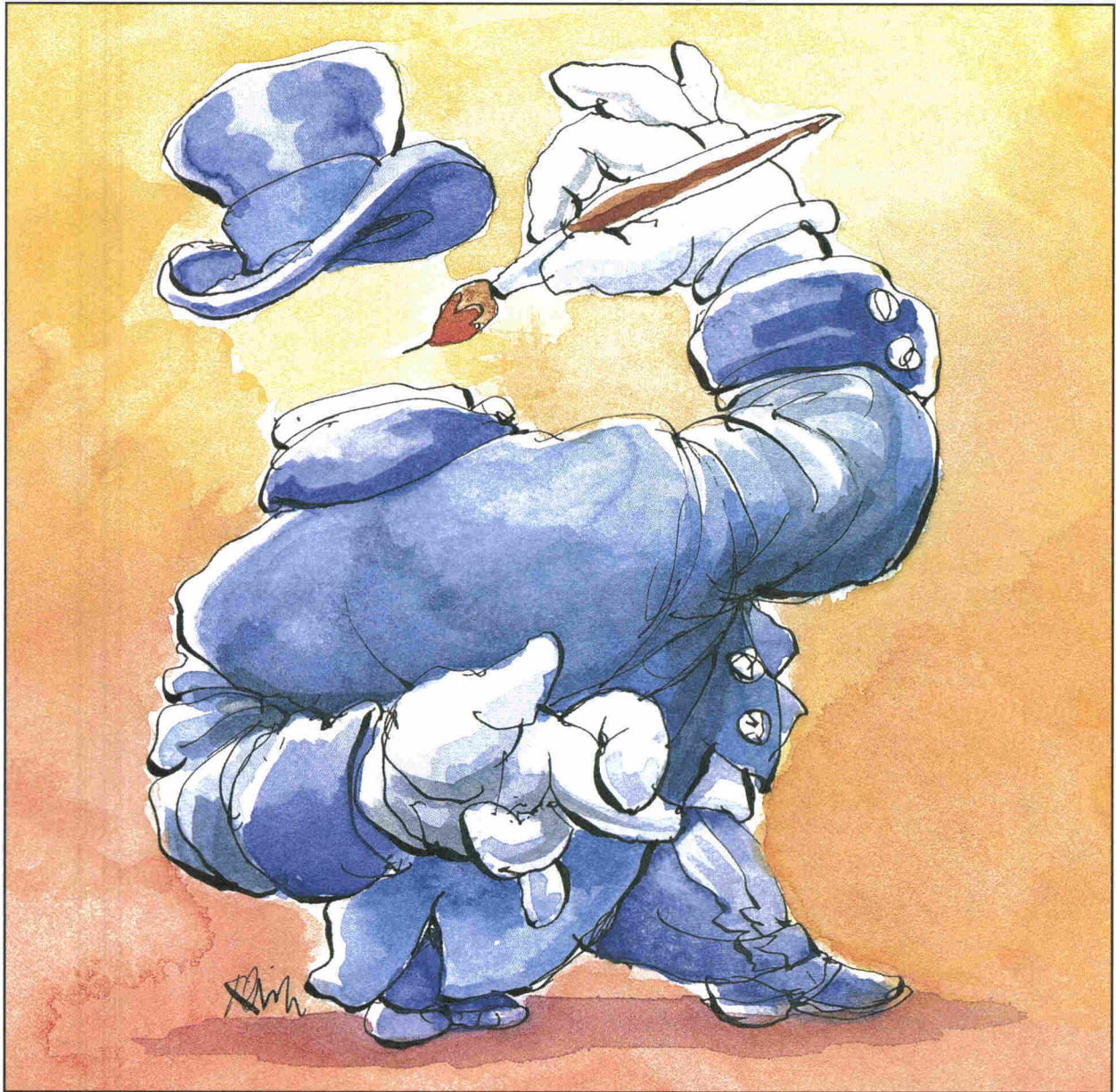


AUTHORS GUILD

Spring 2006

BULLETIN



TRUTH & MEMOIR: A Conversation with William Zinsser

Roy Blount Jr. Elected Guild President

Symposium: Freelancing Without Freefalling

Small Claims Court for Copyright? The Guild's Testimony

Adopted by Everyone: A Proposal for "Orphan" Works

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An initial skim through the Bulletin's Google Symposium transcript was sufficiently disappointing as to dissuade me from doing a close reading. (I speak, b/t/w, as one of the Old Network Boys, one of whose subspecialties was network security.) The key point is that apparently there was nobody there, on stage or in audience, who really knows computers, much less intercomputer networking.

Either that or the transcript suppressed what should have been at least a couple of extremely raucous reactions had there been anybody around who "had clue," as the current generation of the neterati often phrase it.

When the Guy from Google said that all They were doing was showing "snippets," he should have been hooted off the stage. It's precisely because once They've scanned and OCR'd the entire book They *can't really* limit what users can see to "snippets" that Their whole case falls to the ground. And it's not only the possibility that Their "database" could be penetrated or misappropriated in some to-be-determined fashion: within 10 minutes of my becoming aware of the Guild's lawsuit last year, I'd found—using Google—a grad student who'd already broken Google's at-the-time protection mechanism against re-

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peated inquiries and written a program that would allow an entire work to be exposed a "snippet" at a time. Though They've changed the implementation since, the entire history of "digital rights management" argues against an impenetrable protection mechanism ever being developed.

When the Guy from Stanford—or perhaps from the Stanford Chamber of Commerce Cheerleading Squad—essentially credited the Internet to "a Stanford student with his professor" he should have been hooted off the stage even before he went on to credit the Web to a "Swiss researcher," which is also nonsense. While neither the Stanford student nor the Stanford faculty member, both of whom are friends of mine, can be said to have invented the 'Net, as Lessig almost implied they had, it was in fact the

professor, not the student, who could claim to be at least co-inventor (along with a Princeton Ph.D.) if he chose to. Instead, some months ago, he scrupulously said, "We all invented the Internet."

And while Tim Berners-Lee was indeed working at a research facility in Switzerland (CERN, actually) when he came up with the Worldwide Web, he's not Swiss.

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ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

How did the book business stack up last year? **David Rosenthal**, publisher of Simon & Schuster, said, "If there's any theme to the year, it's that people only want to read the truth." He said nonfiction sales were generally good, but fiction sales were [expletive deleted].

Edward Wyatt, in *The New York Times*, said, "This continues a trend that began at least four years ago, when, after 9/11, a large segment of readers seemed to give up on fiction, flocking instead to nonfiction works . . ." Examples were **Jimmy Carter's** *Our Endangered Values* and **Kurt Vonnegut's** essays, *A Man Without a Country*.

The fiction that did do well last fall included two first novels: *The Historian*, by **Elizabeth Kostova**, and *The Widow of the South*, by **Robert Hicks**. Credit for the

success of both books went to a series of dinners that the publishers arranged with booksellers around the country just as early copies were being shipped.

Wyatt quoted a publisher: "Such early meetings between authors and bookstore representatives have become as important to a book's marketing as the traditional author tour and book signing after a book is released."

ROLL CALL: According to PW, the Romance Writers of America has 9,500 members, but only about 1,600 of them have published books. Anyone can join for \$75.

THE END: **Jan Karon's** ninth and final book in her Mitford series is *Light from Heaven*. When asked on tel-

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