

Works in Progress • Digital Social Reading

Preface

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It is 2021, the major social media have been around for more than a decade, increasingly being used for reading-related activities, like organizing one's own virtual bookshelf, discussing novels, and reading book reviews. Still, there is no publication that tried to organize the precious knowledge generated by research about digital social reading (DSR), which is scattered among dozens of volumes, journal articles, and blog posts, intersecting many different disciplines. I tried to do it in this book. Given its broad scope, it will necessarily attract legitimate critics by different parts, from scholars that will think it does not meet specific disciplinary expectations. I think that such an interdisciplinary approach is needed to understand the social, cultural, and pedagogical aspects of DSR. Aware that a synthesis done by a single person can easily overlook even important aspects of a phenomenon, I openly share my work hoping that a community review will help to improve it and make it more useful for other researchers, students, educators, and curious readers.

In the Introduction, I briefly present from what perspectives DSR has been studied so far and state some of the reasons that make a thorough investigation of DSR a necessary step for the comprehension of the digital literary sphere, but also of the cognitive and aesthetic aspects of reading. In chapter 1, I clarify what are the subjects covered in this book, contextualizing DSR in the long history of reading and outlining its difference from traditional forms of social reading with print books. In chapter 2, I survey various categorizations and taxonomies proposed and then present a new improved taxonomy systematizing the existing knowledge about DSR. In chapter 3, I use three case studies to show how DSR can help us understand cognitive, aesthetic, and educational aspects of reading. In chapter 4, I focus on how DSR can be leveraged in designing learning activities, also introducing a new theory of *distributed social learning*. In chapter 5, I intervene in the debate about the use of digital technology for reading, criticizing some methodological aspects of existing research and underlining the possible benefits of DSR for individuals and for societies.