



# The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

Number 29, Fall 2007

## Creativity (2)

Although research is incomplete, studies suggest that creative individuals can not only maintain their creativity into their later years, but also resurrect it even if dormant for long stretches. As many writers start writing in their middle years and others pick it up again after they retire, this is excellent news. It heartens, as well, younger writers who struggle to find writing time amidst career and family demands.

The prospect of enjoyment in the task fires creativity more than deadlines, or monetary gain, etc. (I knew that!) But it is not enough for a writer to have a vague idea and a computer. Research from cognitive psychologists shows that creativity also needs the focus of an area of intense interest and a coterie of other like-minded individuals with whom to interact, bounce ideas around, and gain support. (If you don't know what *coterie* means, see the second article on p.2.) This is the science behind the value and motivation we derive from writers' groups.

Most encouraging of all, is that creativity can be learned—it's never too late to start getting creative or enhancing what you've got, according to the findings of Smith, Ward, and Fink (1995) and, more recently, other researchers.

Here are some tips to increase your creativity:

- Don't stop at your first idea or even your fourth. Use your first four ideas as a jumping off point for more, whether it is a book or just a turning point in your novel. Try "What if...?" Exhaust all options!
- Never judge your ideas at the brainstorming stage.
- Give yourself time and the relaxed environment conducive to reflection and idea germination. (For more on this, see the Spring 2007 issue of *The Beacon*.)

...../2

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the editor's keyboard.....	1
Creativity (2) .....	1
Buy Yourself a Good Dictionary.....	2
Fall Events for Writers .....	2



### From the editor's keyboard

*The Beacon* is arriving early this quarter because I have a week of out-of-town speaking engagements starting on August 28th and then I leave immediately for my annual vacation. By the time I return, it will be fall with writing courses and groups in full swing, and conferences to anticipate.

The process of creativity, so vital for writers, continues to fascinate and the lead provides writers with the second installment on the topic. Research encourages those writers heading towards 70 and 80 years old. Me, included! I have always planned to write till I "shuffle off this mortal coil," but have wondered if my skills would last. Now I have some hope.

To my descendents: please put a laptop in my grave with me, instead of food...!

I have begun my next project—a juvenile novel for ages 11-14 year olds. I found the prospect intimidating as a nonfiction author and procrastinated until a colleague said, "For God's sake, just start writing!" I did and finished the first chapter in about 45 minutes. It's okay, so far...

**Julie H. Ferguson**

# Buy Yourself a Good Dictionary

by Joyce Gram, editor

A year ago, I threw out all my dictionaries—a rash act for an editor. I had just attended an editing course, where the instructor had impressed upon us that our most important—indeed indispensable—reference was an up-to-date, good quality dictionary. Mine were so old they lacked not only current word usage, but also any words to do with computers or the Internet.

I bought myself one of the best, the latest Canadian Oxford. And, because I work for writers planning to publish in the United States, I bought the latest Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus. My Webster still looks new, but in a year, my Canadian Oxford is looking decidedly used.

Why do I recommend all writers invest in a good dictionary? Because in it you will find a gold mine of information on meaning, usage, idioms, word choice, synonyms, grammar, spelling, punctuation, style, to say nothing of biographical, historical, geographical, and statistical tidbits of all kinds. I could read it for hours!

But, really now, there is no excuse not to own one—and use it. Nothing will kill your chances of publication faster than mistakes you could have corrected by quick reference to a good dictionary. I laughed the day I came across a Q & A on *The Chicago Manual of Style Online* entitled “You Could Look It Up.” Chicago posts a fresh Q & A every month, and they can't help pulling out a few questions for special treatment, like this one:

“Q. Is it ‘cell phone’ or ‘cel phone’? I am working on a crash deadline, and would appreciate a quick response. Thank you so much!

A. Any writer who has deadlines should also have a dictionary. I always swear I'm not going to look up words for people, but it's like being a mom and picking up socks—something just makes me do it. It's ‘cell phone.’ Please buy a dictionary—and pick up your socks.”

‘Nuf said.

© Joyce Gram 2007

Contact Joyce Gram for all your editing needs: [gramkend@shaw.ca](mailto:gramkend@shaw.ca)

## Events for writers

(for details, see [www.beaconlit.com](http://www.beaconlit.com))

**Sep 30 - Word on the Street**, Vancouver Public Library Square, 11 am-6pm.

**Oct 13 - *How to get Published: from Inspiration to Publication*<sup>TM</sup>** for all aspiring authors and freelance writers; discusses commercial and self-publication. At Port Moody Public Library, 9am to noon. Everyone welcome (free), but please register at 604.469.4577 if you plan to attend.

**Oct 19-21 - Surrey International Writers' Conference.** Info and registration at [www.siwc.ca](http://www.siwc.ca).

**Nov 3 - *Book Magic: Turning Writers into Published Authors*** for all who yearn to get commercially published. Johnston Heights Secondary School, Surrey, for the Creative Writing Diploma program. 9am to 4pm. Register [here](#).

**Nov 17 - *Book Magic: Turning Writers into Published Authors* (9am to noon) and *Crafting Irresistible Query Letters* (1-4pm)** for all writers, except poets, who yearn to get published. At VCC's downtown campus; register [here](#) after Labour Day.



Enjoy the BLS blog at  
[www.beaconlit.blogspot.com](http://www.beaconlit.blogspot.com)

## Creativity (2) ...contd

- Expose yourself to the work of others, within and outside your genre and passion.
- Stay curious and highly attuned to everything around you for ideas, new approaches, etc. Keep a creativity journal, a digital recorder, and/or your camera handy.

I think we all have imagination, but those who learn to tap their deep wells of creativity benefit the whole planet with their work.

---

There is more in the electronic version of this newsletter at [www.beaconlit.com/newsletter.htm](http://www.beaconlit.com/newsletter.htm)

---



*The Beacon* is published quarterly by Beacon Literary Services and is distributed electronically free of charge to those who are interested. If you do not wish to continue to receive the newsletter, please notify the editor:

Julie H. Ferguson  
#5-300 Maude Road,  
Port Moody, BC  
Canada, V3H 2X6  
P: (604)469-1319  
F: (604)469-1316

info@beaconlit.com  
www.beaconlit.com

© Beacon Literary Services 2007

All rights reserved