



The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

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FAQs on submissions...

Submission rules are one of the most frequent areas of inquiry that I deal with in my workshops and via email, with ms formatting running a close second. The reason behind all the questions is the variety of answers that writers receive from editors – there are almost as many permutations as there are models of cars.

The **golden rule** is first review the publication's or publishing house's website for their submission guidelines. Then, if you're still unsure of how they prefer to receive ideas, phone the receptionist and ask. Writers need to be certain that the receiving editor will accept electronic queries and manuscripts before using that method. Remember too that the text of an e-query is identical to that of a mailed query. Stay formal and professional. (Book proposals are never sent via email, only by snail mail.)

MAGAZINES: Over 90% of all print magazines are happy to receive queries and article manuscripts electronically and all ezine editors will. Turn your email program format to "plain text" and paste the query letter or manuscript into the body of the email. Editors delete anything with attachments these days because it is the attachments that transmit computer viruses.

If your query letter to a magazine has a one page bio as well, simply paste the bio into the email below the letter. A sidebar to a magazine article is treated the same way when submitting the ms electronically.

BOOKS: Most print publishers now accept queries for novels and non-fiction books via email – but you must make sure. Follow the rules above – use 'plain text' and put your TOC, if non-fiction, below the letter. Print book publishers do not accept manuscripts electronically – you must snail-mail a hard copy with a CD or floppy disks as indicated in your contract. Commercial e-publishers, .../2



From the editor's desk

How much time do you read for pleasure every day? I average about two hours/day, exclusive of the reading I do for writing purposes or on airplanes, which would increase my daily average by a factor of at least two. Writers should read and read voraciously, IMHO.

If US stats are anything to go by, the average woman reads 24 minutes/day, and an average man, 19 minutes. Children read about eight minutes/day. (A Time-Use Survey by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the US, September 2004.) Ouch!

Ideas for Christmas for writers – printer cartridges, paper, Elizabeth Lyon's new book *A Writer's Guide to Fiction*, spam washer software, blank CDs, Baroque music to help creativity, a decent sized diary, and sheet protectors for published articles in the original. I could go on.

The inaugural *Beacon Flash* hit a nerve – I've never received so many emails on a subject before. I asked for zinger sentences that describe your book or article and here are two:

. Bio-War tells the story of America crippled by a pandemic of smallpox, dropped on New York on a rainy night before Christmas.

. Sunny's Grand Adventure tells the story of a daisy who wants to fly!

Season's Greetings to you all....

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Trends

I was listening to the Executive Director of the Association of Book Publishers of BC speak at a meeting last month. Margaret Reynolds told the audience that British Columbia's publishing companies are the fastest growing in the Canadian industry, producing 900+ titles a year and earning revenues of over \$100 million/year. She said that these days Chapters sells 82% of all titles in this country, leaving the independent booksellers a very small window to make a profit and serve their patrons.

But my ears really pricked up when she started to discuss trends in publishing. Science is dropping down the hit parade of books these days. Books that have annual sales trending upward include the following categories:

- Mind, body and spirit
- Self-development
- History

Note that all are non-fiction and remember that over 80% of all titles published are non-fiction, which means there is less competition in this area of publishing. Hmm!

Forthcoming events

(for details, see www.beaconlit.com
and click on "Schedule 2005")

- Jan 25 – *Bright...but Can't Write!* for teachers of Delta School District.
 Jan 26 – *Crack Open Your Creative Channel!* at VCC, 6:30-9:30pm.
 Jan 29 – *How to Craft Irresistible Query Letters* at VCC, 9am – 4pm.
 Jan 31 – *Bright...but Can't Write* for teachers/parents of Coquitlam SD.
 Feb 3 – *Getting Published in Canada 101* at VCC, 6:30-9:30pm.
 Feb 8 – *Writing with Power!!* for teachers of Abbotsford School District.
 Feb 9 – *How to Write for Online Markets* at VCC, 6:30-9:30pm
 Feb 18 – *Bright...but Can't Write!* and *Writing for Success!* for teachers of Coquitlam SD
 Mar 2 – *Bright...but Can't Write!* for teachers of Langley SD.
 Mar 12 – *Writing with Power!!* for Surrey's Creative Writing Diploma Program, 9-12 noon
 Mar 12 – *Writing Online* for Surrey's Creative Writing Diploma Program, 1-4pm.
 Apr 16 – *How to Craft Irresistible Query Letters* at VCC, 9am-4pm.
 Apr 27 – *Crack Open Your Creative Channel!* at VCC, 6:30-9:30pm
 May 4 – *Getting Published in Canada 101* at VCC, 6:30-9:30pm
 May 11 – *How to Write for Online Markets* at VCC, 6:30-9:30pm
 May 14 – *How to Craft Irresistible Query Letters*, for Surrey's Creative Writing Diploma Program, 9am-4pm
 May 18 – *Brainstorming Brilliant Bios!* at VCC, 6:30-9:30pm

FAQs....(cont'd)

usually have a facility on their websites that allow you to upload your ms to them.

Now a word about the subject line in emails – editors need good info in this field otherwise they will delete your message. Indicate that it is a query and the topic (or book category) or an article manuscript and the title. Here are some examples:

For magazines –

QUERY: infant asthma

MS: 'Asthma Epidemic in Infants'

For books –

QUERY: Canadian naval history

QUERY: Mainstream romance

(the ms is not sent electronically.)

Follow these simple rules and you can't go too far wrong. Most importantly, you signal to the editor that you know the business and are a professional.

Previous issues of *The Beacon* are archived at www.beaconlit.com/beaconli/newsletter.htm



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