

## Biblio File

Ed Gordon's next book is tentatively titled *The Job Hunters*. Ed says he thinks he has a publisher lined up and expects the book to be out next year. Also, Ed was quoted in an April 29 Chicago Sun-Times editorial, saying that America has 6 million unfilled jobs because employers can't find workers with the needed skills. Also, Ed was scheduled to do a WGN radio interview with Bill Moller May 26 to discuss the paradox that over 30 million Americans are unemployed or underemployed, yet over 6 million jobs are vacant. ... Harvard Square Editions will publish **Michael Raleigh's** novel *The Conjuror's Boy* sometime in the fall. Michael will schedule "a couple of" signings and library appearances. ... **Arnie Bernstein**, author of *Bath Massacre: America's First School Bombing*, was interviewed by the Christian Science Monitor for his insight on the shooting in Aurora, Colo. The interview will be posted on the CMS book section. Meanwhile, he continues working on *Swastika Nation: The Rise and Fall of the German-American Bund*. ... **David Radavich** is the 2012 recipient of the MidAmerica Award, given by the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature to honor contributions to the literature and scholarship of the Midwest. He received the award at Michigan State University, where he presented a paper on Midwestern drama and gave a reading from his epic, *America Bound*. ... "Eastland: A New Musical," which was partly inspired by **Jay Bonansinga's** *The Sinking of the Eastland: America's Forgotten Tragedy*, opened June 16 at the Water Tower Water Works, 821 N. Michigan, Chicago. It has been extended to Aug. 19. ... **Merv Block's** next book is a collection of articles from his website that he's expanded, updated and, in theory, improved. Title: *Weighing Anchors: When Network Newscasters*

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Paula McLain



B.J. Hollars



Steven Naifeh



Gregory White Smith



Donna Latham



Trent Reedy



Susanna Childress

## 2012 SMA awards dinner honors 16 for their work

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Author **Jay Bonansinga** admitted it was a little embarrassing on May 8 to emcee the Society of Midland Authors annual awards in Chicago, honoring its choices for the best books by Midwest authors published in 2011.

"You know, many of the people in this room I've stolen from over the years," joked Bonansinga, who has written 14 books. "I'm a little embarrassed to be in the same room with them."

Although one of his books has been on the New York Times best-seller list, Bonansinga said he's resigned to being a midlist author. And for those in the audience who wondered whether they, too, are on the midlist, he offered 10 sure signs. ("Sure sign No. 8: Your publisher's headquarters is located in the basement of the CEO's mother's house in Melrose Park. Sure sign No. 7: Most of your positive reviews are online and are signed by such legitimate sources as trekkieDan45 and www.mysonthetheauthor.com.")

In the Adult Fiction category, the winner was **Paula McLain** of Cleveland

Heights, Ohio, for *The Paris Wife* (Random House). The finalists were **Donald Ray Pollock** of Chillicothe, Ohio, for *The Devil All the Time* (Doubleday) and **Patricia Ann McNair** of Chicago for *The Temple of Air* (Elephant Rock Books).

"Unlike the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, we had no problem picking a winner," said Judge **Mark Eleveld**.

Of McLain, Eleveld said, "she makes a very real character of a historical figure." Of Pollock's book, Eleveld said, "The writing is exquisite." Of McNair's book, he said, "These stories are a treasure trove of the human condition."

Accepting the award, McNair said, "I am incredibly, incredibly honored to have had this, my first book, chosen by such an esteemed group of writers, the Society of Midland Authors."

The other judges in the category were **Mary Claire Hersh** and **Tony Romano**.

In Adult Nonfiction, the winner was **B.J. Hollars** of Eau Claire, Wis. for *Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America* (University of

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survey said

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The new Gatekeepers

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*Don't Know Write from Wrong*. He likes the title so much he's suggesting that the publisher put a diagonal orange band across the cover reading, "Please Judge This Book by Its Cover." The publisher, Marion Street Press, says the book will be released Sept. 1. ... The audiobook of *Great American Catholic Eulogies*, compiled by and with introductions by **Carol DeChant** and published by ACTA Publications of Chicago, won first place in the Benjamin Franklin Awards presented in New York City on June 4. Also, Carol posted a May 9 op-ed in defense of nuns on Huffington Post. ... NPR on June 26 listed **Jim Merriner's** *Grafters and Goo Goos* as one of four influential books "to help you master Chicago politics." The other three: *Boss*, by **Mike Royko**, *Don't Make No Waves – Don't Back No Losers*, by **Milton L. Rakove** and *There Are No Children Here*, by **Alex Kotlowitz**. ... **Richard Cahan** on May 8 posted "Touring the Nanny-Photographer's Past" on the New York Times blog about nanny-photographer

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## Literary License

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Society of Midland Authors members can pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal (there is a \$1 fee to help cover PayPal's fee). To make a donation, visit our home page at [www.midlandauthors.com](http://www.midlandauthors.com) and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.



Donald  
Ray  
Pollock

Patricia  
Ann  
McNair

Barbara  
Oakley

Steven  
A.  
Reiss

Richard  
Lindberg

Andrea  
Warren

Rob  
Griffith

Philip  
Freeman

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Alabama Press). The finalists were **Barbara Oakley** of Rochester, Mich., for *Cold-Blooded Kindness: Neuroquirks of a Codependent Killer, or Just Give Me a Shot at Loving You, Dear, and Other Reflections on Helping That Hurts* (Prometheus Books) and **Steven A. Riess** of Skokie, Ill., for *The Sport of Kings and the Kings of Crime: Horse Racing, Politics, and Organized Crime in New York, 1865-1913* (Syracuse University Press).

Judge **Richard Bales** said, "Mr. Hollars made great use of primary sources in writing this book, but I must tell you what really impressed me personally more than anything else ... he really made nonfiction sing."

Of Oakley, he said, "She goes beyond the mere story of the killing," and as for Riess, he said, "I just fell in love with this book."

Riess told the assembled authors, "This was a book that took a long time to do. ... Originally it was going to be the entire [history] in Chicago and New York but as you pointed out it is a pretty hefty book, so Chicago got cut out, at least for the time being."

For his part, Hollars said, "Reading, I think, isn't always meant to be enjoyable, especially nonfiction because the stories we recount don't always end happily. I went into this project ... to preserve the hard parts of history."

The other judges in the category were **Carol Jean Carlson** and **Richard Prince**.

For Biography, the winners were co-authors **Steven Naifeh** and **Gregory White Smith** for *Van Gogh: The Life* (Random House). Smith grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and Naifeh and Smith now live in Aiken, S.C. The finalists were **Philip Freeman** of Decorah, Iowa, for *Alexander the Great* (Simon & Schuster)

and **Richard C. Lindberg** of Chicago for *Whiskey Breakfast: My Swedish Family, My American Life* (University of Minnesota Press).

Of Naifeh and White's book, Judge **Jim Schwab** said, "I was stunned by what these folks put together ... [an] incredible piece of research."

Of Freeman's book, Schwab said, "I was absolutely entranced and amazed all the way through this book with the new material that I had never seen before. [Freeman] did a fabulous job of digging out new information."

As for Lindberg, Schwab said, "He did a fabulous job sharing all the trials and travails of growing up as a Swedish American in Chicago."

At the podium, Lindberg said the book was "a labor of love."

"It took 22 years to write the book," he said. "It took about 12 years to find a publisher."

Smith said Naifeh, his co-author of 18 books, was unable to attend the banquet because he had recently broken his shoulder. The idea for the book began in New York, he said, when a woman asked "why hadn't the scholarly community attempted a definitive biography of the most beloved and best-known artist ever?"

"Her fellow scholars knew what a great task it was, and they knew better than to try it. ... We were stupid enough [to take it on]," he said.

The other judges in the category were **Robert Remer** and **Gerry Souter**.

The Children's Fiction winner was **Trent Reedy**, who grew up in Dysart, Iowa, and later taught school in Riverside, Iowa. He lives in Spokane Valley, Wash. Reedy is author of *Words in the Dust* (Arthur A. Levine Books).

Judge **Harriet Gillem Robinet** said,

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# Stellar setting for this year's Society book awards dinner

Had Vincent Van Gogh been hovering overhead, he'd have been amazed that a 900-page chronicle of his life was the Biography Prize winner in the 2012 SMA annual awards event. And also that this celebration took place in fittingly star-wrought surroundings.

The Chicago-centered Holiday Inn, venue of this year's program, was far from the suburban-based buildings so familiar to travelers. Penthouse-high, this inn featured a spacious meeting room with a spectacular 180-degree city view; skyscraper early on and sparkly by night.

Master of Ceremonies **Jay Bonansinga** kept things lively with comments tailored to the event, spiced with wit and a twist of macabre humor. (He does, after all, write of the undead and horrific happen-

ings.)

Winners and finalists in the seven categories: Adult Fiction, Adult Nonfiction, Biography, Children's Fiction, Children's Nonfiction, Poetry and Literary Criticism spoke of inspiration, occasional drudgery and eventual triumph as they moved from manuscript to published work.

Fittingly, poet Susanna Childress began

her speech with a touching a cappella melody.

There were books galore at every table for all to take home as trophies of a five-star night.

Oh, yes, and the meal was excellent, in

spite of the forecast of one of our members. Not to mention names, but you were wrong, JS. Go fish!

Happy memories to you all, and see you next year.

*Literary  
Landscape:*  
by  
**Stella  
Pevsner**



## ■ Awards Continued from Page 2

"Young adults have a wonderful opportunity when they read this book [about] differences of culture landscape and religion. ... Their horizons are stretched, their hearts are opened, and at the end of the story American medical care and Afghan family love triumph."

The other judges were **Marlene Targ Brill** and **Charlotte Herman**.

In Children's Nonfiction, the winner was **Donna Latham** of Batavia, Ill., for *Garbage: Investigate What Happens When You Throw It Out* (Nomad Press).

The finalist was **Andrea Warren** of Prairie Village, Kan., for *Charles Dickens and the Street Children of London* (Houghton Mifflin Books for Children).

Judge **Mary Frueh-Lardie** said of *Garbage*, "I think it is something that is valuable to read not just for children but also for adults, and I would like to say that I think as a librarian this is something that I could pitch to children and their parents."

Of the Dickens book, she said, "[It is] not just a story of how Dickens overcame hardships similar to those in his books, but one that highlights the current struggles of poor children in America and throughout the world."

Accepting the award, Latham said, "I love writing for kids. I admire their willingness to help others, their love of nature, their passion for the planet and [their interest in] wacky factoids."

The other judges were **Andrea Wukitsch** and **Patricia K. Kummer**.

In Poetry, the winner was **Susanna Childress** of Holland, Mich., for *Entering the House of Awe* (New Issues Press), and the finalist was **Rob Griffith** of Evansville, Ind., for *The Moon from Every Window* (David Roberts Books).

Judge Mark Arendt said Childress' "poems unfold in unfamiliar, extraordinary ways through ... language rich and abundant to awaken us to marvelous and

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Vivian Maier, subject of a book he is working on with **Michael Williams**. "Like any biographer, I am determined to travel in the footsteps of my subjects. For Ms. Maier, that means a trip to the high Alps – to a tiny town called Saint-Bonnet-en-Champsaur about five hours by car north and west of Nice on the French Riviera" Rich wrote. *Vivian Maier: Out of the Shadows* will be published by CityFiles Press. ... **Paul McComas** and his current publisher, Steve Sullivan, were on hand at the 2012 Midwest Book Awards on May 9 in Bloomington, Minn., where Paul's hefty genre collection *Unforgettable: Harrowing Futures, Horrors, & (Dark) Humor* (2011, Walkabout Publishing, 480 pp.) "took the silver," placing second in the Fantasy/SF/Horror category behind Ruth Berman's fantasy novel *Bradamant's Quest* (2011, FTL Publications). Wrote the judges of *Unforgettable*: "Outstanding. Adult material, written in an adult manner. Good character development and engaging plot lines; one of the best collections of genre stories we've had the pleasure to read – and the editorial work is exemplary." In other words, just like Biblio File.

... **Jim Schwab** spoke in both San Antonio and Hawaii recently. He was in San Antonio, Texas, May 20-22 for the national conference of the Association of State Floodplain Managers, where he presented a two-hour workshop May 21 on "Leave No Plan Behind: Integrating Hazard Mitigation into the Local Planning Process." He was also invited

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## Letters to the Editor

I recall some great SMA dinners in the past when I spoke and acted as emcee. Some big literary names attended, as did city officials and the cardinal, even the mayor. Bob Cromie, Herman Kogan, Jack McPhaul. What a great trio of newsmen and what staunch friends. I think of them often.

Harry Mark Petrakis

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by the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center at the University of Hawaii as a keynote speaker for its June 7 conference at the university, “Resilience: Respond/Recover/Rebuild,” then on June 8 to participate in an NDPTC advisory session and lead a brown bag discussion with APA’s Hawaii chapter members. Finally, on June 12, he spoke to graduate planning students at the university as a guest lecturer. Jim also assisted in Chicago on June 27 with a one-day APA training workshop, “Planning for Flood-Resilient Communities,” which will also be presented Oct. 10 in Kansas City, Mo., to a four-state APA regional conference, as well as speaking on a panel on the National Disaster Recovery Framework at the Natural Hazards Workshop (July 14-17) in Broomfield, Colo. And if flooding doesn’t seem timely, this does: He is leading a two-day symposium of invited experts on drought mitigation for a new project APA has undertaken in partnership with the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska, and the National Integrated Drought Information System, run by NOAA in Colorado. ... **Gregory Harms’** next books will be *It’s Not About Religion* (Perceval Press, 2012) and, as co-author,



Mary Elizabeth Anderson

*The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction, Third Edition.* (Gregory discussed Mideast policy at the Oct. 11, 2005, SMA monthly program.) ... May 22 was the official pub date for **Bruce Guernsey’s** *From Rain: Poems, 1970-2010* (Ecco Qua Press). ... **Mary Elizabeth Anderson** has compiled teacher and student study guides to accompany her book *Gracie Gannon: Middle School Zero*, a book regarding bullying, belonging and dealing with insecurities. ... **Chuck Schaden**, author of *Speaking of Radio*, has created a website, *speakingofradio.com*, that

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# This year, rain doesn’t reign: LitFest is sweltering success

**H**ow important is LitFest to our SMA participants? For one author member who crossed an ocean to join us in the tent, the annual June festival of books, ideas, and people is one event not to miss.

**Kim Strickland**, author of *Down at the Golden Coin* and *Wish Club*, is an airline pilot when she is not writing books. Kim flies the jumbo jets – the big ones – traversing the continents of the world.

Kim had just flown a jetliner full of passengers from Paris to Chicago, arriving at O’Hare Airport in the late morning of June 9.

Skipping the nap after her grueling nine-hour flight, Kim left O’Hare and proceeded directly downtown to LitFest so that she would not miss her 2 p.m. appearance in the SMA tent. She was right on time.

The weekend was hot and humid, temperatures soared into the 90s – but surprise – no rain for a change. Our SMA tent was situated on Polk Street just west of the train station where we were joined

on Saturday by authors **Rebecca Johns, Art Plotnik, Ruth Spiro, James Finn Garner, Gail Lukasik, Kim Strickland** (showing no evidence of jet lag), **Carol DeChant, Janet Spivey Gilchrest, Carol**

**Fisher Saller and Claude Walker.** On Sunday, **Hugh Moore, Gerry & Janet Souter, Barbara Gregorich, Lynn Voedisch** and yours’ truly, exhibited our books and talked up the world of SMA to passers-by.

A number of people expressed interest in participating in SMA and attending our monthly meetings.

All in all, the weekend was a success, evidenced by the number of books sold by members and the kind word of Carol DeChant, author of *Diamond Presence*, to SMA President Robert Loerzel: “Thank you and the other board members for all you did to put the Printer’s Row (LitFest) space together.

“I know that this was a heap o’ work and appreciate you doing this. Please also extend my thanks to all involved in coordinating this and being on the scene to help out.”

Literary  
Litfest

by

Richard  
Lindberg



## ■ Awards Continued from Page 3

demanding truths.”

Griffith, he said, writes poetry “of surpassing grace, thoughtfulness, and finally wisdom.”

After singing W.B. Yeats poem “When You Are Old,” Childress said, “The defining moment in my literary life was getting to see **Gwendolyn Brooks** read at Butler University Indianapolis. She read on my birthday, Oct. 16, and it was the year that she died. So to be receiving an award that she received in a city that she loved ... is really meaningful for me.”

Childress also read one of her poems, “Love Anonymous.”

The other poetry judges were **Anthony Burton** and **Richard Jones**.

The winner of the James Friend Memorial Award for Literary Criticism,

which is hosted by the Society, was **Elizabeth Taylor**, the Chicago Tribune’s literary editor.

The award, in its 25th year, was presented by **Gregory Friend**, grandson of **Beverly Friend**, who has presented the award in years past.

Among notable past winners of SMA book awards are Saul Bellow, Kurt Vonnegut, Studs Terkel, Gwendolyn Brooks, Mike Royko, Jane Smiley, Dempsey Travis, Leon Forrest, William Maxwell, Louise Erdrich, Scott Turow, Alex Kotlowitz, Aleksandar Hemon, Stuart Dybek and Roger Ebert.

Also at the dinner, revised bylaws and a slate of officers and directors for the next fiscal year were approved unanimously by the members present.

## Survey results:

# How members think SMA could improve

Most of the SMA's members say they're satisfied with their membership, but they're also full of ideas and opinions about how to make the society even better.

That's what we learned by conducting a survey this spring. Now, it'll be the SMA board's job to sift through all the percentages and the many comments we received in this survey. Your feedback will help us plan activities as we draw closer to the Society's centennial in 2015.

We sent the survey to 484 current and former members, and received 151 responses. That response rate seemed to show a high level of interest. As one survey respondent remarked, "I am proud to be a member of SMA and I find its work compelling. Thanks for outreaching with this survey. We need to continue to innovate in order to survive."

Twenty-five percent said they were extremely satisfied with their SMA membership, and 42 percent said they were somewhat satisfied — altogether, that's about two-thirds of the people who took time to fill out the survey. Only 6 percent said they were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

SMA board member Keir Graff designed the survey and collected the results. Summarizing the results in a May report to the board, he wrote: "If they

*“The Society should be a major participant in Chicago cultural events. Its history should be well-known and respected.”*

haven't renewed, it's by and large because they've forgotten to do so. They would like us to clarify our mission, and they seem to feel that the single most important thing we do is to promote members' work. They do like the format of our programs but would welcome some experimentation."

Asked about Literary License, 75 percent said they are interested in getting it as an e-newsletter. Many people praised this newsletter, although it came in for its share of criticism, too.

Some would like to see changes in the design and content. Others echoed the comments of this respondent: "Swell job, good variety, always interesting. I really enjoy marketing hints and recaps of meetings. I always read what mem-

bers are up to. Might be fun to read essays by members, talking about their writing lives/habits/where they like to write."

And while many said they'd like to receive Literary License by email, others made remarks such as this: "Although I am willing to receive it via email, I really hope it will continue to appear in hard copy, if financially feasible."

The survey shows the SMA has room for improvement with its online efforts. Thirty-six of respondents say they visit the midlandauthors.com website only once a year; 34 percent visit monthly. And only a very few people said they follow the SMA on Twitter or Facebook.

In open-ended comments, several SMA members made it clear that they'd like the organization to raise its profile in the Chicago literary scene, while finding more ways to reach out to members in the rest of the 12-state Midland region.

A few sample comments:

"The Society should be a major participant in Chicago cultural events. Its history should be well-known and respected. The annual awards should be on a par with the

*“I always read what members are up to. Might be fun to read essays by members, talking about their writing lives/habits/where they like to write.”*

Algren Awards. Yet somehow, this is not the case, and I'm not sure why."

"SMA is a venerable and valuable organization. It does need to pep up, however. It needs a new look, a fresh voice, a livelier approach to programs, and much more zest surrounding the awards."

"I think the volunteers running this organization do a good job. I really appreciate their efforts."

"I feel strongly that we need to both enhance the value of membership and recruit as many young members as possible if the Society is to enjoy another 100 years of relevance."

"This is a chicken-and-egg conundrum, but I believe that if we do a better job promoting members' work, they in turn will help promote the society."

Some members expressed interest in volunteering or participating in other ways, and we'll be getting in touch with them in the months ahead.

Congratulations to Amy Hassinger, the SMA survey respondent who won our random drawing for a \$100 gift certificate to a bookseller. Amy chose to use her prize at the Powells online store.

Kudos to Keir for taking on the task of conducting our survey. And thanks so much to everyone who took the time to fill it out.

The board is taking a close look at your responses as we strive to make the Society of Midland Authors an even better and stronger literary organization.

*Literary  
Legwork  
by  
Robert  
Loerzel*



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includes more than 200 interviews he did over the years. ... **Harry Mark Petrakis** has republished part of his 1983 book *Reflections: A Writer's Life - A Writer's Work as Journey of a Novel* ... **Daniel Kraus'** next book is set in 1981, which he points out makes him an historical fiction author. ... **Jill Peláez**

**Baumgaertner** is editor of *Imago Dei: Poems from Christianity and Literature* (Feb. 14, Abilene Christian University Press). ... On July 16, WBEZ-FM profiled **Timuel Black**: "Today, Timuel Black is a spry 93 years old. In January, he donated his archive to the Chicago Public Library's Woodson Branch at 95th and Halsted. The archive, which is open to the public, weaves a tapestry of black life in Chicago from the first waves of black migration through to the present day." ...

**Roger Ebert** on his blog wrote the story of his 20-year romance with wife, Chaz. The Sun-Times called it, "a moving column on the occasion of the couple's 20th anniversary. It's a two-hankie must-read." Chaz told People magazine, "Of course we'll watch a movie [on their anniversary July 18]. But this time, we may bust out the old wedding video." ... **Stephen Bloom** was one of the local topics of conversation receiving jabs July 15 at Iowa City's third-annual "Roast This Town." ... **Sherrill Bodine** was scheduled to appear in July at The (Chicago) Drake's Palm Court for "50 & Beautiful" by Raymi Productions. ... Among the contributors to *Shadow Show: All-New Stories in Celebration of Ray Bradbury* are: **Jay Bonansinga, Sam Weller, Joe Meno, Jacquelyn Mitchard, Gary Braunbeck** and **Audrey Niffenegger** (see New Books, at right). ... **Elizabeth Cook-Lynn** is helping to lead an effort to place "The First Nations Sculpture," a symbol of indigenous peoples, at Halley Park in Rapid City, S.D. The proposal calls for four bronze or stone busts on pedestals in a public square along with indigenous colored flags. The busts would "reflect the modern contributions to tribal culture and the intellectual history developed through thousands of years of experience on the Great Plains." ...

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## New Books

### THE PROBLEM WITH SURVEY RESEARCH

**George Beam** writes in his new book (2012) that is that answers to survey questions are not reliable.

When all you have are answers, it's impossible to know if they are, or are not, correct. To find out what's really going on, don't ask. Instead, observe, analyze documents, and use other, as he calls them, "proper" methods of data collection and research designs.

### SHADOW SHOW: ALL-NEW STORIES IN CELEBRATION OF RAY BRADBURY

**Sam Weller's** new book (he's co-editor) got a starred review in the May 15 Publishers Weekly. PW said: "Editorial interest and experience converge here to produce an exciting book." The book has "enticing short works," never before published, from 26 writers.

### THE NEW MADRID QUAKE CHRONICLES

**Claude Walker** has always been drawn to disasters, both natural and man-made. So the disastrous 1811 New Madrid earthquake is an apt topic for his new book (iUniverse).

The quake caused rivers to run backward, but two centuries ago the area was inhabited only by French fur traders, a dwindling number of Native Americans and newly arrived European immigrants.

*Chronicles* is a story of two families, of Native American relocation and European immigration, of assimilation. Each chapter is a snapshot of a generation.

An 1811-sized quake today would result in 3,500 fatalities and about \$300 billion in direct economic loss.

### THE LOST ARTIST

**Gail Lukasik's** debut stand-alone mystery/thriller, released in June, is titled *The Lost Artist* (Five Star/Cengage).

Here's the official synopsis: Chicago performance artist Rose Caffrey is desperate to sell her sister's 19th century farmhouse in southern Illinois. She's haunted by her sister's death from a fall inside the house.

But when Rose discovers four mysterious murals in an upstairs bedroom, she becomes obsessed with deciphering the murals' meaning. What the murals reveal launches Rose on a quest for one of the greatest lost art treasures of 16th century America.



Gail Lukasik

As she uncovers buried secrets going back over 400 years with the potential to shatter the very foundation of American history, she finds that beneath the layers of time lurks a truth worth killing for.

Publishers Weekly wrote: "Rose's present-day sleuthing and the intertwined tale of the original homeowners command our interest until the final page."

SMA member **Julie Hyzy** wrote: "This is a wonderful read. Highly recommended."

See the April 2012 Literary License for Gail's report on how this book intertwines with Illinois history.

### KEEPSAKE

**Kristina Riggle's** new book (Morrow, July, 2012), tells the story of dysfunctional family members trying to make peace with their pasts.

Publishers Weekly wrote: "Riggle offers a marvelous and sensitive portrayal of rich, full characters, using realistic dialogue and intriguing secondary subplots. ... She employs a light sense of humor while never making fun of the disorder at hand. Highly recommended."

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## New Books

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**BEST SHOT IN THE WEST:  
THE ADVENTURES  
OF NAT LOVE**

**Patricia C. McKissack** and **Frederick L. McKissack**, winners of the 2000 SMA Children's Nonfiction Award, have a new book (Chronicle) about a freed slave in the Old West. Booklist wrote: "The writing makes little use of hyperbole, allowing the natural drama of horse-roping contests, a kidnapping by a Native American tribe, and driving cattle through a fierce lightning storm to hold readers' attention."

**TREACHEROUS BEAUTY:  
PEGGY SHIPPEN,  
THE WOMAN BEHIND  
BENEDICT ARNOLD'S PLOT  
TO BETRAY AMERICA**

**Mark Jacob** is co-author of this biography of Benedict Arnold's wife, who was considered a poor innocent at the time but turned out to be a scheming spy.

It is the first biography of one of the war's most remarkable women, a beautiful Philadelphia society girl named Peggy Shippen. While war was raging between Britain and its rebellious colonists, Peggy befriended a suave British officer and



Mark Jacob

later married a crippled revolutionary general twice her age. At age 19, she brought these two men together in a treasonous plot that, had it succeeded, might have turned George Washington into a prisoner and changed the course of the war. Jacob's co-author is Stephen H. Case, who tracked down Peggy's letters at various repositories.

LITERARY LICENSE, MAY-JULY 2012

# Digital hasn't unlocked door to world without gatekeepers

The more book publishing changes, the more the wall of gatekeepers stays the same

That's the opinion of **Robert Sutherland**, co-founder of the 35-year-old independent book publisher Pikestaff Press in Normal, Ill.

Pikestaff originally published two literary magazines – the Pikestaff Review and (from 1977 to 1996) the Pikestaff Forum. The small not-for-profit continues to publish volumes of poetry and prose fiction, and has a good future, he said. Its latest book is *The Utility of Heart Break*, poems by **Charles Reynard**, a circuit judge in McLean County, Ill.

"Some of the shrunken number of big [traditional] houses were nasty gatekeepers to aspiring writers," Sutherland told Literary License recently. But the new online world of publishing won't allow authors to dodge gatekeepers, either. An author who once might have been frozen out altogether by the traditional gatekeepers will be free to publish in e-book format. But that's of limited value if the book is lost among a vast tsunami of competing digital titles, he said.

"The e-book industry will be undergoing a major shakeout, and some e-publishing businesses will survive and some will not," said Sutherland, a retired English professor at Illinois State University.

Many authors now are eager to get titles on Kindle for 99 cents and to participate in free giveaways in an effort to "build their brand" and get their names before the public so that readers will buy their next books.

But much of that plan is wishful thinking with no guarantees of success, he said.

"E-publishing won't provide quite the freedom from gatekeepers and rules that authors envisioned," said Sutherland, who also is an author of a scholarly work, *Language and Lewis Carroll*, and two novels, *Sticklewort and Feverfew* and *The Farringford Cadenza*.

*“My faith is that people generally will not be willing to let the print and paper book go. ... You can put in your pocket, and lend it to a friend, and you don't have to have an electronic device to read it.”*

One of the controversies in the digital-vs.-print world is the benefit of selling some e-books for 99 cents each. Some authors fear that such pricing will devalue books and literature generally in the mind of the reading public, he said. If readers start feeling entitled to buy books for 99 cents, they may become reluctant to pay even \$5, \$6 or \$10 for others.

"Some feel that this model is not working to the advantage of authors," he said. "It is working to the advantage of Amazon.com, which is building a library of thousands of new books for the Kindle.

"It's very hard to make a living as a writer anymore," Sutherland said. "If you sell a book for 99 cents, you may get to keep 70 cents. But how many do you have to sell to earn a living? Then, if you give some away free, you've eliminated that market as an income source also."

"The transition to digital publishing we are living through is very interesting and exciting, but, in my opinion, the print book will be around for a long time," Sutherland said.

"Paper has certain advantages. You can put in your pocket, and lend it to a friend, and you don't have to have an electronic device to read it."

*Literary Livelihood*

Robert Sutherland

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## Biblio File

Continued from Page 6

Here's what a reviewer for the Los Angeles Review of Books said of **Aleksandar Hemon**: "A few years ago, I heard Aleksandar Hemon say that what is



**Aleksandar Hemon**

hardest to imagine, and therefore what most writers have great trouble imagining, is reality. I understood him to oppose the common view that the most difficult feat for the writer is to invent fantastical scenarios. From this statement and others, I take him to mean reality as what really is – not what we see when we habitually filter it through a concept or a compulsion (for example, nation or desire or fear or piousness), simplifying it and making it more comprehensible."

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## Essays wanted

Claire Bushey, who identifies herself as a freelance writer and editor in Chicago, is editing an anthology for ACTA Publications ([www.actapublications.com](http://www.actapublications.com)) that seeks to describe Chicago's Catholic community and what it wants in our next archbishop.

She is looking for Catholic writers who belong to the Chicago archdiocese and are interested in submitting an essay between 300 and 500 words in length, rooted in personal experience and exploring a single theme, due no later than Aug. 3.

Essays should avoid the word "should," as in, "the church should do XYZ."

"We're looking for stories, not polemics. The anthology will compile 50 to 75 of these essays, and besides sales to the public, copies will be sent to the Papal Nuncio selecting candidates to fill the see, and eventually to the new archbishop."

Compensation is two free copies of the book. For more information, contact Claire Bushey at [www.clairebushey.com](http://www.clairebushey.com).

# Articles of configuration: Put your work back to work

If you've spent time writing an article and have gotten it published, you probably want to get more return on your investment. Try repurposing, or "recycling" your article so that it appears in other places. Below are 10 ways you can do that. If you try them, you will discover how easy it is.

- Edit the article and send a revised version to various trade publications and websites.
- Offer to send it to people when you are speaking or participating in a seminar or conference. You can also print out copies to pass out when you meet people at those events. Remember to include your contact information.
- Look for news angles and create a press release that mentions the article.

- Create a white paper.
- E-mail the article to your contacts. You can upload it to your own website and send a link to that. If you don't want to host it at your website, you can upload it to Scribd or Mediafire and send that link instead.

- Create an e-book that is a collection of your published articles.
- Create a video or audio in which you read or talk about your article, and include a link to the article below the video or audio post.
- Link to the article in your e-mail signature.
- Post a summary of the article in LinkedIn and your other social media networks. If you belong to any groups, give them a link to the article.
- If you're reading an article online and think that your article is related to the topic, leave a comment with a link to your article.



If you want to want to create polls, surveys, or quizzes, try **Polldaddy**.

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If it's been a while since you've thought

about how your e-mail can be more effective, consider:

1) Enhance your signature. Your signature probably includes your name, company, and contact information. You can add one more

line that could be a link to an article that you wrote or was featured in, or a link to something else that you want to share. You might have just written a book or have an upcoming speaking engagement. Keep the language simple so that your recipient doesn't feel like your signature is a commercial.

2) Give ways to share. If you'd like someone to pass along your e-mail, include ways for the recipient to share it. Write the e-mail so that anyone would be able to understand it. People who forward emails to others often don't delete your personal message to them.

3) Lighten the graphics. Make sure that your e-mail is simple enough for people to view and open. too many graphics can send your message into junk mail.

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

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*Literary  
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