



The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

Number 14, Winter 2002-03

How to Promote Your Book... pre-publication.

Consuming though it is, writing your manuscript should not be the only task that you undertake during the long journey to publication. Aspiring authors must have an eye on promotion early in the writing process and work on it in parallel with the manuscript. Pre-publication book promotion is important, not only for future sales, but also to heighten your chances of getting published in the first place.

Getting published in targeted magazines, both print and electronic, is the number one way to gain pre-publication promotion for both novelists and non-fiction writers. Make sure that you are writing articles on your subject or short stories in your fiction category. If you succeed in getting them published, you will enhance your visibility, credibility, and name recognition. Publishers love it when they see an unpublished author has systematically gone about a campaign like this. I aimed to get into print four times a year while I was writing my two books on naval history and I found it easy because I had lots of material ready to hand – I summarized chapters, I enlarged vignettes, and I used sections that had hit the cutting room floor. Ensure that the periodical publisher includes your by-line at the end of your piece – this is the promotion of your forthcoming book. Here is an example of one of mine: *Julie H. Ferguson is writing the history of the Canadian Submarine Service, due for publication in 1995, and can be reached at.....*

Another good route is **the radio interview**, especially if you write non-fiction. True, you have to be comfortable at the mic or it could back-fire but, if you are, you become known to the media as an 'available' expert. Radio show hosts are very good about plugging your book-in-progress at the end of the interview. I shamelessly plugged myself to the media throughout the manuscript phase/2

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From the editor's desk

Last October, I learned some good news at a four day international writers' conference, where I was a presenter. Several Canadian publishers plan to digitize some of their backlist books that have gone out of print. (The publishers will, of course, be negotiating new contracts with their authors.) Then, they are also going to be PODding these titles to fulfil the trickle of orders that continue to come in over the years. This does apply mainly to non-fiction titles but the publishers' decisions demonstrate a move that will eventually assist in reducing the stigma that e-authors and POD authors have been labouring under.

As a non-fiction author, I am delighted because this means my first book, which has sold out, will be re-released in paperback at no cost to me (I was thinking of doing it myself when the rights reverted to me this year). I will also get a fee for my e-rights and get paid royalties on all sales. As this process proceeds, I will keep you posted

All that is left is to wish you the best of the festive season and encourage more of you to email me with your questions....

Julie H. Ferguson

Powerful fiction pitches: verbal and written

Donald Maass, a famed New York literary agent, led a three hour master class last October, which I attended, on perfecting your novel's pitch. His major thrust was teaching us to avoid the mistake that most aspiring authors make when pitching their books to agents and editors. **Pressure, nerves, and lack of preparation cause writers to talk about how good their work is and about themselves.**

Agents and editors are only interested in the story...! They want to know the essence of your novel and what makes it original. Answer their question, "Why should I read this book?"

According to Maass, a verbal pitch should take no more than 60 seconds and a written pitch should have only four sentences. Both pitches must contain the title and category, the novel's milieu (time and place), the name of protagonist and what s/he does, and the main problem, conflict, or goal of the protagonist. Maass urged authors to clearly define the protagonist's problem and to inject some "out of the ordinary" into the pitch because these are most often left wanting.

When to send a written query with a four sentence pitch? Maass advises not to send them during Christmas week or immediately after a major writers' conference that the editor/agent has attended.

For more details, try reading some of Maass's own books on the subject, such as *The Career Novelist: A Literary Agent Offers Strategies for Success*. \$21.36 CAD or *Writing the Breakout Novel*, \$22.75 CAD.

Forthcoming events (see website for details)

- Jan 21:** *Writing for Success: Essay Planning and Self-editing* for SD 42 grade 5-12 teachers' professional development session, 4-7pm, Brown Centre, Maple Ridge,
- Jan 23:** *Writing with Power!!* for Saanich SD 63 teachers' Professional development session, 3:30-6:30pm.
- Jan 27:** *Writing with Power!!* for teachers of Edith McDermott Elementary, Pitt Meadows, BC, 9am to noon.
- Jan 31:** *Writing with Power!!* for teachers of Maillard Middle School, Coquitlam, BC, 9am to noon.
- Feb 21:** *Writing with Power!! (9:30am)* and *Essay Planning and Self-editing* (1:30pm) for SD 43's teachers' Professional Development Day, Coquitlam.
- Mar 1:** **Mini-Writers' Conference** in Surrey, BC. Includes *How to Write Irresistible Query Letters* at 10am or 1:15pm. \$79 for the day
- Apr 15:** *Writing with Power!!* for selected students of Coquitlam's SD 43, 9:15-11:45am, Riverview Park School.
- Apr 26:** *Writing Online* (9-12 noon) and *Writing with Power!!* (1-4pm) for the Surrey Creative Writing Diploma Program.

Promotion pre-publication...

(continued)

whenever I had an excuse to do so – Remembrance Day, for example. Local and national radio provided me many interviews over several years and, just after my first book was published, Vickie Gabereau had me back on her CBC national radio show as one of her five Guests of the Year. I think I can safely say that my promotional efforts worked well. And, the phone still rings...!

Novelists also should be **entering contests** as regularly as possible. Your aim is to win or get placed so that you can use the success when pitching your books to editors and/or agents verbally or in query letters. E.g. *I won the fiction prize in the Pacific North-west Writers' 2001 contest for my short story "Down Under."*

So work on pre-publication promotion steadily as you write your masterpiece and watch as the success develops. With luck, you'll also get paid for it....



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 receive the newsletter, please notify the editor:

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