

Reading Ahead – Topline Summary

Reading is not just a solo activity; there are significant social/interpersonal aspects for many people

- Recommendations, book clubs, lending
- Books facilitate the interpersonal aspects of reading
 - Can be easily lent or given away
 - Given as gifts
 - People can use a book together: parents and kids, showing someone a passage or illustrations, etc.
- Reading can be a big part of family life
- Childhood memories, passing books between generations, reading with one's own children.
- Connection between home life and outside world (school)

Reading and Books are not always one and the same

- Erica buys some books because she likes them as objects. She knows she may not read all of them. *"I love books. I almost like books more than reading."*
- Jeff says if you love to read, you'd like the Kindle. If you love books, you should try it out before you buy one
- The Kindle facilitates types of reading beyond books: blogs, articles, periodicals

Books do more than carry content

- Books engage the senses: they are tactile, visual objects, with specific characteristics like smell and weight
 - Become carriers of specific memories
 - Develop a patina that carries meaning
 - An inscribed book becomes a record of an event, interaction, relationship
- There is an art/collector aspect to books (which is absent in the Kindle)
- First editions
- Signed copies
- Galley proofs
- Typography

- Pictures and illustrations
- Quality of paper, printing, etc.
- Books say something about a person
- Others can see what you're reading; like clothes, etc., this carries meaning
- "Looking at someone's bookshelves when you go to their house" (Jeff)
- When people give books as gifts they are deliberately communicating something about the relationship, the event, themselves, and the recipient
- Books can create a physical record of someone's reading activity
- Chris used to line up all the books he had read to get a sense of accomplishment
- Annotations, bookmarks, tags all convey the reader's personal history with that book

Books are easily shared

- Pass them along to others
- Donate to library
- Sell or buy at used book store
- Borrow from the library rather than purchasing

How books are stored and organized carries meaning

- Emotion, sense of pride, expression of personality, record of engagement
- Erica organizes her books by how the content/type of book feels to her: "dusty" classics, modern classics, etc.
- Julie's extensive shelves are organized alphabetically to reinforce the idea of library

Libraries and bookstores provide specific experiences

- As a little girl, Erica visited different libraries with her Mom. This was their daily activity, and Erica retains strong and specific memories
- Julie and her housemate recreated a library atmosphere in their home
 - A quiet, comfortable space
 - Good lighting
 - Alphabetized bookshelves
 - A unified décor
- For Jeff and others, spending time browsing in a bookstore represents having leisure time

The Kindle

- For people whose love of reading is bound up in their love of books, the Kindle loses much of the reading experience; it is only a content carrier
- Julie has a history of wanting to read on electronic devices as well as from printed books, so to her, the Kindle is a big evolutionary step from her old Palm, the iPhone, etc.
- For Erica, the Kindle signifies “computer,” so it does not let her “unplug” from the fast-paced connected lifestyle that books provide a refuge from
- Several people described the kinetics of page-turning as an important aspect of reading books that is absent in the Kindle
- Books afford ways of navigating content that the Kindle does not: flipping, comparing non-sequential pages, looking at the recipes at the end of each chapter, etc.
- Peter finds it frustrating that when he buys a Kindle book from Amazon, he can’t share it. When he started working in an environment where people were passing books around, he went back to reading printed books

Participant ideation about the “book of the future” and “reading device of the future”

- NOTE: The first thing a number of the participants said when asked about what the “book of the future” could be and do was that it’s pretty hard to improve on the book—it works very well the way it is. In addition to all the qualities already mentioned, books are
 - Instant on-off
 - Durable

But people did have ideas. Here are some of them:

- Interactive
- Put yourself in the story
- Leave the story for more information
- Choose from alternate endings, versions
- Size-shifting
 - Able to morph from bigger size for reading to smaller for transporting
- Retain the book form while adding functionality
 - Book form with replaceable content: a merging of book and device, with a cover, and page-turning but content is not fixed—it can be many different books
 - Books that contain hyperlinks, electronic annotations, multimedia, etc.

- Privacy
 - Hide what you're reading from others, hide annotations, hide your personal book list and lend your device to someone (with content for them)
- Projecting
 - A device that projects words that float above it, so that the reader doesn't have to hold the device in their hands