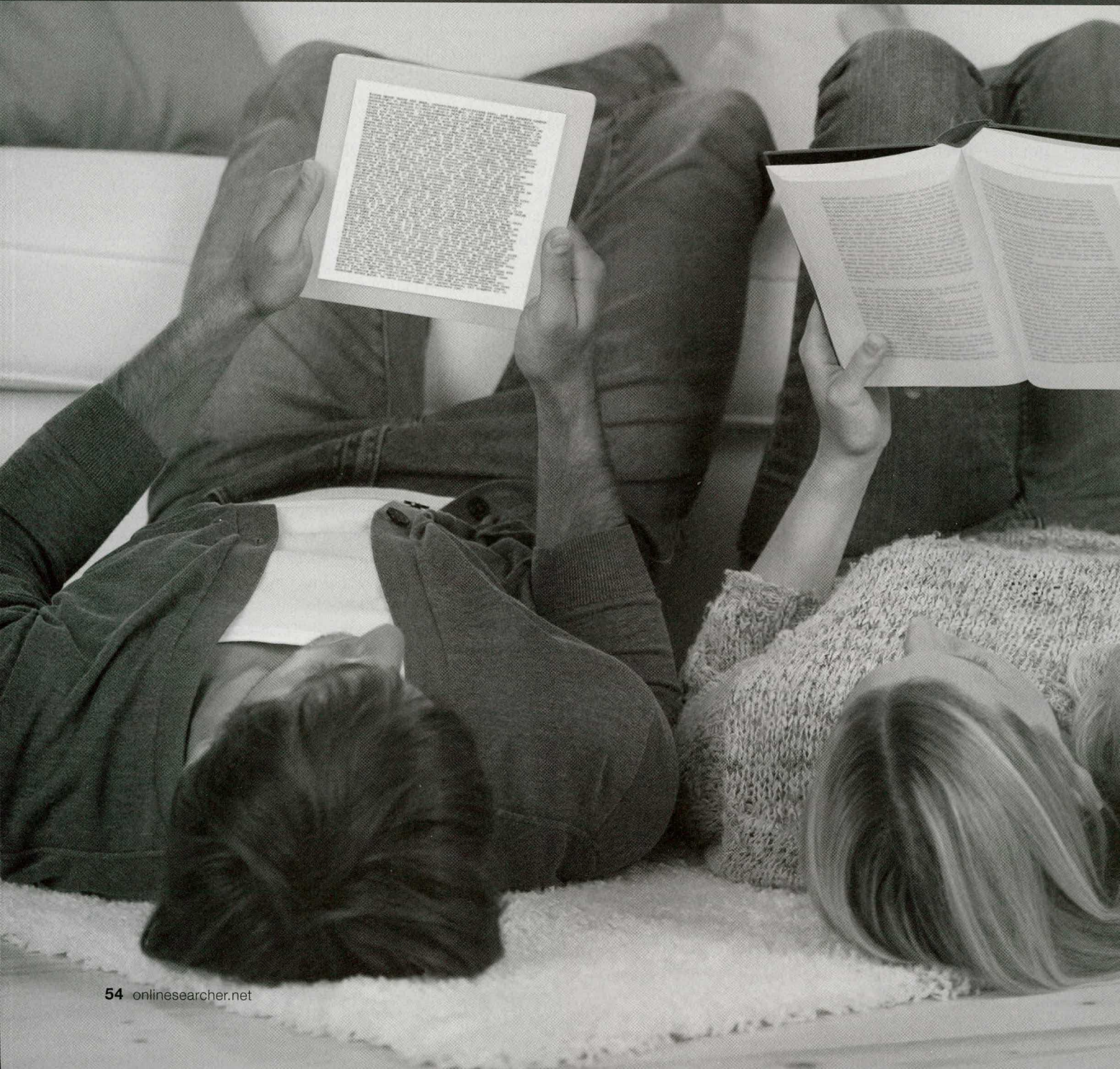


Book Discovery Through Summaries, and



Lists, Reviews, Recommendations

Have your reading habits changed in the past few years?

How we determine what to read and how those items ultimately get read—print or online, and, if the latter, on which device—deserve some thoughtful analysis in light of technological innovations and changes to our society. My print reading habits were to read a great deal in one sitting. When reading online, I find myself drawn to those sites presenting material in bites that I can scan quickly and then move on. I don't think that it's attention deficit, but something has genuinely altered my reading habits. And if it's altered mine, chances are you've experienced something similar, as have those who use your library collections.

Social media now shapes how I discover items of interest to read. When I stumble across an item that is longer than I have time for at the moment or requires concentration, I might use Pocket (pocket.com) to read it later, or sync my reading via the Instapaper app (instapaper.com)—saving some gems for when I'm at the airport waiting to board a plane.

BEST BOOKS

Every media outlet under the sun lists its take on the Best Books at year's end. If you missed them amid all of the holiday rush, you can still access the lists online. Use them for collection development as well as personal reading. Take a look through NPR's recommendations (apps.npr.org/best-books-2014); check out The Scholarly Kitchen (scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2014/12/04/chefs-selections-the-best-books-read-during-2014-part-1 and scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2014/12/05/chefs-selections-the-best-books-read-during-2014-part-2); or turn to Goodreads (goodreads.com/choiceawards/best-books-2014). *Library Journal* has its own annual review of nonfiction, arranged by subject and with annotations (reviews.libraryjournal.com/2014/12/best-of/best-books-2014-core-nonfiction). Kobo has a best of 2014 ebook list (store.kobobooks.com/en-us). Even *En-*

ertainment Weekly has gotten into the act (ew.com/ew/gallery/0,,20326356_20879231,00.html).

If you would like to see these types of lists all year long, Publishers Lunch Bookateria (bookateria.publishersmarketplace.com) is your best bet. The top navigation bar conveniently lets you access the year's numerous book awards, Industry Lists (Library Reads, Recently Reviewed, Publishers Lunch Best of the Best), Bookseller Picks (from Amazon, B&N, iBooks, Costco, Target, and "Indies"), plus latest releases (by subject). Don't forget those book awards: Pulitzer Prize (for Letters, Drama, and Music); Caldecott, Geisel, and Newberry, among others, for children and young adult books; Man Booker, for English-language books published in the U.K.; National Book Awards for American literature; and National Book Critics Circle Award for "finest books and reviews published in English (in the USA) the previous year in six categories: Fiction, nonfiction, autobiography, biography, criticism and poetry."

BUSINESS BOOKS

When it comes to business book recommendations, there is a list of the top from 2014 at Strategy + Business (strategy-business.com/article/14402?gko=42558). Individual professors sometimes let us in on their favorites, as Stuart Ridgley of the

Business book summaries are available from EBSCO

LeBow College of Business, Drexel University, does (lebow.drexel.edu/news/my-five-favorite-business-books). For business classics, the University of Florida's library has a great core collection (businesslibrary.uflib.ufl.edu/businessclassics) with meaty paragraphs about each text. For those who hate entering personal information in order to download a text, Bookboon.com is a registration-free site for free downloads of business ebooks and textbooks. Smartbooks.com features not only business books, but also author articles and excerpts from new books.

Business book summaries are available from EBSCO (www.ebscohost.com/learning-resources/business-book-summaries) and from web startups, such as Business Book Summaries (bizsum.com). Soundview Executive Book Summaries (summary.com) offers professional book summaries, author webinars, and video interviews with executives in top companies. Each 5-page getAbstract.com summary is presented in a crisp, magazine-page format designed to be consumed in less than 10 minutes.

DISCOVERING WHAT TO READ

I mentioned how much I appreciate the quality book reviews shared by the London School of Economics and Political Science (blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks) in my January/February 2015 *Online Searcher* article ("Organizations Getting Social: Free Resources From Business Schools, Publishers, Management Consultants, and Think Tanks"). In the past, I leaned heavily on the Sunday *New York Times* Book Review section (nytimes.com/pages/books/index.html). I'm still not sure why the section is not available on the top navigation bar, but buried within Arts, while the Magazine and Travel sections are front and center with one click.

When I worked in libraries, cover-to-cover reading of each issue of *Publisher's Weekly* (publishersweekly.com), *Kirkus* (kirkusreviews.com), and *Choice* (ala.org/acrl/choice/home) was de rigueur, but if someone asked me for a book review that wasn't in any of the above, I would go online to consult the *Boston Review* (bostonreview.net), *Washington Post Book World* (washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books), *Los Angeles Review of Books* (lareviewofbooks.org), *London*

Review of Books (lrb.co.uk), or *Bookreporter* (bookreporter.com/reviews). My other options were to check newspapers on Nexis (nexis.com) or see if the author had been featured on Book TV (booktv.org) or interviewed at Booknotes.org. For pure reading pleasure, I maintain an RSS feed to the *New York Review of Books* (nybooks.com). Never mind the books, I read it for the quality of the reviews!

A newer approach involves LibGuides. Look for one from your favorite academic library that provides links (and more) to resources for book reviews. Cornell University Library, for example, provides an excellent example (guides.library.cornell.edu/bookreviews). In lieu of book reviews, at BookSpot readers can opt for the first chapter to get a taste of a book before they purchase it (bookspot.com/firstchapters.htm).

BOOK REVIEW SITES

Other sites from which you can obtain book reviews, detailed abstracts/summaries, or a sample chapter include the following:

- AllReaders.com features detailed book reviews from many genres: literature, science fiction, fantasy, mysteries, comedies, dramas, and more. You can search by title or author, but also by plot, setting, or character. And there are movie reviews as well.
- BookBrowse (bookbrowse.com) is an online magazine for booklovers—including reviews, previews, "behind the book" backstories, author interviews, reading guides, and much more. The site features online excerpts and multiple reviews in one place. Click on the Read-Alikes tab; if you find a book you like, the editors will suggest books that you are probably going to like as well.
- *Bookish* (bookish.com) is an enewsletter sending book recommendations to your inbox each week. The website is elegantly designed, which astonishingly cannot be said for many of the other sites mentioned in this article.
- BookPage has book reviews (bookpage.com/reviews) and author interviews (bookpage.com/interviews).
- Bookslut (bookslut.com) reviews fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. The site also has an interesting blog with recommended reading from the web.
- The Complete Review (complete-review.com) contains more than 3,500 book reviews of recently published/republished books and "books in the news." The site highlights books "most worthy of your attention," and foreign books that have not been translated into English (yet). There is a convenient index of books under review and links to other relevant sites, including foreign publisher websites and sites with book reviews.
- Curled Up With a Good Book (curledup.com) includes book reviews for fiction and nonfiction, romance, sci-fi/fantasy, graphic novels, and audiobooks.
- Jellybooks (jellybooks.com) lets you browse the covers of books, downloading 10% of the text before

purchase. You can even share your download with a group of friends to determine if it's the right "next read" for your book club.

- Hungry for the next good book? Try Amazon's Omnivoracious blog (omnivoracious.com).
- The Reading Room (thereadingroom.com) is "a distinctly independent experience, aggregating and curating content around the world from members and trusted sources such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*. With millions of members and books on the platform, people can easily discover, purchase and discuss their next great read, connect with like-minded readers, enjoy online book clubs and receive latest news and deals."
- *Shelf Awareness* (shelf-awareness.com) is an newsletter issued twice weekly containing detailed abstracts and reviews of 25 recommended titles scheduled for release that week.
- Ron Hogan takes a personal approach, introducing new authors to readers at his blog (beatrice.com/wordpress).
- Track New Book (tracknewbook.com) helps you find new books related to websites you visit (discovery.tracknewbook.com): You receive an email from the service as new books are published (by authors you specify or subjects you track).

If you've ever been asked about an author or book that was featured on a television show, Fresh Fiction (freshfiction.com/medias.php) can help you identify what the author or book was. It highlights books and authors mentioned or interviewed on the various morning news shows, as well as the afternoon and evening talk shows.

LIBRARY ADVISORY SERVICES

Online library catalogs can incorporate extensive book summaries accompanied by community reviews. Readers' corners and staff picks (If you like ...) are available on public and academic library websites. For example, try Blogging for a Good Book (bfgb.wordpress.com), "a sug-

gestion a day from the Williamsburg Regional Library" or, for a bit of serendipity, there is the Orange County (Florida) Library System's Shake It! (ocls.info/downloadables/mobileapps.asp).

Libraries also link to book resources, including book reviews, book clubs, and best-sellers. If you want to learn how Reader Advisory librarians know all this, take a look at EarlyWord (earlyword.com), the site they read. If you don't subscribe to ALA's *Booklist*, you can still benefit from The Booklist Reader blogs (booklistreader.com). Have a website and want to recommend books to others? Learn how to add *The New York Times* Bestseller Lists to your site (open.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/27/announcing-the-best-sellers-api/?_r=0).

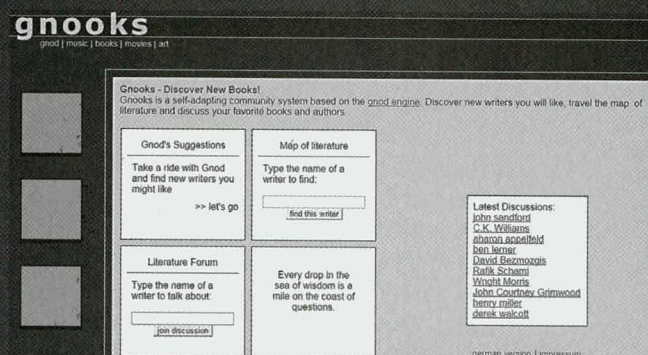
Some sites use technology to provide recommendations; others have editors or crowdsource from their community. The site may select titles from newly published works or rely on an archival database of classics. Here are a few that do either an exceptional job in recommending books to readers, or have a fascinating approach that (astonishingly) works, similar to the Amazon readers' advisory approach, "Customers who bought this item also bought ...":

- Enter a book you like at What Should I Read Next (whatshouldireadnext.com) and the site will analyze its database of real readers' (i.e., humans) favorite books to provide book recommendations and suggestions for what to read next. There is a sister site, Where Should I Read Next (wheresouldireadnext.com), with a map of the world. Click on a country or city to find a list of books related to the location.
- Gnooks (www.gnooks.com) uses a Gnod engine to learn what an individual might like to read. Enter three authors you like, and Gnooks will suggest what you should read next.
- If you've reached a certain age or have library users who've reached a certain age, it might be difficult to recall the titles or authors of books you/they cherished long ago. Stump the Bookseller is a service offered by Loganberry Books designed to reconnect people to the books they

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Jellybooks lets you browse the covers of books, downloading 10% of the text before purchase.



Gnooks uses a Gnod engine to learn what an individual might like to read.



love but can't quite remember. Enter as much or as little of the plot as you can recall, and let Loganberry do its magic (loganberrybooks.com/stumpthebookseller).

- Each day, The Browser (thebrowser.com) recommends five to six pieces of reading, plus the occasional video, that are "worth reading."
- Lovereading UK (lovereading.co.uk) has "developed some unique online tools to help you choose your next read, including free 10-15 page Opening Extracts of every one of our Featured Books." (There are more than 12,000 Opening Extracts now.) The "If you liked" tool names an author and provides several other authors you would love. The site also sends magazines to registered users "recommending books they like might love to read in their categories of choice ... [T]hese are completely free and come with no commitment to buy."
- Shelfari, by Amazon (shelfari.com), is a community-powered encyclopedia for book lovers where you can "create a virtual bookshelf, discover new books, connect with friends and learn more about your favorite books—all for free." Based in Seattle, "Shelfari is a gathering place for authors, aspiring authors, publishers, and readers, and has many tools and features to help these groups connect with each other in a fun and engaging way."
- "Novelry.com is a new way to discover your next favorite read. ... We step back from recommendations based on algorithms or what others have purchased. Instead we show how books are connected and make these connections searchable, so that you discover new books, new authors and new subjects based upon what you care about most." Start with your favorite book (or topic), and let the system tell you more. There is an informative video describing the tool at novelry.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/200725116-How-It-Works-Video.
- Complete the following statement on The Book Seer (bookseer.com): "I've just finished reading _____ by _____. What should I read next?" and the site will supply the answer (pulling from Amazon and LibraryThing).
- WhichBook (openingthebook.com/whichbook) offers choices not available anywhere else, such as selecting a book based on a mood, emotion, plot shape, type of main character, country the book is set in. Click "Borrow" and you can link directly to public library catalogs to borrow the book you've found for free; click "Buy" and you'll be routed to Amazon, where you can purchase your title. "If you find a book you think a friend or colleague would like, click Share and you can send them an email

Books influence society as the ability to read and the access to thoughtful literature increases. Librarians and publishers play an important role in recommending titles to read, assisting the public in accessing them, and offering venues to discuss their meaning.

with the link with the book cover. Or if you're a Facebook user, post it on anyone's wall."

- FictionDB (fictionDB.com) has extensive author bibliographies for the authors you like and want to read. The site lets you track your collection and compile your own "wish list" for future reading.
- Maria Popova's Brain Pickings (brainpickings.org) has gotten a lot of press coverage. Less known is the subsite, Book Pickings (bookpickings.brainpickings.org), with an archive of books covered in Popova's blog. Subjects covered include creativity, design, science, history, psychology, and art.

SOCIAL DISCOVERY

Recommendations from family and friends (or those we admire who mention titles we've not yet had a chance to read) continue to move to the top of my "must reads" list, along with those "great books" I studiously avoided during my years at university. However, there are a number of tools that send convenient reminders of recommended titles, including emails of Apple iBooks Spotlight notification to "watch for this new release." For example:

- Each day, BookBub (landers.bookbub.com/covers) sends me an email with "Today's Deals"—three titles discounted to \$1.99 (or offered for free!).
- DailyLit (dailylit.com) lets you read literary classics and great new fiction in short installments that you

can pick up and put down anytime. Once you've found a book, just select when you want your installments to arrive in your inbox. (Some books are free—in the public domain or available under Creative Commons licenses—but others are not.)

- Emily Books (emilybooks.com) is an independent ebookstore that sells one book per month. For \$159.99 per year (or \$13.99 per month), Emily and Ruth, your personal curator/recommender experts, will send you a link to a book to download to whatever device you choose. What will you get to read, you ask? Their collection development policy reads: "We have a bias towards books that are unjustly forgotten, hidden gems, weird genius marvels that were ahead of their time, or books coming out soon that seem like they might slip through the cracks unless someone gives them a boost."
- Each month, Book Riot (bookriot.com) recommends five new releases readers should consider. Book Riot's podcast is a "weekly news and talk show about what's new, cool, and worth talking about in the world of books and reading." The site features thoughtful columns (blogs) by the editors, each with a different voice.
- Copia (thecopia.com) is a social e-reading community—a bookstore with reviews and community ratings for each title. Tag and insert notes in the margin while reading, and share them with your community group. Discussion forums with interesting conversations to join make this less of a site for recommending what to read than one in which you can share your thoughts about what you read, such as a book club.
- Use Reader² (reader2.com) to share your reading experience with others. Its recommendation system can help you find new books to read in the categories of your interest. Use the virtual community to discuss books and authors with other readers.

FUTURE BOOK DISCOVERIES

The book as we knew it is changing, as it has for centuries. Books influence society as the ability to read and the access to thoughtful literature increases. Librarians and publishers play an important role in recommending titles to read, assisting the public in accessing them, and offering venues to discuss their meaning. For additional, thoughtful discourse on the subject, I recommend looking at the website for the Institute for the Future of the Book (futureofthebook.org). Ronald Barba, associate writer and reporter for Tech Cocktail, summed up some excellent arguments for reading in a New Year's Day post ("Why You Should Read More books in 2015"; tech.co/read-more-books-2015-2015-01).

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