

TECHNOLOGY

by | Donalyn Miller

Grades
4-12

USING TECHNOLOGY TO PROMOTE READING, PT. 2: SOCIAL NETWORKING

THE FEATURES OF BOOK LOVERS' SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Readers need other readers to talk to, and now you can do it across the miles. Even if you are not able to include students as part of a social networking community, start one for your book group or create one for colleagues at your school or between other libraries.

Virtual Bookshelves

Set up bookshelves of the books you have read, are currently reading, or plan to read. Personalize your bookshelves with tags like “fantasy,” or “books I hated.” I am now on a mission to record every book I have read over my lifetime into my GoodReads account. From *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Marjorie Bianco to *Homebound* by Hillary Jordan, I have added every book I can remember reading since childhood. Not only did I share these titles with my friends, I revisited all of the books I have read over the years. These virtual bookshelves are also a great way to keep track of all of the books you run across in bookstores and read about in reviews and plan to read later.

Adding books is easy, as these sites are linked to Amazon and other booksellers. Simply enter the book's title, author, or ISBN in the search field and the sites will locate the book for you. Books are connected by author and topic on the site, so it is possible to add all of the books you have read by a particular author in one sitting. Books are also linked to other books read by the same readers. Just read *Twilight*? Look at the books other *Twilight* readers have read and add these titles to your bookshelves, too!



Book Reviews

Read book reviews from friends or other members on the site, or write and post your own. Once you add a book to your account, the site will pull up the reviews of other readers and prompt you to write your own review or give the book a star rating. Let's face it; we are more likely to read a book recommended by a friend! Writing book reviews is also an authentic form of reading response and writing for students. It excites my students when their friends read their book reviews and use them as a source of recommendations.

Discussion Groups

Once you add a book to your account, start a discussion group about the book or join an ongoing conversation. Many discussion groups research the author, time period, or interesting facts about the topic of the book and add them to the discussion group's page as links. You can limit the discussion group membership to your invited friends or hold book discussions with students or peers in other schools. Bring literature circles and book clubs into the twenty-first century by moving your book discussions online.

Author's Pages

Well-known authors are members of these networking sites, too. Explore an author's personal pages, look through their bookshelves, or contact them to ask questions about their books. Many authors' pages on these sites include biographical informa-

tion, excerpts and reviews of their latest books, and contests to win advance reader's copies. Imagine joining a discussion group hosted by the book's author! After I read Kathi Appelt's book *The Underneath* and reviewed the book, I noticed that she was a GoodReads member, too. I sent her a short message to tell her how the book impacted me, and she responded back the same weekend. Those days of sending an author a letter through their publisher are coming to an end.

Email Updates

Want to know what your friends are reading or planning to read? These readers' sites offer members the option to receive e-mail updates when your friends add books or reviews to their accounts. Once a day, I receive an e-mail that reminds me I am part of a community of readers and gives me the opportunity to add my friends' books to my account, too. I look forward to discovering what my friends recommend, and these regular updates keep us connected as readers.



Donalyn Miller teaches sixth grade Language Arts and Social Studies at Trinity Meadows Intermediate School in Keller, Texas. She is the author of the popular "Book Whisperer" blog at <http://teachermagazine.org>, where she provides tips on motivating young readers and explores topics of interest to literacy professionals. Her latest title, *The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child* (Jossey-Bass, a division of Wiley, 2009), focuses on motivating and inspiring student readers and their teachers. Contact Donalyn at miller.donalyn@gmail.com or check out her blog at www.teachermagazine.org.

