

**Beyond the Book project website: Selected text from  
<http://www.beyondthebookproject.org/default.asp>**

**compiled by Anouk Lang on 25 August 08**

[Menu options below]

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**About Us**

\*

**Questionnaire** [Not included in this document]

\*

**News**

\*

**Blog**

\*

**Team Reads**

\*

**Research Results** [Not included in this document]

\*

**Links**

\*

**Our Funders**

\*

**Contact Us**

\*

**Conference** [Only the top-level conference page included in this document]

## **Welcome**

Are you a reader? Do you participate in a book club, love the smell of libraries, feel like you're a kid in a candy store when you enter a bookstore? If so, this site will interest you.

Here you will find information about the trans-national phenomenon of "mass reading events," our name for book events that are meant to bring readers of one city, region or nation together by reading and sharing the same book.

Even if you do not participate in these events, you will still find our site useful. We have included a little something for everyone who cares about or enjoys reading. The buttons across the top of this page will take you through the site. Come, explore with us!

## **About Us**

**Beyond the Book: Mass Reading Events and Contemporary Cultures of Reading in the UK, USA and Canada is a three-year interdisciplinary research project funded primarily by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).**

Our main objectives are to determine why and how people come together to share reading through a comparative study of selected mass reading events such as “Canada Reads,” “Richard and Judy’s Book Club,” and “One Book, One Community” programmes, including, but not limited to, “One Book, One Chicago” and “Liverpool Reads.”

The mass reading event is a new, proliferating literary phenomenon. Events typically focus on a work of literary fiction and employ the mass media as a means of promoting participation in the themed activities and discussions that take place around the selected book. *Beyond the Book* uses research methodologies drawn from both the humanities and social sciences to investigate whether mass reading events attract new readers and marginalized communities. We also wish to determine whether this contemporary version of shared reading fosters new reading practices and even whether it is capable of initiating social change.

Our research will result in a trans-national analysis of contemporary shared reading practices, the formation of reading communities and the popular function of literary fiction in the UK, USA and Canada. In addition to addressing a significant knowledge-gap in literary and cultural studies’ scholarship, we aim to produce practical guidelines of relevance to event organizers, book groups and cultural policy makers.

*Beyond the Book* is a collaborative project. Directed from the [Department of American & Canadian Studies](#), University of Birmingham, UK by literary scholar-cum-qualitative research expert and table-maker extraordinaire Danielle Fuller, our fieldwork guru and North American director is DeNel Rehberg Sedo (Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada).

Anouk Lang is the project's Postdoctoral Fellow, while Anna Burrells provides us with part-time administrative assistance. Translation into and from Spanish and French, the two most widely-spoken second languages in the USA and Canada, is ably provided by Aiora Irizar, Dominique Belkadi, Annie Rigler and Claire Wood.

Fieldwork assistants: LaDonna Saunders (Chicago); Amy Laurent (Bristol); Cathy Collett, Kimberly Walsh, Lesley Mulcahy (Halifax); Lori Thiessen (Vancouver).  
Transcribers: Brett, Bronagh and Rich (UK); Hanni Bouma (Canada).

*Beyond the Book* is supported by an Advisory Board consisting of three senior scholars: Dr R.J. Ellis, Dr Maureen Bell (both University of Birmingham, UK) and Dr Jenny Hartley (Roehampton University, UK).

This website was designed and built for us by the creative folks at Nemisys.

## News

[Posts are in order of most to least recent]

**Map of Books Published Around the World**  
**Whichbook.net**  
**BTB Fieldwork Sites on Google Maps**

**Book swaps**  
**BTB Conference Publications**  
**Liverpool Reads ... Mal Peet**  
**Research into reading & new technologies in Canada**  
**Plans to adopt Richard & Judy book selections on UK A-level syllabus**  
**Statistical consultant Lindsay Engel joins BTB**  
**National Public Radio podcast on the Kindle**  
**Project Conference News**  
**Amelia Chester Joins the Team**  
**Huntsville Survey Winner**  
**Seattle Reads Questionnaire Winner**  
**Last Stop: Seattle**  
**The Team Welcomes Diana LaChance in Huntsville, Alabama**  
**UK-wide Questionnaire Winner**  
**'Small Island' Read**  
**Welcome Ross!**  
**Two New Team Members**  
**Birmingham Book Festival - survey winner**  
**Wayne Wiegand webcast interview on One Book One Community events**  
**The Reading Experience Database Needs You**  
**Birmingham Book Festival 2006**  
**A Big Thank-You!**  
**Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference**  
**One Book One Vancouver winner**  
**More conference news**  
**Conference News**  
**Canada Reads Winner**  
**Waterloo Region Announces its Fifth Pick**  
**Next Stop: Vancouver**  
**Bristol Questionnaire Winner!**  
**Beyond the Book Thanks Canadian Readers**  
**Love Libraries?**  
**Project Team Grows with a Dash of Halifax Flavour**  
**NEA Announces The Big Read**  
**Biggest-ever Book Group attempt!**  
**Chicago and Moscow Read Together**  
**Amy Laurent joins Beyond the Book**  
**Latest news on One Book, One Chicago**  
**Chicago Questionnaire: we have a winner!**  
**The Adventure Continues...**  
**Canada Reads: Book Titles**  
**Countdown to Canada Reads**  
**Anouk Lang joins Beyond the Book**  
**Kenwood Academy High Rocks Our World!**  
**Chicago Reads Jane Austen**  
**Toronto project**  
**Anna Burrells joins Beyond the Book**

**Map of Books Published Around the World**

2/6/08

WorldMapper is a site which produces cartogram maps (representations in which a country's area is altered in proportion to some external variable such as population) on a wide and compelling range of topics. Their map of books published around the world <<http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=343>> is surprising for what it shows about the nations publishing the most books. Also intriguing is the world map of books borrowed <<http://www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=344>>.

### **Whichbook.net**

15/5/08

Another day, another new technology for mediating our relationships with books ...

Whichbook.net is an intriguing little tool from Opening the Book Ltd which allows you to specify the kind of features that you enjoy meeting in the books you read (safe or disturbing? optimistic or bleak? funny or serious?) using a series of sliders. It then delivers to you a short list of books published since 1995 which match the parameters you've specified. As the site says,

The standard way of organising books for choice, on shelves in a library or a bookshop, or on the web, starts from the products available - the authors, titles, publishers or genres. Whichbook enables, for the first time, the choice of book to start from the individual reader and what they are looking for.

Readers in the UK can then use the service to click through to libraries where they can borrow the book. Give it a go <<http://www.whichbook.net/default.aspx>>.

### **BTB Fieldwork Sites on Google Maps**

9/5/08

Here at BTB some of us are just as enamoured of new technologies as we are of books. Anouk Lang has put our fieldwork sites onto Google Maps <<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msa=0&msid=114946083118728039872.00044cccdf837dc83606d&hl=en&ie=UTF8&ll=44.07552,-62.516062&spn=18.670514,121.245005&output=embed&s=AARTsJqTZi1P-haMVWUIHGUR76y8coPEtw>> so the geographic coverage of the Beyond the Book fieldwork sites can be seen below in an instant.

Those with Google Earth should be able to follow this link

<<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&output=nl&msid=114946083118728039872.00044cccdf837dc83606d>> to open the sites in Google Earth.

### **Book swaps**

1/5/08

For those interested in ways technology is changing the way we access books, the Guardian has a story on online book-swapping sites, which are not only saving trees, and money, but connecting people with books they would not normally read. These

sites bring people together, according to the founder of one, ReadItSwapIt.co.uk, who comments "Our forum is a great social tool. People who like books tend to like each other." Jeanette Winterson's take on the sites? "In the music industry, this kind of thing would be called 'file sharing', and technically illegal". Judge for yourself: the article can be found here

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/may/01/ethicalliving.recycling>>.

### **BTB Conference Publications**

7/3/08

We are really excited to be working with a number of journals to publish some of the great work that came out of the conference. We are pleased to be working with:

New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship  
Edited by Sally Maynard

Particip@tions (online journal of audience and reception research)  
Edited by Martin Barker

Popular Narrative Media  
Edited by Nickianne Moody & Joanne Knowles

Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media  
Technologies - Debates Section  
Edited by Julia Knight & Alexis Weedon

We look forward to some very exciting special issues.

Delegates from the conference should have been emailed this week with a combined CFP menu. If you were a delegate at the conference and didn't receive the email, please get in touch with Anna at [burrealz@adf.bham.ac.uk](mailto:burrealz@adf.bham.ac.uk)

### **Liverpool Reads ... Mal Peet**

23/2/08

Readers in the 2008 City of Culture can join in with Liverpool Reads 2008, which is themed around two books by Mal Peet. Tamar is a tale of spying and intrigue set in part during World War II, while Keeper is a football story, which follows a South American goalkeeper who eventually wins the World Cup.

This is what Mal Peet had to say about Liverpool Reads:

Books are free travel passes for journeys through space and time, and it's a brilliant, radical idea on the part of Liverpool Reads to distribute them to the people of Liverpool. And I feel hugely honoured that in 2008, the National Year of Reading and the year in which Liverpool is the European Capital of Culture, my books have been chosen as the City Reads. All it will take now for my happiness to be complete is either Liverpool or Everton winning the Premiership and the Cup. (One each would do.)

Find out more at [www.liverpoolreads.com](http://www.liverpoolreads.com).

## **Research into reading & new technologies in Canada**

18/2/08

Those with an interest in digital books and reading will be interested in a research group based primarily in Canada: INKE: Implementing New Knowledge Environments (formerly the HCI-Book Strategic Research Cluster). Their key research objectives, as stated on their website <<http://www.hci-book.org/cluster/index.php>>, are to:

- \* understand and describe the basic principles of humanistic interaction with knowledge objects (digital and analog alike)
- \* articulate core strategies for the design of humanistic knowledge objects, especially electronic books, based on this understanding
- \* suggest basic principles necessary for evaluating and implementing current technologies, and exploring future ones.

## **Plans to adopt Richard & Judy book selections on UK A-level syllabus**

14/2/08

Danielle Fuller was interviewed by the Birmingham Post about plans to introduce texts such as those featured on the UK TV show Richard and Judy onto the final-year high school syllabus. You can read about Danielle's praise for the idea here <<http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/birminghampost/news/2008/02/12/lecturer-praises-plan-to-adopt-richard-and-judy-for-a-levels-65233-20466251/>>.

## **Statistical consultant Lindsay Engel joins BTB**

26/11/07

The Beyond the Book team is happy to welcome the newest member of our project, Lindsay Engel. Serving as statistical consultant, Lindsay will help us work with the quantitative data collected from the nine different research sites where we posted our online survey. In addition to a fantastic sense of humour, and a zest for the outdoors and books, Lindsay brings much expertise to the project. She has a Masters of Arts in Family Studies and Gerontology and Bachelor of Arts Psychology, plus experience in research project co-ordination for Dalhousie University/IWK Health Center's Departments of Psychiatry and General Pediatrics. She's also held various lead positions in statistical analysis involving both univariate and multivariate analysis on projects in several sociology and social work schools in the Halifax area. Welcome, Lindsay! It's good to have you with us.

## **National Public Radio podcast on the Kindle**

25/11/07

Amazon has just brought out the Kindle, a new e-book reader (with a fairly hefty price-tag) to which you can download e-books, newspapers or other online publications. National Public Radio's On Point programme recently hosted a podcast discussion about it, featuring Sven Birketts and Steven Levy. Interestingly enough, many of the points raised by Birketts, Levy, the On Point host Sheilah Kast and listeners who phoned in overlapped with those which the BTB team have asked readers in our travels around the UK, the US and Canada. How does technology affect the way we choose our

books, for example? and does the relationship between oneself, the text, and other readers of that text change when the book becomes an e-book?

The NPR blurb <[http://www.onpointradio.org/shows/2007/11/20071120\\_b\\_main.asp](http://www.onpointradio.org/shows/2007/11/20071120_b_main.asp)> summarises the discussion thus:

E-read all about it. On Monday, Amazon debuted its much-anticipated e-book reader -- the Kindle -- and set the book world abuzz. The goals of the electronic reading device are simple: to replace bound paper, and to change the way we read and buy books. Lofty, but maybe not impossible goals, for our wired, jacked up, on-demand world. Purists warn against putting books in electronic garb: Beware of the effects on our culture. Read between the lines. We'll do just that, with a concerned critic and a top technology writer.

You can download the podcast here <[http://podcastdownload.npr.org/anon.npr-podcasts/podcast/330/510053/16478431/WBUR\\_16478431.mp3](http://podcastdownload.npr.org/anon.npr-podcasts/podcast/330/510053/16478431/WBUR_16478431.mp3)>.

### **Project Conference News**

7/11/07

August 31-2 September saw one of the major events for the Beyond the Book project: our conference on Contemporary Cultures of Reading which ended our second project year. Sufficient time has now passed for the BTB team to have caught their breath and written up a news item about it! Over 120 scholars and practitioners from a range of countries descended on the University of Birmingham, representing a cross-section of disciplines including English literature, sociology, education, African-American studies, linguistics, performance studies, criminology, library science, publishing studies and cultural studies. Over three days, the topics covered ranged from the circulation of urban fiction among women in US prisons to the effect of blogging on the dissemination of poetry, and from projects using reading to assist in recuperation from brain surgery to online Chinese time-travel romances.

Postdoctoral research fellow, Anouk Lang, said: 'What was really striking about this conference was that it became clear over the three days that a lot of scholars in different parts of the world are very interested in studying reading and its effects in the social world, but that there aren't always obvious disciplinary or institutional contexts in which to carry out this kind of research. We hope that the conversations and relationships that started at Beyond the Book will be carried forward into new multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional collaborations, as reading is such a complex web of processes that it is difficult to analyse through one disciplinary approach alone.'

Various publications are planned from the conference: an edited volume is already well under way, and there are plans to put together several special issues of journals. Watch this space for more ...

### **Amelia Chester Joins the Team**

16/7/07

The newest member of Beyond the Book research team is Haligonian Amelia Chester. Amelia is a fourth-year Cultural Studies student at MSVU in Halifax. She's assisting

with data coding and transcriptions in between taking a summer course on the history of rock 'n roll, and playing her own gigs around the city. Welcome, Amelia! Good to have you with us.

### **Huntsville Survey Winner**

15/7/07

Clarise from Huntsville is the winner of our Big Read survey, which we ran for residents of Huntsville and Madison County, Alabama, who were reading Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Clarise's favourite kinds of books are history, romances, science fiction and contemporary fiction.

### **Seattle Reads Questionnaire Winner**

28/6/07

Our final survey, Seattle Reads, is now finished, and the winner is David from Ravenna, Seattle. David was lucky enough to see Isabel Allende when she came to Seattle some years back, and enjoyed seeing her and hearing the questions and reactions of others at the event. We're pleased he elected to receive his gift certificate from the wonderful Elliott Bay Book Company, an independent bookstore in downtown Seattle.

### **Last Stop: Seattle**

23/4/07

Our final fieldwork site for Beyond the Book research is the fine city of Seattle, Washington. Helping us there are two keen graduate students whom we are excited to have with us. With a Master of Education degree in hand from Portland State University, and a Oregon licensure in middle school (6-8) and high school social studies and language arts, Felice Atesoglu is working towards a PhD in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. Mitogo Ondo Ayekaba is a freelance writer and collaborator for journal the Ebano Latinoamerica. He is currently a student at the University of Washington-Bothell, diligently pursuing a Master of Art in Policy Studies.

Both Felice and Mitogo are working hard on recruiting focus group participants for Seattle area focus groups, which will be held in various parts of the city from May 16-19. Contact Felice at [atesoglu@u.washington.edu](mailto:atesoglu@u.washington.edu), and Mitogo at [mitoha\\_ondo@yahoo.com](mailto:mitoha_ondo@yahoo.com) if you are interested in talking about books and reading.

### **The Team Welcomes Diana LaChance in Huntsville, Alabama**

4/4/07

Next stop for the Beyond the Book research team? Huntsville, Alabama, where the city is reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* as part of NEA's The Big Read project. Diana LaChance is our woman on the ground in Huntsville, and she's already busy recruiting participants for focus group discussions and online survey participation. Diana is a freelance writer and editor, and is an active community member. If you're interested in our project, contact Diana at [deeahn@yahoo.com](mailto:deeahn@yahoo.com). Welcome aboard, Diana. We are glad to have you!



### **UK-wide Questionnaire Winner**

12/3/07

Another questionnaire, another happy prize recipient of a book voucher. Our most recent winner is Joy from Lincoln, who was one of over 1600 people who shared their thoughts on reading and Richard and Judy's Book Club with us. Here's what Joy wrote about the centrality of reading in her life:

"Reading has always been important to me; it is freeing to be able to let my imagination play in the stories and worlds that can be found inside books. I've always admired writers who could communicate visions beyond the realms of real life, and even those who portray familiar scenes. Non-fiction has also played an important role as I am now a student and guidance books in my area of study are worth their weight in gold as I learn techniques and find inspiration within each page."

### **'Small Island' Read**

23/2/07

The biggest UK citywide reading event is currently underway in Liverpool, Bristol, Hull and Glasgow where Andrea Levy's 'Small Island' and Benjamin Zephaniah's 'Refugee Boy' have been selected as featured books. For information about events in Liverpool, go to [www.liverpoolreads.com](http://www.liverpoolreads.com). For more information about the 'Small Island' read 4-city extravaganza visit: [www.smallislandread.com](http://www.smallislandread.com)

### **Welcome Ross!**

27/1/07

Ross Cohen is working as our new fieldwork assistant in Liverpool, as 'Beyond the Book' gears up to investigate Liverpool's participation in the 'Small Island Read 2007.' Ross, a native Liverpoolian, is a graduate of the American & Canadian Studies department at the University of Birmingham and is hoping to go to film school in the US later this year. His graduating film from ACS about the Beatles in America gained first class marks, and included interviews with many people closely associated with the band, including their former tour manager.

### **Two New Team Members**

2/1/07

Welcome to Sara Beadle and Claire Brown who have both come on board as fieldwork assistants for BtB. Sara will be working with us in Birmingham and Claire in Liverpool during January and February 2007. Both have a strong commitment to the promotion of diverse reading cultures. Sara has been involved in the organisation of the Birmingham Book Festival and many other book events in the West Midlands. Claire has been a volunteer for 'Liverpool Reads', advertised poetry events for Northend Writers, and currently facilitates a reading group for people with early dementia.

### **Birmingham Book Festival - survey winner**

29/11/06

Our Birmingham Book Festival survey is now offline, and Christine from Sutton Coldfield is our winner. Christine is a wired reader: she belongs to an online book group and gets some of her book recommendations from Amazon, but she's also in a face-to-face book group too and in fact started up a book group at her former school. A £50 book e-voucher is winging its electronic way to her.

### **Wayne Wiegand webcast interview on One Book One Community events**

5/9/06

Listen to Wayne Wiegand, F. William Summers Professor of Library and Information Studies at Florida State University, talk about the importance of research into One Book One Community events in a webcast interview with Charley Seavey in August 2006. As well as One Books, they discuss the need to undertake research into libraries in order to understand reading, and some of the reasons to take popular reading seriously. The webcast is one of a series on the LiS Interactive Webcasting page at the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies at the University of Missouri-Columbia. You can access the interview on the LiS page here  
<[http://www.lisradio.missouri.edu/view.php?id=303&type=summary&title=Tiger+Eye+Reading+Room+-+Wayne+Wiegand+Interview&cast\\_date=August+28%2C+2006](http://www.lisradio.missouri.edu/view.php?id=303&type=summary&title=Tiger+Eye+Reading+Room+-+Wayne+Wiegand+Interview&cast_date=August+28%2C+2006)>.

### **The Reading Experience Database Needs You**

4/9/06

Visitors to the Beyond the Book website may be interested in the Reading Experience Database, a project organised jointly by the Open University and the Institute of English Studies, University of London, and funded by the AHRC. The RED research team is looking for accounts of the reading experiences of British subjects and overseas visitors to Britain from 1450 to 1945, with the aim of building up a collection of more than 25,000 accounts of these reading experiences - recorded engagements with written or printed texts, beyond the mere fact of possession. Over time, this collected information will be of interest to researchers and scholars in a number of different disciplines (History, English Studies, Sociology, Anthropology), and also to anyone interested in the history of reading.

They write:

RED will only ever be as good as the material that goes into it. And this is where the wider community of readers comes in. If, in the course of your own reading (of biographies, collections of letters, autobiographies, diaries, memoirs and so on), you come across a description of reading from any historical period between 1450 and 1945 (and this can be as cursory as, for example, finding a simple record of an identifiable reader having read a particular book, the newspaper, or an advertisement, or as extensive as a diary which records a person's thoughts on what they read every day), please make a note of it, and pass on that information to us. If you have family records (letters, diaries etc) which mention the reading of your ancestors, we are extremely interested in hearing about these. Please contact either Katie Halsey ([Katie.Halsey@sas.ac.uk](mailto:Katie.Halsey@sas.ac.uk)) or Rosalind Crone ([R.H.Crone@open.ac.uk](mailto:R.H.Crone@open.ac.uk)), or fill in one of our online forms, available at <http://reading.open.ac.uk:8282/part1.asp>.

If you're interested in participating, a flyer with more information may be downloaded

from our Research Results section. There is also a little more information in our Links section.

### **Birmingham Book Festival 2006**

4/8/06

4-13 October 2006. Speed reading groups, an all-night writing workshop, events on canal boats and in warehouses, plus many special guests link Brum's Book Festival to the places and communities which make up our city. Beyond the Book will be investigating how the Festival brings reading alive and we hope to discover who takes part - and why!

Brummies: watch this space to find out how you can participate in the next phase of our research.

[www.birminghambookfestival.org](http://www.birminghambookfestival.org)

### **A Big Thank-You!**

2/8/06

The BtB team would like to thank everyone who has worked with us during project year 1: transcribers, translators, fieldwork assistants, support staff at the Universities of Birmingham & Mount Saint Vincent Univ., our Advisory Board and Nemisys, the creators of this website -- whose names appear in the 'About Us' section of this website. At several points in time, the BtB team has consisted of 10 people working together across the Atlantic in various geographic locations. We couldn't have completed our year 1 goals without all of these talented people: thanks to you all!

### **One Book One Vancouver winner**

18/7/06

One of the (many) perks of this project is that at regular intervals we get to make people happy by bestowing book vouchers upon them. Our most recent winner is Colleen from Vancouver, who filled out our One Book One Vancouver questionnaire. Like many of the readers we've met both virtually and in person, Colleen is a member of a book club, and finds this the best way to hear about new titles. Reading has been a hobby for her since she was very young - an enjoyable way to spend time and to learn about new things.

### **Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference**

18/7/06

As our research project nears the end of its first year, we are presenting some of our findings at the Crossroads in Cultural Studies Conference, which this year is being held at İstanbul Bilgi University. Our panel, Reading Matters: The Commodification of Contemporary Book Cultures in the UK & North America, comprises a paper from Danielle Fuller on One Book, One Chicago, another from DeNel Rehberg Sedo on the business of book clubs, and a third from Anouk Lang on Canada Reads.

### **More conference news**

23/6/06

We are thrilled that Elizabeth Long has agreed to be a keynote speaker at our conference in September 2007. Professor Long's detailed study of women's book groups in Houston, Texas, *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life* (2003) has been an important influence upon the design and methodology of the BTB project. Find out more about both of our keynote speakers on the conference pages on this site.

### **Conference News**

20/6/06

We are excited to launch our conference pages on this website with the news that Professor Janice Radway (Duke University, USA) has agreed to be the keynote speaker at our conference on contemporary cultures of the book, 1-2 September 2007. Please explore behind the 'Conference' icon button to find out more!

### **Canada Reads Winner**

22/5/06

All of us on the Beyond the Book project have been amazed by the response to our Canada Reads survey. Over one thousand Canadians took the time to tell us their thoughts on reading and the CBC programme Canada Reads. Our winner this time is Jody, from Toronto. Her recommendation for the kind of book that is best for Canada Reads? 'Fiction with a contemporary sense of the world (local, cosmopolitan, curious, and compassionate)'.

Our Canada Reads survey has now closed, but Canadian residents who live in Vancouver and the surrounding areas are eligible to participate in the next one. Click on the Questionnaire link above to get started!

### **Waterloo Region Announces its Fifth Pick**

18/5/06

Waterloo Region has just announced its latest reading selection for 2006 -their fifth year! This year OBOC organisers are encouraging everyone to read *Three Day Road* by Joseph Boyden. For more info on the book and author, visit the project web site at [www.therecord.com/onebook](http://www.therecord.com/onebook). It looks like the folks in Ontario are planning lots of events around this wonderful book, including a blog so readers can share their thoughts.

And, because we are proud supporters of librarians and readers of all ilks, check out the new reference book *One Book, One Community* (Waterloo Region) project chair Sharron Smith has co-authored: *Canadian Fiction A Guide to Reading Interests*. Here is a link to the publisher's site <http://www.greenwood.com/catalog/LU1664.aspx>.

### **Next Stop: Vancouver**

12/5/06

Beyond the Book team members are pleased to announce that Lori Thiessen has joined the project team in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia. As our new field research

assistant, Lori is busy participating in One Book, One Vancouver (OBOV) events and recruiting focus group and online survey participants.

Lori recently graduated from Simon Fraser University with a BA in English and Publishing. Her honours essay was about a fourteenth-century English mystic named Margery Kempe. Lori brings a wealth of organizational skills, experience in publishing, and an infectious bright spirit.

Lori's personal motto? "There is no such thing as too many books--only too few bookshelves." We couldn't agree with you more. Welcome, Lori.

### **Bristol Questionnaire Winner!**

7/5/06

Congratulations to the winner of our Bristol survey prize: Samantha, from Portishead, just west of Bristol. Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the explorer whose 200th anniversary is celebrated by Bristol's Great Reading Adventure, had numerous links with Portishead. His ship the S.S. Great Western sailed past the headland of Portishead on her maiden voyage. Samantha described the Great Reading Adventure as helping to develop regional identity and a sense of heritage, and also encouraging people to use their library. She receives a book voucher for £50.

### **Beyond the Book Thanks Canadian Readers**

27/4/06

We're delighted with the overwhelming enthusiasm with which Atlantic Canadians have responded to our call for discussion group participants. All our Halifax groups are now full, although we do still have some room in Wolfville and PEI. We apologise to those Haligonians who wanted to take part and now won't be able to. We hope that you'll send us your thoughts and comments via our online questionnaire instead. This can be accessed through the large Q to the right of our main screen. You're also welcome to email us your thoughts at [beyondthebook@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:beyondthebook@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

### **Love Libraries?**

27/3/06

...we do. Post your thoughts about libraries at [www.lovelibraries.co.uk](http://www.lovelibraries.co.uk). This campaign, a partnership among UK libraries, the Reading Agency (a not-for-profit organisation that aims to get more people reading via use of libraries) and several publishers, includes a makeover of 3 libraries in need of some TLC. The makeover will take 12 weeks and can be tracked on the website.

### **Project Team Grows with a Dash of Halifax Flavour**

24/3/06

We welcome three new members of the project team, Canadians Cathy Collett, Kimberly Walsh and Lesley Mulcahy, who will be working with DeNel in Halifax.

Cathy Collett is currently finishing an Honours Thesis in English at Mount Saint Vincent University. She is the president of the English Society, teaches piano to thirty

children and adults a week, and is the Sunday School Coordinator at Grace United Church. Next year Cathy will be moving to Hamilton to complete her MA at McMaster University.

Kimberly Walsh is a mature student entering her final year in the bachelor of public relations (co-operative education) at MSVU. Her prior education includes the University of Toronto where she pursued English and political science. Kimberly is also the founder and managing editor of Halifax's only non-profit literary journal All Rights Reserved.

Lesley Mulcahy hails from Newfoundland where she studied at Memorial University. An avid reader, Lesley enjoys all things books. Along with Kimberly, Lesley is a graduating student in Public Relations. She is also part of the founding team of the literary journal All Rights Reserved.

### **NEA Announces The Big Read**

28/2/06

The National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest in the USA is funding 10 communities to participate in "One Book, One Community" programs as part of a pilot project to promote reading. The NEA project is named "The Big Read." The activities are scheduled to take place from February to May 2006, including read out-loud marathons, film series and book discussions. The program responds to the NEA's 2004 study "Reading at Risk" which showed that literary reading in the US "is in steep decline." NEA Chairman Dana Gioia hopes that a community-wide reading program can "restore reading to its essential place in American culture." The 10 locations will focus on one of four classic novels that have been chosen for "The Big Read": "Fahrenheit 451", "The Great Gatsby", "Their Eyes Were Watching God", and "To Kill A Mockingbird."

### **Biggest-ever Book Group attempt!**

24/2/06

Bristol: Thursday 2nd March @ 7pm. Borders bookshop in downtown Bristol will make a world-record attempt to create the largest book group ever. Anyone who wishes to participate should go along and be prepared to talk about "Around the World in 80 Days" for 5 mins. Organizers claim that you don't need to have read the book, just be prepared to talk about it! This exciting event ties into the "Great Reading Adventure" 2006.

### **Chicago and Moscow Read Together**

24/2/06

Sister cities Chicago (USA) and Moscow (Russia) will be reading together this Spring. Chicago Public Library will host an international online book club as part of their Spring 2006 "One Book, One Chicago" program:

"This spring, Chicago and its sister city, Moscow, Russia, will join together for the first international One Book, One Chicago, as residents of both cities read and discuss Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. Like Chicago,

Moscow will present book discussions and dramatic readings featuring this book throughout April." (Richard M. Daley, Mayor of Chicago)

### **Amy Laurent joins Beyond the Book**

23/1/06

We are glad to welcome Amy Laurent to the Beyond the Book research team. Amy, who is co-ordinating activities for us in Bristol, is a Fine Art graduate practising in Bristol with a great love of books and writing.

### **Latest news on One Book, One Chicago**

18/1/06

The next book announcement for One Book, One Chicago is scheduled for 15 Feb ... watch this space!

Also of interest - Oprah's Book Club has just selected Elie Wiesel's Night, the novel which was chosen as the Spring 2002 selection for One Book, One Chicago.

### **Chicago Questionnaire: we have a winner!**

17/1/06

We are happy to announce that the winner of our One Book One Chicago questionnaire prize is Arlecia, from Chicago. She wrote:

" ... when I was a kid reading was my escape. I read all the time so that I would not be so alone. I was the baby of the family and I really had no one but books to keep me company. Even now, I read everything, I mean everything. Books are knowledge and knowledge is power."

### **The Adventure Continues...**

5/1/06

Bristol's Great Reading Adventure - the first "One Book, One Community" to be organized in the UK to the best of our knowledge - has run successfully for 3 years. On 5 January 2006, the Adventure continues, this time with a program which will run throughout the south west region of the UK. Keep up to date with events via [www.swreads.com](http://www.swreads.com).

The organizers have selected the Jule Verne classic Around the World in Eighty Days as a tie-in to the Brunel bi-centennial celebrations, and hope to involve readers of all ages in activities relating to the book, its themes and ideas.

### **Canada Reads: Book Titles**

5/12/05

And the books that "Canada Reads" will be featuring in 2006 are: Deafening by Frances Itani Cocksure by Mordecai Richler Three Day Road by Joseph Boyden Rooms for Rent in the Outer Planets: Selected Poems, 1962-1996 by Al Purdy A Complicated...

## **Countdown to Canada Reads**

29/11/05

On December 5 the CBC are due to announce the titles and the names of the celebrity participants for Canada Reads 2006, so watch this space for further details! (or check [www.cbc.ca/canadareads](http://www.cbc.ca/canadareads) ).

## **Anouk Lang joins Beyond the Book**

31/10/05

Welcome Anouk! Anouk takes up her full-time position as the Postdoctoral Fellow on the project on 1 November. Anouk brings an impressive set of skills to Beyond the Book, including her fluency in French, her experience of working with textual data using quantitative software, and her knowledge of systemic functional linguistics which was developed by her compatriot, Sydney linguist Michael Halliday.

Anouk recently submitted her PhD for examination at the University of Cambridge. Entitled "Reading Nation, race and gender in Canadian and Australian modernist poetry, 1925-1985," Anouk's dissertation adopts a cultural materialist approach to her investigations of literary production in the two nation-states. In particular, she critiques the poetry of Canadian civil rights activist Frank Scott, and that of the Australian environmentalist and Aboriginal rights campaigner Judith Wright.

## **Kenwood Academy High Rocks Our World!**

20/10/05

Thanks to the wonderful students in Mayor Daley's Teen Book Club at Kenwood Academy High School in Hyde Park, Chicago, for sharing their book discussion with us this week. What a great club! The frank interpretations of Austen's novel were refreshing, the intelligence displayed impressive, and the hospitality humbling.

## **Chicago Reads Jane Austen**

10/10/05

The ninth "One Book, One Chicago" selection was announced in September: it is Jane Austen's "Pride & Prejudice". Austen's novel is the first non-American book chosen for the event which has previously urged Chicago-ans to read, among others, Lorraine Hansbury's *A Raisin' in the Sun* and Stuart Dybek's *The Coast of Chicago*. What will the residents of Chicago make of this very English eighteenth-century novel? Beyond the Book aims to find out! Watch this space, as we venture to discover how and why *Pride and Prejudice* gets Chicago talking Austen. Living in Chicago? Please take part in our on-line questionnaire!

## **Toronto project**

2/10/05

Julie Van Huysse, our research assistant for the pilot portion of Beyond the Book, is busily planning her own One Book, One Community project. Julie is an elementary education teacher—second grade, to be exact—in an area of Toronto that is home to many new Canadian immigrants. Her One Book project aims to help her students'



parents get involved in their children's lives and school through reading the same book. Currently working hard on securing funding, Julie hopes to have the inaugural project up and running by next year.

### **Anna Burrells joins Beyond the Book**

30/9/05

We are delighted to welcome Anna as our part-time Administrative Assistant on the project. Anna brings both impressive administrative expertise and a genuine interest in reading to Beyond the Book. She is currently working on her PhD in the Department of English at the University of Birmingham. Within the field of European Modernisms, Anna's research interrogates notions of technology within literature of the inter-war period.

### **Blog**

In this space we hope that you will offer up your thoughts on reading, community reading, or anything else that you think is appropriate.

If you have questions about our work, post them here. If you have comments about your own work, please post them here, too. We want this space to be an open forum for discussion about contemporary literary culture.

If you are living outside of North America or the United Kingdom, we would love to hear from you too.

[Posts are in order of most to least recent]

### **Prison reading groups**

#### **Online versus print reading**

#### **The space you are in**

#### **About book clubs**

#### **Book Clubs in Halifax**

#### **open book=open world**

#### **An innocent abroad**

#### **Places Spaces cont**

#### **evolving reading**

#### **Places, spaces and books**

#### **Book Clubs**

#### **Book Clubs**

#### **Why Book Clubs?**

### **Prison reading groups**

9/10/07 By Sarah Turvey

I would love to hear from anyone involved in or interested in prison reading groups. A colleague and I have been involved for a number of years and are now trying to spread the word and encourage others. We have a website [www.prisonreadinggroups.org](http://www.prisonreadinggroups.org) Do visit it and contact us for more information.

### **Online versus print reading**

16/4/07 By Desmond Maley

Speaking as an academic librarian, I am wondering about the state of reading in the online era. I am concerned that the culture of the Internet, with its emphasis on skimming and cut-and-paste, is undermining sustained, intensive reading of complex texts. These texts were/are conceived and published in book form - yet often are received/read in electronic form. Is something being "lost in transition?" And are there corresponding impacts on the quality of writing?

### **The space you are in**

21/10/06 By Inga

I started a bookclub in our small city of 40,000 eight years ago and I know of only two other clubs in town. Sad, but true. We are six similarly aged women and read fiction except for once or twice a year we read non-fiction. We read Margaret Mc Millan's "Paris 1919" and John Ralston Saul's "Reflections of a Siamese Twin" plus some amazing fiction in the last two years. I've found that my reaction to a book was highly dependant on my physical and emotional state,perhaps even my spiritual state. If I was in a bad space I found it difficult to enjoy the book or add to the discussion, something I had not thought about but makes sense. Also what I have just read,for example, I and another member,without each other knowing both read Anne Marie Mc Donald's "As the Crow Flies" and then turned our reading to the club choice of Carol Shield's "Unless" and we were the only two who did not like the book. Mc Donald had us on such an emotional high that Shield's story just didn't evoke that same level of intensity. I'm grateful to have found your site and enjoyed the other blogs.

### **About book clubs**

8/9/06 By Kate

I think the pleasure of book clubs varies a great deal. The people obviously matter, but also the location, the time you have available, the comfort of your surroundings...

You see, I live in Reading which is pretty empty of any culture whatsoever but I work for a publisher in Oxford so, when I was told there was a book club at work, I thought, great! like-minded people talking about books in the most bookish city in the world - what could be better? Unfortunately the reality was that the club meets over lunch in the staff canteen in an open plan building so we are trying to squeeze onto tiny tables, surrounded by noise and other people we know, have at most 45 minutes together and being at work already means it is too easy for, you know, work to prevent you from attending.

It's a real shame because I love talking about books. I have certain friendships formed entirely on this shared love. I'm leaving Reading soon so hopefully my new home will be near a 'real' book club!

Great site by the way.

### **Book Clubs in Halifax**

3/5/06 By DeNel

Hello Colleen.

Thanks for posting.

We've just finished our round of focus groups in the Maritimes, and have met many wonderful readers. A few of them are members of book clubs, and some of those book clubs are looking for members. I'll try to get in touch with some of them and direct them to your blog entry.

In the meantime, you might want to check out the book clubs that meet at your local library branch. Or, you could ask a few of your reading friends to form a group with you. They ask a few more friends, and those friends ask a few more. Then, waaaa! You've got a book club.

Again, thanks for blogging.

### **open book=open world**

18/4/06 By colleen

hello to all inspired readers. Since I was a young girl, I was a reader. Luckily in our rural area we had a public library within walking distance, where I would walk to get my books.

Reading heals, and reveals a world that exists beyond your own. Reading actually is a world of its own. You can curl up in Tibet, England, Africa, or anywhere else, if you have a book in your hand.

I'm a 'mature' graduating university student -English major, of course- (46 actually, which I think is within the mature range) and am looking for a great book club in the Halifax, NS area. Any suggestions?

colleenswords@hotmail.com

### **An innocent abroad**

8/2/06 By BamaMan

I would be interested to learn from others re. the dynamics of reading and book clubs. I am still saddled with the stereotyped image, from the fabulous Donna Reed Show of the 1950s, of the suburban housewife "broadening her horizons" at a weekly Club but running the risk of neglecting domestic duties in doing so. (I believe Donna got her comeuppance when she couldn't get past the intro of War and Peace --- she, to the relief of Mr Reed, returned to the kitchen at that point.)

I find the biggest challenge, given the limited time I have for "pleasure" reading outside the demands of an academic job, is that I run a narrow path in my reading. US contemporary (DeLillo, Roth, Ellroy, Mosley and some up-and-comers). So I'm woefully ignorant beyond American shores....(And I now notice, male American shores)

### **Places Spaces cont**

1/2/06 By Dale

Well, to elaborate on my experience, I usually attended readings at bookstores in my neighborhood. At the time I lived in Old Strathcona in Edmonton. It is an area near the UofA that is very diverse in culture and events. There were a few bookstores within walking distance of my home (along with live theatre and music venues, shops, restaurants, pubs etc) and this provided an obvious avenue for my interests.

My life has changed and after a short stay in Saskatoon my wife and I are in a suburb of Edmonton. Lets just say it is a long walk from Old Strat.

Needless to say, Edmonton is a large city. And while perception of the uninitiated may be that EDM is a cold, northern city known only for a large mall and short lived success in the NHL in the mid 80's; the truth is that it is easy for any event to get lost in the multitude of high profile entertainment offerings.

cheers and all good things....

### **evolving reading**

16/1/06 By DeNel

Robert McCrum evaluated the contemporary environment of e-publishing in Sunday's Guardian, outlining the different camps' perspectives on the future of books. One thing really struck me—other than the doom and gloom nature of critics of digitization—the social and sensory pleasure I get from books. This pleasure is not only that which I get from talking about the latest novel I'm reading or the nostalgic feelings I conjure from the smell of ink and musty paper, but extends to my joy of walking through the stacks at my university library looking for that rare article published in a journal that is no longer in print. I, too, am thankful for the digitization projects popping up all over the world. I need them and want them to enhance my country (read: in the boondocks) office. I think there's room for both print and digital text in my life. What about you?

### **Places, spaces and books**

6/1/06 By DeNel

Hi Dale, thanks for your kudos. We've been working like little beavers to get this site up and running. Of course, it doesn't seem much like work when you're doing what you love. The site is always evolving, so we do hope people come back time and again, and that they offer advice to help us make it useful.

I'd like to comment on your comment :-)) about the place where you live determining what and how you participate in book events. I think you're really on to something here. We've visited three different locations that support mass book events, and have noticed that the book culture in each city is very, very different.

Where do you live? Is there a lot of other than book culture in the city? In other words, is there a lot of other things to do and going on at the same time as there would be book events?

d

### **Book Clubs**

30/12/05 By Dale

DeNel...first of all congratulations to you and your colleagues on this site! Jane directed me to it this morning; I think it's wonderful. I will direct all my book loving friends to it!

I have never been involved in a book club; although I have enjoyed the feeling of immediate connection to anyone I meet who enjoys the same authors as I do. I enjoy attending readings by the author. It has been years since I have done this....I think the place I was living influenced my participation in the past and a lack of effort influences it now. Thanks for inspiring the thought process to seek up once again.

Cheers!

### **Book Clubs**

13/12/05 By Jay Warner

I don't belong to a book club right now but I have in the past. I love book clubs. They let people who are excited by books talk about that excitement with other people reading the same book. I often read books on the recommendation of my friends (but never celebrities, their opinion on books holds little weight unless they are authors). I love author studies, author round tables, and I want to have a network of friends based on books. Heaven!

### **Why Book Clubs?**

31/10/05 By DeNel

I thought I'd get this blog going by posting a question that's near to my heart. In fact, it's near everything I do considering that my research life is centered on reading, and collective reading.

I belong to a book club, and while I enjoy it, it still hasn't become a part of me like my very first book club in Vancouver. Maybe it was the women in the club, maybe it was the books. I'm not sure. I'll stick with this group in Halifax because I am holding onto the ideals of my first one...

Are you in a book club? Do you like it? What makes you go month after month?

### **Team Reads**

#### **Beyond the Book team members write about their current reading.**

DeNel writes: During the last six months of my study leave (sabbatical), I have had the good fortune to live on the beach in southern Mexico. Life is simple here: no phones, no t.v., and no internet—unless you have a satellite, and we don't. That means most of my free time has been spent tackling my 'to read' list. Some of the books I recommend to readers of this webpage, others I don't.

For a long time, Don DeLillo's *White Noise* sat on my list because most of my academic friends praised it. I don't understand why, unless they read it in the 80s at the beginning of mass environmental consciousness. I thought the book boring, dated and the plot unlikely. The saving grace is the character development; it's always fun to see myself and my colleagues highlighted in comedic reality.

The prolific work of Anne Tyler can be found in its entirety in our village's small lending library. I chose *Back When We Were Grown Ups*. The story of a middle-aged woman who asks the big question of why are we here guides the reader to ask the same questions of herself, and maybe see some answers. With brilliant dialogue, and graphic character development, Tyler makes for good, smart beach reading.

In our research travels, we have spoken with so many voracious readers. Almost all of them in the past two years have read, and praised, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. Because so many spoke of it, I didn't feel the need to read it. The many readers of our

study unknowingly and slowly laid out the entire book for me—including the ending! So, instead of reading Hosseini's hugely successful book, I decided to read *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Describing the plight of women in Afghanistan through vivid characters, Hosseini paints a picture of sadness, despair and hope for oppressed women. I was left wondering how a male author could possibly know the intimate details of women's lives, but hopeful that his book reaches readers who have the means to make necessary changes.

I shared a good month of reading time with an English travel writer by the name of Isabella Tree. Her *Sliced Iguana* shed insight into the country that I've grown to love and admire. Weaving ancient history with contemporary political and cultural observations, Tree insightfully and humorously taught me to respect, listen and experience Mexico in new ways. As an academic, I felt a distinct absence of research citations, but realize I am not her main audience. When I travel to new places, I will be certain to check if my new favourite travel writer has herself commented on it.

My time here hasn't been entirely carefree. I was bitten by a Mexican bug that put me flat out for 11 days. Not one to lie around, I decided to tackle the Harry Potter series. I'd read the first one when it was published, but had decided after that that I wanted to read them all in succession. My illness allowed me to read three of the books, and forget my rumbling and painful stomach as I learned about charms, Quidditch and the universal forms of good and evil. Reading all of the books one after another was a treat. Much like watching an exceptional television series on DVD, I felt as if I was in a never-ending good movie. Daily life was peppered with language and images of the fantastical world J.K. Rowling so brilliantly created. When I finally turned the last page of the seventh tome, I felt a sadness one feels when packing a suitcase and boarding the plane home from a really fantastic holiday.

Since finishing HP, I have read *The Year of Magical Thinking*, Joan Didion's memoir of the year after the death of her husband, editorial/writing partner and friend. Always an engaging author, Didion's personal reflections are inflected with facts and information gleaned from her fastidious research habit. *The Year* gave me a new appreciation of the grieving process and of death itself. I recommend it to anyone who is trying to help a loved one or friend through the death process.

If you love the Nova Scotia landscape, and its people, pick up Jean McNeil's *Interpreter of Silences*. That's really all I can remember about it, and it wasn't too long ago that I read it! Maybe that tells you exactly what I thought about it.

Like Danielle, I, too, read *Tenderness of Wolves: A Novel* by Stef Penney. I thought it was a tender human love story. I thought that Penney was light on the severity of northern Canadian winters (I've lived through a few, and know what it feels like to have frostbite). I also thought it odd how all of the characters spoke the same English dialect. What I did find fascinating, however, was the portrayal of the Hudson's Bay Company. As an American-born and bred Canadian, I am always fascinated by the divergent ideological beginnings of Canada and the US. I knew that the 'Company' was influential in Canadian development, but I didn't realize the extent of their power. While I didn't think this was a book worthy of the Costa Prize, I understand how 'otherness' can be interpreted and received. Hopefully, English readers will be intrigued enough to seek out Canadian historical writers who might shed additional different light

on our country. (I recommend beginning with Rudy Wiebe and Margaret Lawrence.)

The cold north is an unlikely preferred theme when the temp is around 40c, but as the English say, 'there it is.' Last night I finished *Peace Like a River*. Set in Minnesota and my home state of North Dakota, Leif Enger does not hold back on his descriptions of torrid winter blizzards and the characters such living produces. Using brilliant technique of recollection and first-person narrative through Ruben, an 11-year-old asthmatic, Enger produces a landscape the reader smells, feels and will always remember. (Have you ever smelled cold? I promise, it has a smell and Enger is able to bring it to you!) The jacket copy says that Enger has produced another Owen Meany, but I wouldn't go that far. Ruben is a lively, vivid character, but it's his feisty eight-year-old Western prose writing sister, Swede, who will stay with me forever. (Spoiler – kind of – she becomes a professor!)

Thanks to her recent travels, which afforded her good opportunities for novel-reading in noisy airports etc., Danielle has recently read Stef Penney's *The Tenderness of Wolves*, Alexander McCall Smith's *The Kalahari Typing School for Men* and Alice Hoffman's *Skylight Confessions*. The first two novels draw upon the detective/mystery genres, while Alice Hoffman's book is more of a realist fiction which charts the story of a New England family across three generations.

Although the faux-naïve style of McCall Smith is not really my cup of tea, I can see why so many readers fall in love with his protagonist, Patience. I'm sorry to have missed the recent BBC dramatisation of the first novel in this best-selling series – it would have been interesting to see how McCall Smith's nostalgic representation of Botswana translated on the screen. Penney's novel, meanwhile, is set in northern Ontario during 1867. I found the evocation of place to be fairly convincing, although the Canadian friend who read it after me felt that she had underestimated the extreme isolation of small communities during the mid-nineteenth-century (he also commented upon how all the characters speak the same kind of English!) Whether or not these details engage or annoy the reader, Penney presents a compelling story: this was a proper 'page-turner' for me. Similarly, Hoffman kept me reading rather fervently, moving me to tears at least twice (and in public because I was on an aeroplane!), with her sensitive portrayal of loss, grief and haunting. The skylight of the title refers to the extraordinary 'glass house' designed by a family member who is an architect, and the literal building acts as a metaphor for the fragility of relationships which play out beneath the glass panelled roof.

Anouk's recent reading includes Francine Prose's *Blue Angel* and the wonderfully titled *Talking Right: How Conservatives Turned Liberalism into a Tax-Raising, Latte-Drinking, Sushi-Eating, Volvo-Driving, New York Times-Reading, Body-Piercing, Hollywood-Loving, Left-Wing Freak Show*, by the Berkeley linguist Geoffrey Nunberg.

*Blue Angel* is an academic novel, a genre which I'm coming to see as less concerned with university-specific plot twists and campus settings, and more about the merciless skewering of human failings for which academic contexts seem a somewhat incidental vehicle for transmission. The character at the centre of this novel, a tenured professor of creative writing whose days of productive writing are long behind him, is so wrapped up in himself and his infatuation for one of his students that he does not see his

downfall barreling towards him along the pretty tree-lined avenues of his New England college. As readers, though, we can see it coming all too clearly.

Nunberg's *Talking Right* looks at the ways that US Republicans have manipulated certain words in the realm of public discourse in the US – terms like liberal, elite, freedom and choice. The metaphors, narratives and associations that have been yoked to these words have had a distorting effect, with the term liberal elite, for example, evoking a wider narrative in which those in the media, in academia and in Hollywood are portrayed as having undue, and undeserved, influence on public life. I found the sections discussing how the language of class has been gradually co-opted to refer to taste rather than socio-economic status to be the most interesting. Merely bringing up class in US politics results in the charge of 'inciting class warfare', and Nunberg argues that this has been an effective tool for the Republicans because once you stop being able to talk about class, it's much more difficult to point out that those with real power tend not to be the 'liberal elite' but rather the socio-economic elite.

Anna has just finished reading *What was Lost* by Catherine O'Flynn, a Birmingham based writer, published by Tindall Street Press. I have to say that I bore with the first chapter (it felt a little bit like a kids book), but by the time I got to the second I was hooked. It is based around a shopping centre, and the disappearance of a young girl, and follows the ramifications of the choices that various employees at the shopping centre have made. Thematically it explores the ramifications of commodity culture. Everyone in the novel is lost within the maze of their own lives, and within the shopping centre itself - I get the distinct impression that O'Flynn has been reading some Adorno and Horkheimer lately - I loved it, and there is a great ending! (You can download the first five chapters of *What was Lost* from the Radio 5 website.) I have also just finished Tom Wolfe's *I am Charlotte Simmons* which I wasn't really feeling (I don't think I know enough about the US), and have just started Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* which, if the first chapter is anything to go by is like Beckett, Henry Green and Wyndham Lewis rolled into one, and is shaping up to be the best thing I have read in a VERY long time, though *Maus* which is currently ranking highly would be a tough one to beat!

## **Links**

[Posts are in order of least to most recent, but note that news items are undated on website]

**[www.readinggroupchoices.com](http://www.readinggroupchoices.com)**

**[www.readinggroupguides.com](http://www.readinggroupguides.com)**

**[www.bookgroup.info](http://www.bookgroup.info)**

**One Book, One Chicago**

**The Richard and Judy Book Club**

**Bristol's Great Reading Adventure**

**Seattle Reads**

**One Book, One Vancouver**

**The Reader magazine**

**Canada Reads**

**Liverpool Reads**

**One Book, One Community: Waterloo Region, Ontario**



**One Book AZ**  
**One Campus-One Community-One Book**  
**The September Project**  
**Ready Steady Book**  
**www.bookclubs.ca**  
**One Book One Internet**  
**Birmingham Book Festival 2006**  
**One Book, One College: Common Reading Programs**  
**The Reading Experience Database**  
**Moving Manchester, Mediating Marginalities**  
**Book Bags**  
**Book Crossing**  
**Beyond the Book for Floridians**  
**Kids and Reading**  
**INKE (formerly HCI-Book)**  
**Library Thing**  
**Mass reading event in London, Ontario: London Reads**

**www.readinggroupchoices.com**

Selections for lively book discussions, book club favourites and other suggestions for good book group chat can be found here.

<http://www.readinggroupchoices.com/>

**www.readinggroupguides.com**

Self-styled 'on-line community for reading groups.' Interviews with writers, book-related features and more.

<http://www.readinggroupguides.com/>

**www.bookgroup.info**

A great site built and maintained by a group of British women. Independent from publishers, this site manages to convey the personalities of those who run it without going OTT. Enter your group for this month's reading group prize!

<http://www.bookgroup.info/>

**One Book, One Chicago**

Read all about the latest selection and activities in Chicago. It wasn't the first but it may be the best known "One Book" event in the English-speaking world.

<http://www.chipublib.org/003cpl/oboc/pride/pride.html>

**The Richard and Judy Book Club**

Information about the books featured in the Richard and Judy Book Club, along with some information on the National Library for the Blind.

[http://www.channel4.com/entertainment/tv/microsites/R/richardandjudy/book\\_club/book\\_club.html](http://www.channel4.com/entertainment/tv/microsites/R/richardandjudy/book_club/book_club.html)

### **Bristol's Great Reading Adventure**

Everything you need to know about Bristol's Great Reading Adventure - information about the book and the author, historical details, contributions from readers, and resources for readers and teachers. The site will launch in early 2006; you can also see last year's site at [www.bristolreads.com](http://www.bristolreads.com). Related information can be found at [www.brunel200.com](http://www.brunel200.com).

[www.swreads.com](http://www.swreads.com)

### **Seattle Reads**

This programme, which previously went by the title "If All of Seattle Read the Same Book", is hosted by the Washington Center for the Book at The Seattle Public Library. You can read here about the featured book and the featured author.

[http://www.spl.org/default.asp?pageID=about\\_leader...](http://www.spl.org/default.asp?pageID=about_leader...)

### **One Book, One Vancouver**

Details about competitions, events and book discussions around Vancouver can be found here. There's also information on activities for children.

<http://www.vpl.ca/MDC/onebookonevancouver.html>

### **The Reader magazine**

'The Reader' in Liverpool, UK, is not only a wonderful print journal about reading, since the team also run this dynamic website and are the driving force beyond 'Liverpool Reads.'

<http://www.thereader.co.uk>

### **Canada Reads**

Each year five celebrity panelists discuss five Canadian books in the bid to see which book will be the one that all Canada Reads.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canadareads/>

### **Liverpool Reads**

Liverpool Reads has been running since 2004 and will run until 2008, Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture. You'll find information here on how to get involved,

along with other useful downloads like newsletters and teaching resources.

<http://www.liverpoolreads.com/>

### **One Book, One Community: Waterloo Region, Ontario**

Readers in Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and surrounding townships in Ontario gather together for this community-wide reading event.

<http://www.therecord.com/onebook/index.html>

### **One Book AZ**

Access current and past sites for One Book AZ here. There's also a site especially for kids.

<http://www.onebookaz.org/>

### **One Campus-One Community-One Book**

A "One Book" programme which reaches out from the Western Kentucky University to the whole of the Bowling Green community. An adult and children's programme run in parallel.

<http://www.bgOneBook.org>

### **The September Project**

A grassroots effort to foster public events in all libraries in the USA on or around September 11. September Project events are not about September 11; they are events of reflection, discussion, and dialogue about the meaning of democracy, the role of information in promoting active citizenship, and the importance of literacy in making sense of the world around us.

<http://www.theseptemberproject.org>

### **Ready Steady Book**

Those readers seeking up-to-the-minute reviews, interviews and other information will find Ready Steady Book a useful place to visit. This site calls itself 'an independent book review website devoted to reviewing the very best books in literary fiction, poetry, history and philosophy', and has plenty of resources for those wanting to keep their finger on the literary pulse.

<http://www.readysteadybook.com/>

### **www.bookclubs.ca**

A Random House site with resources for those in a book club or those who want to start one. You may find the collection of discussion guides useful: this is organised by author

and has particularly strong discussion questions for Margaret Atwood, Jane Austen, Marcel Proust and Salman Rushdie.

<http://www.bookclubs.ca/>

### **One Book One Internet**

Inspired by the idea of One Book, One Vancouver, a Vancouver blogger has suggested the idea of One Book One Internet, so (in his words) 'everyone can play along'. All you have to do is read the One Book One Vancouver book, which is Patrick Lane's *There is a Season: A Memoir*, and then get blogging on the page below.

<http://randomdude.com/blog/threads/1946-One-Book-One-Internet>

### **Birmingham Book Festival 2006**

This year's festival, running 4-13 October 2006, includes Speed Reading groups, an all-night writing workshop and many special guests, from Lionel Shriver to Julie Walters. Keep up-to-date by consulting the Festival website...

<http://www.birminghambookfestival.org>

### **One Book, One College: Common Reading Programs**

If you are interested in the growing phenomenon of college and university One Book programmes, you'll find this site helpful. Collated by Barbara Fister, it lists all the programs that have taken place or that are currently running in colleges across the US. If your own institution runs a One Book program, you can send Barbara an email so the list can be updated (the site lists her address).

<http://homepages.gac.edu/~fister/onebook.html>

### **The Reading Experience Database**

The Reading Experience Database is a huge project designed to gather together evidence of five hundred years of reading. You can participate, either by sending in descriptions of reading from any historical period between 1450 and 1945, or by volunteering to work through letters, diaries, annotated books and so on, to record evidence of particular reading practices. Forms and guidelines are available via the link below, or else contact Dr Katie Halsey at [Katie.Halsey@sas.ac.uk](mailto:Katie.Halsey@sas.ac.uk). There is also a flyer with more information available under Research Results on the *Beyond the Book* site.

<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/>

### **Moving Manchester, Mediating Marginalities**

Moving Manchester 'explores creative writing from Greater Manchester that has been informed and influenced by the experience of migration.' Visit this website to learn about the AHRC/Arts Council/Black Arts Alliance-funded project...and to discover some wonderful writing!

[www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/movingmanchester](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/movingmanchester).

### **Book Bags**

This is the website of The Book Bags, "self-styled premier bookgroup of Cheltenham" now in its ninth year. If you are thinking of setting up a book group yourself, this site may give you some useful ideas about how to go about organising it (choosing the books, keeping track of what everybody liked or disliked etc.).

<http://bookgroup.org.uk/>

### **Book Crossing**

At BookCrossing, you can register any book you have on the site, and then set the book free to travel the world and find new readers.

Leave it on a park bench, at a coffee shop, at a hotel on vacation. Share it with a friend or tuck it onto a bookshelf at the gym -- anywhere it might find a new reader! What happens next is up to fate, and we never know where our books might travel next. Track the book's journey around the world as it is passed on from person to person.

[www.bookcrossing.com](http://www.bookcrossing.com)

### **Beyond the Book for Floridians**

We've heard about a project that shares its names with ours. People in Florida's Gulf Coast are reading Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, in their own Beyond the Book programme. Their website asks, "What if your community extended beyond your neighbourhood? What if every time you met someone you instantly had something to discuss? What if that opportunity was just around the corner?"

<http://www.beyondthebookfl.org/>

### **Kids and Reading**

A very comprehensive not for profit public interest website focused on encouraging and helping kids to read.

[www.kidsandreading.co.uk](http://www.kidsandreading.co.uk)

### **INKE (formerly HCI-Book)**

INKE (Implementing New Knowledge Environments) is a research cluster of academics based in Canada (but including people from the UK and the US) who are researching digital technologies and reading. There is some fascinating material on their site for anyone who's ever wondered how technology is changing the way we interact with text and information.

<http://www.hci-book.org/cluster/index.php>

## **Library Thing**

Are you the kind of person whose love for books extends to an obsession with cataloguing, sorting and re-sorting your personal library? Then LibraryThing is for you. It is an online library-cataloguing service that will not only let you catalogue all your books quickly (by entering ISBN numbers, or for the truly obsessive you can buy one of their scanners) but also compare your own book collection to those of others.

<http://www.librarything.com/>

## **Mass reading event in London, Ontario: London Reads**

The University of Western Ontario puts on a mass reading event for the town of London in southern Ontario, Canada. They have a shortlist of five books: Peter Behrens, *The Law of Dreams*, Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road*, Vincent Lam, *Bloodletting and Miraculous Cures*, Randy Boyagoda, *Governor of the Northern Province*, and Michael Redhill, *Consolation*.

<http://www.londonreads.uwo.ca/index.html>

## **Funders**

### **Thanks to our funders and supporters**

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds postgraduate training and research in the arts and humanities, from archaeology and English literature to design and dance. The quality and range of research supported not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For further information on the AHRC, please see their website [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk)

The British Academy ([www.britac.ac.uk](http://www.britac.ac.uk)) funded the pilot study for *Beyond the Book* and continues to support Drs Fuller and Rehberg Sedo via an International Joint Activities Grant.

*Beyond the Book* has a physical office within the Department of American & Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK ([www.uscanada.bham.ac.uk](http://www.uscanada.bham.ac.uk)) where the majority of the team are based.

Our Northern American site is located at Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada ([www.msvu.ca](http://www.msvu.ca)), which has provided project support in terms of graduate assistance (2005) and travel funds through an internal research grant. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation ([www.innovation.ca](http://www.innovation.ca)) provided funding for the Atlantic Canada Communication Issues Research Lab, which houses the technical equipment and research space used on the North American side of the Atlantic.

## **Contact Us**

**We welcome enquiries and feedback about our research and this website.**

After 31 August 2008, please direct all enquiries to Dr Danielle Fuller using the contact details below.

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### **Beyond the Book: Contemporary Cultures of Reading Conference 31 August - 2 September 2007**

**Welcome to our conference webpages.**

Keynotes: Janice Radway (Duke University); Elizabeth Long (Rice University)

August 31-2 September saw one of the major events for the Beyond the Book project: our conference on Contemporary Cultures of Reading which ended our second project year. Over 120 scholars and practitioners from a range of countries descended on the University of Birmingham, representing a cross-section of disciplines including English literature, sociology, education, African-American studies, linguistics, performance studies, criminology, library science, publishing studies and cultural studies. Over three days, the topics covered ranged from the circulation of urban fiction among women in US prisons to the effect of blogging on the dissemination of poetry, and from projects using reading to assist in recuperation from brain surgery to online Chinese time-travel romances.

Various publications are planned from the conference: an edited volume is already well under way.

We are really excited to be working with a number of journals to publish some of the great work that came out of the Conference:

New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship

Edited by Sally Maynard

Particip@tions (online journal of audience and reception research)

Edited by Martin Barker

Popular Narrative Media

Edited by Nickianne Moody & Joanne Knowles

Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies -  
Debates Section

Edited by Julia Knight & Alexis Weedon

We look forward to some very exciting special issues.

Delegates from the conference should have been emailed on 7th March with a combined CFP menu, if you were a delegate at the conference and didn't receive the email please get in touch with Anna at: [burrealz@adf.bham.ac.uk](mailto:burrealz@adf.bham.ac.uk)