



# The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

Number 11, Spring 2002

## Writing Online: the new adventure for writers

Despite the dot.com crash, the market for content online continues to explode. Are we, as writers, taking advantage of it? If not for money, then for visibility?

Ezines are always looking for material and some are very well known; electronic versions of print newspapers and magazines often publish articles unique to their e-version; websites need content all the time, especially those that change daily. It is a voracious market and just about every subject on the planet has a presence on the web. Try looking up "miniature donkeys" or "crows" on your search engine and you will find an ezine or association that you can write for! Poets and fiction writers can also find outlets for their talents in a way not possible for them in print.

To be successful online, writers need to follow the new conventions for e-queries and e-submissions, otherwise risk looking unprofessional and attracting rejection.

Although e-queries contain the same text as a query letter, they need to be first prepared *without formatting* in your WP program, saved in RTF, and then pasted into the body of the email. Never send them as an attachment - editors will not open them due the virus threat and potential incompatibility with their programs. Send e-queries in plain text email, not HTML, with no paragraph indents. Subject line should read "QUERY - Title of Your Article." As tear sheets cannot be sent electronically, ask if the editor would like you to snail mail a couple.

E-submission of article manuscripts has similar rules. Unless invited to send as an attachment, paste it into the body of the email with your contact info and word count at the top and the title and author next, as in a print manuscript submission. Use no WP formatting when com-

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### From the editor's desk

Last month I had the pleasure of receiving the first 100 copies of my latest book in paperback – an experience that never loses its magic. This time I am selling copies (as a book-seller) on my website using a secure payment method from PayPal and gaining the 40%+ profit, as well as the royalties. This has been a very good decision and I am capturing more of a global market – with sales, other than Canada, to the UK, Australia, Italy, and the US so far. To see the webpage, please visit: <http://www.beaconlit.com/beaconli/deepcdn.html>

I circulated the results of the survey on e-publishing to you last month and received several comments from Beacon readers. Many thanks for your lively interest. I have drawn some conclusions from the survey for you in this issue. Polls often produce contradictory responses and this one was no exception. Writers are not keen on reading online, but there are many other groups out there that are very willing to do so. We need to be aware that our views may not be held universally - there are good e-markets for some categories of books.

**Julie H. Ferguson**

## Survey on Electronic Publishing...

*The Beacon's* survey of writers, carried out in January 2002, came up with an overwhelming "NO!" to reading books online and a convincing "YES!" for getting e-published - a bit of a paradox. The survey return rate was 30% -- higher than normally expected -- but I must say that the poll was unscientific and the results must be read with that in mind. That said, I was intrigued.

Nearly 90% of you read short stuff online and, all but two, read exclusively non-fiction. But when it comes to e-books, only 30% have tackled one. With 60% saying that they would consider getting a book published electronically, I would have expected more of you to have experienced reading one. Overwhelmingly, you opted for the download format (50%), I suspect so that you could print it out...! Now I buy how-to books on CD as they are interactive and multi-media, but most of all they are cheap! I also like the booklets (30-50 pages) which I download and print. Many people are doing this now, especially university and college students, as well as adult learners. Look for CDs of my writing and publishing workshops at the SWC in October!

The major reason given for not publishing an e-book was the issue of security. This is not as big a turn-off as first believed -- there have been very few copyright infringements relating to e-books; more to do with articles. Another concern was that electronic formats compete with a print version -- I have found the complete opposite. I sell more paperbacks after people have tried the cheaper e-version and decided that they want to have a hard copy on their shelves.

Most of you said that you would welcome any opportunity to get published and e-books were one way to go. Use caution here -- be sure your book's category is one that sells well electronically.

### Forthcoming events

**Mar 7:** **Writing with Power!!** for selected grade 10-12 students of SD 43 (Coquitlam). Winslow Centre, 9-11:45am.

**Apr 9:** **Writing with Power!!** for SD 42 (Maple Ridge) teachers' professional development session. 4-7pm at the Resource Centre, Maple Ridge.

**Apr 16:** **Writing for Success: Essay Planning and Editing.** For AP students at Pinetree Secondary in Coquitlam.

**Apr 17:** **Writing with Power!** For grade 12 students at Pinetree Secondary, Coquitlam.

**May 8:** **Writing with Power!** For Challenge Centre students at Mundy Road Elementary, Coquitlam

**May 11:** **Speaking and Writing: the Indivisible Twins** for the BC Chapter of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers, 1:30-4:30pm.

**Julie enjoys presenting workshops to writers' group of 8 or more. Call 604-469-1319 or [info@beaconlit.com](mailto:info@beaconlit.com) to check her availability.**

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posing and send in plain text. If the piece needs italics, bold face, etc. you are going to have to ask if the editor wants it as a compatible attachment. Include sidebars, your by-line, etc. after the main article. Start the email with a reminder of what you are sending and who you are. Put the title of the piece in the subject line. Then hit the squirt button!!

A word about the readers of electronic content - they like it short and sweet; 500-800 words is about right. Break it into sections of about 100 words that fit on one screen - this is called "chunking." Remember too, readers may live anywhere in the world so make your words appropriate. Many are younger than the baby boomers scatter a few hot links throughout an article - not too many though or you'll lose your readers before they have finished it!

Formatting e-books for submission is a whole other topic - perhaps next time



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