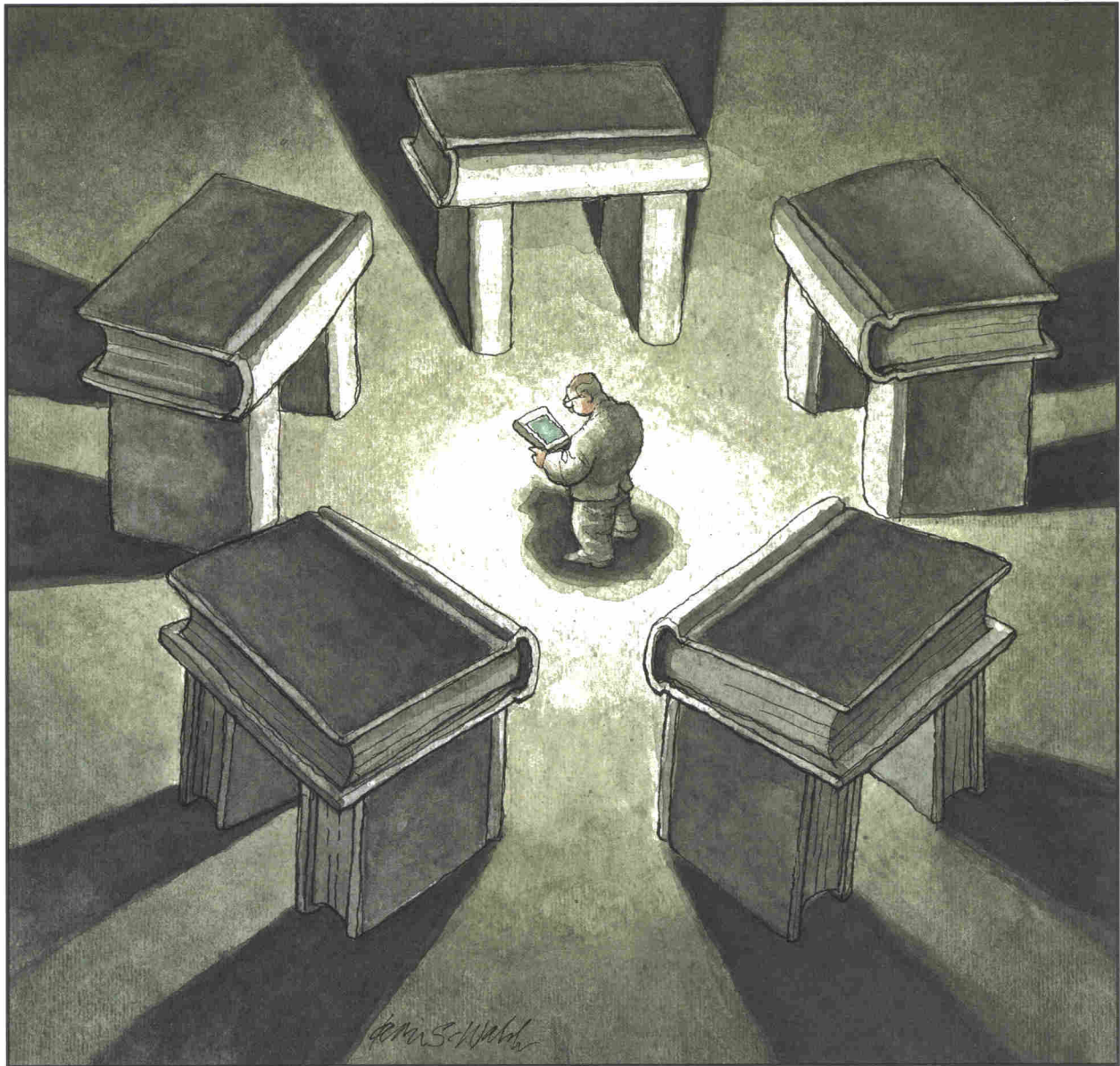


AUTHORS GUILD

Spring 2009 **BULLETIN**



Can This Industry be Saved?

AAR Symposium: The Future of Publishing

Sara Nelson: Keeping Calm in Changing Times

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

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

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 "crabbiness" 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

Continued on page 49

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."

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 I*, 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?"

Continued on page 30