Making Choices: What Readers say about Choosing Books to Read for Pleasure[1]

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This paper analyses 194 open-ended interviews with committed readers who read for pleasure, focussing in particular on interviewees' responses to questions about how they choose and how they reject a book. The analysis suggests that a comprehensive model for the process of choosing books for pleasure-reading must include five related elements that are examined in the paper: the reading experience wanted by the reader; alerting sources the reader uses; elements in a book that the reader takes into account in making book choices; clues on the book itself; and costs to the reader in getting access to a particular book.

Introduction

In the so-called 500 channel universe of expanding choices among multiple media, attracting the attention of the reader is increasingly difficult. Conversely, as one committed pleasure-reader put it, "Selecting one book out of the many, many thousands available seems almost impossible when you think about it." It is therefore not a trivial concern how a reader goes about making the series of choices that ends up, if all goes well, with a compatible match of reader and book. Indeed the successful encounter of a reader with a book that gives pleasure or instruction is the end-point toward which an enormous number of institutional activities converge: family structures that foster reading; the education system that teaches literacy; publishing houses that select certain authors' work to publish and promote; publicity and reviewing structures that focus attention on certain books; and finally the bookstores, bookclubs and libraries that make the physical book accessible to readers. The purpose of this paper is to report what committed readers say about how they negotiate the complex chain of choices that ends in their reading a particular book for pleasure. In addition to the fundamental deci-

sion to spend time reading rather than doing something else, there are two further stages of choice: the set of choices that gets a particular book home from the library or bookstore and makes it available for reading; and the choice to read one book rather than another at any given time. For many, the opportunity to choose is valuable in itself, an aspect of the freedom that is a crucial part of the enjoyment of reading:

> That's my thing—this business of freedom. When I go to the library, I'm completely engrossed in what I'm doing. . . . It's a very personal choice and nobody can make it but me. . . . Choosing books is wonderful. I enjoy that. In fact, it's hard to restrain myself without ending up with the whole library and transferring it to my house. . . . I'm a browser. For me, it's an adventure. I don't know what I'm going to find and I don't want to be anticipated. (Sarah, age 40, Graduate student/ library assistant— Code names are used throughout in identifying interviewees.)

About the Study

Evidence concerning readers' book choices comes from a transcribed set of 194 intensive, open-ended interviews with adult readers, undertaken as part of a larger study on reading for pleasure. The interviewed subjects were not randomly chosen but were deliberately selected as individuals who read a lot and read by choice. The goal was not to investigate the 95% of the North American population who can read or even the 55% who say they have read a book in the past six months. Rather the study focussed on committed readers who said that reading for pleasure is a very important part of their lives. This criterion means that most of the interviewees studied fall within the 10% of the North American population who show up in national reading surveys as "heavy readers"—those who read upward of a book a week (Cole and Gold 1979, 63; Book Industry Study Group 1984, 84). Unlike non-book readers who read primarily for information, heavy readers tend to say they read for pleasure (Cole and Gold 1979, 61-2). And because they borrow and buy far more books than their proportionate share, their impact on the

world of literacy is far greater than the 10% figure their numbers would predict.

The demographic profile of the interviewees in my study resembled that of heavy readers, as consistently described in reports of reading surveys based on large-scale national samples. Previous studies conducted in Canada and the United States have found that heavy readers are more likely to be female than male; to be younger rather than older; and to have achieved a higher educational level than the population at large (Book Industry Study Group 1984, 69-84; Cole and Gold 1978, 49-52; Gallup Organization 1978; Watson et al. 1980). Of the 194 people interviewed for my study, 65% were female and 35% were male. Interviewees ranged in age from 16 to 80, distributed as follows: age 16-20—3.6%; age 21-30—44.8%; age 31-40—18%; age 41-50—14%; age 51-60—11.3%; age 60-80—8.2%. The level of education was generally high, although the study included some readers, especially older readers, who had received little formal education.

I interviewed 25 of the readers, and the other 169 readers were interviewed by graduate students enrolled in successive offerings of my course on Genres of Fiction and Reading in the Masters Program of Library and Information Science at The University of Western Ontario. The student interviewers each picked as an interviewee someone whom they knew to be an enthusiastic reader for pleasure. Before they conducted and transcribed their interview, the student interviewers were trained in using open-ended questions and follow-up probes and were provided with a schedule of interview questions to be used as a guide for the interview. Using a chronological approach that started with the first thing the reader remembered reading as a child and worked forward to the present, the interviews explored, from the reader's perspective, the whole experience of pleasure-reading including the following: factors that fostered or hindered reading in childhood; how the reader goes about choosing or rejecting a book; rereading; ways in which a particular book has helped; and so on. The analysis presented in this paper focusses on the issue of reader's choice and depends primarily upon interviewees' answers to the following questions:

How do you choose a book to read for pleasure?

> Are there types of books that you do *not* enjoy and would not choose?

Since the topic of choice was so basic and so salient, interviewees did not limit their discussion of choice to their answers to these two questions but tended to include commentary on choice throughout the entire interview. Therefore relevant data from the 194 interviews coded under themes related to choosing were derived, as appropriate, from the entire interview.

"I'm calling the shots now": Learning to Choose by Choosing

At every stage, choice permeates the topic of reading for pleasure, starting with the initial development in childhood of competencies in literacy. In order to achieve the bulk of reading practice that creates confident readers, beginners must be motivated to choose the activity of reading over any number of other activities that compete for their time. Then there is the question of what particular text gets read and who chooses it—is it freely chosen or is it assigned? In *The Power of Reading*, Stephen Krashen summarizes research on factors that encourage success in reading and emphasizes the crucial role of "free voluntary reading." Free voluntary reading, he says, "means putting down a book you don't like and choosing another one instead. It is the kind of reading that highly literate people do obsessively all the time" (1993, ix-x). The connection between voluntary reading and powerful literacy is that people learn to read by reading. They choose reading over some other competing activity because of the inherent pleasure in the reading experience itself. That pleasure is enhanced when readers are reading something that they themselves have selected. As one late-comer to pleasure-reading explained, contrasting her previous reluctance to read required school books with her current enjoyment of leisure reading:

> [I find reading enjoyable now] only because I have the freedom to choose which kinds of books I read. As a child I was not a good reader. I didn't understand what I read, and I found that in order to understand I had to read *so slowly* that I lost the flow. It was like pulling teeth—one word at a time. . . . But once I got to the point where I could pick and choose

> what I wanted to read, I found I was enjoying what
> I was reading much more. I get more of a kick out
> of it because I'm calling the shots now. (Adrienne,
> age 32, Elementary school librarian)

Being able to choose successfully among materials is an important skill that is never directly taught but is learned by readers who teach themselves, beginning in childhood. Each successful book choice makes it more likely that the beginning reader will want to repeat the pleasurable experience by reading something further. Each book read contributes to the bulk of reading experience that enhances the reader's ability to choose another satisfying book. Conversely, each unsuccessful choice decreases the beginning reader's desire to read, which in turn reduces the likelihood of further learning based on interaction with books. Most of the 194 readers have taught themselves strategies for choosing enjoyable books that less practiced readers may never discover. When asked how they go about choosing a book to read for pleasure, most interviewees launched into an elaborate description, involving many interrelated considerations, often starting with their own mood at the time of reading and going on variously to how they find new authors or what clues they look for on the book itself. Fewer than 10% of the readers said they were currently dissatisfied with their ability to select enjoyable books. But this minority is worth considering because the problems that these readers experience in finding enjoyable books to read are probably also faced by average readers. Average readers are less intensively involved with reading than readers chosen for this study and are likely to have developed fewer successful strategies for choosing books. One reader who was dissatisfied with her way of choosing books was Amelia, a former non-reader who started reading for pleasure after her marriage. The first book she read for enjoyment was Steven King's *The Shining*, following which she went on to read other horror novels, including the Halloween series and Anne Rice. Her main strategy for choosing books has been by author and genre, but at the time of the interview she had exhausted her stock of known authors and had difficulty in finding new books of interest:

> [Disgusted] I go to the library and, like, stand there
> for hours. So I end up picking just at random. I pick
> some books up, bring them home, and end up tak-

ing them all back. You read the first couple pages,
and then the author *goes on and on about some medal*,
or, you know, describing [something at length]. . . .
It's just so boring and you don't really get any ex-
citement out of it. (Amelia, age 45, Housewife)

Barbara had a longer history of successful interactions with books
and more strategies for identifying enjoyable books, but she was
also at a dead end because two of her ways to find out about books
were no longer available:

Lately I've been having trouble finding a book be-
cause I haven't been talking to people who have
been reading. . . . The last three times I went to the
library, I have taken out five books and I've returned
them unread. I start the first page and then I know. I
can tell the author's style and the kind of book by
the first page. I know whether or not I'm going to
enjoy it. . . . I've just been in a kind of dead end
lately. At the library, they used to have all the new
books out, so you could get an idea. They've stopped
doing that and I miss it. (Barbara, age 28, Speech
language pathologist)

In contrast, an overwhelming majority of the 194 readers expressed
confidence in their ability to make successful book choices. This
confidence is likely to be both a result and a cause of their pro-
longed and continued engagement in reading. In this respect, they
differ most decidedly from non-book-readers and reluctant book-
readers. For many of these experienced readers, the process of selec-
tion seemed almost intuitive because it depended on a broad famili-
arity with books:

I feel books. I get a feel for a book. I am sometimes
wrong but rarely. Ninety percent of the time—95%
of the time—I know before I read it that a book is
going to be good or enjoyable, that I'll get some-
thing out of it—whatever the experience is that I'm
looking for. (Paul, age 42, Librarian)

I have a whole shelf of books to be read. This year
I've worked through them in a fairly random way.

When I finish one, there might be a day or so and then I would say, "What am I really feeling like?" I pick something—sometimes it's intuitive. I'm pretty good at telling what will work out. Maybe because of all these years of persisting through books. (Rebecca, age 34, Social Worker)

I just choose from some inner stimulus. I don't know what prompts me to choose. . . . If I start to read plays and it's a satisfying experience, I will continue to take out some plays until I find some that make me feel a little jaded or disappointed and then I might stop. . . . And you read a really good book review and think, "I can't wait until I can read that book," and to me that's the whole aura of reading. Some of it is retrospective because you deliberate on what you have read; it's current because you're experiencing; and also it's anticipatory because you know what you want to read. (Jean, age 44, Teacher-librarian)

Not surprisingly, most of the readers in my study described themselves as avid readers in childhood. Their current familiarity with books and authors was based on a long apprenticeship in reading. Only 20 of the 194 readers, or a little more than 10% including Amelia and Adrienne quoted above, identified themselves as reluctant readers as children. Typically the interviewees described themselves in childhood as voracious and indiscriminate readers who "read everything they could get their hands on": books in their own home, including their parents' and grandparents' childhood books; books in classrooms and in the school and public libraries; books received as birthday and Christmas gifts; and books borrowed and exchanged among friends. Reading series books, a practice disparaged by reading experts and librarians, was nevertheless a successful strategy used by 60% of the readers as a way of reducing the risk of choosing books and maximizing the likelihood of reading pleasure (Ross 1995, 217). When reading experts such as librarians or teachers challenged the choices of these self-confident readers, these readers as children generally wrote off, ignored, or worked around the reading experts and followed their own choices. Initially the opportunity for the child reader to choose books from a small, limited but readily available collection or from a favorite genre or series conferred an advan-

tage, since it minimizes the problem that Sharon Baker calls "overload" (Baker 1986) while reducing the work needed to get physical access to books. Once readers outgrow the somewhat protected field of children's books, the process of choosing books becomes far more difficult and risky as the number of possible choices expands exponentially. Readers reported times, especially when they were adolescents or when they were moving to a new stage in their reading, when they were dissatisfied with their method of finding and choosing books. With practice and persistence, however, most by adulthood had arrived at a system that worked.

Behind the Eyes Knowledge

So what have these practiced readers taught themselves about choosing books that other people don't know? Notably the systems they described for choosing books usually depended on considerable previous experience and knowledge of authors, publishers, cover art, and conventions for promoting books and sometimes depended on a social network of family or friends who recommended and lent books. We can consider this to be "behind the eyes" knowledge that the reader can draw upon when considering for selection or rejection any particular book that comes to hand. Past experiences with books and remembered information from reviews or from word of mouth are carried in the reader's head and available to be called upon when the reader is browsing in a bookstore or library. In order to be alerted to the existence of new books that will provide the reading experience they want, committed readers typically put out antennae that scan their everyday environments for clues. They tuck away for future use in memory or on lists the names of books and authors mentioned in magazine and newspaper reviews; books given currency because they have been made into films or television productions; and authors and titles that come up in conversation. Recommendations are important, but only from a trusted source with tastes known to be compatible, such as certain reviewers, family members and "friends that know my taste," selected bookstore staff and librarians, and more recently Internet acquaintances. Each instance of a reader's engagement with a particular book takes place within a personal context that includes the following: the reader's literary competencies derived from previous experiences reading books; the reader's preferences developed during a lifetime of reading; and events

going on in the rest of the reader's life at any particular time, which in turn relate to the reader's mood and time available for reading. Derek emphasized prior experience as a factor in enjoying a book: "Sometimes you have to be ready for a book. There are some books it's not your time to read, or it's not their time to be read by you. Sometimes a book just has nothing to say to you, and that's probably because you have to have had some prior experience." All these personal factors interact to determine what the reader means at any given time by "a good book."

Marsha was typical in using an array of cues in concert with each other when choosing books: previous experience with the author ("It's very safe to know that you've got an author that you like, and there are more books sitting there waiting. . . . I like the fact that LeCarre is still writing"); the reputation of the book ("I always thought I should read important books"); the reputation of the publisher ("I decided that Penguins. . . were important books"); recommendations of friends and family ("So it's important for someone to recommend a book. I very rarely pick up a book that I've never heard of"); and clues provided by the packaging of the book itself ("I always read the blurbs on the back. I'm easily put off or become very cynical of something that's too glowing"). Taking this amount of care to avoid unsatisfying choices was worth the trouble because a bad reading experience threatened her pleasure in reading in general. Readers explained how they read their way into reading, following up a successful experience with an attempt to repeat the pleasurable experience by reading something else. Successful choices are therefore part of a self-reinforcing system that sustains the pleasure of reading itself, while disappointing choices kill the desire to read:

> I think that's why I'm so careful about [choosing a book]. I don't just pick up any book and read it. Because if I get disappointed, then I get put off, and I get really mad. I get mad at myself for wasting my time. I get mad at the hours I spent reading. (Marsha, age 26, Student)

Strategies for Selection

The bedrock for choice is the reader's mood: what do I feel like reading now? what will I want to read in the future (that I should

borrow or buy now to have on hand)? Readers overwhelmingly reported that they choose books according to their mood and what else is going on in their lives. Short books, easy reads, and old favorites are picked when the reader is busy or under stress. At such times, rereading a childhood favorite is the quintessence of comfort reading (Ross 1994). More demanding and unfamiliar material is chosen when the reader's life is calmer. Wendy said, "It depends on my mood. . . . Some days you don't want a book that reaches too deep into you and other days you do." And moods can fluctuate over time, as Larry explained: "As my mood fluctuates from day to day and even within the day, I'll want to read one book as opposed to another." Readers variously identified moods, each of which required its own kind of book: "a very pensive and solitary mood" is appropriate for reading poetry, said Edward; "if I'm feeling a bit down" Lisa picks up a humorous book; Ivor had to be in an "an almost somber mood" to read Lillian Rubin's *Worlds of Pain*, but if he's "very, very tired" he reads "something a little lighter, something that you don't have to struggle with." Tess said, "When I'm really stressed, I will try to find a writer or a book that is really gentle, that has a gentle plot—like Barbara Pym or Jane Austen or early Trollope." On the other hand, Anna said, "if my life is going through a calmer phase . . . I might set an external stimulus for myself and pick up something new." In each of these cases, readers were quite specific about the kinds of books that would suit their mood, and often specified a dimension along which variation might occur: stressed out vs. relaxed; tired vs. rested; sad or somber vs. upbeat; wishing comfort and sameness vs. wishing novelty:

> Sometimes I want nothing but escape and then I like a big romance like *The Far Pavilions*. Other times I want something that offers a little intellectual stimulation such as *The White Hotel* by D.M. Thomas. . . And if I'm *really* tired, I read mystery stories like Agatha Christie. Agatha Christie's for when I'm so tired I can hardly see. . . . You see, this D. M. Thomas—I can't predict what might happen and I like that. That's exciting. But it isn't exciting if I'm tired. Then I wouldn't read it. (Diane, age 37, Social worker)

easier for me." Genre was second only to the author in providing clues as to the kind of experience the reader can expect from a book. In fact, genre was often used in conjunction with author: "If I am looking for something light to read like a mystery novel, I will look at the authors—I have certain authors I like and if I see something I haven't read before."

Once the reader starts to browse within a range of books, then the cover and the clues provided on the book itself become important. As Charles explained, "When you're as genre-specific as I guess I am, and read as voraciously as I do, you're looking for some quick identifiers on what's a good book. It'll take me ten minutes to go in [to the science fiction section], get five books, and leave because I'm just so familiar with the genre in general." The most frequently mentioned "quick identifiers" were the cover, the blurb on the back, and the sample page. This finding is similar to the Book Industry Study Group survey result that 29% of readers indicated that the description or synopsis on the book jacket or cover was "very important" in making choices (1984, 133). Titles are also important—readers said they were drawn both to an unusual, catchy title (in the case of an unfamiliar book) and to a familiar title that they had heard about before. Charles stressed that "the cover actually does play a really important role in the choice," but was not an overriding factor: "If Margaret Weiss was wrapped in a brown paper bag, I'd still pick her book."

A feature that strongly attracted one reader equally strongly put off another, but in each case the information was helpful in matching book and reader. For example, a die-cut mauve cover with a title in swash lettering or a black cover spattered with gore each advertise themselves to their respective genre readers while at the same time warning off others who dislike romance or horror ("those gold things with women with their shirts half ripped off, that kind of thing, is a definite turnoff"). One reader said, "Another way that I choose books is if they have won prizes," while another said he is *less* likely to pick prize-winners because the basis for awarding prizes is usually "a type of literary excellence that doesn't particularly make for enjoyable reading." Readers stressed the need to evaluate cues critically and skeptically, reading between the lines. Covers can be deceptive, as a

number of readers pointed out: "I'm suspicious of covers" and "covers are so misleading sometimes that they have no real connection with what's inside. . . . I've learned that very good books can be hidden behind lousy covers." Regarding cover blurbs: "You read the back of the Harold Robbins' books—'It's spellbinding'—and you get into it and they have this F-word. I quit reading them." A final test for many readers is to read a sample paragraph or page, which was considered a good indicator of the writing style and level of literary competence demanded by the book: "you see a title of a book that sounds interesting, open it up and scan random pages, just to make sure that the writing is at a fairly decent level." In short, the majority of readers resembled Paul in reporting that they put a book through a series of tests and filters:

> I read the first few pages, look at the back cover, look at the front cover, read what I can about the author, and get an impression of the book. . . . The cover is important. The title. What I know about the author. What other people have said about it. Who it was that said that—is it *The Times Educational Supplement* or it is *The Kodiak Daily Fishwrapper?* I read all the information that is designed to make you interested in the book. Then I'll open it just at random and read one paragraph on each page and then open it again. Maybe three or four times I'll do that and just dip in. So the book is auditioning for me. It's like an audition: the book reads a very small part but it's only got that one chance to succeed. (Paul, age 42, Librarian)

The interviewed readers were emphatic about what they *don't* like in a book, and used cues on the book itself as a warning. When asked what they *wouldn't* choose to read, readers had no trouble being specific, as in these examples: "Books that deal with fad diets, fad exercise programs, anything that was written in California by somebody with long hair and little round glasses. Anything that consists of navel gazing by some pretentious writer"; "I'm not going to read a depressing book. . . I don't like foul language in books. I get enough of all that in real life. I don't think it's necessary"; "Maybe I'm elitist, but I don't like mass market fiction—the sort of books like *Scruples* that feature some incredibly wealthy woman on the

cover. Someone who goes from the Lower East Side [of Manhattan] to the top of the cosmetic industry in about two years." The most frequent response to the question about books that would *not* be chosen was to specify a particular genre, especially romance, westerns, and horror. For example, Maurice said, "there are some words on the back cover that turn me off—you know like 'psychological thriller' or 'horror.' If I see that, it goes straight back on the shelf." In addition readers mentioned certain characters as unappealing—drippy heroines, violent heroes, and alpha males. Other readers variously ruled out books with particular content (too much, or "unnecessary," sex and violence; too much gore or horror); books with an undesired emotional effect ("makes me depressed"; "makes me feel like a patsy, taken for a ride"); and books written in a style that the reader dislikes. The frequently-given explanation that the rejected category of book is "poorly written" requires interpretation. "Poorly written" often seems to mean successfully written to achieve an effect that some readers admire but that this particular reader dislikes, finding it too sexually arousing, too scary, too sentimental, too full of verbal effects, too descriptive, or too literary.

A Model for the Process of Choosing a Book for Pleasure

In summary, an analysis of readers' statements suggests that a comprehensive model for the process of choosing a book to read for pleasure must include five related elements that come into play in concert with each other (see also Smith 1996, 48-49 for a summary of previous research studies that examine dimensions of a book found important to readers). Anyone wanting to promote free voluntary reading can help less practiced readers by making it easier for them to make the complex discoveries, discriminations, and judgments involved in negotiating these five categories. Anything that reduces uncertainty in any of these categories provides what Gregory Bateson has defined as genuine information—"differences that makes a difference" (Bateson 1979, 110).

1. Reading experience wanted: the "what mood am I in?" test

Familiarity vs. novelty

Safety vs. risk

Easy vs. challenging

Upbeat and positive vs. hard-hitting, ironic or critical

Do I want to be reassured/ stimulated/ frightened/ amazed?

Do I want my beliefs and values to be confirmed or to be challenged by an uncomfortable but stimulating new perspective?

Readers tended to say that mood at the time of reading was more important for choosing fiction than non-fiction.

2. Alerting sources that the reader uses to find out about new books

Browsing in bookstores or libraries, including looking for genre labels, limiting searching to certain subject or genre areas, and monitoring displays of new books and "just returned" shelves

Recommendations from friends, co-workers or family members

Reviews or advertisements in newspapers, magazines, Internet, radio and television

Viewing dramatized productions of an authors' work in stage-plays, television or films.

"Literary log-rolling" (books highlighted by trusted, favored authors, either within their own books or on publicity blurbs, e.g., "Pyncheon writes jacket blurbs for DeLillo")

Lists (prize-winning books; books made familiar on course curricula; lists of recommended books produced by libraries, literary critics, or other readers)

Serendipity

Because of their high degree of commitment to reading, the readers in this study were themselves apt to be a key alerting source for others, passing on recommendations derived from reviews, choosing books at the library and bookstore for family members, and buying books as gifts for others.

3. Elements of a book that readers take into account in order to match book choices to the reading experience desired

Subject (related to genre in fiction and to topic in non-fiction)

Treatment (popular vs. literary or serious style; conventional and familiar vs. unpredictable; upbeat vs. negative or pessimistic in tone)

Characters depicted (e.g., presence of strong female characters or sympathetic characters or depressing characters; use of schematized black and white characterization)

Setting (the kind of world that the reader enters in reading the book)

Ending (happy or sad; predictable or unexpected; resolved or open-ended)

Physical size of the book ("thick books" vs. "quick reads")

For the majority of readers, for each particular instance of choice, a single factor was given precedence as an overriding consideration. Hence one reader might be looking primarily for a mystery story, with the secondary requirement being the presence of a smart female detective. Another might say that the major requirement is "nothing depressing or frightening" but she also wants to be "transported, moved into a world that's different from the everyday one." For others the size of the book is a key factor: "And the third thing I look at [after author and the description on the back cover] is the thickness. I will reject a book even if it's a book by an author that I know if it's a small, little book." In narrowing down choices, readers are strongly guided by what they *don't* want, so that they can quickly rule out whole categories ("nothing too long") and entire genres ("the psychological thriller").

4. Clues on the book itself used to determine the reading experience being offered

Author

Genre

Cover

Title

Sample Page

Publisher

The more experienced the reader, the greater their ability to use these clues to make subtle discriminations about the anticipated read-

ing experience. A problem faced by beginning readers is that it takes a long apprenticeship in reading to build up the depth of knowledge needed to interpret the cover information that provide valuable clues to experienced readers. Series books such as Harlequins simplify the process of choice by highlighting genre, publisher and cover in one easily identifiable logo.

5) Cost in time or money involved for the reader in getting intellectual or physical access to a particular book.

Intellectual access (previous knowledge of content or of literary conventions needed by the reader to make sense of the text)

Physical access (time and work required before the reader can lay hands on the book itself)

Length of time required or degree of cognitive and emotional commitment required by the book itself (easy quick read vs. long demanding read)

The likelihood of a reader's choosing a particular book can be regarded as a ratio of the degree of pleasure expected from the book divided by the degree of work needed to appropriate, physically and mentally, the book. Some readers said that they often read "books lying around" or they would "read what's around me" or "books I find at home." "I will not go out of my way to read this book," one reader said, but did in fact read it, because the book came easily to hand. Conversely, readers reported being willing to put themselves on waiting lists, special-order, or pay hard-cover prices to read a book that they expected to yield a high degree of pleasure. It follows that people who want to promote a particular book choice can either increase the reader's expectation of pleasure from a book or decrease the work needed for the reader to acquire the book.

End Notes

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