

How to Test Your Marketing With (or Without) BookTrakr and Littlink

Jack Royal-Gordon and Brent Royal-Gordon
Groundbreaking Software

[Jack]

Hi. I'm Jack Royal-Gordon, and this is my son Brent.

(Brent waves)

Together, we run Groundbreaking Software, a company that makes tools for indie authors.

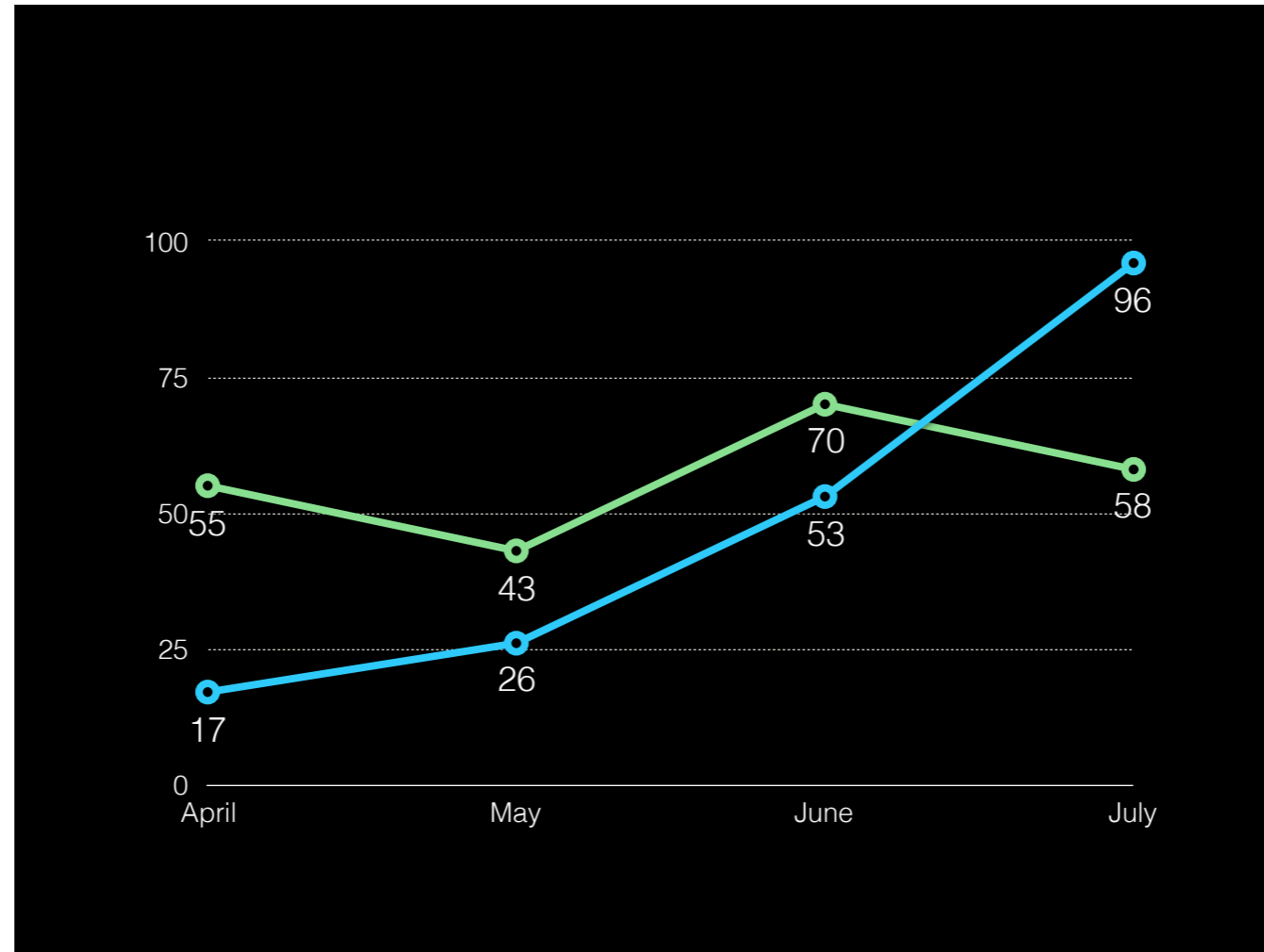
Lauren Royal

Romance Author
Wife & Mother

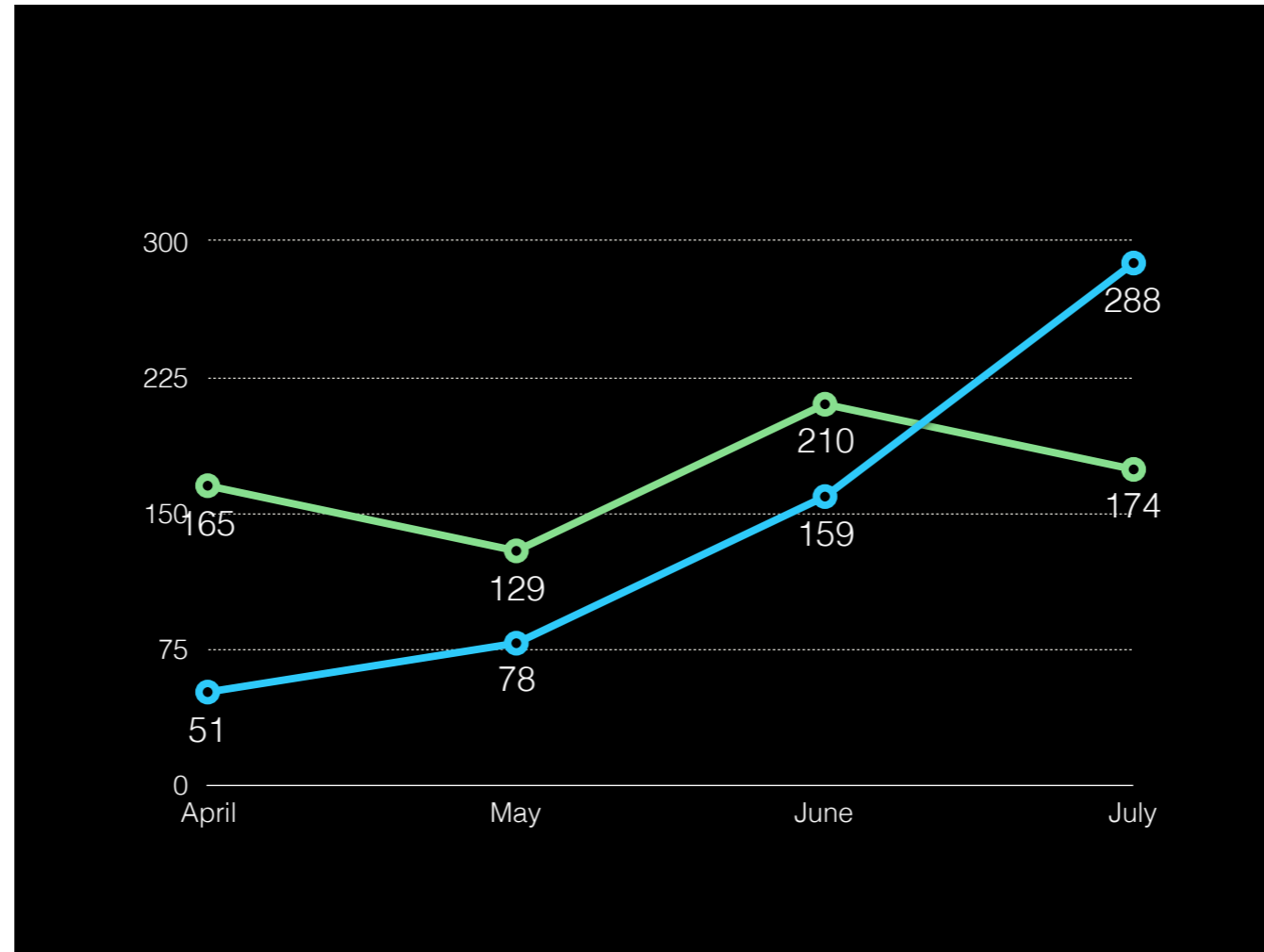


We're in this business because my wife, Lauren Royal, wanted us to help with her indie career. But we're programmers, which means we're naturally lazy, so we made our computers help her instead. Since we were already making these tools for her, we decided we should sell them to other authors, too.

Lauren has graciously agreed to let us use her data to illustrate this talk. She just had two conditions. One was to get her face off the screen quickly.



The other was that we scramble up the actual numbers we show.



So the specific numbers in this presentation are going to be fake—sometimes they'll even be total nonsense—but the proportions in the graphs are all real.

On the agenda

- Running an email promotion
- Optimizing book list placement

But that's okay, because this is not a talk about specific results. We're going to use two examples from Lauren's data, but there are dozens of other marketing ideas that we don't have time to talk about. And more importantly, each of them will work differently for you than they would for her. Every genre and every author is different. So rather than go through a long list of ideas and tell you which ones you should do, we're going to teach you how to test these ideas yourself, and discover if they actually work *for you*. So I'm going to hand things over to Brent to talk about that.

Your teachers forgot
to tell you...

[Brent]

So, I loved science class, but I always hated that first couple weeks every year, where we reviewed—yet again—the metric system, the different fields of science, all that stuff. But it turns out that there was something in that unit which is probably more relevant to daily life than any facts about stars or rocks or organelles.

The scientific method

(remember high school?)

1. Ask a question
2. State a hypothesis
3. Conduct an experiment
4. Analyze the results
5. Make a conclusion

It's the scientific method. Chances are pretty good that your teachers forced you to memorize some version of these steps. What they might *not* have taught you is that it's useful for things other than figuring out which nutrients make a potato grow faster. Strip away all the Latin words and this is just a process to discover how something behaves—and it doesn't stop working just because you're trying to measure marketing.

The scientific method

(applied to marketing books)

1. Decide upon a goal
2. Come up with an idea
3. Run a test
4. Measure its impact
5. Decide if it worked

So let's strip away all that Latin and see how you can use it to solve marketing problems.

Number 1: Decide upon a goal. Maybe you want to increase sales of a particular book, or get more mailing list subscribers, or raise your author ranking, or drive visits to a page on your website. But before you make any change, you should know what you're trying to accomplish by doing it; otherwise you can't judge whether it worked.

Number 2: Come up with an idea. For instance, maybe you're trying to improve sales of a series of books, and their covers all look different from each other. You think that giving them all a consistent cover style will improve sales.

Number 3: Run a test. For example, you might switch to the new covers on Amazon and leave the old ones up everywhere else. If your Amazon sales go up and your other sales stay the same, the new covers are probably better.

Number 4: Measure its impact. Collect your sales numbers over the next couple weeks and examine them.

Number 5: Decide if it worked. Chances are, the impact won't be exactly as you predicted, so you have to make a judgement call. Maybe the sales of the first book stayed the same, but the others went up. That's probably a success, even if it doesn't look exactly like you guessed it would.

The scientific method

(applied to marketing books)

1. Decide upon a goal
2. Come up with an idea
3. Run a test
4. Measure its impact with BookTrakr and Littlink
5. Decide if it worked

BookTrakr and Littlink come into play during step four. BookTrakr measures your sales, ratings, rankings, and reviews; Littlink measures clicks on links and can split out clicks from particular sources. But there are a lot of other tools here: website analytics, store sales dashboards, affiliate statistics, Twitter and Facebook analytics, even the subscriber count for your mailing list. We're going to go into a lot of detail about how to get BookTrakr and Littlink to give you the most useful data, but the basic techniques are applicable to almost anything that can be put on a chart. So, for our first example, I'm going to turn it over to my dad to talk about how to measure an idea's impact on your sales with BookTrakr.














BookTrakr

Collects sales, ratings, rankings, and reviews

[Jack]

First a quick word about BookTrakr for anyone here who's not familiar with it.

BookTrakr Dashboard Sales Reviews Rankings Settings Logout Help Email Us

Book Title	Category	ALL TIME	ALL TIME	ALL TIME	ALL TIME
	All Books	AUG 31 652 paid books 29 free books 0 KENP/lent books \$1,421.41 9 new reviews Not available	ALL TIME 833,564 paid books 8,594,731 free books 4,734,591 KENP/lent books \$667,988.88 8,415 reviews #64 in Nook US Paid		Amethyst
		AUG 31 0 paid books 97 free books 0 KENP/lent books \$0.00 6 new reviews Not available	ALL TIME 44,919 paid books 436,489 free books 7 KENP/lent books \$77,523.41 7,692 reviews #3 in Kindle US Free		Forevermore
		AUG 31 62 paid books 0 free books 0 KENP/lent books \$127.50 2 new reviews Not available	ALL TIME 91,533 paid books 393,486 free books 3 KENP/lent books \$67,516.38 154 reviews #77 in Kindle US Free		Amber
		AUG 31 82 paid books 0 free books 0 KENP/lent books \$1,825.67 6 new reviews Not available	ALL TIME 22,742 paid books 22 free books 9 KENP/lent books \$31,578.19 377 reviews #5 in iBooks CA Paid		Violet
		AUG 31 96 paid books 0 free books 0 KENP/lent books \$56.15 4 new reviews Not available	ALL TIME 24,845 paid books 34 free books 3 KENP/lent books \$31,452.27 423 reviews #21 in Nook US Paid		Lily
		AUG 31 5 paid books 0 free books 0 KENP/lent books	ALL TIME 41,426 paid books 51 free books 6 KENP/lent books		Rose
		AUG 31 82 paid books 0 free books 0 KENP/lent books	ALL TIME 34,341 paid books 82 free books 1 KENP/lent books		

BookTrakr helps indie authors track their sales, ratings, rankings and reviews across the major vendors - Amazon/KDP, Apple/iBooks, B&N/Nook, Kobo, Google, and CreateSpace, as well as the aggregators Smashwords and Draft-2-Digital. We maintain this data as long as you use BookTrakr, even after the stores have purged it.

no-reply@BookTrakr.com September 18, 2016 at 10:05 AM

To: Lauren Royal Cc: John Royal-Gordon, Devon Royal
 Reply-To: help@BookTrakr.com
 BookTrakr Daily Sales Update

BookTrakr [Dashboard](#) [Sales](#)

Good morning, Lauren!

Yesterday (17-Sep-2016) you sold 268 books for \$453.32 in revenue, gave away 774 books, got 203 lent KENP for \$0.87 in revenue, and earned total revenue of \$454.19. You are currently on 147 Top 100 genre ranking charts.

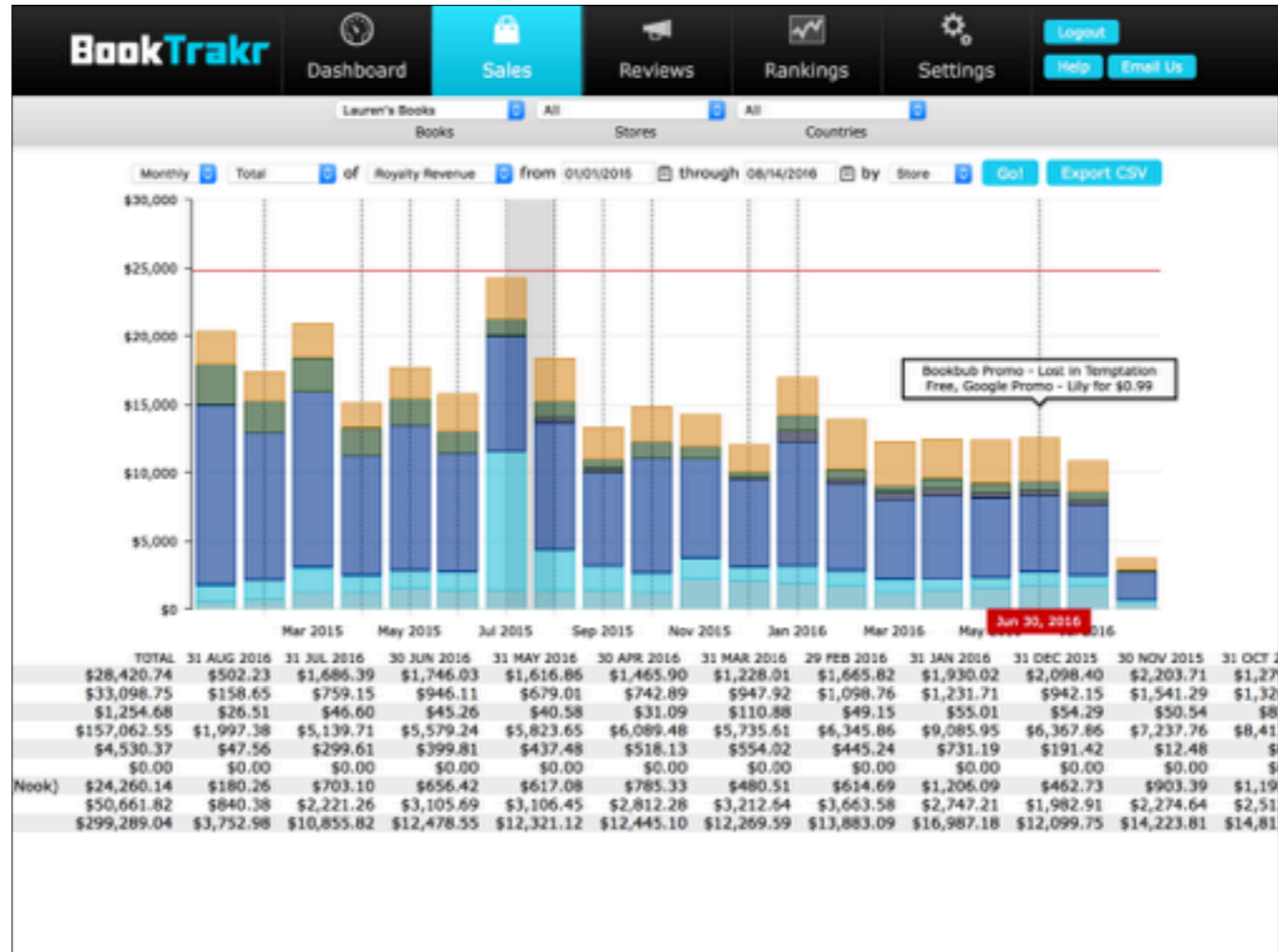
3 new books, "Amethyst", "Regency Chase Brides: A Jewels of Historical Romance Duet (Sweet & Clean Historical Romance)", and "Violet", **are not included in this email**. To include them, activate them [here](#).

STORE	PAID	SALES	REVENUE	FREE	KENP	KENP	REVENUE	TOTAL REVENUE
Amazon	155		\$191.56	303	203		\$0.87	\$192.43
Apple	41		\$76.76	111	0			\$76.76
B&N	24		\$49.11	0	0			\$49.11
CreateSpace	0		\$0.00	0	0			\$0.00
DD	2		\$23.78	108	0			\$23.78
Google Play	29		\$95.06	252	0			\$95.06
Kobo	17		\$17.05	0	0			\$17.05
Smashwords	0		\$0.00	0	0			\$0.00
TOTALS	268		\$453.32	774	203		\$0.87	\$454.19

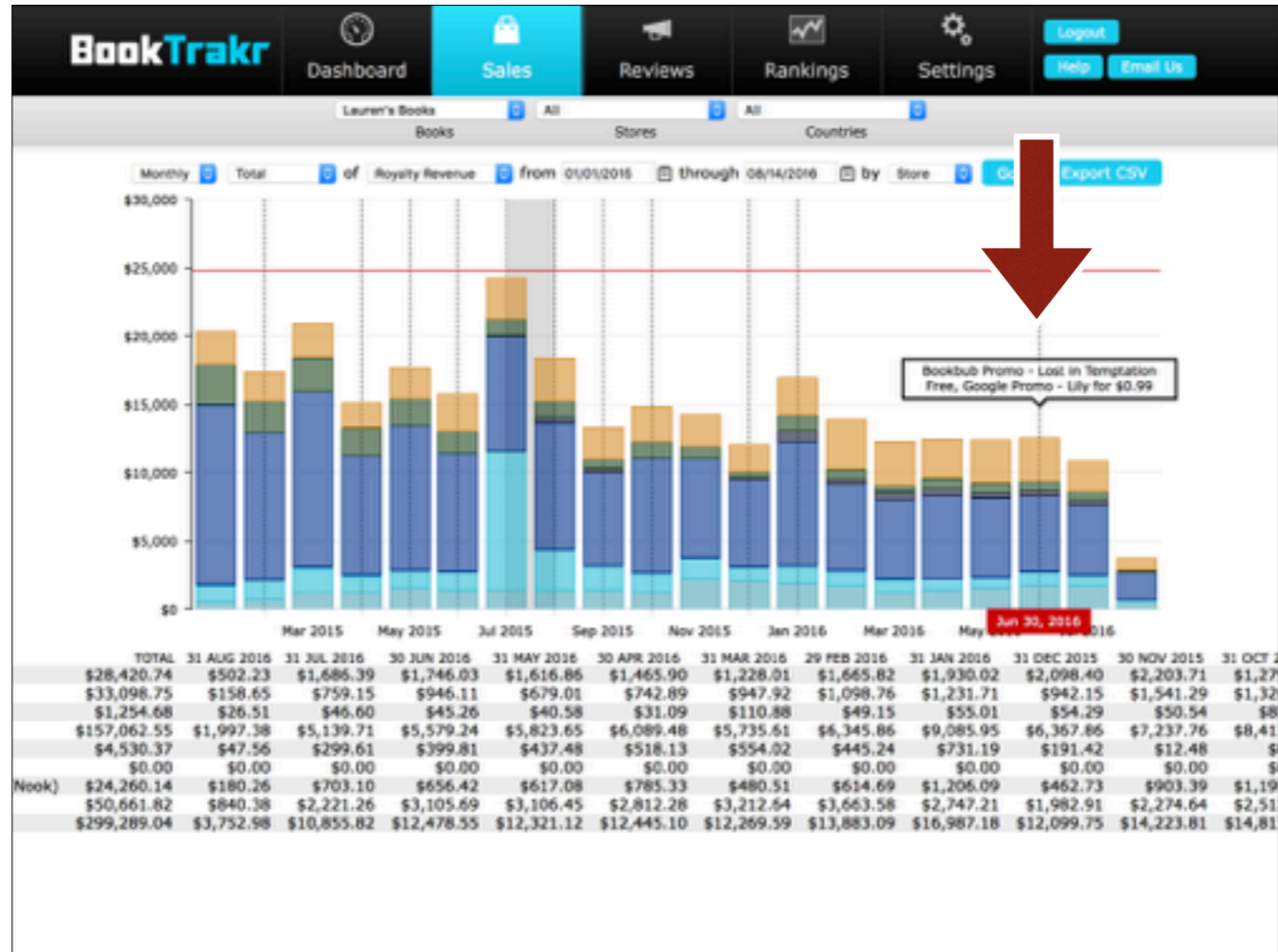
Smashwords reported no new sales.

BOOK	PAID	REVENUE	FREE	KENP	KENP	REVENUE	TOTAL REVENUE
Amethyst	0	\$0.00	128	0		\$0.00	\$0.00
Emerald	11	\$35.58	0	0		\$0.00	\$35.58
Forevermore	16	\$32.41	0	0		\$0.00	\$32.41
Amber	10	\$34.40	0	0		\$0.00	\$34.40
Violet	157	\$62.64	0	0		\$0.00	\$62.64
Lily	3	\$10.46	0	0		\$0.00	\$10.46
Rose	3	\$10.38	0	0		\$0.00	\$10.38
Lost in Temptation	0	\$0.00	190	0		\$0.00	\$0.00
Tempting Juliana	6	\$21.32	0	0		\$0.00	\$21.32
The Art of Temptation	7	\$24.37	0	0		\$0.00	\$24.37
Chase Set #1	3	\$18.16	0	0		\$0.00	\$18.16
Chase Set #2	0	\$0.00	0	0		\$0.00	\$0.00
Regency Chase Set	3	\$18.67	0	0		\$0.00	\$18.67
The Complete Chase Family...	4	\$61.20	0	0		\$0.00	\$61.20
Chase Family Recipes	2	\$1.07	0	0		\$0.00	\$1.07
Alexandra YA	0	\$0.00	100	15		\$0.06	\$0.06

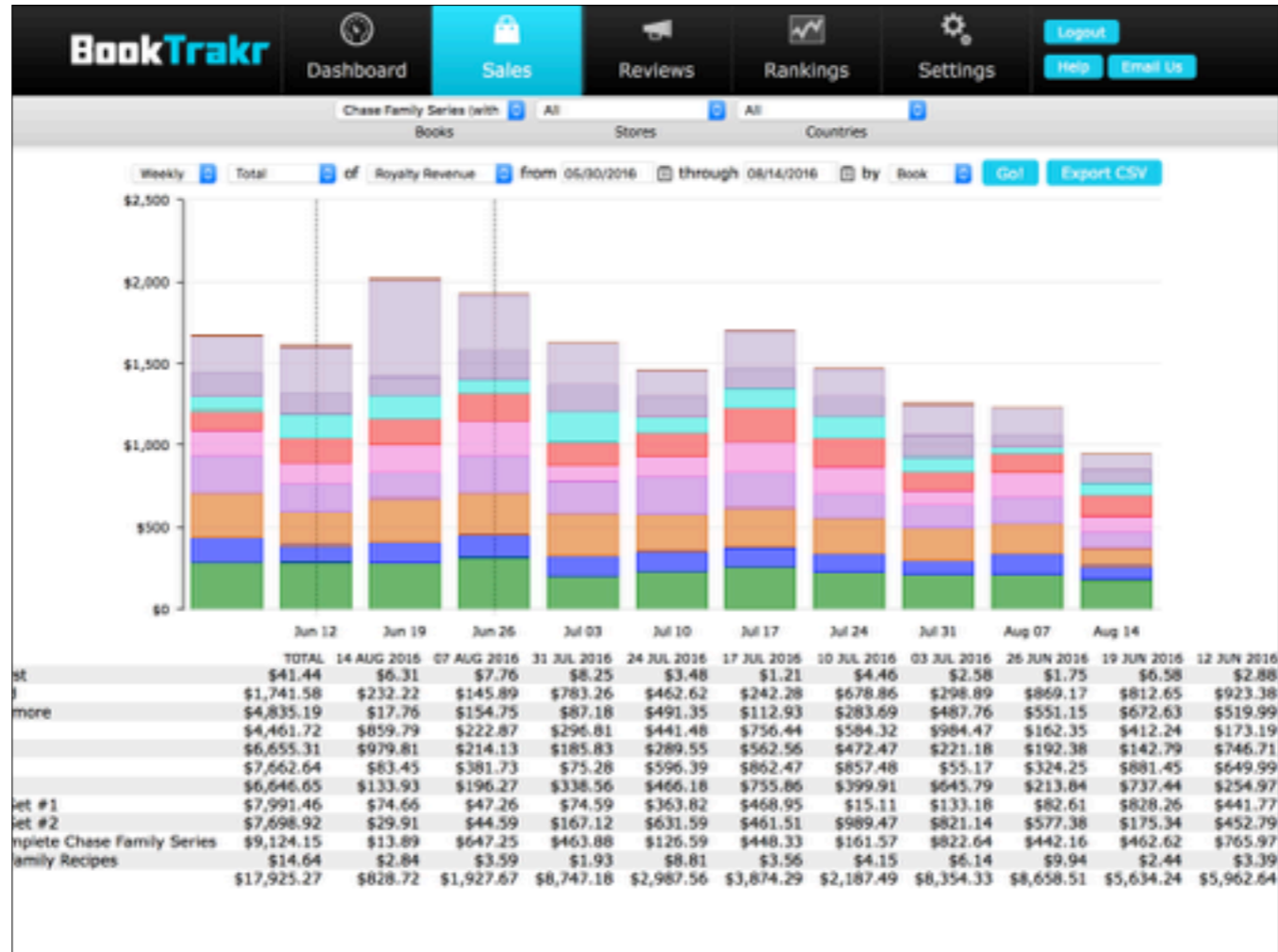
While many users restrict their BookTrakr use to reading the daily emails that BookTrakr sends reviewing their previous day's sales activity, we will be concentrating on two of the charts BookTrakr can display on their website: the Sales Chart and the Rankings Chart.



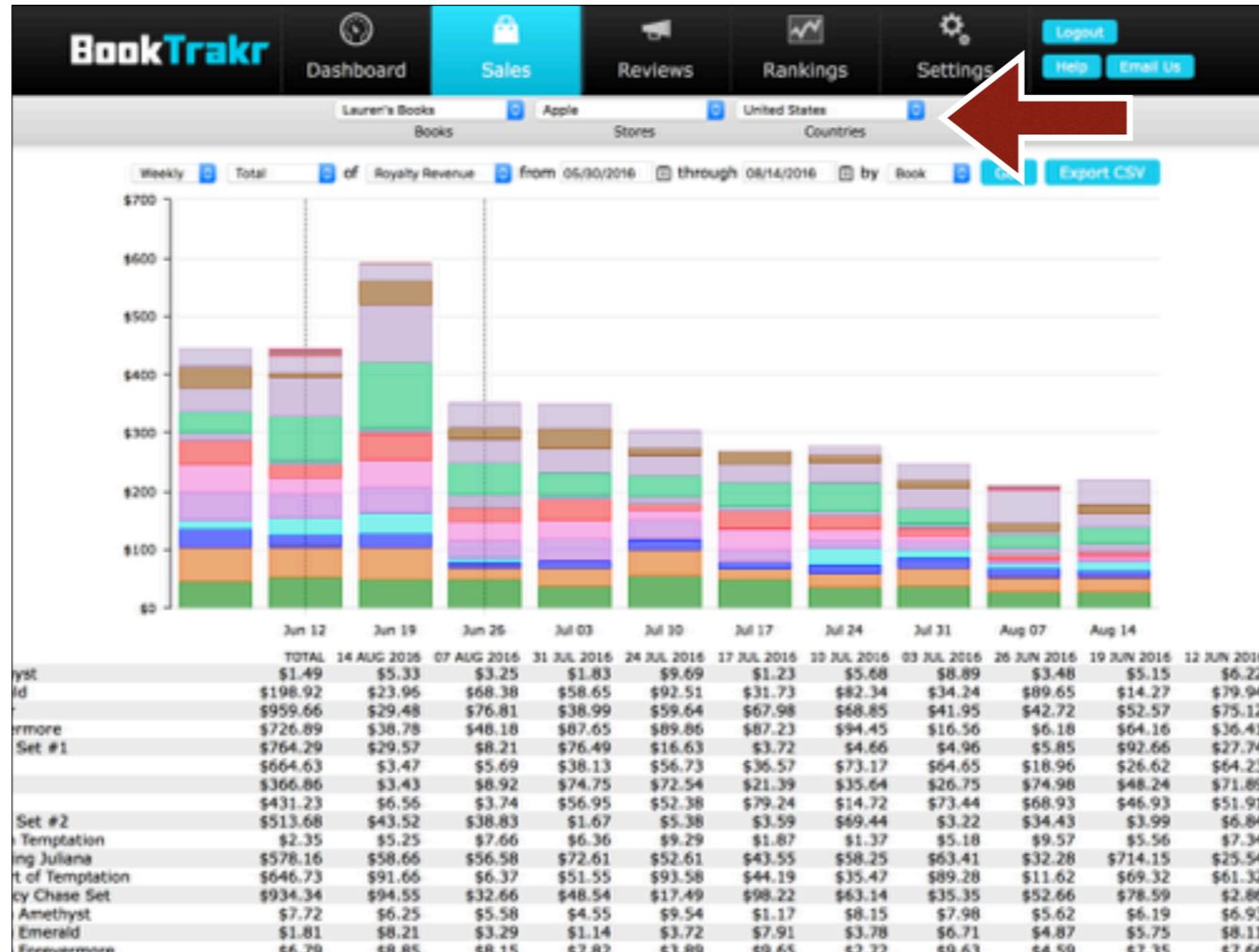
This is a Sales Chart showing sales by store. You can show this by day, by week, or by month for any time period that interests you.



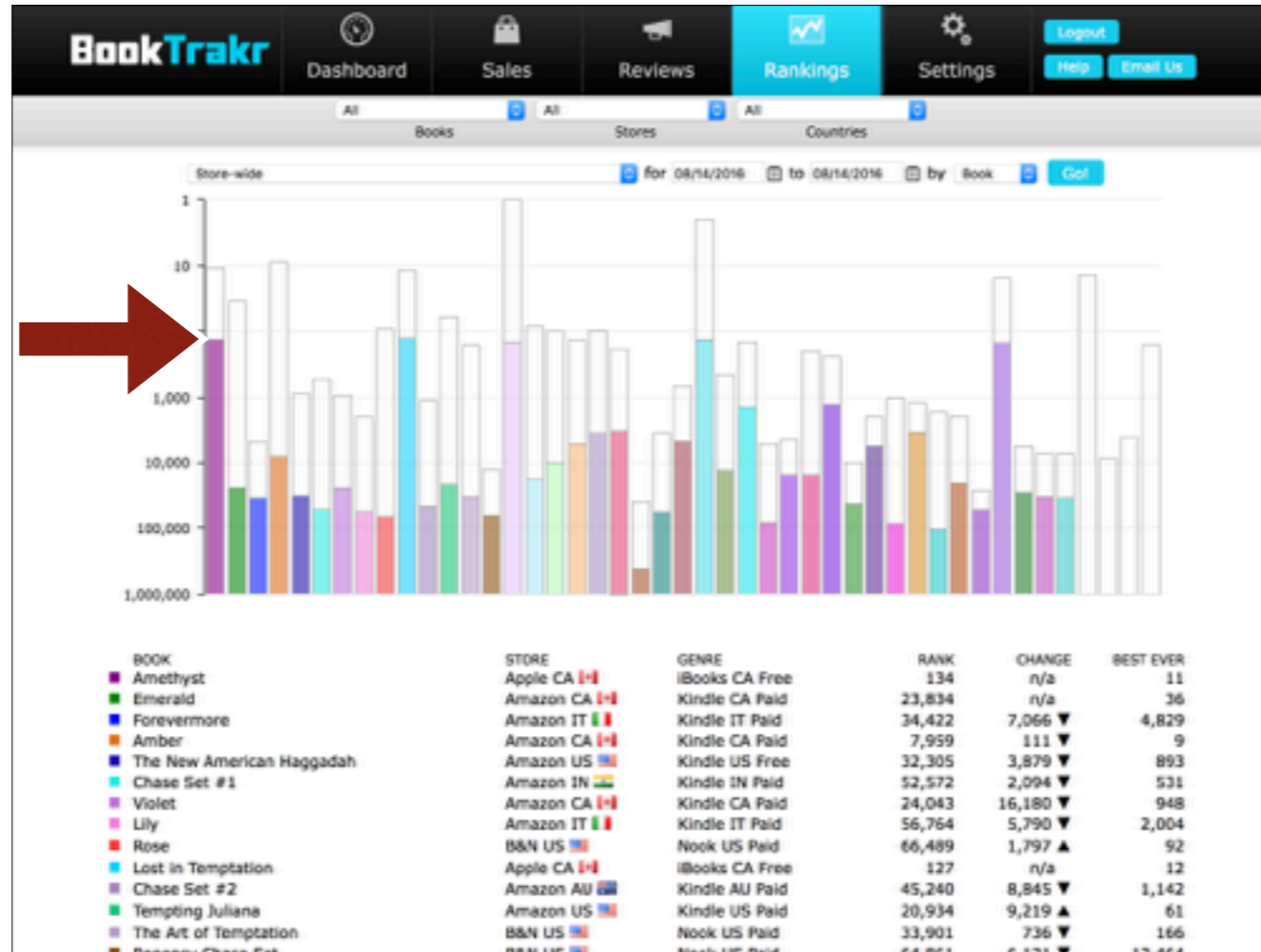
You can also tell BookTrakr about events that may affect your books' performance. The chart will show these events as dashed lines, so you can correlate changes in sales with promotions or other occurrences.



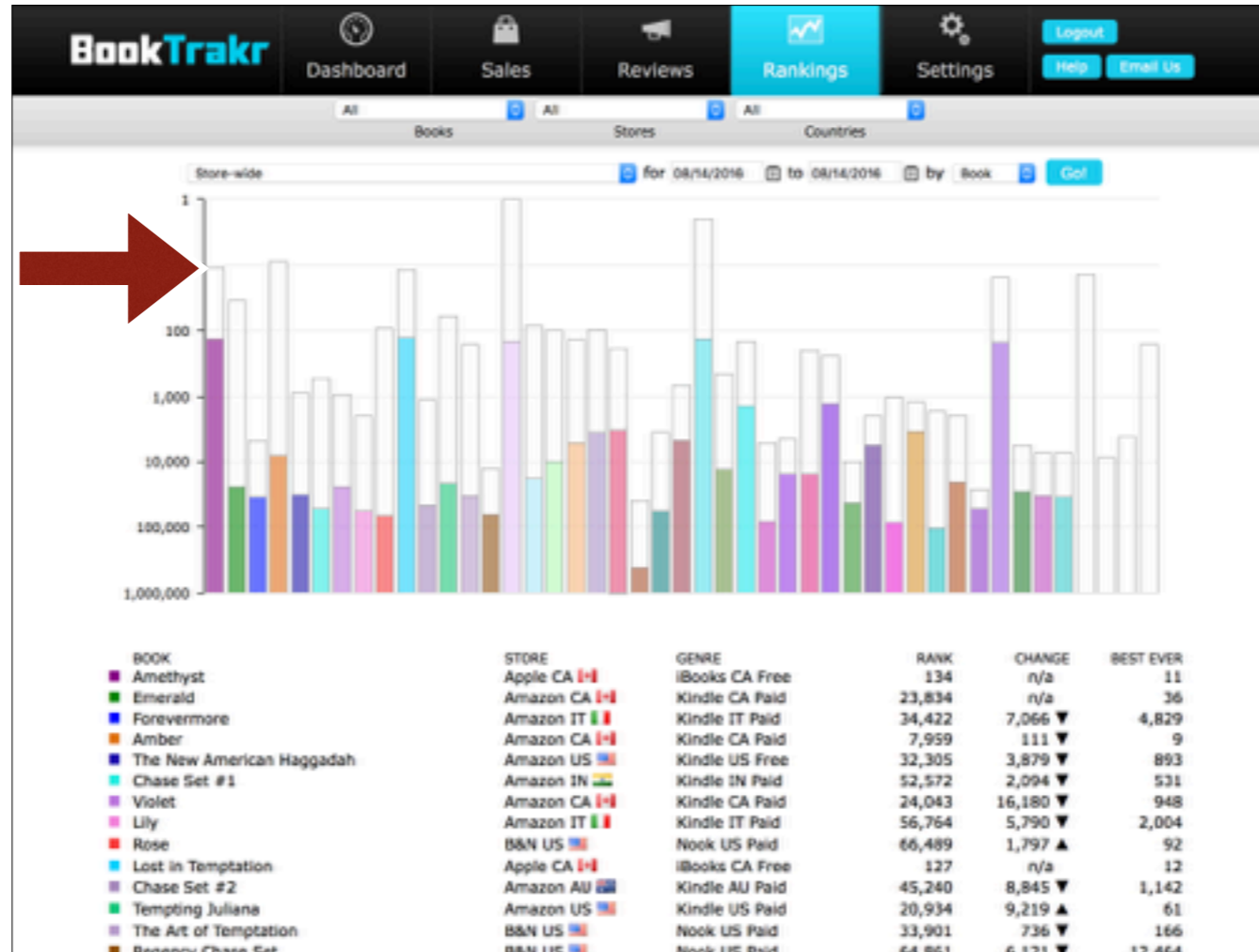
You can see sales by Book, by Store, or by Country.



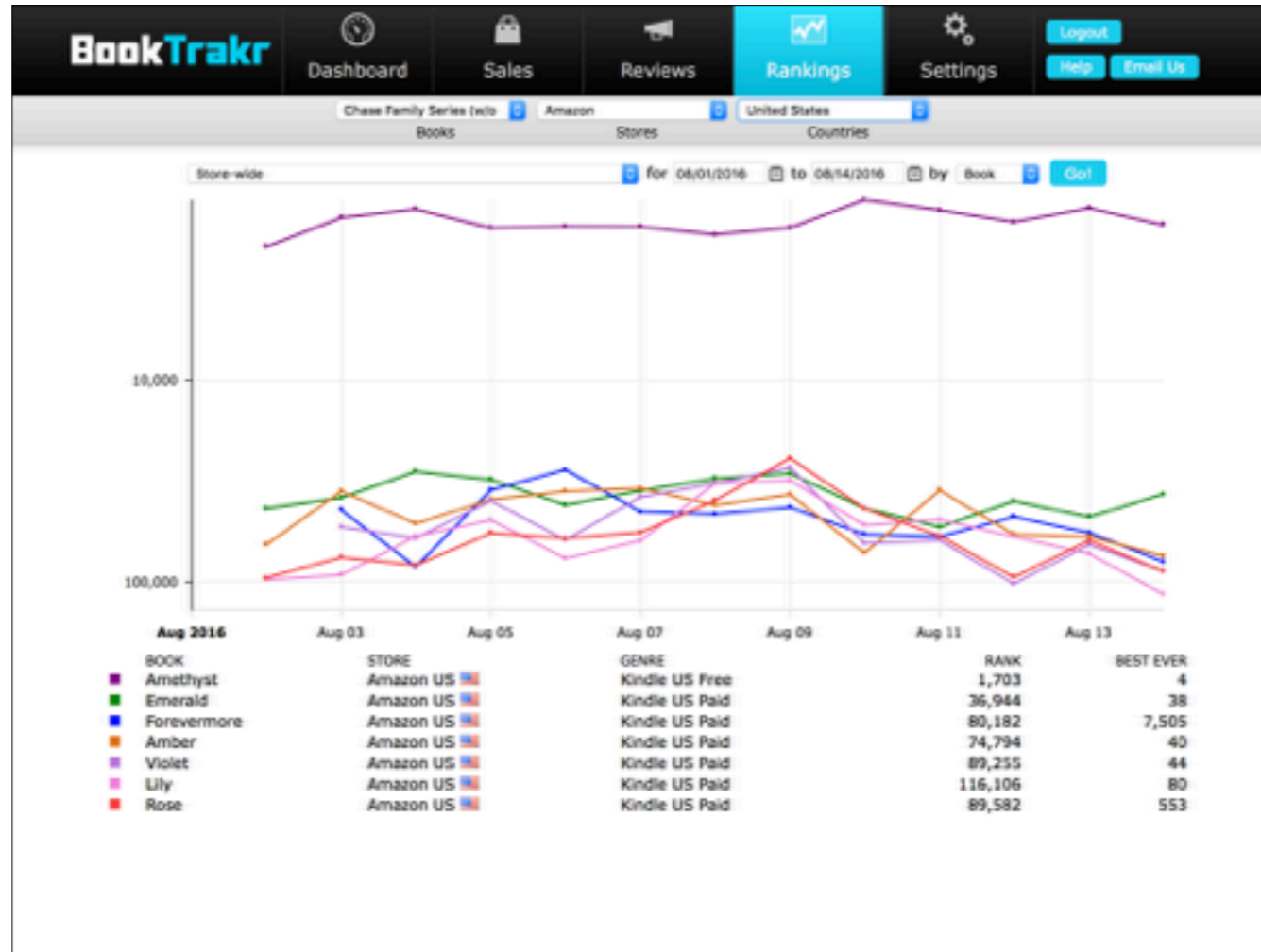
And you can filter by Store, by Book (or Bookshelf), and by Country.



This is a book ranking chart. This particular chart shows the best ranking today for each book...



...along with the best ranking that the book ever had.



Many users don't realize this, but you can also look at how book rankings change over time, which this chart shows. And you can filter by store, book (or bookshelf), and country, just like on the Sales Chart. Why would you want to use rankings instead of (or in addition to) sales? Well, rankings can either lead sales or follow sales; that is, higher rankings can lead to better sales (such as the practice of discounting your book to run it up in the rankings and then restoring the original price in order to take advantage of the high ranking). Or better sales can lead to higher rankings (this is most often the case). But it might be desirable to know which it is.

BookTrakr

Collects sales, ratings, rankings, and reviews

So, as you can see, BookTrakr is a natural tool to think of when it comes to measuring changes in sales and rankings associated with a promotion (of course, you can do that without BookTrakr if you have someone record your sales and rankings every day).

Decide upon a goal

As we said at the beginning of the talk, when you want to run an experiment, you first need to decide upon a goal.



Free



\$4⁹⁹



\$4⁹⁹

So, like a lot of authors, Lauren puts her books in series, **CLICK**

And she makes the first book permafrees. The strategy here is that the free book draws in readers, who read it and then pay for the other two. Since ultimately, she wants to make money, that's our goal:

Decide upon a goal

“I want to increase sales of the paid books in my series by exposing the free book to more readers.”

Increase sales of the paid books in my series by exposing the free book to more readers.

Come up with an idea

So next, we need to come up with an idea to increase the exposure of the free book. Well, what's the first thing you think of?

The logo for BookBub, featuring the word "BookBub" in white, bold, sans-serif font centered within a red rectangular box. The box is set against a solid black background.

BookBub

Yeah. These guys. They have a reputation for sending you a lot of traffic.



Now it doesn't have to be BookBub, of course. There are lots of other good promotions out there, and they're all worth testing. But that's who we went with on this occasion.

The BookBub logo consists of the word "BookBub" in a white, sans-serif font, centered within a red rectangular box. This box is itself centered within a larger black rectangular area.

BookBub

Now, this might seem like a slam dunk, but it's really not. Remember, our goal is not just to bring traffic to the free book—it's to cause sales of the paid books to rise. BookBub advertises bargain books; maybe their subscribers are bargain hunters who won't pay full price for a book. So it's worth testing:

Come up with an idea

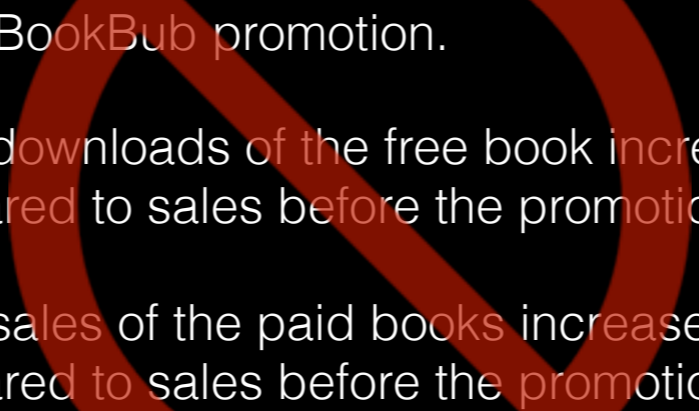
“Let’s run a BookBub promotion
on the first book.”

Let’s run a BookBub on the first book.

Run a test

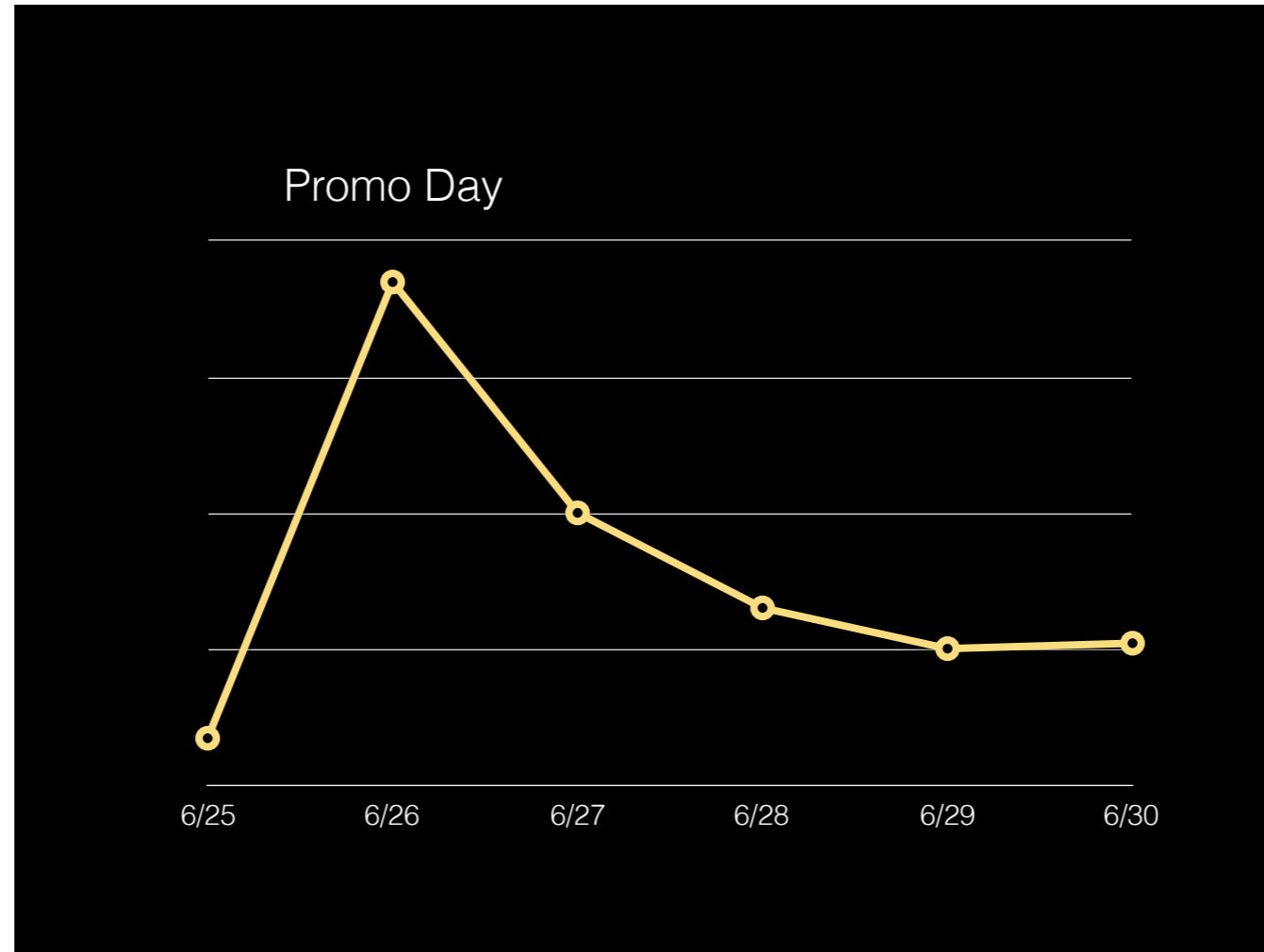
Because we're worried about bargain hunting, our test should be two-pronged. First, we want to prove that the promotion will increase downloads of the free book. Second, we want to prove that it will increase sales of the paid books.

The plan

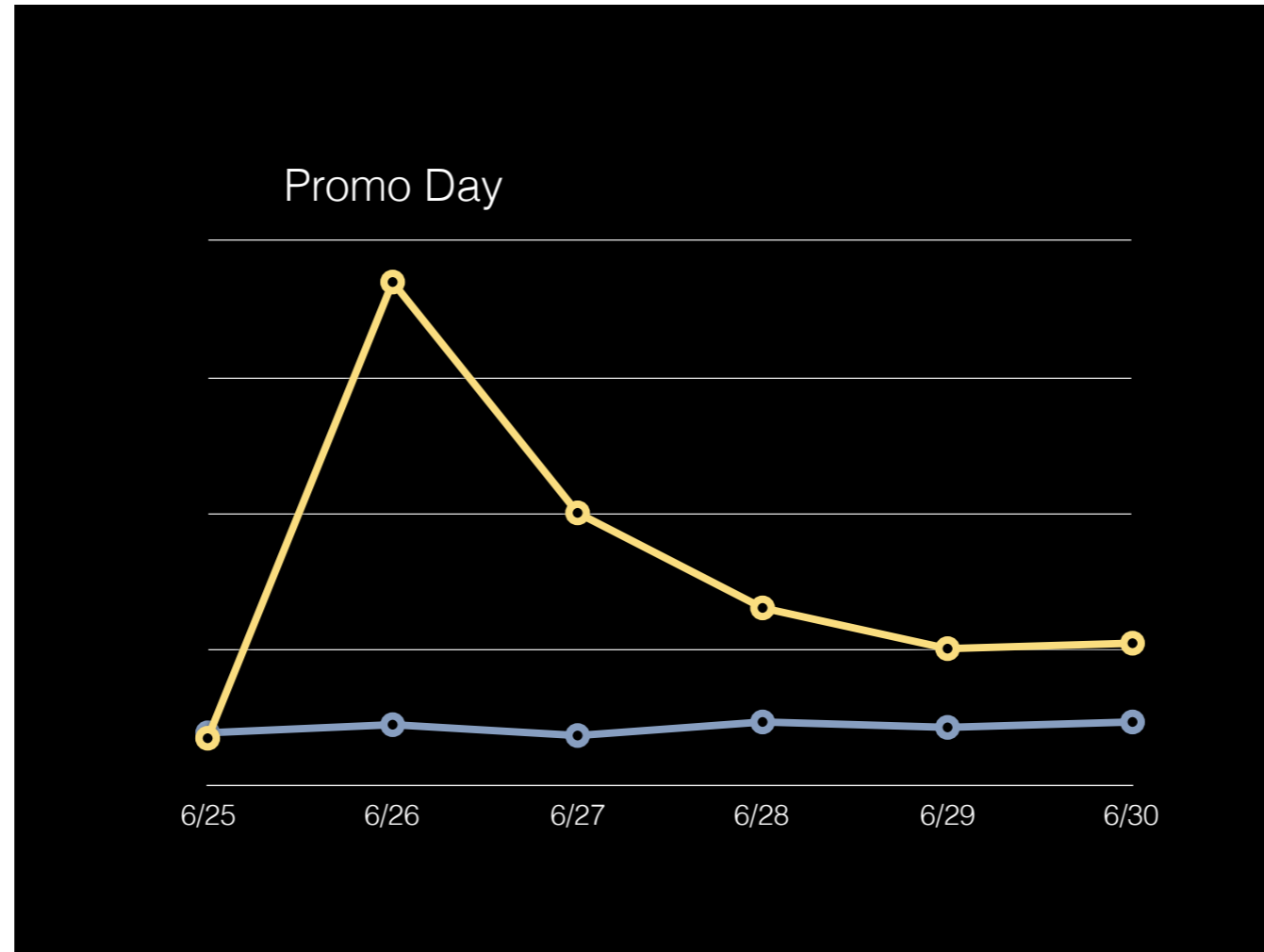
1. Run a BookBub promotion.
 2. See if downloads of the free book increase compared to sales before the promotion.
 3. See if sales of the paid books increase compared to sales before the promotion.
- 

So, we've got a nice, simple plan of action: Run the promo, see if free downloads increased, and see if paid revenue increased. Right? **CLICK**

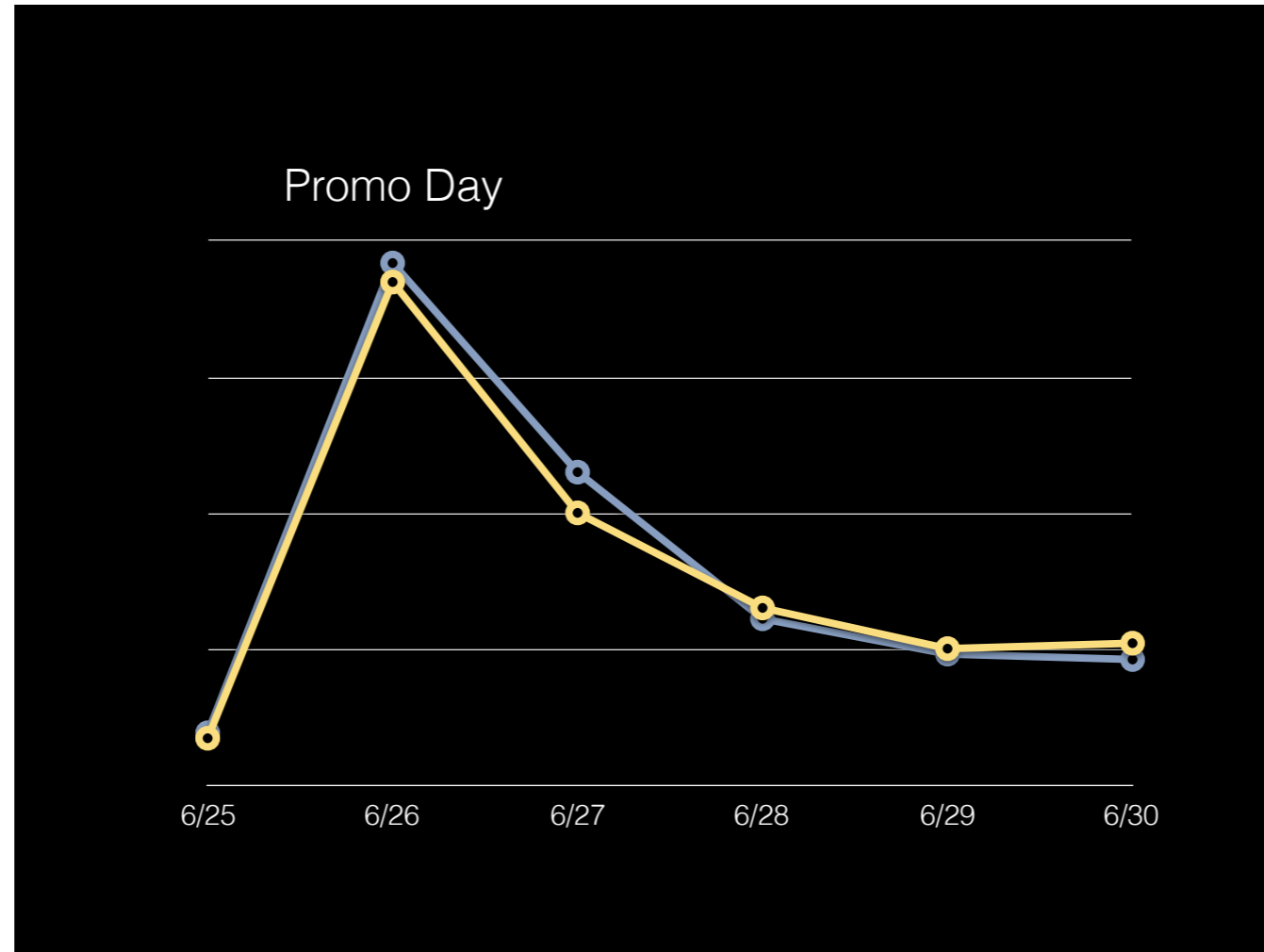
Wrong. That could easily give you the wrong conclusion.



So, let's say you see a chart that's something like this. Was the promo successful? Well, maybe. Or maybe something else happened at the same time—for instance, Amazon changed its algorithms and your books all jumped up the ranking charts. That's great news for you, but it doesn't tell you that the promotion worked.



So instead, you want to make sure you have a *control*—some similar thing that *shouldn't* be affected by the test—that you can compare to. Now, “control” isn’t the same as controlling your TV; it basically means canceling out effects other than the thing you’re testing. If the test succeeds, the control should stay the same, while the thing you’re trying to affect should change.



But if the control moves too, then it probably wasn't your test doing it—something else intervened.

Possible controls

- Both versions simultaneously
- The same book on other stores
- A similar book that's not affected
- The same book in a different time period

So what can you use as a control?

The best possible thing is to try both alternatives at once. This isn't usually possible when you're using sales data, though, because sales numbers don't have enough detail to tell which alternative the reader used. But Brent will talk about that option when he discusses Littlink. **CLICK**

When measuring sales, your best choice of control is probably the same book on a different store. For example, if you want to change your cover, you might change it only on Amazon and leave the other stores alone. If your Amazon sales jump and the others stay the same, that's a good sign that your cover made a difference. **CLICK**

Sometimes, like when doing a BookBub promotion, that's not really possible. In that case, you should compare it to similar books which you don't think should be affected by the promotion. For instance, if you have two series, you can run a promotion for one and use the other as a control. **CLICK**

Finally, if even that isn't an option, you can fall back to comparing before-and-after data. But you need to be careful if you do.

No control is perfect. Using a book on another store as a control can fail if that book gets featured on that store. Using a similar book can fail if the book isn't similar in an important way—imagine testing a children's book about fish the week *Finding Dory* came out, and using a book about dogs as a control.

But generally, the more similar the control is to the actual books you're testing with, the less likely you are to get an incorrect result. And an awful lot of the things that can mess you up are tied to time. You should always be on the lookout for events that might mess up your result, but doubly so if the test and control data aren't from the same time period.

The plan (revised)

1. Run a BookBub promotion.
2. See if downloads of the free book increase compared to sales before the promotion.
3. See if sales of the paid books increase compared to sales before the promotion.

So let's revise the plan to properly control these measurements.

The plan (revised)

1. Run a BookBub promotion.
2. See if downloads of the free book increase compared to sales **of another free book**.
3. See if sales of the paid books increase compared to sales before the promotion.

Instead of comparing free book sales to previous sales, we'll compare them to sales of a free book.

The plan (revised)

1. Run a BookBub promotion.
2. See if downloads of the free book increase compared to sales **of another free book**.
3. See if sales of the paid books increase compared to sales **of other paid books**.

And instead of comparing sales of the paid books to previous sales, we'll compare them to sales of other paid books.

Now, in reality, we'll *also* look at before-and-after data. But we'll be careful of it, because there's more that can go wrong.

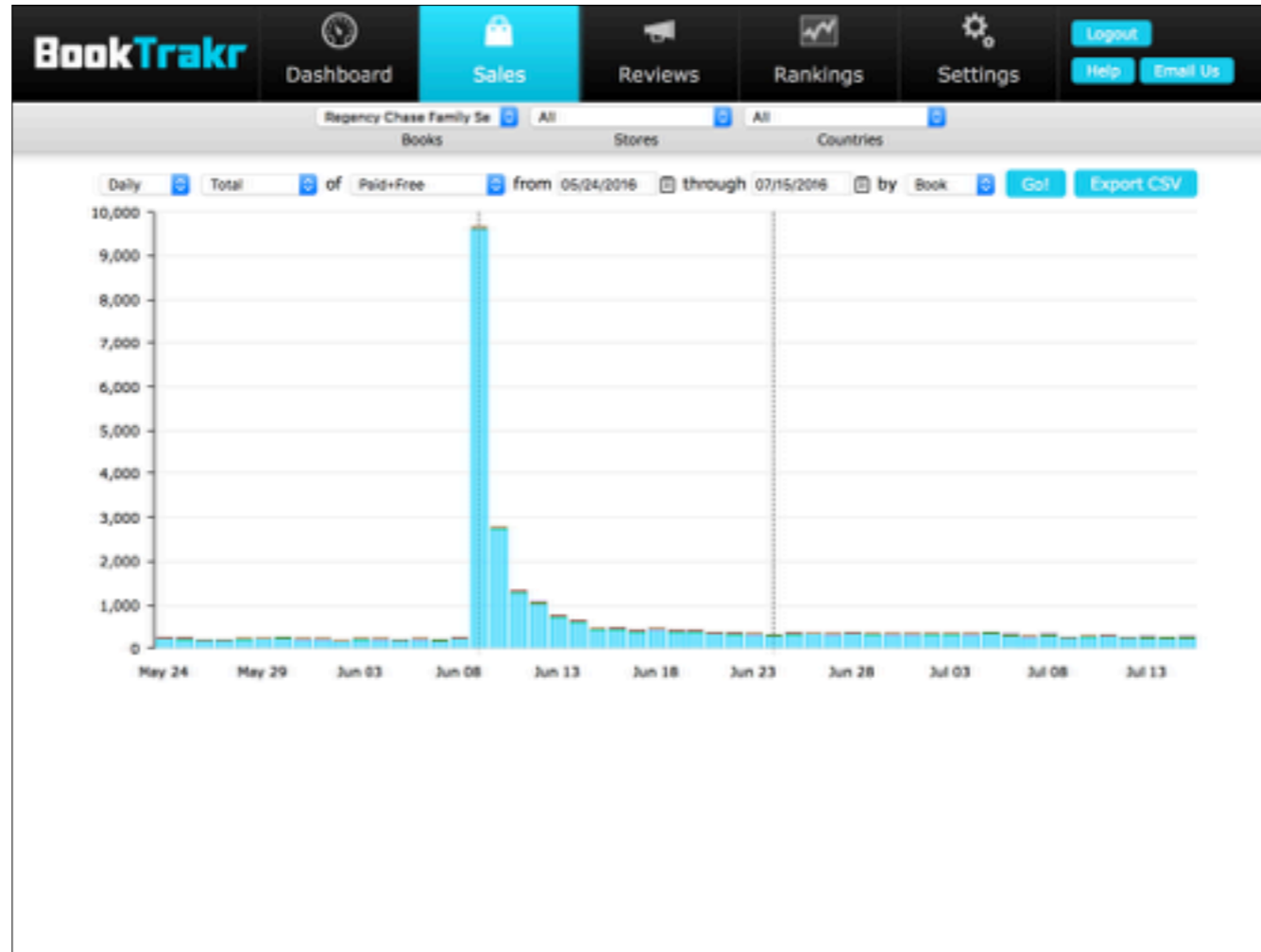
Run a test

“Start a BookBub and see if sales of that series rise compared to similar books in another series.”

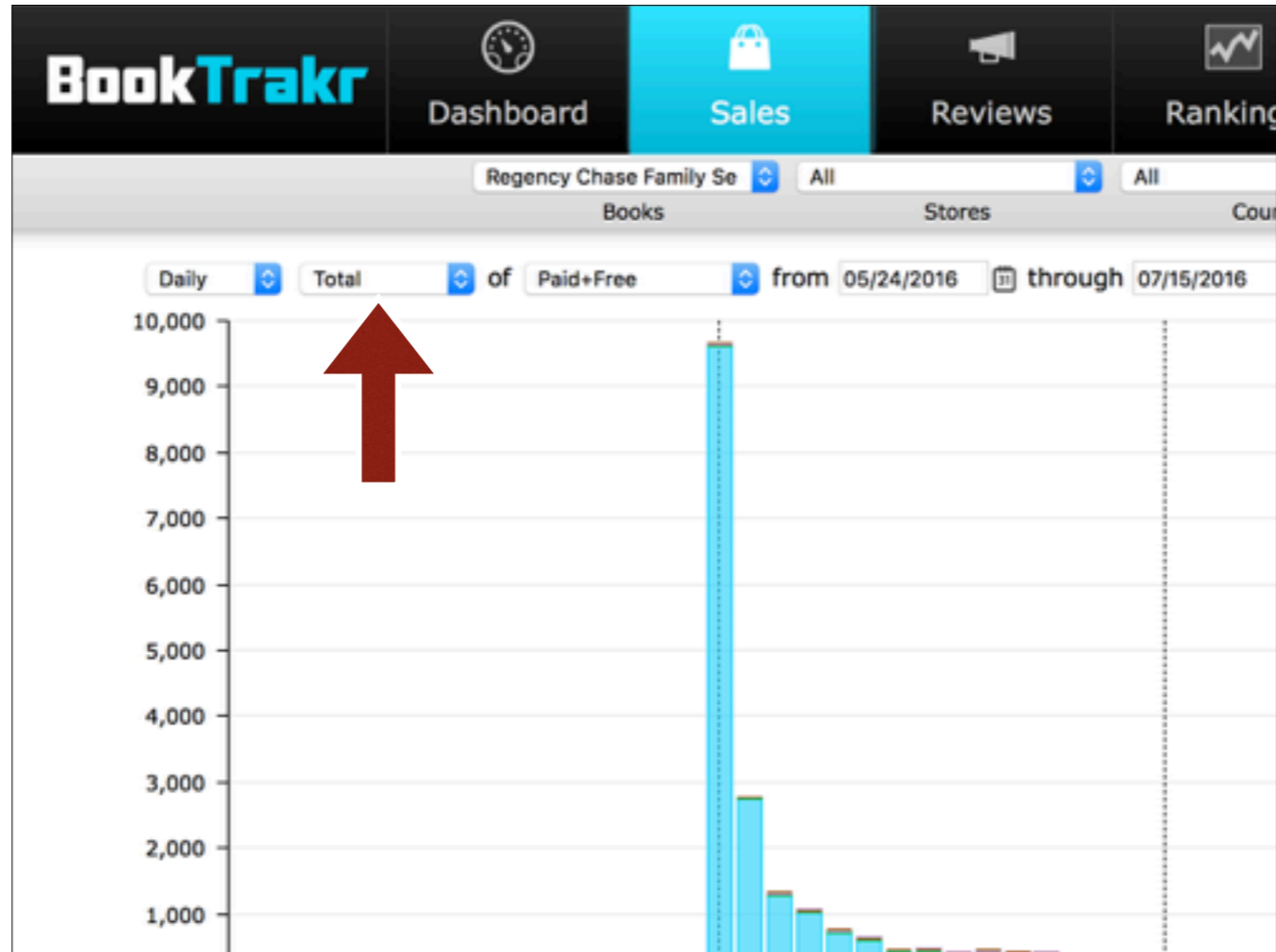
So that's what we're going to do. Run our test, then compare the results to other books we have.

Measure its impact

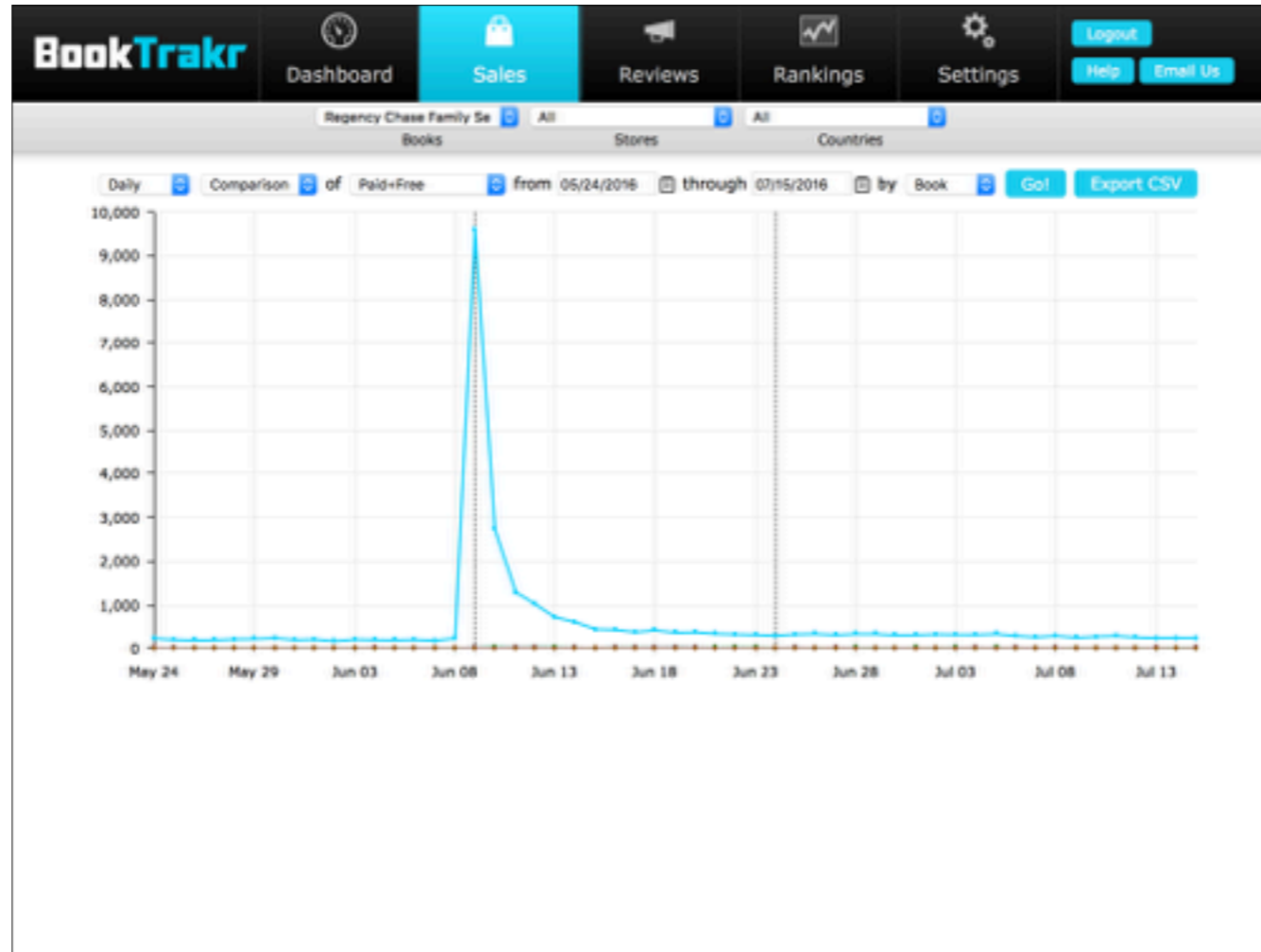
So, a few weeks later, we decide to sit down and look at the results of our test. We open up BookTrakr and we're so excited to see how it went that we forget all about controls and just pull up the numbers for that series.



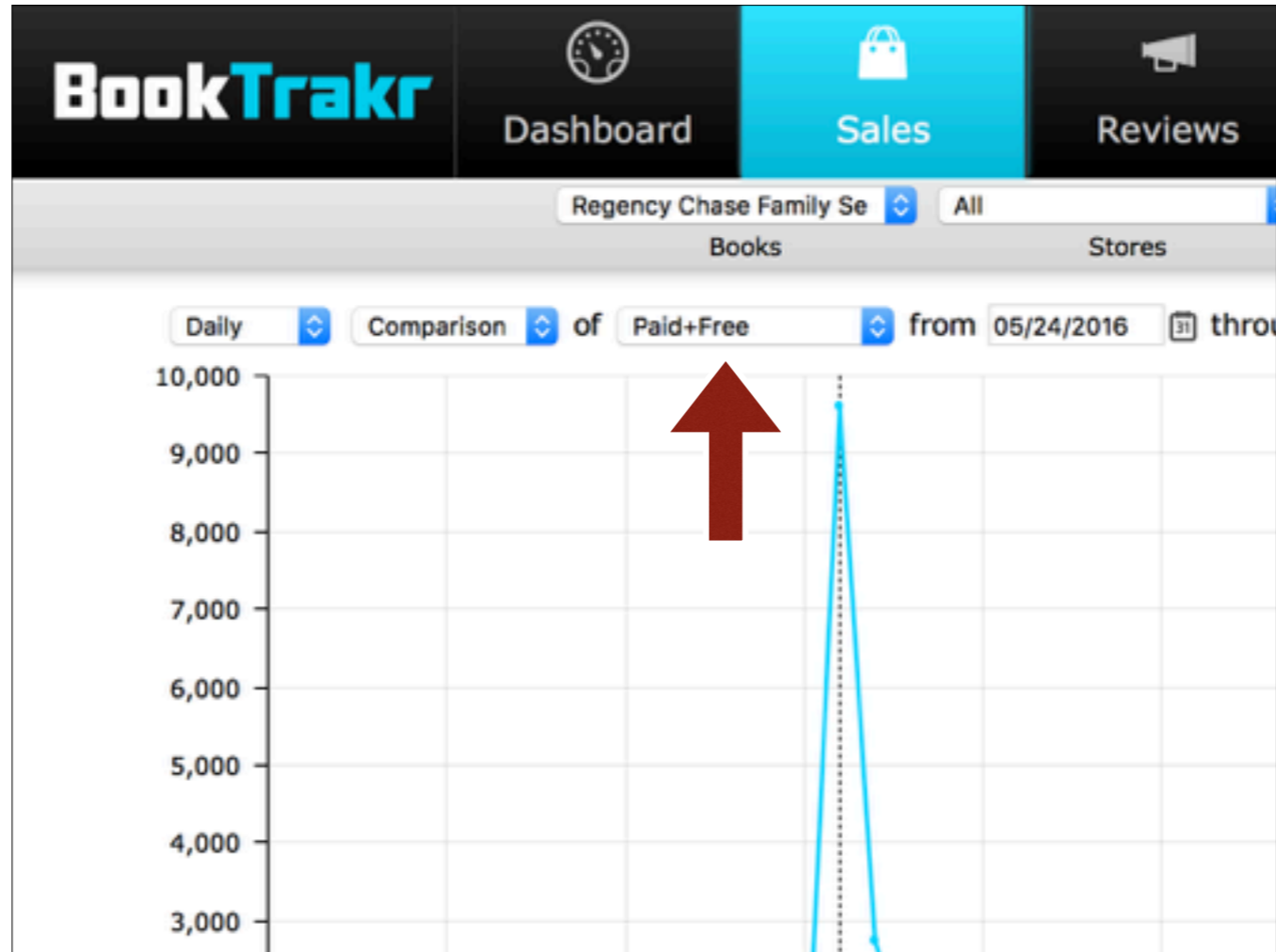
Whoa. That's...not very helpful. Obviously the BookBub had a big effect the first day, and it looks like we've probably continued to have more downloads ever since, but it's actually combining together books we want to look at separately, and of course the spike is blowing the scale. So let's start cleaning this up.



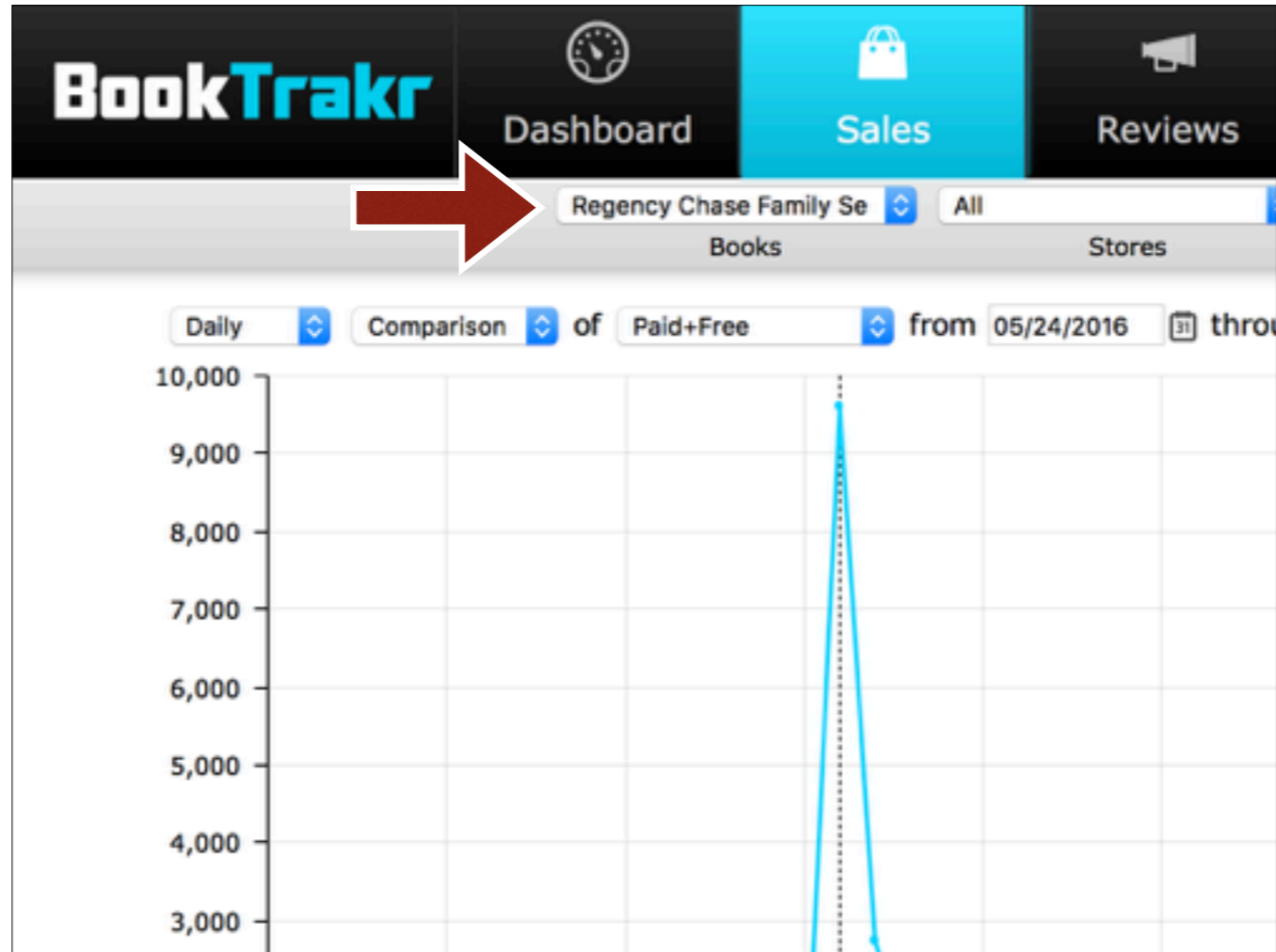
First, let's switch this to Comparison mode. That's this control right here, the one that says "Total". Pull that down and switch it to "Comparison", and you'll get something aimed at comparing different books.



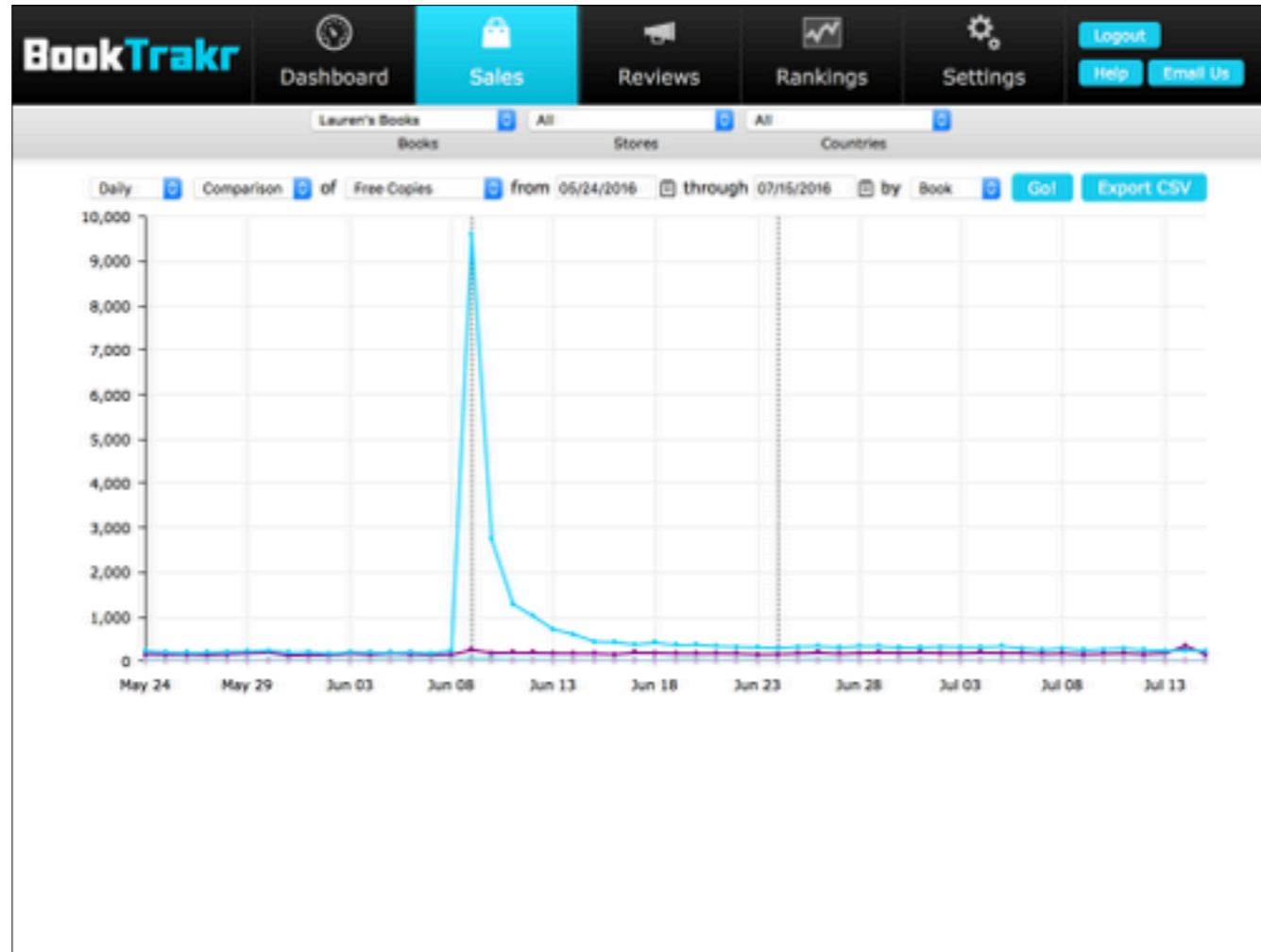
So, this is still kind of unreadable, but at least it's broken out the different books. You can clearly see that the number of free copies completely dominates the number of paid copies, but we kind of expected that. You can also see that there is a small but persistent increase in the number of free downloads. Still, the spike has blown the scale so badly that we can't see any detail in the paid books.



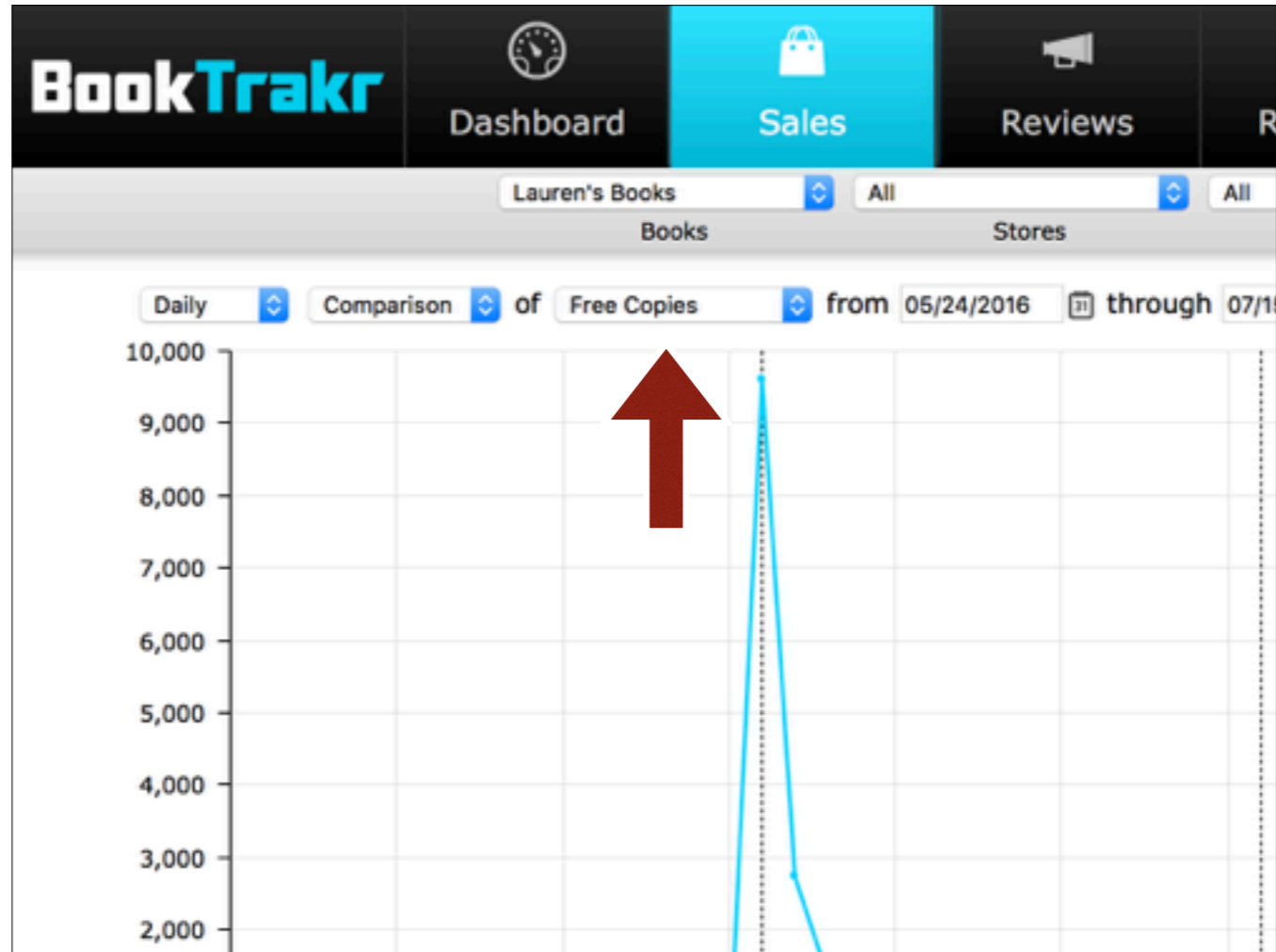
So let's look at just the free books to begin with. What we'll do is switch "Paid+Free" to just "Free Copies"...



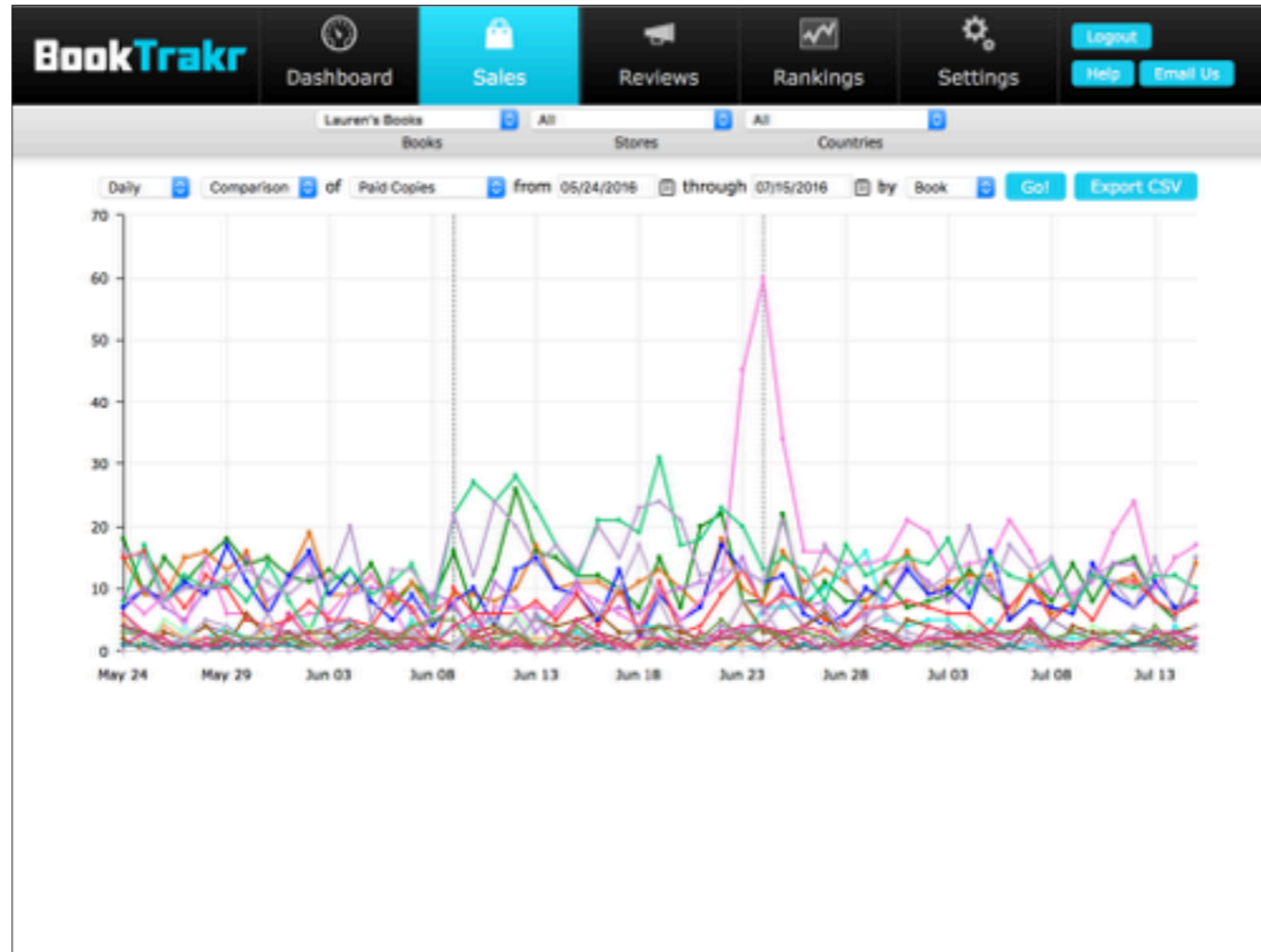
And change this from just this one series to a shelf that includes both of Lauren's series. Run that, and...



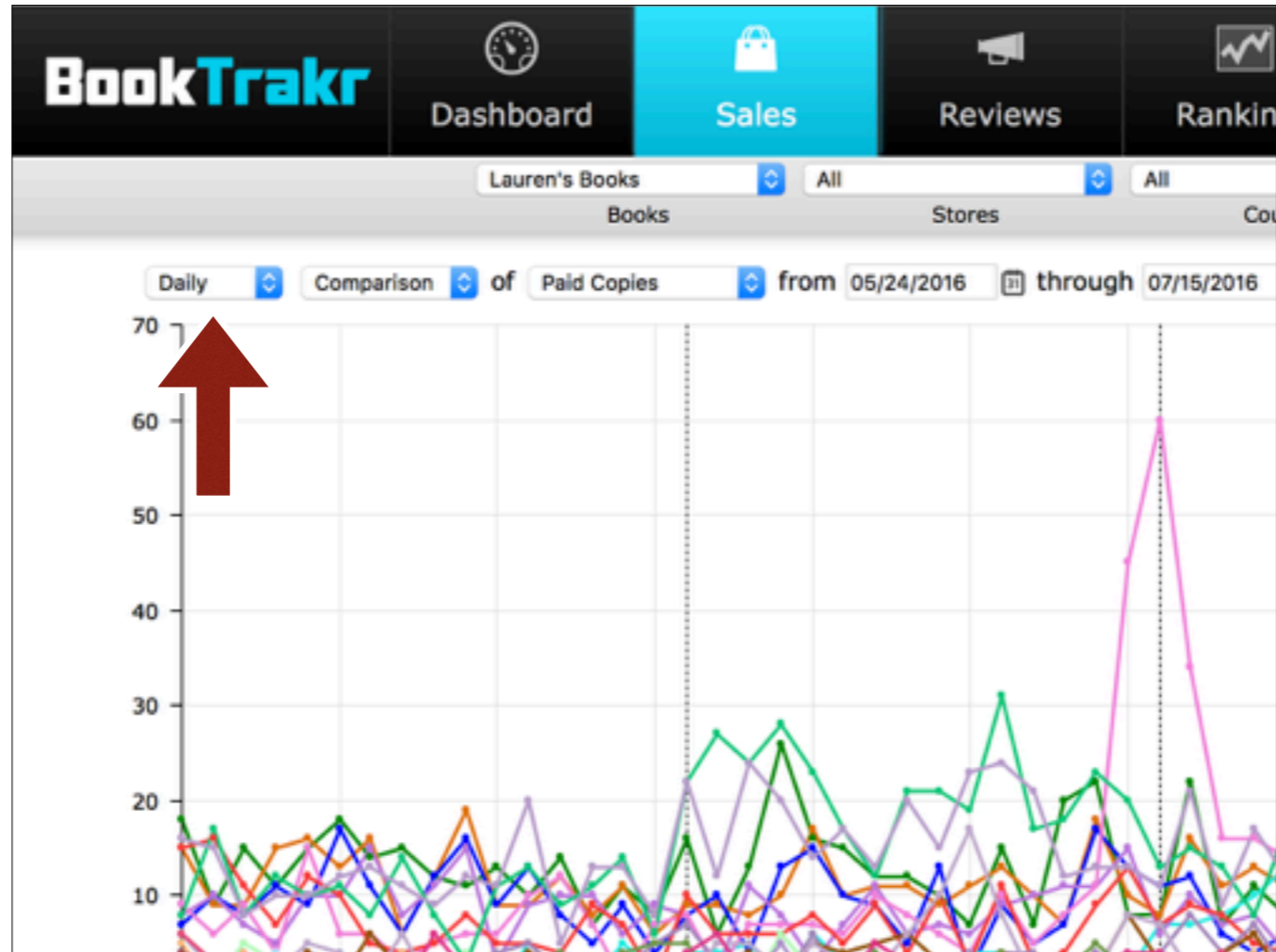
You get this instead. Because we went to “Free Copies”, the paid books are all at zero, so only the two free books have lines here. And you can see that the other free book stayed pretty flat, while the free book we promoted shot into the stratosphere and then came down just a tiny bit higher than the other one. That looks like a success in making the free book more popular. So now let’s see what it did to our paid books.



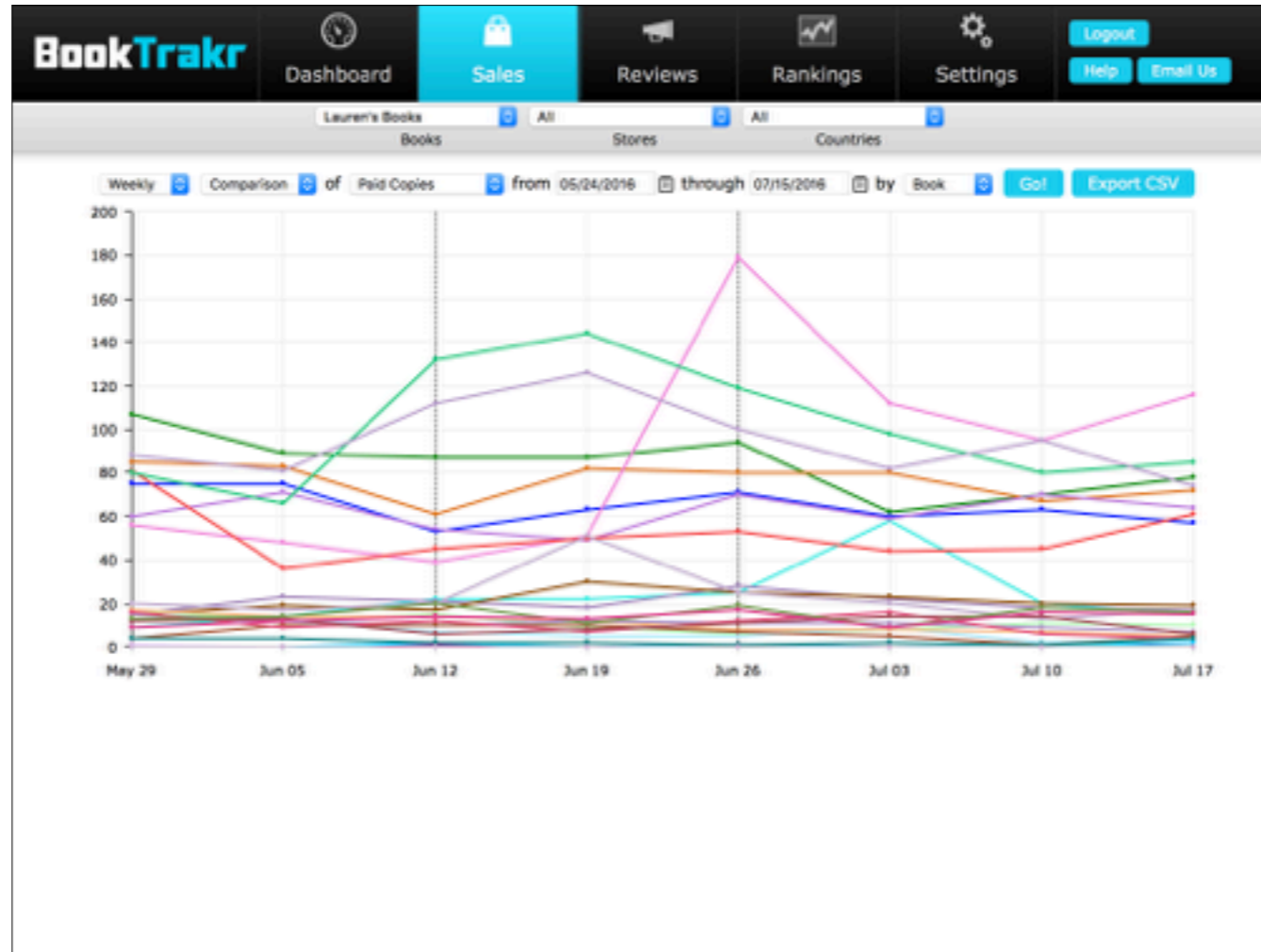
So let's just switch this from "Free Copies" to "Paid Copies" to zero out the free books, and...



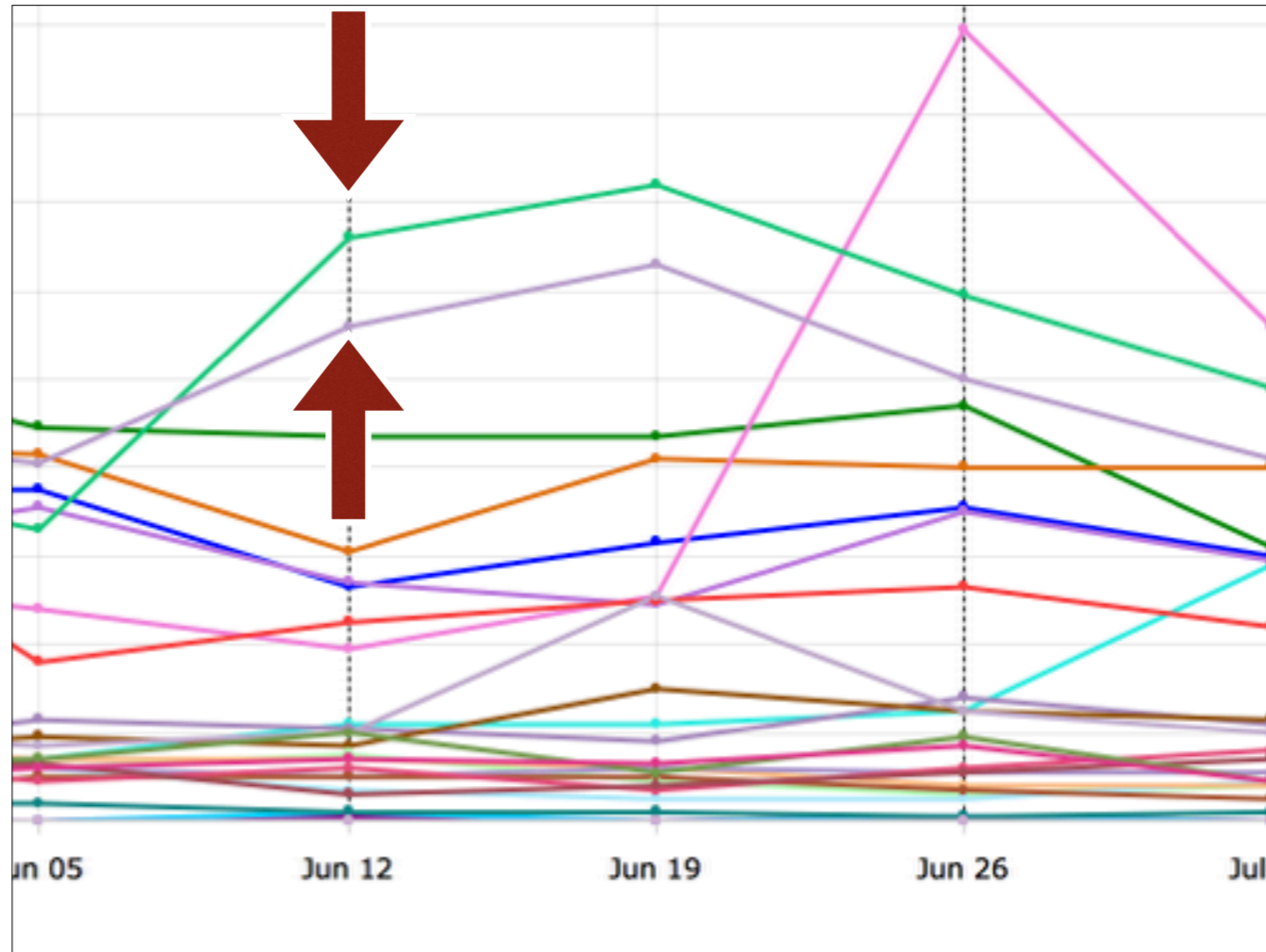
Um. Well, we end up with a tangled ball of yarn. The problem is that the data is just too noisy for us to see anything. Things bounce up and down all the time, and with a lot of lines on the chart, you can't sort out what's what.



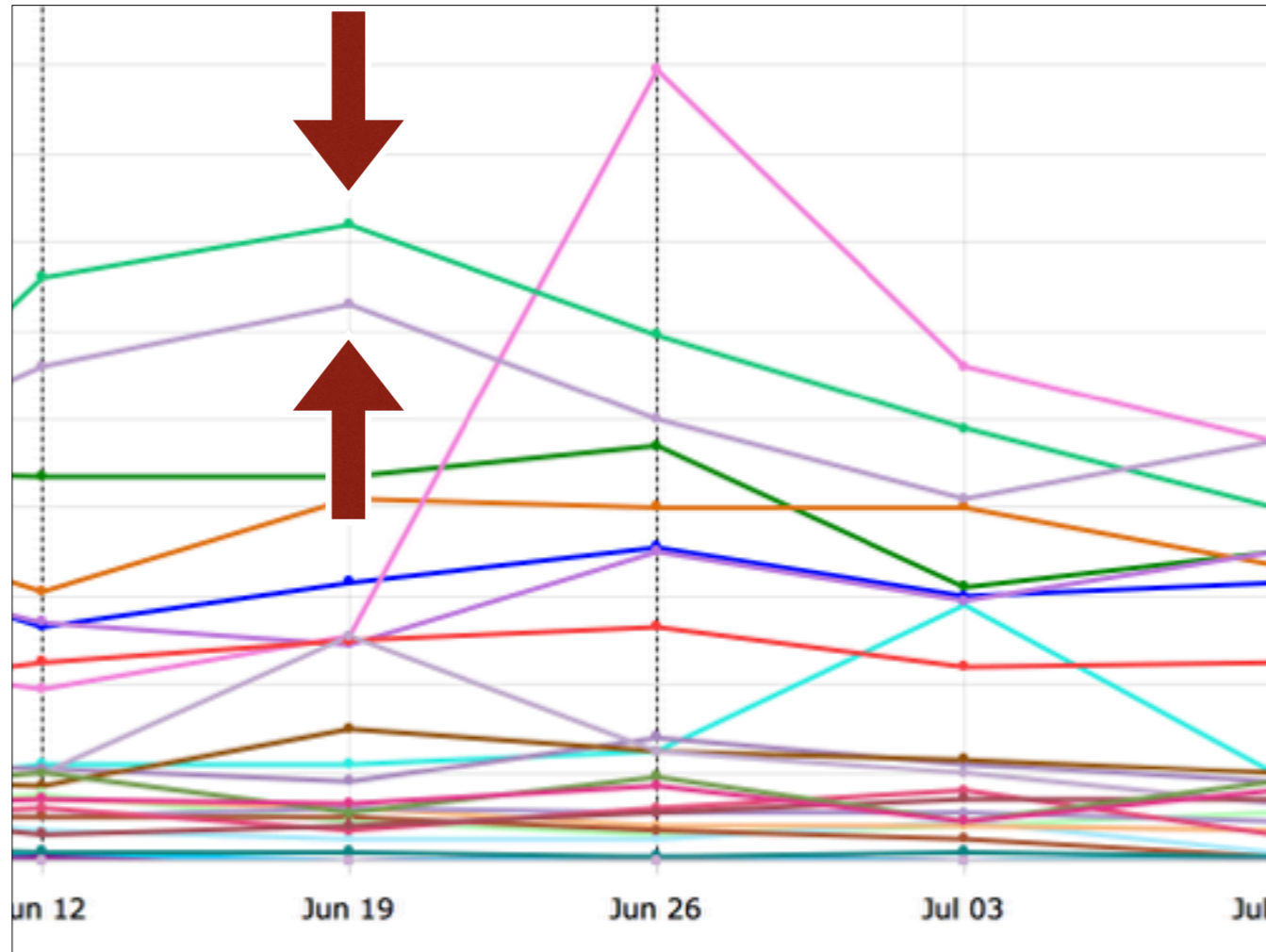
Fortunately, BookTrakr includes a feature to work around this kind of problem. What we'll do is switch from "Daily" to "Weekly". Once you do that...



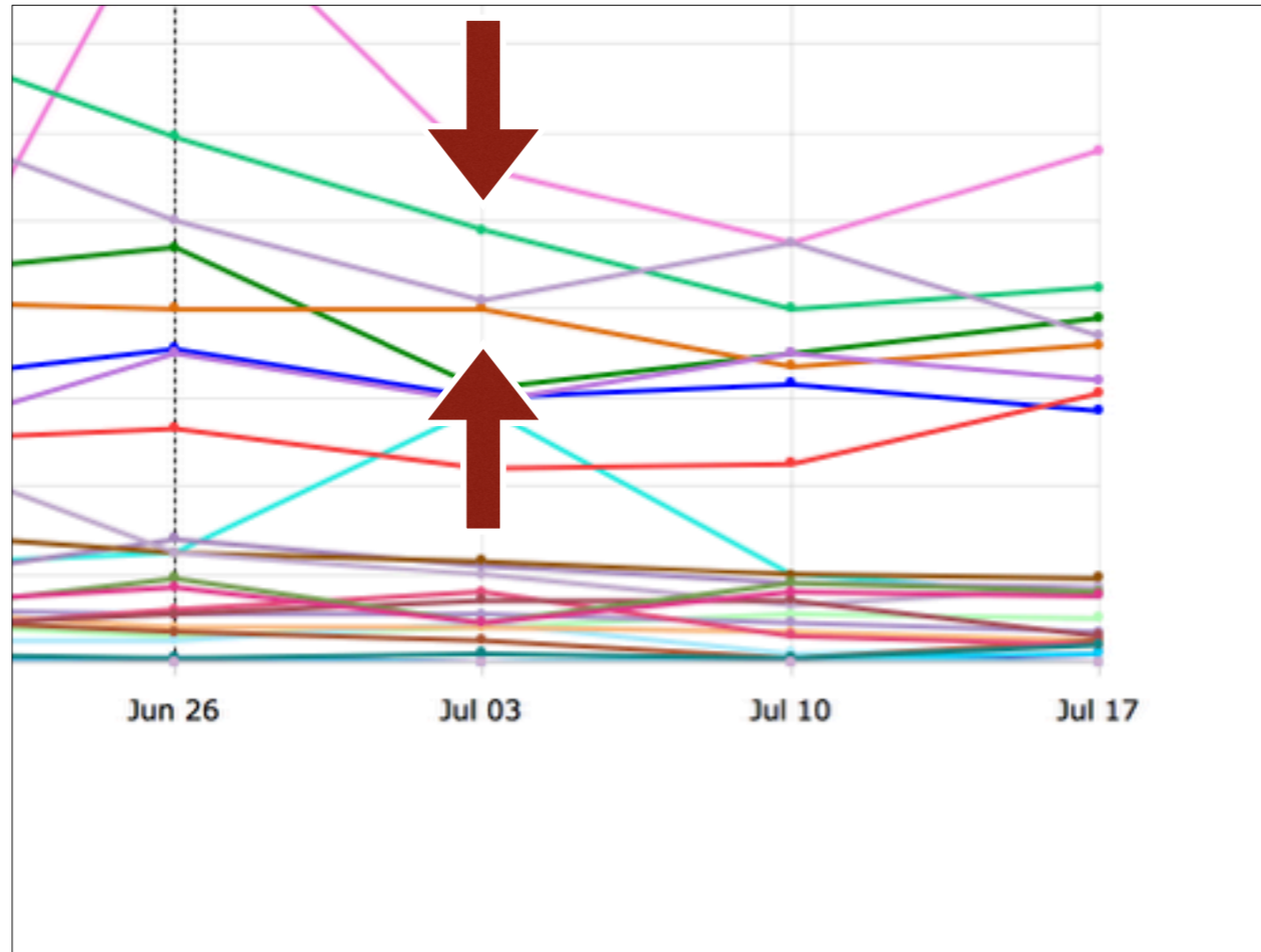
And, boom. The data is still a little tangled, but you can at least follow the lines now. If we zoom in a little...



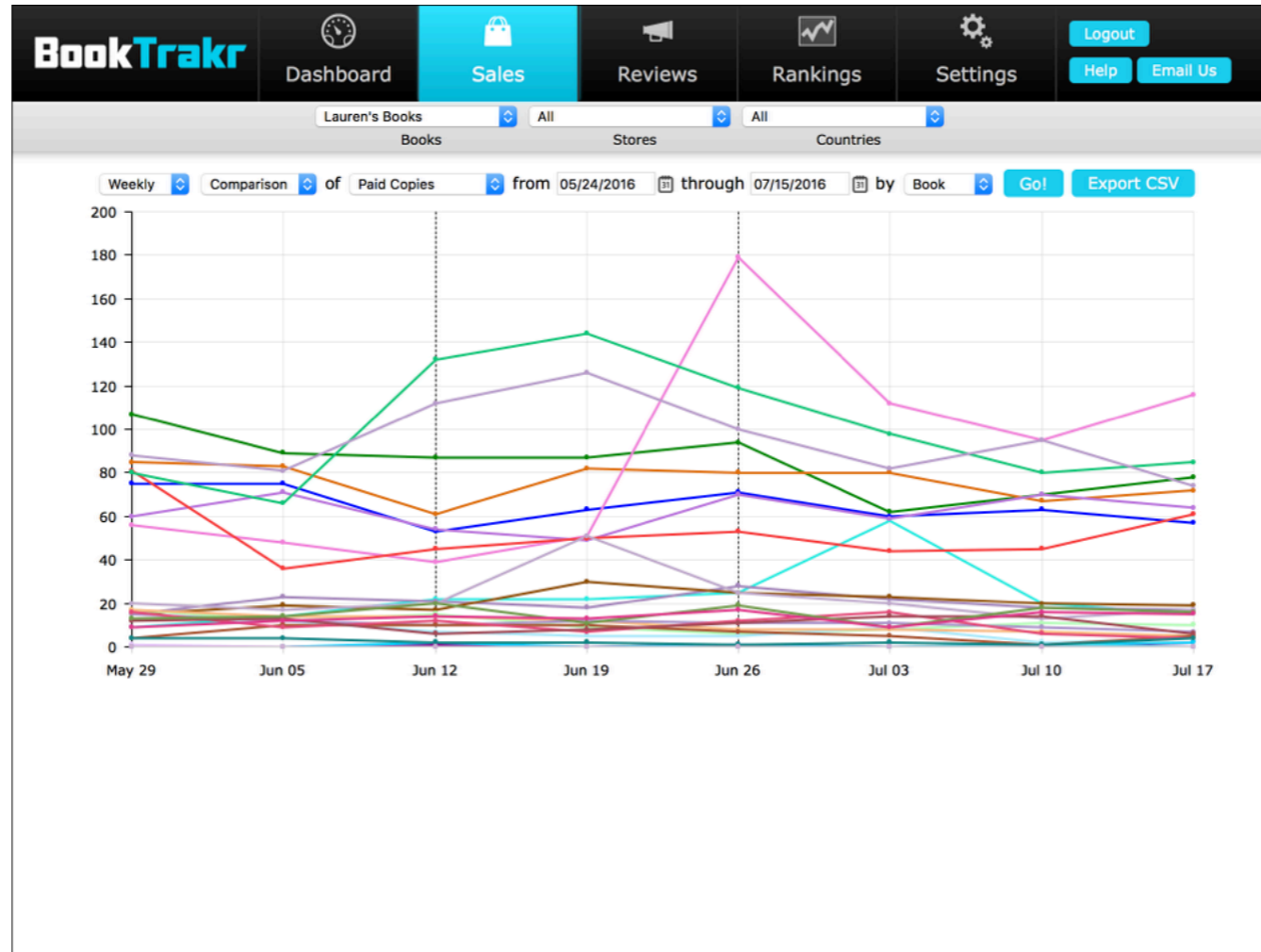
You can see the lines for those two paid books jump up during the week of the sale...



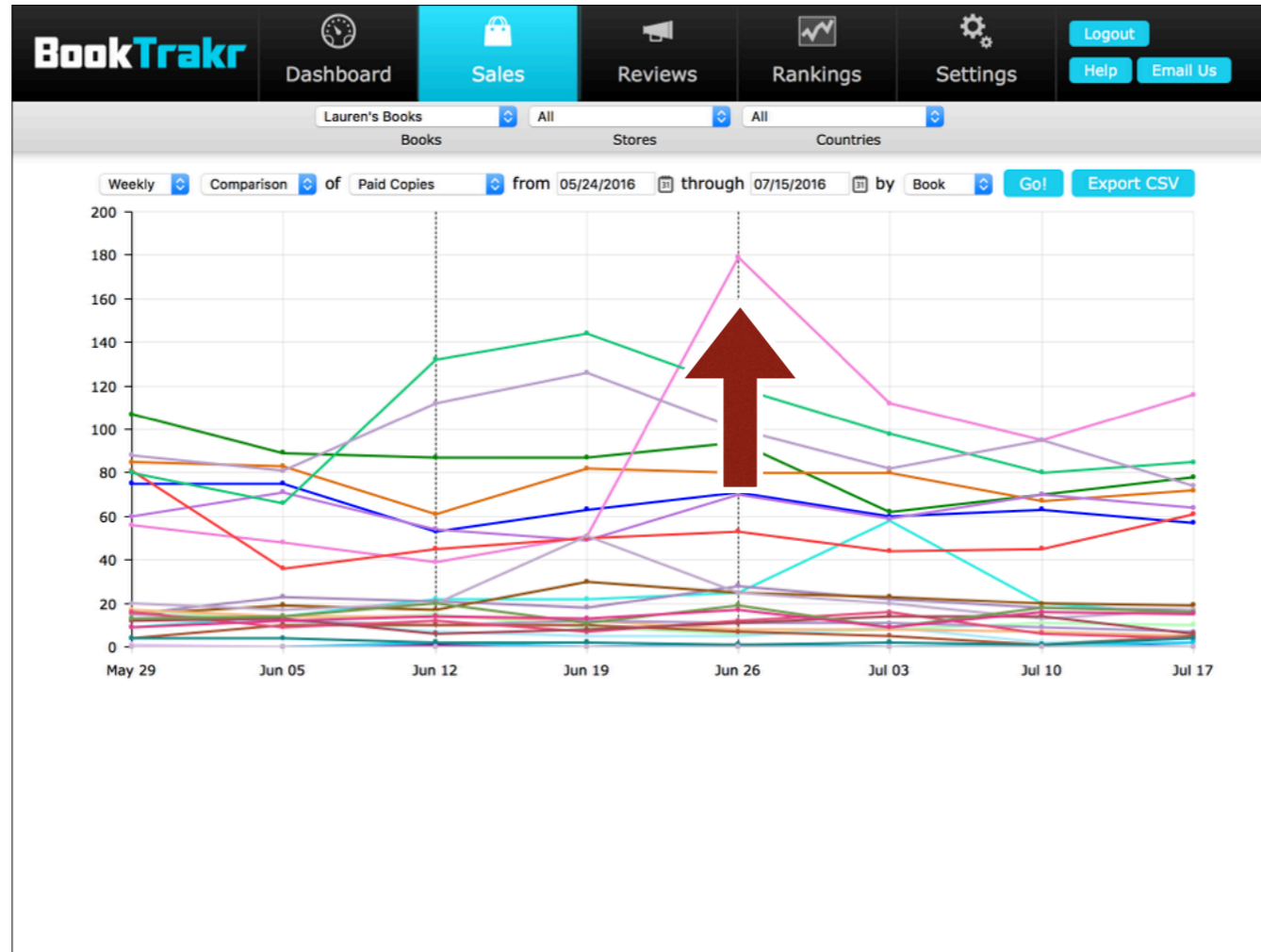
Then keep climbing for a little while as more people finish the first book...



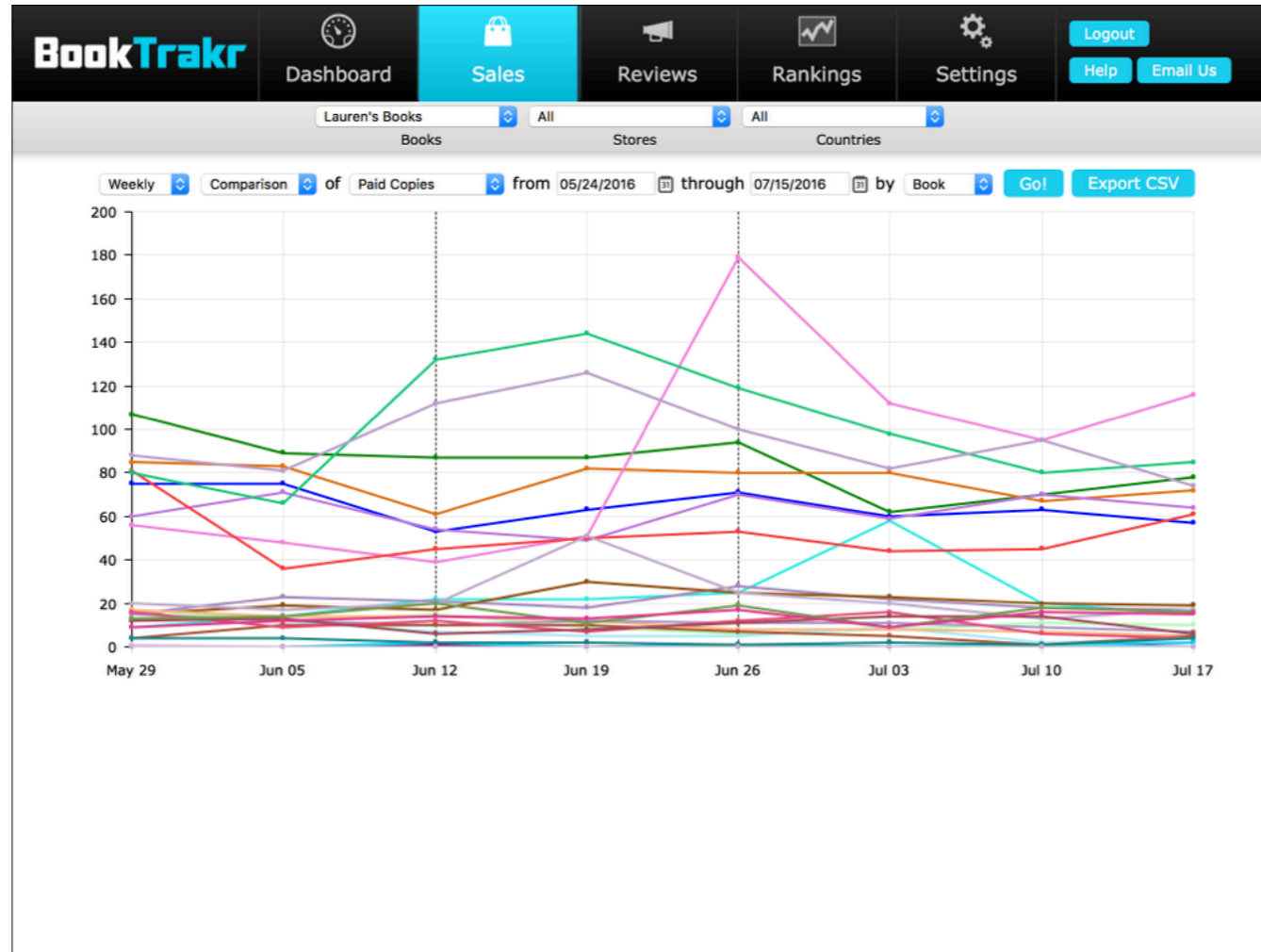
And then gently fall back to Earth.



Meanwhile, the other lines don't really do anything in particular, except for this book...



Which got promotion from one of the bookstores a couple weeks later.



Overall, you really can see a significant impact from this test—not just in the giant free book download spike, but also in paid books down the line.

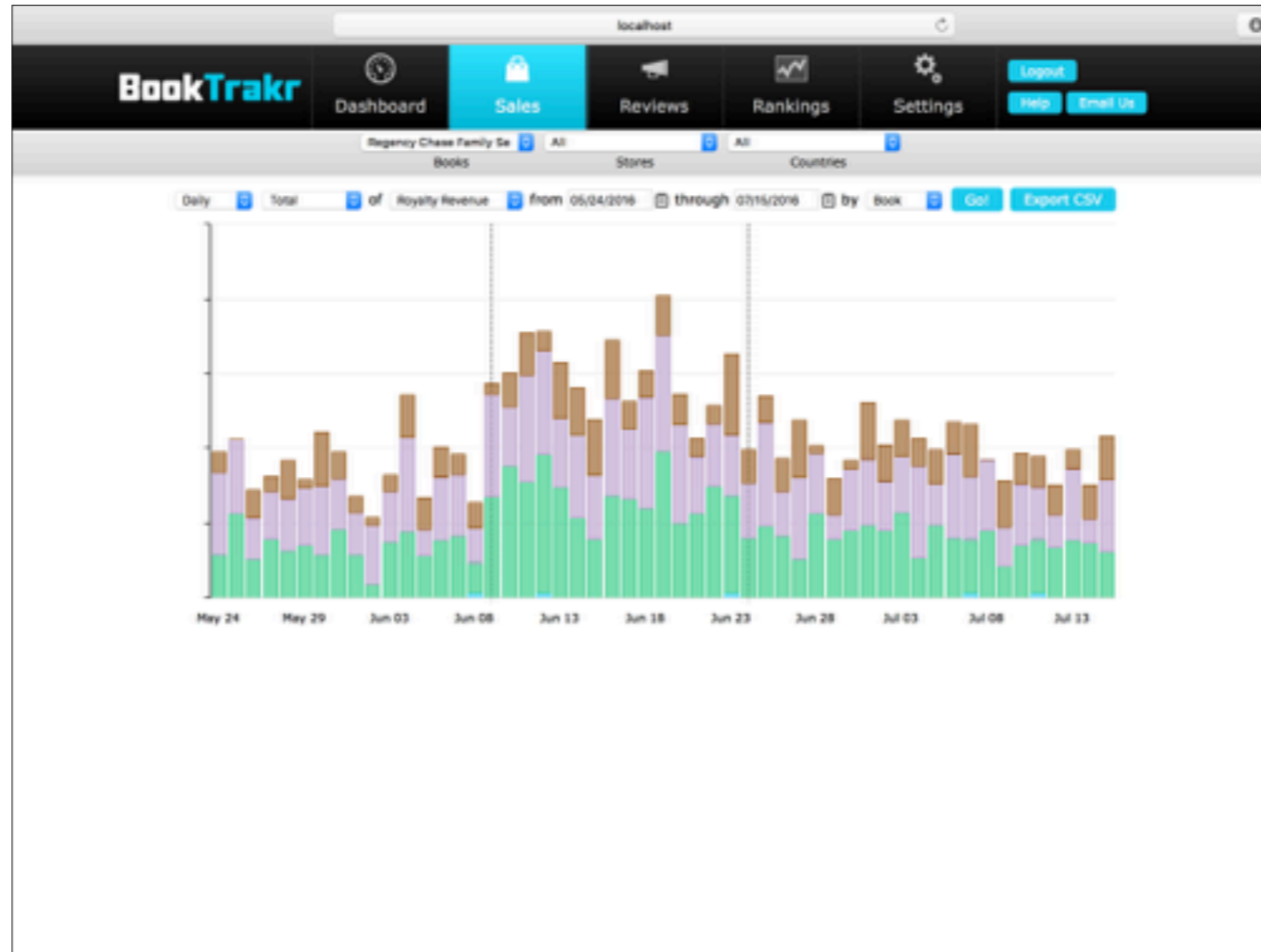
Measure its impact

“Both the free book and the paid books in the same series sold more copies than my other books.”

Now, your mileage may vary—remember, what works for someone else might not work for you. But for Lauren, it looks like the BookBub did raise the sales of both the free and paid books.

Decide if it worked

So, did this idea work? Well, to really decide that, you have to weigh the cost of the promotion against the money it earned. And to get into that, we'd have to talk about real numbers, which we promised not to do.



But we *can* show you this chart of revenue from that series during the promotion. And we can also say that Lauren is not a repeat customer of every promotion company she's tried.

Decide if it worked

“Yup.”

But she asked for another BookBub.

So now I'll hand it back to Brent so he can talk a little bit about Littlink.

Littlink

Measures clicks on your links

[Brent]

So, Littlink is a link shortener we designed specifically for authors.

Link shortening

[https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/
amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4](https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4)

The basic function of a link shortener is to take some big, horrible, gibberish-filled web address like this one—Apple's aren't *that* bad, by the way, they're just short enough to fit on a slide—

Link shortening

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>



<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4>

And hide it away behind a much shorter address.

Link shortening

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>



<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4>

But a link shortener turns out to be useful for a lot more than that. Because it simply sends you somewhere else, you can sort of stick it in the middle of anything you're doing. That makes it an ideal place to put some smart behavior.

Custom short links

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>



<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4>

For instance, Littlink allows you to choose nice, descriptive names for your links. These look better, are easier to remember and type, and help people understand where they're going.

Custom domains

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>



<https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4>

Littlink also supports custom domain names. These let you brand your links, allow you to use the link name you want even if someone else is using it, and they also mean you can take your links with you if you ever switch away from us.

Evergreen links

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>



[https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/
amethyst/id493387870?
mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID](https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID)

Littlinks are evergreen—you can edit them to point somewhere else after you make them. That means, for instance, that you can turn all of your book links into affiliate links without re-uploading any of your books. You can also use it when you're releasing a new book—just create a Littlink that points to a “coming soon” page, and edit it to point directly to the store once you release—and when a site changes their addresses.

Labels

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>

BOOK LINK



[https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/
amethyst/id493387870?
mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID](https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID)

Labels help you organize the links in your Littlink account. They're kind of like folders...

Labels

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>

BOOK LINK

AMETHYST



[https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/
amethyst/id493387870?
mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID](https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID)

Except that you can add more than one of them.

No affiliate code changes

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>

BOOK LINK

AMETHYST



[https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/
amethyst/id493387870?
mt=11&uo=4&at=TheirAffiliateID](https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4&at=TheirAffiliateID)

And one very important thing is what we *don't* do. Some of our competitors actually modify your links to add *their* affiliate codes and collect money for themselves.

CLICK

We don't think it's fair to do that, and our terms of service actually ban us from doing it.

Hit reports

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/iBooks>

BOOK LINK

AMETHYST



[https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/
amethyst/id493387870?
mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID](https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/amethyst/id493387870?mt=11&uo=4&at=YourAffiliateID)

But what's most important for this talk is that, when somebody clicks on one of your links, we record it. And that's a great way to measure how effective your marketing is.



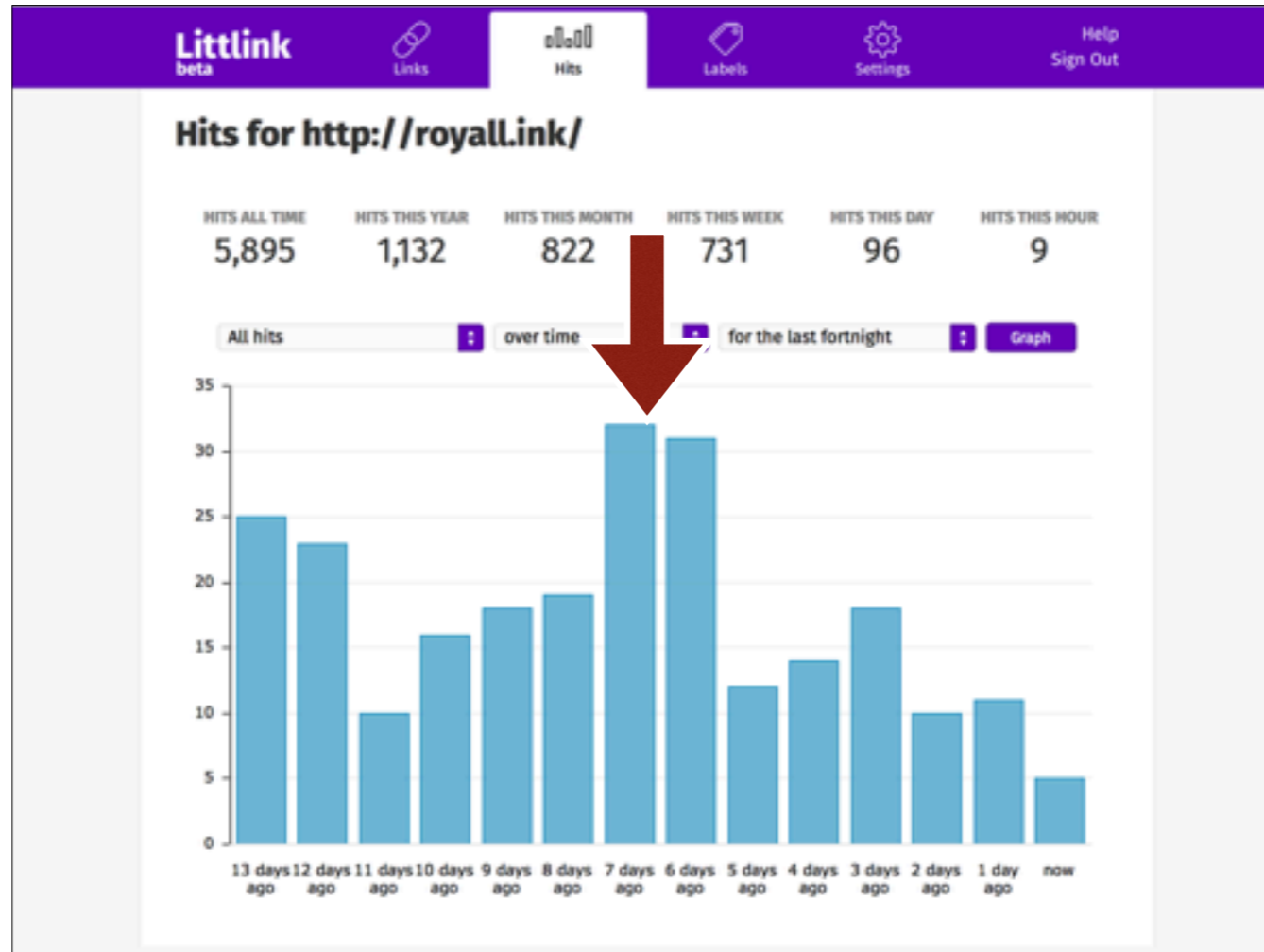
Hit reports let you figure out how many visits your links are getting. It's pretty simple, but you've actually got everything you need here:



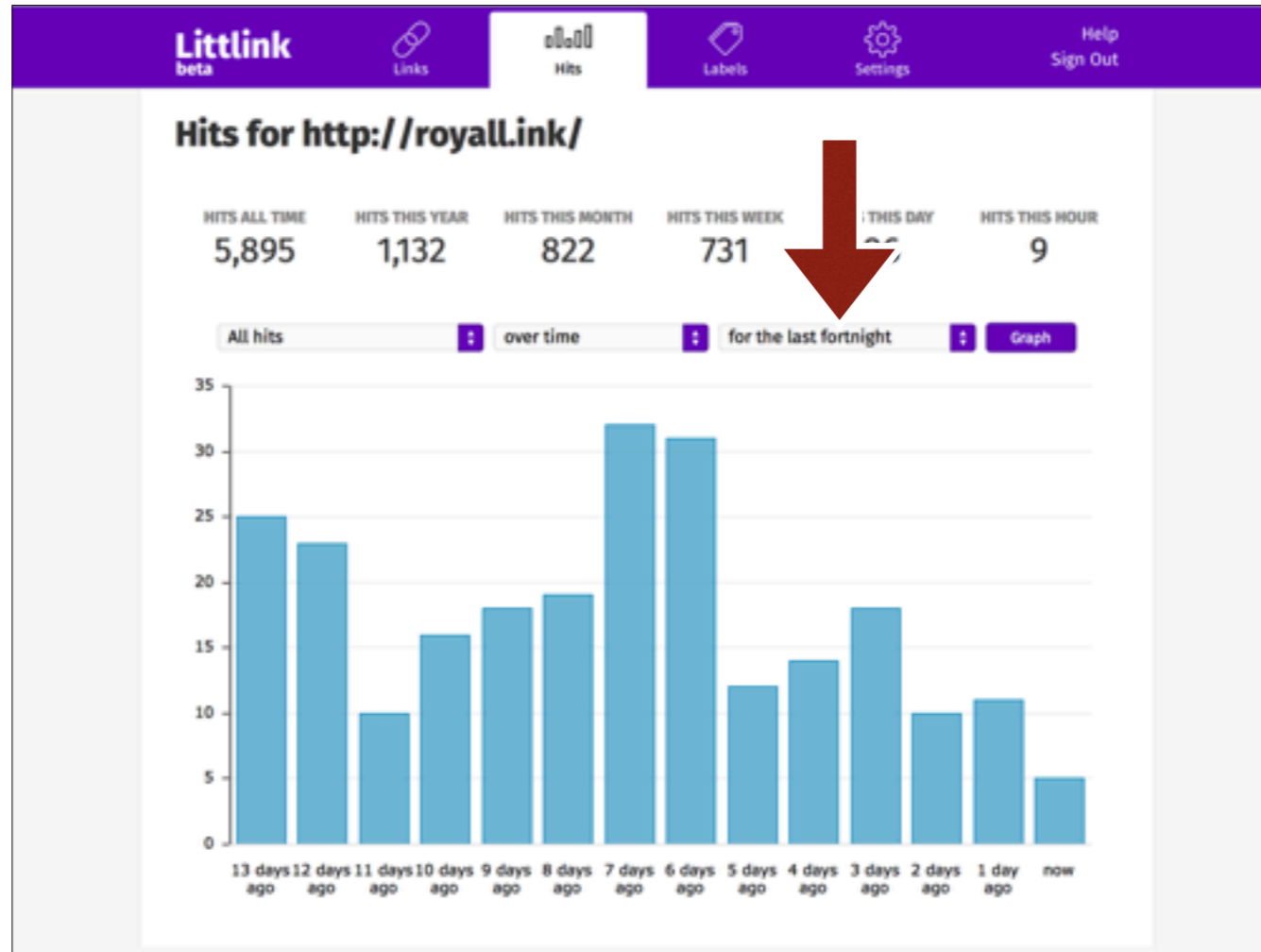
Totals for various time periods,



And a chart of hits. By default, this is a pie chart of all the links, but you can change that—for instance, by clicking on one of the wedges...



You can see a time chart of one specific link.



There's also some controls above the chart. This one does the timespan, and the other two relate to a feature I'll be talking about later.

Littlink

Measures clicks on your links

So, now that we've had a quick tour of Littlink, let's talk about how you might actually use it.

Decide upon a goal

As we said at the beginning of the talk, when you want to run an experiment, you first need to decide upon a goal.

ALSO BY LAUREN ROYAL

The Jewel Trilogy

[*Amethyst*](#)

[*Emerald*](#)

[*Amber*](#)

Forevermore (a *Jewel Trilogy* novella)

The Flower Trilogy

[*Violet*](#)

[*Lily*](#)

[*Rose*](#)

The Sweet Temptations Trilogy

[*Lost in Temptation*](#)

[*Tempting Juliana*](#)

[*The Art of Temptation*](#)

Your books probably all have a page like this. It's a straightforward way to advertise to your existing readers. A click on a link in this page is pretty likely to turn into a sale, so it'd be really helpful to get people clicking here.

Decide upon a goal

“Get more clicks on my
book list page”

So let's make that our goal: Get people to click on those links more often.

Come up with an idea

Next, we need to come up with an idea to increase clicks on your book list links.

When you put that book list page in, there's an important question you might not have asked: how does someone actually *use* the book list page? You can tell a couple different stories, which would give you different ideas about what do with this page.



The first story: Jane starts reading at the beginning of your book and reaches the end. She enjoyed the story, and she flips through the back matter, finds your book list page, and chooses another book to read.



The second story: Jane starts reading at the beginning of your book and reaches the end. She then sets her e-reader on the nightstand and goes to sleep. A couple days later, she decides she wants to read another one of your books and opens it again. She looks through the table of contents, finds the book list page, and jumps to it.

There are a few more ways this could go down—for instance, Amazon might stick a page in front of your back matter that makes Jane think there's nothing else in the book. But just from these two, you can see that in one of them, it's better to put the book list in the back, and in the other, it's better to put it in the front.

Come up with an idea

“People might use the book list more if it were also in the front.”

So there we have an idea. If the list is currently in the back, maybe some readers won't find it, and it'd be better to have it in the front too.

Run a test

So, let's test this idea.

The plan

1. Copy book lists to the front
 2. Upload books and see if clicks increase
- 

So, the plan for this is simple, right? Copy the book lists from the back to the front and re-upload? **CLICK**

No. Once again, you don't have a good control. If you upload the new book and clicks rise, you can't be sure it's because you moved the book list. Maybe there was a blizzard somewhere and people there got a lot of reading done.

Possible controls

- The old and new thing simultaneously
- The same book on other stores
- A similar book that's not affected
- Data from before the test started

So let's dredge up that slide my dad showed you, the one that discussed controls. Back then, he told you that the first kind of control—testing both options simultaneously—wasn't really something you could do when you measured sales. But here, we actually *can*. All we need is to be able to tell whether someone used the links in the front matter or the ones in the back matter.

The plan (revised)

1. Copy book lists to the front
2. Upload books and see if clicks increase

So, that's the new plan. Instead of making an identical copy of the book list...

The plan (revised)

1. Copy book list to the front
- 2. Change the links in the two pages so you can tell which one a reader used**
3. Upload books and see what happens

...we're going to modify the links in both of the lists so that we can tell whether the reader used a link in the front or the back. Then we'll upload the books and see whether readers naturally end up using the book list in front or the one in back.

There's one big question here: How are we going to change the links so we can tell which book list a reader used?

Tracking tags

We're going to add tracking tags.

<http://littl.ink/tour>

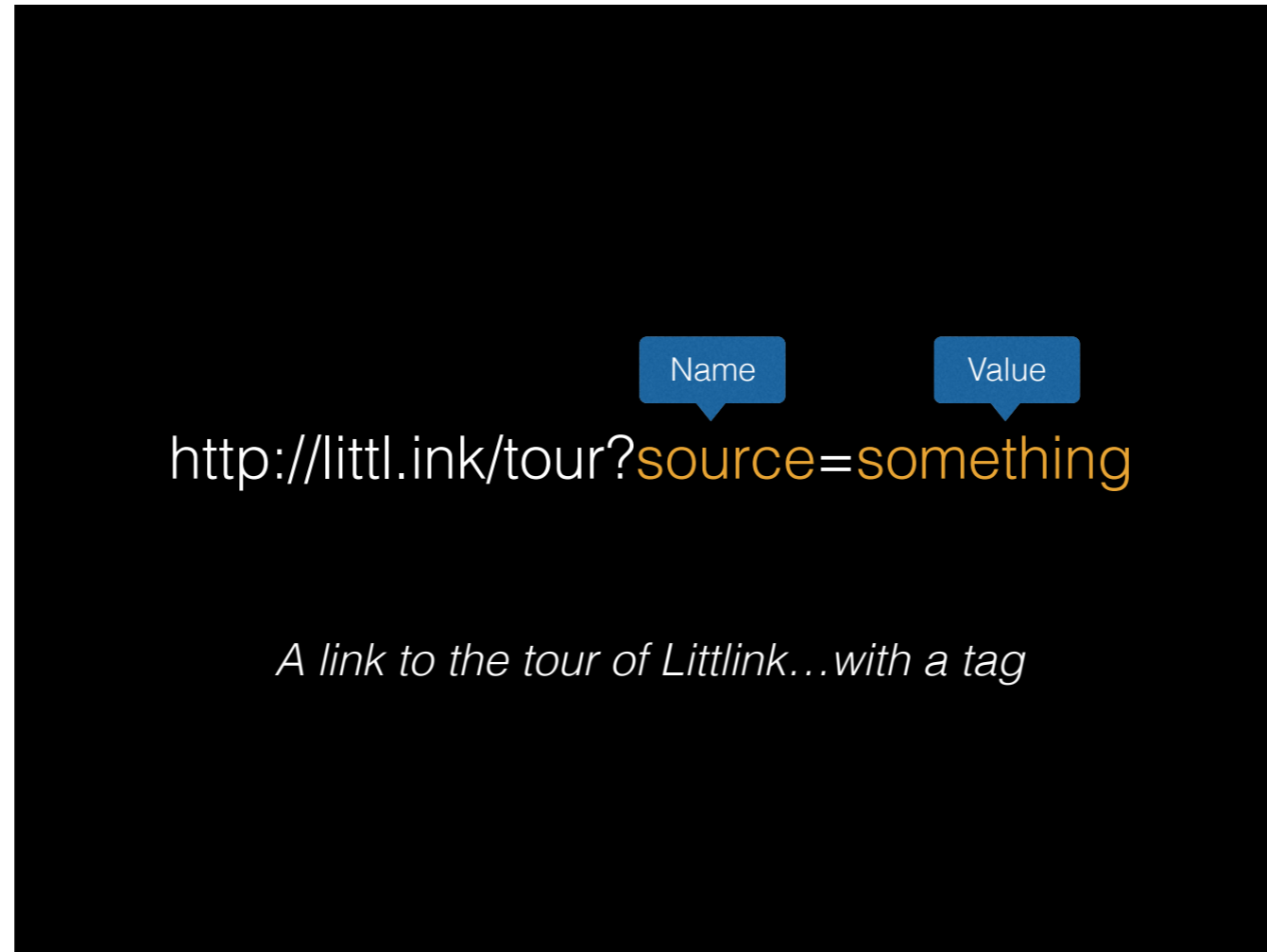
A link to the tour of Littlink

So, here's a Littlink I own; it leads to a section of the Littlink website where I demonstrate various features of the service. I use this link in several different places: the home page of Littlink, the navigation bar when you're not logged in, the company Twitter account, et cetera. But if you just use it like this, I can't tell which one of those places you came from.

<http://littl.ink/tour?source=something>

A link to the tour of Littlink...with a tag

Unless, of course, I add a tracking tag. A tracking tag is a little bit of extra information you add to the end of a link. It doesn't affect where the link goes, but when Littlink records the hit, it also records the tags attached to it.

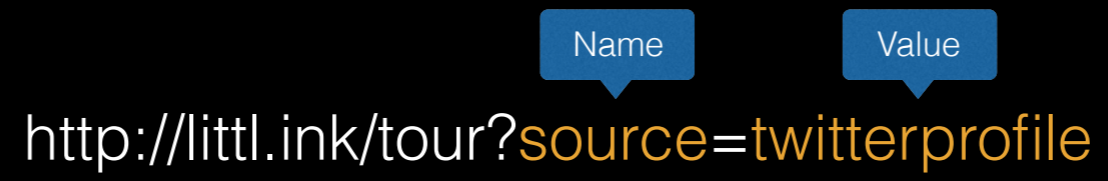


Each tag has a name and a value. You keep the name the same, but you change the value for each place you put the link.

The diagram shows a URL on a black background. The URL is `http://littl.ink/tour?source=homepage`. The word `source` is highlighted in orange, and `homepage` is in white. Above `source` is a blue callout box labeled "Name". Above `homepage` is a blue callout box labeled "Value".

A link to the tour of Littlink...on the home page

So the link might look like this on the home page...

The image shows a URL on a black background. The URL is 'http://littl.ink/tour?source=twitterprofile'. The word 'source' is highlighted in orange. Above 'source' is a blue callout box with the word 'Name'. Above 'twitterprofile' is a blue callout box with the word 'Value'.
`http://littl.ink/tour?source=twitterprofile`

A link to the tour of Littlink...on Twitter

This on the profile for your Twitter account...

Name

Value

<http://littl.ink/tour?source=businesscard>

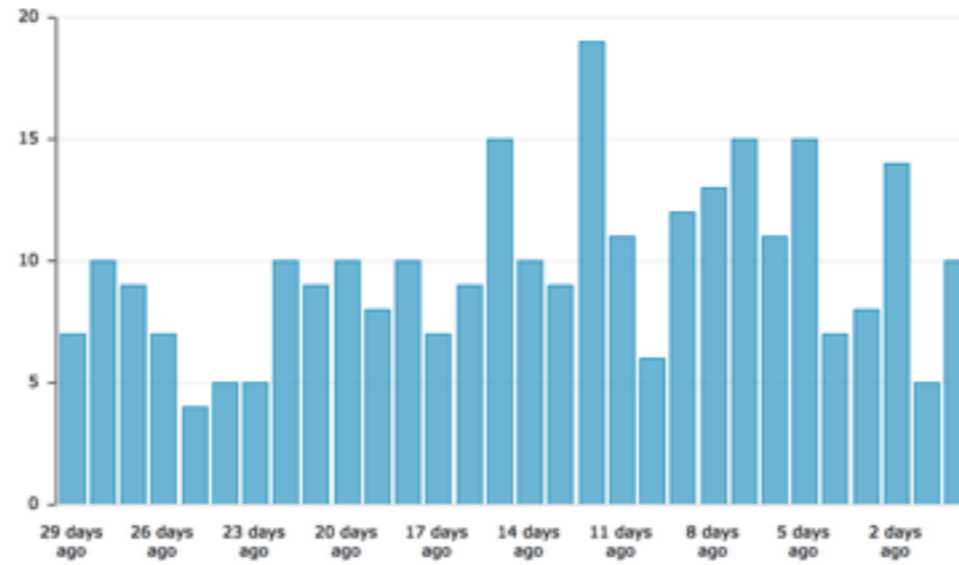
A link to the tour of Littlink...on your card

And this on your business card.

Hits for http://littLink/tour

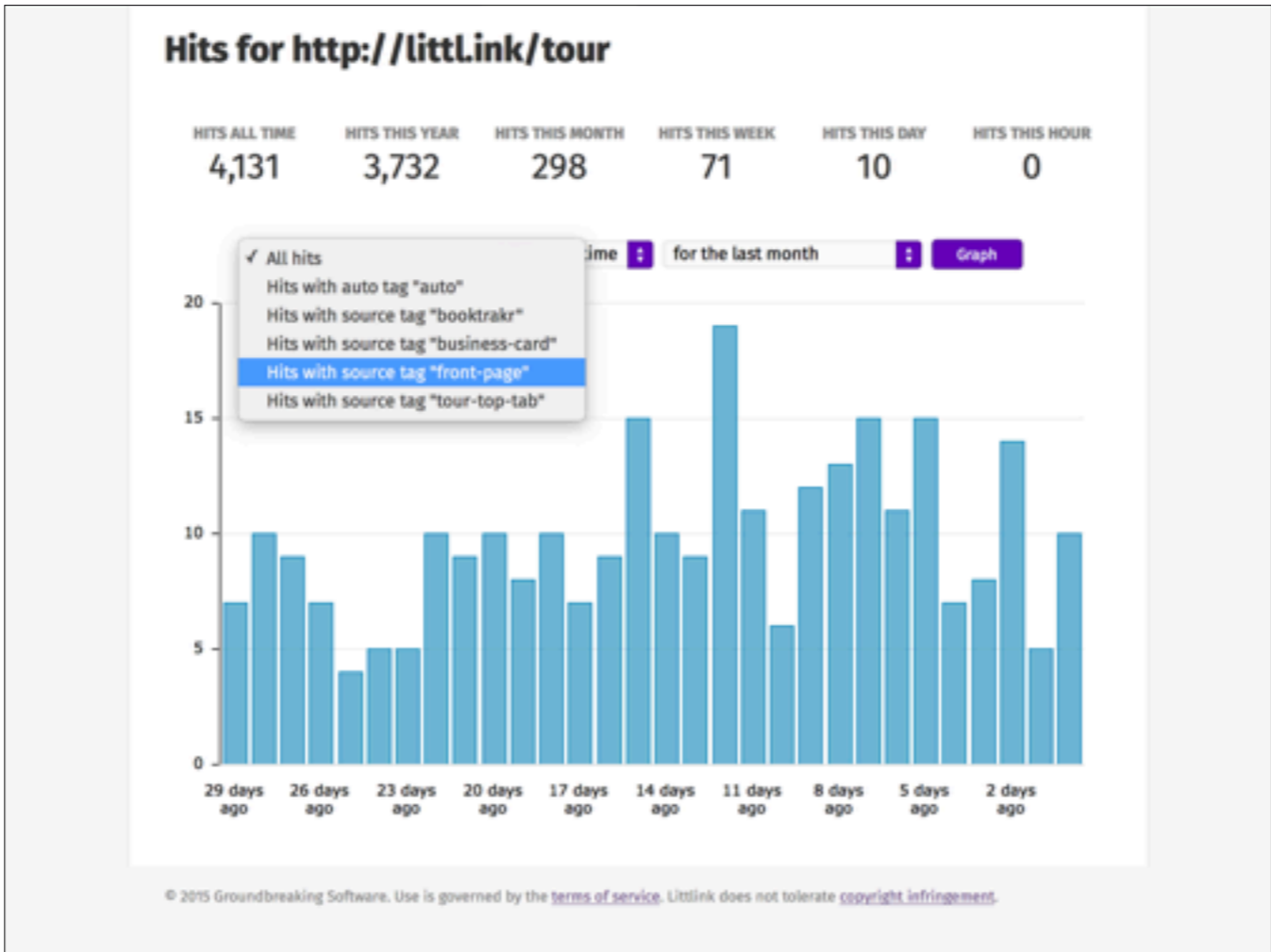
HITS ALL TIME 4,131 HITS THIS YEAR 3,732 HITS THIS MONTH 298 HITS THIS WEEK 71 HITS THIS DAY 10 HITS THIS HOUR 0

All hits over time for the last month Graph



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Now, when you look at the hits on a link in Littlink, there are two ways to use the tags.

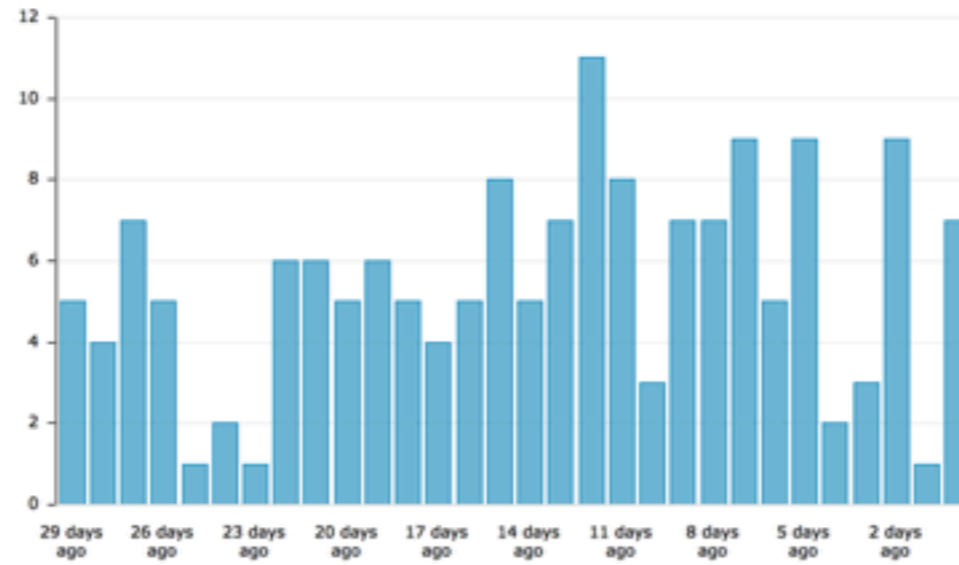


The first is to pull down the “All Hits” menu and choose one of the “Hits with tag” lines.

Hits for http://littLink/tour

HITS ALL TIME 4,131 HITS THIS YEAR 3,732 HITS THIS MONTH 298 HITS THIS WEEK 71 HITS THIS DAY 10 HITS THIS HOUR 0

Hits with source tag "front-p" over time for the last month Graph

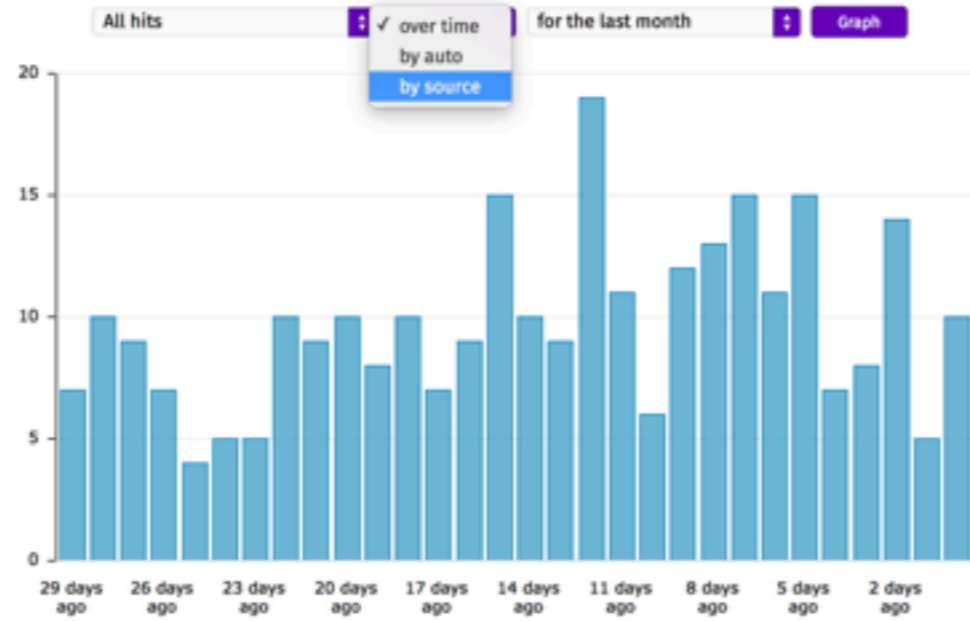


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Then you'll get a chart showing only the hits with that particular tag and value.

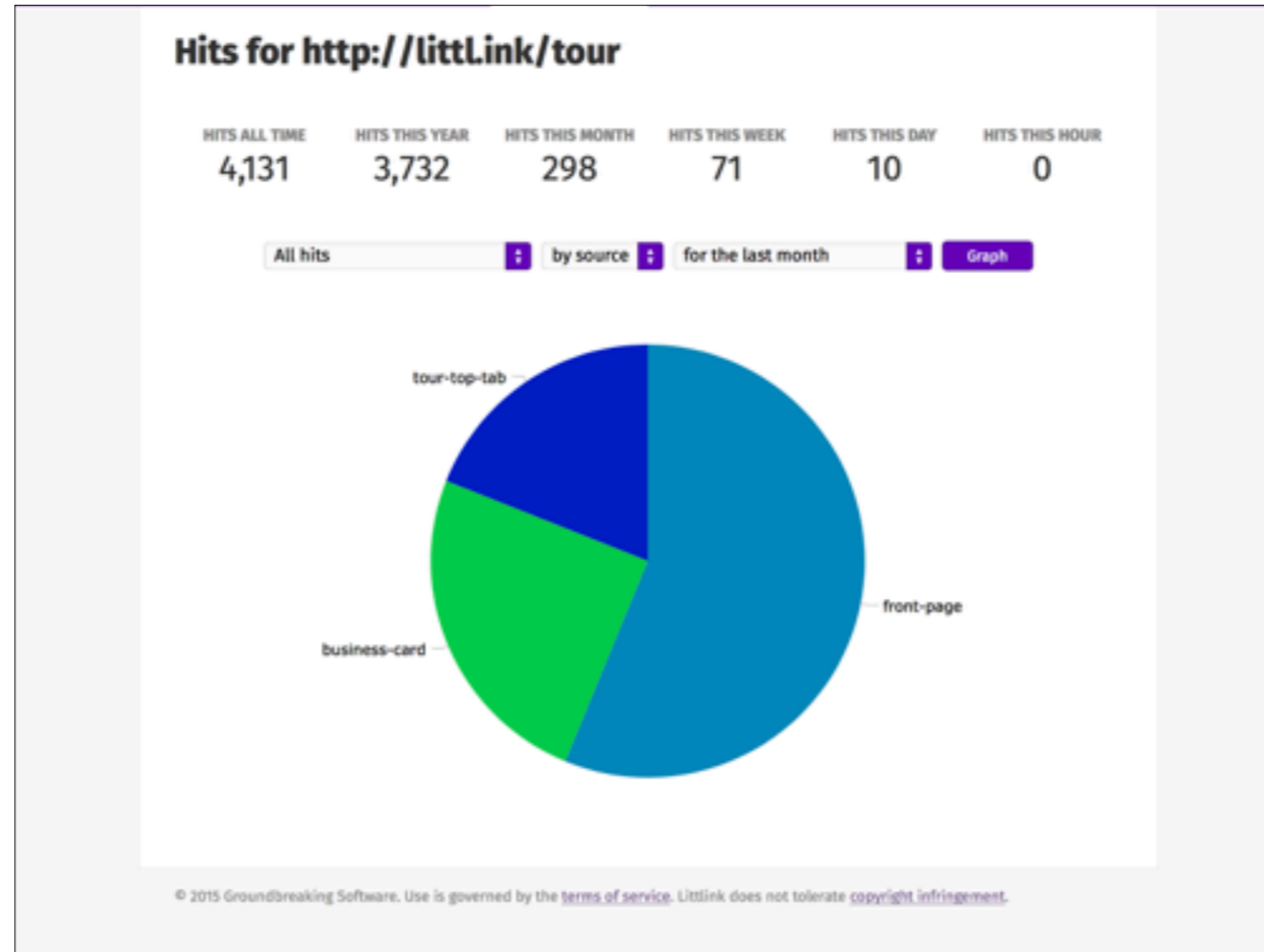
Hits for http://littLink/tour

HITS ALL TIME 4,131 HITS THIS YEAR 3,732 HITS THIS MONTH 298 HITS THIS WEEK 71 HITS THIS DAY 10 HITS THIS HOUR 0



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The other thing you can do is change the “over time” setting to “by [the tag]”.



Then you'll get a nice pie chart showing you how commonly each value of that tag is seen.

The plan (revised)

1. Copy book list to the front
2. Change the links in the two pages so you can tell which one a reader used
3. Upload books and see what happens

So, back to the plan. We now know how we can change the links in the two book lists:

The plan (revised)

1. Copy book list to the front
2. **Tag** the links in the two pages so you can tell which one a reader used
3. Upload books and see what happens

We'll put different tags on the two links, and then we'll...

The plan (revised)

1. Copy book list to the front
2. **Tag** the links in the two pages so you can tell which one a reader used
3. Upload books and **examine the hits by tag**

...chart our hits by tag to figure out what we had.

Copy the book list
(your software goes here)

So, to actually carry out this plan, first you'll copy the book list from the back to the front. I can't really show you how to do that because I don't know how you make your books, but whatever you use will almost certainly have a way to do it.

Littlink beta

Links Hits Labels Settings Help Sign Out

Links Labeled AMETHYST [Filter by Label](#)

CREATE LINK TO ADDRESS

[Create Link](#)

SHORT ADDRESS	HITS		
http://royal.link/Amethyst/Buy + <small>BOOK LINK</small>	0 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/Google + <small>BOOK LINK Affiliate link</small>	1980 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/iBooks + <small>BOOK LINK</small>	3145 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/Info + <small>BOOK LINK</small>	290 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/Kindle + <small>BOOK LINK</small>	4553 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/KindleFree + <small>FREE LINKS</small>	0 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/Kobo + <small>BOOK LINK</small>	849 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/Nook + <small>BOOK LINK Changed to CJ</small>	730 hits	Edit	Track
http://royal.link/Amethyst/Paper + <small>PAPER</small>	32 hits	Edit	Track

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Next, you need to change the links in your book. So to do that, you pull up your links in Littlink...

1980 hits	Edit	Track
3145 hits	Edit	Track
290 hits	Edit	Track
4553 hits	Edit	Track
0 hits	Edit	Track
849 hits	Edit	Track
730 hits	Edit	Track
32 hits	Edit	Track



And then click the “Track” button next to the link you’re putting in.

The screenshot shows the Littlink dashboard with a purple header. The main content area is titled "Links Labeled AMETHYST" with a "Filter by Label" option. A modal window titled "Add Tracking Tags" is open, displaying a table for adding tags to a link. The table has two columns: "TAG NAME" and "TAG VALUE". The first row shows "source" and "twitter". Below the table, the modal instructs the user to "Enter your tags, then select and copy this link: http://royallink/Amethyst/Kindle".

Littlink beta

Links Hits Labels Settings Help Sign Out

Links Labeled AMETHYST Filter by Label

CREATE LINK TO A

SHORT ADDRESS

LINK	HITS	EDIT	TRACK
http://royallink/BOOK LINK	200 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/BOOK LINK Affili	0 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/BOOK LINK	0 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/BOOK LINK	200 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/Amethyst/Kindle +	4553 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/Amethyst/KindleFree +	0 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/Amethyst/Kobo +	849 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/Amethyst/Nook +	720 hits	Edit	Track
http://royallink/Amethyst/Paper +	32 hits	Edit	Track

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That will bring up the “Add Tracking Tags” screen.

The screenshot shows the Royall Ink dashboard with a purple header. The 'Links' tab is active. A modal titled 'Add Tracking Tags' is open, displaying instructions and a table for adding tags. The table has two columns: 'TAG NAME' and 'TAG VALUE'. One row is visible with 'source' in the first column and 'twitter' in the second. Below the table, a URL is shown: <http://royall.ink/Amethyst/Kindle>. The background shows a list of links, with the selected link having 290 hits.

k Links Hits Labels Settings

Labeled AMETHYST [Filter by Label](#)

Add Tracking Tags ✕

Tags help you tell where your hits are coming from. Simply customize your link with a different tag for each place you post it. Tag names and values may include any character, but letters, numbers, dashes, and underscores work best.

TAG NAME	TAG VALUE
source	twitter

Enter your tags, then select and copy this link:
<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/Kindle>

Link/Amethyst/Kindle [290 hits](#) [Edit](#)

That will bring up the “Add Tracking Tags” screen. So let’s do the link for the front first.

Add Tracking Tags

Tags help you tell where your hits are coming from. Simply customize your link with a different tag for each place you post it. Tag names and values may include any character, but letters, numbers, dashes, and underscores work best.

TAG NAME	TAG VALUE
source	front
source	

Enter your tags, then select and copy this link:

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/Kindle?source=front>

In the “tag value” field, put some short text that describes the place you’re putting the link. Here I’ve used “front”, since it’s in the front matter of a book.

k Links Hits Labels Settings

Labeled AMETHYST [Filter by Label](#)

Add Tracking Tags

Tags help you tell where your hits are coming from. Simply customize your link with a different tag for each place you post it. Tag names and values may include any character, but letters, numbers, dashes, and underscores work best.

TAG NAME	TAG VALUE
source	front
	twitter

Enter your tags, then select and copy this link:
<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/Kindle?source=front>

Link/Amethyst/Kindle

In the “tag name” field, you put a bit of text that describes what *kind* of thing you’re measuring. If you want to compare two different tag values against each other, they should have the same name.

k Links Hits Labels Settings

Labeled AMETHYST [Filter by Label](#)

Add Tracking Tags

Tags help you tell where your hits are coming from. Simply customize your link with a different tag for each place you post it. Tag names and values may include any character, but letters, numbers, dashes, and underscores work best.

TAG NAME	TAG VALUE
source	front
source	twitter

Enter your tags, then select and copy this link:

<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/Kindle?source=front>

Link/Amethyst/Kindle

And finally, you copy the link with the tag attached and put it in the front of the book.

Add Tracking Tags

Tags help you tell where your hits are coming from. Simply customize your link with a different tag for each place you post it. Tag names and values may include any character, but letters, numbers, dashes, and underscores work best.

TAG NAME	TAG VALUE
source	back
source	

Enter your tags, then select and copy this link:
<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/Kindle?source=back>

Now, we'll go back to Littlink and do the link for the list in the back matter. You just change the "tag value" from "front" to "back"...

k Links Hits Labels Settings

Labeled AMETHYST [Filter by Label](#)

Add Tracking Tags

Tags help you tell where your hits are coming from. Simply customize your link with a different tag for each place you post it. Tag names and values may include any character, but letters, numbers, dashes, and underscores work best.

TAG NAME	TAG VALUE
source	back
source	twitter

Enter your tags, then select and copy this link:
<http://royall.ink/Amethyst/Kindle?source=back>

Link/Amethyst/Kindle

And then we copy the link with the tag and put it in the back of the book.

You'll do that for each link in the book list. Once you're done...

Export and Publish

(your software goes here)

You export your book, publish it on the stores, and then sit back and wait for the data to come in.

Run a test

“Try it both ways with tags.”

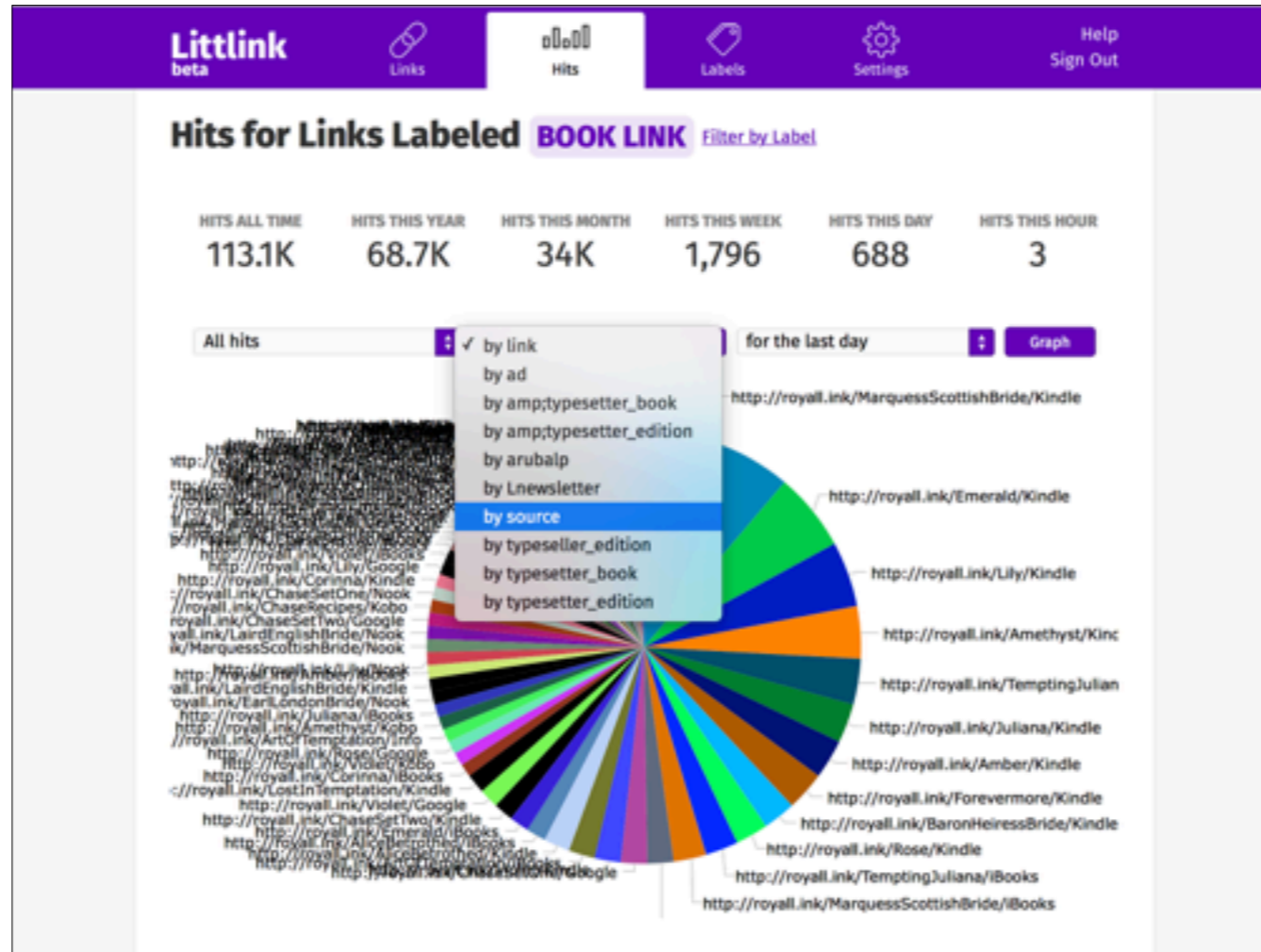
So, now we've started a test: we've uploaded books with tagged links in both the front and back, and we're going to see which one works better. Now we need to wait and see what happens.

Measure its impact

So, perhaps a week or two later, we decide to sit down and look at the results of our test.



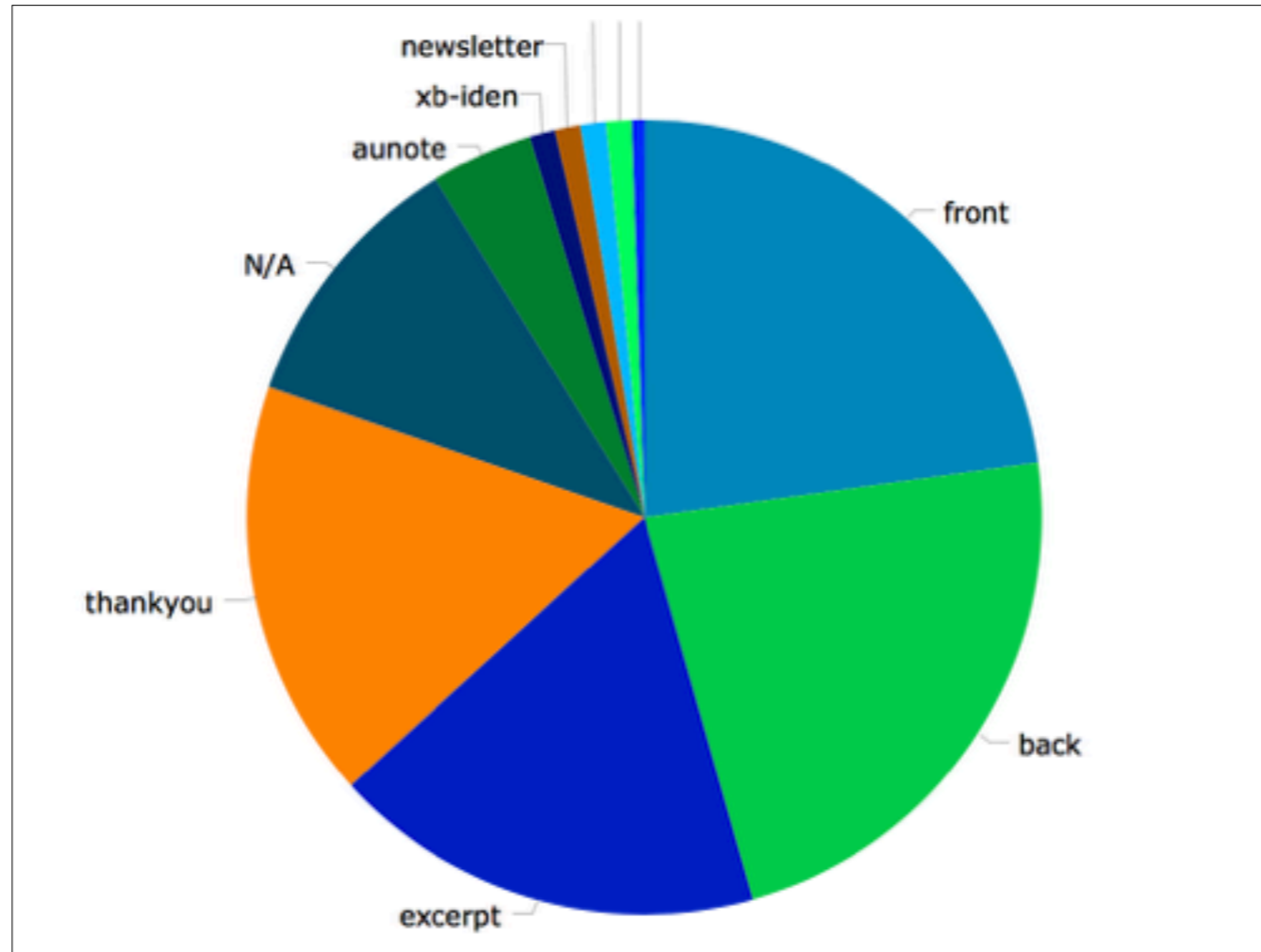
Now, conveniently for us, Lauren has grouped all of her book links together with a label, creatively named “Book Link”. Inconveniently, she has way too many of them.



But if we pick the “by link” option and change it to “by source”...



...and we get this nice pie chart. Now, Lauren's also using a few other "source" values for things like her excerpts and author's notes, but we only really care about the "front" and "back" wedges...



...and it looks like they're almost exactly the same size. Huh. Now, you can mess around with different time periods, narrow things down to specific links, and so on and so forth, but I won't bore you with all those slides, because they all basically look like this one: plus or minus a few hits, "front" and "back" are even.

Measure its impact

“People use the front and
back book lists equally.”

So, our measured impact was this: People use the front and back book lists equally.

Decide if it worked

So, having looked at the data, we now need to reach a conclusion.

People might use the book list more
if it were also in the front

Clearly, people use the list in the front. So Lauren decided to keep it. It takes up very little space and, at least in her books, it gets as much use as the one in the back.

Decide if it worked

“People love it.”

Again, your mileage may vary, so don't do it just because it worked for one author—try it if you'd like and see how it performs for you. But it definitely worked for her.

Using other tools

[Jack]

So, we've gone into a lot of detail about how to use BookTrakr and Littlink, but the techniques we've been using are quite general. You can do similar things with a lot of different tools.

Using per-day data

- Store sales dashboards
- Website traffic graphs
- Facebook and Twitter analytics
- Charts of mailing list subscriptions

The techniques in the BookTrakr section are basically just about analyzing changes in per-day data. They can be applied to anything with a graph of a count—sales data from individual stores, analytics from websites, Twitter, or Facebook, mailing list subscriptions, all sorts of things.

Using per-day data

- Keep an Excel spreadsheet
- Record count every day
- Subtract each day's from the previous to get number of new ones
- Graph the "number new" column

You can even do this manually in Excel for things that don't include charts. Just record the count each day and then subtract the day's count from the previous day's to get something kind of like BookTrakr's charts, but for whatever it is you're charting. Honestly, BookTrakr's main competition is probably humans visiting store dashboards and filling in spreadsheets by hand.

Using tracking tags

- Google Analytics: Campaign parameters
- Amazon Affiliates: Tracking IDs

A lot of link-based tools support something equivalent to tracking tags. Google Analytics supports five fixed “campaign parameters” you can attach to links. And Amazon has a system called “tracking IDs” that serves a similar function for affiliate links. If you search the web for those keywords, you’ll find lots of articles talking about them.

We're not quite
done...

We ought to be done at this point, but there was one more thing Brent wanted to fit in, so I'll give it back to him to finish it up.

Pretty tagged links

Why don't you talk like you're
running out of time?

[Brent]

As a quick aside, I'd like to point out a clever little technique that's sometimes useful.

The image shows a URL on a black background. Above the URL, there are two blue callout boxes. The first callout box, labeled 'Name', points to the domain 'littl.ink'. The second callout box, labeled 'Value', points to the parameter 'source=businesscard'. The URL is: <http://littl.ink/tour?source=businesscard>

A link to the tour of Littlink...on your card

Earlier, one of the examples I used was tagging a link on a business card.



I use that for these little cards, which I actually have in the back of my NINC badge right now.

http://littl.ink/tour?source=businesscard

The diagram shows a URL on a black background. Two blue callout boxes are positioned above the URL. The first callout box, labeled 'Name', points to the text 'source'. The second callout box, labeled 'Value', points to the text '=businesscard'. The entire URL is highlighted in a light orange color.

A link to the tour of Littlink...on your card

But let's take a look at that link again.

<http://littl.ink/tour?source=businesscard>

It's long and full of punctuation. Nobody is gonna want to type all that stuff. And if they try, they'll probably get it wrong anyway. So I don't ask them to.

Littlink is an advanced link shortener for people who use links for their business. It lets you edit, analyze, customize, and brand your links, all for \$2.99 per month.

Take the tour at <http://littlink/card> and start your 14-day free trial today!

Instead, I have them use a much shorter address. You can see it down at the bottom.

<http://littl.ink/card>



<http://littl.ink/tour?source=businesscard>



<https://my.littl.ink/tour/hits>

So, how does this work? Well, I actually use two links. The first one—the nice, pretty, short “card”—points to the second link, the one with the ugly tag. You don’t need to do this in your books, but if someone’s going to see or especially type the entire link, it might be a good idea.

Thanks for coming.

<http://booktrakr.com>

<http://littl.ink>

Grab this at <http://littl.ink/ninc16>

So, thanks for listening. We don't have this talk online yet, but we'll put it up in some form at that link. I'll just have to edit the link!

More ideas to test

- Running ads
- Social media activity
- Changing titles, keywords, blurbs, categories
- Changing covers
- Releasing new books
- Releasing boxed sets
- Changing prices
- Going permafrees
- Discounting a book
- Store exclusivity vs. wide distribution
- Cross-promoting with other authors
- Mailing list performance

And while we're waiting for the Q&A to get organized, here's a list of random ideas whose effect you might want to test.