



# The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

Number 25, Winter 2005-06

## Trends: hot and not...

Trends are slippery customers - no sooner do you think you have the most popular book categories nailed down, when new ones slide onto the publishing stage and into the spotlight. That's exactly what I experienced at this year's Surrey International Writers' Conference (Oct 21-23) when I went on a quest to discover the latest North American publishing trends.

I was determined to ask everyone in the business, "What's hot?" I grilled the top editors, agents, and authors in Canada and the US about what was selling and what was likely to sell well in the next two years.

Well, the category that is sizzling is **Chick Lit**. All the agents and editors are actively seeking manuscripts that fit this genre. Now, I always have viewed chick lit as fluff and barely worthy of reading so I was surprised to hear the current definition. Chick lit is anything that 18-35 year old women read – fiction or non-fiction. It is light and easy to read, with graphics and lots of white space, and has 'attitude.' No longer fluffy, it is geared for that age group who is increasingly living alone and very independent. Most of the openings lie in chick lit non-fiction and the agents are hungry for manuscripts that fit. For example, *Buying Solo (a house)*, *How to Start a Small Business*, *How to be Your Own Contractor for House Renos*. You get the picture....

Other categories that are selling very well include **popular historical fiction** (both YA and adult), and **young adult novels** of all kinds. In non-fiction, **Christian, spirituality**, and the **politics** categories are all on the upswing. Any non-fiction with 'legs' (can sell overseas and be translated) is a good bet. Memoirs seem *passé* and romance is slipping, according to Jo Beverley, winner of five Rita awards for her historical romances. Sci-fi and fantasy continue to have strong demand.

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### From the editor's desk

Chick Lit was the talk of the publishing world this fall at SIWC 2005. Red hot and begging for manuscripts, you should consider whether your ms fits or could be made to fit this category. The lead details all about this and other trends.

I delivered my latest book to my publisher at the end of September with a whoosh of relief. I always experience a surge of liberation when the courier picks up the package and swear I will never write another book. The latter feeling soon wears off and a month later I began a new book called, *Book Magic: Turning Writers into Published Authors*. This one will be self-published (in 2006), like all my books for writers.

Now that *Sing a New Song* is into production at Dundurn Press, I have decided to chronicle what takes place at the author's end during this phase. It is a busy period and authors need to be aware of the demands coming their way from the publisher. Part One of the chronicle starts on page 2 and will help you understand the process.

Now it is time to wish you all *Season's Greetings*. May you enjoy the festivities!

**Julie H. Ferguson**

PS: a free book for writers at [www.beaconlit.com](http://www.beaconlit.com).

## An Author's Chronicle of Book Production - 1

**Sep 05** - Dundurn's publicity and promotion department sent me a long form to complete. This took 10 hours of work. The most time-consuming section involved researching the names and contact info for those reviewers (worldwide) who would need copies of the book and those who would receive only press kits. Dundurn also asked for my long bio, my publication list, other info, and a recent professional mug-shot – a 5 minute job for me to email as I already had these. Had previously written the catalogue blurb and short bio in about 2 hours and sent them to Dundurn's sales company for comment. At the same time, the five individuals, whom I had asked to write pre-pub endorsements for the cover and other publicity material, were responding and needing advice. Two had to be nagged to meet deadline (total of about 2 hours). Foreword needed editing (1 hour).

**Nov 05** - After the art director viewed the 65 images, she emailed me her "Image Review" which detailed the problems she had run into with grainy photos and digital images that were not 300dpi resolution, etc. I fixed what I could for her (2 hours) and informed her that the old pix were the only ones available. Publisher changed the sub-title after *minor* consultation with me. (20 mins). I created first webpage for book (4 hours). Release date nailed down for April 23, 2006 and two editors have the ms.

### Forthcoming events (for details see [website](#))

- Dec 5** - **Writing with Power!!** for writers. Creative Writing Diploma Program, Guildford Park Secondary School, Surrey, 6:30-9:30pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Dec 7** - **How to Write for Online Markets** for writers. Creative Writing Diploma Program, Guildford Park Secondary School, Surrey, 6:30-9:30pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Jan 18** - **Crack Open Your Creative Channel!** for writers. Vancouver Community College (downtown campus), 6:30-9:30pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Jan 25** - **Book Magic: Turning Writers into Published Authors** for writers who yearn to get a book published. Vancouver Community College (downtown campus), 6:30-9:30pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Feb 8** - **Writing Online: the New Adventure for Writers** for writers of all kinds. Vancouver Community College (downtown campus), 6:30-9:30pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Feb 22** - **Brainstorming Brilliant Bios** for all writers who want to increase their chances of getting published. Vancouver Community College (downtown campus), 6:30-9:30pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Mar 2, 9, and 16** - **How to Craft Irresistible Query Letters** for writers of books and articles. Creative Writing Diploma Program, Guildford Park Secondary School, Surrey, 7-9pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Mar 4** - **How to Craft Irresistible Query Letters** for writers of books and articles. Vancouver Community College (downtown), 9am-4pm. **Register [here](#)**
- Mar 25** - **Writing with Power!!** (9-noon) and **Brainstorming Brilliant Bios** (1-4pm) for all writers who want to increase their chances of getting published. Creative Writing Diploma Program, Johnston Heights Secondary School, Surrey. **Register [here](#)**

## Trends... (cont'd from p.1)

In Canada, the sales of **kids' books** have soared this year. It is 38% better than last year, with the largest growth in the 9-16 age group. Even removing *Harry Potter* from the scene, the growth is still 21%. And, young adult books accounted for 14% of annual sales at Indigo Books last year.

Why are these trends useful to aspiring authors? Think about your manuscripts – do they or can they fit any of the categories that are booming? Could you rewrite your ms with a slightly different slant? Think about your queries - can you target them to better meet the markets?

Many delegates at SIWC 2005 quickly realized they would have a better chance at publication if they did....



Previous issues of *The Beacon* are archived at [www.beaconlit.com/beaconli/newsletter.htm](http://www.beaconlit.com/beaconli/newsletter.htm)

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