

Yes, I'm dipping my toes into the self-publishing waters. My first novella is coming out, may be out by the time this article appears. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. First, I had to go to Bowker and buy an ISBN number. That was a reality check. This kind of detail work had always been handled by my publisher before. Bowker is the company that sells you those numbers and gets your book or novella listed in "Books in Print". You can't put your jewel up on-line without one of these numbers. If you want to print paper copies of your effort, you also have to buy a bar code. And guess what? These babies aren't cheap. One ISBN number is over a hundred bucks. Yes, you read that right. So I bought ten of them, which was a bargain, relatively speaking. Gulp.

Okay, so I have my number. I also have the name of the person who is going to put my novella up on various sites on the 'Net. I'd already had my webmistress design a cute cover. Had to worry about that design and pay for that too. Looking ahead, I've contracted with the British illustrator who did my previous books to do my next single title in my Real Vampires series which I'll also self-publish. Don't even ask what I'll have to pay for that cover. But I wanted continuity. Maybe that was stupid. I have no idea what I'll earn on these efforts.

Okay, back to getting the novella up on the 'Net. There are so many sites--Amazon and B&N, of course. Then don't forget Apple and who knows what else. Me? I read paper. So I won't even get to read my novella anywhere. Which makes me sad. I love going into my local bookstore and seeing my books on the shelf, signing them at my chapter meeting. My elderly aunt and cousin, who love my series won't get to read the novella unless I print it out for them.

Now I'm back to what I hate about self-publishing. I'm going to RWA National this year. Will I be able to sign anything I've self-pubbed? Only if I pay to have some print copies there. Yes, if I pay. Bummer. Because all proceeds go to Literacy. Which I believe in. Yes, I do. Former reading teacher here. But it's another reality check that makes me cringe.

What is the upside to this self-pubbing experiment? First, I wrote the novella and can have it to my fans really fast. They don't have to wait the usual year to see it. I love that. I also get to set the price. I'm calling it a love offering and will make it 99cents for a limited time. Why not? It's my experiment and I want to draw in some new readers for the series. My publisher owns my backlist, but I'm getting royalties on those so this should help me there too. And here's another bright side: royalties on this novella will be paid quickly, not twice a year with reserves held back like publishers do. Of course I didn't get a nice advance this time either. I do like advances.

So I'm working feverishly on a proposal to send to my agent and editor. I like writing, making up stories, not the minutiae of the business side that self-publishing demands. Add to that the terror that I missed some mistakes without my trusty copy editor. I was careful, but I'm not objective when it comes to my own stuff. Yes, I majored in English in college but that doesn't mean I won't get some emails about a missing word or a misplaced modifier.

I named my little company Dragon Lady Publishing. Am I a Dragon Lady? I can be. But I'd rather not have to be a hard-driving businesswoman hammering out deals. That's why I have an agent and why I don't plan to make a habit of self-publishing. Because next on my agenda will have to be promoting this novella. Yep, ***Real Vampires Take a Bite Out of Christmas***. Buy it now. Ninety-nine cents wherever e-books are sold. Pass it on.

Gerry Bartlett is the national best-selling author of the Real Vampires series. Book 10, ***Real Vampires Know Size Matters***, was a December release. Watch for that e-novella, on-line now.