



The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

Number 6, Winter 00-01

E-publishing: the jury's still out...

Listening to one of Canada's e-publishing experts at the Surrey Writers' Conference in October was enlightening. Debbie Ridpath Ohi, of Inkspot.com fame, was excited by the prospect of e-books, but cautious regarding how fast they will be accepted. "The jury's still out," she explained.

Andersen Consulting estimates that there will be over 20 million titles available as e-books by 2005, although only 15% of us have ever read one so far. A staggering 66% vow they never want to – but this statistic should change when the price of the e-readers drops. At the moment, most who buy e-books on the Internet do so as downloads and then print them out on 8x11 paper. These files are usually in PDF format and require Acrobat software to print, which only 10% of the population have on their computers. This alarmingly low figure should concern everyone considering e-publishing and lean them towards HTML versions. Debbie informed her audience that romances, sci-fi, fantasy, self-help, and business are categories that are doing well in cyberspace.

If you are looking for a reliable, commercial e-publisher, analyse several websites. Debbie advises, "Answer the following questions."

- ☞ Is the site professional?
- ☞ Do they display a sample contract that *pays royalties* and only takes electronic rights for a finite period, about a year?
- ☞ What kind of books do they publish?
- ☞ How many authors do they have?
- ☞ How long have they been in business?
- ☞ Do they have secure credit card processing?
- ☞ How much promotional help do they provide?
- ☞ Who are their editors? Are they listed on the website?

Cont...../page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

E-publishing: the jury's still out.....	1
From the editor's desk.....	1
Publishing Myth # 6.....	2
Forthcoming events.....	2



From the editor's desk

The late October Surrey Writers' Conference seemed bigger and better than ever this year. The 450 who attended were treated to a new line-up of presenters, as well as a few perennial favorites.

I was able to attend only one workshop (see the lead article) as I was busy meeting with individual writers in the Blue Pencil café. I had the impression that the aspiring authors were better informed than ever and were producing a higher quality of work too.

The most heartening moment came at the final conference keynote, when two American agents presented a 17 year old participant with a Chapters gift certificate. They wanted to recognize that someone so young would devote her whole weekend to the conference. Everyone else was enchanted too - there is hope for the future when high school students are so intent on becoming writers.

My best Christmas present this year was the publication of my second book – *Deeply Canadian: New Submarines for a New Millennium*. Buy it directly from: www.crossroadspub.com/DCanada.htm.

May 2001 be a great year for you!

Julie H. Ferguson

Publishing Myth # 6: Never, ever phone a publisher/editor....

When I wrote my first book, I did not know the correct conventions to use when approaching a publisher and so I phoned *the* Canadian publisher, McClland and Stewart. "Could you put me through to someone who could tell me how you like to receive author's ideas?" I asked the receptionist. "Certainly," she said.

The next thing I knew, Doug Gibson was on the line. Mr. Gibson is the president and publisher himself -- the top dog. I was scrambling but managed to present my book well enough for him to request a proposal asap. Later I learned that I had committed a cardinal sin -- that aspiring authors never, ever phone publishers. Everyone said that I had got away with it once, but wouldn't manage it a second time. Well, I continued to do it with success and several of my students have too.

The big American publishers definitely do not encourage this method of telephone querying but, if it is done well, it is a route for authors to consider with Canadian firms. Make sure you are articulate and confident and be sure you can pitch your book in a sentence or two. Let the publisher/editor carry the conversation and refrain from the hard sell. My opening gambit was always, "How do you like to receive ideas?"

Forthcoming events

- Feb 16:** **Writing with Power!** for selected Gde 8-9 students of North Vancouver SD 44. 9:00am - 12 noon.
- Feb 17:** **Writing with Power!** 9:00am-12:00 noon at Johnston Heights school, Surrey, as part of Surrey's Creative Writing Diploma Program. \$25.00
- Feb 19:** **Writing with Power!** Maple Ridge SD 42, Professional Development annual convention. For secondary teachers.
- Feb 23:** **Writing with Power!** Two sessions for Coquitlam School District 43's Professional Development day. 9:30am & 1:30pm
- Apr 24:** **How to Write Winning Non-fiction Book Proposals!** Four Tuesdays at 7:00pm at Guildford Park school, as part of Surrey's Creative Writing program. \$52.00
- Apr 27:** **Writing with Power!** for School District 42's (Maple Ridge) Professional Development day). 8:30-11:30am (elementary and middle teachers) and 1:30-3:00pm (secondary teachers).
- May 12:** **Writing with Power!** 9:00am-12 noon at Johnston Heights school, Surrey, as part of Surrey's Creative Writing Diploma program. \$25.00.
- Jul 14:** **Speaking and Writing: The Indivisible Twins** for the BC Chapter of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers' at the Vancouver Museum's Vanier Room, 9:00am.

E-publishing...

- Have any books won awards?
- Have their titles been reviewed? Where?
- Are they willing to provide references?
- How well do they respond to your questions?
- Do they offer print on demand (POD)?

The lack of a standard e-reader and a consumer reluctance to read online are major disadvantages to getting your book published this way. But the higher royalties and better chance of having your manuscript accepted may be an acceptable trade-off for you.

The Beacon will continue to monitor the world of e-publishing and report on its changing scene in future issues. Try this website if you want to look more deeply: www.epublishingconnections.com.



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

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

© 2000 Beacon Literary Services