

## Biblio File

**Jack Fuller's** latest book, *What Is Happening to News: The Information Explosion and the Crisis in Journalism*, last month won the Goldsmith Book Prize, given annually by the Joan Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School. The prize is given to "the best academic and best trade books that seek to improve the quality of government or politics through an examination of press and politics in the formation of public policy." Fuller's book won as best trade book. ...

**Sam Weller**, author of *The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury* and *Listen to the Echoes, The Ray Bradbury Interviews* will emcee the Society of Midland Authors annual dinner and book awards on May 10 at the Chicago Bar Association. (See details on Page 4.) ... **Robert Loerzel** will speak about his book *Alchemy of Bones: Chicago's Luetgert Murder Case of 1897* April 28 and 29 at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The Graduate Student Anthropology Association



Sam Weller

received a grant to present the lectures, which include one geared for anthropology students, as well as a general talk about the book at 11:30 a.m. April 29 in the Student-Alumni Council Room at the Ohio Union, 1739 N. High St., Columbus. ...



Robin Marvel

Congratulations to **Robin Marvel** on the birth of her daughter, Rorie Love. ... **Jim Schwab** was scheduled to speak March 3

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## Given time, simple phrase turns into best-selling novel

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

The best-selling novel *The Time Traveler's Wife* started as a simple phrase, author Audrey Niffenegger told writers March 8 at the Society of Midland Authors program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The idea that launched *The Time Traveler's Wife* popped into her head around 1997, said Niffenegger, who also is an artist.

"The way I tend to work on anything is I that ask questions," said Niffenegger, who teaches classes at Columbia College Chicago that explore the relationship between text and images. "I had this great big drawing table which is covered in brown paper. And when I am drawing and have an idea, I will just jot it down on the brown paper. ... One day I was drawing, and this phrase popped into my head: 'the time traveler's wife.' And so I wrote it down."

Most of the ideas on the brown paper "never get revisited," she said, but this one was different.

"It dawned on me almost immediately that in that little phrase were two characters, and their relationship was defined. They were husband and wife, and you understood that the husband was a time

traveler," she said. "And immediately, I thought, well, it would be such a drag to be married to a time traveler. What would you do when he was off on his time traveling adventures? It would be really kind of a bore. And I had this picture in my head of this elderly woman sitting at this window with a cup of tea and her coral sweater, and her hair all down her back, and she is just sitting there waiting. ...

"I could tell almost immediately that this idea had a lot of power, a lot of juice for me because it made me curious and it made me keep asking questions. You know, so, what did this couple do? And where did they live?

"If he is time traveler, is he like a huge famous celebrity time traveler, or does he keep it a secret? And do they have any kids, and what's that like, being a kid of a time traveler? And

on and on and on. And of course every time you answer a question it firms it up a little bit, but it also generates a lot more questions."

Up to that point in her career, Niffenegger never had written anything longer than 50 to 60 pages, but this project kept getting longer and longer.

"Suddenly, I realized I was in fact in the

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Audrey Niffenegger addresses the Midland Authors on March 8.

April poetry program features 2 top writers

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on “planning the urban forest” at the Audubon Naturalist Society Woodend Sanctuary, 8940 Jones Mill Rd., Chevy Chase, Md. The program was sponsored by Conservation Montgomery. ... **Arnie Bernstein’s** book *Bath Massacre: America’s First School Bombing* was chosen by the Ionia County Library system for their “On the Same Page” program. Libraries throughout region held reading and discussions groups about the book during first few months of 2011, which will culminate in Arnie’s talk and signing at the historic Ionia Theater on March 31. ... **Carol DeChant** (See New Books, Page 4) wrote a blog post titled “How to write a eulogy: A final gift to a loved one” March 17 on the Huffington Post. ...

**Robert McClory** and the Rev. Michael Pflieger discussed “Faith and Racism in Chicago: the Fight for Social Justice” March 23 at Loyola University in Chicago. ...

**Frank S. Joseph’s** story “The Coming of the Flags” has won third place in the Maryland Writers Association annual story contest. Another of his stories, “Skin Deep,” was published recently in *Scribble*, Vol. 8 No. 1. ... **Jim and Lynda O’Connor** will speak in Bellingham, Wash., to the Northwest Outdoor Writers’ Association April 28 - May 1. They will offer tips to authors on how to sell books through print and broadcast media as well as telling them the best ways to reach their targeted audiences. The O’Connors also will meet one-on-one with the authors to help them individually with marketing. ...

SMA Board Member **Rosina Neginsky** will do a poetry reading April 7 at the Quadrangle Club at the University of Chicago. A dinner in the library is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. and the reading will be at 7 p.m. Reservations preferred, 773-702-7221. Neginsky is the author of three books of poetry, and of *Zinaida Vengerova: In Search of Beauty*. Her most recent book of poetry is *Juggler*.



Frank S. Joseph

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# Annual SMA poetry program to feature 2 well-known writers

The annual April Society of Midland Authors poetry program will feature **Reginald Gibbons**, author of *Slow Trains Overhead: Chicago Poems And Stories*, and **Cornelia Maude Spelman**, author of *Missing: A Memoir*.

Gibbons is a poet, fiction writer, translator, literary critic, artist, and professor of English, Classics, and Spanish and Portuguese.

In 2008 he published a new book of poems, *Creatures of a Day* (LSU Press, 2008), which was a finalist for the 2008 National Book Award in poetry.

Also in 2008, he published a volume of new translations of Sophocles, *Selected Poems: Odes and Fragments* (Princeton); from 2006 to 2009 he was a columnist for *American Poetry Review*.

From 1981 to 1997, he served as the editor of *TriQuarterly* magazine, an international journal of new writing, art and cultural inquiry published at Northwestern; during that time, in addition to general issues of the magazine, he published special issues of writing from South Africa, Spain, Poland and Mexico. He also co-founded and edited *TriQuarterly Books*, an imprint for contemporary writing.

Spelman, who is married to Gibbons, grew up in Cincinnati. She attended the

April 12, 2011, program

Cliff Dwellers  
200 S. Michigan Avenue  
22nd floor

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

Free - donations accepted

University of Cincinnati and Emerson College in Boston, graduating in 1968. She earned her MSW at Loyola School of Social Work in Chicago and worked as a therapist with children and families before turning full-time to writing. For some of her children's books, Cornelia has won awards from the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio and the Children's Book Committee of Bank Street College of Education. She has also earned several awards from the Illinois Arts Council for her nonfiction writing for adults. Her memoir, *Missing*, has been published by Northwestern University Press.

A diarist, she has taught workshops on diary-writing, and is writing volume #141 of her diaries, which are being archived at the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America.

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## SMA Program

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middle of writing a novel without even having intending to do so,” she said.

The success of the book was a far cry from a full-color work she created while she was an art student at Columbia titled *The Adventuress*. It featured a nameless heroine who wandered around Napoleonic France with a great funky haircut, and just 10 copies were printed – all by Niffenegger herself.

But when she tried to entice commercial publishers to print up more, they demurred.

“Essentially all the letters said this is brilliant, and we are not going to publish

it,” she said.

“The thing I did not understand when I was 22 was how expensive four-color printing was and just what a crazy amount of money I would have been asking a publisher to invest in this incredibly non-commercial thing.”

She had more luck with *The Time Traveler’s Wife*. When the clerk at the Lake Forest, Ill., post office realized she was sending five copies of her manuscript to an agent, he announced: “I hereby bless them in the name of the postmaster general.”

From there the manuscript went to an actual bidding war, partly due, perhaps, to what Niffenegger calls “the magic of the Lake Forest post office clerk.”

# How to guard your reputation in a crisis – and other times

Have you ever thought about what you would do in a crisis, and I don't mean the kind of crisis authors have when they see the deadline creeping up and they're happy with only the first four chapters?

It's not good to wait until something bad happens; you should be prepared in case you have to deal with an event that can negatively affect your reputation or the reputation of your book. Here are a few things to think about to get a plan in action:

**1) Put together a team.** Some people on your crisis communication team can include your publisher, your public relations specialist, your agent, an attorney you use, and your online communications expert. You should also choose someone to be the dedicated spokesperson if an incident occurs.

**2) Consider your audience.** In order to prepare for a crisis, you should think about your potential audience, your readers, your potential readers and of course, the media.

Because your audience is varied, think about how you could effectively communicate with each group. Develop important media connections, and strengthen your existing ones.

**3) Prepare your online presence.** You most likely have a website that anyone can see, but prepare a "dark" section of your website that is not public, which can go live in case you need to communicate with the public during a crisis. Some possible sections could be a newsroom and a place to post statements, links, and special contact information.

Also decide which social media platforms you will communicate through. Analytical tools for your online networks are also important to have ready, in addition to someone who will be responsible for analyzing online activity from other sources.

If you are prepared, you won't get blindsided if something horrible happens.

*“It's not good to wait until something bad happens; you should be prepared.”*

Information moves rapidly, and you want to be ready to respond just as quickly.



Even when there is no emergency, it's important to control as much as possible what your reputation online looks like.

**Reputation.com** is an online privacy and information protector. It helps control the information that is found in the social media you use, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, or wherever people can find your infor-

mation.

Reputation.com offers various plans, including these:

**MyPrivacy:** Monitors the Internet, and when your personal data becomes visible, it requests those sites to remove your data so that it can't be sold.

**MyReputation:** Helps you create and promote the positive content you want people to see, so that you can control your online image.

**MyReputation Discovery:** Shows how visible you are online, how you're perceived, and how much control you have over the information about you.

If you're worried about what you've posted online or what people are posting or even re-tweeting about you, then give this a try. So far, it's gotten good reviews.

Email [tcpr@tcpr.net](mailto:tcpr@tcpr.net) or call (312) 422-1333.

*Literary  
Loudspeaker*  
Tom  
Ciesielka



## New Members

**Tracy Seeley** grew up mostly in Kansas, a few blocks from the Arkansas River. Thirty years later she returned, which is the topic of her new book, *My Ruby Slippers: the Road Back to Kansas* (University of Nebraska Press, 2011).



Tracy Seeley

She finished her B.A. in English from the University of Dallas and earned a Ph.D. in 19th and 20th century British literature from the University of Texas at Austin. She went to

University of San Francisco in 1993, after teaching for five years at Yale University.

Her literary research has focused primarily on the period between 1880 and 1939. Her creative work in nonfiction grew out of her teaching experience at Yale, where she fell in love with the essay. She has also published literary nonfiction in journals such as the *Florida Review* and *Prairie Schooner*.

Dr. Seeley received the Distinguished Teaching Award at USF in 2001. She has been a finalist for the Iowa Review nonfiction award and the Brenda Ueland Nonfiction Prize. A screenplay short she co-authored won a Bronze Remy at the Houston International Film Festival, and she was a fellow of the Edward Albee Center for Creative Persons.

She has won the Distinguished Teaching Award and the College Service Award at the University of San Francisco.

Novelist and editor **Eckhard A. Gerdes**, who earned his MFA in creative writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, is the author of 12 novels.

Wikipedia says his work "reflects experimental technique, sometimes ignoring time, space, or cause-and-effect, in the service of stories of individuals struggling to transcend fear and limitation. His recent work has been associated with the Bizarro Fiction movement, of which he is one of the leading proponents."

Gerdes also is the editor of the *Journal of Experimental Fiction*. He has also written on modern and post-modern literature

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## New Members

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for Review of Contemporary Fiction, American Book Review, and other magazines.

Gerdes has won several literary awards, including (twice) the Richard Pike Bissell Creative Writing Award.

His most recent novel, *Hugh Moore*, has been nominated for an American Book Award. *My Landlady the Lobotomist* was a finalist for the Wonderland Book Award for Best Novel of 2008. *The Million-Year Centipede* was selected as one of the top ten mainstream novels of 2007 in the Predators and Editors Readers Poll. He lives in Geneva, Ill., and has three children.

**Joey Tito**, author of *Delving Into The Unknown*, is a paranormal researcher and investigator. He was born in 1979 "in the very haunted city of Chicago," and grew up with a keen interest in the paranormal.

Hearing stories about Chicago's ghosts as a youth eventually led him to pick up ghost research as a hobby. This hobby has expanded over the years as he began visiting alleged haunted sites around Chicago and across the United States.

He is videographer with the Ghost Research Society and documents video evidence of paranormal activities. He has traveled to many states investigating haunted locations with the society, and researches claims of ghostly phenomena.

He is also the creator and works on the Ghosts Across America DVD series of documentaries, under the GRS Productions label. He resides on the South Side of Chicago.

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## Literary License

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P.O. Box 10419, Chicago IL 60610

Editor: Thomas Frisbie  
tomfrisbie@aol.com

Copy editor: Steve Huntley

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[www.midlandauthors.com](http://www.midlandauthors.com)

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## New Books

### GREAT AMERICAN CATHOLIC EULOGIES

**Carol DeChant's** new book is *Great American Catholic Eulogies*.

SMA member **Thomas Lynch**, author of *The Undertaking: Life Stories of the Dismal Trade*, wrote the forward.

And spurred by **Mark and Matthew Jacob's** article in Literary License, Carol launched a website for the book, [www.GreatAmericanCatholicEulogies.com](http://www.GreatAmericanCatholicEulogies.com).

The hardcover book is a history of Catholics in America from the colonial era to now, told through the lives of significant men and women. Carol writes a preface to each to place the subject in his/her era.

The deceased include artists and sports legends; military and pacifist heroes; pioneers in social justice, education, health care; and founders of distinctively American religious orders.

Eulogists, Carol says, are often as interesting as their subjects: Ronald Reagan, Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, Dorothy Day, Shelby Foote, Phil Donahue, Tom Wolfe, Andre Dubus, Tip O'Neill III, and the elegiac poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson and John Keats, among others.

A CD-packet of portions of the book is being taped in LA, for later release.

Carol will be speaking at two sessions at Religion Booksellers Trade Exhibit in St. Charles, Ill., on May 31.

### PLANNING AND CONTROL OF LAND DEVELOPMENT: CASES AND MATERIALS

**Stuart Meck**, FAICP/PP, Associate Research Professor at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University in New Jersey is the co-author of a new textbook,

*Planning and Control of Land Development: Cases and Materials, 8th Edition*

(LexisNexis, 2011) and the accompanying teacher's manual.

His co-authors are law professors Daniel R. Mandelker, Carol Necole Brown and Peter W. Salsich Jr. and attorneys Dwight H. Merriam, Nancy E. Stroud and Julie A. Tappendorf.

The 913-page case book is one of the most widely used land use texts in the U.S. It may be ordered from Lexis/Nexis at: <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.



**Stuart Meck**

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## Annual Dinner Notes

The annual dinner will be held May 10 at the Chicago Bar Association: 6 p.m. cash bar, 7 p.m. dinner, 321 S Plymouth Court, Chicago.

Also, here are the officer and board candidates for the next fiscal year. If any member wishes an election to be held so that other candidates can run for office, please notify the Society before the May 10 annual dinner in writing.

Send such a notification to our P.O. box, which is handily listed in the box at left.

### Candidates:

**President** - Robert Loerzel

**Corresponding Secretary** - Charles J. Masters

**Recording Secretary** - Anastasia Royal

**Treasurer** - James L. Merriner

**Membership Secretary** - Thomas Frisbie

**Board Member** - Rosina Neginsky

**Board Member** - Lynn Voedisch

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## Letters to the Editor

Every time I get an announcement of your monthly programs, I sob inwardly. They sound so great. Hopefully I'll be in Chicago one day and the timing will be right so I can attend.

**Frank S. Joseph**