

Self publishing industry thrives in Dayton region

■ BY LAURA ENGLEHART
DBJ STAFF REPORTER

When author Carolyn Christian wrapped up her book, "The Legendary Tales of Sharktooth and Hammer – The Awakening," she initially tried to secure a publisher through traditional channels.

Christian, who hails from Yellow Springs and currently lives outside Columbus, sent letters to some 80 literary agents. Many wrote her off, while others told her they could not publish her book because she wasn't a well-known author.

"Agents were getting back to me saying, 'You know what? You're unknown, so it would be hard to sell you to any publishers; we can't pick you up, but you should keep plugging away at this,'" Christian said.

So, instead, Christian chose to self-publish her 200-page book, geared toward 9- to 12-year-old children. And she found many resources in the Dayton region to guide her in the process.

The self-publishing industry has exploded in the past few years, thanks to Internet outlets and larger publishers that have balked at taking on unrecognized authors who would require more marketing dollars to promote.

The Dayton region, especially, has provided those verdant authors with quality resources to enhance, print and market their books themselves. Dayton-based Greyden Press LLC, for example, not only prints books, but also offers writers consulting services on anything from page layout to choosing a font.

"We give them ideas, because they're not in the market," said David Braugler, publishing advisor for Greyden.

The printer, which has 25 employees, went from running about 30,000 books annually two years ago to more than 50,000 books.

Also in the region, Antioch University Midwest and the University of Dayton both host annual writer's workshops that allow writers to make industry connections and glean feedback on their works.

Self-publishing provides authors complete control over their printed work and their personal brand. However, it takes a lot of legwork and grassroots marketing — not to mention several thousand dollars in out-of-pocket expenses.

"It's very hard," said Gery Deer, creative director and owner of GLD Enterprises Commercial Writing of Dayton, which helps self-published authors market their books. "It's not as hard as rejection, but it's harder in terms of time, money and your own expertise."

The process has evolved quickly since the advent of Internet self-publishing

outlets and e-books, which are free to publish through some Web sites.

Previously, aspiring authors would follow industry standards.

"You didn't do anything unless you had an agent, and they typically accepted about 8 to 10 percent of authors," Deer said. "The concept (of self-publishing) was really kind of taboo."

Now, online publishers, such as Amazon.com and Lulu.com, make it easy for writers to print or upload their books to sell, opening doors for authors whose books would have been shelved by big publishers.

While e-books do not require cash to publish, hard copies could run authors into the thousands of dollars. For example, to print a paperback book that's 6 inches by 9 inches in size and has 150 pages costs about \$1,200 for 200 copies.

"Obviously, it varies based on what they're doing and how they're doing it," Braugler said.

Self-publishers, however, keep all proceeds from book sales. If books cost \$6 to publish and sell for \$14.99, they'll turn a higher profit than authors who allow traditional publishers to market their books and take a cut, Braugler said.

But, if authors are not paying publishers to market their books, that means they must pick up those costs themselves and throw their weight behind a campaign formed from the ground up, which could take a few thousand dollars more, plus additional time and patience.

Enter GLD Enterprises. The company has adopted an honest-to-a-fault slogan that illustrates the hard-fought marketing process: "Because writing is the easy part."

The marketer typically picks up authors — selectively — when they're looking to self-publish their book and before they've hit print. Then, Deer said, his company



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Book Business: Carolyn Christian, a self-published author, says the Dayton region is filled with resources for self publishing.

can help edit and craft the book to help better market it down the road.

A former freelance journalist, Deer formed GLD Enterprises in 2003 because he found a need in the region for book consulting and marketing services.

"Writers are not typically good at business," he said. "Most want to get their book out and crank out the next one. That makes it hard for them to wrap their head around the idea that the author is the brand and the book is the product."

When Christian sought to market "The Legendary Tales of Sharktooth and Hammer – The Awakening," with help from GLD Enterprises, she turned to family, friends and business contacts. She also set up a Web site and reached out to readers through social media channels.

Between building a Web site, taking orders for books and hosting a launch party, authors could spend about \$3,000 per year for marketing on top of book printing expenses, Deer said.

"If you're a big-name celebrity, publishers can get you on board and it's an easy sell, but if you're a lesser-known author, it takes grassroots marketing," Christian said.

Her book sells for \$14.95 on Amazon.com and GreydenPress.com.

Also self-published, Greg McAfee, founder of Kettering-based McAfee Heating and Air Conditioning Co., recent-

ly compiled his business experiences into "It's -My- Your Dream: Eight Elements to Guide Your Business Success," printed by Greyden Press.

Sometimes publishers pick up authors when they start to gain popularity from their on-the-ground efforts. That kind of marketing is expensive for big publishers like Harper Collins, Penguin and McGraw-Hill.

As those organizations accept fewer books to publish on falling revenues, the self-publishing industry stands to continue on its growth path.

"I don't see this trend of independently publishing books going away anytime soon," Braugler said, and the Dayton region, somewhat unexpectedly, makes for an ideal place to do it.

"We have seen that the audience you find in this area — it's a very good cross section, and consequently it provides for a wide audience," he said.

Christian, for her part, has ordered 500 copies of her book and plans more marketing pushes in the next few months. In the future, she hopes to make "The Legendary Tales of Sharktooth and Hammer" a series of books.

The author works full time in Columbus as director for strategic account development for 21st Century Communications.

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Gery Deer

WSU to add \$12M classroom building, new student facility

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Wright State University plans to spend \$9.7 million to expand on, and fund, construction of two campus buildings.

The university Board of Trustees was expected Friday to approve a bond issue that would allow the school to add another \$6 million and 16,000 square feet to a classroom building planned for the west side of campus.

The now \$12 million building will have more than 57,000 square feet and include classroom space and room for student

and teacher support services.

The bond also would help pay to build a \$3.9 million, 18,000-square-foot student commons building near residence halls on the northwest side of campus. The building would provide more student gathering space and dining options.

"There was a common theme we were hearing that there was a lack of student gathering space," said Jeff Ulliman, assistant vice president for finance and university controller. "This is in response to that."

Both buildings, still in early design phases, fall in line with the university

campus master plan.

A favorable bond rate has prompted the university to issue new bonds for the work and enabled an expansion of the student classroom building, said Mark Polatajko, vice president of business and fiscal affairs and university treasurer.

"Timing is everything," Polatajko said. "The market is good and we have an opportunity to generate positive cash flow."

The new bonds additionally will help Wright State pay down bonds issued in 2004 at a higher rate, freeing up about \$80,000 in positive cash flow a year

and saving \$1.4 million in the long run, Polatajko said.

Wright State administrators initially presented the proposal during budget workshop discussions in May.

The new buildings adds to other construction on campus. For example, Wright State Physicians in June completed its \$11.5 million Wright State Physicians Medical Office & Sports Medicine Building, which has 66,000 square feet where WSP practices have been consolidated.

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