TIKTOK ISN’T JUST FOR DANCING

An Undergraduate Perspective on #BookTok

As seen by the "BookTok" tables in Barnes & Noble, the effect that TikTok has on the literary landscape is undeniable. Using their experience growing up online, these undergraduate students explain why you should care about the platform currently rewriting the industry, and how to use it to market your work. From the generation largely responsible for TikTok’s reach, the panelists will tackle the beginnings of BookTok and its effects on the future of the publishing industry.

Participants

→ Emily Hizny | Moderator
Emily Hizny is a senior creative writing and publishing & editing double major at Susquehanna University. She is the managing editor of SU's literary magazine The Sanctuary, the president of SU Slam Poetry Club, and the director of SU's FUSE chapter (Forum for Undergraduate Student Editors).

→ Ellie Pasquale | Panelist
Ellie Pasquale is a senior studying English literature and publishing & editing at Susquehanna University, where she also serves as the managing editor of RiverCraft literary magazine and the conference coordinator for FUSE. She formerly managed the TikTok account of a best-selling children’s author and currently works as a teaching assistant for the Susquehanna University Press.

→ Sarah Ledet | Panelist
Sarah Ledet is an undergraduate student at Susquehanna University studying creative writing and publishing & editing. They are the Junior Managing Editor of The Sanctuary Magazine and the Junior Director of FUSE (Forum for Undergraduate Student Editors).

→ Amber Watkin | Panelist
Amber Watkin is a senior at Susquehanna University studying creative writing, publishing & editing, and art. She is the Editor in Chief of Susquehanna’s The Squirrel and the Head Visual Arts Editor for The Sanctuary Magazine. She is also the PR chair for SU’s chapter of FUSE and is responsible for running the organization’s social media.

→ Maggie Mauro | Panelist
Maggie Mauro is an undergraduate student at Susquehanna University, where she studies creative writing and publishing & editing. She serves as the treasurer of Susquehanna University’s chapter of the Forum for Undergraduate Student Editors (FUSE) and manages the website for FUSE National.

Opening Remarks & Housekeeping Announcements
Welcome to *TikTok Isn’t Just For Dancing: An Undergraduate Perspective on #BookTok*. A few reminders before we begin:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, Emily Hizny, know, and a printed copy will be delivered to you.
- Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
- Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
- Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

→ Opening address given by our moderator, Emily Hizny.

**BookTok: A Not So Secret History | Ellie Pasquale**

A timeline of BookTok events.

- TikTok began as the app musical.ly
- Became TikTok in 2018
  - A review of the platform’s layout, affordances, and algorithm
  - How does TikTok make it easier for creators to go viral?
- The rise of BookTok in quarantine
- TikTok about books that will make you cry
  - *They Both Die at the End, It Ends With Us, Song of Achilles,* and *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*
- The community developed its own niches and subcategories
  - Dark academia, romance, fantasy, "romantasy,” horror, queer lit, etc.

**BookTok and Book Sales | Sarah Ledet**

Discussing BookTok’s effect on book marketing and sales.

- Annotating books and pushing for “aesthetic bookshelves”
  - This results in an increase in book sales, especially the sale of special editions
  - Increased popularity of YA print books
  - How the aesthetic of books affects their performance on BookTok
- Bookshelf tours and overconsumption
  - Brief mention of the era of BookTube vs BookTok and how they differ
- The rise of tropes
  - How publishers are using these BookTok-coined tropes to advertise their books
  - BookTok is strongly skewed toward novels featuring romantic relationships
- Short form content & instant gratification leads to impatient audiences
  - Books are being published quicker to meet demand, but their production is not being held to normal standards because of how fast they are edited and assembled
  - “Fast fashion” presses spurred on by the trends of BookTok
- Red Tower Books
  - BookTok tables in Barnes and Noble, Target, etc.
    - *The Ripped Bodice* and their ice hockey romance display

**BookTok Going Forward | Maggie Mauro**

BookTok’s impact on the industry and the non-literary world.

- Books blowing up before publication/release, books first published independently and later published traditionally because of their popularity, books receiving sequels due to their popularity
  - *The Ashes and the Star Cursed King, Fourth Wing, The Atlas Six, These Divine Rivals, Lightlark, The First to Die at the End*
- Real World Consequences
  - Seattle Krackens incident

**How To Use TikTok | Amber Watkin**

Recommendations on how to use TikTok to promote yourself as a writer and/or publication.

- Language
  - The different words used on TikTok versus in the literary world
    - Example: “romantasy”
- Making content outside of always selling something
- Being genuine and honest with your audience
- Building and maintain boundaries with your audience
  - Interacting as peers versus interacting with fans
- Adjusting to the shortform content—include a hook!
- Knowing who your audience is
- Peer-reviewing content—ask your friends!
- Creating a content calendar

→ A summary of what all this means for the future of the publishing industry, provided by moderator Emily Hizny.

**Open the Floor for Audience Questions (20 min)**

**Concluding Statements**