Book Buzz: Online 24/7
Virtual Reading Clubs and What We’ve Learned About Them

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Abstract

This presentation, originally given at the Ontario Library Association 2007 SuperConference, was based on our experience at Toronto Public Library in developing the online book club site, Book Buzz. We have described our actual experience and what we have learned from it that may be useful for other start-ups. The presentation has been adapted here for a reading audience.

Taking part in the presentation were a manager, an electronic services specialist, and a moderator - all librarians. We covered the project’s planning stages, the design phase, and, lastly, what is involved in the day-to-day running of the book club.

Keywords: Library and information studies; readers advisory; book clubs; online book clubs

The Planning Stage

Our goal was to start a book club that would attract active, engaged adults under fifty. To do that, we needed to avoid current book club stereotypes.

TPL Book Club Demographics

- 95% female
- 34% age 50 – 65
- 54% age 65+
- 68% retired

Statistics, taken from a 2005 survey of the fifty or so book clubs in the Toronto Public Library system at the time, show that club members were almost exclusively
women, a large percentage of them retired and/or over sixty-five.

However, we knew that, outside libraries, book clubs for younger readers were thriving. We had heard about reading clubs for young mothers, or ones strictly for singles. There were even men’s book discussion groups that held meetings in bars. Popular magazines such as *Flare* and *Chatelaine* had their own online books clubs that were popular and active. We wanted to meet the needs of some of these younger readers.

An online book club seemed a natural for busy young parents, or working men and women who loved reading, but could not spare the time to go out to book club meetings. It would also appeal to a younger demographic simply by being part of the online environment.

Our next step was to research existing online book clubs. Early in 2004, we conducted an environmental scan of forty of the major public libraries in North America. At that time, most libraries did not have their own online clubs, but subscribed instead to the dearreader.com service. We looked at this service ourselves but found it expensive and lacking in Canadian content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online book clubs at 6 public libraries (2004):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Book Clique of Tippecanoe County <a href="http://www.tcpl.lib.in.us">http://www.tcpl.lib.in.us</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Baltimore County Public Library <a href="http://www.bcpionline.org">http://www.bcpionline.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hennepin County Library <a href="http://www.hclib.org">http://www.hclib.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Columbus Metropolitan Library *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Halifax Public Library *</td>
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<td>• Ottawa Public Library *</td>
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* book club no longer active in 2007

We registered with the six library online book clubs listed above, and drew conclusions from direct experience. A number of them were listservs. We had several issues with this format. The discussion was carried on away from the library website, with no linkage to the library. Another important concern was that listservs were already old technology. We wanted to take advantage of new and more recent technological advances.

All the book clubs we examined suffered from “not enough”: not enough traffic, not enough staff resources, and not enough marketing. Looking at these sites did not provide great motivation to start our own. At the time, we did not find any that were really successful.

Our next stop was commercial sites run by institutions. Perhaps we would find inspiration there.

*The New York Times* forum was very active, with more than 200 postings every month. The facilitator was the resident critic at the *New York Times Review of Books*, who regularly posted a weighty analysis of some aspect of the book to stimulate discussion.
Abe Books, a network of independent booksellers, offers a fairly active discussion alongside a community forum that includes everything from book swaps to movies. The site sells books, facilitates book exchanges, offers some readers’ advisory, and provides access to a chat room. It also holds occasional contests with modest giveaways such as book bags and mugs.

Oprah’s book club had interesting content, but we knew its success was due mainly to the fame and visibility of its celebrity moderator – not something we could duplicate!

As a result of our assessment, we decided that to create a successful online book club we would need to combine some of the best features of virtual and in-person clubs. We began by comparing the two. The following chart lists the pros and cons of an online discussion group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online Discussion Group Pros and Cons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pros</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time for in-depth analysis and discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less pressure to participate (Subscribe/unsubscribe freely)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less time investment (no travel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants are anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/7</td>
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</table>

Some of the pros are better for members than for the club itself. For instance, Mary K. Chelton surveyed the members of the Baltimore County Public Library’s Virtual Book Club and noted they did not feel pressured to read the book. (Chelton 31). This is fine for members, but for the club, that could mean less participation, or less informed participation.

Similarly, some of the cons are not as bad as they seem. For instance, in an article comparing “face-to-face” book clubs to virtual book clubs, Dr. Rehlberg Sedo made the following observation, based on a comparative survey: people join traditional book clubs for the social interaction; they join virtual book clubs for the book. (Rehlberg Sedo 88)

We reasoned that if the needs were different, then the motivation to join would also be different. Nevertheless, we were determined to mitigate factors such as an unpredictable membership, less immediacy, and less social and emotional connection that were inherent in the online environment.

One way to create a more “clubby” feeling would be to develop a core group of members who posted regularly. To overcome the lack of immediacy, we decided to make use of email notification. Together with a facilitator or moderator with an engaging but non-intrusive style who answered posts quickly, we hoped this would establish a responsive
and friendly atmosphere that would attract and keep a core membership, as well as appeal to potential newcomers.

A very important aspect of planning is finding out what your potential users want.

When we noted that even the most active of the six library clubs did not get a large number of postings per month, we needed to find out why. We looked at a survey done by Hennepin County Library of their online book club members. The survey revealed that most respondents did not participate in discussions because of lack of time, or because they preferred to read others’ messages and get reading suggestions without commenting themselves. We learned from this that the majority of online book club members might be looking for readers’ advisory rather than participatory activities.

In 2005, we conducted our own survey, online and on paper at our branches and book club meetings. The survey questions are in Appendix 1, the results are in Appendix 2. Here are the highlights:

Amongst people who responded to the survey online, 97% were interested in the idea of a virtual book club. Of these, almost half chose web-page posting with optional email notification as their preferred way of staying in contact with the club.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What they want to discuss</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 78% fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High interest in non-fiction, mystery, biography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moderate interest in sci-fi/fantasy, graphic books</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who they are</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 76% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 41% age 18–35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 34% age 35- 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 18% age 50–65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 8% age 65+</td>
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</table>

The reading interests recorded above are in line with the academic research on the subject. In Dr. Rehberg Sedo’s online survey of 250 members from various reading groups, the preference of both genders was still for contemporary fiction, although non-fiction came a close second for men. (Rehberg Sedo 69). The majority of our respondents were, as expected, female, but, unlike our in-person clubs, 75% of total respondents were between eighteen and fifty years of age.

From the environmental scan, the research and the surveys, we developed a model of our ideal online book club:
• An attractive web page and easily accessible discussion forums to draw users and encourage participation.

• Web-page posting to facilitate cross-promotion of related library programs and services.

• Optional e-mail notification to meet our members’ needs. Preferences vary, after all. Members with a high volume of e-mails might choose not to be notified or to be notified only periodically.

• Notification options that include a choice of emails with or without full-text messages. Including the message allows for the same interaction as a listserv. The recipient can see what is posted and respond. However, there were bound to be members who would prefer a list of postings only. If they felt drawn to read the messages, they could then connect to the web page.

• Live online chats with authors. These would engage the public and provide opportunities to further develop the book discussions. They could also be tied to author readings at the library.

In our scan of online reading groups, we discovered that the successful ones all had active facilitators. The facilitator or moderator is, in our opinion, a key ingredient in the success of an online book club. The moderator introduces the title and guides the discussion throughout the month, creates a personality participants can relate to, sets the tone for the club and gives it a distinctive voice. He or she provides continuity and dedicated time, as well as building relationships that provide a form of social interaction often lacking in a virtual book club.

If your library system is on a tight budget, a team approach might work well. We did consider having librarians take turns moderating the club each month, with the assignment as part of their regular duties. This has the advantage of providing different perspectives. However, we ultimately decided that it is more important to have continuity and a consistent, distinctive tone that would help build relationships with members and give the club a recognizable “personality”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Estimated time (monthly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choosing titles/themes</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research supporting materials</td>
<td>6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create webpage contents</td>
<td>7 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create read-alike annotated list</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding discussion</td>
<td>8 hours depending on activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 hours (not including reading of book)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Above is an estimate of the time we thought it would take a librarian to run Book Buzz once it was set up. We developed it prior to starting the club, and did not factor in programming and marketing, two tasks we have found to be essential. Working with other staff to coordinate programs and dealing with technical problems all take time. Our moderators have told us that choosing the books takes much longer than we estimated, largely because it is done in consultation with other staff.

Initially, we asked for a half-time librarian, 17.5 hours a week, but we have subsequently found that having a full-timer who divides time between desk duties and the club works better for us. Among other things, it allows for full-time monitoring, which is important both for quality content and user satisfaction.

Our current moderator is a full-time librarian who is scheduled on desk like other librarians, period on, period off. She works approximately twenty hours per week on the club. Her off-desk assignment is Book Buzz, but she is also able to do Book Buzz tasks on desk when it is not too busy.

How long did the project take, and how much did it cost us?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources Required</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Staff Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External costs for design</strong></td>
<td>$53,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web librarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project librarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>200 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maintenance:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book club librarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>21 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web librarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 hrs/wk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web technician</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 hr/wk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The whole enterprise took a little less than six months from design to launch.

We thought it was very important for first time users to encounter an engaging experience that would encourage them to return. We decided to use a professional web designer to ensure the development of a successful website. Our web developer spent three to four months on the project. A considerable commitment of staff resources was necessary. Dedicated staff were required to work with the IT Department; construct the webpage with the web team; coordinate the project; commit adequate time to lead, monitor and build the start-up discussion group; and do research as the need arose. We hired a half-time librarian to plan and develop the project.

The staff time figures above do not include IT staff or managerial time. The time of the project manager was hard to gauge, given that she had multiple projects underway.
Once the planning was over, and we had hired a developer, it was time to move on to the design stage.

**The Design Stage**

One of the major challenges we encountered in designing the Book Buzz site was articulating our vision to the developer.

We started by drawing up a business requirements document together, outlining the functional requirements for the site – how we wanted it to work. The next step was filling out a creative questionnaire designed to help the developer understand the more intangible qualities we were aiming for - the look and feel of the site, the choice of images, fonts, and colours. We described the site’s target audience as the adult reader, primarily female, but also including men, twenty to forty years old, Internet-savvy, with at minimum a medium reading level.

We were asked: “If the online book club was a person, who would it be?” This kind of question can be very helpful to you and your web developer in arriving at a common understanding of what the site is about and who is the target audience. Our models included Governor-General Michaëlle Jean and CBC TV personality George Stromboulopoulos.

Based on our feedback, the developers gave us two possible concepts for the website design:
Both seemed formal, old-fashioned, and stuffy. The graphic treatments included old parchment, a tasselled bookmark, and flowery script. What happened to our twenty to forty-year-old target demographic? Was this the kind of site where George Stromboulopoulos would hang out? The developers were drawing on traditional images associated with libraries and book clubs – exactly what we were trying to avoid!

We resorted to metaphors based on clothing retailers to try to convey the difference between what the developers had produced and what we wanted: “You’ve given us The Bay and Stollery’s…we want Urban Outfitters or American Apparel!”

Here is what they came back with: a younger, more urban vibe we liked.

The next step, setting up the discussion forum, was easier. How it goes for you will depend a lot on the discussion forum tool you choose. We chose Web Crossing because we were already using it for the discussions on ramp, our teen website. Web Crossing is used by the New York Times Reader Forums and Salon.com’s Table Talk.

If you want to see what is available before making a decision, there is a wide array of software, including open source and hosted solutions that would be worth investigating. One good starting point is David Woolley’s site at <http://www.thinkofit.com>.

Web Crossing offers a number of plugins, including one for creating a blog, and one for hosting live chats. The live chat plugin has a feature called Auditorium Chat that allows the host to moderate questions and comments from the chat audience. We are also using their blog plugin for The Buzz … About Books, the Book Buzz blog. We have found the blog to be less than ideal; it looks and feels very similar to the discussion areas. For serious blogging, we would recommend using a dedicated blog application.
With the design in place, our club was ready to roll. Now it was the job of the moderator/facilitator to run it.

**Moderation and Running the Club**

The moderator/facilitator position requires flexibility, working to deadline, reading and writing, phoning and follow-up, plus outreach, marketing and research.

Before your site is launched, there are a number of things the moderator, in cooperation with other designated staff, will need to do. Establishing criteria for choosing books is of primary importance. Once the criteria are in place, one, or preferably two, titles should be pre-selected for discussion.

In our case, we decided that availability of the book in our library system was a primary consideration that made sense. We chose thirty copies with no more than a few reserves as a good base figure. The number you choose will depend on the size of your collections. The book had to be easily available for purchase in paperback, to accommodate members who cannot get a library copy for whatever reason. We determined this by checking [http://www.amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca) and/or [http://www.chaptersindigo.ca](http://www.chaptersindigo.ca). We decided to include non-fiction as well as fiction, to appeal to a wider group of readers.

Drawing up Discussion Forum Rules in cooperation with other designated staff is also important. Ours are listed below:

**Discussion Forum Rules**

In order to promote a safe and respectful environment in our Virtual Book Club, we will not tolerate the following:

- Personal attacks (including discriminatory remarks on the basis of sexuality, creed, ethnicity)
- Swearing
- Threats
- Any posting of personal contact information, or requests for personal contact information such as email address, telephone number, mailing address
- Posting of commercial advertising
- Posting of pornographic materials or links to such material

Posts infringing upon these rules will be deleted or edited.

After your launch date is set, contact should be made with your potential members, the ones who said “yes, we’d like an online book club” in answer to your original survey. Next, it would be a good idea to choose more books. The time requirements for the moderator’s job are unpredictable. It is to your advantage to work ahead.
To find out more about what your members want, hold a vote for a book pick as soon as possible. We did this by drawing up a list of five choices, then asking members to vote for their favourite.

It is a good idea not to let your members choose all the books. Many of them appreciate having something chosen for them – it is a way to expand their horizons. Plan six months in advance if you like, so that your members can read ahead but leave yourself room to change a selection if necessary to tie in with a last minute library program, or a media event. We sometimes feature a second book to allow for this cross-promotion.

There are other things to consider, including length (beware of anything over 350 pages, unless you are certain it is totally gripping), diversity in authors and settings, and a balance between fiction and non-fiction.

The “discussability” factor is worth a separate mention. Sometimes controversy can work in your favour. If you choose only mildly controversial material, with wide appeal and good reviews, you may foment some lively discussion. When we chose Fingersmith by Sarah Waters, we knew our membership well enough to think a little controversy in a very readable and critically acclaimed book would be a good thing. We had a record number of posts that month both in the Open Discussion and the Current Discussion about issues raised by the book’s content.

Most of us have the idea that a moderator is there to screen posts, as well as guide discussions. In our case, we’ve found that screening posts hasn’t been necessary. Occasionally, the moderator’s job will involve intervening. When this happens, you have to make a number of decisions about how to apply or enforce your forum rules. For example, do you say anything at all? And if you do, what do you say, to whom, and where?

One suggestion when dealing with difficult situations is not to intervene too soon. If someone makes a racist or homophobic remark, for instance, wait to see if other members jump in to present the opposite view. Let them enforce the rule by their comments; if they do not, you should. You could start by contacting the “offending” member privately offline, plus posting a reminder of the forum rules. Of course, if the initial remark is too offensive, delete it immediately, then follow-up with a private email to the person who posted it. Each situation will be a little different, and you will need to use your judgement.

The moderator’s job involves a great deal of writing – such as concocting questions for discussion and responding to members’ posts. You will also be writing copy about the book and the author, perhaps linking to book reviews, biographical information and interviews, and posting on your blog, as we do.

On our club, the moderator does not use the formal questions you find on most reader’s guides. We link to such guides on the Net, if they exist, but pose our own questions more informally, often basing them on members’ posts or indicated areas of interest. You may want to consider the informal approach yourself. We find it encourages more spontaneous and non-threatening discussions. To start things off, and if things slow down, you will need
to introduce leading questions, but you can keep them light and interesting – such as, *If you could be any character in this book, who would you be? Did this book end the way you expected?*

Moderators can establish online personas. Aim for one that is welcoming and friendly, humorous if it suits you, edgy if it fits. Adopt a persona as much like your real self as you can, so that when you get to know members, you can respond to them in a genuine manner. Do remember though that anonymity gives you some leeway to be playful. If you have a little fun, chances are your members will, too.

Your club’s blog is a good place to set your tone and get yourself known. One suggestion is to copy and paste the opening paragraph of an interesting article, with its by-line, and then provide a direct link to the article itself. Writing introductions to this type of material gives you a chance to establish a tone. Writing reviews and comments in your own distinctive style is also useful for creating an online presence. Get on the mailing list for publishers’ newsletters, as these will keep you current on publishing news and events. Checking out established blogs such as *BookSlut* and *50 Books* regularly will help you with style and approach ideas.

Programming is another important aspect of running a successful club. Live online author chats are one of the more unique opportunities offered by an online book club. You can opt to pay your chat authors, or try to get them online free. We have gone both routes. The first unpaid chat was with an author, Dan Kalla, whose publicist approached us, and whose book we were not featuring on the club.

Authors can be contacted directly, or through their agents, publicists or publishers. We have found it is much easier to get Canadian authors to chat with us than international authors. So far, we have always run chats that are one hour long as that timeframe works well for us. We hold the chats in the middle of the month that the book is featured, then post the transcripts to spark discussion.

Your job as moderator will be to keep chatters on track, discussing the author’s work, and specifically the title you are featuring. At first, we screened our chats. Now we conduct them in real time, finding that it creates a more natural give-and–take between author and audience.

We think contests are worth doing for two main reasons: they attract new members, plus they help make the club rewarding and fun for those who already belong. Book prizes are the obvious choice, and can often be obtained free of charge from publishers, publicists, and book fairs such as BookExpo.

One of our contests was a random draw of members who filled out our second survey.

Running an initial survey is, as previously mentioned, an important part of getting your club underway. Additional surveys are useful for staying in touch with members, finding
out how the club is doing, and collecting input on how to proceed. A helpful site for compiling surveys is <http://www.ryerson.ca/~mjoppe/ResearchProcess/WriteBetterQuestion.htm>.

In brief – when compiling a survey, first establish what it is you want to know, then ask clear, concise, unambiguous questions. Keep the survey as short as possible. You might want to consider having a site such as SurveyMonkey.com host your survey for you. It is one way to avoid sending it out as an email attachment.

Surveys provide you with information; they have a secondary function as a form of promotion. Promotion of your book club is essential to attract members. Even with a marketing or publicity department, the moderator will likely need to do a lot of outreach. One suggestion is to support library programs or initiatives already in existence – for instance, do a Black History book in Black History Month, or open an extra discussion folder to highlight an author visit, if you cannot feature the book at the same time. That way, you can double-up on publicity, get the word out to more people, and foster good relations between branches or departments.

Reaching out online is also important. Try googling literature, reading, and book club sites and blogs. Get listed on www.bookclubs.ca, the Random House site. Answer questions on other people’s blogs, and mention your club. Visit author websites, and if you like the author’s work, invite him or her to answer a question or two to post on your blog. Join other online book clubs and troll for ideas.

One of the sites we contacted was BookShorts, a young, somewhat trendy Toronto company that makes short films about books and authors. In December of 2006, BookShorts named us “Site of the Month”, and wrote a short article that linked directly to the TPL site. We also did an online “interview” for readinggroupguides.com and we were featured on BellaOnline, a literary fiction site based in the United States. We also ask authors we are chatting with, or featuring, to link to our site.

In addition, we do the more traditional forms of promotion. We have a Book Buzz bookmark that we distribute wherever we can; we create flyers and displays, and we promote the club when we attend book-related functions such as Toronto’s Word on the Street. Let any in-person book clubs you have contact with know about this alternate way to discuss books and reading. If you are featuring a book of interest to teens, let your teen programmers know about it, and so on.

To sum up, how do you judge the success of your book club? First of all, don’t rely strictly on the number of posts. There is a catchphrase out there in cyberland – “participation inequality”. It means that of all the members who belong to any given online club, only about 1% will post regularly. When pondering how to overcome this tendency, net guru Jakob Nielsen came up with the following words of wisdom: “You can’t.” (Nielsen) “Participation inequality” is the rule, not the exception. Thus the number of posts isn’t the whole story; “lurkers” enjoy reading whatever content you provide.

Focus instead on the following questions: Is your membership growing? When you do surveys, are the responses mostly positive? How many hits or visits does your site get in a
month? We have an average of approximately 150 total posts a month – but 11,000 page views!

Do not ignore posts entirely. Factor them in by monitoring their growth. As your club acquires more members, the 1% who post should grow too; plus, if you are doing the right things, over time people will become more comfortable with the club, and more eager to connect with other members.

We have seen our posts go from lows in the twenties to highs in the hundreds, and we are hoping that is a lasting trend. Even more importantly, our membership has grown, survey results have been positive, and hits and page views have increased over the year. The charts in Appendix 3a and 3b summarize our performance in the first year of operation.

Appendix 3a charts the posts on the Current Discussion and Open forums. The Current Discussion forum features the book of the month. The Open Forum is where members can talk about any book-related items. The first few months after the April launch were rather slow; but by August, with a new facilitator, there was a spurt of activity resulting in the highest number of posts in the twelve month period. December and January were also very active with almost 180 posts total, possibly attributable to the books discussed (Fingersmith in December and Spin in January).

Appendix 3b charts the page views for the Book Buzz homepage and the combined discussion forums (current, open and the blog). High numbers coincide with either controversial books or more active marketing. The number of posts does not necessarily correspond to the number of page views. Months with high page views (February and March) are not reflected in the number of posts, possibly an indication of a large number of lurkers. There was also a lot of cross-promotion with other library programs in those months. Overall both posts and page views indicate a healthy site.

We wish you the best of luck in starting and running your own online book club.
### Appendix 1

**24/7 book discussion**

Branch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you interested in participating in an online book club run by the library?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If yes, what format would you prefer?

- [ ] Website posting
- [ ] Website posting with e-mail alert
- [ ] Listserv
- [ ] Live chat
- [ ] Blog

If you would like us to contact you if we start an online book discussion group, please supply contact information:

Name: 

Phone Number: 

E-mail address: 

If chat format, what is a good time for you?

- [ ] Morning
- [ ] Early afternoon
- [ ] Late afternoon
- [ ] Evening (to 8:30 pm)

What interests you? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] General Fiction
- [ ] Non-fiction
- [ ] Modern Literature
- [ ] Biography
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] Fantasy/Science Fiction
- [ ] The Classics
- [ ] Mystery
- [ ] Graphic Books

Please tell us a little about yourself (for statistical purposes only):

**I live in:**

- [ ] Toronto
- [ ] Greater Toronto Area (GTA)
- [ ] Ontario outside of GTA
- [ ] Canada outside of Ontario
- [ ] Other (please specify)

**Gender:**

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female

**Age:**

- [ ] 18 – 35
- [ ] 35 – 50
- [ ] 50 – 65
- [ ] 65 and over

Please return the completed form to a staff member or fax to 416-395-5668

Thank you very much for your help.

The Personal information on this form is collected under the authority of the Public Libraries Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This information will only be used for the provision of library services and programs by Toronto Public Library. Questions related to the collection of this personal information should be directed to The City Librarian’s Office, Toronto Public Library, 789 Yonge Street, Toronto, ON, M4W 2G8, Telephone: 416-393-7032.
Appendix 2 – Survey Results of Toronto Public Survey on Online Book Club

Number of forms returned (as of May 13, 2005): **213**

Form returned in branch or submitted online?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Branch</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>139 – (65%)</td>
<td>74 – (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you interested in participating in an online book club run by the library?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>206 – (97%)</td>
<td>7 – (3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If yes, what format would you prefer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website Posting</th>
<th>Post with E-mail</th>
<th>Listserv</th>
<th>Live chat</th>
<th>Blog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49 – (20%)</td>
<td>111 – (45%)</td>
<td>19 – (8%)</td>
<td>36 – (14%)</td>
<td>33 – (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If chat format, what is a good time for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Early Afternoon</th>
<th>Late Afternoon</th>
<th>Evenings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41 – (19%)</td>
<td>23 – (11%)</td>
<td>29 – (14%)</td>
<td>116 – (56%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What (genre) interests you?

- **Fiction**: 163 – (77%)
- **Sci-fi / Fantasy**: 61 – (29%)
- **Non-fiction**: 116 – (54%)
- **The Classics**: 104 – (49%)
- **Modern literature**: 112 – (53%)
- **Mystery**: 92 – (43%)
- **Biography**: 96 – (45%)
- **Graphic Books**: 40 – (19%)
- **Other**: 49 – (23%)

**Note:** Figures were calculated for each genre individually, for example: out of 213 forms returned, 163 people indicated that Fiction interests them, therefore 77% of total respondents indicated that they would be interested in general fiction.

**Demographic Information**

I live in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toronto</th>
<th>GTA</th>
<th>Ontario (outside GTA)</th>
<th>Canada (outside Ontario)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>178 – (86%)</td>
<td>26 – (13%)</td>
<td>2 – (1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 – (26%)</td>
<td>153 – (74%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18 – 35:</th>
<th>35 – 50:</th>
<th>50 – 65:</th>
<th>65+:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81 – (40%)</td>
<td>70 – (34%)</td>
<td>37 – (18%)</td>
<td>17 – (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3a - Book Buzz Posts: April 2006 - March 2007


(Discussion Forum statistics not captured Apr - Jun 2006)
Works Cited

Chelton, Mary K. “When Oprah Meets E-mail: Virtual Book Clubs.” Reference and User Services Quarterly Fall (2001) : 31-35.


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<http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/Entertainment___Arts/Humanities/Books_and_Writing/Reading_Groups>.


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1999 (viewed date?)


