

EPISODE 60

*Carissa's End of 2020 Pendomus
BookBub Check-in*

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Okay, so, let's talk about BookBub, shall we?

Earlier this year, January 21st, to be exact, I got my very first BookBub Featured Deal. There was crying, there was confetti... and of course, a lot of books that went out the door. But now that the year is coming to a close, I wanted to dive back in and really look at the effectiveness of that campaign to see if it really is worth as much of the hype as we all think.

Interestingly, my results kinda surprised me. Now, last time, you'll remember that I was pretty darn thrilled with the results. I had over 16K downloads of the book, hit some great charts, and rankings... and had a nice bump in sales (especially in comparison to 2019 when I was wide and waiting to get a BB deal...)

So, before I give you my final take on the yearlong test of this promo, let's go over some numbers. I know, I know... numbers, bleh. But we authors gotta get better at these numbers. Yes, myself included.

First off, Sales:

Throughout 2020, Pendomus alone has had 267 sales and brought in roughly \$900 in royalties (as of 12/21/2020). Although, just to be clear, that number does include page reads and paperback copies sold through Amazon. Sales of Pendomus held steady from January (which is when I had the BookBub deal) to May, then slowly declined after that as my ad spend switched to Secret Legacy. By October, it starts to pick back up again when I redistributed my ad spend across all of my books.

Next, let's look at Page Reads: For the year, I've had 137,000 pages read on Amazon's Kindle Unlimited Program as well. Now remember, that's just for this book. If I add in the other books in the Pendomus Chronicles series, that number jumps up to nearly 400,000. But more than that, my sales jump up to 702 and royalties jump to just \$200 shy of \$4000. I know it's not insane numbers here, guys. But I feel this was a pretty good number, considering most of my efforts were put on the list-aim for Secret Legacy.

And finally, Read Through: The biggest area that I wanted to focus in on what read through. It's all fine and good to talk about the numbers, but if people aren't actually reading a series, that can throw up some red flags, right?

When I went in to calculate my read through for the series, I was surprised to find the numbers here were really good for those who purchased the series, but interestingly, pretty low for the freebie giveaway from BookBub. First, let's include only the paid orders for this book, then I'll go over the read through from the freebies. Now, of those who purchased (ebook or physical copies) of Pendomus, 54.31% went on to purchase a copy of Polarities, which is book 2. A good rule of thumb with a full price book is a read through of 50%-60%. So, this is right on the mark. Now, you might be wondering about how the freebies skewed that number (and I was, too), so we'll get to that in a minute. For those who purchased Polarities, 87.59% went on to read Revolutions, the final book. Overall, the cumulative read through was 47.57%, which means almost half of the readers who purchased copies of Pendomus went on to read the whole series. When I look at the page reads through Kindle Unlimited, the numbers are even better. My read through from Pendomus to Polarities is 76.55% and from Polarities to Revolutions is 83.30%. The cumulative read through for page reads is then 63.77%. I know this is a lot of numbers to throw at you, but the key takeaway is that roughly 48% to 64% of readers went on to read the entire series this year if they purchased a copy. However, if you add in the freebies in January, the read through from Pendomus to Polarities drops significantly. In the end, there were 16,448 copies of Pendomus given away, but only 145 went on to buy book 2. That's a read through rate of 0.87% and ideally, with a free book, you want to be averaging 3-6%, if you can help it. So, with that in mind, I think I can say with fairly good accuracy, that the majority of people who downloaded from BookBub never even opened the book. Now, how do I know that?

The last time this series was in KU was 2018 and it was also the year that Amazon chose Pendomus as a Prime Reading title, so I was curious to see how those numbers stacked up in comparison. Interestingly, the numbers didn't deviate a whole lot from the paid read through rate I talked about at first.

Remember when I said I was curious if the BookBub readers would have skewed the read through rates? It turns out, not a whole lot. The read through stayed roughly the same if I ignored all of those freebie downloads. So, in 2018, my read through landed at 48.49% for sales and 78.37% for page reads. See what I mean? Not a whole lot different. If anything, read through was still better in 2018 without Bookbub.

So, what does that tell me? It says that my normal read through rate for people reading the entire series is at or around 60% when averaged out. So, the lackluster readthrough from BookBub is really a cautionary tale that even if you put your book up for free with BookBub, the chances of those people going on to read that book (or your series) is not very good. However, I will say that when I look into the nitty gritty of my page reads, 2020 still kicked 2018's butt and I'm sure that has everything to do with the BookBub deal. I had nearly double the page reads this year, which also increased the value of the series from \$3.72 per KU reader to \$6.03 per KU reader.

Timeline wise, I would also like to say that when looking at the sales and KU read tail, the biggest gains were obviously in January for sales, but they did hold steady until about July after the initial drop. Page reads maxed out in February (and remember, my BookBub deal was January 21st, 2020), so that makes sense. The KU reader tail held out pretty steady until July and August, as well. Then, everything looks like it took a backseat to the Windhaven Witches, come September.

So, when I look at this campaign and the strategy overall, would I do it again? I don't think I would do a free download next time. Instead, I'll go for a 99c deal, and here's why - I would rather cut out all of those freebie hunters and focus in more on the readers who might actually read the series. Even if ultimately, I get fewer sales and don't go as high in the rankings. Pendomus is currently (and has been for a while) at \$3.99 for the ebook.

If 50-60% of those readers are willing to continue on to the other books (which are also at \$3.99), then that tells me the price point isn't a huge deterrent. My goal then, is to offer a special offer to the people who probably would already pay for my book, but who would appreciate a special offer to get started. Does that make sense?

I will also mention that as this year wraps up, I'm laying out some new marketing strategies to test for 2021. You know me, guys. I can't sit still and I have to be your guinea pig, right? Now that I have another series out there that can pull its weight in KU for a bit, I'm going to take a bunch of my other books that aren't performing as well as I'd like them to in KU out, as well as the Pendomus Chronicles. I'm placing them all wide using Draft2Digital and I'm committing to a 3-year plan to grow my wide-base across sites like Barnes & Noble and Apple Books. In fact, just this week, I was in talks with Apple Books to see how I can better partner with them as my books start to transition over. They gave me some interesting things to mull over and once I've had the time to test out their theories, you will be the first to know if they worked. Most of that won't be implemented until February, when my KU contract is up. And, of course, once those books are wide again, I do plan to go out for a couple more BookBub Featured Deals to test out that 99c version, if they'll let me.

To wrap up this episode, I want to remind you about the waiting list for Rapid Release Roadmap. I am going to be going into these types of strategies and so much more inside this course and in the exclusive Facebook community. Doors are going to be opening January 12th and they'll only be open for one week. So, if you're interested in an indie author course that really does teach you how to be profitable, be sure you're signed up to get notified with the cart opens. Additionally, you can also hop onto one of my live webinars during that week to learn more about the program - and I will say, there is a pretty sweet, exclusive bonus in there if you do show up. Remember you can sign up by going to authorrevolution.org/rrr-waitlist



Last, but not least, if you'd like to download today's transcript or get a link to the original BookBub results episode, stop by the show notes at authorrevolution.org/60.

Alright my writerly friend, that's it for this week. Next week, I'll stop by quick to give 2020 a final farewell (erm, kick in the pants). But in the meantime, I wish you and yours a very merry Christmas and happy holiday season.

And without further ado, it's time to go forth and start your author revolution.



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