



# The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

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## How freelancers can add value magazine editors can't resist...

In the last decade, freelancers have become content providers in a **fast-paced, visual, and connected world**. As demand for articles has dropped when print periodicals shrank due to the economic slump, writers need to offer editors more than just an 800 word article to get published. Whether you are breaking into freelancing or you have been writing for years, you have no choice but to embrace the new reality.

Most periodicals provide their readers with both print and web versions. Many want more than text to drive traffic to and fro between their magazine and website. To find out what added incentives a freelancer can offer editors, check their websites. You'll be surprised how many publications use content other than articles to entice and retain their readers. And it is their writers who provide it.

Once you know the array of content magazines use regularly, you can offer the right mix. Here are some of the most common offerings freelancers must consider:

- A variety of article lengths (feature (2000+), department (700-1200), short (300-400))
- A print version and an online version (think small screens) of your piece
- A choice of sidebars and images (preferably yours)
- A guest blog post
- An author blog interview
- Short video clips (use [www.animoto.com](http://www.animoto.com) to transform your still images into great 30 second clips). See one at [www.beaconlit.com/PitchingCold.htm](http://www.beaconlit.com/PitchingCold.htm)
- A podcast that augments your text with IVs and sound effects.

If you quail at the thought of creating podcasts and video clips, choose to pitch to magazines that don't use them. Alternatively, learn how and start competing with writers who already do. Start adding value that editors can't resist — and get into the 21st century!

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### From the editor's desk

After a long wait, the New Year brought the good news that Canadian authors can publish their titles for Amazon's Kindle and other e-readers. I found formatting my manuscript took some learning, but I was delighted that my book in the new format uploaded and Amazon converted it to the epub format with no difficulty. The 2010 edition of *Crafting Irresistible Query Letters* is available for Kindle [here](#) and in print or .pdf [here](#). The new edition has a whole chapter devoted to the topic of the lead article to help freelancers improve their acceptance rates in the chilly climate we face.

The sale of e-readers has exploded in the last quarter—50% more are bought by the 50+ age group than the 18-34 year olds. Those stats should make authors check their contracts and, if the publisher holds the e-rights, you should encourage them to re-issue your titles electronically. Your royalties may just increase. If you have titles whose e-rights are yours or all rights have reverted to you, consider republishing them digitally yourself.

**Julie H. Ferguson**

## Bring Your Writing to Life Through Dialogue

by Joyce Gram, writer and editor

I was surprised when a friend told me that, when she reads a novel, she skips much of the narrative and goes straight to the dialogue. She's not alone. Acquisitions editors in publishing houses do the same. In the best advice you'll find anywhere on how to improve your dialogue, Browne and King, authors of *Self-editing for Fiction Writers*, write: "What's the first thing acquisitions editors look for when they begin reading a fiction submission? Several editors we know have answered that question the same way: 'The first thing I do is find a scene with some dialogue. If the dialogue doesn't work, the manuscript gets bounced. If it's good, I start reading.'"

Strong dialogue can lift almost any story—including memoir, nonfiction, even opinion pieces—to new heights. But strong dialogue can easily be weakened by what Browne and King call "creaky mechanics." One of the most common ways writers kill even the best dialogue is by describing or explaining it with attributions like "she snarled, giggled, chided, declared, cried, mused, stated, muttered." Whew! These verbs can entangle your reader, drawing attention away from the dialogue and toward your technique. Your best bet is to replace them all with *said*. *Said* isn't read the way other verbs are read; it's more like punctuation: transparent, and therefore graceful. It leaves your reader free to concentrate on your dialogue.

Adverbs ending in *ly* that describe *said* do the same kind of damage: "I'm afraid it's not going very well," he said grimly. They, too, "catch the writer in the act of explaining dialogue—smuggling emotions into speaker attributions that belong in the dialogue itself." Browne and King would like you to think of it this way: "Every time you insert an explanation into dialogue, you're cheating your readers out of a little bit of one of your characters. Do it often enough, and none of your characters ever comes to life on the page."

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**Gram Editing Services** || [www.gramediting.com](http://www.gramediting.com) || [email@joycegram.com](mailto:email@joycegram.com)

Renni Browne and Dave King, *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers: How to Edit Yourself into Print*, 2nd ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2004. Read chapter 5: "Dialogue Mechanics."

### Winter/spring events for Writers

(for additions, visit [www.beaconlit.com/schedule2010.htm](http://www.beaconlit.com/schedule2010.htm) regularly)

**Mar 20: Book Magic: Turning Writers into Published Authors** (9am-noon) and **Crafting Irresistible Query Letters** (1-4pm) for all fiction and non-fiction writers who want to learn more about getting their books published (unsuitable for poets and screenwriters). Vancouver Community College (downtown). Register [here](#).

**Mar 22: Pitching Magazine Articles** for first-year students in the Public Relations Diploma program, Kwantlen College, Richmond campus. 3:00-5:00pm.

#### The Surrey Writers' School offers:

**Mar 27 - a.m. Writing a Memoir: How to Get Going.** With a published memoirist, explore how to approach your story, where to get background material and how to determine how long it should be.

And, **p.m. Blogging for Writers.** Learn how to set up a blog, connect with and manage an audience, use the blog for promotion and sales, and to develop your writing skills. At Guildford Library, 15105 – 105 Avenue, Surrey.

**May 15 - a.m. Hero's Journey.** Learn to use this powerful plotting tool to develop stories that resonate with your readers.

And, **p.m. Story – Art & Craft.** Gain insights into how story meets the human need for shared experience, and explore and practice craft elements that bring your ideas for fiction and nonfiction to life on the page. At Semiahmoo Library, 1815 - 152nd Street.

**Register for all sessions:** <http://surreywritersschool.com/coursesandregistration.aspx>



### Olympic Torch Relay enters Port Moody

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"There are as many kinds of dialogue in fiction as the sum total of stories, novels, and characters that exist. And really that shouldn't surprise us. Because what is dialogue, after all, but the speech that could only come from the mouth of one character in all of fiction, and from the mind of one writer?"

Francine Prose, *Reading Like a Writer: A Guide for People Who Love Books and for Those Who Want to Write Them*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

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### Read The Beacon Blog

[www.beaconlit.blogspot.com](http://www.beaconlit.blogspot.com)

for monthly *Beacon Flashes* and current news for writers

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