

## Biblio File

The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded **Margaret McMullan** a 2010 fellowship in literature. McMullan will use the \$25,000 grant to complete *The Aftermath Lounge*, a collection of stories about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. McMullan and her work will soon be featured in the NEA's Writer's Corner at: <http://arts.endow.gov/features/Writers/index.html>. ... **Jack Ridl** shared his experiences, poetry and advice to aspiring writers early in November at Saginaw Valley State University and Kirtland Community College, both in Michigan. Ridl and his new book, *Losing Season* (CavanKerry Press, see New Books, October, 2009), were a featured segment on NPR's "The Story" and "Only a Game." The book will be



Jack Ridl

named "Sports Book of the Year" by the Institute for International Sport. And Ridl will be keynote reader at Springfield College's tribute celebration of James Naismith's inventing basketball at the college.

"It's fun stuff to have poetry intersecting with the sports world, two worlds that don't often hang out with one another," Ridl told Biblio File.

Ridl's poetry also was scheduled to be on Garrison Keillor's radio show, "The Writer's Almanac," on Dec. 1. ... The Lincoln (Neb.) Journal Star said Nov. 4 that **Carol Fisher Saller's** new book, *The Subversive Copy Editor*, is a "treasure house of



Carol Fisher Saller

advice, stories, suggestions and how to handle the difficult author." ... **Betsy Green** has moved to Santa Barbara. ... **Sel Yackley** is getting the word out that

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Donald Whitfield

Janice Metzger

Alan P. Mammoser

Aric Lasher

Robert Samuel Roche

## Five authors offer new views of century-old Burnham plan

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

**F**ive local authors offered insights into Daniel Burnham's *Plan for Chicago* on Nov. 10 at the Society of Midland Authors' monthly program at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

The plan by Burnham and his co-author, Edward H. Bennett, is responsible for much of Chicago's public character, including its open lakefront and expansive park system. The plan also envisioned a network of broad avenues.

The SMA program marked the centennial of the plan's publication.

Because of a scheduling conflict, the program was held in the club's smaller Louis Sullivan Room, where SMA President Robert Loerzel noticed that Sullivan's *Autobiography of an Idea* was one of the books on the shelves and read a quote from it as part of his introduction.

The panelists at the program were **Donald Whitfield, Janice Metzger, Alan P. Mammoser, Aric Lasher** and **Robert**

**Samuel Roche.** After Loerzel's introduction, Whitfield acted as moderator of the program. The program was recorded by Chicago Public Radio under a new arrangement that will allow the public to access SMA programs online.

Whitfield, who is the director of higher education for the Great Books Foundation, which has just released a new version of Burnham's *Plan for Chicago*, said the original is hard to find because only 1,600 copies were printed.

"It was very difficult to get," Whitfield said. "I started teaching seminars on the *Plan for Chicago* several years ago. At that time, you just couldn't get the book. It was one of those great books that everybody seems to have heard of but nobody read, but not because they didn't want to, it just wasn't available. So with the help of the Commercial Club and the Centennial Committee, we were able to publish a replica of the entire plan."

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**Stephen Kinzer**, who has reported from perhaps more countries than any other SMA member, will speak at 6 p.m. Jan. 26 on "Iran, Turkey and the U.S.: Power Triangle of the 21st Century." The lecture, presented by International Women Associates, will be at the Film Row Cinema of Columbia College Chicago, 8th floor, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago. Kinzer (see New Books, Page 9) sees Turkey, and a future democratic Iran, as logical partners for the United States. Cost: \$20 per person in advance, \$25 at the door. Reservations at [www.iwachicago.org](http://www.iwachicago.org) or (312) 263-1421. ... **Alzina Stone Dale** was scheduled to have a "double" book signing at 10 a.m. Dec. 9 at the Newberry Library bookstore and at 57th Street Books in Hyde Park that afternoon beginning about 3 p.m. ... Illinois Poet Laureate **Kevin Stein** read a



Kevin Stein

selection of poetry, answered questions, and signed copies of his books at the Morris (Ill.) Area Public Library on Nov. 12. He also donated money for the purchase of books by Illinois poets via his laureate Poetry Now project. (Morris is the 36th Illinois library to receive such funds.) Also, on Sept. 27, Stein took part in the Gold Star Mothers

selection of poetry, answered questions, and signed copies of his books at the Morris (Ill.) Area Public Library on Nov. 12. He also donated money for the purchase of books by Illinois poets via his laureate Poetry Now

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## Burnham

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One of the first things people will notice when they read the new edition is that it is much more than a collection of conceptual illustrations, Whitfield said.

"There is a lot to read, there is a lot to ruminate on, there is a lot to digest," he said. "I encourage you to read it. It reads well. It is kind of an interesting distant mirror on Chicago as we know it now."

Roche, co-author with Lasher of *Plans of Chicago* (which on the evening of the SMA program was about to be released by the University of Chicago Press), said the book compares Burnham's *Plan of Chicago* to other proposals, including those by Frank Lloyd Wright, Jens Jensen, Walter Burley Griffin, Eliel Saarinen and Ludwig Hilberseimer.

"One of our original thoughts was everyone knows the [Burnham] plan," Roche said. "It is full of beautiful drawings. But perhaps even for that reason, it is not necessarily taken seriously as an urban plan. And why is that? Could close analysis of the plan yield something fruitful for contemporary conditions in Chicago specifically, but maybe more largely in American cities?"

Lasher, Roche's co-author, said the authors studied plans that came both before and after Burnham.

"We discovered there were plans subsequent to Burnham's plan that addressed more localized conditions than his overarching approach for regional origination and enrichment of the civic center," Lasher said.

Some of the later plans took into account the advent of the automobile, "something that was highly disruptive to the earlier industrial-era plans, including Burnham's plan," he said.

Metzger said her book, *What Would Jane Say? City-Building Women and a Tale of Two Chicagos* (Lake Claremont Press), took a different approach. In the book, she imagines that Burnham had asked the women behind the settlement house movement, including Jane Addams' Hull House, to participate in a planning process and had asked them to meet and

comment on drafts of the plan.

"What difference would it have made if these women, these city-building women who were on a separate but a parallel path, had actually been involved in the Burnham Plan of Chicago?" Metzger said. "I think that it would have made a huge difference."

The illustrations in *Plan for Chicago* are "lovely," but "emphasize this above-the-people point of view, this bird's-eye view where people are really small and insignificant," Metzger said.

"The people who were promoting the Burnham plan were really looking for business investment at taxpayers' expense and they were looking for a ready labor pool that was only marginally healthy and well-fed," she said. "People needed from their point of view to be somewhat hungry to work."

Mammoser was added to the program at the last minute because he is co-author with DePaul University professor Joseph P. Schwieterman of *Beyond Burnham:*

*An Illustrated History of Planning for the Chicago Region* (Sept. 1, Lake Forest College Press). Mammoser said he learned how difficult it is to

devise and implement urban plans while he worked for the former Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission from 1999 to 2005. (NIPC has since been merged into the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.)

"It was a tough agency to work for because we were so powerless," he said. "We were an advisory agency, and we made a lot of good plans."

*Beyond Burnham* is a "good introduction to everything that happened after Burnham," he said. "We wanted to bring recognition to all those unsung, hard-working planners, many of them dead, many of them still living, but most of them forgotten, who really tried their best to create this regional vision for metropolitan Chicago and never attained the glory of Burnham."

Note: The Society of Midland Authors' Oct. 13 and Nov. 19 programs may be heard in their entirety at [www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified](http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/amplified).



Daniel Burnham