



The Beacon

Your guiding light for writing and publishing

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My book is about..... the mission statement

Can you state what your non-fiction book is about in one sentence? If not, you probably do not have a clear purpose or theme for your project and you run the risk of writing a book without a point to it. Completing the following sentence is not as easy as it sounds: "My book is about...." Unpublished authors take several tries to boil down their theme to a phrase and usually seek assistance from other writers. Once you have achieved this task, type up the sentence in bold letters, and stick it on top of your computer screen. It will act as an ongoing guide and a baseline against which you can measure everything you include in your book. Ask yourself: Does this section contribute to the theme or not? What does this paragraph add to my overriding purpose?

Books' **mission statements** develop from this single sentence and are used in many ways, such as:

- Discovering your book's angle;
- Writing query letters to agents/editors;
- Speaking to agents/editors at writers' conferences;
- Preparing your book proposal/synopsis;
- Writing catalogue blurbs;
- Writing promotional material for news releases, flyers, etc; and,
- Giving media interviews.

Your book's mission statement should run about 150 words and must generate excitement, clearly describe the subject and scope of the book, demonstrate its uniqueness, show its benefits and the features that deliver them (sidebars, templates, illustrations, etc.), identify the audience and, lastly, reveal the author's credentials. "All that in 150 words," I hear you wailing! Yes! It takes a lot of work and much rewriting but it is well worth it. Many aspiring authors say it clarifies their thoughts and helps them create a more marketable product.

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From the editor's desk

Summer is nearly upon us and I have decided to take it off – completely and totally. I need to reclaim some time for myself and enjoy my daughter who will be leaving home for Dalhousie University in September. Empty nest syndrome looms...! Having made the decision reluctantly, I also gave up six of my volunteer commitments and discovered how good it felt. Perhaps my writing will benefit....

Several subscribers of *The Beacon* have let me know how much they appreciate the tips in the newsletter and others have emailed me with their literary successes. I have even been included in a new author's Acknowledgements. Now that was a first for me and most touching. I also appreciated the many compliments from the Editors' Association of Canada after the Spring edition of *The Beacon*.

Don't forget to register for the Surrey Writers' Conference, Oct 19-21 at surreywritersconference.bc.ca. I shall be in the Blue Pencil Café once again and will be presenting two workshops. See you there!

Julie H. Ferguson

A Book Review...

The Canadian Copyright Act (December 1999) demands a legal brain to understand and most writers, me included, shy away from trying. Now we don't have to because McGraw-Hill Ryerson has just published a revision of a book by Lesley Ellen Harris called *Canadian Copyright Law*.

Harris is a copyright and e-commerce lawyer who assisted in the recent revision of Canada's copyright act and has written several other books including *Digital Property: Currency of the 21st Century*. She has the talent for translating legal jargon into language you and I can understand and read easily.

Canadian Copyright Law covers anything a writer, a performer, an artist, a librarian, a webmaster, etc., could ever need to know on the subject and is smack up-to-date with sections on digital copyright and electronic rights. Most of all, I like it because the book is broken into small readable chunks with examples and resources throughout.

In a writing world dominated by American information, Harris's updated *Canadian Copyright Law* is a welcome addition – a must for any Canadian writer's reference shelf at \$29.99.

Forthcoming events

Jul 14: *Getting Published in the New E-ra* and *Speaking and Writing: The Indivisible Twins*; both for the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers, BC Chapter, at the Vancouver Museum's Vanier Room, 9:00am.

Sep 23: *Word on the Street*, Library Square in Vancouver, 11-6pm

Oct 19-21: *Surrey Writers' Conference*. Meet Julie in the Blue Pencil Café for an encouraging discussion about your work and attend her workshops – “Writing Irresistible Query Letters” and “Getting Published in Canada....” Register at www.surreywritersconference.bc.ca.

Nov 17: *Writing with Power!!* at Johnston Heights School, as part of Surrey's Creative Writing Diploma program, 1-4pm, \$25.00. Call 589-2221 to register.

Mar 2: *Writing Irresistible Query Letters* (9-noon) and *Writing Online* (1-4pm) both at Johnston Heights School, Surrey's Creative Writing Diploma program, \$26.00 each. Call 589-2221 to register.

Mission Statement.. / from p1

Answering the following nine questions will help you develop your mission statement:

1. What problem will your book solve for its readers? (One only, in one sentence.)
2. Describe your typical reader in 2-3 words. (eg. Canadian writers)
3. What is the subject of your book? (One simple phrase)
4. What makes your book unique?
5. What makes your book better than others on the same subject?
6. Why is it a good time to have a book like yours available?
7. List the benefits of your book to its readers.
8. List the features that deliver the benefits.
9. Describe yourself in two words. (eg. author and speaker)

Good luck and, if need be, get some help from your writers' group or individuals who know your work-in-progress.



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