

Call for Proposals

Celebrating 50 Years of Writing the Midwest: A Symposium of Scholars and Writers

The 50th Annual Symposium of the
Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature

May 20 – May 22, 2021
The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, IL

Join us in Chicago in May 2021 as we celebrate 50 years of SSML. Founded in 1971, the vision of the society is to “encourage and assist the study of Midwestern literature in whatever directions the insight, imagination, and curiosity of its members may lead.” We are honored and thrilled to be celebrating our anniversary at a prestigious institution in a world-class Midwestern city: “Free and open to the public since 1887, the Newberry is an independent research library whose world-famous collection is available to scholars, genealogists, and lifelong learners alike.

Please note: At the moment, we are planning for an in-person symposium for 2021, but the safety of our members and participants is always paramount. We will continue to monitor the ongoing Covid-19 situation and will make planning adjustments as necessary.

Proposals

We welcome proposals for panels, individual papers, and roundtables on Midwestern literature, and readings of original creative work with a Midwestern emphasis.

We especially seek proposals that complicate stereotypical notions of the Midwest as a rural, white, “heartland” space. Such papers might take advantage of our conference location in Chicago, or they might articulate the diversity of the Midwestern experience by examining the rich and ongoing tradition of writing by Black, Native American, Latinx, Asian, LGBTQ, and disabled authors.

Proposals related to the work of both the 2020 Mark Twain Award winner, Marilynne Robinson, and the 2021 Mark Twain Award winner, Rebecca Makkai, are especially invited. Please see the website for details on these and other specific panels.

Deadline: **no later than Jan. 1, 2021.**
Find the link to an online proposal form at **ssml.org/symposium**.

Book Display and Sales

We will have to make some adjustments to our usual book area due to restrictions at the Newberry. We will have more information posted on our website regarding how we will be handling books sales and displays.

Student scholarships for travel

Joseph Wydeven Scholarships are available to students whose proposals are accepted. Application for a scholarship must be made with the proposal, deadline Jan. 1, 2021.

The scholarship will cover the following:

- the membership fee for one year,
- one ticket for the awards banquet, and
- some reimbursement to help defray travel and hotel accommodations (based on distance travelled).

Registration and housing

Information about housing may be found at www.ssml.org/symposium. Registration forms will be available in late fall.

Prizes

SSML sponsors three \$250 prizes for unpublished original work read at the symposium in poetry, creative prose, and literary criticism.

There is also a \$1,000 prize for student work in any genre. Winning entries in all four contests will be published in a volume of *MidAmerica*.