

Section Proposal Anglistentag 2023 (Siegen)

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Social Reading and Reading Communities in Diachronic Perspective

The digitalization of the book market, with its fundamental impact on modes of production and reception, has drawn new attention to the social dimensions of reading. The “digital literary sphere” (Murray 2018) has been seen as affording new ways of transforming reading into a communal activity. At the same time, scholars have also taken the latest media revolution as an inspiration to (re)examine the ways in which reading has always been social – see, for example, Heather E. Blatt’s 2018 study on readerly interactions in late-medieval England, which takes as its point of departure the concept of ‘participatory culture’ as introduced in digital studies, or Abigail Williams’s *The Social Life of Books* (2017), which intertwines forms of sociability in the eighteenth century, questions of access and format, with different modes of reading and attention.

In this section, we not only aim to offer a critical investigation of the different ways in which reading in the digital age can be understood as (or in some cases merely appears to be) ‘social’. We are also hoping for contributions on the sociality of reading in earlier periods. The design of this section is interdisciplinary in that we invite contributions from **ELT** as well as **linguistics** and **literary studies**. Early career colleagues are particularly encouraged to apply.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Reading communities from monastic cloisters to digital book clubs
- Empirical studies on real reader interaction
- The study of interpretive communities
- Social reading practices in the classroom
- Fictional scenarios of readerly interaction
- Social reading and/as activism
- Praxeological dimensions of social reading in literary studies
- Social reading and democratization
- Reading aloud (as a historical or contemporary practice)
- Communal reading spaces
- Digital affordances for social reading
- Reading as a family routine
- Reading and socialization
- Accessibility and exclusion in reading communities
- Readerly isolation
- The value of reading
- Hierarchies of taste

Please submit a 300-word proposal (for a 20-min paper) and short author bio (3-4 sentences) to dorothee.birke@uibk.ac.at, a.korfmacher@uni-koeln.de and helga.schwalm@rz.hu-berlin.de by **15 January 2023**.

Literature

- Anderson, Tore Rye et al. (eds.), *Modes of Reading*, special issue of *Poetics Today*, 42.2, 2021.
- Baron, Naomi, *How We Read Now: Strategic Choices for Print, Screen, and Audio*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Blatt, Heather E., *Participatory Reading in Late-Medieval England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018.
- Fuller, Danielle and DeNel Rehberg Sedo, *Reading Beyond the Book: The Social Practices of Contemporary Literary Culture*. London and New York, New York: Routledge.
- Griem, Julika, *Szenen des Lesens: Schauplätze einer gesellschaftlichen Selbstverständigung*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2021.
- Long, Elizabeth. *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life*. The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Murray, Simone. *The Digital Literary Sphere: Reading, Writing, and Selling Books in the Internet Era*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 2018.
- Nakamura, Lisa. "“Words with Friends’: Socially Networked Reading on Goodreads.” *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 128, no. 1, Jan. 2013, pp. 238–43. <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2013.128.1.238>.
- Radway, Janice. *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Rehberg Sedo, DeNel (ed.). *Reading Communities from Salons to Cyberspace*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Thumala Olave, Maria Angelica, “Exploring the Sacrality of Reading as a Social Practice”, *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 9, 2021, 99-114.
- Williams, Abigail. *The Social Life of Books*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017.