CHAPTER 5

Reading Lives and Reading Identities
Genre, Audience, and Being a Reader of E-books

'Books mark important moments in life. Just looking at the spines brings back memories. That's why I keep books.'

(Survey 7)

'[E-books aren't real books] Because I feel a "real book"...can be passed on and shared, looked at and admired.'

(Survey 2022)

The laptop is shut; the app closed; the e-ink screen blurs and resolves into its latest placeholder image (perhaps a fountain pen or stack of battered leather tomes, or, if one has a lower cost 'With Ads' Kindle, a pitch for a toaster). What comes next? What role do e-books play in the formation and expression of readers' self-image and public image? And how can a reader's self-image and public image shape their use of and attitudes towards e-books? Previous chapters have examined the ways in which e-books are real or unreal, and useful or not useful, in terms of ownership, trust, and pleasure; these intermingling roles of e-books as real books, *ersatz books*, digital proxies for books, and incomplete books come together as we consider how readers reconcile book-love and bookish identity with use (or rejection) of artefacts when they function as near-books, stand-ins for books, or dismembered parts of books. This chapter brings the reader's journey full circle, investigating how finished e-books are shared or not shared, displayed or not displayed, and made a cherished part of the reader's personal history or barred from such status. It examines aspects of display, cultural capital, and sharing (both conscious and 'frictionless')[1] in forms specific to digital and forms specific to print. It investigates how stereotypes (of some readers as unqualified and some reading practices and communities as inferior) and assumptions (regarding the reading behaviour of low-status audiences and e-book readers as a whole) can interact with and further entrench existing narratives, including narratives of literary decline, technology as a threat to culture, and women as

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incompetent readers in need of professional and/or masculine guidance. It further examines how the bookish groups taking part in this study policed or did not police orthodoxy on bookish positions (such as pleasure in the material object of the print book) and considers how changing attitudes towards print privacy signal the emergence of concern for intellectual privacy as a bookish value in its own right. Finally, it examines e-book realness through the lens of love. It investigates readers' experiences of powerful emotion and digital reading, including how previously discussed dimensions of control, trust, pleasure, and identity intersect for those novels that attain special status and with which a given reader establishes a meaningful and lasting relationship. It explores love for reading devices as well as love for print, how love for books and book-related activity does and does not equate with identity as a bibliophile (or as a technophile), and what it means to feel real emotions for an e-book that is only sometimes real.

Reconciling Bookish Identity with Reading of Low-Status Books

As discussed in Chapter 2, from a consumer perspective, e-books do not enjoy equal status with print. While there is no certainty that this will remain the case, for now the reputation issues of digital-only and self-publishing – categories that only include some e-books, but the stigma of which affects all e-books – casts them as lower investment products that may or may not have been approved by traditional gatekeepers. The large proportion of book readers who read digitally are hence aligned, at least some of the time, with lower status books.[2] They must incorporate readership of lower status or ambiguous-status books into their public and private reading personas and contend with entrenched narratives of 'print vs digital' as they negotiate their readerly identity. The lower status of digital, however, is also due to its association with lower status audiences.

Influence of (Perceived) Audience on Book Status

Books, like other artistic works, are defined not only by the intentions (or background) of their creators but also by their audiences.[3] Bourdieu finds that 'there are few fields (other than the field of power itself) in which the antagonism between the occupants of the polar positions is more total' than for literature, amplifying the impact of association with an 'intellectual', 'bourgeois', or 'mass' audience.[4] The 'negative relationship. . .established between symbolic and economic profit, whereby *discredit* increases as the

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audience grows and its specific competence declines, together with the value of the recognition implied in the act of consumption'[5] [emphasis his] devalues any work appreciated by a mass audience. Damage caused by their appreciation can be, to a degree, counterbalanced by critical approval and simultaneous attention from high-status 'intellectual' audiences, but not cancelled out. Within this exceptionally polarised literary field, the novel ranges across a wider territory than drama or poetry, offering a great number of possible locations along axes of size of audience and degree of consecration.[6] With many consumers, but also many producers (not limited as, say, late twentieth-century French drama was limited by the number of Parisian theatres) and low unit price (compared with, say, paintings), and much profit and critical attention to distribute between works, the outcomes for any particular novel are volatile; identification with a particular audience has the power to move that work nearly to the poles of either axis (and hence to any corner of a legitimacy grid). Digital-era measures of esteem can make the relationship between wider audience and lower prestige even more visible, and to the general public as well as literary insiders: for example, Kovács and Sharkey's analysis of Goodreads star ratings of novels before and after major awards found that winners tended to experience, in addition to the expected spike in sales, a drop in average star rating, while shortlisted books saw a more modest increase in sales and no obvious drop in star rating.[7]

Bourdieu presents this as an essentially irreducible problem: the novelist needs a mass readership if there is to be any possibility of making a living wage,[8] but growth of an audience lacking in 'competence' leads to increase of discredit. Later theorists have noted how problematic a binary opposition between prestige and wide readership can be for interpreting contemporary literary fields, proposing a more nuanced approach that recognises the role of audience while respecting the significance of other factors. Squires notes that 'the value-laden nature of this principle too quickly suggests a delineation of the field into markets for mass and elite audiences, as Q. R. Leavis's does', and goes on to demonstrate in *Marketing Literature* how factors including literary awards make it impossible to so directly couple status with audience size in twenty-first-century Britain.[9] English performs similar work on the American literary field in *The Economy of Prestige*, emphasising the role of 'journalistic capital' as a third force interacting with economic and cultural capital and challenging the idea of a direct trade-off between the economic and cultural.[10] But any increase in discredit due to changing readership depends on the visibility of the 'competent' portion of the audience in proportion to the 'incompetent' portion: if the incompetent, low-status readers were somehow concealed,

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their 'loving a book in public'[11] made less public, the author could in theory accumulate economic profit without risking discredit. (Raising the possibility that authors such as Jonathan Franzen, eager for an Oprah's Book Club sales boost but frightened that association with female readers and feminised reading institutions would drive away male readers,[12] can now enjoy income from female readers without being seen with those readers in public.)

This concealment of audience is in fact under way. The generic exterior of the e-book is not so much a veil of discretion as a blank canvas, a space onto which observers can project their ideas of what 'that kind of person'[13] would be reading. In the absence of data, stereotypes can rush in to any gap, and lower status readers contend with automatic assumptions that they are reading lower status books.

E-book Privacy: Reading a Book Without Showing Its Cover

With highbrow material a source of cultural capital, and low- or middlebrow material a source of discredit, readers are justifiably concerned about what image their reading choices might project. The question is whether this feeling affects reading choices, and if so what role digital reading might play.

The perception that individuals choose e-books for furtive reading is widespread and longstanding; an 'opinion piece cliché'.[14] Data on furtive reading, however, is almost absent. A Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) survey from 2013 (based on responses from general readers, not only readers with sight loss) found that 64% 'admitted feeling embarrassed about reading certain types of books'.[15] It represents a very rare instance of an actual survey on 'embarrassing' screen reading (even if a brief one, disseminated via press release) and even there the key question is framed as a hypothetical. The RNIB survey reported that 'less than one quarter of e-book readers (23%) said that they were more likely to read an "embarrassing" book electronically as no one would know about it'.[16] My survey, asking about actual rather than hypothetical reading choices, found an even smaller proportion in agreement. 'Better for privacy – no one can see what I'm reading' is a real but rare motivator, a factor for only 6.5% e-book readers. Agreement did not vary significantly by year (though it sagged slightly during pandemic lockdowns, to 4.4% in 2020 and 4.2% in 2021, possibly because of the frequently mentioned loss of commute reading, and fewer opportunities to read in public settings in general). Women were most likely to agree.[17] However, more important than

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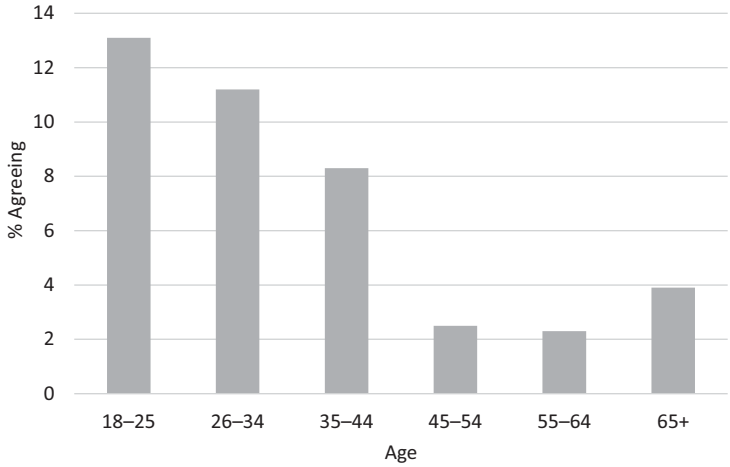


Figure 5.1 Reasons for choosing digital: 'better for privacy – no one can see what I'm reading', by age.

gender is age.[18] Respondents younger than 35 were more than twice as likely to agree (12.0%) as respondents 35 and older (4.7%), with the highest level of concern among those 18–25 (13.1%) (Figure 5.1).

A desire for this form of privacy emerges as a rare concern, and one disproportionately shared by young women. (Only one survey respondent – young and female – used the free-text boxes to describe secretive reading, and that individual did not mention genre: 'plus I don't want people to see what I am reading').[19] These digital privacy-valuing readers appear otherwise largely ordinary in their reading behaviour. They are typical in their sources of print books, no more likely to read novels or any other genre of e-book, and there were no meaningful links with reading device (including the Kindle, confidently cited by journalists as the device of choice for furtive reading).[20] They are slightly more likely to obtain e-books from the unusual source of chain bookshops. But when it comes to e-books from Amazon, a potential pattern emerges. Between 2014 and 2017, when Amazon purchases and loans are grouped together, there is no connection. But between 2020 and 2022, when I asked separately about e-book loans, those who value e-book privacy are no more likely to buy from Amazon, but slightly more likely to borrow from Kindle Unlimited/Prime Reading (42.3% vs 21.1% of others) (though no more likely to borrow from a non-Amazon service such as Scribd). The connections to other digital motivators of 'cheaper/better value' (63.9% vs 42.8%), 'better

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selection' (18.1% vs 3.8%), and 'the books I want aren't always available in print' (49.4% vs 22.5%) (though this limitation that would not apply to mainstream romance or even mainstream erotica of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* moiety, these genres being widely stocked in bookshops, supermarkets, and public libraries) further suggest that Kindle Unlimited might be particularly appealing to this group both for digital-only offerings, exemplified by the prototypical Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) self-published novel, and for the all-you-can-read monthly price. This raises the possibility that the readers most concerned about reading without public scrutiny – or judgement – are more active consumers of the genres most closely associated with Kindle Unlimited, including self- or Amazon-published[21] romance.[22] (Though intriguingly, not to a degree that would lead to unusually active use of Kindles, or Kindle apps on tablet or smartphone.) However, the lack of connection to choosing digital because it is faster or easier to obtain does not support any special link with chain reading. Obtaining books for chain reading, where after finishing one book in a series one immediately starts the next, was noted by several participants as a reason to read digital, and one theory as to the success of romance fiction in digital form has been that romance novels lend themselves to this kind of one-after-another 'binge reading'.[23]

In gathering empirical data on a widely shared but previously untested belief, this study emphatically challenges conventional wisdom on the topic and calls into question theories based on an assumption of widespread furtive reading (and assumptions as to who those furtive readers might be). The question is whether this small population of readers is drawn to digital for freedom from scrutiny, or driven to it. The reasons why young women might be especially sensitive to scrutiny of their reading have roots in the long history of anxiety over private reading and focus of that anxiety on women's reading.

Enduring Stigmas: Women as 'Incompetent' Readers

The strong connection between e-reading and novel reading would by itself link e-books to women readers. The novel has been associated with women readers since its inception: not only as a genre shaped to accommodate the requirements (or what were assumed to be the requirements) of female customers but also one that developed in tandem with mass female readership and conceptions of female readership, and even tasked, to a greater degree than other literary forms, with defining what a modern woman could and should be.[24] 'By the middle of the 19th century. . .the

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novel was already known as a female form of writing', and 'throughout the [Victorian and Edwardian] period novels were at the centre of discussions concerning women and reading'.[25] But e-books, associated with lower status texts, are also associated with female readership because of the persistently lower status of women readers, 'women's genres', and women's reading practices.

Most readers are women, and women, on average, read more books than men,[26] but women do not enjoy equal status as readers or occupy most positions of power and influence in the literary world. The 'woman reader' is a figure identified as both different (an essential point in separating out women's reading as both atypical and in need of anxious examination) and inferior for millennia.[27] 'Men have historically been associated with elite culture, while women have been linked with more commercial forms'[28] and women's mass participation, with reading and with the novel in particular, has led not to full participation in the elite but rather a sectioning-off of literary culture, where women (and the books they read, the books they write, the literary institutions they patronise, etc.) are corralled into lower status zones. Though the majority of publishing professionals are now women, the majority of senior positions are still held by men,[29] and the majority, sometimes the overwhelming majority, of both book reviewers and authors reviewed in elite literary magazines and journals are male.[30] In library and records management, the UK workforce is approximately gender-balanced (in contrast to the global workforce, where four out of five librarians are women), but men have higher average pay and are nearly twice as likely to hold senior management positions.[31] At present, 'the literary field that fosters modernist fiction gendered male has its related mother-field, the field of mass-market books, in which middlebrow women readers exert power'.[32] Driscoll defines the literary middlebrow as 'a broad phenomenon. . .allowing for different registers and formations' that nonetheless can be tracked by a 'family resemblance' where all middlebrow institutions share most of a set of eight features: middle class, reverential, entrepreneurial, mediated, emotional, recreational, earnest, and, crucially for digital reading, feminised.[33] Humble explains that 'texts move in and out of bounds [of the middlebrow] depending on who is perceived to be reading them', and popular success demotes a book down the highbrow-middlebrow-lowbrow axis, the more dramatic the success and the more populist the venue, the more severe the damage; 'selection as a "Book of the Month" by a newspaper would inevitably push a book into the middlebrow category, as, often, would "bestseller" status. . .indeed, there is much evidence to suggest

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that. . .a predominantly female readership very often automatically consigned a text to the category of middlebrow'.[34]

E-books are also associated with women because of the prominence of women as creators in modern self-publishing. Though there are few reliable statistics for self-publishing, several studies indicate that the majority of self-published authors, both for Amazon's KDP and similar models and for free sources such as Wattpad, are likely female.[35] Just as the texts they produce are held at arm's length, only sporadically granted the designation of 'book', the writers are frequently fenced off from the designation of 'author'.[36]

'Guilty Pleasures'

A major factor in perceptions of women's digital reading as furtive consumption of 'guilty pleasures'[37] is the status of romance fiction, particularly stereotypes of voracious and exclusive readers of popular fiction caricatured as 'undiscriminating, without judgement, a passive consumer gulping down rubbish by the gallon'[38] while ignoring more nutritious fare.[39] Romance is a major category in both print and digital formats[40] and a genre with a unique publication history.[41] Its complexities make it a zone of disagreement and debate among literary scholars,[42] but three points of agreement are its importance to the publishing industry, its association with female readers, and its low status. While the idea that this one genre is somehow uniquely lacking in worth, inherently less valuable than any other form of popular fiction, is ludicrous, this is a charge levelled at romance and an image with which readers must contend. While it is reasonable to investigate whether privacy (rather than, say, lower price, speed of access, or availability of digital-original titles) is a primary reason for the genre's success on screen, it is not reasonable to skip the investigation and assume that correlation is causation, leading to 'train commuters reading spicy novels on iPhone but crime stories in paperback'.[43] This assumption was visible in focus groups. Privacy of this kind was rarely mentioned, but when it was the furtive reading was instantly associated with 'women's genres' of erotica and romance. One participant, a student pursuing her master's degree in publishing (who did not read romance herself or choose digital for reasons of privacy), knew about digital romance sales figures and leapt to the conclusion that the cause was romance readers' desire for privacy.

> *'The success of Mills and Boon in digital form, certainly [comes from the choice to access 'light reading' digitally] particularly if people are embarrassed to read it. People no longer have to buy book covers, which was a thing that they would*

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> *use that was actually sold because you can just hide whatever dodgy novel you're reading by reading on a Kindle.'* (FG 4 participant 4)

Only one (female) individual in any focus group or interview described privacy of this kind as important to her personally; she was one of only two respondents who spoke about reading romance novels. She was teased by a (male) fellow participant.

> P1: *'And then there are some books I might not necessarily want people to see that I'm reading. For example, some romance books. There's an author I quite like called Shelley Lawrence; she writes kind of like the romance thing and the covers are always quite sort of, of, like, I don't know. . .'*
> P2: *'[laughing] Do they have shirtless men?'*
> P1: *'[sounding nettled] No, not necessarily. [laughter from other participants] Well, it depends, because they have different versions, now, of [covers]. It's just, you can more easily hide what you're reading on a Kindle.'* (All FG 2)

Later, when the same respondent (P1) was discussing the experience of strangers striking up a conversation with her regarding the print copy of an Orwell classic she was reading in public, the other participant (P2) continued to tease her: 'secretly, you had the romance tucked under it!', making it clear that her earlier statement had been noted as a meaningful admission (or confession) and was neither forgotten nor forgiven.

This display of teasing (in this instance, it was between coursemates and appeared to be done, and accepted, in a generally good-natured spirit) also demonstrates the next step of the folk wisdom that women habitually conceal taboo reading: that whenever a woman's reading can't be seen or verified, it is assumed that the reading is taboo. This assumption is prominent in the discussion even in the face of immediate reminders (including, in this case, shortly beforehand in the same conversation, 'I read a lot of classics on the Kindle, 'cause you can get them for free' that female as well as male e-book readers frequently choose classics, in part because so many are available for 'free of charge' on Amazon and via Project Gutenberg).[44] There is explicit recognition that because anonymous e-book reading means sacrificing cultural capital attached to public reading of prestigious titles, readers are discouraged from accessing such titles on screen.

> *'. . .a lot of it is genre and romance that people don't necessarily want to be seen reading on the Tube [exasperated, sarcastic 'yeah' in background, from Participant 1, the previously teased romance-reading participant], I also think*

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> *there's a kind of corollary to that, which is that if it's literary fiction or a classic, everyone almost does deliberately want to be seen reading it.'* (FG 2 respondent 2)

Romance was unique in these focus groups as the only genre singled out for ridicule and derision. The respondent teased earlier for her romance reading had elsewhere in the conversation noted that she reads (in addition to high-status classics and literary fiction) fan fiction, young adult (YA), science fiction, and fantasy. None of this reading attracted jeers. (In focus group 1, one reader, participant 4, was tentative and apologetic in discussing Harry Potter fan fiction that she had read, but no one in the group picked up on this as embarrassing or even noteworthy.)[45] In focus group 6, participant 4, the only other participant who openly discussed reading romance, did not wait for it to be criticised by the group but instead criticised it herself: 'don't [read romance, as she does]. You shouldn't, it's all garbage [General laughter]'.

Fifty Shades: The Only E-book Published in the Twenty-first Century

More than a decade after its release, *Fifty Shades of Grey* remains embedded at the centre of debates on digital reading privacy. In studying commentary on the topic, I have encountered virtually no journalism published since 2012 on the trope of Kindles used for furtive reading that did not mention this series: journalism on any aspect of digital reading is, in fact, highly likely to mention it. There are reasons for its prominence in these debates. It was unquestionably a publishing phenomenon: even the least prominent books in the series were bestsellers[46] and the series as a whole was a fixture (not to say fixation) of early twenty-first-century cultural conversation, invoked in discussions that range far beyond books and publishing. Its colourful origin story (e.g. a work of fan fiction that stunned industry insiders and made its author fabulously wealthy) is exciting and widely known, and easily invoked by commentators to support a wide variety of arguments, from women's empowerment to women's triviality to a new cultural frankness to imminent cultural collapse. And the theory that its success is bound up with secretive digital reading was raised early by a woman with an insider's knowledge and perspective: James's agent, Valerie Hoskins, told *The New York Times* in 2012 that 'one of the things about this is that in the 21st century, women have the ability to read this kind of material without anybody knowing what they're reading, because they can read them on their iPads and Kindles'.[47] Nicolas Carr goes further,

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concluding that benevolent supervision had, pre-Kindle, protected the publishing industry and the culture from the likes of *Fifty Shades of Grey*: 'We may even be a little embarrassed to be seen reading them, which makes anonymous digital versions all the more appealing. The "Fifty Shades of Grey" phenomenon probably wouldn't have happened if e-books didn't exist.'[48] His hypothesis curiously overlooks *Fifty Shades'* parallel success in print; as Colbjørnsen observes,[49] the mega-selling paperbacks sold in a plethora of formats, sporting a wide array of cover designs, all of them visible to the naked eye. The series' overwhelming presence dominates and skews discussion of digital reading, but most particularly women's digital reading, and similarly skews perceptions of what is 'typical' screen reading and what the motivations of a typical e-novel reader (at least a female e-novel reader) might be.

Fifty Shades of Grey bears almost every possible stigma in terms of literary legitimacy. It is genre fiction, and a hybrid of two of the most derided forms, erotica and romance. It began as a piece of fan fiction. It was originally self-published, and in digital-original form. It was written by a woman for a female audience. It is not generally regarded as well-written.[50] (In its defence, Archer and Jockers marshal machine learning data to argue that while the line-by-line prose may be awkward, the first novel in the series is, in fact, expertly paced.)[51] And, as noted earlier, it is a bestseller of historic proportions, which according to Bourdieu would by itself accrue historic levels of discredit.

No one in the interviews or the free-text boxes of the survey mentioned *Fifty Shades of Grey*, but it was mentioned (not raised by the facilitator, but by participants) in half of the focus groups. Focus group participants were aware of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* assumptions as something widely shared in the media, but notably did not express agreement: it was couched as something 'they' said and thought (a hallmark of reputation as meta-belief).[52]

> *'That's one of the things* ***they said*** Fifty Shades *benefitted from, wasn't it? That people could read it without anyone knowing they were reading it. (Laughs)'.* (FG 3 participant 3)

> *'It's one of the reasons* ***they thought*** *so many copies of* Fifty Shades of Grey *was sold, because people could read it anonymously and no one would know.'* (FG 5 participant 5)

It is interesting that both participants quoted earlier (one male and one female) said 'people' rather than 'women', whereas James's agent spoke specifically of women. While the success of the series is attributed to (and

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resulting damage to literature blamed on) women, it is acknowledged that men do sometimes read it; to avoid censure, they must ensure that their interest is perceived as critical or academic, not personal. (Charles McGrath, author, past *New Yorker* fiction editor and *New York Times* book review editor, and confirmed member of the literary establishment, laughed at himself for hiding his childhood copy of *Little Women* behind a homemade brown paper wrapper, but still takes pains to make clear that his and his friends' Kindle reading of *Fifty Shades of Grey* was for professional reasons.)[53] If they are suspected of enjoying such books, sharing such tastes (feminine, juvenile, or both), mockery can be harsh and enduring, as with a participant deriding her father: 'he's got the taste of a teenage girl. He actually, like, legitimately likes *Twilight*, and I'm still judging him for it many years later'.[54]

While journalism on 'Kindle smut' frequently features headlines about guilt and shame (e.g. 'A cover-up! Guilty secret we hide in our Kindles' or 'Ebook readers' guilty pleasures revealed'), interviewees the articles quote often tell more complex stories about public mockery and the variety of possible responses to it.[55] Sarah Wendell, author and co-creator of the romance website *Smart Bitches, Trashy Books* (www.smartbitchestrashybooks.com) agrees that concealment is a major factor for digital sales of romance and erotica because 'women get enough commentary when they check out at a bookstore with romance novels. The commentary when you go to buy an erotic novel is even worse, so if you have the safety of doing it anonymously online, you take it', but she herself 'no longer cares what people think of her reading habits' and while fellow commuters still regularly bother her, they do so at their own risk.[56] An anonymous reader recounted a story of moving to digital reading after being teased on a plane: 'but I was like, gosh, never again can I be out in public with these books with questionable titles and creepy people on the front all draped over each other'.[57] These are not stories of 'guilty secrets' or 'guilty pleasures' so much as stories of anticipation of and pragmatic response to pestering. In general, what readers are describing as their own experience of furtive reading is embarrassment, with shame reserved for much more specific book-related transgressions.

Embarrassment versus Shame

Any specific mention of shame by participants is noteworthy, all the more so as shame is a cultural preoccupation and recent fixture of the bestseller lists,[58] whether filed in the Self-Help section with John Bradshaw or Humour with Jon Ronson. While older participants in my study came

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of age in a time when, in the US and the UK, shame was discussed as a valuable means of managing behaviour,[59] current debates are shaped more by Gilligan's hugely influential theories of shame as unproductive and profoundly damaging to the individual and society.[60] Philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians of emotion, and researchers and clinicians from other disciplines distinguish between embarrassment, guilt, and shame in different ways (some describe embarrassment as a lesser version of shame, some as a distinct but related emotion), but there are areas of intersection. One is that they are not equally painful: embarrassment is less intense, an emotion suited to a relatively minor transgression, or simply to being caught doing in public something normally done in private (it is not for nothing that the reader of popular fiction is 'imagined as. . .virtually masturbatory').[61] Another is that they have different relationships to outside judgement: while shame may be either public or private, embarrassment typically requires an audience. Shame researcher Brené Brown (whose bestselling popular books and famous TED talk, at 61 million views one of the most-watched in the organisation's history, have made her an extraordinarily prominent academic)[62] has popularised a definition of shame as 'an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance or belonging', quite distinct from guilt, 'a feeling that results from behaving in a flawed or bad way rather than flawed or bad self'.[63]

Participants in my study rarely use the words shame, guilt, or embarrassment. Quantifying the mentions reveals how infrequently they appear in these readers' conversations about e-reading, in sharp contrast to the frequency with which they appear in journalists' coverage of e-reading. The few instances where they use the word 'shame' suggest that they do, in fact, subscribe to the above-mentioned concepts of shame hierarchy (where shame is more serious than embarrassment) and the importance of observation. In this set of qualitative data, personal shame is mentioned only twice: one participant described 'shamefully' buying high-quality books but giving them as gifts instead of reading them herself, and another reported that she 'dropped Salman Rushdie in the bath and I've never been so ashamed in my life' (this experience of shame, interestingly, came from the same participant who described romance novels as merely 'embarrassing').[64] There were three mentions of guilt: avoiding it by buying books one wanted to annotate electronically, as one can mark up an e-book 'without guilt' (this relates, like one shame example, to remorse over mistreating a print book), proudly rejecting it for the non-crime of excessive book buying ('I buy far more books than I read and I have no

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guilt'), and of other people's lowbrow reading as 'guilty pleasures'.[65] Embarrassment is mentioned twice: once, as mentioned earlier, in describing romance novels as embarrassing books, and second, in describing Amazon's dynamic estimated reading time, where glancing away from the page means being branded a slow reader, an 'embarrassing' identity imposed (unfairly) by a 'judgmental' Amazon[66] (this instance of resented surveillance, and the problem of Amazon, is one I'll discuss further in the context of intellectual privacy). These six are the only examples, but they do together suggest meaningful distinctions. Shame was experienced, and came from ruining a print book and from failing to read a book one has bought, but was not attributed to others. Guilt was experienced, from marking up a print book (or rather, avoided by not marking up a print book), and was attributed to others for 'guilty pleasure' reading. Embarrassment was experienced, from being labelled a slow reader by Amazon, and attributed to others for being seen to read a romance novel in public (not, notably, for reading romance, but for being seen with it; readers do not have to agree that their reading is shameful to know that they are likely to be attacked for it). Shame was reserved for damaging or neglecting books. Embarrassment was specific to being caught looking unbookish in public.

E-books and e-novels in this way function as parts of books: the text without publicly visible paratext. E-novels are in that sense precisely what the book-shamed reader quoted earlier wanted: the romance novels she liked to read without the lurid, 'creepy' covers she neither liked nor wanted to be seen with, and indeed the reading experience without the public shaming experience. This represents, in one sense, freedom: the ability to read in public without being harangued by strangers. In theory, this might also, should the reading be low-status, evade discredit. However, stereotypes and tropes of Kindle reading as a tool for furtive readers may invite observers to assume that all her anonymous reading is low-status: that she only reads digitally because her reading is 'embarrassing' (activating eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideas of private reading as dangerous, with female readers in particular restrained only by fear of censure, and reaching for the trash and smut the moment their benevolent supervisors' backs are turned). If so, her choice of reading digitally does not evade discredit, it invites it; the price of digital reading is not only opportunity cost, cultural capital lost when her high-status reading (as with free classics) is concealed but also a default assumption that any e-book – if it is read by a woman – is *Fifty Shades of Grey* or something like it.

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Narrative of Literature in Opposition to Technology

Statements about the virtues or dangers of screen reading are 'position-takings', statements that may express liking or dislike but also declare alliance (with a philosophy, group of actors, etc.) in the struggle to define a cultural field.[67] Position-taking on the issue of digital reading began long before mass e-reading, and, in the form of suspicion regarding technology, before the emergence of the e-book.

Narratives of technology as the enemy of literature, or of reading, predate digital reading and take a variety of forms. (Flint notes that Victorians also considered themselves time-poor and bedevilled by technology, distracted from reading by 'loosely defined "tendencies of the age"'.)[68] Bob Brown's *The Readies*, expanding on ideas first explored in a modernist literary magazine in 1930,[69] described print reading as 'old-fashioned, frumpish, beskirted', and promised that his new machine would free writing 'bottled up in books' and allow literature to advance into the twentieth century.[70] In 1913, Thomas Edison pronounced that books would 'soon be' obsolete; in 1966, Marshall McLuhan pronounced them obsolete already.[71] Sven Birkert's *The Gutenberg Elegies* has proven an extremely influential text in the late twentieth-/early twenty-first-century debates on screen reading, widely reviewed on its release and cited by hundreds of scholars and commentators from almost the moment of its publication[72] to the present day, admiringly[73] and less so.[74] First published in 1994, it refers to digital reading, when it does refer to it, in the sense of hypertext fiction that must be 'booted up' on a 'terminal' in the writing room of a friend who is 'a convert to the sorcery of the microchip'.[75] Rooted in twentieth-century debates on competition between media, it situates reading in opposition to an 'electronic culture'[76] where the anti-literary distractions come from 'music, TV, and videos' emerging from radios, Sony Walkmans, and television sets, not the not-yet-mainstream internet or digital culture as fostered by the Web (which had been invented only five years before). It presents technology in any form more modern than moveable type as antagonistic to 'slowing down enough to concentrate on prose of any density' or literary production; even composing on an IBM Selectric electric typewriter instead of a personal computer is seen as a (deeply contradictory) statement of alliance to heritage forms.[77]

Technology companies' statements about how their products and services would disrupt information exchange landed on fertile ground. The territory was primed by exhaustive debate in literary circles. 'In the early stages of thinking about bookishness,' Pressman 'considered writing a

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history of "the death of the book" genre, focussing on rhetorical practices and assumptions', so vast was the material for analysis – and so revealing as to the values of the combatants.[78] 'Discourse of resistance surrounding e-reading,' as Hayler observes, 'reflects a rhetorical attitude that is repeatedly played out in the history of the introduction of new technologies'.[79] Colourful insults reducing print books to squid remnants defacing tree and cow remnants[80] may have been intended as playful or provocative (the tendency to whimsical overstatement certainly suggests that the goal was attention, not sober discussion), but such insults were quoted and requoted and requoted again, helping to shape an idea of debates on e-reading as a battle between 'gloomy bibliophiles and triumphant technophiles'.[81] As historian of technology Mar Hicks reminds us, 'narratives focussed on progress or "revolution"', while not necessarily accurate or offering much explanatory value, are ubiquitous in computing.[82] Any romantic attachment on the part of the gloomy bibliophiles to heritage, to preservation-heroes and narratives of decline and loss, has a counterpart in romantic attachment on the part of triumphant technophiles to innovation, to disruption-heroes and 'sociotechnical progress narratives',[83] and all of these narratives rely on conflict, villains, and the drawing of sides. Jeff Bezos did in 2007 assure shareholders of Amazon's essential bookishness,[84] citing as evidence those aspects of Kindle design that emulated print reading.[85] But by the time of the Kindle launch, the idea of opposing teams, like the frequently 'hyperbolic' tone of the discussion,[86] was already well established. In my own focus groups, there are instances where readers are, in establishing their own credentials as readers and bookish people, acknowledging the existence of sides, before beginning the slow and difficult process of determining which side they are on. Participants were often exasperated by what they described as excessive attention to the idea of sides, and by narratives of print in opposition to digital, and emphasised the importance of moving on (not ignoring the fact that in studying digital reading I am myself frequently drawing attention to differences between print and digital reading, and helping reinforce the idea of them as opposing forces; part of their exasperation is very justly with me).

> *'I wish there were fewer value judgements about the whole thing. I mean, fewer people saying. . . "I don't ever want to use e-books, I hope they plateau and die." Or people* ***on the other side*** *saying things like "oh, within ten years it's all going to go, all the print is going to go."'* (FG 2 participant 2)

> *'We've* ***got to get away from this idea*** *that one [print or digital reading] is better than another. . .I think the important thing is to encourage the reading, and that's an end to it.'* (Interview 2).

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The question facing this group of committed readers is where a bookish person should sit: what attitudes towards digital reading are appropriate? It is fair to say that all would, if they were given the choice, be on the side of books; but they are not given that choice, the sides are not defined in that way. Instead, they are left to work out, on a conversation-by-conversation, purchase-by-purchase level, what opinions are approved (winning them inclusion in circles of other bookish people) and what choices are positive (supporting rather than harming books, reading, and literature). 'In our book-centered societies, the craft of reading signals our entrance into the ways of the tribe, with its particular codes and demands'[87] and weary as they might be with the idea of sides, awareness that there are sides is in itself a sign of sensitivity to the logic of the field and hence inclusion in the bookish group.

Choosing Sides

On many dimensions of reading we are prepared to disagree without rancour. On aspects such as genre choice, evaluation of specific titles (such as Becky Chambers's *A Long Way to a Small and Angry Planet,*[88] which some members of one focus group loved and others despised), importance of ownership, or attitudes towards book piracy, it proved possible for focus groups to air conflicting opinions without heated debate. An exception was appreciation of the material qualities of a print book. Groups could comfortably accommodate observations that hardcover books were in some cases too expensive for purchase, too bulky for storage, or too heavy for comfortable reading, as in this exchange in focus group 6:

P5: *'Oh, I dislike hardbacks.'*
P1: *'I never buy hardback.'*
P3: *'I love them.'*
P5: *'I actively dislike hardback. I wish things came out in paperback first, I would buy them.'*
P1: *'Me too.'*
P3: *'I like the hardbacks, for the good ones. You know they last longer.'*
P1: *'They're too big.'*
P5: *'They're unwieldy.'*
P3: *'I've destroyed. . .'*
P1: *'Big and heavy, compared to many paperbacks.'*
P5: *'They're like heavy and uncomfortable to hold.'*
P4: *'It really depends.'*
P4: *'That's why I like my Kindle.'*

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This exchange is typical in the sense that reading is held up as the ultimate good, and materiality scepticism (and even expressing a liking for Kindles) is acceptable when avoidance of hardcovers is presented as a trade-off in pursuit of an even more important bookish goal. The hardcover enthusiasts may even come in for some gentle teasing over the lengths to which they will go to read heavy hardcover books in bed, propping themselves and their reading matter on carefully constructed edifices of pillows (FG 6 participant 5), or rolling over after each page to keep resting a book on its side (FG 6 participant 3).[89] Groups were less tolerant of any suggestion that hardcover books were not beautiful, or did not sit at a pinnacle of desirability such that any other choice of format must be guided by practical considerations. In this exchange from focus group 4, when one member of the group (participant 4) says that she dislikes hardcover books, she is challenged (her account of her experience dismissed as unreasonable) and corrected (told that if her personal reading habits make hardcover books inconvenient, that is her 'own fault').

P4: *'Also, I don't buy hardbacks ever.'*
P2: *'Really?'*
P3: *'Really? . . .why?'*
P4: *'I hate hardbacks! Because you drop them on your face and it hurts.'*
(laughter)
. . .
P2: *'No, I don't.'*
P3: *' I have never done that.'*
P4: *'I have dropped them on my face and that is painful.'*
P3: *'Well, that's your own fault more than the book's.'*
. . .
P2: *'Then don't read like that.'*
P4: *'They are bulkier and they just don't feel as nice to me.'*
P2: *'They're so pretty!'*
P4: *'I hate dust covers. Dust covers are the worst thing.'*
P3: *'I take the dust cover off. . .'*

The recommended solution is to change how she reads, by holding books differently and removing dust covers rather than not buying books with dust covers in the first place. It is the very definition of the accommodating reader and the demanding book – along with a demanding, uncompromising bookish community.

Opinions about the smell of books were policed as fiercely. Extravagant declarations of love for book aromas, of the fresh-from-the-press ('new

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book smell never gets old') or years-on-the-shelf ('the smell of old paper is magic') variety, are a familiar means of expressing personal bookishness.[90] When, in focus group 1, one reader (participant 3) admitted to disliking the smell of new books ('they keep talking about smelling books and things, and I have never done that in my life'), the group reacted with incredulous disbelief, shouting 'what?!' and 'you haven't done that?' When the errant participant persisted, she was firmly corrected: told that her facts are wrong (that books do not have a 'strong, unpleasant smell of glue' as she believes) and commanded to educate herself: 'you should go into a bookshop!' This last is an extreme and telling rebuke, insisting that deviation from group norms can only be a sign of ignorance of, and inexperience with, books; in a stroke undercutting the dissenter's bookish credentials and entire bookish identity. Later, a different participant is taken to task for not agreeing that old books smell nice and are pleasant to hold. When she explains that she doesn't enjoy old books because 'you have no idea whose germs are on it!' she is laughed at, and instructed to stop being so silly.[91]

Again, the reader is instructed to adapt to accommodate the physical book: in this case not just to hold it differently, but to change her own habits, tastes, and beliefs. If a heavy hardcover is incompatible with reading in bed, she should stop reading in bed. If she dislikes an approved smell, she should train herself to love it instead. If she avoids 'germs' in every other instance, she should nonetheless make herself indifferent to germs when they appear on books. The rigidity on display here helps explain why for many readers time spent with an e-book that is expected to change itself to suit her, not vice versa, is so appealing (for more on enjoyment of the accommodating book, please see Chapter 4). When readers choose digital to escape such strictures – or judgement for non-compliance – they are treating e-books as part of books, specifically the parts of books that don't come with responsibilities and burdens.

Elusive Display

As noted, reading on screen means sacrificing the cultural capital that comes from public display of high-status literature. If reading on a dedicated device like a Kindle means that observers are likely to make assumptions about what one is reading (including the common assumption that a woman with a Kindle must be reading erotica or romance), when reading on a non-dedicated device like a smartphone, the sacrifice is not only display of a given book but display of reading at all: 'I'd have books on my

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phone and I'd read them while my wife was in the changing room at the mall or whatever. People think I'm texting but I'm just reading'.[92]

One of the advantages conferred by personal print libraries, and not matched by digital personal libraries, is of course display of one's collection. Reading is, to participants in my study and to the bookish circles they inhabit, both the foundation of and the window unto character: 'hence the persistence of the old saw "show me your book case, and I will tell you who you are"'.[93] (Such quotes are, for people who linger in bookshops and book sites, beyond truisms and into the realm of furnishings, metaphorical and literal: Heidegger's version, like Ruskin's precursor and Mauriac's development, adorns countless posters, wall stickers, screen backgrounds, mugs, scatter cushions, etc.) As US lawmakers put it in a Senate Report stressing the importance of reading and viewing privacy (a report inspired, pragmatically, by a burst of press interest in the video store rental records of politicians), 'the selection of books that we choose to read' is 'at the core of any definition of personhood. They reveal our likes and dislikes, our interests and our whims. They say a great deal about our dreams and ambitions, our fears and our hopes. They reflect our individuality, and they describe us as people'.[94] But 'reflect' and 'describe' are some distance from 'define'. That readers enjoy looking at each other's bookshelves, and wish there were an equivalent activity for e-books, is almost as omnipresent as the observation that readers enjoy the smell of books. To readers in my study, display of books is taken for granted, simply part of life, but as a representation of one's reading invariably suspect: when curated, too calculated to be truly revealing, when not curated too raw to judge.[95] Physical shelves can prompt 'discussion',[96] inspiring a social connection not about a single book, as in serendipitous public transport book conversations, but about one's entire collection (and, potentially, one's more rounded and complete book identity). As one put it, 'you have people over and they like, look at your bookshelf and they ask you about stuff. Whereas. . .I guess unless they're like looking at your Kindle or whatever that really can't come out'.[97]

The people I spoke to for this study overwhelmingly value books and reading, and display of books in any form tends to please them. As one put it, 'I like books. I'm suspicious of places without books in them'.[98] But participants in this study actually spoke much more often of a personal than a public view: how bookshelves (physical or virtual) looked to themselves as the owners, rather than how they might impress visitors. Many descriptions of books that 'look nice on the shelf' and 'make shelves look good' don't specify who is looking, the owner or a suitably impressed guest.[99]

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The physical bookshelf, with print books that are 'easier to organise as you can put them on shelf and see very clearly', was specifically noted as a better way to access one's personal reading history, describing the visual review as effective in a way that a digital search was not. As one respondent put it, 'books mark important moments in life', and 'just looking at the spines brings back memories'.[100]

> *'Browsing a bookshelf is very different to browsing a screen. Owning a book [in print] allows you to browse your personal bookshelf easily letting the mood you are in select the book you wish to read.'* (Survey 2015)

> *'I have a large library of print books already, including many favorites, even though I find it easier to read on a Kindle. Sometimes I even buy the printed version of some thing I have read on the Kindle so that I can look at it on my shelf.'* (Survey 2022)

> *'It's random, but I find it harder to remember what books I have in e-book form. Like with my physical books, not only do I know all the books that I own, but I know them almost because of where they are. . .Like if I want to read Lord of the Rings again I know it's on that shelf over there somewhere.'* (FG 6 participant 4)

Digital displays were singled out by several as poorly designed and ineffective for finding the book one wanted, sometimes requiring shifts between different e-reading apps and devices.

> *'I also really don't like the way the library is organised on my e-reader, because I feel like I have to flip through multiple pages in order to find the book I'm looking for. And I'm like, "Is it even in this category? Maybe I didn't file it in this one. I don't know."'* (FG 6 participant 1)

> *'I have all the e-reader apps on my phone, because I find it much easier to search on the phone, "Oh, yes, I have got that one. It's that one." And then I can get the e-reader out and find it on that, because the e-reader is a little more fiddly to use and type on.'* (FG 6 participant 3)

Such displays can be equally inadequate for giving an overview of one's full collection and/or recent reading. For some readers, digital 'helps. . .keep track of what [they've] read/bought':[101] file lists aid in quantifying their reading. But others found that the screen display made it more difficult to recall what they had read recently. Despite options for sorting and searching e-book collections, what they 'do find difficult sometimes is to keep track of what [they've] actually got'.[102] Displays with excessively tiny cover images, or cover images detached from the e-book file, were a particular issue: 'I think the cover thing with that as well, in that I recognise the visual, what a book looks like, because of its cover, and I don't, I just have

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the title. It's harder to browse'.[103] Books can be effectively lost because without the identifying covers they are neither findable nor memorable.

> P2: *'In a physical copy because you see [the cover] every time you pick it up.'*
> P4: *'Yes, absolutely, whereas I couldn't tell you on the Kindle.'*
> P3: *'Quite often with an e-book, with the Kindle, I don't even know, can you see the cover?'* (FG 5)

Functionally invisible books lead to what was recognised as a common and vexing e-book problem: repurchasing. Interfaces were seen as working so poorly for recollection and display that many respondents recalled buying, or having clicked through to a sale page to buy, an e-book they already had. Without reminders from Amazon about past purchases, readers don't always realise they have it already: 'I'll sometimes be on Amazon looking at something that'll be recommended and I'll be like, "I think I've read that"' or 'I often get it when you get reviews, and say Amazon is giving this special offer and I'll be, "Oh, that looks like an interesting book, but, oh, it says I purchased this six months ago"'.[104]

> P7: *'Yes, or you can go back and add it. You know when you buy the same book and it says. . .'*
> P8: *'"You've already bought this."' [general laughter, recognition of a common situation]* (FG 5)

The endurance of e-books, where purchased and even borrowed e-books leave lasting traces of an Amazon profile, makes the ubiquity of repurchasing all the more startling. For these readers, the e-books are there but not there, in theory constantly accessible but in practice inaccessible, because they have entered the file structure of a digital collection but not the mental map of a book collection.

But visual access to a personal reading history is not only a matter of organisational practicality. Digital shelves, while they have their uses, do not necessarily offer the same utility in terms of commemorating and celebrating one's reading history and reading self. Several participants in my study noted physical shelves as important for the sense of achievement they enjoy in recalling their reading, citing experiences of 'looking at the shelf and saying [ticks finger against imaginary bookshelf] 'I've read that one, I've read that one. . .' and 'having it all on your shelf. . .and you can say, 'I read that!'.[105]

> *'I think it is partly to see. Because the ones that you have on your Kindle, it's sort of like they exist in imaginary space [murmurs of agreement]. If you bother to*

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> *scroll through the whole contents list you'll see it again, but you normally don't. Whereas if you have it, then it's on a shelf, and you read it, even if you don't read it you'll see the spine occasionally and sort of remember.'* (FG 1 participant 3)

The personal digital shelf is not the only setting where display matters intensely even when the display is to oneself. Amazon recommendations are, to some, worse than a nuisance: disliked for their uselessness, but loathed for their inaccuracy, for the false image they project of one's reading self. One participant found Amazon's mistaken impression of him as a drug dealer amusing (he had purchased a highly sensitive digital scale to weigh small amounts of artificial sweetener for sugar-free baking, and then found that Amazon was recommending paraphernalia such as 100-packs of tiny resealable plastic bags). But others found unsuitable book recommendations insulting, or actively offensive. Some found Amazon's 'bombard[ment]' an irritant: excessive and not always relevant, as in this exchange in focus group 5:

> P7: *'I go onto the Goodreads site. Again, Amazon do bombard you with. . .'*
> P5: *'[exaggerated sing-song voice:] "If you've read this you might also like to read this", but that's not always the case.'* (FG 5)

Some participants liked Amazon recommendations or avoided them because 'they're too tempting', an indication that they are well-targeted at least some of the time.[106] For others, however, irrelevant recommendations provoked 'hate',[107] largely because they were seen as a symptom of a much larger problem: that Amazon thinks it knows its customers, but doesn't. Amazon was seen as using 'obvious' and 'corrupt[ed]' metrics, such as recent browsing or the time one takes to turn a page, to make broad assumptions about its users: one's taste, one's reading speed, what 'kind of person' one is.[108] This offered constant reminders of how they were perceived by an unaccountable, uncorrectable corporation that observes a fraction of their book-buying and book-reading behaviour and draws the wrong conclusions from what it sees.

> P1: *'I hate [Amazon recommendations].'*
> P2: *'I hate them because they're so wrong most of the time.'*
> P6: *'Really?'*
> P2: *'Oh, yes. They're terrible. They're so obvious. Because sometimes – to do something, some research, and it's nothing to do with anything I'll read* Industrial Tractor Farming *or something, some character I needed to know.'*
> P5: *'Yes; "You looked at* Industrial Tractor Farming*, now we have these for you".*

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P2: *'And then, "Amazon recommends great tractors".*

. . .

P5: *'Yes. They should look at the majority of what you're browsing rather than a one-off which* ***corrupts*** *every recommendation they're after.'*

P1: *'And sometimes it's so insulting, isn't it? You turn it off. It's like, "****Really? You think I'm that kind of person?*** *That's it, go on".'* (FG 3)

To be subjected to constant scrutiny and evaluated by such crude means could be 'embarrassing' (FG 5 participant 5) because 'they're judging you' (FG 5 participant 1):[109]

P5: *'The other thing I notice is that quite often I read in bed so I might read and fall asleep, the thing's still on so it thinks you've taken an hour to read that page [laughter, agreement] and then it says you've got 17 hours left of the book. It turns out there is only 20 minutes. . .' [lively laughter]*

P8: *'But it's got you down as a slow reader!'*

P1: *'They're judgmental aren't they, they're judging you.'*

P8: *'It is.'*

P1: *'It's very judgmental.'*

P5: *'It's embarrassing then.'* (FG 5)

It is notable how often participants refer to the Amazon recommendation algorithm as if it were a person: a 'they' or 'you' that can judge or insult, and inflict pain as though it were another human dismissing or disrespecting them. The practical problems that stem from the existence, on some distant server, of false images of ourselves, false images that can be used against us (and not only in terms of reading recommendations), is a concern confronted in attitudes towards print reading privacy.

Print Book Privacy: Reading Without Page-by-Page Tracking

Like digital privacy, print privacy is at present a concern for only a small minority of readers. That, however, is where the similarity between the two motivations ends. When asked their reasons for choosing print, only 10.5% of all readers agreed with 'better for privacy – no one is tracking what I buy or when I read'. Choosing print books for privacy reasons did not vary significantly by year, country of residence, age, or gender (the latter a sharp contrast with choosing e-books for privacy reasons). The lack of connection to age again defies ideas of digital natives as complacent about (or conversely, highly sensitised to) data sharing and online profiling compared to their digital immigrant elders.

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What does correlate with desire for this kind of privacy is print-only reading. Over one in six (18.3%) of print-only readers choose print for this reason, compared with only 7.8% of e-book readers. The issue, however, may be much more to do with e-book use than with book purchasing. Those who choose print for reasons of privacy were no less likely to buy print books from Amazon, and are actually more likely to obtain print books from other online retailers (37.5% vs 23.5%) which can track purchases as well, though perhaps not comprehensively cross-referenced with non-book purchases to the same degree as Amazon. They are more likely than average to take advantage of the typically untracked options of independent and secondhand bookshops. In terms of e-book usage, they are more likely to have read on a laptop computer (another potential suggestion of last-resort reading) and to have obtained e-books from Project Gutenberg (which requires no sign-in to download books or read online, though Project Gutenberg does, of course, have the usual ability to track by IP address). But attitudes towards Amazon appear to be hardening. Pre-pandemic, they were less likely in absolute terms to have obtained an e-book from Amazon (which not only tracks page-level reading but as a major general retailer and tech company has the ability to link reading data to a broad purchasing/reading/viewing/Alexa-using profiles), but the effect was too small to be meaningful (61.0% vs 70.1%[110]). But after the start of the pandemic, the effect is both significant and meaningful (58.5% vs 74.8%[111]). These are not large effects, and it is important to keep in mind that a solid majority of privacy-minded e-book readers still use Amazon. But given the ordinary levels of enthusiasm for other sources that can track purchases and could track some usage, such as non-Amazon online retailers and (at least in theory, though they may not take advantage of the opportunity) libraries, this again isolates Amazon as a source of concern.

The fact that these print privacy-valuers still buy print from Amazon, and in great numbers, but are much more likely to be print-only readers and eschew digital reading altogether, suggests that the freedom from monitoring 'what I buy' is less important than freedom from monitoring 'when I read': that distaste for Amazon's and other e-book retailers individualised reader metrics is the real issue.

Valuing print privacy is correlated with other print motivators in the survey, with the sole exception of 'the books I want aren't always available electronically'. This pattern aligns a desire for this kind of privacy with core 'book experience' values, including support for traditional bookshops,

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valuing a physical personal library, giving gifts, and bibliophilia. (The correlations to bookish values are not simply due to the high proportion of print-only readers in the print privacy-valuing group: looking only at e-book readers, every connection other than availability still appears.) As is the case elsewhere, this bookishness does not equate to anti-e-book sentiment: e-book readers who prize print privacy are typical in their attitudes towards e-books.

These factors – the singling-out of Amazon, the aversion to Kindle reading but not Amazon print buying, and the correlation between concern for print privacy and other motivations – suggest that concern for intellectual privacy[112] may be emerging as a bookish trait in its own right. Though rooted in practical protections for individual records of viewing, borrowing, browsing, and web searching, and employed by law scholars such as Julie Cohen, Pauline Kim, and William Geveran in arguments for expanding and updating a wide range of privacy laws to address the disclosure risks presented by new technologies, Neil Richards notes that the concept has 'special applicability to reading in general and social reading in particular'[113] because the freedom to read is inseparable from freedom of thought. Richards argues that intellectual privacy 'protects our ability to think for ourselves, without worrying that other people might judge us based on what we read' and 'rests on the idea that new ideas often develop best away from the intense scrutiny of public exposure'.[114] Richards enshrines books and reading as essential to democracy, and 'free minds [as] the foundation of a free society' and issues a stirring call to action in asking anyone who agrees on books' importance to fight for reading privacy, because 'surveillance of the activities of belief formation and idea generation can affect those activities profoundly and for the worse' (noting, as he should, that librarians have defended this position for generations).[115]

While Richards's argument for urgent changes in privacy law is not directed solely at bookish people, his arguments are predicated on the importance of books to society and hence are calculated to appeal to bookish listeners. My data support Richards's arguments as to the special applicability of intellectual privacy theories to reading, but in identifying line-by-line tracking as an issue of greater concern to readers, my findings complicate his theories of private purchasing as always-better purchasing. Turow, Hennessy, Draper, Akanbi, and Virgilio have demonstrated that 'party affiliation and political ideology impact how Americans feel about [everyday institutional surveillance] far more than do income, age, gender, and race/ethnicity';[116] and in my own study, demographics are also less

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significant than sentiments: beliefs and values around books, bookshops, and personal libraries are excellent predictors of a desire for print privacy, while age and gender have no predictive power at all. Tracking not only the level of interest in reading privacy, but the association between interest in reading privacy and in bookish motivations, will be an essential area for continued research.

Book-Love

The long history of book-love includes a long history of complicated emotional relationships with book technologies: reverence for a material object vying with a 'language of insides and outsides' that 'makes any consciousness of the book's material qualities signify moral shallowness', and persistent anxiety about the 'proper' relationship with the 'outsides' of books.[117] Twenty-first-century readers are as active and innovative as their predecessors, and use the rapidly evolving menu of interlocking digital and print reading options for more than just access. New book technologies that 'augment. . .and offer alternatives'[118] provide new ways to read, and also new ways to form, deepen, and express relationships to the text. As discussed in Chapter 4, for some (but not all) readers, digital interfaces present barriers to immersion and a sense of connection. But my study finds readers seeking ways to keep and memorialise books as 'peculiarly interiorized objects that stray outside the metonymic logic of the souvenir'[119] and harness the menu of options to construct their own desired relationships with a given book. This section examines emerging reader strategies, such as layering the affordances of print with those of an array of e-reading interfaces, and how readers strive to perform an 'act of reading' that 'establishes an intimate, physical relationship in which all the senses have a part'.[120] The key word, however, is 'desired'. Not every book demands a close relationship: distant, impersonal and transitory may perfectly describe what a reader wants from a given book (particularly if that book is a novel).

As noted in Chapter 3, conceptualising digital ownership as demi-ownership allows book collectors to control their level of obligation to a given text, keeping some accessible for reading but without requiring storage or special treatment. Novels are frequently given as an example of the kind of 'throwaway'[121] reading that does not merit a place in permanent book collections. But novels are also very frequently given as examples of the kind of deeply beloved, personally meaningful texts that form the heart of a book collection, and that readers seek to access in

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multiple editions and formats. These 'reread novels' are sometimes canonical (as with *Don Quixote*) or more recently acclaimed (as with *The Luminaries*) texts, but sometimes childhood favourites, a 'comfort thing' where with a given novel 'you just feel like dipping back into the old friend'.[122] One respondent compared such reading to 'comfort food, like macaroni cheese books', inspiring raucous laughter and nods of recognition from the book lovers sitting beside her in the group.[123]

Love and Screens: Readers' Accounts of Emotions Related to Digital Reading

E-books can and do inspire powerful emotions. While a few respondents described e-books as 'sterile' or 'impersonal', implying that e-books are incapable of moving us deeply, participants' accounts are in fact rich with emotional language, positive and negative.[124] E-books are, as retailed and accessed in the 2020s, walled off from a number of specific elements of what could be termed 'the whole book experience' (FG 4 participant 3) that respondents in my study explicitly link to love, hate, 'LIKE' (Survey 2014), and so on.[125] Examples include love for handling a codex (particularly a hardcover book with sumptuous endpapers and intense book-smell), seeing print books on a bookshelf, collecting signed editions, and browsing in and buying from physical bookshops: actions beloved by many and set by some as minimum requirements for realness. But 'lov [ing] the object for itself' can include the physical artefact of an e-reading device, even if such expressions of feeling are rare compared to those for paper and spines.[126] This group deployed ardent, not dispassionate, language, as with 'I love my Kindle', 'LOVE my kobo glo!', 'I love my Kindle Oasis' or 'my husband has become a convert and loves his e-reader'.[127] It was more common for respondents to express love for their own, individual devices – love for 'mine' or 'his' – but some were willing to extend their feelings to embrace the entire category, saying 'I just love Kindles' the way that other respondents will say 'I love printed media' or 'I love print'.[128]

When it appears, love for 'e' is wholly compatible with – and in fact, more often than not appears alongside – love the printed book, as with 'I love both ebook and print books' and 'I love both e and non e'.[129] And a number of participants found this love heightened or actually inaugurated by reading during COVID-19. When asked whether their thoughts, feelings, or opinions about e-books changed during the pandemic,[130] several explained that they 'love them now! Was sceptical about the

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reading experience before but turns out it's great' or 'love them even more' (alongside, it must be said, less enthusiastic praise such as 'I'm more accepting of them' and 'I'm a little bit more okay with them than I used to be').[131] And in light of perceptions of e-books as (as noted previously) sterile or impersonal, this love can come as something of a shock. As one respondent put it:

> *'I have **come to love** reading e-novels. I really enjoy the physical experience of it - the fact that I can read in the dark and it is so accessible and easy. I now find a print book almost cumbersome. **I've been surprised at how much I love e books**.* (2021)

The reverse, expressing blanket loathing for an entire format, was unusual. The great majority of statements were positive, either in favour of (more often) print or (less often) digital, or neutral, insisting that 'format is unimportant' or that they are 'entirely print/digital agnostic'.[132] But when it did appear, hatred was exclusively for digital: 'I think E-Books are horrible', 'e-books suck' or 'I hate ebooks **:)**' [emoticon theirs].[133] (That said, respondents are perfectly capable of making themselves use the hated objects in a pinch: as one put it, 'I hate ebooks! But they are a necessary evil if you need a book really quickly'.)[134] Others expressed hatred for aspects of the e-reading experience, if not for the e-books themselves, as with 'hate reading lengthy text' on screens, 'hate looking at a screen', 'hate reading ebooks before going to sleep!' and 'just hate reading from an e-book after spending most of my working week in front of a screen!' – hatred for reading on screen is not generally expressed as hatred *of* the screen, which would, in a sense, be a form of feeling for part of the device itself.[135] No participants in my study reported that they hate Kindles (though some hate Amazon or Jeff Bezos, feelings I'll discuss further later in this chapter). Even when professing strong dislike for certain aspects of print books, such as 'strong, unpleasant smell of glue' or weight so excessive it caused pain for the reader,[136] no one expressed a view that print books suck.

Bibliophilia

There is nothing unexpected, or even particularly modern, about the fact that not every person who loves books is ready to call themself a bibliophile. Since its origins in the eighteenth century and rise to prominence in the first decades of the nineteenth, the label has bound together the best and the worst of relationships to the book.[137] Modern definitions contrast

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the two: 'a lover of books; a book-fancier' or 'having a great or excessive love of books'.[138] For every refined, cultivated, sensitive, cerebral individual with a great love, there sits beside a mirror image, the snobbish, ignorant, sentimental, or mindlessly acquisitive individual made ridiculous by an excessive love: a 'bibliomaniac' or 'book fool'.[139] While the term was originally applied to a small population of dedicated collectors, at a time of pre-industrial book production when high costs made all books, not just rare ones, luxury items,[140] its connotations changed and diversified as the price of books fell and more book lovers (including more women) could define themselves as collectors without necessarily being part of a closely acquainted community of gentleman enthusiasts.

Many readers in this study held bookish values without wishing to share the bibliophile label. In addition to questions on bookish motivations (both intuitively obvious ones like enjoyment of print book-objects and less obvious ones like print privacy), my survey asked specifically about bibliophilia. Just over one-third (34.6%) of respondents gave, as a reason for choosing print, 'I would describe myself as a bibliophile'. Compared to other named factors, bookish and not, agreement with bibliophilia is low: out of eleven options given, it ranks seventh (between 'I prefer to support traditional bookshops' and 'the books I want aren't always available electronically').

Focus group and interview contributions highlighted both the level of uncertainty regarding the meaning of the term and the resulting level of anxiety about alliance with it. Some simply embraced the term, wholeheartedly, without hesitation or qualification, saying 'oh, yeah' or (following a unanimous round of 'yes') 'I'd be interested to find a book group where they didn't [call themselves bibliophiles]. It would be a bit weird, wouldn't it?'[141] Others, however, were more cautious, responding with 'probably', or protesting 'I don't even know if I know what [bibliophile] means' and requiring definitions before committing themselves.[142]

> *'Well, I don't know. [I hesitated] just because everyone hesitated. (Laughter) I was like, "Does 'bibliophile' mean something that I don't know?" (Laughter) Is it something creepy?'* (FG 4 participant 3)

One participant, in the face of such uncertainty, backtracked from a confident 'yes, definitely' to a more timid 'I mean, I would say I was, but like, express slight misgivings about, like. . . [trails off]'.[143] Some initial impressions were distinctly negative, for example, 'It's so creepy, isn't it? It's a weird word' or 'I think it describes me, but I think it sounds a bit pretentious'.[144] But most were generally positive, aligning the term with

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bookish priorities participants could understand even when they did not share those priorities.

Initial definitions varied widely. Some emphasised enjoyment of the physical object, while others emphasised owning and collecting books in any category 'regardless of content'.[145] One participant narrowed this to collecting books 'beyond novels': an intriguing distinction, as it implies that novels are a special kind of book that even non-bookish people collect.[146] But most considered any kind of book-collecting bibliophilic, as long as it involved suitably enormous quantities of books: 'There's a big "to be read" pile that qualifies me, I think.'[147] Exactly how big the TBR (to be read) pile needs to be to 'qualify' is up for debate. But one easy definition is 'too many', a quantity of books, whatever the number for a given person, that represents a burden and a problem: 'if you define a bibliophile as buried very deep under books that you've bought and then you're struggling to keep up with all the books that you've bought that you need to finish reading, yes'.[148] Such a quantity is explicitly framed as a hoard, a spectacle of extravagance, even waste: 'you've built a pile and you sit on top of them like a dragon!' (this last followed by nods and appreciative laughter from the group).[149] This places an understanding of bibliophilia on the same cusp as the dictionary definitions: one foot in great and one in excessive love, balanced not between feeling and indifference but between feeling and even more feeling. Burden is the point.

Only one participant cited public image as a component, explaining that 'I'm pretty sure I have somewhere a couple of reserve Twitter handles and things for Bitchy Bibliophile, so yes [I am a bibliophile]'.[150] But most defined it in terms of behaviour or beliefs, not outward-facing statements. Only one participant equated bibliophilia with antipathy for digital reading, stating that 'I guess the very fact that I can't bear to read e-books instead of actual books means yes'.[151] However, in this context 'can't bear' actually meant 'can and do bear, but prefer print': she clarified later in the session that she did read e-books and while also identifying as a bibliophile.

Each group in turn effectively embarked on a negotiation of the meaning of 'bibliophile'. The result was generally an expansion of the definition: narrower individual contributions (e.g. that bibliophilia was about collecting art books rather than novels or about smelling books) combining to extend the term until it could cover some aspect of relationships with books that resonated with everyone in the group.[152] By the end of a given session, even groups where one or more individuals disagreed (e.g. 'No, I wouldn't use the term "bibliophile"') could come to a point of consensus ('I think we all just went, "Yes"').[153]

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Many focus group respondents took pains to make clear (which, in person, they could, qualifying and adding nuance in a way the survey respondents could not) that they were not the kind of bibliophiles 'rather seduced by the exterior than interior'.[154] Some placed the interior and exterior on the same level, as with 'I love the stories and the objects'.[155] But others firmly assigned higher priority to the interior, as with '. . .it's love of stories, for me, more than the books themselves' and 'I also love the stories more than the objects, but. . .different levels of love. You still love the object. I'm a bibliophile, but I'm more a – whatever the equivalent for stories is.'[156] In a separate focus group, one participant coined the term 'readingophile', as a subcategory of bibliophile, to describe herself.[157] The term was instantly picked up by others in the group, who proudly declared themselves readingophiles as well.

Such definitions split decisively from any narrow definition of a bibliophile as someone who collects rather than reads, and realigns the term with someone who loves the experience of reading a book as much or more than the experience of holding or admiring a book. Such a definition, privileging the 'readingophile' over the bibliophile, is not only sympathetic to e-book reading but it also opens the door to use e-book reading to distance oneself from some of the least attractive connotations of the bibliophilic image.

E-books as 'Insides' of Books

The signal quality of the 'book-fool', the book-fancier who loves books in the wrong way, has long been exemplified by someone who fixates on the 'outsides of books' when 'due attention to the inside of books, and due contempt for the outside, is the proper relation between a man of sense and his books'.[158] The trope of a book lover as insensible when faced with a ravishing binding is not only a standing joke, a subject for 'bantering' and friendly teasing, but also a grave accusation of improper relations. The (lightly) fictionalised characters in Thomas Frognall Dibdin's expanded 1811 version of *Bibliomania* are swift to defend themselves.

> *"'I will frankly confess," rejoined Lysander, "that I am an arrant BIBLIOMANIAC —that I love books dearly — that the very sight, touch, and, more, the perusal—"*
>
> *"Hold, my friend," again exclaimed Philemon, "you have renounced your profession — you talk of reading books — do BIBLIOMANIACS ever read books?"*

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> *. . . "Forgive," rejoined Philemon, "my bantering strain. You know that, with yourself, I heartily love books; more from their content than their appearance."*[159] (Dibdin, 1811, pp. 3–4)

Price finds evidence of near-consensus in the Victorian era that 'not content to ignore the outsides of books, a good reader actively scorns them'.[160] Ferris, however, qualifies that, noting the number of passionate readers who maintained that while the 'inside' was of course more important, only a philistine would deny the beauty of a good binding and the emotional connection of a reader to his personal, physical copy of a book that moved him: for 'a real man of letters, the most fanciful bindings are often the emblems of his taste and feelings' (though this was in the days of commissioned binding, when such 'emblems' were not just choices between different editions but often bespoke tailoring for one's books.)[161] Bibliophiles have always in a sense walked a tightrope, wanting to care for 'outsides', but not too much; to show oneself to be not only a 'man of sense' (and it is by default a man, as discussed later) but also of taste and of feeling. Digital reading offers an opportunity to align oneself with the 'proper' sort of book-love. If a reader chooses to think of an e-book as part of a book, specifically the all-important 'inside', reading even one makes a statement, as with 'it's the words, like the content, the information that's in the book, rather than the book itself, I think'.[162] Just as the presence of some (but not too many) lowbrow books alongside the highbrow in an eclectic book collection allows them to demonstrate that they are a cultural omnivore, not a snob,[163] enjoyment of some (but not too many) digital books allows them to prove that they have the knowledge and taste to appreciate a print book's material qualities without being dependent on those qualities: they can appreciate the gem of a fine 'inside', whatever the setting.

A conception of the e-book as the inside of a book – and specifically an elevation of the inside of a book as the part that truly *counts* – is the single most prominent theme in responses on realness in my study. Of 197 free-text responses, over half (103) rooted realness (sometimes alongside other aspects, in the case of a longer response) in arguments such as 'books aren't defined by their physicality or lack thereof. To me, a book is the contents, not the cover/jacket/etc.' – almost a quarter (45) did so using 'content' or 'contents' as nouns (and seven more use the verb 'contain'). 'Content', however, is a fiendishly difficult word to define. It is inescapable in discussion of books, serving as a means of gathering under one umbrella the expanding range of textual and non-textual matter produced by publishers: as Bhaskar puts it, 'content was once a grubby, near

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disrespectful word in the corridors of publishing. Not any more'.[164] But 'surprisingly, for a buzzword, the concept of "content" remains relatively unexamined', where publishers and readers use the term relentlessly but do not 'state [any definition] explicitly, then it uses [a working definition] nonetheless'.[165] Eichhorn observes that 'as the term grew more ubiquitous in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, critical dialogues about content – what it means in a digital era and its adoption and circulation across industries and disciplines – have remained surprisingly rare'.[166] Eichhorn's study of the concept of content includes charting its shift from twentieth-century usage (when, as Tenen observes, the Open eBook Authoring Group could gather 'to give content providers. . .minimal and common guidelines which ensure fidelity, accuracy, accessibility, and presentation of electronic content over various electronic book platforms' with comparative confidence),[167] to complex and frequently contradictory usages following the web-based explosion of content. 'Content', Eichhorn explains, 'isn't necessarily data, even if the two terms are frequently used simultaneously', but some older definitions corralling content as non-data because it is contextualised information, and/or conveys a message, break down when 'some content – for example, the Instagram egg – seems to exist simply for the sake of circulation alone and not to convey a message'.[168] When 'content' can be stretched to include almost anything shared, even when not created by humans or requiring humans to receive it for its value or meaning, 'content' is a commonplace, mutually understandable, yet supremely fluid way of designating the inside of a book – one that leaves a reader with a great deal of room to manoeuvre.

The many variations on 'same content', 'same number of words and content', or 'the content is what makes a book, regardless of how it's consumed' converge on an idea that 'it's the contents that matter' – or more specifically, it's the contents that matter *most*. Responses that echo the sentiment 'the content is more important than the format/method of delivery' recognise personal preference, noting that even if e-books are 'just another format, that people may like or dislike', 'some people find them more convenient' though they 'might not suit everybody'.

> *'The book is the text, the story, the narrative, the content, whatever you want to call it. The container is secondary. Print and digital (and audiobooks for that matter) have different affordances and are not the same experiences, but are all "real" books.'*

'Whatever you want to call it', however, puts a spotlight on the importance of subtle differences for responses in this category. For one strand, in

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addition to 'text', 'story' and 'narrative' (all of which appear in multiple responses), the inside of a book is described as 'words' and 'verbiage' (or 'the words and the pictures' or 'words and illustrations'). For another, as 'writing' or 'intent of the author' or 'the work that someone has created', foregrounding the role of the creator and recalling the ownership argument for realness (e.g. 'the content that the writer came up with is still contained in the work', and interestingly separating books as things that spring from *authors*, *writers*, or just *someone*), For a third, as 'ideas' and 'information' and 'knowledge' (and for one respondent, 'structure'). In any of these strands, the book can be defined as that which can 'convey' or 'impart' or 'deliver' or 'communicate' or 'port' or 'share' that 'whatever you want to call it'. But alternatively, and frequently, the book is said to simply 'contain' – leaving unstated who or what is the active agent.

Similarly, words used in relation to the 'outside' revealed varying conceptions of what the inside is, what can hold it, and where it ends. The frequently used 'container' (as with 'narratives in containers, even if the container is my phone/ipad') is highly generic, broadly defining the outside as the thing, any thing, that contains; as one puts it, 'I don't confuse container and content'. Some focus not only on the tangible aspects of a codex with 'paper' or 'pages' but also on the 'cover', 'jacket', or 'ink', in opposition to 'bits' and 'bytes'. 'A book is not a lump of paper and ink – a book is the written word' is crushingly diminishing: the 'lump' not only recalling jibes about bits of tree covered in bits of squid but also firmly defining the book as *not* the material – the words being (as others put it) 'independent' of an outside that's 'almost irrelevant' or 'has no bearing'. But respondents also use 'form', 'format', and 'edition', as well as 'medium' and 'media' and 'method of delivery', concepts that are anything but interchangeable: as one puts it, 'media, format and content are entirely separate things.' A *format* that *delivers information,* for example, is hardly synonymous with a *medium* that *ports knowledge*, or an *edition* that *shares* the *intent of the author*. The number of ways one can splice conceptions of inside, outside, and means by which inside reaches the reader is vast.

> *'This might be the technophile (or perhaps the pedant) in me talking, but the format doesn't matter too much. A book is a book, whether it's printed on paper, read aloud, or displayed on a screen. Sure, you could argue that a "book" is a physical thing, and everything else is specific – but that's just semantics. A copy of some novel is still that novel whether it's bound in paper, or bound in bytes.'*

But a minority of respondents argued exactly that. Free-text responses following 'no' answers included 'for me the definition of a book is printed

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material with a cover. I'm happy with a separate definition of e-book for online material', 'a book is not just the contents, but also the physical object', and 'a book consists of the content but also the paper, weight, design etc.' All rely for their power on *with* and *also*, accepting the logic of an inside and an outside, but maintaining that shorn of its outside, the inside no longer qualifies. 'A book should have a cover and actual pages' makes covers and pages, like 'content', necessary but not sufficient conditions for bookness. For these readers, e-books 'are the content of story collections/novels/recipe books whatever, but not a book'. The earlier self-declared technophile/pedant dismisses these distinctions as 'just semantics', but those semantics, and their context, leave ample grey area.

> *'The real answer is "yes and no." If someone asks if I've read a book and I read the e-book, I say yes. In that instance, book = story. But when I hear the phrase "real book," I think of something tangible—a particular physical object. Same for audiobooks.'*

Adopting a language of insides and outsides does not require accepting that the outside is irrelevant – or irrelevant all of the time.

Compatibility of Bibliophilia with E-reading

The usefulness of this conception of e-book as incomplete book – all inside, no outside – helps explain the compatibility of bibliophilia with e-reading. E-book readers are in fact fractionally more likely to identify with the term than print-only readers (34.9% vs 33.9%), though the gap is so tiny this amounts to a statistical tie. This is doubly striking as a number of bookish values, including enjoyment of the physical object and preference for print as better for keeping as part of a personal library, have strong positive correlations with print-only reading (please see Chapters 3 and 4 for more on these forms of ownership and enjoyment).

This raises the question of whether e-reading attracts those who already identify as bibliophiles, or whether e-reading may potentially amplify, or even activate, such identification. Evidence suggests that the answer is both. Digital readers are, above all else, readers: numerous surveys have confirmed that the great majority of e-book readers are also print readers, and those who read in both formats read more books overall.[169] Even if digital is not their preferred format, format flexibility can allow a keen reader to fit more books into their day, and 'never have to stop reading':[170] filling those last, frustratingly bookless minutes of a life with reading. However, as discussed previously, 'death of the book' debates have for

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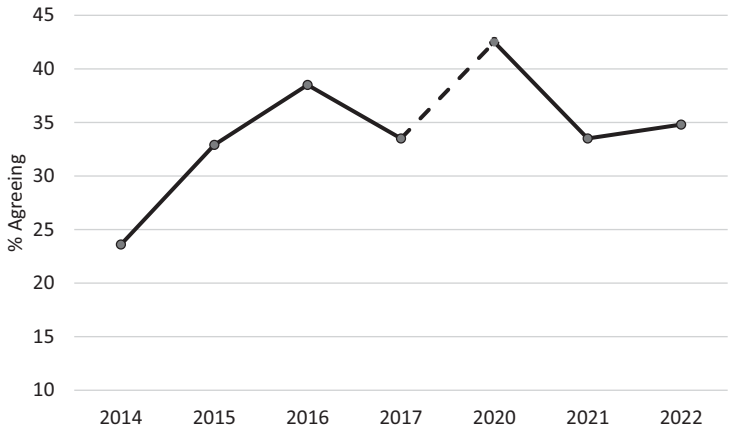


Figure 5.2 Reasons for choosing print: 'I would describe myself as a bibliophile', by year.

generations framed digital reading as the enemy of print reading,[171] and called for e-book readers to explain themselves and their supposed disloyalty towards print culture. Such calls may drive otherwise indifferent e-book readers towards a label that proclaims their loyalty to book culture. These findings demonstrate how unrepresentative opinions like those of the focus group participant who equated bibliophilia with being unable to bear e-books[172] actually are and provides a sharp riposte to arguments that e-reading and bibliophilia are incompatible.

Identification as a bibliophile increased over the eight years of the survey, rising from 23.6% in 2014 to mid-30s in most years. The peak of 42.5% in 2020 suggests that the tremendous importance of reading for solace, comfort, connection, and well-being during the pandemic[173] had at least some – though perhaps temporary – effect on identification as a bibliophile (Figure 5.2).

Men were less likely to describe themselves as bibliophiles.[174] Gender differences on bibliophilic identity are highly intriguing. As Lisa Otty has explained, the positive and negative sides of bibliophilia have been presented, particularly in the early twentieth century, as gendered: 'bibliomania' as feminine or effeminate, and true connoisseurship as masculine.[175] This separation of the masculine 'book-lover' and the feminine 'book-fool' makes the under-representation of men amongst avowed bibliophiles all the more interesting. It could be a point of honour for some female respondents to reclaim the term. Alternatively, it could be that the word 'bibliophile', and all the risk it brings, has been less frightening for non-male readers in the early years of mass e-reading: as discussed earlier in

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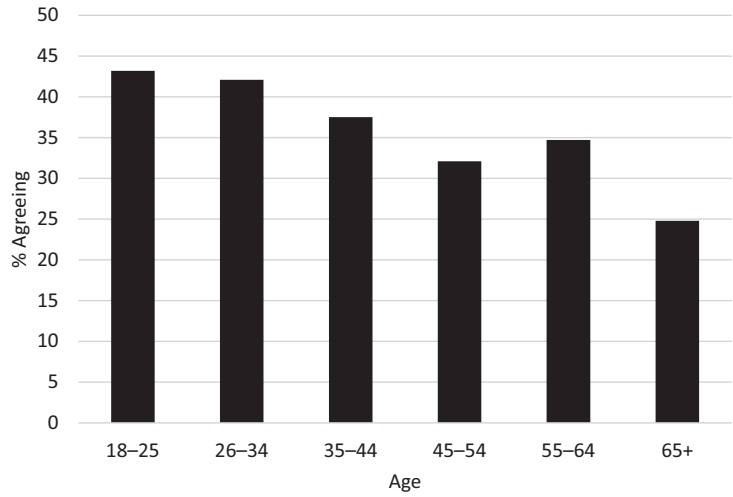


Figure 5.3 Reasons for choosing print: 'I would describe myself as a bibliophile', by age.

this chapter, women are accustomed, and perhaps resigned, to ridicule, condescension, and scolding. But another possible reason for a gender-based gap in identification with the word 'bibliophile' is that its meaning in the digital reading era has been debated in highly gendered reading spaces, such as the book groups, online forums like Goodreads, and festival audiences that are typically dominated by women.[176]

Identification as a bibliophile varied significantly by age, falling steadily for older respondents, a pattern that echoes those choosing print for ease of reading (Figure 5.3).

Identification as a bibliophile correlated positively with every source of print books in the survey, including gifts (underscoring the fact that bibliophilia is not just a matter of personal identity but also public identity: friends know, and buy accordingly). All connections are meaningful, but the weakest[177] was with libraries. While this is a slightly counterintuitive result, it could simply be the result of the higher level of book consumption from every other print source, including gifts. These avowed bibliophiles, who also highly value print for keeping as part of a personal library (see later), may be such active book collectors that book borrowing is less important, and even less feasible, if they commit so much time to their larger collections of owned books that they have little time left for borrowed ones. Even so, avowed bibliophiles' levels of library use are average, not low (or only low compared to their heroic levels of bookshop, online bookshop, and gift use) (Figure 5.4).

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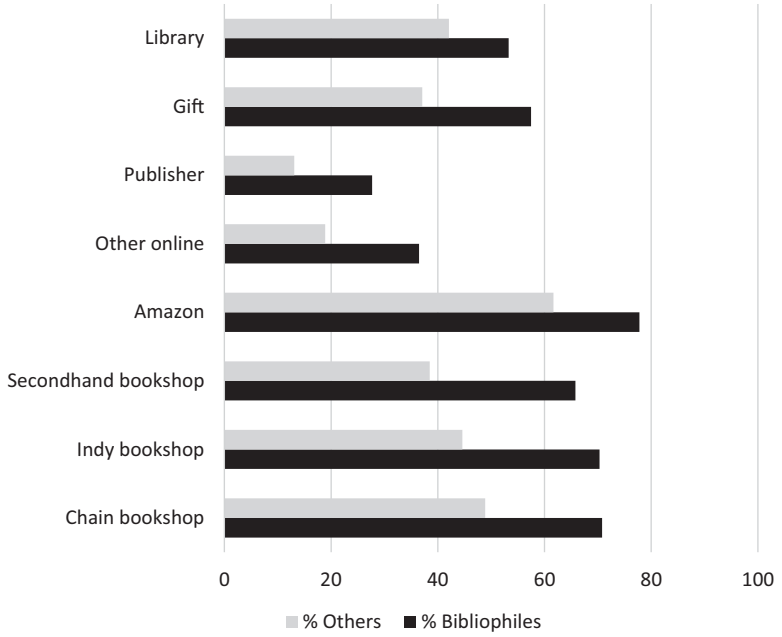


Figure 5.4 Reasons for choosing print: 'I would describe myself as a bibliophile', by source of print books.

Avowed bibliophiles are generally ordinary in terms of their e-book use, with few significant relationships to sources or genres of e-books, or device usage. While they are also ordinary in most attitudes towards e-books, they stand out on a few key e-bookish values. E-book reading avowed bibliophiles were slightly less likely to choose digital because e-books are easier to read (14.8% vs 24.3% of others), or more enjoyable (5.4% vs 15.7%). They were slightly more likely, however, to choose digital for reasons of availability, or 'the books I want aren't always available in print' (31.1% vs 20.6%); a hallmark of being driven to digital rather than drawn to digital.

In contrast, bibliophiles' attitudes towards print books are anything but ordinary. Identifying as a bibliophile correlates positively with every other print value. It is the strength of the relationship that demonstrates what other values are the most bibliophilic. While links to choosing print because print books are more enjoyable to handle and use (87.8% vs 57.3%[178]) and because print is better for keeping as part of a personal library (87.0% vs 52.3%[179]) are notable, the most 'bibliophilic' value is choosing print to support traditional bookshops (68.8% vs 30.7%[180]).

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'Love' and 'LIKE' were words many participants used in conjunction with bookshops, and particularly for the 'thrill of browsing in a second-hand bookshop' ('I love to browse!', 'I love to browse in bookshops', 'I love browsing bookstores', etc.) alongside the satisfaction of supporting a traditional physical shop ('I love to support independent booksellers where possible', 'I LIKE to support bookshops', and grief for its reverse, 'While I embrace e-books as convenient and an inevitable advance, I lament the demise of print books and of bookstores').[181] This form of love was only heightened during pandemic lockdowns, where mourning for access to beloved bookshops and libraries was a fixture of free-text responses.

Among avowed bibliophiles, e-book readers and print-only readers are not far apart in their views. E-book readers are, predictably, more likely to choose print because the books they want aren't always available electronically. Print-only bibliophiles, however, exceed e-book reading bibliophiles in their enthusiasm for print being easier to read, the leading bookish value of print being better for keeping as part of a personal library, and the emerging bookish value of privacy – but not on print being more enjoyable or other signal bookish values such as wishing to support traditional bookshops.

The single focus group participant who defined bibliophilia in terms of antipathy for digital reading did not speak for the majority. The special relationship avowed bibliophiles have with print (they are more likely to obtain print books from every source, they have drastically amplified bookish values, etc.) is paired with a very unspecial relationship with digital: ordinary in their usage, mild in their opinions. Declaring love for print books, outsides and insides, is compatible with e-book reading. However, declaring love for the insides of books carries its own kind of risk, especially for female readers, given the negative image of affective reading.

Emotional Reading and 'Untrained' Readers

Novels that inspire empathy and emotional connection may, as there is evidence to suggest, enjoy greater commercial success,[182] 'have a unique role to play in promoting and nurturing pro-social abilities',[183] and further the agendas of policy makers who hope that literary empathy will foster real-world altruism, yet 'disdain for the preferences of feeling readers pervades literary criticism'.[184] As Murray has noted, a flight from affect is part of the history of the formation of English literature as an academic discipline.[185] Despite the work of generations of scholars of reading, including Radway's analysis of romance readership, in questioning such a simple dichotomy, it remains easy to find examples where empathetic

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reading is casually set up as the antagonistic opposite of analytical reading, as in Jonathan Franzen's account of rewriting *The Corrections* for the 'open-minded but essentially untrained fiction reader'.[186] In the absence of a critical apparatus, and unable to cope with 'difficulty', Franzen's untrained reader supposedly relies on lesser measures of a work's quality, most especially emotional connection: feeling for the story and the story-world, and 'empathy, sympathy, identification, and the reader's "care" for fictional characters'.[187] This confidence that emotional response is a separate and distinctly lower form of response to literature, and that the unskilled reader does not without help ascend past this lower rung, is also gendered. As Studer and Takayoshi point out, the conflict between trained and untrained reading is dramatised in *The Corrections* in a showdown between a male literature professor, Chip Lambert, and a female student, Melissa; Franzen's pivot to the mainstream was in essence a decision to 'turn his back on readers like Chip Lambert and court readers like Melissa'.[188] Longstanding stereotypes of women as emotional, and by definition irrational, beings incapable of analysis (of literature or anything else) live on in feminised middlebrow literary culture where modes of 'sentimentality, empathy and therapy' characterise and stigmatise both emotional reading and the female readers associated with it.[189] Jonathan Franzen's feud with Oprah's Book Club is so often mentioned as an example of literary elitism, and sexism in the 'high-art literary tradition' Franzen defined as his natural home, that it is possible to overlook the role that book-love played in making the Oprah audience, out of all possible mainstream audiences, so threatening to him. It wasn't just the gender of her studio audience, it was the genderedness of the studio discussion: its earnestness, its affect, its extension of the 'sentimentality, empathy and therapy' modes of daytime television to the discussion of books. The 'readingophile' who described her own bibliophilia in terms of 'love of stories [even] more than the books themselves' is using the language of affect to define her relationship to the inside of a book, and this makes it easier for a critic (at least one who accepts a binary division) to consign her to the lower rung of amateurish, non-analytical readers. For women readers, taking hold of the label of 'bibliophile' requires a measure of defiance in reclaiming it from its history of sexist use. It may also offer a counterweight: balancing the outside against the inside of a book, the caricature of the book-fool against the caricature of the 'open-minded but essentially untrained reader'. These excessively, incorrectly emotional readers invite further ridicule when they broadcast unseemly feelings for a novel or novelist. Public dislike need not damage an author's standing: as

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discussed earlier in this chapter, the right enemies can be as important as the right friends, and the disapprobation of outsiders with low levels of cultural capital can elevate a work's prestige, underscoring how its virtues are beyond the capacities of the uninitiated. But public affection presents risk, and online reading forums, using the 'affective language that is common online'[190] pose a threat.

Bibliophilia and Amazon

Feeling for a text in digital form is further complicated by feeling for the device on which it is displayed, which can be intense.[191] This does not, however, map neatly to a strength of feeling based on device choice or, indeed, to device choice based on strength of feeling, or an easy equation by which novels on beloved iPhones are more treasured than novels on work laptops. This is in part because texts are not fixed to one device. As previously noted, most respondents in my survey used two or more reading devices in the past twelve months, and many regularly switch between devices (e.g. reading on a smartphone while standing for a train commute but switching to tablet or print on the sofa at home). But it is also due in part to the fact that some devices are linked to retailers, and these retailers may be distinctly unloved.

While, as discussed, a number of readers love their Kindles, not a single respondent described love, or even mild liking, for 'the dreaded Amazon'.[192] Rather, the reverse was true. While respondents use Amazon extensively and its lead over other sources of e-books remains overwhelming, their feelings about Amazon as a company range from indifference to mild distaste to active loathing. Some express reservations about its 'business practices' and effect on writers and the literary marketplace, even rooting for its demise ('I hoped Amazon would lose money... I am a writer and if Amazon keeps growing I will not be able to make a living').[193] A number actively despise both it ('Hate Amazon and avoid them religiously for all book purchases, print and electronic') and its founder ('[during lockdown] I grew to hate Jeff Bezos so I started reading exclusively on my iphone').[194] The depth of feeling only increased during the pandemic, where some respondents avoided Amazon for print book orders, not only because of their desire to support bricks and mortar bookshops but also from concern for Amazon warehouse workers and deliverypersons. The result is reluctant Amazon purchases ('I might have to buy it from Amazon which I would not necessarily like to do') or no Amazon purchases ('I am now boycotting Amazon', 'I'm actively

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boycotting Amazon', 'I will not buy from Amazon').[195] This stands in stark contrast to the love many respondents expressed for physical bookshops: while the occasional participant expressed dislike for aspects of traditional bookshops, such as 'bookstore staff are useless',[196] none hated bookshops as a category the way some hate Amazon as a company.

Even more striking is the way some express strongly negative feelings about themselves when they buy from Amazon. They describe themselves as 'a sucker when Amazon recommends something', or 'Amazon's dream customer because I read a review. . .on Amazon and, "okay, I'll have that."... So yes, [I'm] gullible, stupid. . .', or explain that they 'don't like buying things from Amazon... But [they] just get suckered in anyway, because... "Oh, look, £0.99".'[197] Among respondents who dislike and disapprove of Amazon, buying on its terms can leave them feeling like a 'sucker', a 'gullible' chump. Aversion to Amazon does not lead readers as a whole to avoid Amazon: it is too ubiquitous, typically the most convenient and often (especially in the case of digital-only books from KDP or an Amazon imprint) the only way of obtaining a given book. But respondents sometimes described themselves as something akin to accomplices in an assault on print culture: weak, unprincipled, cheaply bought. This intriguingly recalls accusations of disloyalty levelled at all e-book readers during the 'e-book wars': while no one in this study described their own e-book *reading* as contrary to the best interests of print or print culture, in this one specific way a few participants describe their own e-book *purchasing* as contrary to such interests.

Not only are Kindles linked to a widely disliked retailer, they also do not appear to qualify as 'technology', if technology is defined as something alluring to the group Duguid termed 'triumphant technophiles'.[198]

Technophilia

Technophilia is a factor for fewer than one in fifteen (6.6%) survey respondents, and did not vary by age. Men were more likely to identify as technophiles.[199] Agreement was stable from 2014 to 2017, but dropped to an average of 3.5% between 2020 and 2022 (largely due to a plunge to 0.7% in 2021). This general trend could be due to screen exhaustion during the pandemic, but also to the evolving image of Kindle and other e-ink readers as everyday tools rather than desirable gadgets of interest to technophiles (who are more likely to read e-books on tablet or smartphone, but not other devices). As noted in Chapter 4, since 2010 Amazon has split its Kindle range, selling feature-laden premium models such as the

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Scribe and Oasis alongside basic versions where advertising-free interfaces and even chargers are optional extras. But marginal advances such as improved waterproofing and Bluetooth connectivity for headphones are not breakthroughs on the level of e-ink: *Wired*, the technology magazine that enthusiastically reviewed prior models described the 2017. Oasis as 'just not different enough to justify the £229 starting price'.[200] (Technophiles were no more or less likely to obtain e-books from Amazon, however: the only link to sources of e-books were to higher likelihood of direct purchase from publishers).

Building Relationships

Aside from instances where an avowed bibliophile chooses to think of an e-book as part of a book, in terms of legitimacy, a loved e-book is functioning for these respondents as real. The emotions inspired are real emotions. That said, the powerful dislike a few respondents feel for e-books, or for e-book retailers, may prevent them ever encountering enough of them to fall in love with one (if they are boycotting Amazon, they are unlikely ever to fall in love with a novel presented as an .AZW file). The problems some respondents report in becoming immersed in an e-book may also stand in the way of a close relationship. But when participants report that 'one of my favourite books I actually got for free on Amazon' or that they are 'as likely to read or reread a favourite "amateur" story/novel length work as a published pro work these days' it is clearly possible for not only an e-book but also a digital-only book to ascend to the status of a favourite 'reread' book.[201]

Some of the actions readers identify as special, reserved for books that warrant close attention and ongoing connection, are difficult or impossible for digital-only books. To own, give, or handle and use in codex form a given book, a reader may use digital audition to layer on the affordances of print, if there is a print edition to be had. (This can entail paying twice for the same book, but paying twice has its own benefits, as I'll discuss later in considering e-book patronage.) And availability in print is not limited to commercial availability. The practice of fan binding, where readers turn chosen born-digital fan-made texts into physical fan-made codices (what one fan binder calls 'undigitising'),[202] offers readers the opportunity to create bespoke editions to satisfy needs not fulfilled by online originals. Such editions can be as simple as a comb-bound stack of A4 (evoking twentieth-century traditions of photocopying zines), or a Print-On-Demand hardcover from Lulu or Barnes & Noble (though such providers can officially refuse to print transformative works,[203] as they do for any

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text where copyright permissions are murky). But the most celebrated examples are sumptuously produced book art, one-off book-objects created by fans largely self-taught in desktop publishing software and traditional bookbinding techniques. While preservation is one reason for fan binding, loss being a chronic concern with fan works,[204] two studies of the Renegade Bindery community by Shira Buchsbaum and Kimberly Kennedy indicate that individuals pursue this expensive and demanding practice for a range of reasons, from reading offline to conferring status on the works to bequeathing volumes to heirs and archives to furthering ideals of non-commercial creativity by gifting copies to fic authors – reasons that connect with many desires for realness in obtaining, enjoying, and keeping books as discussed in previous chapters.[205] But both studies find that fan binders are fundamentally motivated by love. Binders 'began binding fic because they love fan fiction' and choose to work on, out of the vast number of available fics, those they love the most.[206] As one fan binder put it, 'the effort of binding an entire book has to be the strongest demonstration of "I loved your story this much!" there is'.[207] These bespoke objects don't supersede the digital, as the losses in converting online fic to print include aspects of 'accessibility, interactivity, and malleability. . .losing hyperlinks and comments strips the fic of its community context'; as Kennedy puts it, 'at its core, fandom is a conversation' and 'without the source material and the fandom interactions that led to the fic's creation, readers cannot understand the full breadth of meaning held within the story'.[208] The bindings are treasured but not necessarily preferred. To retain their full meaning, the fics remain interlocked with the digital, symbiotic rather than superior.

Without the option of print, however, there is still the valued option of personalisation. One such form of personalisation is through annotation. For my participants, the idea of writing in books was contentious, as in these two exchanges from focus group 4.

P4: *Yes. Let me show you the book that I have with me today. This was one that I used at university and I've got over half the pages turned down at the corners. The highlighting wasn't me but the pencil notes were me. The highlighting doesn't bother me.*

. . .

P2: *'Oh, goodness. No.'*

P4: *'Look!' [directing another participant's attention to the annotated page]*

P2: *'No. Oh my God. I only did that to books I* ***hated****.' (Laughter)*

P4: *'No, I* ***love*** *this one. I'd do it because even if you pass it onto someone else it's nice to see what they've enjoyed.'*

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P3: *'Yes. I lend books to my mum and she finds it interesting because I write little notes sometimes. Not in all of my books but in some of them and she's like, "Oh, that's interesting. I wouldn't have thought of that."'*

. . .

Moderator: *'If you put notes down in a book like that, is it a sign that the book was especially good? It moved you to say something?' (From FG 4)*

P4: *'Or* ***especially bad****.'*

P3: *'Yes, hopefully it's not the other.'*

P4: *'I distinctly remember underlining something and just writing "no" in the margin.'*

For some, writing in print books is 'definitely' a powerful sign of esteem,[209] something they do to books they love and something they welcome from past readers. For others, it is taboo, and something they personally only do to books they loathe. But in both cases, it is a sign of strong feeling, even when the annotation involved 'typ[ing] notes [on a first generation keyboard Kindle] painstakingly!'[210] rather than taking a pencil or pen to paper. In some cases, it is a bridge to other readers, 'the notes in the margins written by my great great grandfather or complete strangers' or Kindle Popular Highlights 'where you can see other notes of people who wrote in it?. . .I loved that!'.[211] But annotation can as easily serve as a bridge to themselves in another time.[212]

> *'I write by hand on them, take notes of passages to re-read, they are memories attached to the object called book "where I bought it in which mood, at what moment of my life, they are a personal image of my evaluating centre of interest"'* (Survey 2014)

> *'a physical book can become an old friend. You see the places you've dogeared in the past, pages you marked as meaningful, your maiden name in the front cover because you've had it that long. . .'* (Survey 2017)

Marking up is an important action for readers to take for books that matter to them. But readers are split on whether annotation is facilitated by print. In just one year group, Survey 2017, multiple write-in responses gave ease of annotation as a reason to choose print (e.g. 'easier to highlight and take notes' and 'easier to take notes on them') and as a reason to choose digital (e.g. 'annotations and copy paste, especially for scholarly works easier to go digital', 'I like being able to search, add notes' and 'useful to search and highlight', the *especially for scholarly works* serving to emphasise the particular importance of search functionality for non-fiction reading). No one expressed hesitation about writing in digital books – after all, one cannot,

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when notes and comments are held in a separate file from the text, truly deface an e-book even if one wanted to. But forms of annotation like Amazon Kindle highlights cross a line between writing in books and writing about books.

Amazon has pushed its 'highlights' feature aggressively, emphasising its use as a connection between readers: 'popular highlights' making everyone's copies more alike, not allowing one reader to make their copy distinctive and personal to them. But if the purpose of this type of marginalia is in fact to broadcast one's opinions, broadcasting one's opinions is another key strategy for getting closer to a book. Talking about a book, in person or on social media, is ostensibly a format-neutral strategy: unless one is in a book group where audiobooks are taboo, it is no one's business whether the book is encountered on paper, on screen, or via headphones. That said, the attachment and recollection gap noted in Chapter 4, where some (but not all) readers reported that they did not feel they 'know. . .fully' or completely 'absorb/remember' e-books, may make it that much more difficult for a digital-only book to move them the way they need to be moved before they write a book review (another sign of strong feeling, good or bad, according to my respondents), blog post, Goodreads comment, or tweet. But once over that obstacle, one can write oneself closer to a novel whatever its format.[213]

Patronage

But if e-book readers can own themselves closer, customise themselves closer, and write themselves closer to a given book, there is one way of deepening a relationship that can be quite different for a book on screen: spending oneself closer, but not in the manner of a typical product purchase. What readers receive in exchange for financial investment in book relationships is less of the privileges and satisfactions of a customer and more of the privileges and satisfactions of a patron.

Buying an e-book is not pleasant. It may be quick and easy, but it is unsatisfying.

> *'It's not as. . .special? You know when you go into a bookshop and buy a book, and you get it home and you're really excited (agreement). . . [and] when you get a book through the post, that's really exciting? Whereas downloading a book is just like. . .mmmmmugh.'* (FG 1 respondent 1)

Buying is often unnecessary, if one does not mind piracy. (And, as discussed in Chapter 3, many respondents in my study do not.) And

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buying is, in many ways, futile. Conditional use licenses do not confer either the same rights or the same feeling as print ownership (see Chapter 3). The feeling of being taken advantage of as a customer makes readers describe themselves as 'sucker[s]', 'gullible'[214] and outsmarted – 'book-fools' of a very different kind.

Readers can instead reframe their e-book payments as effectively 'donation', and 'patronage', with reciprocal offerings for an artist's gift, and the transaction as a gift exchange rather than a commercial arrangement.[215] Freely given support for art and for artists establishes a profound but very different relationship between creator and reader.[216] (Thinking of book transactions in this way brings to book buying some of the feeling of book giving, and the connection it forges between two readers; for more on this connection, please see Chapter 3.) This idea of spending one's way closer to a text also helps explain digital audition: not so much buying twice as contributing twice.

Savvy authors and publishers are very explicitly tapping into this sentiment, and not just via non-book-specific creator sponsorship platforms such as Kickstarter (which allows members of the public to commit to prefunding individual projects such as games, music, or films, which are only made, and the patrons only charged, if a funding goal is met) or Patreon (which uses a similar online platform but takes pledges to an individual creator rather than a creative project).[217] Unbound's business model allows reader/patrons to take part, via prepublication commitments of support, from the point of commissioning, and offers levels of involvement. Early commitment allows select patrons to literally write themselves into the book, listed in the first edition like eighteenth-century subscribers.[218] The range of pledge options typically includes print editions (as well as premium packages that bundle hardcover print copies with collectables and experiences such as signed bookplates, sets of bookmarks, enamel pins, or lunch with the author) but also e-books, with one's name included in only the digital edition. Sellers like Humble Bundle (noted by several survey respondents as a source of their e-books), a company that began sharing indie games but expanded into e-books and digital comics, invite users to 'pay what you want', share the proceeds with charity, and post constantly updated leader boards of top contributors.[219] But other authors are finding ingenious ways to bend existing commercial frameworks to address readers as potential patrons rather than potential customers. Hugh Howey, a self-publishing breakout star whose *Wool* series went on to be adapted for television by Apple TV+, used the product description of a Kindle Singles e-book to directly address the reader/buyer and

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explain his creative aims, apologise for Amazon's commercial ones, and to say 'thank you' (not *readers*, but *you*) 'for all your support'.[220] Despite its length, the passage is worth reproducing in full: what makes it notable is not just its content but also its context. The direct appeal is not before or after the product description, it *is* the product description, in its entirety: the connection between reader and author is what the supporter (not customer) gets for their money. Even within the 'everything store', authors and readers can choose to replace the language of commercial exchange with the language of gift exchange.

> *'This is a short story about a man seeking closure. It can be read in ten minutes. Please don't purchase this expecting a novel for your dollar.*
>
> *This story was written in a small cafe on the corner of Bleeker and Grove in New York City on Tuesday, May 27th. The idea came to me yesterday while walking across the Brooklyn Bridge. I saw the locks on several of the small cables on the bridge. I remembered my time in both London and Paris, taking pictures of all the love locks on bridges there. And I thought about all the couples those locks represent. I wondered how many are still together.*
>
> *Maybe this story isn't worth your dollar. If I could price a work on Amazon for less, I would. It is what it is. I hope this will be the first of many short pieces that I write and publish in a single day while recording what I'm thinking and where I am when I write them. For those who take the plunge, I hope you get your money's worth. Thank you for all of your support.*'[221]

This form of direct bid for connection demonstrates not only how retail venues can be effectively hijacked by authors to further a patronage rather than a commercial relationship but also how such patronage does not require a physical print object to build a reader–author relationship of this type. Support for a self-published, digital-only work, and indeed for a self-published, digital-first author, can employ the same economic and emotive apparatus. When readers choose to become patrons of an e-story or any e-book on the same terms as they would a print book, to accept that they are getting their 'money's worth' in terms of relationships and emotional reward, the e-book is functioning as real.

Conclusion

In terms of image, public and self, the e-book functions primarily as an incomplete book. It cannot contribute to readerly identity as fully as can a print book because its own identity is in part obscured: not only to the subway 'spy'[222] but also to the reader themself, as their reading history

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may be less visible and accessible to them, and their reading choices more difficult to meaningfully and intentionally share. At the same time, the granular experience of reading, from annotations to reading speed, is unprecedentedly visible to retailers. Readers who object to e-reading surveillance demonstrate particular concern about Amazon, singling it out as both especially crude and overt in its profiling (which some respondents find not only inconvenient but also insulting, as if the company were a person being personally disrespectful). In a sense, in objecting to being defined as people by a subset of their purchases, they object to being reduced to parts of readers: treated as incomplete people, judged according to their use of incomplete books. This makes Amazon for them a retailer to be avoided for digital (but not print) books. The desire for print privacy has no link to age or gender, but correlates strongly with other bookish values such as a desire to support traditional bookshops; the latter constellation of links underscores the degree to which a desire for this kind of privacy is itself a bookish value. The appeal to bookish readers to resist tracking for the sake of the intellectual privacy of future generations may, if the proportion of readers concerned with this form of privacy continues to rise and continues to correlate with bookish values, add an additional reason to hew to print.

The freedom offered by obscured paratext, allowing readers to access their books of choice in public without fear of teasing or embarrassment, comes at a high price, as anonymous reading denies readers the cultural capital their reading might accrue if it were in print and, for women in particular, invites observers to impose their own ideas of what their chosen reading is likely to be. The lower status of digital books can cost readers cultural capital simply for being seen with a dedicated device, and a non-dedicated device may hide book reading altogether. Despite the image of e-reading devices as vital tools for furtive reading, perfect for guilty pleasures and naughty books, the actual importance of furtive reading as a motivator for choosing digital appears extremely low. The exaggerated image of the furtive reader, however, threatens to further perpetuate gendered stereotypes and distort not only understanding of digital reading but also understanding of the audiences for specific books and of women's reading in general.

The empty space where some elements of the book's paratext would be in a print edition can be filled, and not by the reader. It can serve as one kind of screen facing outwards, where observers can project their ideas of what any particular 'kind of person' would read, and another kind facing inwards, projecting a stream of data towards retailers, who will continue to

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stockpile such data to profile and target individual readers, and will, unless restrained by refinements to the law, retain it indefinitely for future uses not yet imagined. How to tolerate that empty space is what bookish people must negotiate in order to use e-books while maintaining an identity as a bookish person.

Viewed through the lens of love, e-books can function not only as parts of books but also as real books. Print inspires deep feelings and passionate loyalty for many readers. Digital formats inspire these for fewer, but their love is no less real for being somewhat unusual. While aspects of print books and print book culture, such as the smell of a book or the staff of bookshops, may be disliked, no respondents in this study expressed hate for print books or print culture. Some respondents do hate e-books, as well as e-book retailers such as Amazon. That said, loathing of e-books is rare (much more so than love of e-books and e-reading devices) and the most common stance towards e-books among book lovers is bland appreciation. Notably, e-reading is wholly compatible with book-love: e-readers are in fact fractionally more likely to identify as bibliophiles than those who read books only in print (though this difference is small and below the level of statistical significance). Love for books and book culture is widespread, but embrace of the label bibliophile is not: only a third of participants in this study choose print because they identify as bibliophiles, in contrast with large majorities who choose print because they enjoy the material object, find print better for keeping as part of a personal library, and/or wish to support traditional bookshops. What it means to be a bibliophile in the modern day is a matter for debate, though in the focus groups virtually all respondents were willing, after discussion, to subscribe to a term that was agreed to embrace aspects of collecting, ownership, and enjoyment of the material print object, while stressing that they loved the act of reading even more than the material object. Technophilia motivates only a small fraction of readers to choose digital. In having no claim on the affections of technophiles, it would appear that Kindles are perhaps now so humble and ubiquitous that a gadget lover finds little that is exciting, compelling, or new to tempt them. Book lovers, whether or not they embrace the label of bibliophile, can love e-reading devices, can love books they encounter on screen, and can, through avenues including digital audition, annotation and other forms of customisation, and patronage, deepen their relationships with beloved e-books. These strategies suggest ways in which the image and status of e-books can be further shaped by bibliophiles' needs, reverse engineering a role that continues to complement rather than undermine print culture.

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E-books are only sometimes real, but it is their very flexibility that makes them so valuable to book lovers. They can be public or private, permanent or ephemeral, valuable or valueless, intimate or distant, depending on one's usage and settings but also on one's idea of what an e-book is; and, as demonstrated, that idea is highly adaptable and at least sometimes under one's conscious control. And in those instances where digital simply cannot provide the same experience as print, as with feeling paper under one's fingers or lifting a volume from a physical bookshop shelf, digital can be augmented with print, layering formats and forms of use. Shifting one's conception of the nature of an e-book to suit one's intended use, willing it to be the thing one desires (and then willing it to be something else when one's desires change), goes to the heart of how readers integrate e-books into their broader reading lives.

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