

The Perils of Being Published: My Big Release Day by Gerry Bartlett

My new book, *REAL VAMPIRES DON'T WEAR SIZE SIX*, came out Tuesday, August 2nd. Now you know that a book's release is a big deal, even if it's not your first or even your tenth. There are several reasons for that. First, you want readers to buy your book as soon as it comes out to increase your odds of making a bestseller list. A large volume of sales in that first week is critical for that to happen. Making lists impresses publishers and translates into more and better contracts. We live and die by our ranking on the "lists". Secondly, if you have a series, you want your loyal fans to know the next installment is out and that the wait is over. This is their reward for hanging around with you on Facebook or twitter between books. So you want to be sure to let everyone know that "Release Day is Upon Us!"

Now it just so happened that I spent twelve or so hours on this release day in airports and on airplanes getting from England to Houston. Yes, I was lucky I'd had a nice trip, but my timing sucked. It left me powerless to push anyone toward a bookstore. By the time I got home, jet-lagged and exhausted, my release day was almost over. I tiredly posted a reminder notice on my friend page on Facebook and on my fan page which also has a twitter feed. It was all I could do. Then I went to bed. Would my fans rush out and buy the book? Well, I hadn't waited till this last minute to make sure. That reminder was just the final push.

Here's what I had to do before I even left for my two week vacation: I made sure a newsletter blast was prepared to send out two to three days before the big release to my mailing list. Bless the webmistress who takes care of those things for me. I also had two blogs that were scheduled for the big day. I wrote them and sent them to the blog sites ahead of time. Before my head hit the pillow on that Tuesday, I also posted a notice on those Facebook pages that there were prizes to be won if anyone wanted to go comment on those blogs. Were my posts coherent? I have no idea.

Of course the release lasts more than a day. And some readers reported that they got the book early—not exactly a tight laydown by booksellers. No worries. The real worry came when frustrated fans started reporting that they couldn't find my book to buy it. Yes, this is our economy at work. I'm a mid-list author and my books are trade paperbacks. Booksellers are reluctant to order many of such titles, if at all. My print runs have been shrinking but luckily my on-line sales are keeping my series alive. Still, I want my books in stores. Do I have any control over this? Not really. My fans aren't the only ones frustrated. What I can control is to try to increase demand for my books so that booksellers order my books and keep ordering them. I urge fans to become squeaky wheels, insisting their bookstores carry my titles. It's worth a shot.

I have five more blogs lined up in the next few days. More chances to promote the book. I also had previously bought a coop ad in *Romantic Times* and I have over a hundred members of my street team passing out brochures all over the United States, Canada, even Australia. I have blood red drink koozies as incentives for my team members and passed those out to booksellers and librarians at the RWA conference in New York. All

in all I feel like I've been in a frantic race to give this book some momentum when it comes out. Will it hit a bestseller list? All the previous ones in the series were in the top ten at Barnes & Nobles and Borders. Now Borders is gone so B & N is my only hope for any kind of list. Trust me, a trade paperback without a big name author's name on it has a snowball's chance of making the USA Today or NYTimes lists.

If you are still unpublished, I'm sure you dream of your first release day. I know I did. I never imagined it would be stressful, much less a day full of dread and terror. Because every book that goes out to the public has your reputation riding on it. Will they like it? What will the reviewers think? Will anyone buy it? Will sales be flat or, worse, drop? Writing is a business and you should never forget that. We all wish we could just be creative creatures who dream up stories and send them out to a grateful public. If only it were that easy. But it's a numbers game that you can win or lose too easily.

Oh, well, release day is behind me now. I wrote the best book I could so I should just find comfort in that and move on. Are you kidding me? I have blogs to write, another book to start and edits on one I was supposed to finish last month. Ah, a writer's life. Aren't you glad you signed up for it?

Gerry Bartlett is the author of the bestselling REAL VAMPIRES series. REAL VAMPIRES DON'T WEAR SIZE SIX is number seven in that series and hit stores and e-retailers on August 2, 2011.