



Squeezing All You Can Out of Your Articles....

by Julie H. Ferguson

Author and professional speaker, Julie H. Ferguson leads workshops that provide aspiring authors with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to approach publishers and succeed. Her workshops are available as e-books and paperbacks through Beacon Literary Services at www.beaconlit.com, then click on Writers' Tools.

Two summers ago, I met an author well-known in maritime history circles at a national writers' conference. We shared a table at the book fair and soon struck up a conversation. Tim not only wrote nonfiction books that interested me, but also articles. We talked when we could during the fair, non-stop over dinner, and later in the bar.

Proud of my skill at selling articles over and over again, I boasted that one particularly good one of mine had sold over ten times. Tim laughed and nicely put me in my place, saying that he had sold one of his twenty-seven times. A few years later, I ran into Tim at another writers' conference and he whispered in my ear, "Thirty-five times!"

Not many emerging writers realize that they can sell their magazine articles over and over again. As long as the markets don't overlap, you can sell exactly the same article as many times as you like and, in this globally connected marketplace, it is easier than you think. However, you can only sell first rights, either print or electronic, once for the same piece. After that, unless you change the article significantly, you must offer it as a reprint for a lower fee.

If you change the article, as I often do, you can sell it again for first rights. For example, I turned a 500 word piece for a grade seven market, into a similar length article for a regional Catholic newspaper and an Anglican website (e-rights) in Canada. Then I tweaked it into an 800 word article for a national US daily. Subsequently, I made some minor changes to slant the piece for a travel magazine. Each time, I was able to sell it for first rights.

I plan to continue to sell it, but will be looking for new markets in North America and other English language markets overseas.

This practice should be your standard operating procedure if you write and sell articles to print periodicals and ezines. Reselling your work makes good business and time management sense – it reduces the energy you expend and increases your revenue. Unless you routinely sell a single article for several thousands of dollars, and perhaps even if you do, you should be squeezing every dollar out of every single piece you write.