

Biblio File

Blue Balliett writes to say, “I have a new manuscript – filled with subversive but intriguing ideas – that I’m excited about. I think it’s probably an adult book, unlike the seven mysteries published by Scholastic Books. I can’t believe it, but



Blue Balliett

my first MG/YA novel, *Chasing Vermeer*, came out back in 2004.” ... Midland Authors Corresponding Secretary **Jon K. Lauck** was appointed as the next executive director of the Center

for Western Studies effective Aug. 20. The center, which is based at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, serves as a repository for more than 500 substantive archival collections and maintains a library in excess of 37,000 volumes on the American West. ... **Richard Babcock’s** *A Small*

Disturbance on the Far Horizon (See Literary Latest, November, 2025), which is set in Nevada, was named a Southwest Book of the Year by Tucson’s Pima County Library. ...

Norbert Krapf recently sent in a manuscript for a book about Emily Dickinson.



Kevin Davis

... **Robert Marovich’s** article “CeCe Winans Revisits the Simple Power of Worship Music” was published in the July 9 New York Times. ... **Kevin Davis** writes to say, “I’m thrilled to announce that I’ve signed with Steerforth Press to publish my next book, *Fractured Minds*:



Jon Lauck

... **Robert Marovich’s** article “CeCe Winans Revisits the Simple Power of Worship Music” was published in the July 9 New York Times. ... **Kevin Davis** writes to say, “I’m thrilled to announce that I’ve

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Fine weather brings out crowds for Printers Row



Amelia Cotter displays her books on Sept. 21 in the Midland Authors tent at the 2026 Printers Row Lit Fest. Sara Shacter is at left. (Photo by Kim Scipes)

BY LITERARY LICENSE STAFF

The Printers Row Lit Fest went very well this year. The crowds seemed much bigger, younger and more energetic than in years past. We had a few sprinkles for about 45 minutes on Sunday afternoon but that blew over, and activities kicked back into gear.

Of the rain, **Patricia Skalka** said, “When the drizzle started, we pulled the

tables in to protect the books. A man sought shelter by **Mary’s [Wisniewski’s]** table and then saw her display. ‘I came in to get out of the rain,’ he said. ‘And then I saw *Algren: A Life* (the title of Mary’s book), and now I have to buy a book.’ Which he did!

“In the past, I’ve done both days of the event and then stepped back to just doing

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Members’ New Books

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Frightening Therapies, False Memories and the Making of the Satanic Panic. The book tells the story of Dr. Bennett Braun and a group of psychiatrists in Chicago who helped create and fuel one of the most preposterous myths in modern medical history – that their patients, mostly women, were afflicted with multiple personality disorder, and had been involved in satanic cults that murdered babies, committed sexual assault and took part in cannibalism during secret rituals. The story has deep Chicago connections, as Braun was the head of the psychiatric unit at Rush-Presbyterian St. Luke's Hospital (now Rush). The book deal was brokered by Lukas Ortiz and Anne-Lise Spitzer of the Philip G. Spitzer Literary Agency. Chip Fleischer, senior editor at Steerforth and Adam Freudenheim, publisher of London-based Pushkin Press, Steerforth's parent company, bought world English rights. Publication date is summer 2028. ... **David Radavich** tells Biblio File, "My poem, 'Bunker

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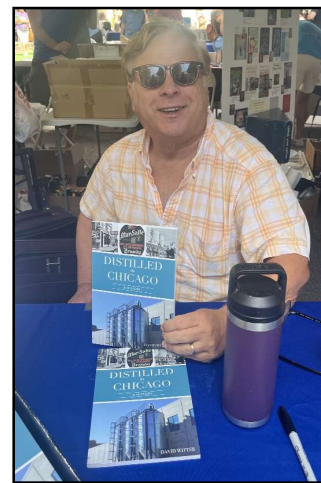
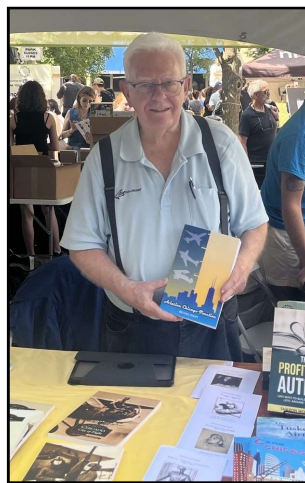
Society of Midland Authors members can pay their membership dues, buy tickets to the annual dinner and make donations on our website with PayPal (there is a \$1 fee to help cover PayPal's fee). To make a donation, visit our home page at www.midlandauthors.org and click on the "Donate" button in the upper right corner.

Printers Row

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Mary Wisniewski (center) chats with Printers Row Lit Fest attendees at the Midland Authors tent. (Photo by Patricia Skalka)



LEFT: Patrick Reardon at the 2026 Printers Row Lit Fest (Photo by Alex Poppe). CENTER: Michael Haupt (Photo by David Witter). RIGHT: Midland Authors Vice President David Witter. (Photo by Walter Podrazik)

Saturday. I always thought Sunday was the slower day and didn't expect to sell many books this year since I was there on Sunday. To my surprise, I sold 30 books – 20 of which were *Death Stalks Door County*, which is Book One of the Dave Cubiak Door County mystery series. Printers Row is always a good day for introducing new readers to a series!"

All the books left over from the Midland Authors book awards ceremony in May were given away to grateful attendees. That generated publicity and good-

will for Midland Authors. Plus, Midland Authors got two sheets of new email signees.

Even the 4 p.m.-to-6 p.m. time slots were filled on both days. Those slots have never been filled up by Midland Author exhibitors (or other exhibitors, for that matter). **Greg Borzo** said, "I think they are all missing an opportunity. After 17 years in a row exhibiting at Lit Fest, I can tell you that those time slots do surprisingly well."

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■ Printers Row

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Patricia Skalka and Susan Blumberg-Kason at the Midland Authors tent at the 2026 Printers Row. (Photo by Mary Wisniewski)



ABOVE: Greg Borzo chats with a Printers Row Lit Fest attendee. (Photo by Walter Podrazik)
ABOVE RIGHT: Sara Shacter (Photo by Walter Podrazik)
RIGHT: Sara Shacter, Thomas Thorson, Marlene Targ Brill and Michael Haupt. (Photo by Walter Podrazik)



“Many buyers walk around for hours before making their final purchasing decisions,” Borzo added. “Also, the few exhibitors staying until the end of the festival have much less competition for customers. And they are able to spread out a bit on the available tables.”

“Meanwhile, fewer potential customers made it easier to chat with those who did stop by the tent. I sold seven books in the last hour on Sunday, not my best hour, but worth waiting for. Those buyers thanked me for sticking around and were eager to talk about their other purchases and some Lit Fest sessions they had attended.”

“At Lit Fest, it’s not only the early bird that gets the worm.”

Sara Shacter said, “A family came by the booth and said they owned a copy of the picture book I was selling: *Just So Willow*. Apparently, their kids attend a school where I had done a school visit and they had purchased the book then. The mom told me that just the night before, the boys picked my book as their bedtime story. That made my day!”

Amelia Cotter said, “With the weather being so lovely, it was a great turnout, and probably the biggest crowd I’ve ever seen there.”

“I met a Japanese woman whose mother is interested in haiku in English. I write, and am known for, mostly spooky books, but my other writing passion is haiku, of all things! So I was super excited she just happened to mention this. We had a great conversation, and she and her

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Marlene Targ Brill (left), Greg Borzo and Amelia Cotter. (Photo by Walter Podrazik)



Katie Frendreis sells her books on Sept. 12 at the 2026 Printers Row Lit Fest. (Photo by Michael Rizzuto)



Alex Poppe displays her books at the 2026 Printers Row Lit Fest. (Photo by Kim Scipes)

friend both ended up buying copies of my poetry book. She even wrote out my name in Japanese, in both katakana and hiragana styles, for me. It was super cool."

Marlene Targ Brill said, "The best part for me was meeting lots of nice people and people-watching, some in costume, some with multi-colored hair and others with great T-shirts. What an assortment of humanity came, and they all must love books."



LEFT: Michael Haupt chats with attendees at the 2026 Printers Row Lit Fest (Photo by Walter Podrazik). RIGHT: Patricia Skalka talks books with an attendee.



Literary Latest

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Chicago's dangerous criminal vice districts over a 50-year period spanning 1870-1920. He holds Mayors Carter Harrison I and Harrison II – and their corrupt City Council allies within the ascendant Democratic Machine – primarily responsible for allowing this type of criminality to endure, along with the



Richard Lindberg

unstoppable spread of venereal disease. He also examines the endemic violence and physical abuse against brothel women by a criminal cabal of vice overseers. City officials allowed victims' drug addiction and fre-

quent murders to flourish as the system slowly devolved into what was destined to become Chicago's enduring 125-year-old traditional organized crime family in the 1920s, which today known as the "Outfit." In its closing years, the "Levee" launched the most famous criminal hang-on of them all, Al Capone, who commenced his deadly reign in 1919.



'MASTERFULLY BROUGHT TO LIFE'

Joseph Gustaitis' new book is *Chicago's Art Deco Skyscrapers* (University of Chicago Press, Oct, 19, 2026).

Gustaitis tells Literary Latest, "The idea of writing a book on Chicago's Art Deco skyscrapers came to me when I was working on my book *Jazz Age Chicago*. Art Deco, I discovered, was 'the last of the total styles' in that it was applied to

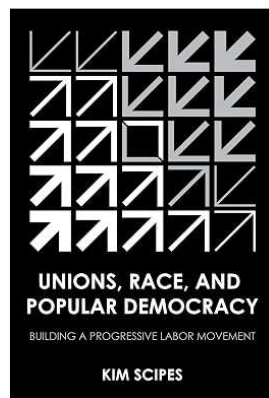
so many things – kitchen appliances, locomotives, magazine covers, jewelry and, of course, skyscrapers. And although in the 1920s and 1930s Chicago architects were the very best at this groundbreaking style, many of their achievements seemed to me to be underappreciated. You can see some fabulous drone photos on my website: josephgustaitis.com."

The book, Midland Authors Board Member **Dominic Pacyga** wrote, "is a fascinating look at an important phase of the city's legendary architectural history. Gustaitis' approach is that of a careful historian as he presents not only the architectural history of these buildings but also gives the reader a wider look at the era in which these graceful structures transformed the Chicago skyline."



Joseph Gustaitis

Midland Authors Treasurer **Greg Borzo** wrote, "In a scant six years, Chicago added 20 Art Deco skyscrapers to its world-class skyline, creating some of the city's most striking buildings. Gustaitis masterfully brings them to life and shows how these towers are not only beautiful but also reflect an era of optimism and modernity."



IN-DEPTH LOOK AT LABOR HISTORY

Kim Scipes' new book is *Unions, Race, and Popular Democracy: Building a Progressive Labor Movement* (ILR Press, Aug. 15).

(ILR— Industrial and Labor Relations Press – is the publishing division of the ILR School at Cornell University.)

Scipes tells Literary Latest, "This book provides an in-depth look at labor history in Chicago and Northwest Indiana (the

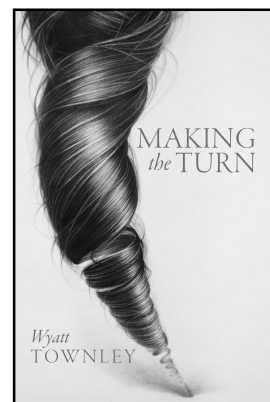


Kim Scipes

Calumet Region) between 1933-1955, through a comparative historical study of the processes of unionization in the steel and meatpacking industries, and how each union addressed white supremacy and racism.

The labor organizations took radically different approaches. The steelworkers ignored this issue, while the packinghouse workers directly attacked it: In 1939, in racist, segregated Chicago, out of 14 local packinghouse unions, eight were headed by African Americans!

"This also provides labor activists today with some lessons learned in the earlier period."



'IN THE MIDST OF THE SWIRL'

Wyatt Townley writes to say, "This fall, I'll have a new book of poems out called *Making the Turn* from Lost Horse Press (best known for its award-winning translations of Ukrainian poetry). I am proud to be their American poet. The cover art is by the remarkable Hong Chun Zhang.



Wyatt Townley

"For me the joy of writing poetry is process, being in the midst of the swirl. I'm a slow writer, revising endlessly, so

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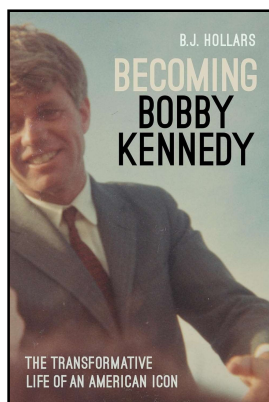
Literary Latest

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my gestation period for a poem or a book is longer than most mammals. Making the *Turn* took eight years to emerge, after many versions, upheavals and rearrangements.

"It finally found its center on the theme of 'turning,' in part due to my collaboration with the witty and profound Chinese artist Hong Chun Zhang. The word 'turn' is something of a passion for me, not just as a poet surprised by a poem's volta, but also as a former dancer. It all comes down to physics.

"Life is full of turning points – big and small, public and private. The book explores the curves, swerves and U-turns on life's unfurling paths. Its sections include 'Turning Back,' 'Downturn,' 'Turnaround,' 'Lectern,' 'Nocturne' and 'Return,' each punctuated with images by Hong Chun Zhang. Turning points deserve recognition, and are themselves in flux. Turning away becomes turning around, leaving becomes returning, and revolution becomes revelation."



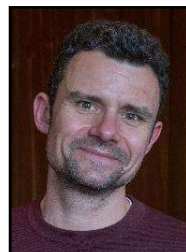
'A FIRST-RATE GUIDE'

B.J. Hollars, a 2026 Midland Authors Bernard Brommel Award for Biography and Memoir honoree, has a new book coming out: *Becoming Bobby Kennedy: The Transformative Life of an American Icon* (Potomac Books, Nov. 1, 2026).

Hollars writes to say, "*Becoming Bobby Kennedy* grew out of an earlier book I wrote about the Kennedy family. For three years, I researched and wrote about JFK's experience in the Wisconsin

primary – a make-or-break contest that would have forced Kennedy to withdraw from the race had he lost.

"During that research, I came across a brief mention of Bobby Kennedy walking through a Wisconsin blizzard after his train was stopped in its tracks. According to the story, he walked several miles in dress shoes to reach Eau Claire, Wisconsin – the city I now call home. I remember thinking: What kind of person walks through the snow just to help get his brother elected? The answer, of course, was someone like Bobby Kennedy.



B.J. Hollars

"Further research confirmed that RFK's blizzard walk was among his tamer adventures.

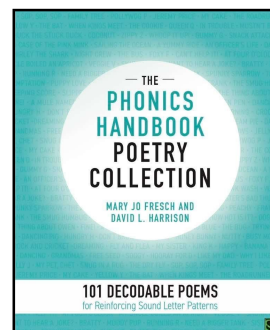
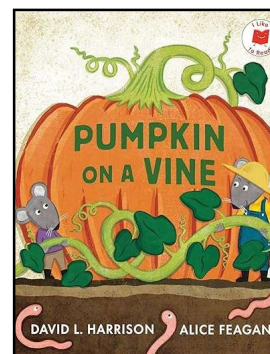
"He once walked 50 miles in a single day simply to prove that he could. He befriended a newly orphaned boy on the Pine Ridge Reservation and invited him to live at Hickory Hill. He swam with piranhas in an offshoot of the Amazon River. He pushed his way into working mines to understand the hardships faced by miners. He fought to feed starving people in eastern Kentucky and advocated for the impoverished residents of the Mississippi Delta when few other politicians seemed to care.

"All of this led me to wonder: How could a silver-spooned man, born into extraordinary privilege, devote so much of his time and attention to those with the least?

"RFK was undoubtedly a lightning rod. But at his best, I believed he still had much to teach us about America today. And that's how the book was born."

Midland Authors member **Ray Boomhower** wrote, "President John F. Kennedy once observed that what made journalism and history so enthralling for readers came from the work required to answer an essential question: 'What's he like?'"

"In *Becoming Bobby Kennedy*, B.J. Hollars has deftly attempted to answer that question for a man who represented different things to different people. It is a fascinating journey, and Hollars is a first-rate guide."



TWO NEW BOOKS

David L. Harrison has two new books, *Pumpkin on a Vine* (Holiday House, Sept. 6, 2026) and *The Phonics Handbook Poetry Collection: 101 Decodable Poems for Reinforcing Sound Letter Patterns* (Routledge, July 21, 2026).

David writes to say, "In 2019, I received a note from Terrell Young, professor of children's literature and literacy at Brigham Young University in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was working with Amy White, who taught kindergarten in Salt Lake City, and wondered if I had in my files a pumpkin poem that Amy's kids could act out. I didn't. But we have been friends for a long time. I decided to write a pumpkin poem for him. Terrell liked the poem and shared it with Amy. She liked it and shared it with her kids. Her kids had fun acting out the scenes described in the poem. Amy sent me pictures and a lovely note.

"Encouraged by Amy's enthusiasm, I submitted the poem to a publisher. The editor liked it but couldn't find a spot for it. I tried a few other houses without success and set the poem aside. After Jane



David L. Harrison

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Yolen and I published *Rum Pum Pum* in 2020 (Holiday House), I suggested to her we do a collection of poems about seeds. She liked the idea, so we began taking turns writing poems. For one of mine, I stuck in the pumpkin. That would at least get it in print.

“An editor at one house couldn’t use our submission but picked out the pumpkin poem to do as a book. Big smile from me. The editor practically promised to publish the pumpkin poem, but unfortunately her editorial committee did not approve it. Jane and I kept submitting. At Holiday House, Grace Maccarone said the same thing; couldn’t use the collection but wanted to publish the pumpkin poem. With Jane’s agreement, I removed the pumpkin, replaced it with a new poem about watermelon seeds, and signed a contract with Holiday House to bring out *Pumpkin on a Vine* as an early reader book. Soon after that, Jane and I placed our seed manuscript with Bushel & Peck, and it has a 2028 pub date. It would be the last time that Jane and I worked together.

“In July of this year, I co-authored *The Phonics Handbook Poetry Collection* with Mary Jo Fresch, professor emerita and early literacy authority from The Ohio State University. Kathy Temean featured our book here on her blog. For the last several years, much of my work has been in the field of early literacy, so I was especially pleased when the Kirkus review of *Pumpkin on the Vine* included this statement: Harrison includes many examples for burgeoning readers to hone their phonics skills: four-letter long-vowel words like poke, hole, and seed, as well as diphthongs (shout, sprout) and variant vowels (zoom, pull).

“You can see why I am excited to finally greet my pumpkin poem in person. I love Alice Feagan’s marvelous artwork, how she tells the story right along with me by adding worms and mice to carry the action. That’s what good artists do. That’s why we call these creations picture books. Remember that I wrote this poem for kindergarten kids. It works well for first grade, too, and also for preschool children. Read it aloud with gusto and actions suitable for taking a pole, poking

a hole, planting a seed, pulling a weed, and on. Keep a camera handy and consider recording the fun. Of all the books I’ve done, *Pumpkin on a Vine* is probably the best example of how an idea may twist and turn in unexpected directions before it eventually meets its destiny between the covers of a book.”



HUMOROUS TALE OF FRIENDSHIP

Amos & Ike (Snafu Publications, June 24, 2026) is **Grove Mower’s** latest book.

From the publisher: “*Amos and Ike* is a fast-paced, humorous tale of friendship, discovery and of how much we need one another. Amos is a handyman who can fix anything in life except himself. He is 32 years old and back in the town he grew up in after 18 months in prison and eight long years on the road. Ike Barnes is a 17-year-old wrestling with his father’s death, delayed puberty and a bad attitude. His mother can’t handle him, so she ships him off to a suburb of Chicago where a good friend has offered to take care of Ike by having him work with Amos – their caretaker – for the summer. This appears to be a good idea on paper, but



Grove Mower

Amos is opposed to babysitting this kid – he has enough on his plate getting his life back on track; and Ike, too, balks at washing windows and cleaning pools – he’s a musician, not a flunky monkey.

“Mixed together, Amos and Ike are nitroglycerin, and they soon discover their chemical reaction is explosive (in a good way) as they help each other with redemption, rebellion, and finding love

Amos and Ike is a fast-paced, humorous tale of friendship and discovery and of how much we need one another.”



‘WHERE THE DRAMA IS BORN’

Harry Pinkus’ new book is *Moving Targets* (BQB Publishing, May 26, 2026).

Pinkus tells Literary Latest, “My love of detective stories started in the familiar fashion as it did for so many others: being intrigued by the exploits of Sherlock Holmes stories as a young person, I immediately began trying to figure out the cases before reading the outcome. It set me on the path of being a detective for a good detective story.

“As both my reading and my real experience base expanded, I became acutely aware of how the emotional elements of everyday life intersected everything we do and the people we become. The cases that a private investigator deals with come with heightened amounts of those same elements. I wanted Miles to experience those things as well, both empathetically and personally. That’s where the drama is born.

“*Moving Targets* is the third in my Miles Darien Detective Thriller series. With this installment, I wanted to get into Miles’ emotional side and confront him with personal tragedy and grief and ultimately redemption. Along the way, he solves a number of other cases, each with significant help from a growing cast of friends. It was important to me that he not be a brooding loner like so many others in this genre, but rather someone who has many friends and is truly a friend in return.”

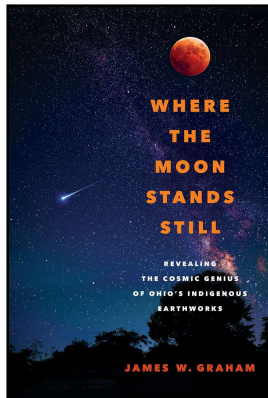


Harry Pinkus

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'I WAS HOOKED'

Where the Moon Stands Still: Revealing the Cosmic Genius of Ohio's Indigenous Earthworks (Ohio State University Press, Sept. 2, 2026) is the latest book by **James W. Graham**.

Graham writes to say, "Living most of my life in Illinois, including Joliet, Ottawa and Wilmette, I've always been fascinated by Native American history and archaeology here in our own area. The presence of mound-building cultures, of still-living trail-marker trees, of the path of Green Bay Road along a former Native American trail, of Starved Rock State Park – all these places bring our Native American heritage to life for me. I've also been fascinated by ancient astronomy, including places like



James W. Graham

Stonehenge. When I learned about little-known earthworks constructed 2,000 years ago on a massive scale in Ohio, pointing to astronomical events, I was hooked.

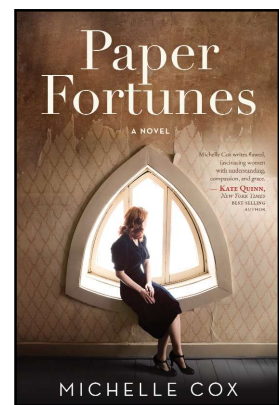
"I was intrigued when I heard the story of two small-town college professors who discovered that the Ohio earthworks mark the complex 18.6-year orbit of the moon. They had no research funding, no training in archaeology, but they had bottomless amounts of intellectual curiosity and simply followed their own path to discovery. They were ignored for many years. I consider their work to be one of the least-known but most important archaeological discoveries in the U.S. of recent decades. Their work helped make possible one of America's newest UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The two men – Ray Hively and Bob Horn – agreed to be interviewed at length, over many visits, and I find their story and the history of the earthworks to be truly epic.

"Nonnative Americans need to work harder at understanding and appreciating our nation's Indigenous past and to learn from it. On the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, which incidentally refers to Indians as 'savages,' we should rededicate ourselves to learning from their culture and to continuing to protect and discover more archaeological sites."

CHARACTER BASED ON REAL PERSON

Michelle Cox's new book is *Paper Fortunes* (Woolton Press, Aug. 25, 2026).

Cox writes to say, "The inspiration for the novel comes from my time working at the Bohemian Home at Foster and Pulaski in the early 1990s. I met a



woman there who became the inspiration for one of the characters in the book, Opal. Much of what happens to her in the book really did happen, including her work in a gumball factory in Chicago, where her job was to insert tiny paper fortunes into the gumballs."

From the publisher: "Chicago, 1937. The Great Depression has tightened its grip on the city, and three women find themselves bound together by the Elizabeth Sullivan Home for Destitute and Degenerate Women – a crumbling Victorian mansion that promises refuge while quietly trading in secrets."



Michelle Cox

You can have info about your new book posted at midlandauthors.org. Members may submit books published within the last six months by emailing **Robert Loerzel** at: midlandauthors.org/members-new-book/

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Thoughts,' won first prize in the Rod Carlos Rodriguez Prize for Poetry Contest. The award comes with a \$250 honorarium and publication in the next issue of Formidable Woman Sanctuary. The final judge was Rod Carlos Rodriguez. Also, my poem, 'Gaza Mother,' recently won first prize in the St.



June Sawyers

Andrew's (Pennsylvania) 2026 Poetry Contest. The award includes an honorarium of \$250 and publication in their special anthology, 'Bearing Witness.' It seems that lightning really does (some-times) strike twice. I'll take it!" ... **June Sawyers** has a new book coming out in

January, *Chicago Coffeehouses: Brewing Community and Connection in the Midwest* (University of Illinois Press). ... In May, **Steve Paul** presided over the annual conference of Biographers International Organization, which attracted nearly 250 authors to the New York proceedings and dozens more online. Steve has entered the last year of his two-term stint as president of BIO. Also, in July, Steve gave a paper at the 21st

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New Members

Alex Poppe, the author of the memoir *Breakfast Wine* (Apprentice House, 2025), *Jinwar and Other Stories* (Cune Press, 2022), *Moxie* (Tortoise Books, 2019), *Duende* (Regal House Publishing, 2022) and *Girl, World* (Laughing Fire Press, 2022) lives near Chicago.

Her writing also has appeared in The New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, Literary Hub, HuffPost, Informed Comment and elsewhere.

Among recognitions for her titles are USA Today best-seller, 2024 American Legacy Book Awards winner, a Booklist starred review and a 2024 Pen Craft Award runner-up in fiction,

Midland Authors Member **Christine Sneed** wrote, “*Breakfast Wine* is an extraordinarily immersive memoir from a writer with a first-class mind. I was struck again and again by Alex Poppe’s insights and her experiences related to the complexities of living abroad as a single



Alex Poppe

woman, in particular, the gender-based hypocrisies and sexual predation (and its apologists) she encountered. This is also a book about finding one’s way in the world as an artist and an intellectual.”

She was nominated by **Michael McColly**.

Timothy E. Shanahan, a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Illinois Chicago, is the author of *Leveled Reading, Leveled Lives: How Students’ Reading Achievement Has Been Held Back and What We Can Do About It* (Harvard Education Press, 2025).

He was director of reading for the Chicago Public Schools and a visiting research professor at Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland. He is the author or editor of more than 300 publications.

He also is a founding director of the UIC Center for Literacy and a past president of the International Literacy



Timothy Shanahan

Association. He was nominated by **Dick Simpson**.

Steven P. Millies, a professor of public theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, is the author of *Joseph Bernardin: Seeking Common Ground* (Liturgical Press, 2016), *Good Intentions: A History of Catholic Voters’ Road from Roe to Trump* (Liturgical Press, 2018), and (Paulist Press, 2024).

At the CTU, he teaches courses in history and Catholic social ethics, and he is the director of The Bernardin Center at the CTU.

He lives in the Chicago suburbs, where he was raised. He is a graduate of Loyola University Chicago, with a B.A. in history.

He taught political science for 15 years in the University of South Carolina system before being appointed a theologian at the CTU.

He also contributes a monthly column to the Religion News Service.

He was nominated by **Dominic Pacyga**.



Steven P. Millies

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Biennial International Conference of the Ernest Hemingway Society in Toronto. His topic: “Inventing the Sentence: How Hemingway Goes Long in Green Hills of Africa.” In addition, Steve’s biography of the Kansas-born poet William Stafford is due for publication in April 2027 from the Oregon State University Press. ... **Milton Nieuwsma** tells Biblio File, “On Nov. 5, I’ll have the honor of hosting ‘An Evening With Thomas Jefferson’ featuring historical actor Bill Barker at the Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids. It will be live-streamed, so Midland Authors members can tune in if they want. P.S.: Bill Barker played Jefferson in my PBS show ‘Inventing America’ and wrote the foreword to *Miracle on Chestnut Street*.” <https://share.google/kANKSxTHzUODfvHim> ... Thanks to **Mary Wisniewski**, **Rick Telander** and **Sharon Woodhouse** for the excellent work they did as program chair and board members during the Midland

Authors’ 2025-26 year. **Rebecca Johns** is the new program chair. ... **Jonathan Eig**



Jonathan Eig

will present a lecture and discussion from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Sept. 28 at Lake Forest College on “MLK and Voting Rights, Then and Now.” Brown Hall, 555 N. Sheridan Rd., Lake Forest, Illinois. Also, Jonathan

wrote “The older I get, the less I seem to know” for the Sept. 14 New York Times. ... **Mark Jacob’s** book co-authored with Mathew Jacob, *Globetrotter: How Abe Saperstein Shook Up the World of Sports*, is now out in paperback.

... **Linda Nemec Foster** taught poetry workshops and a hybrid (poetry and prose) class at the Scriptoria Conference



Linda Nemec Foster

in Dundee, Scotland, this summer. A consortium of colleges from West Michigan and organizations in the United Kingdom worked together to coordinate the conference. Joining Linda were faculty, guest speakers and participants from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Scotland and England. Before Linda left for Scotland, she received a publishing contract from Grid Books (based in Boston) for her poetry manuscript, *A Single Line of Pure Horizon*. Her first “new and selected” collection, the book includes new work and poems from seven previous volumes reflecting 50 years of Linda’s writing career. The book is scheduled to be published in early 2028. ... **Joel Greenberg** spoke on July 19 at Boswell Books in Milwaukee and on Aug. 1 at the Brushwood Center in Riverwoods, Illinois. He will have a



Joel Greenberg

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From left: Former Midland Authors President Dick Simpson; former Cook County (Illinois) Clerk David Orr, and Paul Durica, director of exhibitions at the Chicago History Museum present the Sept. 17 program at the Harold Washington Library Center in Chicago. (Photos by Walter Podrazik)

A program to aid authors' research

BY WALTER PODRAZIK

On Sept. 17, the Authors Room at the Harold Washington Library Center in downtown Chicago was transformed into a time travel visit to the Chicago City Council, over multiple decades, through audio recordings played as part of a program presented jointly by the Chicago Collections Consortium, the Chicago Public Library and The Society of Midland Authors. Consortium Executive Director **Ellen A. Keith** hosted, and more than three dozen attendees gathered to listen.

The voices were from the City Council audio archives, selected by Matt Messbarger, archival specialist for the Chicago city clerk's office, accompanied by relevant photos curated by Johanna Russ of the Chicago Public Library.

Paul Durica of the Chicago History Museum, the emcee at the Midland Authors 2014 book awards, directed the discussion.

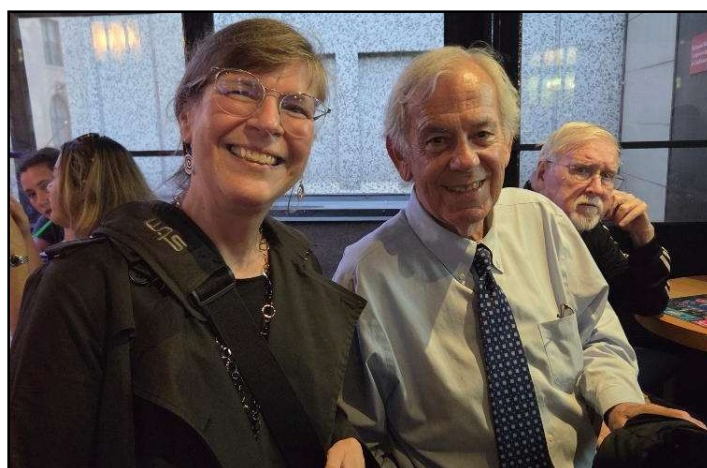
Former City Council member **Dick Simpson** (from Midland Authors) and former Cook County (Illinois) Clerk **David Orr** discussed the contexts and controversies detailed in the recordings.

These captured conflict, passion and legislative determination with alders and mayors sparring on matters ranging from charges of nepotism in city personnel decisions to the heavy push for the original parking meter deal.

The program illustrated this rich resource available to all, especially useful for writers looking to experience history first-hand.

Afterward there was a rooftop reception at Panchos Rooftop & Cantina across the street, overlooking the Harold Washington Library Center.

From left, Johanna Russ of the Chicago Public Library Special Collections and Ellen Keith, executive director of the Chicago Collections Consortium.



From left, Ellen A. Keith, executive director of the Chicago Collections Consortium, Former Midland Authors President Craig Sautter and Thomas Gradel at Panchos Rooftop & Cantina.



Midland Authors Board Member Jim Walker and Former Midland Authors President Dick Simpson at Panchos Rooftop & Cantina.

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launch party sometime in October for his new book, *Chicago's Art Deco Skyscrapers* (See Literary Latest, Page 7). ... A reminder from **James Kennedy**: Submissions are open for next year's 90-Second Newbery Film Festival, 90secondnewbery.com, in which young



James Kennedy

readers worldwide create short movies that tell the stories of Newbery-winning books. The general deadline is Jan. 15, 2027. On, March 6, James and **Keir Graff** will hold the Chicago screening of the 16th annual 90-Second Newbery Film Festival. Keir also was scheduled to present "Music, Magic and Murder on Aug. 21 at Chicago's Harold Washington Library Center. Also, in his newsletter, 'Graff Paper,' Keir writes, "I finished a screenplay for a client in January and then in March, Linda Joffe Hull and I published our fifth book together, *I Did Not Kill My Husband*. In July, I completed a ghost-writing project on which my name probably won't appear. Now I'm brainstorming with a new creative writing partner, Mark Stevens, on an idea he shared with me over dinner in New Orleans. While all this unfolds, I'm still muddling along with a two-year-old solo project that I hope you'll be hearing more about next year."... **Robert Loerzel** wrote "The Gospel Legend Who Spurred on MLK's "Dream" speech for the Aug. 4, Chicago Tribune. ... Earlier this year, Former Midland Authors Board Member **Arnie Bernstein**, the author of *Bath Massacre: America's First School Bombing*, was interviewed for a May 16 Daily Mail article about the school massacre. ... **Mary Wisniewski** wrote "Class Warfare" for the September

Chicago magazine. In a post, she said the "story kept changing. It was like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall." ... **Michael McColly** wrote "Lake swimming restores me. But I recognize the divide that exists in Chicago" for the Aug. 18 Chicago Tribune. ... On Aug. 20, The New York Labor History Association wrote **Kim Scipes'** new book (See Literary Latest, Page 7) "is full of valuable lessons for those hoping to have 21st century success in developing an inclusive, rank-and-file based unionism." ... **Marlene Targ Brill** shared that she has two upcoming book events. She presents "Dolores Huerta Demands Justice in an Unjust World" online and in person at the North Shore Senior Center at 1 p.m. on Sept. 29, and she will be signing books at the Oak Park Book Fair at the Oak Park Library from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Oct. 10. Her article "Writing for Kids Isn't Baby Stuff" will be published in *New Studies on the Left: Essays Uniting Theory and Practice* in October. ... Midland Authors 2024 poetry honoree **Taylor Byas** is a 2026 Ohio Book Award finalist. ... **Barbara Gregorich** says the second edition of *Jack and Larry: Jack Graney and Larry, the Cleveland Baseball Dog* should be out in early to mid-September. ... **Libby Fischer Hellmann** has a new thriller coming out on Oct. 1. *Capital Partners* is about two women on the run from an AI. Their every move is monitored, analyzed and anticipated by a sophisticated artificial intelligence system. ... At 6 p.m. on Nov. 10, **Keir Graff**, **Barry Pearce**, **Christine Wolf** and **Sharon Woodhouse** will be on a ghost-writing panel at After-Words Bookstore, 23 E. Illinois, Chicago. ... **Audrey Niffenegger**, who presented the Midland Authors' March 8, 2011, program (See Literary License, March 2011) has a new book coming out, *Life Out of Order* (Hanover Square Press, Oct. 6, 2026). ... Condolences to Midland Authors Recording Secretary **Jim Schwab** upon

the passing of his wife, Jean, on Aug. 3. An accomplished and warm and welcoming person, Jean attended many Midland Authors functions. Condolences also to Midland Authors Treasurer **Greg Borzo**, whose brother passed away in September. ... **Gillian Flynn**, who presented the Midland Authors' overflow February, 2013 program, placed two of her books on the New York Times' "Best Thrillers of the 21st Century" list, *Sharp Objects* and *Gone Girl*, which was No. 1. ... At 3 p.m. on Sept. 27, Chopin Theatre will present the first public performance of "Chopin in Winter," a theatrical and musical production based on the celebrated Chicago story by Midland Authors Member **Stuart Dybeck**. Midland Authors members are invited. The preview offers an opportunity to remain afterward to speak with the artists. Set in a working-class Chicago neighborhood after World War II, the story follows a young boy transformed by the music drifting from the apartment above his family's flat. There, the mysterious Marcy practices Chopin late into the night while the boy's aging grandfather, Dzia-Dzia, shares stories of exile, hardship and the unlikely wonders of Chopin. Steppenwolf Ensemble Member Yasen Peyankov performs all the story's characters, with music by concert pianist Jana Pavlovskaya, under the direction of Dexter Bullard. Chopin's music, along with touches of boogie-woogie, is woven into the storytelling. The special preview price is \$25 at Chopin Theatre Mainstage, 1543 W. Division Street, Chicago. Tickets can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/2seacz54>. "Chopin In Winter" runs for a limited engagement through Oct. 18. Regular tickets are priced at \$40.



Stuart Dybeck

Literary Largesse

Dues cover mailings and other organizational expenses, but Midland Authors needs additional money for programs such as the awards at the annual May

book awards banquet.

Special thanks to **Steve Bogira**, **Barbara Croft**, **Jonathan Eig**, **Thomas Frisbie**, **Timothy Gilfoyle**, **Connie Goddard**, **Norbert Krapf**, **Edmund Lawler**, **Laurie Lawlor**, **Michael Lewis**,

Shanti Nagarkatti, **Marcia Nelson**, **Steve Paul**, **Jamilla Ra**, **Richard Reeder**, **Jill Long Thompson**, **James Walker** and **Joyce Zeiss**, who recently made contributions to Midland Authors.