

DATA-DRIVEN PUBLISHING:
USING SELL-THROUGH DATA AS A TOOL
FOR EDITORIAL STRATEGY AND
DEVELOPING LONG-TERM BESTSELLERS

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A B S T R A C T

This report examines how sell-through reporting has revolutionized the editorial, marketing, publicity, and sales strategies of Sourcebooks and Raincoast Books since the introduction of BookScan and BookNet. It analyzes how Sourcebooks developed its line of college-bound books through data analysis, using Harlan Cohen's *The Naked Roommate* as a case study to learn the strategies that the publisher implemented to grow the title into a *New York Times* bestseller after six years over four editions. The report also explores how Raincoast Books, the distributor of Sourcebooks titles in Canada, analyzes sell-through data to identify concerns in the book's performance, and its plans to fix the issues. The main goal of this report is to offer insight into the ways that various departments of a publishing house can practically analyze sales data and utilize the information creatively and strategically to grow its editorial vision, guide its marketing decisions, and improve book sales.

Keywords:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGES	CONTENTS
II	Approval
III	Abstract
IV	Acknowledgements
V	Table of Contents
VII	List of Figures
VIII	List of Tables
1	Introduction
2	About this Report
2	Overview of the Topic
4	I – The Impact of Sell-Through Reporting on the Business of Book Publishing
6	Impact on Editorial Acquisitions
9	Impact on Marketing, Publicity, and Sales Functions
14	II – Leveraging Sell-Through Data at Sourcebooks and Raincoast Books
14	Overview of Sourcebooks
16	Overview of Raincoast Books
18	Leveraging Sell-Through Data
25	III – Case Study: <i>The Naked Roommate</i> by Harlan Cohen
25	Beginnings of the Sourcebooks College Vertical
27	About Harlan Cohen
28	Selling <i>The Naked Roommate</i> in the United States
34	Selling <i>The Naked Roommate</i> in Canada

42	IV – Review and Analysis
42	A Successful Vertical Strategy
45	Considerations for the College Vertical in the Canadian Market
46	Considerations for Other Book Categories and Publishing Scenarios
49	Conclusion
	Appendices
51	A: US Marketing, Publicity and Sales Promotion Campaign
53	B: Fourth Edition Press Release
55	C: Sourcebooks Catalogue Features
56	D: Fourth Edition <i>New York Times</i> Bestseller Press Release
57	E: US Media Coverage and Public Relations Events Confirmed
58	F: Raincoast Books Spring 2011 Graduation Promotion
60	G: Canadian Press Release
62	H: Canadian Media Targeted for Publicity Mailings
65	I: Canadian Media Coverage and Public Relations Events Confirmed
66	J: Sample Topics and Questions for Author Interview
67	References

LIST OF FIGURES

PAGES	FIGURES	NAME OF FIGURE
26	Figure 1	Sales Cycle of College Guides
30	Figure 2	Sales Cycle of College Survival and Success Books

LIST OF TABLES

PAGES	TABLES	INFORMATION
18	Table 3.1	Three streams of data that Raincoast Books provides to its publishers
23	Table 3.2	Items listed on Raincoast Books' Major Sales Grid
31	Table 4.1	Publication dates for in the United States
35	Table 4.2	Fall enrolments in degree-granting institutions in the United States
35	Table 4.3	University enrolment in Canada
36	Table 4.4	College enrolment in Canada

INTRODUCTION

The book publishing industry has gone through major changes over the past few decades with the contraction of traditional media outlets and the expansion of new technologies. The persistent issues of poor supply chain practices and massive returns continue to this day. Now added to that are the questions and concerns over adapting to new technologies such as ebooks, web publishing and social media. Technology is always evolving and publishers are expected to be open to adapt to change to keep their businesses thriving.

In the past decade since the turn of the century, one major development in the book publishing industry in North America is the establishment of sell-through data reporting services. Sell-through data, also known as point-of-sale (POS) data, is the information collected at the point when the final business-to-consumer (B2C) sales transaction occurs during checkouts at retail outlets, where the ownership, and typically the possession, of the product is transferred from the seller to the consumer, as opposed to the business-to-business (B2B) sales transaction from the publisher into the bookstore (Wikipedia, “Point of Sale”; BusinessDictionary.com). Sell-through data reveals where, when, and how many copies of a product, in this case a book, is bought by a customer at a retailer.

Nielsen BookScan and BookNet Canada are the organizations that respectively provide American and Canadian book sales data to their industry subscribers. Prior to this, publishers often acted in the dark and could only find out about how their books were doing via returns, which sometimes came back months later. They would have had to maintain close relationships with retailers to keep tabs on how their own titles were doing on a regular, weekly basis. It was a time-consuming process. Now, sell-through reporting services allow publishers to track the performance of not only their own titles, but also those from their competitors, in a timely manner. This development has had significant implications within the industry, and has influenced all aspects of book publishing, from editorial to marketing and sales departments.

As with all advancements in technology, there is need for continued research, gathering of information and understanding of best practices to shape the future of the book and the publishing business in the midst of these changes. This report seeks to examine the practical implications that sell-through reporting has had on some publishers and how sales data can be leveraged successfully in the business of book publishing.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The main goal of this report is to offer insight into ways that publishers can practically analyze sell-through data so that the various personnel in editorial, marketing, publicity, and sales departments can utilize the information creatively and strategically to grow their editorial vision, guide their marketing decisions, and improve sales of their books. To accomplish this goal, this report examines how sell-through reporting has revolutionized the business strategies of Sourcebooks and Raincoast Books since the introduction of BookScan and BookNet in the United States and Canada. It will look at how these two companies leverage sell-through data in the process of developing their list of books, getting them into the market and into the hands of consumers.

The strategies explored in this report are particularly applicable to publishers of non-fiction and genre fiction titles where a specialty reputation can be established within niche communities. The approach can help push sales of mid-list titles, or frontlist titles that are not blockbusters from the outset, and possibly turn them into bestsellers over time.

The information in this report was collected in the period of April to December 2011, which includes the three months of my summer internship with the marketing and publicity department at Raincoast Books. It was obtained from interviews conducted with the staff at Sourcebooks and Raincoast Books, personal staff emails, marketing materials provided by the staff, analysis of BNC SalesData, books and journals from the Simon Fraser University Library and database, as well as blogs, websites, and magazine and newspaper articles found online.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

Raincoast Books is a division of Raincoast Book Distribution Inc., an award-winning, Canadian-owned book wholesale and distribution company based in Richmond, British Columbia. Founded in 1979, Raincoast Books provides comprehensive sales, marketing, and distribution services to a select number of international publishers. It distributes books on a wide range of topics including food, health, kids, pop culture, travel, as well as gift products such as notebooks and stationery.

In 2010, Raincoast Books signed a distributor contract with an independent US publisher, Sourcebooks, and began shipping its titles in January 2011. Raincoast had noticed the big gaps that existed between the American and Canadian sales of some of Sourcebooks' titles. These gaps were apparent for Sourcebooks' line of college-bound books, such as *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College* by Harlan Cohen. The fourth edition of the book was released

in April 2011 and was under-performing in Canada compared to sales in the US, a situation similar to every one of its previous three editions.

The senior marketing and sales management staff at Raincoast Books wanted to put more resources into the fourth edition of the book because of the noticeable difference between American and Canadian sales. Why was it that for four editions now, the book continues to sell so well in the US—with the fourth edition becoming a *New York Times* bestseller—but consistently does so poorly in Canada? Now that the issue is identified, how can it be fixed?

During my internship with Raincoast Books from April to July 2011, I was assigned to help with marketing and publicity initiatives to boost the Canadian sales of *The Naked Roommate*. I decided to analyze the case for this report. Using the book as a case study, the report analyzes how Sourcebooks developed its line of college-bound books through analysis of sell-through data, and the strategies it implemented to successfully grow the title into a *New York Times* bestseller over four editions after six years. The report then explores how Raincoast Books used sell-through data analysis to identify concerns in the sales performance of the book in Canada, and its plans to fix the issues—specifically, its plans to try to close the gap between the book's excellent American sales and its under-performing Canadian sales.

The report focuses on the college guide market and the decision-making process to provide observations on how the considerations and strategies can be adjusted for future publishing seasons and perhaps be extrapolated onto other categories of books.

I.

THE IMPACT OF SELL-THROUGH REPORTING ON THE BUSINESS OF BOOK PUBLISHING

Book publishing has never been an easy business. If one takes some time to read the books about the industry over the recent decades, it will not take long before one discovers the list of challenges that publishers consistently face up to this day. In the book, *In Cold Type*, author Leonard Shatzkin (1982, 2-3) provides a sobering description of the stark difference between books and other consumer products that was apparent back in the eighties. Compared to other consumer products, the book publishing industry has a larger number of suppliers (publishers) in relation to distributors (retailers), and the suppliers experience a lack of direct influence over the distribution system. Not many other consumer industries have products with so short a shelf life as books, where each individual product has its own personality and requires different marketing methods (3). As such, sales of books tend to vary unpredictably and at random. Added to that is the “limited replenishment” (3) nature of the business which makes the task of improving sales a unique challenge for publishers because a reader who enjoyed a book does not usually “rush out to buy another copy so he can have more of the same pleasure” (3). Not to mention the limited shelf space of so few retailers. The book trade has always been a rather unprofitable business which operates close to the break-even point (9).

Up until the end of the twentieth century, publishers were mostly acting in the dark due to the lack of access to real-time sales statistics to forecast market trends accurately. It was difficult to discern sales patterns to see how well or poorly a book was doing until much later—sometimes months later—when the publishers receive returns. However, the book publishing industry was in for a turn of events when Nielsen BookScan was introduced in 2001. Previously, tracking of book sales was not done using concrete raw data, but rather by estimation whereby a survey and sampling of sales from a few selected retailers was used to estimate the patterns of the larger population (Dreher 2002). This was evident in the discrepancies between various bestseller lists such as the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. The rankings would be published without the actual sales figures, which meant that there would be no way to tell the difference between first and second place, or first and fiftieth place. After BookScan was formed, it would eventually be treated as the authoritative source on book point-of-sale data.

Owned by the same company¹ that introduced SoundScan to the music industry in the early nineties, BookScan tracks point-of-sale information from a variety of participating retailers from in-store scanners, and reports to subscribers on a weekly basis the number of copies sold and where they were sold (Nielsen, n.d.; Hutton 2002, 45). Today, it is the world's largest continuous sales tracking service that provides sales data reports and analysis to publishers and booksellers in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, Italy, the United States, Spain, New Zealand, and India (Nielsen, n.d.). Of these countries, BookScan tracks data from more than 31,500 bookstores, presenting the information by market size and market share of different book categories, individual publishers, specific imprints, authors, and price points (Nielsen, n.d.). At the time of writing, BookScan tracks 75 percent of all point-of-sale information in the US, which includes large retailers like Barnes & Noble, Costco, Amazon.com, and Target, as well as many independent bookstores. It does not track sales from Wal-Mart or Sam's Club (Nielsen, n.d.). Publishers who would like access to these point-of-sale reports must pay thousands of dollars, up to \$75,000 per year, for the hefty BookScan subscription fee (Hutton 2002, 47).

Five years after the formation of BookScan, Canada joined many of the other English-language book markets in tracking sales data using BookNet Canada's BNC SalesData service. The process of setting up this service began in September 2001 with the formation of the Canadian book industry Supply Chain Initiative (SCI) for the purpose of identifying inefficiencies in the Canadian book publishing supply chain, recommend solutions, and implement changes to improve the state of the industry (MacLean 2009). SCI focused on three priorities that were identified as critical to improving supply chain: bibliographic data, electronic data interchange (EDI), and point-of-sale data collection (MacLean 2009). SCI funding eventually led to the creation of the not-for-profit agency, called BookNet Canada, in December 2002.² BookNet's website states that the agency "focuses on bibliographic data, electronic data interchange (EDI), sales data analysis, international standards and the sourcing of other technologies and services to enhance supply chain efficiencies" ("About BookNet Canada").

The first few years at BookNet were taken up with finding ways to improve the quality of and establishing a national standard for bibliographic data. It was not until the time between 2005 to 2006 that the agency launched BNC SalesData, a comprehensive Canadian book sales data reporting and analysis service for the English-language market (Canadian Heritage, *The Book Report* 2006, 17). Today, this service tracks 75 percent of all Canadian book sales—an average of

¹ The company was previously called vnu (Verenigde Nederlandse Uitgeverijen), which later became AC Nielsen Company, and now known as The Nielsen Company (Wikipedia, "Verenigde").

² Heather MacLean's 2009 MPub project report, "The Canadian Book Industry Supply Chain Initiative: The Inception and Implementation of a New Funding Initiative for the Department of Canadian Heritage," presents comprehensive research into the inception and development of the Supply Chain Initiative and BookNet Canada.

one thousand retail locations—including data from large chains, independents, online retailers, college and university bookstores, and non-traditional channels such as airport shops, grocery chains, and discount stores (BookNet Canada, “BNC SalesData”). The cost of subscription is a minimum of \$2,000 per year (BookNet Canada, “BNC SalesData Group Buy Plan”).

IMPACT ON EDITORIAL ACQUISITIONS

BookScan did not arrive without controversy. Some publishing professionals—from publishers and agents, to authors and pundits—were concerned about how being numbers-driven would affect the quality of content produced, as illustrated by the impact of the implementation of SoundScan on the music industry (Hutton 2002, 46). Not long after the formation of SoundScan, record labels became increasingly hit-driven and were chasing the artists who could make the charts quickly, namely those in the pop genre. This meant that lesser known artists would be less likely to be given a chance at a record deal. As a result, critics felt that the music charts became gradually filled with songs that were formulaic and of the same “shoddy, market-driven pop music” genre (Dreher 2002). Likewise, with the formation of BookScan, book industry professionals began to fear a similar fate where the bestseller lists would be filled with similar, formulaic books that were perceived as having blockbuster potential to bring in big money (Hutton 2002, 47).

This fear of the blockbuster phenomenon actually began well before the implementation of BookScan. In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was an increasing concern over the widespread consolidation and mergers of publishing houses, declining readership, the growing blockbuster-driven culture, and competition from other media (Greco, Rodríguez, and Wharton 2007, 187-189). In the sixties, trade book publishing was subjected to a major shift: from a predominance of independently owned and run publishing houses, to a predominance of concentrated ownership of such houses under publicly owned corporate organizations (Whiteside 1981, 1-2). These large corporations were in turn absorbed into huge conglomerates.

While mergers were occurring on a small scale since the start of the twentieth century, it was the events during the sixties that set the tone for what was to come, particularly when Alfred A. Knopf was taken over by Random House, which in turn was acquired by RCA (Radio Corporation of America) as part of the wider trend towards corporate conglomerates in America (Whiteside 1981, 3). The growing number of corporate consolidations, combined with the unprofitable nature of book publishing, caused many publishers to increasingly place emphasis on chasing celebrity and the blockbuster. Publishers were concentrating their attention on searching for and promoting potential bestsellers, and the trade book business appeared to be “a component of the conglomerate communications-entertainment complex” (22):

“This concentration on the blockbuster is reinforced by other developments that have been occurring in the industry—among them the growth of large chains of retail bookstores, the strong rivalry of paperback publishers for rack space in retail outlets, the computerization of inventory and warehousing systems, the arrival on the scene of a new breed of big-time literary agent, the influence of television talk shows that regularly feature authors as guests, the control by entertainment conglomerates of hardcover and paperback publishing companies as well as motion-picture companies and the like, and the increasingly active involvement of Hollywood in the business of book publishing itself.” (Whiteside 22)

In Greco, Rodríguez and Wharton’s (2007, 188) survey of fifty-seven respondents at all levels within the industry, they found that the chase for profit, celebrity, and the blockbuster, coupled with widespread consolidation, raised concerns among some in the industry for the small independent presses that were bought up by larger companies. The fear was that these small independent presses might be subjected to massive change or be shut down in the process, causing the loss of their contribution of a unique voice and quality of content in the trade. Some publishers were concerned that the blockbuster-driven industry had a detrimental influence on the quality of the content being published—a type of “dumbing down” (187)—as publishers were less inclined to take chances on a risky or unique book whose market is not easily identifiable.

This trend placed pressure on editors in the acquisition process to look for the commercial potential of the manuscript as well as the media-friendly personality and connections of the author. Focusing on a manuscript’s commercial potential to be a moneymaking blockbuster does not reinforce the strategic development of an editorial plan, but rather the practice of making publishing decisions book by book (L. Shatzkin 1982, 13). To this day, the trend towards media platforms is an increasingly important consideration for all books. It has become an expectation that publishers have of authors (Greco, Rodríguez, and Wharton 2007, 184). How well an author performs in media or an author’s pre-existing connections to media outlets are key factors in determining whether a book will be published. Publishing and public relations strategist, Jodee Blanco, puts it this way: “the most vital selling point when pitching a media contact is how much the author will affect and engage the audience, because that’s the producers’ and editors’ first priority” (2004, 3). It is a shift from finding “great writers” with strong writing, to searching for “marketable writers” that can make money at the expense of poorly edited books (Greco, Rodríguez, and Wharton 2007, 184). Even early on, Whiteside also noted of this shift in focus on “the author as a personality rather than the book as a book” (1981, 37).

What publishers deemed as marketable was probably heavily informed by the media and non-substantive bestseller lists, not by studying concrete sell-through

data to see what consumers are actually buying. Nonetheless, now with availability of sell-through data provided by BookScan, the concern that poor literary quality content will populate the bestseller lists is still a fear for some publishers. In the early days of BookScan, publishing professionals feared that “authors with prize potential or with prestigious, intellectual, or literary works would be buried” (Hutton 2002, 47), lost in the sea of commercial titles that bring in the money but not necessarily carry the same weight in literary excellence. That fear and controversy linger on to this day. Stephen Henighan’s article, “The BookNet Dictatorship” published in *Geist* magazine in early 2011, is an example of the worries that some have today about BookNet sales data. Henighan asserts his opinion that BookNet is detrimental to the quality of Canadian literature, that it “incarnates how corporate imperatives are squeezing the creative juice out of our fiction” (2011). He suggests that today’s editors in Canada are enslaved to BookNet sales data and no longer rely on literary taste, stating that “the novel on a deeply personal subject is shuffled aside in favour of the blockbuster that reflects yesterday’s headlines and promises to sell film rights” (2011), a sentiment similar to the long-time concern about the blockbuster phenomenon.

On the other hand, some publishing pundits saw the potential of BookScan early on to open up the book market to new categories that have been previously overshadowed by blockbusters (Hutton 2004, 48). When SoundScan was introduced, previously niche genres of rap and country music that were underrated by big record companies soon garnered more listeners and were brought to the public’s attention alongside pop blockbusters (Hutton 2004, 48; Dreher 2002). Similarly with BookScan, smaller, alternative books by independent publishers that would previously not be noticed can be brought to the public and bookseller’s attention more readily with BookScan. For example, a book that perennially sells a small number of copies per week steadily for many years will never make onto a best-seller list, even though it would technically be on par with a book that had big sales in the opening weeks, made it on the bestseller list, but stopped selling soon after four weeks. BookScan will be able to establish more credibility in the market for the smaller book.

Much like the movie business with a perpetual reproduction of “typical Hollywood” movies and emphasis on opening weekend sales at the box office, there may well be a continuing trend towards the homogenization and “dumbing down” of books among some publishers and categories of books due to the blockbuster phenomenon and its heavy emphasis on sales within four to six weeks of a book’s release (Thompson 2010, 266). However, the availability of sell-through data can help create greater public awareness of non-blockbuster, smaller titles.

IMPACT ON MARKETING, PUBLICITY, AND SALES FUNCTIONS

Not only has sell-through data impacted the editorial function in how a publisher decides on which manuscript to publish, but it has also influenced the marketing and sales functions of the business. The publisher essentially has to accomplish two things once an author contract is signed: firstly, to ensure that the book is available in stock where prospective buyers can access it, then secondly, to let these buyers know about the book and give compelling reasons for them to purchase it (L. Shatzkin 1982, 25). To accomplish the former, the publisher employs a sales force that sells directly to retailers, distributors and wholesalers. To do the latter, the publisher will have to engage in publicity, public relations, promotions or advertising. The former is the sales function of achieving *sell-in*—getting the books onto the store shelves; the latter is the marketing function of achieving *sell-through*—getting the books into the hands of the end user (Blanco 2004, 10-11).

However, the marketing function also greatly affects sell-in as well. When Leonard Shatzkin wrote *In Cold Type* in 1982, he observed that much of the publishers' efforts were placed on selling in. He noted:

“...in contrast to most other industries producing consumer goods, the selling effort is still almost entirely directed to *getting the product into the store*.” (7)

“Most other industries have reached the point where, it is no longer necessary to negotiate every single unit of every single item, the selling job is to *move the product through the store*.” (7)

Fast-forward twenty years later, the efforts seemed to have shifted to pushing for sell-through. Jodee Blanco (2004, 12) suggests in her book, *The Complete Guide to Book Publicity*, that sometimes publishers make the mistake of focusing publicity and promotional efforts too much on sell-through and not enough on sell-in.

Essentially, both sell-in and sell-through are equally important and mutually dependent. A widely held opinion in the book industry is that word-of-mouth is a powerful factor for sell-through (L. Shatzkin 1982, 46). Word-of-mouth is “the passing of information from person to person by oral communication” (Wikipedia, “Word of Mouth”). It is often generated by media publicity, public relations, or strong advertising and promotion. However, if enough word-of-mouth is generated for a prospective buyer to enter the bookstore looking for the specific title, but the bookstore has none in stock, the word-of-mouth reaction can slow down or come to a halt completely (47). For some time in the late twentieth century, publishers sometimes based their decision on whether or not to publish a title, or whether or not promote a title in a big way, on the level of enthusiasm or cooperation by

the bookseller to carry the book or promote the book in the store with prominent displays (Whiteside 1981, 46). Thus, the sell-in process of getting the book retailer to place enough advanced orders in the right store locations is just as vital to the life sales of a book as sell-through. The right balance of a publisher's resources for both the sell-in and sell-through processes would benefit titles tremendously. The efforts to promote a book can be used both for encouraging a retailer to stock up on a book as well as for a prospective buyer to go out and purchase it.

The bookselling process has changed over the past few decades due to the advancements of technologies. Kermit Hummel (2004) described in this article, "The Perishing of Publishing," about how the business of bookselling has shifted from an enthusiasm-based bookselling method to that of 'analogy bookselling.' He writes, "...what makes things tick is the notion that there is nothing new under the sun. We sell books and distribute books by analogy. 'This book will appeal to the readers of 'X'. If you liked X, you'll love Y'" (160). The old-school bookselling method of relying on sheer enthusiasm for the new title was being replaced in the eighties and nineties by the analogy selling method of providing analysis of competitive or comparable books that are "like" this new title (160). The analogy selling method is used to this day when trying to encourage sell-through, such as Amazon's "Frequently Bought Together" and "Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought" recommendations on its online store, and it is also used during the sell-in process when sales reps attempt to persuade booksellers to stock the shelves with their books.

This shift towards analogy selling was an extension of the development of new technologies in enabling sales data tracking, first just by booksellers of their in-store products, then later by participating publishers who subscribe to a sell-through reporting service. As such, "instead of raw and uninformed enthusiasm, predictability became a vastly more operative concept in the book distribution system" (Hummel 2004, 161). The irony, Hummel pointed out, is that publishers are trying to market new books as unique and entirely different, but using "a sales and distribution system that increasingly depends entirely upon an assumption of the fundamental fungibility of titles" (161). The process has become less about the content of the book, and more about the sales expectations of a previously published book (by the same author or another). Essentially, the book has been commodified.

To aid the bookselling process, publishers combine sales data with a number of marketing initiatives, which may include publicity, public relations, advertising or promotion. Publicity and public relations events for the author and his or her book have always been crucial. Publicity is media or news coverage that is free, unlike advertising which is paid for by the publisher (Blanco 2004, 4-5). Public relations is "the function of perpetuating an image through a variety of means that connect specific sectors of the public with the product or person that image is attached to" (5), and involves public author appearances, such as at bookstores and seminars, that not only allows live interaction with the audience but also helps place the

author and the book in a positive light. As such, public relations can be a means to gain publicity as the media may be invited to be present at the event to report on it. These initiatives create awareness and help to develop word-of-mouth reaction.

According to John B. Thompson (2010, 238) in his book, *Merchants of Culture*, the real battle that is currently taking place in publishing, and probably always has been, is that of getting a book seen, heard of and talked about—the concept of word-of-mouth. It is increasingly difficult to make a book visible in a crowded, competitive marketplace as the number of books being published is growing almost every year and readers are faced with an abundance of books to choose from.³ While the challenge of making the book stand out has remained the same for marketing and publicity departments over the past thirty years, today the channels that are available and the timing of when to push books have changed fundamentally (243).

Traditionally, in the sixties, promotion of books was limited to advertisements in the book-review sections of newspapers and magazines, author appearances at bookstores, sending out press releases and a few review copies (Whiteside 1981, 23). Twenty years later, television and radio interviews quickly became a focus in book publicity due to the capability of an author appearance to spike sales, although the opportunity is subject to the personality of the author and what the publishers and producers deem will work best for television or radio (33-35). Today, specialized channels or ‘micro media’ are becoming more important for marketing and promoting books, whereas traditional mass media channels such as print advertising and multi-city author tours have become less effective due to increased competition for limited space, although these mass channels have not become irrelevant (Thompson 2010, 243-246).

Thompson reports that today, most marketing managers tend to agree that they are increasingly focusing their efforts on micro media, “trying to identify specific, fine-grained ways of reaching the people who comprise what they see as the readership, using an array of different channels which, in addition to traditional print media, now include a variety of new media” (246). Digital channels have become a game-changer in book marketing and publicity with the growth of online marketing through online advertising, online outreach, and the management of web properties such as search engine optimization, e-newsletters, reading groups, websites, blogging, and helping authors start their own social networking sites (251-257). With these smaller and specific channels for marketing, a book will require multiple hits—or mentions in the media—before it can generate substantial word-of-mouth reaction. When an individual is exposed to the ripple effects of word-of-mouth and media mentions, research shows that it could take six to twelve

³ Thompson (2010, 239) reports that prior to 1980, the number of new books published in the US was estimated to be under 50,000. The number reached close to a staggering 200,000 by 1998, and 284,000 in 2007.

touches in the individual's mind for the person to eventually come to a decision to take action and buy the book (244).

The growth of new media channels has also influenced the timing on when to push books. The timing has shifted from aiming for a great break of publicity on publication date and the weeks after, to be more focused on slowly building pre-publication awareness and momentum through new media channels (Thompson 2010, 248-251). When a marketing campaign is built slowly over time, it can “[get] people talking about a book and [generate] interest and excitement well in advance of publication” (249). This pre-publication interest has shaped the pre-order phenomenon at Amazon, whereby publishers are now able to obtain book sales numbers prior to its physical availability at the retailers—an impossible feat before the development of new media. When physical book retailers notice the buzz online and its status on Amazon's pre-order list, they can be more easily persuaded by sales reps to increase their initial order. Thus, a pre-publication marketing and publicity campaign built slowly over time is effective not only for creating awareness through multiple touches in the minds of prospective buyers, but also for obtaining healthy sell-in which can in turn act as another touch point in the minds of casual browsers when they see a sizeable amount of stock placed at the front-of-store display.

BookScan has become an effective marketing tool in creating pre-publication awareness. The ability to find out where books are selling, when they sell, and how many are sold can ensure marketing expenditures are allocated more accurately. Sell-through numbers of previous editions of a book, competitive and comparable books and retailers, can influence sell-in decisions. If a seller is hesitant to place an order for an unknown author, healthy sell-through numbers can push a bookseller to increase his initial order on a book he did not initially believe in. This can reduce the risk of not having enough stock in the store, which can kill a word-of-mouth reaction quickly. Analysis of sell-through data can also reduce the persistent problem of returns through more accurate sales and distribution forecasting. Booksellers can use data to discern the effect of a book review and learn about what their customers are looking for (Hutton 2004, 48).

BookScan and BookNet have also allowed for more accurate sales forecasting because they allow publishers to identify which titles or categories of titles are selling well, manage print runs and inventories, reduce returns, and fine-tune pricing, marketing and publicity strategies. This was precisely what those involved in the Canadian book publishing Supply Chain Initiative wanted to accomplish with BookNet Canada, as stated in the *Printed Matters* report published by Canadian Heritage in 2004:

“Market data analysis allows publishers to make more effective printing and reprint decisions, manage marketing budgets more effectively and focus sales efforts. Retailers also have access to bestseller lists that truly represent the diversity of the marketplace in which they operate.” (31)

Jonathan Nowell, president of Nielsen Book, also touted the benefits of using the point-of-sale system back in 2004, citing that when UK publishers fully adopted it, returns across the industry reduced from 19 percent to 12 percent (Milliot 2004).

The benefits and practical uses of sale data analysis have become increasingly evident over the past decade for some publishers. Sell-through reporting requires publishers to not only monitor data on a daily basis but to also use it to drive their decisions (Thompson 2010, 288). Jean Srnecz, who was the Senior Vice President of Merchandising at Baker & Taylor and a longstanding Director of the Book Industry Study Group with over thirty years experience in the book industry, recommended back in 2004 that publishers need to seriously consider investing into information technology to develop data analysis tools for their books (Milliot 2004). As Srnecz puts it, data should be the DNA of the publishing house.



Few are more exemplary than Sourcebooks, one of America's leading independent book publishers, as well as Raincoast Books, a Canadian book wholesale and distribution company that distributes Sourcebooks titles. In the next section, this paper will explore in more detail how these companies leverage sell-through data in their business operations.

II.

LEVERAGING SELL-THROUGH DATA AT SOURCEBOOKS AND RAINCOAST BOOKS

OVERVIEW OF SOURCEBOOKS⁴

Sourcebooks is one of the leading and largest independent book publishers in North America. Located in Naperville, Illinois, it was founded in 1987 by the savvy and charismatic Dominique Raccach. She started the company with only one title, *Financial Sourcebooks Sources*, with a focus on publishing professional finance titles. In the nineties, Raccach expanded Sourcebooks into publishing self-help, parenting, business, and reference titles, all of which continue to be the backbone of the Sourcebooks list to this day.

In 1997, Sourcebooks was listed as the sixth fastest-growing small publisher in America by *Publishers Weekly*. After moving to number two in 1999, it had expanded beyond the “small publisher” classification, with sales figures doubling every two years during that time period. Its growth can be attributed to the acquisition of imprints over the years to include publishers of relationship-, sex-, and wedding-oriented self-help books (Casablanca Press, acquired in 1996), consumer-oriented self-help law books (Sphinx Publishing, acquired in 1997), humour and women’s interests books (Hysteria Publications, acquired in 1998), and gift and history titles (Cumberland House, acquired in 2008).

Another key factor to Sourcebooks’ rapid growth was its revolutionary, entrepreneurial vision. In 1998, the publisher introduced an innovative new genre of publishing, featuring compact discs of integrated content to accompany Joe Garner’s *We Interrupt This Broadcast*. This book that showcased the creative pairing of live audio with photographs and the written word generated a buzz within the bookselling industry and was Sourcebooks’ first *New York Times* bestseller. This hit book, together with another called *And the Crowd Goes Wild*, helped grow the company from a reported \$1 million in revenue with six employees in 1992, to \$20 million in revenue and fifty-six employees in 2000 (Kirch 2007).

The turn of the century marked the start of a new phase of growth for the company, beginning with the prestigious recognition of being the only book publisher to be listed as one of America’s fastest-growing companies on the *Inc.* 500 list for the year

⁴ The information in this section is taken from Sourcebooks.com (“The Sourcebooks Story”), unless otherwise stated.

2000. Since then, Sourcebooks also launched new imprints such as Sourcebooks MediaFusion (2000) for integrated mixed-media projects, Sourcebook Landmark (2001) for fiction titles and Jane Austen sequels, Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (2007) for children's books, and Sourcebooks Fire (2010) for young adult titles. With Sourcebooks MediaFusion, the publisher became America's leading publisher of integrated mixed-media projects, led by *Poetry Speaks* and *Poetry Speaks to Children*, a book and compact-disc combination featuring noted poets reading their own work. These poetry anthologies not only helped revitalize the way adults and children experience poetry, but also found their way onto the *New York Times* bestseller list. Sourcebooks also had success with its fiction imprint, Sourcebooks Landmark, which was led by the 2000 British Book of the Year, Tony Parsons' *Man and Boy*, and Michael Malone's *New York Times* bestseller *First Lady* and all of Malone's backlist. In 2007, the publisher expanded the Sourcebooks Casablanca imprint (previously Casablanca Press) into the realm of romance fiction and quickly established itself as a top ten publisher in the genre. Later in 2010, more than seventy backlist books by children's and gift book author Marianne Richmond were added to the Sourcebooks list, including the picture book phenomenon, *If I Could Keep You Little*.

Today, Sourcebooks continues to expand the breadth of its list of titles by publishing authors in various subjects, and in formats it describes as both "classically physical and dynamically digital" (Sourcebooks.com, "The Sourcebooks Story"). It is now a strong vertical publisher and established authority in a number of non-fiction categories—college-bound books, baby name books, gift books, grieving and recovery books—as well as a strong competitor in commercial and historical fiction, romance novels, children's books and more. Still headquartered in Naperville, Sourcebooks now has satellite offices in New York City and Connecticut, a staff of more than seventy employees, and an annual output of over three hundred titles at the time of writing (Bookjobs.com).

This is an impressive feat for a company that started out in the spare bedroom of a house belonging to someone without a traditional publishing background. Unlike many of her publishing colleagues, Dominique Raccach came from a scientific background. Her father was a physicist who accepted a position at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and moved the family from Paris to America when Raccach was nine (Kirch 2009). She graduated from the University of Illinois with a Bachelor's degree in psychology and later obtained a Master's degree in quantitative psychology. She went on to establish a flourishing career at Leo Burnett advertising agency in Chicago for seven years, performing quantitative research for major corporate clients before leaving to pursue her love for books in the publishing industry (Kirch 2009). Her scientific background, while unconventional within the industry, will prove to be integral to Sourcebooks' business strategy and culture—one that is essentially data-driven.

OVERVIEW OF RAINCOAST BOOKS⁵

Raincoast Books is a Canadian-owned book wholesale and distribution company based in Richmond, British Columbia, specializing in providing comprehensive sales and marketing coverage, logistical support, and distribution services to a select number of international publishers. It distributes a variety of genres of books, both fiction and non-fiction titles, for all ages from kids and teens to adults. Its non-fiction titles cover a wide range of topics including food, health, kids, pop culture, travel, as well as gift products such as notebooks and stationery.

Raincoast Books is a division of Raincoast Book Distribution Inc. that also includes Publishers Group Canada, a distribution division focused on specialty independent publishers, and Book Express, its wholesale division. Raincoast Books and Book Express were founded in 1979 by Allan MacDougall and Mark Stanton. The company started with seven employees with a goal to be a small regional wholesale operation. It signed its first distribution deal with Chronicle Books in 1988, and, together with Publishers Group Canada, it has grown to serve over one hundred international publishers today, providing fast shipping service capable of shipping over 20,000 new titles to more than 2,500 bookstores and specialty retailers across Canada.

Over the years, Raincoast has won awards and achieved industry recognition for its services. It won the Distributor of the Year Award as voted by the Canadian Booksellers Association (CBA 1998-2010) in 1999, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2010, and was nominated in 2008 and 2009—more often than any book distributor or publisher in Canada. *Quill & Quire* named it the fastest distributor in Canada in its 2003 and 2004 industry surveys. It further won the Marketing Achievement of the Year Award in 2006, and short-listed again in 2007 and 2008 (Raincoast, *Always Connected* 2010, 17).

In the mid nineties, Raincoast endeavored to publish books as well. Raincoast Publishing was founded in 1995. The spotlight was on Raincoast when it secured the contract to be the publisher and distributor of the *Harry Potter* series in Canada. In 2003, the company set a record in Canadian publishing history with the largest domestic print run and single-day lay-down for *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, which was later surpassed by the book's sequel, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* in 2005, and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in 2007. Books published by Raincoast Publishing were also short-listed or won major literary prizes in Canada, including a Governor General's Award for literature in 2003. However, the publishing program was shut down in 2008 to focus on its core distribution and wholesale businesses. The publishing program was deemed unprofitable due to the appreciation of the Canadian dollar in 2007 and the subsequent decision

⁵ The information in this section is taken from the Raincoast Books website ("About Raincoast Books"), unless otherwise stated.

to reduce suggested retail prices by 20 percent (Raincoast, “Raincoast Gets Back to Basics” 2008).

Over the years, Raincoast has placed itself in the forefront of the Canadian publishing industry with its investment and use of new technologies to improve its systems and book sales. Responsible for successful online promotional campaigns for the *Harry Potter* series in Canada and being the first publisher to start a blog and begin a literary podcast series, Raincoast Publishing established itself in the Canadian publishing industry and on the international front as one of the top five publishers to implement new media technologies and strategies (Trottier, “About Monique”). Raincoast’s Chief Executive Officer, John Sawyer, has been an active member in the Canadian book industry SCI and BookNet Canada’s EDI conference. Consequently, Raincoast was an early adopter of EDI and established ONIX⁶ compliance early on in the initiative (Raincoast, *Always Connected* 2010, 19).

The company strives for what it calls “context-smart technology” (Raincoast, *Always Connected* 2010, 19), regularly looking for ways to improve its systems through customizing and modifying its programs. Its recent efforts in 2010 include implementation of a customized warehouse management system, the launch of an electronic catalogue for sales representatives to use when selling titles to its accounts, and the expansion of its publisher extranet site⁷ which provides one of the three streams of detailed data reports to its client publishers (17, 19).

The first stream of data consists of publisher month-end reports of sales, returns, and inventory movement, customized for some of its publishers to suit their respective reporting systems. The extranet site supplies the second stream of data including demand, stock status, current and historical sales, and channel break-downs for specific titles that is updated and accessible in real-time. These first two streams of data are based on data pulled from Varnet, Raincoast’s internal database, and then repackaged for its clients. They are not based on BookNet numbers as that data is always one week behind and only covers 75 percent of the market.

The third stream is what Raincoast calls its “most unique” stream of monthly reports designed to help publishers “understand what is going on in our market” (17). This third stream of reports is based on BookNet and BookScan numbers compiled by Raincoast’s in-house Data Analyst and includes information such as the top titles, top customers, detailed titles sales for a publisher’s top five customers, and “peer gap analysis” that tracks Canadian versus American sell-through numbers. Sell-through data is an invaluable resource to publishers for tracking the effectiveness of any promotion, hence Raincoast ensures that its client publishers

⁶ ONIX (*Online Information Exchange*) for books is the international XML-based standard for representing and communicating book bibliographic data in electronic form (Editeur, “ONIX”).

⁷ The client publisher extranet site is accessible at <http://services.raincoast.com>.

have access to BookNet data of their own titles. Table 3.1 shows a breakdown of the three streams of data provided by Raincoast to its publishers.

Table 3.1: Three streams of data that Raincoast Books provides to its publishers

PUBLISHER MONTH-END REPORTS	REAL-TIME REPORTS FROM THE PUBLISHER EXTRANET	MONTHLY MARKET REPORTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipts • Sales • Returns • Other inventory movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand • Stock status • Order history on given titles • Current and historical sales • Channel breakdowns • For publishers with major divisions: ability to view and analyze each division's performance separately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top titles • Top customers • Detailed title sales for a publisher's top five customers • New customers • Increasing or decreasing customers by sales • Order activity • Seasonal totals (i.e. frontlist versus backlist) • Sale by category • "Peer Gap" analysis that tracks Canadian versus American sell-through

(Source: Raincoast, *Always Connected* 2011, 17)

Today, Raincoast is headquartered in Richmond, British Columbia, with a second sales and marketing office in Toronto, and employs over ninety people over three divisions (Raincoast, *Always Connected* 2010, 24).

LEVERAGING SELL-THROUGH DATA

Sourcebooks prides itself in being a data-driven company, placing emphasis on the analysis of sales data and looking for trends in the numbers. In an interview with the Vice President and Editorial Director of Sourcebooks, Todd Stocke (2011), he professes the company to be a heavy BookScan user. BookScan is used across all departments at Sourcebooks—editorial, marketing, publicity, and sales—many of whom “can’t really live without it” (Stocke 2011).

At Raincoast Books, both marketing and sales departments are also regular users of BookNet. The company has sell-through data stored in its internal Varnet database so that numbers can be pulled up easily and regularly (Broadhurst 2011).

This section explores how both these companies use sell-through data analysis to their advantage in selling books.

Tool for Editorial Creativity

The argument for homogenization of content as a result of the availability of sell-through data persists to this day, and the industry will likely continue to see rip-offs of successful books that validate that line of argument. However, some publishers like Sourcebooks have chosen to use sell-through data in different and creative ways.

Sourcebooks describes its use of sell-through data as a “weapon for creativity” (Stocke 2011). Sourcebooks uses data to identify books that are selling well in the market within the categories it covers. The purpose is not to create a rip-off, but to analyze them and “come out of it in a creatively different place” (Stocke 2011). The end goal is to use data to deliver a better book for readers.

Using this approach, Sourcebooks was able to become a leading publisher in a number of categories in the country, such as the baby names subcategory where it now owns 60 percent of the market share (Stocke 2011). It was able to accomplish that in a crowded category by studying the books at the top of the category at the time, and being creative in developing more substantial, interesting, and contemporary content compared to those previously published books. Chapter Three of this report will further illustrate how Sourcebooks uses this same approach to publish *The Naked Roommate* in the college guide category.

Forecasting, Reducing Returns, and Improving Inventory Turn Rate

Before sell-through reporting, it was difficult to know how well books did after they were shipped. Only the book retailers knew, but their knowledge was limited to information from their own stores. Publishers would hope that once books were shipped out from the warehouse that only a few would be returned. A book with small sales would tend to remain small throughout the course of the year, and it was difficult to know how a big frontlist title was doing until the retailer informed them after some time (Broadhurst 2011). It was thus difficult to make necessary adjustments on time to help with sales of books. For Sourcebooks, the process entailed waiting for faxes from its customers every Monday to see how its books performed (Stocke 2011).

The situation was similar at Raincoast. Raincoast’s Director of National Accounts, Peter MacDougall (2011), explained that before BookNet, his week would involve numerous phone calls and emails to his customers on Mondays and Tuesdays to find out what the week’s sell-through was for the books that Raincoast distributes. That information, too, was limited to only the company’s own books, not the competing titles.

From the get-go, Raccah believed that a service like BookScan could provide information for finding cost savings in the supply chain (Milliot 2004). To achieve cost reduction, Sourcebooks focused its efforts on tackling three areas: advances, inventory and returns. BookScan numbers, such as sales of an author's previous titles or sales of compatible and competitive titles, are used to "help rationalize the predictive process" (Milliot 2004) and determine the demand for the new book. After analyzing the data, a fair author advance could be more accurately determined and the amount of unsold inventory reduced. According to Raccah:

"Sourcebooks makes its inventory decisions by looking at reprints and first printings. In managing reprints, Sourcebooks examines where the demand for the reprint is coming from, why the reprint is needed and what is the inventory on hand in the channel; the company also reviews sell-through information with its major accounts." (Milliot 2004)

Adopting this approach, Sourcebooks reduced its first printings quite aggressively and planned for more rounds of reprints by collaborating closely with printers (Milliot 2004). Raccah reported that the inventory-days-on-hand benchmark was very helpful for determining when a reprint run should be ordered (Milliot 2004). She believed that even though smaller first printings and more reprints can increase the cost of goods sold, it could, on the other hand, increase cash-on-hand and reduce returns. This approach helped lower Sourcebooks' returns by 25 percent in 2003 (Milliot 2004). In a market where returns place huge pressure on pricing and cash flow, working closely with customers and printers, coupled with adjusting first printings and number of reprints to print-on-demand, can shorten lead time and minimize returns for publishers (Milliot 2004).

Similarly at Raincoast, regular tracking of sell-through has also improved sales forecasting and inventory turn rates (how often the stock turns over in the warehouse on an annual basis). Its warehouse does not store stock for six months worth of demand. Sales directors and reps are able to forecast initial orders more accurately, and they track sell-through on a weekly basis to anticipate subsequent orders more precisely on a four- to six-week on-demand basis (Broadhurst 2011). As discussed in Chapter One regarding the importance of sell-in, it would be detrimental to book sales if the publisher could not print fast enough and has to try to catch up with demand because the upward sales momentum could dissipate quickly from a lack of sufficient stock. A healthy inventory turn rate also frees up the warehouse to stock up on a wider variety of titles.

Closing the Gaps

Beyond reducing costs, sell-through data can also be used to determine marketing and promotional strategies to increase sales. This is another benefit that

Sourcebooks has come to identify and implement. As discussed in Chapter One, in old-school bookselling, the publisher's team of sales and publicity personnel had to try to cultivate media and author contacts through sheer enthusiasm and strong persuasive skills, and promote its list of titles by developing word-of-mouth. Today, the added benefit of having sell-through data can add to a sales rep's arsenal of tools to help with his or her pitch to booksellers in the environment of analogy bookselling. The ability to discern sales patterns, and identify the gaps in different market segments and retailers, can help the sell-in process and boost the sales of underrated titles.

Gap analysis has been key to Sourcebooks' and Raincoast's marketing and sales strategies to leverage sell-through information to increase sales and create long-term bestsellers. While all departments at Sourcebooks employ data analysis, analysis of *gaps* is more specific to the sales department who uses the method on a regular basis. Its application is sometimes broad—for example, total sell-through of customer X versus customer Y, versus their market shares (Stocke 2011). Another broad application is to analyze gaps by channel—for example, whether or not the library channel or the Canadian channel is attaining sell-through that is comparable to that of competing publishers (Stocke 2011).

Analysis of gaps is applied to sell-in data as well. Examining the advanced orders of compatible retailers can reveal gaps that help with the sell-in process to persuade the buyer to increase the advance orders if the competing retailer has taken a huge position on a book. That scenario is less likely to occur for Barnes & Noble in the US and Chapters Indigo in Canada as they are the dominant large chain bookstores in their respective countries. However, comparing the chain bookstore orders with that of a dominant online retailer like Amazon, or comparing compatible specialty channels, has been beneficial to both Sourcebooks' and Raincoast's businesses.

MacDougall (2011) now finds sell-through data to be an indispensable tool for selling and pitching to his customers. A book sales rep for eleven years, he expresses how enormous the positive impact of BookNet has been to his work: "It is hard to overstate how amazing BookNet has been in terms of selling and being able to look at peer-to-peer data, and comparing what Indigo is doing versus other retailers in Canada" (MacDougall 2011). Now MacDougall can track the data himself to be prepared with the information for his pitches, whereas prior to BookNet only the retailers could do the work of tracking the data. He can also see which channels a book tends to sell better and make necessary adjustments. The process is now more efficient.

The gap analysis method can be applied at a granular level by title as well, and this level is the most regularly used by both Sourcebooks and Raincoast. Sourcebooks' sales department generates these reports and systematically reviews them every week (Stocke 2011). According to Todd Stocke (2011), granular level gap analysis has become interesting for Sourcebooks in the area of ebook pricing. He explains that with some variables from the print publishing model eliminated in the elec-

tronic realm—inventory is the big one—there should not be any wild fluctuations in sales percentages among online retailers. Gap analysis would then be used in the electronic realm to identify “outliers and look for what one e-tailer might be doing with a title as opposed to others, and [see if you can] replicate it elsewhere” (2011). Oftentimes, gaps appear due to the influence of ebook pricing. Regarding ebook pricing, Stocke notes:

“The effect of pricing is something publishers never had the power to impact, we printed the price on the book and what happened, happened. That’s no longer the case, so most publishers are hiring pricing analysts.”
(2011)

Raincoast also does granular, title-by-title “peer gap” analysis on a weekly basis, and provides the results of the analysis to its client publishers on a monthly basis as part of its third stream of data (Table 3.1). From a practical standpoint of applying data analysis in its everyday operations, Raincoast looks at core frontlist titles and identifies significant gaps between BookNet and BookScan numbers—the books that do well in the US but under-perform in the Canadian market (Broadhurst 2011). For those books where there exists a considerable difference in their recent weeks’ sales, they are called out during Raincoast’s weekly Major Sales meetings to discuss further marketing and publicity options so to improve sell-in and sell-through.

The Raincoast staff gathers every Thursday at 1:00 p.m. for the Major Sales meeting. The staff who attends these meeting include all marketing and publicity personnel, select sales staff (Sales Director, Director of National Accounts, Special Accounts rep, and Data Analyst) and some of the warehouse inventory personnel. Once a month the Vice President of Sales, Paddy Laidley, attends the meeting to give a ‘State of the Union’ report of updates and highlights from the past month’s sales revenue and performance of different publishers. To prepare for the meeting, the Data Analyst, Jim Allan, pulls out the key data and creates a grid divided into columns with selected information. This particular set of information is what Raincoast focuses on to base its marketing and sales promotions decisions. The selected data on the Major Sales Grid are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Items listed on Raincoast Books' Major Sales Grid

MAJOR SALES GRID (AS OF JULY 2011)
<p>Frontlist Titles: Current Season, Highlights from Last Season, and Next Season</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand • Stock status • Order history on given titles • Current and historical sales • Channel breakdowns • For publishers with major divisions: ability to view and analyze each division's performance separately
<p>BookNet Sales Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Sales • This Week • Last Week • Two Weeks Ago • Three Weeks Ago • Last Four Weeks Total
<p>BookScan Sales Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Sales • This Week • Last Week • Two Weeks Ago • Three Weeks Ago • Last Four Weeks Total
<p>Book Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last Four Weeks Total
<p>Last Four Weeks Total Sales for Major National Accounts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costco • Amazon.ca • Amazon.com • Amazon US Not-Yet-Published Orders (pre-orders)
<p>Indigo Sales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Sales • This Week • Last Week • Two Weeks Ago • Three Weeks Ago • Last Four Weeks Total • Sales to Date • Orders to Date • Distribution Centre On Hand • Large Format On Hand • Mall Format On Hand • On Order • Indigo Merch Periods

The meeting is chaired by Jamie Broadhurst, the Vice President of Marketing, who studies the grid before the meeting to make notes on the titles he wishes to call to attention. The meeting would always commence with updates from the publicists on upcoming author tour events and media coverage for specific titles. The staff then switches their attention to the sales grid. Broadhurst would point out significant gaps in the past week or month, if any, between BookScan and BookNet numbers of specific titles so that the sales reps and publicists are aware of the books that need more push. Furthermore, sell-through information is invaluable for highlighting books that are doing unexpectedly well and for tracking the effectiveness of current marketing, publicity, and promotional efforts.

Therefore, while access to sell-through data is available for all publishers who can afford to subscribe to BookScan or BookNet, the key point is less about having access, and more about being able to do something with the data—dissecting, analyzing, and breaking down the mass amount of information into digestible pieces, such as what Sourcebooks and Raincoast have done with their sales grids and charting of sales cycle graphs—so that it makes sense to the sales reps and retailers and can subsequently be used to sell more books. While a major portion of a publisher's resources will continue to be used toward pushing the few potential bestsellers on the frontlist, the availability of sell-through data can, in effect, help push the mid-list or under-performing frontlist books. Both Sourcebooks and Raincoast have found this to be so. In the case of *The Naked Roommate*, as will be explored in Chapter Three, it took Sourcebooks four editions to push the book into a *New York Times* bestseller, using diligent analysis of sales data and adjusting marketing and sales strategies accordingly. It is Raincoast's goal as well to use that information and gap analysis to improve book sales in the Canadian market, when traditionally a publisher would most likely have given up on it after it fails to do well in the first season.

According to Broadhurst (2011), one of the factors why Raincoast made the commitment to push *The Naked Roommate* on a long-term basis was due to the data-driven nature of Sourcebooks and its proactive communication of the American data findings and reports to Raincoast. Within eleven months that Raincoast had been with Sourcebooks, the Canadian book distributor had already recorded a 70 percent increase in sales across all titles compared to Sourcebooks' previous distributor (Broadhurst 2011). Sell-through data analysis was an integral part of this accomplishment.

III.
CASE STUDY:
THE NAKED ROOMMATE
BY HARLAN COHEN

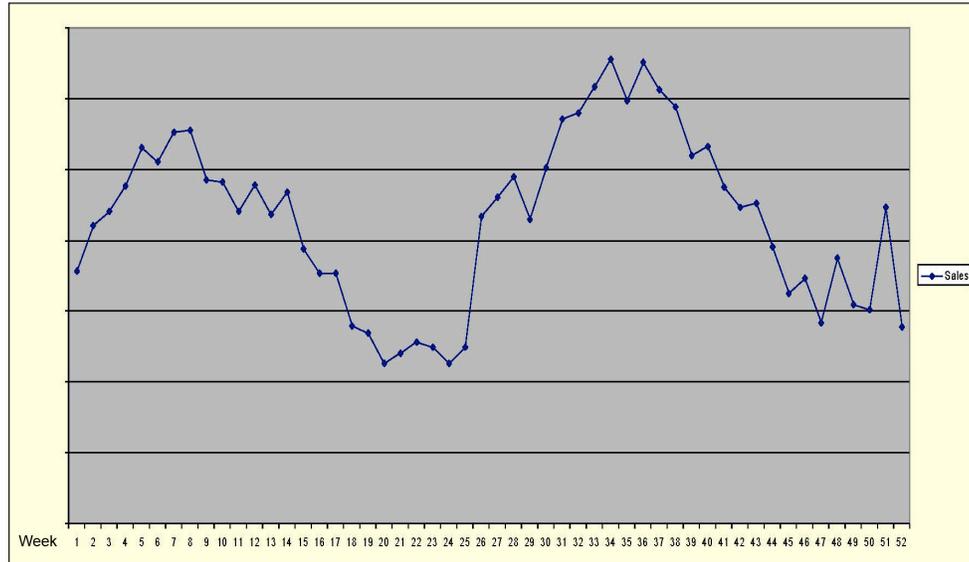
**THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SOURCEBOOKS COLLEGE
VERTICAL**

If anyone was looking for a college guide in America, he or she would most likely come across the number one college guide in the country, *Fiske Guide to Colleges*. The partnership that began ten years ago between Sourcebooks and former *New York Times* education editor, Edward B. Fiske, has gone on to grow Sourcebooks into a leading college reference trade publisher (Rosen 2003).

Fiske Guide to Colleges was published by Random House for twenty years before Sourcebooks picked it up in 2001 to publish the eighteenth edition. The book did decently well with Random House and was the number six college guide in the country at the time (Rosen 2003). Nonetheless, after conducting some market research on its own, Sourcebooks felt that it could give the book a better marketing push in the broader trade market (Stocke 2011). Todd Stocke (2011) describes how Sourcebooks had talked to several college counsellors at the time and found that even though the *Fiske Guide* was not the number one college guide in the country, it was the one that was most recommended by counsellors. The publisher wanted to fix that disconnect, and eventually managed to accomplish that goal. It succeeded in tripling sales in just two years, making it the number one college guide in the country in 2003 with the its 2004-2005 edition (Sourcebooks, “Study Aids Overview” 2011, 6; Stocke 2011).

What was crucial to the extraordinary success of the book was the market research and data analysis that Sourcebooks conducted to identify the prime time periods to promote the book. The biggest sales for college guides were during the late summer before the fall semester began, but there was also a sales spike earlier in the year when early admission letters went out to the student prospects (Rosen 2003). Figure 1 shows the sales cycle for college guides in a year.

Figure 1: Sales Cycle of College Guides



(Source: Sourcebooks, “Study Aids Overview” 2011, 14)

After Sourcebooks identified the key time periods, it “reformatted the book, revisualized it and repackaged it” (Rosen 2003). The publisher updated the book’s design, made the trim size slightly bigger, tweaked how the content was delivered to be “more browsable” (Stoche 2011), changed the publication schedule to be released earlier in June, set up author appearances in media, aggressively pursued drive-time radio advertising in mid-April when rejection and acceptance letters went out, and used traditional marketing methods of offering co-op for end-caps, front-of-store and window displays to “help persuade booksellers that the book could outperform its previous track record” (Rosen 2003). Its efforts paid off, placing the book as the bestselling college guide in many independent bookstores (Rosen 2003).

With the success of the *Fiske Guide to Colleges*, the publisher quickly identified college-bound titles to be one of the key verticals and categories that it wanted to own. Within the BISAC (Book Industry Standards and Communications) subject category system, the main “Study Aids” category can be generally divided into two subcategories: college guides and test prep (Sourcebooks, “Study Aids Overview” 2011, 2). The college guides subcategory includes three groups of books: one group consists of guides that provide information about different colleges to help with choosing a school; another are books that offer advice on successfully getting into college; and a third group of college survival and success books that help with the transition into college life.

While there are a number of college guides devoted to help with choosing the best college, Sourcebooks noticed a hole in the market for the subcategory consisting of books relating to the college transition and survival experience for both students

and parents. There is a substantial market base for this subcategory: a 2009 survey by the Associated Press and mtvU revealed that 85 percent of undergraduates experience stress on a daily basis (quoted in Shatkin 2010). This percentage has been growing every year and has been accompanied by increased visits by students to mental health and counselling services (Shatkin 2010). For parents of college-bound students, a study by NYU Child Study Center found that the transition to college can be a stressful time in a parent's life: "The departure is a significant milestone in the life of a family and ushers in a time of separation and transition, requiring an adjustment on the part of parents, the college-bound teenager and the whole family" (Shatkin 2010). Parents can feel a sense of loss from the separation, feel left out when they find they are "no longer needed in the same ways," and must relinquish control to let their children make their own decisions (Shatkin 2010).

When Sourcebooks identifies a possible subcategory, its practice is to conduct market research by bringing in all the books in the subcategory to study their content and sales numbers (Stocke 2011). Through its research, it discovered that the two good books in this subcategory at the time was *Letting Go* by Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger, and *Been There, Should've Done That* by Suzette Tyler. However, Sourcebooks found that no publisher was really hitting it out of the ballpark. That was when it decided to publish Harlan Cohen's *The Naked Roommate* as its first book in this subcategory of the college transition and survival experience.

ABOUT HARLAN COHEN

Harlan Cohen is one of the most widely read and respected advice columnists in America for people in their teens and twenties (Sourcebooks.com, "Harlan Cohen"; APB, "Harlan Cohen"). His areas of expertise include teen issues, college life, parenting, pregnancy, dating, relationships, sex, rejection, risk taking, leadership, and women's issues (Cohen, "About"). His syndicated "Help Me, Harlan!" advice column is distributed by King Features Syndicate and is read by millions of readers in local daily and college newspapers across the US and internationally. Cohen is also a professional speaker who has toured over four hundred high schools and college campuses to give talks to students, parents and educational professionals. He has appeared on television and radio programs across North America.

Cohen began writing at Indiana University's school newspaper, the *Indiana Daily Student*. After interning with *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* in the summer of 1995 and meeting a fellow writer who started an advice column in college, Cohen decided he wanted to pen his own advice column. When he returned to Indiana University, he launched his advice column, *Help Me, Harlan!* He initially started the column by writing his own questions and answers, but soon after, letters from individuals with real questions started to come in. He consulted experts to help with his replies, and provided responses with honesty, humour and practical help. His

approachable tone and style turned the column into an instant success on campus. King Features Syndicate picked it up for distribution in 2002 and the column eventually spread across the country and overseas. Cohen has since contributed to such publications as *The Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition*, *The New York Times*, *Real Simple*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Psychology Today*, *Seventeen*, and *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul III*.

In time, Cohen delved into authoring his own books and is now a *New York Times* bestselling author in the US. His first book, *Campus Life Exposed: Advice from the Inside*, was published by Peterson's in August 2000 (Amazon.com). He went on to write a number of books published by Sourcebooks, *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College* in March 2005, *Dad's Pregnant Too!* in June 2008, and *The Happiest Kid on Campus* in May 2010. His newest book, *Naked Dating: Five Steps to Finding the Love of Your Life (While Fully Clothed and Totally Sober)*, will be released in April 2012 by St. Martin's Press.

Cohen is a featured speaker every fall at college freshman orientations, touring all across North America campuses (Sourcebooks, "Study Aids Overview" 2011, 45; Stocke 2011). Online, he devotes time to build a strong web presence through regular activity on his websites, blog and social media. He incorporates interactivity into his line of books by creating websites that go hand-in-hand with them—*HappiestKidonCampus.com*, *NakedRoommate.com*, and *DadsPregnant.com*—in addition to running *HelpMeHarlan.com*.

He has since gone on to start social awareness projects to further involve and help his audience. He is the founder of Rejection Awareness Week and president of The International Risk-Taking Project, both of which seek to help those who struggle with relationship rejection (Cohen, "About").

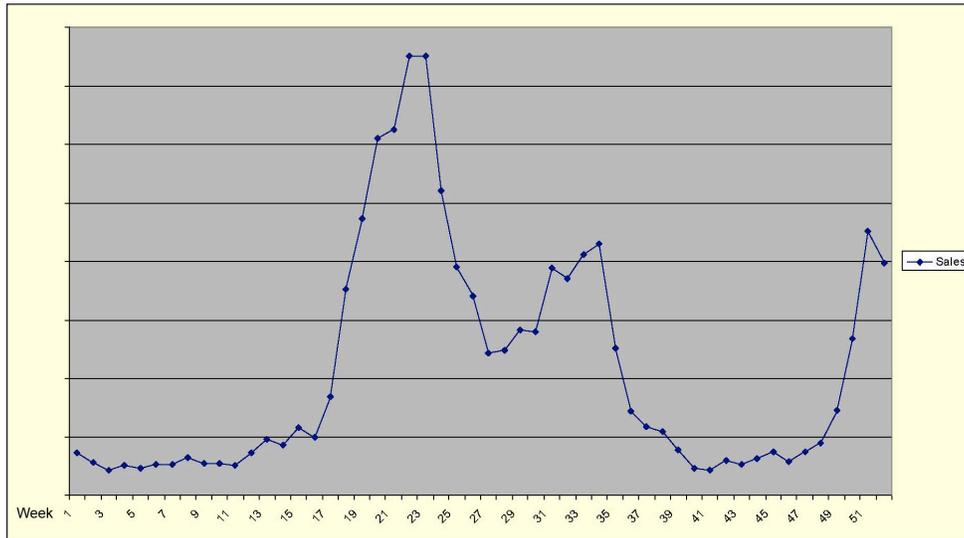
SELLING *THE NAKED ROOMMATE* IN THE UNITED STATES

Sell-through data was "extraordinarily integral" (Stocke 2011) to the release of the first edition of *The Naked Roommate*. Through market research and data analysis, Sourcebooks realized that there were not many comparable titles for sales reps and booksellers to look at. While *Letting Go* and *Been There, Should've Done That* did pretty well in sales, Sourcebooks felt that Cohen's book could deliver content that was different. *Letting Go* catered to the emotional experience of parents dealing with letting go of their kids as the kids leave for school; *Been There, Should've Done That* catered to the college-bound students but the content was delivered as a collection of quotes and one-liners from real students. The bestselling competing title, *How to Survive Your Freshman Year*, was released in 2004 and the content is delivered as a collection of quotes from former and current students as well.

While all of these books were effective, the editorial team at Sourcebooks felt that *The Naked Roommate* could stand apart from the existing books because of Cohen's appealing tone of voice and expert advice. Cohen comes across more like a "big brother" whose advice students would listen to, rather than an authority figure giving advice in an adult tone of voice (Stocke 2011). Cohen is personable, funny, sincere, and approachable, and he can bring to the table a vast amount of experience from interacting directly with students on a regular basis in person and online. Even though reading real quotes and stories from students offers honest insight and can be very helpful, sometimes the quotes contradict one another and might leave the reader still undecided on certain concerns at the end of the book. Sourcebooks felt that there is also value in having an author drive the book, filter through those stories, help students make sense of the information, and guide them in making wise decisions (Stocke 2011). This is what Cohen has been doing well for some time as a syndicated advice columnist. He "combines solid expert advice with fun and honest stories, quotes and advice direct from the students" (Sourcebooks, "Study Aids Overview" 2011, 46). Furthermore, *The Naked Roommate* also covers a wide variety of academic and social topics, such as dealing with roommates, dorm issues, relationships, laundry, cafeteria food, homesickness, social media, succeeding in class, studying, making friends, and more.

The first year that Sourcebooks tried to sell the book, it had to firstly convince booksellers that the book would fill a hole in the market as there were not many compatible books at the time. When the booksellers got on board, Sourcebooks then had to convince them on the timing on when to display the books for in-store promotion. There was a preconceived notion in the industry that back-to-school selling worked best in August, right before school starts in September (Stocke 2011). However, after mapping out the week-by-week sales data from BookScan of competitive titles, Sourcebooks noticed that while sales did spike during the traditional back-to-school selling period in August, there was an even bigger spike in sales during graduation in the spring, from mid-May to mid-June. Figure 2 shows the sales cycle for the subcategory of college survival and success books.

Figure 2: Sales Cycle of College Survival and Success Books



(Source: Sourcebooks, “Study Aids Overview” 2011, 54)

With this revelation from data analysis, Sourcebooks tried to convince booksellers that the real money to be made for the book was during graduation. This notion was something even the internal staff at Sourcebooks needed to be convinced of as well (Stocke 2011). The data revealed that graduation sales actually started its small build in March. Thus publication date for *The Naked Roommate* was set on March 16, 2005, and booksellers were persuaded to stock up in March to avoid missing out on a fair slice of book sales. Stocke (2011) described that as difficult as it was to persuade booksellers to change their notion of back-to-school selling when the traditional method has proven to work for years—and it still does—it was really the data that provided a strong, convincing argument for graduation sales.

Sourcebooks did not hit it out of the ballpark for the first edition although sales were fairly decent. This was because retailers did not stock enough of the books. When weekly sell-through percentages started to rise at a surprisingly fast rate—15 percent to 25 percent—the publisher and retailers started to realize that more books had to be ordered quickly (Stocke 2011). Unfortunately, they were unable to keep up with the demand.

In the second year of publication, the sales reps at Sourcebooks had to be aggressive once again at selling the book to the buyers by showing that the publisher believed in the book and was going to promote and market the book in a big way. There was huge potential for bookstores to do much better than the first year with the book. This was also a difficult process because the book was no longer on the frontlist, so the marketing department had to produce numerous special promotions and flyers to remind sales reps and booksellers that these books needed to be pushed in an aggressive way to get onto the in-store graduation displays (Stocke 2011).

This gradual build went on for all four editions, each one building on the previous edition. The subsequent editions of *The Naked Roommate* have been published every two years. Table 4.1 shows the publication dates in the US.

Table 4.1: Publication dates for *The Naked Roommate* in the United States

EDITIONS	US PUBLICATION DATES
1st Edition (ISBN: 9781402203374)	March 16, 2005
2nd Edition (ISBN: 9781402209093)	March 1, 2007
3rd Edition (ISBN: 9781402219016)	April 1, 2009
4th Edition (ISBN: 9781402253461)	April 1, 2011

(Source: Amazon.com)

The sales of *The Naked Roommate* grew with every edition. The sell-through numbers for the third edition showed a 46.15 percent increase from the second edition (Sourcebooks, January to March Titles presentation slides 2010). While the growth was encouraging, Sourcebooks still saw potential for more growth for the fourth edition and planned a big marketing and publicity push once again.

US Marketing and Publicity Campaign for the Fourth Edition

The fourth edition of *The Naked Roommate* was marketed with a strong campaign. This section provides a comprehensive summary of how the book's fourth edition was marketed and promoted since its release in April 2011. A detailed list of all aspects of the campaign is provided in Appendix A.

The audience that was identified for the book was college-bound students, their parents, educational professionals, and naturally, the author's existing fan base. The positioning for the book is described as follows:

"The Naked Roommate, the #1 bestselling book on college life with over 200,000 copies sold, is now completely updated and revised. Harlan Cohen is the top voice on college life, and through his speaking engagements, college tour, music, and website, has reached thousands of students helping them find college success." (Sourcebooks, Data Sheet, 2010)

Sourcebooks summarized the appealing qualities of the books into three key selling points for marketing efforts. Firstly, it was a national bestseller, number

one in the college life category with sales climbing every year. It had already sold almost 250,000 copies before entering its fourth edition (Sourcebooks, “Study Aids Overview” 2011, 47). Secondly, the author’s platform is extensive, with active social media participation and regular campus tours year-round. Thirdly, the book has a comprehensive line of accompanying products such as calendars, planners, a First Year Experience (FYE) workbook, and a parents’ guide, all creating in *The Naked Roommate* a “comprehensive off-to-college brand” (Sourcebooks, Data Sheet, 2010). The book and its accompanying products were also appealing gift items. These were all strong points on which to build a marketing campaign.

Publicity Goals and Targets

The publicity goals established for the campaign were to secure national media coverage for Harlan Cohen. Sourcebooks wanted to secure appearances on at least one of the morning shows, cable news shows or late-night shows (Sourcebooks, “WAM Packet – March 17, 2011”). It also wanted to gain reviews of the book or feature Cohen in major national publications to build enough publicity to push it onto the *New York Times* bestseller list (Sourcebooks, “WAM Packet – March 17, 2011”).

To achieve these goals, the publicity efforts for *The Naked Roommate* was integrated with other college-bound titles on Sourcebooks’ list. Public relations events involved Cohen being part of a graduation panel that Sourcebooks put together to give back-to-school advice to college-bound students and their parents. Sourcebooks partnered with independent bookseller, Anderson’s Bookshop, to organize a series of panel discussions, called The College Insider Series, to provide opportunities for students and parents to engage with top experts in college lifestyle and college admissions (Sourcebooks.com, “Harlan Cohen and Christie Garton” 2011). Cohen appeared on such a panel with fellow Sourcebooks author, Christie Garton, on July 2011 and September 2011, and other authors such as Edward Fiske will also be featured in subsequent panels (Sourcebooks.com, “Harlan Cohen and Christie Garton” 2011).

Media publicity for the fourth edition included advertising, and mailing out advanced reading copies and press releases⁸ to several major television and radio talk shows, national magazines, large daily newspapers and back-to-school issues for reviews or features (Sourcebooks, January to March Titles presentation slides 2010).

Social media and the marketability of the author has been a key marketing tool for Cohen and his books. Cohen’s online presence is crucial to reaching out to

⁸ See Appendix B for the fourth edition US press release.

teens and those in their twenties who have grown up with the Internet and are surrounded by technology. Students can participate in discussion forums, sign up for *The NAKED Daily* newsletter, or become a “Naked Expert” on Cohen’s website. He regularly updates his blog and posts *Naked Minute* videos online. These videos are short quick tips and advice for questions that he has received from his audience. He is an active user of Facebook, Twitter (@HarlanCohen and @NakedRoommate), and YouTube. These online initiatives are a natural extension of his personality as someone who likes to connect with students directly and regularly (Stocke 2011). Additionally, he has continued to tour the country, visiting several high schools and bookstores from March to April, and college campuses from August to September of 2011 to interact with the students and offer advice (Sourcebooks, January to March Titles presentation slides 2010).

Marketing and Sales Promotions

Marketing efforts for *The Naked Roommate* included a Twitter and Facebook campaign for books within the *Sourcebooks College* category. Sourcebooks also marketed and promoted Cohen and his line of books at trade shows (Sourcebooks, January to March Titles presentation slides 2010). It engaged in aggressive pre- and post-tradeshow marketing with direct mail, email, and phone calls to the National Association of Student Personnel Administration (NASPA), First-Year Experience programs (FYE), Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO–I), National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) and National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). An email blast campaign was also targeted at parents of college bound high school students (Sourcebooks, “WAM Packet – June 16, 2011”).

The book was given a two-page spread in Sourcebooks’ Spring 2011 catalogue and a one-page spread in the Fall 2011 catalogue⁹ to communicate to retailers of its importance on the publisher’s list of titles. Sourcebooks also worked with some retailers to set up theme tables in the spring and end of summer, such as the ‘Dorm Essentials’ theme table at Barnes & Noble, and worked with online retailers such as Books-A-Million to do graduation and back-to-school promotions (Sourcebooks, “WAM Packet – March 17, 2011”). Sourcebooks also offered back-to-school promotions for the ebook edition of *The Naked Roommate* with other college-bound ebook titles for \$1.99 in August.

⁹ See Appendix C for the two catalogue features.

Section Conclusion

As a result of the comprehensive marketing campaign and sales promotion that Sourcebooks implemented, the fourth edition has been successful at achieving most of the goals that were set out in the beginning of the campaign. The most significant achievement was the book's appearance on the *New York Times* bestseller list at number fifteen on the Paperback Advice and Miscellaneous list, reflecting sales for the week ending May 21, 2011 (New York Times Company 2011).¹⁰ It was also number eight on the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* Paperback non-fiction bestsellers list, reflecting the sales for the Great Lakes Association, Upper Midwest Association and Book Sense for the week ending June 5. At the time of writing, Cohen has also been interviewed on radio as well as on television on *WGN Midday News* in June 2011 and *The Gayle King Show* in August 2011. All confirmed media coverage and public relations events for Cohen and *The Naked Roommate* are listed in Appendix E.

This is a reflection of the persistence of a publisher in its commitment to a book and its author, based on concrete market research and data analysis that brought about a strong editorial vision, marketing and promotions strategy. Sourcebooks' strategy, coupled with its close working relationship with the college and student counselling communities, revitalized the subcategory, and *The Naked Roommate* now sells twice the number of copies that the top books in the category sold prior to *The Naked Roommate's* release (Sourcebooks, "Study Aids Overview" 2011, 5).

SELLING THE NAKED ROOMMATE IN CANADA

Gap Analysis of US and Canadian Sell-Through Data

An analysis of the US and Canadian sell-through data for the fourth edition of *The Naked Roommate* by Raincoast's senior sales and marketing executives and Data Analyst revealed a stark gap between sales in the two countries. The year-to-date sell-through data retrieved from BookNet at the end of July 2011, before the back-to-school promotions in August, showed that Canadian sales was fifty-six times less than sales in the US, or 1.8 percent of US sales. That is a significant gap. According to Broadhurst (2011), anything under 4 percent is an unacceptable gap for Raincoast; it should be at least 6-7 percent, although even then it still requires an evaluation of strategies for that title.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the market size in the US is significantly bigger than that of Canada—the population in the US is nine times that

¹⁰ See Appendix D for the *New York Times* bestseller press release from Sourcebooks.

of Canada according to data from the US Census Bureau and Statistics Canada websites at the time of writing—so there will inevitably be a wide gap between the sell-through figures of both countries and explains why 6-7 percent of US sales would be considered an acceptable minimum percentage by Raincoast.

Comparing the university- and college-bound market sizes of both countries reveal an even greater difference in size. Based on statistics from the US National Center for Education Statistics (2010) shown in Table 4.2, the number of students enrolled in American colleges has been increasing every year, with 20.4 million students enrolled in 2009.

Table 4.2: Fall enrolments in degree-granting institutions in the United States

ENROLMENTS IN DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AS OF FALL					
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<i>Total</i>	17,487,000	17,759,000	18,248,000	19,103,000	20,428,000
<i>Full-time</i>	10,797,000	10,957,000	11,270,000	11,748,000	12,723,000
<i>Part-time</i>	6,690,000	6,802,000	6,978,000	7,355,000	7,705,000
<i>Increase from previous year</i>	—	1.6%	2.8%	4.7%	6.9%

(Source: NCES 2010)

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC 2011, 5) reports that almost 1.2 million students were enrolled in degree programs at Canadian universities in 2010. These numbers have been increasing every year as evident from statistics provided by Statistics Canada, shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: University enrolment in Canada

UNIVERSITY ENROLMENT IN CANADA						
	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2010
<i>Total</i>	1,021,521	1,050,225	1,066,905	1,072,488	1,112,370	1,174,200
<i>Full-time</i>	759,045	780,567	792,768	796,245	828,216	898,400
<i>Part-time</i>	262,473	269,658	274,140	276,240	284,154	275,800
<i>Increase from previous year</i>	—	2.8%	1.6%	0.4%	3.9%	5.6%

(Sources: Statistics Canada, n.d.; AUCC 2011)

While data for Canadian college enrolment for 2010 is not yet available, the numbers have remained over 600,000 for the past few years since 2004 according to Statistics Canada (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: College enrolment in Canada

COLLEGE ENROLMENT IN CANADA					
	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09
Total	608,388	605,925	611,832	626,514	605,316
Full-time	473,412	460,266	462,357	469,389	457,854
Part-time	134,979	145,656	149,472	157,125	147,459
Increase from previous year	—	-0.4%	1%	2.4%	-3.4%

(Source: Statistics Canada, n.d.)

The statistics in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show that over 1.7 million students were enrolled in Canadian universities and colleges in 2010. It means that Canadian enrolment is about twelve times less than the 20.4 million students enrolled in the US in 2010, or 8.5 percent of the US number, which is an even bigger difference than the national population size. Thus, the Canadian sales for university survival and success books will inevitably be limited by the significantly smaller number of Canadian university-bound students.

This scenario was no different from the performance of previous editions of the book in Canada. The total life sales of the first edition and second editions are not available in BookNet as the first edition was published before BookNet was launched and the second edition only shortly after.¹¹ According to BookNet and BookScan numbers, the total life sales for the third edition in Canada was only 1 percent of US sales. Normally, when the promotional campaign fails to sell more books, more resources would not be dedicated to push the title further. It would usually be left behind as there would be a whole new set of titles for the marketing and publicity departments to focus their efforts on. Despite three poor performances of the previous editions of *The Naked Roommate* in Canada, both Sourcebooks and Raincoast felt that there was still potential to keep trying to push the book in Canada. They both felt that the information gained from gap analysis, and the fact that the successful US marketing campaign had placed *The Naked*

¹¹ The first and second editions only had one or two stores reporting sales data to BookNet, compared to the 50-100 that reported when the third edition was in print and over 100 stores reporting for the fourth. Thus, the sell-through data is most likely not reliable for the first two editions.

Roommate on the *New York Times* bestseller list, could be extra fuel to create buzz for the book for future selling seasons.

The key piece of information obtained from data analysis by Sourcebooks—that the graduation season in the spring was the prime time for college transition and survival titles—would also be vital to Canadian sales. However, Canadian booksellers are also not accustomed to that idea yet, a similar situation that Sourcebooks had experienced when selling the first two editions (Broadhurst 2011). Canadian booksellers still possess a traditional sense of back-to-school selling which consists of discounted dictionaries and college guides that sell in August (Broadhurst 2011). Raincoast sales reps therefore need to do the same thing that Sourcebooks sales reps had to do: persuade booksellers to start thinking about back-to-school earlier during graduation season in the spring, and to complement their list of back-to-school titles college life books such as *The Naked Roommate*.

However, this was difficult for Raincoast to accomplish within the first six months of its relationship with Sourcebooks. Raincoast became the distributor of Sourcebooks titles in January 2011. When Raincoast sales reps were selling for the Spring 2011 season, booksellers were not open to stocking up on Cohen's book. In fact, the booksellers were hesitant to stock many of Sourcebooks' titles because the publisher was still not a familiar name to Canadian booksellers. Raincoast sales reps reported that for this past Spring 2011 season, they had to spend the time introducing Canadian booksellers to the concept of Sourcebooks as a publisher (Broadhurst 2011). Thus, it was difficult to push *The Naked Roommate* at the time. BookNet numbers show that not many books were sold this spring. The graduation feature in the May 2011 issue of Raincoast's *Titlewave Newsletter* entitled "Good Luck Grads!" and the "Gifts for Grads and Books for Back-to-School"¹² spring promotion to booksellers were not successful, with only four stores participating in the promotion (Rich 2011).

With the problem and cause identified, Raincoast decided to place more resources to push *The Naked Roommate* for the fall 2011 and spring 2012 seasons. To start, Raincoast assigned its marketing intern to work on market research and publicity for the book in the summer. The research and publicity work that was carried out from May to September 2011 is described in the following section.

Canadian Marketing and Publicity for the Fourth Edition

The target audience in Canada for *The Naked Roommate* is similar to the US market. With guidance from Jamie Broadhurst and Raincoast publicist, Danielle Johnson, some initial background research was initiated for this project. One of the tasks was

¹² See Appendix F for Raincoast's spring 2011 graduation promotion.

to find hooks that would catch the attention of the Canadian media so that they will feature Harlan Cohen and his book. More time was devoted to reading through *The Naked Roommate* to pick out any information that would relate to the Canadian audience. Following that, research into statistics for Canadian universities and colleges was conducted. The results of this research are listed in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. The statistics show that the number of students enrolled in Canadian universities and colleges is growing every year. With the increasing rates of enrolment in Canadian universities and colleges, it means that issues of choosing a degree, excelling in classes, dealing with roommates, dating, finding friends, personal finances, sex, drugs and other mental, emotional and physical concerns that often arise in university life are affecting more and more Canadian young adults. These issues are becoming increasingly relevant in the Canadian context.

In a survey conducted by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations in 2009, it was found that more than 55 percent of Ontario's university professors and librarians believed that students are less prepared for university than even three years prior (Bell Media 2009). The survey received two thousand responses from twenty-two Ontario universities. The *Persistence in Post-Secondary Education in Canada* report also found from analyzing data from Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey that about 14 percent of first-year students drop out from university:

“The overall post-secondary drop-out rate was about 16 per cent, suggesting that those who are going to drop out, do so early on. The YITS followed 963,000 students who were 18 to 20-years-old in 2000 and participated in post-secondary education by 2005. Survey results from the students who left school suggest that they were already struggling with meeting deadlines, academic performance and study behaviour in their first year.” (Bell Media 2009)

With this information, Raincoast can pitch to the Canadian media that university life is vastly different from high school, and first-year students are finding it a challenge to adapt to the change. If a student's first year in university also involves moving to a new city and living in campus dorms, the change can be even more acute. Harlan Cohen and his books are thus a valuable resource to precisely these students.

Publicity Efforts

Harlan Cohen was scheduled to visit Canada for two days in September 2011. Raincoast's plan was to try to build publicity around his visit for the back-to-school selling season. The goal was to try to secure some interviews on national morning television interviews in September, plan a college radio interview tour, and pitch

for reviews with national newspapers, smaller commuter papers and weeklies in major cities, and university newspapers.

Firstly, to formulate a pitch, a press release and sample interview questions needed to be written and compiled. If a publisher is not in Canada, it is a usual practice for Raincoast to request the original press release used by the publisher and then “Canadianize” the content for the local media. For *The Naked Roommate*, the task of editing the Sourcebooks’ media release for the Canadian market was assigned to the intern. Appendix F shows a copy of the media release that was sent out to the Canadian media. The main changes implemented were editing the word ‘colleges’ to read ‘universities and colleges’ because unlike the US, the word ‘colleges’ does not account for both universities and colleges in Canada; and including extra information that would appeal to Canadian audiences. Sample interview questions that might appeal to the local media were also included.

Next, a list of media contacts was compiled using Google and a cloud-based marketing and public relations software called Vocus. The contacts that were selected for the publicity mailing are listed in Appendix H. The seventy-three contacts include newspapers (national, city, and university), weeklies, magazines, university radio stations, and national radio talk shows that feature topics on higher education, lifestyle, advice, and parenthood. The publicity mailings went out in June, which included a copy of the book and a press release. After two weeks, a follow-up email was sent to the radio contacts to check in for interest in setting up interviews with Cohen. The email contained sample topics that Cohen would be able to discuss in an interview, as listed in Appendix J.

As a result of Raincoast’s publicity initiatives, an article by Joanne Laucius published by Postmedia News ran in a number of newspapers online across Canada in August, such as *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Montreal Gazette* and *The Windsor Star*. A full list of newspapers that ran the article is provided in Appendix H. The article was also published in the print versions of *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Ottawa Citizen*. It features a question-and-answer session with Harlan offering advice to university students.

During Cohen’s two days in Canada at the beginning of a new school year in September, he met with students in two cities—Windsor, Ontario, and Sherbrook, Quebec—and did two radio interviews. On September 4, he held a presentation for the new students at the University of Windsor, more than one thousand of whom just moved into the campus residence (Pearce 2011). CBC Windsor interviewed Harlan on that same day (Johnson, “The Naked Roommate” 2011). The Cartier Residence Hall at the University of Windsor also included a brief segment called “Things to Think About Before and After You Get Here” adapted from Cohen’s book in its welcome letter to new students (University of Windsor 2011). The next day on September 5, Cohen spoke to the students at Bishop’s University in Sherbrook, Quebec. During that same week, the University of Manitoba’s radio sta-

tion, 101.5 CJUM-FM, pre-taped an interview with Cohen to air for back-to-school on its *Wake Up Winnipeg* segment (Johnson, “*The Naked Roommate*” 2011).

Marketing and Sales Promotions

For the July and August back-to-school promotion, Indigo decided to give the title a chance. Using co-op support, Raincoast worked with Indigo to promote *The Naked Roommate* in-store for the back-to-school season with a prominent front-of-store placement as part of Indigo’s PLUM reward points promotion. The table ran for six weeks starting August 2, 2011. Indigo was initially hesitant to buy in on Cohen’s book because the third edition did not sell well when it previously tried to promote it for back-to-school (MacDougall 2011). However, after communicating the promising expectations of the book to the Indigo buyer by showing the buyer the US sales data of the new edition and its huge potential, Indigo decided to try it again with the new edition with co-op support from Raincoast.

The results indicated that Indigo’s back-to-school promotion was “mildly successful” (MacDougall 2011). Due to the fact that the front-of-store promotion tied in with media coverage of the book through print reviews, online reviews, radio interviews, and Cohen’s visit to Canada, there was a small increase in sales during the last two weeks of August. The week’s sell-through reported by BookNet on August 28 was the highest year-to-date, and September 4 recorded the second highest. The sell-through was not bad, but it was not good either. Even though those two weeks registered as the highest sales year-to-date for the book in Canada, the total year-to-date sell-through at the end of September 2011 was still less than 3 percent compared to US sales. Of the total number of books that Indigo took for the back-to-school promotion, just over 50 percent sold through, which is not an ideal statistic (MacDougall 2011).

Section Conclusion

The marketing, publicity, and sales promotion plans for the 2011 back-to-school selling season did not yield much success in numbers, only a small spike in sales. However, it is a good start in a process that is going to take some time to achieve results. The process will involve having to familiarize Canadian booksellers of Sourcebooks as a publisher, reminding booksellers repetitively of the sell-through data and publicity efforts, and convincing them to rethink traditional back-to-school selling to encompass spring graduation selling as well.

Gap analysis has helped Raincoast in identifying the problem, then in pushing for the Indigo promotion. Raincoast will use data analysis in 2012 to continue to push

sales for *The Naked Roommate* in conjunction with all the titles within the broader college guide category. Broadhurst describes Raincoast's future plans this way:

“Raincoast will use our multiple sales and marketing channels through 2012, including a weekly bookseller newsletter reaching 1,500 Canadian industry members, to hammer home the message that the back-to-school window is bigger and longer than retailers may think. And sales data is a key part of this ongoing campaign. The vertical that Sourcebooks has identified and which is growing—post-secondary students and their parents—goes far beyond Harlan's books. We can reach this vertical in Canada, but it will take resources, patience and persistence. Sometimes the most important impact of sales data is the stark presentation of a gap between what is and what could be. We see the potential for this category and we are going to close the gap.” (Broadhurst 2011)

Particularly for *The Naked Roommate*, if there were to be a fifth edition in the future, Raincoast would certainly position and market it as a big frontlist title and do an aggressive push for the graduation season as well as the back-to-school season.

IV. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

A SUCCESSFUL VERTICAL STRATEGY

Sourcebooks' business model focuses on developing vertical niches and creating online communities in the process. A vertical market is one where “the market for a good or service is confined to a segment constituting relatively few prospective customers (is narrow) but within which most of the customers need the item (is deep)” (BusinessDictionary.com). In contrast to expanding horizontally by targeting a diverse, mass audience, a vertical strategy targets a niche community based on specialized needs and interests.

In a time when new media and technology are evolving, publishers need to reevaluate their business models to best utilize the technologies that are available to keep their businesses thriving. Mike Shatzkin, a respected blogger of the publishing industry, is a strong proponent of publishers exploring ‘verticals’ as he believes that it is how the industry has to adjust to adapt in this digital age. Shatzkin posits that “the horizontal and format-specific product-centric media of the 20th century are inexorably yielding to the vertical and format-agnostic community-centric delivery environment for content that will soon predominate” (2010). In the context of the changing marketplace, Shatzkin (2008) believes that the future of publishing is in vertically integrated niche publishing. He predicts that there will be a rise in vertically integrated niche publishers that focus on a particular subject or category, or a small number of them, and vertically expand the depth of these subjects through various media such as text (printed and electronic), audio, video, social media, and merchandise. Shatzkin (2008) recommends that publishers need to shift their focus from selling the book in its physical form, to being audience-centric, i.e. focusing on selling content that the audience desires or needs, regardless of format.

For a publisher to establish authority within niche communities, a strong presence in the digital environment is crucial and should complement a vertical editorial vision. Today, publishers are able to make direct connections with their audience and service them through multiple channels, new media, and social media tools. Marketing efforts that are focused on driving people to the niche community website or social media accounts that are regularly updated can create a place where people can convene and participate—an active community drives the market through word-of-mouth, in both the online and physical realms, and is a potential revenue-generating opportunity.

Sourcebooks is a good example of such a vertical niche publisher, having built niche audiences around a few specific subjects and categories, such as college guides, baby names, and romance fiction. It has also endeavored to publish in a

variety of formats, create dynamic specialized websites and online portals, and utilize social media. Shatzkin has named Sourcebooks' PoetrySpeaks.com as an example of a "real vertical portal" (2009). Sourcebooks has not only been successful at publishing poetry using different formats in print and compact-discs, but also developed a website which brings together the community of poets and poetry lovers, keeping them connected online. Shatzkin (2009) touts this as an excellent method of providing a service to the reading community—not trying to sell you something—where people can celebrate their love for poetry by posting, critiquing, sharing, and selling poetry. With this model, Sourcebooks generates revenue by selling poetry content and tickets to readings and online performances, but Shatzkin (2009) proposes that it could potentially capitalize further by selling premium memberships to access more content.

Using a similar vertical expansion model and being audience-specific, Sourcebooks has created a similar online community for its college-bound books. It has created a separate section on its website called *Sourcebooks College* which consolidates all its college-bound books. Categories of books include those for test preparation, college search, college survival and success. This is part of the new education division, Sourcebooks EDU, that the publisher recently launched to manage its "biggest existing initiatives, including the leading college-bound publishing program, a *Naked Roommate* first year experience program, and MyMaxScore.com, and online SAT/ACT test prep solution" (Sourcebooks.com, "New Education Division" 2011). Its mission for this category is "to help students find the right college, support the application and admissions process, including test prep, and successfully transition students into college" (Sourcebooks.com, "New Education Division" 2011). Through this platform, Sourcebooks hopes to provide convenient, solutions-oriented content from top experts in the field through innovative and engaging ways to the community of students, parents, and educators.

The vision and mission for Sourcebooks EDU is a key step in building a thriving and active niche community and strengthening the brand of Sourcebooks as a leading provider of content for college-bound students, right up there with competing publishers such as Princeton Review, Barron's, College Board, Kaplan, Peterson's, and Spark (Sourcebooks, "Study Aids Overview" 2011, 3). The major brands that Sourcebooks has developed in the Study Aids BISAC category are *Fiske* (college guides and essay prep), *U.S. News* (law and medical college guides), *The Naked Roommate* (college survival and success), *Gruber* (test prep), and *MyMaxScore* (test prep). Under the Sourcebooks EDU umbrella, Sourcebooks has also begun to develop a line of financial aid books that offers help on how to manage money and finance the cost of going to college (Stocke 2011; Sourcebooks.com, "Sourcebooks Adds Financial Aid Resources" 2011). This is a key area in which to expand vertically as financing higher education is a source of daily stress for nearly one in three college students and their families (Shatzkin 2010) and cited as "the most challenging aspect of the college process, according to a recent survey of guidance counselors" (Sourcebooks.com, "Sourcebooks Adds Financial Aid Resources" 2011).

Over the next few years, Sourcebooks intends to continue to expand its vertical platforms. Raccah explains:

“...as the market changes, we have to continue building the infrastructure to accommodate digital, both from an architecture and an innovation point of view.” (quoted in *Publishers Weekly* 2011)

“Over the next five years, we believe that building vertical platforms will make an enormous difference to our company. For some of our authors, there’s a very real new set of opportunities that we are creating for them—new platforms, new models, new ways to reach readers. It is (I think) going to provide some significant revenue streams down the road.” (quoted in *Publishers Weekly* 2011)

“And I think you can expect publishers to have much broader relationships—with retailers, digital partners, affinity communities, authors, agents, multimedia resources, and other content providers among them. You can expect us to be “publishing” far more than just printed books and ebooks.” (quoted in *Publishers Weekly* 2011)

As such, Sourcebooks is moving forward with a format-agnostic mindset and focused on building an authoritative brand reputation within its niches by delivering quality content through the use of multiple media formats and channels to reach its audience. Particularly for Sourcebooks EDU, this division plans to make its online tools more easily accessible and deliver content using different formats such as video, webinars, seminars, books, interactive ebooks, and software tools (Sourcebooks.com, “Sourcebooks Adds Financial Aid Resources” 2011). However, Sourcebooks is not the only brand. Its authors are also promoted as brands. Edward Fiske, Harlan Cohen and Gary Gruber are prime examples. The publisher has helped its authors extend their brands from one title to full lines of books. It has not only done so in the Study Aids category, but also in a number of others as well.

Sales data analysis has been integral to Sourcebooks’ business model. Its method of using sales data not only as a “weapon for creativity” to develop a unique editorial vision that encompasses multi-niches and deepens its vertical platforms, but also to aggressively pursue successful sell-in and improve sell-through, is commendable.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE COLLEGE VERTICAL IN THE CANADIAN MARKET

While these strategies have been successful for Sourcebooks to push sales of *The Naked Roommate* in the American market, it has yet to be seen if they can likewise help sales in the Canadian market. Raincoast has identified that there is a problem with seriously under-performing sales for *The Naked Roommate* in Canada, and have plans to push the book aggressively in future seasons based on gap analysis. Time will tell if those plans will be successful.

As previously discussed, the market size for Canadian university- and college-bound students is much smaller than that of the US—about 8.5 percent of the US. Bearing this in mind, perhaps a realistic goal for Raincoast to close the gap could be to push Canadian sales up to 7–8 percent of US sales as that would be a close reflection of the difference in the size of the market in both countries.

Further research or focus groups could also be conducted to canvas the opinions of Canadian parents who are going through the process of sending their children to university or college, and how the students adjust in their first year. That information could better relate to the local audience when used for marketing purposes.

In the future, perhaps Raincoast could consider targeting other university publications that are non-campus-specific, such as the Toronto-based *Faze Magazine*, which is the largest paid circulation magazine for youth ages 12 to 24 in Canada with the “annual Back-to-School Issue hitting 500,000 copies” (Faze, “The Faze Story”). *Campus Life Magazine* is another Toronto-based magazine with a circulation of 100,000 that reaches more than forty campuses across Canada (Campus Intercept, “Media”). It is a national student lifestyle magazine, both print and online, “representing the voice of Canadian post-secondary students” (Campus Intercept, “Media”) and a widely distributed campus publication in Canada. *Campus Life Magazine* is part of the larger brand of Campus Intercept, which is a youth marketing specialist that offers “specially tailored marketing solutions to clients who wish to reach Canada’s student population” (Nicholson 2007). Working with Campus Intercept to promote *The Naked Roommate* through advertising, media reviews, or interviews could be a good opportunity to increase the book’s sell-through in Canada.

However, the high cost of magazine advertising and collaborating with such marketing companies as Campus Intercept can be beyond what most publishers can afford. As discussed in the beginning of Chapter One, books have a short shelf life, each with its own personality competing with thousands of different books every year, which can require a customized marketing plan for each individual title (L. Shatzkin 1982, 3). This characteristic of books is unlike many other consumer businesses where their lines of products comprise of fewer, more individually distinct items sold at higher price points, making it easier for these businesses to

justify a long-term investment of marketing funds towards cultivating lifelong customers. For publishers, it would be more difficult to justify spending on costly marketing initiatives such as advertising which can require multiple impressions to be effective. In this case, Raincoast would have to run a thorough cost-benefit analysis and decide if advertising in niche publications such as *Faze Magazine* and *Campus Life Magazine* would be cost-effective in terms of raising sales within a feasible marketing budget.

Some presence at national student trade shows and events might be helpful as well—similar to what Sourcebooks did in its US campaign—such as at the Student Life Expo, which is a large national post-secondary education and lifestyle event in Canada for graduating high school students. As Raincoast does not sell directly to consumers, perhaps collaborating with its retail partners—for example, using co-op support to buy a table—could be a viable option. Nonetheless, Raincoast would once again need to carry out a cost-benefit analysis to factor in the exhibitor’s cost of entry into such trade shows.

A less costly plan would be to engage in online marketing. One major benefit of the digital age is that the impact of Cohen’s active online presence and Sourcebooks EDU’s online initiatives know no national bounds and can be helpful for connecting with the Canadian audience as well. It will, however, be limited by the extent to which the content is catered specifically to the American audience as opposed to encompassing a wider market.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR OTHER BOOK CATEGORIES AND PUBLISHING SCENARIOS

How could a small publisher without a large budget compete with larger companies like Sourcebooks and Raincoast who have more resources to invest time and money in data analysis? In an article by Peter Grant (2006) in the *Literary Review of Canada*, he looked at how Chris Anderson’s long-tail theory¹³ can be applied to the Canadian book market to benefit Canadian publishers and Canadian-authored books. He reported this statistic:

“Of the new trade [titles] published in Canada in 2004, only 36.5 percent were by Canadian authors. But when it comes to trade titles that were reprinted in 2004, the percentage of Canadian-authored titles rose to 75 percent. That suggests that the Canadian-authored books have shorter

¹³ The long-tail theory is the idea that outside of the few money-making blockbusters, the aggregate of non-hits and obscure titles made up of thousands of niches—the Long Tail—is a substantial revenue-generating opportunity as well (Anderson 2004).

initial print runs, a longer shelf life and more frequent reprints, distinguishing features of the long-tail effect.” (Grant 2006)

This statistic means that in the Canadian market, where the majority of books are foreign import titles, Canadian-authored books can have the potential to be pushed for a longer term, beyond the initial weeks of the books’ release. Sell-through data analysis could be used to drive marketing and promotional decisions for reprint editions in the longer term to encourage sell-in.

However, the statistics published in Grant’s article were reported prior to the formation of BookNet Canada and it is unclear where he retrieved that data. The question of whether the number of reprint editions of Canadian-authored trade titles significantly exceeds the number of newly published ones remains to be answered conclusively with relevant current data from BookNet.

Even if the statistics published in Grant’s article were true, the problem for small publishers is in the ability to finance long-term promotions of old titles, as well as cover the cost of subscription to sell-through reporting. To cover the sell-through subscription rate in Canada, BookNet’s Group Buy Plan for up to ten small independent presses could be an option to consider. Promoting old titles will be difficult because resources will need to be devoted to the bulk of new titles that are released each publishing season. One solution might be in exploring a vertical editorial strategy, as discussed earlier in this chapter, which is what Sourcebooks has developed. Trade publishers can work towards becoming multi-niche publishers, focusing on bringing in-depth and rich content to the communities they represent (M. Shatzkin 2008). A vertical editorial strategy allows books within the same category—frontlist or backlist—to be promoted together as a collection. The books will cater to multiple needs on different levels within the same category, which can push the long-tail titles over a longer period of time.

The topic of having a vertical editorial strategy begs the question of where literary fiction fits in the discussion. While categories of genre fiction such as science fiction or romance are easily delineated into individual vertical platforms, literary fiction is more broad scale in subject matter. Nonetheless, the category could potentially stand on its own as a vertical, differentiated from genre fiction. Can sell-through data analysis help with sales in literary fiction, or would it merely homogenize and “dumb down” literary quality as writers like Stephen Henighan fear? Henighan’s (2011) sentiments, as briefly touched on in Chapter One, appear to be an over-simplification of the use of sell-through data. Regarding this issue, Pat Holt, former book editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and now the writer of the online book industry column, *Holt Uncensored*, responded this way back in 2002:

“BookScan has a lot to tell us when it’s used the right way, but we don’t want to have to be limited by something that records only sales. Publishers are the caretakers of literature, that’s how we get new writ-

ing, new ideas. If you publish for trends, it's just as bad as Hollywood. Majority rules does not have an equivalent in literature." (quoted in Dreher 2002)

Holt's point about using sell-through data in the right way is an important one. Sell-through reporting services can help publishers make informed, sustainable publishing decisions so that they can continue to afford to bring unique, alternative and high quality literary voices forward. Sell-through data can be another tool used to foster these voices in an analogy bookselling environment as described in Chapter One, whereby comparisons can be made between a book whose subject matter or author's style of writing are akin to that of previously published titles with healthy sell-through numbers.

C O N C L U S I O N

There is no question that there has been a commodification of books and a growing commercialization of the publishing business that is numbers- and profit-driven. The development of digital technologies and new media channels over the past thirty years have caused the business of bookselling to shift towards becoming less about the content and more about the sales expectations of a book. With traditional enthusiasm-based bookselling being taken over by analogy bookselling, sell-through data has been used to serve the solely profit-driven publishers to churn out repeat blockbusters due to the fact that there is a track record of comparable titles to back up those publishing decisions. Within some genres such as literary fiction, new authors may continue to be shunned for their own poor track record revealed by sell-through data. As such, the controversy over sell-through reporting continues to this day, ten years after the launch of Nielsen BookScan.

The persistent disagreements over sell-through reporting among publishing professionals require continued research into best practices in the industry for publishers to adapt to the changing digital environment. This report has striven up to this point to illuminate how data-driven publishing can be an effective model for the business, despite its naysayers. Beyond the immediate benefits of more accurate sales forecasting and better management of print runs and inventory, sales data has the potential to revolutionize all functions of a publishing house, positively affect both sell-in and sell-through decisions, and help publishers thrive.

Contrary to the traditional practice of cultivating mass audiences and finding manuscripts with blockbuster potential, sales data analysis can service publishers in cultivating strong vertical niche markets, creating a public awareness of smaller titles that have been overshadowed by blockbusters, and turning them into bestsellers in the long term. This is precisely what Sourcebooks has managed to achieve with a number of its categories, with its education division being a prime example. Sourcebooks uses sell-through data analysis to study existing content within numerous categories in order to improve it or offer something different. This application of data analysis can be a vital tool in shaping a publisher's editorial vision and vertically deepening the platforms within the categories that it publishes.

Data has also been an essential tool for shaping Sourcebooks' marketing and sales strategies. Sourcebooks uses the information it pulls from research and data analysis for effective analogy selling to retailers—"this book will sell better than this other book that did not do so well because of the extra or different content"—as it did with *The Naked Roommate*. The publisher's consistent use of data analysis and market research to achieve healthy sell-in, as well as to improve sell-through with targeted multi-channel marketing and promotional campaigns, have led to the growth of Harlan Cohen's book over four editions into a *New York Times* bestseller. Such publishers who are willing to think outside the box and experiment with new

strategies can use data to their advantage to pinpoint holes in the market, as well as to find and compare similar books—in Sourcebooks' case, even books that did not sell well—in an effort to push book sales of new authors.

Selling a new author's book will no doubt still be a difficult process even with the availability of sell-through data. Sourcebooks and Raincoast Books both found this to be difficult in the first year of publishing *The Naked Roommate* because there were no strong comparable titles. For Raincoast, the task of re-educating its customers on consumer purchasing patterns during the graduation and back-to-school seasons will continue throughout the upcoming publishing seasons. There is great potential for growth in the college category in Canada considering the stark gap that has been identified between US and Canadian sales. The information that Sourcebooks and Raincoast have extracted from data analysis will be integral to the task of closing the gap in Canada by presenting what the potential of the title could be.

The important factor in the success of Harlan Cohen's first book is in the persistence and commitment of the publisher who stuck to pushing a book year after year based on diligent sell-through data analysis. It will certainly be difficult to achieve the same results as *The Naked Roommate* for all categories. A careful evaluation of the return on investment on sell-through data subscription and marketing initiatives would have to be made—especially for Canadian publishing companies whose market is substantially smaller than the US—to ensure that the calculated benefits received will be worth the staff's extra time and finances expended on sell-through reporting services. For those who can afford the subscription fee, sell-through data is an important and effective tool for their businesses, not just in improving sales but also in encouraging creativity and diverse strategies during the editorial acquisitions process.

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX A: US MARKETING, PUBLICITY AND SALES PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

Media Publicity

- Appearance on graduation panels
- Send ARCs and pitches:
 - National TV shows (morning, news)
 - National magazines
 - Large daily newspapers
 - College/back-to-school issues
 - Radio stations
 - Blogs
- National tour (March/April, August/September): High schools, bookstores, college campuses
- Push for presence on mtvU, MTV Networks' 24-hour college network (reaches 750 campuses and 9 million American college students)

Marketing

- Feature spreads in publisher's catalogues
 - Two-page feature spread in Spring 2011 catalogue
 - One-page feature in the Fall 2011 edition
 - Big Mouth Mailing
 - Target 50 Hot Leads from NASPA/FYE Shows
 - Send DM Piece, Naked Suite of books, letter explaining the books and program, and "10 Naked Tips for First Year Experience"
- Aggressive pre- and post-show marketing at trade shows
 - Direct Mail
 - Email
 - Phone calls to:
 - » National Association of Student Personnel Administration (NASPA)
 - » First-Year Experience programs (FYE)
 - » Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I)
 - » National Orientation Directors Association (NODA)
 - » National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)
- Email blast campaign to parents of college-bound high schoolers (June)
- Comprehensive website for Harlan for all three books

- Social Media:
 - Twitter/Facebook campaign for Sourcebooks college
 - Cross promote on teenfire.com
 - Harlan Cohen's blog, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, *Naked Minute* videos

Sales Promotions

- Books-A-Million Online Bookstore: Grad and Back-to-School (May 8)
- Barnes & Noble: Grad Table and Online Promotion (April 15)
- Barnes & Noble: 'Dorm Essentials' theme table (August 3)
- eBook: Promo with college-bound titles for \$1.99 (August)

APPENDIX B: FOURTH EDITION PRESS RELEASE

The Naked Roommate: The Essential Graduation Gift

Bestselling Author Harlan Cohen Helps Prepare College-Bound Students for Life on Campus

College is stressful.

First-year college students' self-ratings of their emotional health dropped to record low levels in 2010, according to the CIRP Freshman Survey, UCLA's annual, nationwide survey of students at four-year colleges and universities. Only 52 percent of students characterized their emotional health as "above average" while 46 percent of female college students reported "above average" emotional health, compared with 59 percent of their male counterparts.

Enter the #1 college guide, *The Naked Roommate*, by bestselling author Harlan Cohen.

Don't let the name fool you. *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College* (ISBN: 9781402253461; APRIL 19, 2011; \$14.99 US; College Guide; Trade Paper), now in its fourth edition, is packed with valuable information, tips, advice, and resources for not just surviving, but thriving, in college.

The Naked Roommate is a work in progress, including research that Harlan has compiled over 17 years at 400 college campuses. The tips and stories have been collected via face-to-face and phone interviews, written requests, submissions to Harlan's websites, student organizations, and social media platforms.

What's new in the fourth edition of *The Naked Roommate*?

- More than 10 percent new content
- New student stories
- New tips and advice for students headed home for break
- A bonus chapter for community college students
- Updated statistics and facts
- New recommended websites, Facebook links, and Twitter feeds

Harlan has also expanded his online presence at www.nakedroommate.com. Students can participate in forums, sign up for *The NAKED Daily* newsletter, or become a "Naked Expert." Harlan can also be found on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Harlan Cohen is the bestselling author of *The Naked Roommate* (Sourcebooks), *The Happiest Kid on Campus: A Parent's Guide to the Very Best College Experience (for You and Your Child)* (Sourcebooks), *Dad's Pregnant Too!* (Sourcebooks), and *Campus Life Exposed: Advice from the Inside* (Peterson's). His nationally syndicated advice column, *Help Me, Harlan!*, is distributed worldwide by King Features Syndicate. Harlan has been a featured expert in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Real Simple*, and *Seventeen*. He has been a guest on hundreds of radio and television programs, including NBC's *Today Show*. Harlan is also a professional speaker who has visited over 400 college campuses.

(Source: Sourcebooks. Kelsch 2011)

APPENDIX C: SOURCEBOOKS CATALOGUE FEATURES

Spring 2011 Catalogue Feature



The World's #1 Going-to-College Book

This **essential guide** is packed with expert advice on everything from managing money to managing stress—plus hilarious, outrageous, and telling stories from students on over 100 college campuses:

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- Finding Friends
- Dating
- Money

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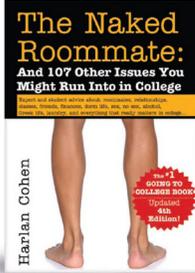
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- With a calendar, planner, First Year Experience workbook, and parental guide, *The Naked Roommate* is a comprehensive off-college brand

From sharing a bathroom with 40 people to sharing lecture notes, *The Naked Roommate* is a behind-the-scenes look at everything students need to know about college. This essential guide is packed with expert advice, plus outrageous stories from students on over 100 campuses.

Through his advice column, college tour, and website, Harlan Cohen has reached thousands of students with his message of being yourself and making the most of the college years.

"One of the best and most practical college advice guides I've read!" —Andrew Tivtin, University of Michigan

"The most useful guide on college life."
—*The Daily Orange* (Syracuse University)

HARLAN COHEN's syndicated advice column for people in their teens and twenties, *Help Me, Harlan!*, is distributed by King Features Syndicate, and appears in papers such as the *Chicago Tribune*, *Dallas Morning News*, and the *Seattle Times*. Harlan tours college campuses giving presentations to orientation groups. He lives in Chicago, IL.

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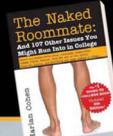
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SOURCEBOOKS 97

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- College Living
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- The Party Scene
- Finding Friends
- Dating
- Money

Must-Have Book for Back-to-School!

The world's #1 going-to-college book is now available as a workbook!

The Naked Roommate's First Year SURVIVAL WORKBOOK
The Most Practical, Fun, and Inspiring Preparation for the First Year of College Experiences

The Naked Roommate: 2011 College Survival Planner

The Happiest Kid on Campus
A Parent's Guide to the Very Best College Experiences (for You and Your Child)

As Seen on **The Today Show**

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Harlan Cohen

The Book Every Parent Needs!

The Happiest Kid on Campus offers the best advice, facts, stats, tips, and stories to prepare parents for their role in the successful college transition.

APPENDIX D: FOURTH EDITION NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER PRESS RELEASE

The Naked Roommate: Now a New York Times Bestseller!

Top College Guide Moves to the Head of the Class

NAPERVILLE, IL – May 27, 2011 – *The Naked Roommate* has moved in—to the *New York Times* Bestseller List!

The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College (ISBN: 9781402253461; APRIL 19, 2011; \$14.99 US; College Guide; Trade Paper) by Harlan Cohen made its debut on the *New York Times* Bestsellers List at #15 on the Paperback Advice list, reflecting sales for the week ending May 21, 2011.

*“I’m thrilled *The Naked Roommate* is being embraced by and helping so many college-bound students,” Cohen said. “I hope this new exposure will help even more students discover ‘the nakedness’ and have the very best college experience.”*

Don’t let the name fool you. *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College*, now in its fourth edition, is packed with valuable information, tips, advice, and resources for not just surviving, but thriving, in college.

The Naked Roommate is a work in progress, including research that Harlan has compiled over 17 years at 400 college campuses. The tips and stories have been collected via face-to-face and phone interviews, written requests, submissions to Harlan’s websites, student organizations, and social media platforms.

Harlan has also expanded his online presence at www.nakedroommate.com. Students can participate in forums, sign up for *The NAKED Daily* newsletter, or become a “Naked Expert.” Harlan can also be found on Facebook, Twitter (@HarlanCohen and @NakedRoommate), and YouTube.

Harlan Cohen is the bestselling author of *The Naked Roommate* (Sourcebooks), *The Happiest Kid on Campus: A Parent’s Guide to the Very Best College Experience (for You and Your Child)* (Sourcebooks), *Dad’s Pregnant Too!* (Sourcebooks), and *Campus Life Exposed: Advice from the Inside* (Peterson’s). His nationally syndicated advice column, *Help Me, Harlan!*, is distributed worldwide by King Features Syndicate. Harlan has been a featured expert in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Real Simple*, and *Seventeen*. He has been a guest on hundreds of radio and television programs, including NBC’s *Today Show*. Harlan is also a professional speaker who has visited over 400 college campuses.

(Source: Sourcebooks. Kelsch 2011)

APPENDIX E: US MEDIA COVERAGE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS EVENTS CONFIRMED

Print

- *Family Circle* article on teen rejection (August or September issue)
- *azTeen* college issue (August 2011, page 10)
- *College Times* feature
- *Journal Star* grad guide (circulation 70,000)
- *USA Today*: “Kids bound for college; what’s a parent to do?” (August 4)

Television

- *WGN Midday News* (June)
- *The Gayle King Show* (August)

Radio

- 3 interviews booked

Events

- Anderson’s Bookshop (IL – July 7)
- Saint Leo University (FL – August 18)
- Webster University (MO – August 19)
- University of Texas at Dallas (TX – August 20)
- Trine University (IN – August 21)
- Hiram College (OH – August 24)
- University of Montevallo (AL – August 25)
- Embry-Riddle (AZ – August 26)
- Tiffin University (OH – August 28)
- California Lutheran University (CA – August 29)
- University of Kentucky (KY – August 31)
- Southern Connecticut State (CT – September 13)
- Point Park University (PA – September 14)
- Anderson’s Bookshop (IL – September 20)
- University of South Dakota (SD – September 22)
- Northern Arizona University (AZ – September 23)
- Whitman College (WA – October 11)

(Sources: Sourcebooks. “WAM Packet – March 17, 2011”; “WAM Packet – June 16, 2011”; January to March Titles presentation slide)

APPENDIX F: RAINCOAST BOOKS SPRING 2011 GRADUATION PROMOTION

Titlewave Newsletter – May 2011

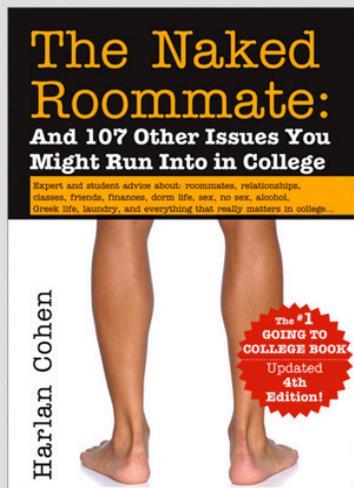


Good Luck Grads! May 2011

Dear Readers,

Summer isn't even here yet so is it too soon to be thinking about going back to school? My answer: It's never too soon to think about school! (I love school.)

With high school letting out for the break soon most graduates are gearing up for their first year at university or college -- and most parents are coming to terms with their babies growing up. Our highly educated friends at [Sourcebooks](#) and [Chronicle Books](#) have all the guides and resources you and your new students need to tackle the overwhelming experience of freshman year.



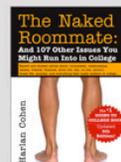
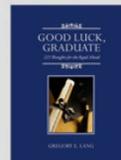
The Naked Roommate, 4e

And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College
By Harlan Cohen
Source books ISBN 978-1-4022-5346-1
\$16.99 · pb

From sharing a bathroom with 40 people to sharing lecture notes, *The Naked Roommate* is a behind-the-scenes look at everything students need to know about college. This essential guide is packed with expert advice, plus outrageous stories from students on over 100 campuses.

Find this title at [Independent Retailers](#), [Amazon.ca](#) and [Chapters-Indigo](#).

CONTEST DRAW



The lucky winners of the GRADS draw will receive copies of:

THE NAKED ROOMMATE, GOOD LUCK GRADUATE and COLLEGE SAFETY 101

To enter the GRADS draw, please reply to newsletter@raincoast.com with the words GRADS in the subject field.

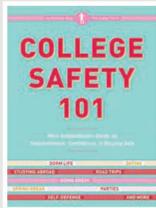
Don't forget your mailing address so we can send you your prize. Entry deadline is June 15th, 2011.



Do you like kids' books? Picture books? [Sign up](#) to receive our newsletters and get the latest on all our books.

Spring 2011 Grad Promotion to Booksellers

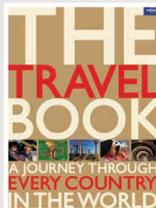
GIFTS FOR GRADS & BOOKS FOR BACK TO SCHOOL



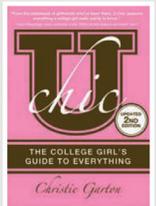
College Safety 101:
Miss Independent's
Guide to Staying Safe
and Smart on Campus
Chronicle
9780811869492



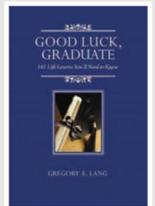
**The Rogers & Littleton
Guide to America's
Douchiest Colleges:
Including the Territory
of Canada**
Chronicle
9780811878876



The Travel Book:
A Journey Through
Every Country in the
World, 2ed
Lonely Planet
9781741792119



**U Chic: The College
Girl's Guide to
Everything, 2ed**
Sourcebooks
9781402254956



Good Luck Graduate:
142 Life Lessons You'll
Need to Know
Sourcebooks
9781402254581



**College Survival
Coupons:
22 Lifelines to Help
You Survive College**
Sourcebooks
9781402254895

Special Offer

Receive a special discount of **45%** books and **52%** off gift items when you purchase a minimum of **20 units** from the attached list.

Orders must be placed by **July 15, 2011** and marked with the promo code **GRAD11**.

Order all 20 units to be delivered for the spike in sales near Graduation (mid-April to the end of June) or divide your order into two shipments to cover both Graduation and Back to School periods (split-shipments must be clearly indicated on the order form).

**The Naked Roommate:
And 107 Other Issues You
Might Run Into in College**

Experts and student advice about roommates, relationships, classes, friends, finances, dorm life, sex, no sex, alcohol, Greek life, laundry, and everything that really matters in college...

Harlan Cohen

The #1 GOING TO COLLEGE BOOK
Updated 4th Edition!

The Naked Roommate

First Year Survival is a heavily demanded topic by students and parents of students enrolled in or heading to higher education.

Cohen is the most trusted name in the college survival and transition area, touring college campuses and speaking to parents at orientations every year, and is promoted by the colleges and orientation leaders. **Look for Harlan Cohen to be on Canadian campuses in June 2011.**

The Naked Roommate has sold more than 200,000 copies in North America and is currently required or recommend reading at 15 colleges and universities.

sourcebooks



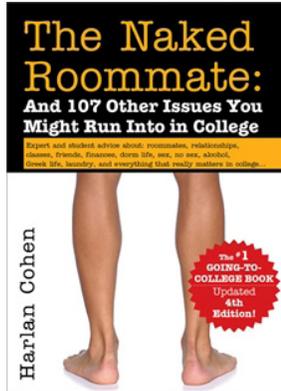
Distributed in Canada by

RAINCOAST BOOKS

APPENDIX G: CANADIAN PRESS RELEASE

The Naked Roommate: Now a New York Times Bestseller!

Top College Guide Moves to the Head of the Class



Sourcebooks
5.28 x 7.09 • 544 pages
978-1-4022-5346-1
CDN \$16.99 • pb

*“I’m thrilled **The Naked Roommate** is being embraced by and helping so many college-bound students,” Cohen said. “I hope this new exposure will help even more students discover ‘the nakedness’ and have the very best college experience.”*

Don’t let the name fool you. *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College*, now in its fourth edition, is packed with valuable information, tips, advice, and resources for not just surviving, but thriving, in college and university.

The Naked Roommate is a work in progress, including research that Harlan has compiled over 17 years at 400 campuses. The tips and stories have been collected via face-to-face and phone interviews, written requests, submissions to Harlan’s websites, student organizations, and social media platforms. It contains hilarious, outrageous and telling stories including:

- Dos, don’ts, and dramas of living with roommates
- 17 kinds of college hookups; online dating; long distance dating
- Why college friends are different; getting involved on campus
- To go or not to go to classes; how to get an A, C, or F
- Managing money, time and stress
- Sex, drugs and the truth

Harlan has also expanded his online presence at www.nakedroommate.com. Students can participate in forums, sign up for *The NAKED Daily* newsletter, or become a “Naked Expert.” Harlan can also be found on Facebook, Twitter (@HarlanCohen and @NakedRoommate), and YouTube.

Harlan Cohen is the bestselling author of *The Naked Roommate* (Sourcebooks), *The Happiest Kid on Campus: A Parent's Guide to the Very Best College Experience (for You and Your Child)* (Sourcebooks), *Dad's Pregnant Too!* (Sourcebooks), and *Campus Life Exposed: Advice from the Inside* (Peterson's). His nationally syndicated advice column, *Help Me, Harlan!*, is distributed worldwide by King Features Syndicate. Harlan has been a featured expert in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Real Simple*, and *Seventeen*. He has been a guest on hundreds of radio and television programs, including NBC's *Today Show*. Harlan is also a professional speaker who has visited over 400 college and university campuses in the US and Canada.

Harlan is available for interviews.

APPENDIX H: CANADIAN MEDIA TARGETED FOR PUBLICITY MAILINGS

National Newspapers

- The Globe and Mail
- National Post

City/Commuter Newspapers and Magazines

- 24 Hours (Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver)
- The Calgary Herald
- The Edmonton Journal
- The Gazette
- Metro Toronto
- The Ottawa Citizen
- The Province
- Quebec Home and School News
- Times Colonist
- Toronto Free Press
- Toronto Star
- The Toronto Sun
- The Vancouver Sun
- Vancouver Courier
- University Affairs
- The Winnipeg Free Press
- The Windsor Star

Weeklies

- Georgia Straight (Vancouver BC)
- Monday Magazine (Victoria BC)
- Montreal Mirror (Montreal QC)
- Montreal Review of Books (Montreal QC)
- NOW Magazine (Toronto ON)
- SEE Magazine (Edmonton AB)
- Vue Weekly (Edmonton AB)

University Newspapers

- The Ubysey (University of British Columbia)
- The Peak (Simon Fraser University)
- The Martlet (University of Victoria)
- The Varsity (University of Toronto)
- The Gazette (University of Western Ontario)
- Queen's Journal (Queen's University)
- The Fulcrum (University of Ottawa)
- The Silhouette (McMaster University)
- Imprint (University of Waterloo)
- The Eyeopener (Ryerson University)
- The Charlatan (Carleton University)
- The Ontarion (University of Guelph)
- Excalibur (York University)
- The Cord (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- The Link (Concordia University)
- The McGill Tribune (McGill University)
- The Gateway (University of Alberta)
- The Gauntlet (University of Calgary)
- The Manitoban (University of Manitoba)
- The Sheaf (University of Saskatchewan)

National/City Radio Talk Shows

Featuring topics such as lifestyle, higher education, advice, and parenthood

- CKCM-AM (Grand Falls-Windsor NL)
- CKUA-AM (Edmonton AB)
- CRFM-FM (North Bay ON)
- CKMO-AM – Island Parent Radio (Victoria BC)
- CBLA-FM – Ontario Morning, CBC Radio One (London ON)
- VOXM-AM (St. John's NL)

University Radio Stations

- CiTR 101.9 FM (University of British Columbia)
- CFML-FM (British Columbia Institute of Technology)
- CJSF 90.1 FM (Simon Fraser University)
- CFUV 101.9 FM (University of Victoria)
- CIUT-FM 89.5 FM (University of Toronto)
- CKHC-FM (Humber College)
- CHRY-FM 105.5 FM (York University)
- CHRW-FM 94.9 FM (University of Western Ontario)

- CFRC-FM 101.9 FM (Queen's University)
- CHUO-FM 89.1 FM (University of Ottawa)
- CKCU-FM 93.1 FM (Carleton University)
- CFMU-FM 93.3 FM (McMaster University)
- CKMS-FM 100.3 FM (University of Waterloo)
- Radio Laurier (Wilfrid Laurier University)
- CFRU-FM 93.3 FM (University of Guelph)
- CJLO 1690 AM (Concordia University)
- CKUT-FM 90.3 FM (McGill University)
- CJSW-FM 90.9 FM (University of Calgary)
- UMFH 101.5 FM The Manitoban (University of Manitoba)
- CHMR-FM (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

APPENDIX I: CANADIAN MEDIA COVERAGE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS EVENTS CONFIRMED

Canadian Print

- *The Ottawa Citizen*: “Campus Confidential” (August 19)
<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/health/Campus+confidential/5279265/story.html>
- *Leader-Post*: “Campus Confidential” (August 20)
<http://www.leaderpost.com/life/Campus+confidential/5282122/story.html>
- *The Vancouver Sun*: “Campus Conundrums” (August 22)
<http://www.vancouversun.com/health/Campus+conundrums/5287822/story.html>
- *The Montreal Gazette*: “Campus Conundrums” (August 22)
http://www.montrealgazette.com/story_print.html?id=5286718&sponsor=
- *Canada.com*: “Campus Confidential” (August 23)
<http://www.canada.com/Campus+confidential/5298731/story.html>
- *The Windsor Star*: “Students’ Dilemmas Don’t Make Columnist Squirm” (August 27)
<http://www.windsorstar.com/life/Students+dilemmas+make+columnist+squirm/5317348/story.html>

Canadian Radio

- CBC Windsor (September 4)
- University of Manitoba 101.5 CJUM-FM (September 5)

Canadian Events

- University of Windsor (ON – September 4)
- Bishop’s University (QC – September 5)

APPENDIX J: SAMPLE TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Guest Segment:

Back-To-School Advice for Students (and Parents) from Top College and University Expert Harlan Cohen

Harlan Cohen knows about college life.

He's the author of the *New York Times* bestselling college guide, *The Naked Roommate: And 107 Other Issues You Might Run Into in College*, a nationally syndicated advice columnist for teens and twenty-somethings, and an in-demand college lifestyle speaker who has visited more than 400 college and university campuses.

Harlan is available for a back-to-school interview segment featuring valuable information for college-bound students and their parents.

Back-To-School Checklist for College-Bound Students

- *Expect the Unexpected* – Try leaving for college with BIG, but flexible, expectations.
- *Patience, Patience, Patience* – It can take up to two years to find your place on campus.
- *The Ultimate Roommate Rule* – Make rules before you need rules.
- *Homesickness* – It's normal. Medicate with small doses of home, family and friends.
- *The Fifth Wall of Technology* – Don't stay in your dorm and live online. You'll miss out.

Back-To-School Checklist for Parents of College-Bound Students

- *Loosen Your Grip* – You don't have to "let go." Just change your grip.
- *The 24-Hour Rule* – Unless there's immediate danger, wait at least 24 hours. Most situations will get fixed without your help.
- *Learn to Text* – Texting is the most unobtrusive way to get a response from your student.
- *Moving Day* – How to say good-bye and what NOT to do.
- *The First Few Months* – What to expect from your college student (and what to do) in the first few months.

(Source: Sourcebooks, Kelsch 2011)

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