Can This Industry be Saved?
AAR Symposium: The Future of Publishing
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Man Gives Birth (and Other Authorship Metaphors)
Listen Up! Roy Blount on Amazon’s Kindle 2
LETTER TO THE EDITOR

My first book was published 40 years ago, I’m astonished to say, and shortly after it appeared I received a hand-signed letter from Rex Stout inviting me to join the Authors Guild. I’m not sure if it was the content of his message or just the idea that I was being asked to join an organization by the man who created Nero Wolfe, but I responded immediately, and I’m very glad I did. The Guild continues to do great work and I’m proud to be a member. Cheers.

Leonard Maltin, Toluca Lake, CA

In the spring 1995 PEN Newsletter, then-editor Thomas Stewart predicted the near-future availability of what he called a “literary jukebox,” in which I would be able to insert my credit card and which would, by the time I and my cappuccino found a table, print out a “decent-looking—maybe even handsome” copy of a book. I responded with a letter, published in the autumn 1995 PEN Newsletter, in which I pointed out that right now, two blocks from my house, I could already “buy the same cappuccino and the same book in an assuredly handsome edition from a knowledgeable clerk whom I know personally and whose reading recommendations I solicit and trust.”

Fourteen years have passed. The literary jukebox has yet to appear, even as the corner bookstore and its knowledgeable clerk long ago vanished for reasons I have no need to detail.

In “The Internet vs. Books,” (Bulletin, Winter 2009), Beau Friedlander’s interviewees offer the by-now-clichéd cries of the technomaniacs against the “crabiness” of enemies they’ve manufactured for the sake of self-promotion. As I wrote in 1995, “I’ve used a computer for years and find it indispensable.” When

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ALONG PUBLISHERS ROW

BY CAMPBELL GEESLIN

FUNNY? A cartoon by David Sipress in The New Yorker shows a smiling editor behind her desk. Across from her, an author looks shocked as the editor says, “We’d like to publish it, do nothing to promote it, and watch it disappear from the shelves in less than a month.”

“Reading on the Rise: A New Chapter in American Literacy” was a report released by the National Endowment for the Arts. “The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts” was conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2008.

Among its chief findings, The New York Times reported, “is that for the first time since 1982, when the bureau began collecting such data, the proportion of adults 18 and older who said they had read at least one novel, short story, poem or play in the previous 12 months has risen.”

Dana Gioia, outgoing chairman of the National Endowment, told the Times, “In a cultural moment when we are hearing nothing but bad news, we have reassuring evidence that the dumbing down of our culture is not inevitable.”

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QUOTE: James Merrill, the poet, said, “Life is fiction in disguise.”

METAPHOR MAN: “When I was a young man,” Jorge Luis Borges said, “I was always hunting for new metaphors.” The writer was interviewed in Buenos Aires in 1966. His comments were republished in The Paris Review Interview 1, a collection brought out in 2006.

Borges added, “Then I found out that really good metaphors are always the same. I mean you compare time to a road, death to sleeping, life to dreaming, and those are the great metaphors in literature because they correspond to something essential. If you invent metaphors, they are apt to be surprising during the fraction of a second, but they strike no deep emotion whatever. If you think of life as a dream, that is a thought, a thought that is real, or at least that most men are bound to have, no?”

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THE AUTHORS GUILD BULLETIN

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About the Cover Artist
Kevin Sanchez Walsh is a freelance artist in New York City.

Overheard

“My book is thumbed by our soldiers posted overseas, and even in Britain people quote my words. What’s the point? I don’t make a penny from it.”

From the President

BY ROY BOULT JR.

When the phone rings and it’s our executive director, Paul Aiken, I always wonder: What institution must we take a stand against now? OPEC? Sweden? Mexican drug cartels? This time, said Paul, it was just Amazon. Amazon, he explained, is releasing a new Kindle 2 device that not only downloads e-books to its screen but also reads them aloud. And Amazon believes it can do this without paying extra for audio rights.

Oh, great. By all means let’s tangle with Amazon. Amazon probably doesn’t have the major portion of my personal bookselling future in its hands, yet. Why pass up a chance to tell Amazon where to get off?

But that was just about me. Here was the bigger question: Who knows what’s to become of books? The next digital literary device may automatically render your book in injectable form, or at least adapt it for the stage. If the writers and primary publishers of books don’t claim a stake in all of books’ commercial manifestations, who will be able to afford to create books in the first place, anymore?

A wait-just-a-minute case needed to be made, and no other organization (why couldn’t I be president of a timid one?) was likely to make it. With a vote of approval from the Authors Guild Council, the Guild issued a statement. We welcomed this new form of book delivery, but since it delivered audio without compensating audio rightsholders, we regarded it as an encroachment upon the audio-book market.

The Internet lit up. The Guild just doesn’t get it, cried bloggers whose bliss it is to proclaim that people who do understand anything digital today are going to steal it anyway, so how can anyone be so fatuous as to consider charging for it? Authors, bloggers hooted, must be imbeciles. Obviously, according to bloggers, the computer-generated voice of Kindle 2 was so unappealing, no one would choose it over a human audio-book voice. Just as obviously, according to bloggers, the voice was a contribution to humanity that no one should be deprived of.

I have heard Kindle 2’s voice. The male version. There is also a female version. Whether you can switch back and forth as dialogue alternates between, say, Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley, I don’t know. But I have heard the male voice delivering passages from The Sun Also Rises. If you have ever heard recordings of Hemingway’s own reedy, peevish vocal stylings, I think you’ll take Kindle 2. On audiobooks, Charlton Heston is a Hemingway reader. I have enjoyed Heston in movies—he’s quite something as an upright Mexican law officer in A Touch of Evil—but he always sounds like he has a matter of great gravity stuck in his craw. For The Sun Also Rises, I’ll take the Kindle 2 voice over Heston too.

And text-to-speech technology is improving rapidly. How far-fetched is it that inaudible print is on its way out? Legend has it that Julius Caesar was the first person to read text silently to himself. Ancient Greeks read only aloud. How many people watch silent movies anymore? Or black-and-white, for that matter. Future generations may wonder how in the world people used to get anything out of a book that wasn’t plugged in and multimodal.

I am primarily a print person, myself. I could go the rest of my life without being read to by Kindle 2. But the Guild has no interest in denying that service to people who are eager to have it. We just believe that if they want the voice to read them a book from which the author is entitled to earn income, they should pay a little extra.

For blind people, obviously, a device that audibilizes books is a boon. Kindle 2’s prompts are visual, so blind people can’t use it independently, but with assistance it affords them access to far more books than are recorded especially for the blind. The Guild made it clear that blind people should have that access without paying for it.

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Opening Lines

The Perils of Passion

BY NICHOLAS WEINSTOCK

Karan Mahajan, 24, is a young man of great passions. His passion for esteemed authors led him to seek the company of writers including Stephen Elliott, Elizabeth Tallent, Jay McInerney and Tobias Wolff after he moved from his native India to attend Stanford University. His passion for his homeland—specifically, for his home city of New Delhi—inspired him to plunge into years of analytical research on that city’s heedless urban development. And his passion for writing drove him to labor at a novel about Indian urban development at all hours and at breakneck pace: a combination of obsessive interests that would, unexpectedly, bring them all to a halt.

"It was Elizabeth Tallent who really got me started on the novel," Mahajan recalls. "I turned in a story to her, and her response was, 'I think you're ready to write a novel.' I had always thought that you were only eligible to become a novelist once you turned 45. But I wrote 30 or 40 pages during my senior year of college, and it started to feel like something I needed to see through. And it started to consume me."

Following his graduation in 2005, craving a literary environment, Mahajan entered the New York State Summer Writers Institute at Skidmore, then went to work at the independent publisher MacAdam/Cage—"because I wasn’t really qualified for anything else." Nonetheless, the move helped to focus him on his novel. "I started working as an associate editor," he says, "but at a small publishing house, that came with an unusual amount of power. I could walk into the editor in chief’s office and argue for a book—which helped me to refine my thinking about the kinds of books that were necessary to publish, including my own. Also, having never written a novel before, I could read a bunch of bad manuscripts, see their mistakes, and go home and correct those very mistakes in the manuscript I was writing."

Thus inspired, Mahajan resolved to get his novel done. After arriving home from MacAdam/Cage around seven p.m., he would start writing immediately and keep at it till two in the morning. He determined that the novel would be completed in week-long bursts, 40 pages per burst, during which he would go all-out and forsake all else.

"I decided to live just for my writing," he says. "I didn't eat right. I didn't go out and see anyone. I did nothing but write. I would work in my kitchen in a backless chair at an extremely high table. My shoulders must have been near my ears when I typed. And I would really pound the keys. I can't believe how hard I was typing those days. And by the end of that first week, I had blown out my hands."

Wracked by shooting pain up his arms, unable to sleep or walk without the sense that "someone had attached my fingers to electric plug points," Mahajan went to a doctor who diagnosed the repetitive stress injury, but erroneously mandated the wearing of heavy wrist braces nonstop. "He gave me no other instruction, ergonomic or otherwise, and I foolishly assumed the braces would keep my wrists straight and save me from the minor pain I was experiencing at the time. Instead the braces destroyed my wrists. They put a tremendous amount of pressure on my shoulders and arms, and exacerbated the strain on my muscles till the point that I had tendinitis. I’d probably have avoided severe RSI had I not been wearing those goofy braces."

Mahajan’s pain steadily worsened. He applied for and received a grant from the Elizabeth George Foundation that allowed him to write full-time—but he couldn’t write. "It was literally crippling," he says. "And then there was depression that came with not being able to write—to the extent that I think a lot of

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CONTRACTS Q&A

BY MARK L. LEVINE

Q. I want to sign a book contract but the publisher, a small one, says it can’t afford to pay me an advance. She assures me, however, that she will “promote the heck” out of the book and that the book will do “very well.” I’d like to believe her. Any suggestions?

A. Before deciding that signing the contract or walking away are your only alternatives, there is a third one to consider. Tell the publisher that you will sign the contract for no advance if it agrees to pay you, whenever the book goes out of print, an amount equal to (x) the advance the two of you agreed would be reasonable if the publisher could afford it, minus (y) the sum of royalty and subsidiary rights payments you were paid under the contract while your book was in print.

This alternative meets both your publisher’s needs (no money available now) and yours (assurance that you can rely on its promises of how the book will do). Indeed, you will want to verbalize this to the publisher to explain how rational you are being.

This should have one of three effects: 1. The publisher will quickly backtrack on her assurances of how the book will do, exposing them essentially as hype. That should enable you to consider her offer more rationally and, if you accept it, know you are doing so with your eyes wide open. 2. The publisher will decide that she can give a small advance after all (or improve on whatever offer she made), saving herself the embarrassment of having to backtrack. 3. The publisher will accept your suggestion, both giving you what you need and demonstrating that she is indeed someone you want to do business with.

This “guaranteed amount” approach can also be used when the publisher is willing to pay a decent or substantial advance—though not as much as you are seeking—but tells you that it is confident that the book will earn what you are looking for in royalty and subsidiary rights payments. In that situation, the amount of the advance paid should be added to clause (y) in the formula, and (x) should be the full guaranteed amount.

If this approach is accepted, make sure that the language drafted by the lawyers eliminates two possible loopholes: 1. Specify that you get the money if the book isn’t published by the date required in the contract (unless it’s your fault), since it can’t go out of print if it never gets into print, and 2. To prevent the book from never going out of print because of a technicality or publisher manipulation, require payment under the formula x years (e.g., five) after publication if the guaranteed amount hasn’t yet been paid.

Note that one of the problems in signing a contract for little or no advance is that the publisher, if management changes or the current management has a change of heart, can cancel your contract and refuse to publish your book with impunity. Or it could simply “print” your book rather than properly publish and promote it. This can happen even a year or two after the contract was signed, when you thought there was nothing else you needed to do for the book other than help promote it.

Q. I’m planning on making a will one of these days. Do I need a literary executor? I have published 12 YA books; five are still in print.

A. Few people need literary executors. Generally speaking, the work that most literary executors do can be done by the person(s) to whom you bequeath your copyrights in your will, working with a literary agent.

The bigger danger, if you do designate a literary executor, is to fail to clearly and specifically designate in your will what that person’s rights, responsibilities and powers are, how that person is to be compensated, and the relationship between his/her role and those of (i) the people to whom you have left your copyrights, and (ii) the person named as executor of your entire will. Failure to do this could well lead to confusion—and possibly acrimony or even litigation—about what is to be done and who is to do it.

State law typically specifies the duties of the (primary) executor of a person’s will. It is unlikely there will be a similar provision for those of a literary executor. Thus, although the primary executor’s duties end when the will is fully settled following probate, until then (which can occasionally stretch to two years or more) that person’s authority could well trump the literary executor’s unless the will is extremely clear on their respective roles and the literary executor is given priority on matters relating to the control and disposition of your copyrights and disputes regarding them.

After the will has been settled, the primary executor’s authority terminates and (especially if there is no literary executor) all decisions regarding your writings will belong solely to whomever you left the copyrights. (If you have not specifically bequeathed your copyrights, they will pass to the beneficiary of your “resid-


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Authors Guild Interview

Sara Nelson

BY ISABEL HOWE


What have you been doing since leaving Publishers Weekly?

I’ve been writing a lot, primarily about books and the book business. I’m doing a lot of reviews and author interviews for the DailyBeast.com, Tina Brown’s website. I’m doing a regular but occasional column for WallStreetJournal.com, writing some for the LA Times, and just did a piece for Real Simple magazine. I’m writing a blog about unemployment and self-reinvention for More magazine. It’s fun.

There’s been a lot of bad news about the publishing industry, even before the economic downturn. Do we have any reasons to be optimistic?

We’re in a very bad time and books are not selling the way they used to, or the way publishers would like them to. But I think there’s an irrational fear that books are going to go away, that the whole book business is going to disappear, and the book as we know it will be obsolete in five or 10 years. I just don’t think that’s true. The culture always has and always will want narrative and stories and information. What a book looks like may be different—there may be fewer printed books and more e-books—but I think writers are the last people who need to worry. If you have a story to tell and a way of telling it, there will always be demand for that.

A writer friend said to me recently, Tell me everything about this Internet stuff and all these e-readers. I said, I’ll tell you, but why? She said, It might influence how I need to write, what I should write. I said, Unless you’re planning to write cell phone novels like they’re doing in Japan, let your agent and publisher worry about what form it’s disseminated in. Yes, there are rights issues, I’m not minimizing those, but I feel that this panic that people are not going to want the stuff that’s inside the covers of books is baloney. I think they want it more than ever.

How is the e-book working itself into the industry, and how might this change in coming years?

The Kindle has taken over. Most of the public will tell you there is one electronic reader and it is called the Kindle. The consumer, the reader, is really not interested in whether the books come from Amazon or from Joe Smith Books. Insofar as they want them, they want them to be as easily accessible and easily downloadable as possible.

I think the publishing industry needs to get its rights business together, and the pricing, and those are really large issues. There needs to be, and I believe there will be, real competitors to the Kindle, but I think they’d better come soon, because Kindle is starting to get the lion’s share.

Have you used the iPhone’s e-book reader?

I have not used the iPhone. I have a Kindle and a Sony Reader. I like them both. For people who read a lot and travel a lot, the convenience is great. Even when I have a book in hardcover, if I’m traveling, I take the e-version with me. Obviously I am not the conventional reader and I don’t know that the average person is going to spend $25 on a hardcover book and another $10 for it in e-format just for the convenience—they’ll buy one or the other or not at all.

But I think that e-reading is separate and apart from traditional reading. There are certain kinds of books you will read in one format, some kinds in another. People have different expectations and requirements for different kinds of books.

I don’t think the book business is going to have the LP to CD problem. If they were going to have it, they already had it, that is, hardcover to softcover.
Many writers feel their role in the book industry is changing, which may be where the hesitancy to embrace e-books comes from. Can you assuage these fears?

Agents and publishers and e-book producers and retailers need to figure out the rights issue. There needs to be a system by which writers are rewarded with royalties and payments for their books in e-form. There’s no question about that. I think one of the fears that a lot of writers, and consequently their agents, have is that once the book is available in e-form, it’s going to be transmittable—that twenty people can read it for the price of one. In fact, it’s less true with the Kindle. You can download a Kindle book to up to six Kindles that are registered to you. What that means is you can pass the book along six times for one price. But you can pass a book along a hundred times. And I don’t have six Kindles. So when I read something on the Kindle and my friend says to me, I want to borrow that, I say, You can’t! If I had a book, I’d say, Sure, take it.

There’s no question that this is all a way for Amazon to control the book world. But at this point, at these prices, nobody’s buying six Kindles. So you’re passing along the book a lot less frequently when it’s an e-book than when it’s a traditional book.

I don’t think electronic books are ever going to replace books permanently. People who want to share books, own books, are still going to buy books. It’s never going to be all one or all the other, ever. It’s a different experience. When I need to read something that I don’t want to find the shelf space for, a throwaway, either because I just need to get a piece of information out of it or because it’s not the kind of book I’ll want to get back to. I’ll buy it for an e-reader. But the book I want to give my best friend, mark up the pages, pass around, that’s going to be a book-book.

Will the recession cause a shift in how business is done? Are publishers going to cut down even more on midlist books and continue to pay enormous advances to big names, or might some of the major ones try to do more books and take more risks on a smaller budget?

This is a worrisome question in the business. It does seem, in April of 2009, that the books being bought by publishers are the celebrity books, for many millions of dollars, and most agents and authors will tell you that the smaller book is not selling. I have to think that we are at an extreme right now, and that the pendulum will swing back somewhat, that a couple of big celebrity buys that don’t earn out are going to restore some perspective.

But it is worrisome. I personally believe we should publish fewer books in this country than we do, but the thing that stops me from saying that too much is that the average publisher, if they’re going to cut their list, they’re going to cut the midlist. That’s the stuff that doesn’t obviously make money. But if you have a couple of big ticket items, $5 million celebrity books that don’t make much money, you’re going to stop doing that—I hope.

Is the idea of paying huge advances for not-so-great books a problem because it’s not a good business model or does it have more to do with the poor quality of what’s published?

I think it’s both. The good news will be that the business model doesn’t pan out. If you give $2 million to Kathy Griffin and the book only makes back $100,000 or $200,000, you’ll do it once or twice and then you’ll stop doing it. It isn’t good business.

I’d like to think that publishers would stop doing it because they’re not good books! But it is all about the marketplace. Publishing is a business. If these books aren’t being read, publishers shouldn’t keep publishing them. Why do they continue to spend a fortune on books that people aren’t reading? They’re willing to risk a huge amount of money on books that the public might not read, but they’re not willing to risk small amounts of money on midlist books that the public may or may not read. And the only way to discover a blockbuster is by starting in the middle.

There are so many books that have become blockbusters that were classic midlist books. And they might be crappy books, too, but it doesn’t matter if you’re looking at it as a business. It is far better business to publish Marley and Me, whatever you might think about Marley and Me, because it sold millions of copies—that’s good business and people liked it. If

"The Story of Edgar Sawtelle is a better example. . . . If you went through your list and said, We’re going to cut out all advances under $300,000 because we’re only going to pay for blockbusters from now on . . . you wouldn’t have that book—the world wouldn’t have that book"
Man Gives Birth! Three Times!

BY RICHARD MICHELSON

It is mostly men, of course, who compare the writing of books to giving birth. "Oh, the agony," we say. But I have learned never to say this when my wife, or any other woman who has actually given birth, is in the room. As women know, the world would soon be depopulated if men had to actually experience labor pains.

Still, I wasn't surprised to hear some other guys use the old publication process/courting comparison at a recent writers' conference. One suggested the classic multiple submission method: propositioning any publisher, large or small, young or old. No matter how many times one is turned down, there is always the hope of a next hook-up. Another preferred to fell in love with one editor at a time and learn everything he could about his/her history and family imprint before beginning the long courtship. It made me want to add that most writers die virgins and others masturbate (self-published authors, please hold your hate letters). Still, for the lucky, there is the ecstatic moment when one finally hears "yes," and the contract is consummated.

And so I have segued back to the birthing process. Now come the months of waiting, when there is little to do but worry and hope, and tell everyone you meet the titles/names you are considering. You spend your days accepting advice and congratulations, but as the due date nears, the hours seem never-ending and you get impatient as you pace in the waiting room.

Then finally you get see to what he/she/it looks like—yourself—but your better self, and more beauti-

ful than you ever imagined (maybe she looks a little bit like the editor too, but nobody tells you that). You proudly go to schools and bookstores and hold up your baby for everyone to see. You do whatever you can to provide a leg up on the competition. Those other parents with their "prodigy" claims drive you crazy, especially when the public seems to agree. "What about my handsome, smart child?" you want to scream. But sooner than you ever imagined possible, you realize that there is little more you can do. Maybe one last shout-out to the world, to treat your babies well, as they head off on their own.

Last year brought me three new children's books, by three different houses. I know what that sounds like. Please don't judge. Each time it was I who was told to pack my bags. I loved each editor and would have happily stayed for life, but they weren't interested in having my next baby. Perhaps I wasn't pulling my own weight. So how are my motherless children doing? As it happens, their birth order corresponds to proverbial wisdom.

My eldest is As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom. She is a serious child, much praised, and well adjusted. She likes to impress librarians and teachers, and they have adopted her, promoting her virtues. I get regular and good report cards marked with stars.

My middle child, Animals Anonymous: Poems for Teens and Immature Adults, was the class cutup, rowdy and irreverent. He is floundering badly. Lately I have gone four months without hearing one word of his whereabouts. I fear he has fallen on hard times, but I am hoping that sometime in the future, someone will pick him up out of the gutter, dust him off and notice that behind the silly posturing is a child with great potential to speak to other children.

My youngest is A Is for Abraham: A Jewish Family Alphabet. She has big plans, but it is still too early to know what her future holds. If you see my children, please buy them a meal, or even better, just buy them. I love them all equally, but I fear none of them will support me in old age. I am hoping for better luck with my next child. It's already spring 2009. I think I'll proposition some old lovers. ♦

Guild member Richard Michelson is the author of four books of poetry and 12 children's books, including Across the Alley and Tuttle's Red Barn, a Publishers Weekly "Best Book" of 2007. He lives in Amherst, Mass., and can also be found at www.RichardMichelson.com
Annual Meeting

The Authors Guild held its Annual Meeting on March 30 at the Scandinavia House in New York City. Guild President Roy Blount Jr. called the meeting to order and asked for and received the approval of the minutes of the 2008 Annual Meeting.

Mr. Blount asked Paul Aiken, Executive Director of the Authors Guild, to give the Executive Director’s Report. Mr. Aiken’s report detailed recent Guild developments and activities:

During the last fiscal year, which closed on September 30, 2008, the Guild gained 735 new members. The Guild has gained 352 new members so far in the current fiscal year, a 7 percent decrease from the same period last year, although the numbers for February and March are improving, perhaps because of the publicity surrounding the Google settlement and Amazon’s new Kindle.

The Guild’s Backinprint.com program has more than 1,000 titles available and there has been an uptick in new applications ever since the Google settlement was announced.

We are continuing to upgrade our website-building service, Sitebuilder. The Guild currently hosts 2,100 member websites, more than 1,900 of which were built with the Sitebuilder software; the remainder use the hosting-only service. At last year’s Annual Meeting we reported that we were testing a new version of our software, Sitebuilder 2.0, which proved to have too many bugs. We now plan to release a version closer to the original, to be called Sitebuilder 1.5.

The Authors Registry, the 14-year-old rights payment agency supported by the Guild, has now paid authors more than $8 million in combined photocopy royalties, largely collected from the United Kingdom, and library lending royalties.

Since the Google settlement in October, the Guild has done a great deal of outreach to inform writers about the settlement. Jan Constantine, the Guild’s General Counsel, has traveled around the country, and has made presentations at the Academic Publishers of Europe annual meeting in Berlin, and at the Poetry Foundation meeting in Boston in April. Mr. Aiken has spoken to writers, publishers, and rights organizations in Oslo, Stockholm and Munich. Anita Fore, Director of Legal Services, spoke at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) conference in Chicago. Mr. Aiken and Ms. Constantine have also met with both the Association of Authors’ Representatives and individual agents, and have given 19 conference calls for Guild members. Under the terms of the settlement, Google is paying for Kinsella Media, a group chosen by the class action attorneys, to notify authors and publishers around the world about the settlement. To date, Kinsella has placed 610 advertisements in 72 languages in 216 countries. There have been more than 3,500 stories in the press in 80 countries about the settlement.

Ms. Constantine gave her report on legal developments during the past year. During the 2008 fiscal year, the Guild’s legal department covered 1,112 matters, the majority of which pertained to reviewing, negotiating and drafting contracts. This does not include any inquiries about the Google settlement, and is an increase from the 853 matters handled the previous year. Ms. Constantine discussed the Shield Law, or the Free Flow of Information Act, which was overwhelmingly approved by the House of Representatives on March 31, 2009, and now awaits action by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The Guild was part of a media coalition that campaigned for passage of the law by sending letters to members of Congress and writing articles for publication in the media.

Ms. Constantine gave an update on the Artist-Museum Partnership Act, which would allow authors and artists to deduct the market value of their work—rather than simply the cost of the materials involved, as is currently the case—when donating their work to universities and libraries. The Guild has supported this act for eight years and is guardedly optimistic that it will pass because of President Obama’s support and because a related tax bill to which it could potentially be appended is under consideration.

Ms. Constantine then discussed the “Dead Celebrities Bill,” which would give celebrities’ heirs a posthumous “right of publicity” over the unauthorized use in advertising and trade of the “name, portrait, voice, signature or picture of anyone who died after January 1, 1938.” The bill has been promoted by the Marilyn Monroe estate in New York after it lost a case in California. For the past two years, the Guild and other media organizations have successfully campaigned against the bill, objecting that it would make it difficult for historians, biographers, novelists, journalists and dramatists to document the life of deceased persons.

Ms. Constantine noted that in April 2008 the New York State legislature passed the Libel Tourism Act with the Guild’s support and in response to the plight of author Rachel Ehrenfeld. The nation’s first “libel tourism” bill will serve as a model for federal legislation. She concluded her report with an update on the Orphan Works Bill, which was put on the fast track by both houses of Congress last year. The Guild has ex-

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Three (fraught) Little Words: “I’m a Writer.”

BY ALISON OWINGS

We all know stories about doctors at cocktail parties wary of confessing what they do for a living, for fear of unleashing the knee injury, high blood pressure, kind-of-hurts-right-here complaints sure to follow. I bet that plenty of other professionals—lawyers, tax specialists, roofers—react to the “So, what do you do?” question with equal skittishness. In fact, given the risks, I’m surprised how regularly people in the “helping” professions turn up at social events. On the other hand, I’ve never heard any of the people who corner them for a private consult respond with “Really? I’m a doctor/lawyer/tax specialist/roofer too.”

That’s a trick they save for writers.

When a stranger asks, “So, what do you do?” my three-word answer, “I’m a writer,” inevitably opens the floodgates. The stranger, the stranger’s relative, or the stranger’s good friend, is also a writer. True, in a land where the alphabet is part of our common heritage, most of us can write, as most of us with an intact voice can sing, as most of us with an intact hand can paint, as most of us with an intact body can act. Whether the words “I’m a singer,” “I’m a painter,” “I’m an actor,” elicit similar reactions, I do not know. I know only the reaction—make that reactions—to “I’m a writer.”

After so many people have told me that they, or someone they know, is a writer, I begin to wonder if my own three little words imply that a) “I am pretending to be a more cultured person than you are or I wouldn’t try to distinguish myself by mentioning a daily activity we all share,” or b) “We are all one and I am especially eager to learn of our commonality.”

It must be b.

In turn, b has become, to me, a lay version of a church-like call and response.

I first became aware of the phenomenon many years ago, when “I’m a writer” led to the assertion that so was my questioner’s cousin, who wrote articles for a magazine for flight attendants. “Uh huh,” I said, nodding convivially. In the ensuing years, a hundred calls and responses followed. The number of people who write or know people who write, or— the latest more heartening category— plan to write, is amazing. (To the plan-to-writes I then can add, “I also edit. Here’s my card if you need help.”)

A related response comes from people who, after diligently professing to want to know the subjects of my past books (women in the Third Reich, American waitresses) tell me in so many words how I missed the boat by not interviewing them, or someone they knew, or that really, they could have written my book themselves. “Uh huh,” I reply, and sometimes manage a rueful smile. “Too late!”

In quantity, though, the people who are not interested in a follow-up question, such as, “What?” stand out. My latest “I’m a writer” response brought the response that the questioner, a gym trainer I had engaged for a rare one-hour session, was writing an article about nutrition for a (locally ridiculed) local newspaper. “Uh huh,” I said. “Great.” What I thought was, Damn. I knew I should have replied, “Oh, this and that,” for my quest to learn more ab exercises during this precious and finite amount of time was now being supplanted by my trainer’s monologue—how flattered he was by the assignment, what he planned to write about, how this might lead to a best-selling book.

. . . My silence eventually brought us back to more salient matters, like obliques (a muscle group that was such news to me until recently that I had to spell check it).

A few days later, a dour mechanic who had just changed the oil in my car and noted that the oil cap was gummy because I must be making too many short trips, asked The Question. Following the pause following my reply, he said he reads mostly about sports and doesn’t like it when writers show off big words that he suspects they’ve just learned.

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Hot Chicks Lose; Satire Wins

Superior Court of New Jersey

When Yvette Gorzelany, Joanna Obiedzinski and Paulina Pakos found their photos embedded in author Jay Louis’s *Hot Chicks with Douchebags*, they were none too pleased. Louis managed to secure two photos featuring the three women from Clubitup.com, for which a photographer had taken the photos without the women’s consent in June 2007, at a club they attended in Clifton, N.J. All three women brought suit in Superior Court of New Jersey, alleging that Louis’s inclusion of their unauthorized photos, which he lawfully obtained from clubitup.com, violated several privacy rights and constituted defamation. Simon & Schuster Inc., Simon Spotlight Entertainment, Jay Louis and Club Bliss filed summary judgment motions to dismiss, alleging that the use of the women’s photos in the book was not defamatory and did not violate any of their other privacy rights.

In evaluating the women’s claims, the Superior Court of New Jersey noted that to prove defamation the women must show that Louis had made a defamatory statement of fact and concerning them, which has been proved false. The court also noted the existence of a blanket rule that precludes a finding of defamation where the material at issue is clearly understood to be parody, satire, humor or fantasy.

In this case, the court found that *Hot Chicks* was a work of humor from beginning to end. The book begins with a clearly satirical definition of the term “douchebag,” and in the court’s opinion, the humorous tone used throughout made it clear that the book was never intended to be taken as fact. Among many humorous anecdotes, the court pointed to the fact that Louis defined completely fictitious time periods of “BG”—before Richard Grieco (an actor who was famous in the 1980s)—and “AC”—after Richard Grieco—and delved into his contributions to the “douchebag male-style.” In support of its judgment that the book is fundamentally satirical, the court also pointed to Louis’s discussion of Archaeologist Renee Emile Bellaqua’s purported uncovering of a Third Century religious scroll from a cave in Israel that suggested that the “douchey/hottey” coupling was “a troublesome facet in early religious structures.” In addition, the court found that Louis did not comment on either of the two photos of the three women.

Based on the evidence, the court concluded that the photos were used merely as a “general depiction to support the humorous commentary,” and that no defamatory meaning could be inferred from the photos since the text as a whole was not “of or concerning” the women and was not otherwise false, as required to establish a defamation claim. Thus, the court held that the women’s defamation claim necessarily failed, rendering the book protected expression of opinion, which is absolutely privileged under the First Amendment of the Constitution.

In regard to the women’s additional claims, the court said that even if the First Amendment did not protect Louis’s work, their other claims would fail. Of particular note, the court dismissed the women’s claim for intentional infliction of emotional distress on separate grounds. To establish a claim for intentional infliction of emotional distress, the women would have to prove that Louis’s conduct was outrageous and intentional to such an “extreme degree, as to go beyond all possible bounds of decency.” The women would also have to prove that their ensuing emotional distress

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**Legal Services Scorecard**

From January 16 through April 30, 2009, the Authors Guild Legal Service Department handled 397 legal inquiries. Included were:

- 58 book contract reviews
- 14 agency contract reviews
- 26 reversion of rights inquiries
- 96 inquiries on copyright law, including infringement, registration, duration and fair use
- 12 inquiries regarding securing permissions and privacy releases
- 14 electronic rights inquiries
- 2 First Amendment inquiries
- 175 other inquiries (including literary estates, contract disputes, periodical and multimedia contracts, movie and television options, Internet piracy, liability insurance, finding an agent, and attorney referrals)
was “so severe that no reasonable person could be expected to endure it.” In the case at hand, the court found that there was nothing inherently offensive about the photos of the women that would satisfy this lofty standard.

The court also dismissed the women’s invasion of privacy claim, which would have required a showing that the photos were actually “private,” that their dissemination would be offensive to the reasonable person, and that there was no legitimate interest to the public in viewing the photos. In order to be considered “private,” the court found that the women would have had to allege that Louis “published facts (in this case photos) about them that they did not expose to the public eye, but kept entirely to themselves (or at most revealed only to their family or his close friends).” Since the women’s photos were taken while they were in a public establishment, the court held that they could not have an expectation of privacy. The court added that even if the photos had been private, a reasonable person would not find their publication offensive since all they showed were women in a club. The court dismissed this and all other claims.

—Michael Gross

Nine Seconds of Fame

Bara Diokhane v. 57th & Irving Inc., Groovy Griot Films, LLC, Youssou Ndour, Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi
Supreme Court of the State of New York

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, Bara Diokhane served as advisor to acclaimed Senegalese musician Youssou Ndour. Diokhane negotiated the singer’s first record deal in 1987 and produced his subsequent tours and videos. For some reason, however, Diokhane was surprised to find his image included in the documentary film I Bring What I Love, which chronicles Ndour’s experiences during the release of his controversial CD Egypt, which won a Grammy Award. Diokhane appeared in a single nine-second clip of the 102-minute film, seated at a press conference near Ndour while Ndour answered questions about Egypt.

In October of 2008, Diokhane wrote to Youssou Ndour, Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi (the producer and director of the film) and Groovy Griot Films, LLC, demanding that they cease distribution of the version of the film containing his image. When they refused, Diokhane brought suit against them in New York Supreme Court, alleging that his privacy rights were violated under N.Y. Civil Rights Law section 51. Diokhane sought to enjoin the defendants from including his image in the film and obtain punitive damages for the unauthorized use of his image.

At the outset, the court noted that Statutory Law Section 51 provides that “Any person whose name, portrait, picture or voice is used within this state [NY] for advertising purposes or for the purposes of trade without the written consent first obtained . . . may maintain an equitable action in the supreme court against the person, firm or corporation so using his name, portrait, picture or voice to prevent and restrain the use thereof.” However, the court noted that this statute was designed to “operate in connection with the sale of goods and services,” and was not meant to trump First Amendment speech protections that otherwise protect literary and artistic expression. Moreover, the court explained that newsworthy events or matters of public interest do not usually fall into the statutory categories of “for advertising purposes” or “purposes of trade.”

The court also noted that the documentary film has generated widespread acclaim and has been shown at film festivals throughout the world. Moreover, the film’s subject, Youssou Ndour, is internationally known, making the press conference Diokhane attended a matter of public interest. Moreover, the court found that even though a profit was made on the film, the existence of profit did not automatically convert a newsworthy event into a trade or advertising purpose, since it is the content of the material, not the profit from it, that determines whether the event is newsworthy.

Holding that the documentary film was of public interest, the court found that the appearance of Diokhane in the film would be actionable only if the use of his image had no relationship to the film or the film itself was an advertisement in disguise. Here, the court found that the press conference that Diokhane attended was clearly relevant to Ndour’s story. Moreover, the court found that Diokhane failed to prove that the use of his image in the film was an advertisement in disguise. Accordingly, the court dismissed Diokhane’s section 51 claim.

The court also acknowledged a separate basis for dismissal, noting that the “incidental use” of a person’s name or photograph, even when it is unauthorized or fictionalized, falls outside N.Y. Civil Rights Law section 51. To determine whether a given use is “incidental,” the court said there must be a “relatively direct and substantial connection between the appearance of the plaintiff’s name or likeness and the main purpose and subject of the Work before liability may be established.” Here, the court found that Diokhane appeared in the film for nine seconds out of a possible

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CENSORSHIP WATCH

The Goof Between Us? As in many of the best novels, what first appeared to be a clear-cut story of anti-gay censorship at a literary festival in the Islamic world has turned out to be something much more nuanced. In late February, it was reported that The Gulf Between Us by British author Geraldine Bedell had been blacklisted by Dubai’s International Festival of Literature, banned in the United Arab Emirates and possibly banned throughout the Arab world. Bedell’s invitation to participate in the festival was allegedly withdrawn by the director, Isobel Abulhoul. This freeze-out prompted Margaret Atwood to announce, shortly before the February 26 opening of the festival, that she would not be attending.

Supposedly, although organizers of the four-day festival had initially welcomed Bedell’s participation in its inaugural year, enthusiasm quickly evaporated when a preliminary reading of the manuscript revealed that one of the minor characters is gay. In a February 17 Guardian blog entry entitled “The only offensive thing about my novel is that it’s been banned,” Bedell wrote:

“It seemed a perfect fit [for a book festival in the United Arab Emirates]. Mine is the only novel I know of in English (but I can’t think there are many in Arabic, either) set in a Gulf emirate. Most of the action takes place in a small fictional state. . . . The book certainly isn’t a PR handout for the region, but . . . [it] is an affectionate portrait, and I rather expected readers to be surprised that there could be so much to like.”

Bedell characterized festival director Abulhoul’s objections—“it is set in the Gulf,” “it talks about Islam,” and “it focuses on the Iraq war and could be a minefield for us”—as “weird-sounding,” and maintained that The Gulf Between Us is “extremely respect-ful of Islam (the Church of England actually gets a much rougher ride) and . . . the Iraq invasion is only a distant threatening rumble, still several months off.” Bedell claimed that the only objection that wasn’t “nonsensical” was Abulhoul’s apparent distaste for the sexual orientation of one of her minor characters, a gay sheikh with an English boyfriend. Said Bedell, “I can only shrug and say that some people are gay, and this is fiction.”

But Bedell didn’t stop there. She went on to announce that sales of the book were banned throughout the United Arab Emirates. And she criticized the mission statement of the International Festival of Literature: “The Dubai literary festival has a vision statement in which it claims to seek to ‘awaken the imagination whilst providing tangible educational benefits to the younger generations.’ It is tempting to feel they should have added ‘though only in approved directions.’”

The censorship story spread throughout the literary community like wildfire. Numerous articles were published and Internet stories were posted about the book banning. Festival director Abulhoul did herself no favor with statements such as, “I knew that [Bedell’s] work could offend certain cultural sensitivities. I did not believe that it was in the Festival’s long term interests to acquiesce . . .” and “I do not want our festival remembered for the launch of a controversial book. If we launched the book and a journalist happened to read it, then you could imagine the political fallout that would follow.” Articles reported that selling The Gulf Between Us was completely banned in the United Arab Emirates, while Bedell was said to have been personally barred from the festival and forbidden to travel in Dubai.

But then the lines blurred. The story became less clear.

First, Isobel Abulhoul, a woman born and raised in England who relocated to the United Arab Emirates after marrying an Emirati husband, made her own attempts at clarification. Although she has not denied expressing concern over featuring a book with a homosexual character, Abulhoul did issue a statement explaining that Penguin, Bedell’s publisher, had approached Abulhoul with a request that The Gulf Between Us be launched at the festival. Abulhoul, the manager of Magrudy’s, a small chain of bookstores in the United Arab Emirates that she founded with her husband and operated for more than 30 years, had refused Penguin’s launch request in September 2008. She claims no special invitation or launch promise was ever extended or withdrawn. According to her, the book was never selected for the fair in the first place. Apparently, neither Bedell nor Penguin made any public comment on the rejection until shortly before the festival’s February 26 opening date. Abulhoul said she declined to give the book special consideration after reading 150 pages of the manuscript. Supposedly, her decision was based at least in part on her judgment as a bookseller and her knowledge of “what would appeal to the book-reading community in the Middle East.” Nevertheless, she admitted to being influenced by a desire to avoid offending “cultural sensitivities” and “social mores” (presumably those against homo-

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AAR SYMPOSIUM:
The Future of Publishing

On the evening of March 18, The Association of Authors’ Representatives hosted a panel on the state of the publishing industry and what might be done to catapult its traditions and business model into the 21st century. Brian Kenney, editorial director of Publishers Weekly, Library Journal and School Library Journal, served as moderator for the discussion. Participants included Morgan Entrekin, president of Grove/Atlantic; Susan Katz, president and publisher of HarperCollins Children’s Books; Larry Kirshbaum, president of LJK Literary Management; John Sargent, CEO of Macmillan in the U.S., and Mike Shatzkin, Founder and CEO of the Idea Logical Company. The Guild thanks Gail Hochman, president of AAR, and the participants, for permission to publish this edited transcript.

BRIAN KENNEY: When Gail talked to me about this panel, I thought it was really overdue. It was one of those weeks where even I put off reading PW Daily for an hour or two. If the news isn’t bad, oftentimes it’s unsettling, or challenging, or disruptive, or as the technologists among us like to say, full of unintended consequences. As Gail said when she wrote to me, “We are in a pivotal moment here.” I think that’s a very optimistic and forward-looking way of thinking about it.

We’ve got downsizing and restructuring and “corrections,” as some call it, happening within the industry. On PW we have a page called “Comings & Goings” that lists people’s e-mail addresses, and it’s one of the most popular pages on our site, which really does tell us something. We’ve had the Google settlement, which I think left publishers pleased, perhaps the rest of us sort of confused. The good news, I guess, is that Amazon is no longer the monolith when it comes to digital publishing, but who knows how in the world this is going to work. Barnes & Noble published Fictionwise, which could lead to another robust platform for digital books. We saw this flash in the pan story about audio rights with the Kindle 2 that was sort of fascinating. It was a story which popped up on a Wednesday and got resolved on a Monday, but I think it points to how disruptive technology can be.

I want to offer one more quote. This one’s from Chris Anderson, who edits Wired, and in The New York Times this week he wrote that, “Free is still the best way to maximize your reach, but paper still matters.” Thank you, Mr. Anderson. He goes on to say that, “If you believe that the physical book is the superior form, then you have to believe that people who love the sample will buy the physical book.” Once again we’re talking about this tension between free content and print content.

On a personal note I’d like to add that I actually saw four people this week reading on the Kindle, which was remarkable. Two of them were in Seattle so they could have been plants, but two of them actually were on my way home to Queens, and I got close enough to see that they were reading books and not newspapers. Finally, if there were any sort of need for a sense of urgency to all this I have to say we just have to look at our brothers and sisters over in the newspaper publishing industry, which has seen The Rocky Mountain News die, and the Seattle paper go entirely online, which is something that none of us had expected to see in our lifetime. It’s easy to fall into self-pity but I encourage you to save your pity for me. I manage three publications that sit between the book industry on the one side and readers who are in many ways those newspaper readers going more and more online every single day. Fortunately this afternoon we have a brilliant panel prepared to see us through these challenging times.
MORGAN ENTREKIN: I know most of you in this room and I assume a lot of you know who we are. Grove/Atlantic is a midsized, independent publisher. It’s owned by me, and seven other shareholders, and consists of two old imprints, Atlantic Monthly Press, started in 1917, and Grove Press, started in 1951. We do about 110 books a year—about 70 new books and about 40 reprints of hardcovers from the previous year. Nine years ago we started a company in London called Atlantic Books. I brought in a couple of individual investors there so we don’t own 100 percent of that company anymore but we own a majority of it. We do about 100 books a year there.

They’re starting with me tonight because alphabetically I come first, but I think in some ways I’m also the most old-fashioned of the models up here. Because really what we are is an old fashioned publishing company, privately owned. We don’t have the pressures of publicly owned publishing houses. We publish midlist books; that’s what we do. Occasionally we make a mistake and one of them becomes a giant hit, but we’re really in the business of making money publishing books that sell six, eight, 12, 25,000 copies. I was on a panel recently with someone who works for a corporate publisher and that person was saying, “Well, you know the high end”—meaning north of 250,000, the very big ones—“the celebrity bios and the big name authors, those are easy, and the little ones”—meaning under 25,000—“are easy”—though I don’t think he does much publishing in that range; he doesn’t know how hard they are—“but the middle ones, the ones between 25,000 and 250,000, are difficult.” My response was, “You call 25,000 to 250,000 the middle?”

We have a model that works doing that. I’m excited about what all this electronic stuff is offering us in terms of opening up new distribution channels and making our content available, but Grove/Atlantic is never going to be a pioneer in that area. We’ll probably just follow where other people go. The thing that interests me the most about the Internet and the effect it’s having on our business is using it to find a cost-effective way to reach our consumers. I think that’s always been the critical problem in the kind of publishing that I’ve been doing for 30-odd years.

When I took over Grove we published a wonderful Polish author named Andrzej Szczypiorski who wrote a book called The Beautiful Mrs. Seidenman and—I am using this as an example—I used to say if I found some new Polish billionaire who wanted to give me $100 million to make sure everyone in the world read Andrzej Szczypiorski, I could do it but he would lose $90 million in the process. With the Internet, what we’re able to do is identify people who are interested in a subject in a cost-effective manner. It’s something that I think is very exciting for the kind of publishing that I do, but in terms of where I think the future is going, I think there are going to be some big changes.

I think the model of large corporate publishing that’s grown up over the last 20 years has some deep, deep flaws in it. I think the big overhead is unrealistic and they’re just not going to be able to continue with it at that level. Again, we don’t have that model and we never have. I haven’t had to downsize, I haven’t had to fire anybody, knock wood, I’m not planning on firing anybody. We do almost 60 percent of our business through backlist. I am not in the business of taking risks and offering giant advances. We’ve done some business with some of you and you know our model. Occasionally we’ve won an auction but it’s unusual when we do; it’s unusual when we even participate. We try to stay in business with our authors once they have success but we can’t always. I understand that’s kind of like saying, ‘We’re the Oakland A’s of publishing, and it upsets me when an author leaves in a manner that is not honorable—meaning that they don’t honor their option agreement with me and
negotiate with me in good faith, but you know what? I get over it and I increasingly know whom I can count on to do business in a way that works for us.

I read a quote the other day from Warren Buffett, where he said, “There is no deal that offers me enough profit to lose a night’s sleep over anymore,” and that’s kind of how I feel. I worked very hard for 25 years as an independent publisher and fortunately, through hard work and risk and luck and whatever else caused it, got into a position where we have a pretty sustainable model. I believe these next years are going to offer opportunity for companies like Grove/Atlantic because I think that the big group publishers are going to continue to look for those big revenue-producing properties and take the risks on those, but I think the middle’s going to fall away for them. Books that aren’t obvious or aren’t necessarily easy are going to fall away for them, but we’re perfectly set up to publish that way.

In London we’re part of a thing called The Independent Alliance, which includes Faber, Canongate Books, Atlantic and Profile, and now Portobello. It’s become an incredibly dynamic part of the UK publishing scene. I urge you all to get to know those publishers. We do a very good job of publishing books my colleague Toby Mundy at Atlantic Books calls “books that require a story.” That’s the business that we’re in and it’s really the lifeblood of publishing and the books that I have the most fun doing anyway. Increasingly I’m looking to try to generate ideas myself. I see all these journalists who are going to be unemployed and I’m trying to think of how I can get those people writing books. In the UK it’s much easier to find people to write books at a mid-five-figure level. Here people think, Well, it’s going to take me six years and I need, you know, $800,000. You know what? They may just have to write the books a little quicker.

I’m nervous about the retail landscape and the general economy but I have confidence that Grove/Atlantic will be OK. In some ways ours is a “Back to the Future” model: We will keep trying to make prudent decisions, cut costs and publish good books, sticking with authors for the long haul and not taking crazy risks. In other words, follow the model of an old-fashioned midsized publisher with a strong literary backlist. If we can do that and have a little luck we will be fine.

SUSAN KATZ: Harper is one of the largest children’s publishers. We publish a lot of bestsellers. In both the adult and children’s markets, we’re not a Grove/Atlantic but one of those big corporate guys that tries to get the million-copy bestseller and struggles with the midlist—which I totally respect. And I almost wonder if Grove/Atlantic might be a somewhat easier place to work right now. What I really want to say isn’t about HarperCollins. I want to talk to you about children’s publishing in general. Children’s publishing this year has been extremely solid. We are making our numbers, our competitors are making their numbers. Children’s publishing—a $3.6 billion dollar market—has grown 18.5 percent over the last five years. Teen publishing has grown 50 percent during that time. That’s pretty staggering. In the last October to February, while we all watched this very serious economic crisis build, kids’ business was up 12 percent, and if you put in Stephenie Meyer and Harry Potter, kids’ books from October to February were up 42 percent.

I would say that children’s publishing is a great place to be right now, for Harper and for our competitors. But—and this is a big but—if we think the present is going to be any indication of the future, if we go on this way, publishing print products, we are absolutely going to be left in the dust. Kids between birth and 10 have no idea what it was like to live in a world
without computers. They are extremely comfortable around them, they want their book experience to be as much on the computer as off the computer, they expect a multimedia experience, and for children’s publishers the challenge is not how do we keep business going. The challenge for us is changing the skill set of the people who work within our company.

Editors are very talented at helping writers craft a long-form narrative; the long-form narrative is definitely around for the long haul. The issue is, it’s not going to be a long-form narrative presented exclusively in a printed receptacle. It may be partially presented in a printed receptacle—if it’s printed at all—but it will definitely be on the Web. It will definitely be on mobile phones. It will definitely be on a variety of multimedia applications. So the people who work at HarperCollins and our competitors have got to learn how to take long-form narrative and present it in a variety of media, and they’re going to have to work with people unlike the production people and the designers they have worked with for the last 30 or 40 years. Harper and Random House and Penguin and Scholastic and Simon & Schuster and Little, Brown—these are fantastic companies. They are all doing well, but they’re in this process of morphing from a print medium to a very different medium, and the challenge is not to stay in the world that we know and that we’re comfortable with.

I want to share some statistics with you. This is from a study done by Scholastic for nine to 11 year olds: 22 percent are high-frequency readers, not a very encouraging sign. Fifty-two percent are girls—OK, we’d rather have it 50-50 but we know that girls tend to read more than boys; 83 percent of them go online; 34 percent go online daily; 25 percent have read a book online in the past year. They expect their books to be online as well as in print. They’re reading on the computer and on handheld devices, and 65 percent extend the reading experience by searching the Internet for other authors in a genre they like or other books by the same author. Twenty-five percent of them visit fan sites, and more and more of them are looking for an interactive experience or information about the books they read on a computer. Among 12-to-14-year-olds, 93 percent are online, 40 percent will read a book online, 58 percent extend the reading experience online. Among 15-to-17-year-olds, 95 percent are online, and 41 percent have read a book online in the past year. As you get closer to the 20-year-olds, most are online many times a day and they’re expecting an online/offline experience.

Two books that aren’t HarperCollins books—you see how ecumenical I am—are great examples of what’s going on in children’s publishing right now. Maybe some of you have heard about The 39 Clues Scholastic published in the fall. There are now three books out and they’ve all been on the bestseller list for weeks and weeks. For me the most interesting thing about this publication is that it came with six cards in the book’s front cover, and right next to it on the shelf in the bookstore are sets of cards. There’s a fantastic website, there are contests and it’s basically a mystery that’s going to be written over a period of years about a very powerful family that rules the world and the head of the family dies and someone’s going to take his place. It’s kind of “cliffhangerly,” and cliffhanger-type stories are the way to go with the book-web experience. You find out certain things in the book; you go to the web to find out more. I think this is definitely a model for the future.

HarperCollins has a project called the Amanda Project, that will be out in September, but another book
just came out from Scholastic called *Skeleton Creek*, which is packaged like a DVD, and on the back it says, “Read It, Watch It, Live It.” What I would say is most publishers who want to continue to have their 12 percent increases will be dealing with the fact that we’re going to be publishing a much greater percentage of Web-book interrelated projects. I think if I could do a three-year plan right now I might be making a lot of guesses, but I do think three years from now this business is going to look a lot different. Editors are going to have to function differently, the people in-house are going to have to function differently, and our dependence on agents is going to be as much if not more than it is currently, because we’re going to be saying, for us to be successful with a property we’re going to need some kind of Web rights that we probably didn’t have in the past.

**LARRY KIRSHBAUM:** I’m Larry Kirshbaum and I’m in exile from big, bad corporate publishing. I now run a modest literary agency and I will tell you that I’m a very chastened man. I thought when I was a publisher that being an agent was “a piece of cake”—work a couple of hours, go in, work on my golf game. In any case, I’ve learned. I am now in our fourth year and things got so bad that when John Sargent and I went out a couple of weeks ago I offered to pay but I warned him, “you can’t supersize it at the McDonalds.”

I’ve learned a lot, but in some ways I have to disqualify myself in terms of prognostication because I’ve made so many wrong calls along the way. Among them was starting an electronic publishing company about 10 years ago called iPublish. We had everything going for us; the only thing we didn’t have was readers, and we lost about $15 million. But hearing Susan talk, I’m reminded about the dangers of making predictions cause if you remember, five, 10 years ago we were saying YA is dead because of iPods and computers—kids are not going to have time to read. Well, lo and behold, in comes Harry Potter, Stephenie Meyer, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid, The Gossip Girl, The A-List, The Clique.* The fact is we were very wrong then. I will also say that in a year or so, Stephenie Meyer sold 15 million hardcover copies, so I don’t think it’s all going digital quite yet.

What I see are seven significant trends. Number 1: Good content will still be king, regardless of format. I believe more than ever that books with unique informational value or entertainment value, great storytelling, are still the ultimate key. That’s still going to be the root of our business. I don’t believe that books are going to go the way of newspapers because we have something far better in its original form, and it’s a form that has lasted 500 years for good reason. Of course quality is going to matter, and word of mouth is going to matter, and as Susan said, understanding the consumer is certainly going to matter. I’m glad that Carol Fitzgerald [founder and president of Book Reporter.com] is here today. She’s one of the real gurus for understanding what readers want from the Internet world.

Having said that, Trend Number 2 is that certain types of content will be wed more closely to distribution via the Internet, mobile phones, and other computer devices that offer an opportunity for authors and publishers to diversify away from standard formats and current content modes. Books can and should compete with magazines. For example, we can do what Morgan indicated—shorter versions of books. We can provide information in ways that are more sophisticated than magazines, but compress the book so that it works better with mobile reading devices. I think we are very well positioned to have content that can work in print and online, content that crosses over and works both ways. We know from Google that there’s a lot of different ways now to get readers involved in subjects and in our books.

Trend Number 3: Book retailing as we know it will diversify. The bricks and mortar chains are going to struggle against the online booksellers. I believe independents will survive because they are offering quality personal service and because even in a high-tech world, there remains what John Nesbit called “High tech accompanied by high touch.” The biggest problem is that so many bookstore founders are seven-day, 24-hour-a-day workers and it’s going to be hard for the next generation to work as hard. The so-called big box stores and supermarkets will still play a role, but I think it might be a more specialized one, and they are going to have to adapt. Costco is a good example: They have a small number of titles; they have a good sense of both mass market and quality; they offer a lot of good things for kids and at very, very good prices. Clearly there is a strong market today for value in everything and books certainly are within that realm.

Trend Number 4: I believe publishers will find that in many ways smaller is better. Morgan has given this speech so I don’t have to repeat it, but I think even the large publishers are going to have to take a look at the way they do business. I believe they will cut back their lists, perhaps have more targeted imprints. The principle of economies of scale doesn’t work as well as it did years ago. The fact that you can publish a lot of titles does not necessarily work, because it is harder to market a lot of those titles and you can lose a lot of money at 20,000 copies as well as at 100,000 copies. So I think publishers are going to be taking a very hard look at that and become more like federations of smaller im-
prints that will operate almost as if they were small independents. One obvious concern that a large publisher has to have and that I never found a way out of, is that in the marketplace there are probably 10 accounts that add up to something like 70 percent of your volume. I’m thinking about large distributors, large online retailers and so on, and yet publishers build a sales operation and a marketing operation that is designed in great part for that other 30 percent. Now obviously no one can be successful doing 70 percent of potential business. We probably need to do 115 percent to keep up, but I do think that publishers are going to find that the value of having really large organizations is worth less as time goes on. I know John Sargent for one is going more to Web sales conferences, for example, as a way of saving money and yet being just as effective. The problem is while everyone is sitting at sales conferences about future lists, the work they should be doing on the current books is pushed aside.

Trend Number 5: I think the trade paperback is clearly becoming the format of the future. Retailers recognize this. The audience coming up, from teenage on into college age kids—our future readers—seem to really like this format. They’re comfortable with it. The hardcover will still exist for older readers and for younger readers who may want a book they can keep and put in their library, but the trade paperback is emerging more and more, spurred on by the fact that major retailers like Barnes & Noble are really pushing it. The importance of this for agents is that more and more of the revenue stream is going to have to come from that format. The mass paperback, which has been so important for large name authors, is going to be producing less revenue, and ultimately the hardcover is going to be producing less revenue, so trade paperbacks are going to have a big impact on the advance structure and the way we look at brand name authors. The electronic format is going to pick up some of the slack, and already has, and audio is going to pick up some of the slack, and has. But in the long run we’re going to see the trade paperback emerging as the format.

Trend Number 6: Non-returnable won’t work but less returnable will. I think the Bob Miller model [Robert Miller, who has launched an innovative publishing imprint at HarperCollins called Harper Studio] makes sense. It’s not a total non-returnable model but a limited-returns one, and it becomes ever more evident, given our concerns about the environment, not to mention the cost, that retailers do not want excess inventory because they’re trying to turn dollars. The publishers don’t want excess because it tends to come back as returns. Authors clearly don’t want it either because it doesn’t amount to any royalties—we’re paid out of net. So it seems to me that the time is coming when you’re going to see smaller distributions, a wider variety of titles, and even the brand name authors are going to be selling closer to the net. When I was at Warner and Little, Brown, even an author like Jim Patterson was generating 25–35 percent returns and that’s really too high for a best-selling author. So you’re going to see those numbers come down, and certainly in terms of midlist and smaller titles the distributions are going to be less, and this is where the electronic world offers an opportunity.

Borders and others are experimenting with kiosks, for example. I don’t see any reason a consumer going into a bookstore should have any less selection than somebody going to amazon.com, and the answer there is you’re not going to stock a million-plus titles physically, but you can stock them in a kiosk with a good search engine. This kind of forward thinking, which is what Susan was alluding to in terms of publishers, is going to apply to retailers as well.

As a sideline, since I’m on the board of Baker & Taylor libraries, libraries are also emerging as information centers. If you’re in New York, for example, and you have a NYPL card, you can download tons of stuff from your home. You don’t have to even go to the library, so free is good for a lot of things and we’re going to see our consumers demanding that some things be free—maybe they’re in the public domain or maybe they’re older titles—but I think libraries are going to play a very significant role going forward.

Finally, Trend Number 7 is the author. As I see it, the author now has several routes that he or she can take. One is partner/author, which is perhaps a step up from what we have now, where the author turns the book in and then the publisher takes care of it. More and more, the author has got to build the platform, has got to help with publicity, has got to help with promotion and has got to stop complaining—one thing I think would help a lot. I had a conversation today with Sandy Mendelsohn, who’s an outside publicist, and she told me that what she says to authors when they say, “My publisher isn’t doing X, my publisher isn’t doing Y,” is, “Give me three concrete things that you’d like to see the publisher do. Don’t just say, ‘They’re not doing X,’ or “My sister-in-law went into the store in Hoboken and couldn’t find the book.’ Give me three concrete things that the publisher could be doing but is not doing.”

I think that’s a very intelligent approach. Another model is the promoter/author. More and more I find that the first question that comes from publishers is, “What’s the platform?” We’ve all heard this, it can be very, very frustrating because sometimes we have an author who is in the process of emerging—certainly
first novelists for the most part don’t have platforms—but there is a recognition on the part of publishers that they can’t do the job alone. They really need the author to be part of the promotion.

And then the last and perhaps most controversial model is the author as publisher. This is where there’s going to be a very interesting scramble, maybe a Donnybrook, where some authors are going to choose to be their own publisher. I don’t mean vanity publishing or the print-on-demand kind of publishing where you sell a thousand or two thousand copies. I’m talking about how authors are going to say to themselves, “We can do most of the job better, we don’t need everything our publisher is doing for us, etc.”

I think this is going to be interesting. Publishers are very, very good much of the time—in fact, I would say most of the time—but there are titles that fall between the cracks. It’s almost as if a book has to have a certain magic right out of the gate. If it starts badly it seems to get worse. What happens is that the enthusiasm the editor who bought the book felt, and the enthusiasm of some of the associates who read the proposal and really, really liked it, somehow gets lost in the process of the publishing cycle, which can take six to nine months, sometimes a year. When I was a publisher I would frequently say to myself, Oh, my god, I didn’t realize we were publishing this book today. I thought we published it six months ago. Because by the time you go through the presales and sales and post-sales and marketing meetings and jacket meetings and so on—you all know this—it’s like, Haven’t we published this book yet? It’s a real problem because the nature of publishing is such that you’re always looking at your next list, nine months to a year ahead, and in the process you sometimes lose enthusiasm for the books that are landing that particular week.

It’s a real conundrum and it’s something I know agents feel very keenly because we know when the books are coming out. We know that we have an author sitting at home or out on the road wanting to know what’s going on. All authors, the first time out, think, pub day—the pearly gates open, Saint Peter’s hand comes down, God bestows money on me and I’m sitting on the throne of luxury. Well, pub day comes and they’re still going to their lousy diner and having lunch all alone, because not much has happened. It’s very frustrating, especially for midlist and smaller authors. We all know this feeling, and I think it opens the door to the question, How can the author be a more effective participant in the publishing process?

What I think we will see is that publishers are increasingly going to move to what I call the Chinese menu approach, where they will offer a variety of ways to publish books. Publishers can certainly be the banker. This is something that I think authors will want because they’re going to want financial guarantees. Publishers are also best at the mechanics of distribution. On the creative side, I think there is still a need for the publisher and the editor—especially the acquiring editor—to feel invested in the book, and to have a relationship with the author. Publishers can be the seller of rights, which of course are going to become more and more important as we move into globalization. Finally, publishers can price their advances according to the services are offer. This may be a bit more confusing than the blanket deal, but for a lot of smaller titles it may make sense.

I should also mention that the bigger houses may want to see more of the marketing taken outside the house. The outside publicist is firmly entrenched in our business and in a lot of cases it makes sense, because the author needs more specific support than the publisher can offer. So I see the model changing down the road. The author is still going to be a partner with the publisher in some way, but it may be different from

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—Larry Kirschbaum
what we have now. Ultimately—perhaps because I spent over 35 years as a publisher—I believe that the best authors are still going to want the best publishers. They still bring that ruby dust to the party and in the long run a smart author is going to want a smart publisher.

JOHN SARGENT: Larry, I hope we do a lot more business because as I was listening to that, there’s no longer going to be a lot of pressure on us to put out a lot of books up front and you’re going to be accepting lower advances. Sounds good, sounds good.

KIRSHBAUM: Ha, ha. You’re going to be buying.

SARGENT: I agreed to come here tonight and then yesterday I looked at the list of assignments and discovered that mine had a little parenthesis that said I had to give the perspective of the “large publisher,” so I’ll try to do that. I’ll address the economic downturn first. It’s a lot of math, right? At the end of the day, large publishers are going into a very uncertain time. The last three months have been uncertain, the last five months have been uncertain, but more than that, the next two years have no certainty to them, so if you are looking to manage risk, which is what large publishers try to do, you have to put a discount factor in for uncertainty.

At the same time, you’re in a situation where the sales of guys who have traditionally delivered for us at a very high level are dropping by 10, 15, 20 percent—so you pretty much know that those large advances we have out are going to bring lower returns. And we are also publishing midlist, smaller books, so there’s an upping of the risk there too. Almost all large publishers and their corporate parents are involved in some sort of leverage. There is borrowed money at some level. Most large corporations want to de-lever and nobody wants to be in the position of having to borrow more and more over the next two years. Cash is becoming more important. That means balance sheet management—and author advances and inventory—are on the balance sheet. So tighter printings, fewer printings, even when there is market demand; tightening up on the print runs and tightening up on author advances. If you haven’t seen that yet you will see it over the next few months. Debt loads need to come down. We need to re-lever, so cash becomes king. Readjust the way you look at expenses and make sure that you are efficient in everything that you do.

If you look at layoffs across the industry, all the papers are laying off but not all of them are in deep financial trouble. What is happening is everyone is looking at the industry and saying, We need to become more efficient when we spend money on marketing. We need to spend money on things that work. Larry, you mentioned sales conferences. We get 8 percent of our volume from the independents. We spend tremendous amounts of money on sales conferences. Why? Historically you let that run. When you get in a time like this you say, We’re not going to do that anymore. You’ll see a fair amount of shifting in how we spend our money to promote books.

Retail pressure is enormous now. All the retailers in America pretty much have serious cash flow problems. Christmas didn’t work, and that’s where they make their money, so now they’re under pressure for the whole next year. It’s across all industries; it is across great components of the publishing industry. Anderson News went under because of the magazine side of the business. That was what—the third largest distribution channel for mass market books? You see Borders teetering on the edge and when you look at our credit departments, you see all sorts of small problems out there that multiply.

So you never know who’s going under next, and when they go under, they go under pretty quick. They go from happy and healthy Anderson News to “We’re closing our doors in three weeks.” So that layers risk on and we look at it and we say, OK, we’re not going to get money from a receivable, we’ve got to be careful with cash. So that pressure, along with the pressure of returns across the whole retail channel—every single retailer comes in and asks for better terms because, “Look. Our landlord gave us 20 percent off our rent, so we don’t have to close our stores. We’d like an extra two points of discount from you. Otherwise we’re not going to buy from you.” So conversations that had been relatively gentlemanly over the years have become a little more hardball over the last six months. So there’s a lot of pressure there.

Good news? It’s remarkable to me that the industry is as healthy as it is at this moment in the plot. If you look at the actual point of sales at retail through the last three months they are sort of flat. Sometimes down a little but mostly flat, and in certain cases, up. It’s not the car industry, which is down 35 percent, or any of these other industries that are down 35 percent, and there is some indication that the efficiencies that are being put in place because of the pressures on the business are bearing some fruit. We’ll see lower returns I think, and as some other things happen some efficiencies will be gained. The bad news is there is still a lot of bad economic news out there. There are a lot of sub-prime mortgages and everybody talks about consumer level debt, but there are also all those private equity deals that were done with all those large companies. When the debt comes due for those large private equity deals, no bank is going to finance the next
round and 50 percent of them are going to unwind. So my view is we’ve got two or three years of relatively bumpy times ahead. Historically, the book industry has done pretty well when things are rough, so it’s nothing to get overly depressed about. But there is that three- or four-year timeline of lack of certainty in the business. The good news is big books have gotten bigger. Look at Stephenie Meyer—39.7 million units they’re claiming for last year, right? That’s a lot of units. That’s a lot more than Harry Potter, so there are these big mega things that happen and we see that, when you’ve got one, like your friends at Hachette do, life is grand.

But for everybody else life’s not so good, and what you see is a greater and greater bifurcation—a big book and everything else. And if you get a big book it’s good, and if you don’t you look at those weekly sales reports and you know it’s tough. At the same time there is dramatic change in the delivery mechanism from the electronic side. That was the other point we were asked to talk about, the two things everyone talks about on the electronic side: POD [print on demand] and digital delivery. They get mixed up and I have no idea why. POD is simply a different type of printing press. It prints a physical book. It just happens to print it one at a time. Actually they all print one at a time or as much as six at a time on some printing presses, but you know it is simply a different mechanism, a lot more flexible printing mechanism, but that is all. I know in the agent community there’s great concern about it. I think the concern is the reversion costs—the fact that with POD there’s no longer that barrier that says the publisher can keep his book in print forever. That is a concern and it’s something we’ve talked about and need to figure out a solution for, but it’s not an electronic book in any way, shape or form just because it’s delivered to a press digitally.

The electronic side is very interesting. I saw just last week that a four-color touch-screen reading device was launched commercially in Japan. There is a flexible screen reader now that can be scrolled. There is the Kindle, which is an interesting device. The iPhone. There’s a lot of noise. I think we’re still a long way from a replacement for the current technology. Everybody says we’re at a tipping point, but I don’t believe it. You look at it and you see our sales, and maybe we’re head-in-the-sand-publishers, but our electronic sales are still just 1 percent of our overall net. They’re not reaching the tipping point.

We have two publishing operations, trade and college. On the college textbook side you see some serious movement. Statistics texts were over 60 percent digital this year, and 50 percent of our statistics business in college is now no ink on paper at all. So you can see these little pockets, like in the hard sciences and higher ed, it’s there. And in children’s publishing there’re some little pockets where you say, oops, there’s some action there, but overall it’s not a business now and I don’t think we’re anywhere near it being one.

The good news, I think, is that as an industry we have a bunch of issues to address and the time to get it done. One of the problems with newspapers is they don’t have an effective functioning trade organization. The book publishing business has actually been pretty forward thinking. I think we’re pretty well positioned compared to music or newspapers or even magazines. We have a lot of issues. DRM [Digital Rights Management] is an issue for us. Text to speech is not that big an issue. Everybody is getting all excited but I don’t see that as a huge issue. I’d say the one truly big, current issue in the electronic publishing world is the price point. As much attention as a Kindle gets on tel-
evision—and I don’t know if you’ve seen him yet, but everywhere Bezos goes he’s talking about “books are $9.99, books are $9.99, $9.99, nine-dollar books—you know it’s all about the nine-dollar books, and if you put that against the trade publishing model, it is an unmitigated disaster. There is no way this business operates with a nine-dollar hardcover without tearing the whole thing up and starting anew. At least, when I do the math, I can’t figure it out. I know even guys like Bezos, who’s driving it, can’t figure it out. So there are big, big issues out there which you guys are going to have to be heavily involved in thinking through. We are not allowed to talk about pricing, but the industry has got to figure out what to do with the pricing models and that to me dwarfs pretty much all the other concerns.

MIKE SHATZKIN: It won’t surprise you that I have a somewhat different take than the rest of the panelists. From my perspective, the most significant change underway, which is affecting all media, is the switch from horizontal to vertical. Twentieth-century media was characterized by two things that were very consistent: They were format specific and they covered everything. They were horizontal. The New York Times, CBS, the publishers on this stage—it doesn’t matter what the topic is. What matters is the size of the audience, the size of the project. Twenty-first century media—and we’re not far enough in yet for this to really happen but it’s going to happen—is going to be the opposite. They’re going to be vertical in what they do and—I’m talking about the media companies—they’re going to be agnostic in format, because when you’re delivering a file it doesn’t matter what it is: It could be print, it could be animation, it could be software, and so the need to be format-specific is going away. But the need to be vertical in what you’re presenting is the new requirement, because the cost of marketing horizontally is rising.

Newspaper book review pages are going away because newspapers have gone away. Newspapers are horizontal. You want to know why they’re disappearing? They’ve lost chunks of their horizontality. They lost the stock quotes; nobody buys newspapers for stock quotes anymore. They’ve lost the value of box scores; they’ve lost the value of classified advertising. Even there, classified advertising started out as a horizontal Craigslist, but Craigslist is losing out to classified advertising that’s subject-specific: There are local sites and car sites and ticket-reselling sites. So that’s a change that is very uncomfortable for trade publishers to think about, because there’s not any easy answer for how horizontal companies deal with this change to verticality.

“We’re in a time of transition, where we have to maintain two business models. We have to maintain a print model and a 20th century promotion model, because not all the book pages are dead and Oprah’s not dead. . . . But we also have to invent the 21st century model at the same time, which requires an investment in collective experimentation, which is very, very hard.”

—Mike Shatzkin

It’s easy for Chelsea Green in Vermont. They figured out they had to change their website content from a catalogue, which is, frankly, what most websites are—catalogues on steroids—to being about a renewable resource community that they publish to. They didn’t make it about their books, they made it about what their audience wants to know. Now they’re getting two or three times the traffic they were before, and of course all the traffic that they get they can sell books to over and over again. They don’t have the problem that the book they published today doesn’t have the same market as the book they published yesterday. They’ve got the same audience going in the door. Hay House, in the mind/body/spirit business, collects e-mail names and they know what to do with them. So when they publish a book and they send 15,000 e-
mails, immediately the book goes to the top of Amazon because people are interested in that book. Hay House can hold a convention in Las Vegas and charge the people they're in touch with $300 or $500 to spend three days with their authors. The big houses can't do that because there's not enough continuity among their authors.

This is an enormous shift that no horizontal entity will be able to escape, and what it calls for is a new understanding of brand. Every publisher up here has a B to B brand. Atlantic Monthly Press doesn't mean anything to the consumer; it means something to the collection development people at the NYPL. It means something to the buyer at Barnes & Noble. It means something to The New York Times Magazine and the Sunday Book Review, but that's how publishers have always operated. That was the magic of trade publishing; it was all about leverage. You didn't have to go to each consumer; you didn't have to go to each market niche; you could do more or less the same thing over and over again, book after book after book, even if the books had different markets. But that opportunity is vanishing because the infrastructure that enabled it is vanishing.

Now it's interesting that the "horizontal in the vertical world" that I'm imagining is here on this stage and in this room. You represent the horizontal part of the vertical so to speak, which is to say that there are probably very few people around here who are particularly concerned with Guidebook to Paris or How to Do Beading or any number of large subjects that are not about editorial creativity, not about literature, not about narrative reading, not about anything that those of us who are most interested in the business are most interested in and the things that we most read.

Now here's the bad news. Bookstores can't live on literature alone. None of them can. So if they lose ten or fifteen percent of their travel business or ten or fifteen percent of their crafts business they close! And even if the things that you've been selling them are up, which they're not, but even if they were, the store still closes. So we face a serious issue as an industry. We need to figure out how to get vertical and how to get the content creator more directly in touch with an audience, which, by the way, smaller, richer publishers do more naturally than large horizontal publishers.

It's even more challenging when you listen to what John was saying. He's got pressure to deliver cash and he can't. It's very, very hard for John to deal with a situation where, let's say, you have a crafts editor, and she's acquiring for the crafts section at Barnes & Noble a knitting book, a beading book, a crochet book, a sewing book. Guess what? Online, that's four different markets. To the extent that you're moving your marketing online, you just gave your marketing department four separate challenges. They have to research four different groups of websites, they have to find four different places to blog, four different places to make comments, or four different groups of places to make comments. So in fact while this person is acquiring repetitively for the world we used to be, the Barnes & Noble buyer would be interested in all four of those books. But from a marketing point of view in today's world, those are four different things and it's become very important for her to understand that and for her to understand that she can't do all four of those verticals anymore; that she's got to make some decisions and some commitments so that your company can develop a relationship with knitters or beaders and become part of that community.

The publisher still does have an edge in the vertical world. The publisher can say: Madame Blogger: You're writing every day about knitting, you've got a lot of people following you about knitting, come with me, and I'll make you legitimate now. By the way, that's good for another five or 10 years, not forever, because although it's true that books are the dominant form and will remain the dominant form for quite some time, as these horizontal structures fall away,

"Bookstores can't live on literature alone. None of them can. So if they lose ten or fifteen percent of their travel business or ten or fifteen percent of their crafts business they close!"

—Mike Shatzkin

things are going to change faster. I think that that's my overarching message.

The other thing I want to offer is a little commercial, because it actually fits right in with a number of things people have been saying. This week, a website that I founded with Peter Clifton, who was an executive at Ingram and is known to most of the people on this panel, went live. The concept of File by Author (filedby.com) is we've gone live with a webpage for 1.8 million authors—every author with a live ISBN in either the U.S. or Canada. The page is manipulable, and it's claimable, so the author is getting a page free that would cost him $2 or $3,000 to create, and then for a
very limited fee—this is the business model—$99 a year or for $399 a year they can buy additional functionality. We see this business as important because we believe authors need to market themselves, and this is pretty obvious to all agents.

So this is addressed to agents: The author has to start a platform. If an author comes to you with an idea for a book, it doesn’t matter if it’s fiction. Fiction is about something. If it’s about something, there are communities related to it. The author has to be known to the key people who are going care about the book before you show up at the publisher. Now that eventually going to lead to more self-publishing, but not right away. Self-publishing is going to start at the two extremes. It’s going to start, as it has, with authors who can’t get a deal, and it’s going to migrate to authors who are so big that they say, “You know what, instead of a publisher bankrolling me, I’ll bankroll them, and I will rent the services that I need from them and I’ll just do the rest myself and keep the profits.” And as companies like ours and others offer services to those authors, it’ll put further pressure on the publishers. They’ll have someone to compete against besides other publishers, which is the possibility that authors would do it themselves—which is where we’re going and that is part of the thinking behind Filed By: That there are going to be increasing numbers of authors looking for a way to market themselves.

You really need to be looking at small publishers as well as big ones. The bigger ones are going to be buying less, they’re going to be paying less, they’re going to be struggling more. I’m not saying that the small ones are all going to flourish, because it’s a hard business for everybody. But we’re in a time of transition, where we have to maintain two business models. We have to maintain a print model and a 20th century promotion model, because not all the book pages are dead and TV is not dead and Oprah’s not dead—all those things are still there. But we also have to invent the 21st century model at the same time, which requires an investment in experimentation, which is very, very hard.

A major publisher said to me, I have a science fiction encyclopedia, what should I do with it? I said you should put it online. You should create a science fiction site and put that encyclopedia online free because it’ll draw in a lot of people to your site. You should make a registration layer, where everyone can come in and Wiki that science fiction encyclopedia—and add new entries, modify entries and then the stuff graduates from the Wiki layer to the public layer by a vote of the community. He said, That’s a great idea, I wish I could do it but I can’t, because my deal with the author is I’ve got to give him a percentage of the revenue from an online version. Well, I’m not trying to think of revenue from an online version. I’m trying to think of how to use this content as bait to attract a community that will have value, and the only thing I could offer the author would be a piece of the community. I’m going to invent this new business, it’s going to be a science fiction community, and you can have half of 1 percent of it if you let me use your encyclopedia—and by the way I think it’ll also sell more copies in the short run. We’re going to need that kind of collaboration between content creators and publishers for the whole industry to move into a completely new paradigm, which over time we will.

One more observation: I agree with the fact that we’re 1 percent of sales in e-books now and I have no credibility because I’ve been reading e-books since 2000 and I thought it was all going to happen faster. But I would point out that 1 percent doubled three times is 8 percent. Right now we’re in a situation where doubling is an annual proposition. So three years from now 1 percent could be 8 percent. If it’s 8 percent of the sales, although I share John’s concern about the margin, it could be 12 percent of the margin. We are not on the verge of e-publishing being the most important part of the business, but we are on the verge of e-publishing becoming a significant revenue stream.

KENNEY: I’m going to open this to the audience for questions.

AUDIENCE: It seems to me that consumers are unwilling to flock to the electronic delivery of books. It’s hard to use electronic books at the same price as paper books. Is there any way to encourage consumer adoption of electronic books without price reduction?

SARGENT: The answer, I believe, is no. If you think about pricing in the book world, there’s a hardcover, there’s a trade paperback, and then there’s a mass market. Price is driven by the artifact as opposed to what’s in it—because what’s in it is the same. But when people sit in front of a computer screen they have a different price expectation. It’s what killed the CD-ROM business in books, in that the investment necessary to make them is not supported by what the consumer would give as value when they had it in front of them. So no, I don’t believe there’s any way to have the same pricing as you have in books. What we have to do is be very careful about is the deterioration of that pricing and that not be a free-fall price. The thing about music is it has actually done pretty well. A track of music is 99 cents. Most albums have 10 tracks on them. It wasn’t that big a shift in the historical price of what a track cost.

There’s a massive thing happening now where Google is taking every public domain book and put-
ting it up for free, Amazon is putting them up for free, everywhere you’re going to see public domain for free if we don’t put different pricing options in front of people, so that they realize books aren’t free, and they aren’t $9.95 and under. Pretty soon we’re not going to have that opportunity anymore, so we have got to get books out there at realistic prices. Books are hugely valuable. What is the reason that we want to downgrade the value of our intellectual property? A long-form novel is compared to a movie. It takes a lot more time, it’s a lot richer experience in a lot of ways. Why the hell do we want to devalue it? And that is the prob-

lem. I spent two years negotiating with Google, they want everything goddamn free or as cheap as possible. Amazon wants everything cheaper because Bezos is just after market share. He knows he gets it cheap, and if he gets market share he wins because he determines the business model at the end of the day. That’s why he’s going cheap. We’ve got no reason to go cheap.

AUDIENCE: [Partly inaudible on tape, about Amazon’s pricing of electronic books and who controls it.]

SARGENT: There’s a case that just went to court that suggests there is some hope that we may be able to determine pricing at retail, but historically our only ability is to offer Amazon the bookstore price. We sell novels to Amazon at $14 for the Kindle and they put it on there at $9.99. They lose $5 a book, and they can do that because they’re going for market share. We can’t control the price; the only thing we can control is the availability of the book.

SHATZKIN: I fully agree that what Amazon is doing is a bit scary for publishers. But it’s a little more complex than market share. What they’re doing is trying to create lock-in for the Kindle, right? The more people that buy the Kindle, the more books you’ll sell them. Second, it’s so easy to buy books for the Kindle from Amazon that why would you do it any other way? They’re trying to create lock-in for the Kindle, but they’re buying that $25 book from John for $12.50, choosing to eat the difference and selling more copies as a result. Therefore if he’s selling more you’re selling more. That doesn’t mean that it’s all a good thing and I’m as nervous as if I were a publisher—I look at the world through publisher’s eyes, and Amazon makes me very nervous. I was quoted six months ago in New York magazine saying that publishers’ fear of Google is pure paranoia; publishers’ fear of Amazon is enlightened self-interest. I completely understand the concern, but the reality is they’re making good business decisions for themselves that are actually putting money in people’s pockets at the moment.

AUDIENCE: And ultimately what they are doing is changing reader behavior.

SHATZKIN: Well that actually goes to the other question that was asked about pricing and e-books. I really don’t believe that pricing has been a key barrier. I just think—as much as I don’t understand this because I don’t have a problem with it personally—people just don’t want to read on a screen. Even though people read all day on screens, they don’t want to read books on screens.

AUDIENCE: They don’t want to read books on screen at night. People don’t want to live their entire life electronically.

SHATZKIN: Whatever the reason is, that’s been a fact, and I don’t think it will change quickly. The other thing that’s worth noting is that a lot of publishers are giving e-books away for a dollar, so there’s almost no cost at the moment. I think this goes to what John said about the tragedy of the commons, because if you give away an e-book you’ll sell more books, there’s absolutely no question about it. But if everybody gives away e-books, the e-book reader will learn, You know what, I don’t have to buy these things. Let’s go shop around for the free ones. But no one publisher would benefit from stopping the practice. Only if everybody stopped doing that would it change, and that’s not going to happen. So I share the fear that we’re going to be devaluing the e-book product.

KATZ: The one thing I would like to add is that kids would like to spend their life either on their laptop or on their phone and they are not interested in paper products if they can get away with it. So the next generation is going to see it very differently than we do.

KIRSHBAUM: I share John’s concern about the retail price, but I also think there has to be a reassessment of the author’s share of the e-book revenue.

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“We sell novels to Amazon at $14.95 for the Kindle and they put it on there at $9.95. They lose $5 a book, and they can do that ’cause they’re going for market share.”

—John Sargent
AUDIENCE: When is the no cost e-book pricing going to change and what will they then cost?

SARGENT: If you want to talk about cost in the tiny growing section of e-books, we spent $10 million last year just building infrastructure. Our total revenue from electronic books in college trade together last year was, I don’t know, $2 million. So we’re $8 million in the hole last year alone. I’ve got no argument with you in the future. When this is a developed market, absolutely fine, we’ll do deals that reflect the economics. Yeah, we’ll talk about royalty rates but right now we’re losing our shirts trying to protect the model. This idea that there’s no incremental cost is wrong: you have the server, the software, the 24/7 100 percent redundancy, so your sites can never be down. If you think about who uses the screen, think about those college students studying at three a.m. on Saturday night for a Monday morning final. The site goes down three a.m. Saturday, the phones light up, people are goddamn pissed, and so there is this huge component of cost that you don’t see but it is enormous. I’d love to go toe to toe with you for about a half hour. The investment we have is enormous, and at this moment in time, therefore, no, we are not overly generous with our royalty rates, it’s not a big business for us and we’re losing a lot of money on it.

KIRSHBAUM: The good news for John is that whatever he’s losing on electronic publishing he’s more than making up for with the high discount.

SARGENT: Okay! Okay!

AUDIENCE: Earlier someone mentioned added value books, books that have connectivity to the Internet and other media. Is that an area that you’re exploring?

SHATZKIN: I have a blog, idealog.com/blog, called The Shatzkin Files. I just did a three-part post on e-books written as a letter from the publisher to an author, and the key to everything is to get rid of this one-at-a-time mentality. I understand that from an agent’s point of view that’s almost the only way to operate unless you can develop a series, but the fact is, every book a publisher does is an opportunity to make an unlimited number of decisions. You must resist that and not make so many decisions. What you can see on the blog is that I suggest that publishers essentially recruit authors to help them build a database of elements that can be put into an advanced e-book, and what I’m envisioning is a database full of elements, so that a smart person could sit there with that database, understand the elements and put together 25 enhanced e-books in a day, because they would have a template and they would have the material. That’s the only way to approach it systematically. One book at a time will never work and that’s of course the way everything gets done in publishing, one book at a time.

AUDIENCE: The college side of the business is already there digitally, isn’t it?

SARGENT: Essentially, if a professor says a course is going to be electronic, you go and buy a piece of cardboard with a code on it, a little piece of paper with a number on it shrink-wrapped to a piece of cardboard. You pay $50 for that and it allows you to go online. When we do an Intro to Psychology title, there’s something like 350 ISPN numbers that go with it and the products that go with it—transparencies that go up on the wall to electronic textbooks to course management systems to homework help, tutoring—all that is packaged together because that’s what the market demands. And I think we’ll do that on the trade side when the market moves that way. We tried it in the world of CD-ROMs for a while and nobody wanted it, so we’ve got to wait for the market to be there.

AUDIENCE: We’ve seen in the music business, with the iPod and more importantly, with iTunes, and in television with Hulu, what happens if you have a central place to go where it’s super easy to get the digital version of something. I was talking to a client today who’s got a Kindle and she said, “I can’t stop buying the books cause if I want to try somebody I just buy the book and I don’t have to worry about it cluttering up my house afterward if I don’t like it and it’s just so easy.”

SHATZKIN: You can also get a free sample, right?

AUDIENCE: Yes. So does it become a default to let them do it? Because I know people who are canceling cable because they can get it all on Hulu and if it’s not on Hulu they won’t watch it.

KATZ: What we talk a lot about at work is iGooglezon, which is the iPhone, Google and Amazon combined. I think if we allow Apple, Google and Amazon to become the most powerful places, as Hulu is becoming such a powerful place, our value and our leverage will be out of our control. I think it’s very threatening and I think we’ve got to look to alternatives to the Hulu model for books.

SHATZKIN: It’s a very difficult problem, because Amazon has done such a good job of capturing the book reader online. Forget the e-book because the e-book is 1 percent, maybe. Amazon’s claiming bigger numbers, so maybe it’s 4 percent for them or something. The point is that’s not a big number; that’s not what’s doing it. What’s doing it is they have all the readers coming to their site anyway, they have rela-
tionships with all the publishers, so when they said, We need you guys to get your books into the Kindles as fast as you can, people cooperated. They succeeded in selling enough Kindles and enough e-books so that every publisher saw that their Kindle sales were better than any of their other e-book sales. Everybody is just following their nose here but it’s very, very hard to see how this stops

KIRSHBAUM: You have to realize he’s right. The reason Amazon has been so effective is it comes back to the consumer. It’s not something that publishers can control, or authors or agents. It really comes down to what people want.

SHATZKIN: I want to make a critical point here. It is very dangerous to compare books to either TV or music. Your ears and your eyes don’t care how that signal got to you. When you read an e-book, it’s a different experience from reading a paper book. In the music business and the TV business, they’re just changing the form of delivery; they’re not changing the form of consumption. With e-books we’re wrestling with the form of consumption. So I don’t think the analogies hold and I don’t think what worked or what didn’t work in those businesses give us much of a clue about ours. The other thing is, newspapers and magazines are in trouble not primarily because they’re losing readers or circulation, although they are losing both; they are troubled mainly because they’re losing advertising, and they, too, are not a particularly good model for us, because they don’t have the same economic structure.

SARGENT: The problem with comparing publishing to Hulu is that publishing is still a highly fragmented industry. Bezos realized that very early on, and the reason he succeeded where other retailers did not is that he managed to get content from hundreds and hundreds of us. For us to get together and resist, given the monopoly laws in America, is tough.

KIRSHBAUM: I beg to differ. Amazon has in a lot of ways opened this business up to backlist, titles that never sold before, self-published titles. It’s really diversified the business and in that sense it’s been a great force. But in the end it’s sort of like holding back Niagara Falls. The consumer is going to decide. And I use Amazon a lot. It’s just such a great way to buy books.

SHATZKIN: I want to make one other observation. All the work that Amazon has done bringing back the long tail, bringing back the backlist, is one of the reasons that the business has gotten so much harder. Books don’t die anymore. Fifteen years ago you only had to compete with a fraction of all the possibilities; now you’re competing with everything and that is a big part of the problem. We all love that there’s that much stuff available—until you try to sell something new.

KENNEY: Thank you, Gail, for organizing this. Good night. ♦
Along Publishers Row
Continued from page 2

MORE: David Wroblewski's novel, *Story of Edgar Sawtelle*, became a bestseller when Oprah gave it her nod last September. Has any book about dogs ever lost money? Ecco, an imprint of HarperCollins, announced that it had signed up a new novel from the author. The New York Times reported that it will be part of a trilogy and will trace the origins of Edgar Sawtelle's father and uncle.

Wroblewski was interviewed by Publishers Weekly and asked about the next novel. The author said, "Basically I've no anxiety about living up to Edgar. It's going to be a different story, and it'll have its strengths and weaknesses. I think it's the only way to do it; otherwise you just tie yourself up in knots. I'm 48 years old and I've been making software for 30 years in my other career...I think that's one of the advantages to having an experience like this a little later in life."

DOGGONE IT! Another bestseller has a dog named Chet as the main character and narrator. *Dog on It* is a novel by Spencer Quinn. Chet also files a daily blog at www.ChettheDog.com, and he has a fan club on Facebook. If that's not enough dog for you, PW suggests you check out Twitter.com/ChettheDog.

BOOKS TALK: In The Wall Street Journal, Eric Ormsby wrote an essay entitled "Travels in the Republic of Letters." He commented, "Authors may be touchy, but books are naturally gregarious; they converse with one another and sometimes strike sparks."

He adds, "Ideally, new technologies don't displace old ones; they augment them. Cuneiform tablets, papyri, manuscripts, as well as books, remain essential to scholarship and to learning at large if only because the look and feel of the past can be as important as its content."

NEW IMPRINT: It Books is the name of a new HarperCollins imprint that will launch next fall. Carrie Kania, now publisher of the company's paperback unit, will be in charge. The focus will be on pop culture, sports, style and content from the Internet called Twitter Wit. Other titles planned for fall are The Style Strategy by Nina Garcia, a judge on Project Runway, and Chocolate, Please, a memoir by comedian Lisa Lampanelli.

Michael Morrison, president and publisher of HarperCollins, told The New York Times, "I think we've pulled together the best people within our company who are really interested in this and are targeting them to all work together to tap into the zeitgeist."

Kania explained, "It's a response to the economic times in many ways. It's escapism and fun. We want to publish books that people want to buy and read. As people turn to movies and television, we want them to turn to books as well, and this seems like a perfect fit for them."

SISTER ACT: In 1981, Nancy Bush read an article in Time magazine about young mothers who were writing romance novels. Bush suggested that she and her sister, Lisa Jackson, give it a try. They failed, but each on her own became a successful writer.

Last year, PW said, they tried again and teamed up with *Wicked Game*. It hit the paperback bestseller list.

ADVICE: P. D. James was asked what advice she would give to young writers. James replied: "You must write, not just think you're going to. It doesn't really matter what you tackle first, novel, short story or diary. And you must widen your vocabulary, enjoy words. You must read widely, not in order to copy, but to find your own voice. A student of architecture has to work at other buildings, see what other architects have done and ask why they were so good. It's a matter of going through life with all one's senses alive, to be responsive to experience, to other people."


In the same volume, British novelist Anita Brookner was quoted: "Proust was very precious to me. That state of mind he kept himself in is so hypnotic and dangerous that one approaches rereading him almost with fear. Always marginal and always observing. The cost was too high when all is said and done. The perils of remaining in that childlike state of receptivity are terrifying. And the awful thing is that he got it right all the time. It is all true."

POET GENERATION: Helen Vendler is the author of *Last Looks, Last Books: Stevens, Plath, Lowell, Bishop, Merrill*, which will be published later this year.

In an essay for The New York Review of Books, Vendler wrote: "The American poets born in 1926 and 1927 formed a remarkable generation that included A. R. Ammons, James Merrill, Robert Creeley, Allen Ginsberg, Frank O'Hara, James Wright, John Ashbery and W. S. Merwin. These poets were a disparate group: Ammons the prophetic ecologist, Merrill the lyric perfectionist, Creeley the fastidious minimalist, Ginsberg the political poet, O'Hara the quotidian comic, Wright the sad mourner, and Ashbery the wry omnivore."
NEW IMPRINT: Publications International Ltd. has launched a new adult trade imprint, West Side Publishing. It focuses on general-interest nonfiction in hardcover and paper. West Side plans to release 50 books in 2010, PW reported.

VALENTINE: The title of the book is Once Again to Zelda: The Stories Behind Literature’s Most Intriguing DedICATIONs. The author is Marlene Wagman-Geller. An article in the Style section of The New York Times described the devotion of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s wife: During the year Marquez worked on One Hundred Years of Solitude, his wife “first sold her jewels and when that money was depleted, they sold their car and later on their household appliances.” To get the postage to mail the manuscript to Marquez’s editor, his wife pawned her Mixmaster and hair dryer.

After they were married, legend has it that Marquez paid his wife to burn his love letters, but the Times said, “their flights and flourishes survive in his novels, refashioned as fiction. And fiction may be the surest and best place to preserve great loves: less permissible than a letter, less opaque than a dedication, hidden in plain view.”

EURO TREND: In the U.S. the sales of books have been falling, but in France, after a dip in the fall, sales rose 2 percent in December from a year earlier and 2.4 percent in January. “It’s a happy message,” analyst Andre Breedt told The New York Times.

“People have been reading and they will keep reading, no matter what happens.”

The same thing is happening in Germany and analysts say that many other European markets have also shown gains.

Helen Fraser, managing director of Penguin Books in London, said, “Books are a very cheap treat. When you are reading all this dreadful news in the paper, a lovely 500-page novel by Marian Keyes or a classic by Charles Dickens takes you right away from all that.”

Not everything is selling well. Travel books are sluggish, and diet books are out, along with books about fitness and fashion, Fraser said. “It just feels too sybaritic and selfish to buy books about how to lose 100 pounds or run a marathon.”

EMOTION: Daniel Halpern was editor of The Art of the Tale: An International Anthology of Short Stories 1945–1985. In his introduction, he wrote: “The story, when it is written well, is like strong emotion: it is alive, convincing, and difficult to expel from the body’s metabolism.”

SLOW BEGINNING: Barack Obama’s Dreams from My Father has been a trade paperback bestseller for more than a year, but in the preface to the 2004 edition, Obama wrote, “I was filled with hope and despair upon the book’s publication. . . . The reviews were mildly favorable . . . the sales were overwhelming. And after a few months, I went on with the business of my life, certain that my career as an author would be short-lived, but glad to have survived the process with my dignity more or less intact.”

NEW IMPRINT: In a cover article, PW said, “In recent years, the market for Christian fiction has been so successfully cultivated by a handful of evangelical Christian publishers, such as Nelson, Tyndale, Bethany House, Zondervan and Barbour, that even large, otherwise secular houses have formed their own Christian imprints.”

Next fall, Abingdon plans to join that group and has signed Cynthia Ruchi, president of the American Christian Fiction Writers, and Kay Marshall Strom, who has published 34 books.

CHANGE: Sales at the Borders chain stores fell more than 11 percent last year and in January the top executive was fired and replaced by Ron Marshall, the former principal at a private equity firm.

The New York Times quoted a statement from the chairman of the board, Larry Pollock, who said, “it is imperative that the company more aggressively . . . address its long-term future.” Does that mean sell more books?

TREND? During a period when book sales were flat or falling, e-book sales more than tripled last year. The New York Times reported: “According to a survey by Codex Group, a book marketing research company, 3 percent of book sales from mid-December to mid-January were in digital form.”

AND NOW THE WEB: David L. Ulin, book editor of The Los Angeles Times, lost his stand-alone book review section when it was killed by hard times. He began to step up blogging with Web-only material.

Ulin told PW: “I’m committed to both print and Web. There are two readerships, and I’m not sure...
they’re the same. My main interest is, how do we get the most book coverage to the most people. . . . The Web offers a truly interactive book culture. We take it seriously.”

MORE BUSH: Laura Bush is writing her memoirs, to be published in 2010. A release said the book would be “an intimate account of Mrs. Bush’s life experiences.” She will tell “the stories of the extraordinary events and people I’ve met in my life, particularly during my years in the White House.”

Word was that W. wasn’t having as much luck trying to interest a publisher in his version of the last eight years and what led up to them.

POOH’S BACK: Return to the Hundred Acre Wood by David Benedictus, is a sequel to A. A. Milne’s 1928 The House at Pooh Corner. The author said the book would “both complement and maintain Milne’s idea that whatever happens, a little boy and his bear will always be playing.” Publication is set for October.

EXPANDING: Author Solutions, publisher of print-on-demand books in Bloomington, Ind., has bought Xlibris, a rival. The New York Times said that this is one of the fastest-growing segments in publishing. Author Solutions also owns iUniverse and Author House and last year published 12,000 titles and sold more than 2.5 million copies of its books.

Author Solutions offers cover design and copyediting, and writers can sell their books through Amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com or other booksellers.

FREE MAN: The late Roald Dahl, author of New Yorker stories and a few children’s classics, wrote: “It happens to be a fact that nearly every fiction writer in the world drinks more whisky than is good for him. He does it to give himself faith, hope, and courage. A person is a fool to become a writer. His only compensation is absolute freedom.”

WINNERS: A cover article in PW was entitled “Against All Odds, Small Presses Prosper.”

The trade magazine explained, “Despite brutal economic conditions, several independent publishers managed to grow both their sales and profits in 2008. How did they do it? They are not afraid to be frugal—forgoing advances in favor of offering higher royalties, for example; and they practice innovations—‘mining data’ for new audio prospects . . . or teaching authors how to self promote.”


REFERENCE BOOK: The Nation magazine has published a guide that might be just what you are looking for. The title is The Nation Guide to The Nation, described in a promotional pitch as “a primer collecting small businesses, cultural institutions, activist organizations, and gathering places.” The “one-of-a-kind collection identifies art collectives, food co-ops, independent bookstores, reading clubs, camps for radical kids, slow food restaurants, eco-friendly products, political tourism and left-leaning cemeteries.”

How about taking your radical kids to a slow food restaurant this evening?

HOT SITE: Inspired by an item in this column about the late lexicographer Lawrence Urdang, Malcolm Ross-McDonald suggested that “you could do everyone a service by mentioning World Wide Words. The site—www.worldwidewords.org—is a gold mine of fact, saga, and erudition, all to do with words; and the weekly newsletter is matchless; this writer, at least, could not contemplate a life bereft of its humor and erudition.”

REWRITE: Aravind Adiga’s novel, The White Tiger, won the 2008 Man Booker Prize. He lives in India and once worked for Time Magazine. The name of the hero, who narrates the story, is Balram.

Adiga was interviewed for the Columbia University alumni magazine, and he said, “The book was first written in the third person: and in the original ending, which owed a lot to Richard Wright’s Native Son, Balram fled New Delhi after his crime and was caught by the police in a train station. I left the novel aside for a year, and then, in late 2006, rewrote it in the first person; and when Balram told his own story, and freed the story of the middle-class morality that had shackled it earlier, he changed the ending. In the new ending, the police become Balram’s best buddies in Bangalore, which is exactly what would happen in real life. Obviously, Balram knows more about his life in India than I do, and I’m glad he rewrote the ending.”

BUSY MONTH: Robert B. Parker has two hardcovers due out in May. Brimstone is the second sequel to his western Appaloosa. Chasing the Bear is a YA novel that introduces a teenage Spencer, Parker’s smartmouth Boston PI. Pub date is May 9.

CRIME: Harry Nicolaides, an English teacher from Australia in Bangkok, wrote Verisimilitude, a self-published novel. He sold fewer than a dozen copies and wound up in prison for three years for insulting the Thai king. The law in that country calls for a prison term of up to 15 years for anyone who “defames, in-
sults or threatens the king, the queen, the heir to the throne or the regent.”

Andrew Walker, a Fellow in the Asia-Pacific program at Australian National University, was quoted in The New York Times: “I think Thailand is trying to send a message to international media, to writers, to bloggers, to people who are putting material on the Internet, that the royal family is out of bounds.”

Reuters reported that a month after his imprisonment, Nicolaides received a royal pardon.

FOR THE POOR: Joe Queenan has written a memoir, Closing Time. In an interview with PW, he said he began writing when he produced a novel about Joan of Arc when he was five years old.

He wrote Closing Time, he said, because, “Well, there are very few books like this written by people who grew up poor. Most poor people don’t grow up to write books. One of the lessons I wanted to get across was that if you’re poor, you’d better start reading. I’ve always loathed the way that most movies and books portray working-class people, and I’m offering here a completely unsentimental portrait of working people.”

THRILLER MAN: The Whole Truth by David Baldacci topped the PW paperback bestseller list in March. PW said that there are 65 million copies of the author’s books in print in more than 40 languages in more than 85 countries.

PW reported that Baldacci was contacted by the U.S. government to help it theorize possible terrorist scenarios. His latest hardcover, First Family, came out in April.

WINNER: Neil Gaiman writes science fiction, fantasy, graphic novels and comics for adults. His The Graveyard Book won the Newbery Medal. Gaiman told The New York Times that the idea had gestated for almost two decades. It was inspired when his son, then a small child, played in a cemetery. Gaiman said he had written a page or two at the time, but decided he wasn’t yet up to the task as a writer. After repeated tries over the years, he finally sat down and wrote it three years ago.

He said, “You always have this Platonic beautiful ideal of a book in your head, and then you write something which isn’t as good as that. The Graveyard Book is the first time I’ve had a Platonic ideal of a book and written the thing and looked at the book and said, ‘You know, I think you’re better than the thing I set out to write.’”

NONFICTION ADDED: Deborah Brody is in charge of nonfiction, a new addition to Harlequin, the romance publisher.

She told Writer’s Digest: “The overarching mission is nonfiction geared to women, and because women traditionally buy more books than men, this gives us lots of subject areas in which we can publish. Some of the categories we’re acquiring are self-help, relationships, health, sex, diet, fitness, beauty, parenting, memoir and inspirational.”

THINGS CHANGE? Almost 80 years ago, Biography, a comedy by S. N. Berman, ran on Broadway for a year and a half, 1932–1933.

A scrap of dialogue, spoken by an actor playing the editor of a scandal magazine with a circulation of three million, said: “The only lively reading these days is biography. People are bored with fiction. It’s too tame. The fiction-writers haven’t the audacity to put down what actually happens to people.”

MORE PANTS: Ann Brashares’s four Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants YA novels have sold more than eight million copies. In her latest, 3 Willows: The Sisterhood Grows, the author writes of three friends who are entering high school. Brashares told PW, “I decided to create a new friendship in the shadow of the old friendship.” The first printing was half a million copies.

NICKNAMED FANS: Kristin Hannah’s Firefly Lane was a trade paperback bestseller in March with 275,000 copies in print. The publisher told PW that the novel has become a book club favorite. Hannah lovingly calls her fans “fireflies.”

At the same time, her new hardcover, True Colors, was a fiction bestseller with 190,000 copies in print.

HELPFUL HINT: The late novelist John O’Hara was quoted recently in The New York Times: “For the sake of verisimilitude and realism, you cannot positively give the impression of an ending: you must let something hang. A cheap interpretation of that would be to say that you must always leave a chance for a sequel.”

FAR WEST: Jonathan Raban grew up in Great Britain but now calls Seattle home. He is the author of nine books, including Surveillance.

In an essay in The New York Review of Books, Raban wrote that “in the stories of Raymond Carver, the films of Gus Van Sant, and the novels of Ken Kesey and David Guterson, among others, the Pacific Northwest has become familiar as the place in America where lives of grimly straitened circumstances play out within sight of the now-ironic sublime. The old-growth Douglas firs, the mountains and cascades are there to tease from a distance: it’s in the trailer homes and bungalows below, in insufficient, straggling towns, their single highway lined with the parking lots of big-box stores, that most Northwest fiction happens.”

Raban said that this phenomenon began when Bernard Malamud...
was teaching at Oregon State College in Corvallis from 1949 to 1961. Malamud’s A New Life (1961) was a novel about a town that was “a scale-model of McCarthy-era, small-minded social, academic, and political conformity, set in a landscape whose mountains, tumbled clouds, and vast sky hold out the promise of exhilarating escape.”

NEW AUDIENCE: Carl Hiaasen writes mystery novels about Florida eccentrics. His new YA novel Scat is a bestseller.

The author told PW, “It would never have occurred to me that with iPods and Wii and Xboxes and all the distractions kids have, that there would be this tremendous market for the kinds of books I write. I think it shows you kids are insatiable in the same way I was when I was a kid. If you can tap into that you’ll have readers for life.”

BOOKS ON PHONES: Google announced that it was making the 1.5 million public domain books it had scanned and made available free on PCs accessible on the iPhone and the T-Mobile G1.

Amazon announced that it was making titles for the Kindle available on a variety of mobile phones. The Kindle currently offers about 230,000 titles.

Evan Schnittman of Oxford University Press told The New York Times that mobile phones are “terrible for long-form reading.” The back-lighted screen “hurts the eyes. The pages of a book are the size they are because of hundreds of years of experience of what works best.”

DUMB QUESTION: The late W. H. Auden wrote: “A writer, at least a poet, is always being asked by people who should know better: ‘Whom do you write for?’ The question is, of course, a silly one, but I can give it a silly answer. Occasionally I come across a book which I feel has been written especially for me and for me only. Like a jealous lover I don’t want anybody else to hear of it. To have a million such readers, unaware of each other’s existence, to be read with passion and never talked about, is the daydream, surely, of every author.”

THE ANSWER: Emily Chenoweth is the author of Hello Goodbye, about a girl’s sexual awakening and her mother’s terminal illness. The author told PW, “People find you’re writing a book and ask what it’s about. It’s always an excruciating question to answer. I used to say somewhat jokingly, “It’s Dirty Dancing meets Elizabeth Kubler Ross’s On Death and Dying, which is a seminal book about the five stages of grief.”

Asked what she was working on now, Chenoweth said, “I novelized a script for a movie that’s coming out in August. I wrote a whole novel in the month of January. It was as though I’d been laboring in this dark cave with Hello Goodbye, and then writing this script novelization was like going swimming in some warm Mediterranean Ocean.”

COLOR COUNTS: If you are writing a novel, paint the walls of your room blue. If it’s nonfiction, paint the walls red.

According to a study by researchers at the University of British Columbia, the color red can make work more accurate, and blue can make people more creative.

The 600 participants in the test performed tasks with words or images displayed against red, blue or neutral background on computer screens. Juliet Zhu, an assistant professor, helped conduct the study with Ravi Mehta, a graduate student. Zhu told The New York Times, “If you’re talking about wanting enhanced memory for something like proofreading skills, then a red color should be used.” But for “a brainstorming session for a new product or coming up with a new solution to fight child obesity or teenage smoking, then you should get people into a blue room.”

MENTOR: Karen Dionne, author of Freezing Point, told Writer’s Digest that she had learned about “crafting solid fiction” from the late Michael Crichton.

Dionne wrote, “Don’t be afraid to tackle complex topics such as quantum physics or manipulating the genetic code. Readers love learning something new. Stirring their curiosity is just as important as grabbing them from the first page.

ONE WAY: How about some advice from that master storyteller, Rudyard Kipling?

“In an auspicious hour, read your final draft and consider faithfully every paragraph, sentence and word, blacking out where requisite. Let it lie to drain as long as possible. At the end of that time, re-read and you should find that it will bear a second shortening. Finally, read it aloud and at leisure. Maybe a shade more brushwork [cutting] will then indicate or impose itself. If not, praise Allah and let it go, and when thou hast done, repent not.” . . . I have had tales by me for three or five years which shortened themselves almost yearly.”

ENJOY: In a recent New Yorker article, Ian McEwan, British author of the best-selling novel Atonement, is quoted: “Writing is a bottom-up process, to borrow a term from the cognitive world. One thing that’s missing from the discussion of literature in the academy is the pleasure principle. Not only the pleasure of the reader but also of the writer. Writing is a self-pleasing act.”

ENTERTAINER: James Patterson was a cover interview subject for Writer’s Digest. He is the only au-
The author who has ever debuted at No. 1 on five New York Times bestseller lists: hardcover fiction, hardcover nonfiction, mass market fiction, children's chapter books and children's series. His publisher says he holds the Times's bestseller record at 42 weeks.

How does he do it? Patterson said, "I'm big on having a blistering pace. That's one of the hallmarks of what I do, and that's not easy. I never blow up cars and things like that, so it's something else that keeps the suspense flowing. I try not to write a chapter that isn't going to turn on a movie projector in your head."

"My style is colloquial storytelling. It's the way we tell stories to one another—it's not writerly, it's not overdone. I'm always pretending I'm sitting across from somebody. I'm telling them a story and don't want them to get up until it's finished. I'm very conscious of an audience. I'm very conscious that I'm an entertainer."

FAN BOOKS: The following quote is from Alan Bennett's Writing Home, a collection of essays, diary entries, prefaces to plays, and odd pieces he calls "stocking stuffers."

"Fans are a feature of a certain kind of book. It's often a children's book—Winnie the Pooh, Alice and the Hobbit are examples—or it is a grown-up children's book such as those of Wodehouse, E. F. Benson and Conan Doyle. But Jane Austen and Anthony Trollope are nothing if not adult and they have fans too—and fan clubs—so children are not the essence of it.

"What is common to all these authors, though, is the capacity to create self-contained worlds; their books constitute systems of literary self-sufficiency in ways that other novels, often more profound, do not. It is a kind of cosiness. Dickens is not cosy; he is always taking his reader back into the real world in a way that Trollope, who is cosy, does not. So it is Trollope who has the fans."

TOO MANY BOOKS? Geoff Nicholson wrote an essay for The New York Times Book Review to prove that being described as prolific is not a plus. Author of 20 books in 22 years, Nicholson's latest is The Lost Art of Walking: The History, Science, Philosophy and Literature of Pedestrianism. He notes that Joyce Carol Oates has published more than 100 books in 45 years. Georges Simeon wrote 500 books or so in 70 years, and Anthony Burgess wrote 75 or so in 40 years.

Nicholson claims that "truly extreme productiveness (like the opposite) is beyond the absolute control of the author." And he tries to explain that "the real reason we keep writing is the hope, naive perhaps, that we'll make a better job of it next time. Unless you're a genius or a fool, you realize that everything you write, however 'successful,' is always a sort of failure. And so you try again."

BUSY: Speaking of prolific writers, Philip Roth has written his 30th and 31st books. The Humbling, a novel about an aging actor, is due out in the fall, and Nemesis, a novel about an outbreak of polio in 1944, in 2010.


CHANGE: Annette Meyers always wanted to be a writer, but her first important job was as assistant to Broadway's Harold Prince, the man who produced such shows as Fiddler on the Roof, Company, and Follies.

At 40, Meyers decided that if she was going to be a writer, she'd better start. She quit her job and went to work. According to Forbes.com, she has published eight “Smith and Wetzon” mysteries and two “Olivia Brown” mysteries set in Greenwich Village and also has co-authored with her husband, actor Martin Mann, another series under the name Mann Meyers.

The point of the Forbes article is that it is possible to make a big change in one's career and be successful.

UNFINISHED WORK: When David Foster Wallace killed himself last September, his third novel, The Pale King, was unfinished. Excerpts were printed in The New Yorker in March, and the book is scheduled for publication in 2010. It will include Wallace's notes, outlines and other material, the Associated Press reported. According to The New York Times, the book focuses on a group of I.R.S. agents in a Midwestern office.

FICTION DEFINED: The late Canadian novelist Robertson Davies wrote: "Fiction is not photography, it's oil painting."

FAVORITE BOOKS: Stuart Woods is the author of more than 40 bestsellers. He named his favorite books on Barnes&Noble.com: Lassie Come Home ("It forced me to finish learning to read at five, so I could find out what happened to the dog"), Gone With the Wind ("Not the romantic potboiler most people think it is . . .") and Portnoy's Complaint ("In case you've forgotten how much fun sex is").

Woods's latest bestseller is Mounting Fears. PW says that there are 192,000 copies in print.
RECONCILIATION: When The Citadel, a military school in Charleston, S.C., found itself the unflattering subject of Pat Conroy’s The Lords of Discipline, the author became a very unpopular graduate. When asked to compare himself with a typical Citadel grad, he liked to say, “I’m richer, smarter, and more famous and nicer.”

Gradually over the years a thaw has taken place, partly because Conroy’s cousin Ed Conroy is now the Citadel’s successful basketball coach, and Pat Conroy likes to cheer for the team he once played on. The reconciliation seemed important enough to The New York Times for a long article that began on page 1.

WARNING: Alan Lightman, author of Einstein’s Dreams, said, “I like to let the reader do much of the writing for me. Readers are so good at visualizing things, and when you say too much, you block the reader’s invitation to participate in the imaginary experience.”

SUCCESS STORY: According to The New York Times, “As large New York publishing houses have laid off staff, suffered drastically reduced book sales and struggled to adjust to a digital future, Europa Editions turned its first profit last year and is enjoying a modest but growing following.”

The firm was started by Sandro Ferri and Sandra Ozzola Ferri, a couple from Italy. They publish translated literary novels written mainly by Europeans. Their first bestseller, The Elegance of the Hedgehog, a French novel by Muriel Barbery, came out in September. By March it had sold 71,000 copies.

REACTION: “I don’t write books for people to be friends with the characters,” novelist Zoe Heller told The New York Times. “If you want to find friends, go to a cocktail party.”

Heller’s latest novel, The Believers, is about a family in which “each [member] chooses a different vehicle of worship—socialism, liberal humanism, orthodox Judaism or the New Age gospel of self-improvement.” That quote is from a Michiko Kakutani review, and she continues, “They are all in thrall to their own certainty, self-righteous about their own beliefs and contemptuous of anyone dimwitted enough to disagree.”

In an interview about the novel, Heller said, that she had told the story through the eyes of both parents and daughters and that “trying to write in the third person and juggle several characters was challenging.”

Responding to the way some readers have interpreted the characters, Heller said that once you write something, you no longer control it. “It goes out in the world. You have to let it go.”

UNIVERSAL: Nobel Prize winner Isaac B. Singer wrote, “If you write about one place well, you write about every place.”

TEST DRIVE: Danielle Belopototsky wrote about the new Kindle 2 and other electronic books in the business section of The New York Times. She warned, “I’m a book person. A real-book person. I like to hold books. Thumb through their pages. I even like the smell of them. So while I appreciate technology in all its forms, I approached the latest crop of e-book readers with no small amount of skepticism.”

She found much to complain about but concluded, “With a device like the Kindle, I could see myself reading happily on the train and buying books instantly. Despite these added conveniences, I don’t think e-books will replace books anytime soon.

“In the same way that there are some movies you want to see in the theater, there are books I will want to hold in my hands and spend more time with—unless Amazon comes out with a special ‘book scented’ Kindle. If that happens, I can’t say where I’ll stand on the issue.”


She asked: “So what do we really want from a literary biography? Photographs, an index, a little gossip?”

Moore described photographs of Barthelme (“he was said by Thomas Pynchon to resemble Solzhenitsyn”) and his wives and children. Moore added that “the index was admirable in the hypnotic way of indexes.”

“And for gossip Daugherty lets us in on a brief affair Barthelme had with Grace Paley (all that short story heat!). Paley lived across the street from him on West 11th Street and Barthelme dedicated his sixth collection of stories, Amateurs, to her. There is also the tragedy of his third wife, who committed suicide by leaping off a roof in Copenhagen.”

GOOD NEWS: Drink a lot of coffee? Bob Greene, author of The Best Life Diet Cookbook, wrote: “Coffee drinkers are less likely to get Parkinson’s disease than those who drink little or no joe.” He adds that “coffee and tea drinkers also stay sharper with age, suffering less cognitive decline than non-drinkers.”

DARK SUBJECT: Motoko Rich wrote in The New York Times: “Among the vampires, dragons and dystopian futuristic societies that dominate young adult reading lists, a debut novel about teen suicide has become a stealthy hit with surprising staying power.”
"Thirteen Reasons Why, by Jay Asher, is made up of the transcripts of audiotapes that 16-year-old Hannah Baker recorded before committing suicide."

The idea of using tape recording, Asher told the Times, came from a visit to a casino in Las Vegas, where Asher used a recorded audio guide on a tour of an exhibition about King Tutankhamen of Egypt. Something about listening to a disembodied voice made the writer think, "This would be a really cool format for a book."

Asher had 11 manuscripts rejected before he sold Thirteen Reasons Why. The book was published in 2007 and has sold 158,000 copies. It remains in hardcover.

REVENGE: Michael Palmer, a medical doctor, is author of The First Patient, a paperback bestseller. He wrote on his website that when he was a premed major at Wesleyan University he got a "G" on his first freshman English paper ("as in A, B, C, etc."). In one of his books, Palmer gave the villain that professor's name.

HOT DIARY: "Greg Heffley may be a 'wimpy kid,'" PW said, "but his books keep going strong. Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw, [by Jeff Kinney] third in the series that began in 2007, was released on January 12 with a million-copy first printing; it sold 300,000 copies in its first week, the publisher reported, and went back to press for another 500,000 copies."

NO SERIES: Edgar winner John Hart is the author of The King of Lies and Down River. His latest crime thriller is The Last Child.

In an interview, PW asked Hart if he had ever considered writing a series.

He said, "At first, I avoided the idea of a series because there are so many great ones out there that I thought I'd be lost in the shuffle. Who wants to compete with Harry Bosch, Lucas Davenport, Kay Scarpetta or Jack Reacher? That seemed like reason enough, but I eventually figured out that I like breaking new ground on new characters. Doing that fresh with each book is one of the great joys for me. I'm just not ready to say, 'This is my guy.' One day maybe."

THE PLAN: In his introduction to The Best American Short Stories of 1984, John Updike wrote, "I want stories to startle and engage me within the first few sentences, and in their middle to widen or deepen my knowledge of human activity, and to end by giving me a sensation of a completed statement."

KEYS: Daniel Mendelsohn is the author of two volumes of new English translations of all C. P. Cavafy's poems.

Mendelsohn told PW: "Many people I know kept saying they didn't get what was supposed to be the big deal about Cavafy based on what was already out there. Every translation has its excellence and its virtues, but I wanted to do two things: the music, because in Greek Cavafy is incredibly musical. And the background. You have to know what he knew to get the poems. You have to be deeply situated in a context. Like all great poets, this guy had a world in his head that was total and complete, and you have to be a citizen of that world in order to see what he's up to."

OUT: Publishers Weekly announced that editor in chief Sara Nelson and executive editor Daisy Marles "were let go."

Brian Kenney, editor-in-chief of a sister publication, School Library Journal, was named PW's editorial director.

JOE CHANGES*

Richard Rosen is a new senior editor at ESPN Books. He will acquire, develop and edit sports books in most nonfiction categories.

Laura Stickney has been named editor at the Penguin Press.

Eric Simonoff has left the literary agency Janklow Nesbitt and joined William Morris. Simonoff represents Jhumpa Lahiri, Edward P. Jones and James Frey.

In a restructuring, HarperCollins laid off publishers Steve Ross and Lisa Gallagher, and top editors Gillian Blake and Caroline Sutton.

Becky Saletan has been named editorial director of Riverhead Books.

Tom Wilkens has been promoted to agent at the Jeff Herman Literary Agency.

Katie McHugh is senior editor at Da Capo Press.

Annette Pollert has been promoted to assistant editor at Simon Pulse.

Brendan Deneen has joined Fine Print Literary Management. He represents writers working in both publishing and TV and film.

Gita Manaktala has been promoted to editorial director of MIT Press.

DEATHS

Daniel Button, 91, died March 6 in Albany, N.Y. The former member of Congress and editor was the author of Lindsay: A Man for Tomorrow (1965) and Take City Hall! (2003).

James Brady, 80, died January 26 in Manhattan. The gossip columnist was the author of The Coldest War (1990), The Marines of Autumn (2000), The Scariest Place in the World (2005), Why Marines Fight (2007) and Hero of the Pacific: The Life of Legendary Marine John Basilone, to be published in November.
Hortense Calisher, 97, died January 13 in Manhattan. She was the author of 23 novels and short story collections. Titles include: In the Absence of Angels (1951), False Entry (1961), Textures of Life (1963), The Last Trolley Ride (1966), Herself (1972), Kissing Cousins (1988) and Tattoo for a Slave (2004).

Ian Carr, 75, died February 25 in London. The jazz trumpeter was the author of Music Outside: Contemporary Jazz in Britain (1973) and Miles Davis: A Critical Biography (1982).

Carol Chomsky, 78, died December 19 in Lexington, Mass. The linguist and educator was author of The Acquisition of Syntax in Children From 5 to 10 (1969).


Philip Jose Farmer, 91, died February 25 in Peoria, Ill. The science fiction writer was author of more than 75 books. Titles include The Lovers (1952), Riders of the Purple Wage (1967), Venus on the Half-Shell (1975) and mock biographies of Tarzan and Doc Savage.


Horton Foote, 92, died March 3 in Hartford. His homes were in Wharton, Tex., and Palisades, Calif. The prizewinning playwright and screenwriter was also the author of Farewell: A Memoir of a Texas Childhood (1999).

Anne Frydman, 61, died February 23 in Towson, Md. She translated novels by Sergei Dovlatov and that writer’s short stories for The New Yorker and other magazines. She also translated The Cockroaches by Leonid Tsypkin, and Frydman’s poems have been published in The Yale Review and other magazines.


Leila Hadley, 83, died February 10 in Manhattan. She was the author of Give Me the World; How to Travel with Children in Europe (1963) and Traveling with Children in the U.S.A. (1976), Tibet 20 Years After the Chinese Takeover (1979) and A Garden by the Sea (2005).

Christopher Hibbert, 84, died December 21 in Henley-on-Thames, England. The historian was the author of Il Duce: The Life of Benito Mussolini (1962), Garibaldi and His Enemies (1965), Rome: The Biography of a City (1985) and a two-volume biography of George IV.


Samuel P. Huntingdon, 81, died December 24 on Martha’s Vineyard. The political scientist was the author of The Soldier and the State (1957), Political Order in Changing Societies (1969) and The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996).


Sir Michael Levy, 81, died December 28 in Lincolnshire, England. The art historian was author of The Chapel Is on Fire (2000) and coauthor of Fifty Works of English and American Literature We Could Do Without (1967). Two of the works singled out for oblivion were Leaves of Grass and Huckleberry Finn.


Mireille Marokvia, 90, died October 19 in Las Cruces, N.M. She was the author of Immortalias: Memoir of a Will-o’-the-Wisp (1996), Sins of the Innocent (2006) and five books for children.

David Middleton, 88, died November 16 in New York City. He was the author of An Introduction to Statistical Communications Theory (1960) and Space-Time Treatment (to be published posthumously).

John Mortimer, 85, died January 16 in Oxfordshire, England. The barrister was the creator of Rumpole, in novels and TV scripts. He was also the author of Clinging to the Wreckage (1982), Murderers and Other Friends: Another Part of Life (1994) and The Summer of a Dormouse: A Year of Growing Old Disgracefully (2000).

Opening Lines

Continued from page 5

the pain became psychosomatic. I was completely out of commission for a couple of months. But it took a year and a half until I could write comfortably again.”

In the meantime, Mahajan set about correcting his problems. Under the care of savvier doctors, he began thorough physical therapy for his hands and wrists. “I had been totally oblivious,” he considers. “I was young and irresponsible. I had never thought about ergonomics in my life.” He practiced a daily, 40-minute routine of therapeutic exercises. He chose his writing workplace and posture more carefully. He even attempted to resume writing with the aid of voice recognition software; but it proved faulty and frustrating.

“That lasted precisely one day,” he recalls. “I ended up cursing at the machine, shouting, ‘F*#k! F*#k! F*#k!’ And the machine just yelled back at me: ‘Friend! Friend! Friend!’”

Slowly Mahajan completed the last few chapters of his novel. Jay McNerney helped him to find and interest an agent; Mahajan went through another “bazillion drafts”; the manuscript was at last sent out to several editors; and eventually HarperPerennial published the novel, Family Planning, as an original paperback last November, to ecstatic reviews and a Henry Jackson Award for Fiction among other accolades.

All of which leaves Mahajan with his three passions intact. As part of his continuing effort to grapple with trends in urban planning, he is working at the New York City Economic Development Corporation. He continues to keep a keen eye on great and inspiring novelists, and in the early mornings is working hard on his own second book, a novel about public transportation—albeit with a newfound reverence for ergonomic health.

“I do forty minutes of strange and embarrassing exercises every morning: exercises called The Duck and The Penguin that have me contorting my hands like a mime. It’ll never be the sexiest part of my personality,” he considers. “And I can’t type on laptops. I might go to coffee shops, but if I do I bring a notebook and a pen and write longhand. The good news is that I have a theory that it encourages longer, more sinewy sentences.”

Yet Mahajan has no resentment for authors who are blissfully free from such hindrances. “Apparently Richard Powers writes in bed,” he says. “I think he uses voice recognition software. Then again, he’s an American from the Midwest. He probably has a better accent for it than mine.”


Martha Putney, 92, died December 1 in Washington, D.C. She was the author of When the Nation Was in Need: Blacks in the Women’s Army Corps During World War II (1992) and editor of Blacks in the United States Army: Portraits Through History (2003).

Richard Seaver, 82, died January 6 in Manhattan. The publisher of Samuel Beckett, Henry Miller and William Burroughs was translator of more than 50 books from the French, including works by Marguerite Duras and Andre Breton.

W. D. Snodgrass, 83, died January 10 in Erieville, N.Y. The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet was the author of more than 30 books including Heart’s Needle (1959), After Experience (1967) and The Fuehrer Bunker (1977).

Henry Ashby Turner, 76, died December 17 in New Haven, Conn. The Yale professor for 44 years was author of Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (1963), German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler (1985) and Hitler’s Thirty Days to Power (1996).

Hillary Waugh, 88, died December 8 in Torrington, Conn. His novel Last Seen Wearing was named one of the top 100 mystery novels by the Mystery Writers of America. Among his 50 other novels is Madame Will Not Dine Tonight (1947), The Night It Rained (1961) and End of a Party (1965).

Donald E. Westlake, 75, died December 31 while on vacation in Mexico. He was the author of more than 100 books written under his name or the pseudonyms Richard Stark, Tucker Coe, Samuel Holt and Edwin West. His first novel was The Mercenaries (1960). Get Real was scheduled for publication in April.⭐
Visitor’s Guide to the Colonial & Revolutionary South; Betsy Franco (and Michael Wertz, illus.): A Curious Collection of Cats; Lynn Freed: The Servants’ Quarters; Jon Friedman (Ed.): Rejected: Tales of the Failed, Dumped, and Canceled; Laura Furman (Ed.): The PEN/O. Henry Prize Stories 2009;

Kathlyn Gay: The Scoop on What to Eat: What You Should Know About Diet and Nutrition; Bill Germain: Under Their Thumb: How a Nice Boy from Brooklyn Got Mixed Up with the Rolling Stones (and Lived to Tell About It); Matthew Goodman: Hold Love Strong; Beatrice Gormley: Barack Obama: Our 44th President; Robert Greenman: More Words That Make a Difference; Lynne Griffin: Life Without Summer; James Grippando: Intent to Kill; John Grossmann (and Gordon Hempton): One Square Inch of Silence: One Man’s Search for Natural Silence in a Noisy World; Michael Gurian: The Purpose of Boys: Helping Our Sons Find Significance, Direction, and Meaning in Life; Sid Gustafson: The Language of Natural Horsemanship;

Christine Hale: Basil’s Dream; Parnell Hall: Dead Man’s Puzzle; Victoria Hallerman: How We Survived Prostate Cancer: What We Did and What We Should Have Done; Wilborn Hampton: Up Close: Babe Ruth; Dirk Hanson: The Chemical Carousel: What Science Tells Us About Beating Addiction; Sandra Harmon: Mafia Son: The Scarpa Mob Family, the FBI, and a Story of Betrayal; Carolyn Hart: Dare to Die; Libby Hathorn: Fire Song; Juanita Havill (and Christine Davenier, illus.): Just Like a Baby; Georgia Heard (Ed.): Falling Down the Page; Florence Parry Heide: The One and Only Marigold; Joseph Helgerson (and Peter de Seve, illus.): Cross & Cards; Patricia Hermes: Emma Dilemma and the Camping Nanny; Will Hillenbrand: Louie! Julia Hoban: Willow; Stacy Horn: Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Paragons, Telepathy, Clairvoyance, and Other Phenomena of the Unseen World; Gail A. Hornstein: Agnes’s Jacket: A Psychologist’s Search for the Meaning of Madness; Lisa Horstman: Squawking Matilda; Patricia Hubbell (and Megan Halsey and Sean Addy, illus.): Boats: Speeding! Sailing! Cruising!;


Sheba Karim: Skunk Girl; Bobbi Katz (and Deborah Zemke, illus.): More Pocket Poems; Michele Keith: Country Living Easy Makeovers: 101 Quick Design Fixes You Can Do in a Weekend; Steven Kellogg: The Pied Piper’s Magic; Katy Kelly (and Gillian Johnson, illus.): Melonhead; Kim Kennedy (and Doug Kennedy, illus.): Hey-Haw-Dini and the Great Zambini; Eric A. Kimmel (and Valeria Docampo, illus.): The Three Little Tamales; Elizabeth Cody Kimmel: Boy on the Lion Throne; Suddenly Supernatural: Scaredy Kat; Elisa Kleven: A Carousel Tale; Michelle Knudsen: The Dragon of Trelain; Elizabeth Koehler-Pentacoff (and Wes Hargis, illus.): Jackson and Bud’s Bumpy Ride: America’s First Cross-Country Automobile Trip; Jean Hanff Korelitz: Admission; Sally Koslow: The Late, Lamented Molly Marx; Steven Kroll (and Steve Cox, illus.): Stuff!: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle;

Laila Lalami: Secret Son; Reif Larsen: The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet; Jim Lehrer: Oh, Johnny! J. Robert Lennon: Castle: Pieces for the Left Hand: 100 Anecdotes; Jeffrey Lent: After You’ve Gone; Elmore Leonard: Road Dogs; Eleanor Lerman: The Blonde on the Train; Gerda Lerner: Living with History/Making Social Change; Janice Levy (and Bill Slavin, illus.): Gonzalo Grabs the Good Life; Mindy Lewis: Dirt: The Quirks, Habits, and Passions of Keeping House; Carolyn Lieberg: Teaching Your First College Class; Elinor Lipman: The Family Man; Shelia E. Lipsky: Beautiful Ugly: My Son’s Wife; Ray Lischner: Exploring C++: The Programmer’s Introduction to C++;

Sarah Darer Littman: Purge; Lois Lowry (and Middy Thomas, illus.): Gooney Bird Is So Absurd; Lisa Lutz: Revenge of the Spellmans;


Carl Nelson: Madam President and the Admiral; Import/Export: How to Take Your Business Across Borders; Alyson Noël: Evermore;

Brian O’Dea: High: Confessions of an International Drug Smuggler; Sally Wendkos Olds: Super Granny: Great Stuff to Do with Your Grandkids; T. L. Orcutt: Collateral Karma; William O’Rourke (and John Matthias) (Eds.): Notre Dame Review: The First Ten Years; Sally Palaian: Spent: Break the Buying Obsession and Discover Your True Worth;
MEMBERS MAKE NEWS

The finalists for the Children’s Book Council’s 2009 Children’s Choice Book Awards include Meg Cabot, Airhead, and Suzanne Collins, The Hunger Games, both in the Teen Choice Book Award category. (The Hunger Games was also included on the American Library Association’s 2009 Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults list.) Winners will be announced at a gala celebration on May 12 in New York City.

The Children’s Book Council also cosponsors, with the International Reading Association, an annual Children’s Choices list of recommended books. The 2008 list includes, in the Beginning Readers category, Five Little Monkeys Go Shopping, Eileen Christelow; How Do Dinosaurs Go to School?, Jane Yolen (Mark Teague, illus.); How to Be a Baby, by Me, the Big Sister, Sally Lloyd-Jones (Sue Heap, illus.); The Perfect Nest, Catherine Friend (John Manders, illus.); Dog Diaries: Secret Writings of the WOOF Society, Betsy Byars (and Betsy Duffey and Laurie Myers) (Erik Brooks, illus.); Encyclopedia Brown Cracks the Case, Donald J. Sobol; Extreme Pets!, Jane Harrington; Goosebumps Graphix 3: Terror Trips, R. L. Stine (jill Thompson, Jamie Tolagson, and Amy Kim Ganter, illus.); A Horse in the House and Other Strange but True Animal Stories, Gail Ablow (Kathy Osborn, illus.); Monday with a Mad Genius, Mary Pope Osborne (Sal Murdocca, illus.).

In the Advanced Readers category, the list includes Ghosts, Stephen Krensky; Girl Wonders, Karen Salhan-sohn; and Summerhouse Time, Eileen Spinelli (Joanne Lew-Vriethoff, illus.).

The Association of Jewish Libraries awarded Brooklyn Bridge, by Karen Hesse, the Sydney Taylor Award for older readers. As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King and Abraham Joshua Heschel’s Amazing March Toward Freedom, by Richard Michelson (Raul Colon, illus.) received the Sydney Taylor Award for younger readers. Michelson’s book A is for Abraham: A Jewish Family Alphabet (Ron Mazellan, illus.) was an Honor Award winner for younger readers. Other Honor Award winners included Sarah Laughs, by Jacqueline Jules (Natscia Ugliano, illus.), and Naming Liberty, by Jane Yolen (Jim Burke, illus.). Freefall, by Anna Levine, was an Honor Award winner for older readers. The Notable Books for Younger Readers list included Mysterious Guests: A Sukkot Story, by Eric Kimmel (Katya Krenina, illus.), and Jodie’s Hanukkah Dig, by Anna Levine (Knesia Topaz, illus.). My Chocolate Year, by Charlotte Herman (LeUyen Pham, illus.), is among the Notable Books for Older Readers.

Women Writing the West announced the winners of the 2008 WILLA Literary Awards for books published in 2007. Pamela Smith Hill received the Scholarly Nonfiction award for Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Writer’s Life and Rilla Askew received the Historical Fiction award for Harpsong. The finalists included Velda Brotherton, Fly with the Morning Dove, in the Creative Nonfiction category and Gretchen Woelfle, Jeannette Rankin: Political Pioneer, in the Children’s/Young Adult Fiction & Nonfiction category. The winners and finalists were honored at a banquet on October 25, during Women Writing the West’s annual Marketing Mavericks Conference in San Antonio, TX.

Rilla Askew received a 2009 Academy Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The seven Academy Awards honor exceptional accomplishment in any genre and include a $7,500 prize. The award will be presented along with all of the 2009 awards in literature, art, music and architecture at the Academy’s annual Ceremonial on May 20 in New York City.

Shaveltail, by Thomas Cobb, received the Texas Institute of Letters’ Jesse Jones Award for Best Work of Fiction, which carries a $6,000 award. The book also received the Western Writers of America’s Spur Award in the Best Western/Long Novel category. Cobb will be honored with the other winners in June at the WWA Convention in Oklahoma.

E. L. Doctorow was included on the list of 14 contenders for the 2009 Man Booker International Prize. The £60,000 prize is awarded once every two years to a living author who has published fiction either originally in English or whose work is generally available in translation in the English language, and highlights his or her continued creativity, development and overall contribution to fiction on the world stage.

Emil Draitser was one of 26 New Jersey artists chosen to receive a 2009 Artists’ Fellowship from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. He received a $7,000 award.

Patrick Durantou was awarded an Honorary Doctor Degree of Philosophy, or the Doctor Honoris Causa, from Ansted University in the British Virgin Islands, and was included in the American Biographical Institute’s “Hall of Fame” for Distinguished Accomplishments in Philosophy.

Joan Frank received the 2010 Richard Sullivan Prize in Short Fiction for her story collection In Enemy Country. The award is sponsored by the University of Notre Dame’s Creative Writing program.
Horses They Rode, by Sid Gustafson, was a finalist for the 2008 High Plains Book of the Year award, ForeWord Magazine's 2008 Book of the Year award, and USA Book News' 2008 National Best Book Awards.

Joe Jackson's book The Thief at the End of the World: Rubber, Power, and the Seeds of Empire was a finalist for the Mark Lynton History Prize, one of the J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project Awards, which recognize excellence in nonfiction writing.

Sand Dollar Summer, by Kimberly K. Jones, was included in the Booklist Top 10 First Novels for Youth list, the New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age list, and was an American Library Association's Best Books for Young Adults nominee, a CBC/National Council for the Social Studies Notable Social Studies Trade Book, and an International Reading Association/Children's Book Council Children's Choice book.

The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor presented the Doug Fletcher Lifetime Achievement Award to Allen Klein, founder of International Mirth Month and author of The Healing Power of Humor, The Courage of Laugh, and 14 other books. The award was presented at a ceremony on April 3 in Las Vegas, NV.

Tantra for Erotic Empowerment, by Mark Michaels and Patricia Johnson, was a winner in the Health: Sexuality category of the 2008 USA Books News awards, a finalist for the 2009 Indie Excellence awards in New Age Nonfiction, and a finalist in the Body, Mind and Spirit category of the Foreward Magazine awards.

Brian O'Dea received the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Non-Fiction Crime Writing for High: Confessions of a Pot Smuggler. The award is sponsored by the Crime Writers of Canada.

Barbara Ann Porte was one of six winners in the Arlington County Moving Word poetry competition, sponsored by several Virginia state agencies. Winning poems are posted on all county buses from April, which is National Poetry Month, through the fall, and winning poets participated in a reading on April 21 in Rosslyn, VA.

Rabbit in the Moon, by Deborah Shlian and Joel Shlian, received the 2008 Gold Medal, Genre Fiction, for the Florida Book Award, cosponsored by the Florida State University Program in American & Florida Studies and several Florida-based institutions to recognize the best Florida literature published in the previous year. The awards were presented at a ceremony in Tallahassee on March 25.

The Lifetime television movie made of Sue William Silverman's memoir, Love Sick: One Woman's Journey Through Sexual Addiction, was nominated for two PRISM Awards, one for Best TV Movie and one for Sally Pressman, for Best Performance. The PRISM awards are sponsored by the Entertainment Industries Council.

Elizabeth Spencer has been chosen by the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters for a 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award, which will be presented at the 30th annual awards banquet in June in Laurel, MS.

Elizabeth Strout received the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for Olive Kitteridge. The Pulitzers were awarded at a ceremony in May in New York City.

Come on Shore and We Will Kill and Eat You All, by Christina Thompson, has been shortlisted for the Douglas Stewart Prize, the New South Wales Premier's Literary Award for nonfiction. The winner will receive $40,000.

Frederick C. Wootan was inducted into the Hall of Achievement by Bishop Fenwick High School in Franklin, OH, in recognition of his career in business, his teaching, and his writing accomplishments.

Tobias Wolff was awarded the Story Prize and $20,000 for Our Story Begins. The award was announced and presented at a ceremony in New York City on March 4.

From the President
Continued from page 4

I wrote an op-ed column about all this for the New York Times. Before the week was out, Amazon had announced that it would allow publishers (no mention of authors) to withhold audio rights from Kindle 2.

The Web lit up again. Outrage! In fact, Kindle 2's audio function was still in place, but the notion took hold that the Guild had stripped it off, as Gothic romance villains do (or so I am told) to bodices. Amazon had wilted under pressure from the greedy bullying Guild. Bloggers called me all sorts of names, my favorite being "that impeccable prick"—sort of dashing, really, in an oxymoronic sort of way. "Why Roy Blount Jr. Is Evil" was one posting's title. I had never been called such things by strangers.
The National Federation of the Blind was insulted by the notion that blind people should have to be certifiedly blind to get Kindle 2’s audio for free. This left them the option of paying for it like everybody else, but the NFB wanted everybody to have it gratis. The NFB pulled together something it called the Reading Rights Coalition, representing “15 million Americans who cannot read print because of blindness, dyslexia, spinal cord injury, and other print disabilities.” Kindle 2 could help dyslexic people learn to read. It could also be a godsend for people whose injuries or dystrophy kept them from holding a book up and stationary.

A good opportunity for the Guild and others to get together and work out new arrangements—perhaps even put some pressure on Amazon to develop Kindles that people with reading disabilities could use independently. The Guild’s track record, after all, oozes good faith. Our class-action suit against Google’s scanning of copyrighted books led not to acrimony but to negotiations with Google and publishers and libraries, resulting (pending court approval) in a historic good-for-everybody settlement praised by the National Federation of the Blind.

But the Reading Rights Coalition preferred, at that point, to rage and confront. Some 200 people speaking for a spectrum of reading disabilities traveled to New York by bus on April 7 to picket the offices of the Guild and shout accusations that the Guild was being discriminatory by wanting the blind, but not the general public, to have free access to text-to-speech.

I live mostly in Massachusetts, and do not hang out at the Guild offices. A big part of your president’s job involves not getting in the way of the people who are doing all the work. Word was, though, that I was to be hanged in effigy, and I didn’t want to miss that, so I spent most of April 7 at Guild headquarters.

It was disappointing. Because of the angle from the 7th floor, we couldn’t see the demonstration, except for flickery reflections in windows across the street. We couldn’t make out what they were chanting, either. I listened to a live podcast the coalition had going, but it didn’t capture the chants either. It did report that I had sent a message to the NFB’s website, “We’re not quaking in our boots,” or perhaps “. . . in our books,” but that, though true enough, was a fabrication, as was a later message to the website, also supposedly from me, that said something like, “We’ve beaten Amazon. The case is closed for me,” which wasn’t even true.

I didn’t get hanged, dang it. I had a nice tuna fish sandwich with the Guild staff and spent most of the day Googling up research on the movie I am writing a book about: Duck Soup. Groucho plays Rufus T. Firefly, who is given command of a nation, Freedonia, that is going broke. He sings, dances, insults people and starts an extremely amusing war. Some presidents have all the fun.

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**Bulletin Board**

**Awards and Fellowships**

The Ohio Arts Council supports Ohio-based creative artists, including fiction and nonfiction writers, poets, playwrights, screenplay writers, and critics, with Individual Excellence Awards of $5,000 and $10,000. Applicants must have lived in Ohio continuously for one year before the September 1, 2009 deadline and remain an Ohio resident for the term of the award. The application requirements and list of supporting materials are outlined at oac.state.oh.us/Grantsprogs. Ohio Arts Council, 727 E. Main Street, Columbus, OH 43205, (614) 466-2613.

The Christopher Isherwood Foundation is offering annual Fellowships for Fiction Writing to novelists and Isherwood scholars. The fellowship carries a $3,000 prize, and is meant to allow fiction writers time for writing and/or research. The foundation also offers two scholarly grants of $4,000 each. For application requirements, visit isherwoodfoundation.org or e-mail james@isherwoodfoundation.org. Applications will be accepted between September 1 and September 30, 2009. James White, Christopher Isherwood Foundation, 1708 21st Avenue South, #301, Nashville, TN 37212.

Applications are being accepted for the Alicia Patterson Foundation fellowships. The foundation will award five to seven $20,000 or $40,000 grants to full-time print journalists, including both U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens who work full-time for U.S. print publications, either in America or abroad. Guidelines and application forms are available at aliciapatterson.org/APF_Application/APF_Application.html. Deadline: October 1, 2009. For more information, visit aliciapatterson.org, call (202) 393-5995, or e-mail info@aliciapatterson.org. The Alicia Patterson Foundation, 1025 F Street N.W., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20004.
Each year, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation provides fellowships to assist writers and other artists in research and creative projects. Grant amounts vary. Applications for 2010 are available online at gf.org or write to The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, 90 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016. The deadline for residents of the United States and Canada is September 15, 2009; the deadline for residents of Latin America and the Caribbean is December 1, 2009.

Multiple Genres

The Bellevue Literary Review offers three annual prizes, the Magliocco Prize for Poetry, the Goldenberg Prize for Fiction, and the Kaplan Prize for Nonfiction, which honor outstanding writing related to themes of health, healing, illness, the mind, and the body. Each winner receives $1,000 and publication in the Spring 2010 issue of the Bellevue Literary Review. Prose entries should be no more than 5,000 words and poetry entries should be no more than three poems (up to five pages). Submissions are made electronically; visit blreview.org/Contest/contest_guidelines.htm for instructions. There is a $15 entry fee (send $20 for a one-year subscription to the journal), also submitted online. Deadline: August 1, 2009. Contact info@BLReview.org with questions.

Cutthroat magazine will accept submissions for the Joy Harjo Poetry Prize and the Rick DeMarinis Short Story Prize between June 15 and October 10, 2009. First place in each genre is $1,250; second prize is $250; both will be published in Cutthroat. All finalists will be acknowledged in Poets & Writers magazine and The Writer’s Chronicle and considered for publication in Cutthroat. Visit cutthroatmag.com for full submission requirements (click on the “Contest” link). There is a $15 fee for each submission and entrants must include a SASE or be disqualified. Cutthroat Literary Awards (specify genre), PO Box 2414, Durango, CO 81302. (970) 903-7914; cutthroatmag@gmail.com.

Fiction Contests

The University of Iowa Press will accept submissions to its Iowa Short Fiction Award and John Simmons Short Fiction Award contests between August 1 and September 30, 2009. Winning manuscripts will be published by the University of Iowa Press under their standard contract. Applicants must not have previously published a volume of prose fiction; authors of a volume of poetry, any work in a language other than English, or those who have self-published a work in a small print run are eligible. Submit a collection of short stories of at least 150 double-spaced pages by mail with an optional cover and/or contents page. The author’s name may appear on every page, but this is not required. There is no reading fee. Iowa Short Fiction Award, Iowa Writers’ Workshop, 507 North Clinton Street, 102 Dey House, Iowa City, IA 52242-1000. uipress.uiowa.edu/authors/iowa-short-fiction.htm

Boston Review will accept entries to its 16th annual Short-Story Contest until October 1, 2009. The winning author will receive $1,500 and publication in the May/June 2010 issue of the journal. To enter, send one previously unpublished story, up to 4,000 words. The author’s name should not appear on the manuscript; include a cover letter with the author’s name, address and phone number. Send a $20 entry fee ($30 for international submissions), which includes a one-year subscription to Boston Review. Short-Story Contest, Boston Review, 35 Medford Street, Suite 302, Somerville, MA 02143. bostonreview.net/about/contest

Fiction Collective Two, or FC2, is sponsoring the Catherine Doctorow Innovative Fiction Prize, which awards $15,000 and publication by FC2, an imprint of the University of Alabama Press. Entrants must have published at least three books of fiction, and submissions may include a collection of short stories, one or more novellas, or a novel of any length. Works previously published in magazines or anthologies may be included, although translations and previously published novels and collections are not eligible. Entries should be consistent with FC2’s mission to publish “fiction considered by America’s largest publishers too challenging, innovative, or heterodox for the commercial milieu.” Visit fc2.org for detailed submission guidelines. There is a reading fee of $25 and entries will be accepted between August 15 and November 1, 2009. FC2 Catherine Doctorow Innovative Fiction Prize, University of Houston—Victoria, School of Arts and Sciences, 3007 N. Ben Wilson, Victoria, TX 77901-5731.

Poetry Contests

The Mississippi Review will accept applications for its 2010 poetry prizes between March 15 and August 1, 2009. The Review will produce full-length (48-64 pages) paperback perfect-bound books for the three winners, which will be packaged as a set for subscribers. Each winner will also receive $1,000 and 100 copies of his or her book. To enter, send no more than 56 pages of poetry with $25 per entry; each entrant will receive a set of the three prize-winning books. Write MR Poetry Series, entrant’s name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and title of the work on the
first page of the manuscript. Mississippi Review Poetry Series, 118 College Drive #5144, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001. (601) 266-4321; rief@mississippireview.com

The Creative Writing department of the California State University, Fresno, holds the annual Philip Levine Prize in Poetry, which includes a $2,000 cash prize, and publication and distribution by Florida-based Anhinga Press of the winning entry. The winner will also receive 25 free copies of the published book. To enter, send a manuscript of original poetry, unpublished in book form, of 48–80 pages, with no more than one poem per page. Do not include the entrant’s name on the manuscript; send two title pages, one with the entrant’s name and contact information and one with the manuscript title. Include an entry fee of $25 for each submission. Bind the manuscript with a binder clip; no staples. Deadline: September 30, 2009. Philip Levine Prize in Poetry, CSUF English Department, 5245 N. Backer Ave., MS PB98, Fresno, CA 93740-8001. csufresno.edu/english/philip_levine/guidelines.shtml; connieh@csufresno.edu

Alice James Books will accept submissions for the Kinereth Gensler Awards until October 1, 2009. Winners receive $2,000 and publication, and serve a three-year term on the Alice James Books Editorial Board. To enter, send manuscripts of 50–70 pages. Individual poems may have been previously published, but not the collection as a whole. Include a table of contents and list of acknowledgments for poems previously published. Entrant’s name, address and phone number should appear on the title page. Send one copy of the manuscript with two copies of the title page, and use a binder clip; do not use staples, folders or printer-bound copies. Include an entry fee of $25. Alice James Books, Kinereth Gensler Awards, 238 Main Street, Farmington, ME 04938. alicejamesbooks.org/KG.html

Submissions will be accepted for the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prizes until October 17, 2009. Prizes ranging from $1,000 to as much as $25,000 will be awarded for the finest lyric poems celebrating the human spirit, and the contest is open to all writers who are under the age of 40 as of November 6, 2009. To enter, send one to three previously unpublished poems, each on a separate sheet, with only one poem, if any, exceeding 30 lines. Send two copies of each entry with your name, address, phone number and e-mail address on each page of one copy only. Include a $10 entry fee and an index card with the same information, as well as the titles of all submitted poems. Visit dorothyprized.org for more details. Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prizes, PO Box 2306, Orinda, CA 94563.

The Hollis Summers Poetry Prize, sponsored by Ohio University Press, will award a cash prize of $1,000 and publication by the press. To enter, send an unpublished manuscript of 60 to 95 pages in final form, with the author’s name, address and phone number on the title page. Include acknowledgments on a separate page and a $20 fee. For full submission guidelines, visit ohiojswallow.com/poetry_prize. Deadline: October 31, 2009. Hollis Summers Poetry Prize, Ohio University Press, 19 Circle Drive, The Ridges, Athens, OH 45701.

Three (fraught) Little Words: “I’m a Writer”
Continued from page 11

“Uh huh,” I said. I should not have added, in an attempt to bond (as one must with a mechanic, however dour), that Annie Proulx sends me to the dictionary, and which newspapers supposedly have good sports-writers. He was still ticked off about my gummy oil cap and big words.

What I never have a chance to explain is that “I’m a writer” is basically a job description. It is not meant as affirmation that I am either a good writer or a successful one, however success is defined. It means that I sit a lot and write. True, it implies publication. One of my favorite old New Yorker cartoons involved two men at a party, one saying to the other, “No, I haven’t been published, but I have been professionally typed.”

Sometimes, responses to The Answer to the Question have been ego-buoying. Some questioners have read my work, a thrill to me, of course. Other questioners follow up by asking what I have written instead of using the three little words as a springboard for talking about themselves. When this happens (women ask much more often than men do) I happily prattle on about past books and what I’m working on now (an oral history of Native Americans about contemporary life, yes, thanks, Rutgers University Press, oh, a Passamaquoddy in Maine and an Ojibwe in Minnesota, and a Navajo medicine man, among others, but I have to get to Oklahoma, and gee, you’re right, funding is such a huge challenge I’ve considered hanging out at fancy Santa Fe galleries and looking for white guys sporting much turquoise and seeing if they’d like to donate to my book), but at some point, after not that much prattling, I always add, “So, what do you do?”

Writers love to ask questions, if given the opportunity.  ♦
Annual Meeting

Continued from page 10

pressed concern about the impact of the bill’s passage as currently drafted and is prepared to voice these concerns again should it be reintroduced this term.

Sidney Offit, President of the Authors Guild Foundation, provided a brief report on the Foundation and the upcoming Authors Guild Benefit dinner and its honoree, Dave Eggers. He also reported on the completion of a survey, funded by the Foundation and carried out last year, on the economic condition of the American writer, the results of which will be reported in the Summer Bulletin.

Ms. Constantine then gave an update on the freelance class-action suit, which the Guild and others brought several years ago against Lexis-Nexis and others over the unauthorized use of freelance articles, including both registered and unregistered articles. On November 29, 2007, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled that the district court had no jurisdiction over the unregistered articles and refused to approve the settlement. The Guild disagreed with this decision and sought a review by the Supreme Court. In March the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case next term, an unusual and promising development.

Mr. Aiken then discussed the Kindle 2, Amazon’s e-book reader, which features a text-to-speech function that allows the text of any e-book to be read aloud by the Kindle. The Guild and others in the industry interpreted this as a contractual issue, pointing out that most trade publishing contracts do not grant the right to add audio to an e-book, and any multimedia version of a book often requires approval from the author. Most contracts state this specifically, and there are even some contracts stating clearly that e-books must be sold without audio enhancement (the Guild has found just one case of a major publisher that grants the right to add machine-generated audio). The Guild made these arguments publicly following the release of the Kindle 2, most notably in a New York Times op-ed by Roy Blount. In response to pressure by authors and publishers, Amazon reversed its policy, announcing that it was working on technology that will allow publishers to turn off the text-to-speech function. This is expected to happen soon.

A Guild member attending the meeting asked whether writer-President Barack Obama had been invited to join the Guild. He had in fact been asked when still a Senator, but didn’t respond. Following a short discussion, a motion that the Council approach leading politicians who are also writers and ask them to join or accept honorary membership in the Guild was made and passed.

Mr. Blount and Mr. Aiken then called for the voting results. The proxy votes had already been recorded by the tellers and inspectors. The total number of votes was 1,067, and the proposed slate was passed.

One new Council member was elected to the board, Meg Wolitzer. Ms. Wolitzer is the author of eight novels, including The Ten-Year Nap (2008), The Position (2005) and The Wife (2003). She has taught creative writing at the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop, Skidmore College, the University of Houston and Columbia University, among others.

After asking whether there was any new business and receiving no answers in the affirmative, Mr. Blount adjourned the meeting.

Authors Guild Interview

Continued from page 8

you were only looking for books you’d pay a million dollars for, you would have overlooked that.

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle is a better example. I think the advance on that was under $300,000, and it sold a million copies. If you went through your list and said, We’re going to cut out all advances under $300,000 because we’re only going to pay for blockbusters from now on, you wouldn’t have bought that book. You wouldn’t have that book—the world wouldn’t have that book—you wouldn’t have the cachet of having published that book, and you wouldn’t have the money you made.

It sounds like we’re still in the wait-and-see stage when it comes to the long-term impact of the recession.

These big celebrity books that they paid a lot of money for lately are going to come out a year from now, when the market might be different. I wouldn’t want to be publishing a book today that I paid $3 million for a year and a half ago. Nothing is selling these days. Many, many things are not selling that might have sold two years ago. So if you paid $100,000 you may be losing money, but if you paid $1 million you’re really screwed.

Small presses have a different business model.

Small presses are in better shape, for two reasons. One, they are not able to overspend on these big books.
They don’t take on that enormous risk. And, as big publishers are turning away from buying the smaller books, those smaller books are being shopped to the smaller and medium-size publishers, so they have a better pool to choose from.

*What is the most exciting thing happening in publishing right now?*

I’d like to think that people would embrace the changes and be less afraid of them than they are. Among authors and agents, there is a fear that electronic books are going to ruin the business. I think they may open the business up, that people who don’t read, people who are not traditional book readers but who have grown up on the Internet and are used to reading on screens, will buy books they wouldn’t go into a bookstore and buy; that if they can get them online, they’ll buy them. There are a lot of possibilities for an upside, assuming that publishers, retailers, agents and authors can get it together in terms of rights. This notion that some authors have, that publishing an e-book is the death of their book and the death of writing, just isn’t true. It’s a distribution system, and the business needs to figure out how people should get paid appropriately for their material, in the form that it’s in, but to try to stop progress and assume that this progress is bad news is really self-defeating. But that’s an unpopular opinion.

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**Letters**

*Continued from page 2*

Jason Epstein’s “literary jukebox” finally appears (“Dreaming Big with a Small Machine,” Winter 2009), after allowing some years for frustrated users to work out its kinks, I expect I’ll make use of it.

Will I have a choice? What I found objectionable in 1995 I find ignorant and irresponsible now: The aggrieved tone of technologists who believe that their technology, unlike any previously invented, arrives with no downsides, and that anyone who asks questions is a troglodyte. As I wrote in 1995, “For possibly the first time in the history of technology, might we pause to consider: What’s the baby? What’s the bathwater? Do we [writers and readers] want all these changes that will make so much money for someone else, somewhere else? Are they good for our families, our communities, our culture?”

Friedlander makes the argument better than I. He searches the Net to discover that his role model is dead. “I found [Donald] McKenzie, mourned him, and revisited Brideshead in about three minutes.” So it goes for our honored dead—and everything else—in the age of the ‘Net.

Fenton Johnson
Tucson, AZ

Having once worked for a corporate entity interested in “publishing frontlist/bestsellers,” I am particularly warmed by Jason Epstein’s views, long held.

There is no question that backlist, plant costs paid off, print costs rational per unit, are what have historically made publishing a plausible business. There’s no boom and bust if the quality is maintained and the cost of selling is not inflated by “overhead.” Compare that to the bundle spent to promote and advertise current titles, much of it nonsense, despite being peddled for an unreasonable price.

Many moons ago I proposed buying the then available Everyman’s list for the U.S. market. A backlist dream, an identifiable quality, a nearly plantless backlist! Alas, the dictum of the day—publish bestsellers—subverted the notion and the money that would have bought a sound long-term investment. The 30-day wonders that were financed instead are not memorable, by and large—nor were their 30 days in the sun. As the late Kurt Vonnegut would say, And so it goes. And so it does.

Richard McDonough
Irvine, CA

**Legal Watch**

*Continued from page 13*

102 minutes. As such, the court ruled that his presence in the film was fleeting at best, and indeed might well be overlooked since he was visible only because he sat next to Ndour. Accordingly, the court concluded that no direct or substantial connection could be established between the use of Diokhane’s image and the main purpose of either the film as a whole or the scene at issue. Diokhane’s lawsuit was dismissed.

—Michael Gross
CONTRACTS Q&A
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Residuary estate”—i.e., that part of your property that was not bequeathed to anyone specifically.) If someone else—your “literary executor”—is to have joint or controlling authority on decisions involving your writings, that should be specified in the will. Care should also be taken to clarify that his or her authority will continue even after the will has been settled.

So first decide what you would want your literary executor to do if you had one. Then consider 1) whether the person to whom you are bequeathing your copyrights (specifically or as part of your residuary estate) will be able to handle those tasks, either by herself or with the assistance of a literary agent, or 2) whether there is a need for a new person, typically one with both literary and business sophistication, to be involved. If you choose the latter and appoint a literary executor, then determine and specify who you want to make the important decisions—your literary executor or the beneficiary of your copyrights and, if you say both, whose opinion controls if they disagree.

E-mail questions to QandAColumn@authorsguild.org. Questions are often edited for readability or to make them more broadly applicable.

The answers in this column are general in nature only and may not include exceptions to a general rule or take into account related facts that may result in a different answer. You should consult a lawyer for information about a particular situation. No question submitted, or answer provided, creates an attorney-client relationship with the column’s author.

Censorship Watch
Continued from page 14

sexuality) in Dubai even as she chalked the brouhaha up to an “excellent publicity campaign being run by Penguin which will no doubt increase sales of [The Gulf Between Us] and we wish Ms. Bedell the very best.”

Meanwhile, shortly after her initial boycott, Margaret Atwood announced that she would participate in the festival only via videoconference, as part of a February 28 panel on censorship sponsored by PEN in response to the controversy. She said she didn’t learn until after her boycott announcement had been made that the book—which wouldn’t even be published until April 2009—hadn’t been banned in the United Arab Emirates let alone throughout the Islamic world, and might never have been included in the festival program. Atwood spoke with Abulhoul by phone, and heard the director’s explanation that Penguin’s request to launch the book was reasonably denied in light of the fact that Bedell is a “little-known writer who would not ordinarily be accorded that kind of slot. [Abulhoul] asked to see the manuscript. On the basis of that, she passed.” Atwood openly wondered if she’d charged into the anticensorship fray too quickly. Maybe Bedell was invited and uninvited from the festival, but maybe she wasn’t, said Atwood. Maybe there are more twists and turns to the story. Atwood felt further discussion at the festival was warranted: “Books are seriously ‘banned’ and ‘censored’

around the world, and people have been imprisoned, murdered and executed for what they’ve written. A loose use of these terms is not helpful.”

Fair enough.

Suicide Bunnies Survive. After months of uncertainty, The Book of Bunny Suicides by Andy Riley is finally back on the shelves of the Central Linn High School in Brownsville, Ore. The cartoon book, subtitled Little Fluffy Rabbits Who Just Don’t Want to Live Any More, is a bestseller that’s produced a sequel (Return of the Bunny Suicides), a collected edition (The Bumper Book of Bunny Suicides), and a variety of other merchandise including calendars and postcard books.

Each work in the series features content true to its name—line drawings of adorable fluff-ball rabbits in the process of committing suicide. The suicide bunnies attempt to kill themselves in a variety of elaborate ways—toasting themselves in a toaster, standing next to a dynamite-rigged Leaning Tower of Pisa, smoking half a dozen cigarettes all at once, huddling underneath the exhaust jets of a soon-to-launch space shuttle—that are just as likely to go wrong as they are to go right. There’s no blood or gore, just pages of dark but goofy sight gags. It’s supposed to be funny. Silly funny. Cute bunnies trying to off themselves by aiming a slingshot at a beehive? C’mon, funny.

But, one Brownsville mother, Taffey Anderson, wasn’t laughing. When her 13-year-old son brought home a copy of The Book of Bunny Suicides from the high school library, Anderson failed to see humor in the cartoons. Instead, she threatened to burn the book rather than return it to the school. When interviewed by the local paper, the Albany Democrat-Herald,
Anderson attempted to explain her objection to the book: “I saw poor bunnies going through meat grinders; people, like, throwing them in there and they’re getting shot out. People in Nazi helmets, and there’s a bunny, and they’re shooting him.” Except none of the cartoons depict unwilling bunnies being thrown into meat grinders against their will. That would be murder, not suicide. And no Nazis are executing cartoon rabbits. Instead, the world-weary bunny stands in the midst of a line of jackbooted Nazi officers; while they offer up Hitler salutes, the bunny throws up a peace sign. Clearly suicide, not murder. Anderson went on to say, “They’re not getting this book back,” and if a replacement were purchased or donated, “I’ll have somebody else check it out and I’ll keep that one. I’m just disgusted by the whole ordeal.” Anderson eventually reversed her position and returned the book. Failure to surrender it would have ended her son’s library circulation privileges.

In response to a written complaint submitted by Anderson last October, the Brownsville school board removed the book from circulation pending a decision on its ultimate fate. A December 2008 vote on a motion to permanently remove the book ended in a 3–3 tie, but a January 2009 vote to reinstate the book passed 5–1. During the months it took for the school board to return the book to the library shelves, protests streamed in from various sources including the ACLU.
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