

KeyNotes

September 2009



Ideas, Inspiration, and News You Can Use to Write and Publish Your Book

Hello, Authors and Publishers ~

September always brings memories of plaid dresses (first day of school), great sleeping weather, and trees showing the first touch of fall's paintbrush. For me, September is sort of a second new year, a second chance to make some of those goals I had in January become real. It's a time to clean the cobwebs from my summer-lazy brain and crank up the word machine.

What about you? Do you have any special tricks you use to make the fall days more productive, to get back in gear after vacation?

A New Constellation

Last month I had just started the Facebook fan page for the new book, and now there's a separate page on the website for [The Cat Lover's Book of Days](#). Because this is the first of a series of Books of Days, I wanted to set the book and the series apart from the other publishing I do. So...introducing **Ursa Books**, the new imprint of **The Silloway Press**.

Ursa, of course, is a she-bear in Latin, but also two familiar constellations in the northern hemisphere. Ursa Major, the Great Bear, contains the stars that make up the Big Dipper, and Ursa Minor, the Little Bear, has the North Star in its tail. For centuries, sailors have depended on the heavens for navigation, and the North Star is an important point of reference. Also, Ursa Major was the "drinking gourd" that helped lead slaves north to freedom, pointing to the North Star that marks the north pole of our Earth.

The Big Dipper was the first constellation I could identify and still the easiest to find. Even in a suburban sky where there are so many lights it can be hard to see any stars at all, you can usually spot Ursa Major. And with over half a million different books published each year, it's important for these books – these Books of Days – to stand out. Ergo, **Ursa Books**.

Take a look at the new logo on **The Cat Lover's Book of Days** Web page – <http://CatBookOfDays.com> – let me know what you think.

Can I Quote You on That?

Writing can be a lonely, frustrating occupation or avocation. We've all had days when the computer screen's blank stare seems more a sneer than an invitation. A blank lined pad is ready to receive our blissful poem or stirring prose, but all we can come up with is scribbled nonsense. I've heard that journalists learn how to produce text even when the

muse is nowhere to be found, but I imagine that can be almost painful. The reward, of course, is that when the words DO come, when you cannot type fast enough to keep up with the ideas, there is an elation that's impossible to explain. I suppose it's something like an athlete being "in the zone," and it's a wonderful feeling. But for all those other times, when words won't form, there are these words from Georges Simenon:

Writing is not a profession but a vocation of unhappiness.

Here's hoping that September and the rest of the year bring you more good word days.

My Word!

Thank goodness for my high school typing teacher! I don't recall her name, but I can still see and feel those old manual typewriters that we used to learn touch-typing. Because of that one class, I earned money in college typing papers for guys, and have used the skill ever since. These days, I can type much more quickly than I can write by hand, so I don't have to expose people to my **cacography**, or bad handwriting.

Featured Article – Of Dan Brown and the Rest of Us

Author Dan Brown's new book, *The Lost Symbol*, is blowing print and sales records out of the water like Michael Phelps at the Olympics. Most reviews I've read say that it is as much a page-turner as *The Da Vinci Code*, and as full of the overblown phrases that any writing professor would slash with an angry red pen. The reclusive author has hit the mega-best seller jackpot and can calmly dismiss the critics who say that the writing is second-rate. Who cares? Brown does massive research and then weaves a story full of intrigue, obscure clues, and "it just might be true" scenarios with a breakneck pace. And people line up for blocks to plunk down their \$29.95.

But what if you're not Dan Brown? Or Nora Roberts? Then you probably won't be wined and dined by your publisher, nor be able to buy and renovate an historic hotel in your town to create an elegant Bed & Breakfast inn. But if you write non-fiction, you still have an opportunity to build a following and to influence people through your words. If you write what you believe, what you know, and what matters to you, there may well be an audience just waiting to hear what you have to say.

You've probably heard about niche marketing – tailoring a message to a very specific market. Parenting magazines and web sites have this down pat. They know who their market is: people with children. Different magazines focus on the life stages of children, so you have some targeted to new parents, others to parents of teens. You can do the same thing with a book.

Suppose you know a lot about gardening. OK, fine, there are a lot of books on gardening. But more than just gardening, you know about growing plants in containers. Better, but still a large topic. How about growing fruits and vegetables in containers in an urban environment? Now you have a niche, and you know who will be interested in buying your book: city dwellers who want the freshness and convenience of stepping onto their balconies and picking fresh fruits and vegetables!

Reading about a Dan Brown and his massive sales can be disheartening as you type away on a manuscript. There will always be Dan Browns. But there will also always be markets for well-written books on very specific topics. Enjoy your own creative process as you write what you know. That enjoyment is something you DO have in common with Dan Brown.

Staying Connected

Social networking is a fact of life for many writers these days, and I'm not exempt. To help me stay in touch with people who have shared their cats' names and photos for *The Cat Lover's Book of Days*, there's the [Facebook fan page](#). I'm also on LinkedIn, and try to remember to tweet on Twitter where you can follow me @McFrugal. Hope to see you in cyberspace.

The Keeper of the Keys

That's me, Peg Silloway. Lover of words and collector of books. Publishing is a natural outgrowth of my life-long love of writing, and now I'm pouring that love of wordcraft into creating books that have something to say, that can make a difference, and that help authors' publishing aspirations become reality. Mix that passion for the written word with a background steeped in business reality - accounting, project management, and small business management - and you have The Silloway Press.



Isn't it high time you published your book? Call me at 301-335-9368, or email me at Peg@SillowayPress.com. Together we can make it happen. **Write On!**

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