



The Verbal Pitch

by Julie H. Ferguson

Author and professional speaker, Julie H. Ferguson leads workshops that provide aspiring authors with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to approach publishers and succeed. Her workshops are available as e-books and paperbacks through Beacon Literary Services at www.beaconlit.com, then click on Writers' Tools.

Be ready for this one! If you're not prepared, verbal pitches can be scary; if you are organized and thus confident going into one, you may just get your ms accepted. Most often encountered at conferences when you meet editors/agents in the bar or through an appointment, verbal pitches are also necessary when you phone a publisher to enquire about the name of their acquisition editor and get put through....

To avoid rambling, you need to develop, ahead of time, a zinger of an opening sentence to describe your book – just one sentence. A radio producer I know put it best, “Surprise me!” Try completing these sentences: *My book is about...* or *My book tells the story of...* Test them on your fellow writers; revise them and test again. Then you can add a couple more sentences to supplement the first. Next, compose one or two sentences about why you are perfect to write this book that include your writing achievements and expertise on the subject of the book. Test them out too. When you have the short paragraph to your satisfaction, learn it by heart and practise it – you never know when you'll need it.

When delivering a verbal pitch, recite your paragraph and then shut up and wait. The editor/agent will then ask you questions they need you to answer. Remember they are not interested in why you wrote the book or that you have a degree in an unrelated subject.

If you have a terrific idea and write reasonably well, the editor or agent will ask you to send along more material and you have succeeded at the first step. Good luck!