

Biblio File

The Society of Midland Authors' annual dinner is coming up May 11, so here's a story from a few years ago. At that dinner, **Bill Barnhart** first met **Alex Schwartz**, director of the Northern Illinois University Press, who was seated at the same table. Alex agreed to take on Barnhart's John Paul Stevens biography, and Bill later said, "I couldn't be happier with his skill and enthusiasm and the skill and enthusiasm of his entire staff." The book came out this month (See New Books, Page 5), and the unofficial launch is at 6 p.m., Thursday, May 20, at the Original Billy Goat Tavern, 430 N. Michigan Ave. Bill suggests bringing your friends. Books



Jane S. Smith

will be available for sale. ... **Jane S. Smith**, a biography finalist is this year's book awards, is spending the academic year in California, working at the Huntington Library. ... **Beryl Satter's** *Family Properties* was one of two finalists for the

2010 J. Anthony Lukas Prize given by Columbia University's School of Journalism for an exceptional nonfiction book. The book also was a Lukas finalist in 2004 in the work-in-progress category. ... Among the authors who will appear at the Niles Public Library's "Big Read" program in May are **Thomas Frisbie**, **Bryan Gruley**, **Libby Fischer Hellmann** and **Sam Reaves**. ... **Dick Simpson** is involved in a new government accountability Web site designed to educate voters in advance of next year's Chicago elections. ... **Richard Lindberg's** book *The Gambler King of Clark Street: Michael C. McDonald and the Rise of Chicago's Democratic Machine* and **Dominic Pacyga's** book *Chicago: A Biography* won Illinois State Historical Society Awards for Excellence April 25 at the

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Poets, students stage lively finale to program season

Marty McConnell, a Chicago poet who has appeared on HBO's "Def Poetry Jam," was the featured speaker at the Society of Midland Authors' annual program April 13 at the Cliff Dweller Club in Chicago.

McConnell's poems comment on 21st century America, mashing together Catholic saints, pop-culture icons and tarot cards.

Society of Midland Authors Board Member **Rosina Neginsky** also read, from her book of poems, *Juggler*, which contains seven cycles of poems.

Accompanying music was provided by John Condron, singing and on guitar, and Barrett Harvey, who knocked out an engaging beat on an empty water cooler jug.

A contingent of Joliet West High School students also showed up, and three of them took over at the microphone to give an idea of what a new generation of poets is doing.

Here's how the student portion of the event was described on the Chicago Sun-Times Commentary blog:

"Poetry, like Carl Sandburg's fog, has been coming on little cat feet into Chicago – but to stay, not to move on.

"Just one example: On Tuesday night at the Cliff Dwellers Club on South Michigan Avenue across from the Art Institute of Chicago, three students from Joliet West High School performed a

work titled 'Undecided' – not just for the usual assemblage of writers and book lovers but also for an enthusiastic crowd of other Joliet West students who made the trek to the Loop for a poetry reading and the Cliff Dwellers' famous view over Grant Park. (For one student, it was her first trip to Chicago.)

"The student poets were recreating their performance as a youth slam team in the 10-year-old 'Louder than a Bomb' competition. Just as Chicago is home to the poetry slam, which has become a world-

wide phenomenon, the city also is home to Louder than a Bomb, now the world's largest youth slam. ...

" 'What I want is who I am and who I am is undecided,' the students read, with decided conviction. ' ... Will my aspirations sink to the size of a Post-It note on my cubicle?' "

After watching their performance, somehow that doesn't seem

likely."

Although thrown off stride momentarily by a maintenance crew that showed up in mid-performance to adjust the lighting at the podium, McConnell was lively and engaged, bringing the 2009-2010 program season to a successful end.

Note: The Society of Midland Authors' 2009-2010 programs may be heard in their entirety at www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified.



Marty McConnell

Q&A
with Jonathan Eig

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Literary Loudspeaker:
Tom Ciesielka

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Governor's Mansion. ... **Richard Cahan** and **Thomas Frisbie** were winners April 23 at the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Awards. Cahan won for a year-later audio snapshot of people living at the public housing development where president Obama got his start as a community organizer (see *Literary License*, November/ December, 2009) and Frisbie won for editorial writing. Also, Cahan was described in *Chicago* magazine as one of "two men who probably know as much as anyone about photography over the ages in this city." ... *The Weight of Heaven* by **Thrity Umrigar** was picked by Booklist as a 2009 Editor's Choice. ... **Nami Mun's** *Miles From Nowhere* was among the books listed in the Grinnell College Libraries tournament of books. Later this month, Mun will appear at Calabash, the only international literary festival in the English-speaking Caribbean. ... Good news on the Cliff Dwellers, site of the SMA monthly programs: A two-year lease renewal in the works. ... **Jim Merriner** was on "Beyond the Beltway" April 18 on WLS-AM 890. It's syndicated to talk radio around the country, also on XM channel 130. It was televised at 10:30 p.m. April 18 on WYCC-TV. ... "Turkey's true faith isn't Islam or secularism," wrote **Stephen Kinzer** in *The Week* magazine, "It is the cult of Atatürk," who is "a virtual deity." ... RHINO, "the little magazine with a big horn," is establishing what it says will be

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Page 1 image of Marty McConnell
from photo by Gerry Souter

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Writer finds app-ropriate way to market new Capone book

Jonathan Eig's new book, *Get Capone: The Secret Plot that Captured America's Most Wanted Gangster* – first reported in *Literary License* in February, 2009 – comes out this month (See New Books, Page 5). And Eig has done something that to our knowledge no other Midland Author has attempted: He created an iPhone app to help promote his book.

The app is called "Chicago Gangland Tour" and is available through the iPhone, iPad and iTouch for \$2.99 (Sutro Media).

Here's what Eig told *Literary License* about the new app:

Literary License: *How does the phone app work?*

Jonathan Eig: It's like a travel guide book, except gussied up with technology. It knows where you're standing and shows you pictures of all the nearest Chicago gangland historic sites. You can search by category, too – murder scenes, gangster houses, speakeasies and so on. Each entry includes a short essay and a slide show with five or six photos. And while you're using the app you can also click to buy my book. It's pretty cool, if I do so say so.

Literary License: *What gave you the idea to do an app in conjunction with your new book?*

Jonathan Eig: I'm trying to do anything I can to reach potential readers. And a lot of readers today don't read book reviews, or even newspapers, but they do goof around with the iPhones when they're not picking up a book. So I decided to take this encyclopedic knowledge of gangland Chicago that I've developed from writing my book and do something with it that might reach readers in a new and different way.

Literary License: *Can authors who are*

“Technology is hurting the book business in many ways, but maybe there are some small ways to fight back.”

not on the cutting edge of technology hope to create apps for their books?

Jonathan Eig: I am not exactly Bill Gates. I don't even own an iPhone.

Building this app was as easy as filling out index cards.

Literary License: *What was the hardest part of the phone app?*



Jonathan Eig: The hardest part was gathering all the photos and uploading them to the computer. Boring, boring, boring.

Literary License: *As book-selling enters a new era, is this something authors should consider?*

Jonathan Eig: An iPhone app is not going to be useful for every author. You've got to have the right kind of book. My book is all Chicago. It's full of street names. It's full of bars and restaurants and funeral parlors. It makes sense to offer readers a look at those places, and plenty of people who don't read my book can enjoy a tour of Capone's Chicago, too.

But even if an iPhone app isn't right for other authors, I think we all need to think creatively about how to market our books. We can't count on bookstores and book reviews to do the job anymore.

Technology is hurting the book business in many ways, but maybe there are some small ways to fight back. I think it's worth trying.

Annual dinner: A place to be 'diverted by pleasing wit'

Here's what **Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor**, the first president of the Society of Midland Authors and later its historian, wrote 80 years about the organization's annual gathering of authors:

"We Midlanders do assemble once a year, it is true, to listen to papers read by fellow members; but even these solemn occasions have proved far from depressing; for instead of being bored by 'high-brow' sapience we have been diverted by the pleasing wit of Alice French, Meredith Nicholson, Randall Parrish, George Ade, Emerson Hough, Zona Gale, and Margaret Hill McCarter.

"Even at the last annual meeting, when the death of our beloved Honorary President made personal reminiscences of him the order of the day, we did not wear long faces or pass stilted resolutions. On the contrary, we just sat together in a friendly group while Clara Laughlin, Edith Wyatt, and Harriet Monroe told us human stories of James Whitcomb Riley's lovableness and quaintness.

"But the annual meeting is the only formal conclave of the year, and even that is followed by sufficient cheer and welcome to make what Shakespeare calls a 'merry feast.'

"Decked in paper motley, we then devour the roast beef of old England and quaff October ale; or, in more homely guise, eat pork and beans and pumpkin pie until the hard cider which has washed them down begins to tingle in our toes. Then we must needs dance a reel to

““ *The annual meeting is the only formal conclave of the year, and even that is followed by sufficient cheer and welcome to make what Shakespeare calls a 'merry feast.'* ””

May 11, 2010, Awards Dinner

InterContinental Hotel
505 N. Michigan Avenue
Camelot Room

6 p.m. - Social Hour

7 p.m. - Program

Tickets: \$75

the tune of 'Old Dan Tucker,' till the perspiring fiddler will bow no more.

"No, there is but little wisdom and false philosophy in the Society of Midland Authors, and much that is human and edifying, even our annual meetings being far from staid events. In the winter time, however, we gather at such Bohemian places as Mme. Galli's, the Bismarck

Garden, or De Jonghe's French restaurant; while in summer we hie either to Lake Forest for a sylvan outing or to the Chicago lawn of our charming Secretary, whenever wandering Thespians raise their trestles there.

"Indeed, if the Society of Midland Authors has a just reason for being, it lies, I repeat, in its avowed purpose of bringing the writers of the Middle West together in closer association. Though a society of authors, it is nevertheless free from cant and prejudice, the creation of both friendship and goodfellowship among the men and women of the Middle West who write for a living being the object for which it was founded."

Literary
Lore:

Hobart C.
Chatfield-
Taylor



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an "annual award to be given to a person who has made a significant, long term contribution to poetry in Illinois." On April 11, that person was the SMA's own **Ron Offen**, who, as Biblio File reported last month, has been forced due to health problems to stop publishing *Free Lunch: A Poetry Miscellany*. ... On April 12, **Carol Felsenthal** started posting on politics at chicagomag.com, hoping to post two or three times a week about Chicago and Illinois politics. Stop in and leave a comment. ... **Ed Gordon** now has a blog at [Encyclopedia Britannica \(www.eb.com/blogs/author/egordon\)](http://Encyclopedia Britannica (www.eb.com/blogs/author/egordon)). ...

Jim and Lynda O'Connor were scheduled to speak at the University of Wisconsin's Writers' Institute on April 23 on "Publicity that is Fun and Effective." They were also to meet one-on-one with the writers. On April 29, they'll be off to gorgeous Seeley Lake, Mont., to present the same topic to the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association. ... At the annual meeting of the Authors Guild in New York April 27, members elected **Scott Turow** as their president. It's his second time in the job; in 1997-1998 he completed the term of the late J. Anthony Lukas. Turow's new book *Innocent* is due out May 4. Publishers Weekly said, "Mesmerizing prose and intricate plotting lift Turow's superlative legal thriller, his best novel since his bestselling debut, *Presumed Innocent*, to which this is a sequel." ... After 27 years in Evanston, Ill., **Paul McComas** has relocated to Madison, Wis., where he writes, freelance-edits manuscripts, and teaches fiction writing in UW-Madison's Mini Course Program. In March, Paul presented his program, "The Lying Game: Confessions of A Fiction Writer," at the public library in Ladysmith, Wis. He'll perform "Poetry in (E)motion: The Many Moods of Verse" at Third Avenue Playhouse, Sturgeon Bay, Wis., on April 25, and two other programs - "Stories in the Spotlight: Coming of Age" and "First-

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"Beyond the prairie road could be seen a double furrow of jet-black glistening sod, framing the green grass and its spangling flowers, first browsing of the plow on virgin soil." - *The Covered Wayon*, **Emerson Hough**, 1922

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Person Fiction: Stories in the Key of 'I' – through the Passages adult-ed program at Oakton College's Skokie, Ill., campus on April 27 and June 22. On June 14, he'll debut "Two Tales Terrifically Told" at St. John's by the Lake in Milwaukee. On June 18 and 19, he'll be serving on panels at the Southeast Wisconsin Festival of Books in Waukesha (www.sewibookfest.com). Paul reports that the option on his book *Planet of the Dates* has been renewed and that the two producers have adapted the novel into a surprisingly faithful screenplay they're now shopping around to directors. ... The contemporary baseball poetry Web site **James Finn Garner** runs, Bardball.com, has begun its fourth season. Its goal is to revive the daily baseball doggerel that used to grace the daily sports columns of Grantland Rice and others. It is driven by fan submissions, and has published original work by **Jonathan Eig**, Stuart Shea and Thomas Dyja, among others. ... The American Planning Association will be releasing in May a new Planning Advisory Service Report, titled "Hazard Mitigation: Integrating Best Practices into Planning." The report is the result of a 30-month project underwritten by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, for which **Jim Schwab**, manager of APA's Hazards Planning Research Center, served as project manager and principal author. The book examines how planners can integrate planning for natural hazards mitigation into all aspects of the planning

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Printers Row

As in past years, the Society of Midland Authors plans to participate in the Printers Row Literary Lit Fest June 12-13. The event's organizer, the Chicago Tribune, plans to confirm tent and table locations for the SMA and other organizations on May 7. Check the SMA's Web page, www.midlandauthors.com, after May 7 for information on how to sign up for a \$30 two-hour time slot when you can sell your books at the festival.

New Books

THE MAN WITH TWO ARMS

Billy Lombardo, who read from his poetry at the Society of Midland Authors April, 2008 program, has written his first novel. It's about a father who helps his son grow into a baseball phenomenon who can throw with both hands, but is accused of pushing his son too hard.

Publishers Weekly wrote "Lombardo's prose is poetic and poignant. Readers who can suspend their disbelief will find the book haunting and beautiful. It is a lovely, timely debut novel."

THE GREAT AND ONLY BARNUM: THE TREMENDOUS, STUPENDOUS LIKE OF SHOWMAN P.T. BARNUM

Candace Fleming, winner of the 2009 Society of Midland Authors Children's Nonfiction Award, had two new books come out last fall.

Of *The Great and Only P.T. Barnum*, Publishers Weekly said, "Audiences will step right up to this illuminating and thorough portrait of an entertainment legend."

Fleming traces Barnum's roller-coaster life from his boyhood in Connecticut to his early career as the creator of sideshows and his later role as the master of enormously successful circuses.

Of *Imogene's Last Stand*, Booklist said, "Fleming's sense of small-town space is impeccable ... and the historical facts and quotes that bookend the story are just the thing to get new Imogenes fired up."

The book tells the story of a feisty child who discovers an abandoned historical society building in her New Hampshire town, cleans it up and opens it as a museum, and rescues it from developers who want to replace it with a factory.

JOHN PAUL STEVENS: AN INDEPENDENT LIFE

For this biography, **Bill Barnhart** and Gene Schlickman interviewed Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens and an extraordinary number of Stevens' friends and family members, former clerks, current colleagues, politicians, and court watchers. They spoke with such public figures as former President Ford, former Ford chief of staff Donald Rumsfeld, and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Interviews with Stevens' children and one of his brothers provide personal insights into the man behind the robe.

Tales of his childhood, of growing up in an affluent family in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, and of the family business, including the Stevens Hotel (now the Chicago Hilton and Towers), create a rich portrait of the independent man and judge. Intimate anecdotes from Stevens' former law clerks reveal the lighter side of some of the most serious work in the country.

Barnhart and Schlickman also trace Stevens' early years as a Chicago lawyer, his appointment to the federal appeals bench in Chicago, and his nomination to the Supreme Court by Republican President Ford.

The book was due in stores on April 21.

FOOLPROOF

Barbara D'Amato, Jeanne M. Dams and **Mark Richard Zubro** are authors of *Foolproof*, a thriller about a couple who meet for coffee before going to their software firm in the World Trade Center. That saves them from the Twin Towers' collapse, even as their friends and a fiancé were killed and their company obliterated. They create a clandestine division inside their company to track down global terrorists, leading them on a search involving Washington D.C., Egypt, Italy and Turkey.

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New Books

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FIRST RAIN

Charlotte Herman's new book, *First Rain*, was published in March by Albert Whitman. It tells the story of a young girl who moves to Israel with her parents, while her grandmother stays behind in the U.S.

School Library Journal wrote, "Besides being a realistic look at another culture, this well-written book is heartwarming and reassuring."

And from Booklist, "Herman's simple story offers a good look at contemporary secular life in Israel as well as the realities of moving far away from family."

First Rain was also selected for The PJ Library, which sends Jewish-themed children's books to Jewish families around the country.

GET CAPONE

Jonathan Eig's new book is *Get Capone: The Secret Plot that Captured America's Most Wanted Gangster* (Simon & Schuster, \$28).

One April 25, the Chicago Sun-Times wrote: "Journalist Jonathan Eig has carved out quite a career taking on figures like Capone – familiar faces from history that everyone knows about or at least thinks they do – and breathing fresh life into them. He's written well-reviewed histories of baseball legends Jackie Robinson and Lou Gehrig.

"But with all the myths, half-truths and Hollywood gloss dripping from Chicago's most glorified gangster, it's remarkable what Eig has been able to do in his latest book. ... He's wiped away the garbage and given us a man. A brutal, ruthless schemer, to be sure, one who loved to bet on the horses and spend lavishly – and one didn't hesitate to kill to keep the cash rolling in. But a man who also loved his family and was loved by them."

THE ROAD TO WAR: DUTY & DRILL, COURAGE & CAPTURE

Stephen Burgaur's new book is the story of Captain William C. Frodsham Jr., who — shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor — enlisted in the U.S. Army Infantry, where he excelled in basic training, became a junior officer, and eventually led a combat boat team ashore on Omaha Beach.

Six days later, in French hedgerow country and under withering German fire, Frodsham was wounded and taken prisoner. He spent the next year as a German POW, where he suffered great deprivation before finally being liberated by advancing Russian forces.

His training, his courage, his capture. The reader is taken for a first-person tour of the times at home and then tunneled into a vastly different world on the battlefield and in a German prisoner-of-war camp.

ORANGE CRUSH

Here's what Dara Wier wrote about **Simone Muench's** new book, *Orange Crush*.

"It is difficult to say in a few words all that should be, could be said of this powerful book. Its language is lush, exacting and active; its sounds alert, nervy and quick. All this may be seductive, lulling, entrancing but then there are the facts of violence and grief one encounters, often wrenching combinations of the two. When a poem says: 'my skin is soft/the safety's off' I quake, shudder and brace myself."

The New York Times Book Review said, "Muench's lush figures give great pleasure to both ear and eye, and her imaginative leaps can feel both mysterious and inevitable, in a way that recalls not only Desnos, but also Neruda."

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process, from local comprehensive plans, to land-use codes, development work and site plan reviews, and capital improvements programming. Jim is also speaking on a panel at a May 12 conference of the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., that looks forward to a 2011 exhibit, "Designing for Disasters," in which Jim is participating as an adviser. The following week Jim will also attend his first meeting as a member of a newly created Wildland Fire Operations Advisory Committee for the National Fire Protection Association, in Quincy, Mass., outside Boston. Schwab also wants to make it clear that he is not dropping names when he tells us he won't be at the annual dinner because he will be in Washington that evening hanging out at the National Building Museum with Wynton Marsalis and Harry Connick Jr. ... The paperback edition of **Jeff Zaslow's** *The Girls from Ames* is out. ... **Lori Andrews** appeared April 4 on CBS on a panel discussing the merits of gene patenting. ... The Jacksonville, Fla., library's Mother-Daughter Book Club met April 9 to discuss *Chasing Vermeer* by **Blue Balliett**. ... On April 8 at the University of Iowa College of Law, **Scott Turow** discussed his work leading legal reform efforts in Illinois, visited with law students at the Boyd Law Building and then delivered the Levitt Lecture in the Iowa Memorial Union later in the afternoon. He'll also be part of an all-author band tour, the Rock Bottom Reminders, that started April 20 in Washington to benefit World Vision, a nonprofit providing relief in Haiti and the Washington-based America's Promise Alliance. ... The script of Barack Obama's first political ad, "Blackout," written and produced by Craig Sautter and his brother Chris during Obama's 2000 congressional run, is reproduced in full in *The Bridge: The Life and Rise of Barack Obama* by David Remnick, (Alfred A. Knopf). Sautter is back in Chicago after evading the winter weather by teaching "Ethics and Critical Thinking" classes at Miami Dade College.

"I was about to be snookered into getting him brownie points with his independently wealthy wife who was the biggest charitable giver in the city. ... She probably busted his balls every night about the [Art] Institute's inadequate coverage in the Tribune." – *Buffalo Spirits*, **Elizabeth Black**

Final Chapters

Jules Steinberg of Winnetka, a long-time member of Society of Midland Authors, passed away March 20 in Tempe, Ariz., where he and his wife Marietta Marcin, also a member, had a winter home.

He was 88 years old.

Jules, a writer, business consultant, and for 25 years executive director of National Association of Retail Dealers of

America, wrote hundreds of articles for the trade press, and two books –

Customers Don't Bite, and *Childbirth with Hypnosis* (with Dr. William Kroeger).

During his tenure at NARDA, membership by electronic, appliance and furniture

retailers rose from 600

to 4,500, mainly because of the innovative programs he devised and offered to members.

A memorial service will be held in the Chicago area sometime in the future.

Letters to the Editor

I read every line of the newsletters; especially enjoying **Craig Sautter's** items monthly about members from our illustrious past.

Bernard Brommel



I have an especially warm place in my heart for the Society of Midland Authors, who made my very first novel, *A Clearing in the Forest*, the winner of the Children's Fiction Award.

That was many years ago, but that support was an inspiration to me. I was able to attend that award dinner, but unfortunately this year I cannot be there. Please know my thoughts and heart will be in Chicago.

Gloria Whelan

The writer is the winner of the 1979 Society of Midland Authors Children's Fiction Award.

Rags to riches: To succeed, clean up your online presence

As I write this, I am wearing an apron. There is a mop to my left, a broom to my right and a duster in my hand. Spring cleaning fever? You bet. But I'm not cleaning up my house (to my wife's dismay). I'm cleaning up my online presence.

Over time, we all have joined numerous groups online, opened up various accounts, updated different profiles, and published content related to ourselves and our businesses. But how often do we check on all of that content and all of those accounts?

"Cleaning" and updating your online information should happen twice or three times a year at least – or more, depending on what you are "cleaning." We're here to give you a checklist to make it a nice, painless process, free of Lysol-fume-induced headaches.

What to clean:

For your book and/or personal Web site:

News: The news page should be updated monthly at the minimum. This is where you can highlight recent media attention or your recent activities as it relates to the industry at large or your geographic region. Letting this get two or three months out of date gives a very poor impression to website visitors.

Homepage: Give your Web site visitors a reason to come back often. Have a news teaser on your homepage that links to your news page. Sync your blog to a section of your homepage so content is always changing. Consider adding some personality to your site by incorporating a "sticky" idea that engages visitors (we use a post-it note on our site).

Bios: Often times, we write our own website biographies as soon as we are hired or as soon as the website goes live. Then we leave it stagnant for years. Just as the news changes, so do you! Update your bio at least once a year, highlighting new achievements and new interests.

“Updating your online information should happen twice or three times a year.”

For all your social media accounts:

Pictures: Most social media accounts allow you to upload a picture so that people can identify you. It is wise to use the same one or two pictures across all platforms so that you keep your identity constant.

Profiles: With profiles, you need to decide which nuggets of information about you are the most important, and make sure that information is available on EACH profile you have. This is an important part of maintaining

your brand. As with bios on Web sites, this information can change, so be sure to revisit each profile at least once a year to make updates.

Alerts/Privacy: Each platform has different settings for privacy and notifications. Take 15 minutes to log in to each program or application you use and see which settings you may want to change. Do you want to know when someone starts following you on Twitter? Do you want all of your friends to know when you comment on something on Facebook? These are all easy to control, so make sure you know what power you have.

I guess there really is no need for the apron ... or the mop, the broom and the duster. Unless I want to clean the area around my computer ... or go home and surprise my wife with a house that sparkles.

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

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Tom Ciesielka

