



A RESEARCH REPORT BY BOOKNET CANADA

BNC RESEARCH 06.2010

From Page to Screen:

**What happens to book
sales when a movie
version is released?**

A study of Original
Formats, Movie Tie-In
Editions, and Box-Office
Performance

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SUMMARY

By comparing sales data to box-office data, this study examines the impact of movie adaptations on book sales. Marketing tools, like trailers and movie tie-in (MTI) covers, are taken into account to determine when audience interest in a title begins and when it fades away. Titles from the author's backlist are also included to see if effects extend to their other books.

In order to provide a complete and contemporary picture of books on the big screen, we've included eight titles with recent film adaptations representing four movie genres:

- *Julie and Julia* (chick-flick)
- *Dear John* (chick-flick)
- *Push / Precious* (drama)
- *The Lovely Bones* (drama)
- *Shutter Island* (thriller)
- *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (thriller)
- *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (family)
- *How to Train Your Dragon* (family)

APPROACH

For each title we provide the following: the name of the contributor, the title, publisher, binding type, ISBN, publication date, and list price. The following abbreviations refer to their corresponding binding type:

- Hardcover Trade = HT
- Trade Paperback = TP
- Mass Market = MM
- Movie Tie-in Paperback: MTI TP
- Movie Tie-in Mass Market: MTI MM

Since it can take years for the movie version of a book to be released, many editions and formats of the book may be available during the film's run. For clarity and relevance, this study only included formats that registered noticeable sales and were in stock in a significant number of stores during the film's time frame. For example, BNC SalesData tracked HT, TP, and MM formats of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* while the film was in theatres, but we excluded the TP since it sold less than five copies a week and only two stores were stocking it.

For titles from the author's backlist, we chose a maximum of five relevant (that is, directly linked to the film or those with the most recent pub dates) titles.

As can be expected, the timeline of each film adaptation is different, from how far in advance the trailer releases to when the MTI is published. To establish a baseline, timelines start at least three weeks before the trailer's release and end at least twelve weeks (when data was available) after the movie opens. A trailer's impact on book sales was gauged by comparing the title's average weekly sales for the three weeks preceding the trailer to the average sales for the three weeks following the trailer. To determine the effect of a film release on the author's backlist, timelines begin five weeks before the film's release and end after twelve weeks, or on the same week that the regular titles' timeline ends.

Canadian opening weekend box-office numbers and weekly Top 20 rankings are supplied by Rentrak Corporation and hosted on Tribute.ca. To give a broader perspective on box-office performance, each film's total gross for all weeks in the Tribute Top 20 is also included. Trailer release dates were sourced from the ComingSoon.net movie database. While these dates refer to the American trailer release, there is a high level of crossover in traditional media and the Internet which makes them relevant in Canada as well.

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INTRODUCTION

BNC Research began studying the intersection between books and the movies in 2007 with “Hollywood Changes Everything: A Report on Book Sales of Movie Tie-in Editions vs. Previous Editions.” The study focused on how MTI editions of a title perform relative to the original cover after a film version is released. Since 2007, many more high-profile page-to-screen adaptations have captured the reading public’s interest.

Movie studios seem to be taking fewer and fewer risks and are instead banking on the adaptations of bestsellers with built-in audiences. This relationship greatly benefits publishers and retailers because they have a chance to introduce a title to a whole new cohort of readers who may have missed it the first time around. Movies enjoy a level of publicity that book publishers can only dream of, so when a film adaptation of a book is in the spotlight publishers and retailers need to make informed decisions about when to best take advantage of this increase in public awareness.

To help publishers and retailers prepare for the market demands associated with a book-to-film adaptation, this study focuses less on the role of MTI formats and instead looks more closely at the effects of movie promotions and box-office performance across a variety of genres. We start with the trailer, which first airs in cinemas and then quickly makes its way online and on TV, and gauge its ability to increase interest in a title. Book sales are then considered in light of the movie’s actual box-office performance. While every title is unique, some important patterns emerge.

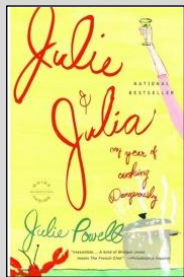
CAVEATS

Every year is different. Unrelated publicity, original publication date and binding type are just some of the factors that can affect sales or stock patterns. Also, every film has a different marketing budget. It is important to keep in mind that some movies are more heavily promoted than others, which may impact related book sales.

Based on publisher feedback, we estimate that BNC SalesData represents 75% of trade book industry sales. There are certain retail segments for which we do not have complete coverage:

- **Independent bookstores:** BNC SalesData includes many major independent bookstores, but does not include many smaller ones, any of whom could be actively promoting a certain title. It also does not capture many specialty independent bookstores, such as for kids’ books. However, we are able to detect even the slightest variation in sales in our independent panel, so we are confident that sales changes in the independent market are well represented.
- **K-12 and higher-education sales:** Our panel does not include direct institutional sales to schools or college/university textbook sales; no course adoption sales are represented here.
- **Additions to the retail panel:** Sales volume over time is limited to the number of retailers reporting in any tracked week. Each year since 2006 new booksellers have been contributing their sales to BNC SalesData. Therefore, some changes in statistics and sales figures may be the result of these new additions.

Julie and Julia by Julie Powell



Trade paperback: Little Brown & Company
• 9780316013260 • \$16.99 • Pub date: 2006-06-07

Movie tie-in paperback: Little Brown & Company
• 9780316044271 • \$16.99 • Pub date: 2009-07-01

Movie tie-in mass market: Little Brown & Company
• 9780316042512 • \$9.50 • Pub date: 2009-07-01

Box Office Data

Genre: Chick-flick

Opening weekend: \$1.33 M (5th)

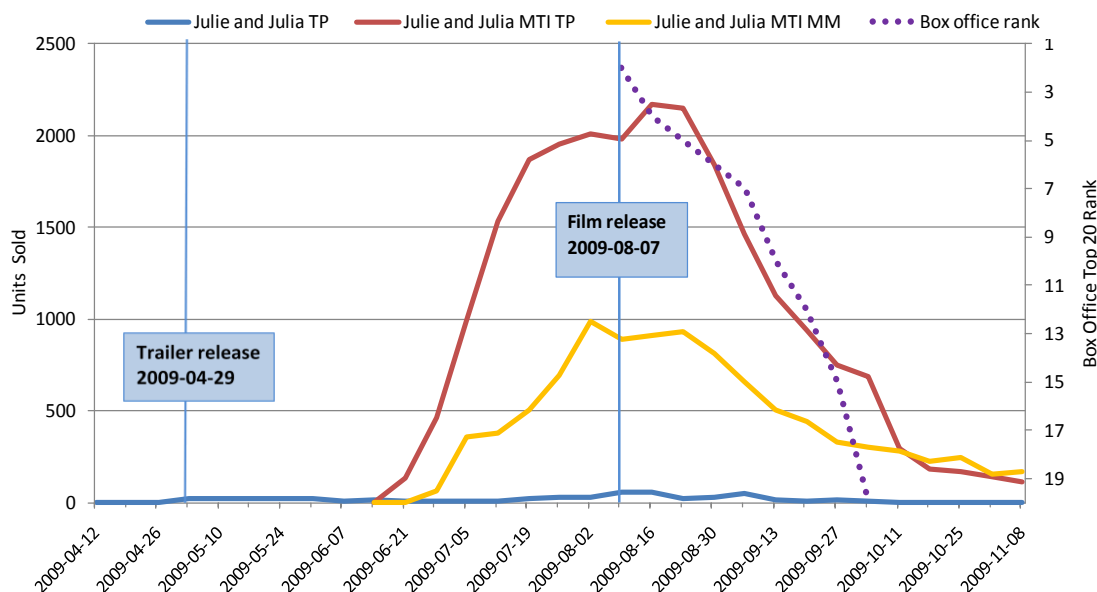
Top Rank: #2 (2009-08-07)

Gross during 9 weeks in Top 20:
\$8.21 M (3rd)

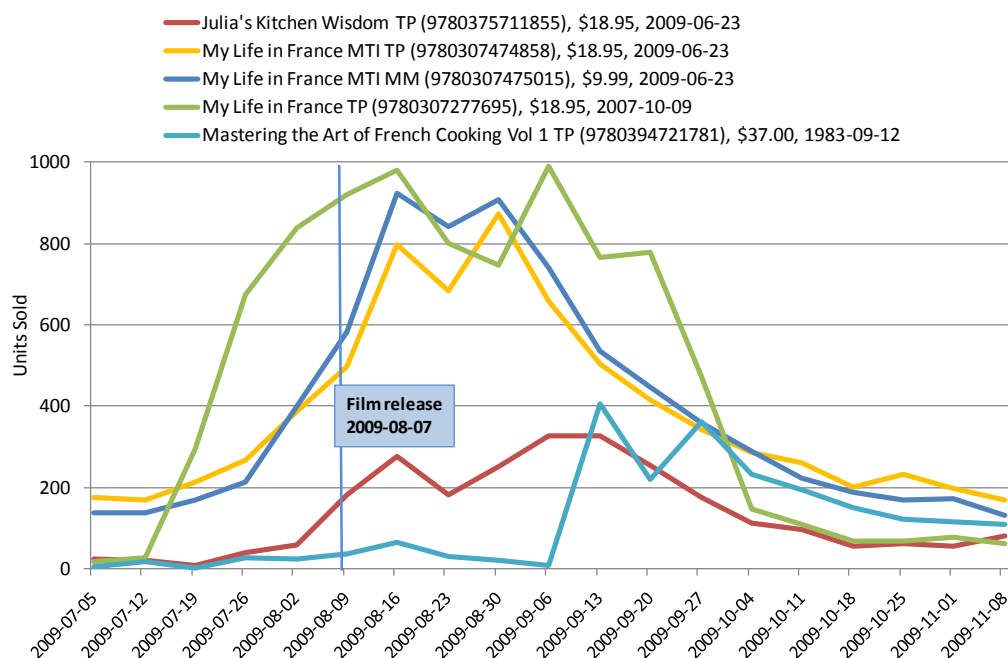
After the *Julie and Julia* trailer premiered, average weekly TP sales jumped from four to twenty-two copies. While the MTI MM sold the most copies in the week before the film's release, sales of both TP formats peaked one week after the film opened.

Julie and Julia did fairly well in theatres; while it only had the 5th-highest opening weekend of the eight films studied, it came in 3rd for total gross. The title's sales start to level off a week after the film leaves the Top 20, nine weeks after the film's release.

Julie and Julia Sales During Film Run

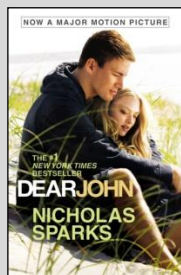
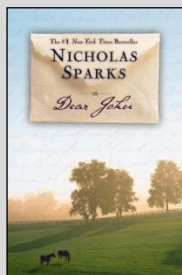


Related Backlist Sales During Film Run



The *Julie and Julia* movie is a special case as far as book sales go, because it is based on and heavily features two titles other than its namesake: *My Life in France* and *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, both by Julia Child. Child's memoir follows a sales pattern similar to Julie Powell's, picking up a month before the film's release and selling well until nearly two months after. In contrast, it takes five weeks for the cookbook to start quadrupling its sales. It appears that people were only persuaded to pick up the classic cookbook after seeing it in action during the movie.

Dear John by Nicholas Sparks



Trade paperback: Grand Central Publishing
• 9780446698320 • \$17.50 • Pub date: 2007-08-07

Mass market: Grand Central Publishing
• 9780446618304 • \$9.50 • Pub date: 2008-07-01

Movie tie-in paperback: Grand Central Publishing
• 9780446567329 • \$16.99 • Pub date: 2009-12-07

Movie tie-in mass market: Grand Central Publishing
• 9780446567336 • \$9.99 • Pub date: 2009-12-01

Box Office Data

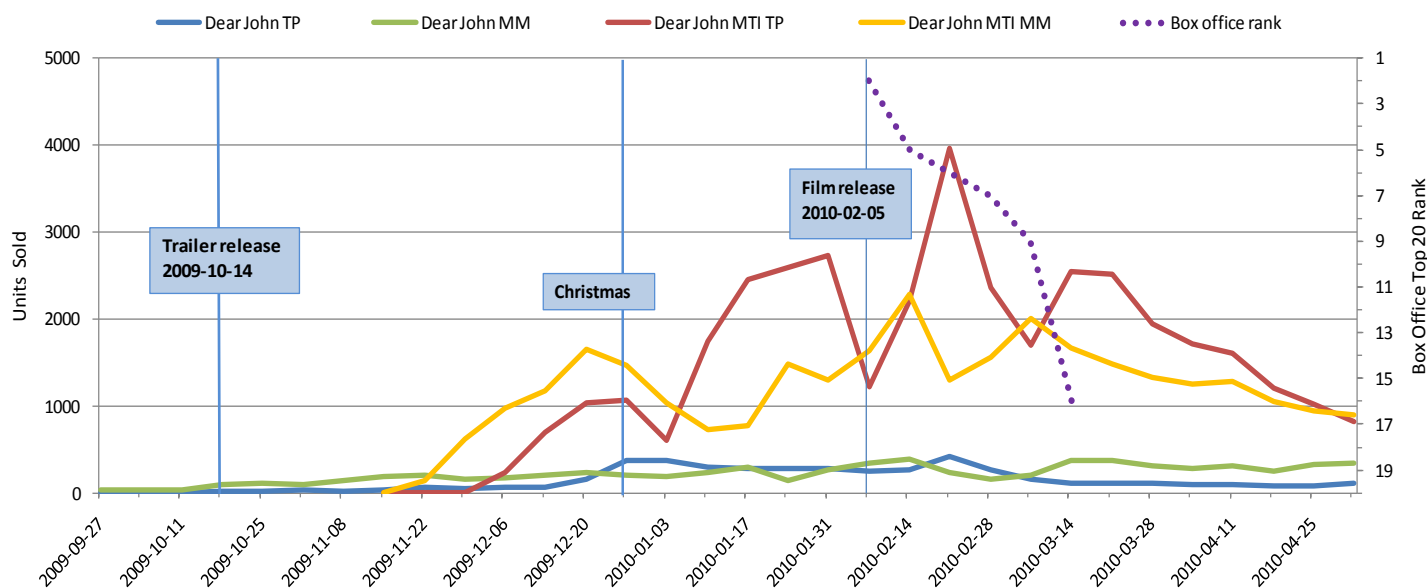
Genre: Chick-flick

Opening weekend: \$2.24 M (3rd)

Top Rank: #2 (2009-02-05)

Gross during 6 weeks in Top 20:
\$7.22 M (4th)

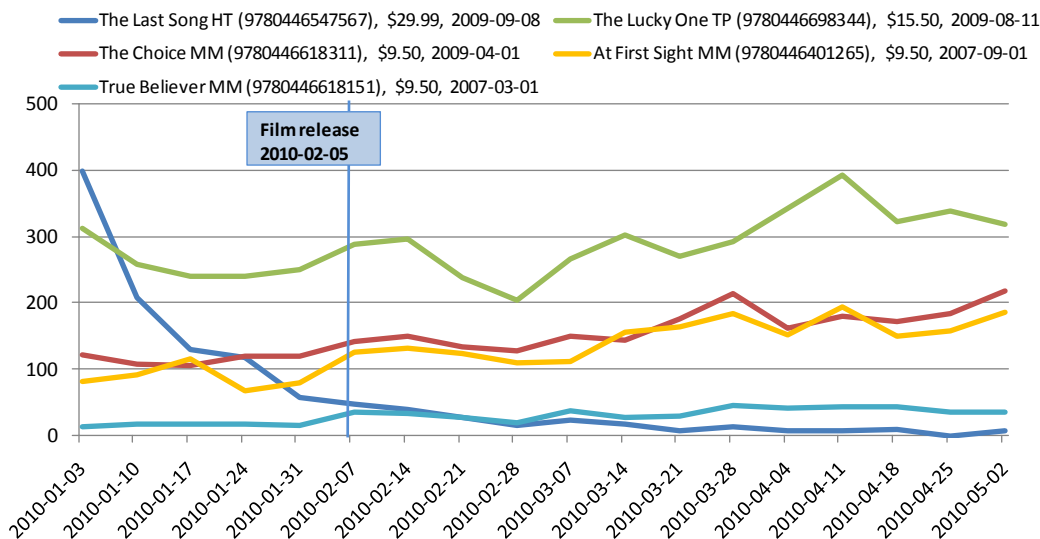
Dear John Sales During Film Run



Immediately following the *Dear John* trailer release, average weekly TP sales grew from eight to nineteen copies, while MM sales jumped from thirty-four to 101 copies. Sales of all formats steadily increased through December with the Christmas rush, but then continually bob up and down.

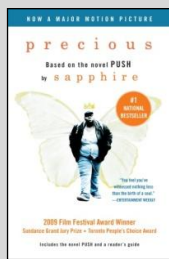
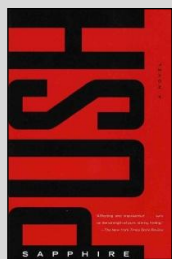
The distinct “peaks and valleys” sales pattern may be explained by the film’s strong box-office performance, where it stayed steadily in the upper-mid levels of the Top 20, unlike most films which see a rapid decline after high debuts. Sales of all formats peaked between one to two weeks after the film’s release.

Dear John Author Backlist Sales During Film Run



The *Dear John* film appears to have had a minor effect on the sales of Nicholas Sparks’ other titles, almost all of which rise slightly in the eight weeks following the film’s release. *The Last Song* is the only title that doesn’t follow this pattern, likely because its own MTI editions were published in February in anticipation of the film adaptation’s premiere on March 31, 2010.

Push a.k.a Precious by Sapphire



Trade paperback: Knopf Doubleday Publishing
• 9780679766759 • \$16.00 • Pub date: 1997-04-29

Movie tie-in paperback: Knopf Doubleday Publishing
• 9780307474841 • \$16.00 • Pub date: 2009-10-20

Box Office Data

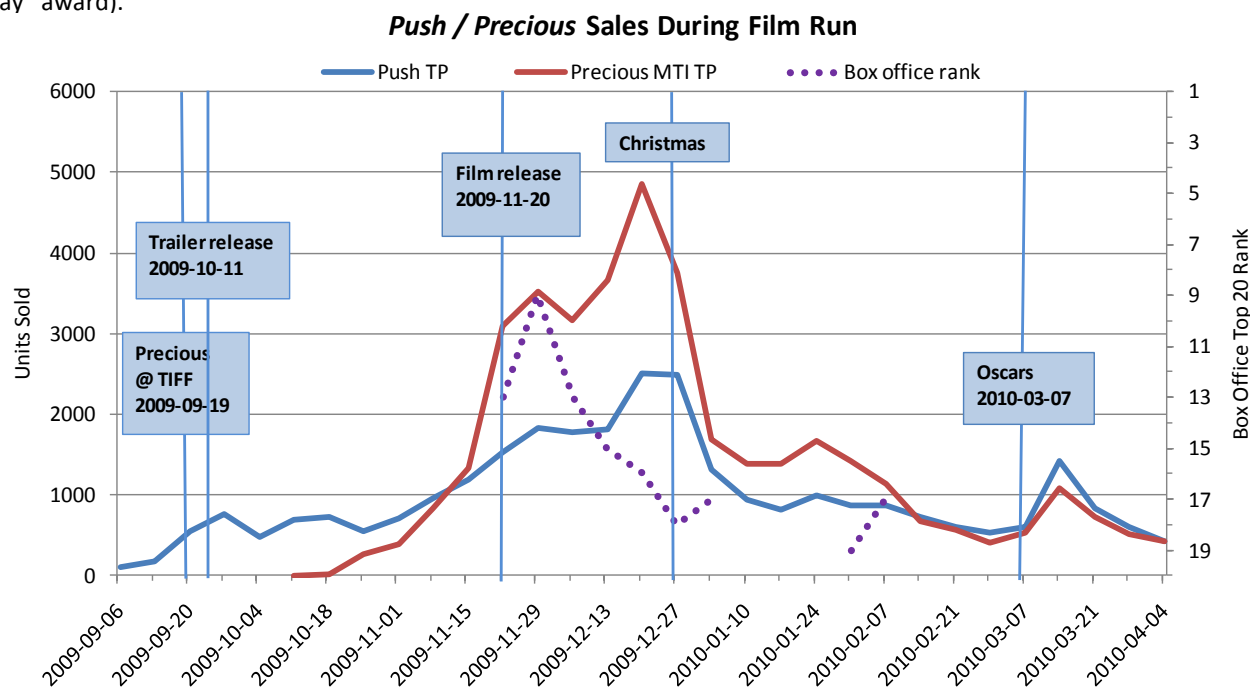
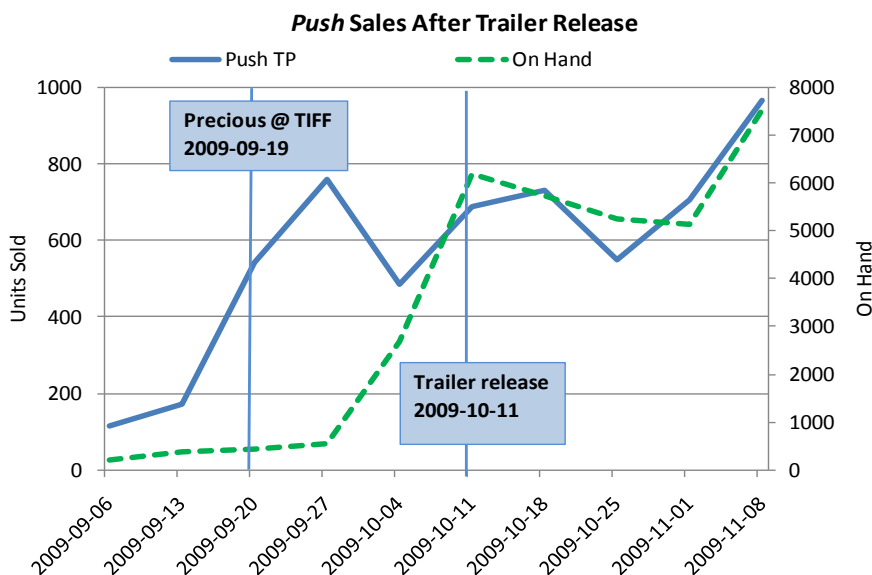
Genre: Drama

Opening weekend: \$88,500 (8th)

Top Rank: #9 (2009-11-27)

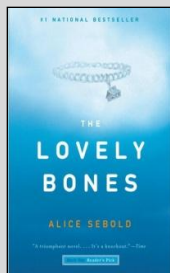
Gross during 9 weeks in Top 20:
\$1.76 M (7th)

It's difficult to judge the effect of the *Precious* trailer on *Push*'s sales, since the film had already generated buzz from film festival success at Sundance, Cannes, and TIFF (where it won the People's Choice Award). Also, unlike most film adaptations, the full title of the film directly states that it is based on a book (*Precious: Based on the Novel "Push" by Sapphire*). This certainly led to book purchases by people who were intrigued by the movie, which explains the spike immediately following the Oscars (where *Precious* won even further attention for the book by winning the "Best Adapted Screenplay" award).



The MTI TP saw the highest increase in weekly sales when the film was released, more than doubling from 1,330 to 3,103 copies. Interestingly, the sales patterns of both formats (if we exclude the Christmas spike) mirrors the film's own box office performance, which peaked the week after it opened, declined steadily before being bumped out of the Top 20, and then spiked once more in anticipation of the Oscars. Although *Precious* had the lowest Canadian opening weekend out of the movies examined in this study, that week (2010-11-22) the MTI TP ranked at #18 in BookNet Canada SalesData.

The Lovely Bones by Alice Sebold



Trade paperback: Little Brown and Company
• 9780316168816 • \$17.99 • Pub date: 2004-04-20

Movie tie-in paperback: Little Brown and Company
• 9780316044936 • \$17.99 • Pub date: 2009-09-30

Movie tie-in mass market: Grand Central Publishing
• 9780316044400 • \$9.99 • Pub date: 2009-10-01

Box Office Data

Genre: Drama

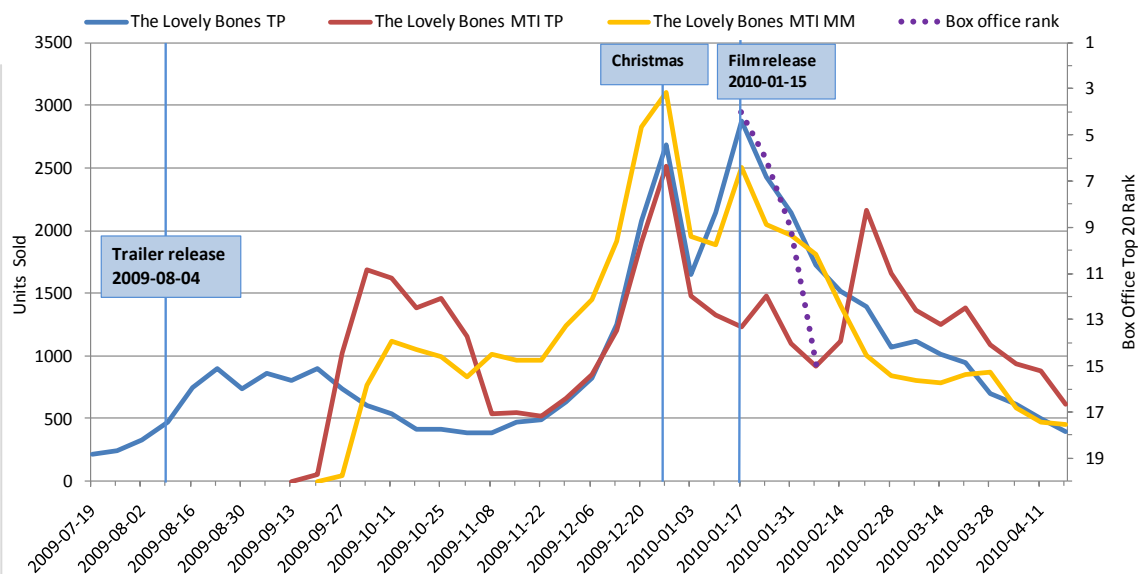
Opening weekend: \$1.14 M (6th)

Top Rank: #4 (2010-01-15)

Gross during 4 weeks in Top 20:
\$3.32 M (6th)

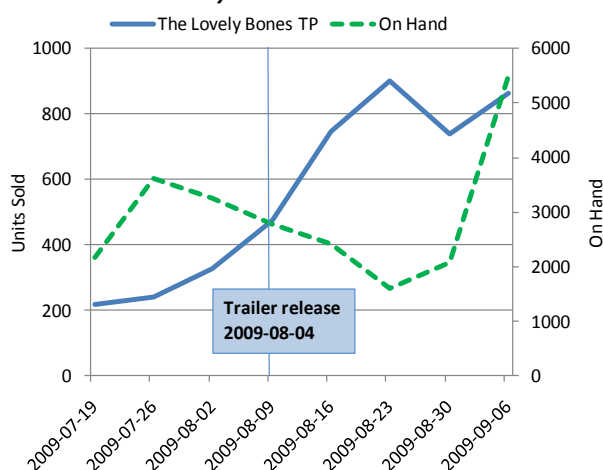
The Lovely Bones Sales During Film Run

Despite not performing very well at the box office (6th highest for both opening weekend and total gross), *The Lovely Bones* movie introduced a new audience to a book that was first published in 2002. The week of the film's release, the TP sold more than it did during the Christmas rush a month earlier.

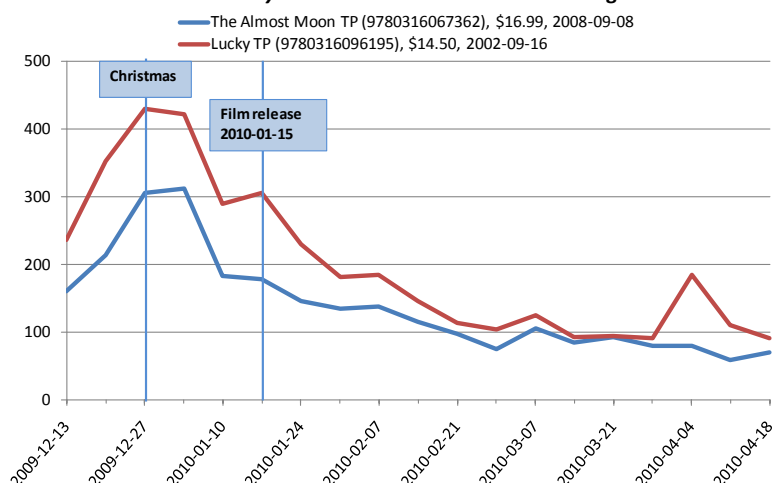


The fact that the film was only in the Top 20 for four weeks — shorter than any other film on our list — is interesting considering that all formats of the book sold over 1,000 copies a week for ten weeks straight, from December 13, 2009 to February 21, 2010. This suggests that box-office success isn't always a necessary factor for driving interest in a book with a current movie adaptation.

The Lovely Bones Sales After Trailer Release

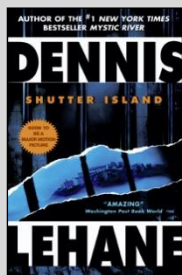


The Lovely Bones Author Backlist Sales During Film Run



After the trailer's release, average weekly TP sales grew from 263 copies to 707 copies, an increase of 170%. It is hard to tell what effect the film had on Sebold's other titles since it was released right after Christmas, which already skews book sales high. But the week of the movie release, *Lucky* had a small spike in sales and *The Almost Moon* briefly leveled out, which may be a sign that the movie increased interest in Sebold's other works.

Shutter Island by Dennis Lehane



Trade paperback: HarperCollins Publishers
• 9780061898815 • \$18.99 • Pub date: 2009-08-17

Mass market: HarperCollins Publishers
• 9780380731862 • \$8.99 • Pub date: 2004-04-06

Movie tie-in paperback: HarperCollins Publishers
• 9780061807404 • \$18.99 • Pub date: 2009-08-17

Movie tie-in mass market: HarperCollins Publishers
• 9780061703256 • \$10.99 • Pub date: 2009-08-11

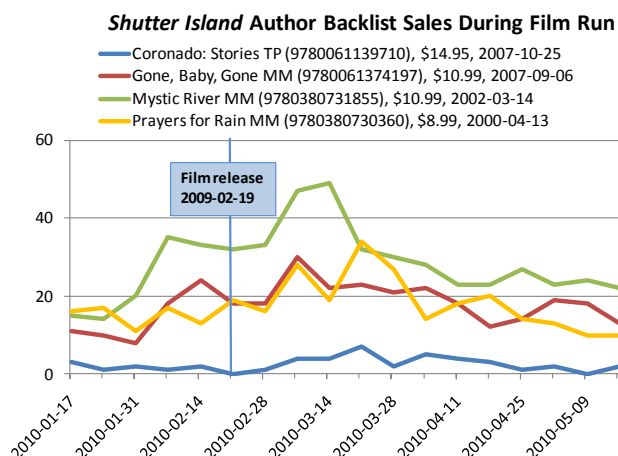
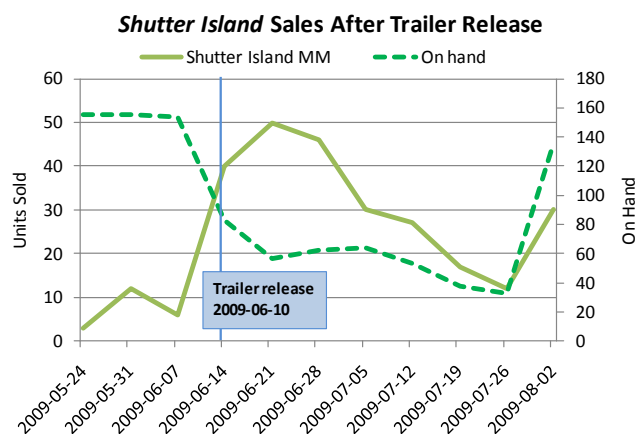
Box Office Data

Genre: Thriller

Opening weekend: \$2.99 M (2nd)

Top Rank: #1 (2010-02-19)

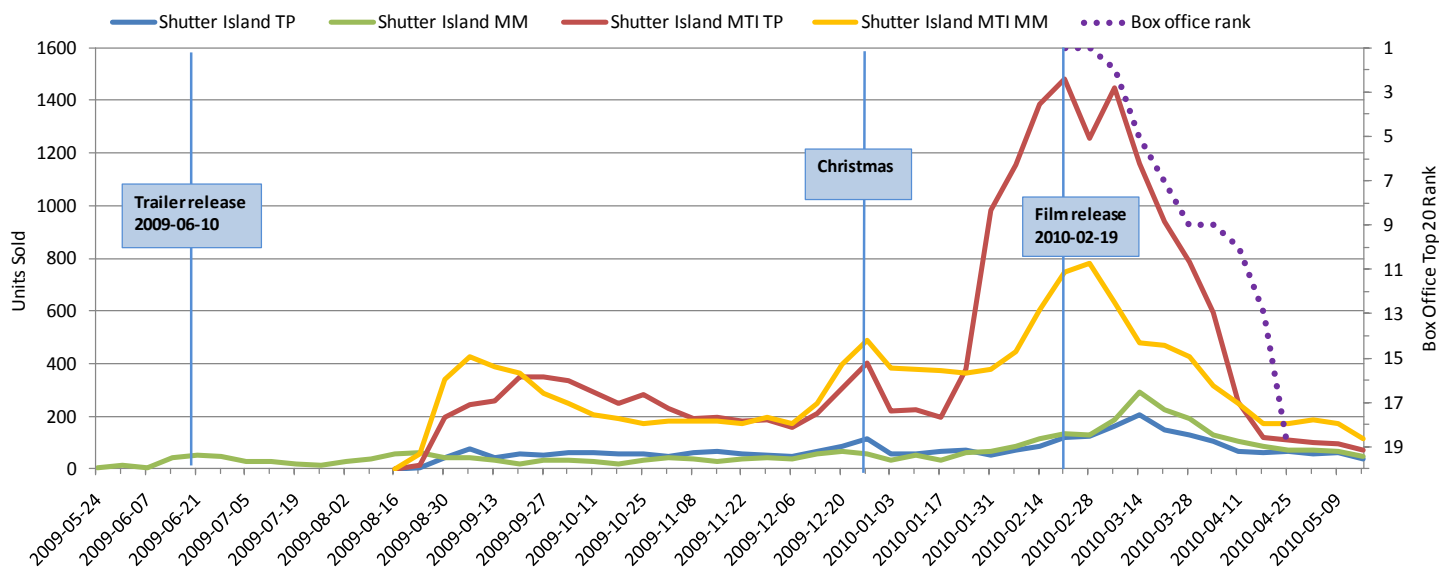
Gross during 10 weeks in Top 20: \$13.71 M (2nd)



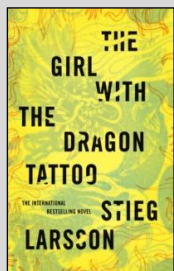
The *Shutter Island* MM sold an average of seven copies a week in the three weeks before the trailer's release; the following weeks, this number grew to forty-five. OH numbers fell as a result, as did sales, which only picked up again when stock was replenished.

While both MTI formats steadily sold around 200 to 400 copies a week during the five months after their pub dates, demand picked up significantly in the month preceding the film's release. *Shutter Island* did extremely well in theatres: it had the second-highest opening weekend and total gross of all of the films studied. Sales of all *Shutter Island* formats leveled out to around fifty to 200 copies a week at the exact same time, eight weeks after the film's release. A few of Lehane's other titles experienced minor and fluctuating sales increases, except for *Mystic River*, which saw sales more than double from around twenty copies a week before the film's release to nearly fifty copies a week. This may be because *Mystic River* was also adapted for the big screen in 2003.

Shutter Island Sales During Film Run



The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo by Stieg Larsson



Hardcover: Penguin Group

• 9780670069019 • \$32.00 • Pub date: 2008-09-23

Mass market: Penguin Group

• 9780143170099 • \$13.50 • Pub date: 2009-06-23

Box Office Data

Genre: Thriller

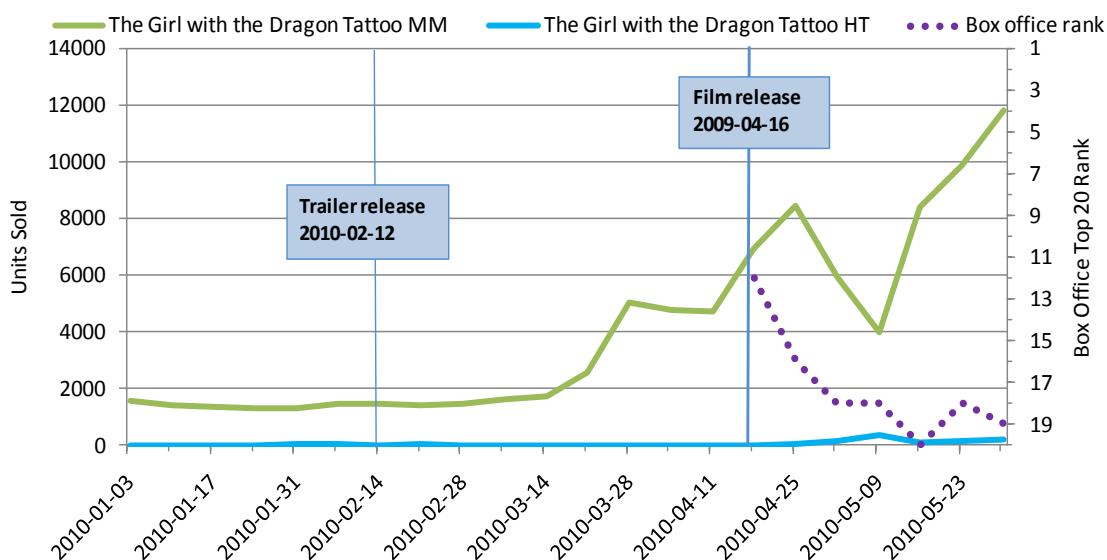
Opening weekend: \$164,800 (7th)

Top Rank: #12 (2010-04-16)

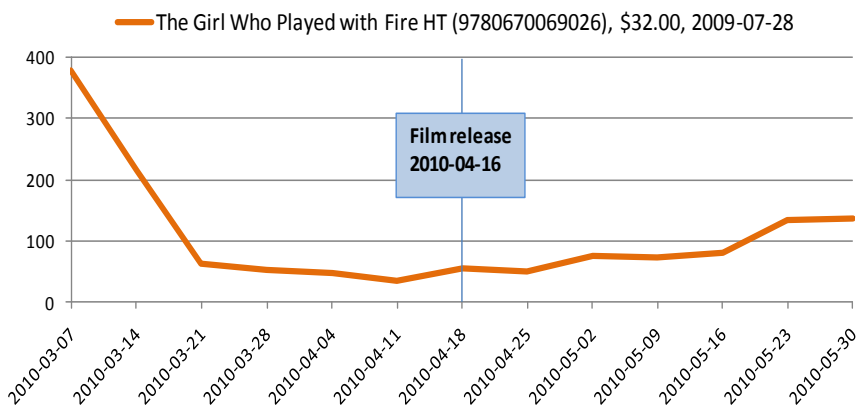
Gross during 7 weeks in Top 20: \$760,000 (8th)

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo is not a typical example of book-to-film adaptation. The MM title was already a massive bestseller in the months preceding the film's release, selling at least 1,000 copies per week. The movie version is also Swedish, with a much smaller marketing push than Hollywood movies; it did not do very well in theatres, coming in 7th for opening weekend and 8th in total gross. The trailer release did not seem to have an effect on the title's sales.

The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo Sales During Film Run



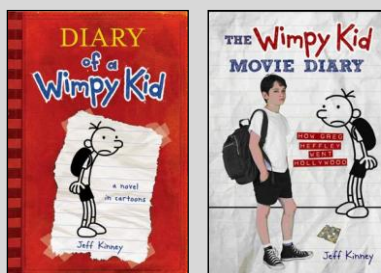
Girl With Dragon Tattoo Author Backlist Sales During Film Run



When we compare sales of *Dragon Tattoo* to its box-office performance, an unusual pattern emerges. Most title sales rise in anticipation of the movie release, sometimes peaking soon after, but usually falling around the same time that the film leaves the Top 20. Here, *Dragon Tattoo's* MM sales continue to grow even after the film drops out, pointing to an unusual case where the book is bigger than the movie; this is sure to change when the Hollywood remake of *Dragon Tattoo* comes out in 2012.

Sales of Larsson's other title appear unaffected by the film release.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney



Hardcover: Abrams

• 9780810993136 • \$16.95 • Pub date: 2007-04-01

Movie tie-in hardcover: Abrams

• 9780810996168 • \$18.95 • Pub date: 2010-03-01

Box Office Data

Genre: Family

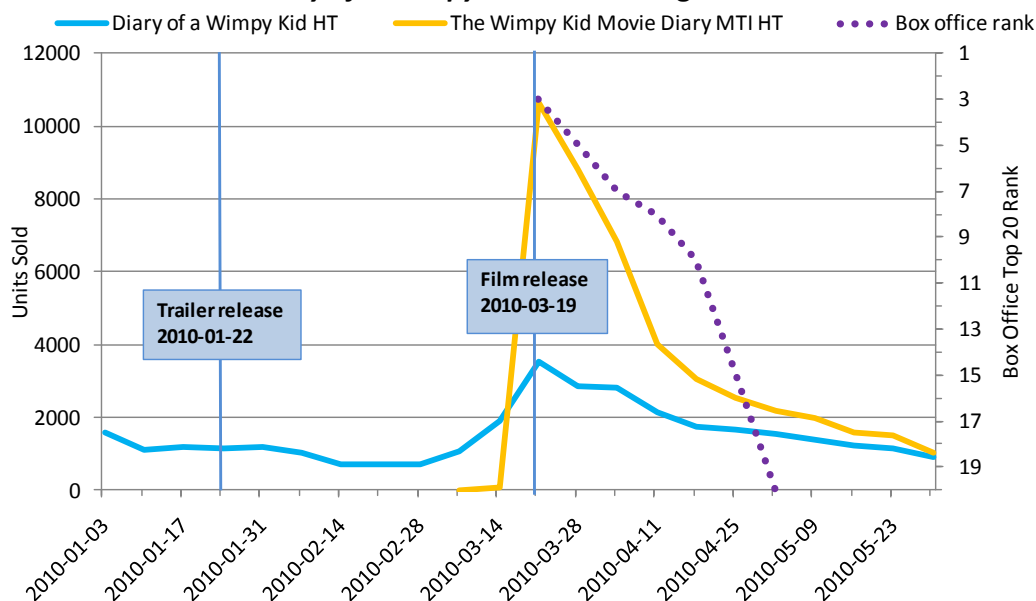
Opening weekend: \$1.65 M (4th)

Top Rank: #3 (2010-03-19)

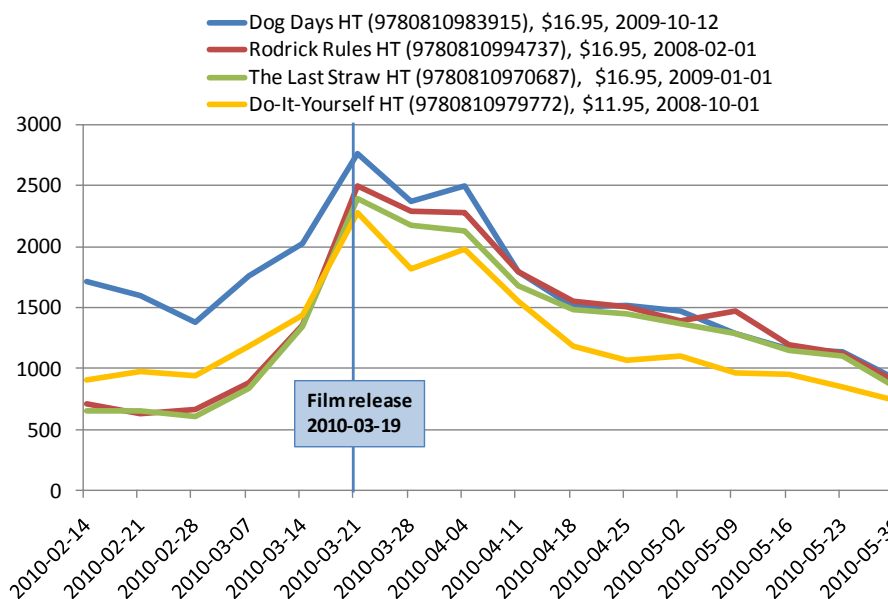
Gross during 7 weeks in Top 20: \$4.55 M (5th)

As with *Dragon Tattoo*, the trailer for *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* did not lead to an increase in title sales because the book was already a bestseller, routinely selling more than 1,000 copies per week in the months before the trailer's release. Sales actually decreased slightly after the trailer came out, only picking up again in the month preceding the film's premiere. Another important contrast is that the MTI version is not just the original title in a new format, but rather a new release that references both the original series and the movie itself. As with most of the examples in this study, sales of both titles begin to level off as soon as the film drops out of the Top 20.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid Sales During Film Run

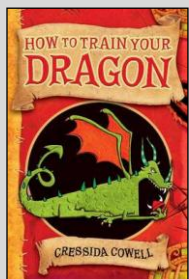


Diary of a Wimpy Kid Author Backlist Sales During Film Run



Kinney's other books saw large sales increases during the lead-up to the film's release and through its box-office run. After the movie opened, each title climbed to similar weekly units sold, which suggests that those who enjoyed the first book, and the movie, may have bought all of the other titles at once.

How to Train Your Dragon by Cressida Cowell



Trade paperback: Hodder & Stoughton

• 9780340999073 • \$10.99 • Pub date: 2010-02-18

Mass market: Hodder & Stoughton

• 9780340860687 • \$9.99 • Pub date: 2003-03-13

Movie tie-in trade paperback: Hodder & Stoughton

• 9780340997161 • \$10.99 • Pub date: 2010-02-17

Box Office Data

Genre: Family

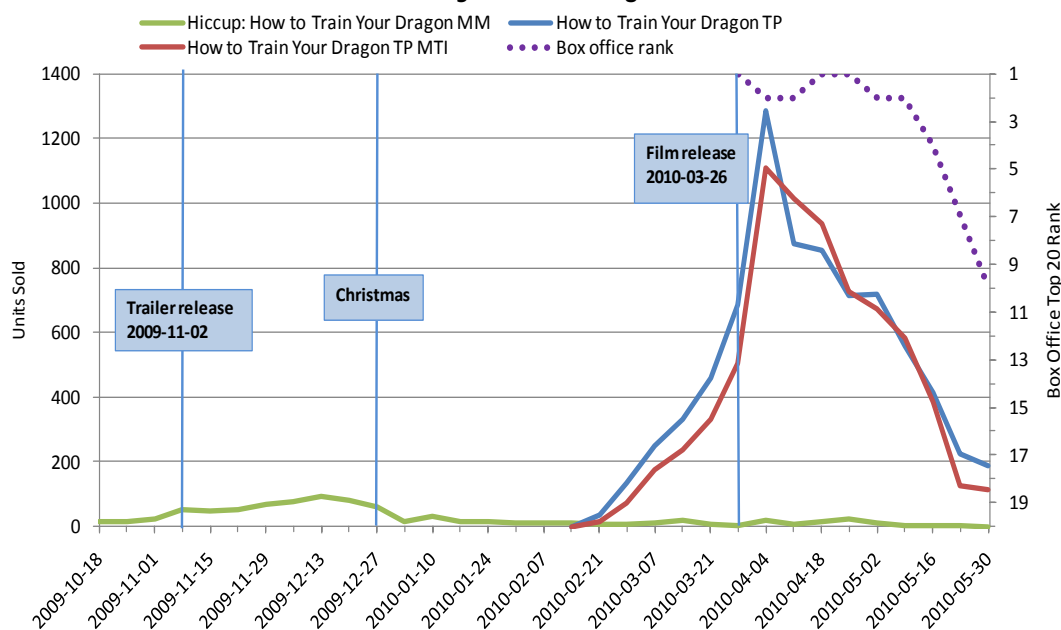
Opening weekend: \$3.43 M (1st)

Top Rank: #1 (2010-03-26)

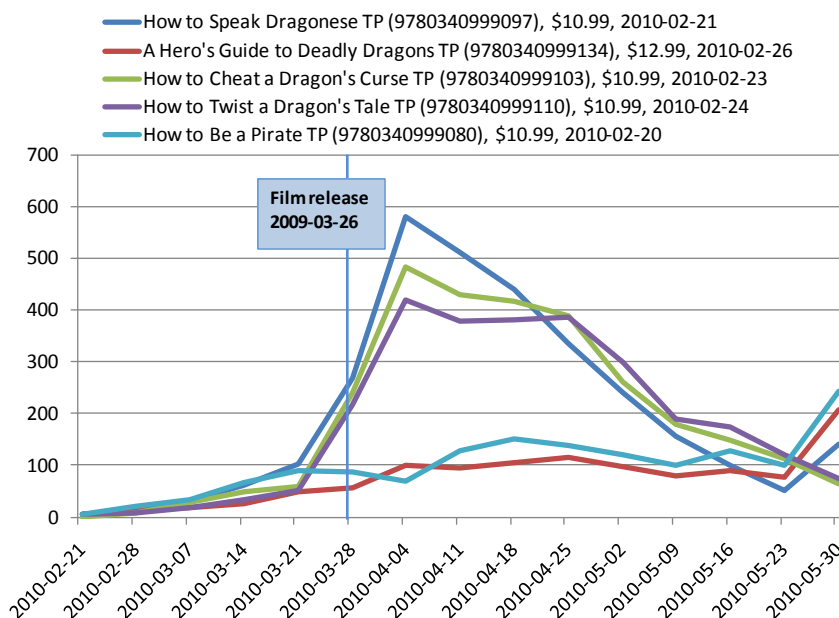
Gross during 10 weeks in Top 20: \$20.39 M (1st)

It is hard to determine the effect the trailer release for *How to Train Your Dragon* had on sales because it was released in early November, just before the Christmas sales increase. After new editions of the TP and MTI TP were published five weeks prior to the movie's premiere on March 26th, 2010, sales rose moderately then increased rapidly to peak in the week following the movie's release. *How to Train Your Dragon* is the most successful movie in this study, with both the highest opening weekend and total gross.

How to Train Your Dragon Sales During Film Run



How to Train Your Dragon Author Backlist Sales During Film Run



In contrast to the other titles studied so far, the TP and MTI of *How to Train Your Dragon* have almost identical sales patterns. Although the MTI sold nearly as many copies as the TP in the week following the film's release, there were actually many more copies of the MTI on hand (8,256, where the regular TP only had 835). Since these formats are also the same price, this data may indicate a customer preference for the regular cover over the MTI cover, despite the phenomenal success of the film itself. Sales eventually level out eight weeks after the film's release.

Sales of Cowell's other titles also spike one week after the film's release and have similar numbers of units sold, just like the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. Yet Cowell's *Pirate* and *A Hero's Guide* titles are exempt from this pattern, showing a customer preference for backlist titles affiliated with the movie.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the impact of a movie release on book sales cannot be understated. Sales even rise in January in anticipation of a film's release (see *Dear John* and *The Lovely Bones*), which is normally when we see a post-Christmas slump.

Movie trailers do seem to increase book sales. When the trailers for *Julie and Julia*, *Dear John*, *The Lovely Bones*, and *Shutter Island* were released, sales immediately increased by at least 200 percent (nearly 550 percent in *Shutter Island*'s case). What these titles have in common is that they were not bestsellers at the time of the trailer's release, and promotion of the upcoming film can be credited with renewing interest in them. *Push*, *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and *How to Train Your Dragon* were already selling well or were about to pick up for Christmas, so it is difficult to say whether their trailers had any impact on their sales.

While sales of all formats start to pick up in the month preceding the film's release, the peak in sales usually occurs one to two weeks after the movie opens, followed by a steady decrease in demand for the title. *Julie and Julia*, *Shutter Island*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, and *How to Train Your Dragon* all saw sales decrease at a rate strikingly similar to the film's own box-office ranking.

Another important pattern is that interest in all title formats tends to level out about eight to ten weeks after the film debuts (except for *Precious*, which benefited from extended attention from the Oscars, and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, which appears to be more successful in print than on screen). Often this leveling out of sales happens very close to when the movie drops out of the Top 20, an indication that after about two months anyone who wants buy the book after seeing the movie will have already done so.

Depending on the title, a movie release can also increase the sales of related works. The majority of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, and *Julie and Julia*'s author backlists saw average weekly sales at least triple from the four weeks preceding the film's release to the four weeks following it. This indicates that if a movie is based on a title from a series, the rest of the series will likely sell along with the original title.

Page-to-screen adaptations are fervently supported by book-buying and movie-making communities, to the benefit of publishers and retailers alike. Invaluable publicity is brought to titles, authors, and series that may have otherwise remained low on the public's radar, with the resulting increase in book sales beginning months before and even outlasting the film's box-office run.