

# Bookcrossing

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to study Bookcrossing community. The main study is to understand why BC community is one of the biggest communities online, why is the motivation of the members join, and how much being part of this community affected the reading habits of their members.

## Keywords

Bookcrossing , social community

## INTRODUCTION

The mission of Bookcrossing is to connect people through books.

It started in 2001 by Ron Hornbacker, a software programmer, as a way to simply track books in the internet, rapidly the Bookcrossing movement transforms in a worldwide phenomenon, six years later with more than 700.000 members of 130 countries and more than 5 millions of books registered, Bookcrossing still is one of the more active communities in the internet

Bookcrossing is a community online that shares a common interest: books and the pleasure for reading; they do this by releasing a book in a public place to be picked up and read by others.

When somebody wants to release a book they leave it, correctly identified, in a public place previously agreed and wait until someone finds it or combine with a member of the community to send the book and this member to another forming this way what is called a bookring.

By releasing a book his owner can track it down, by the journals entry of the users who found it, see where the book has been and their opinions about it.

Also the Bookcrossing community offers different ways to interact with other members like online forums where members can introduce themselves, talk about Bookcrossing and why the love it, discuss the books and authors etc; and offers conventions where members can meet authors and others members of the Bookcrossing community.

This idea differs of other communities as social networks like myspace, facebook and twitter by the fact that people

share a common interest that is the pleasure of reading and they want to share this experience with someone else.

## RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Bookcrossing aims to connect people through books by release them in a place to other discover.

Bookcrossing started as a simple website to people share books where they can track the books that they released but his exponential growth had taken the Bookcrossing movement to another levels.

Part of the success of this community attributed by hi CEO Scott Soroachak, is that nearly 50 % of the members get together in their communities to meet up in small groups to exchange books, impressions, and reviews about the books this way people can actually meet another members and make real social connections.

We can attribute the success of this wide community the interest shared which constitutes the main reason for people to join; for the members, this community is useful for their social life and helpful to expand their knowledge in literature.

The original idea of this community it's the transformation of an internal process like reading to a group process where real and social activities are developed, such as group discussions where members can discuss what they read, what they plan to read, authors, genres and literature in general.

The members are encouraged to exchange books to the society in general this way they developed their sense of social awareness and importance of literature and connect with other persons of distant places.

In some countries like Spain or Brasil the Bookcrossing movement is use as a mediator to promote reading doing mass releases in public places this way people are encourage to read and be part of the Bookcrossing community by encouraging others. In England a mass release was used to promote the film release of the book "The girl who played with fire", they released 60 copies in 12 locations and when a person found a book won prizes in the metro.co.uk. So we can see that the Bookcrossing is also useful for publicity reasons.

## INTERVIEW WITH A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY

Regina Alves is the coordinator of information of the youth center in Funchal and also an active member of the Bookcrossing society since 2003.

Being a coordinator in the youth center where the main objective is to contribute to the informal education of the young, she had the idea to insert the bookcrossing movement in the youth center to promote a reading habit among the young and others that attends the center.

In 2004 the youth center of Funchal became a member of the Bookcrossing community and expanded then to the others youth center of the Madeira Island.

As in the center they have many book donations of people that don't want them and they don't have the space to exhibit all of them, the youth center use the Bookcrossing movement and insert other associations. These associations are associations that seek to carry activities in the society to improve culture so the youth center insert them in the Bookcrossing concept and donate some of the books they have to them so they can spread through society the reading habit in a chain sort of way.

The youth center promote sessions to promote the Bookcrossing movement in the society and to the associations that are interested, normally to this sessions attend, beside the associations, people that like literature and want to know more of the Bookcrossing because they take knowledge about it in the news.

In personal matter Regina said that she became an active member in the community for her love to literature and her desire to find other persons who had the same interest with whom to share books reviews, genres and authors.

This community gave her new opportunities to read books which are not available in Portugal and are available in other countries as also find rare books that are no longer in circulation or even to read books in other languages; and also the community gave her the opportunity to make new friends, locally and internationally, with people that like the same genres of books she like.

## RESEARH METHOD

As seen in the paper of David Crandal about similarity and social influence in online communities' people tend to adopt activities based on the activities of the people they are interacting with [1].

After reading this paper and knowing that normally friendships are made in the Bookcrossing community; I began to wonder how much a person, which share the same interest for the same genres of books of another, can influence the future readings of the other person and even start another in new kinds of books that she has never been interested.

So the focus of my study is to analyze how a person reading choice could be affected for another person that has

common interest this way I can observe how social influence can affect the members of the Bookcrossing community.

To observe the effect of the other ones opinions I'm going to conduct an online survey that is going to be available for two and a half weeks in three different forums in the Bookcrossing website: the general forum, the English forum and the Spanish forum; this way will be possible to collect more data in the limited time available.

## RESULTS

The results consist of 118 responses in which 54 were of the general English forum, 45 were of the Portuguese forum and 19 of the Spanish forum.

In this first collection of results we can conclude that Bookcrossing members are mostly female. Acording to the survey female members constitute 87% and male 13%.

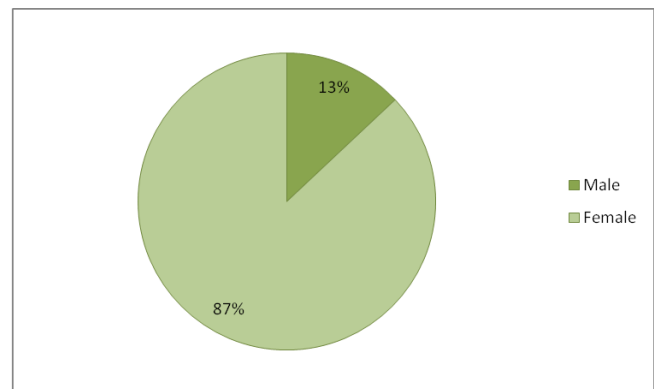


Figure 1- Gender

The second question of the survey was what age the users had and the majority of members of Bookcrossing have more than 41 years old; other significant quantity of users have between 31 to 40 years old constituting the 22%.

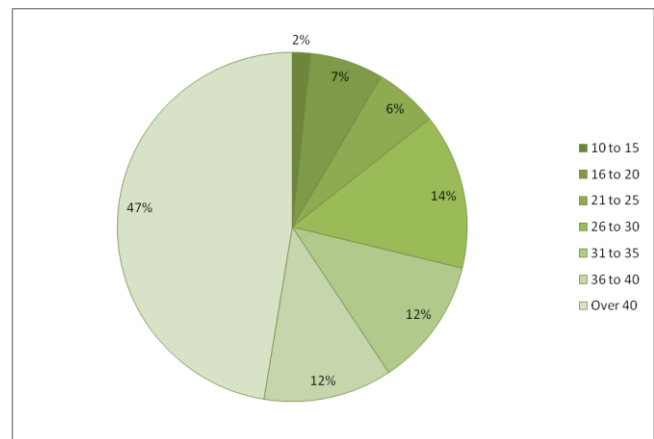
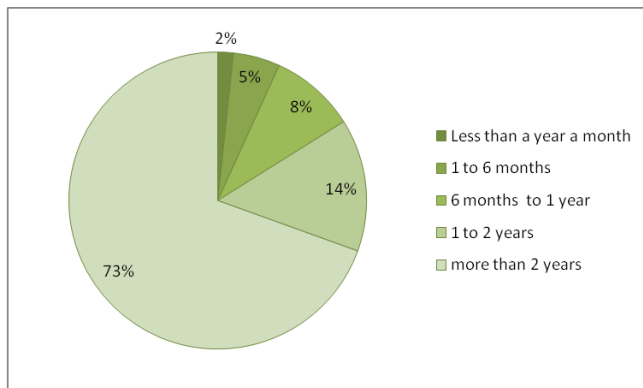


Figure 2 - Age

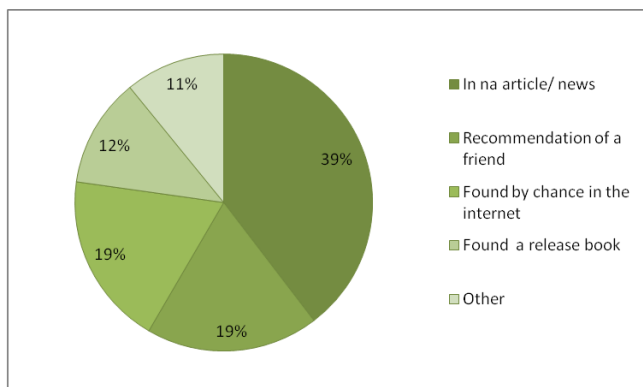
The graph 3 shows that 73% of the members questioned have been part of Bookcrossing more than two years, 14%

one to two years, 8% six months to 1 year, 5% one to six months and only 2% less than a month. We can conclude that the community is good in maintaining members interested and the most active members are the ones with more years in the community.



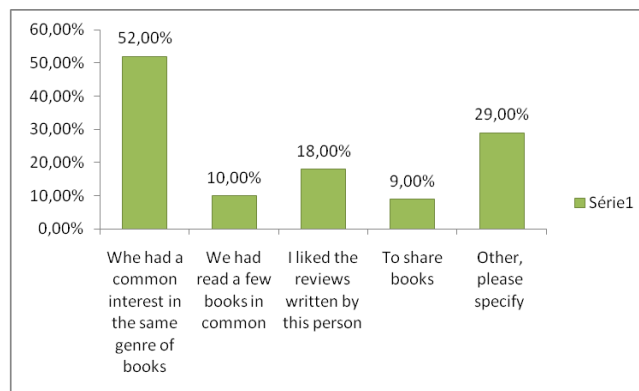
**Figure 3 - How long have you been a Bookcrossing member?**

Graph of figure 4, where we ask how they took knowledge of Bookcrossing movement, shows that 39% took knowledge in an article/news, 19% by recommendation of a friend, another 19% found Bookcrossing by chance in the net and the most interesting result is only 12% found a book in the wild and register.



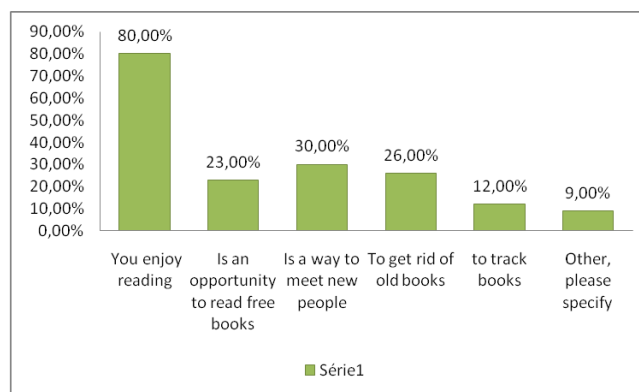
**Figure 4 - How did you take knowledge of Bookcrossing?**

When the members were asked to choose the motives to contact another member in Bookcrossing 52 % choose if they have a common interest on the same genre of books, 10% contact another member if they had read the same books, 18% contact if they like the reviews written by the other person, 9% contact other member to share books and 29% choose other as an answer; the most unexpected response, quoting an member that answered, was “If I travel for a weekend away to another country I normally contact a bookcrosser and sometimes I get a free tour/someone to have a cup of coffee in the best place know to locals” I found the same response in other 3 members.



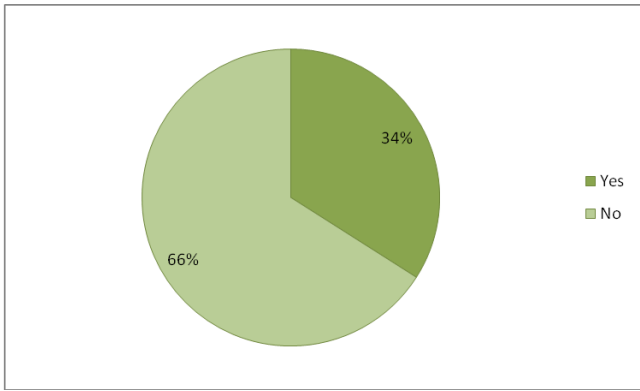
**Figure 5 - What is your motivation to contact other members in Bookcrossing?**

The graph of figure 6 shows that 80% became members because they like to read, 23% wanted to read free books, 30% founded a nice way to meet new people, 26% wanted to get rid of old books, 12% liked the idea of tracking books and 9 % choose other; this other field varies between “get to know new authors”, “sounded like fun” and “to spread the love of books”.



**Figure 6 - What was your motivation to join Bookcrossing?**

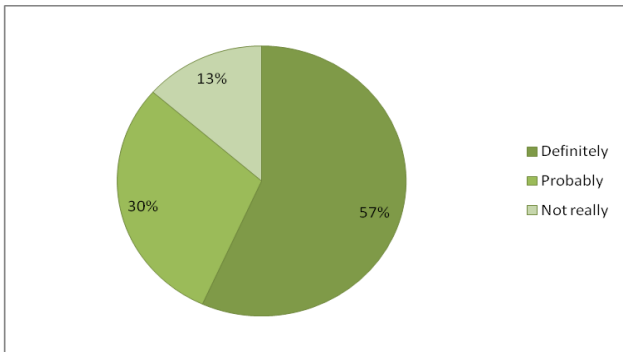
The graph of figure 7 shows that 66% of the members don't search what other members are reading or have read. These results are contradicted by my experience in the forums where members go actually to another member's wish list to see what the books they want are or even to the other member's bookshelf to see what books they have. In the previous answers a considering amount of members said that they contacted others to share books in booktrays or offer books that are in their wish list.



**Figure 7 - Do you search for people in Bookcrossing who like the same books as you, in order to see what other books that they have read or have with them?**

The final question was is they think that being a member of Bookcrossing affected the genres of books that they read 59% said definitely, 27% said probably and 13% said not really. In this question some members commented that they now have the chance to read books that if they saw in a bookstore they would never buy.

Other member said “Bookcrossing provides very easy access to many genres of books and new authors as well as an active, vocal community which recommends them” and other commented “Before Bookcrossing, I’d go into a bookshop and usually head straight to the SF/fantasy/mystery section. But with Bookcrossing a selection of various genres and authors is always at hand, like at the library, only unlike the library I’ve also got people’s reviews at my disposal”.



**Figure 8 - Do you think that Bookcrossing affected the book genres that you read?**

## CONCLUSIONS

So with this study we can conclude that the most active members of bookcrossing are the ones with more than two

years in the community; by the answers that I had this also could mean that this is a good community that keeps members interested but have difficulty motivating people to join.

I also found interesting that only 12% said that they joined to BC to track the books released; this is a contradiction considering that in the beginning the primary objective of this community was to release books and to track them; it seems that the books release know are mostly a “control release” where the members know where is the book and they are getting it back.

Considering the small amount of members that came to know BC by founding a book we can conclude that it is a small amount of people that join after founding a release book or that, like I said previously, now are more “control releases” and the member decides the person who they’re going to send the book.

By the answers that I got I couldn’t measure how a member could affect the choices of books made by other but I can conclude that bookcrossing provides an opportunity to their members to read books that otherwise would never read; opening this way a window to new genres, authors, themes and others people reviews.

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