

# Using social media to promote reading

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This research was conducted by **Joachim Vlieghe, Kris Rutten and Jaël Muls** at **Ghent University and the University of Brussels, Belgium**

## Summary

This paper looks at how readers participate in literary culture through social media. Researchers looked at the website and Facebook group of the Flemish reading initiative ledereenleest.be (EverybodyReads.be), and conducted interviews with participants. The study provides insight into readers' understanding of the social aspects of participating in literary culture through social media platforms. It also confirms that social media spaces are experienced as affinity spaces by users, and stresses the importance of supporting people's engagement in a variety of literary practices.

## **EverybodyReads.be and its Facebook group were created by the Flemish Government in 2004 as part of an initiative to promote reading**

Researchers observed users' communication around literary practice, and identified five types of activity: formulating opinions, sharing advice, sharing information, displaying reading activities, and discussing general topics. Following this, they conducted interviews with ten highly active participants.

## **Most participants described reading as a solitary activity but said they felt the need to share their opinions about books with others**

Social media environments like ledereenleest.be provided them a space to do this. They also found that the Facebook group is a more social space than the

website, as it offers more possibilities for interaction. Several people also said that the reading activities of others have inspired them to read more, or to change their reading habits.

## Producing, distributing or assessing texts are often seen as exclusive activities

Social media environments offer peer groups and opportunities for users to autonomously produce and publish artistic, critical and informative content. Researchers refer to these kind of social media environments as affinity spaces: physical or virtual spaces where people's interactions take place around shared interests.

This summary is by **Paula Serafini, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

### Keywords

**Belgium** **social media** **reading** **literature** **online**

Title	Everybody reads: Reader engagement with literature in social media environments
Author(s)	Vlieghe, J., Muls, J. & Rutten, K.
Publication date	2016
Source	Poetics, Vol 54, pp 25-37
Link	<a href="http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0304422X15000650">http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0304422X15000650</a>
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By **Culture.Case** | 20 June 2016 | **Developing new audiences in arts and culture** , **Live and digital engagement in arts and culture** |



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