

Five books later – a self-publishing saga

by Peter Twidale

Nothing focuses the mind like putting down your last dime—or mortgaging the house—for a personal cause, such as publishing your own book. A writer who isn't a celebrity or a rising literary star, may have no choice. You believe in yourself. It's almost self-publishing or die.

Some writers are well suited for self-publishing. Success comes to those with a buoyant, "I-can-do-it" personality, which is a way of introducing Patricia Kathleen McCarthy, a Sandy Hill resident, who has published three poetry collections and two novels.

Indeed, Patricia may be the perfect model. She's an entrepreneur with a flair for sales and marketing, and has lots of confidence. She's not caught up in art for art's sake. If she were a pure artist, her aim as a self-publisher would be to write and send out the perfect sentence, or perfect phrase. In her case, her overriding purpose has a marketing ring. It is "making a book sale."

Patricia does not write about gardening or French cuisine. She writes vampire stories loaded with imaginative sex. From the outset, she went into the full-book format. She wanted to present a finished product, and she hired a printer. The first effort was a book of erotic poetry. She remembers that, "I gave away copies privately to friends who told me they loved to read them with their partners." Her current vampire book is *The Crimson Boy*, which follows *The Crimson Man*. A third book, *The Crimson Woman*, is now in editing. And a fourth is slated for to come out late next year.

It hurts Patricia that self-publishing is seen as the pariah of the arts world. "You stick 'independent' before other endeavours and it rings true," she says. "Independent films, and indie bands and record labels have an aura of success. The same for independent painters supported by independent galleries? But mention independent publishing and, 'Oh, oh, not good. Nothing but vanity press.'"

Patricia offers herself as proof that self-publishing works, and is good for her self-confidence. "Every new author should experience the self-publishing route. It gives a broad spectrum of the entire process. There are so many facets," she says. "If you don't believe in yourself, and in your work, how can you expect your readers to believe in you?"

Self-publishing has given Patricia insights into herself. "I've learned that I'm short on patience, I'm not one who likes just hanging around. If I were truly patient, perhaps I would have toiled away at finding a publisher instead of branching out on my own, and who knows, I might still be toiling."

At the same time she says her impatient nature makes her a multi-tasker. "I chose that route because it propels me forward. I don't want to lose momentum." This fall, she was working on her third book while the second was with an editor. When the second comes back, she will focus on the new edit before starting the fourth. When one of her books is finished it gets a print run of 250 copies. It costs her \$7.50 a copy for printing, editing and design. Her retail price is \$13.99.

In five years she expects to have left her full-time job in marketing and sales to become a full-time writer and publisher.



Patricia McCarthy, in a photo taken in Strathcona Park, writes vampire stories loaded with imaginative sex. Photo David Three Rats

She says writing is about taking risks. She says her vampire themes are groundbreaking writing. "Self-publishing teaches you to be self-reliant," she says.

End Note: Patricia McCarthy's books are available from her web site www.patriciakmccarthy.com; from Amazon.com and .ca, under Patricia Kathleen McCarthy; and from select book stores.

