

Publishers, get on board the book tube!

The amount of hours people spend watching videos on YouTube is growing by 50% annually. Book tubes, channels which discuss and review books, are blossoming. The biggest channels now have hundreds of thousands of subscribers, generating millions of views. Publishers, particularly in the United States, are getting on board, keen to engage a demographic which is difficult to reach through traditional marketing channels. Publishers and booktubers are now collaborating on a range of promotional projects.

We spoke to **Christine Riccio**, host of polandbananasBOOKS, a channel generating over 800,000 views per month, about how publishers are starting to appreciate YouTube as an effective route to market.

IPA: How did polandbananasBOOKS get started?

Christine Riccio: I studied film and TV at Boston University and have always loved making videos. Equally, I've always loved reading, but it is a solitary pursuit, and I always regretted the feeling of being alone. It's so much fun to read something when you can talk about it. So in 2010 I started making videos for YouTube, focusing on the Young Adult genre. Each time I read a book, I posted a video. I noticed around 2011 and 2012 that other people were starting to do the same thing.



IPA: How does the process of creating a video work?

CR: There are different kinds of videos. Firstly, there are videos that review particular titles. For those, I take notes on whatever book I'm reading, sharing my opinion. The channel has always been more about discussion than critical review. I review the books I want to read.

Secondly, I make what I call book sketch videos, around a particular topic. Examples are "The Mourning Period", where I talk about how I feel when I come to the end of a great book, or "E-books vs Real Books".

I do interviews with authors, discussing their books. I also do book hauls, where I talk about the different books I've acquired during the last month, or I show people what's on my book shelf. Those are aimed at people looking for inspiration and recommendations.



As far as the filming process goes, it takes about one hour to set up and between three and eight hours to edit a video. Before I was producing 2 or 3 a week, but I've scaled that down. In addition to the book videos I'm also making comedy videos, and through my website I'm now also selling book-related merchandise. Youtubing is a time consuming hobby for everyone involved in it; luckily I've managed to turn that hobby into a job that I love and enjoy.

IPA: You have over 160,000 subscribers. What do you know about who they are and what they're looking for?



CR: I know a lot about my subscribers thanks to the analytics which YouTube provides. 75% of them are aged 13-24, 84% are female, and most come from the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, the Philippines, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden.

They're *all* book lovers. They're looking for fun discussions about books that they're either reading or might be interested in reading.

IPA: What kind of viewing figures are the videos generating?

CR: The most popular videos have tended to be thematic ones like The Mourning Period or my favourite books of the year or a bookshelf tour. They get upwards of 200,000 views. The book haul videos get between 70,000 and 100,000 views, and general title reviews get around 20,000 views. But it all depends on the book/author: the video where I discuss *Divergent* by Veronica Roth has over 225,000 views.

IPA: How have your collaborations with publishers developed?

CR: I feel that in the last year, publishers have finally opened their minds to book tubers. Previously, I had to do all the chasing. This year I've worked with Hyperion, interviewing *Never Fade* author Alexandra Bracken before the launch of her most recent title. I've worked with author Gayle Forman on a comedy video discussing *Just One Night*. I worked with Disney Hyperion to help promote the final book in the *Heroes of Olympus* Series, with Entangled Publishing for their Lux Series and with Simon & Schuster for *Rumble* and *Black Ice*.

It's great that more and more publishers are getting on board, but many still don't completely understand it.

IPA: What advice do you have for publishers who are keen to learn more?

CR: Book tube channels exist to help readers find titles and authors, and they are a great way for publishers to generate discoverability and visibility. They also produce real sales, as viewers have the ability to click through to buy titles. I advise publishers to familiarise themselves with booktubers, thinking who would work for particular authors and getting in touch to discuss ways to collaborate.



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Discover more at www.youtube.com/user/polandbananasBOOKS