



BNC RESEARCH

A RESEARCH REPORT BY BOOKNET CANADA

BNC RESEARCH

09.2019

Page to Screen

Canadian Edition

Media tie-ins and the sales impact of screen adaptations



**BOOKNET
CANADA**

PREPARED BY BNC STAFF

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Methodology

The objective of this study is to look at whether the release of a television series or movie that has been adapted from a book has an impact on sales of that book. Title selections are limited to adaptations that have been released between 2011 and 2018 for which the original book was written by a Canadian author. This study does not take into consideration whether the adaption (movie or television) is a Canadian production.

Print unit sales were tallied for all the ISBNs associated with each adapted book (both media tie-in and any previous versions that were simultaneously available) for a 13-week period that spanned the six weeks prior to the Canadian premiere of the adaptation, the week of release, and the six weeks immediately following the premiere date. In some cases where there were multiple releases (e.g., released on television and then later a streaming service), time periods have been extended.

Data has been obtained through two primary sources:

- BookNet Canada's SalesData – representing approximately 85% of the trade market in Canada. SalesData tracks the weekly sale of print books across the country.

- BookNet Canada’s Canadian Book Consumer Survey – adult book-buying Canadians participate in online surveys about their book purchases from the prior month. Book buyers report on such information as: what they purchased; where they made the purchase; what influenced their purchase; and other quantitative data. The consumer data included in this report is from 2018 and represents 2,930 book buyers.

Introduction

BookNet Canada often gets asked how much a movie or television adaptation of a book impacts book sales. When it comes down to it, it is almost impossible to distill this down to a single data point. To start, there are many variables: When it comes to format, is the adaptation a movie, broadcast television show, or streamed? If it is a movie, was there a national release or limited release? If the show is streamed, which services have the production available (Netflix, Prime, HBO)? What if the television show is available on a speciality channel such as Space? Does it make a difference if the production is live action or animated? How are sales impacted if there are different release dates on various services?

When comparing titles, there is also the matter of genre – documentary, true crime, fiction, juvenile — and the popularity of the adapted book. We could be looking at a small animated children’s production compared to a blockbuster movie release with a much wider appeal.

While this study may touch on some of the above, the primary goal is not to determine whether there is an average percent increase in book sales but to review some case studies that reflect how sales may be impacted by the production of an adaptation. Furthermore, we will look at all editions of a book that were available when its adaptation originally aired. This will allow us to see how media tie-in (MTI) editions compare to previously existing non-MTI editions and how each edition sells.

This study is based on a report published in June 2010 by BookNet Canada: *Page to Screen: What happens to book sales when a movie version is released?* While the methodology has been changed slightly, the major update to this study is that we are specifically focusing on the adaptations and media tie-ins of Canadian-authored works.

This study was originally conducted based on a request submitted by one of our BNC SalesData subscribers. We encourage anyone who has an idea for a report to let us know — we are always looking for new ideas.

Behaviour of Book Buyers

You likely have a lot of feelings about whether or not you should read a book before you watch the movie or television show. The internet is full of opinion pieces on reading or watching first (of course the answer is *read* but we won't go there). Alas, this is not one of the questions we ask of book buyers in our regular surveys about their book purchases. We do, however, ask them questions about what motivated their recent book purchases. Regarding screen adaptations, we found the following:

- From 2016-2018, approximately 10% of book buyers became aware of a book they purchased because they heard of its film/TV/radio adaptation.
- Approximately 8% of purchases were decided on because the buyer had seen the adaptation on film or television.

Television

Bitten

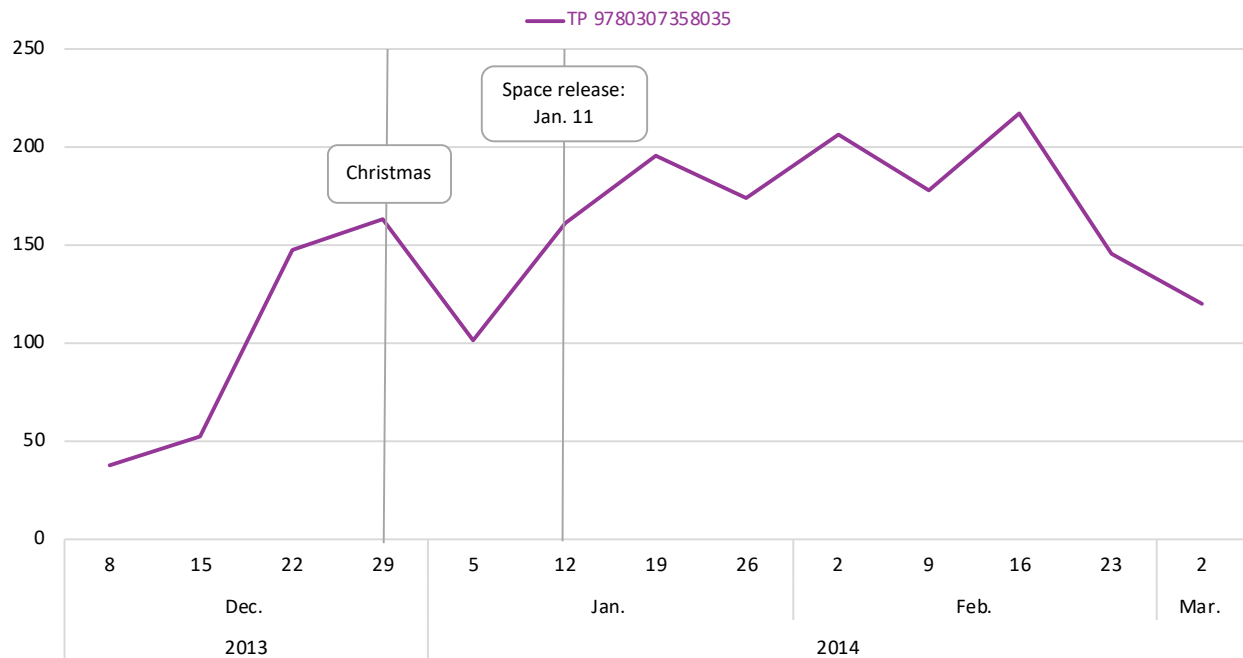


Bitten was produced for the Space channel and premiered on Jan. 11, 2013. Based on Kelly Armstrong's *Women of the Otherworld* series, the TV show was named after the first title in that series. The show aired for three seasons and concluded in April 2016.

Plotted below are print unit sales for ISBN 9780307358035, which is the MTI paperback edition of *Bitten*, the first title in the series, and the only edition that was widely available in the Canadian market at the time. While its sales were not extremely high, we do see notable sales growth from the week prior to the show's first episode to the week after. With the show airing so close to Christmas, we are also seeing an increase in sales over the holiday season.

When we reviewed sales for the following two titles in the series, we did not see any notable sales increase.

Increase of 93% comparing the sales average for the five weeks prior to the show's premiere to the five weeks following.



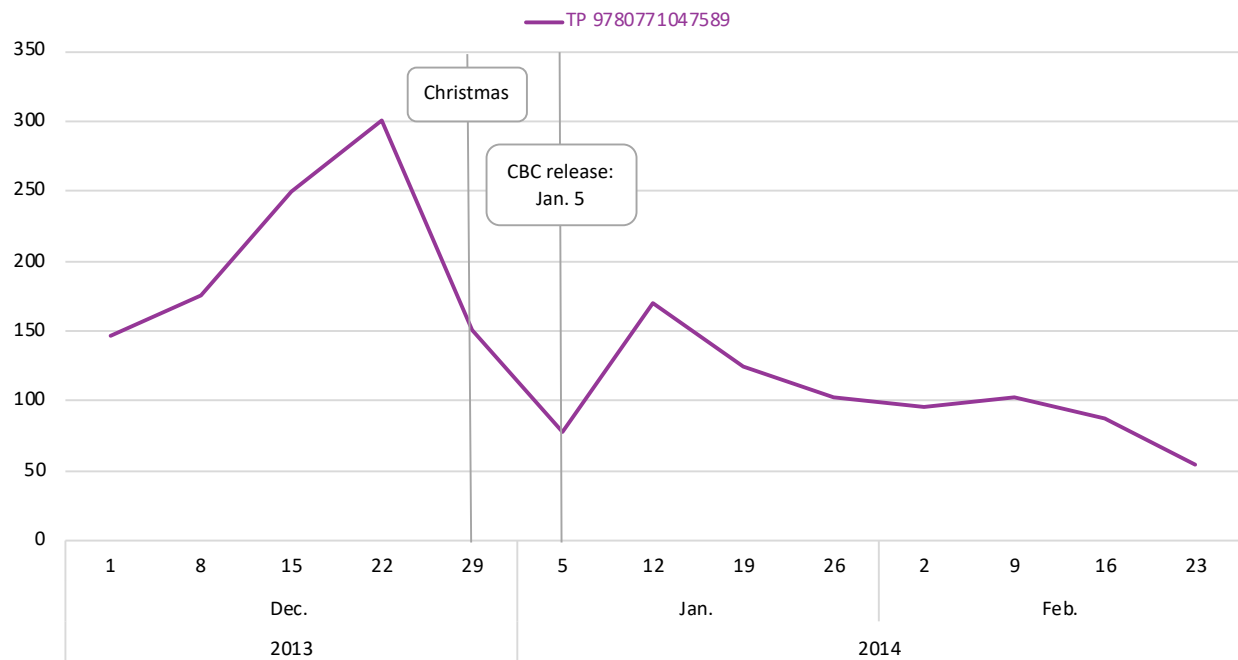
The Best Laid Plans



The Best Laid Plans won the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humor in 2008 and went on to be adapted into a comedy-drama television miniseries produced by the CBC, which premiered on Jan. 5, 2014. (Terry Fallis later went on to win multiple additional Stephen Leacock Medals for other works.)

When we compare five-week sales averages from before and after the show's premiere date, we find that sales declined by 42%. However, this is likely due to the periods falling before and after Christmas. Similarly, the spike in sales for the week ending Dec. 22, 2013 is likely due to Christmas.

Decrease of 42% comparing the sales average for the five weeks prior to the show's premiere to the five weeks following. It is important to note that sales prior to the premiere include Christmas.



The Handmaid's Tale

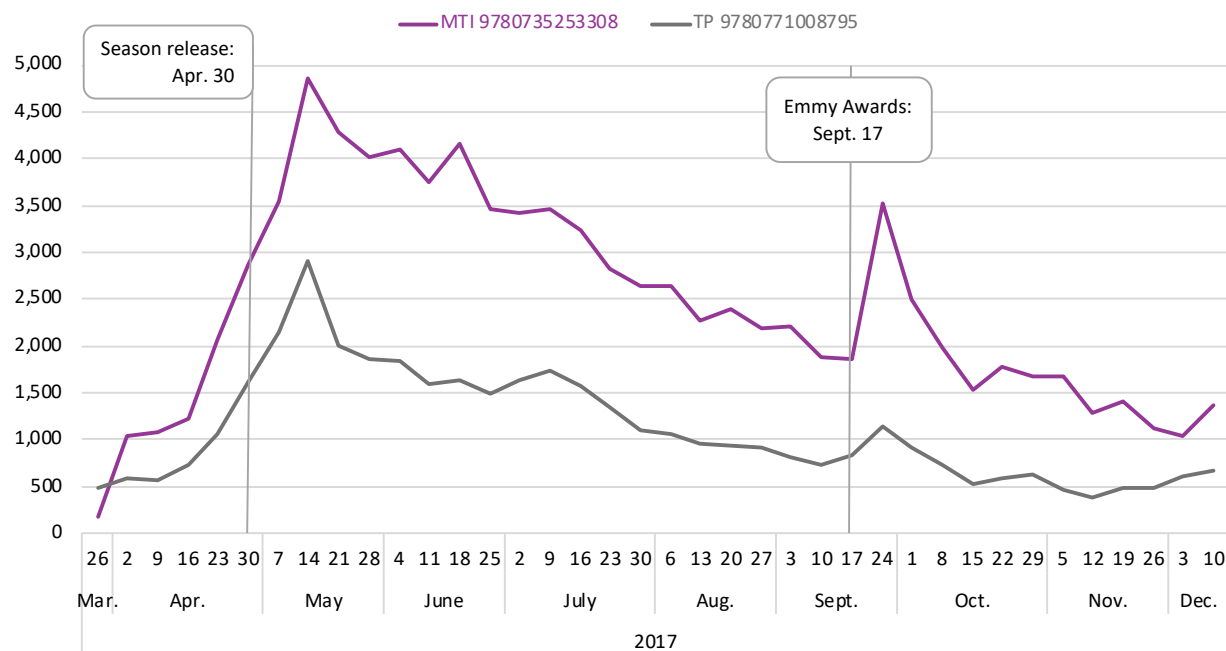


The Handmaid's Tale was originally published in 1985, so there is a considerable track record for book sales. Hulu, which is not available in Canada, released the first season of the TV series on April 30, 2017. This was followed by a Bravo release in Canada four days later. The following spring, the first season was released on CraveTV after Bravo aired the season finale.¹

At the time of the initial series launch, both trade paper (TP) and MTI editions of the book were available in the market and both editions saw very considerable sales gains.

On Sept. 17, 2017, *The Handmaid's Tale* TV series won eight Emmy awards, including awards for best drama series, lead actress in a drama series, supporting actress in a drama series, and directing in a drama series. While the following sales spike only lasted for a few weeks, there was a greater than 100% increase in sales after the Emmys on a title that was already selling well.

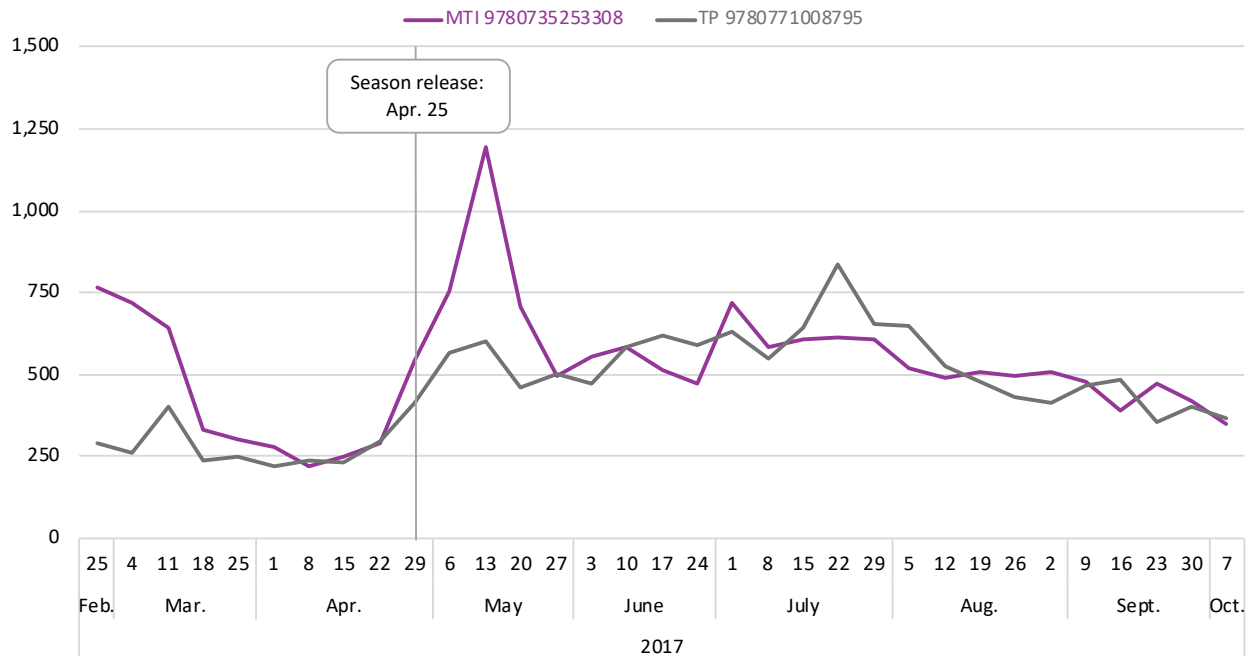
Increase of 249% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the series premiere to the five weeks following.



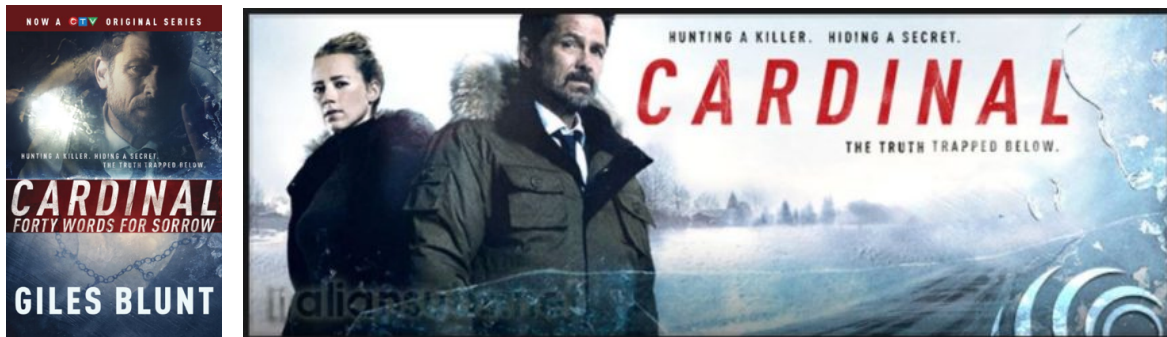
Subsequent seasons of the TV series have moved beyond the scope of the original *The Handmaid's Tale*, carrying the story further. This fact may or may not have impacted the considerably lower book sales that took place after the second season was released.

¹ "The Handmaid's Tale to air on Bravo, then CraveTV in Canada." *The Globe and Mail*. 2019. Available at: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/television/the-handmaids-tale-to-air-on-bravo-then-cravetv-in-canada/article34433369/>. Accessed Aug. 19, 2019.

Season 2

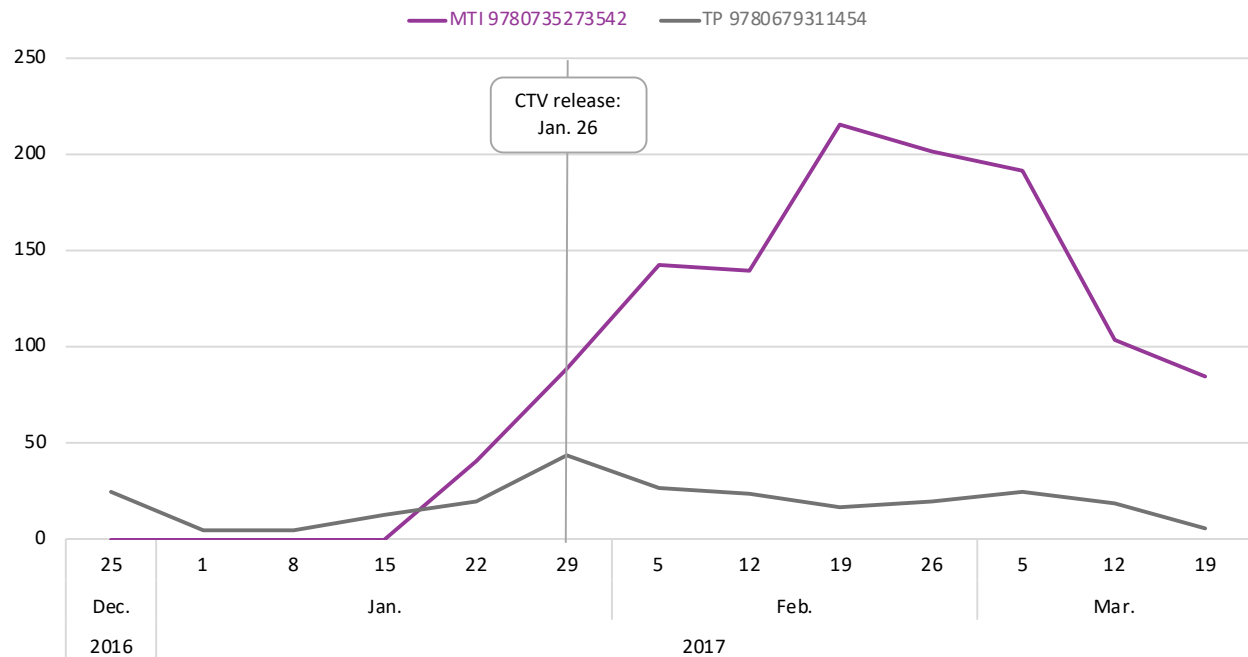


Cardinal

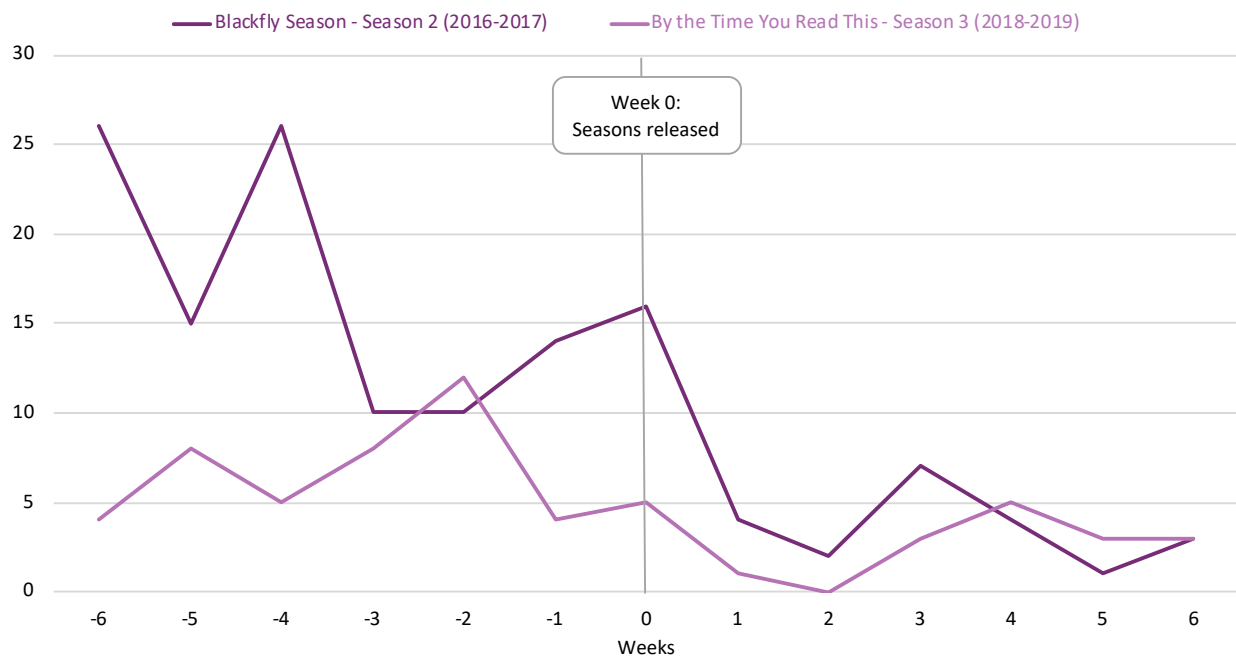


Cardinal is a crime show based on the book series by Giles Blunt. The first season premiered on CTV on Jan. 26, 2017. With fairly low sales to begin with, *Cardinal* saw a notable increase of 342% when comparing the five weeks before and after the week of the show's premiere. The first season was based on the first title in the series, *Cardinal: Forty Words for Sorrow*.

Increase of 342% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the premiere to the five weeks following.



A different book from the series is used as the basis for each season of the *Cardinal* TV show, but they are not selected sequentially, i.e., in order of publication. You can see from the graph below that sales were notably lower for seasons two and three, relative to other books in the series. The graph below represents seasons airing in 2016 and 2018 with the weeks leading up to each season's premiere and the weeks following.



Multi-Format Release

Screen adaptations of the following titles were released on multiple formats, i.e., both broadcast television and streaming services, usually with different dates for each release. It should be kept in mind that, in the case of the CBC where content is simultaneously available on both live television and available for free via the CBC website, it can be difficult to fully quantify sales performance.

In the first three cases that follow, episodes were originally aired on CBC television, followed by a subsequent release on Netflix. In two of those three cases, we find that the subsequent release on Netflix did not result in a notable increase in book sales. It is important to note that, based on data from our consumer surveys, book buyers do tend to be avid CBC watchers — in 2018, 62% of buyers watched CBC television at least once per month.

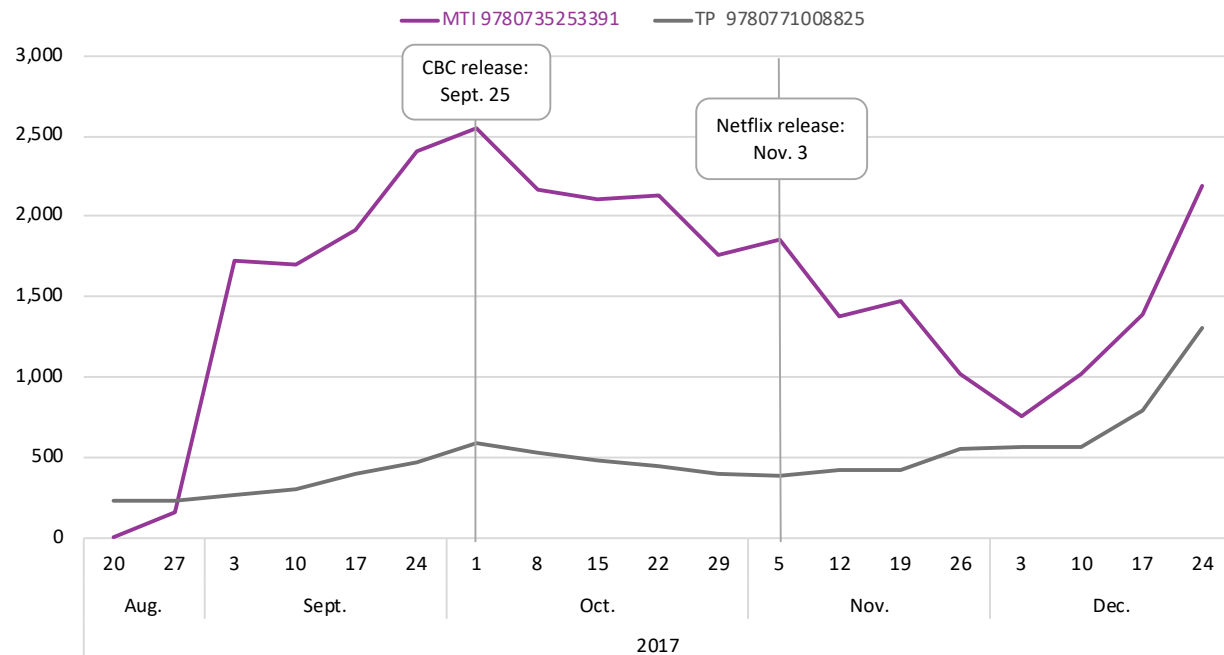
Alias Grace



Alias Grace is a well-known title written by Margaret Atwood that was originally published in September 1996. There were two editions available in the market when the TV adaptation premiered, both of which continued to sell well during that period, though the MTI edition in particular (published about six weeks prior to the CBC premiere) saw soaring sales. Interestingly, the Netflix release did not result in increased sales.

In the graph below, it is worth noting that the sales increases seen in the later weeks represent sales leading up to Christmas.

Increase of 90% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the premiere to the five weeks following.



Note: The MTI edition was published in the first week of the above graph, the week ending Aug. 20, 2017.

Anne of Green Gables



The Canadian icon, Anne Shirley, was adapted for the screen yet again in 2017. *Anne with an "E"* first aired on CBC television on March 19 followed by a Netflix release on May 12 of the

same year. *The New York Times Magazine* ran an article, “The Other Side of Anne of Green Gables,”² which gives some context for the series:

“The book has sold over 50 million copies and has been translated into at least 36 languages. Polish resistance fighters took “Green Gables” with them to the front; the novel became a part of the Japanese school curriculum in the orphan-filled postwar 1950s; a television show based on the series aired in Sri Lanka; and the book occupies a pre-eminent place in Canada, where “Green Gables” is taught in school and featured on postage stamps — a cultural export matched only by hockey and the Mounties.”

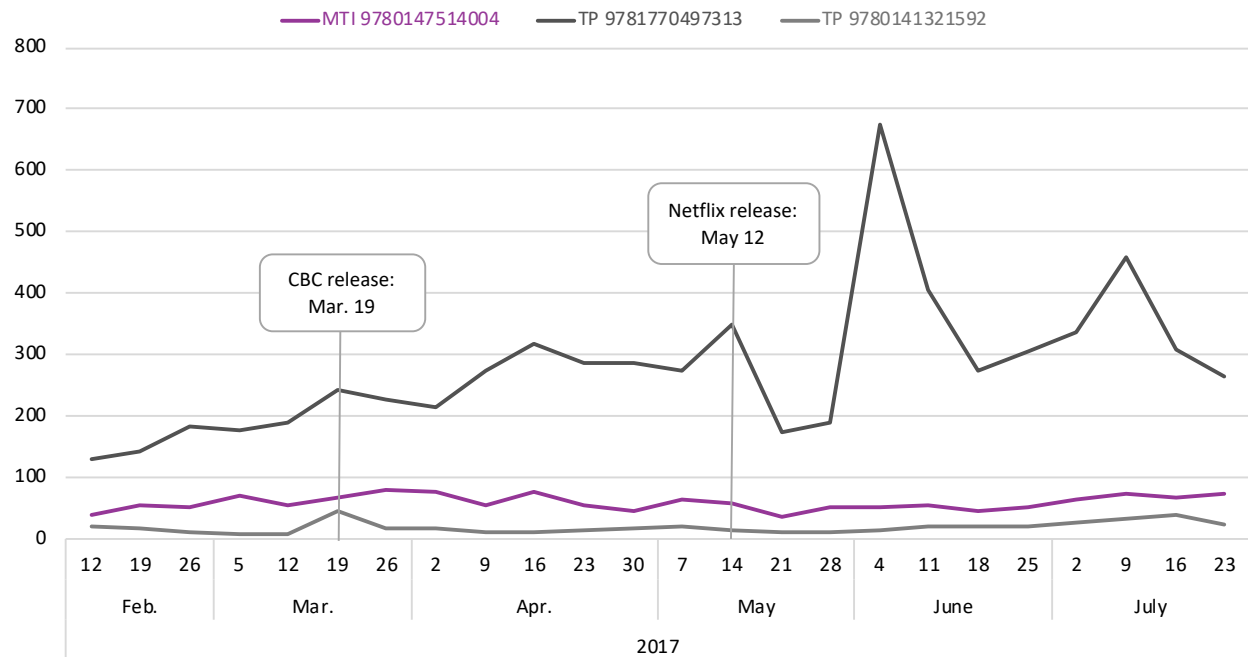
The article goes on to explain that this version of Anne was “overseen, written, and co-produced by Moira Walley-Beckett, a ‘Breaking Bad’ writer from Canada” and “what this means in practice is that the cheerful novel has, in Walley-Beckett’s hands, become much darker.” The series even sparked a *Vanity Fair* article, “*Anne of Green Gables*: Netflix’s Bleak Adaptation Gets It All So Terribly Wrong”.³

For the first book in a series originally published in 1908, sales continue to be incredibly strong. Leading up to the CBC premiere, we see some sales building with a slight peak in the week of the release. Afterwards, weekly sales continue to build slowly with another peak just after the Netflix release. Where things get interesting is in the summer after both of these premieres. We cannot say definitively that June and July sales are due to summer break but it is the most likely cause. Looking at sales for the same ISBNs in 2018 (graphed below), we can reasonably determine that summer into early fall generally sees increased sales.

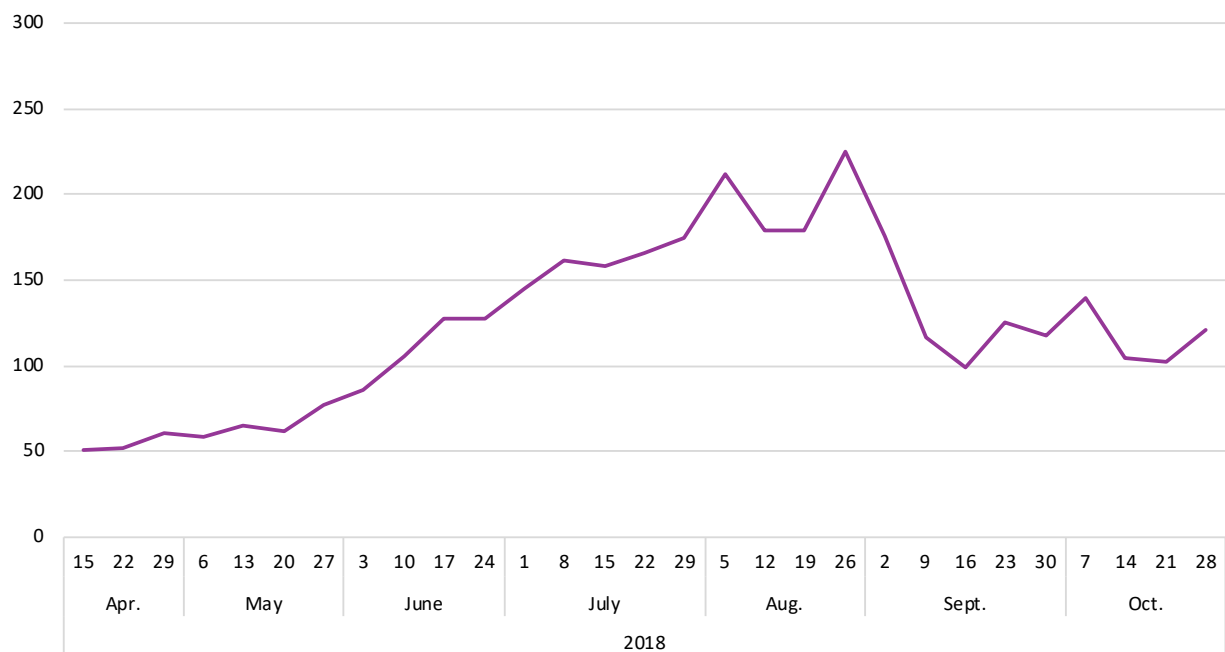
Increase of 50% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the launch to the five weeks following.

² Paskin, W. “The Other Side of Anne of Green Gables”. *The New York Times Magazine*. 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/27/magazine/the-other-side-of-anne-of-green-gables.html>. Accessed Aug. 19, 2019.

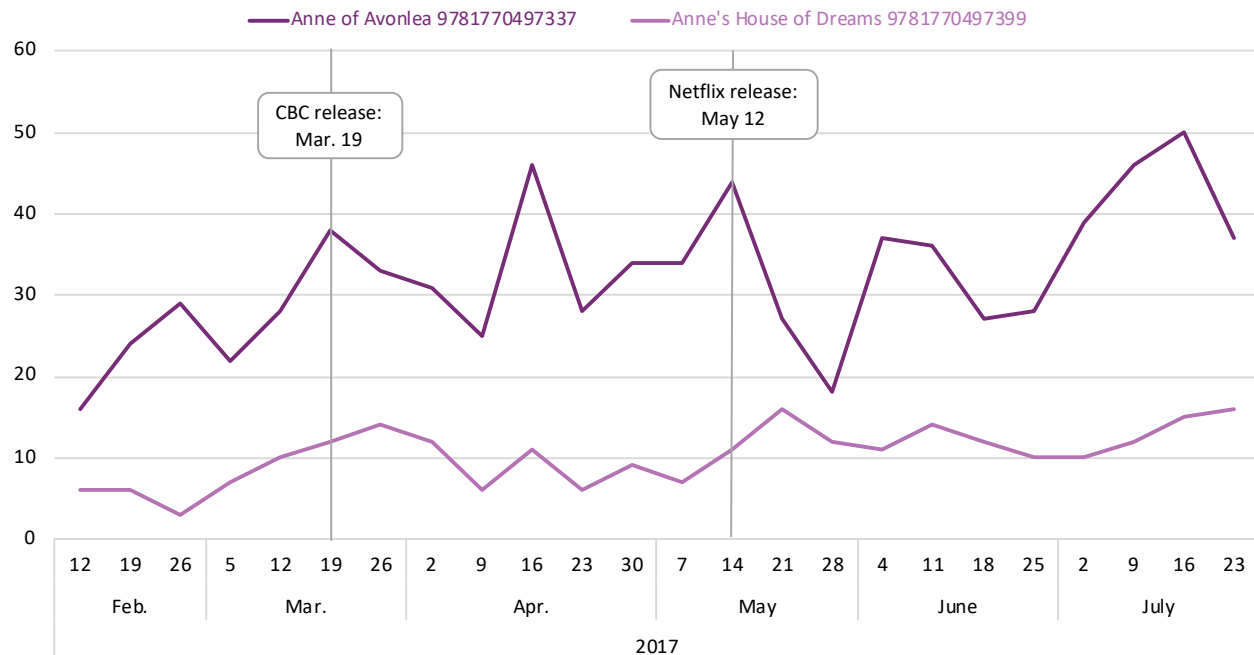
³ Robinson, Joanna. “Anne of Green Gables: Netflix’s Bleak Adaptation Gets It All So Terribly Wrong”. *Vanity Fair*. 2019. <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2017/05/anne-of-green-gables-netflix-review-anne-with-an-e-bleak-sad-wrong>. Accessed Aug. 19, 2019.



2018 Sales – Spring to Winter



Finally, we also wondered if the series release on CBC or Netflix resulted in increased sales for any of the other books in the series. Graphed below are sales for *Anne of Avonlea* and *Anne's House of Dreams*, for which we see very minimal change.



The Book of Negroes



The Book of Negroes by Lawrence Hill was published in 2007 and subsequently made into a CBC miniseries in 2015, which was then released on Netflix in 2016.

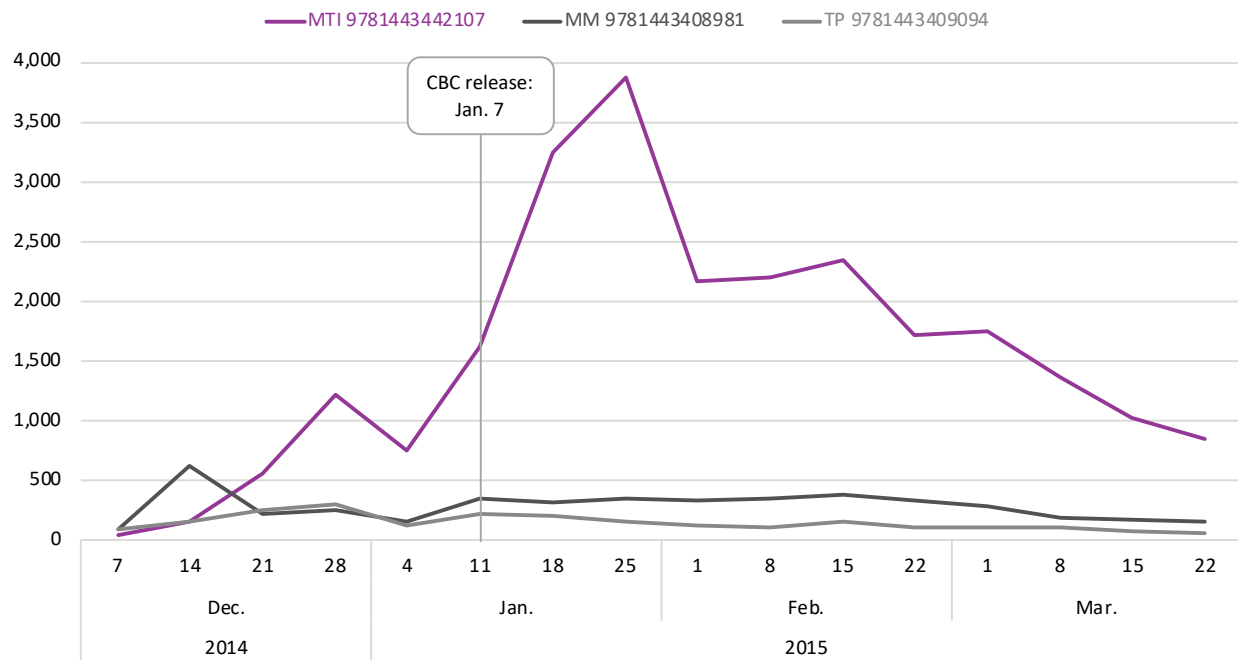
The CBC release caused the already decent book sales to skyrocket for the six weeks after the show aired and it continued to sell well beyond that period. The miniseries went on to win many awards, including the Canadian Screen Awards, Critics' Choice Television Awards, Black Reel Awards, among others.

There were MTI, TP, and mass market (MM) editions available in the market during this time. While the MM outsold the TP, the trade paper MTI far exceeded sales of all other editions.

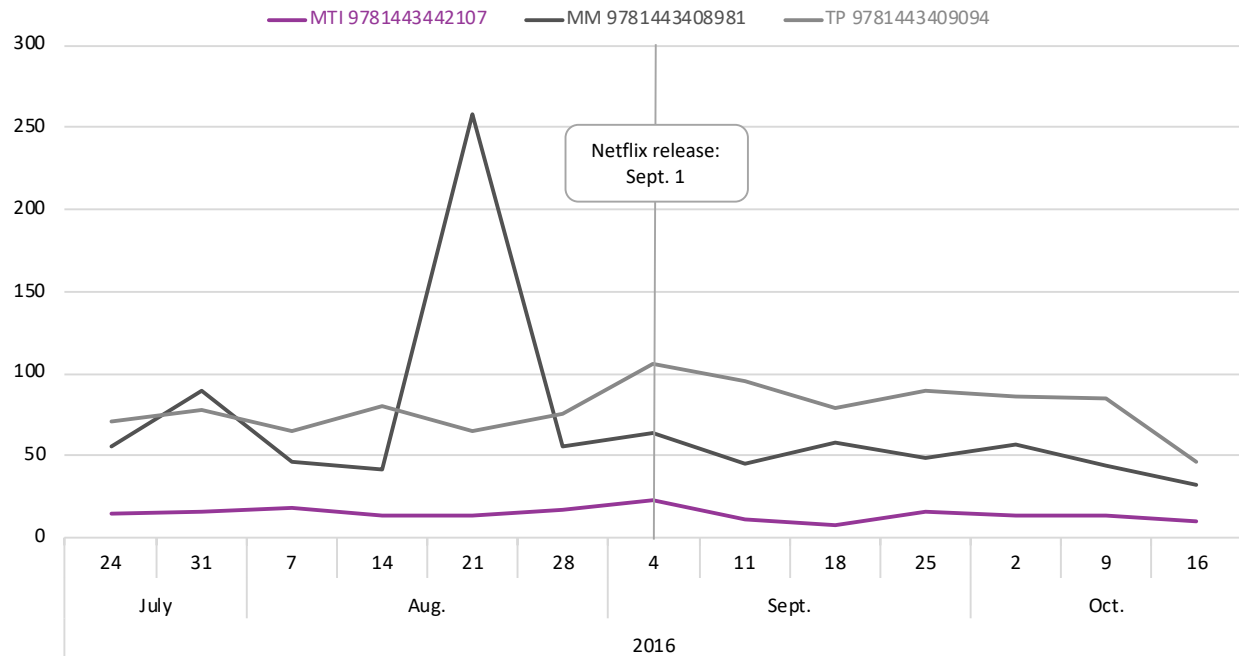
The Netflix release of the production (graphed below) didn't take place until almost a year after it aired on CBC television. Book sales remained relatively flat during this period.

Increase of 221% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the CBC premiere to the five weeks following. It is important to note that pre-launch sales include Christmas.

CBC Premiere



Netflix Release



Caught

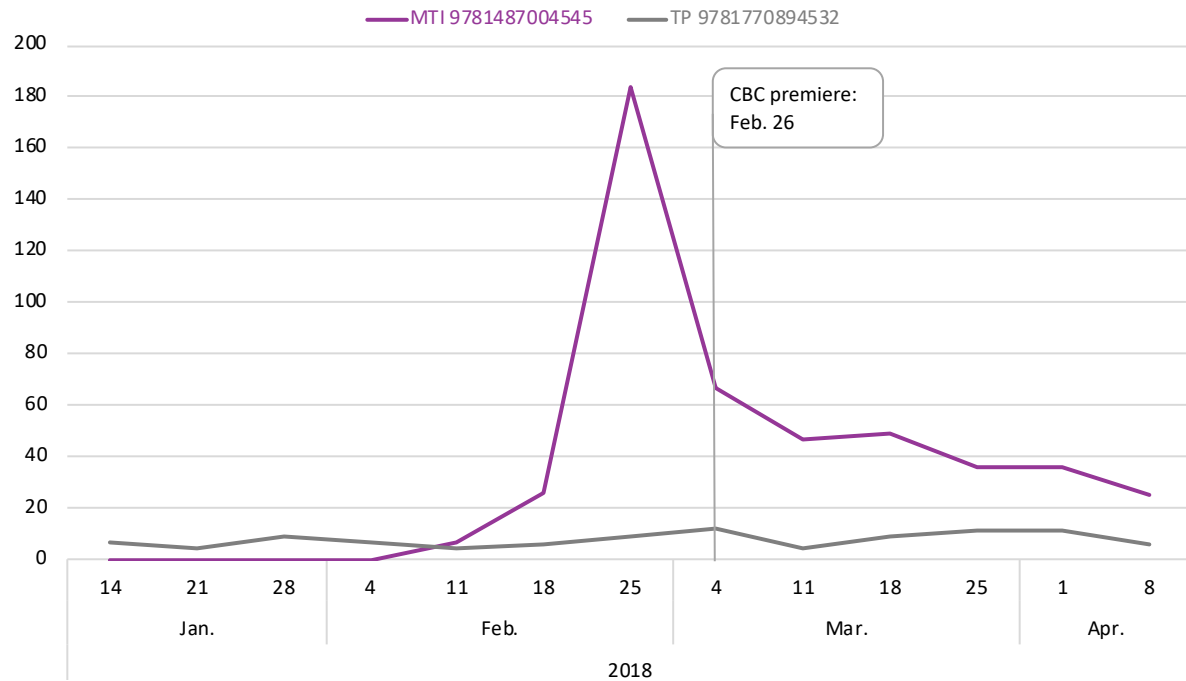


Caught was released as a CBC five-episode miniseries on Feb. 26, 2018. Set in the 1970's, the show brings to life Lisa Moore's crime drama of the same name, which was a 2013 finalist for both the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize and the Scotiabank Giller Prize.

While book sales in early 2018 were quite modest, the MTI edition released on Feb. 10, 2018 saw a notable sales spike for one week at the end of that month. The TP edition published in

January 2014 was on hand during the period that the series aired, though sales for this edition remained relatively flat.

Decrease of 7% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the premiere to the five weeks following.



Movies

The phenomenon of books being adapted into major motion pictures is far from new. The following cases vary from two animated films to one documentary. While most of the films saw major theatre releases, one was a made-for-TV movie and some had limited theatre releases.

The Breadwinner



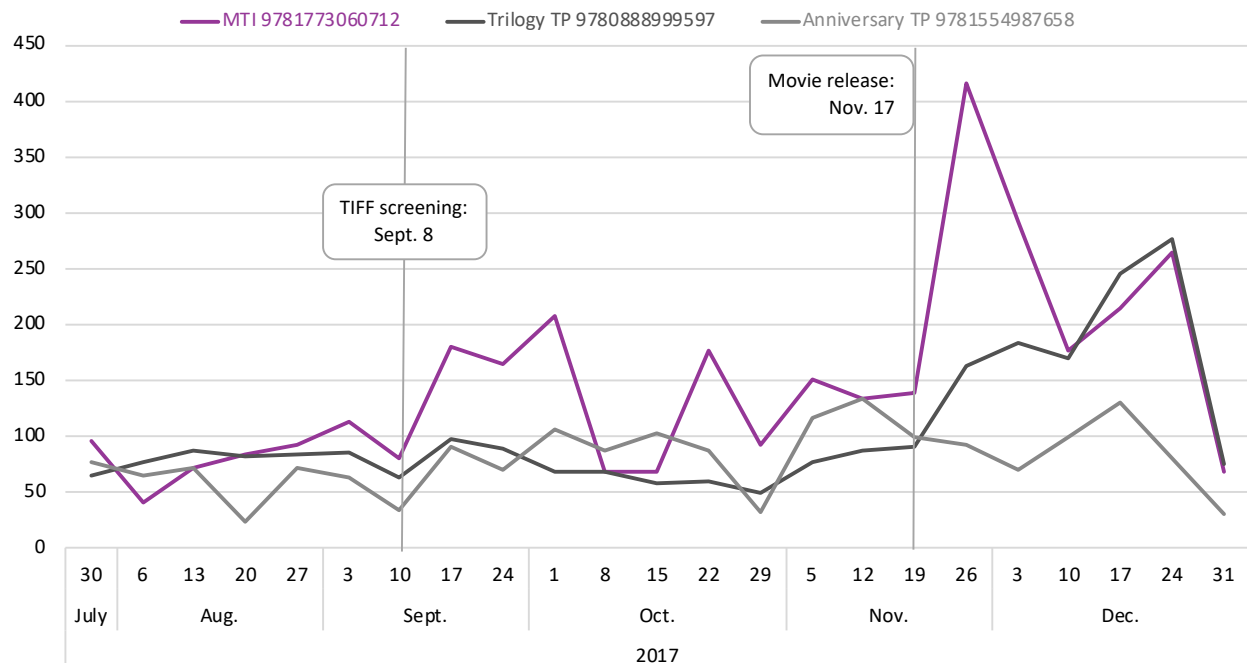
Noted for its “stunning visuals”, *The Breadwinner* film is an animated co-production between Canada, Ireland, and Luxembourg. It premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) on Sept. 8, 2017 and had a limited theatrical release starting on Nov. 17, 2017.⁴

The Breadwinner book was originally published in 2000 for children in grades 6-8. At the time of the film’s release, there were three editions of the book widely available in the market: two TP editions (one is the MTI edition and the other is a 15th-anniversary edition) and one trilogy set that contains *The Breadwinner*, *Parvana’s Journey*, and *Mud City*.

While the TIFF premiere did not result in increased book sales, sales did spike for several weeks following the limited theatrical release before returning to pre-release levels.

Increase of 102% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the film’s release to the five weeks following.

⁴ “The Breadwinner (film)”. 2019. En.wikipedia.org. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Breadwinner_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Breadwinner_(film)). Accessed Aug. 19, 2019.



Indian Horse



Indian Horse is a critically acclaimed film based on Richard Wagamese's book of the same name, which was published in 2012. The book won several awards that year and competed for Canada Reads in 2013.

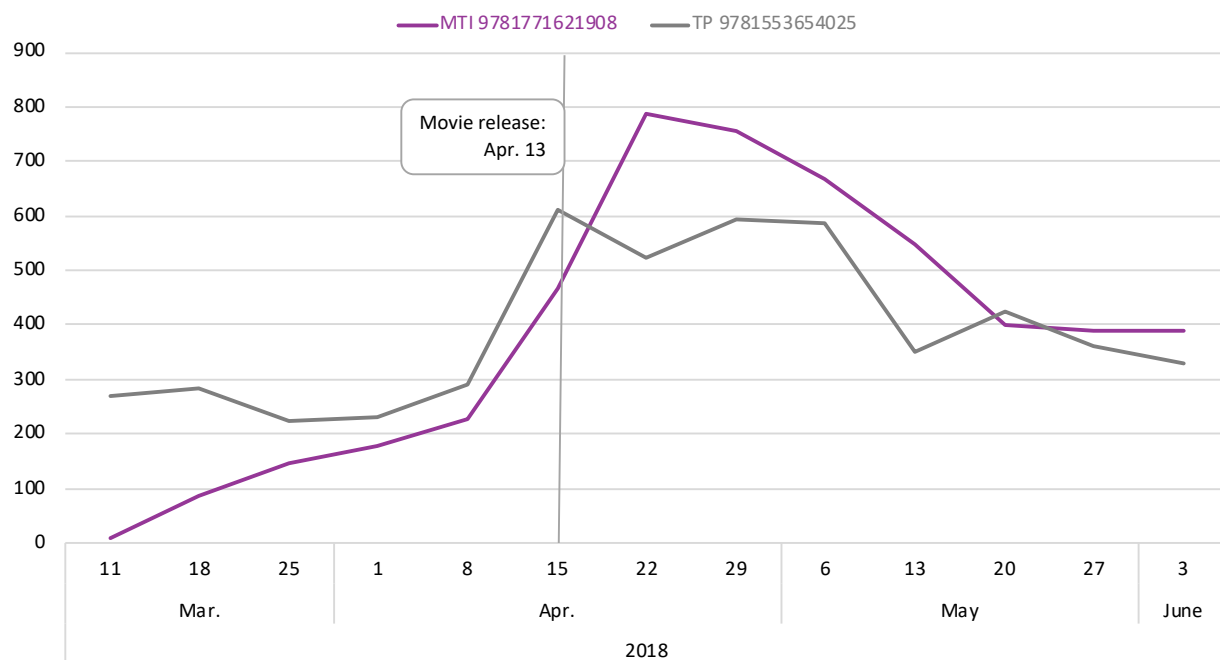
The film adaptation is a collaboration between 52 Indigenous actors and white filmmakers.⁵

⁵ Van Evra, J. "Indian Horse: 10 things about the groundbreaking new Canadian film". *CBC Radio*. 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/blog/indian-horse-10-things-about-the-groundbreaking-new-canadian-film-1.4616397>. Accessed Aug. 19, 2019.

It premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 2017 and was released in theatres in April 2018, a year after the author's untimely death.

The MTI edition (9781771621908) was released in March 2018, a month prior to the film's theatrical release. While the cover (pictured above on the right) mentions that it is "now a major motion picture," it is not an obvious MTI edition. Sales for both the TP and MTI editions of the book rose the week before the film's premiere and spiked the week following, before settling at a level that is notably higher than the pre-movie baseline.

Increase of 191% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the film's release to the five weeks following.

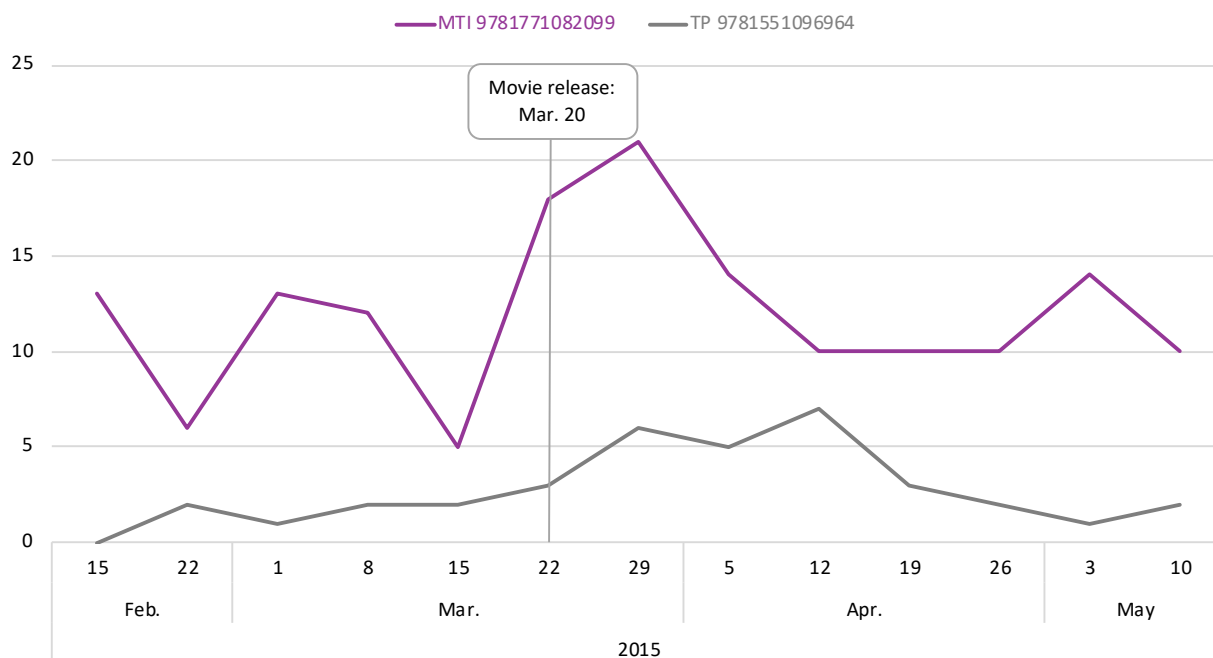


Relative Happiness



The film adaptation of *Relative Happiness*, by Nova Scotia resident Lesley Crewe, was released on March 20, 2015. While sales for this title are small, we do see a very minor increase for a couple of weeks following the film's debut.

Decrease of 85% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the film's release to the five weeks following.



The Sisters Brothers

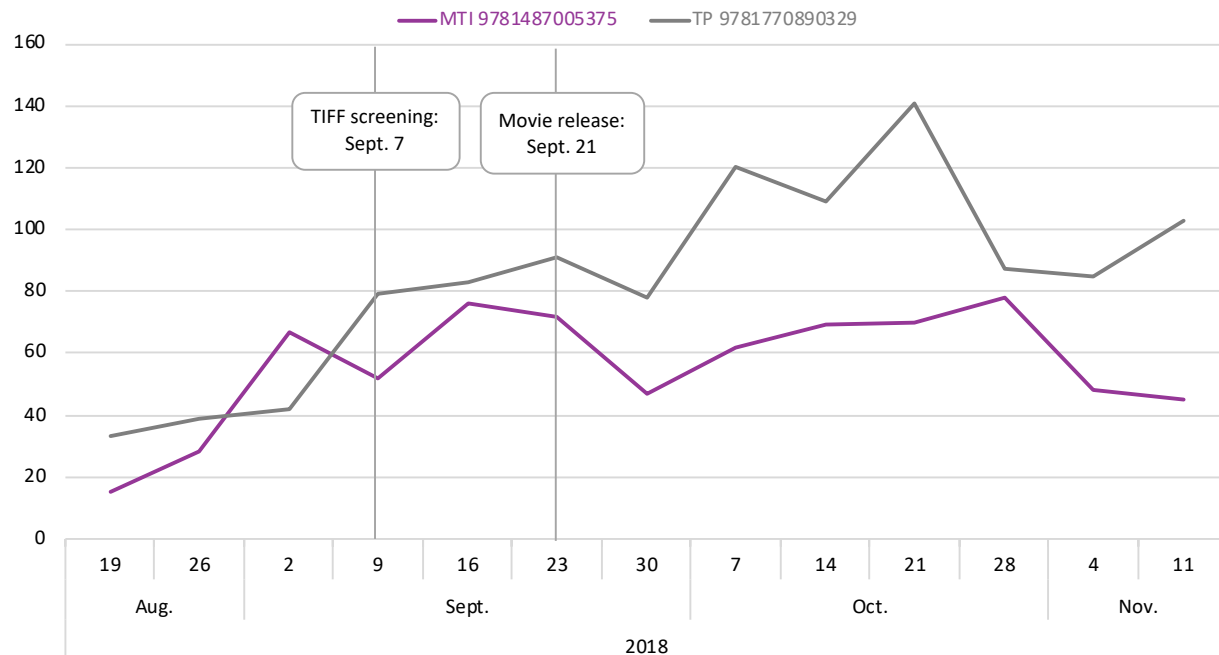


Patrick deWitt's *The Sisters Brothers* is no stranger to literary awards. It won the Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction along with the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize and the 2012 Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour. It was also shortlisted for both the Man Booker Prize and the Scotiabank Giller Prize.

In 2011, the year the book was published, the film rights were sold to John C. Reilly's production company, though the film would not be released until September 2018. By the time the film premiered, the book that sold more than 10,000 copies in a single week in December 2011 was well into being a backlist title with modest sales. After the film was released, there was a notable increase in book sales for a lengthy period.

Sales for the original TP edition outsold the MTI version, perhaps because of the iconic cover (pictured above on the right) that was designed by Dan Stiles. Stiles does package design, video game design, and has designed for bands such as Sonic Youth and Wilco.

Increase of 68% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the film's release to the five weeks following.



Water for Elephants

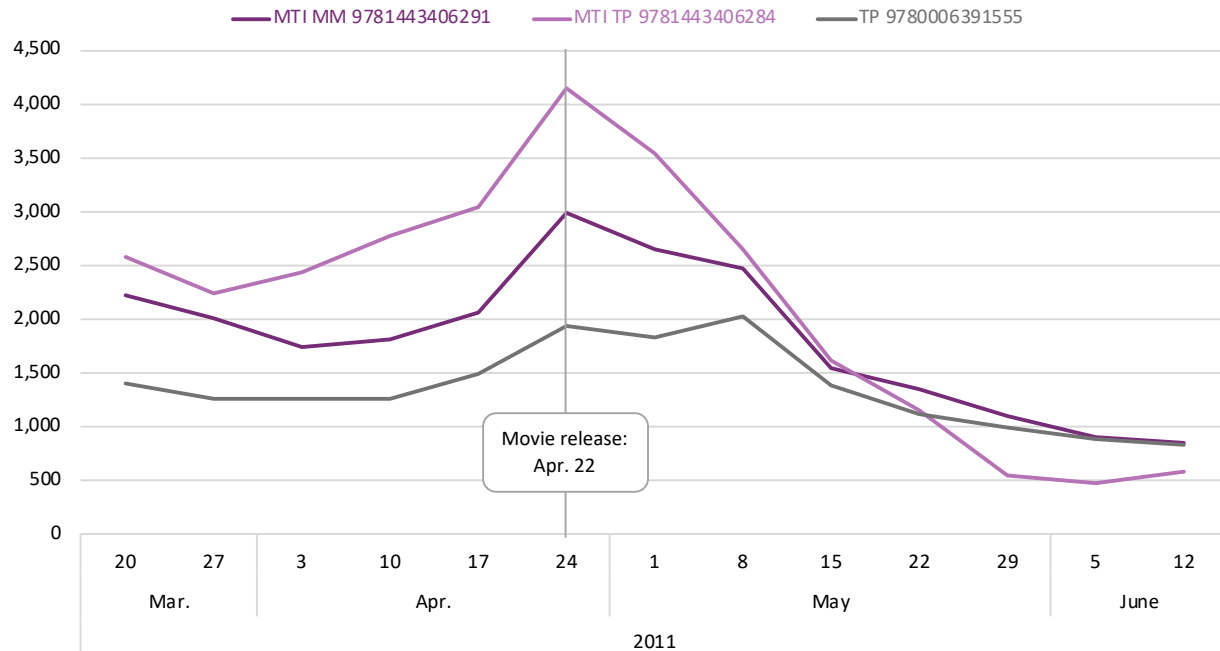


Water for Elephants is a movie based on the book of the same name written by Sara Gruen. Originally published in 2006, the title had three ISBNs actively selling in the market when the film was released in April 2011. Two of those were MTI editions — one MM and the other TP — both of which were published on March 1.

All editions were selling very well in the five weeks leading up to the movie's release. Afterwards, sales peaked for a couple of weeks before falling to a level that was lower than pre-release levels.

When the film premiered, both MTI editions immediately started selling in the range of 1,200-2,500 units per week with the MM edition outselling TP.

Decrease of 12% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the film's release to the five weeks following.



This Changes Everything

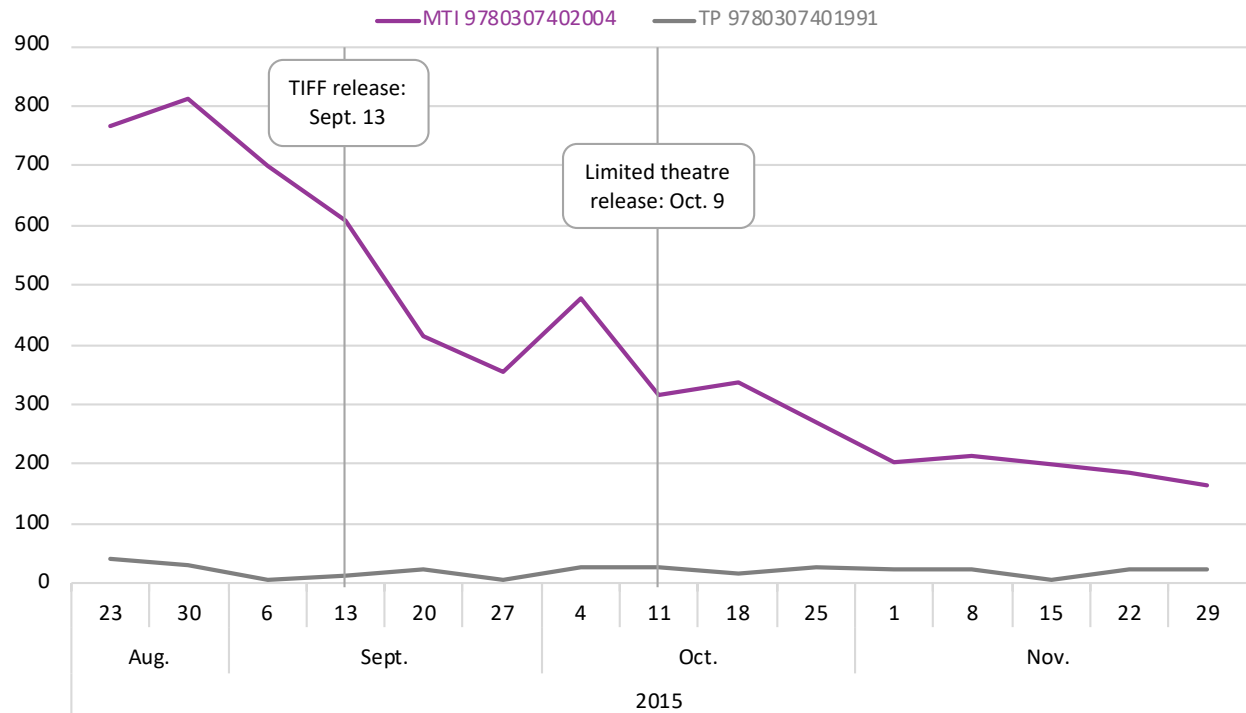


This Changes Everything is the only non-fiction book/documentary film that we are exploring in this study. When the original TP edition was published in September 2014, it saw initial sales of 1,000-2,000 copies per week.

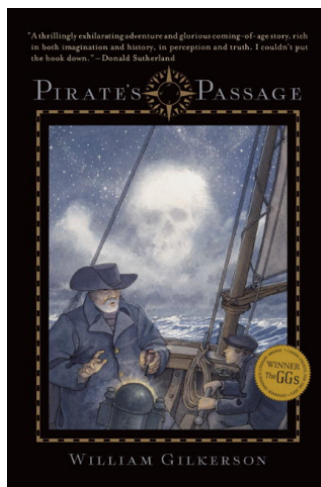
The MTI edition was published in August 2015, a month before the film's release at TIFF, and saw more modest sales of 500-700 copies per week. The film's release did not result in any notable sales increases. A limited theatrical release followed in early October, which saw only

one week of increased sales. Interestingly, the MTI edition (i.e., the edition published just prior to the movie release) does not specifically promote the documentary.

Decrease of 47% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the film's release to the five weeks following.



Pirate's Passage



Pirate's Passage is the second animated film we are exploring. The made-for-TV film debuted on CBC television in January 2015 and was not released in theatres. It was co-written and produced by Donald Sutherland and Brad Peyton. Sutherland also narrated the voice of the main character.

The book, published originally in 2006, won the Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Literature that year and went on to see very modest sales.

When the film was released, there were two editions of the book available in the market: an MTI edition published in August 2014 and a TP edition published in May 2007. What we are calling the MTI edition (pictured above on the right) does not feature any mention of the film.

Decrease of 34% comparing the sales average for five weeks prior to the film's release to the five weeks following.

