

## Biblio File

**Note:** The Cliff Dwellers Club will close its current location at the end of March, so the Society of Midland Authors' May 8 annual dinner will move to the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago (see Page 7). The February and March monthly programs will still be at the Cliff Dwellers, but the Society is looking for a location for the April monthly program. ...



**Marlene Targ Brill**

**Marlene Targ Brill's** *Annie Shapiro and the Clothing Workers Strike* was named an 2011 Honor Book in the Social Studies/Grade K-6 Novels category by the Society of School Librarians. ... **Michael Raleigh** will speak at 2 p.m. March 3 at the Bartlett (Ill.) Public Library as part of its "Inside Writing and Publishing Series." ... **Connie Goddard**, back from two years in Romania with the Peace Corps, writes to say, "When I was writing for Publishers Weekly 20 years ago, I always wondered why cities like Minneapolis and Portland had stronger publishing communities than Chicago. Perhaps with everyone online ... maybe someone will revive Chicago Books in Review (a marvelous project sponsored by **Bob Remer** 15 years ago); maybe it could start online and move to paper – assuming there are still physical bookstores in town to distribute it." Connie also says she intends to "get two books written over the next few years." ... **James Finn Garner's** *Honk, Honk, My Darling* was named a Chicago Writers Association book of the year. Among the judges were **Jonathan Eig**, **Julie Hyzy** and **Sharon Woodhouse**. The awards in four categories covered books published in 2010 and the first half of 2011 and were the first presented by

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## Writers discuss the issues for Chicago in 21st century

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

**T**he Chicago metropolitan region must deal with pressing issues if it wants to prosper in the global economy of the future, three writers told authors at the Society of Midland Authors' regular meeting Jan. 10 at the Cliff Dwellers club in Chicago.

The three panelists were Dick Simpson and Constance A. Mixon, co-editors of *Twenty-First Century Chicago* (Cognella, 2011), and political consultant Don Rose, who contributed a chapter to the book.

"During the last several decades we have been transformed into a global city, while at the same time the population, jobs and housing stock have declined," said Simpson, who heads the political science department at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "The major economic change in the Chicago metropolitan region over the last four decades has been the loss of manufacturing and manufacturing jobs and the switch first to our service [economy] and then our global economy."

Mixon, associate professor of political science and director of the urban studies program at Elmhurst (Ill.) College, said among the changes the city may undergo is a new political order.

"Political machines have governed the city since the Chicago fire," Mixon said. "In 1931, Anton Cermak created a single

Democratic Machine, which was perfected by Mayor Richard J. Daley. This Machine was partially transformed under Richard M. Daley. With the election of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and several new aldermen and county commissioners last year, we are now at the point of deciding whether Machine politics will continue, change again, or be discarded."

Rose raised the question of why citizens tolerate corruption. He compared it to a cat's litter box that the owner gets used to and that only outsiders regard as unacceptable.

"In short," said Simpson, a former Chicago independent alderman, "we are struggling to become a global city that is both livable and humane, one in which wealth and prosperity are shared."

*The Society of Midland Authors' 2010-2011 programs may be heard in their entirety at*

[www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified](http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified).  
For air dates of this program on CAN TV see Page 7.



**Constance A. Mixon**



**Dick Simpson**



**Don Rose**

*Literary Landscape:*  
with  
**Jennifer Stevenson**  
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New  
Books  
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New location for  
SMA annual dinner  
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the nine-year-old organization. ... Talk about a heart-warming experience:

**Robert Follett** this month returned from Antarctica to find on his doorstep copies of his new book (See New Books, Page 5). ... Just days after the Chicago Sun-



Emily Clark Victorson

Times ran a feature about **Emily Clark Victorson's** Allium Press of Chicago (named for the plant that gave Chicago its name), the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago announced its new restaurant would be called Allium. (The restaurant is set to

open in February on the seventh floor of the hotel at 900 N. Michigan Ave.). Biblio File thinks Allium authors should be able to dine there for free. ... **Alzina Stone Dale** writes to say, "I'm sorry to say that night meetings out of our neighborhood are pretty much 'out' for me – I don't do a lot of night driving anymore, especially when it involves parking, etc., and dragging my spouse along isn't really fair, either. One of these days I ought to offer to talk about 'Mystery Authors I have known,' but it also is sad when writers I know die – having a run on that lately, too, both here and in the UK." ... The Wellington (Kan.) Daily News ran a Dec. 23 profile of Sheila Kelly Welch, who illustrated **Leone Castell Anderson's** historical novels *Sean's War* and *Sean's Quest*. (Leone says her middle-grade historical novels based on the 1832 Black Hawk War are still available.) ... On his website dedicated to his passion for cars, Jay-Leno'sGarage.com, Jay Leno this month talked with **Michael Argetsinger** about his book *Formula One at Watkins Glen: Twenty Years of the U.S. Grand Prix, 1961-1980* (David Bull Publishing). Biblio File trusts Michael got all the punch lines. Meanwhile, Michael writes to say, "The book has enjoyed uniformly wonderful reviews in the New York Times, Road &

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# Same old story? Not with new technology here to help

If you have old short stories you've written but never published, you might well reflect on this chain of events.

After retiring as editor of Chicago magazine last spring, Society of Midland Authors member **Richard "Dick" Babcock** ran across a short story he'd written more than 20 years ago but had never been able to get published.

As Jim Romenesko tells it on his new website, romenesko.com, Dick thought of publishing the story as a Kindle Single. Singles, which Amazon started last year, are a "vast spectrum of reporting, essays, memoirs, narratives, and short stories," the company says. (They are priced from 99 cents to \$4.99.)

A problem cropped up, though. The minimum length Amazon requires for a Single short story is 5,000 words (the maximum is 30,000 words), and the story was only 3,500.

David Blum, with whom Dick had worked at New York magazine in the 1980s and who now is editor of Kindle Singles, had a suggestion. The story is about a husband driven to distraction by his wife's endless repetition of the same story. Blum suggested that Dick add a scene or two deepening the nature of their conflict.

"At first I thought [the revision] was impossible," Dick told Romenesko, "but once I started tinkering with it, a couple of new scenes popped up, and I do think the story ended up being a bit better, richer."

“Once I started tinkering with it, a couple of new scenes popped up, and I do think the story ended up being a bit better, richer.”

In a review, Amazon.com called the story "spare and surprisingly sinister." "My Wife's Story" went live as a Kindle Single in November and quickly moved near the top of the Amazon rankings. Eventually, it reached the No. 1 spot, where it remained for several weeks.

On Jan. 1, Technology Oasis at [quanta-coversa.com](http://quanta-coversa.com) reported "My Wife's Story" had sold 24,000 copies at 99 cents each. Since then, sales have topped 25,000.

It helped, Dick said, to have a "terrific" cover illustration and marketing by Amazon.com, which alerted mystery readers and those who had bought Babcock's novels.

"It's sold a lot better than any of my novels," he told Romenesko.

Dick is now thinking of writing new manuscripts as Kindle Singles.

The whole exercise recalls the days when writers could make a living selling short fiction to national magazines.

## Literary License

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"The cock is a fighter, a lover, and a doting husband and father. He is a model for the industrious early riser but also seen by some as the incarnation of vanity, pride and recklessness." – *In Praise of Chickens: A Compendium of Wisdom Fair and Fowl*, **Jane S. Smith**

# 'Romance characters have always been heroic'

On Feb. 14, Chicago authors **Jennifer Stevenson**, **Sherrill Bodine** and **Patricia Rosemoor** will discuss trends in romance publishing and writing.

Here's what Stevenson, whose romance and fantasy novels include *The Brass Bed*, *Fool's Paradise* and *Trash Sex Magic*, tells Literary License:

**Literary License:** *It's been said romance books account for nearly one in every five fiction book sales. What makes the category so popular?*

**Jennifer Stevenson:** The current statistics for the romance genre are available at [http://www.rwa.org/cs/the\\_romance\\_genre/romance\\_literature\\_statistics](http://www.rwa.org/cs/the_romance_genre/romance_literature_statistics). In 2010, religious, mystery, science fiction and fantasy and classic literary fiction titles combined sold \$2.455 billion. Romance fiction sold \$1.358 billion.

Why? The romance genre is optimistic. The reader is guaranteed a happy ending. You cannot imagine the impact of this on a reader if you are accustomed to reading other genres but not romance.

My favorite story about the power of optimistic fiction comes from best-selling romance author Jennifer Crusie, who first read romance as a Ph.D. candidate in feminist literary criticism. "I was 40, divorced, a single parent, putting myself through graduate school by teaching junior high English, and depressed." For a dissertation exploring male versus female narrative structures, she planned to analyze 100 Mack Bolan men's action-adventure novels and 100 Harlequin romances.

Feb. 14, 2012, program

Cliff Dwellers  
200 S. Michigan Avenue  
22nd floor

6 p.m. - Social Hour

7 p.m. - Program

Free - donations accepted

She felt too depressed to start with Mack, so she began with the romances. She read 100 stories with happy endings in 30 days. At the end of 30 days, she was no longer depressed. This phenomenon fascinated her so much that she changed her dissertation topic ... and started writing romance.

**Literary License:** *How have the characters in romance books changed over the years?*

**Jennifer Stevenson:** They haven't much. Oh, Harlequin, the Canadian romance

publisher, no longer limits age or sexual experience level of the heroine, but the genre was never monolithic. As in other fiction, romance characters before 1940 didn't mention birth control, after 1965 some had flowers in their hair, in 1990 they worked for dot-coms, and now they get patted down at the airport.

Romance characters have always been heroic. They battle the world, their own demons, and one another (hero versus heroine) until they win. They are likeable, even admirable. They don't deserve great love when the story opens, but by the time it ends, they have earned their happy ending the hard way. All part of that opti-

mism thing.

**Literary License:** *Have new sub-genres in romance become popular?*

**Jennifer Stevenson:** Romance constantly throws off new sub-genres. Westerns were once popular, waned for 20 years, and are slowly returning, although historicals in some other eras are still strong. Twenty years ago it was cowboys, secret babies, runaway brides, amnesiacs, time traveling heroines, ghost heroes. Then romantic suspense took over. Then chick lit. Now it's demon huntresses, vampires, werewolves, selkies, faeries, and more. It'll be something new soon.

**Literary License:** *It's been predicted 85 percent or more of romance titles soon will be published as e-books. Do you agree?*

**Jennifer Stevenson:** No idea. However, romance authors are recovering rights to their backlists as fast as they can. Their publishers are suddenly trying to hold onto those backlists, after decades of refusing to reprint. An author whose first release was available only in tattered paperback at \$45 can now sell that title as an ebook and collect 70 percent of \$4.99. Instead of writing off their 30-, 50-, or 80-title backlists, romance authors see those old titles as retirement income.

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

**Jennifer Stevenson:** I'm mostly done with an erotic novella that follows book one of *Slacker Demons*, a trilogy of contemporary romantic comedies about five sex demons living in a man-lair in Chicago, all working for different hells in different religions, every one of them \*this\* close to getting fired for laziness. *It's Raining Men and It's Raining Angels and Demons* will be released in early 2012.

Literary  
Landscape:  
Jennifer  
Stevenson



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Track, Motorsport (British), Autoweek, and at least a dozen other magazines." It also was a finalist for the Dean Batchelor book award by the Motor Press Guild. .... The Jan. 2 Seattle Post-Intelligencer inter-

viewed **Michael Craft**, whose recent book is *The MacGuffin: A Mystery* (Questover Press, July, 2011). (See New Books, Page 4). His favorite line from the book: "Pyrite dashed forward, sniffed at the body, then took a lick, tasting blood." ... **Julie Hyzy's** *Affairs of Steak* (a title Biblio File wishes it had thought of) hit No. 22

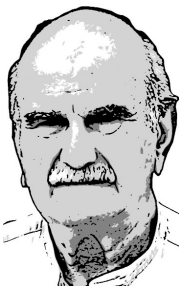
on the New York Times' bestsellers list for mass market paperbacks this month. (See New Books, Page 4). Also, Julie will be the featured local author at the 13th annual Love is Murder: Mystery Writers & Readers Conference Feb. 3-5 at the InterContinental Hotel, Chicago. She'll be

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at a pre-conference signing Feb. 2 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the hotel. ... **Harry Mark Petrakis** writes to say, "Winter has arrived here [in Indiana]. We're in the snow belt and always get hit harder than Chicago. We're hunkered down and looking toward



Harry Mark Petrakis

spring. If the Indiana sun isn't the vaunted sun of the Greek islands, a poet has written, 'In the time of the frost, seek a minor sun.' ... **Jean Bethke Elshain** was among those who spoke Jan. 6 at a Washington memorial for former Czech President Vaclav Havel. Among

those there were former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, author Azar Nafisi and many important human rights activists from various troubled regions. As reported in the October, 2011, Literary License, Jean was a recipient of the Democracy Service Award – the highest honor bestowed by the National Endowment for Democracy, and Havel himself was an awardee in 2007. In 2010, the Dalai Lama was honored. ... **Joey Korom's** new book, tentatively titled *Skyscrapers of the Gilded Age* (McFarland) is due out in the fall. ... The paperback edition of **Rebecca Makkai's** *The Borrowers* is due out in June. ... **Patrick Hicks** will read his work at the AWP Conference in Chicago on March 2, and he is also conducting a workshop with Jim Reese for "Phryme Time on the Prairie" in Akron, Iowa, on April 14. His first novel, *The Missing of Juniper Falls*, is being represented by the Unter Agency and it is under review with various presses. Also, his edited collection of poetry, *A Harvest of Words*, was a finalist for the High Plains Book Award. ... Among the authors hosting a table at the Chicago Public Library's Oct. 20 Carl Sandburg Awards were: **Jonathan Alter, Jon Anderson, Blue Balliett, Edward M. Burke, Richard Cahán, Laura Caldwell, Stuart Dybek, Aleksandar Hemon, Alex Kotlowitz, Billy Lombardo, Achy Obejas, Sara**

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## New Books

### A FAULT IN OUR STARS

**John Green's** new novel is *A Fault in Our Stars*.

After the book was made available for pre-order last June, it was the No. 1 best-seller on Amazon and Barnes and Noble, despite not having yet been released.

*A Fault in Our Stars* (Dutton Juvenile, Jan. 12) tells the story of Hazel, a 16-year-old with terminal cancer.

Naming it one of "Amazon Best Books of the Month, January 2012," Amazon.com said, "John Green has created a soulful novel that tackles big subjects – life, death, love – with the perfect blend of levity and heart-swelling emotion. Hazel is 16, with terminal cancer, when she meets Augustus at her kids-with-cancer support group. The two are kindred spirits, sharing an irreverent sense of humor and immense charm, and watching them fall in love even as they face universal questions of the human condition – How will I be remembered? Does my life, and will my death, have meaning? – has a raw honesty that is deeply moving."

### GOSSIP: THE UNTRIVIAL PURSUIT

In his new book, *Gossip: The Untrivial Pursuit* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, November, 2011), **Joseph Epstein** argues that gossip is an eternal and necessary human enterprise. But he also says gossip has invaded and changed politics and journalism for the worse, causing unsubstantiated information to be presented as fact.

Publishers Weekly said, "Delectable firsthand anecdotes and portraits ... add to the pleasures of this serious appraisal. ... Disquieting and delightful."

The Wall Street Journal said, "[Epstein has] a literary tone that makes you think of venerable Manhattan editors with mid-Atlantic accents ... like a good stand-up comedian (or a discoverer), he inspires confidence [in his writing]."

### THE MACGUFFIN

**Michael Craft** is busy promoting latest mystery novel, *The MacGuffin*, which features a new protagonist, architect Cooper Brant. It deals with the race to discover a promising new source of alternative energy that could profoundly upset the world's dynamics of energy production.

With such high stakes, the race turns murderous, and because of his family connections, the story's central character, a mild-mannered architect named Cooper Brant, finds himself caught in the crosshairs. Coop attempts to save his own skin by unraveling the secrets of past crimes.

The story's underlying premise is that energy independence is both needed and feasible.

### AFFAIRS OF STEAK

*Affairs of Steak* (Berkeley, Jan. 3) is **Julie Hyzy's** fifth installment in her White House Chef series.

White House chef Olivia Paras and her archnemesis, White House Sensitivity Director Peter Everett Sargeant, must work together to solve the double murder of one of the first lady's assistants and the chief of staff – before they become the next victims.

The Obamas aren't mentioned by name, but there are clues about who really is occupying that address at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

On Jan. 4, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer said, "*Affairs of Steak* proves unequivocally that this series burns as bright as the sun during a sweltering DC summer."

AnnArbor.com wrote, "Julie Hyzy unusually combines the skills of a cozy writer with the skills of an accomplished writer."



Julie Hyzy

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## New Books

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### HOW TO KEEP SCORE IN BUSINESS

Longtime Chicago publisher and author **Robert Follett's** new book, *How to Keep Score in Business: Accounting and Financial Analysis for the Non-Accountant*, is the second edition, revised and updated.

It's intended for those who need to understand the basics of accounting and finance but have never taken a course on these topics.

That's where Follett was when he began to move up in management.

So he educated himself, leading to the first edition, which was used in many colleges in business courses, purchased by companies, used in seminars and workshops, and bought by many individuals.

FT Press is an imprint of Pearson, the largest publisher in the U.S.

This is Robert's ninth published book, most on business-related topics.

He is already working on his next one.

### THE MAGIC ROOM: A STORY ABOUT THE LOVE WE WISH FOR OUR DAUGHTERS

In *The Magic Room: A Story about the Love We Wish for our Daughters* (Gotham Books, 2012), Jeffrey Zaslow goes to small-town bridal shop with a "magic room" that has soft church lighting, a circular pedestal and mirrors that



**Jeffrey Zaslow**

make lifelong dreams come true. Here, generations of mothers and daughters have shared precious dreams. Publishers Weekly wrote, "Jeffrey Zaslow has a remarkable ability to select a familiar topic ... and pursue that topic until he mines the diamonds, the stories, hidden beneath the surface. He displays this talent once again in *The Magic Room*."

People magazine wrote: "Zaslow has written a tenderhearted portrait of a bridal store. ... Zaslow gently delineates the changing lives of women and finds — in among the mishaps ... ample evidence of the enduring power of marriage."

strong ties to one of the 12 Midland states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin).

The categories are Adult Fiction, Adult Nonfiction, Biography, Children's Fiction, Children's Nonfiction and Poetry.

Visit our website for the contest rules, a list of contest judges and a printable entry form.

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>

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**Paretsky, Carl Smith, Haki Madhubuti, Martin Marty, James McManus, Joe Meno, Rick Telander, Scott Turow, Rob Warden, Nami Mun, Sam Weller and Michael Williams.** ... Chicago Sun-Times columnist Esther Cepeda wrote on Dec. 26: "Make it the last book you read in 2011 or your first of 2012, but whatever you do, don't miss out on *County: Life, Death and Politics at Chicago's Public Hospital*. Written by **Dr. David Ansell**, now vice president for clinical affairs and chief medical officer at Rush University Medical Center, *County* is a brutally frank, lovingly detailed account of one doctor's mission to end health-care inequities in Chicago."

... **Rita Emmett** will be a keynote speaker describing how to "blast away procrastination" at a Feb. 11 Women in Agriculture conference in Washington state. ... **Helen Frost** was a speaker at the Baldwin Public Library as part of her visit to Birmingham, Mich., where her book, *Diamond Willow*, is one of the books that fourth- and fifth-graders are reading in the Battle of the Books this year. ... **Linda Gerdner** was among the authors at a children's book fair Jan. 14 in Iowa City, Iowa. She read from *Grandfather's Story Cloth*, her book about a Hmong American boy and his grandfather who has dementia. (The book has won six awards and honors.) Linda, who received her Ph.D. from the College of Nursing at University of Iowa in 1998, focuses her research on family caregiving issues for persons with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. ... **Jaimy Gordon** last month told the Wire website, "For people like me, the physical book is never going to lose its centrality," but also said e-books' portability has given them an important niche and that she enjoys seeing e-readers illuminating airplane interiors at night. She will read from her work at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 15 in



**Rita Emmett**

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## Book Awards

**Reminder:** Feb. 1 is the deadline for submitting books to the Society of Midland Authors Literary Competition. The Society presents awards of cash and recognition plaques to the winners.

There is no entry fee and the author need not be a member of the SMA. The book must have been published in 2011 by a recognized publishing house and the author must reside in, be born in, or have

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## 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

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the Eck Auditorium at Notre Dame University. ... Former SMA President **Jim Bowman** this month attended the 70th birthday party for former Chicago Daily



Name Mun

News colleague Dennis Byrne. Jim reports that “a good time was had by all.” ... Granta magazine's winter issue includes a public conversation between writers Chinelo Okparanta and **Nami Mun**. The writers also will read from their work at 7:30

p.m., Feb. 10, Women & Children First Bookstore, 5233 N. Clark St., Chicago ... In a Jan. 10 interview with TimeOut Chicago, **John Green** had nice words for Midwestern authors: “Unlike New York, no one expects you to be a professional writer,” Green said. “Writers in Chicago are mostly really nice. There’s not much cattiness or competitiveness, but there are a lot of people wanting to help each other.” With his latest book out (See New Books, Page 4), John and his musician brother Hank, his partner in the Vlog Brothers YouTube duo, are on a nationwide tour. ... **Christoph Irmscher**, a prominent Audubon scholar, recently visited Connecticut’s Trinity College to see one of the finest remaining copies of the rare *Birds of America* by John James Audubon. Once there, Christoph put on two events about the set – first a viewing of the volumes and then a public talk. In other news, Christoph’s new biography, *Louis Agassiz: Creator of American Science*, is forthcoming from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in the fall. ... **Lisa Holton** wrote a Jan. 2 article for the National Law Journal about the Illinois ground-breaking Patrick Pursley case involving ballistics evidence. Lisa, who covers the legal business in her freelance work, writes to say, “I find these stories really interesting to do because you get to watch attorneys work long hours in legal arenas typically far outside their (often big-money) specialties and you sense a real passion for what they're doing. The

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# How print-on-demand works: Author tries out a new option

E-books aren't the only way that authors can become their own publishers. Print-on-demand also is an option.

SMA member **David X. Novak** has published some of his poetry books through print on demand (order them at [www.lulu.com/spotlight/DavidXNovak](http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/DavidXNovak)). Here is his report:

**L**ulu seems the biggest, so I went with them. My “sample copy” came out looking like poor photocopy. From what I can tell online, Lulu does well enough most of the time. However, I never got a response from customer service. Maybe I was at the end of a cartridge on their inkjet printer (friends liked the cover quality, though).

I've heard good reports about Wordclay.

You set the price. A 19-page chapbook costs \$4.88. I set the price at \$5.99 so I get \$0.89 (Lulu takes a 20 percent cut). A book of 449 pages costs \$13.48. I set the price at \$16.99 so I get \$2.81 (again minus the cut). Lulu recommends you set up a PayPal account.

People do not get their book super quickly. When I ordered a book from Blurb (more on that later), it came lickety-split; but with Lulu, it seems to me their “shipping time” is piled on top of a “printing time,” which they don't warn the buyer about, and which I suppose fluctuates.

With Lulu, the buyer has to take on a \$3.99 shipping cost. The book I bought from Blurb had a mandatory \$7.99 shipping cost, as I recall, which was a factor in my eliminating Blurb from consideration.

Otherwise, the costs of all the POD services are more or less equivalent.

I had some hard choices to make when I decided to go into this. For example, Lulu offers to “give” you a free ISBN, but that permanently ties your edition to them. People who took the Lulu ISBN had complaints when they sold to Amazon or other places, because then the

discounting is drastic and authors get very little.

But I am looking for no marketing outside of those readers my other books have already got me (not to discuss library placement).

Lulu wants you to buy their marketing services and their book design services, and that's how they make their profit, aside from what they make off of sales.

There were no upfront costs to me. I could buy a bunch of copies to sell at readings – but I am not such a businessman as to want to do that.

My situation is unique, though. I've heard that even the big-name poets

don't make a cent off of their book sales, anyhow.

I can afford not to make any profit, but any author who is looking to avoid slipping into the gutter based on self-pub ought to think twice.

E-books look like where it's at in the future, as has been written about in several Literary License issues this past year, but I have not figured out the technologies there yet.

The Blurb book I got was *Aspects of Wilde*, a reprint of a 1930s text by Vincent O'Sullivan printed by Blurb and published by Callum James Books – even the Chicago Public Library didn't have it and I needed it for research. It seems like a good way to make available out-of-print texts that have otherwise no chance of seeing the light, and I can't see it taking away from sales of one's other books, but in my case I have no way to determine the numbers.

Also, the field is changing rapidly. I've heard there's an “expresso” print-on-demand machine that bookstores are starting to have, and a lot of bookstores are beginning to do their own publishing. But I believe that sort of publishing/distribution system still lies in its infancy.

*Books by David X. Novak available through print-on-demand are: The Resurgiad, World Not World, The Condemnation and The Poem Not Taken.*

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### Literary Legwork

David X. Novak

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

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Pursley case is fascinating because it's an illustration of how criminal forensic technology is galloping ahead and the justice system is struggling to keep up." ...

Among the members of the DePaul University faculty recognized this month



Rebecca Johns Trissler

by the Chicago Tribune's review of favorite local publications in 2011 were **Rachel Shteir** for *The Steal: A Cultural History of Shoplifting* and **Rebecca Johns Trissler** for *The*

*Countess: A Novel of Elizabeth Bathor*. ...

... **Mahmoud Saeed** and **Allen Salter** were scheduled to do a reading at DePaul University on Jan. 31. ... Literary License columnist **Tom Ciesielka** was scheduled to talk about "Marketing for Today's Niche and Small Firms" at the Chicago Bar Association Jan. 20 in Chicago. ...

**Paula Kamen** took part in a recent panel discussion at Northwestern University focused on feminism and Gloria Steinem's

legacy. ... **Haki Madhubuti's** *Honoring Genius: The Narrative of Craft, Art, Kindness and Justice* (Third World Press) was nominated this month for Outstanding Literary Work - Poetry in the 43rd NAACP Image Awards. ... **Robert McClory** posted "Former priests refuse to 'disappear'" on the National Catholic Reporter blog Jan. 24, saying that "... it's clear great numbers have gone on to embrace full, valuable lives – as husbands, fathers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, psychologists, business professionals, leaders in nonprofit and peace and justice organizations, writers, even clergy in other denominations." ... Mount Mercy University will host **Benjamin Percy** during the spring 2012 Visiting Writers Series. ... **Robert Pruter** was quoted Jan. 22 in a Reuters story about Chicago rezoning Motor Row – near Chess Studios, the famed "home of the electric blues" – as a live entertainment district. ... **Dominique Raccach**, CEO of Sourcebooks publishers, spoke to GoodEReaders at Digital Book World about the trends in enhanced digital content, especially as they pertain to an older audience of juvenile readers. **Dan Dinello** has just published a short e-book, *Finding Fela: My Strange Journey to Meet the Afrobeat King*.

### Printers Row

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

Details and an opportunity to sign up for two-hour time slots will come later.

This is a good opportunity for authors to sell their books and meet readers.

### January Program Air Times

Here are the cablecast dates, times and channels for the Society of Midland Authors' January program "Twenty-First Century Chicago" with Constance A. Mixon, Dick Simpson and Don Rose on CAN TV:

Sunday, Jan. 29, 9 a.m., Channel 21  
Wednesday, Feb. 1, 8 a.m., Channel 19  
Wednesday, Feb. 8, 12 p.m., Channel 21

### Letters to the Editor

Thanks for the great job you do on Literary License.

**Leone Castell Anderson**

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## New Members

**Rebecca Makkai** is a Chicago-based writer whose first novel, *The Borrower* (Viking, June 2011), is a Booklist Top Ten Debut, an Indie Next pick, an O Magazine selection and one of Chicago Magazine's choices for best fiction of



**Rebecca Makkai**

2011. Library Journal called *The Borrower*, "a stylish and clever tale." London's Daily Mail called it an "astonishingly assured novel."

Her short fiction has been chosen for *The Best American Short Stories* in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 and

appears regularly in journals such as Tin House, Ploughshares, New England Review and Shenandoah.

She has two daughters who cannot understand why she would write stories without pictures.

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## Board Notes

At its Jan. 18 meeting, the Society of Midland Authors board:

1. Selected the Holiday Inn Chicago Mart Plaza as the location for the May 8 banquet. An emcee has not yet been chosen.

2. Discussed how to handle the April poetry program, which cannot be at the Cliff Dwellers, the past location, because the Cliff Dwellers is closing at its current location at the end of March.

3. Voted to continue working on developing a survey that will be sent to members.

4. Agreed to have a presence again this year at Printers Row, with two options: Pay the \$900 fee for the usual one-fourth of a tent. Or share a tent with other groups, reducing the cost to \$625 for the same amount of space.

5. Agreed to begin looking for a new treasurer to replace Jim Merriner at the end of his term.

6. Voted to participate in the Chicago Creative Expo on March 24 and to consider being at the Association of Writers & Writing Program, Feb. 29-March 3 in Chicago.

# Three ways you can avoid annoying the news media

**P**erhaps your plans for the new year include contacting the media about an event you're organizing, a new book or some information you want to share.

Here are three tips for not annoying the media:

**Be available.** If you've issued a press release or have been featured in a story in a local paper about something that is interesting or unique, then other media outlets will contact you. Make sure that you answer your phone and email. If you make yourself unavailable, it can also negatively affect your chances down the road for other opportunities.

**Be a good talker.** If you can write well but have not developed your speaking skills, you will probably not get another chance to be in media

outlets outside of print. If you want to appear in various kinds of media, make sure you know how to express your ideas through what you say.

If they find out you're a dud, you will not be invited back.

**Make sure your content fits.** Members of the media get a lot of email, and they don't like sales pitches.

Whatever you're trying to promote should fit with what they are doing. In order to communicate with them effectively, you should look at what kinds of stories they've covered, and include such awareness in your email.

Show them that you understand their goals instead of bulldozing them with your agenda.



If you want to customize and share web pages, try Bo.lt.

Bo.lt? Yes.

Bo.lt is a free way to remix webpages to share with others.

Enter a web address in the space pro-

*“ Show the news media that you understand their goals instead of bulldozing them with your agenda.”*

vided on the home page and click the "Copy it" button, or use the bookmarklet

to copy a page. It will give you a link to click, and will take you to a customizable version of the page. You can edit the page by deleting areas of it, replacing images, or inserting links wherever you want by

hovering over the area. You can also make comments in various areas of the page.

Once you've made your changes and comments, you can share it with others on Facebook, Twitter, or through email. Other people can also edit it or add their comments, and it tracks the changes.

If you're thinking of redoing your website, you can send around the design to get feedback. You can also create different versions of pages to communicate with various types of people who visit your site.

Also, it's just a good way to share web pages with others, without having to include every aspect of the page, so you're emphasizing just what you want them to see.

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



*Literary Loudspeaker*  
**Tom Ciesielka**