SOCIAL READING AND THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

by

Jillian E. Lutz

An Abstract
of a research paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Library Science and Information Services
in the Department of Educational Leadership and Human Development
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ABSTRACT

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This literature review examines previously published literature that addresses the use of social reading by the school librarian as a tool to promote literacy. This literature review focuses on three types of social reading: book clubs, book discussion and recommendation websites, and conversing using hashtags. When the school librarian uses social reading to promote literacy in the school library, students have improved reading comprehension as a result of discussing what they have read, their attitudes about reading are more positive, and their standardized test scores improve. Using social reading in the school library helps to develop relationships between the school librarian and the students to encourage voluntary reading and to help meet students’ emotional needs.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................1
  Statement of the Problem.............................................................................1
  Purpose of the Study ..................................................................................1
  Research Questions ....................................................................................2
  Limitations of the Study...........................................................................2
  Definition of Terms...................................................................................3
  Research Design ........................................................................................5
  Conclusion ................................................................................................6

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ...........................................................7
  The School Library’s Role in Social Reading: An Introduction...............7
  Book Clubs Support Social Reading..........................................................9
    Physical Book Clubs versus Virtual Book Clubs .........................9
    Effectiveness of Book Clubs in the Library Program....................10
    Formation and Promotion of Library Book Clubs ....................11
    Characteristics and Platforms of Effective Book Clubs ..........12
  Book Discussions and Recommendations Support Social Reading .........13
    Conversing Using Hashtags .................................................................16

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .........................20
  Social Reading in the School Library .....................................................20
  Promoting Literacy with Book Clubs ...................................................21
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One objective for many school librarians is to promote literacy in and out of the school setting. With more information available online, school librarians need to find new and innovative ways to promote literacy to students in their school along with people that participate online. This literature review focuses on three types of social reading that help school librarians promote literacy. Book clubs, book discussion and recommendation websites, and conversing using hashtags are three types of social reading that librarians use to reach more students when promoting literacy. As a result of participating in social reading activities, students improve their reading comprehension, their attitudes towards reading, and their standardized tests scores.

Statement of the Problem

Social reading helps students to improve their reading comprehension, makes their attitude towards reading more positive, and improves their standardized tests scores. It also helps the school librarian to develop relationships with students, encourage voluntary reading, and to meet students’ emotional needs. Social reading is a tool the school librarian can use to promote literacy, and there are ways for the library to do this beyond hosting the traditional book club. There are new ways to incorporate social reading into the library program to reach a wider audience and promote literacy with the help of new technologies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to take a closer look at what social reading is and what role it plays in the school library. It demonstrates how school librarians can use book clubs, book discussion and recommendation websites, and conversing with hashtags to promote literacy. With the use of social reading, school librarians can reach a wider audience than before with the
help of technology and new media. Book clubs are no longer just a face-to-face activity, but can occur online alongside book discussion and recommendation websites. Students can participate in a librarian’s microblog by conversing using hashtags on platforms like Twitter. Social reading is no longer just a face-to-face endeavor, and school librarians use social reading both online and off to promote literacy. The result of this study will show that social reading plays a valuable role in the school library and aids in promoting literacy.

**Research Questions**

This review of literature highlights social reading and what role social reading plays in the school library. It focuses on three specific types of social reading that help the school librarian promote literacy: book clubs, book discussion and recommendation websites, and conversing using hashtags. The following questions guided the research about social reading and its role in the school library:

1. What is social reading as it relates to the school library?
2. How can librarians use book clubs to promote literacy?
3. How can librarians use book discussions and online recommendations to promote literacy?
4. How can librarians promote literacy by conversing using hashtags?

**Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of this study include the limited access to research articles on the topic of social reading, specifically book clubs, book discussions and recommendation websites, and conversing using hashtags. Narrowing down the types of social reading down to three types used by the school librarian to promote literacy was another limitation of this study. The terms of the
different types of social reading were limiting as well. When using the term “virtual book clubs,” I had limited results, but when I used “online book club,” it opened up some more research possibilities.

**Definition of Terms**

aNobii: a social reading website that allows readers to find, shelve, review, and share books; a social networking site aimed at readers

BiblioNasium: a reading focused social network for kids age 6-13; kids can log their reading, play games, complete reading challenges that their librarian or teacher sets up for them and earn rewards.

Blogger: a blog-publishing service that allows multi-user blogs with time-stamped entries.

Book Divas: an online book club for young adult and college readers.

BookHive: is a book discussion website designed for children (birth through twelve), their parents, teachers, and anyone interested in reading about children’s books.

CommentPress: a website that allows readers to comment paragraph by paragraph in the margins of a text; used to annotate or debate a social text in a social context.

Facebook: a social networking website that makes it easy for one to connect and share with family, friends, students, and others online.

Gnooks: a book recommendation website where one fills in the blanks about book preferences and the website provides recommended titles specific to the survey.

Google Sites: a structured web page creation tool offered by Google. The goal for Google Sites is for anyone to be able to create a team-oriented site where multiple people can collaborate and share files.
Hashtags: on social media sites such as Twitter, a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to identify messages on a specific topic.

Kindle: a small hand-held electronic device for reading books developed by online retailer Amazon. One downloads books onto a Kindle and reads the books on it.

LibraryThing: a social cataloging web application for storing and sharing book catalogs and connect people with the same books along with suggestions for what to read next.

Microblog: a social media site to which a user makes short, frequent posts.


Pinterest: a social bookmarking site where users can upload, save, sort, and manage images (pins) and other media content such as videos.

ReadReviewRecommend: a blog where students read self-selected texts, review those texts, vote on which texts they like the best, and recommend their “Best Books” for specific months.

Shelfari: a social cataloging website for books where users build virtual bookshelves of the titles they own or have read, and can rate, review, tag, and discuss their books.

Slide decks: a series of pictures or slides that a person has created that relates to specific literature.

Social reading: when a reader discusses what he or she is reading with another reader.

Tweet: a posting made on the social media website Twitter.

TweetBook: a platform to read and publish stories and discussions shared on Twitter. A personal narrative of tweets with added titles, comments, and pictures where tweets can be published and exported in PDF format and shared with friends on a tablet or e-reader.
Twitter: an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called “tweets.” Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read tweets.

Twitter feed: a utility that allows one to feed their content to Twitter, Facebook, and other social platforms. It enables publishers to bring content to a wider audience and track the performance through real-time stats.

Twitter handle: a username selected by anyone using Twitter. It must contain fewer than 15 characters.

Whichbook.net: a book recommendation website that will recommend books based off of the user’s preferences.

Wix: a cloud-based Web development platform that allows users to create websites and mobile sites, through the use of online drag and drop tools.

Research Design

For this literature review, established literature on the topic of social reading and its effect on promoting literacy in the school library were analyzed. Research included how school librarians use book clubs, book discussion and recommendation websites, and conversing using hashtags to promote literacy. Most of the literature was selected from peer-reviewed journals. There was no research performed or new research originated from this study. Articles originated from the following databases provided through James C. Kirkpatrick Library: Academic Search Complete, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text, and ProQuest. Search terms such as the following were used: “social reading,” “hashtags,” “virtual book clubs,” “online book clubs,” “book recommendations sites,” and “online book suggestions.” I also
conducted an Internet search using the term “social reading.” This produced some websites that defined social reading more clearly.

**Conclusion**

This literature review contains three chapters. This chapter introduced the topic of social reading and presented the research questions that guided this study. The second chapter includes a review of literature that focuses on social reading, specifically book clubs, book discussion and recommendations websites, and conversing using hashtags and how school librarians use those three types of social reading to promote literacy. The final chapter contains conclusions and recommendations about social reading and how school librarians can use social reading to promote literacy.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The School Library’s Role in Social Reading: An Introduction

School librarians use social reading to promote literacy. Social reading is when a reader discusses what he or she is reading with another reader. Social reading is an old concept that is now often used with the aid of media and technology. Trubek discusses the history of social reading as an oral history. Homeric poetry, along with other oral genres, were recited to crowds; Socrates spoke as disciples listened and took notes. Victorian readers listening as one person read the latest Dickens novel (120-121). In the early part of the industrial revolution, factories had lectors who read to workers from books and local magazines (Kite-Powell 4).

Now social reading is utilized in and out of the school library and includes discussions about the readings. It is a public activity that is a result of the interactions between two or more people and the text. Social reading extends readers’ experience by allowing them to make connections outside the book, draw conclusions, summarize thoughts, and ask questions in conversation with others (Mennella). It frees students to gain confidence in their responses and helps them find meaning and understanding relevant to their lives (Ruzich and Canan 65).

According to Stein’s Taxonomy of Social Reading, there are four categories of social reading. Category 1 is informal, ephemeral, face-to-face conversation about shared reading. Category 2 is informal, persistent online discussion that is asynchronous. Category 3 is formal, ephemeral, face-to-face conversation that occurs in a classroom or formal book group. Category 4 is formal, persistent online discussions that can be either synchronous or asynchronous (Winget 40). One example of Category 1 social reading is a student discussing a book with a friend at lunch. An example of Category 2 social reading is discussing a book online on a discussion board such as LibraryThing. An example of Category 3 social reading is a
librarian-led classroom discussion about a book with an organized set of questions to discuss. One example of Category 4 social reading is having a discussion on a platform like CommentPress where the librarian or leader imports a licensed text into the platform and the group discussing the text then has a chance to provide commentary directly on the CommentPress platform. This is formal because students are asked to comment and discuss particular parts of a text and respond to one another’s comments on the same platform.

The use of social reading by the librarian promotes reading and literacy. Preddy discusses an action research project done at Perry Meridian Middle School in Indianapolis, Indiana in which educators met readers’ emotional needs through formal social reading, developing relationships between educators and students, and creating reading role models of themselves as well as other students (23). As a result of this action research, students successfully improved reading attitudes, comprehension, and standardized test scores. By creating a school library program that meets students’ emotional needs, develops relationships through social reading, and encourages reading by providing students with reading role models, students are inclined to participate in the social reading opportunities when presented by a school librarian. School libraries create experiences for students that involve social reading and in turn, blur the lines between what students consider fun and work (Ferriter, 87).

Van Der Westhuizen discusses multiple studies on reading development and enhancement that show the benefits of conversations stemming from social reading (96). One study Van Der Westhuizen discusses reported, “that the improved reading comprehension performance of learners in the United States is a direct result of discussions around texts” (96). Another study discussed by Van Der Westhuizen reported that when students get the chance to discuss what they have read, it promotes a higher level of comprehension for those
students (96). A study about the impact of social library programs found that voluntary and preferred readings were beneficial and that “new roles of being creators, curators, and consumers of texts help develop new information literacy skills” (Van Der Westhuizen 98).

Social reading includes a wide range of topics. It can be as simple as sharing a quote from a book on Twitter or Facebook from a Kindle (Mulvihill and Schiller, 33) and something as complicated as an online book club created by the school librarian (Lee). The three types of social reading that promote literacy this paper focuses on are book clubs, online book discussions and recommendations, and using hashtags to converse about books.

**Book Clubs Support Social Reading**

Book clubs are a type of social reading that helps promote literacy and are a type of social reading commonly linked with libraries. Book clubs in the school library are either Category 3 or Category 4 on Stein’s Taxonomy of Social Reading. Physical school library book clubs are in Category 3 because they are formal with set questions and a librarian leading in a face-to-face setting. Virtual school library book clubs are in Category 4 because they are formal with a librarian leading the discussion in an online platform discussing a predetermined book. This section of the paper discusses physical book clubs compared to virtual book clubs, the effectiveness of book clubs in the library program, the formation and promotion of library book clubs, and the characteristics of effective book clubs.

**Physical Book Clubs versus Virtual Book Clubs**

With the addition of new media and technology, book clubs are no longer only available in a face-to-face setting. Book clubs are now either physical or virtual. With a physical book club the librarian creates a reading discussion group that meets on a regular basis to discuss a prearranged book. The problem with a book club meeting in the library is busy
schedules. Students, parents, teachers, and librarians cannot always make time for a face-to-face book club. Virtual book clubs, also known as online book clubs, are a solution to the problem of busy schedules. The format of the book changed from print to digital, and along with it, the format of discussing a book changed as well (Dempsey 24). Librarians use both physical and virtual book clubs to promote literacy by allowing students to meet either face-to-face or via digital media to discuss what they are reading. Virtual book clubs allow flexibility without losing the sense of community that the physical book clubs foster (Dempsey 25). Both physical and virtual book clubs offer a motivating environment that is convenient for students and encourages them to read voluntarily (Scharber 433). Both types of book clubs promote recreational reading and offer students a way to discuss what they are reading with their peers.

When librarians use both physical and virtual book clubs to promote literacy, they better understand the needs of the school library’s stakeholders. Librarians know that understanding readers’ needs leads to not only better collection development but also better reference services and promotes a broader understanding of the uses of the library (Fister and Trott 309). Also with the addition of new media and technology, librarians use virtual book clubs to open up the book club experience to students who might have never participated in physical book clubs (Flynn Gilliss 49).

**Effectiveness of Book Clubs in the Library Program**

Book clubs allow students to talk about what they are reading with their teachers and peers. Librarians use book clubs to promote literacy because they encourage students to think critically when they read. Librarians “encourage students to feel, to question, to explore human values, and to examine traditions and cultures...to think about how they view the world” (Klages, Pate, and Conforti Jr. 294). Book clubs provide a venue where students can collaborate with one
another and with educators. With book clubs offered from the school library, students are
motivated to read voluntarily so they can discuss the reading with others in the book club. Book
clubs also increase students’ subject area knowledge. If the book club is a virtual book club, it
engages students in technology use and aids in learning information literacy skills (308).

Whittingham and Huffman conducted a study that consisted of sixty middle school
students who volunteered to participate in a book club at their school library. They met one
morning a week before school. The data collected from this study suggests that simple exposure
to book clubs has a positive effect on students who have resisted reading in the past
(133). Librarians find opportunities for struggling or reluctant readers to be involved in book
clubs by allowing students or members of the book club to choose which books the club reads
and discusses. Klages, Pate, and Conforti Jr. discuss a study that shows students who
participated in virtual book clubs interacted more freely with one another online because of the
lack of social constraints that they felt in physical book clubs (295).

**Formation and Promotion of Library Book Clubs**

Librarians have many options when forming physical or virtual book clubs. The basic
ritual is the same; a small group of students or educators get together to discuss a prearranged
book (Atlas 11). Librarians decide what type of book club to offer to students and if the library
program offers only physical book clubs, only virtual book clubs, or a combination of both
virtual and physical book clubs. Before the formation of a book club, the librarian looks at the
goals of the school district and the library and matches the book club goals to meet the goals of
the district. They also determine how books are chosen and paid for and how frequently any
physical book club meetings are held.
The school librarian is the go-to person when forming and promoting either physical or virtual book clubs. The librarian decides on what type of technology to use to promote the book club. This can be done in a variety of ways including; posting on social network sites created by the school; sharing the book club website; sending notes and email to teachers, parents, and students; and verbally networking with these stakeholders (Fajardo 67-68.) Librarians are the role models students imitate in book clubs (Langhorst 77). Fajardo discusses how running a book club takes extra work, but it aids school libraries in promoting literacy (69). Book groups are about the community of readers that is created. Librarians form and promote book clubs with that thought in mind (Atlas 11).

**Characteristics and Platforms of Effective Book Clubs**

There are common characteristics of effective book clubs, both physical and virtual. Effective book clubs create conversations that facilitate student learning and critical thinking skills. Effective book clubs are also diverse in their membership and readings as related to race, gender, age, socioeconomic background, opinions, and the thoughts of members of the book club. Book clubs have a spirit of cooperation, collaboration, and personal sharing that a student might not get in a traditional classroom setting (Smith and Galbraith 171-173). They might include group direction which employs self-directed learning or group-directed learning in that the group takes control of what they learn from readings. The small group atmosphere of the book club allows members to talk openly and freely to reach learning conclusions they might not discover on their own (178-179). Both physical and virtual book clubs are engaging, motivating, and flexible in terms of questions presented in discussions and books chosen to read. (Scharber 433).
Librarians use virtual book clubs to promote literacy (Whittingham and Huffman 130). Librarians have options when it comes to choosing what program to use to form virtual book clubs. LibraryThing, Shelfari, BiblioNasium, and aNobii are websites librarians use to form virtual book clubs (Eisenberg 3). These four are established websites where librarians create accounts to inspire book discovery and book talks along with starting virtual book clubs where students can decide on what to read next. Librarians can also use Google Sites, Wix, or Blogger to create websites that house their virtual book club. With these websites, librarians add their own content, and they are creating their own website. Visitors do not need a username and password combination to access what the librarian adds to these sites. Librarians have more freedom of what content to include on their website when using these tools to create a relevant virtual book club to either supplement or replace physical book clubs.

Book Discussions and Recommendations Support Social Reading

Book discussions and online book recommendations are types of social reading that will aid the librarian in promoting literacy. Book discussion groups and book recommendations that use social media platforms can be in any category of Stein’s Taxonomy of Social Reading. A book discussion group that falls under Category 1 of Stein’s Taxonomy of Social Reading is one where a student talks to another student about a book they have both voluntarily read. A Category 2 book discussion group is when a librarian posts an informal discussion question online, and students answer on their own time. A Category 3 book discussion is when a librarian conducts a book discussion in the classroom or library with predetermined questions. A Category 4 book discussion is when a librarian uses digital platforms to create an online discussion forum. In this instance, the librarian is the leader and students discuss the predetermined text with one another. This can happen asynchronously or synchronously. A
book discussion is similar to a book club because students are reading a book and talking about that book with peers and educators. The difference between book clubs and book discussions is membership. Book clubs that are hosted by the school librarian have members of the school community that participate with one another to discuss predetermined books. Online book discussions that are hosted by the school librarian can include anyone in the school community along with anyone online who would like to participate and discuss books that the librarian decides to spotlight.

A book recommendation site is one type of online book discussion. A book recommendation that falls under Category 1 of Stein’s Taxonomy of Social Reading is one where a student recommends a book that they have read to a friend during a face-to-face conversation. A Category 2 book recommendation is when a student gets a book recommendation online from a friend or someone they have never met. A Category 3 book recommendation is when a librarian gives book recommendations face-to-face to students based off of their past interests and readings. A Category 4 book recommendation is when a librarian uses a digital platform to recommend books to students in a specified website like ReadReviewRecommend. This section of the paper discusses characteristics of effective book clubs, using digital platforms to continue book discussions and book recommendations over a summer break, and examples of book recommendation and discussion websites.

Ruzich and Canan discuss their experience with book discussions using digital platforms and came up with characteristics of effective book discussions. One characteristic is when students are shown what book discussion questions are in advance, so they are better prepared to participate in a book discussion. A good book discussion question covers topics that students can disagree and rationally talk about (64). Ruzich and Canan also stress that effective
discussion characteristics consist of a collaborative exchange of ideas to help with understanding (65). One last characteristic of an effective discussion is when students get to guide their own discussion with the librarian stepping back to take the role of facilitator so students can build their own understanding.

Librarians can use social reading year round, including over summer break by using digital platforms to continue discussions and book recommendations. Justice et al. found that children who participate in a summer reading program “tend to like reading (or being read to), value the effort needed to become advanced readers, and hold a belief that reading is important” (335). With that in mind, librarians do not give extrinsic motivation to encourage students to participate in the library summer discussion. Students who participate in the online discussions over summer are motivated by intrinsic factors. Technology is not the cause of motivation it facilitates conversations (Ruzich and Canan 65). To use digital platforms for book discussions and recommendations, the first step is to set up a reading website and to provide examples of what a summer reading discussion looks like (Cohen and Spencer 39). Then the librarian lets students guide the discussion so they can build understanding from peer collaboration.

Online book discussion websites include BookHive, a site that provides reviews, recommendations, and allows children to comment about books (Blowers 20). Ercegovac provides another example of an online book discussion and recommendation website, ReadReviewRecommend provides guidance in helping students decide what books to read next (37). Another example is Book Divas, created for young adult and college age students to discuss books (Rettberg 35). Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest are all used by librarians to promote literature in the form of book recommendations (Ercegovac 37; Falk 43). Kouwe provides two online book recommendation websites that allow the user to answer questions to
get book recommendations; Whichbook.net and Gnooks. Librarians use these websites and more to provide online book discussions and recommendations.

**Conversing Using Hashtags**

Using hashtags to microblog and conduct micro book discussions is another form of social reading that librarians use to promote literacy. If a librarian does not feel comfortable creating or using online book clubs or online book discussion groups, conversing using hashtags is an alternative. Conversing using hashtags falls under either Category 2 or Category 4 of Stein’s Taxonomy of Social Reading. A Category 2 conversation using hashtags is students using Twitter to discuss books and adding a popular hashtag to the end of the tweet. For example; a student discussing the Harry Potter books and using #HarryPotter at the end of the tweet, so their tweet is part of the #HarryPotter discussion thread. A Category 2 conversation using hashtags is when a librarian designs a specific hashtag to run a micro book discussion for students to easily find and follow. For example, a librarian might use #LIS6960 to specify what class discussion students should follow. This section of the paper discusses using hashtags for microblogging and micro book discussions, using them to start and follow a book discussion, and for book recommendations.

Microblogging is a form of blogging that features posts that are limited to 140 characters. Like regular blogs, microblogs can consist of text, digital media like images, video, and audio—all that can be posted via short message service (SMS) text message, the Web, or instant message. Unlike regular blogs, microblogs posts are as short as a single sentence or even just a few words. The brevity of the posts is the attraction of microblogging over the lengthier
prose format of traditional blogging. The character limit forces authors to choose their words carefully in order to be succinct and to the point. -DeFebbo, Mihlrad, and Strong 211-212.

Microblogging is blogging, but on a smaller scale, micro book discussions are book discussions, but on a smaller scale.

Online microblogging tools like Twitter, discussed here, enable librarians to promote literacy in real-time with anyone across the world who wants to participate (DeVoe 167). Librarians create their own hashtags but also use hashtags other librarians, authors, or students have created to join micro book discussions. “Twitter hashtag applications enable users to add value to the tweeted content by reorganizing, publishing, and distributing the content based on different criteria, ranging from hashtags to keywords to user names” (Chang and Iyer 257). Librarians use that flexibility to their advantage and create Twitter handles. A Twitter handle is the username used on Twitter. The Librarian can select any handle or username that is not already being used on Twitter and it must contain less than fifteen characters. When the librarian creates a Twitter handle, he or she automatically creates a unique URL for that handle, so it is easy for students to find the librarian’s microblog by going straight to that URL. An example of a Twitter handle a school librarian might create is @vinelmc which stands for Vineland library media center. The unique URL that is created with that Twitter handle would be http://twitter.com/vinelmc.

Librarians create a Twitter handle for microblogging instead of creating an entire blog to maintain. With the librarian using Twitter as a microblog, students can view brief book recommendations or discuss books. With Twitter, the librarian is limited in what he or she can post. Twitter only allows 140 characters per tweet, so librarians are limited to the bare bones of
recommending a book or starting a book discussion. In return, students are limited in their responses to the original tweet, so the discussion is on a smaller scale than what it would be on a book discussion website where students and librarians are free to write as much as they can on one reply when discussing a book. Participating in these conversations is not as much work for either the student or the librarian, but there is still an open line of communication available.

Librarians can also use microblogs to reach students who do not have time to stop by the library. “By using microblogs, librarians can create learning environments for e-learning students who do not wish to come to the physical library” (Hricko 689).

According to DeVoe, librarians create a brief, unique, time specific hashtag that is easily found and used by students and other educators. DeVoe also suggests promoting the created hashtag on school websites, blogs, wikis, and newsletters to build excitement for the micro book discussion (168). One specific suggestion presented is to create a TweetBook of the micro book discussion after it is completed so students who were not able to participate can view a document that contains the hashtagged tweets from the discussion (168). Librarians also post links to notes, slide decks (a series of pictures or slides that a person has created that relates to specific literature), and URLs related to book discussion or recommendations using the hashtag created so students receive supplemental information about the text being discussed.

Alfonzo lists one benefit of using Twitter hashtags in the library media center is that a student does not need a Twitter account to search and read tagged content on Twitter, so student privacy is a not an issue (20). An account is needed if a student wants to post to the hashtag.

Lawrence discusses how instead of students creating Twitter accounts, librarians can embed a Twitter feed on the school library’s website, so students have the opportunity to view the library’s tweets without creating their own Twitter account (67). Librarians use hashtags on
Twitter and other platforms to share book trailers (Lawrence 67) to recommend books, as well as promote virtual book clubs and online discussion created by the librarians. Another benefit of using microblogging is that it expands the library services to reach those stakeholders that cannot come to the school library. It is an additional access point to the library (Hricko 692).
CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social reading is used by librarians to promote literacy. The three types of social reading that promote literature that this paper focuses on are book clubs, book discussions and recommendations using digital platforms, and using hashtags to converse about books. Librarians use these three types of social reading to motivate students to read voluntarily and utilize resources offered by the library. Social reading is a historical activity that is now used more often with the aid of technology. Librarians use book clubs, online discussion and recommendation websites, and converse with hashtags to promote literacy to students. With these three types of social reading and countless others, librarians can reach more students now with the help of new technology and media. The following questions guided the research about social reading and its role in the school library: What is social reading as it relates to the school library? How can librarians use book clubs to promote literacy? How can librarians use book discussions and online recommendations to promote literacy? How can librarians promote literacy by conversing using hashtags?

Social Reading in the School Library

Social reading is used by the school librarian to promote literacy. Social reading occurs when a reader discusses what he or she is reading with another reader. Social reading happens in both face-to-face discussions and online discussions about texts that the readers have read. Stein’s Taxonomy of Social Reading states that there are four categories of social reading based on the following aspects: online or offline, synchronous or asynchronous, formal or informal, ephemeral or persistent.

When the school librarian uses social reading to promote literacy in the school library, students benefit from it. Students have improved reading comprehension as a result of
discussing what they have read, their attitudes about reading are more positive, and their standardized tests scores improve. The school librarian uses social reading to develop relationships with his or her students, to encourage voluntary reading, and to help meet students’ emotional needs. Three specific types of social reading that the librarian can use to promote literacy are book clubs, book discussion groups and online recommendation websites, and conversing using hashtags.

**Promoting Literacy with Book Clubs**

Book clubs are one type of social reading that school librarians use to promote literacy. Book clubs can be physical face-to-face meetings or virtual where the meetings occur online. Students, parents, teachers, and librarians have busy schedules; and with the format of the book changing from print to digital, more and more librarians are creating a place online to hold virtual book clubs for their students to promote literacy. Both physical and virtual book clubs offer students a way to discuss what they are reading with their peers. Book clubs provide a venue for students, teachers, and librarians to think critically about what they have read and have an open discussion about literature.

School librarians decide what type of book clubs are best for the students whether it is a physical book clubs, a virtual book clubs, or a combination of the two. Librarians can use established websites such as LibraryThing, Shelfari, and BiblioNasium to house their virtual book clubs or they can create their own websites using Google Sites, Wix, or Blogger to house their unique virtual book clubs.

**Promoting Literacy with Book Discussions and Recommendations**

School librarians use book discussions and online recommendation websites to promote literacy. This is separate from using book clubs because book discussions and online
recommendations are not limited to the school community, but anyone online who would like to participate in the discussion. Librarians use social reading year round, including during summer break and using online book discussions and online book recommendation websites. This is one way that librarians can reach students when they are not at school. Effective book discussions involve a collaborative exchange of ideas between students and the school librarian. An effective book discussion is student led with the librarian stepping back and assuming the role of facilitator.

Online discussion websites and online recommendation websites offer librarians a way to reach students who do not visit the physical school library. With online discussion websites like ReadReviewRecommend, BookHive, and Book Divas, librarians can choose which website would work best to promote literacy with his or her stakeholders. Librarians can use Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and Gnooks to recommend books to their stakeholders and promote literacy during the school year and over breaks.

**Promoting Literacy by Conversing Using Hashtags**

If a school librarian is overwhelmed by the idea of creating a website or blog to reach students, an alternative is using Twitter to microblog and converse with them using hashtags. Using Twitter and hashtags allows school librarians to promote literacy in real-time with anyone in the world who wishes to participate. When the librarian uses Twitter to promote literacy, he or she is limited in what they can post to only 140 characters. As a result, librarians and students can have micro discussions about books or students can receive brief book recommendations from their school librarian.

Librarians can create specific hashtags to go along with specific book discussions so everyone who would like to join the discussion can join by adding the librarian-created hashtag.
at the end of their post. When a library creates hashtags for specific books or events, the librarian should promote those hashtags on school websites, blogs, wikis, and newsletter to build excitement for the micro book discussion they plan to sponsor. If students are not allowed to have a Twitter account, a librarian can embed his or her Twitter feed onto the school library website so students can still view the micro book discussions that are going on. Using Twitter and other microblogging websites allows librarians to promote literacy to students outside of the library as well as inside of it.
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