing up profiles and accomplishments, and nominating candidates for the Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education, given annually at a black tie awards dinner in the New York City Library. ... **Jim Merriner, Dick Simpson, John Hagedorn and Paul Green** will be among those participating in a March 2

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Romance

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heals her, Bodine said. Or, as happens in her book *Talk of the Town*, they heal each other.

"That is actually the best story of all. They have wounds that play off one another," she said.

As for her own approach to how she starts a book?

"I see a situation," Bodine said. "I see the two people most deeply involved in it. It is the plotting that is difficult."

But even when the story becomes clear, there's lots of work to be done, she said.

"It is very important, in all the different genres you write in – research is so incredibly important," Bodine said.

When she wrote a novel involving a heart transplant, "I had to actually go into the operation room, which I was very lucky to do, stand in front of the anesthesiologist and watch a quadruple bypass so that I could get the feel of being in an operating room," she said.

Rosemoor said she started writing "in the dark ages. They wouldn't let you write romantic suspense back then because booksellers didn't know where to shelve them."

Rosemoor, who also has written under the names Lynn Patrick, Jean Rose, Rosalind Patrick, Rosalind Griffith and Patrice Lindsay, said creating the right conflict is important to producing a book that captivates readers.

She said she learned that lesson when she studied her earlier books to see which ones "I really invested in myself personally."

"I tried to figure out what it was that really made them work, and it was when the back story of the characters had them have a really terrible thing in their background that they had to overcome," she said.

"The books that I consider special [are those in which] I really succeed in finding those intense conflicts," she said. "It doesn't mean they don't like each other. ... But there is something that is going to stand between them, that is not going to let them say, OK, we are going to be together forever."

"Conflict and tension between the hero and the heroine drive the plot and keeps

the reader turning pages," she said. "I teach my students: Conflict in every scene ... tension on every page."

"The conflicts should be believable and substantial enough to carry the book," she said. "The emotional conflict should always be in the characters' and readers' minds. That means you can't talk about it in the first chapter and wait till the last chapter to say, oh, by the way, we have that conflict that we haven't worked out yet."

In romantic suspense, "If you are in a suspense scene, you've got to know that romance is there," Rosemoor said. "If there is a romantic scene, you've got to know they are looking over their shoulders because someone might kill them."

"The secret of writing a good book is making all your little elements reflect one another."

“Romance fiction is popular because it is optimistic.”

Stevenson, whose latest title is *A Taste of You: A Roller Derby Vampire Romance* (Kindle), said there are four plots in a romance: The hero's arc, and the heroine's arc – "as they develop from being not worth marrying into someone you might want to fall in love with"; the arc of their relationship – "how they come together" – and the external plot.

Stevenson, who has two post-graduate degrees in psychotherapy, says, "I view all reading as self-treatment. ... Romance fiction is popular because it is optimistic."

And don't worry that reading for pleasure is frivolous, Stevenson said, offering up this

quote from Voltaire:

"I have come to the uncomfortable conclusion that it is precisely those things that I read for pleasure that influence me the most."

The Society of Midland Authors' 2011-2012 programs may be heard in their entirety at www.chicagopublicradio.org amplified



Jennifer Stevenson

Writing about the right: A historian's view

Historian **Rick Perlstein** will discuss his upcoming book *The Invisible Bridge: The 1970s and the Rise of Ronald Reagan* at the March 13 Society of Midland Authors program. Perlstein is the author of the acclaimed books *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* and *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*.

Here's what Perlstein tells Literary License about his writing:

Literary License: *You're writing a book about Reagan and have published one about Goldwater. Did Goldwater's defeat in some aspect pave the way for Reagan's victory?*

Rick Perlstein: It was absolutely crucial. First, Goldwater's supporters took over the nominating structure of the Republican Party, pushing aside the moderate liberals who'd controlled nominations previously.

Second, his campaign began creating a solid organizational infrastructure for the conservative movement – that infrastructure still exists today.

Finally, Reagan himself received his first national political exposure with a television speech the week before the 1964 election that had many conservatives calling Reagan presidential timber even then. David Broder called it the most powerful debut in American politics since William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech. Goldwater has been commonly described as conservatism's John the Baptist.

Which, of course, makes Reagan conservatism's Jesus Christ, and to listen to the Republican presidential candidates this year talk about him, they almost seem to approach that level of sacrilege!

Literary License: *Many people learned the wrong lesson from the 1964 election – that the right wing of the Republican*

March 13, 2012, program

**Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor**

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

Free - donations accepted

party was finished. Do you see any ways we may be making similar wrong assumptions about where today's political trends are headed?

Rick Perlstein: I'm sure we are. We always do. I like any political outcome that humiliates the confident predictions of pundits – which may be why I was so drawn to the 1964 election in the first place – because I think the most important lesson history can teach us is humili-

ty in the face of human complexity and unpredictability.

I once wrote a cover article for the Nation called "Pundits Predict the Future Are Always Wrong." The title had a double meaning: they are wrong empirically,

over and over and over (it wasn't three years ago, after all, when Obama's victory had pundits forecasting the end of conservatism as a force in American political life, just as in 1964). And they are wrong morally, precisely because their glib confidence that the future is easily predicted diminishes possibilities for a richer understanding of the present.

Literary License: *You are often seen as a left-leaning writer. Is that an advantage or disadvantage in writing about conservative politics?*

Rick Perlstein: "A liberal is someone who can't take his own side in an argument": remember that old joke? If it's an advantage, it's because as a liberal I'm

temperamentally disposed to try to empathize with people who think differently than me.

Literary License: *How much time to you devote to researching your books?*

Rick Perlstein: In terms of portion of the workday, my work on my books (as opposed to writing articles and lecturing) probably takes up about a third of my time. Longitudinally, a good six years passed in preparing the manuscript for *Nixonland*. *Before the Storm* took three years. This one will be somewhere in between. I would say about half of my time is devoted to research, and half to writing, but that's a tough distinction to make because the two tend to meld into one another – at least, I think, when you're doing it right.

Literary License: *Goldwater, Nixon and now Reagan – you've written three*

“ I like any political outcome that humiliates the confident predictions of pundits because I think the most important lesson history can teach us is humility in the face of human complexity and unpredictability. ”

books about Republican presidents. Any plans to write about a Democrat who was in the White House?

Rick Perlstein: Well, all my books also cover the Democrats in the White House during the time periods they cover pretty extensively – JFK, LBJ, and with this next one, Jimmy Carter. But focusing a book on a Democrat? For some reason that just doesn't interest me. "Why?" may be a question for my shrink.

"In Tours, we found a cheap hotel and explored. I recalled at Tours, Charles Martel had defeated the Moors and saved Europe for Christendom ... but we were surprised how many monuments Tours had to World War I." – *When the Postwar World Was New*, **Alzina Stone Dale**

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symposium on “Changing Political Culture” at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago. ... **The Society of Midland Authors** now has a Wikipedia entry. Check it out. ... **Linda Neme Foster**’s poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize (her 20th nomination since 1984). Her poem, “The White Birch,” was recently published in the Fall 2011 issue of the Connecticut Review, and the journal’s editorial staff nominated the poem for the prestigious anthology. Her latest book of poems, *Talking Diamonds* (New Issues Press), was the subject of a review in the Fall, 2011 issue of the Los Angeles Review. The book was described as “quiet, elegant and wise.” *Talking Diamonds* is Foster’s ninth poetry collection and was a finalist for ForeWord Magazine’s Book of the Year in 2010. ... **Carol Fisher Saller** writes for Lingua Franca, the Chronicle of Higher Education’s blog on language. ... Feb. 3 was a significant day this year for Midland authors for two reasons. First, Feb. 3 is Bubble Gum Day. French documentary filmmakers traveled from Paris to Chicago last month to interview elementary school students breaking school rules by chewing gum in school in honor of Bubble Gum Day, which was founded in 2006 by **Ruth Spiro**. The documentary is titled “Stuck on Chew” and will be released this spring on France’s ARTÉ Network. ... Also on Feb. 3, a poem, “Repartee,” from **Ingrid Wendt**’s new book, *Evensong* (See New Books, right), was chosen for Verse Daily (www.versedaily.com). Ingrid writes, “It’s funny, this poem is quite different from most of the others in *Evensong*, and I’ve never read it publicly at readings. Maybe I should rethink that! It was certainly fun to write!” Ingrid also did a reading this month of poet William Stafford’s work at Bloomsbury Books in Oregon. ... After returning from Africa, **Dan Dinello** (See New Books, right) made a music video for Fela called “Army Arrangement.” The film will be included in a “Retrospective: 33 Years in 45 Minutes” that Dan will present at 6 p.m. on March 22 at

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New Books

EVENSONG

Evensong (Truman State University Press, October, 2011) is **Ingrid Wendt**’s fifth full-length collection of poems.

Maxine Kumin, poet laureate of New Hampshire from 1989 to 1994, wrote, “These poems, full of feeling, reward the reader with their musicality and wit. Wendt seems equally at home in form and free verse. There’s a well-wrought villanelle, a poem in unrhymed couplets that turns on a perfect metaphor, a retelling in skilled sestets of the old story of the fisherman’s wife. The first and last poems are capstones of a rich collection.”

Poet John Daniel wrote, “In this collection Ingrid Wendt sounds the depths of everyday experience and sings the mysteries she finds stirring there, bearing witness to the things that matter most – love, spirit, memory, mortality, the ache and wonder of being alive.

“The poems of *Evensong* are the true testaments of an ongoing lifetime of cultivated attention. They are ambitious in the highest sense.”

FINDING FELA:

MY STRANGE JOURNEY TO MEET THE AFROBEAT KING

Dan Dinello recently published a short ebook called *Finding Fela: My Strange Journey to Meet the Afrobeat King*.



Dan Dinello

It’s a personal memoir of his 1983 trip to Lagos, Nigeria, to meet the legendary African musician and political rebel Fela Kuti. Hero of the oppressed, Fela is the focus of the recent award-winning Broadway musical

“Fela!” that is now touring the United States.

An excerpt from Dan’s book: “On my initial night in Lagos, my companions take me to a restaurant and want me to eat chopped goat brains, but I beg off and fail

I KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND I SAW WHAT YOU DID: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE DEATH OF PRIVACY

Lori Andrews’ new book (Free Press, January 10, 2012) “ventures far beyond the social networks of her subtitle to consider the ramifications of search engines, data mining, targeted “behavioral” advertising and other technologies,” the New York Times Book Review wrote on Jan. 29. “Likewise, she covers a range of issues beyond privacy, including discrimination in the workplace and free speech in schools.

“Some of her questions are challenging and potentially explosive.”

Kirkus Reviews called the book, “authoritative, important reading for policymakers and an unnerving reminder that anything you post can and will be used against you.”



Lori Andrews

a cultural bonding test. We leave and roar down a dusty road at 120 miles per hour. There are no speed limits, no traffic laws of any kind. Then, suddenly, makeshift roadblocks appear, manned by young boys with big machine guns. They wave flashlights, signaling cars to stop, checking for armed robbers and non-Nigerians. The government has just expelled a million immigrants, giving them two weeks to get out or face jail or worse. Scowling police check my papers and let us pass. My later encounters with police are less fortunate.”

The book is available in all e-book formats on Smashwords.com as well as Amazon.com (Kindle), BarnesandNoble (Nook), and the iTunes store (iPad, iPhone, etc.).

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New Books

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QUESTION OF TRUST

What would you do if you were sleeping with the enemy? In *Question of Trust* (Mira: Harlequin, Feb. 21, 2012), Izzy McNeil is back in action and forced to walk the line between attorney and lover after her boyfriend, Theo, is arrested. When their neighbor is found dead, Izzy must determine if the man she shares her bed with is a criminal or merely a pawn in a much larger scheme.



Laura Caldwell

Izzy also can't forget how Theo was inexplicably turned down for a mortgage. Or his recent moody silences. Or how a stranger warned her that Theo needs to "accept responsibility." Only

Izzy can decide whether trusting Theo will keep her safe.

Mystery Gazette: "The latest magnificent McNeil legal thriller. ... This is a terrific twisting tale."

JACK AND LARRY: JACK GRANEY AND LARRY, THE CLEVELAND BASEBALL DOG

Barbara Gregorich has written books for children and books for adults for years. And years. But never did she think she would write for children and for adults in the very same book.

That has happened, serendipitously, with *Jack and Larry: Jack Graney and Larry, the Cleveland Baseball Dog*, a nonfiction story told in free verse, for ages 10-Adult.

This the tale of a woe-begone team (102 losses, 48 games out of first place) that doggedly pursued the pennant: a story of devotion, commitment, and persistence, illustrating what it means to be major league.

RESHAPING REALITY: CREATING YOUR LIFE!

Robin Marvel, *Reshaping Reality: Creating Your Life!* encourages readers to shake their spirits awake from anything that is limiting them from your potential, propelling them into a life of purpose and meaning.

"This book is written from experience," Marvel said. "I have used all the exercises in this book to break out of learned cycles and motivate myself to live a life of purpose."

FINDING OUR WAY HOME

Finding Our Way Home (Random House, March 13, 2012) is Charlene Ann Baumbich's story of second chances and lavish grace.

When principal ballerina Sasha Davis suffers a career-ending injury at age 38, she leaves her Boston-based dance company and retreats to the home of her youth in Minnesota.

Concluding she can't recover alone, Sasha reluctantly hires a temporary live-in aide.

Enter the übercapable 19-year-old Evelyn Burt.

Evelyn soon discovers Sasha needs to heal more than bones. Slowly, as the wounds begin to mend and the tables tilt, the two women form an unlikely alliance and discover the astounding power of even the smallest act done in the name of love

Allie Pleiter, author of *Yukon Wedding and Bluegrass Blessings*, called the book, "Charming, surprising, familiar, and just downright wonderful."

Susan Elizabeth Phillips, New York Times best-selling author of *Call Me Irresistible* wrote, "Fans of Jan Karon will adore Charlene Baumbich's warmth, wisdom, and inspiration."



Charlene Ann Baumbich

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Film Row Cinema, Columbia College, 1104 S. Wabash, Chicago, eighth floor. ...

Joey Korom's new book, tentatively titled *Skyscrapers of the Gilded Age* (McFarland), is due out in the fall. Also, Joey was quoted in a Jan.

26 Chicago Sun-Times editorial on Chicago architecture. ... Janet

Souter is working on a new novel based on her Swedish grandmother, who came through Ellis Island

when she was 16 with \$20 pinned inside her

clothes. ... Paul McComas was scheduled to be on a panel at this year's annual conference and bookfair Feb. 29-March 3 of the Association of Writers & Writing Programs at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago. The panel, "Present at the Creation: The Chicago Poetry Revolution of the 1980s and '90s," also was to include Tim W. Brown, Luis J. Rodriguez, Sharon Mesmer and Kurt Heintz. The panel members, who came of age in the Chicago poetry scene of the 1980s and '90s, were to discuss the explosion of spoken-word poetry and performance in the city during those decades and its national and international impact on the presentation of poetry to popular audiences. Paul writes to say, "As a fiction writer, I was always something of an odd duck within the Chicago spoken-word poetry world, which I entered in 1986 at age 24; I gravitated more toward storytelling, in-character monologues and text-driven performance-art than toward verse. Still, I was accepted into 'the scene.' And having the opportunity to bring my brand-new solo and two-character narrative works to live audiences at the Uptown Poetry Slam, N.A.M.E. Gallery, Lower Links, and other venues proved instrumental in my development as both a writer and a performer. I'm delighted to be able to reflect back on that exciting period with some of my old cohorts, a full quarter-century later."

Among the featured presenters scheduled



Paul McComas

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for the conference were **Jaimy Gordon**, **Audrey Niffenegger** and **Aleksandar Hemon**. ... **Robert Collins** writes to say he's been putting up short stories as ebooks for sale at Amazon and through Smashwords [See "Same old story? Not with new technology here to help,"



Robert Collins

Literary License, January, 2011]. "Up to now, all have been previously published in magazines, but I will be putting up some unpublished shorts soon," Robert writes. "I'm doing two per month. If a single story isn't at least 3,000 words, I'll add it to one or more as a short collection. All these sell for 99 cents. I know of a few [other] authors who are doing this, too." Robert also has a new nonfiction essay collection out, *Pieces of Kansas History*. ... **Jonathan Eig** is one of two authors teaching a voluntary workshop at the Chicago Police Academy for Chicago police officers who wish to tell their own stories. "My impression is they're dealing with powerful themes and terrific story lines, but nailing down the essence of what they want to say is going to take much time and many rewrites," Eig told the *New York Times* on Feb. 8. "This is like psychotherapy, and the first impulse for these and other writers is to resist." ... Here's a feeling all authors are familiar with: **Kristina Riggle**, having just deleted 1,200 freshly written words that turned out to be boring, tweeted, "Too bad I don't get the satisfaction of ripping those unsatisfactory pages out of the typewriter carriage and balling them up furiously." On the plus side, her new novel, *Keepsake*, is due out June 26 from William Morrow Paperbacks. ... **Joseph Epstein** was quoted in a Feb. 5 *New York Times* op-ed on Charles Dickens and lawyers. ... Fox 2000 has optioned *The Fault in Our Stars* [See January 2012 Literary License] by **John Green**. As of mid-February, the book had been No. 1 on the *New York Times* best-seller list

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Proposed bylaws revisions

The Society of Midland Authors' constitution and bylaws haven't been revised since 1997. After reviewing the bylaws, the Board of Directors is recommending several changes. SMA members can vote on the proposed changes at the Society's annual meeting, which will be our awards banquet on May 8, 2012, at the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza. Here are the proposed amendments, with deletions and additions marked. Deletions are in italic. Additions are in bold.

— **Robert Loerzel, President**

Article I: Name

The name of this association shall be The Society of Midland Authors. Eligible for membership are qualified persons identified with the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin through birth or residence.

Article II: Objects

The objects of the Society are: (1) creation of a closer association among writers of the *Middle West Midwest*, (2) stimulation of creative literary effort, (3) *maintenance of a collection of members' works*, and (4) (3) encouragement of an interest in reading and literature by cooperation with other educational and cultural agencies.

To this end, meetings shall be held regularly to present speakers on literary subjects. Money awards and citations of merit may also be given for outstanding books and services to literature in the Middle West. These awards shall normally be given at the annual meeting.

Article III: Directors and Officers

The officers of the Society shall be a President, a Vice President, a Corresponding Secretary, a Membership Secretary, a Recording Secretary, *and* a Treasurer, **and a Webmaster**. The President must be a full member of the Society. Associate Members of the Society may be elected to any of the other offices or as a director, but no more than twenty percent of the Board membership shall be from the Associate Member category at one time. Associate Members serving on the Board shall have a full vote on matters before the Board during their tenure.

The Board of Directors shall be composed of the six officers, the immediate Past President, and nine other directors elected from the membership. The Board of Directors shall fill vacancies in the Board until the next election and shall appoint officers to fill vacancies until the next election. It shall also approve appointments to committees made by the President. **If a Director or Officer fails to attend four or more board meetings during a one-year period, the Board may vote to declare the position vacant.**

Article IV: Duties of Officers

The President shall preside at meetings of the Society and of the Board of Directors. He or she shall call meetings, appoint committees and their chairpersons, subject to approval by the Board of Directors, and shall be responsible for the general management and fulfillment of the stated purposes of the Society.

The Vice President shall perform the duties of the President upon the President's absence or request. *The Vice President shall also head at least one important committee. The Vice President customarily shall run for President following the President's term.*

The Corresponding Secretary shall have charge of *all publications of the Society and of its general correspondence, maintain liaison with the library of the University of Illinois at Chicago (see Article XI)*, and assist other officers with respect to the communications of the Society.

The Membership Secretary shall have charge of keeping the membership roster up to date, seeking qualified new members, and processing their applications.

The Recording Secretary shall keep minutes of all meetings of the Society and the Board of Directors *and have custody of all other non-financial records.*

The Treasurer shall have custody of all funds and financial records of the Society, shall collect program admissions and other funds owed the Society and shall cooperate with the Membership Secretary to bill members annually for dues and report delinquent members for further action or removal from membership lists. The Treasurer shall also pay bills of the Society and make other disbursements as approved by the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall serve as Registered Representative of the Society under the laws of Illinois governing non-profit corporations. **The Webmaster shall maintain the Society's website and report on it to the Board of Directors.**

At the end of their term of service each officer and committee chairperson shall *submit to the President a written report to the President* **on** of the year's activities for the respective office or committee.

Former Presidents of the Society who are still members in good standing will remain Advisory Directors after their year as Immediate Past President. Advisory Directors shall be notified of all Directors' meetings and shall have the right to participate in debate but not to vote.

Article V: Duties of the Board of Directors
Final responsibility for management of the Society shall be vested in the Board of Directors. Five directors shall constitute a quorum.

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All directors except the Immediate Past President shall serve three years or until a successor is elected.

Standing committees of the Board, consisting of one or more members, shall be Awards, Electronic Communications, Programs, Publications, and Public Relations. The chairs of these committees may vote on matters that come before the Board during their terms of service. Some of the duties of officers described above may be delegated to committees with the consent of the Board when the volume of work warrants it. The President may appoint committees to handle specific topics.

Article VI: Meetings

The annual meeting of the Society shall be held at a time and place set by the Board of Directors. Special meetings may be called by the Board of Directors or by petition of twenty-five members of the Society.

Article VII: Elections

Election of three directors and all officers shall take place annually. At least a month before the annual meeting the Board of Directors shall *appoint a Nominating Committee which shall prepare a ticket of officers and directors. At the request of fifteen or more members, an independent ticket may be offered. If there is only one ticket of candidates, the Board may ask all members by mail if the ticket should be adopted. One member's request shall be sufficient to require an election. If there is no objection, the new ticket is considered elected.* At least two weeks before an the election, the *Corresponding Secretary Board* shall send appropriate ballots to members, who may vote by mail.

Article VIII: Membership

Any writer who meets the conditions set forth in Article I is eligible for Regular Membership in the Society if he or she is the author or co-author of a book demonstrating literary style and published by a recognized publisher, or the author of a published or professionally produced play. Other persons having some connection with literature, such as librarians, teachers, publishers and editors, are eligible for Associate Membership, without voting rights.

Any member of the Society may propose the name of a candidate for membership. This nomination shall be in writing and shall give the name, address, and qualifications that recommend the candidate for membership. The sponsor and a co-sponsor, both members of the Society, shall sign the recommendation and send it to the Membership Secretary for consideration by the Board of Directors. Membership invitations shall be extended after favorable action by a majority of the Board of Directors. If the candidate is elected, the Membership

Secretary shall notify him or her. Authors who receive awards from the Society shall automatically be offered a free one-year membership.

Speakers at Society programs, including authors and others who are eligible for Associate Membership, shall automatically be offered a free one-year membership.

At the discretion of the Board of Directors, long-time members who are no longer active may become Emeritus Members, without voting rights.

Article IX: Dues

Annual dues or any special assessments shall be set by the Board of Directors. New members who join between the annual meeting and July 1 shall have their dues credited to the year beginning July 1.

Award winners who become members under Article VIII shall pay no dues for the year following the date of their award.

Speakers at programs who become members under Article VIII shall pay no dues for the year following the date of their program.

Dues for Emeritus Members shall be one-half the regular dues, to cover the cost of mailing newsletters and announcements.

Article X: Local Chapters

Local chapters of the Society may be organized anywhere in the Society's territory, with the approval of the Board of Directors, outside a fifty-mile radius of Chicago, on petition of five or more members. Their rules shall not conflict with this Constitution.

Article XI: Library

The Society maintains a collection of books by its present and former members in the library of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Each new member is asked to contribute to the collection a representative copy of his or her work.

Article XII: Article XI: Amendments
This Constitution may be amended at any annual meeting or at a special meeting by a two-thirds vote of the members present at the meeting. A meeting for this purpose may be called by the Board of Directors or the written request of twenty-five members. A copy of the proposed amendment or amendments shall be sent, at least thirty days before the meeting, to each member of the Society by the Corresponding Secretary. The Constitution may also be amended by a ballot mailed to all members.

Article XIII: Article XII: Dissolution
In the event of the dissolution of this Society, which shall require approval by two-thirds of the membership responding to a mailed ballot within twenty days of mailing, assets of the Society shall become the property of educational or cultural organizations whose purpose is in harmony with that of this Society. Choice of the organization or organizations shall be made by the Board of Directors.

Biblio File

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four weeks in a row for Children's Chapter Books. ... **Steve Edwards'** new show on WBEZ is "The Afternoon Shift with Steve Edwards," 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays. ... **Patricia Rosemoor's** 53rd book with Intrigue comes out in April (she's written 89 overall). She also recently signed a contract with the new company Entangled Publishing to write romantic suspense. ... **Scott Turow** last month visited the University of Missouri in Columbia, Mo., through the John William Proctor Distinguished Author Reading program. ... **Libby Fischer Hellmann** has new a website. ... Scott Russell Sanders, 2007 SMA Adult Nonfiction finalist for *A Private History of Awe*, has a new book out: *Earth Works: Selected Essays by Scott R. Sanders* (Indiana University Press, Jan. 16, 2012). ... Who was that amazing person the Feb. 12 Chicago Sun-Times said "exercises 30 minutes a day, plays five separate Scrabble games on Facebook each night and takes a weekly class on Parisian-themed books and movies"? The SMA's own "Super Ager" **Shirley Haas**, of course. The newspaper wrote:



Shirley Haas

"Haas isn't wasting a moment of her free time. Also a widow, mother and grandmother, she spends time each week at the Center for Life and Learning in Streeterville, run by the Fourth Presbyterian Church. There, she participates in exercise and memoir writing classes, as well as a weekly 'cultural conversation' led by a University of Chicago professor where she reads and discusses Hemingway and watches French New Wave cinema. Twice a week, she participates in water aerobics with her 'pool pals' at Fitness Formula Club, often meeting classmates for lunch on dry land. Haas has subscriptions to two theater companies and the symphony. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago, a master's from Northern

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Illinois University and spent her career writing for newspapers or working in public relations. Every summer, she vacations at her Canadian summer home, which lacks running water and electricity. She has to take a boat to get there.” One



Lynn Voedisch

of her secrets? “I like martinis.” ... **Lynn Voedisch's** *The God's Wife* made the top Kindle 100. ...

Jennifer Stevenson has just signed a four-book contract with an ebook publisher for a paranormal romance trilogy, plus a novella about slacker sex

demons. ... You might be surprised by the existence of the character of übercapable 19-year-old Evelyn Burt in **Charlene Ann Baumbich's** upcoming new book, *Finding Our Way Home* (See New Books, Page 5). If so, join the club. Charlene says she when started writing the story, she didn't see this character coming, either. ... Here's the latest from SMA Board Member **Rosina Neginsky:** Rosina has published the book *Symbolism, Its Origins and Its Consequences* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011) based on a 2009 conference she organized at Allerton Park, the University of Illinois Conference and

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Kansas Report

The Hutchinson Public Library is planning a Cow Creek Book Festival for Saturday, March 31, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The plan is to have authors speak, and the library will be selling books from participating authors.

Town Crier Books in Emporia always has its Author Extravaganza on a Saturday in June. They invite as many Kansas authors as they can for a two-hour period. They've had as many as 50 authors there.

— Robert Collins

A bait-and-switch is no way to hook enthusiastic readers

I attended a meeting at one of the professional associations I belong to, and I couldn't believe what I saw: a speaker who pulled a bait-and-switch. He said that he was going to talk about a certain topic but ended up using the speaking opportunity to sell his services. I was surprised that he ended up being the main speaker, since he was chosen out of about 100 people who submitted applications.

I want to share a few tips for not being like that speaker, who was so blatantly self-serving:

Deliver what you promise. If an organization or other professional group asks what you are going to speak about, then put it in writing and be willing to submit an outline if they ask for one. Then stick to the plan.

Respect your audience. The speaker I saw probably assumed we were naïve or ignorant. He definitely underestimated us, so his presentation seemed condescending and even annoying, since we were there to get helpful information, not a sales pitch. Remember that even just one search on the Internet can yield vast amounts of information, and in our information-saturated culture, the average person is well-informed.

Be accountable. Talk to someone in your company or another person you trust about your speech, and show him or her your outline. You can also practice your speech in front of others so that you can get constructive feedback. That way, you won't sound like a salesperson.



If you want to take a break from addictive websites, use SelfControl for Macs and Cold Turkey for PCs.

“If you want to take a break from addictive websites, use *SelfControl for Macs and Cold Turkey for PCs.*”

What are they?

Free applications that don't allow you to go to time-killing websites.

How do people use them?

Download SelfControl or Cold Turkey to block access to websites that you choose for an amount of time that you

decide. Just type the URL and set the clock, and the blocking will begin. If you try to go to the websites, you will get an error message.

SelfControl is for Macs and can block websites and your email accounts.

Cold Turkey is for PCs and can block websites and games. It works on all browsers at once. It even lets you post a Facebook status update before the clock starts ticking.

For both applications, once you choose the amount of time that you want to be blocked, you cannot cancel or shorten it, even if you turn off your computer. You must wait until time is up before you can indulge again.

How can you use them?

Have a project to finish? A book or article to write? A deadline to make? Use these applications, and you'll be able to focus. Many people have found them very useful for their productivity.

If you've used either one, let Tom know at tc@tcpr.net

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

Literary Loudspeaker
Tom Ciesielka



Society of Midland Authors

Annual Dinner Early Registration Form

The Society of Midland Authors annual awards banquet will be held May 8 in the LaSalle Room at the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago.

The reception with a cash bar will start at 6 p.m. Dinner will begin at 7 p.m.

Name: _____

Number of Chicken Vesuvio dinners at \$75 each. _____

Number of vegetarian (risotto with grilled asparagus) dinners at \$75 each. _____

Please clip above form and mail to: Dinner Reservation, Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 10419, Chicago IL 60610
 You may also download a similar form at our website, www.midlandauthors.com

Here's to a huge 'Holiday' night

The tale of the traveling SMA Awards takes another turn with this year's decision to hold the event at the Holiday Inn, Chicago Mart Plaza.

We know. ... you've enjoyed the view in the past from the Cliff Dwellers on Michigan Avenue, but that venue is no longer available. We've cut a swath through Chicago's various pomp-and-ceremony hotels. But this year we're going huge with our choice of a totally new but highly regarded location ... the LaSalle Room of the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza (as you might have guessed, next to the Merchandise Mart) at 350 North Orleans. And get this: Parking is under the hotel and only \$10!

So what's the big deal with the Awards Dinner?

Oh well, you'll know if you've ever been there. If you haven't, just ask one of the players. It's the event that brings members together to laugh, to chat, to get caught up.

Throughout the year you may see various authors, at the monthly meetings, at Printer's Row or at staged programs here and there. But only at the awards dinner

do you see so many much-missed friends and acquaintances. It's like an author's version of a family reunion ... (without the drama!). To some, it's the only time of year when you really feel the connection.

So do yourself a favor ... show up and enjoy this celebration. You'll bask in the warmth and you'll get a glow hearing from winners of the year who have spun to the summit.

Their stories are always an inspiration.

And ... we realize this is not a motive, but just a bit of a bonus: You'll have a chance to take home a table decoration, in the form of a prize book from this year's winning authors.



*Literary
Laurels
Stella
Pevsner*

May 8 is not that far away. So while you're energized, how about making your reservation right now (the form is above) to be sure you're booked for an SMA night that belongs on the best-seller list!

We don't yet know who the winning authors will be, but we can unveil the identify of the emcee: Jay Bonansinga, an animated, entertaining person.

Here's (some of) what it says about Jay on his website:

"The Chicago Tribune says, 'Jay Bonansinga has quickly and firmly established himself as one of the most imaginative writers of thrillers. His twisting narratives, with their in-your-face glimpses of violence, are set in an unstable, almost psychotic universe that makes the work of many of his contemporaries look rather tame.'

"His novels, which include *Perfect Victim* (2008), *Shattered* (2007), *Twisted* (2006), and *Frozen* (2005), have been translated into nine different languages. His 2004 nonfiction debut *The Sinking of the Eastland* was a Chicago Reader 'Critics Choice Book' as well as the recipient of a Superior Achievement Award from the Illinois State Historical Society. His debut novel *The Black Mariah* was a finalist for a Bram Stoker award, and his numerous short tales and articles have been published in such magazines as *The Writer*, *Amazing Stories*, *Grue*, *Flesh & Blood*, *Outre and Cemetery Dance*, as well as a number of anthologies.'

This all sounds like a can't-miss event to me, and it should to you, too. So get out your \$75 check and make your reservation. For the first time, you can even pay via PayPal! (It's \$76, which includes a \$1 service fee).

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Continued from Page 8

Retreat Center. The book included 35 articles she selected, collected and edited, one of them she wrote and her introduction. Rosina is proud to point out the conference was also attended by the Director of Ecole du Louvre in Paris, Claire Barbillon, who said that it was the best conference she ever attended. As a follow up to the conference, Rosina founded an international organization, Art, Literature and Music in Symbolism and Decadence at the University of Illinois Springfield. Rosina now is organizing a second international conference on the same topic, "Symbolism, Its Origins and Its Consequences" with the theme "Light and Darkness." This conference will have 43 presenters and two keynote speakers. After the conference, Rosina will publish another book based on papers presented at the conference. To top it off, Rosina has accepted an offer from Cambridge Scholars Publishing to be a founder and an editor of an annual series, "Art, Literature and Music in Symbolism and Decadence."

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Board Notes

The Society of Midland Authors Board of Directors met Feb. 15 at the home of Recording Secretary Anastasia Royal.

Treasurer Jim Merriner said he is retiring in April and moving to Ohio, so we will need a new Treasurer. Merriner said the job involves four heavy-lifting months: July and August, when the dues come in, and the two months around the annual dinner in May.

Vice President Gerry Souter, who also is a book contest judge, said books have been coming in for the contest.

Because the Cliff Dwellers closes at the end of March, the Society don't have a home for the April 10 meeting. President Robert Loerzel said we are considering the option of not doing a program in April.

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Final Chapters

Jeffrey Zaslow, 1958-2012

Jeffrey Zaslow, an enthusiastic member of the Society of Midland Authors and a best-selling author who inspired readers with his empathic descriptions of life's significant moments, died at age 53 Feb. 10 after a car crash in northern Michigan.

As he was driving home from a book signing in Petoskey, Mich., Mr. Zaslow skidded in the snow on a highway near Gaylord, Mich., into the path of a truck.

Mr. Zaslow was author or co-author of eight books, three of them bestsellers. *The Girls from Ames* was the story of a 40-year friendship among 10 women. *The Last Lecture* was about Randy Pausch, a Carnegie Mellon University computer-science professor who in 2007 was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and given only a few months to live. In the book, which was a New York Times best-seller for 112 weeks, Pausch talked about achieving childhood dreams.

Mr. Zaslow collaborated with Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and her husband, astronaut Mark Kelly, on their memoir, *Gabby: A Story of Courage and Hope*. He was co-author with airline captain Chesley Sullenberger of *Highest Duty*, about Sullenberger, who safely landed a damaged jetliner in the Hudson River in New York.

His most recent book was *The Magic Room: A Story About the Love We Wish for Our Daughters* (Gotham Books, 2012), about a Fowler, Mich., small-town bridal shop with a "magic room" that has soft church lighting, a circular pedestal and mirrors that make lifelong dreams come true.

"I found a place with an awful lot of emotion. And I have been writing books with emotion for all these years so I was just grateful to find this place," he told an interviewer.

His earlier books were *Take It from Us: Advice from 262 Celebrities on Everything That Matters – To Them and to You* (1994); *Talk of Fame* (1997), and *Tell Me All About It: A Personal Look at*

the Advice Business by the Man Who Replaced Ann Landers (1990).

His final two books came out within a short time of each other, leading Mr. Zaslow to email: "I know, it seems nuts to have two books so close together. I sound like some deranged typist! But the books had different publishers, the release dates ended up close together, so here we are."

Last year, he made 206 book-related appearances.

Mr. Zaslow, a Wall Street Journal writer, also was an advice columnist at the Chicago Sun-Times for 14 years after he won a contest to succeed Ann Landers. Like his books, his Wall Street Journal column, "Moving On," focused on life transitions. Among his topics were the distress of losing a car in the Disney World parking lot, the power of fathers' lunchbox letters to their daughters, and the sadness of watching a beloved childhood stadium being demolished.

He was twice named best columnist by the National Society of Newspaper Columnists, and in 2000 he received its Will Rogers Humanitarian Award.

"I write about 'matters of the heart' for people of all ages," Mr. Zaslow said during an appearance at the Marple (Del.) Public Library in 2010, according to the Delaware County News Network website.

During the period in his career when he wrote the advice column, Mr. Zaslow received many letters from people who were lonely – which became the inspiration for the Zazz Bash, an annual party at Chicago's Navy Pier. Thousands attended.

"He got these letters from lonely people and, being Jeff, he thought he should do something. So he orchestrated this enormous party for them," author and newspaper columnist Neil Steinberg told the Los Angeles Times.

In Detroit, 1,500 mourners gathered Feb. 13 at Congregation Shaarey Zedek for his funeral, including Sullenberger and eight of the 10 women from *The Girls from Ames*.

Mr. Zaslow is survived by his wife, Sherry Margolis, a TV news anchor in Detroit, three daughters, Jordan, 22; Alex, 20; and Eden, 16; and his parents, Harry and Naomi Zaslow.



Jeffrey Zaslow

SMA QUESTIONNAIRE: The Society of Midland Authors wants your feedback. Please fill out this survey to help us make plans for the future. It's also an opportunity to let us know if you'd like to help out with the SMA's activities. This survey is also online — visit www.midlandauthors.com and click on the "MEMBER SURVEY" link. Or if you prefer to fill out this paper version, mail it to: Society of Midland Authors, P.O. Box 101419, Chicago IL 60610. Please send us your completed survey or fill it out online by April 30.

WHO ARE YOU?

- 1. Are you a current member of the Society?
 Yes No
- 2. Are you a former member of the Society?
 Yes No
- 3. Approximately how many years in total (consecutive or nonconsecutive) have you been a member?
 1-5 6-10 11-15
 16-20 21+
- 4. If you not currently a member, why not?
 Too expensive Not useful
 Forgot to renew

Tell us more: _____

HOW ARE WE DOING?

- 5. How satisfied are you with your Society membership?
 Very dissatisfied
 Somewhat dissatisfied
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 Somewhat satisfied
 Extremely satisfied

MISSION

- 6. Do you believe the Society needs to clarify its mission? Yes No
- 7. Please rank the following statements in order of importance to you personally:
 ___ The Society is a social group for writers.
 ___ The Society provides networking opportunities.
 ___ The Society promotes members' work.
 ___ The Society encourages new writers.
 ___ The Society supports the literary arts in the Midwest.

PUBLIC EVENTS

- 8. Please indicate your interest in the following themes for the Society's public events: [1 = not interested, 2 = somewhat interested, 3 = neither interested nor uninterested, 4 = somewhat interested, 5 = very interested]
 ___ Fiction
 ___ Nonfiction
 ___ Chicago/Midwest history
 ___ Poetry
 ___ Writing craft (writing, revision, technique)
 ___ The business of publishing (getting published, promoting work)
 ___ Book reviewing
 ___ Social media
 ___ Welcoming new members
- 9. Please indicate your interest in the following formats for events: [1-5]
 ___ Author readings
 ___ Panel discussions
 ___ Casual mixers/cocktails
 ___ Book groups

- ___ Critique groups
- 10. Please indicate your interest in the following locations and venues:
 ___ Chicago neighborhoods
 ___ Chicago suburbs
 ___ Other cities/states
 ___ Libraries
 ___ Bookstores
 ___ Bars
 ___ Coffee shops
 ___ Member homes

PUBLICITY

- 11. How often do you visit the Society website?
 Weekly Monthly
 Yearly Never
- 12. How often do you visit the Society Facebook page?
 Weekly Monthly
 Yearly Never
- 13. Do you follow the Society on Twitter?
 Weekly Monthly
 Yearly Never
- 14. Are there any specific areas you feel we could be promoting the Society better?

- 15. How often are you willing to receive emails from the Society?
 Quarterly Once a month
 Twice a month Four times a month
- 16. Would you be interested in receiving Literary License as an e-newsletter instead of as a print edition? Yes No
- 17. Please share your thoughts on the content of Literary License. What do you like? What would you like to see more of?

WEBSITE

- 18. Please tell us how well the website does the following. [1-5]
 ___ Explains the mission and membership of the Society
 ___ Captures interest of new users
 ___ Promotes our authors' books
 ___ Promotes our authors as speakers
 ___ Promotes the SMA awards
 ___ Promotes the SMA programs
 ___ Promotes SMA membership
 ___ Shares current news about the Society and its members

AWARDS DINNER

- 19. Have you attended the award ceremony?
 Yes No
- 20. If yes, in which year did you most

- recently attend?
 2007 or earlier 2008
 2009 2010 2011
- 21. Please rate the following for the ceremony most recently attended. [1-5]
 ___ Cost ___ Location
 ___ Host ___ Length ___ Food
 ___ Entertainment value
- 22. The 2012 awards dinner will follow a similar format to years past. For 2013 and future years, please rate your interest in the following ideas. [1-4]
 ___ Don't change a thing.
 ___ Seated ceremony in a hall (e.g., the Harold Washington Library auditorium), free to the public.
 ___ Seated ceremony in a hall (e.g., the Harold Washington Library auditorium), free to the public, followed by a ticketed reception with drinks and hors d'oeuvres.
 ___ Ticketed wine and cheese reception with shorter ceremony.

THE FUTURE

- 23. In just a few short years the Society will celebrate its 100th anniversary. How should the Society prioritize its efforts in 2012? Please rank the following from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important.
 ___ Creating more dynamic programming
 ___ Building membership
 ___ Broadening geographic reach
 ___ Enhancing value of membership

GETTING INVOLVED

- 45. The Society thrives on member participation. If you are interested in becoming more involved, please indicate your areas of interest. [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]
 Identify and nominate authors in your area
 Program events
 Write blog posts
 Help with publicity
 Help with website/online presence
 Represent SMA at book fairs, etc.
 Other
- 25. Please provide your email address or telephone number. [FILL IN THE BLANK]

FINAL THOUGHTS

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your insight is truly appreciated! Please feel free to share any final thoughts below. Use more paper if needed.

Board Notes

Continued from Page 10

The board discussed a survey drawn up by Board Member Keir Graff (which is on page 11 of this issue of Literary License). The board discussed changes in the bylaws, which will be voted on by the membership at the May 8 dinner in accordance with the rules laid out in the existing bylaws.

Gerry Souter displayed a new SMA bookmark he designed.

Robert Loerzel said the SMA is registered to be at the Chicago Creative Expo (see note at right).

Treasurer's report: Jim Merriner said the Society's net worth is about \$34,000, but probably will diminish by about \$4,000 after the dinner. Merriner suggested we increase the awards from \$300 to \$500. It was decided to vote on this at the March meeting.

The board also discussed reviving an effort to get sponsorships for the annual dinner so we could also do things like pay for the dinners for finalists

Printers Row

The Society of Midland Authors will have a tent at the Printers Row Lit Fest on June 9-10.

We've been officially confirmed, so contact SMA President Robert Loezel for a two-hour time slot. The fee is \$35.

There are four slots on each day, starting at 10 a.m. More than one author can share a time slot. A tip: SMA authors who in the past reported that the 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. slot has the least foot traffic. This is a good opportunity for authors to sell their books and meet readers.

Creative Chicago Expo

The Society of Midland Authors will be at the Creative Chicago Expo March 23-24 at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., Chicago.

The expo is a chance for artists and organizations to connect and exchange

information about the best practices and recent information across disciplines. Representatives from the SMA will be present at the expo to spread the word about the Society's activities. For details on the expo, visit <http://www.chicagoartistsresource.org/dance/node/38109>

Choosing what not to say when each word is a step in the dark,
sometimes takes too long and then there is trouble. No matter

that you, who always try to look out for their toes, try
also not to step on your own, a position

no longer in fashion, today the word is *speed*, it's leaping
into revolving responses like doors

no one need exit from, no one need hear anyone else. – from *Evensong*, **Ingrid Wendt**

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