

# 2018 READER SURVEY REPORT

## READERS ON READING

... conducted by M.K. Tod  
author and blogger at [www.awriterofhistory.com](http://www.awriterofhistory.com)

with support from authors Patricia Sands and Heather Burch

# Readers On Reading

September 2018

This report contains results from a comprehensive reader survey. The survey occurred during June and July of 2018 and reached 2418 participants (84% female, 16% male).

## PURPOSE

This year's survey was designed to reach readers of all fiction genres. It includes questions on:

- general reading habits
- the selection and acquisition of books
- the reading experience
- the influence of social media on reading

Each chart that follows is presented with a few highlights.

Information and analysis from prior surveys are available on [A Writer of History](#).

## A NOTE OF THANKS

I am very grateful to all who took the time to participate in this year's survey and to Heather Burch and Patricia Sands who helped design the questions and road test the survey.

A GREAT BIG THANK YOU to the many readers, bloggers, and authors who publicized the survey.

## FURTHER RESULTS AND ANALYSIS WILL BE POSTED ON A WRITER OF HISTORY

*M.K. Tod writes historical fiction. Her latest novel, **TIME AND REGRET** was published by Lake Union. Mary's other novels, **LIES TOLD IN SILENCE** and **UNRAVELLED** are available from Amazon, Nook, Kobo, Google Play and iTunes.*

*She can be contacted on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Goodreads** or on her website **www.mktod.com**.*

*I am pleased to have others reference information from the survey and only ask that you include my name, M.K. Tod, and blog [www.awriterofhistory.com](#).*

## A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2018

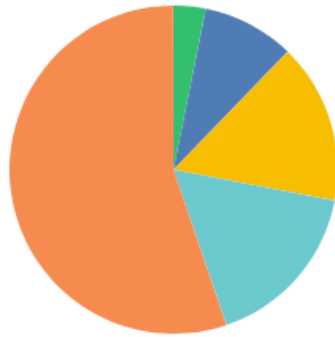
- **2018 SURVEY ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT PARTICIPATION** – a total of 2418 participants from various parts of the world weighed in with their opinions.
- **AS IN PRIOR YEARS, THE SURVEY ATTRACTED HIGH VOLUME READERS** – 72% read more than 20 books a year; 55% read more than 30
- **49% of participants USE SOCIAL MEDIA REGULARLY TO SUPPORT THEIR READING**
- **GENDER MAKES A DIFFERENCE** – among the differences—women read more than men and use social media more regularly in support of reading; men and women prefer different types of stories and different non-fiction
- **PRINT BOOKS REMAIN POPULAR** - Of 2418 participants, 75% frequently or exclusively use print books
- Not surprisingly, **ENTERTAINMENT IS THE DOMINANT REASON FOR READING FICTION**
- Readers say that **FEELING IMMERSED IN THE NOVEL'S WORLD** is the most important factor for their reading
- **THE TOP TWO FACTORS** when choosing a book are **SUBJECT MATTER** and **GENRE**
- **AGE MAKES A DIFFERENCE** – among the differences – interest in fantasy decreases with age; the highest use of phone-based e-readers is for those between 30 and 50
- **FRIENDS ARE THE TOP SOURCE FOR BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS** – chosen by 61% of participants when asked for their top three sources
- For reading purposes, **CONNECTING WITH THE AUTHOR OF A BOOK** is the social media functionality most valued by participants

## 1. READING HABITS & PREFERENCES

### ON AVERAGE, HOW MANY BOOKS DO YOU READ EACH YEAR?

#### Highlights:

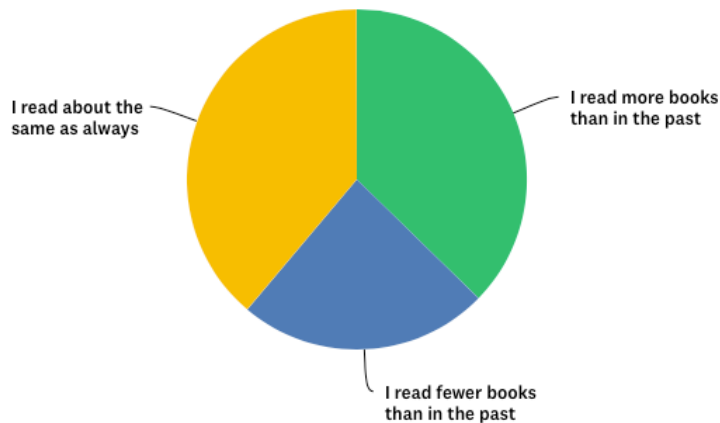
- SURVEY ATTRACTED HIGH VOLUME READERS – 72% of participants read more than 20 books a year and 55% read more than 30



#### Digging further:

- WOMEN READ MORE THAN MEN – 60% of women and 29% of men read more than 30 books a year
- READERS UNDER 30 ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE HIGH VOLUME READERS – 49% of under-30s read more than 20 books per year compared with 61% to 75% in older age groups

### ARE YOU READING MORE OR FEWER BOOKS THAN IN THE PAST?



**Highlights:**

- ONLY 24% OF PARTICIPANTS SAY THEY ARE READING FEWER books than in the past

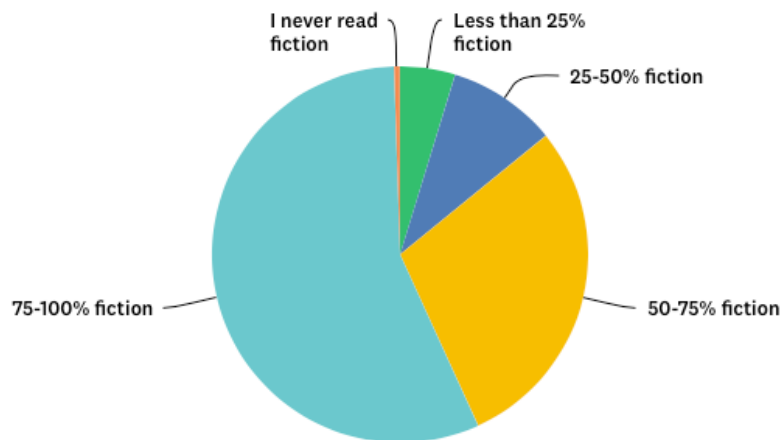
**Digging further:**

- MORE MEN THAN WOMEN SAY THEY ARE READING LESS – 34% of men and 22% of women say they are reading fewer books than in the past

**WHAT PORTION OF YOUR BOOK READING IS FICTION?**

**Highlights:**

- SURVEY PARTICIPANTS LOVE FICTION – most read at least 50% fiction

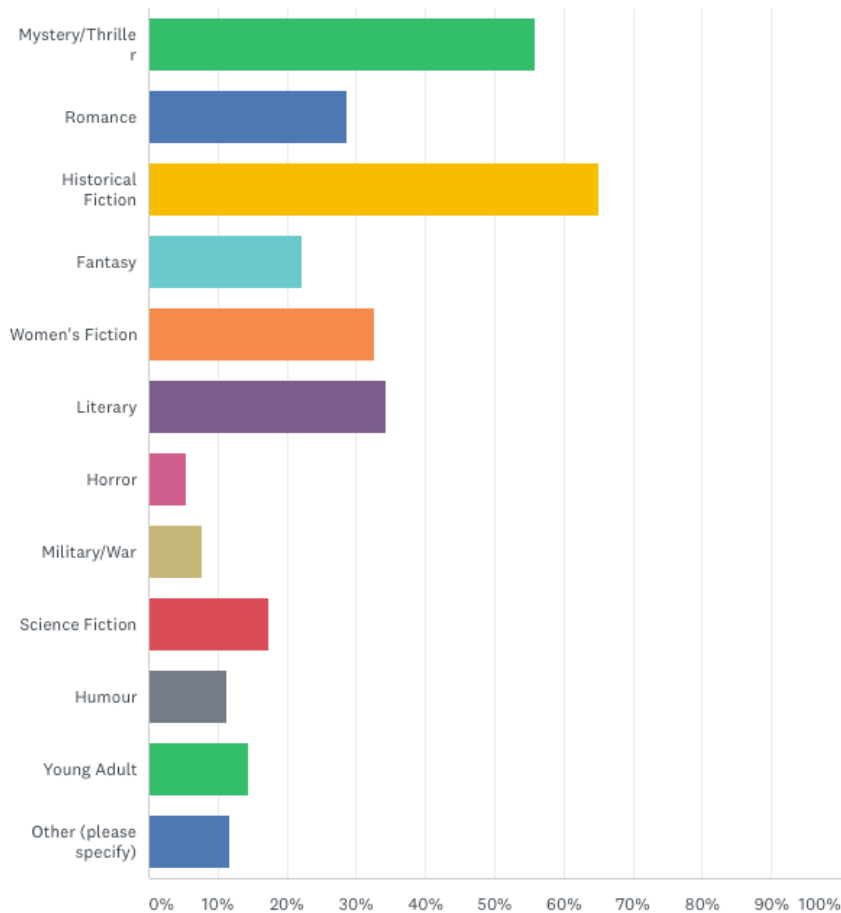


**Digging deeper:**

- 71% OF MEN VERSUS 88% OF WOMEN READ MORE THAN 50% FICTION

## WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE FICTION GENRES? (CHOOSE UP TO 3)

FIRST, A CAVEAT ... I am a member of a robust group of historical fiction fans so results have a built-in bias for that genre



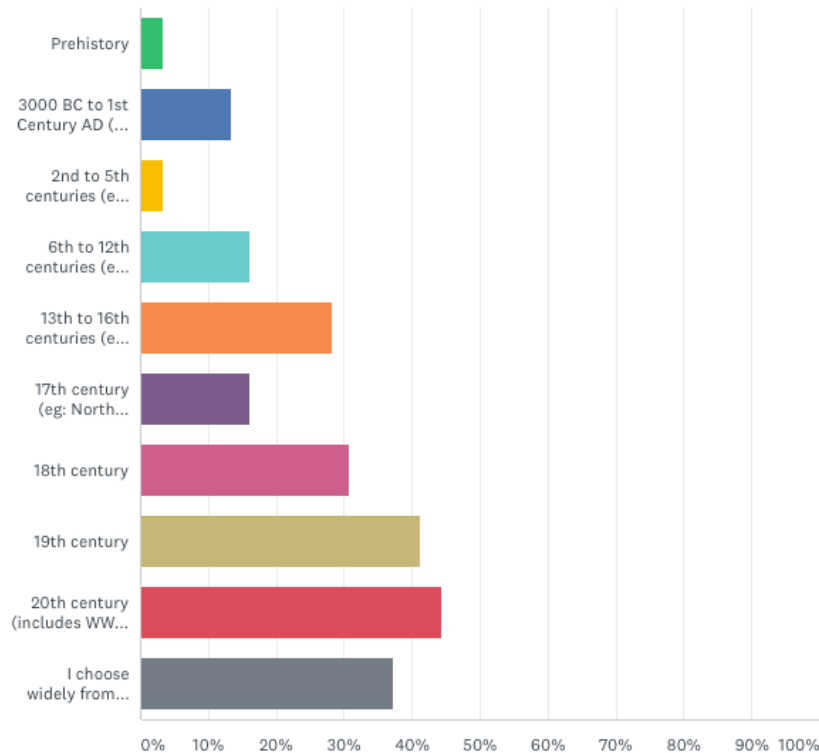
### Highlights:

- TOP 5 GENRES ARE MYSTERY/THRILLER, ROMANCE, HISTORICAL FICTION, WOMEN'S FICTION AND LITERARY

### Digging further:

- **GENDER:** The top genres for men are HISTORICAL FICTION, MYSTERY/THRILLER, SCIENCE FICTION, MILITARY/WAR and FANTASY
- **AGE:** INTEREST IN FANTASY DECREASES WITH AGE – from 54% for those under 30 to 6% for those over 70; there is a similar pattern for SCIENCE FICTION and HORROR
- **AGE:** INTEREST IN MYSTERY/THRILLER INCREASES WITH AGE
- **AGE:** INTEREST IN ROMANCE PEAKS BETWEEN 30 AND 50
- **GEOGRAPHY:** LITERARY FICTION IS LESS POPULAR AMONGST U.S. READERS THAN IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

## IF HISTORICAL FICTION IS ONE OF YOUR FAVOURITES, WHAT TIME PERIODS DO YOU ENJOY? (CHOOSE UP TO 3)



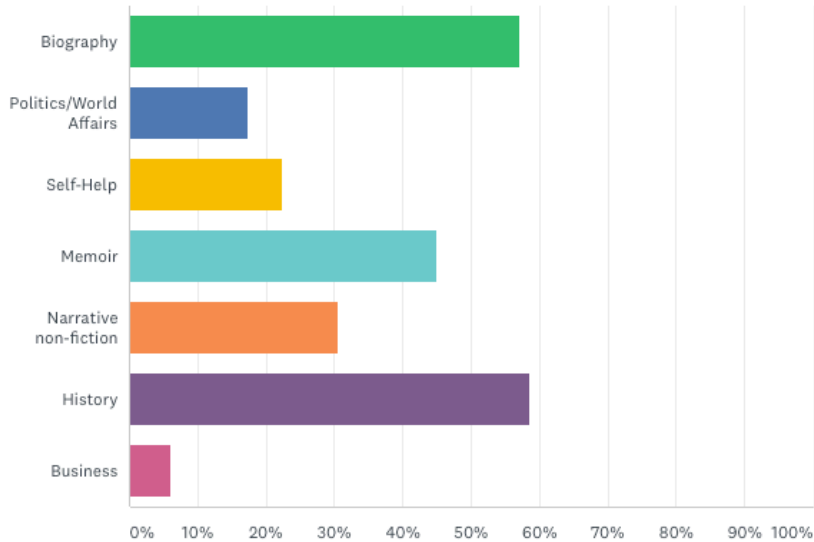
### Highlights:

- 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY and CHOOSING WIDELY ARE THE TOP THREE CHOICES
- THIS CONTRASTS WITH EARLIER SURVEYS FOCUSED ON HISTORICAL FICTION WHERE THE FAVOURITE TIME PERIOD WAS 13<sup>TH</sup> TO 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES followed by the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries – see [A Writer of History](#) for more information

### Digging Further:

- **GENDER:** MEN HAVE LESS INTEREST IN THE 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY THAN WOMEN and MORE INTEREST IN 3000BC TO 1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AD stories than women
- **AGE:** THOSE UNDER 30 ARE MORE INTERESTED IN 13<sup>TH</sup> TO 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY STORIES THAN OTHER AGE GROUPS – this time period includes the ever-popular Tudor period
- **GEOGRAPHY:** 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY STORIES ARE OF SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER INTEREST TO U.S., CANADIAN AND AUSTRALIAN READERS

## WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE NON-FICTION BOOK GENRES? (Choose up to 3)



### Highlights:

- TOP THREE NON-FICTION INTERESTS ARE HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIR
- Caveat - I am a member of a robust group of historical fiction fans and results may have been influenced by this.

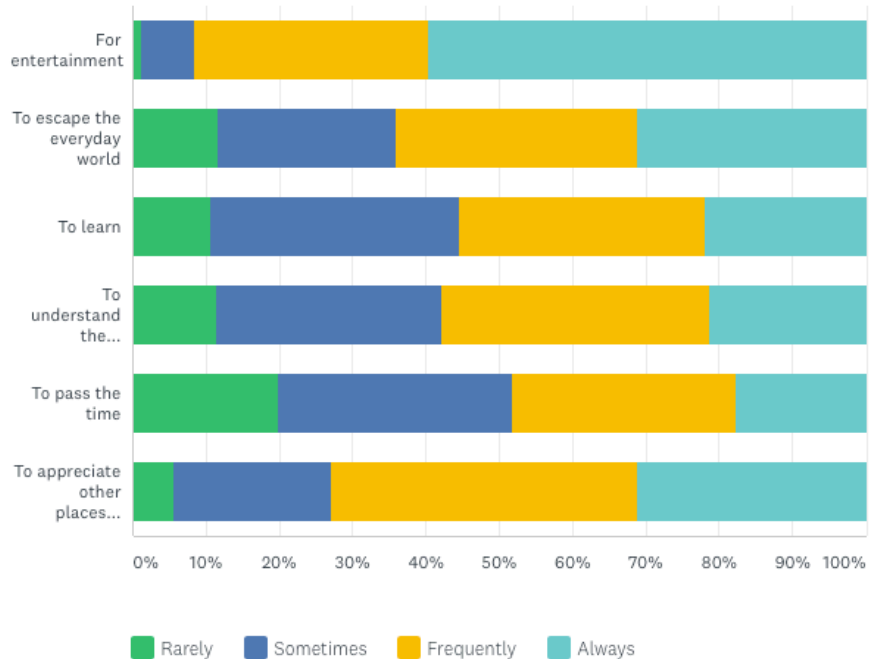
### Digging deeper:

- **GENDER:** In their non-fiction reading, MEN HAVE A MUCH STRONGER INTEREST IN HISTORY AND POLITICS THAN WOMEN
- **AGE:** INTEREST IN BIOGRAPHY SEEMS TO INCREASE WITH AGE



## 2. WHY, WHEN & HOW DO YOU READ

### WHY DO YOU READ FICTION?



*LEGEND: fourth option is 'To understand the circumstances of others'; sixth option is 'To appreciate other places and people in the world'*

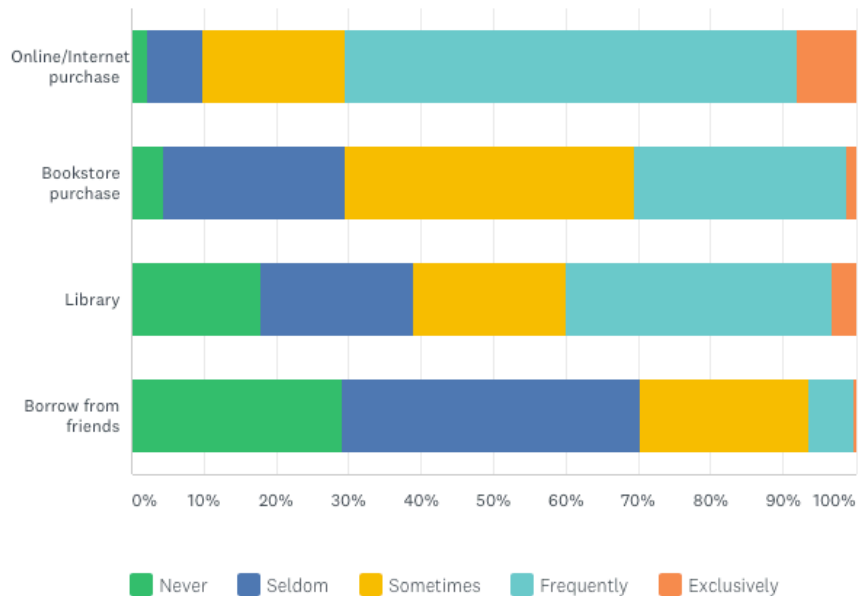
#### Highlights:

- Not surprisingly, ENTERTAINMENT IS THE DOMINANT REASON FOR READING FICTION
- TO APPRECIATE OTHER PLACES AND PEOPLE IN THE WORLD is a significant factor for 73% of participants

#### Digging deeper:

- THE MORE YOU READ, THE MORE PASSIONATE YOU ARE ABOUT YOUR REASONS FOR READING
- HIGH VOLUME READERS are more likely to choose ENTERTAINMENT, ESCAPE and PASSING TIME as their reasons for reading

## HOW DO YOU PURCHASE/ACQUIRE BOOKS?



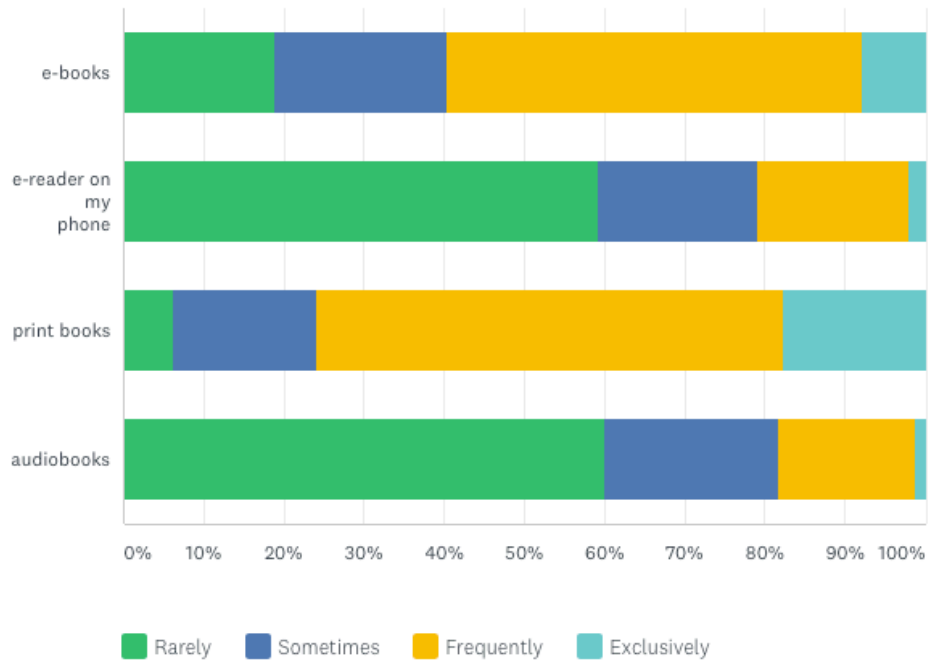
### Highlights:

- For this group of readers, ONLINE/INTERNET PURCHASE is the dominant response with 70% choosing this source frequently or exclusively
- LIBRARIES REMAIN A STRONG SOURCE for readers

### Digging deeper:

- **GENDER:** MEN ARE LESS LIKELY THAN WOMEN TO MAKE ONLINE PURCHASES AND MORE LIKELY THAN WOMEN TO MAKE BOOKSTORE PURCHASES
- **GENDER:** WOMEN USE LIBRARIES MORE THAN MEN
- **AGE:** UNDER 30s ARE LESS LIKELY TO MAKE ONLINE PURCHASES THAN THOSE OVER THIRTY AND MORE LIKELY TO MAKE BOOKSTORE PURCHASES
- **#BOOKS PER YEAR:** HIGH VOLUME READERS TEND TO USE ONLINE SOURCES and the LIBRARY MORE FREQUENTLY

## WHAT BOOK FORMAT/DEVICES ARE YOU USING?



### Highlights:

- Of 2418 participants, 75% FREQUENTLY OR EXCLUSIVELY USE PRINT BOOKS.

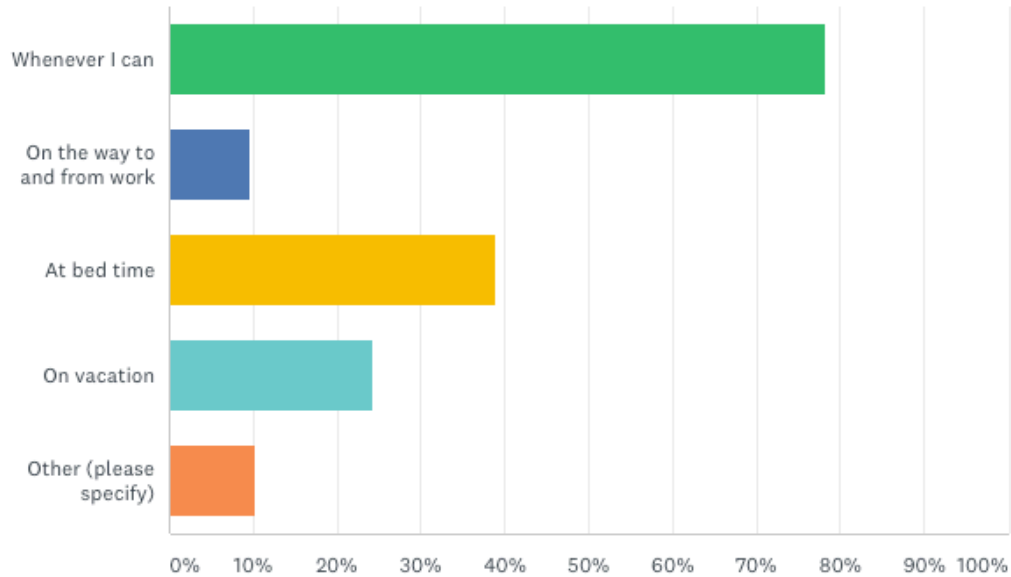
### Digging deeper:

- **GENDER:** WOMEN ARE MORE COMMITTED TO E-BOOKS THAN MEN WHILE MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO READ PRINT BOOKS THAN WOMEN
- **AGE:** THE HIGHEST USE OF PHONE-BASED E-READERS IS FOR THOSE BETWEEN 30 AND 50
- **GEOGRAPHY:** U.S. (62%) AND EUROPE (67) ARE THE HIGHEST USERS OF E-BOOKS WHILE U.S. (22%) AND CANADA (21%) ARE THE HIGHEST USERS OF PHONES FOR READING

## WHEN DO YOU MAINLY READ BOOKS?

### Highlights:

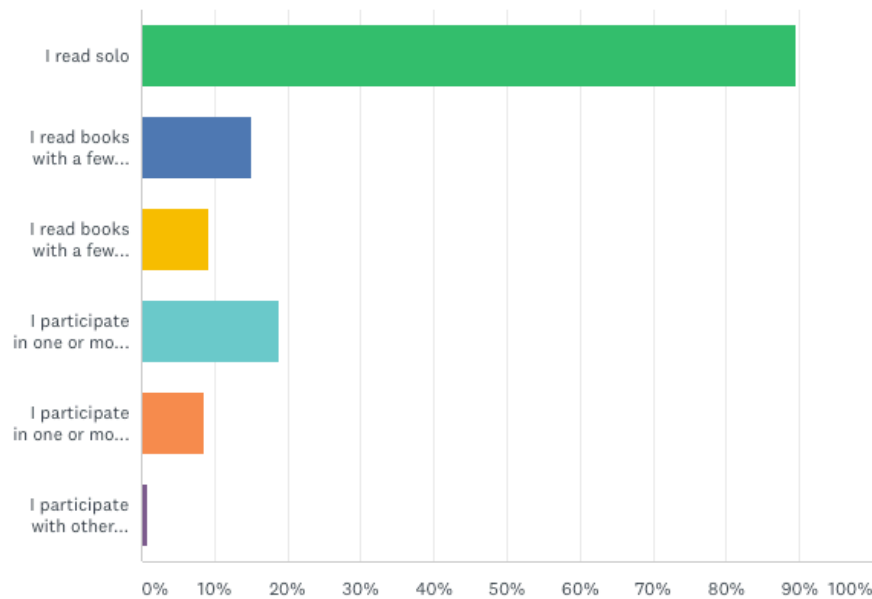
- PARTICIPANTS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC BOOK READERS – 78% read whenever they can



### Digging further:

- *GENDER*: more men (15%) than women (9%) read on the way to and from work
- *AGE*: not surprisingly, those who read on the way to and from work decreases with age
- *#BOOKS PER YEAR*: those who say they read 'whenever I can' increases with volume of books read; conversely, those who read 'on vacation' decreases with volume of books read

## DO YOU READ WITH OTHERS?



### Choices that don't show completely:

- I read books with a few friends and we chat about them in person
- I read books with a few friends and we chat about them online
- I participate in one or more book clubs that meet in person
- I participate in one or more book clubs that meet online
- I participate with other readers through a reading app like BookShip

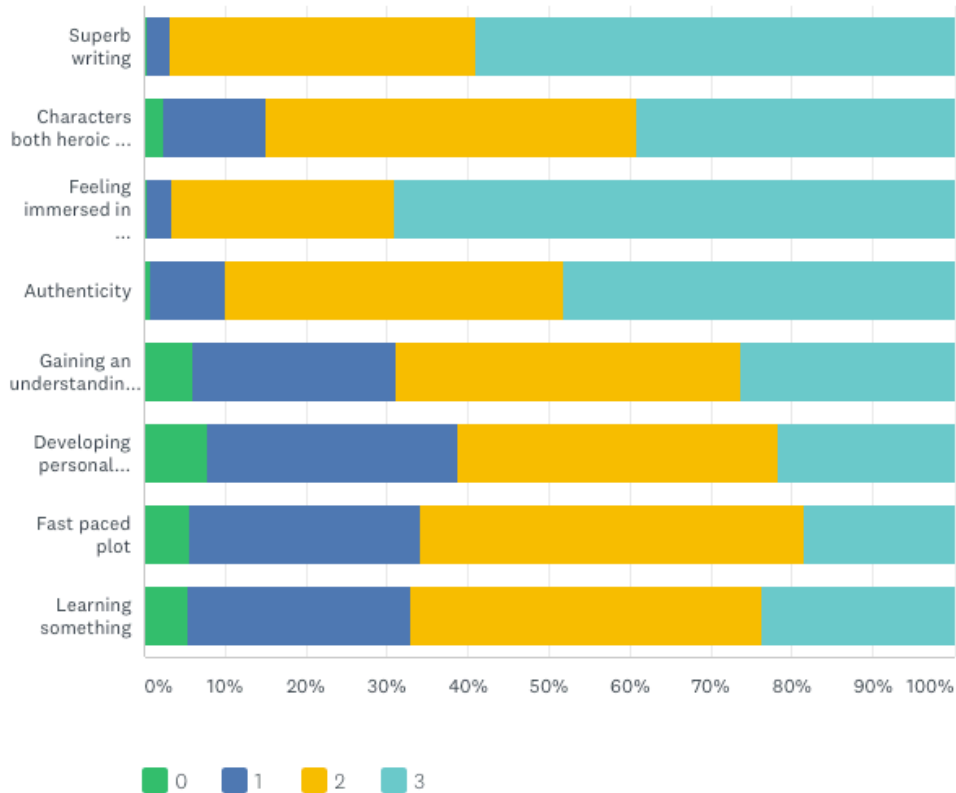
### Highlights:

- Not surprisingly MOST PEOPLE READ SOLO
- IN PERSON BOOK CLUBS ARE POPULAR WITH 19% OF PARTICIPANTS

### Digging further:

- **GENDER:** dividing responses into male and female shows quite clearly that WOMEN USE VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA TO A MUCH GREATER EXTENT THAN MEN
- **GENDER:** MEN READ SOLO MORE THAN WOMEN; WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO PARTICIPATE IN BOOK CLUBS
- **AGE:** THE OLDER YOU ARE THE MORE LIKELY YOU ARE TO PARTICIPATE IN BOOK CLUBS
- **#BOOKS PER YEAR:** the more books you read, THE MORE LIKELY YOU ARE TO PARTICIPATE IN BOOK CLUBS

**REFLECTING ON YOUR FICTION READING, HOW RELATIVELY IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS? 0=NOT IMPORTANT, 3=HIGHLY IMPORTANT**



**Choices that don't show completely:**

- Characters both heroic and human
- Feeling immersed in the novel's world
- Gaining an understanding of the human condition
- Developing personal insights

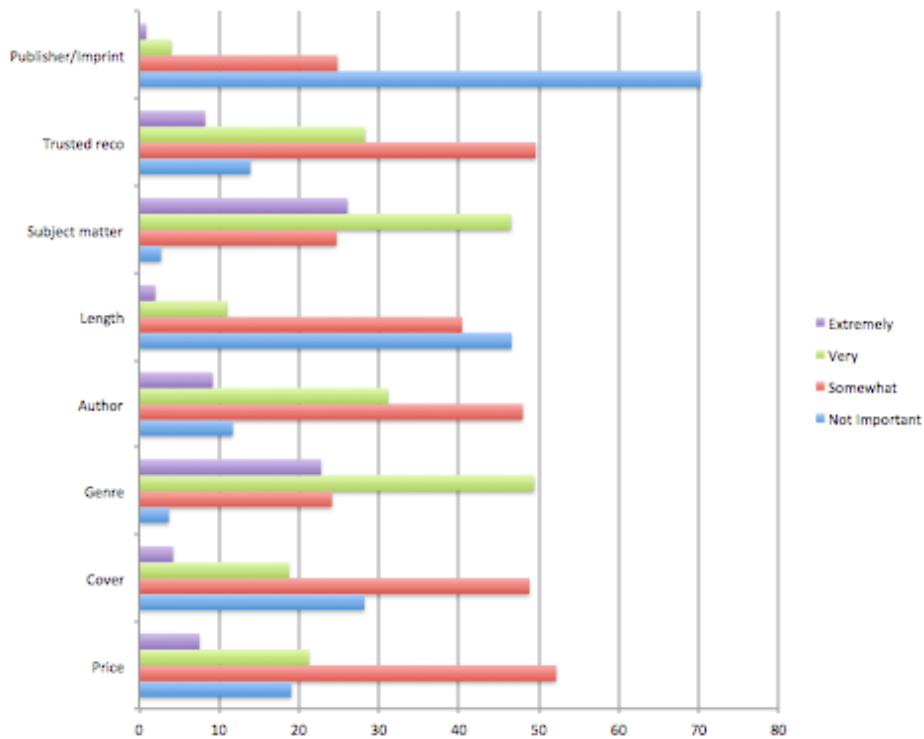
**Highlights:**

- FEELING IMMERSSED IN THE NOVEL'S WORLD is the most critical factor for readers; this is followed by AUTHENTICITY and SUPERB WRITING

**Digging further:**

- *GENDER*: women rank the following factors as more significant than men do – AUTHENTICITY, CHARACTERS BOTH HEROIC AND HUMAN, FAST PACED PLOT, FEELING IMMERSSED IN THE NOVEL'S WORLD
- *AGE*: as readers age, SUPERB WRITING becomes increasingly important

## IN CHOOSING A BOOK, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS?



### Highlights:

- Combining very and extremely important, THE TOP TWO FACTORS ARE SUBJECT MATTER and GENRE
- PUBLISHER/IMPRINT IS THE LEAST IMPORTANT FACOR

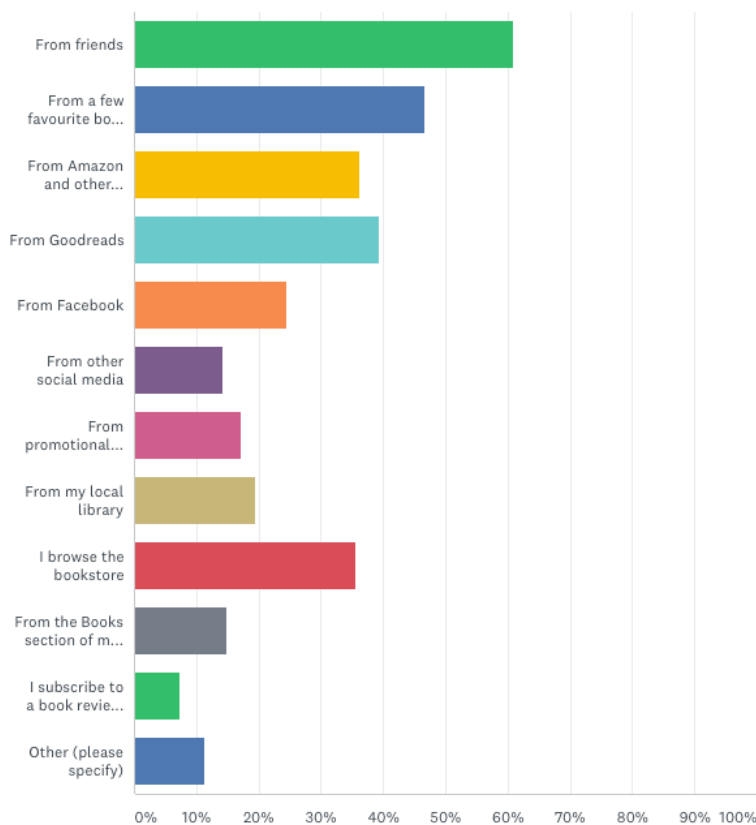
### Digging further:

- *GENDER*: COVERS are slightly more important to women than to men
- *AGE*: AUTHOR IS INCREASINGLY RELEVANT WITH AGE; for example, combining very and extremely important those under 30 sit at 29% and at 54% for those over 70
- *#BOOKS PER YEAR*: SUBJECT MATTER IS MOST SIGNIFICANT FOR THOSE WHO READ THE LEAST

## WHERE DO YOU FIND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOOD BOOKS? (Check top 3.)

### Highlights:

- TOP FIVE sources for recommendations are (1) FRIENDS, (2) A FEW FAVOURITE BOOK REVIEW SITES AND/OR BLOGS, (3) GOODREADS, (4) AMAZON and OTHER ONLINE RETAILERS, (5) BOOKSTORE.



### Choices that don't show completely:

- From a few favourite book review sites and/or blogs
- From Amazon and other online retailers
- From promotional sites like Bookbub, Bargain Booksy, Books Go Social etc.
- From the books section of my newspaper
- I subscribe to a book review publication (print or online)

### Digging further:

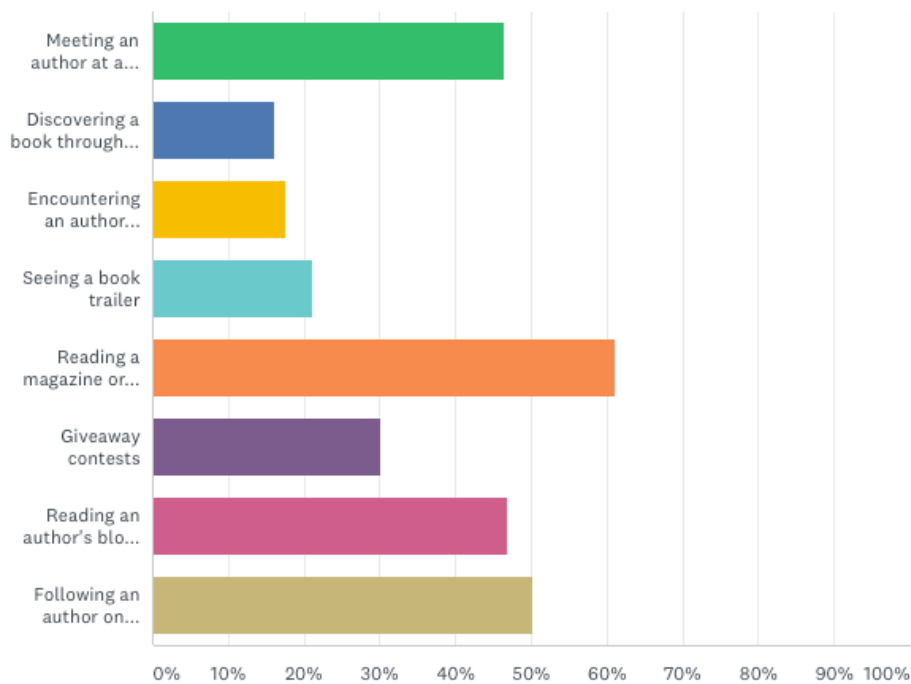
- **GENDER:** MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO RELY ON FRIENDS OR BROWSE THE BOOKSTORE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS and LESS LIKELY TO USE BOOK REVIEW SITES AND BLOGS
- **GENDER:** WOMEN ARE MORE FREQUENT USERS OF GOODREADS, FACEBOOK and ONLINE PROMO SITES THAN MEN
- **GEOGRAPHY:** READERS FROM THE U.K. ARE LEAST LIKELY TO USE GOODREADS and MORE LIKELY TO BROWSE THE BOOKSTORE or CHECK THEIR NEWSPAPER/BOOK REVIEW PUBLICATION



## WHAT AUTHOR OR BOOK MARKETING APPROACHES DO YOU ENJOY? (Check all that apply.)

### Highlights:

- TOP 4 PREFERENCES ARE: (1) READING A MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT AN AUTHOR'S BOOK, (2) FOLLOWING AN AUTHOR ON FACEBOOK OR TWITTER, (3) READING AN AUTHOR'S BLOG OR NEWSLETTER, and (4) MEETING AN AUTHOR AT A BOOKSTORE OR SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT



### Above choices are:

- Meeting an author at a bookstore or speaking engagement
- Discovering a book through blog tours
- Encountering an author through Goodreads Q&A
- Seeing a book trailer
- Reading a magazine or newspaper article about an author's book
- Giveaway contests
- Reading an author's blog or newsletter
- Following an author on Facebook or Twitter

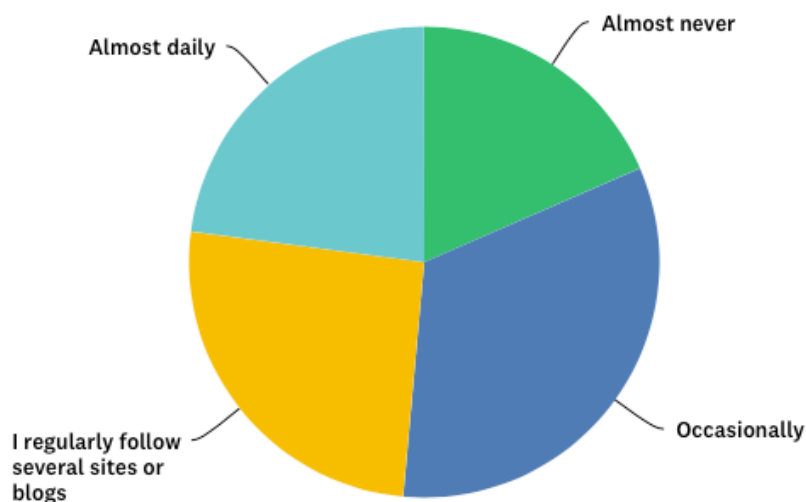
### Digging further:

- AGE: THE OLDER YOU ARE, THE MORE LIKELY YOU ARE TO READ MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ABOUT BOOKS

### 3. INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON READING

Caveat: the survey was primarily distributed through social media. Still, 1181 participants or 51% chose 'almost never' or 'occasionally'.

**HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR READING PURPOSES SUCH AS BOOK DISCOVERY, BOOK REVIEWS, AUTHOR INTERACTION, BOOK DISCUSSIONS?**



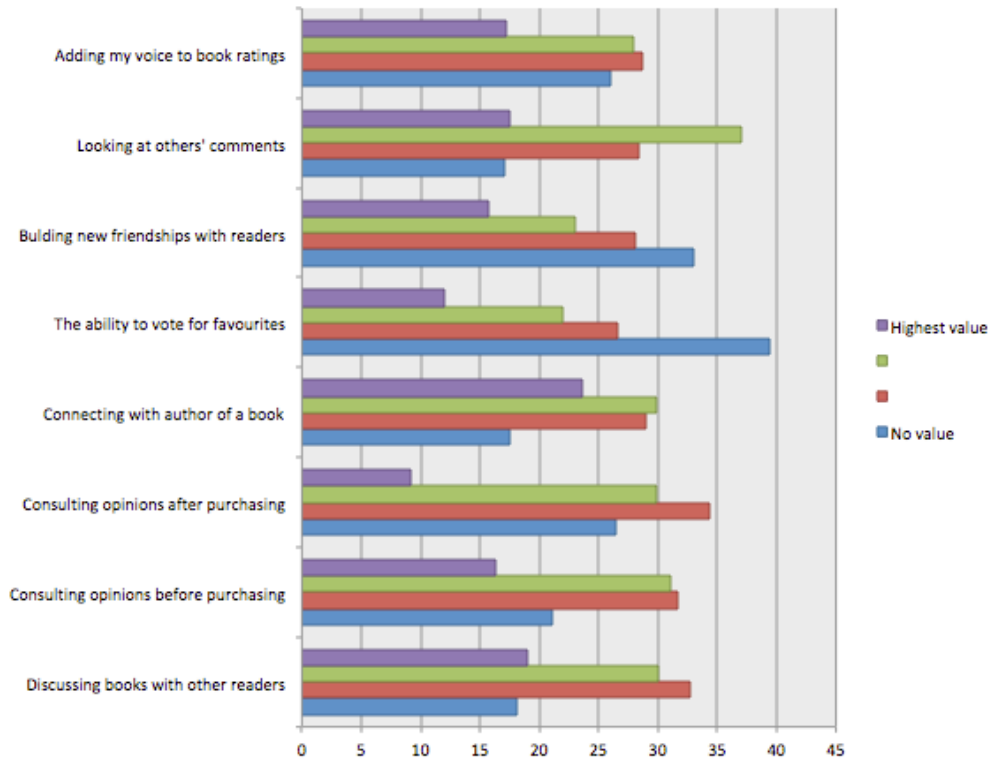
**Highlights:**

- 23% of participants USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR READING PURPOSES DAILY; another 26% use it REGULARLY

**Digging further:**

- **GENDER:** 38% of MEN ALMOST NEVER USE social media, compared with 15% of WOMEN
- **GENDER:** 25% of WOMEN use social media DAILY compared with 10% of MEN
- **#BOOKS PER YEAR:** use of social media for reading INCREASES WITH BOOKS READ PER YEAR

## HOW MUCH DO YOU VALUE THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONALITY OFFERED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA? (0=NO VALUE, 3=HIGHEST VALUE)



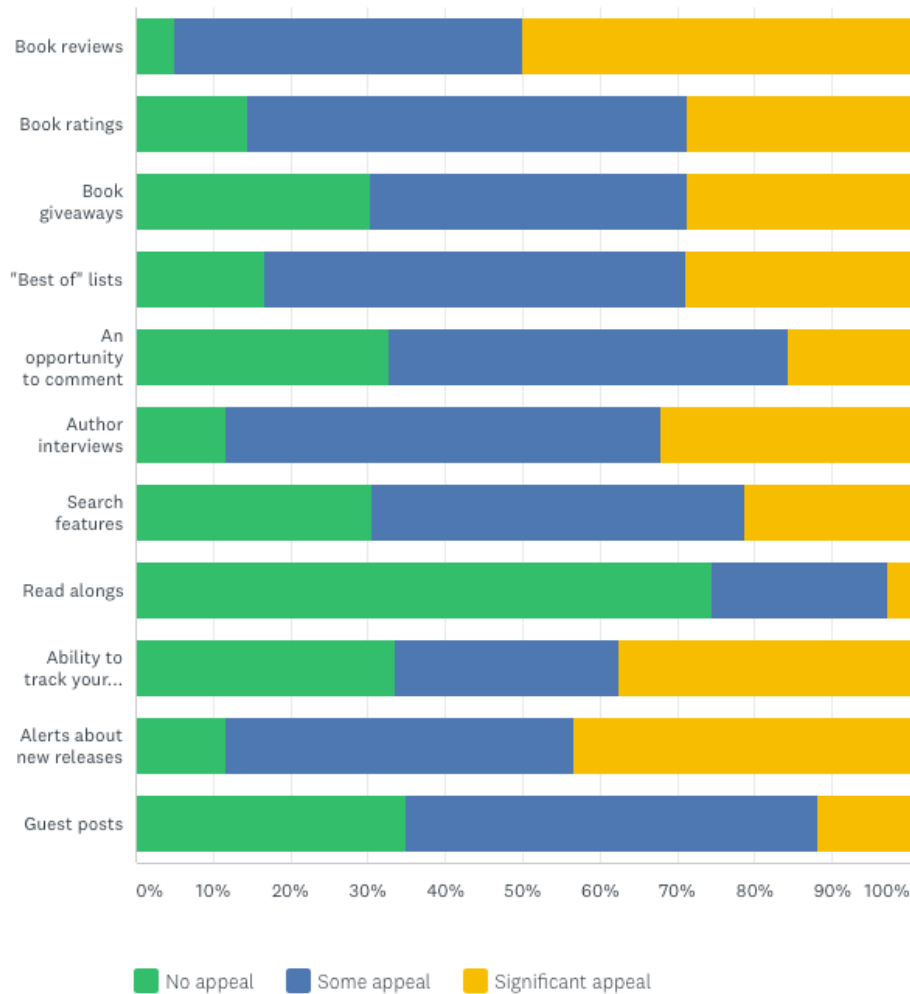
### Highlights:

- **CONNECTING WITH THE AUTHOR OF A BOOK** is the social media functionality most valued by participants

### Digging further:

- **GENDER:** MEN are more likely than women to VALUE CONSULTING A RANGE OF OPINIONS BEFORE PURCHASING A BOOK; WOMEN place more value on USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO CONNECT WITH AUTHORS than men
- **AGE:** YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS place more value on consulting a range of opinions after reading a book
- **AGE:** YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS place more value on the ability to build new friendships

## WHAT BLOG, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA FEATURES DO YOU ENJOY?



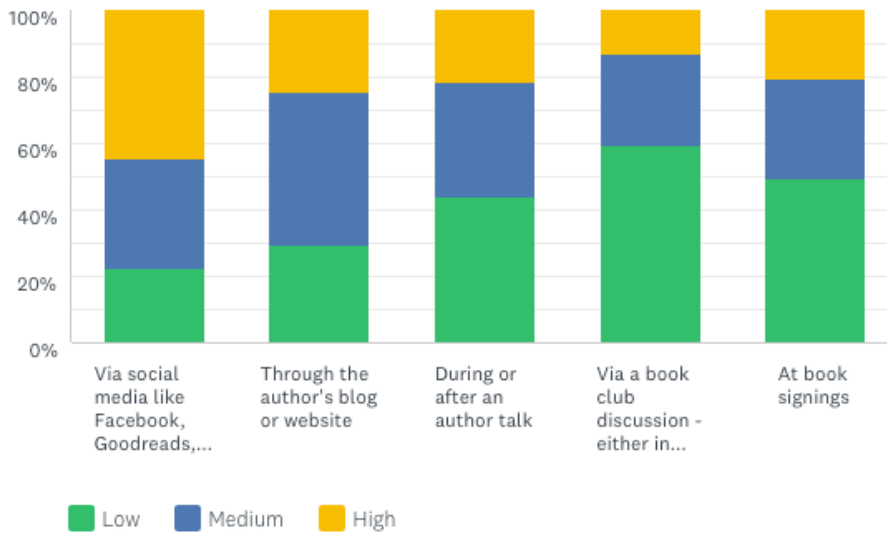
### Highlights:

- BOOK REVIEWS ARE THE MOST HIGHLY VALUED FEATURE
- READALONGS ARE THE LEAST VALUED FEATURE

### Digging further:

- **GENDER:** WOMEN VALUE 'ALERTS ABOUT NEW RELEASES' 'BOOK GIVEAWAYS' AND 'BEST OF LISTS' MORE THAN MEN
- **AGE:** AS PEOPLE AGE they are LESS INTERESTED IN TRACKING THEIR BOOKS
- **GEOGRAPHY – U.S. and CANADA** VALUE 'BEST OF' LISTS MORE THAN OTHER COUNTRIES

## HOW DO YOU LIKE TO INTERACT WITH AUTHORS?



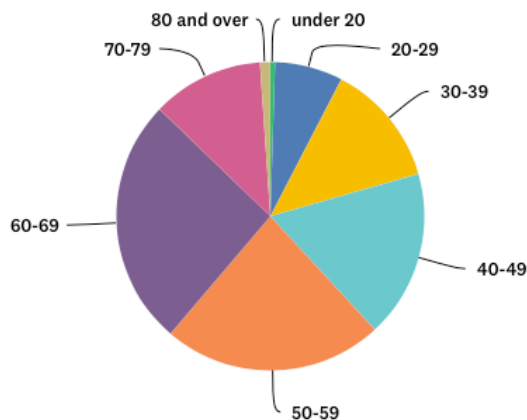
**Note:** the label on the first column reads 'via social media like Facebook, Goodreads, Twitter chats etc.; the fourth column reads 'via a book club discussion either in person or online'

### Highlights:

- SOCIAL MEDIA PLAYS A PROMINENT ROLE IN HOW READERS LIKE TO INTERACT WITH AUTHORS; not surprisingly, those who use social media frequently value this method of interaction the highest

## 4. DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

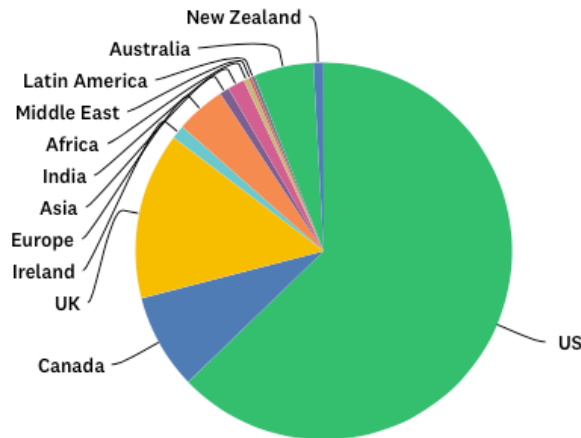
### HOW OLD ARE YOU?



### Highlights:

- PEOPLE OF ALL AGES RESPONDED – solid distribution of age ranges; sufficient at all levels except under 20 to consider differences by age

## WHERE DO YOU LIVE?



### Highlights:

- NUMBERS BY GEOGRAPHY: US – 1504, Canada – 196, UK – 343, Ireland – 28, Europe – 102, Asia – 20, India – 35, Africa – 11, Middle East – 5, Latin America – 8, Australia – 122, New Zealand – 21

### END NOTES:

Further results, such as an analysis of write-in comments, will be available on M.K. Tod's blog [A Writer of History](#) as time permits. Surveys from 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2017 are also on the blog.

I am neither a statistician nor a survey specialist. However, I realize conclusions cannot be drawn from small numbers. As a result, I have avoided drawing inferences from small partitions of data and for the most part, comments in 'digging further' reflect gaps of 8-10 percentage points or more.

Survey publicity was almost totally through online means with bloggers, authors, readers and others spreading the word. As noted earlier, I'm a member of a robust historical fiction community. Hence responses to a few questions will reflect a bias towards (1) historical fiction, (2) readers who are accustomed to social media, and (3) participants who read more than the average individual. Consequently, results do not reflect the general public. Nevertheless, I believe the results are highly interesting and of significant value to authors, bloggers, members of the publishing industry and, of course, to readers.

*I am pleased to have others reference information from the survey and only ask that you include my name, M.K. Tod, and blog [www.awriterofhistory.com](http://www.awriterofhistory.com).*