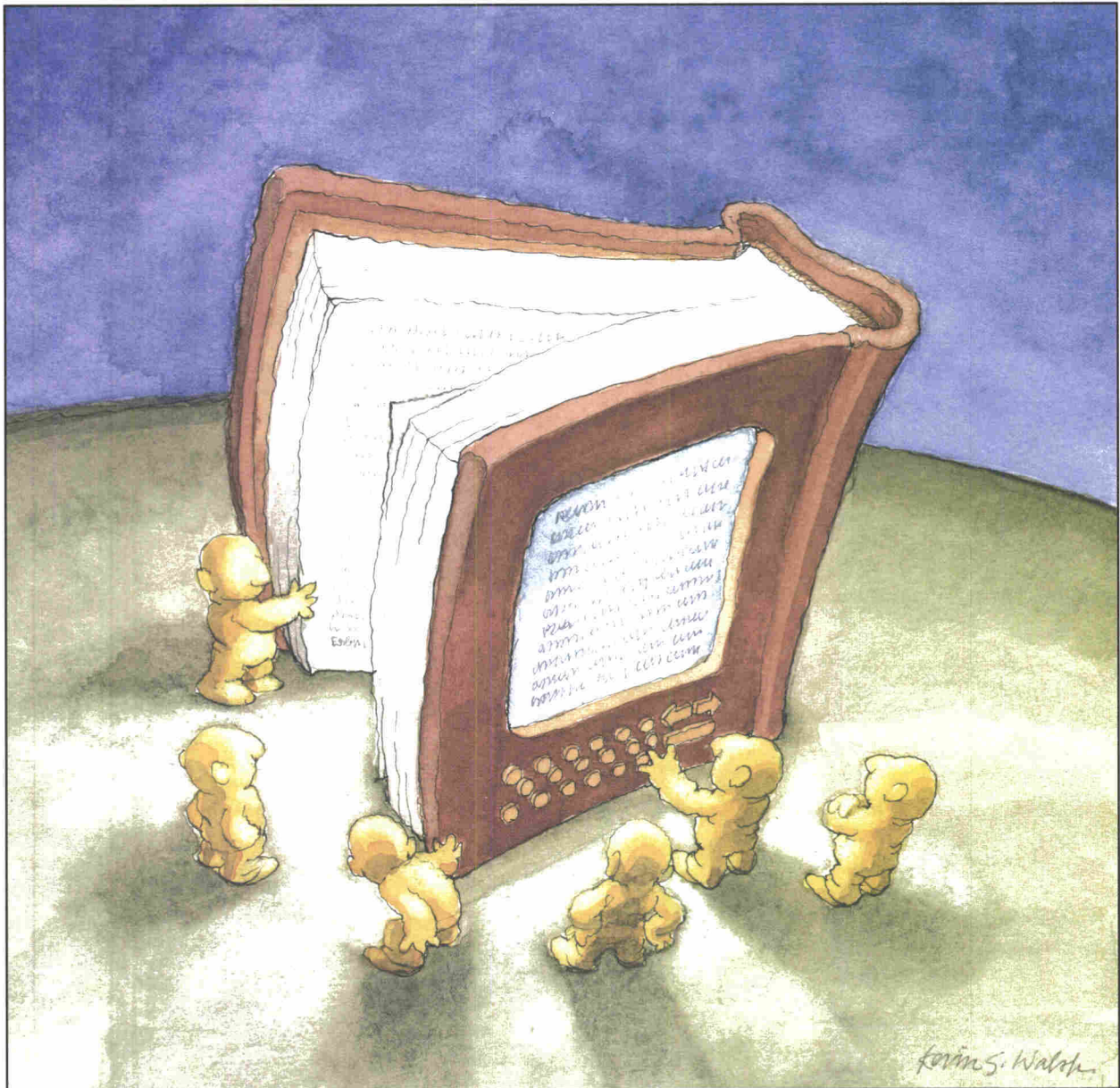


# AUTHORS GUILD

Fall 2011/Winter 2012

**BULLETIN**



*Amazon Takes the Gloves Off*  
**Builds Kindle "Library" Over Publisher Objections,  
Rewards Brick-and-Mortar Informants**

**Reading With a Crowd**

**Scott Turow: There Will Be Books. Will There Be Bookstores?**

*Free Ride's Robert Levine on Culture, Commerce, and Silicon Valley*

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# ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

In September, the best-selling fiction list in *The New York Times* included two self-published e-books, *The Abbey* by **Chris Culver** and *The Mill River Recluse* by **Darcie Chan**.

*The Abbey* is about "a former homicide detective [who] begins an investigation into his niece's murder." *The Mill River Recluse* is about an abused widow with a secret that will "change many lives in her Vermont town."

Both books were priced at 99 cents.

**BATTLE OF THE TITANS:** Last summer, Amazon announced it was officially going into the publishing business and scared the pants off everyone already in it. In mid-October it announced another market share coup—exclusive digital rights to a hundred DC comic novels about such popular heroes as Superman, Batman, Green Lantern and others. Amazon's Kindle Fire tablet is the only device they can be viewed on.

Barnes & Noble, trying to compete with its Nook, removed all copies of the DC books from its 1,300 stores. B&N "would not carry any book if it were denied the right to sell the digital version," *The New York Times* reported. Books-a-Million did the same at its 231 stores. "The two chains," the *Times* said, "are desperate to avoid becoming showrooms for Amazon's digital warehouse, which would quickly send them to the bookstore graveyard. . . ."

This is just the beginning, according to Lorraine Shanley, a publishing consultant. "Content providers and online purveyors have a few more rounds to go."

Jack Rems, owner of the Escapist Comic Bookstore in Berkeley, Calif., said what was happening was like "the tide or a storm or an earthquake. Nothing I can do about it."

The *Times* begged to differ: "Well, there is one thing. Escapist is offering 20 percent off all the DC titles that the chains removed. Mr. Rems said he hoped the deal would bring some new business in the door."

**BAN LIFTED:** In 1906, the library in Charlton, Mass., banned **Mark Twain's** *Eve's Diary* because of illustrations by Lester Ralph that showed a naked Eve in the garden of Eden.

In September, the library trustees lifted the ban. Trustee **Richard Whitehead** told *The New York Times*,

"There's nothing outrageous about [the illustrations]. It's kind of a shame that for what seems to me like very good artwork, a great piece of literature was banned." Two copies were put into circulation and an older edition was bought for display in a glass case.

All this was to call attention to Banned Book Week.

The article included a quote from a letter written by Twain himself: "But the truth is, that when a library expels a book of mine and leaves an unexpurgated Bible lying around where unprotected youth and age can get hold of it, the deep unconscious irony of it delights me."

**SELLERS:** "Book publishers are surrounded by hungry new competitors: Amazon, with its steadily growing imprints; authors who publish their own e-books; online startups like the Atavist and Byliner.

"Now they have to contend with another group elbowing into their territory: news organizations," said *The New York Times*.

Among those moving rapidly into the e-book business are: *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *ABC News*, *The Boston Globe*, *Politico*, *Vanity Fair* and *The Huffington Post*.

Many of the works sold as e-books are a hybrid between a long magazine article and a serialized book. **Jon Meacham**, an executive editor at Random House told the *Times*, "We think that the nature of a book is changing. The line between articles and books is getting ever fuzzier."

How are the authors making out? The Huffington Post pays its authors for their work and then shares the profits from the sales of any e-book version.

**NEW APPROACH:** Perseus Books has started a marketing and distribution service for authors of self-published e-books. The revenue split is unusual: 70 percent goes to the author and 30 percent to the distributor.

This new division is called Argo Navis Author Services and is available only to authors who are represented by an agency that has signed an agreement with Perseus. **David Steinberger** of Perseus told *The New York Times*, "We've heard from authors that they may have a book that's never been published, but it

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The Guild encourages members to write to the *Bulletin*. Letters should be sent to "Letters to the Editor," The Authors Guild, 31 East 32nd Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10016. They can also be faxed to (212) 564-5363, or sent via e-mail to staff@authorsguild.org (type "Letters to the Editor" in the subject line). Letters may be edited for length, grammar and clarity.