

The BookTok Boom: Book Recommendations in the Digital Age

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THE BOOKTOK BOOM: BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

Examining the evolving landscape of book marketing, this study delves into the shift of conventional reading recommendations within the digital era and specifically explores the significant impact of BookTok on shaping individuals' choices for their next literary venture. As a digital platform and subcommunity of TikTok, BookTok provides the space for users to create content and share their passion for books. Through an analysis of the relationship between BookTok and the consumption of literature, this research uses a focus group and interviews to illuminate reading trends and the influential factors guiding readers to their selection of future reading materials. Ultimately, it was discovered that BookTok is extremely impactful on reading recommendations and both BookTok users and content creators alike believe it is here to stay for the foreseeable future.

Keywords

reading trends, reading recommendations, BookTok, digital era, book publishing

The BookTok Boom: Book Recommendations in the Digital Age

Book recommendations are a personal way for readers to learn about their next best

literary venture. This has evolved over the years from simple word-of-mouth to

television recommendations like Oprah's book club and, most currently, social media

platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Presently, the most popular of these

reading communities is BookTok (Jacobs), a subcommunity of TikTok. By examining

the evolving landscape of reading recommendations and the role of BookTok in shaping

book selections, this study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the

complex relationship between digital technology, social media, and literature

consumption.

From the early 20th century (1900s-1920s), print advertising, such as newspapers

and magazines, were the primary forms of book marketing, which lead to limited and

more traditional marketing channels compiled of bookstores, libraries, and word of

mouth. The mid-20th century (1930s-1960s) introduced bestseller lists and book clubs

like *The New York Times Best Seller List*, *Book of the Month Club*, and *Reader's Digest*

Book Club, influencing book sales everywhere. Television and radio became more

popular and were used by publishers for book promotions. Late 20th century (1970s-

1990s) brought about direct mail marketing, offering readers book club memberships

and book discounts sent straight to their home address. Literary agents emerged,

stepping into a fast-growing role that marketed authors and their works, and author

book tours expanded, with authors traveling greater distances to promote their books.

In the late 20th to early 21st century (1990s-2000s), the digital age exploded. The rise of

the internet led to a slew of digital marketing strategies, including author websites,

email newsletters, and online book promotions. eBooks and self-publishing provided a

space for authors to be celebrated on an international level; social media platforms like MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter were also used for book marketing and author engagement. Now, in the 21st century (2010s-present), the world is in the midst of everything digital. This takes on the form of online retailers (Amazon), data-driven marketing with advanced consumer insights, digital advertising (such as Google Ads, Facebook Ads, BookBub), podcasting, and above all else: book bloggers and general influencer marketing. Publishers increasingly collaborate with social media influencers for book promotions (“Provide a history”).

Online platforms are highly influential in general, but specifically impactful on book choices (“Impact of Social Media”). The app, TikTok, debuted in August 2018 and has only grown in popularity (Lee). With that fame, many subcommunities have formed based on user’s personal preferences and the number of people who join and spend time on the app. For the purpose of this paper, the BookTok subcommunity will be further examined. BookTok content creators have a wide reach; many BookTok accounts have thousands, if not upwards of millions of followers. In 2022 according to “Impact of Social Media on the Book Publishing Industry,” #BookTok only had roughly 45 billion views which is an impressive number but meager in comparison to now, merely a year later. As of September 14, 2023, the BookTok hashtag currently has 177.5 billion views—and views are still multiplying by the second (“Impact of Social Media”). With this data in mind, it is astounding that a thorough review of existing literature shows very little scholarly research about the impact of BookTok on reading recommendations and reading communities.

Walking into a bookstore, it is clear that major retailers are astutely aware of BookTok's popularity. There are "BookTok Recommendations" sections in most major retailers in person and online, such as Barnes and Noble, Amazon, Target, and Walmart. Book publishing companies are not far behind, with many having some sort of presence on TikTok. Listed below are the main TikTok handles for the "Big 5" book publishing companies, accompanied by their follower and like counts as of September 14, 2023. In order from top to bottom, the list includes Penguin Random House, Hachette Book Group (the U.S. division), HarperCollins, MacMillan Publishers, and Simon and Schuster:

TikTok Handle	Follower Count	Number of Likes
@PenguinRandomHouse	56.2K followers	997.1K likes
@HachetteUS	11.7K followers	5,215 likes
@HarperCollins	9,048 followers	8,695 likes
@MacMillanPublishers	2,988 followers	2,991 likes
@SimonAndSchusterBooks	445 followers	1,699 likes

Similarly, the same information is listed below for the top five book retailers as of April 2023 (Kizer); the follower and like counts were recorded on October 21, 2023. In order from top to bottom, the list includes Amazon, Barnes and Noble, The Hudson Group, Books A Million, and Half Price Books:

TikTok Handle	Follower Count	Number of Likes
@Amazon	873.0K followers	4.1M likes
@BNBuzz	176.0K followers	3.3M likes
(The Hudson Group) n/a	n/a	n/a
@Books_A_Million	8,492 followers	173.9K likes
@HalfPriceBooksOfficial	262 followers	n/a

To compare, here are the top five BookTok influencer accounts I found on September 14, 2023:

TikTok Handle	Follower Count	Number of Likes
@KierraLewis75	1.1M followers	31.9M likes
@AymansBooks	945.8K followers	130.2M likes
@Sophia.Panella	694.3K followers	24.9M likes
@EzeeKat	686.4K followers	34.7M likes
@MaditasBibliotheca	588.0K followers	76.0M likes

Examining the three tables provided above, there is a drastic difference in the BookTokker's numbers compared to the big 5 publishers. For the major book retailers, Amazon and Barnes and Noble seem to be keeping up follower-wise, but that is likely because they are big names. The number of likes that BookTokkers receive surpasses them with ease. What do the BookTok content creators have that traditional publishers or retailers do not? Research is necessary to provide deeper insight into BookTok's impact on reading recommendations and how books can be better marketed; this is how publishing companies can work alongside BookTok in the present instead of clinging to the past.

To best understand what sets BookTok and its content creators apart in influencing reading recommendations, I found it necessary to contribute my own research. I conducted a focus group with four BookTok users via a Zoom call; then I conducted interviews with nine BookTok content creators via email response and Zoom video calls. For my focus group, I asked the readers various questions about their perception of BookTok and personal reading habits and then, about books they read because of BookTok and why. For my interviews, I asked the content creators about their experiences with BookTok and what they notice from their positions of influence.

This varied in questions about their journey as content creators, how they handle endorsements with publishing companies or authors, patterns or trends they notice in their followers, and how BookTok impacts the entire literary community. Their responses were recorded and later analyzed to determine which opinions the focus group and interviewees shared, as well as which opinions differed and which unique insights they offered. I conclude with a summation of their responses and how researchers can use their answers to better understand why readers listen to specific reading recommendations over others, with an emphasis on why book publishing companies and authors should grow alongside thriving platforms such as BookTok, instead of fighting the future.

Literature Review

Known for being the best platform to receive book recommendations in the digital age, BookTok began as a hashtag sometime in 2019 (McLean; Colville; Jacobs). Before that time, Oprah Winfrey paved the way by creating an incredibly successful television book club in the mid-'90s, reaching thousands of viewers and promoting over 60 authors ("Oprah Launches Influential Book Club"; Stein). Over 25 years later, a new frontier for book selection emerged and #BookTok quickly gained popularity during the 2020 pandemic, with its reach only skyrocketing since then (Colville). Now, there are BookTok recommendation sections in most major bookstores in Barnes and Noble, Target, and Walmart, to name a few. The BookTok platform provides plenty of space for revitalized authors and emerging authors to share the limelight, with a few standout names in particular: Colleen Hoover, Sarah J. Maas, and Emily Henry (Prah; Colville; O'Sullivan). With the popularity, there are a variety of factors that influence book selection, ranging from the style content is filmed to the reader's personal taste being

taken into consideration and not having a random advertisement shoved in front of their face (Prahl; Colville; Diaz). One of the biggest factors is that BookTok is all about community and emotional engagement (O’Sullivan; Diaz). Ultimately, the research question that these sources all revolve around is about how BookTokers have the power to influence reader’s choices in selecting books to read and why should book marketing strategists be paying attention.

Before the Boom...

As established, book marketing has taken on the shape of endless methods in the past 100+ years, with the digital age providing a multitude of platforms for books to reach national and even international audiences—with ease. While promoting authors and books via digital means is normal now, it was unheard of until the mid-90s when Oprah Winfrey played a key role in paving the way. Oprah’s television book club was one of the biggest steps forward for combining influencing personalities with modern technology. Her book club launched with the title, *The Deep End of the Ocean* by Jacquelyn Mitchard on September 17, 1996, and members of the publishing industry were initially skeptical about its success.

Oprah and her team proved everyone wrong and the club “proved to be a hit with Winfrey’s legions of fans... many of her picks sold over 1 million copies” (“Oprah Launches Influential Book Club”). Every time Oprah’s book club selected its next feature, “sales of that book would skyrocket and modestly selling titles would become bestsellers within a week.” A television personality has never influenced the reading public to such an extremely high level (Stein). Oprah bravely chose not to play it safe by only selecting cult classics; instead, she used her impact in a positive way, helping numerous first-time novelists. By the final season of her show in 2011, more

than 60 books had been chosen and promoted for her book club (“Oprah Launches Influential Book Club”).

A New Frontier for Book Selection

The BookTok hashtag has boosted book sales across the charts. In fact, “825 million books were sold in the U.S. in 2021, up 9% from the previous year” (McLean). NPD Bookscan stated it was the highest number their company had seen since 2004. For long-time BookTokker, Cait Jacobs, the first time she saw the term “BookTok” was when @kathyellendavis used it in late 2019, as part of a series of TikTok videos with book recommendations—which were relatively new. At the time, a small number of bookish creators, publishing companies, authors, and readers were on TikTok; nothing compared to what the community is today. Jacobs believes that more authors are recognizing BookTok as a serious marketing tool. She thinks this will continue as more authors and publishers join the community to promote their books:

I imagine oversaturation of creators might become an issue. And now that the marketing successes of BookTok has gained attention, I can also see more promotional content being made, which might cause those who joined for authenticity to lose interest. (Jacobs)

Though it is possible, Jacobs does not envision these issues permanently affecting BookTok. Similar problems have arisen within book communities on other platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, “which they experienced and survived. BookTok will as well.” Charlie Colville agrees, stating “TikTok is a great space for authors to find advice, share their ideas, and build a fan following. Fans can also connect with their favorite authors, tuning in to watch their progress and chat with them in the comments about

characters, settings, and plot lines.” From the beginning, the positive aspects of BookTok far outweigh the negative.

Leading BookTok Authors

I researched the top authors on BookTok based on author account and hashtag on August 25, 2023. The information that I found based on the number of followers, the number of likes, and the number of hashtag views is listed below, in order from the most followers to the least for the first table, and in order of the most views to the least for the second table:

Rank by Author Account		
<i>TikTok Handle</i>	<i>Follower Count</i>	<i>Number of Likes</i>
@ColleenHoover	1.4M followers	7.5M likes
@VictoriaAveyard	400.7K followers	24.5M likes
@ElleKennedyAuthor	100.4K followers	2.3M likes
@Penelope.Douglas	51.5K followers	180.4K likes
@HollyBlackWriter	45.0K followers	88.2K likes

Rank by Author Hashtag	
<i>TikTok Hashtag</i>	<i>Number of Views</i>
#ColleenHoover	4.5B views
#SarahJMaas	2.5B views
#PenelopeDouglas	1.4B views
#ElleKennedy	486.3M views
#LeighBardugo	439.1M views
#HollyBlack	429.8 M views
#EmilyHenry	266.9M views
#VictoriaAveyard	101.3M views

Revitalized Authors and Emerging Authors

BookTok is a fantastic platform for new and seasoned authors; there is room for everyone to have a seat at the table, “BookTok trends have ranged from building anticipation for brand-new releases to rediscovering older books and turning them into hits all over again” (Prah). Colleen Hoover, adult romance author, is a prime example

and perhaps the best known because of her BookTok fandom, though she is nowhere near the only author who has experienced this “unexpected midcareer success” accompanied by skyrocketing sales (O’Sullivan). In June 2020, author Emily Lockhart got a text from one of her children with a link to a TikTok video of a reader talking about her 2014 bestseller *We Were Liars*. The next month, *We Were Liars* was on the bestseller list, which was almost unheard of at the time. Lockhart says the video stood out from others she’d seen because of the reviewer’s apparent tears in the video. It was “a different kind of book conversation than what I’ve seen on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter,” she said. Among other books, Adam Silvera’s *They Both Die at the End* (2017); Leah Bardugo’s *Six of Crows* series (debuted in 2015); and Victoria Aveyard’s *Red Queen* books (2015) were granted a second life and multiple new printings, with Madeline Miller’s *Song of Achilles* novel (2011) receiving a two-million-copy bump 10 years after publication. O’Sullivan believes that BookTok’s “secret sauce” is emotional engagement:

Videos are brief, seemingly unrehearsed, and appear to come from the heart. TikTok isn’t follower dependent, so anyone has a shot at going viral. BookTokkers can sell out a title both online and in brick-and-mortar stores within days of a seconds-long video. (O’Sullivan)

Additionally, BookTok has pushed for its favorite reads to grab Hollywood’s attention, with several titles slated for filming and production soon (Prahl). Regardless, there is no denying the dollar signs that are attached to the popular hashtag. Alex Aster’s August 2022 YA release, *Lightlark*, hit the BookTok jackpot (O’Sullivan). “TikTok has changed my life,” she said. “It helped *Lightlark* sell nearly 25,000 copies in its first week.” With

that scope of reach, authors are nearly tripping over themselves to promote their works and hope they might be as lucky to reach their perfect reader niche. Similar to Oprah's efforts of highlighting up-and-coming authors, BookTok provides a safe space for authors to share their stories with a welcoming audience. For new authors especially, BookTok is helpful because they can draw in new readers from opposite ends of the world (Colville).

One of the major benefits of BookTok being part of a social media platform is its worldwide availability. This opens the door for international creators of all nationalities and cultures to obtain an audience and build friendships, no matter where they reside. Author Tessa Bailey said that "with BookTok, you feel like you have friends at your fingertips." There is a special opportunity to develop bonds with people you may never interact with in everyday life. Social media and more specifically, TikTok, are instrumental in fostering modern reading communities. Many BookTok users do not create content, but simply use the platform to discover new reads and new friends. New research from the Publishers Association suggests that "BookTok is so influential, it is completely transforming reading habits" (Colville). When a video pops up on a user's For You page and piques their interest, it opens the door to hook a new reader and builds trust between the user and content creator. Diaz agrees, stating that "BookTok is the niche side of the social media platform where readers recommend, review and theorize about their favorite books, authors and genres." BookTok is a "leading force in the book world, converting non-readers into people who can't stop, giving literary aficionados their next adrenaline rush ... and selling copies in the process."

Factors Influencing Book Selection

The BookTok hashtag has helped boost book sales across the charts. “I would say my last 15 books I found through TikTok,” Jessi Pridmore, 23, from Monmouth, N.J., tells TODAY.com (Diaz). But what influences readers to select certain books? A popular way for BookTok content creators to share their favorite books is through a story time trend. “Creators will tell the story from their perspective, only to reveal that their personal dilemma is in fact the plot of the book they are recommending. It’s a creative way to draw an audience into a story—if not slightly jarring at first” (Colville). Other popular videos are about trending books that have the whole BookTok community abuzz. “Spend enough time on BookTok, and you’ll definitely notice some titles getting mentioned over and over again” (Prah). Sarah J. Maas, Colleen Hoover, and Emily Henry are a few of the authors currently in the limelight, with many of their books being BookTok favorites. These authors are essentially the A-list celebrities of BookTok, with almost everything they publish being devoured almost immediately. “Henry’s most recent romance, “Book Lovers,” has trended in the [BookTok] community.” Kristen McLean, executive director at NPD Bookscan stated, “I feel confident in saying this is some of the biggest social media impact we’ve seen concentrated in a single platform since I’ve been tracking books” (Diaz). A big part of what distinguishes BookTok from other social media platforms is that “readers’ taste and enthusiasm determine what goes viral on the algorithm, not necessarily marketing money from publishers or authors.” As a result, trust is built with other users on a deeper level, as if they are having a book recommended by a close friend. For Annika Norton, a 31-year-old from Germany, BookTok “filled a gap in her social circle” and helped her feel connected to a community.

“BookTok is from readers, for readers,” Norton said. “I trust the people that I follow to give me their honest opinions.”

Methodology

I decided to use qualitative methods to complete the research, specifically conducting a focus group and interviews. These methods best help answer my research question because they allowed me to collect data from both groups of people on either side of BookTok, which is essential to fully understand the impact that BookTok has on the reading community.

BookTok User Focus Group

The criteria for the user focus group is as follows: participants must be between 18-30 years old, read at least one book because of BookTok, and willing to discuss their reading preferences. I found four participants relatively easily because they are my friends and I knew they read BookTok books, but it was difficult to find more than that. I also posted on social media for friends to reach out if they fit my focus group criteria and a couple more of my friends reached out to me because of that.

BookTok Content Creator Interviews

The criteria for the content creator group is as follows: participants must create content on BookTok, be over the age of 18, have 20,000 followers or more on the TikTok social platform, have a public page, and able to discuss patterns they notice within followers who interact with their page. I was not optimistic about finding a plethora of participants who would be willing to contribute to my content creator research because I do not know anyone who has a BookTok account with over 20,000 followers. This forced me to be creative with how I found participants, leading me to reach out to content creators who fit my ideal interview criteria. To my pleasant surprise, I found

over 20 creators willing to participate. Unfortunately, not all of them followed through with participation because of age restrictions and busy schedules. Nonetheless, nine creators met with me; five emailed me their responses and four met with me to discuss the interview questions via Zoom.

Research Design

In September 2023, I collected my research data virtually from my focus group participants via a Zoom video call and interview participants via email and Zoom video calls. I prepared a list of interview questions ahead of time and then recorded my participants' answers to detect common or unusual themes, codes, and patterns with their answers. This study was approved by the IRB office at Missouri State University.

Overview of Research Participants

As previously mentioned, I chose to analyze focus group responses of BookTok users and interview answers of BookTok content creators for my research. With both sides of BookTok being covered, there are two realms of alternating perspectives and a range of personal experiences to draw from—which is incredibly insightful to broaden the spectrum of my research. Receiving data from users helped me understand what draws them to specific videos or creators on BookTok instead of finding book recommendations in other areas of their life. Data from content creators shed light on what trends they noticed within their massive followings.

Procedure

To conduct the focus group, I used the same list of questions for each participant, only deviating from the protocol if a participant instigated it and if the question and answer were within the boundaries of my central research question. The focus group was conducted over Zoom video call. Everyone was required to have their face visible and participate in answering the questions with their microphone on. Afterwards, I used

Parrot AI to create a transcription of the focus group session and best code and categorize the data within the participants' responses. I then copied that transcript and uploaded it into a table to best analyze the data concisely. While analyzing, I searched for common keywords, phrases, and experiences shared between all the participants.

To conduct the interviews, the procedure slightly varied between the email interviews and the Zoom interviews. For the email interviews, I emailed the same list of questions to each participant. After receiving their responses, I directly copied their responses and uploaded them into a table to best analyze the data concisely. For the Zoom interviews, I used the same list of questions for each participant, asking follow-up questions or allowing the conversation to deviate from the list if the topic remained within the boundaries of my central research question. I used Parrot AI to create a transcription of each Zoom video call and best code and categorize the data within the participants' responses. While analyzing, I searched for common keywords, phrases, and experiences shared between all the participants.

Focus Group Questions

The following mixture of open and close-ended questions were used while interviewing the focus group of BookTok users. Questions were sometimes modified, or new questions were added to deviate from the protocol, if I deemed them consistent with my research goal.

1. How would you describe your experience with BookTok so far?
 - a. Would you say it's been mostly positive or negative and why?
2. What genre of books do you like to read?
3. Who are some of your favorite authors?
4. How do you typically receive book recommendations?
5. How likely are you to read a book because of a BookTok recommendation?
 - a. Does anything stand out about how the videos are made?
6. How do you think BookTok impacts the book publishing industry?

7. What's your favorite part about being on BookTok?

Interview Questions

Similar to the focus group questions, the following mixture of open and close-ended questions were used while interviewing the BookTok content creators. Questions were sometimes modified, or new questions were added to deviate from the protocol, if I deemed them consistent with my research goal. This rarely happened, as most of the content creators completed email interviews:

1. How did you become or how did you start your journey as a BookTok content creator?
2. Describe your experience with BookTok.
3. What genre of books do you focus on for your account?
 - a. Is that based on what you like or what you think will generate the most views and likes?
4. How do you decide which books to promote on your platform?
5. Have any publishers or authors reached out to you in hopes of public endorsement?
 - a. If the answer is yes, how do you respond?
6. You have thousands of subscribers and millions of views on your videos. What do you think about the influence and power BookTok has on the publishing industry?
7. Have you noticed any patterns or trends in how your followers engage/don't engage with certain posts?
8. What's your favorite part about being a content creator on BookTok?
9. What do you see as the future for BookTok and the book publishing or book marketing industry?

Focus Group and Interviews

The selected focus group was compiled of participants whose reading habits were significantly influenced by BookTok; the selected interviewees were participants who had significantly influenced BookTok users. This allowed both sides of opinions to be analyzed simultaneously.

Results

Included below are two tables that display my focus group answers from both sides of BookTok: users and content creators. Meaningful results are displayed by organizing my

table in an effective way that highlights similar answers from my participants. Each question is listed in the same way it was asked via the video call or email. Participants who consented to their name being used in this paper are listed with the first initial of their last name, and the only participants who preferred an alias is listed as “Anonymous:”

BookTok User Focus Group Responses		
Question	Name	Thoughts on BookTok
<i>Describe your experience with BookTok</i>	Pamela S.	I love BookTok. I watch it every single day. If I don't get a video recommended, I will Google BookTok in the search bar on TikTok just so I can watch book videos. I get most of my recommendations from there. Yeah, I'm kind of addicted to it.
	Cela C.	I would say kind of similar. It just kind of popped up for me. I don't think it's something I ever like sought out. I feel like I used to get most of my book recommendations just from friends and just like person-to-person communication, so it was definitely a new way for me to get book recommendations. I've definitely gotten some recommendations from BookTok and I've enjoyed some and not enjoyed some. I think that's how it goes with any recommendations. But I would say I still don't seek it out too much unless I'm in like a really bad reading drought. But I feel like I usually have a really long list of stuff I want to read. So usually, things just come up and maybe I'll add them to my book list or if it's really fitting my mood in the moment, then I'll seek it out immediately.
	Kaylee E.	I don't really read books often. So, I think being on TikTok and seeing certain books over and over definitely helped me read more over the summer.
	Harrison F.	I didn't read a lot of books and then, you know, I saw some just on TikTok and then, like, ones that I would like, and then I read those and then found more books that I would like in the series. I saw several books several times and that made me want to read them.
<i>What genre of books do you like to read?</i>	Pamela S.	Whenever I first started on BookTok I read a lot of romance books, but then I kept getting recommendations for romantasy and now I refuse to touch a book if there's

		not a fairy or a vampire in it. So, I'm all about fantasy now. I freaking love BookTok.
	Cela C.	I like fantasy as well. And I also like romance and I like a lot of genres. I also like self-help books and I like biographies as well, depending on the person. If they're cool, interesting person, I like those.
	Kaylee E.	I like romance books. That's pretty much all I've read. I mean, like the Colleen Hoover books. I don't know. Also, I like if it has a little mystery.
	Harrison F.	Fantasy or science fiction—not romance.
<i>Who are some of your favorite authors and what are some of your favorite books that you've found because of BookTok?</i>	Pamela S.	Yeah, I found Colleen Hoover from BookTok, and I like some of her books too, but I feel like I mostly find series or like particular books. I don't really pay as much attention to the authors, but my whole feed has been like, Sarah J Mass with <i>Throne of Glass</i> and Rebecca Yarros with <i>Fourth Wing</i> now, since those are like blowing up like everywhere.
	Cela C.	I think I mostly get specific book recommendations from BookTok. I think Colleen Hoover is definitely the biggest one who's made her claim to fame via TikTok. Another one that I found from TikTok is Emily Henry. And I think she has very recognizable covers and very vibrant book covers. Not to judge a book by its cover, but I did and so I think they are very eye catching. So, I think that's kind of what drew me in with those. But those are really the only two authors that I would say I found specifically from BookTok. As far as book series, I would say a Court of Throne and Roses is a big one and I think Prince Harry's book, <i>Spare</i> —which is on the bookshelf in front of me right now—was really popular on my “for you” page when it first came out. I think those are the big ones,
	Kaylee E.	Really just Colleen Hoover, that's it. I never really read and then this past summer I started reading Colleen Hoover books just because it was just kind of super popular.
	Harrison F.	I found Brandon Sanderson on there for <i>The Stormlight Archive</i> and then, Patrick Rothfuss. I already read like the <i>Red Rising</i> series, which is pretty popular, but a lot of people like that and I've seen several guys talking about that series on there.
<i>How do you typically receive</i>	Pamela S.	Before, it was mostly just from specific people. And then now I feel like it's a lot just from TikTok videos that pop up and then I'll also get like friends who send me book

<i>book recommendations?</i>		videos on TikTok, which is kind of just utilizing the ones that I guess we get personally, but that's mostly it. Also, just talking to people at work and stuff. There are some bookie people that I share recommendations with.
	Cela C.	Before BookTok, I definitely got a lot of recommendations from my friends. I have a lot of big reading friends and they still give me a lot of recommendations honestly. But I think with BookTok, kind of like what Kaylee said, I think when you see it on TikTok and see the same book over and over, it's like, "A lot of people are liking this, it must be something good." So, I think that goes into it a lot and especially if a friend recommends something and then I also see it on TikTok that'll really persuade me to be like, "Okay, this is legit." Because I think when you get a recommendation from just one person, it's like, "Well, one person liked it, that doesn't mean I will." But when you see so many on TikTok, it's like, "This might have a little something to it."
	Kaylee E.	Yeah, like I said earlier, I didn't really read a bunch before. So TikTok just kind of made me read more like over the summer. Honestly, I just saw those books go famous and then I thought, "oh maybe I'll try it." And then I tried it and it was a lot better. There were some good books.
	Harrison F.	I mean, like, at school or whatever, I would get a book here and there. Like, I read the <i>Red Rising</i> series junior year just because I saw it and wanted to read it. I'm not on BookTok a lot just because I've gotten several books to read. But yeah, I like watching people rank their books or whatever because there's a podcast of two guys that I've seen and they both like similar books that I like.
<i>How likely are you to read a book because of a BookTok recommendation?</i> <i>Does anything stand out about how the videos are made?</i>	Pamela S.	<p>I feel like it depends on how many videos I see about a book on whether or not I'm interested; or how passionate and detailed they are in describing it because if they [the creator] are just like "enemies to lovers, fantasy, etc." that's just so broad. I'm not necessarily like, "Oh, I have to pick that up." But if I see a bunch of people saying, it's amazing, then I will.</p> <p>I like it whenever they show that they have the book or show a picture of the book. It always draws it to my mind a little more when I can see what the physical thing looks like. But other than that, I just like when they describe it well in the video or else, I just forget about it with the next swipe.</p>

		I like it when they show like more [books] in one video rather than just focusing on one [book] because I like it when I see them list multiple books and I'm like, "Oh, well I've read one or two of those and I did like those" because it makes it more likely for me to be interested in the other books that they mention.
	Cela C.	<p>I would say like 40% of the time I will pursue a book recommendation if it's really good from BookTok. It's not as often, just because I think I do have a really long list of books that I want to read that I've curated both from TikTok already and from friends and other stuff. But I think BookTok is really, really helpful when you're in a reading rut and trying to get back into it.</p> <p>I feel like that did form a lot of my TBR [to-be read] list and a lot of the books, I think, that are recommended are very quick, pretty easy reads. Obviously, that's not true all the time. But I think some of the most popular ones are pretty quick reads, which are really helpful for getting back into reading. So, I think that's where it really was helpful for me. As for the type of the videos, I really like ranking videos like we talked about and through the year rather than like, today I saw one that was like, "These are good books for Fall," but I'm like, "Well, is it good?" And this girl hadn't even read them. She was just like, "These are what I'm gonna read in Fall." I was like, "Well, read them first and then let me know how they are." But yeah, I like people who are like, "This is what I read this month" or whatever. And then when they're like, "This [book] is a 10 out of 10, the best book I've ever read" that's gonna make me be like, "Hmm, okay. Maybe I should look into that." I've also read books from BookTok that I'm like, this sucked. Like, what?! What is everybody talking about?</p>
	Kaylee E.	<p>I think like on TikTok it goes with like anything if you see a girl wearing like an outfit or something or like, I feel like things are going like viral then it makes you just like want to get it like with anything honestly. Yeah, but the books, I mean they have cute covers too. Girls go for cute covers, cute bottles, and stuff like that. A few people in high school read the Colleen Hoover books and so that made me want to read it more.</p> <p>Kind of like what Pamela said, it just depends on how many videos I see of the book and then, I guess too, seeing the physical book too helps me visualize it, I guess.</p>

		But I mean, I think if I just see it over and over again then I think it makes me want to read it more.
	Harrison F.	If it's a video I'd rather have it go over one or two because if it's like, "the top 10 books I'm reading," I forget after the third book what the first two were. And I mean, some of the books I've gotten, I've only seen a couple of times but other ones like <i>The Stormlight Archive</i> I've seen a lot and then <i>Red Rising</i> , I see all the time
<i>How do you think BookTok impacts the book publishing industry?</i>	Pamela S.	For <i>Fourth Wing</i> , Rebecca Yarros was talking about how her publishers had to change the format of her second upcoming book <i>Iron Flame</i> that's getting released in November just because of the pure mass that they were having to produce because she's so popular now. So, like the sprayed edges were this huge thing in the first book that people are paying hundreds of dollars for now because there was a limited amount of them. So now, in the second book, she [Yarros] was like, "We're not even having sprayed edges because they simply can't make them fast enough for how many people want to buy it." And that's the first time I heard about the creative side of making the book and how they had to kind of rush it because of her popularity. I thought that it was cool that TikTok has blown her up so much because of that.
	Cela C.	I think on one hand, it probably impacts the way people write their books in the first place. Just considering, if I'm an author, I'm thinking, "Okay, how do I sell my books? How do I get popular?" And TikTok is a very obvious answer for that. So, I think it might change the way people write in the sense that they might want to make it quicker, more of an easy read, flashier. Really keep in mind like the cover, what that looks like, the content, is it exciting? Is it moving at a quick pace? Stuff like that. And then as far as the marketing of the book itself, yeah, I agree with everything that everyone else said. I think it's going to continue to cause authors and publishing companies to incorporate more influencer marketing. For example, if people's favorite influencers are reading a certain book, people are going to go buy that book. I mean, we're seeing that with every industry, influencer advertising and marketing is skyrocketing. And then I really think to promote themselves, authors should be active on their social media and on BookTok. I think that's a great way to promote themselves and their book and go viral. So yeah, I think it has a huge impact on the publishing industry and the advertising agencies they work with.

<i>What's your favorite part about being on BookTok?</i>	Kaylee E.	I don't really know.
	Harrison F.	I guess BookTok just adds publicity to a book. If it's a self-published person, they can get more out of it and send it to a big [book] publishing company. I saw an older guy that was selling his own book, and a guy came up and bought it and then the author got popular after that.
	Pamela S.	I just love that it's a never-ending list of books to read. Now you can just search and there's thousands of people telling you what to read. The more the merrier.
	Cela C.	I think that it's a really cool community. I'm not super involved in it, but I have a cousin who is really involved in the BookTok and Bookstagram communities and she's made a bunch of friends from it. She's making money from it now, she's going on trips to these author signings, and she's made some really, really close friends from it, which was mind blowing for me at first. But I think that's a really cool thing that they're able to bond over this love of books and form a really cool community. So, I think it's a really cool thing.
	Kaylee E.	I mean, it made me read books. I don't like looking through books, I would rather have somebody tell me what to read.
	Harrison F.	Yeah, it helped me get back into books because I just didn't know what to read and I didn't like going to the library and just looking through everything they had.

BookTok Content Creator Email Responses		
Question	Name	Thoughts on BookTok
<i>How did you become or how did you start your journey as a BookTok content creator?</i>	Arabella T. @arab311a	I've always been a reader and was a big fan of BookTube before BookTok really got started. I started college in 2020 and didn't read much until I got to my senior year in 2022. Summer of 2022 was when I really got back into reading, and I guess at some point I either looked up book recommendations on TikTok or engaged with a BookTok video that came up on my FYP, because I started getting book content on my TikTok feed a lot more frequently. I also started posting on TikTok in summer of 2022, but wasn't really posting about books at all. I made primarily lifestyle and fashion content at this point but wasn't really seeing any growth on my account. I took a hiatus from posting on TikTok for a while once school started back up last fall, but when I graduated in May of this year, I decided I wanted to get back to trying to build a

		social media presence. I knew that my primary interest (or obsession, if we're being honest) was in books, so I wanted to try my hand at making book content. I already followed a lot of BookTok creators, so I understood the kind of videos that people liked to see having to do with books. At this point, I just started having fun with it and posting a lot more!
	Anonymous	I began Tik Tok as a make-up artist with my main niche being makeup, fashion, transitions, etc. However, I discovered my passion was more towards books. It became more exciting to make that my niche on my Tik Tok account instead of makeup
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	I've been a Bookstagram content creator since May 2016. I opened a TikTok account to keep an eye on my kids' accounts but when a random, non-book related video I posted went viral, I started posting about books on TikTok too. Mostly I was giving book recommendations like "If you like this popular book, then try these books" or I'd do recommendations based on themes, like books that have tournaments or dragons or enemies-to-lovers. As my account grew in follower count and publishers started promoting on TikTok, I started doing more partnerships and tour posts with them and authors.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	I started my BookTok journey in August of 2022. I've always loved reading but really didn't have any friends or family who enjoyed it so BookTok was a fun place for me to chat with people about books & get book recommendations. I really just started as a fun creative outlet!
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	I started my BookTok journey after picking up a book series that was trending on my TikTok FYP. That book series was A Court of Thorns and Roses (ACOTAR) by Sarah J. Mass. The book rekindled my love of reading and I noticed there weren't a lot of book memes or content yet out on social media in December 2022, so I started creating book content.
<i>Describe your experience with BookTok</i>	Arabella T. @arab311a	My experience with BookTok has been overwhelmingly positive. Prior to being on BookTok, I didn't really have anyone in my personal life that was reading the same books as me, which I think is a pretty common experience among BookTokers. Creating a space in which I can build community with people who really understand my interests and are excited about the same things as me has been so valuable and special to me. Of course, when you're posting yourself on the

		internet, there's always going to be times where someone doesn't like what you're doing and leaves a mean comment, but overall, those times are 100% worth being a member of the community
	Anonymous	BookTok was instantly more welcoming than my previous community of other makeup artists. BookTok is more engaging and you are likely to have more relatability through it.
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	What I love about BookTok is that it gives indie authors a solid chance of getting discovered. For me, Bookstagram has mostly been about YA fantasy, sci-fi, and paranormal books. Those are the books my audience there seems to prefer. They like the popular, traditionally published, YA books best. But BookTok is a place where I can really share my love of indie and adult books. I read over 100 books a year and half of them are indie and most are adult. I also find that my BookTok community is mostly new adult or adult readers in the romantasy or dark romance genres. Since I read a variety of genres and age groups, I love having a place to share those types of books. I also tend to get more book recommendations from BookTok than Bookstagram since I'm hearing about authors I've never heard of before. Today [Sept. 11], for instance, a creator was talking about a book she loved and I stopped what I was doing to download it and started reading it immediately.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	My experience has been amazing. I have met so many people on BookTok (which I know sounds crazy) but I'm so grateful. I met two girls specifically who I speak to daily on BookTok and we now have started our own business called Romance Readers Retreat where we host Book retreats! I also have a book club with 10 other girls who I met on BookTok.
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	BookTok can best be described as two groups of people coming together to share their love of reading. That is those who have been consistently reading, the ones that read 100 books a year. Then the other group, the group of readers who used to love reading as a kid but haven't read consistently for years and when they did it was a handful of books a year at best. BookTok has made reading accessible again (not that it wasn't before) but it feels like school again being able to share thoughts and ideas and theories like we did as kids and be excited about something. We all have a common sense of escapism.
<i>What genre of books do you</i>	Arabella T. @arab31a	I read three main genres: fantasy, thriller/mystery, and romance. The genres I read are completely

<p><i>focus on for your account?</i></p> <p><i>Is that based on what you like or what you think will generate the most views and likes?</i></p>		<p>based on what I like. I generally don't read books that I don't have interest in or think I might not like, because I don't want to share negativity about a book that would then negatively affect an author. There are times when I read a specific book within one of my favorite genres because it's gotten a lot of hype, but even then, it's not particularly because I think that video will get a lot of views. It's just fun to participate in the hype for a book that a lot of other people are also really excited about.</p>
	Anonymous	<p>Mainly romance, which includes contemporary romance, fantasy romance, etc. It is based on what I personally enjoy, it would be harder to make content for something that I am interested in reading.</p>
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	<p>My BookTok account is mostly NA and adult fantasy and romance. I do post YA there, but not as often. As I mentioned above, most of my followers on BookTok read adult books and since I read YA and adult, I post more of my adult books on BookTok and my YA books on IG. They do crossover sometimes. I don't really worry too much about views and likes. Being a content creator is a hobby for me, not a job, so I post the books I like and am excited to read.</p>
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	<p>I mostly share about fiction: romance, fantasy, historical fiction. I would say I think I'm most known for my small town romance recommendations! But, I'll read just about any fictional genre. I think this is definitely based on what I like! I'm super honest about the books I recommend and small town romance is one of my absolute favorite genres. I share a lot of tropes like enemies to lovers, grumpy sunshine, cowboy romance, friends to lovers</p>
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	<p>Fantasy and fantasy romance are the typical genres that I create BookTok content around and the ones that I see typically go viral.</p> <p>Both! I love fantasy and fantasy romance books, I have been reading more on dark romance, but I don't share this as often on BookTok as I don't want to make sexualized content or content around aspects relating to potential trigger warning romance books (I.e., haunting Adeline is an example of this).</p>
<p><i>How do you decide which books to promote on</i></p>	Arabella T. @arab31a	<p>Because I do monthly wrap-ups (where I share reviews and ratings of every book that I read each month), pretty much every book I've read will get discussed on my account at some point. I guess the</p>

<i>your platform?</i>		books that I promote would be the ones in my recommendation videos. I do a lot of specific recommendation videos (“thrillers to read this fall” or “books I’ve read in one sitting”), and usually if I put a book in a recommendation video it’s because I really enjoyed reading that book. There are exceptions to this sometimes though, because there are times when I read a book and don’t like it because of my preferences but I know that other people may have different preferences than I do and would really enjoy that same book.
	Anonymous	What is put on my platform completely relies on what I have read or what I am currently reading. Since a lot of my TBR [to-be read] is from BookTok, often these books are trending on Tik Tok. Otherwise, it is books I am just genuinely interested in, despite popularity.
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	Sometimes they’re books I’ve agreed to promote for a publisher or tour company and sometimes it’s a book I recently read and loved or am obsessed with. All the books I post are ones I’ve read and enjoyed or want to read. I don’t post nonfiction and rarely post middle grade since I don’t read those. If I’m posting a book, it’s one I’m genuinely interested in.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	I only share about books I’ve read and loved. I rarely post negative reviews but you will see a select few on there. I don’t do many paid or sponsored posts because my goal is to be genuine with my content. A few of my favorite authors are Laura Pavlov, Elsie Silver, Sienna Judd, Kat Singleton, and Devney Perry.
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	I typically promote the books I’m currently reading but also books that publishers have sent my ARCs (advanced reader copies) on. Even though I am on a PR basis with these book publishers and there is no explicit obligation to promote the book I feel that I should read and at least post about them at least once.
<i>Have any publishers or authors reached out to you in hopes of public endorsement?</i> <i>If the answer is yes, how do you respond?</i>	Arabella T. @arab31a	Yes! Publishers will ask to send me a book, I’m assuming in hopes that I will like the book and decide to post about it. I usually say yes (because who doesn’t like free books?) unless I think for some reason that I wouldn’t enjoy the book. If I think a book isn’t for me, then I’d rather it go to someone who would enjoy it and post something positive about it.
	Anonymous	It has been done in a sense that they just want to share their work with me, rather than me promoting on my account. Occasionally I will be reached out to read an ARC, to leave a review. However, I usually

		turn these down because I am bad at reading books that I don't have interest in prior to them reaching out to me. If I receive something I automatically include it on my account because I want to share what has been given to me.
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	Yes, I get requests often, usually 10-20 a week. I agree if it's a book I'm interested in. If I'm not interested, I'll usually thank them for the offer and decline but wish them luck.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	Yes. I have yet to say yes to any paid collaborations with authors though. I have only had two sponsored endorsements and they were from brands. The brands were Book of The Month and Cavill & Wicks Candles. All of my book content so far has been unpaid and organic. So, I do have a media kit that I share with authors if they're interested but I'll be honest... I'm very picky. My account is something I started for fun and I really don't want to start sponsoring too many posts. If the author's campaign fits my niche, we will most forward. But, most of the time I will accept a "no strings attached arc (advanced reader copy)" and then post if I love the book and want to share!
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	Yes multiple! Generally gifted campaigns. I typically say yes but it also means that it depends on if it's a paid collaboration or a gifted campaign. If it's a paid collaboration i would enquire about the deadline to read and post the book and what expectations are required. If it's a gifted campaign, then I typically have more freedom and no deadline so I can take my time reading and creating content.
<p><i>You have thousands of subscribers and millions of views on your videos.</i></p> <p><i>What do you think about the influence and power BookTok has on the publishing industry?</i></p>	Arabella T. @arab31a	I think BookTok has a massive influence on the publishing industry. Take Fourth Wing by Rebecca Yarros for example. That book came out in May of this year, and absolutely blew up on BookTok. I remember really realizing how influential BookTok is on buyers when I went to my local Target and Barnes & Noble and could not find a copy anywhere. They weren't even available on Amazon for weeks. I'd bet a big, big majority of those sales were from BookTok (or at least from social media, maybe Bookstagram and BookTube as well). It seems to me that most people agree that reading really started becoming a "trend" again when Covid happened, which ushered in the creation of BookTok. Because of the pandemic, people stuck in their houses were (a) getting back into reading, and (b) on their phones/TikTok a lot more. Colleen Hoover was obviously one of the first big authors to blow up, and I think I saw somewhere that her books sold

		more copies than the Bible last year. I don't know the accuracy of that, but still! I also think that BookTok has been a huge help for indie authors that I'm assuming previously had a much harder time getting attention on their books without the help of a publishing house. I think BookTok also adds credibility to books and authors-for example, in both Barnes & Noble and Target, they have "as seen on BookTok" sections. I think a lot of people automatically want to read "BookTok books", because they've already been read and approved by thousands/millions of other people and they also want to be able to participate in the hype.
	Anonymous	I believe it is the relatability of the BookTok content, books are a thing that is already discussed among a community. Through Tik Tok you are able to reach even more people than a book club ever could in my opinion. The fact that so many people are able to be reached, Tik Tok can be another form of marketing. This can influence the publishing industry by popularizing books on the market or could be found as marketable
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	I think BookTok has had a huge influence on getting indie authors seen and into brick-and-mortar stores. It makes me so excited when I see indie authors on BookTok tables in Barnes and Noble or Books A Million or even small indie bookstores. Those books are there because of the power of BookTok influencers. I also think BookTok has had the power to bring attention to older series and give them a second life. It's amazing to see new, younger readers discovering and gushing over books that I read a decade ago because they've just discovered them.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	It's HUGE. I've had so many authors reach out asking if they could send me arcs of their books and I'll be honest, I say yes about 40% of the time. I LOVE reading so if I can get a chance to receive an arc with no strings attached, I'll do it. One author in particular was Sienna Judd. She had a debut novel called Thirteen Candles and it really sounded like something I'd enjoy (small town, enemies to lovers, age gap, single dad, cowboy). After reading it and absolutely devouring it, I created several videos surrounding it. Sienna reached out personally and said she could physically see the increase of kindle unlimited downloads after I posted. BookTok and Bookstagram are making reading fun again. I think a lot of people are finding joy in reading again from

		these platforms and publishing industries / authors are seeing more and more sales because of this!
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	I think we will see a rise in the number of creators we already have, and I think being a BookTok creator will hold some pull for new book releases we saw that with fourth wing how it took over everyone's FYP and the book sold out copies and there was a 2 month waiting period while they printed more books. I think getting on book publishers PR lists will become more exclusive and potentially we will see a rise of BookTok creators attending more book events with the author even. It was an unsaturated space and it's getting more popular.
<i>Have you noticed any patterns or trends in how your followers engage/don't engage with certain posts?</i>	Arabella T. @arab31ia	For me, I think usefulness is the most important aspect of my content when it comes to trying to increase engagement. This is why I post a lot of book recommendation videos. I think one of the big reasons people look at book content is because they want to know what they should read without having to sift through a bookstore themselves and spend money on a book that they have no idea whether they'll like or not. When I make a book recommendation video, I usually try to include multiple different titles, so the viewer gets as much utility out of that one video as possible. Basically, my video can become something they'll add to their saves and then reference back to when they're at the bookstore.
	Anonymous	I notice when I just talk to my community about things that can help the reading experience or about things people don't know they have access to as reading resources, these do the best on my platform. In addition, making videos about trending books also does well on my platform. Sometimes it is the book humor videos that have the least amount of engagement.
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	I get more engagement with posts that use trending sounds, posts where I show multiple books, or posts where I give recommendations based on Disney movies or characters. My Disney recs do really well. One of my "style" posts is "If you're obsessed with _____, then read these recs" and those seem to do well and they're fun for me to do because I can share a variety of books. I've done ones based on Disney movies, my favorite movies, barbies, candy, zodiac signs.... I really enjoy doing those kinds of posts.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	Yes! There are a few! I do a monthly reading wrap up where I share everything I read for the month

		and the rating and this tends to get great views, comments, and saves. Another post that does fairly well is a post where I share an aesthetic of a book where I'm convincing you to read a book based on its aesthetic. Lastly, I have a series of videos called "spicy books with a good plot" and this hands down gets the most engagement!! People love it!
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	They typically love the content that are memes or book edits (ie making the book come to life with either an aesthetic video made up by photos from fanart and Pinterest or a compilation of videos / photos from other sources that create a mini movie of a piece of the book bringing it to life).
<i>What's your favorite part about being a content creator on BookTok?</i>	Arabella T. @arab31a	My favorite part about being a BookTokker is the community. I've never had someone in my personal life that was equally obsessed with reading as I am, so having an entire community of people that I feel like really understand me is invaluable. It's so fun seeing people post their reactions to books that I've also read and being able to be like "YES! I thought that too!" It's kind of like having an inside joke with an entire community of people.
	Anonymous	My favorite part is actually being able to talk about my reading experience and having someone who can relate to or just listen to it. I am not surrounded by a lot of people that read like me or are interested in the same books as me.
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	My favorite part is discovering new authors.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	I absolutely love the relationship I've created with other BookTokkers and authors. I have met so many amazing people and some of them I now talk to on a daily basis. I absolutely love the BookTok community and how it's been such a positive outlet in my life.
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	Connecting with other readers. Majority of my followers are women and having been a gaming content creator for the past 2 years it's refreshing to have a women-based audience.
<i>What do you see as the future for BookTok and the book publishing or book marketing industry?</i>	Arabella T. @arab31a	I think we're already seeing this happen, but I predict that there will be a lot more authors that skyrocket into success due to BookTok (just like Rebecca Yarros and Fourth Wing). I think that this will also happen for a lot more non-traditionally published/indie authors, similarly to what happened to Jessa Hastings, Sophie Lark, Elsie Silver, etc. I don't see BookTok going away anytime soon, and I think that publishers and authors will

		continue to try to leverage BookTok as a way to get eyes on their books.
	Anonymous	In the future, I could see Tik Tok being one of the main marketing strategies for the industry as well as a source to find marketable books that publishing may find interest in.
	Christine M. @xenatine (author)	I think BookTok is, and will continue to be, a huge part of not only book success but bookstore success. I remember a few years ago everyone was worrying that brick and mortar stores were going to go out of business because of the popularity of eBooks. But that's not the case. I think BookTok is bringing in new readers and many of those readers want physical books.
	Ashley A. @ashleynicole_reads	I really think book publishers will start to use BookTok/Bookstagram as a marketing strategy more and more in the future. I know a lot of indie authors and self-published authors are found on TikTok and I do think publishers will start to take advantage of this more too.
	Livia R. @acegamergirl1	I think it'll be like how makeup brands and influencers are now. I think BookTok is just at its beginning and it's going to become massive especially over the next year.

Discussion Topics in the Reader Focus Group

Participants in this focus group provided a well-rounded data pool full of similarities, but multiple differences and outliers. All participants expressed enthusiasm and positive feedback about their experience with BookTok. It is a large community which is amazing in many ways, yet still individual to the user. There is incredible user diversity with the app being an international platform. There are many niches and different experiences that a user seeks through their time on BookTok; that is evident by the participants' answers.

Similarities

All participants mention using BookTok as a source of book recommendations, although the degree to which they use BookTok varies. *Pamela* uses it constantly, while *Harrison*

only watches videos that pop up on his For You page. Nonetheless, it supports the idea that BookTok is a significant platform for users to discover new books.

- *Kaylee and Harrison* both discuss that they are not big readers and had not read much in a while and BookTok positively impacted their reading habits by encouraging them to read more, especially when they encountered books repeatedly on the platform. This supports that non-bookish users have the power to be influenced as well.
- *All of the participants except Harrison* expressed interest in fantasy or romance novels, which indicates that these genres are popular within the BookTok community and supports research I found in my literature review. Colleen Hoover's name was mentioned as the only author Kaylee reads, because of how highly it was spoken of on BookTok.
- *Pamela and Cela* both noticed the impact of BookTok on the book publishing industry. For example, Pamela discusses Rebecca Yarros' experience with a surge in popularity on BookTok, leading to changes in the format of her upcoming book.

Differences

Pamela stands out with her specific preference for books with fairy or vampire

elements, which indicates a more niche reading interest compared to the others who

have not expressed such a specific preference. *Harrison* also stands out as the only male who prefers to read strictly fantasy and male perspective books.

- *Pamela* relies heavily on BookTok recommendations and is swayed by the enthusiasm and details provided in the videos, whereas *Kaylee* and *Harrison* mention seeing books repeatedly but don't express the same level of influence. *Cela* seemed indifferent; she likes to see BookTok videos but will not always be receptive to book recommendations just because they come from BookTok. Additionally, each participant has their own preference for the type of BookTok videos they find compelling, such as ranking videos or monthly reading summaries.
- *Kaylee and Harrison* stand out as the participants who didn't read much before finding themselves on BookTok. For *Kaylee*, BookTok has helped her want to read more. For *Harrison*, he was already a reader, but BookTok helped get him back into reading much more frequently.

Though only four people comprised the focus group, there is still distinct variety in their BookTok journeys and unique tastes.

Discussion Topics in the Content Creator Interviews

With nine participants, these interviews provided an extremely thorough data pool full of similarities, but many differences and outliers. Please refer to the following to read full interview transcripts of Rosie, Sloan, Giulia, and Emma:

- *Appendix A: Rosie T. Interview*
- *Appendix B: Sloan M. Interview*
- *Appendix C: Giulia C. Interview*
- *Appendix D: Emma L. Interview*

All the compiled data provides a comprehensive overview of the BookTok community.

This helps to further understand how BookTok influencers with varying approaches and audience sizes contribute to book recommendations in the digital age.

Similarities

Many of the content creators shared that their journey on BookTok began as a way to engage with a community that shares their passion for reading. They mention factors like a love for books, wanting to connect with fellow readers, or trying to explore a new social media platform.

- Content creators typically focus on book genres they personally enjoy, rather than solely aiming for views or likes. This reflects their authenticity and passion for reading.
- Creating book recommendation videos and discussing the usefulness of content seem to be a key factor in engaging with followers and what keeps their followers coming back for more. These creators understand the importance of helping their audience discover new books and also bond in shared interest of cherished books.
- All content creators received requests from authors and publishers to promote books, at some capacity. They handle these requests differently; some choose to promote books they are genuinely interested in, while others are more selective or do not enter into paid promotions of any kind. All of the content creators also agree that see BookTok is incredibly impactful on the publishing industry. It has the power to make all books, from indie to traditional, more visible and popular.
- Most creators also agreed that their favorite part about being a BookTok content creator is the sense of community and the opportunity to engage with like-minded readers who align with their interests. The community

aspect seems to be a driving force for their content creation and supports the literature I have read.

- The creators also seem to unanimously believe that BookTok will continue to grow and become an integral part of book marketing and publishing. They foresee more authors achieving success through the platform, including indie authors, and publishers leveraging BookTok as a marketing strategy.
- The most common genres and types of books that the creators create content about were similar, including young adult (YA), fantasy, and romance. Their content often aligns with their personal reading preferences. This supports previous literature I found, as well as aligning with the interests of all four of the focus group members: *Cela*, *Pamela*, *Kaylee*, and *Harrison*.

Book recommendations were a significant aspect of all the creators' content. Most of them talked about the influence they have on their audience and how their reviews and recommendations impact their followers' reading choices. Other types of posts that receive higher engagement are book hauls, reviews, and recommendations.

Differences

There are large variations in audience size among the content creators. The number of followers attached to these creators provide insight into their reach. Christine leads with over 278,000 followers, followed by Rosie with 137,000, Giulia with 77,000, Sloan with 66,300, Ashley with 55,700, Anonymous with 55,300, Emma with 40,200, Livia with 34,400, and Arabella with 29,900 followers.

- Some of the creators were on BookTok for their job like social media marketer *Emma*, or authors *Christine* and *Rosie*. Though most creators were on BookTok for their own pleasure only.
- While all of the creators in both groups receive books from publishers, specific approaches to author interactions, such as collaboration for unique content, might differ. *Rosie* does not want anything to do with monetary partnerships while creators like *Sloan* have bookish partnerships with brands like Fable.
- Reading goals and specific challenges related to reading preferences, such as reading books from diverse authors, may vary among creators within each group.
- There are a plethora of book selections with some creators having fun with whatever they feel like and others, like *Emma* and *Rosie*, emphasized the importance of reading books with diverse authors and genres.

- While there were commonalities in the type of content that they create, each creator has a unique approach. *Giulia* discussed her focus on creative aesthetics and seemed like an outlier, while *Rosie and others* emphasized reading challenges and simply recommending books in various ways. Also, some creators preferred to be behind the camera while others were right in front of it. *Emma* mentioned her videos do not get as many views when she is in front of the camera because she tends to be long-winded, while *Sloan* mentioned her videos do not get as many views if she is not in front of the camera.

Implications and Future Directions

Every single one of the sources utilized for this paper acknowledges the potentially unlimited power that BookTok holds over the future of book recommendations, completely changing the way that books are marketed for the foreseeable future. Most of the major points in the literature review were backed up by either the BookTok user focus group or the content creator interviews, sometimes both.

It seems as if BookTok is presently here to stay, though it is hard to know how long it will continue to trend. A few literature sources were skeptical about the continuation of authenticity, but all 13 of my focus group and interview participants seemed to fully believe that BookTok will be around for a while, if that provides any indication. Readers, authors, and content creators all seem to understand the value associated with BookTok, so only time will tell.

Limitations

As previously discussed within the methodology section, there were certain limitations that I endured while conducting this research. It was difficult because I lacked resources and that could not be helped, as I am currently a graduate student with no previous connections to BookTok content creators with massive followings. I also lacked contacts at major publishing companies. For researchers who may want to replicate this study or conduct a similar study, I would recommend branching out and interviewing a larger variety and higher number of BookTok users and content creators, as well as

interviewing a few of the Big 5 publishing company employees about their thoughts on BookTok and the impact they have noticed. This would ensure that there are many more experiences being taken into consideration. Another obstacle I encountered was people not following through with the interview. After reaching out to over 60 BookTok content creators, I received interest from close to 30. I followed up on numerous occasions over the course of three months and ultimately only interviewed nine. For my focus group of readers, I anticipated having more participants as well, but I had three people decide not to show up for the session.

I understand that there are limitations for my chosen methodology of research. Having focus groups consist of only four and interviews consist of only nine people, they can only represent a minute percentage of the BookTok community. This cannot be helped, as it is not realistic for me to conduct a large-scale survey and it is especially difficult for me to get in contact with a surplus of BookTok content creators because I am a college graduate student who does not possess a large list of contacts.

I still hold the belief that conducting a focus group and multiple interviews, instead of using other available research methods, was the best course of action. As my research question examines what draws readers to obtaining their reading recommendations from BookTok, it is necessary for my study to utilize research methods that favor qualitative data over quantitative. The interview and focus group methods stood out to me plainly because all other qualitative methods, such as: usability testing, document analysis, or even surveys, were not *personal* enough to fit my goal. I did consider using field observations; however, I decided against it because the results obtained from the interviews gave sufficient and helpful information to aide in

answering my research question clearly. With only a limited number of interview participants and focus group participants at my disposal, it is not practical to use any of the other methods.

Conclusion

The sheer amount of research, both on the web and from the focus group and interviews and I conducted, is a testament to the extremely powerful grip that BookTok has on people everywhere. Book marketing has expanded exponentially over the past 100 years and since 2019, #BookTok has only skyrocketed in growth, with creators and TikTok users constantly being added into the fold. BookTokers have caused book sales to explode for authors everywhere; from indie authors to authors with books that were published upwards of 10 years ago. BookTok users cherish their platform and the community that they have built, trusting creators to influence them on what to read. In turn, creators seem to take that responsibility seriously by recommending books that they, themselves, genuinely like instead of selling out for monetary partnerships. Book publishing companies and authors must grow alongside thriving platforms such as BookTok, instead of fighting this new step into the future. It is undeniable that BookTok content creators have a major impact on reading recommendations and book marketing strategists should ensure they fully understand the full value of BookTok when considering how to market authors and their books.

Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, some further research questions that I have are: what do publishing companies and major retailers think about BookTok and what has been their experience with transferring their book marketing to exist in social media platforms? I also think that it would be interesting to conduct a similar study with

authors who are on BookTok compared to authors who are not and may not want to be. Social media is not for everyone, and I imagine that is a driving factor as to why every author is not currently on TikTok. To take this study further, I think that it is interesting to look at this research from the inside of a publishing company, major retailer, or sitting one-on-one with an author. All that research would provide insight into BookTok's impact on the literary world.

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Appendix A: Rosie T. Interview

TikTok account handle: @talbotrosie, 137,000 followers–United Kingdom

Olivia

How did you start your journey as a BookTok content creator?

Rosie

So, I started my BookTok as an extension of my Instagram. And I started my Instagram social media because I knew I wanted to be a published author and I knew having a community of readers and writers around me was A) beneficial for my mental health and my general creative journey, but B) you know, if you're gonna sell a book, you need someone to sell it to.

So having a platform that I controlled was always gonna be a beneficial thing. And I'm really glad I did because now it is something that's really important. But when I started out, it was just an extra feather in my cap. I don't want to write alone in my living room kind of thing. And I actually didn't know it would be really important. So then I actually didn't join TikTok until right at the end of the pandemic. Everybody else had joined way before, but I didn't realize there was such a big book community on there.

And when I realized I was like, "oh, great, okay. I'll hop over, I'll start another account there" expecting maybe a few 1000 people to follow me. And then my account exploded a lot faster and there was a lot more potential for growth on TikTok at the time than A) there is now, but B) than there was on Instagram at all. So, my account actually became my dominant account on TikTok.

Olivia

Describe your experience at BookTok.

Rosie

So, it's a very complex beastie, BookTok, and I feel like it's a very big community and within that community, there are lots of different niches and lots of different mini BookToks that are going on. I found my way to what I would describe as a queer diverse way, fantasy BookTok. I actually don't see a lot of content about Colleen Hoover and Colleen Hoover adjacent, for example, I don't see a lot of pure romance.

I know there's like mafia romance things, I never see those. I have no idea. I rely on friends to tell me what's going on with those. So, my experience with BookTok is a very sort of niche book recommendations about fantasy, sci-f, YA, queer books, books written by all sorts of color, books written by disabled, all sorts of speech and disabled, cos that's the sort of thing I read and what I seek out.

I think people's BookTok experience is very shaped by the content creators that they decide they wanna follow and seek out and that's what I follow and seek out. That's what I get in return. I have had a very positive experience with BookTok, personally. I know, I know not everybody does, but I do. I think it's a great community of recommendations.

I find so many interesting books—from all over the world actually—that I didn't know about. And I go find them and get them and it mounts up in my bedroom and I have so many books. It's ridiculous. And also, I've made really good friends, and we meet up in real life. The British BookTok community is lovely.

If it wasn't for BookTok, I wouldn't be a published author. Traditionally, I was gonna self-publish and it was because of BookTok and the platform that it gave me and the support of the community there that I got a traditional book deal. So it, for me, was a lifechanging experience, quite literally.

Olivia

So, was your book published before or after you got into BookTok and Bookstagram?

Rosie

No, not at all. I was writing and I was considering self-publishing, but I didn't feel confident enough that I had a platform that would allow me to market it effectively. So, I was still thinking about traditional publishing because I didn't think I could do my own marketing. And then when my TikTok started to do very well and I hit 50,000 plus followers I thought actually, maybe I could do this.

And then *Heartstopper* [by Alice Osman] came out and I did a lot of *Heartstopper* content, and I think I almost doubled my numbers in about a month. It was ridiculous. And that's when I thought, “yeah, okay, I can self-publish [*Sixteen Souls*]” and that's what I set out to do. And I created a product essentially. I put it through its paces. I wanted to create something that was completely identical to what you'd see from a traditional publisher to, within my budget, because there are certain limitations of print runs involving lithographic printing, printing versus a different form of printing that you use for print on demand, for example. So, under 5,000 copy print batches—it's a lesser quality. It just is. And it is that way for traditional publishers or small publishers who are printing under 5,000 copies. So, it just meant that I couldn't quite match that quality, but I still got pretty close, close enough. In fact, that when Scholastic offered me the book deal, they kept my cover, they kept my edit, they just did a like a house edit thing and we were able to turn it around in like six weeks and it came out really quickly and I didn't have to move my intended publication date at all cos Scholastic is amazing and they worked really hard.

This all happened after *Heartstopper*, but that was the content that suddenly did really, really well for me. I did a giveaway for a full set of Alice Osman's works, not realizing that they were essentially unavailable worldwide because they'd sold out, and it blew up, it ridiculously blew up. And I can't remember who won them. It was like some kid in Canada. I think it was sent to Canada. It was this young teenage guy in Canada who got the full set.

And yeah, I mean, there are lots of different types of content done well; it's not my *Heartstopper* content that always does well now, and I haven't been posting about *Heartstopper* anyway because—although we did email and check that it wasn't covered by any of the strikes—I still felt weird posting too much about it even though I knew it

wasn't covered by the strikes. It was weird. But I've avoided posting too much about TV content generally until all that's over.

[when I was blowing up because of *Heartstopper* content] I was kind of showing my journey to how I was putting the book together. And I did a big cover reveal and that coincided with me doing a couple of events in London where I met the right people. The stars aligned with Scholastic.

One of their commissioning editors, he's, actually, now I know him as Shooter, but Yasmin Morrissey, she got in contact with me through a mutual friend—an old friend who she worked with—and asked to read the manuscript. And within the week they'd offered on both *Sixteen Souls* and then the sequel of *Twelve Bones*, which is literally out now, it's just come out.

Part of the reason I was creating content with *Heartstopper* is because I, as a bookseller, have loved, love, love, loved that graphic novel series since before it was even published, like I followed it online. And so, it's great that suddenly people are actually coming in asking for it rather than me having to force it upon them and being like, “you should read this it's really cute.”

And then, there's parallels. So, my book, *Sixteen Souls*, is that kind of queer found family, guys falling in love like, you know, adjacent lesbians, that sort of vibe but with horror. So, Waterstones ended up coming up with a tagline “*Heartstopper* with ghosts.” So yeah, that came out of me just creating those parts of content because I loved it. But that helped grow my audience, some of whom would be interested in my book, some of whom were not interested in my book because they only want to see the contemporary. But I recommend a lot of contemporary books. So, it kind of still works out with my audience because I do both. It's not just about me and my books, it's more about book selling and recommending stuff to the right people and book reviews, as much as I talk about writing.

Olivia

So, the events that you did in London, is that where you got into contact with Scholastic or did they find you on TikTok and reach out to you? How did that process work?

Rosie

I was already kind of in contact with Scholastic as a book influencer—I hate that word; I hate it so much. But they were sending me proofs when I requested them and I'd met some of their marketing team at different book events and we'd emailed, so it wasn't like it just kind of came out of the blue.

But I'd met Yaz, the editor who ended up offering me the deal, very, very briefly at YALC in the summer, which is the Young Adult Lit Con here in the UK. And cos she's the editor of a friend of mine—Cynthia Murphy, who publishes amazing books—and Cynthia was my mentor, the right mentor. So, I went over to say hi, cos it's the first time we've [Cynthia and I] met in person and Yaz happened to float over and say hello too and nothing happened then. I was introduced and Cynthia said I was self-publishing, and it

was literally a two-minute meeting of, “oh, that's exciting. It was lovely to meet you. Maybe I'll see you again sometime.” I didn't think anything of it, she didn't think anything of it.

But then, several weeks later when the cover reveal happened, you know it was, for a few days, kind of everywhere. And lots of my publishing friends very kindly sort of boosted it and commented about it and **the Tik Tok community boosted it.** They were amazing, amazing. And so, when I went to the Waterstones TikTok Book event at Waterstones Piccadilly, I saw my now-marketing team and we were talking about *Sixteen Souls* and they were really excited about it. And so, for Yaz, I think that brought it to her attention again. So, it all kind of coincided with different people in the company being like, “oh, this is exciting, maybe we should look at this” and Yaz being like, “yeah, I'm on it.” And then it all came together that way. So, it was just really good timing. But that visibility, you know, because I was self-publishing before they kind of knew in a very vague sense, **but it wasn't something to pay attention to until after TikTok made it a thing and then it was something to pay attention to.**

And then I was in an anthology called *A Taste of Darkness*, which is a wide horror anthology published here in the UK. And that invitation to join came right after my publication announcement. So that was a great opportunity. And now I'm doing a graphic novel for Scholastic. So that's coming out hopefully next year.

Olivia

Was the sequel also published with Scholastic?

Rosie

Yeah. *Twelve Bones* is a Scholastic book as well.

Olivia

Did they approach you with the graphic novel idea for next year or is that something that you were already thinking about?

Rosie

They approached me for that. We had a conversation about my schedule and how—because normally if you're going to do a traditional author journey, you write your book, you edit it as best as you can, you send it to an agent, and you keep sending it to agents until you find your agent. Then your agent will work with you on it (possibly) and send it off to an editor or multiple editors.

Hopefully, you find a publisher and an editor to work with. There might be more revisions, you know, so it can be a two-year process; from getting an agent to selling a book to the book coming out. And in that time, you can write another book or two. I didn't have that. I spent a year not writing and being a publishing house and commissioning a cover and doing the edits and doing all the market research.

So, I didn't write. I didn't have another book lined up. And suddenly I needed another book. So, this year I've written a full novel and a graphic novel, and it's been intense. I

had to write *Twelve Bones* very quickly, out of not having written for a year. So, I just kind of had to reteach myself how to write. And because of that, I was really burnt out and I just was like, I can't do another full novel by next year. I need to have that little break. And I think they knew that, and I think they wanted to do a graphic novel and they thought I might be a good person to approach. So, they offered, and I was like, "yes," because I love novels. I love them so much. And it's really hard to get one published. The fact that they invited me to submit a pitch for one was the best and I'm really excited for it. It's called *Phantom Hearts* and I'm really excited.

Olivia

When is it scheduled to come out next year?

Rosie

If it all goes to schedule, which very much hopefully will depend on the artist and everything? You know, it's a lot of work for them. But it's scheduled to release September 24th. A bit of a race, a bit of a marathon. But yeah, a good one.

Olivia

What genre of books do you focus on for your account? And is this based on what you like or what you think will generate the most views and likes?

Rosie

So, I don't care about views and likes. I know that sounds counterproductive and I did before, let me clarify. So, at one point, my engagement and my likes and everything on Instagram and TikTok was really important because I thought I was gonna be doing all of my own marketing stuff and I think I just put too much of my emotional being into my account and focused on it almost too much.

And so, I noticed that I would have a bad day emotionally if whatever I posted wasn't doing as well as I'd hoped. And I had to kind of take a step back and be like, "well, that's no way to live" because in 10 years, no one is going to care, let alone me. Like, what is the point in spending my time stressing about views and things? I'm an influencer but I have made the decision not to monetize my account.

My account was always about building a community and about finding an audience for the books that I write and the books I wanna promote because there are so many great books out there. I don't rely on that money to live and while I don't need that money, I'm not going to monetize my account. I have no problem with other people doing that. No problem at all. I think for some people, it's their income and it's really important and it's a great job, like it's a great job, but I have two other jobs. I'm an author and a bookseller. I don't need to turn my social media into a third job. If I wanna take a day off, I can take a day off. I can post and not be worried about how many people are going to see it. Because at the end of the day, it doesn't matter.

And that's why I haven't monetized it. For my own mental health and also, I suppose, for the authenticity and transparency of my account. But mostly, because honestly, my ADHD brain, as soon as I'm told I have to do something, it's like, "cool. Let's do

anything else.” It takes all the fun out of it. I found out I can't... I'm not a scheduled girly. I can't do spreadsheets and timings. Remembering to send invoices and things is my worst nightmare. I hate doing it. So, it's like, I don't enjoy that. I don't wanna monetize it. But again, reiterate, I have no problem with anybody else monetizing their account, go for it. But it's just not for me. So, because of that, I can take a step back and not be overly concerned about my views and likes. But I know for some people that's extremely important.

I mean, for me as an author, it is important, because the more people see my content, the more likely I am to sell books. But again, I've always been more interested in building community than I have necessarily about selling books. Selling books is kind of a side thing that happens.

If you talk about books you love, then some people are gonna pick them up, which is great. And because I'm traditionally published, I have a wonderful marketing team who are paying for ads and spreading the word and doing things that I don't have to do and can't do. I just do my little social media stuff and mention a book and you know, do my bit that way. So that takes the pressure off. I think people who are entirely self-published with TikTok as their primary vehicle for their marketing, there is a lot more pressure and stress on your engagement and your content and it is in its own way, a full-time job and it's exhausting.

Olivia

How much of your content is focused on promoting your books versus just talking about other books in the community?

Rosie

It really depends. At the moment, because I'm right at book launch, I'm trying to do every other post. So, I post twice a day. I might take some time off. But ideally, my ideal schedule, I post twice a day—which sounds like a lot, and it is a lot if you're burnt out—but if you're not burnt out and you've got loads of ideas, it's not enough. You're like, “I do have so much to say.” So, I'm trying to do every other post about *Twelve Bones*. And I will do, you know, for spooky season cos my books, it's my time of year, spooky season. So, I will mention them more. But other than that, I would say, probably it varies all the way down to maybe 10% of me actually mentioning my book and 90% is me talking about other books and other things I enjoy. Because I want to add value to people's lives, and I think me just talking about my book the whole time isn't necessarily always gonna be that helpful for people. I want to recommend other things and show other things that I do as well.

Olivia

Do you have any idea of where your followers are from?

Rosie

I used to. I used to be really on it and I used to be really interested and I'd look at my analytics and see what was doing well and what wasn't. Now? I just post whatever the hell I want to post, because I decided it's not worth my mental health to have that

pressure. **This isn't a business for me. This is for fun and to help sell my books.** It's important but it's not the end of the world.

I actually have not looked at my analytics for probably about a year and that's kind of deliberate. But I know I have a lot of... I think my UK audience has grown. Before, when I was going to self-publish and I did look at my analytics, I think I was over 50% from the US. Then the UK was the next biggest chunk. And then a lot of like Philippines, Malaysia, Canada, and then like a scattering of everything else around the world. But the US was my primary market, I suppose. And I would be surprised if that's completely changed actually. Now I'm tempted to look...

Olivia

How do you decide which books to promote on your platform? What goes into that thought process?

Rosie

The books I like. And honestly it could just be the cover is awesome. And I'm like, "yeah, look at this cover, I haven't read it yet, but look at it. It's beautiful!" Or it could be, I mean... the other day I did a post about a book because I was shelving, and a beautiful book appeared in my section and I only work part time as a bookseller. So, I didn't shelve it. My colleague shelved it and I hadn't seen it before, but it was stunning and I just like did this little [video] like, "what is this book doing here? This is what it's about. It looks really great. I hope somebody gives it a lovely home." And that book sold. Somebody came in to get it and the post did reasonably well. It's kind of ticking along on [Instagram] reels and on TikTok.

But yeah, so books I like, books by friends, books by publishing houses I respect and like, you know, books I've read and just wanna yell about cos they're great. That's literally it. **I don't have too many concerns about what's popular because a lot of the popular books...** I guess for me, my TikTok as a book recommendation space is an extension of my life as a bookseller. **And as a bookseller, I don't need to recommend the top 10. They're selling themselves. Why would I recommend them?** I mean, they're great. **But I want to be there to help people find other books that they might not have heard about.** And I know that you can end up getting more views if you mentioned Sarah J Maas in the fantasy space, for example... I've only read one of her books and it was fine. I enjoyed it. It was fine, I enjoyed it. But it wasn't my favorite book ever, it's nothing to shout about. And I'm like, well, she has bazillions of people promoting her. I don't need to. I'll focus on something else.

Olivia

So, do you focus on promoting more independent authors over mainstream?

Rosie

Not necessarily, not deliberately. I mean, **I love to support indie authors, but again, it's just down to what I like.** And I do promote lots of authors. Like I love N.K. Jemisin. She's very popular and she's very well known. She's very famous. Absolutely root for her books cos I love them. They're great. But it's certainly these big, big TikTok books...

If I read one and I genuinely love it? Absolutely, I'll talk about it. But yeah, I'm more likely to be influenced by a little recommendation video that features some books that I've never heard of, than something like *Fourth Wing* that is literally everywhere. And I'm like, I admit that that is not... Even though I'm a fantasy girly, I'm more of a contemporary fantasy girly. I'm not really, you know... and then all of the things that it's been compared to... not really my thing. So, am I gonna like it? Probably not. Do I have a borrowed copy because of pressure? Yeah. Have I read it yet? No. But you never know, I might end up loving it. I might end up loving it. So, we'll see. At some point, I'll try.

Olivia

Have any publishers or other authors reached out to you in hopes of public endorsement and if the answer is yes, how do you respond?

Rosie

Yeah, I get it all the time. So, the various ways that it works is basically the paid and gifted channels. I only say yes to the gifted channels because I'm not interested in being paid for the promotion I do. But I also don't want to undermine people in the community who rely on those payments. So, I will not do what somebody will do if you pay them. People are welcome to send a book to me for free. And I will always do an unboxing of it, at least, to say thank you. And I will read it when I read it, and I will review it if I want to. I make no promises, and publishers and authors know this. And it's how it was before payment came in over the past few years. So, you wouldn't necessarily, you know, it's directly from the publisher. I'm on various lists. And if they think I'm interested in the book, they'll reach out and say, "hey, do you want to receive a copy?" And I'll say "yes" or "no" and they'll send it.

There's more and more brand collaboration companies who reach out to say, "oh, we want you on our books." I honestly am at the point now where I don't respond to them. And I don't want to be rude, but like, I get so many emails. I just, I can't, like I can't, and it's the same standard email of "hey, we love your account, and you should sign up with us and we'll get you all this money and this work." And I'm like, "I don't want any of that, thanks." So, if I have time, I will probably respond, "thank you for considering. But no, thank you." But most of the time I just ignore it and that's really bad. I'm so sorry. I'm really sorry to anybody who's tried to reach out to me and I haven't responded. Sometimes, it's like an indie author who's reached out and I'm like, "ooh, yes. Okay, cool." And then ADHD happens, and I don't respond. And it's not because I don't like... I actually genuinely am excited and I meant to respond, but I just, yeah, so then that happens too. So that's fine.

But generally, I respond positively and "yes, please, send me a free copy for whatever purposes, review purposes, to anything that I'm interested in" that's a gifted product and I only do books. Very occasionally I'll accept something else, but mostly it's just books and then I say no to anything that's paid. Cos I've done a few paid things in the past and I didn't like it, I hated it.

Olivia

Do you have any estimate of how many times people are reaching out to you and how often you say yes?

Rosie

I mean, when it comes to publishers, I'm on all of their lists. So, it's kind of constant. But it will come in, you know, there's set release days in the UK, like the big release days. So, there's always a, sort of, a flood of them and then a, sort of, winnowing down to kind of, not as many and sometimes they'll just send things unsolicited. They tend to do that less and less unless they know you already like an author because it's not in their interest to send out books that you're gonna avoid, right? And I think a lot of people in the community have requested that they don't send out unsolicited things because it's a waste of paper and it's a waste of time and money. So, they don't tend to do that as much anymore. But I'm on certainly these publishing emails where you'll get an email from Glance, and they'll be like, "these are all of the proofs we have available, you pick what you're interested in, let us know and we'll send you what you can" and some of those, in terms of other brands and random stuff like that, 50% of which have possibly attempted scams. I get several a day.

Olivia

You have thousands of subscribers and millions of views on your videos. What do you think about the influence and power BookTok has on the publishing industry?

Rosie

I think it has a huge power at the moment, both in terms of generating sales, but also in terms of starting to be selecting some of what's getting published in certain genres, I don't think necessarily that BookTok is influencing the lit. fic. [literary fiction] section particularly, for example, occasionally, but I don't, I don't really think so. I think primarily there are certain genres that do very, very well on TikTok, like romance, fantasy perhaps or, yeah, like lots of the romance genres, lots of the kind of fantasy genres, maybe some of the thriller genres. And I've noticed that more and more publishers are looking for unsigned authors on TikTok that already come with a following. And for them [publishing companies], that is a bonus because they're getting somebody that comes with a platform and they're getting somebody who has readers who have already expressed an interest, right?

So, it's kind of more of a sure thing. It's still a gamble, but it's more of a sure thing. So, I think it will be interesting to see how, whether that trend continues or whether it tails off. Certainly, I went to a book event last year where, as an influencer person, I got to sit down with six amazing different authors. Some of them are very famous and it was amazing, like Olivie Blake and people like that.

But of the six, four of them were TikTok self-successes, before they were picked up traditionally. And I think, you know, I don't know. I feel like that does say something. So, it's happening more and more. But then it's also having a massive impact on sales. If, for example, if a book starts to do really, really well on TikTok, I'll just have a constant stream of people coming and asking for it and we gotta make sure to get that stock in because I'll, you know, I'll know a book is a TikTok because suddenly in one day, three

or four people come in and be like, “oh, do you have like *Haunting Annabelle*?” And I'm like, “what is that?” It's not my side of TikTok. So I'm like, “I don't, but I bet it's a TikTok book and I will find out if I can get it.” Yeah, so it, at the moment, is extremely powerful. I think what publishers are trying to do but struggling to do, what we're all struggling to do is to figure out the algorithm. There is no surefire way to guarantee a BookTok hit, it's very hard to manipulate. So, I believe at the moment, I think people have given it their best shot and some have been very successful, and some have not. But what I love about it is that a book that was published 10 years ago can suddenly just pop up and great, great. Like, it's fun. It's not just new releases. It's something that's from how many years ago? And? Yeah. It's good. It's fun. Keeps it interesting.

Olivia

Do you have any advice for other authors or maybe authors starting out that want to get into BookTok and potentially promote their book or just get involved in the BookTok community?

Rosie

Yeah, definitely. I would say my advice: focus on community first, because ultimately, if you're not having fun, what's the point? And you're gonna meet some amazing people. So that's great. Number two, post regularly. Like the algorithm, no matter what, they love it when you post regularly. So, if you're like, “okay, I'm gonna post every day,” commit to that. You can take a break for your mental health like I do, but your views and engagement will suffer. And if that's something you're worried about, you need to try to keep going. Number three would be it's not always for everybody. So, if you try and hate it, that's fine. It doesn't mean you're a failure. There are still people getting amazing book deals and hitting the New York Times best seller who are self-professed TikTok/social media haters and will never be on social media particularly. And they're still getting those deals and they're still like hating the best sellers. So, it's not a be-all end-all. Don't put all your eggs in that basket and cry if you're like, “I hate this.” And four, just be aware that you're, as an author, you're in a reviewer space. So AuthorTok and BookTok are parallel, but they are separate things. So just be aware of what you're saying.

It is a professional space for you as an author. If you're there as an author, it is a professional space. Be mindful of what you say, even though you're making quite casual content, you know, you need to be thoughtful and mindful about how you're expressing yourself because you could quite easily say something that will destroy your career before it even starts. And it's just an offhand comment, but it wasn't well considered. And it's not actually something you would say publicly, you'd say it to a couple of friends, don't put it online. Also, some of those things that people say, “hmm, that's actually a problem and maybe they need to reconsider those opinions to have a deep, deep think about that.” But they still said them.

And hey, in the past, people would have said that in the privacy of their own living rooms and then been able to go “oh” and reassess before making anything public. Now, we just put it straight online. So just be mindful. And then the last thing would be like you put up the content that you find interesting, but also think about where you're

adding value for other people because people are gonna come back if you're giving them interesting information.

So, you wanna, you know, do what you wanna do, but also if you do care about growth and you do care about these, just think where is the value in my concept? What am I offering people and what are they getting from it? I think you should experiment with content, like just throw it out there and see what happens.

Olivia

Have you noticed any patterns or trends in how your followers engage or don't engage with certain posts?

Rosie

Yes, I think there are certain styles of posts for different... and they'll be different for every person. And it's interesting because what will work for one person as a format just doesn't work for somebody else. So, for example, I've got friends who, if they film a video to a trending sound and put a little bit of text over it, guaranteed it will do well for them. Like, that's how they built their platform. Every time I do that, I know that video won't do that well and I still do them because they're fun and I want to bury up my content and sometimes using that is easy. I do a lot better if I do like a talking video in the stockroom telling a silly story or just kind of sit and chat to the camera about what I'm reading.

That usually does better for me than the sort of trending sound lip sync type thing. But every now and again I'll do one and it will just, I don't know, the timing will be right and it will just do really well. So really varies. But yeah, so, and the ones that do consistently well for me are my stockroom story time, where I rely on the delightful customers at Waterstones to do completely unhinged things, which is every day. And I turn those into little stories for people. And then also I have this weird book rack, which I haven't moved into this new house yet, but I won it on Instagram, actually. It was like amazing. It was really expensive, and I got it, I got it and it's so beautiful and it's basically like this rack where you hang books and I haven't made a video with it for a while because I've been moving and everything, but I use it to display something to what I'm reading, or I use it for just BookTok videos. And every now and again, somebody will be like, "what is that?" And I would do a video just explaining what it is and nine times out of 10, they will go viral. Like, just me being like... because I think it's one of those things that provokes opinion, like 50% of people are like, "this is amazing I want one" and the other 50% of people are like, "it's damaging the book, it's a terrible idea, it looks ugly, I hate it." But by the way, it's emotive. And so, if you have content that's gonna make people have an opinion, even if it's one that they disagree with you, you know, you'll get that engagement. So sometimes, I mean, I like to use it for display and using it anyway. But every now and again also, because of the way, like, I know you can pin things [on your TikTok page], but I don't like to have loads of pinned stuff because it gets a bit buttered. I try and stick to just one pinned video. So, people aren't going to be able to scroll down and easily find that video explaining what it is. So, you know, every like few months I'll

do one so that they can be like, “oh okay, that’s what it is.” That's like a commonly asked question, I'll do it again.

Olivia

What's your favorite part about being a content creator on BookTok?

Rosie

People, the people. Definitely just chatting to people about books, my favorite thing. Which is a little bit sad because, you know, my whole life is books. Yeah, and pockets and cats and tea. Ok. I have, I have more. But yeah, I spend a lot of my day thinking about books and it's just lovely to have people to talk to about it. So, yeah, my favorite thing is just the people that I've met and the fact that somebody cares enough about my content to leave a message or send me a DM or that they engage with me in any way. It feels like a huge privilege. There's so much content out there. So, you know, the fact that people want to engage with mine is lovely and I'm very grateful and I certainly don't take that for granted. And I don't always get to every comment because I'm so busy. But when I had a smaller following I did. I diligently spent like four hours a day with like everything and I just can't do that anymore.

But I try my best, like I put time aside and I sit and I go and chat to people and engage as much as I possibly can and share other people's content as well and like boost other people's stuff, like that's really important for me. But yeah, definitely just the community, but that's always been my personal focus.

Olivia

So you said that you got into Bookstagram at the end of the pandemic or was that TikTok?

Rosie

So, I've been on Instagram for about five years and I would say I've been on TikTok for three years now or two and a bit?

Olivia, Rosie

Was it the end of 2020 or like early 2021?

Rosie

It was the end of the last lockdown in the UK. And I cannot remember when that was because time for me normally is meaningless, but it was particularly meaningless in the pandemic. But we had a series of lockdowns where we were back to work for a month and then it would lock down again. So, the last lockdown, I think I joined TikTok in the last week of that lockdown and then it ended, and I was like, “why wasn't I doing this the whole time sitting in my room reading 25 books a month” because I could’ve done, but I wasn't there.

Olivia

What do you see as the future for BookTok in the book publishing or book marketing industry?

Rosie

That's really interesting. I think things are changing very fast because the landscape of TikTok changes very fast. Like, my most recent find is **actually Instagram reels are generating a lot more engagement for me right now than TikTok is.** The algorithm has shifted. It's not in my favor. I put the same content on both spaces. It will do significantly better on Instagram right now than it will on TikTok. **That might change in two weeks,** I don't know. But we'll see, when my TikTok took off, I thought I'd keep my Instagram because of my friends on there. But I didn't think I would be generating many new followers and new engagement on there. And I found that it's not true. I'm doing that, **currently growing faster on Instagram than I am on TikTok.**

So it's kind of interesting and I've got a few friends who are finding the same thing and I have some friends who are not finding that. So, I think it just **depends on the content you're making and how the algorithm sees you.** In terms of, **from a bookseller perspective,** I don't expect the **influence of BookTok to go away anytime soon.** I think it would be interesting to see if it expands outside of the genres that it has a chokehold on, because there are many genres it isn't having that much of an impact on, particularly things like literary fiction where there is an amazing literary book and classics BookTok community there, but they're smaller, they're often not generated into big, big ones, but sometimes they are, it does happen.

But whether or not, I don't know, personally, **I haven't seen somebody writing mainstream accessible literary fiction that got a book deal because of TikTok.** But I know a lot of people that are writing YA and fancy and romance who have got a book deal **because of TikTok.** So, whether or not that influence is going to continue as it is or shift into other genres will be interesting to see. I honestly have no idea what's gonna happen. I think AI is the big thing that everybody's kind of talking about at the moment and it just remains to be seen. It's such early days on that. **But already there's a lot of AI generated content in terms of filters** and, you know, you being able to put your face into things and you know, **AI is here to stay definitely.** We are now navigating, as creators, how we are using that content to make sure that people are getting paid, who should be paid and we're not stealing work, essentially. So that's important and that's still kind of something that we're figuring out. And not just us, it's like **the whole industry, the whole world is kind of figuring out what that means.** So, **I think we might see some big changes moving forward in how AI interacts with the book sector** generally and that will be really interesting to see. But again, I don't wanna make any predictions because AI is not my specialty.

Olivia

Is there anything else that you wanted to say about your experience as an author, influencer, or just BookTok in general?

Rosie

I don't know... **To reiterate, I do think it's a very strangely new thing.** Like it is, it's so new. Like if you told me we would be having this conversation two years ago, I'd be like,

“well, no.” But I also think it's one of those things where, as an industry, we're putting so much stock in social media because it can be so powerful.

But that doesn't mean that the other ways of getting the word out there aren't equally powerful. I work for Waterstones and my boss is an amazing bookseller and I have seen her hand sell hundreds of copies of a hardback book that then went on to be very commercially successful, partly because she hand sold 800 copies in our hometown. Like that is exceptional. And, you know, she's doing that on the ground. She's not living on social media. She's just finding a book she loves and hand selling it because she loves it. So, I do think that, you know, booksellers, for example, will still you know, that are outside of TikTok, are still having an influence, publications that are outside of TikTok, reviewing books in the garden, you know, newspapers, all of those older ways of promoting and getting books out there are still doing their thing. They're not any less powerful. I feel like BookTok is like an additional tool that can be used. But what the future of that platform and that community is, I'm not sure, because everything reaches its peak, right? And then everything will decline. But then it can sometimes have a little bit of a comeback. You never know. We'll see.

Appendix B: Sloan M. Interview

TikTok account handle: @itsmesloaner, 66.3K followers—Canada

Olivia

How did you start your journey as a BookTok content creator?

Sloan

Oh man, it happened kind of by accident. I didn't go into it with the intention to be like a BookTok or like book influencer. That is so not my thing. Yeah, it happened by accident. Like I said before in lots of my TikTok videos, I was already like balls deep in the BookTok world before I even became a BookTokker.

I mostly just posted videos for my friends because lots of my friends love to read, and I was always their go-to for recommendations. So, I just started posting little cute book hauls and then it was the video with me and Kyre where we posted our top five reads of 2022 and that shit accidentally went viral. We got 1.5 million views on it and that's kind of just how it happened. And then after that, everything exploded. And the next thing I know I have almost 70K followers on TikTok and I'm getting all these brand deals. It seriously happened overnight, and it was completely by accident. I had no intention of being a BookTokker, but here we are.

Olivia

And when was that? Was that earlier this year?

Sloan

January third. It hasn't even been a full year and it blows up every day. Every time I log into my TikTok, I've got thousands more. It's just... I didn't plan this. It just happened and I'm just like holy shit. This is so fun.

I hit 30K in 24 hours after that [the original video from January third] went viral. And the more I posted, the more followers that came in. And now we're at 66K. When I hit 50K, I was like holy shit. Like the fact now that we're at 66K and our book club is at 10K... I'm just like, I can't believe these many people can stand me. You know what I mean? Like, this many people like me? I'm kind of annoying. It's just been crazy.

Olivia

What's the book club thing? Is that a separate TikTok account?

Sloan

Yes, it's a separate thing. When me and Kyre got really popular on BookTok, we had all of the girlies in the comments asking us to make a book club so that they could read all these recommendations and read with us and we thought that was such a cool idea. So, we're like, "hey, fuck it, let's start a book club." So, we were searching for all kinds of cute platforms that we could run our book club through, and we ended up finding Fable and started a book club through them. And we were like, "if we had 100 followers on there, that would be so cool." And like I said, it fucking blew up to 10K and I still, I'm

just like, how do these many people like us? It's just been so crazy. I'm just like, I don't know what the fuck is going on, but I'm here for the ride. This is so fun.

Olivia

How does that [the book club] work? Do you post videos or is it a big text message thing or what?

Sloan

Oh my God. It's the cutest little app. It's literally just a social media platform for book clubs and book girlies and they actually just had a huge upgrade on it as well. So now it's like bookish Twitter. So, we have a For You Page where you can just see all these people and what they're doing and you can build book lists... But before then it was literally just for book clubs.

So, you can run a book club on here [Fable] and it's like set up so perfectly for book clubs. You just have your little book club discussion on your Fable page. It's perfect. And then our book club became so successful that we got a Fable sponsorship out of it. It's been nuts.

Olivia

How many followers did you guys have to have to get the sponsorship?

Sloan

I think we had 2K and then Fable was emailing us for meetings and stuff. Now, every month we read a new book and the book that we put into our book club, they [Fable] automatically adds it to our library. So, we get all these free books from the sponsorship and then they also pay us for content as well. When they had that big upgrade, for the bookish Twitter, they paid us \$500 to make a quick video and talk about the main thing. It's been wild.

Oh, and we also make 5% off book sales in the Fable app. So, if the book girlies buy the eBook in our book club, we make 5% of that sale. So, the book girlies did that for us. So yeah, so thankful for all of our followers because we wouldn't have had these opportunities if it wasn't for all these girls. And I'm allowed to say girls because my analytics say that 97% of my following are girls.

Olivia

Describe your experience with BookTok.

Sloan

Honestly, great. Like I said before, it's the best community. Like I said, TikTok can be very scary. I've read some comments out there on people's videos that are just so unhinged, I can't believe humans say some things to other humans, but BookTok is the best community I've ever been a part of. Everyone is super supportive.

All the book girlyies are so nice. I think I've gotten three hate comments in my whole entire experience. It's the most positive community. We're just here to read books and talk about them and I think that's fucking awesome.

Olivia

Do you remember what the hate comments said?

Sloan

One was that I had too much Botox, which you're not wrong, I will admit that I have a lot of Botox in my forehead. Another one was saying how me and Kyre are like the Kardashians and I still don't know if that was a roast or a compliment. Because I love the Kardashians. And then there's always stuff about what we're wearing, which is just like, "okay?"

Olivia

Do you ever get people trashing your book recommendations or anything like that?

Sloan

No, no. I've always preached on my BookTok that we don't care what other book girlyies tastes are. We're allowed to like what we like and we're allowed to talk about the books that we like. A crazy concept, right? It doesn't fucking matter. If you're reading a book that I absolutely hated and you loved it I'm like, "okay, cool." So no, my space is very safe. We don't care about what the girlyies love. If they love that book, I'm so happy for them. Even if I fucking hated it.

And I know that there has been some drama with BookTok recently, but I don't even touch about it on my account. I don't even talk about it. I don't associate myself with that side of TikTok. Like I'm here, like I said, to talk about books and have fun. I don't need any of this other bullshit.

Olivia

What genre do you focus on?

Sloan

Oh, my God. Fantasy. We are the fantasy queens. We don't really read romance unless it's fantasy romance.

Olivia

Is that based on what you like or what you think will generate the most views and likes?

Sloan

Like I said, I didn't start my BookTok for views, for sponsorships, for monetary gain. I started it because I love books and I love talking about books. So, I'm only gonna talk about things that I love. But like I said, most of the book girlyies who follow me are here for my recommendations. So, of course I'm gonna talk about the books that I love. Also,

I'm **very honest in my reviews** and if I don't like a book, I will shit on it (in a positive way). I never attack the author, I just attack the book and be like, "this was shit."

Olivia

Have you ever had an instance where you liked a book that the author wrote but the next one you didn't? And then do you clarify that?

Sloan

Oh my God. No, I loved a book. It's called *Blood Orange*. Greatest *Dracula* retelling. Loved it. It had another book after it called *Black Rose* and it was absolute fucking garbage. The plot from the first one that I absolutely loved went completely out the window and it was just porn, and I was just like, "okay," and that author also follows me on TikTok and sends me PR but that didn't stop me. I said it as it was. And she actually commented on TikTok and she's like, "oh, I'm sorry that this book missed what you needed" pretty much. And I was just like, "oh fuck." **Authenticity only around here.**

Olivia

How do you decide which books to promote on your platform?

Sloan

Our major content is our monthly reading wrap up. Me and Kyre do monthly videos and we just talk about every single book that we've read that month, book hauls...

Then **I do get people or companies reaching out to me to promote books. And I will only do it if there are books that I'm interested in,** because the book girlies will know if I'm talking about a book that is nowhere in the realm of my taste. They'd be like, "what the fuck are you talking about?" They would know. Like I said, I'm not here for the monetary gain. So, if I'm getting offers to talk about a self-help book—which I've had before—not gonna happen. Like I said, the book girlies will know.

Olivia

How does it work with you and Kyre? Do you guys share your account at all, or do you guys just tag each other and do videos together?

Sloan

So, at first, we both had separate accounts and we would both film separate videos. But then Kyre went through a hard time in the middle of the year and is still kind of going through a hard time. So, she actually quit all of her social media. She is slowly starting to come back. But in that time period, we kind of just moved everything over to my account and I filmed the majority of our content to keep up with our contracts with Fable.

And then whenever she felt comfortable or safe to film a video with me, she would come in for content. But she has slowly been coming back to her own account and filming some stuff.

So, it was two separate accounts, and we would film separately. And if we did book hauls or something, part one would be on mine and then part two would be on hers so that you would have to flip back and forth between our profiles. But ever since she's taken a mental health break, everything has just been on mine.

Olivia

Have any publishers or authors reached out to you in hopes of public endorsement?

Sloan

Well, I don't put any of my contact stuff on my profile. So, people have to direct message me to get my shipping address or my email address to contact me, just because I like to filter through that stuff. I don't want a bunch of people reaching out that I don't want, you know. I don't want to have a bunch of strangers having my shipping address. But I get lots and it's very exciting because I just love books. So if anyone's like, "can we send you free books?" I'm like, "yes!" I'm trying to put like a number on it. Like five a month? They're all books, bookish boxes, bookish merch, fun stuff. It's great. I love getting little gifts all the time.

Olivia

Do you feel pressure to post about if you receive free stuff in the mail? Or does it depend on if they ask you to?

Sloan

There's never been pressure from people who want to gift me things. They're just like, "no pressure at all, if you wanna read it and you like it and want to rave about it..." I think for authors, any review is a good review, as long as their book is getting attention. But I never feel pressure to read a book that gets sent to me or post really positive reviews about it. But do I love filming little unboxing videos? Yeah. It's like showing my friends what I bought at the mall that day, that's how I feel about my bookish hauls. I just want to show the book girlyies. I'm like, "look at all this cool stuff that I got" and then the people who sent me stuff are really appreciative that I'm just throwing their name out there. So then hopefully they get like a little bit of traffic from that video that I filmed.

Olivia

Do you usually always do unboxing videos and then tag the people that sent you stuff?

Sloan

Yeah, I find that they're really appreciative of that and you took the time to send me something, which is so sweet. So, I can take, what, three minutes out of my day to film a quick little video and give you hype about the cute shit that you sent me. Like I have no problem doing that at all.

Olivia

Have you ever said no?

Sloan

This is the thing, I'm a Libra. So, I have a very hard time saying no. So, if an offer ever comes into my messages that I don't want any part of, I just ignore it. It just gets deleted because I am so bad at being like, "no, I can't do it." All the people who have reached out to do podcasts with me, I just haven't responded because I know it's a no. So, it just gets ignored because I literally can't say no.

Olivia

What would make you say no or what would make you want to avoid them?

Sloan

Yeah. It's mostly just shit that I'm not interested in. Books that I have no interest in. Like, if they're not fantasy, like if they're self-help books or something like children's books. Like, I don't want it, give it to someone who wants it. But I just don't have the heart to respond to those messages being like, "no, thank you" because I don't want them to take it as a personal thing. It's not a personal thing. I appreciate you, just send it to someone who actually wants it.

I need to get better at that. Instead of just ignoring messages, I need to just grow a backbone and be able to just say no to people.

Olivia

You have thousands of subscribers and millions of views on your videos. What do you think about the influence and power BookTok has on the publishing industry?

Sloan

That's a deep question. Ooh, that's a hard one. Obviously, they have a huge, huge influence. Like I said before I was a BookTok creator myself, my For You Page was BookTok. And all of my book recommendations—like books that I was interested in, wanted to read, wanted to pick up at the bookstore—were all recommendations that I found on TikTok.

And I think that that right there just speaks huge volumes. BookTok is where authors need to be because it's such a huge community and lots of people are getting their recommendations from BookTok and I think that's what's selling. To further that point, I had an author come up on my For You Page and she was just promoting her book and talking about it because she wanted to get more sales on it and it was something that had interested me. So I commented on it and I'm pretty sure I was like, "oh book girlies, she said enemies to lovers, we ride at dawn." And then the next day she posted a new video and it was like, "you guys put my book on the Amazon best sellers within 24 hours." Like TikTok is fucking powerful dude, especially BookTok.

And that's not the first time that me and Kyre or myself has been able to do that for authors. Our first book in our book club *Revelle* by Lyssa Smith. We sold that book out on Amazon and Barnes and Noble because of our book club and she [the author] actually posted about it on her social media. So, like, BookTok is powerful.

Olivia

How quickly did that happen?

Sloan

Over the course of 24 hours again. So, that just makes me feel good because if I can do that for authors and I can support them, then I'm here for it. I think that BookTok has a huge influence on publishing.

Olivia

Have you noticed any patterns or trends in how your followers engage or don't engage with certain posts?

Sloan

Okay, this is gonna sound so conceited—and I don't want it to sound conceited—but if my face isn't in a TikTok, it gets much lower views.

Videos that have my face, especially my face as the cover, will get tens of thousands of views. But if I post like a cute little aesthetic video of just bookish stuff, it'll only get thousands.

Then like I said, our book hauls are very popular. Those get lots of views and likes and comments. So do our monthly TBRs and then our monthly reading wrap ups. I think that's what we're both the best known for, our monthly wrap ups. Just because our reading wrap up is what made us go viral. So, I think that's why book girlyies follow us is for those reviews, because that's where they get all their book recommendations. And then my dad is super popular on BookTok. Those [videos] always get tons of comments and tons of views. But it's because he's so cute and sweet.

And then when I featured my brother on here, of course, it was just like a huge fucking thirst trap. And all the book girlyies are just like, “oh my God make him read like passages from books.” And I'm like, “no, you guys are freaks.” Oh my gosh. It's so unhinged. I love it. They're actually so feral, but so am I.

there were two questions that we recorded in a part two Zoom session; however she lost the recording on her computer or there was an issue and I wasn't able to get ahold of her to re-film them

Appendix C: Giulia C. Interview

TikTok account handle: @giuliasbookcorner, 73.9K followers—Italy

Olivia

How did you become or how did you start your journey as a BookTok content creator.

Giulia

I actually didn't have this idea in mind of becoming a BookTokker. **It just happened.** I was talking to my boyfriend, and I said, "oh my God, I love reading, what if I just publish a video or something?" But I wasn't really sure because there are so many big BookTokers around. Who am I gonna be? What am I going to do? I'm not gonna gain any followers.

And he kept saying, "no, you just have to try. Just post one and then from there you'll see." And so, I started; **I posted my first video on December of last year and I didn't get many views on the first video, of course, and then I kept posting and posting. After like four or five videos, I kind of went viral and then I kept going and yeah, today here I am.**

Olivia

How often were you posting those first four or five videos? Is that four or five videos posted in just two days or did you post every single day for a week?

Giulia

I think at first, I posted one day, yes and one day, no. But now I post a little less, maybe two times a week, but sometimes just one. I see that my views are going down, but yeah, that's fine. I don't have a lot of drafts to post at the moment and I still have to film some more TikToks. I'm not posting as much, but that's fine.

Olivia

Describe your experience with BookTok.

Giulia

My experience has been pretty nice. I've never gotten bad comments on my videos and I have a positive audience. I post videos that I really enjoy filming. I don't actually make videos because of the views or stuff like that. I make them just because I like to make them. And I wanna do the things that I like. I post about books that I like. They're popular on BookTok, obviously, because I'm on BookTok and I get influenced too. But yeah, I usually post books that I like, not books that I know are going to get a lot of views. I don't know if that makes sense. Though with that being said, I don't know if you know this book, it's called The Love Hypothesis? That one I didn't like. But you can see it on my page maybe two times just because I needed to post it there to have more books. I typically don't post about the books that I don't like, even if they are very popular.

Olivia

Have you received any negative comments?

Giulia

Just under one video. It was this stack of books and I said to sing the lyrics if you read the book and I went through all these books. I saw so many people saying—and they're not really negative comments—but they were like, “oh, I didn't sing for any of these books. They are so bad. They are... I don't know all these things.” I was like, “okay,” everyone did this type of video because it's kind of a trend, you know, so I tried to do it too and I was like, “okay, fine.” But that's the only video that got like, let's say negative comments.

Olivia

Is your face typically shown in the video or not?

Giulia

No, I never show my face, I just post the books that I read because it's a choice that I made. I don't like being on social media. Like I don't even have an Instagram account. I have it for my BookTok page, but not actually an Instagram account with my face and my pictures and stuff like that.

Olivia

What genre of books do you focus on for your account?

Giulia

So, I really like romance books, poetry books, and fantasy books. But I show mostly romance books just because it's the genre that I read most. But there are some poetry videos that I made and some fantasy ones. But probably 80% percent of my videos are about romance books.

Olivia

Are they all based on what you like, or is any of it based on what you think the audience would like?

Giulia

No, it's based on what I like because if the account becomes something that I have to do, like, read books just because other people are gonna like them and post about them, then it's not fun anymore. So, I just read whatever I like and post about whatever I like.

Olivia

How do you decide which books to promote on your platform?

Giulia

So, I decide basically on the books that I like, like I said, and I don't know, some videos I just post books based on the aesthetic of the cover because it goes well with the video, you know. That's basically it.

Olivia

Have any publishers or authors reached out to you in hopes of public endorsement?

Giulia

Yeah, but I have to really think about what they are asking, and it really depends. I've said no to so many authors and even publishers. Some publishers, just because I lived in Italy for so long and they couldn't ship the books there. And then if I see a book that they are trying to make me promote and I don't like its synopsis or whatever, I just say, "I'm sorry, I'm not interested at this moment" and stuff like that because I don't wanna like, read something, knowing from the synopsis that it's not gonna be my thing. So, I try to choose books that I like and that are actually similar to the ones I post because people are gonna build some kind of trust because they can see consistency and stuff like that in the genres and whatever I try to promote.

Olivia

How many books do you promote on your platform? How many of those are sponsored, free books that you've been sent, or paid promotion?

Giulia

Not so many. I stopped with promotions and stuff like that because I moved and now, I'm trying to go back to those things and I don't know. Some books that I've received are just shown for like a brief moment on my page, it's not like a video specifically about them showing them for a while because the author didn't ask me to post about them, just to read them. So, yeah, but I post a clip of them just to be nice to the author, because I actually like the books.

Olivia

Is it typically you're just sent kind of like free stuff or is it like we'll pay you this amount of money to talk about it?

Giulia

I actually received a request for payments also and I did also a collaboration with the music industry because they asked me to put a song of their choice under my video. They asked to pay me for promoting some books, but I don't actually remember if that went through in the end. But yeah, most of the requests that I get are just free books that I'm sent. So that's so cool.

I don't know, sometimes I'm really insecure and yeah, I didn't know if I should start the account in the first place just because it's a very saturated space on TikTok.

Olivia

So, you have thousands of subscribers and millions of views on your videos. What do you think about the influence and power BookTok has on the publishing industry?

Giulia

I think it has a lot of influence just because there are authors that weren't really famous before and then they blew up on BookTok. Let's say Colleen Hoover, she blew up so

much because of BookTok and now she's like probably one of the most famous authors in the world. I think it has a lot of influence and if your book ends up being on BookTok, I think you're really lucky and you're gonna make a shit ton of money. I was actually sent Fourth Wing. I don't know if you heard about that book, but I was sent that for free—the entire box with the stickers and stuff inside—and then that book blew up like crazy. I was like, oh my God, how can a book blow up so much?

She [Rebecca Yarros] probably made so much money because of BookTok because it blew up on there. So, I think it has a lot of potential, you just have to use it wisely. If you are a new author and you want to promote yourself on BookTok, you have to do it wisely.

Olivia

Have you noticed any patterns or trends in how your followers engage or don't engage in certain posts?

Giulia

I'm actually really bad with analytics. I don't look at that ever. Sometimes I think a video will do well, just because of the effort that went into making it or because I saw similar videos that did well, but then I post it and it doesn't go well.

So, it's always random, I think, because even if you do something similar to someone else that blew up, it's not for sure that you're going to blow up too. So, I don't know. I don't actually look at analytics. I just post and however it goes, it goes.

Olivia

What's your favorite part about being a content creator on BookTok?

Giulia

My favorite part is that it's a really positive environment because on my profile, like I said, I don't get a lot of hate comments or negative people. I just post whatever I like, and then make the videos however I like. I don't do it because I know the video will get views. I just do whatever I feel like doing and then post it and it's good. I don't feel like it's very stressful or I have a lot of pressure on posting content just because, I don't know, maybe I'm not big enough. Probably people with more followers, they might feel like it's a job. But for me, it's just for fun. It's just kind of a hobby and whenever I feel like shooting a video, I shoot a video. If I don't feel like it, I don't. So, yeah, it's very useful and good vibes.

Olivia

Have there been any drawbacks to being a content creator? Have you felt any burnout?

Giulia

Sometimes with ideas of videos to make, it's tricky sometimes. I always look at the feed of my profile and if I have a similar video with the same cover as the ones that I just posted, then I don't post it. I just wait and have to shoot another style video, but maybe I

don't have another video [ready to post that fits that style]. So that can be stressful because then I don't know what to shoot. Yeah, but other than that I think everything is okay.

Olivia

Does that stress come from the organization of your page?

Giulia

Yeah, it's keeping the same organization of my page and thinking about ideas of what to do. I try to keep my profile aesthetic and there are so many good videos of people making jokes about books with these audios that are so funny but I don't do it because it doesn't go with my page. So sometimes it's like, no, that could be such a good video and sound, but I just don't do it because it doesn't go with my feed.

Olivia

What do you see as the future for BookTok in the book publishing or book marketing industry?

Giulia

I think BookTok actually blew up pretty good. I think it's gonna be around for quite a while still. For the book publishing side, I think it's very helpful for authors, even the newer ones. Like I said before, if they use BookTok wisely, they can reach a lot of people I think and it's just good for the authors and for the publishers because they're gonna get more books and more money.

I think it's good for both of them and also for the readers because they get opinions on books. I usually go on TikTok for actual reviews on books. I never go on Amazon or anything like that. I just see the videos of BookTokers I like and, I don't know, if you build this kind of trust with your viewers where your opinions on books are validated and they actually like your reviews, I think it's the best thing that could happen to you because then they're gonna come to you for recommendations.

Olivia

Do you have anything else to add about BookTok or your experience in general?

Giulia

I think it's such a powerful tool because it's so much easier to watch a video of someone saying, "oh, this book is good" than actually read so many reviews. So, it's actually easier and I think people use BookTok more just because people are lazy. So yeah, you're gonna go on TikTok, watch a couple of videos—just a couple—and you see one person talking that's just really hyped about the book and you're like, ok, let's go. Or sometimes you see one quote and then you buy the book—it's the same. So yeah, even that. But yeah, you can show actual pages or quotes of the books and then you get the people hyped about it.

I did a video that went viral on reading the first lines of the books, like the first line of the first page if I thought it was well written. I think it makes you want to buy the book sometimes. And sometimes you don't have the time to go to the bookstore or on Amazon and look at the first page or whatever. You just see it on TikTok on a 15-second video and you're done and it's just easier.

Olivia

How much do you actually watch BookTok videos on your own?

Giulia

I don't know. I usually stay on my For You Page. Not on the following side of TikTok. So, on my following side, I have all the BookTokers that I follow. But on the For You Page, I actually get a lot of videos on books. I think maybe 30% of my videos on TikTok are from BookTok. I don't know how much time I spend on BookTok. But yeah, I spend quite some time because I need to spend time on there just to get ideas on videos and stuff like that.

Appendix D: Emma L. Interview

TikTok account handle: @emmalouisebooks, 40.2K followers—United States

Olivia

What led you to becoming or how did you start your journey as a book, talk content creator?

Emma

So, I started a year ago now. And I actually did it because I'm a social media manager, as my full-time job; we wanted to get on TikTok and just kind of explore more. I didn't have a TikTok before then, so I was like, I'm totally new to this space, I don't really know what I'm doing. I obviously didn't want to mess around on my company's social media accounts. So, I was like, I'm just gonna make my own BookTok and see what happens. And that's kind of where I was just experimenting with different things, learning the space, and I started to get really into it. I had a Bookstagram before that and I was like, wow, this is really fun. I'm getting a lot of different recommendations. I'm just gonna start making videos about books because I love them. Then one of them went viral and now here we are.

Olivia

When did it go viral?

Emma

It went viral, I guess, in August of last year. Yeah. So, a year ago. And the video was just “are these popular BookTok books worth reading.” And I remember I posted it and I didn't check back for the night. I was like, whatever. It was the lowest lift I had ever done in a video. Then I opened up my phone the next day and there were 30,000 notifications and I was like, excuse me?! MY video? I'm like, wow, if I had known that I could have spent five minutes on all the other videos...

Olivia

Have you seen any other big pushes in getting a bunch of followers or anything like that or has it been a steady climb since then?

Emma

It's been a pretty steady climb. Some videos will do a lot better than others. But I found that the ones that do the best are the ones that mimic that same style where I do like a voiceover—a voice-to-text in the same Jessie voice—and I just pick up books in the bookstore.

Olivia

Describe your experience with BookTok.

Emma

My experience has been very positive overall. I try not to get too in the weeds because I want to still read what I want to read and not feel super influenced to read something

just because someone told me to or because it's really trendy. But obviously I succumb to that because I'm on BookTok. It's been a great space to really get book recommendations and also just hear other people talk about books. And I love that because I've been a reader my whole life and this space hadn't really existed before now. Especially because it's so video based. You actually get to hear people talking as if you were in, almost like a virtual book club. I'd say overall it's been really positive and helpful for my own reading and exposed me to so many different authors and books that I wouldn't have picked up if I hadn't been on social media and seen them, with these authors getting the visibility their books definitely deserve.

Olivia

When you say, “in the weeds,” do you mean just only reading books recommended by BookTok or posting those type of books or..?

Emma

Yeah, I try not to only read the books I see online. Like, well, there's so many other books out there and, and then I want also to create content for my followers that isn't just about the books they're seeing everywhere, because sometimes it can get tiresome to see the same book like 20 times in a week.

You want something new and fresh and there's so many books coming out all the time, that I really try to focus on finding different voices if I can.

Olivia

Do you feel a responsibility to try and give diverse book recommendations or new author recommendations?

Emma

Yeah, definitely. Because I feel like, especially working in this space—like with the authors—it can really change the trajectory of their career when someone promotes one of their books. And it's obviously great to promote a book that you love. But if that book already has so many people talking about it, I feel like it's really important to maybe pick up a book that I love that a lot of people aren't talking about and share that with my followers because then that author might get a bump or someone might read it and post about it. That can create a domino effect for people. And it's always important to have diversity in what you're reading because it just exposes you to new experiences and new authors, new ways of seeing things. I think that that's part of the beauty of reading is that you get to see things from a different perspective. And if you're always reading the same book over and over again, you're not exactly getting that.

Olivia

Do you have any friendships with other BookTok creators that are kind of bigger or do you guys collaborate any? I didn't see anything in your profile.

Emma

No, I mostly just create videos to do experimentations and fun recommendations. And another thing, because I work and this is my full-time job, I'm on the app so much for my company that I'm not really on it as much for myself. I do mutually follow a lot of different BookTokkers on my own account. But for the most part, I just put out the videos and I'm kind of like, "oh, this is what I'm thinking today" and then I just let it do whatever it does.

Olivia

What genre of books do you focus on for your account? And is this based on what you like or what you think will generate the most views?

Emma

I focus on romance, young adult (YA) literature, and some literary fiction. This is what I like. I post only books that I personally enjoy, on my account, because I feel like I want to be honest and have actually read the book. So, I don't want to be giving them a book that I haven't read.

Obviously though I read other genres and BookTok has exposed me to a lot of different books. I read fantasy too, but I'm primarily in the romance vein and then I do young adult often because I think that there had been like, such a stigma around that genre and reading it as an adult, that it's really important to me that those books are visible and that you see adults are reading them and enjoying them and can talk about them in the same way that like a teenager could, even if you're relating to it differently. And literary fiction, the English major in me just loves a good literary fiction book.

Olivia

Have you seen, like, any of the genres do better on your platform?

Emma

So, yes, romance by far does the best. They love the romance. And me too. So, I really put the most content out about romance books. I also read mostly romance books and even when I'm reading a young adult or literary fiction, there's always romance in it. They love romantasy too, the romance fantasy combo that is exploding right now. They don't love the YA as much, which makes me sad. They like very popular young adult books, but they don't love the weird niche ones.

Olivia

How many books do you think you read every month? And how do you make time to read those books whenever you have a full-time job and you're doing social media?

Emma

That's a great question. I read anywhere from 6-12 books a month, usually. I just have to make it a priority because I need to know what's out there and what people are reading and kind of stay up with it. I don't know the books that are coming out and the only way to do that is to really read the books and be in that space. However, there's only 24 hours in a day, so I can only read so much. I try to optimize as much as I can and set

aside dedicated reading time. I always set aside half an hour when I wake up. So, I set my alarm early and then I wake up, read, and I go about whatever the rest of my day is. I listen to audio books when I'm cleaning, walking, or doing anything. A lot of times when I'm actually planning social media work on my laptop in a calendar, I will be listening to an audio book. Pretty much whenever I can, I turn on an audio book. and then at night I set aside an hour to read before I go to sleep and I take my book everywhere I go just in case there's a minute or two I can read something. I know that's not something that everyone can do and not time that everyone has to read. And I think that it's really important to tell people that. This is also my job. Like, yeah, reading these books is part of my job. So if you're working full time as an accountant or something, reading a romance book is not part of your job, it's a hobby that you do.

So, don't feel bad if you're not reading that much because you're doing other things. Especially other women who are moms and all that. Like, you have other priorities and it's ok that you're not spending three hours a day reading. The only reason I'm able to do that is because it's part of my work.

Olivia

How much do you think the amount that you read differs from before you started doing this as a job? Do you think you read a lot more now because you're much more intentional?

Emma

Yes, definitely. I'm way more intentional about how much I read and setting aside time to read. I think that even before I was getting paid in any capacity—whether it's like for the company I work for or independently on my own page—I was reading. And that's how I got into this space to begin with because I loved it. But for a long time—pretty much through the end of high school and all through college—I wasn't reading that much. It wasn't a big priority for me and I just read the books that I knew I was really excited about and hoped that I could fit into my schedule. Then, like a lot of people when the pandemic happened, I was like, “well, I have time on my hands now I can go back to reading” and it kind of snowballed from there.

Olivia

How do you decide which books to come out on your platform?

Emma

I think that it's just the books that I enjoy. I also will get books in PR packages from publishers and that process is like (sometimes not all the time) we get a request form where we can request the books that we want. And sometimes there will be books that I already want to read, so I will request those books. Obviously, because I know I want to read them, I will promote them on my platform, and I also promote books that I really think I'm going to enjoy. So, if I go to the bookstore and I buy three books and I make a video where it's like “mini book haul” or something, I'm choosing those books because I really think I'm going to enjoy them or because I've heard good things about them or because I've already read them and I think they're great.

Olivia

As far as publishers or authors reaching out to you in hopes of public endorsement, how many people are reaching out to you and how often? How does that process work?

Emma

It's different month to month. For example, I was on vacation in June for 2.5 weeks and when I got back I had around 14 packages in my office room. And I was like, "what are these?" And they were from publishers and authors. I'm on influencer lists where they have your contact information; if they feel like the book is a good fit for you or they think that you might promote the book, they'll send it to you in exchange for you posting about it or just in the hopes that you will post about it. So, I don't always know when a book is going to come in and when they appear I'm like, "oh my goodness." But that example was a big month. Usually, it's just a handful. I'd say five, maybe six a month. Also, now that my page has gotten larger, it's not only publishers and authors, it's small businesses too. I just got a package that has reader-oriented candles that say "book lover" on them, which I love. And I got some crowns that I made a video about that were inspired by the night court and the whole *A Court of Thorns and Roses* thing, which was really fun. So I get opportunities to do stuff like that and I'd say like probably two or three of those come in a month.

So it's, it's usually less than 10. And, while I love to promote the books, my own page is not my full-time job. So I'm not putting in the same amount of pitching and stuff that other creators are doing, where it's their full-time job to get paid partnerships to promote books and also work directly with publishing houses. I don't do that.

Olivia

So, is it typically them sending you products or are they ever requesting to do a partnership with you?

Emma

Yeah, so I'll have some requests to do partnerships with me and then I will put the paid promotion label on that. And then the other ones who just send me their products, I don't put any paid label on it because I'm not getting paid. It's just like "if I send you this will you maybe think about posting about it," but you also have to keep in mind that the more you post about the products and the books, the more you're sent because people notice that you're engaged with a product or you're talking about an early release and an author thinks, "maybe they'll talk about my book." And that's how you get more people to reach out to you and get to work with more people.

Olivia

Do you feel pressure because of everybody sending you stuff?

Emma

Yeah, definitely. Like, I can't possibly read all these books and post about them. I do feel pressure to make sure that I'm doing their book justice or their product and then

sometimes I'll forget about it, then see it on my shelf and I'll be like, "oh no, that book came out two weeks ago and I didn't post about it." So yes. But for the most part, I try to do it right when they come in. So, when I get a book mail or something, I'll make a video that's [titled] "book mail" or I'll say, you know, "advanced reader copies I got this week."

So that way I know that even if I forget or don't read the book for another two months, at least it had some visibility of "this book is coming out on this date and I'm excited to read it, so you should be excited too or you might be excited to."

Olivia

You have thousands of subscribe or thousands of subscribers and millions of views in your videos. What do you think about the influence and power BookTok has on the publishing industry.

Emma

I think it's crazy. I've been seeing a lot recently of indie authors getting picked up by traditional publishers because their book got picked up by BookTok. And that is like, mind blowing to me because I feel like that wasn't heard of at all before BookTok. Like, usually if you publish an indie book, you kind of stayed an indie publisher, maybe it picked up some ground.

But now, you see in the publishing space, indie authors getting picked up a lot and there's a lot of hybrid publishing as well. So, you have people who will publish with their publisher and also independently. And I think the most amazing thing about the BookTok space is that it's given a chance for authors who might not have been able to reach the traditional publishing houses who have the money and the teams to promote a book. It gives them the agency to promote their book and the visibility and the chance to get picked up by traditional publishing. Whereas before, there just wasn't that same opportunity because there wasn't a space that was as vibrant and as visible as BookTok in the book world.

Olivia

Have you noticed any patterns or trends in how your followers engage or don't engage with certain posts?

Emma

Yeah, definitely. They don't like to see my face as much and like, hear me just talking—which is hard. I'll make a video where I'll be talking and they're like, "no, please just show us the books" and I'm like, "okay, fine." Then I don't have to do my makeup and look nice, and I can just get behind the camera in sweatpants just with my books.

But they do love the videos where I go to the bookstore, and I pick up a book and then I put it down. And I say, "this is what this book is about" or like, "yes, this popular book is worth it" or "no." I think that the thing followers really want is instantly to be told the value of the book, like, is this worth my time or not? And don't make it take 10 minutes to say yes or no, make it take 10 seconds. Because everyone's focus is very short. Which

is relatable. But definitely when you're on social media, people want the information and they want it fast. Which I think is also why the ones [videos] of me talking don't do well because I'm extremely long winded. So it'll be like, "here's my, you know, reading round up of the month" and I'll have read like four books and it'll be like a 10-minute-long video because I can't shut up.

So that's my own problem. I can't be short when I'm talking directly to the camera. But when I just say it in text, I can be a lot more to the point and those do better. I also notice that ones where I'm like, you know, "books with the grumpy sunshine" trope and it's just like a video of the spines or like the edges of the book. And then it goes to like the stack where I just pull the books. They like that because you immediately know what you're gonna get. You're getting books with, you know, this in it or it's fantasy romance books or it's books set in wherever and then you immediately know like, ok, all 10 of these books have what I want and I can save this post and return to it later.

Olivia

What's your favorite part about being a content creator on BookTok?

Emma

Getting to talk about books all the time and read and connect with other readers, hear what they're saying about books, find new books, work with authors. I think it's really fun to connect with authors. Especially when you read a book and you absolutely love it and you write a review or you post a video and the author is like, "I'm so happy you love this, thank you." And I'm like, "no, thank *you*. This is amazing." I think that's the best part.

Olivia

What's been your favorite book that you've ever been sent?

Emma

Oh, I know. I actually read this one last month. It comes out on October 24th. I will yell about this book from the rooftops. It's called *Guy's Girl* by Emma Noyes. This book meant so much to me when I was reading it. I've had books that I've connected with and that have been very important to me at different points in my life because they've been a comfort, or they help me escape.

But I never had a book where I so fiercely related to the main character. To the point where sometimes I had to put it down because I was just like, "wow, I feel like this has seen into my soul" and the feeling and the comfort in knowing that someone else has gone through what you've been through and then reading about it on the page and getting to just feel seen and heard and understood was incredible and it reminded me of why books are so important.

Telling your story and putting that out there is so important because someone, like me, might come across it and read it and just be like, "wow, finally, I feel like I have been heard, there's someone else out there." So that was amazing to have been able to read

that book and to have been able to read it early, because now I get to tell everyone that they need to preorder it and that they need to buy it because it was so well written too, the prose, it wasn't just that I connected with the book, obviously. Like that was a huge part of it, but the writing was so well done, craft wise, and it was a romance, but it was so much more than that. Like very, very layered and the characters were well drawn. The world just so well balanced that I couldn't stop reading it? But at the same time, I was like "this cannot end. Like I have to stop because I don't want it to end" and I cannot wait for it to come out and to buy my physical copy and to read it again because that's how good it was.

Olivia

Do you have a favorite all-time book or book series?

Emma

Yes, I have a few. *The Hunger Games* is my all-time favorite. Those are the books that got me into reading. I reread them at least once a year. I'm obsessed with them. I had two Peter Mellark cutouts in my house, and they remain there. I had posters on the walls in my basement that my mom has not taken down and I'm like, "you can never take these down now," a blanket with his face on it, the whole nine yards. I just can't get over these books. I'm like, "Emma, you're gonna be 25 years old. You have to stop." Like never! Because now there's another movie coming out. It never ends.

And then another one of my own all-time favorite series by my all-time favorite author is the *Mortal Instruments* series by Cassandra Claire. Love. She's just incredible and I will follow her everywhere and I have. Any time she has a book event, I'm like, "hello, it's me again. Come to get my book signed."

I'm actually going to see Cassandra Clare in a month. Counting down the days. I'm going to Nashville actually to see her and meet her for the fourth time. Like I said, I love her so much and I really wish that there had been a BookTok back in, like, 2017, because I was in Germany at a book fair to meet Cassandra Claire. And it was the wildest experience of my life. And I was so nervous when I met her and my name is Emma and she has a character named Emma and she was like, "you look like exactly how I pictured her." And I was like, "I can just die now. That's it"

It was crazy. And I ended up meeting her again two years later (these are all at book events, no one has invited me to these) but I ended up meeting her again a few years later and I was like, "oh, I was in Germany" and she was like, "oh my gosh, actually we had to shut that down because the line got so crazy." And I was like, "well, I got in at a good time."

And she's just the sweetest and I think that the way her mind works to create those worlds. And I think she's the best at world building, ever. She has a new fantasy book that's out in October as well, it's adult fantasy. And the world building she does, just so exquisite, so well done. She is a master at that and she's just so nice, so, so nice.

Olivia

What do you see as the future for BookTok in the book publishing or book marketing industry?

Emma

I think it's just gonna keep getting bigger. I don't see it slowing down at any point and I love that so many people are excited about reading, whether they're in the BookTok space or not. But I think you can really see the change. When you go into Target and there's a massive book section that has popular BookTok books and you see multiple people in there.

I remember back in, you know, the 2015 time, the book sections in stores like that were not as they are today. And I think it's proof that people want books and they want to read more and they want to have them readily available. And also the fact that independent bookstores are getting more business and people are interested in going there and buying books, is proof that the effect of BookTok has been huge.

I think that publishing is gonna keep on paying attention to what people are saying and what they're liking. Because at the end of the day, it's really about the readers. Because if you don't have readers, your book's not gonna be seen. You can write a book, but if no one reads it (obviously still write the book), but it's not gonna get out there in the same way. It's important to pay attention to what readers are saying and to have people talking about the books that they enjoy so that authors can keep on writing and that publishing houses can keep on publishing and bookstores can keep on going.

Olivia

How much of a percentage do you think big five publishers are reaching out for you to promote their books or to talk about their books?

Emma

Low, probably I don't know, 20-30%. I get a lot of books from Sourcebooks Landmark, which is not a big five publisher. They do Bloom Books, which is a romance imprint. I am part of the Macmillan Influencer Program list. But other than that, I also do a lot of cold pitching. Like, I want this arc and then I cold pitch an agent and sometimes that gets me a book. Sometimes it doesn't. But, yeah, again, because it's not my full-time job, I'm not as connected as some of the other influencers.

Olivia

Anything else about BookTok that you wanted to share?

Emma

It's really fun to hear about how much books are impacting people. The creativity of the people on BookTok never ceases to amaze me. The way that they make these like cinematic videos about some of the books, I'm like, "how did you do that?" The edits that are like one quote and they're like, "this is the aesthetic" and I'm like, "where did

you get these photos? How did you put this together? How can I do that?" And then I'm on my phone for hours trying to make something and it comes out and it's like, "no."