NEW DIRECTIONS IN BOOK HISTORY

Publishers, Readers, and Digital Engagement

MARIANNE MARTENS

New Directions in Book History

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For Carlos, Alexander, and Christian

Preface

When I worked in children's publishing at North-South Books in New York, by the mid-1990s early digital book formats such as CD-Roms gave us pause. Were these new formats going to end print publishing as we knew it? If we licensed digital editions of our books, would parents and educators select those over the high quality print editions for which we were known? Most of the short-lived CD-Roms for children turned out to be either educational or game-related (or both), and during that time, few of us felt that there was any chance that one day digital formats would replace print books for young readers. At the time, most of us who created children's books viewed reading print picture books with children as an almost sacred activity. Common sentiment was that the art of a high quality picture book could never be properly rendered in digital formats. And perhaps more importantly, no one imagined that any digital device could ever replace the cozy experience of sitting with a child on your lap as you shared a *print* picture book.

But twenty years later, digital formats are far more sophisticated. No longer do you have to sit at a desktop computer and insert a CD to view a "book." Instead, light-weight platforms such as Kindles, Nooks, iPads, and other tablets have made reading in digital formats far more accessible, and far more visually appealing. Sophisticated picture book apps are able to reproduce art in great detail—and make that art interactive. Suddenly reading to young children in digital formats is a reality. From picture book apps for the youngest readers, to multiplatform books for young adults, interactivity changes the reading experience as we know it.

A curiosity about these new formats led me to the research of this book. As a former publisher, I was aware of publishers' reviewing websites, such as *RandomBuzzers*, shortly after they began to appear. In 2009, when I first started studying the *Twilight* phenomenon, I was astonished to see the amount of user-generated fan content that existed online, that later was channeled into the official site, *TwilightSaga.com*. And when I first read about *The Amanda Project*, I knew that I wanted to study it as well. I was just the type of bookish girl, raised in libraries and bookstores, who would have enjoyed participating in *The Amanda Project* had it been around when I was 13. Together, *RandomBuzzers.com*, *TwilightSaga.com*, and *The Amanda Project* represented a progression of digital interaction around books.

As I started, I realized that it was not enough to study the formats in isolation. Digital formats are deeply rooted in book history. They borrow much from, and are closely related to, printed books. Books are not static, and even in the case of analog books, formats have evolved and changed. Beyond studying publishing and library history, I realized I would need to look at different pieces of the digital mix, from creation, to dissemination, to reception. The fact that I was studying digital phenomena as it emerged presented real challenges. Years after starting the initial research, many sites have been taken down, and old links are broken. A challenge with studying digital formats and participatory websites is that they are ephemeral in nature, which in turn means that the need to study them is immediate, and constantly subject to change. In the case of studying such sites that are aimed for a teenage audience, the teens themselves have in many cases grown up and left.

Earlier versions of some of the work in this book have been published elsewhere. For example, a (2010) book chapter called "Consumed by Twilight: The commodification of young adult literature about the Twilight" about *The Twilight Saga* was published in a collection called *Bitten by Twilight: Youth culture, media, and the vampire franchise*, edited by M. Click, J. Stevens Aubrey, and L. Behm-Morawitz and published by Peter Lang. A (2011) article called "Transmedia teens: Affect, immaterial labor, and user-generated content", was published in *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*. A (2013) article about the history of children's publishing and librarianship called "The Librarian Lion: Constructing children's literature through connections, capital, and criticism," was published in *The Journal of Education in Library and Information Science*, and is largely about New York City

librarian Anne Carroll Moore. This article connects to Chapter 2, the historical chapter of this book. A book chapter called “Reading the Readers: Tracking Visible Online Reading Audiences,” is included in a (2016) collection called *Plotting the Reading Experience: Theory/Practice/Politics*, edited by P. M. Rothbauer, K. I. Skjerdingstad, L. E. F. McKechnie, and K. Oterholm and published by Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Kent, Ohio Marianne Martens

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Prior to the expansion of digital technologies around reading, teachers, parents, and librarians were the primary gatekeepers responsible for getting books into the hands of young people, and researching readers was an elusive process. But a combination of convergence in the publishing industry and the development of new digital technologies around reading have enabled publishers to create disintermediated digital enclosures in which they can communicate directly with their reading audience. Access to their favorite authors attracts teen readers to the sites, where they are encouraged to participate via quizzes and games, to act as peer-to-peer reviewers and marketers, and even to have an authorial role as content creators or contributors. Within these online collaborative communities around reading, the construct of Iser's (1974) largely invisible "implied reader" is replaced by a visible and vocal reading audience. By examining three progressive case studies of reading-related websites for young people: *RandomBuzzers.com*, which was Random House's interactive website for teen readers; Hachette's *TwilightSaga.com* (based on the books in the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer); and *The Amanda Project.com* as evidence of such visible audiences, this book exposes how teens contribute their immaterial and affective labor as they engage in participatory reading experiences via publishers' and authors' interactive websites and use of social media, and how in turn, publishers are able to exploit such labor as they get invaluable market research, peer-to-peer recommendations, and even content which can be used in other projects—all virtually free-of-charge. As Young Adult

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literary content moves from print to digital formats, this book will demonstrate how the roles of "author," "marketer," and "reviewer" are being redefined, and present a twenty-first century configuration in the field of cultural production for young people.

Starting with an historical look at the formative period of children's librarianship and publishing at the beginning of the twentieth century, this book will provide an overview of the field of production of literary products for young people during an era of convergence in the field. This work examines how publishers' book-based cultural products for young adults are created, produced, disseminated, received, and consumed within a contemporary practice of producing transmedia and multiplatform books that are embedded in technology and rely on user-generated content. Weedon et al. (2014) describe how the "book's social function as *the* high status vehicle for communicating new ideas and cultural expressions is being challenged by sophisticated systems of conveying meaning in other media" (p. 109). Subsequently, publishing practices increasingly mirror production and consumption practices of other media industries, resulting in a new political economy of the field which emphasizes earnings-power, or what McChesney (2013) calls hypercommercialism.

The fields of children's librarianship and children's publishing arose as interconnected fields in the early twentieth century, and before the expansion of reading-related websites and social media around books, teachers, librarians, and parents were the primary gatekeepers responsible for getting literature into the hands of young people. But with interactive online environments, publishers create disintermediated spaces in which they can communicate directly with their target reading audience. Such technologies provide publishers with transparency on a population that previously was ephemeral and difficult to reach.

In this context, the publishers' economic model changes. In return for access to authors and book-related content on publishers' sites, teens contribute their immaterial and affective labor around the books they love by participating in peer-to-peer reviewing and marketing, and by contributing user-generated content. Publishers can solicit focus-group-style feedback via online quizzes and Q&A sessions, which reveal evidence about young readers' likes and dislikes. In addition, teens' labor guides their participation across such corporate sites creating a loyal, branded readership, which in turn, can be used by publishers to market commodified cultural products back at this population.

Teens' participation provides rich evidence of reader preferences, engagement, and a record of activity. Through their contributions, young

people construct themselves as a visible, participatory audience, leaving written evidence of their reading via a detritus of content across publishers' websites. Young readers are commodified as participants because they are expected to participate as fans of the cultural products they are consuming themselves. However, despite the publishers' sometimes blatantly commercial objectives for such participatory sites, and efforts at establishing guidelines for participation, this newly visible teen readership is not always an obedient audience, and evidence of participants' transgressive behavior such as: not following site owners' guidelines, or posting story spoilers or other inappropriate content, demonstrates that sites are not entirely under publishers' control. This results in new labor requirements for publishers and their agents, who must continuously police their sites and remove evidence of undesirable participation. As we read the readers across participatory websites, this research explores how a dichotomy of intentions produces conflicts between those who create the fora of participation and necessarily attempt to govern the readers, and the ensuing visible—and somewhat rebellious—reading audience.

Across three progressive sites: Random House's *RandomBuzzers* review site, *TwilightSaga.com's* online fan site, and *The Amanda Project* (the first multiplatform book series for teens which was intended to be a collaborative, co-written series by work-for-hire authors and influenced by storylines from teen fans), this book explores digital enclosures (governed by sites' end-user licensing agreements) that encourage teens to participate via quizzes and games, to act as peer-to-peer reviewers and marketers, and even to have an author-like role in contributing content. In return, publishers get invaluable market research free-of-charge, effective peer-to-peer recommendations, and even content which can be used in future books in a series. These blurring roles present a twenty-first century configuration in the field of cultural production for young people. As Young Adult literary content moves from print to digital formats, roles of "author," "marketer," and "reviewer" are being redefined. While librarians used to be the primary gatekeepers responsible for getting books into the hands of young people, technology enables publishers to create disintermediated environments in which they can communicate directly with a visible reading audience.

This book takes a look at the digital shift in reading experiences, and in the field of cultural production for young people. In doing so, it aims to provide a rich understanding of a contemporary phenomenon, comparing and contrasting the various levels of teens' understanding of the digital cultural products created for them, to publishers' plans and goals for such products—all within a historical and comparative framework.

And in writing "digital shift," one clarification must be made. The use of this term throughout this book is not intended in a deterministic way, as I do not believe that we are at the point at which digital formats will replace print formats completely. The format currently known as a *book* exists on a continuum of evolving formats. Historically, children's book formats have included primers covered with a layer of protective horn known as hornbooks which started in England in the fifteenth century. Chapbooks, sold from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, were a precursor to the twentieth-century Penguin paperback, and represented an early form of mass-market books. These cheaply made booklets were sold on the street by *chapmen*. Eventually, printed books with covers as we know them today appeared in the nineteenth century. In the world of printed books for young people, other formats, some which included interactivity, emerged as well, from moveable books and pop-ups to choose-your-own adventure stories, paperbacks, board books, cloth books, books with electronic buttons that when pressed make sounds (for example animal noises), audio books, mass-market film adaptations—indeed nothing is static about format in the realm of printed children's books. The picture book *Babar* is a prime example. Initially created and illustrated by Jean de Brunhoff in 1931, and then upon his death in 1937, continued by his son Laurent, Babar presents a perfect example of an analog multiplatform book series. Kent State University houses the *Babar Collection of John L. Boonschaft*, which is comprised of many first edition books by both authors in multiple languages. In addition to the international editions, the collection of 214.33 ft of Babar-related materials demonstrates how licensed merchandise was intended to extend the story experience, just as transmedia products such as *The Twilight Saga* do now.

The collection includes spin-off versions of books and licensed merchandise, from toys and games to furniture and china. According to the collection's finding aid (Allamon et al., 2000), in addition to the original hardcover picture books, there are smaller-format, abridged versions, anthologies, large-format books, board books, board books with toy elements (like clocks with moving arms), board books with die-cuts, pop-up books, video tapes, audio cassettes, records, compact discs, calendars, and non-print items that extend the story experience from books, to clothing, a tricycle, an inflatable children's swimming pool, rugs, sheets, crib-sets, and a breakfast cereal box (Honey Nut Cheerios) with Babar on the back.

Digital formats enable a fast-forward production when it comes to innovative formats. A generation ago, authors who wanted to experiment with innovative ideas, such as creating unique formats or foil-stamping illustrations in a

picture book,[1] had to wait for print and production technologies to evolve in order to support their ideas. Digital formats require more work on the hardware front, but they enable far more experimentation with new experimental and multimedia formats in a much quicker timeframe. E-formats and book apps mean that format is no longer restricted to specific dimensions that best suit reams of paper to be printed on printing presses, or specific formats to fit into shipping boxes. As Pires Franco (2014) writes: "If there is one thing the history of the book has shown us, it is that books, writing, publishing, and reading are not static; rather, these things evolve—in tandem—with cultural, social, economic, and technological changes. Expecting the book to persist 'as we know it' seems equivalent to asking for time to stop and for books to remain forever crystallized in their current form" (p. 35).

As we will see in this book, both digital and print formats appeal on multiple levels. In fact, with popular books, there is evidence that young people will purchase multiple formats—a hardcover book to treasure and display, and an e-book format for portability and convenience.

New digital formats for young people are best understood in the context of their origins, and Chapter 2 starts with an historical look at how the interconnected fields of children's librarianship and publishing arose, providing a comparative base for the chapters that follow. In the United States, the field of literary cultural production for young people began with the library and the publishing house working in tandem. Views from the Progressive Era influenced first librarianship, which in turn influenced publishing for young people, as publishers recognized a burgeoning market in books for young people, and established children's imprints within their houses, starting with Louise Seaman Bechtel at Macmillan in 1919. This chapter visits shifts in the field, from the earliest days of Anne Carroll Moore at the New York Public library and Louise Seaman Bechtel at Macmillan, the first children's editor, during which publishers and librarians served as child protectors in their selections, to a shift at the mid-century, when Margaret Edwards at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore shifted from child protector to child educator—wanting young adults especially to be informed about Cold War and peace, to a shift in the 1970s when librarians officially became child advocates instead of child protectors. In the library, this was reflected by content in Carol Starr's *Young Adult Alternative Newsletter*, which was circulated to a thousand librarians, and in the publishing house, with the 1967 publication of *The Outsiders*, which marked the beginning of realist fiction for young adults.

[1] *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister (1992) was the first foil-stamped picture book.

Another shift began with the mergers and acquisitions of the 1980s, and a new commercialism emerged, as publishing for young people was finally considered to be a profitable business.

The third chapter bridges historical and contemporary practices of marketing books to young people, and uses an interview with a veteran children's book marketer and interviews with marketers at small, medium, and large publishing companies to compare practices before and after the emergence of digital technologies. Earlier, marketing to young people was a top-down process, as children had to be reached via a series of gatekeepers, including parents, teachers, and librarians. Now, digital technologies enable a disintermediated space in which publishers can communicate directly with teen consumers via their proprietary online sites. As a result of technological innovations, traditional definitions of "marketer," "author," and "consumer" are shifting towards collaborative communities of online immaterial and affective labor by publishers, authors, and teen consumers. Consolidations in publishing houses and changes in bookselling practices, from the rise of the superstore to Amazon.com, transmedia, and a push toward hypercommercialism, lead to a new model of publishing, in which books become brands and readers too are branded (*Twilight*-reader) and commodified. Capabilities of using online spaces and free social media resources theoretically give all publishers similar opportunities for reaching young readers, but interviews with marketers at a small, a medium, and a large publisher reveal that this is not exactly the case. The following chapters each present one of the progressive case studies of this book. *RandomBuzzers.com* demonstrated how a publisher formed a digital corral in which the main purpose was peer-to-peer reviewing, marketing, and free consumer research. The *TwilightSaga.com* included all of this with the added element of related user-generated content, such as fan fiction. *The Amanda Project* built upon these structures and asked readers to contribute user-generated content as material for future books in the series. Data was gathered within these websites by observation from 2009 to 2012. In each case, this data is supported by interviews and a focus group with teen readers about reading on digital platforms.

Chapter 4 presents a case study of Random House's *RandomBuzzers* (*RandomBuzzers,* 2011) website. This early participatory site dedicated to the publisher's teen consumers adds user-generated peer-to-peer reviews to the tradition of librarian-based reviews in journals such as *Kirkus,*[2] *School*

[2] *Kirkus Reviews* was an early review journal founded by former Harper editor Virginia Kirkus in 1933.

Library Journal, *Publishers Weekly*, and *The Horn Book*. On this site, teens received free advance review copies of Young Adult books in exchange for writing reviews of such titles. Participating teens received "Buzz Bucks," a currency earned for their affective labor, which could be used on the site to buy Random House products (such as more books), and were awarded with badges they could display with their user profiles (a form of cultural capital). Using *RandomBuzzers.com* as a case study, this chapter examines how technology enables a convergence of reader and critic. At the time of the research, several publishers developed interactive sites for teens with a focus on peer-to-peer reviewing, including Little, Brown's *Hip Scouts* (LB Teens n.d.) and Simon and Schuster's *Pulse It* (Simon & Schuster, "Pulse It," 2009). *RandomBuzzers* was chosen for this study, because it was more sophisticated than the others—especially because it offered a form of payment to its participants.

Chapter 5 examines fandom and the lifespan of a corporate fan site through the lens of *TwilightSaga.com*. Building on the forms of digital participation enabled on the *RandomBuzzers* website such as peer-to-peer reviewing, peer-to-peer marketing, and consumer research, Chapter 5 presents a case study of Hachette's *TwilightSaga.com* (*TwilightSaga.com, n.d.*) which enabled all of these forms of participation, and in addition, channeled fan fiction and other user-generated content to the publisher's proprietary site. This study shows how Hachette used *Twilight* fandom, exemplified by readers' participation on individual websites and blogs, by corralling it into a proprietary "digital enclosure" (Andrejevic, 2008) of user-generated content which the publisher, based on its end-user licensing agreements (EULAs), would then have rights to repurpose in any way. From a "Wild West" of independent *Twilight* fan sites on the web, to a more restrained culture governed by the EULAs, Hachette successfully created their site by emulating free sites on the web and branding them as "official," turning "Edward" and "Jacob" based fan sites into groups called "Official Team Edward" and "Official Team Jacob." On *The Twilight Saga* site, readers were able to create their own *Twilight* identities. By commercializing fandom and extending Stephenie Meyer's world-building onto a commercial website, Hachette could extend the brand and create further sources of revenue: peer-to-peer marketing, focus group research information, and user-generated content. *The Twilight Saga* site was studied from its earliest days, around 2009–2012, after the books in the series had been published, and the movies were released. During this time, Hachette went from being intensely involved in the site to having less involvement—or interest—in the site, as evidenced by reduced numbers of posts from the site owners, to fewer (or none) Q&A sessions

with the author, and most interesting, to a lack of EULA enforcement, as evidenced by increased subversive behavior by site users.

Chapter 6 looks at a trailblazing multiplatform book series (integrated with a website) for girls called *The Amanda Project*. The publisher, HarperCollins, solicited users' feedback, comments, and storylines, which were allegedly incorporated into future books in the series. *The Amanda Project* study demonstrates how user-generated content could be extended from the type of participation on the *RandomBuzzers* and *TwilightSaga* sites by actually having the readers contribute content that would be used in future books in the series. This chapter begins with analog precursors to multiplatform books, and covers construction of the project, branding, labor, straight through to the end of *Amanda* in 2012, when the book series was cut short.

Chapter 7 concludes the book, summarizing the findings and taking a look forward at innovations that have appeared since research on this book began.

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CHAPTER 2

A Brief History of the Field

While this book will primarily focus on contemporary reading practices for young people, a look back at the origins of the combined fields of children's librarianship and publishing helps demonstrate how an online participatory reading culture for young people emerged. At the beginning of the twentieth century, mandatory education laws and Progressive Era ideals led to new understandings on what it meant to be a child. Childhood was viewed as "a distinct time of life with unique social and cultural requirements" (Eddy, 2006, p. 4), and instead of being viewed as junior adults, young people were viewed as individuals needing adult protection. Books that are now housed in children's sections of libraries and bookstores—for example, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, published in 1865—had been published for a general audience rather than specifically for a child audience.

Progressive Era values meant that children were perceived as a vulnerable population, and therefore, in need of adult protection. From that standpoint, it follows that early librarians, and other adults, believed that the right books could improve children's minds and, subsequently, their lives. The combination of these views and perceptions led to the practice of keeping young people away from the worst books, including the abundance of affordable and very popular dime novels, which according to Denning (1987) were "commercial, mass-produced, sensational fiction of the nineteenth century" (p. 10). Librarian gatekeepers considered books with educational content to be far more important and valuable

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than those created merely for entertainment, and eventually this criticism extended to movies.

The fields of children's librarianship and children's publishing evolved synergistically, with one supporting the other, and children's librarians had an enormous influence on publishing decisions. Children's voices and expressions of taste were filtered (and edited) through these librarians who had access to young readers. This book focuses primarily on contemporary practices of reading, including how publishers are engaging with young readers about books online, and how such engagement changes the reading experience. However, an historical overview across chronological shifts in the combined field of literary cultural production for young people, including librarianship and publishing, is also important in demonstrating how teens' voices have increasingly gained a presence in the products created for them. The introduction of digital technologies allows teen voices to be heard directly and unfiltered—first in their own online fan sites, and then in publishers' participatory book-related sites and social media fora. Instead of having to communicate with teens via libraries, emergent technologies helped publishers establish channels of direct communication with this coveted and formerly elusive audience.

Whereas earlier, children were to be seen and not heard, several cultural shifts over the course of the twentieth century positioned young people in a position to be seen, heard, and eventually, commodified.

A Changing Dissemination Model

Robert Darnton's (1982) communication circuit (see Fig. 2.1) describes the cycle of dissemination of books in the era before digital technologies.

In Darnton's model, readers are quite far removed from publishers and authors. Readers intersect with texts as purchasers and borrowers, and via clubs and libraries. In other words, a direct relationship between readers, authors, and publishers was quite estranged in the realm of print, especially in the case of books for young people as the gatekeeping filters of librarians, educators, and parents were firmly in place (Fig. 2.2).

However, this started changing in 2007, when emerging digital technologies began to alter Darnton's model. As described by Martens (2011), a revised model reflects how publishers incorporate digital technologies in order to communicate directly with readers (Fig. 2.3). This disruption in the traditional dissemination pattern represents an overall change in the field that began with several cultural shifts during the last century. In the United States, the shift began with the emergence of

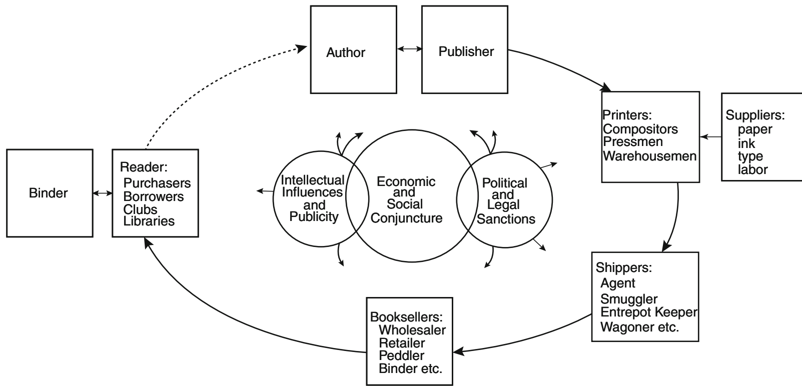

Fig. 2.1 Robert Darnton's communications circuit (*Source*: R. Darnton (1982))

key female figures in late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century children's librarianship including Caroline Hewins at the Hartford Public Library in Connecticut, Effie Louise Power at the Cleveland Public Library in Ohio, and especially Anne Carroll Moore, who served as head of children's services at New York Public Library from 1906 to 1941 (Martens, 2013).

As this revised model demonstrates, emergent technologies enable a direct communication between publishers and teen readers. While librarians are still very much part of the model, by influencing both teens' reading tastes and publishers' output, a consistent and direct communication between publishers and teens is possible for the first time.

Points of Construction in the Fields

As the changes that led from child readers as a reading population that was seen and not heard, to a contemporary focus on young people as a visible reading audience took hold, these young readers embraced technology to: (1) write fan fiction; (2) engage in peer-to-peer marketing; and finally (3) to craft user-generated content which could be repurposed, free-of-charge, into nearly customized products created by publishers to suit the audience of these unpaid co-creators.

While this book is not intended as a thorough history of US children's librarianship and publishing, four representative historical shifts in the field are described briefly herein to illustrate changing views on young

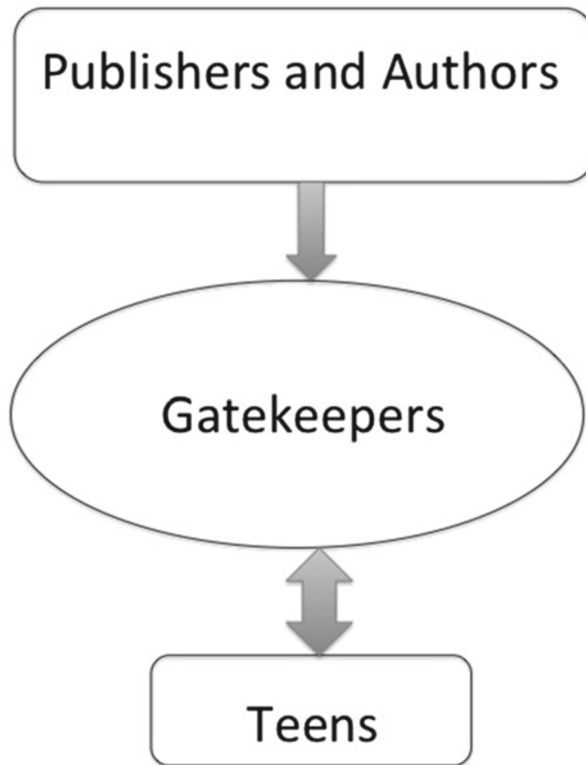

Fig. 2.2 Traditional dissemination model

people and reading: (1) early twentieth century: establishing the fields; (2) mid-century Cold War era; (3) social change in the 1970s; and (4) late twentieth-century: teen voices and new business models (Fig. 2.4).

The first such period is marked by the formation of the fields of children's literature and librarianship in the United States. On the library side, Anne Carroll Moore dominated at the New York Public Library from 1906 to 1941. In publishing, Louise Seaman Bechtel became the first children's editor hired by Macmillan in 1919. During that time, Moore and others appointed by her, including Mabel Williams and Margaret Clara Scoggin, expanded the field of children's librarianship by establishing close connections to the burgeoning field of children's publishing, which was also conveniently based in New York City.

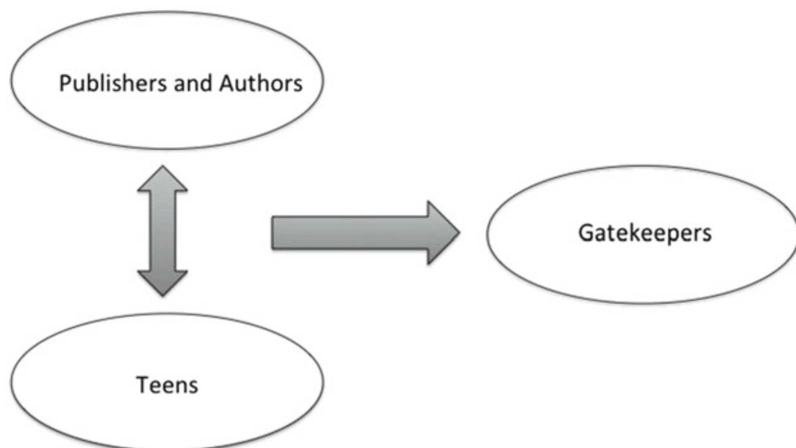

Fig. 2.3 Digital age disintermediated model

The period of the mid-twentieth century marks the rise of a new type of empowering librarianship embodied by Margaret Alexander Edwards at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland. Edwards believed that young people needed to be educated (not sheltered) in order to be able to form their own well-informed opinions during the Cold War era. During these years, Ursula Nordstrom presided as editor at Harper & Brothers,

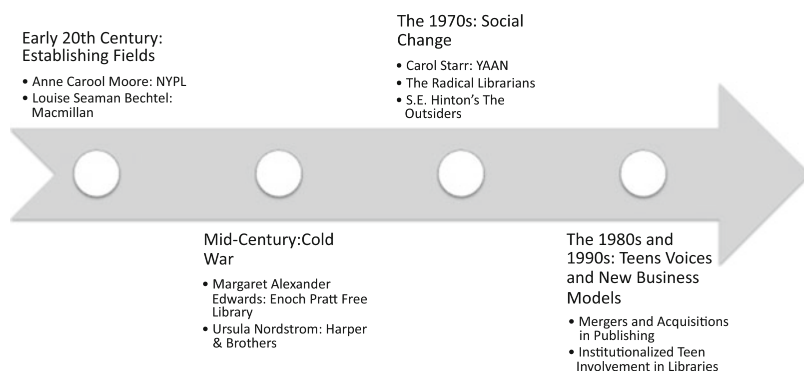

Fig. 2.4 Timeline of four historical shifts

where she eventually became the first female vice president (Marcus, 1998), just as children's literature was finally considered a profitable enterprise for publishers. Nordstrom published a list of books that remain part of the American canon of children's literature today, including Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series (1932–1943) and E. B. White's *Stuart Little* (1945).

The third period is demarcated between the years 1967–1979, starting with S. E. Hinton's (1967) *The Outsiders*, which is generally recognized as the first official Young Adult (YA) novel published in the United States. This period is marked by social change, and the radical librarians of the 1970s were ready to respond to that change. One such librarian, Carol Starr, started the *Young Adult Alternative Newsletter*, which connected similar-minded librarians across the United States. In publishing, books responded to social change as well—and to the market created by the radical librarians. Realist fiction was published as a source of information for young people on topics from sex (including homosexuality and sexually transmitted diseases) to war and drug abuse. This period became a golden age of publishing for teens and the first time that books for teens rose to prominence.

During 1980s and 1990s, publishing was dominated by mergers and acquisitions in the field. By the end of this period, and the beginning of the twenty-first century, technological innovations in books for young people emerged, influencing and altering the print-culture landscape for young people.

Early Twentieth-Century Librarianship: An Influential Matriarchy Assumes Control

Progressive Era ideologies enabled not only an evolving discourse around childhood as a population in need of protection and mandatory education laws, but also the rise of several professions considered particularly well-suited to women (Eddy, 2006; Jenkins, 1995). These included the "social welfare professions of teaching, social work, nursing and librarianship […] established during the Progressive Era" (Jenkins, 1995, p. 12). These female-intensive professions embodied "'semi-professions,' 'helping professions,'" and/or "social housekeeping work" (Etzioni, 1969; Simpson and Simpson, 1969; Grimm, 1978; Kessler-Harris, 1989, pp. 112–119, in Jenkins, 1995, p. 12). These professions also catered to essentialized views that perceived women to be perfect for roles such

as helping others and working with children. Also, during this time, the fields of children's librarianship and publishing were less financially lucrative, and therefore, easily considered less important than other fields for adult work. So, women were quickly able to dominate these interconnected and seemingly insignificant fields.

Early children's librarians' Progressive Era ideologies were quite similar to those of the social workers of the Settlement House Movement, who sought to "enrich the life of the child, to Americanize the foreigner, and to deal with the urban problems the settlement houses sought to remedy," (Garrison, 1979, p. 206). The "right" books were considered tools that could improve children's minds, and subsequently their lives. At the turn of the twentieth century, there was a proliferation of "wrong" books available, which included early mass-market reading material such as serials and pulp fiction by best-selling authors of the time—precisely the type of reading material which would soon be denigrated by children's librarians. Early children's librarians strove to influence what young people read in order to improve their minds. In 1892, at the Hartford Public Library in Connecticut, Hewins published *Books for the Young: A Guide for Parents and Children* and opened the first children's room there in 1904 (Wiegand, 1986). By 1895, Effie Louise Power had been hired by the Cleveland Public Library, and was named one of the first children's librarians in America (Kimball et al., 2004).

However, one early librarian, with a nearly 50-year career, had perhaps the greatest initial influence on the fields of children's librarianship and publishing. Moore was particularly forceful, of course because of her personality, but also because of her physical proximity to the New York publishing world. Starting in 1919, publishers began to include children's imprints. Moore, and her appointees, such as Williams and Scoggin, began a tradition of librarianship dedicated to young people. By the beginning of the twentieth century, two synergistic fields around children's books were established: first, a focus on children's services within the library helped to create a market for books for young people, and then an industry (children's publishing) rose to serve to fill that market.

By the 1920s, the rise of reviews, and later, awards for children's literature raised the cultural capital of the field. For example, Moore started reviewing books for *The Horn Book Magazine* in 1919, and her *Three Owls* column ran in *The New York Herald Tribune* from 1924 to 1930 (NYPL, n.d.). As a reviewer, Moore emphasized the protectionist tradition in her work as she strove to eliminate those inferior works, by criticizing works

of mass appeal in favor of literary taste. Soon, other children's librarians, as well as children's editors, took on the role of being the official arbiters of taste for young people. This meant that they took responsibility for reforming the reading habits and for shaping the minds of all children (Lundin, 2004). In doing so, they sought to remove "bad" literature from their collections (Jenkins, 1995; Denning, 1987). Those books which did not conform to their own standards of quality were replaced with a selection of the "best" literature for children, as defined by Jenkins (1995):

> The values of professional librarians were naturally expressed in their book selection standards. The basic standards used to select children's books were generally described as [being of] "literary quality," [having] "child appeal," and [adhering to] "good values." The books that were selected and reviewed favorably by youth services librarians had to meet all three standards. A book with literary quality was characterized by the same elements of characters, plot, setting, dialogue, and theme that literary reviewers valued in adult reading material of the day. A book with child appeal was one that children were drawn to, read or listened to eagerly, and asked for repeatedly. Good values were those espoused by educated middle-class women. These included cooperation, friendship, acceptance, and tolerance on a personal, community, and international level. (pp. 10–11)

According to Dee Garrison (1979), while both books for adults and books for children were frequently censored by librarians at the turn of the twentieth century, the Progressive Era ideals about children being a population in need of protection also allowed for much freedom for those interested in censoring books for children.

Literary criticism became an important part of many professional children's librarians' work as children's literature experts. Moore was involved in the creation of the two most prominent awards for American children's literature: the Newbery Medal for fiction (1922) and the Caldecott Medal for illustration (1938). Criticism boosted the cultural capital in children's literature, but awards cemented the genre and made it enduring. Such awards, given by librarians, "confirmed the reputation of children's librarians as critics" (Lundin, 2004, p. 49), and served as a "critical prerogative that exerted their authority in the field and established children's books as high literary fare" (p. 49). For example, another Moore trainee, Ruth Hill Viguers, wrote an authoritative review column for *The Horn Book,* which no author wanted to land on, called the "Not Recommended" list (Riskind, 2003).

In tune with this early professional criticism by adult readers evaluating books for children, an emerging ideology related to their self-proclaimed expertise is evident in the first five years of Newbery winners as retrieved from the sponsoring association's website, the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC, n.d.). The content in the award-winning titles demonstrates the experts' propensity toward pedagogy and didacticism, consistent with Progressive Era values about the purpose of good literature as being that which served to improve children's minds, and reflecting those values of "literary quality," "child appeal," and "good values" described earlier. For example, van Loon's 1922 Medal winner, *The Story of Mankind*, provides American children with an ambitious summary of world history, starting with the creation of the earth. Also, Chrisman's 1926 medal-winning *Shen of the Sea* represents an American interpretation of Chinese folktales. It is important to note as well that in 1925, *Nicholas: A Manhattan Christmas Story* by Moore was a Newbery honor book, which not only reflected her power as a literary critic, but also her involvement with the establishment of this award.

The formidable Moore joined Pratt Institute Free Library in Brooklyn in 1896, and served as the first designated children's librarian in New York at the New York Public Library from 1906 to 1941. Her influence, however, went far beyond the walls of the library. She worked indirectly as a critic, mentor, advisor, and de facto literary agent because of her multiple and well-documented relationships with authors and illustrators including Walter de la Mare, Beatrix Potter, and Leslie Brooks (see Martens, 2013 for more information). Additionally, she worked with some of the first children's publishers, several of whom she initially trained as children's librarians.

Small in stature, but towering in personality, Moore was powerful and eccentric. She was alternately respected, revered, and feared—all during a time when few women worked outside the home. While Moore was one of the shapers of the fields of children's librarianship and publishing, library service to older children started soon thereafter. By 1925, separate sections for young people were created in many libraries including those in Cleveland, Ohio; Trenton, New Jersey; and New York City, and they were all centered around the mission of improving the lives and minds of young people (VOYA, 2007). These early librarians, mostly women, established themselves as arbiters of taste in the realm of children's literature, and were responsible for building the canon of children's literature.

Young Adult librarianship initially existed in the interstices of the overall profession of children's librarianship, with only minimal funding

for its national organization until the 1970s, and without a literary award for Young Adult fiction until the first Margaret A. Edwards Award was awarded in 1988, followed by the Michael L. Printz Award in 2000. As described in Martens (2013), Joan Atkinson (1986) identifies four influential librarians as key players in the development of the field of Young Adult librarianship during the first half of the twentieth century: (1) Williams and (2) Scoggin, who were both trained by Moore at the New York Public Library; (3) Jean Roos, who worked at the Cleveland Public Library from 1925 to 1959, supervised the youth department from 1940 to 1959, and was responsible for services to youth in schools and within the public library; and (4) Edwards (the above-mentioned award's namesake) at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland.

Williams, who worked for Moore at the New York Public Library from 1916 to 1951, was a pioneer in serving "Young Adults" by recognizing them as a population separate from (and starting at age thirteen, older than) the overarching population encapsulating "children." Williams "instituted the first systematic services offered for Young Adults by a public library" (Atkinson, 1986, p. 3). This was during an era of minimal recreational reading, one in which students' reading might be largely limited to textbooks in the classroom and classics at home. Thus, Williams' goal was to make middle- and high-school students aware of recreational books, and again, with the idea of protectionism in place, she strove to protect these students from the mass content of newsstands and the cinema. Williams started a publication of recommended titles called *Books for the Teenage* at the New York Public Library.

Her successor, Scoggin, served as Superintendent of Work with Young People at the New York Public Library from 1952 until 1967. She was responsible for developing the Nathan Straus Branch of the New York Public Library for Young Adults. This branch had an active agenda of research on reading interests (Atkinson, 1986). Building on work started by Williams, Scoggin involved teens via a book-reviewing group, which published a pamphlet for Young Adults called *Circulatin' the News* in the 1940s. For the first time, Young Adults had a voice in the books created for them, and this is a theme in Young Adult literature which has only been made more prevalent ever since.

Lastly, Edwards is well-known for her seminal work in designing Young Adult Services, all documented in her (1969) autobiographical book *The Fair Garden and Swarm of Beasts.* More on Edwards will follow later.

Publishing in the Progressive Era

As children's literature gained capital via reviews and awards, children's books were increasingly viewed as commodities infused with cultural capital, worthy of evaluation, criticism, and awards, and almost on par with literature for adults. Publishers realized there was a market for children's literature, and that the cultural capital of books could be exploited for economic gain by forming separate children's departments within their houses (Martens, 2010; Squires, 2007). These departments worked in tandem with their primary market—children's libraries, and used the structures of reviews and awards put in place by librarians to shape their collection development policies.

In this era, the realms of children's librarianship and publishing were codependent fields, and professional developments in the fields were closely connected to the general history of gender and women's roles. The fact that essentialist views held women to be naturally suited for anything related to children resulted in what was most likely an unintended consequence—that women found success in these new professions. Thus, many of the early children's editors emerged from other professions considered appropriate for women, such as teaching, bookselling, or librarianship. For example, after Macmillan hired Louise Seaman Bechtel in 1919 (Eddy, 2006; Martens, 2010; Miller, 2003), other houses soon formed their own children's departments as well. May Massey was hired at Doubleday in 1922 (and then Viking in 1932), and Virginia Kirkus, who later created the review journal *Kirkus*, was head of the children's department at Harper & Brothers starting in 1925.

Following expansions in children's publishing, librarianship and bookselling for children emerged as interdependent and overlapping circles of influence connecting professional women's networks, in which women could not only succeed, but also rise to prominence. For example, when Bertha Mahoney Miller created the first children's bookstore in America, *The Bookshop for Boys and Girls* in Boston, her interior design was much influenced by Moore's Children's Room at the main branch of the New York Public Library (Eddy, 2006), and Alice Mabel Jordan, an early children's librarian in Boston, served on the advisory board of Miller's store (Eddy, 2006; Martens, 2010). Later, Miller created an exhaustive list of recommended American children's books organized by age and subject matter, and Moore used this list as a guideline for collection development in children's rooms at the New York Public Library branches (Eddy, 2006).

By the end of the 1920s, “this network of women—including editors, critics, and librarians—supported [each other’s] aesthetic commitment in vocal and powerful ways” (Hearne, 1996, p. 757). This new field of cultural production of children’s literature was dominated by women that arose out of a synergy of: (1) Progressive Era views on childhood and education; and (2) essentialist views on women’s work, which inadvertently provided an opportunity for emerging women editors, critics, and librarians to dominate the field as professional children’s literature experts—the arbiters of taste in the field. The women’s suffrage movement, which started in the United States in 1848 with the first Woman’s Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, was finally gaining traction in the early twentieth century. New York women gained the right to vote in 1917, and new views on women may also have contributed to doors opening for them to move into positions of influence—albeit in feminine professions.

Mid-century: Cold War Era

By the middle of the twentieth century, the field of production of children’s literature was well established. Children’s divisions existed in libraries across America, and publishers included well-established children’s imprints within their houses. The concept of “adolescents” as a population that straddled childhood and adulthood first appeared in psychologist and educator G. Stanley Hall’s *Adolescence* in 1904. The American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1942) first used the term “youth culture” in 1942 to define “a set of patterns and behavior phenomena which involve a highly complex combination of age grading and sex role elements” (p. 606). “Teenagers” were seen as a population separate from the overarching category of children—as a demographic starting at age thirteen, that connected childhood with adulthood (generally considered to begin at eighteen)—but perhaps more importantly, emerged as a new market to which products could be sold. By the late 1950s, there were more adolescents than ever in the United States because the first children of the post-World War II “Baby Boom” were becoming teenagers.

A convergence of events indirectly supported this burgeoning population. The space race between the United States and the (now former) Soviet Union, during the ensuing Cold War, encouraged President Lyndon B. Johnson’s *Great Society* agenda (Rollin, 1999). This in turn financially supported education and libraries in an effort to eliminate

poverty through education as well as increased the focus on science within education. According to former Young Adult librarian Atkinson (1986), "after Sputnik, the emphasis [was] on upgrading education" (p. 40). This emphasis, which provided money for libraries, also helped the field of children's publishing and supplied libraries with books. During this time, this emphasis on education also meant that young people stayed in school longer, and more of them went to college. An expansion of the time before entering the workforce paired with Young Adults' part-time work, meant that there was more time and money for leisure, as well as interest in popular culture. This interest spanned styles of film, television, and music that were very different from what their parents liked, thus creating a generational culture clash.

Mid-century Librarianship

Halfway through the twentieth century, reviews and awards further legitimized the fields of children's publishing and librarianship. In addition, the work of seminal and influential librarians, such as Edwards, had an enormous influence on how the field was formed. Edwards (1902–1988) started as librarian at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland in 1932. She is perhaps the most famous Young Adult librarian of the twentieth century, in part for her (1969) autobiography *The Fair Garden and the Swarm of Beasts*. According to Edwards (1967), the title of her book was inspired by Jared Bean's *Old Librarian's Almanac* (1773), in which he writes that the library "'is no more to be thrown open to the ravages of the unreasoning Mob [meaning the general public, especially young people], than is a Fair Garden to be laid unprotected at the Mercy of a Swarm of Beasts'" (p. ix). While the title implies that the fair garden is the library, and the swarm of beasts the teens who invade it, Edwards was far more sensitive to and supportive of Young Adults than this title might imply. She had enormous respect for, and sense of responsibility toward, her teen patrons, stating that "there is no age group more important than the Young Adults who in a few short years will be guiding the destiny of this nation, deciding among other things whether to drop the bomb or to use atomic energy for man's good" (Edwards, 1969, p. 19). A forceful personality, Edwards valued teens, but also considered guiding Young Adults as singularly important to shaping the future of the nation. Fearing for the end of the world during the Cold War era under which she served, she saw her work (and other Young Adult librarians' works) as

being infused with the mission of providing the "very best" in literature to Young Adults which would enable them to make informed, responsible, and critical decisions—the types of decisions that would ensure the future of the world.

In order to fulfill this sizeable goal, Edwards created a (frequently unpopular) training program for new hires. Edwards felt that sending teens to the catalog to search for books was the equivalent of losing that population forever, and instead, she wanted her librarian trainees to be ready to assist in recommending the best. To enhance their readers' advisory skills, new hires were required to read and report upon 300 books. By doing so, when they were approached by teens in the library, they would be prepared to quickly and expertly serve in a readers' advisory capacity.

Edwards also believed in giving the teens' agency by including their voices in book recommendations. Following the lead of established pamphlets of teen-written book reviews, such as the New York Public Library's "Back Talk" and Scoggin's "Circulatin' the News," Edwards created a pamphlet at the Pratt Library entitled: "You're the Critic." Understanding the difficulty of getting teens to write reviews voluntarily, Edwards (1969) partnered with teachers to give teens extra credit for their work, and this pamphlet became an early source of peer-to-peer reviews of books for Young Adults.

Because of her enormous contribution to the field of Young Adult literature, two awards sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) are named after her: The Margaret A. Edwards Award is presented annually to an author whose body of work has made a "significant and lasting contribution to Young Adult literature" (YALSA, About the Edwards award, 2012), and the Alex Awards, which are given to the top ten books written for adults in a given year that have special teen appeal.

Edwards' unique focus on, and advocacy for, young people opened the door to a new type of library service for Young Adults—one that focused on teen advocacy. The population boom of Young Adults at mid-century, combined with a new type of library service to this population, created an expanding market for Young Adult books, and of course publishers were there to fill it.

Changing Institutions

Just as publishers supported this burgeoning field by creating more products, library institutions also supported those working in the field. Today's youth services subdivisions under ALA, including the Association for

Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), began with the Club of Children's Librarians formed at the 1900 annual meeting of the ALA in Montreal. It is not surprising that Moore, whose dominance in the field cannot be overstated, was the club's first chairman (ALSC, History, n.d.). The goal of this club was to create future sessions on library work with young people, and by 1902, a formalized "Section for Children's Librarians" was launched at the annual ALA meeting in Boston. In 1941, the organization further addressed Young Adults, by changing its name to the "Division for Children and Young People," and began publishing a journal called *Top of the News.*

As the field of children's librarianship continued to grow over the next decades, a movement increasingly began to separate service to Young Adults from services to children. By 1957, the "Division for Children and Young People" split into two separate ones: the Children's Services Division (CSD) and the Young Adult Services Division (YASD). Librarian Mildred L. Batchelder was the first executive secretary appointed to serve both divisions. Batchelder is now famous in library and publishing circles for her work promoting international children's literature and for the literary award named after her, the Batchelder Award.

As the fields of children's and Young Adult literature developed and expanded over the course of the twentieth century, publishing also expanded to fit this growing marketplace. The next section examines the field of children's and Young Adult publishing in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mid-century Publishing

With a children's publishing career that spanned a large part of the twentieth century, Ursula Nordstrom was a transformative figure in children's literature. Her career, at the firm formerly known as Harper & Brothers, spanned almost 50 years from 1931 to 1980, during which she rose from a clerk to the head of her own imprint, *Ursula Nordstrom Books* (Marcus, 1998). She edited many canonical works of American childhood, including *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, and *Stuart Little* by E. B. White. During this era, independent Young Adult imprints did not exist within publishing houses. So, books for children, from babies to Young Adults, were published under inhouse "children's" imprints.

Nordstrom also edited Young Adult novels, including those by M. E. Kerr and Louise Fitzhugh, as well as more controversial books, such as

the first book for Young Adults which referenced homosexuality: *I'll Get There, It Better Be Worth the Trip* by John Donovan published in 1969. By the 1960s, the field of children's literature had been firmly established as its own entity separate from the field of adult literature, and it was entering a period of rapid growth, characterized by economic support and an emerging demographic of Young Adults. Fueled by Sputnik and the space race, Johnson's Secondary Education Act of 1965 provided an influx of funding for schools and libraries, which could be used to buy books. As schools and libraries expanded, publishers' children's divisions expanded too—profiting from these developments.

Starting in the 1950s, publishers, who had already established separate children's imprints, recognized that the library market was the core market for books for young people. In order to address this market, they hired marketing staff, and sent them out on reconnaissance missions. Mimi Kayden, one such veteran marketer who started her career under Nordstrom in the 1950s, was given a small budget and a rental car, and then told to "go out, dear, and find out something about this [growing library market]" (M. Kayden, personal communication, September 17, 2010). Regional conferences cropped up to support school libraries, and subsequently, this group of junior marketers and librarians spent much time away from families attending conferences, which were held over holidays and weekends to avoid interfering with the school calendar. Kayden recalls, "we were young and unimportant to the whole scheme of things. We weren't editors . . . [we were paid] five thousand dollars a year." While editors were considered the stars of the publishing companies, Kayden compares her work to that of itinerant peddlers (traveling salesmen) of the early twentieth century, who were conduits of news between customers as they traveled door-to-door, spreading their news along the way.

Kayden spent at least a month out of every year on the road in California, traveling from San Bernardino to Riverside, and La Jolla. Along the way, she helped to establish a network of librarians who would otherwise not have necessarily met each other and, similar to the itinerant peddlers of a bygone era, she served as a conduit for information. These valuable relationships not only served her work, but also turned into lifelong friendships. With this in mind, and with a few notable exceptions, such as William "Bill" C. Morris, these professional "schmoozers" were primarily women. Their responsibilities included seeking potential markets that resided in the interstices between editorial departments and the marketplace, but, interestingly, did not include actually selling books. With hostess-like duties

in their job descriptions, these women marketers arranged dinners and lunches, wrote personal letters (including thank-you, congratulatory, and sympathy notes), and served as communicators, facilitators, and liaisons between publishing companies, libraries, and the young people themselves. As such, women's networks, within both librarianship and publishing, wove together the framework that supported these interconnected fields.

From "Protectors" to "Advocates:" How the 1970s Changed Everything

> Adolescence can be defined as that period in a person's development when he no longer sees himself as a child, but other people do not see him as an adult. (YA Task Force, YAAN, 1974)

In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, cultural changes and global events such as the women's movement, the sexual revolution, and the Vietnam War influenced both librarians' and publishers' perceptions of Young Adults. As a result, librarians' ideologies about their roles in serving this population had to change as well. While their earlier twentieth-century predecessors had considered themselves as child protectors, librarians in the 1970s shifted their role to becoming child advocates (Jenkins, 1995). For example, the formal structures established in Young Adult librarianship by Edwards and her network of trainees was replaced with what Patty Campbell (1973) calls a "let-it-all-hang-out" attitude.

Young Adult librarians of the 1970s felt that they had outgrown the old-fashioned institutions which had existed since the early days of children's librarianship. They transformed the model by going outside of the existing structures and creating alternative support systems in which the goal shifted from improving young minds to helping to improve young people's lives. For example, the field of children's librarianship became partitioned into separate but related fields of "children's" and "teen" librarianship.

While they kept their positions as arbiters of taste and keepers of the canon, by the 1970s, librarians serving young people took on an additional role, as de facto social workers, changing the focus from protecting teens from harmful materials to providing them with whatever material they needed to make the best possible life choices. Such material included everything from pamphlets on sexual health and drug abuse, to realistic

fiction addressing real-life problems, from sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy to homosexuality, the civil rights movement, drug abuse, and anti-war sentiment (Cart, 1996). In their new roles, librarians redefined what would be considered the best books (and materials): from materials which would improve young people's minds to materials which would improve their lives, and this heralded a new cultural sensitivity toward the sorts of real-life issues faced by Young Adults.

Young Adult Librarians Coming of Age

As Young Adult (YA) services expanded in the 1970s, many librarians felt that libraries still held on to legacy, which meant outdated ideologies of children's services. Thus, a group of revolutionary librarians emerged who responded to the changing cultural values of the 1970s. Celeste West (1972) illustrated this struggle between conservative and changing ideologies in her edited collection titled *Revolting Librarians*. In the collection, contributors examined librarianship through a radical, countercultural lens. One article in this collection, written by Anne Osborn, was "How to Annihilate Library Service to Teenagers," in which she criticizes the "protector" role of librarians that pervaded the field in the previous decades. Osborn describes how her own supervisors would censor material she had ordered for teen patrons. When these legacy powers deemed certain material as controversial, that material would mysteriously become:

> lost, stolen, or strayed. If the book arrived and it was too objectionable, it was sent back to the publisher posthaste before I saw it. If the book arrived and was objectionable, but I caught it in time and made a fuss, it might go on the Dirty Book Shelf, hidden from the public in the sorting room, and requiring proof of over-18-age to get a book fetched from it (Osborn, 1972, p. 59).

As a counterpoint to conservative publications in the library, Osborn (1972) attempted to balance her collection by adding magazines with strong teen interest such as *Rolling Stone*, *Teen*, and *NOW* (the publication of the National Organization of Women), but her efforts were met with resistance. Finding no support at her library, Osborn began attending meetings of the Young Adult Reviewers of Southern California (YAR), where she quickly encountered kindred spirits. She wrote:

> We were saddened but not surprised to find out how many directors thought we were very wrong to make available to teenagers such items as

> sex manuals (*Boys and Sex*), novels with sexual encounters and four-letter words (*Love Story*), books advocating or describing radical behavior and ideas (*Do It*), books describing drug use (*The Drug Scene*), and student underground publications (*How Old Will You Be in 1984?*). (p. 61)

Librarian Carol Starr faced similar issues at work, and, in response, she created the "Young Adult Alternative Newsletter" (YAAN). Between 1973 and 1979, she released issues five to six times annually (C. Starr, personal communication, Baltimore, MD: 2011). During this time, Starr emerged as a leader who would address the frustrations of Young Adult librarians and change the institutional structures that governed Young Adult library services. She was frustrated by the ALA's funding structures that kept the Young Adult Services Division as part of their Association for Library Services to Children, and while funds were supposed to be shared equally between children's and Young Adult services, Starr found that, in practice, the favored children's services programs received more funding.

In one such example, Starr felt that YA services were underrepresented in the association's journal, *Top of the News*, compared to children's services content. Eager to defend her claim about uneven distribution of content, she helped to conduct a content analysis of the journal and then published the results in YAAN (Starr and Naef, 1973). From their analysis, Star and Naef found that almost two-thirds of the articles and news items directly addressed the Children's Services Division. Thus, the Young Adult Services Division was severely neglected despite the fact that the two divisions shared the cost of producing the journal.

YAAN reads like a cultural lens on the 1970s. Common themes which appeared in nearly every issue reflected: the burgeoning women's movement; the sexual revolution; and an awareness of the societal problems of youth including drug addiction, suicide, teen runaways, juvenile incarceration, pregnancy, and disease prevention, as well as a willingness to address such problems via the library and to give teens agency in library programming and collection development. YAAN illustrated how library service for Young Adults was moving away from the model of "protector" to the model of "advocate" for young people.

Despite its radical nature, the writing in YAAN is personal in tone and colloquial in style. The style and tone reflect these librarians as writing to each other as a group of like-minded friends. But, despite the personal and colloquial style, the reach of YAAN was broad and the newsletter was distributed at a professional level. At its height, Starr estimated subscriptions

of over 1000 member libraries (C. Starr, personal communication, July 27, 2011). The newsletter created a participatory community of Young Adult librarians, giving them a voice and a space in which they could share resources, as well as the issues they faced in their libraries and in their wider fields.

However, as part of a radical librarians' movement, YAAN helped as a consciousness-raising tool by highlighting the efforts of individual librarians in a shared forum. Many of the contributors became opinion makers, and then advanced their careers as professional leaders in the field of Young Adult librarianship. Another of these frequent contributors was Mary Kay Chelton, and she served as YASD president in 1976. A second was Patty Campbell, who later won the Grolier Award, which is given annually for outstanding contributions to the field of Young Adult librarianship.

Because YAAN connected librarians and encouraged participation, it could be considered a sort of "ur" blog, or what Welch (2010) describes as a "paper blog," albeit one in which librarians' participation occurred via the United States Postal Service rather than via the Internet. According to former teen librarian Campbell, before YAAN, librarians were very isolated in their branches. Some had monthly face-to-face Young Adult reviewer meetings with neighboring librarians (such as the YAR meetings as described by Osborn), but when YAAN was founded, Campbell noted that the newsletter "changed the world. It was just a mimeographed thing, you know, stapled-together yellow paper, but everyone just grabbed it! It tied us together—it gave us a voice. It was very exciting" (P. Campbell, personal communication, June 27, 2011). Through their combined efforts, in 1977, YASD broke away from the Association of Library Services to Children and hired its own full-time executive secretary.

YAAN's Trailblazing

The Young Adult librarians of the 1970s laid the foundation for including teens' voices in Young Adult literature. This inclusiveness has been a standard of the field ever since. The librarians contributing to YAAN shaped the field and led the way for a new type of book content. In touch with cultural developments, they created a market for content relevant to the 1970s that the contemporary publishers rushed to fill. Themes from YAAN included cultural touchstones of the times because these issues also manifested themselves in the library. For example, YAAN contributors helped further the women's movement via a subversive awareness-raising

campaign: from librarians' subversive efforts to eradicate sexist content in educational texts and pamphlets; to writing scathing reviews of books with sexist content; to organizing information panels at the ALA conferences (such as one panel on "sexism in adolescent lives and literature," Panel, 1974); and by sharing listings of feminist resources such as "SHARE: Sisters have Resources Everywhere" (Chelton, YAAN, 1974).

Another example describes the potential of using comics for underground feminist activities. A California Bay Area YA Librarian's meeting in September of 1975 was organized around the topic of "Women's Comic Collective," and described the possibility of feminists using "underground" comics to "reach people who generally don't read" ("Comics," YAAN, 1976). In this way, informational material disguised as entertainment could reach new populations. One such example was the underground comic-style brochure called "Abortion Eve" which was distributed in free clinics and in libraries.

The Library and the Women's Movement

YAAN issues include several descriptions of how librarians challenged content in print material for young people by demonstrating how they subversively used resources available to them to raise awareness and create social change. For example, in 1976, Starr included a copy of a letter written by librarian Arlene Gross (from Croton, NY) to Mark R. Arnold, the vice president of advertising for Westchester Rockland Newspapers. In her letter, Gross complained about sexist representations of women in a brochure for young people about careers in print media. Gross added that, in the pamphlet, women were depicted never as journalists, but always as secretaries, in tight skirts and high heels. As a result, Gross felt that this pamphlet excluded the more serious media careers as viable options for women (Gross, YAAN, 1976).

Also, book reviews were included in every issue and, in 1973, Starr gave a scathing review to a book called *Your Future in Library Careers* by Alpha Meyers and Sara A. Temkin (1973). In her review, Starr described the book as being "so incredibly bad I find it hard to believe it was really published in 1973," and despite the fact that the book was written by two women, she claimed the book to be "rife with an MCP [Male Chauvinist Pig] attitude and seems hell-bent on insisting that all you single would-be librarians will find plenty of attractive men in your work" (Starr, YAAN, 1973). As those responsible for collection development, such critical letters and reviews served as consciousness-raising for librarians, who were then able to use their financial clout in purchasing to make social change.

Another example from YAAN demonstrates how librarians were able to use their purchasing power for social change. In a reproduction of a letter written by Campbell to an editor, Campbell complained about sexism in a book titled *Challenging Careers in Urban Affairs* by Sterling McLeod. In the letter, Campbell (1977) wrote that while:

> the information in this book may be accurate … it certainly is not going to offer any aid and comfort to a young woman who wants to become an architect or a city planner. Since we think this kind of guidance is an important function of a career book, we will not purchase this title, nor any other that ignore women's needs in this manner.

Thus, their shared voices raised awareness—also about sexist content in books—across a distributed network of librarians via YAAN, and their combined voices reached across the United States and abroad.

Sex Education and the Library

As mentioned above, 1970s librarians responded to changing mores and values by providing access to controversial materials. Sexual health education was not mandated in the United States until the 1980s, until the AIDS/HIV epidemic forced the government into its inclusion (Moran, 2004). In the post-sexual revolution era, but before sexual health education was available to most Young Adults, libraries became important points of access for such vital information. While Young Adult librarians of the 1970s were well aware of the need for information about teen sexuality at the library, and even if at times they were personally conflicted about being the providers of such information, their role as teen advocates prevailed. Campbell was one librarian who embraced this role and said, "at the time, my specialty was sex education. I wrote a book on sex education. I was traveling and speaking about it, so I was calling *Forever* (Blume, 1975) one of the best practice manuals to sensible sex that we had" (P. Campbell, personal communication, June 27, 2011).[1]

Additionally, each issue of YAAN also provided listings of "Freebies," resources that Young Adults could order and depictions of programs which

[1] *Forever* by Judy Blume is a romance novel about teens' first sexual experience, and is on the list of *The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990–1999* (ALA, *Frequently Challenged*, 2012).

could be recreated locally. One such freebie (1973) was a pamphlet called "You Can Get it at the Library—Information on VD." Other examples emerged from across this field. Diane Ray Trope, of Raleigh, NC, describes a conference she attended. At this conference, a psychologist advocated for making books about sex accessible to teens on open library shelves, so that they did not have to ask for them (Trope, "Conference," 1974). Chelton (1974) recommended a book called *Everything a Teenager Wants to Know about Sex … And Should*, and in that same issue, Starr provided information about how to get copies of a free button: "Are you VD Free?" Judy Simpson from the Cuyahoga County Library in Ohio described her programs on "Teen Sexuality" (Simpson, "Sexuality," YAAN, 1979). Planned Parenthood appears frequently in YAAN, demonstrating evidence of library collaboration with descriptions of programs such as the blatantly named "About Sex" ("About Sex," YAAN, 1976). The contributor, Mel Rosenberg from Los Angeles, CA, describes the program, but also wonders: "Is the library the best setting for 'voluntary' sex education? We'll see." Unfortunately, no follow-up summary appeared in YAAN.

Young Adult Librarians as Social Workers

As advocates and de facto social workers, these librarians also held parenting workshops for parents of adolescent children. Jan Polacheck, from Canton, Ohio, describes an inservice training for YA workers on providing materials surrounding controversial topics. For example, materials included posters on pregnancy, venereal disease, drugs, and suicide prevention. Each of these posters was captioned with a phone number to the appropriate agency (Polacheck, "In-Service," YAAN, 1973). The *Random Notes* section of this same volume provides information about a quarterly newsletter of the Institute of Family Research and Education, about establishing inter-generational communication on "love, morality, sex, birth control, VD, drugs, and other areas of vital concern to our youth." Judith Rovenger, of Ossening, New York, wrote: "When I first started here 2 years ago I envisioned myself going out into the ghetto areas, the drug centers, etc. saying 'the library has something for everyone' kind of crap." Instead, she focused her Young Adult department on providing legal aid to teens because "the need arose for more counseling services to these kids—legal aid, drug counseling, runaway info, jobs counseling, etc. and as we began to gather more information, more kids began to make use of these services" (Rovenger, "Legal Aid," YAAN, 1973).

Within YAAN, librarians were also encouraged to promote social awareness of drug abuse. Outside of libraries, they encouraged boarder outreach. Susan Ellsworth wrote of the need of YA librarians, especially budding YA librarians such as those still in library schools, to work for [drug abuse] hotlines, because they are then best able "to organize (and catalog) references, evaluate and provide information" to those in need (Ellsworth, "Drug Abuse," YAAN, 1974). In an article called "Active Listening for the YA Librarian," Joy Macari, of Dublin, CA, described a training program at the local crisis intervention switchboard. While working there, Macari connected with other adults who cared about teens, and offered support via the library. In her programs, Marilyn Van Gieson of the Hawaii State Library included speakers from social agencies who had experience working with teens. Outreach was evident throughout YAAN. There were efforts by librarians to form partnerships with agencies that worked with young people, such as Planned Parenthood, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and the National Runaway Switchboard, and even included information about a newsletter called *Inside-Outside*—a publication about library services for incarcerated youth and adults.

A Shift to Teens' Voices

Content in YAAN clearly demonstrates how librarians listened to what teens wanted, tried to figure out what they needed, and accomplished their goals by giving teens a voice. Throughout YAAN, there is evidence of librarians' strong desire to make teen voices heard—but teen voices were filtered through teen librarians, who served as their spokespeople. Such evidence included descriptions of librarians' success stories in setting up Youth Advisory Boards, including teen reviews and writings, and helping teens advocate for themselves and their own interests. A letter from Campbell described how she was able to get teens "evaluating titles and planning programs, and first thing you know, they were writing letters to the head librarians suggesting changes in the system" (Campbell, "Suggesting Changes," YAAN, 1973). For example, questions were posed to readers in each issue and then answered in subsequent issues. In 1976, Starr asked readers: "if you are involved in either a YA advisory board or have a teenager serving on your library board, would you please write up a brief description?" (Starr, "Brief Description," YAAN, 1976). Responses included several letters from teen librarians describing how they included teens on their boards.

Samples of teens' creative writing projects were included in YAAN, including "*Insight*" compiled by Michael Garrison of the Baldwin Public Library in Michigan, or *Seven Hills Review* published by Hortense Meister, Head of YA Services at the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County (published in Vol. 1, No. 5), and Starr had an entry called "Right On Women" (Starr, "Right On," YAAN, 1975) in which she connected services to teens with the women's movement. In one example, she described the efforts of an organization of ambitious young feminists at a high school who had published an article in *Ms* magazine, and arranged for Anaïs Nin to visit their school. This same article describes how young women reacted to being told by guidance counselors that "Stanford is a boys' school, don't bother to apply," how they were recommended to go to nursing school instead of medical school, and how they had uncovered discrepancies in athletic funding for boys and girls at a school—$5900 a year for boys versus $900 a year for girls. By understanding and connecting to overarching issues faced by teens, YAAN contributors learned how best to serve teens inside and outside of their libraries.

Publishers' Interactions via YAAN

Publishers' voices were absent in the first year of YAAN, but soon it became clear that they too were paying attention to the newsletter. Paperback publishing was a new format in the 1970s, and because of their affordability, these soft cover books were especially popular with teens. Suddenly, teens could afford to buy their own books, and libraries were able to afford multiple copies of the most popular ones. By 1974 (YAAN, Vol. II, No. 2), Starr posted a query from the new publicity representative for YA librarians at Bantam Books. Roger Cooper was interested in ideas about how Bantam could "help" librarians. He asked them for feedback on cover designs as well as help in discovering which hardcover titles librarians wanted to see released in paperback. Cooper could then use this market research to support Bantam's acquisition of paperback rights for these titles. By interacting with the publishers, librarians helped to shape and build that market. Cooper's post is particularly interesting, because publishers started children's library marketing departments in the 1950s, but his post demonstrates that by the 1970s, publishers were dedicating staff to specifically handle the area of Young Adult marketing. Clearly, publishers realized the potential of YAAN for providing feedback from the Young Adult librarians.

From the articles, it is also evident that during the 1970s, libraries represented the core market for books for young people and that a relatively small number of books were sold directly to teens. By soliciting feedback directly from YA librarians, Cooper had tapped into a powerful network of experts. Other evidence of publishers' awareness of YAAN includes Henry Holt's offer of a free catalog to anyone requesting it in Vol. III, No. 3, or Scholastic's "Great Paperback Contest" in the same. While publishers' presence was not pervasive across YAAN, those that participated showed that the publishers recognized YAAN as an effective vehicle for reaching Young Adult librarians, and in turn, the teens that they served.

Young Adult librarians were still the primary gatekeepers to this teen population, and for publishers, marketing to these librarians became an important component of reaching an audience of young people. Just as children's librarianship helped create the field of children's publishing in the early part of the twentieth century, Young Adult librarianship helped create the field of Young Adult publishing during the 1970s. As these influential librarians shaped the field and created a market of readers, publishers strove to fill it with books that addressed the ideology of the times—that were both filled with the type of information that would help teens make wise life choices, but were also entertaining.

Realist Fiction: Publishing for Young Adults in the 1960s and 1970s

The date that YA literature emerged as a distinct genre within the overarching genre of children's literature is a topic of great debate. If books for young adults are supposed to be about teenagers, then Martha Finley's *Elsie Dinsmore* series (1867–1905), Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), and Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) are all arguably YA prototypes. Also, books series published by the Stratemeyer Syndicate including *The Bobbsey Twins* (starting in 1904), *The Hardy Boys* (starting in 1928), and *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories* (starting in 1930) are arguably YA novels. Stratemeyer published thousands of formulaic mass-market books for young readers that were enormously popular, but were "the bête noir of children's librarians through his long career" (Jenkins, 2000, pp. 112–113). Another ancillary print culture product with high teen appeal was comics, and long before the *Archie* comics of the 1950s, the first to feature teenagers was the *Harold Teen* comic strip which started in 1919 (Rollin, 1999).

Another YA predecessor is *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger (1951), which served as a precursor for the realist and problem novels of the 1960s and 1970s. The book was initially published for the adult market, but adolescents became the book's most devoted readership, because it featured a teen protagonist, Holden Caulfield, encountering and dealing with adult-like issues, on his own and for the first time. In the novel, Caulfield runs away from preparatory school and spends three nights in New York City. There, he engages in exactly the sort of behavior that the parents of the era did not want their children participating in: drinking, smoking, swearing, and even hiring a prostitute. As such, the book represented the type of content that the Progressive Era librarians would want to shelter young people from, despite its popularity with this younger demographic. As evidence of their gatekeeping function, and desire to protect readers from the lessons of *Catcher,* the novel remains the second most frequently challenged novel in America, all the while being one of the best-selling novels of all time (ALA, n.d.).

In YAAN, contributors demonstrated a need for, and an interest in, books dealing with sex. According to Campbell, *Forever* (1975) was a bellwether that changed the market for publishers. For example, prior to *Forever*, the primary market for Young Adult literature was the library, but after its publication, the novel "changed the market … it showed publishers that kids would buy the books themselves" (P. Campbell, personal communication, June 27, 2011). Also, a key consideration in marketing to this audience of teens was the price of the novels, and to meet the needs of that market segment, publishers released paperbacks to make them more affordable for teens. From the publishers' perspective, while they had a lower price point than their hardcover books, the sales volume made up for any lost profits. To generate interest, for example, Starr would go into high schools for book talks with ten copies each of popular titles, and then lend them out on an honor system (C. Starr, personal communication, July 26, 2011).

The 1970s represents a "Golden Age" of Young Adult literature, with works by YA authors such as Judy Blume and Robert Cormier, who are both still widely read today. However, Cart (1996) points out that this era was also one with a wealth of realist fiction that mirrored the shifting style of library service. Publishers provided a wealth of "problem novels," or what Patty Campbell calls "The New Realism," in which "the problem" dominated the plot. "They were very easy to sell to kids, but they were not literature … when there were headlines about some problem in the

newspapers, we knew in about 6 months, we'd have a novel about it!" (Campbell, personal communication, June 27, 2011).

The books were moralistic in tone; they were designed to teach Young Adults how to make good life choices. Some of the strongest books published during this era addressed real issues in teens' lives—from the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement (*If Beale Street Could Talk* by James Baldwin), to the sexual revolution and women's movement (*My Darling, My Hamburger* by Paul Zindel), drug use and addiction (*A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich* by Alice Childress and *Go Ask Alice* by Anonymous), and homosexuality (*I'll Get There, It Better be Worth the Trip* by John Donovan). While these titles are still in print, many of the shorter-lived problem books embraced a didactic tone that echoed the protectionist tradition behind books published for young readers during the early days of children's literature.

Despite the 1970s being designated as the "Golden Age" of YA Literature, the cultural capital of these books did not translate to awards until the 1980s. Since the Young Adult Library Service Association (YALSA)—originally known as the Young Adult Services Division (YASD)—had existed since 1954, it is surprising that the first ALA award for Young Adult fiction, the Margaret A. Edwards Award, was not given until 1988:

> The award will be given annually to an author whose book or books, over a period of time, have been accepted by Young Adults as an authentic voice that continues to illuminate their experiences and emotions, giving insight into their lives. The book or books should enable them to understand themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationship with others and with society. The book or books must be in print at the time of the nomination (ALA.org, Margaret A. Edwards Award, 1997–2012).

Granted, this particular award acknowledges the lifetime achievement of an author, so naturally, a body of work—by the author, and by others in the same genre—had to be established before the award could be given. Another prominent ALA-based award, the Michael L. Printz Award, sponsored by *School Library Journal*, seeks to award books of exceptional literary merit (ALA.org), and it was first given in 2000. Both the Edwards and the Printz awards are named for Young Adult librarians. Nevertheless, just as the Newbery (1922) and Caldecott (1938) medals lent prestige to the field of children's literature, literary awards established around the

genre of Young Adult literature in the 1980s and 1990s added legitimacy to it. An increased awareness of YA literature, starting with the Young Adult Alternative Newsletter and the growing body of awards for YA literature, helped to cement the stature of YA literature as a genre that was separate from the overarching field of children's literature.

As president of YASD, Starr argued that the division's secretary was focused primarily on children's services. Thus, in 1975, the division was initially granted its own executive secretary, and Evelyn Shaevel served from 1975 to 1989. As service for young people had shifted from the role of "child protectors" to "child advocates," that too was reflected in YASD activities such as the Best Books for Young Adults Committee, and then "The Intellectual Freedom Committee (1976), Legislation Committee (1977), Selected Films and Videos for Young Adults (1977), Education Committee (1978), and Organization and Bylaws (1979)" (YALSA, history, n.d.). YASD Committees created publications based on their work, organized pre-conferences for the midwinter and annual meetings of the ALA, and administered grants, including research grants. YAAN helped to foster an interest in having a more professional journal related to Young Adult librarians and their work, and in 1978, *The Voice of Youth Advocates* (VOYA) was founded by Dorothy Broderick and her partner (and frequent YAAN contributor) Mary K. Chelton (VOYA, Broderick, 2011).

According to Cart (1996), the early Realist Fiction novels of the 1960s and 1970s focused excessively on a single problem (divorce, abortion, suicide, or dropping out of school) rather than focusing on the characters themselves. However, despite the seriousness of these problems, the books were hugely popular, and teens were finally able to access information that was previously unavailable. While these books were tasked with preparing for, and warning teens about, the adult situations they faced, these novels also had to entertain. Thus, the books published for Young Adults had to fulfill two functions: be substantive enough to please adult gatekeepers (and book purchasers), yet entertaining enough to be picked up and read by teens.

Young Adult literature straddles the space between children's literature and adult literature, with an inherent tension between (1) the adults who at times use YA literature to control, shape, and guide young minds (as in the moralizing messages of the 1970s Realist Fiction novels), and (2) the teenage consumers with their desires for intellectual freedom, participation, and empowerment. From the publishers' perspective, YA literature must also bridge education and entertainment.

The rhetoric of teen empowerment that was fostered and encouraged by Young Adult librarians has been part of YA literature since the genre was established in the late 1960s. Thus, publishers identified it as an opportunity in the marketplace and constructed the related genre to capitalize on it. Since its inception, librarians have been primary supporters of teen fiction, serving both as champions of intellectual freedom for teens and as primary critics (and the arbiters of taste of the YA genre). They have encouraged teen participation in the selection process with the annual Best Books for Young Adults (BBYA) bibliography (now called the Best Fiction for Young Adults bibliography). Their work in creating a venue for teens' voices created the foundation for online participation in books by teens. But today the Internet provides countless opportunities for teen participation in Young Adult literature (beyond the library), from teen review sites such as weRead.com and LibraryThing, to independent blogs and websites, to publishers' websites, and to social media sites, which will be addressed later.

Late Twentieth Century: Teens Voices and New Business Models

The last section described a "Golden Age" of Young Adult literature during the 1970s, during which libraries helped establish a significant market for Young Adult literature. By the 1980s, the genre of teen fiction had been firmly established as a separate genre. Around this time, the publishing industry began a period of mergers and acquisitions that continues today. Small, independent, and often family-owned publishers became large transnational conglomerates, which in turn created pressure to generate more profits. The large transnationals were able to focus on what Henry Jenkins (2003) calls "transmedia" products—those highly commercial products that exist on multiple media platforms, appeal to a wide range of audiences, and generate profits in a variety of arenas. Such products created a conflict for publishers forced to balance their lists with books that were potentially eligible for prestigious awards, with highly commercial books that better suited the transmedia model.

Several years before *Harry Potter* was published, there had been a change in the marketplace for children's books. Even as late as the 1970s, the primary market for children's books was the institutional market (meaning schools and libraries). However, this shift, as Patty Gauch (2009) describes it, changed book distribution. Stores such as

the giant box bookstores, including (in the United States) Barnes & Noble, warehouse club stores like Costco, and display marketers including Books Are Fun, meant that suddenly there were new and highly commercialized outlets in which to sell books. Thus, to fill the needs of this market, publishers increasingly looked to highly commercial properties that would sell widely in large quantities.

Technology and Young Adult Services

In 1992, YASD became the Young Adult Library Services Association of the ALA (YALSA). From its earliest days, YALSA had an early emphasis on the use of technology. YALSA used the ALA "gopher" to post for its members, established listservs, and developed a teen website (now defunct) called *Teen Hoopla*. YALSA established guidelines for services to Young Adults, and created new book awards. First, the Alex Award was created in 1988 and named after Edwards. Then the Michael L. Printz Award was created in 2000 and named after the renowned YA librarian Michael Printz. YALSA also expanded its volunteer-run committees, added eight genre committees, as well as book selection lists that included the *Best Books for Young Adults* (BBYA), *Quick Picks* (for reluctant readers), and *Popular Paperbacks*. The *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* (JOYS) was replaced with *Young Adult Library Services* (YALS). YALSA sponsored pre-conference events at ALA Annual and ALA's midwinter conference, and became involved in grant administration.

The BBYA list became the *Best Fiction for Young Adults* (BFYA) list in 2010. Although prior incarnations of this list had existed since 1930 (Cart 1996), earlier lists were comprised of carefully selected adult books that would have teen appeal (such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*). While earlier librarians serving Young Adults wanted books on the list to have high degrees of teen appeal, their protectionist ideologies meant that the books on the list also neglected adult topics or issues. As more books were published specifically for Young Adults, those books began to replace adult books on the list.

At first, books for Young Adults were simply incorporated into existing children's imprints. It was not until the 1990s that separate imprints for Young Adult fiction were created. According to Michael Cart, Avon's "Tempest" imprint was launched in 1999. In 2002, Tempest was followed by Simon & Schuster's "Pulse," and Scholastic's own imprint for teens called "Push." All three imprints published original paperbacks.

1980s and Beyond: Teens Voices (BBYA) and the YALSA Blog

In the twenty-first century, a development occurred during which librarians (and later publishers, as will be discussed later) increasingly provided spaces where teens could participate in the traditional discourse on librarianship, especially those discourses regarding librarians' roles as reviewers and awarders of Young Adult literature. The BBYA Committee, which has recently been renamed the Best Fiction for Young Adults (BFYA) Committee, remains an important vehicle for Young Adult voices, as evidenced from observation at a 2009 American Library Association conference. Although the adult BBYA committee members have the final word on which books will be included in the list, input from readers has long been an important component in building that list. At the biannual ALA conferences, attending teens speak before the BBYA committee members.

While YA librarians are deeply vested in young peoples' opinions, the YA editors and publishing professionals, who are also in attendance, are similarly interested, as teens' feedback can be applied to works-in-progress, or into acquisition strategies for new works. Teenage BBYA members are especially valuable contributors, as they tend to be outspoken and direct about their literary likes and dislikes. According to Sharon Rawlins, Youth Services Consultant for the New Jersey State Library, and former BBYA Committee Member, while participants' negative input will not necessarily make the committee remove a book from the list, members will seriously consider teens' comments. A book will stay on if, for example, committee members feel that a given book is difficult to read, but of high literary quality (S. Rawlins, personal communication, April 7, 2009). Input from young readers sometimes includes impassioned pleas for popular titles, thus challenging librarians' taste for the literary. This also illustrates the inherent challenge of good Young Adult literature, in that it must entertain young readers, while also satisfying the gatekeepers in their duties of selecting "the best" literature for young people.

At the ALA's (2009) annual conference, local library BBYA groups comprised of librarians and teens wore t-shirts emblazoned with team names such as TKB: "Teens Know Best." Their comments and criticisms about 2009 titles were reflective and insightful. For example, one speaker describes that when reading *The ABCs of Kissing Boys* by Tina Ferraro aloud to friends while camping, these friends woke up the entire campground with their uncontrolled laughter. Another stated bluntly that *The Anatomy of Wings* by Karen Foxlee would have been just as

effective if it were condensed into ten pages. A reader of *Marcelo in the Real World* by Francisco Stork, said that reading the book was like eating good chocolate. As another example of useful comment for the editors in the room, a teen reader of *Dear Julia* by Amy Bronwen Zemser, criticized the book for having unrealistic depictions of high school. The teens also criticized an abundance of Vampire-themed books (this was at the height of *The Twilight Saga's* success), thus demonstrating their awareness of commercialization behind the types of books that were being targeted at them.

As we have seen in the United States, teen feedback has been an increasingly critical component of library programs for Young Adults. This was evident from early and locally-based programs such as those run by Scoggin and Edwards; to larger, national programs through the ALA such as the BBYA and BBFA, and similar programs. In recent years, digital technologies are enabling these types of interactions in venues beyond the library. These venues include teens' own fan sites, publishers' proprietary websites, social media sites, and participatory books, as we will see in later chapters of this book. Librarians also have multiple venues for participation in online communities around the field, including their own blogs and the ALA's YALSAblog. These blogs serve to connect and inform about the field, as was previously achieved with the mimeographed mailings of YAAN. However, unlike the days of copies sent via the United States Postal Service, commentary and discourse on these online blogs is instant and accessible. If YAAN serves as an "ur" blog, then the YALSAblog exemplifies the prototype that includes an institutional framework supporting Young Adult librarianship. This is important because it signifies a departure from Starr's days of having to fight the Children's Services Division of the ALA for fair representation of YASD in the shared publication, *Top of the News.* Compared to YAAN, the YALSAblog represents a slow evolution and successful gain for the field of YA librarianship from the mid-seventies to the present.

Librarianship and the YALSA Blog

According to the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, the YALSAblog was first accessible via a link on April 4, 2008 (Internet Archive, n.d.). A short analysis demonstrates how the YALSAblog paralleled YAAN. YAAN reflected and built community around the values inherent in YA Librarianship of the 1970s. The ALA's YALSAblog does the same around current library practices and values. While YAAN went outside the institutional structures

that were supposed to support the field, the YALSAblog serves as a similar conduit for connecting Young Adult librarians, except that the current discourse has moved back within the institutional framework of the ALA as owners of the blog.

A cursory comparison of topics between YAAN and the YALSAblog reveals that issues have shifted from a 1970s era emphasis on librarians' de facto social-worker role to an emphasis on teaching about, and providing access to, technology. In fact, YALSA's mission is about providing free and equal access to materials and services. Arguably, the focus has shifted from the need in the 1970s to provide information on topics like sexual health, legal services, drug abuse, and suicide prevention, to one focused on minimizing the digital divide. An analysis of the YALSAblog (conducted in three periods during 2011, 2012, and 2013) revealed that posts were closely connected to current trends and events. These included Librarians and Technology, Teens and Technology, Copyright and Citation, Fitness (probably in response to first lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" Campaign of 2011), and Gaming in the Library.

The fact that *gaming* is included in the library discourse represents an ideological shift for this era. In earlier eras, "gaming" would have been considered as belonging strictly to the domain of entertainment, and therefore a subject that did not belong within the library. But the recent inclusion of it demonstrates how library programming reflects Young Adults' interests. Also, in more recent postings on the YALSAblog, technology-related content increasingly dominates, from weekly columns such as "App of the Week" and "Tweets of the Week," to several columns related to YALSAblog's partnership with Girlstart's DeSTEMber.

Girlstart is an organization dedicated to encouraging girls to enter STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). During the month of December, YALSAblog partnered with Girlstart to provide programming ideas related to girls and STEM for libraries. In this way, the YALSAblog continues the work of YAAN by not only providing information to young people to improve their lives (including access to vital information), but also by bridging the digital divide. The blog also supports YAAN's feminist mission by expanding equality and opportunity for all Young Adults.

Continuing the work of their predecessors in the 1970s, librarians today are connected to broader social themes. But, as society progresses, the themes that impact teens have also changed. For example, one of the dominant themes of the 1970s about which librarians provided information was sexual health. As the AIDS and HIV epidemic of the

1980s led to mandatory sexual health education in schools by the 1990s (Moran 2004), librarians have shifted to a focus on teaching about and providing access to technology. Arguably, access to, and use of, technology is required for future success, and as such, librarians' work as extenders of habitus continues in the digital age.

From interviews with veteran librarians, document analysis of the YAAN newsletter and the YALSAblog, an overview of ALA websites, and observations at a 2009 BBYA committee meeting, this chapter has shown how Young Adult library service since the beginning of the twentieth century has revolved around empowering teens as readers and as a population of library users. The field of production of literature for young people was shaped by a synergistic relationship between publishers and librarians (and teens, via the librarians who served them). As the "child protectors" at the beginning of the twentieth century, to their contemporary roles as "child advocates," these librarians, primarily women, cared passionately about this population and were key advocates for change in the field.

Publishers have paralleled these library developments by creating products for teens. First, they published books which "protected" young readers, addressing Progressive Era ideologies on children as a population in need of protection. Then, they provided those books which "informed" young people about other people and cultures, and as Edwards' hoped, served as vehicles for peaceful understanding. In the 1970s, Young Adults were seen as a population that needed information. By publishing realist fiction and problem novels, they provided the type of information teens needed to make good life choices. Today, teens' voices are expected, if not assumed, in both the library and in the publishing industry. In fact, addressing the desires for self-determination and agency are becoming as important features of marketing books to this population as they had been for television (Banet-Weiser, 2004) and magazines (McRobbie, 1982). Within media products for young people, capital provides space for leisure, and by providing illusions of self-determination and agency, it also seeks to control it in a pleasurable way.

This introductory chapter provides a foundation of illuminating teens' work as critics of YA literature from the early days of Scoggin's "Circulatin' the News" pamphlet, to BBYA book groups. The following chapters will examine how technology provides the type of voice previously provided by librarians—which now exists on publishers' websites, causing a shift in the configuration of the field.

As publishers disintermediated websites allow teens' voices to be heard directly, and without first being filtered through the voices of

adult librarians, teens are able to speak directly—to each other, to publishers, and to authors—about the books they love. As such, publishers' websites challenge the traditional role of the Youth Services Librarian—and offer opportunities for redefinition. By focusing on appealing commercial sites onto which teens are interpellated via snappy names like *Hip Scouts* or the *In Group* to perform what the Italian autonomist Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) calls immaterial labor, the next chapters will explore themes of co-creation, participatory culture, and commodification around books such as those in the *Twilight* series, and its effect on the concept of teen empowerment within YA literature. Chapter 3 will examine labor shifts in marketing to teens, from top-down to bottom-up structures. Chapter 4 will look at teens' affective and immaterial labor on the *RandomBuzzers.com* site. Chapter 5 constructs the lifespan of a corporate fan site via Hachette's *TwilightSaga.com*. Chapter 6 will examine teens' participation in a pioneering multiplatform book, *The Amanda Project*, and finally, Chapter 7 presents a concluding chapter, with a look at the future.

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CHAPTER 3

Branding Books, Branding Readers: Marketing to Teens in the Digital Age

Introduction

Before digital technologies enabled direct contact between publishers and young readers, publishers' marketing personnel focused on serving as liaisons with those who represented the core market for books—children's librarians. At that time, a primary function of the marketers' work was to build relationships with those librarians who (1) had coveted access to young people; and (2) who helped shaped the canon of literature for young people through their work as reviewers and awarders. Today, while marketers are still responsible for building connections and relationships with those who serve teens in the marketplace, emergent technologies have provided publishers with new tools for reaching their core reading audience directly. Authors, too, are increasingly required to use these tools to connect with their audiences.

This chapter compares historical marketing methods with current ones, relying on interviews with four marketers: one veteran who worked in the industry before the emergence of digital marketing technologies, and three contemporary marketers. An historical look at marketing practices provides a comparative framework for understanding current ones, and demonstrates how the field is changing toward a focus on branding. In addition to the interviews, online trade publications, such as *Publishers Weekly* (n.d.), *Digital Book World* (2014), and *The Digital Shift* (n.d.) contribute to the research of this chapter, and provide background information for the case studies of the following chapters. Together, these sources

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provide an understanding of how technology has changed the way that books are marketed to young readers: from an established and largely print-based model, to one that relies increasingly on technology, including websites and social media.

A look at contemporary marketing practices demonstrates the disruption that occurs when publishers are able to establish direct, disintermediated relationships with their reading audience. Disintermediation changes publishers' relationship with librarians from the earlier model, which was top-down and publisher-led, to a new marketing model which is collaborative, community-focused, and disruptive of traditional definitions of "marketer," "author," and "reader." This chapter draws on theoretical frameworks from Bourdieu's work on distinction and taste, McChesney's work on Political Economy, applied here to the publishing industry, and Lazzarato and Terranova's work on Immaterial and Affective Labor. Jenkins' work on media convergence provides a contextual framework for understanding the implications of media convergence within this arena.

The Print Model: Top-Down Marketing to Teens

Historically, the most effective way of getting books into the hands of teenagers was via the gatekeepers, including librarians, teachers, and parents. However, there were other methods as well. Mimi Kayden, a veteran marketer who started her career working under Ursula Nordstrom at Harper & Brothers in the 1950s, describes how if a publisher had a book by a major author, advertisements would be placed in magazines, such as *Seventeen*, *Mademoiselle*, or *Boy's Life* (Kayden, personal communication, September 17, 2010). But generally, advertising in these magazines was considered ineffective and far too expensive for children's publishers because their budgets tended to be far lower than marketing budgets promoting adult books. Also, most of these teen magazines reviewed just a few books monthly, so only a few could get marketing exposure via such media. By the early 1990s, publishers expanded efforts by preparing biographical sheets for authors to mail in response to fan letters, and then authors started going on school visits. According to Kayden, these school visits were successful in "making kids realize that all authors are not dead."

Since the early days of the field, marketers' primary tools for reaching young readers included: (1) carefully designed paratextual elements, such as book covers and titles that would appeal to teens; (2) cultivation of strategic relationships with gatekeepers (especially librarians); and

(3) in-store placement of books. When designing for young people, book covers need to reflect current trends and tastes, and quickly become outdated. Subsequently, publishers regularly update and refresh cover designs of long-selling popular book series to make sure they will continue to appeal to teens. The entire book, including "the spine … the size, shape, paper texture, font, etc." are subject to what Yampbell (2005) refers to as "grabability," in which the goal is to make a book so visually appealing that it leaps off the shelf, making young consumers want to "grab" the book (p. 349). Covers are used to attract teen readers, but also for branding purposes as well, which in turn, dictate placement in a bookstore. For example, if a monograph suddenly becomes a series when a second book is published, the older title is reissued with a cover that looks more like the newest book in the series.

When Shannon Hale's book *The Princess Academy* became a Newbery Honor winner, the covers of the three-book series were given an updated look (see Figs. 3.1 and 3.2). If a book is adapted for film, images from the film (usually including popular teen actors) are quickly introduced on covers of mass-market reprint editions, to benefit from cross-promotion of the film.

Arguably, in recent years, this grabability concept has been extended toward one-word titles—perhaps appropriate for a population with a perceived short attention span. Examples of such one-word titles include *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson (1999), *Smack* by Melvin Burgess (1998), *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen (2002), *Liar* by Justine Larbalestier (2009), and the *Divergent* series by Veronica Roth, including *Divergent* (2011), *Insurgent* (2012), and *Allegiant* (2013). Franco Moretti's (2007) work on historical trends in literature would provide a useful framework for future research on the significance of such title trends.

Toward a New Configuration of Publishing: Rise of the Superstores

In the United States, until recently, there were multiple venues where publishers could sell the books they published, including independent bookstores, large chain stores, and libraries, but in recent decades, these venues have been shrinking. Many of the independent bookstores, which were also responsible for establishing distinction in the field, have gone out of business. Those that manage to survive have used innovative means to stay afloat. For example, Books of Wonder is the last independent,

Fig. 3.1 Shannon Hale's rebranded *Princess Academy* series: Book #1 (original)

children's-only bookstore in New York City. Facing an economic crunch in Fall 2012, the owner, Peter Glassman, turned to technology and used crowdfunding to raise $50,000 (Bosman, *New York Times*, 2013).

Libraries, which are funded by tax dollars in the United States, closely reflect the overall economic state of the country, and often face budget cuts during challenging times, as they did during the recession of the first decade of the twenty-first century. The large chain bookstores, from the

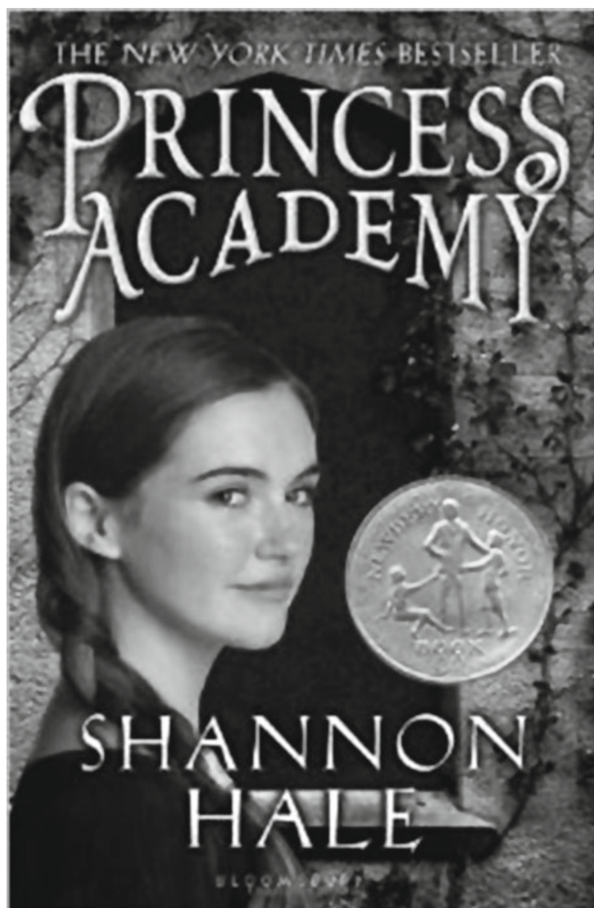

Fig. 3.2 Shannon Hale's rebranded *Princess Academy* series: Book #1 (redesigned)

virtual behemoth that is Amazon.com, to brick-and-mortar superstores such as Borders Group, Inc. (which included also the Waldenbooks and Brentano's chains), Barnes & Noble, Inc. (B&N), and Books-a-Million, Inc. have tremendous influence on what is published in the United States in general, and have—until recently—represented publishers' best market for books. However, Borders closed all of its stores in 2011, and the future remains uncertain for B&N. Yet despite this uncertainty, B&N's buying power remains strong. In order to encourage B&N's buyers to

purchase particular titles for their stores nationwide, publishers change book covers and even content based on B&N feedback (small publisher, personal communication, August 17, 2011).

The superstore model has been blamed for the demise of many independent booksellers who could not compete with the discounts earned by B&N. Many argue that the chains' focus on top sellers with the widest appeal, contributes to a diluted marketplace for niche or specialty books. But certainly one positive element about the superstore concept is that it makes books appealing to teens by selling books in comfortable environments where teens are free to congregate and browse. "Magazines and food [will] draw teens in, and then [stores] rely on shelf talkers, special displays, and hip covers to get them to buy" (Rosen, 2002, *Publishers Weekly*, p. 86). In addition to their purchasing power, superstores have a significant role in genre construction that is largely defined around mass consumption, and thus closely connected to branding. For example, after the success of the books in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* series, a visit to a New Jersey B&N in March 2011 revealed that the teen section had a new sub-genre of books called Teen Paranormal Romance. In this sub-section, B&N included books similar in style and content to those in the *Twilight* series, and these books occupied a significant portion of total shelving space in the teen section. At the time, books such as *The Den of Shadows* quartet by Amelia Atwater-Rhodes (vampires), *The Sweet Far Thing* by Libba Bray (supernatural), *The Summoning* by Kelley Armstrong (ghosts), and *Raised by Wolves* (werewolves) by Jennifer Lynn Barnes were shelved together in "Teen Paranormal Romance," and it was clear in terms of design, that Twilight-derivative books in this category all looked remarkably similar, featuring a muted, dark overall color scheme with bright bursts of red. In this way, the bookseller (and publishers selling to it) responded to a successful product by trying to replicate that success with similar products. This is a clear example of the political economy of the publishing industry. In an era when physical venues for selling books are constantly shrinking, the industry—both publishers and booksellers—must focus on those books that sell best. Subsequently, publishers and booksellers have a more active role in defining genres than does a reading audience, as their role is directly related to potential financial gain. By constructing a genre of books to capitalize on a particular bestseller's fandom, genre construction becomes closely aligned with branding books and the reading audience, as will be explored in the next section.

Branding Teens

In her book *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers* (2003), Alissa Quart describes different strategies marketers employ to get teens to market to their peers. This includes using trendspotters or influencers who can be digitally tracked or recruited via the Internet and video games. Quart (2003) describes American teens as a new consumer proletariat, contributing heavy labor in order to fuel consumption of more products.

According to Quart (2003), corporations have engaged in teen-to-teen peer marketing for a long time. For example, as of the year 2000, *Teen People Magazine* employed up to 9000 teenage trendspotters who tested products, took surveys, and informed their peers about trends and tastes. Delia*s, a clothing store for teenage girls, also hired young trendspotters. The retailer hired girls that had an affective relationship with the brand and loyally posted Delia*s logos on their home pages. In return for their labor, the girls received invitations to special events.

Quart found similar examples of teen peer-to-peer marketing within skate culture. Skate culture is largely perceived as being anti-establishment and anti-corporation. So, instead of staying on trend, skaters prefer to buy gear from "insider" brands that they perceive as supporting the sport. Yet ironically, according to Quart, skaters make excellent peer-to-peer marketers, because they all aim to be sponsored by corporations. Related products, such as skateboarding-themed gaming products are also infused with marketing, including ProSkater3, in which legendary skateboarder Tony Hawk skates around corporate logos from Quicksilver, Nokia, and Jeep (Quart, 2003). This in-product advertising is similar to how readers are targeted in books such as the *Gossip Girl Series,* in which brands and consumer products are seamlessly woven into the narrative. And, of course, the film industry has been doing this type of product placement for much longer. One famous example is Steven Spielberg's (1982) *E.T.*, in which the extraterrestrial character developed a fondness for Reese's Pieces candy (which, according to *BusinessWeek* Magazine resulted in a 65 percent increase in sales of the candy (*BusinessWeek*, 1998).

Unlike other products for young people, books still have the distinction of being inalienable cultural products (Bourdieu, 1984). However, Quart (2003) writes that branding is rife in products marketed to young people, and despite their high status, books have not been immune. Branding can be done simply by creating a series of books around a group of characters as in *Nancy Drew*, or *Sweet Valley High*. More recently, branded books

include those in the *Sisterhood* series by Anne Brashares, the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling, or the *Twilight Saga* series by Stephenie Meyer. In these books, branding is closely connected to story, licensed merchandise, and marketing strategies.

Just as Quart (2003) describes how marketers exploit different teenage communities of affect, the biggest publishers also use teen websites as platforms for the same type of marketing. This means that for young adults, the interactions that are established via contact with authors, publishers, and peers within publishers' online, interactive communities, are actively sought, validated, and almost revered by the publishers' marketing departments. Brown (2006) describes publishing as a "site where culture and commerce converge" (p. 2). While books are considered to be literary products that are infused with cultural capital, for the publishers, they must also be capable of being sold. Thus, relations of branding are shifting from a traditional sense to a more relational one. In the traditional definition, a brand defines the product, such as "Band-Aid," "Xerox," or "Kleenex." However, in the case of branded literary products, such as "Twilight" or "Sisterhood," the branding has shifted from product identity to branded relationships between those who use such products, and those who make and market them. Those relationships are linked to the readers' performance on a site, as they provide peer-to-peer marketing, or contribute user-generated content. As branding shifts from a traditional to a relational model, the consumer, as a fan of that literary product, also becomes a branded reader. Hearn (2008) describes this branding as being connected to social identity. Teen readers are interpellated by participating on publishers' sites including *Hip Scouts* or *RandomBuzzers*, and thus may acquire identities as brand readers on such sites. These websites will be further explored later.

In the case of transnational publishers, branded books become a valuable asset to publishers because of their potential to sell on multiple media platforms: (1) as international editions (to be published by divisions of the publisher in other countries); (2) as films (possibly by the publishers' own film division); (3) as licensed merchandise in the marketplace; and (4) perhaps most importantly, by creating branded readers who consume a large range of products related to a particular series. Thus, books, especially those which are transmedia properties and exist on multiple media platforms, are gradually following the model from the film industry in which the branding is rife with merchandising. A series such as J. K. Rowling's bestselling *Harry Potter* series, around which an abundance of merchandise exists, provides a perfect example, as described below.

From product placement to branding (which in the case of books includes genre construction and carefully planning a book's paratextual and epitextual elements), marketing serves to clearly define the YA genre. "Today the experience of reading for the young is mediated through the mass media and marketing so that the pleasure and meaning of a book will often be prescripted or dictated by convention" (Zipes in Nel, 2005, p. 237). Such convention is in part established by marketers. In fact, the quality of the book and/or series does not dampen this marketing. For example, in the case of a series such as *Harry Potter*, the writing is considered to be of such high standard that it has earned stellar reviews in all the top gatekeeper journals, including *Kirkus*, *Booklist*, and *School Library Journal*. However, because of the high level of marketing, it is difficult to separate the story itself from the hypercommercialism surrounding the series. Philip Nel (2005) describes Dan Wasserman's (2000) cartoon prophesying the future of *Harry Potter*-related merchandising. While this cartoon includes silly products such as "Wizard Fries" (available at a fictitious restaurant) and "Harry Frames," sold, of course, at a prescription eyeglass stores, this satirical comment on the commercialism in *Harry Potter* was prophetic of future licensing. A visit to one of the two *Harry Potter* theme parks confirms this. At Universal Studios' *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* theme park in Orlando, Florida, fans can have their own personal and immersive experience into the *Harry Potter* storyline. Just like Harry, fans can purchase and wear wizard capes, be sized for a "customized" wand at Olivander's (albeit a plastic one that is mass produced in China, rather than hand-crafted of exotic and even magical materials as described in the books), drink butter beer, and eat a "great feast" platter at the *Three Broomsticks* restaurant. Of course, fans do not have to travel all the way to Florida for this experience—there is also the Warner Bros. studio tour outside of London. Alternately, if a fan is unable to travel, a simple Google search reveals an abundance of *Harry Potter* merchandise available online and across multiple retail channels.

Transmedia stories such as *Harry Potter* or *Twilight* are perfect examples of books that become brands and subsequently create branded readers who consume books and related merchandise, wear licensed clothing, watch films, and create their own user-generated spin-off stories which they share with other potential readers (fan fiction). By doing so, their work helps ensure longevity of the original brands. Examples of licensed *Twilight*-related products found via a Google search in 2012, yielded a Cullen family jewelry set, *Twilight* perfume (packaged in a blood red apple-shaped vial similar to the image on the cover of the first book in the

series), and Edward Cullen boxer shorts. A marketing campaign during the release of the *Twilight* movies even linked the car brand "Volvo" to vampire heartthrob Edward Cullen, as he drove one in the films. The most successful transmedia stories are global phenomena. On Stephenie Meyer's website (2015), images of twelve different covers of international editions of the first book in the saga demonstrate that the *Twilight* phenomenon is not geographically limited to North America.

Turning back to *Harry Potter* briefly, while much criticism of the series centers around its commercial connections, it is impossible to dismiss it solely as such, based on the large quantity of respectable reviews the series has received, as described above. Instead, neoliberal practices in book production, as described by Fuller and Rehberg-Sedo (2013), mean that we are at a point at which the conglomerates control the mass media and necessarily have to balance potential sales with aesthetic value. Books like *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* that have built-in world-building are appealing, as they enable the hypercommercialism around the series. Multiple layers of intertextual, interrelated products maneuver fans across media platforms, encouraging them to spend as they go—and help to establish a branded readership around the series. Transnational publishers are uniquely qualified to produce such mega-blockbusters, because they have the financial backing and human resources to attract and build such properties, and often own multiple media platforms.

However, as shown later in the case studies of this book, while the transmedia structures around the series support and enable them, *Harry Potter*-level hypercommercialism is serendipitous and is difficult—if not impossible—to artificially fabricate. In order for publishers to fully exploit the commercial potential of a book, it must have a favorable structural ecology (as exists in the "world" of *Harry Potter*), there must be sufficient financial means and marketing power to support the sales, but above all, a book must be discovered, embraced, and adopted by the fans themselves.

Scholastic: Publisher as Mega-Brand

Ironically, Scholastic, the American publisher of branded books such as *Harry Potter*, and more recently, the *Skeleton Creek* and *Hunger Games* series, is its own well-respected educational mega-brand—"the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books" ("About Scholastic," 2014) with extensive reach into the school market. The firm is known for involving all layers of gatekeepers in children's literature, from teachers,

to librarians, to parents. In addition to its trade publishing division, Scholastic used to publish textbooks, but has now established itself as a leader in the new configuration of the field, focusing on books, educational magazines for teachers, and reading related programs for children. The company website also describes its transmedia efforts including "television, film, video, digital, interactive, audio and consumer products and promotion" which "take learning beyond print" (Scholastic, "About," 2016). Scholastic's Storia e-books digital imprint claims to provide "the digital reading solution for today's family." By downloading the free Storia app, which links to Scholastic's e-bookstore, parents can create a digital bookshelf for each child in the family, whereby parents and teachers are provided with a panopticon-like experience of tracking children's daily reading via "Reading Reports [which] detail the minutes students spend reading, the titles they've read, and words they looked up" (Scholastic, "Storia," 2016). In 2012, Scholastic's flagship bookstore in New York City added a Storia section, where children and their caregivers could experiment with apps and e-books on a variety of platforms. While Scholastic's efforts in connecting books with children are arguably altruistic, the fact that they are a company with over $2 billion dollars in annual revenue (Scholastic, "About," 2016) annually cannot be overlooked. When one remembers that the field of children's publishing started as a marginalized and gendered business within the larger realm of publishing, Scholastic has been a game changer.

While Scholastic certainly publishes Young Adult titles, Scholastic's marketing focus in their Storia site seems to be primarily directed at parents of young children (those just learning to read) and their teachers. But new marketing methods are also changing the field, especially in the way that young adults can be reached.

From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Marketing

Traditional marketing for reaching teens included largely ineffective efforts such as teen magazine advertisements, reviews, and postcard mailings. But even as early as 2002, Judith Rosen described how Random House was already moving toward hybrid marketing by adding technology to their traditional marketing strategies. "Random [House] relies on *Internet marketing* [author's boldface], reviews in teen magazines and postcards [which for example can be mailed to summer camps, as in the case of *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* by Ann Brashares], as well, of

course, the book itself" (Rosen, 2002). According to Rosen, the goal of this hybrid marketing was to encourage teens to tell their friends about new products because peer-to-peer marketing was seen as being especially effective with teens. Of course, since the publication of Rosen's article, the Internet (including social media and interactive websites) has become a primary vehicle for reaching teens, with far greater reach than traditional marketing.

Since 2007 publishers have made inroads in building enclosures around teen's online participatory activities. Andrejevic defines this as "digital enclosure[s]—the creation of an interactive realm wherein every action and transaction generates information about itself" (Andrejevic, 2007, p. 2). Publishers' digital enclosures link to, and parallel, what the teens are doing independently on their own blogs and fan sites. However, publishers are proceeding in a way that creates and exploits a venue for affective peer-to-peer marketing. For example, on the *RandomBuzzers* site, teens could become members, sign up for an electronic newsletter, participate in online surveys, quizzes, competitions, games, blogging, and even become bookish trendspotters by applying to become book reviewers and having their reviews posted on the publisher's site. [1] Those who became reviewers got free Advance Review Copies (ARCs) of books in exchange for reviewing them directly on the publishers' sites and were also rewarded for such labor with additional free ARCs.

In this way, technology enables publishers to have direct relationships with teens in ways that circumnavigate librarians, and encroach on the cultural work of the library, where teens' reviewing activity formerly took place within library-based programs. As we will see with the case studies, the Internet provides a highly effective means of getting book-related feedback from consumers. However, publishers have co-opted this model to create their own proprietary sites on which a branded readership of teenagers feels empowered by being actively involved with the books they love. Within the sites, teen users develop affective relationships with authors and the site moderators, because they respect and value the teenager's opinions. Publishers can use teen's input from their sites to attract and market to other young people, thereby, exploiting teen affect and co-opting teens' online activity and their virtual "friendships" for commercialized marketing purposes. By 2015, publishers, who

[1] NB: *RandomBuzzers* is no longer active. Random House is now using a site called *Figment* for similar functions.

were still maintaining websites for teens, were gravitating from the websites toward the social media sites inhabited by teens.

Social media is perhaps even more effective than websites in reaching teens—either on its own, or in combination with those websites, because updates are pushed at the teenagers via whichever social media tool is most popular at a given moment. And, while the publisher remains central to marketing efforts and relationship building, several Young Adult authors such as Patrick Carman, Simone Elkeles, Sarah Mlynowski, and John Green, who are masters in social media use, are using it to effectively market and build their own book-related brands.

For example, Carman's *Skeleton Creek* series represents a hybrid book–video format in which characters advance the story using different media, such as Ryan's print journal and Sarah's video blog (vlog). Additionally, Carman created an extensive world on Facebook related to the series, with pages allegedly belonging to the fictional characters of the books. This blurred fiction with reality to such an extent that some readers were confused if the Facebook pages were Carman's work or were actually created by one of the book's characters. For Green, another best-selling YA author, YouTube is the perfect medium for communicating with his fans. Handsome and engaging, Green's sincerity and passion comes across online as he effectively uses YouTube as a platform for connecting with his readers. Interestingly, he does not always focus on his books. Instead, his video topics range broadly from gay marriage to health care. In addition to his solo efforts, Green also produces "vlogbrothers" and "CrashCourse" together with his brother, Hank Green.

Another example of an author in this genre who combines creative work with marketing is best-selling Young Adult author Simone Elkeles. Elkeles is active on social media, with 3000 followers on her personal page (Elkeles, Facebook, 2015) and over 13,000 "likes" on *The Simone Elkeles Fan Page* (Elkeles, Fan Page, 2015) and 11,800 followers on Twitter (Elkeles, Twitter, 2015). For her book, *Wild Cards*, Elkeles extended the brand of her book onto another media platform by writing, producing, and directing a four-part online reality-style "scripted" show which aired on YouTube (Elkeles, YouTube, 2014). While she clearly enjoys interacting with her fans, the drawback, according to Elkeles, is that the extensive labor and time commitment needed to manage social media takes time away from her creative work of writing more books (S. Elkeles, personal communication, November 12, 2013).

Sarah Mlynowksi is another master of self-promotion and branding via social media. She regularly participates in multiple social platforms by blogging on her site, SarahM.com, as well as engaging with fans on other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (@SarahMlynowski), Instagram (sarahmlynowski), Google+, and Wattpad. For Mlynowksi, the emphasis is on self-branding, so she maintains and controls her brand as well as her fan base using her own social media networks, regardless of her publishers' marketing efforts. In doing so, she is able to connect marketing efforts of her different publishers. For example, her *Whatever After* series is published by Scholastic Press, *Ten Things We Did (and Probably Shouldn't Have)* is published by HarperTeen, and the *Magic in Manhattan* series is published by Delacorte. At her talk during the (2014) Digital Book World's Kids Launch Conference, entitled "Let's Be Friends: Being a Social Writer and How Publishers Can Help Authors Connect with Readers," Mlynowski spoke about her efforts to self-brand via social media, where she seeks to form affective relationships with the teens who "friend" her and follow her posts each week.

To keep fans interested between release dates of new books, Mlynowski occasionally releases self-published novellas via Wattpad. These free-of-charge works help keep her writing fresh in her fans' minds and serve to feed their anticipation for her upcoming books. As such, Mlynowski represents a new form of writer: the hybrid writer, who alternates between traditional publishing and self-publishing. This is important because self-publishing is increasingly moving into the realm of respectability, removed from the days of the vanity presses in which authors who were unable to obtain a contract from a traditional publisher paid to have copies of their manuscript produced in print. Thus, Mlynowski also represents a new model of respectability within the realm of self-publishing.

While these authors were social media pioneers, fearlessly experimenting with innovative methods of self-promotion, overall, marketing has become far more of a DIY (do-it-yourself) effort than it was even a few years ago. As Phillips (2014) writes: "whether self-published or issued by a mainstream house, authors need to get themselves known and noticed" (p. 7). Of course the idea of authors promoting their own works is hardly new. Children's authors have always been expected to do author events such as school and bookstore visits in their own communities, and bigger name authors (defined by sales) would be asked to go on an author tour to visit venues in other cities. But the digital environment now requires authors to do much of their own online marketing via social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram, blogs, fan sites, etc.

DIY marketing complements traditional marketing efforts by raising consumer awareness across a range of media (subsequently selling more books), connecting authors with readers and building affective relationships between them. This type of affective relationship marketing already exists in other products for young people. In writing about games, Hearn (2008) notes the goal of marketers is to blur the lines "between product and consumer, private self and instrumental associative object" (p. 197). By establishing an affective relationship between producer and consumer, producers win consumer affect, which in turn attracts immaterial labor of the consumer, as described in fields from television (Andrejevic, 2008), social networking sites (Humphreys, 2008), and retail stores such as the Build-A-Bear Workshop (Zwick et al., 2008). In other words, Jarrett (2003) explains how "goodwill towards brands … has arguably become even more important in contemporary times" (p. 344), and how exploiting the affective labor of the consumer is quickly becoming a new model for producers.

According to Mauricio Lazzarato (1996), this immaterial labor involves computer control and relies on affect. Workers performing immaterial labor are doing an activity that is pleasurable and not typically associated with work, as in gaming. Instead, digital technologies encourage new forms of immaterial and affective labor for publishers, authors, and the readers, and have rapidly become the best tools for marketing to teens. This is especially true when teens, in turn, use such technologies to market to their peers. By incorporating digital technologies that enable teens' immaterial and affective labor related to books, publishers are provided with an effective and increasingly important marketing tool. In the case of authors and teens, their immaterial and affective labor creates free peer-to-peer marketing, consumer research, and even book-related content. As we will see in the next section, such labor also contributes to creating a branded readership.

Using interviews with marketing professionals at three different sized publishing companies, the next section explores how publishers are using digital technologies to create disintermediated online spaces in which they can communicate directly with their teen consumers, and how doing so redefines the meanings of the titles "publisher," "author," and "reader."

Publishers and Social Media: Three Perspectives

Publishers increasingly rely on social media to reach teens. In theory, using free social media sites should be an opportunity to level the playing field, thus allowing small publishers with limited budgets to have the

same opportunities as large publishers to reach teens. However, this is not always the case because despite the fact that social media tools can be used free-of-charge, there is still a need for dedicated staff members to manage them, and here, smaller publishers (with smaller budgets) are at a disadvantage. With this in mind, the three marketers interviewed herein are referred to as "small publisher," "medium-sized publisher," and "large publisher" to allow for this more nuanced examination of publishers and social media.

A Small Publisher's Perspective

A small, Midwestern publisher launched its first YA list, consisting of just two titles, in Fall 2011, but did not find that using social media created significant marketing advantages. This is because the "bigger houses have the resources to put up a website and run contests and interact—they have the personnel and financial resources" (small publisher, personal communication, August 17, 2011). While the publishers interviewed all included the authors in marketing efforts, the smaller publishers were especially reliant upon their authors' willingness and availability to participate. This is because without the resources of the larger publishers, the smaller ones have greater difficulty leading the effort on behalf of their authors. For example, during interviews, the small publisher noted that there was no "internet marketing department," no "director of online content," but rather, the same people who did traditional marketing had to take on new roles.

Yet, with creativity and resourcefulness, the small publisher found some alternative marketing opportunities. For example, without incurring significant costs, this small publisher produced book trailers to launch their first two titles by collaborating with a local university's Department of Education. In classes, students who were studying to become teachers were asked to first read the books and then provide feedback as to how they would use the book materials in teaching teens. For one of the two books, G*uantanamo Boy* by Anna Perera, in its marketing efforts, the publisher targeted the traditional gatekeepers that would normally encourage teens to read books, including educators, professors, and parents. Whether or not these efforts were actually successful was impossible to prove.

The small publisher also used "email blasts" to reach the gatekeepers, hired an independent publicist to reach traditional media channels, and relied on bloggers to promote the book. Advance review copies were made available via NetGalley (2014), an online service providing digital galleys

of forthcoming titles for "professional readers" including those who self-identify as: "reviewer, blogger, journalist, librarian, bookseller, educator, or [as being] in the media." While the small publisher was arguably using technology to market this title, it did so by relying on traditional models of targeting gatekeepers, rather than reaching out to the readers directly.

The small publisher was less creative in terms of using emergent technology to build relationships with their target reading market. For example, the publisher did not use interactive websites or social media, such as Facebook, despite the fact that such resources are inexpensive or even available free-of-charge. Because it could not afford dedicated and experienced staff to manage digital efforts, it was progressing slowly with plans to integrate new marketing technologies, "going from zero to 15 miles per hour at this point" (small publisher, personal communication, August 17, 2011).

Despite efforts with technology, the publisher's most successful marketing efforts resulted from the type of informal strategic relationships that veteran marketer Mimi Kayden calls "an old girls' network," (Kayden, personal communication, September 17, 2010) which has existed in children's librarianship and publishing since its nascence. By using its network, the small publisher was able to place an author in a "Discover Great New Writers" program at B&N, which otherwise would have been cost prohibitive to a small publisher. The network can help in other ways, too. If, for example, a chain bookseller is interested in a particular book from a small publisher, but perhaps not in favor of the initial cover design, the right relationship might enable a discussion of a new cover design in exchange for the bookseller committing to buying copies of the book. Thus, strategic relationships remain the most influential resource for this small publisher, especially as at the time of the interviews, the publisher was unable to expand its social media capabilities in the way that the medium- or large-sized publishers could, as we will see next.

A Medium-Sized Publishers' Perspective

Compared to the small publisher's efforts, the "director of trade and digital marketing" at a medium-sized New York City-based publishing company, which published approximately 100 books per year in 2011, was fully entrenched in digital marketing efforts. As of October 2011, this company had one general teen website, and nine Facebook pages dedicated to different book characters. Participation and discussion on the general site determined which books would get dedicated Facebook pages, and

Twitter was used to point readers back to Facebook. This publisher also worked directly with authors and an in-house assistant to manage various social media outlets. In one successful example, characters from a best-selling series, *The Drake Chronicles* by Alyxandra Harvey, extended their narratives beyond the confines of the book by exchanging tweets (which were scripted and managed by the marketing staff), and by interacting with teen readers. Most importantly, this publisher ensured that these social media efforts were interconnected around the series.

Participants' visibility on the sites provided the marketing director with concrete evidence of how readers were engaging with the characters in the books. Because most of the books released by this publisher were targeted towards girls, these girls were also the dominant social media participants. These books included *Perfect Chemistry* by Simone Elkeles (romance series), *Need* by Carrie Jones (paranormal), and *The Drake Chronicles* by Alyxsandra Harvey (romance/vampire series). Boys did comment occasionally, and the publisher made efforts to post content related to what it considered its less feminine titles, such as the *Time Riders* (a book about time travel), in order to attract a male audience.

The medium-sized publisher found that quizzes and polls were the most effective way to attract teen readers back to their site. Questions were posted one day, and then answered the next, so that teens had a continuing reason to engage with the site. Also, drawings for small, book-related giveaways offered in exchange for participants' "liking" a post, or contributing in other ways, served as incentives to participate. An example of a giveaway was miniature gold make-up sets that related to the gold-dust-trailing pixie in Carrie Jones' *Need*. With a background in gaming products, the marketer at this medium-sized publisher represented the type of "experienced staff" that the small publisher would have liked to hire.

In 2011, authors became increasingly engaged in the production of branded readerships. The medium- and large-sized publishers interviewed herein sought to harness the social media reaches of authors, connecting them across social networks so that they could benefit from cross-marketing, cross-pollination, and crossover readerships. In doing so, the authors become important contributors to publishers' social marketing campaigns. In the case of this medium-sized publisher, popular authors that were already active on social media, such as Harvey, helped to boost the publisher's efforts in constructing online identities for book characters almost seamlessly, and the publisher contributed to the author's creative role. In fact, one of the largest challenges identified by this medium-sized

publisher was the ability to stay in a character's voice, and having access to the author via social media was a clear marketing advantage.

The work for employees responsible for creating and monitoring content on publishers' social media sites involved a lot of creative fun. This, in turn, encouraged a level of affective and immaterial labor that extended the boundaries of the traditional work day. For example, characters from a book series inhabited social spaces by exchanging tweets via their own Twitter feeds. Of course these tweets were composed by the publisher's staff, and while this was certainly creative work, it also blurred lines between work and leisure by requiring that ancillary content creators, responsible for interactions with fans, remained mimetically harnessed to these fictitious online personas, which they embodied on behalf of the author and the publisher. Content-related feeds, whether on Twitter or other social sites such as Tumblr or Facebook, had to be monitored during non-working hours. Because of this, employers were able to extract voluntary overtime labor from employees, as online lives of the embodied fictional characters required perpetuity of engagement during evenings and weekends. While this may have been fun initially, in the future, if this type of engagement becomes mandatory, employees may seek labor reform to regulate this type of digital overtime.

An employee at a medium-sized publishing firm described how she could not "stop—[has] to keep going—[had] to check on Saturdays and Sundays to make sure no one posts junk. These are teens, after all, and sometimes, people post silly Facebook chain letters that have to be removed, or the occasional bad word (which also has to be removed), but fans are pretty good about no spoilers and are not rude" (medium-sized publisher, personal communication, October 28, 2011). Because the company she worked for is a transnational corporation, the social media use raised the likelihood that books would be discussed online, and different release dates increased the risk for readers posting "spoilers," such as the ending of a book. As a result of this online marketing, there was an increased emphasis on coordinating book release dates in the United Kingdom with those in the United States. Arguably, social media and emergent technologies have also influenced actual production processes as well.

By 2013, this medium-sized publisher had expanded its social marketing tie-ins, partnered with Simone Elkeles' own social media efforts, and had created a Tumblr page for Lindsey Leavitt's (2013) *Going Vintage* (Leavitt, Tumbler, 2013). In *Going Vintage*, after her boyfriend cheats on her with an online girlfriend, the heroine swears off modern technology

and reverts to 1962-era technology. On the book-related Tumblr page, publishers' staff, authors, and fans posted "vintage" pictures of their own parents and grandparents to connect to the vintage theme of the book.

For Sarah J. Mass' *Throne of Glass* (2012), the publisher created a participatory website in which readers could star in their own stories by putting themselves into their favorite scenes. In a twist on the Mad Libs template game, fans could select names, locations, body parts, items of clothing, verbs, and adjectives. Then, fans' choices were personalized into pre-written sections which yielded amusing results.

One unexpected result of e-formatted books is that this medium-sized publisher experienced a surge in adults buying e-book versions of Young Adult novels, perhaps because of the privacy afforded by e-readers. The marketing director explained, "adults who wouldn't buy teen novels in book stores are buying teen books online in large numbers" and "as a result [the publisher is] looking at giving a more adult look for certain teen books, like the *Drake* series. The core audience is perhaps changing" (medium publisher, personal communication, October 28, 2011). E-books also support the longevity of titles. Prior to e-books, when a particular book stopped selling more than a certain number of copies a year, the book would no longer be listed in the company's backlist catalog and stock left in the warehouse would be sold as "remainders." The publisher reverted rights back to the author and any remaining copies would be pulped, thereby effectively terminating a book's lifespan. However, with digital formats and related print-on-demand technologies, digital versions are keeping books alive far beyond traditional print lifespans. According to the marketer, "things that have trailed off in bookstores do well as e-books. We'd look at print numbers, and decide that maybe certain things could be pushed online" (medium publisher, personal communication, October 28, 2011).

Bloomsbury's e-imprint, Bloomsbury Spark, was launched in 2013, and the e-book website publishes content for "teen, YA, and new adult readers" (Bloomsbury Spark, 2014). Presenting a new commercial model, books published via this imprint begin as e-books, and if sales are deemed to be sufficiently successful, they are also published in print. Bloomsbury Spark books are promoted on the publisher's website and also on a designated Facebook page. In addition, Bloomsbury Spark relies on collective social media efforts. From a presentation at the 2014 Digital Book World conference, publisher Cindy Loh described the first seven authors as collectively reaching "90,000 Twitter followers, 2,000 likes on Facebook, 20 blogs that total over 10,300 views monthly, and 4,500 Goodreads

followers [in addition to accounts on] Pinterest, YouTube, Google+, and more." The medium-sized marketer interviewed here described a combination of company resources and creativity on the part of the publisher's staff and authors that allow for successful use of social media.

A Large-Sized Publisher's Perspective

Compared to the small- and medium-sized publishers described herein, a large publisher has distinct advantages. When creating a new series, especially one that will incorporate technology, large publishers have: (1) the financial means to create technological innovations—in books, and in the websites that support them; (2) a stable of "house" authors to draw on—or the means to attract celebrity authors via substantial advance payments and other financial commitments, including extensive marketing campaigns; (3) the ability to hire personnel to support these efforts; and (4) an ability to cross-market books across a wide range of established authors. A VP of marketing described her efforts in "harnessing social media footprints of several authors" (large publisher, personal communication, July 28, 2011) in order to maximize cross-promotion. While each author has his or her own online audience, by cross-promoting authors via their own social media sites, authors get an exponential increase in exposure from being promoted across a network, and also benefit from peer-to-peer recommendations from the same. Cross-pollination maximizes a publisher's efforts by encouraging peer-to-peer marketing between authors—and subsequently their fans—and it can be achieved by encouraging friendships among Young Adult authors.

As an example of this type of cross-promotion, this large publisher had recently organized a tour with three popular Young Adult authors: Maggie Stiefvater (series include the *Shiver* trilogy, the *Books of Faerie*, and the *Raven Cycle*), Meg Cabot (most famous for her *Princess Diaries* series), and Libba Bray (*The Gemma Doyle* trilogy). Prior to this tour, the three authors did not know each other. During the tour, they used their own social media presences to promote each other's books, blogged as the tour progressed, and even participated in a "This is Teen Live" event on the publisher's website. Thus, they blurred physical and virtual presences and as a result, they allowed those fans who could not attend physical stops on the tour to connect and participate virtually using online technologies.

In traditional marketing, "harnessing" means to control physical copies of the books. For example, each time a new *Harry Potter* book was

published, warehouses would be on lock-down, and employees would sign non-disclosure agreements in order to control the release of the latest book in the series. But in the new marketing model, while "harnessing" means controlling and directing social media efforts, it also includes controlling information about book release dates (which is a difficult task because that information may be tweeted by anyone and from anywhere) and coordinating news releases. According to the large publisher, the goal with this new type of harnessing is to control information which allows for "a critical mass of notification across staff members' collective social media sites" when a major book is released. Certainly there are plenty of precedents for controlling book release dates, but the digital environment complicates such efforts further, because files can be shared quickly and widely. As a result, corporate secrecy becomes even more important in this era:

> Believe me, [multiplatform books] are extremely significant investments for a publisher because there are all these pieces and parts . . . We have other digital things in the plans that I can't get into . . . and also, we wanted to build a community where the kids, the teens, and the readers could engage with each other and have conversations about books (large publisher, personal communication, July 28, 2011).

Already in 2011, this publisher acknowledged that teen sites were migrating toward social media formats. The rapid evolution of technology is an important consideration for publishers, and the largest publishers have the advantage of having the personnel and the resources to follow trends and quickly change course when necessary. The larger publisher emphasized that the rapidly changing nature of social media means that it has become virtually impossible to plan a marketing budget when acquiring a new title. Two years before the August 2011 interview, Twitter had been relatively unknown as a marketing tool, and it is impossible to predict which tool will be most (or least) popular two years in the future. Some of the publisher sites, which in 2009 were extremely popular, are now becoming depositories for expanded content that is more effectively marketed via social media, which is where the teens are. Thus, social media presents an advantage in information dissemination, because news is pushed to the consumer, instead of waiting for consumers to log in and then pull that information off the website. Other publishers have followed suit as well.

Despite the large amount of marketing that can be done on a less costly Do-It-Yourself (DIY) or community basis, structurally the largest houses

still have obvious advantages over the medium- or small-sized publisher. These advantages include greater financial resources which translate to the ability to hire dedicated and highly qualified staff members to run social media programs.

An interesting finding that arose across the interviews was that as marketing becomes a collaborative effort involving publishers, authors, and readers, roles are redefined, as is labor. Readers serve as authors when they extend stories in social media spaces and interact via comments and contributed storylines. They also serve as peer-to-peer marketers by sharing information with friends via their social media spaces. Authors are content creators, marketers, and even publishers; and publishers are content creators, marketers, and producers of content extensions. Affective and immaterial labor is done by publishers, authors, and by readers.

As shown by her enthusiasm in describing digital campaigns, the large publisher had clearly enjoyed the creativity involved in generating supportive storylines. The marketer at the medium-sized publisher also enjoyed assuming the identities of fictional characters from *The Drake Chronicles* and continuing their storylines via Twitter feeds.

In the past, authors certainly helped to promote their books by going on book tours and attending author signings. In the new political economy of the publishing industry, technological innovations mean that marketing has moved beyond those efforts that were directed mainly by the publishing company. Marketing is now considered a collaborative, community effort between publishers, authors, and readers. Social media enables a larger than ever focus on DIY marketing on the part of the authors. Patrick Carman, the author of several books including the *Skeleton Creek* series, embodies multiple roles as he multitasks as “author,” “producer,” and “marketer” of his work as he writes the stories, produces the accompanying videos, and markets his work via social media channels.

Also, the aforementioned critical mass of notification enables the coordination of authors’ social media channels around forthcoming books. This allows for a peer network of authors, whose immaterial and affective labor works to cross-market books written by online author friends across the network. For example, popular author Rick Riordan blogged about the release of author Jude Watson’s new book in *The 39 Clues* series. Similar to the medium-sized publisher’s efforts, the large publisher also experimented with story extensions by creating ancillary characters in *The 39 Clues* series, which appeared on author Peter Lerangis’ book tour. As pictures were posted on social media, children who were unable to attend the physical tour could participate online. Publisher-created

character extensions blend fiction with reality as publishers' staff embody book characters and bring them to life. Thus, collaborative community marketing efforts, involving publishers' marketing staff, authors, and the readers themselves present a very different model from traditional marketing work.

Affective and Immaterial Labor by Teens: Who Is Reading Whom?

In addition to being the vehicle that makes participatory marketing possible, technology also provides publishers with free focus-group-style data about consumer taste. Whereas teens have traditionally been an ephemeral and unpredictable market, web analytics allow the marketing team to "really understand what the kids are excited about. Which aspects of the website were they responding to the most? What were the important areas?" (large publisher, personal communication, July 28, 2011). Analytics provide valuable feedback about who the users are, what they are interested in, what is most popular, what they are responding to the most, whether they participate actively by "liking" or posting, or inactively by clicking on links and spending time in different parts of a site, which in turn helps publishers in creating new products and in marketing such products.

Changing Ideologies on Children, Books, and Reading

As we have seen in the introductory chapter, unlike other products for children, existing ideologies held by gatekeepers have helped to elevate books and reading. In terms of cultural capital in products for young people, books rank high. Compared to books, which reside in the realm of "education," gaming clearly belongs in the realm of "entertainment," much the same way the book/film division existed in the twentieth century. Despite these perceived differences, some large transnational publishers are forging ahead with digital formats, and arguing that instead of being merely entertainment, these digital formats actually create bridges for readers between traditional books and video games. The advantages for publishers are many: (1) there is no need for warehousing physical stock; (2) availability is instant and books are never depleted; and (3) rich market data is gathered from users, as publishers are able to communicate directly with readers. The large publisher envisioned young people as multitasking in

an environment that included simultaneously reading books, playing on computers and mobile devices, and watching television—all while texting.

What do the gatekeepers think of such formats? In response to a question about what she thought about new digital formats, an Urban Teen Librarian interviewed in 2011 (Urban Teen Librarian, personal communication, August 16, 2011) said she supported anything that connects young people and reading. Yet overall in the library community, there is skepticism about these new formats. After attending the Children's Publishing Goes Digital Conference in January 2012, *School Library Journal*'s contributing editor Daryl Grabarek wrote:

> At the end of the day, what was clear was that digital publishing for children is still in its infancy. While the audience was treated to peeks and insights into some exciting products and companies, educators, parents, and booksellers will be waiting to see what publishers and developers create for this new generation of readers and learners. The field is indeed wide open, the new formats offer enormous potential, and the digital audience is growing. Let's hope that along with purely commercial products for children and teens (which are sure to continue to come in droves), there are high-quality, innovative multimedia products that inspire, educate, and inform (Para. 5).

Grabarek expressed hope that future digital projects will evolve beyond the commercial projects such as the ones noted in case studies of this book. Clearly librarians are aware of the commercial effects of the political economy of publishing, and as a result, they are concerned about implications for distinction, and for maintaining ideologies around providing the "best," which Grabarek defines as "products that inspire, educate, and inform" (para. 5).

False Assumptions About Teens and e-Reading?

Digital teens live in a world in which the Internet is a natural extension of their social sphere. It is accessed via a multitude of platforms from computers to mobile devices and connects them with almost everything in their lives, from homework, media, friends, and to the products they consume. In this sphere, the line between public and private communication is fuzzy, and the concept of what constitutes friendship is redefined. For those who love reading, chatting about books in an online format with friends (both physical and virtual) would seem to be a completely natural activity.

Table 3.1 Teens preferred reading platforms

Reading preferences	*Percentage*
Strongly prefer print	17
Generally prefer print	33
Have no preference	28
Generally prefer e-books	13
Strongly prefer e-books	6

Data compiled from Nielsen Kidsbooks, 2014

E-book readers have been on the rise, and the 2010 Holiday season is largely considered the tipping point for e-books and digital readers (Pew Internet, 2011). However, reading in e-formats may not be as popular with Young Adult readers. Young adults seem to prefer the tactility of physical books, and the ability to get lost in a good book, without the interruptions of hyperlinks and other task-oriented distractions that exist when reading in e-formats (Martens, 2012). Other research confirms this as well. According to Jonathan Nowell and Jo Henry (Nielsen, Kidsbooks, 2014), of the teens' surveyed, their reading preferences were as seen in Table 3.1.

According to this report, we are still at a point at which 50 percent of teens who read still prefer print formats, and only 19 percent prefer e-books. So, as publishers make significant financial investments in digital formats, there is an assumption—and perhaps hope—on the part of publishers that young people expect these formats. More research is needed to confirm this expectation.

Summary and Conclusions

As discussed in this chapter, marketing to young readers has shifted from top-down marketing efforts by publishers to gatekeepers, to newer methods, starting in 2007, of bottom-up-marketing. Such efforts include DIY efforts and immaterial and affective labor, all within a collaborative community of publishers, authors, and teen reading consumers. Publishers' websites (and now social media efforts) target teens, speak to this audience's desires for autonomy (and for being treated like adults), and flatter them by providing a space where their opinions are influential and respected. Yet the publishers' motives behind the sites speak more of an economic desire to brand and commodify these teens. While there

may be an altruistic motive of empowering teens via participation, more importantly, branding allows the publishers to create products that closely fit what teens want to read (consume) and then use the labor of those same teens to sell even more products. The publishers do so by creating a community of users dedicated to books, one in which young readers work for the publisher (free-of-charge) and then encourage their friends to join in as well. As we will see in the upcoming case studies, such online marketing efforts by publishers encroach upon territory that previously belonged to the library.

Social media is changing the nature of work for marketing staff and for authors. In the case of authors, their own self-promotional efforts increasingly compete with their creative writing time. While publishing has always been a labor-intensive profession in which staff members were expected to read work-related manuscripts in their leisure time, keeping up with social media requires time, energy, and an ongoing commitment because these sites need to be constantly monitored, including on weekends, evenings, and holidays. In addition, traditional roles of "marketer," "author," and "reader" (or teen consumer) are being redefined as they are pooled into a collaborative community of participation where marketers are also authors, teens are authors and marketers, and authors are creators and marketers. The following chapters will provide evidence of these blurring roles.

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CHAPTER 4

From *RandomBuzzers* to *Figment*: Teens' Affective and Immaterial Labor

In North America, marketing staff serve as liaisons between the publisher, its corral of authors, and youth services librarians. In the print-only era, these librarians served as gatekeepers for young readers. While they still do, since 2007, publishers' participatory websites have disintermediated this relationship, and marketers are now able to have direct access to their young reading public. On these websites, marketers can solicit teens' immaterial and affective labor around books. As the first of three case studies, this chapter on *RandomBuzzers* (*RandomBuzzers.com*, 2009–2013), which in 2013 transformed into a new site called *Figment* (*Figment.com*, 2013), will explore how the political economy of publishing exploits relationship-building between publishers and their reading consumers—first on the *RandomBuzzers* website, and then on *Figment*, on which participating teens acted initially as peer-to-peer book reviewers and as providers of focus group research, and eventually, on *Figment*, as providers of user-generated content.

Prior to 2009, teens participated in online fora regarding reading either through autonomous websites and blogs they created themselves (as will be explored later herein), or via adult-mediated sites like Teen Ink (Teen Ink, n.d.), which began its online presence in 2000. Teen Ink is a venue where teens can publish their work via a magazine, book series, and/or website. By 2009, most of what were then the Big Seven (now the Big Six) transnational conglomerates had created teen-specific participatory sites, including Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Penguin Putnam,

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Random House,[1] Scholastic Corporation, and Simon & Schuster. Of these, Random House's website, *RandomBuzzers.com* was the most sophisticated employer of free labor. Within *RandomBuzzers.com*, members ("Buzzers"), earned "Buzz Bucks" by engaging in activities such as posting pictures, answering surveys, taking quizzes, writing essays, voting, posting comments to a message board, clicking on links and sending them to friends, emailing and sending instant messages directly from the site, and by "recruiting" friends. A social networking component allowed participants to "friend" other reviewers in order to follow their recommendations. The Buzzers could then redeem their Buzz Bucks for Advance Review Copies (ARCs) and other products from the *RandomBuzzer* mall.

RandomBuzzers.com aimed to get teens to participate in book-related content and in doing so, the site demonstrated how marketing to teens has changed with technology. This chapter explores facets of an emerging community of production enabled via publishers' participatory websites and examines how *RandomBuzzers* provided its owner, Random House, with valuable feedback about users' tastes, what they considered to be distinct or popular, and the sorts of products they might purchase. As such, this free consumer research and peer-to-peer marketing, provided by teens within participatory websites, changes production relationships in children's literature by having young consumers contribute their labor toward products they will eventually buy.

Terranova (2000) described this type of unpaid labor in the digital economy as a social factory that employs NetSlaves. While Terranova was writing about the digital media industry—specifically America Online and Netscape, and not about publishing—as we will see in this chapter, a similar model of unpaid labor emerges. Technically, the teens' work on *RandomBuzzers* was not entirely unpaid, but their resulting wages were low, and could only be spent within the confines of the website. Teens were attracted by the promise of building affective relationships with favorite authors. For example, in 2009, on the Sisterhood Central portion of *RandomBuzzers*, participants were able to interact with Ann Brashares, best-selling author of the *Traveling Pants* series. In this way, the site provided a way for participants to build a personal connection with their favorite authors, who otherwise would not have been within their reach. Expanding upon the new book-marketing techniques described

[1] As of this writing, Penguin Putnam and Random House are now collectively Penguin Random House.

earlier, this chapter will examine how one publisher was able to use the online environment to get teens to participate in peer-to-peer reviewing and related activities that provided free consumer feedback around books.

Contemporary Marketing to Teens: From Publisher Websites to *RandomBuzzers.com*

The Internet has allowed publishers to create new venues for reaching young adults in the spaces they already occupy. The web environment provides a forum for mining data regarding their tastes as well as exploiting their immaterial and affective labor around books as they: (1) participate in peer-to-peer reviewing; (2) provide consumer research; and (3) contribute content. Prior to the Internet, it was challenging to reach this population via most traditional marketing efforts. For example, marketing methods that successfully reached adults, such as author tours (including appearances in bookstores, on television talk shows, etc.), or advertisements in print media, did not necessarily translate to reaching young adults. One of the reasons is that as an audience, teens are a fickle, unpredictable, ephemeral market, that is constantly subject to change. But reaching this market via the Internet has enabled a new form of marketing, grounded in immediacy, that reaches teens in the spaces they already inhabit. Participatory online venues, from amateur fan sites to professional corporate sites created by transnational conglomerates, act as digital enclosures (Andrejevic, 2007) of fan labor, incorporating fan-created, corporate-owned, free-of-charge marketing material, through contributions of comments and content. This type of participation around books parallels television, in which accompanying fan sites, such as *Television Without Pity (TWOP)*, have provided endless amounts of free consumer research. In writing about the *TWOP* site, Andrejevic could just as easily have been addressing these publisher-owned participatory teen websites. On *TWOP*, viewers posted extensive commentary about their favorite television shows, which in turn, provided writers and directors with focus-group style research which helped shape new content.

Interpellating Teens

Interpellation, or the idea of "hailing" an audience, comes from the work of Louis Althusser (1971). By hailing, he suggested that individual subjective identities are constituted in interaction with and by social forces. Expanding upon Althusser's concept of interpellation, Angela McRobbie

(1982) described how *Jackie* magazine interpellated readers by allowing them to construct their own "Jackie" identity via the magazine. The notion of interpellation might also be applied to publishers' sites—specifically in their choice of names for the sites. Publishers' sites such as Hachette's *Hip Scouts* or Henry Holt's *In Group* or Random House's *RandomBuzzers* also interpellated readers into groups around which they could construct their subjective identities. In writing about television fans that used the *TWOP* site, Andrejevic (2008) called this type of online participation "an implicit bridging of the production-consumption divide" (p. 33). He described another implicit goal of *TWOP* posters, which is wanting to impress other community members in order to achieve a kind of value or hierarchy within their community membership. The same occurred within the publishers' sites. *RandomBuzzers* awarded merit badges and higher ranks to frequent contributors. Those who earned badges could display them next to their usernames, where they would be prominently visible to other site users.

In 2009, Hachette's popularity as the publisher of *The Twilight Saga* contributed to the prestige of their *Hip Scouts* site. On this site, readers could sign up to be *Hip Scout* book reviewers, get information on starting a book club, enter contests, and download book-related content. Hachette created an additional site called *Pick a Poppy* on which readers could join a group, earn a badge, or "buzz-a-friend" with an e-postcard from a book. This essentially served as peer-to-peer marketing with the additional benefit that readers supplied Hachette with email addresses of their friends as they sent e-postcards. As of May 11, 2009, Hachette closed the site to prospective reviewers. Since then, it has morphed into other incarnations, including *Hachette Teens* (Hachette Book Group, 2015) and *NOVL* (Little, Brown, 2015). The website is also connected to social media sites including Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Like Random House's *Figment*, Hachette's *NOVL* site is more focused on collecting writing content instead of book reviews. As such, users that contribute content are subject to the sites' terms of use, which basically grant the owner (Hachette) rights over any and all content uploaded. For example, per *NOVL*'s terms of use:

> 6. Submitted Materials … (ii) you grant us and our affiliates a royalty-free, unrestricted, worldwide, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive and fully transferable, assignable and sublicensable right and license to use, copy, reproduce, modify, adapt, publish, translate, create derivative works from, distribute, perform and display such material (in whole or part) and/or to

> incorporate it in other works in any form, media, or technology now known or later developed. We cannot be responsible for maintaining any Submitted Material that you provide to us, and we may delete or destroy any such Submitted Material at any time (Hachette, Terms of Use, 2008).

Other publishers created their own sites as well. Henry Holt's *In Group* was for teens aged thirteen to nineteen, and here teens could enroll to get "free" ARCs in exchange for writing reviews. In 2009, Holt's site was not as sophisticated as either Random House's or Hachette's, as interactivity within the site was limited. On the Simon & Schuster *Pulse It!* site, the publisher calmed teen concerns by telling potential reviewers that writing reviews for the site would not feel like schoolwork, and that teens would only be asked to answer ten short questions, taking no more than fifteen minutes to complete. The publishers' eagerness to assure wary teens of the ease of reviewing indicated efforts to encourage teen participation. But in 2009, sites by other publishers paled in comparison to *RandomBuzzers*, which was more advanced in its content, its range of activities, and especially in the ability of participants to earn a virtual currency.

Who Were the *RandomBuzzers*?

As of April 5, 2012, there were 67,524 Buzzers on the site. While the membership number might have been accurate, it was misleading, as it did not signify whether a member was active or dormant. A better indicator of participation would have shown whether members were active or not, because a member who joined in 2008, and never logged in again after establishing an account, was still counted as a member. Membership was open to anyone, and because most participants masked their identities via usernames and avatars, it was difficult to identify whether a participant was a teen, a librarian, teacher, parent, or other type of user. For example, in username searches, I found:

- *Teachers*: A search for members with the term "teacher" in the username resulted in a list of eight names.
- *Librarians*: Twenty-two users had "librarian" in their username.
- *Mothers*: In this search, 133 usernames included "mom," and an additional five had the word "mother."
- *Fathers*: Ten users included the term "father" in their name, and an additional thirty included "daddy" (however, with usernames like

"Kierasdaddy," "Samsdaddy101," "Mackdaddy," "bigdaddyg93," or "bigpimpindaddy," it was difficult to distinguish the actual fathers from those using slang nicknames). Seventy-three users had "dad" in their names, but those whose online identities may have been actual fathers, like "Lizdad" and "Bensdad," are combined with the results like "dadestroyer" and Swordaddict" which contain the same three consecutive letters within.
- *Teens*: Forty-seven members self-described as teens by using "teen" in their usernames.

Table 4.1 (from April 2012) demonstrates samples of some of the usernames, which incorporated possible identities.

In addition to the analysis of names collected on sample users, including the number of users, other information posted included users' gender, hometown, date of joining, last login, number of posts, number of comments, number of Buzz Bucks earned, and "other" (any additional information users chose to share about themselves). Because accuracy of information shared could not be determined, it was difficult to find out exactly who the *RandomBuzzers* were. But much can be seen about their activities within the site. As such, the next section describes how they contributed their labor in support of the publisher's marketing efforts.

RandomBuzzers, Activities and "Pay"

What made *RandomBuzzers* especially interesting to analyze was the virtual currency offered to participants in exchange for their "work." Buzz Bucks could be spent in the site's "mall." In 2009, for between 19,000 and 25,000 Buzz Bucks, participants could buy a book or poster. They could exchange 115,000 Buzz Bucks for a $25 American Express gift card. But by April 2012, the merchandise was limited to content produced by Random House. Instead of gift cards, *RandomBuzzers* could choose to exchange their earnings for the following five items:

- 50,000 BB: a signed hardcover copy of *Fallen* by Lauren Kate
- 30,000 BB: an *Inheritance* poster signed by author Christopher Paolini
- 20,000 BB: a poster of author Tamora Pierce
- 20,000 BB: an ARC of *The Sharp Time* by Mary O'Connell
- 20,000 BB: a poster for the classic Norton Juster title *The Phantom Tollbooth* (published in 1961).

Table 4.1 Evidence of participation in *RandomBuzzers*

Teachers (8 had word "Teacher" in name)	**M/ F**	**Hometown**	**Member since**	**Last Longin**	**# of posts**	**# of comments**	**# of Buzz Bucks**	**"My Buzz Groups"**
LAteacher	F	Fredericksberg, VA	5/5/10	5/5/10	0	0	90	
historyteacher	M	n/a	9/2/08	9/2/08	0	0	60	
Teacherlady	F	Ypsilanti, MI	4/8/10	4/8/10	0	0	60	
teacher333	F	Montville, NJ	11/20/10	11/20/10	0	0	90	
Teacher	F	Gold Hill, NC	10/28/08	12/17/09	0	0	60	
Librarians (22 had word "librarian" in name)	**M/ F**	**Hometown**	**Member since**	**Last Longin**	**# of posts**	**# of comments**	**# of Buzz Bucks**	**"My Buzz Groups"**
DJ Librarian	F	n/a	2/24/12	4/6/12	1	0	6625	
Ninjalibrarian	F	Nashville, TN	12/3/09	8/6/11	0	1	5928	Chick Lit Readers!, House of Night Fans, Percy Jackson Fans, Scott Westerfeld The Hunger Games Fan Club
Tinylibrarian	F	Los Angelea, CA	3/29/10	3/27/11	1	410		
Librarian Sarah	F	Springfield, MO	10/8/08	7/24/10	3	3	1141 7	Alley Carter Fan Club, Chick Lit Readers!, Meg Cabot Fans, Percy Jackson Fans, Sarah Dessen, Sarah Mlynowski

By offering a "salary" for participants' labor, which ranged in activity from answering a survey to posting a review, Random House acknowledged the value of the Buzzers' "work" (or immaterial labor), which arguably is worth far more to the company than the items available in exchange.

By 2012, dwindling offerings on the *RandomBuzzers* site coincided with a short-lived move to other social platforms, such as Facebook. As of January 17, 2015, there were 23,433 "likes" on the *RandomBuzzers* Facebook page—but the last post was from December 17, 2013. Another event certainly influenced decisions about *RandomBuzzers*. In the fall of 2012, Random House merged with Penguin (Pfanner and Chozick, 2012). Doing historical research on the Internet has its challenges. One potential source for data, the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, has unfortunately not proven to be a reliable instrument for measuring Internet activity, especially since some data is not stored, and producers of content are able to actually remove data. But tracking the Internet Archive's URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) does allow users to see general information about webpages over time, provided that such pages are not removed by site owners. According to the Wayback Machine, in 2008, just after *RandomBuzzers.com* was established, activity spiked. Activity reached a plateau in 2009, but then spiked again in 2012–2013. This time, the spike coincided with the launch of *Figment*. According to data on the Wayback Machine, 2013 represented a transitional year for both *Figment* and *RandomBuzzers.com*, with much activity on both sites. By 2014, the transition from *RandomBuzzers* to *Figment* was complete.

In 2009, a large part of *RandomBuzzers'* appeal was the access it provided to its authors. Buzzers could interact with authors such as Anne Brashares, bestselling author of the *Sisterhood* series. Teens posted questions in the author's forum such as, "How did you become an author?" or "What did you wear to your last premiere?" As of April 11, 2012, this interaction between readers and authors had become even more sophisticated. The first page of the *RandomBuzzers* site featured a book Random House was promoting called *Rotters* by "featured author" Daniel Kraus. There was a brief introduction about the author, a description of the book, and a book trailer. In the interest of harnessing the author's social media potential, readers were encouraged to follow Daniel via social media, including his personal website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts. And readers were rewarded with 50 Buzz Bucks for writing simple comments such as "Welcome, Daniel."

However, despite these interactions, the Random House site arguably paid sub-minimum wages for the work provided by its NetSlaves. For example, in 2009, *RandomBuzzers* asked Buzzers to choose their favorite Judy Blume titles from a list of seven. Another survey included five multiple-choice questions asking participants how much they know about Helen of Troy—perhaps the publisher was planning a book on the topic? In return for responding to these surveys, participants earned between 15 and 120 Buzz Bucks each. Another survey asked Buzzers to answer questions about their own book-related blogs, such as: (1) how long they had blogged; (2) how frequently their blogs were updated; (3) whether or not they were RSS enabled; and (4) they were asked to provide a link to their personal blogs. This earned Buzzers 105 Buzz Bucks. Longer assignments, such as an essay about a reader's favorite Blume book, were worth 2000 Buzz Bucks, and a photo of themselves with the book was worth bonus Buzz Bucks. Clearly a fair amount of work had to be done in order to earn 115,000 Buzz Bucks for a $25 gift card. In this case, each Buzz Buck could be considered as having a redemption value of 0.02 cents. If taken as a formula for earnings, the work of writing an essay about a favorite Blume book would translate to about $0.43 in pay.

In addition to earning Buzz Bucks, Buzzers were motivated to participate by gaining status, sharing personal information, and contributing content. As such, the Buzzers' subjective identities were constructed as they interacted with the site. In 2009, gamified elements on the site, such as achieved ranked levels and badges for performance, served to motivate those teens more motivated by status than by Buzz Bucks. Participation earned membership in teams such as Team Skölir or Sverd Team (names came from Random House author Christopher Paolini's book *Eragon*[2]). Ranks that Buzzers could earn included: reader, bookworm, reviewer, staff critic, critic-at-large, editor-in-chief, Buzz blogger, or author (reserved for Random House's own authors). Prestige and status was embedded in these badges, echoing ranks earned. Based on readers' comments posted in Random House's forums, participants earned additional prestige by participating in other publishers' fora as well. Early studies of social media, such as one by Coté and Pybus (2007), described how young people acquired cultural capital as they accumulated virtual friends on MySpace, thereby extending their personal social networks. The more ARCs a

[2] *Eragon* has unique teen appeal as the author, Christopher Paolini, started writing the book when he was only fifteen years old.

participant received from different publishers, and the more badges were earned, the more cultural capital he or she had. To further cement their online identities, participants had the option to display badges and ranks next to their usernames for other Buzzers to see.

In 2009, certain participants' names and photos (or avatars, or other images they chose to represent themselves) were pervasive on forums throughout *RandomBuzzers*, including Ladytron, thepageflipper, Tweeldedum, and bookreader4. Each of these Buzzers displayed prestigious Buzz Blogger badges next to their names. The ability to earn these badges gave teens status within the site, as they crafted an identity for themselves. As Phillips (2014) writes, "becoming an advocate for a book is part of defining who you are" (p. 82). In addition to the reviews, cross-site postings and comments about other publishers were prevalent, about which Buzzers shared advice. Some of the participants indicated that they were cross-platform contributors, reviewing for more than one publisher's site. In response to a posting asking about how to get more ARCs, members responded with tips about getting on review lists for other publishers. Participants posted tips for each other about other sites that offered review groups. For example, one poster recommended LibraryThing's Early Reviewers Group, where participants could receive free books in exchange for reviews. LibraryThing could give away more incentives because the site owners had figured out how to get something for nothing. LibraryThing received free galleys from publishers to send to readers (not restricted to teens), who in turn performed free labor on the site by uploading reviews to the website. Another Buzzer pointed out that while membership on some review sites, like Hachette's, was full, participants would be dropped if they did not submit reviews by the time they had received three or more galleys (or ARCs). Hachette's site may have attracted more attention in 2009 because of its status as publisher of the *Twilight* phenomenon, and subsequently, an abundance of reviewers meant that many would-be reviewers had to be excluded from participating.

Establishing Openness

RandomBuzzers gave an impression of openness by allowing discussions of books by other publishers, and by permitting negative reviews of Random House titles to appear. Reviewing was a key activity on *RandomBuzzers*, and in 2009, books were rated on a scale from 2.0 to 5.0, with 5.0 as the highest rating. By 2012, the numbers system was replaced by stars,

and books received between zero to five stars. One such example was a lukewarm review for *Band Geek Love* by Josie Bloss. Although the book was published in 2008, it seemingly did not receive any reviews until May 3, 2009, when Buzzer ylin0261 wrote: “Band Geek Love was basically a high school romance novel. I would recommend reading this if you are bored—nothing exceptional and aggravating at times” (ylin0261, “Band Geek,” 2012). Thus, the inclusion of some negative reviews of Random House's own books lent critical legitimacy to the site.

This sense of openness was further evidenced in 2009 with cross-posting on a thread within the *RandomBuzzers's* site called “Hip Scouts,” where Random House ARC reviewers discussed books they were reading for other publishers (such as Hachette). There was even a thread for fans of Hachette's bestselling author Stephenie Meyer on the *RandomBuzzers* site, led by a frequent poster, Ladytron.

Openness and transparency within the site revealed itself in other ways. For example, authors' discussion spaces became a kind of popularity contest, measured by number of posts authors received from participants.

As shown in Table 4.2, a discussion about Lauren Kate's *Fallen* series started on March 15, 2012 (and viewed by the author on April 12, 2012), already had 1057 posts, compared to a discussion about Kristin Harmel's work that had been up since March 27, 2010, which only had 105 posts.

Random House's willingness to allow postings with information from competing publishers, as well as critical evaluations of their own publications, indicates an environment of freedom and openness. However, Buzzers only saw content permitted by Random House's moderators, and it is impossible to know what content these moderators may have deleted or hidden. Teens clicking through Random House's “Code of Conduct”

Table 4.2 Author popularity on *RandomBuzzers*

Author	*Number of posts*	*When post began*
Cyn Balog: Q&A session	289	August 12, 2011
E. Lockhart: Discussion with *RandomBuzzers*	235	December 10, 0210
Esther Friesner: Chat	222	June 22, 2011
Fallen series by Lauren Kate: Discussion of all things Lauren Kate	1057	March 15, 2012
Jen Bryant: Chat and author Q&A	146	January, 27, 2011
Jennifer Donnelley: Read the Q&A	317	
Judy Blume: Online author visit	174	Feb 26, 2011
Kristin Harmel: Chat with author	105	May 27, 2010

without reading carefully, were likely not aware that there were constraints imposed by the publisher on the discourse within the site—especially that which gave Random House the right to exploit content uploaded to the site, as will be explored later.

The Digital Enclosure: Control, Surveillance, and Ownership

Massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs) or massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) represent both media product and media service, according to Humphreys (2008). Similarly, on publishers' participatory websites, the line between product and service was blurred, as young adults labored first as marketers by reviewing and by providing focus group research; then as we will see later, as co-contributors, as they shared other content in support of product creation; and finally as consumers, by purchasing resulting products. Whether or not the participants were aware that they were giving away any content that they uploaded onto the sites, producers and publishers carefully preserved their ownership of user-generated content by writing and posting end-user licensing agreements (EULAs). According to Humphreys (2008), EULAs serve as Panopticon-like surveillance in digital environments. Similar to the EULAs of online games, publishers have created rules and codes of conduct for participation on sites. *RandomBuzzers*, for example, required perpetual, non-exclusive rights for use of whatever content was posted by the website users:

> By posting messages, sending e-mails, inputting data, answering questions, uploading data or files or otherwise communicating with Random House through its Web site (a "Communication"), you are granting Random House a perpetual, non-exclusive, royalty-free, unrestricted, worldwide license to use, display, sublicense, adapt, transmit and copy such Communication. The foregoing grant shall include the right to exploit any proprietary rights in such Communication, including but not limited to rights under trademark, copyright, servicemark, or patent laws in any relevant jurisdiction (*RandomBuzzers*, "Code of Conduct," 2012).

In other words, anything posted on the *RandomBuzzers* site belonged (non-exclusively) to Random House, supplying Random House with free (or at least very low cost) marketing tools and other content, which could

serve as ideas towards content for future projects. Non-compliance with Random House's rules resulted in termination of the right to participate. With this model, publishers gained a means of controlling and shaping cultural content for young people that included audience contributions. Within what Andrejevic (2007) called a digital enclosure, participants signed away their rights to the content that they co-created, and agreed to conform to the publisher's code of conduct. Participating in publishers' proprietary sites is much like other online activity—once users participate, ownership of the content they contribute is at stake, whether it is by using Google Docs, or having health records available online. Elements of privacy and ownership of intellectual property are redefined within these virtual realms.

According to its code of conduct, Random House prohibited any content that promoted racism, constituted harassment, promoted unauthorized copying of copyrighted work, or was pornographic. In addition, users were not allowed to use the site to transmit viruses, or modify or reverse-engineer content. Social media extends the publishers' panopticon beyond the borders of their websites, because most of the Young Adult publishers also have presences on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. On these sites, when individuals "friend" publishers, they are also giving those publishers yet another window into their digitally transparent lives.

By 2012, *RandomBuzzers* had removed most of the ranks and badges from the site—perhaps because of their pending move to *Figment*. *RandomBuzzers* provided an example of how publisher-owned sites offer a large arena for teen voices. Compared to the earlier model described in Chapter 2, in which libraries included teens in the review process, this new model arguably encroaches upon library-based programs as the primary source for book-recommendations, and upon librarians, as those who determine distinction in literature for young people. While interpellating these teens, sites like *RandomBuzzers* also allowed them to have an even bigger voice in deciding for themselves.

From *RandomBuzzers* to *Figment*

While *RandomBuzzers* focused primarily on peer-to-peer reviewing, *Figment*'s primary focus is on writing. While users (called "Figgies") could still review books, *Figment*'s primary function seemed to be on gathering user-generated content by getting participants to contribute content

related to prompts. For example, a contest posted between January 9, 2015 and February 6, 2015, encouraged participants to write a short story that used winter, snow, or the cold as a theme (*Figment*, "Winter writing," January 14, 2015). On the front page (January 8, 2015), browsers were invited to "Share what you do. Find what you love," followed by three buttons: (1) start writing; (2) start reading; and (3) start talking. After clicking on the "start reading" button, users could read the content uploaded, including stories by other users. On January 8, 2015, the first three stories were in Korean, which demonstrates another key difference from *RandomBuzzers* specifically that *Figment* has an international reach. In response to a post by *Figment* moderator Emily Steele, "what we do with your suggestions," a Figgie named *Werq* replied ("almost two years ago,")[3]: "I love *Figment*! it's like year-round Nanowrimo! any other Wrimoes here?"(Steele 2013).[4]

While *RandomBuzzer*'s moderation focused on keeping content free from abusive language, *Figment*'s moderation presents an evolutionary change, as it seemingly adds a focus on the users' well-being. Under the "community" tab, there were descriptions of what participants should do if a *Figment* user posted worrisome personal details:

> Community
>
> **I'm worried about a fellow Figgie (self-harm/depression/abuse)—what should I do?**
>
> If you are concerned about another Figgie's health and well-being send their profile URL along with a screenshot attached of the chat you are concerned about to safety@*Figment.com* (*Figment*, FAQs, 2014).

As we will see in the following chapters, site moderation increasingly became problematic for publishers hosting early participatory sites around books.

[3] Precise dates are not listed on site—instead, they are listed as approximations, such as "almost two years ago." This post was viewed January 17, 2015.

[4] Nanowrimo is National Novel Writing Month (http://nanowrimo.org/), and in addition to being an activity during the month of November during which people are encouraged to write their own novels, it is also a non-profit that "organizes events where children and adults find the inspiration, encouragement, and structure they need to achieve their creative potential" http://nanowrimo.org/about. *Figment* has a similar goal of getting young people engaged with writing.

Back to the Library: How Did Librarians Feel About Publishers' Teen Sites?

In 2009, a former supervisor of teen services at a large urban-suburban library in the Northeast was excited about an increased number of outlets in which teens could participate in reading and writing about books (Rawlins, personal communication, May 2009). A former library director in an affluent western community who is also an author, reviewer, and professor of Young Adult literature, saw the benefit of getting teens excited about books, and as a resource for librarians in building collections that reflect teens' interests. Despite this, he said:

> There's something vaguely … meretricious about them and that their true purpose is to cynically exploit teens, but any business these days is trying to do the same thing so I guess it's not fair to single publishers out for special criticism (Cart, personal communication, May 7, 2009).

So, a trade-off between literary quality and sales potential in the latest digital platforms for young people highlights an inherent tension between the library and the publishing house. While arguably both librarians and publishers might agree that books belong to an inalienable field of cultural production, tensions exist as publishers necessarily view books as commodities, and librarians favor a view of books as cultural artifacts that are infused with cultural capital in a way that other media for young people, such as movies, television, or games are not. Books are ranked higher, as there is a lingering sense that books have the power to improve minds. As such, it is objectionable to gatekeepers' values when books are created in ways that best serve the publishers' financial interests. While the sites do offer a positive way for teens to engage with books in entertaining and empowering ways, they do so at a cost. They provide access for young people to engage with certain books—those commodity books in which the publishers have invested the greatest resources. Also, since only the largest publishers can afford technologically sophisticated websites and the staff to run them, teens engaging with these books are selecting material from a limited range of publishers first, and subsequently from a limited selection of top titles promoted by such publishers. The depth of selection work that librarians do as professional critics of Young Adult literature, as well as the role of the library in providing breadth in their collections, might not have a place on commercial publishers' sites.

As they become focused on sales, the publishers' sites are slouching toward what Zwick, Bonsu and Darmody (2008) called a "McDonaldization" of publishing. As opportunities to participate in Young Adult books increase, the selection actually shrinks. In theory, teens are still getting a cross-section of the marketplace of new teen books. However, even the teens who participated in publisher-based analog activities around reading already experienced a limited pre-selection of titles. For example, galleys (ARCs) submitted to programs such as Best Books for Young Adults (BBYA) are limited mostly to submissions from the largest publishers who can afford to produce and give away ARCs. Publishers' websites further funnel the selection of what gets reviewed, as teens only get ARCs from those publishers with which they are registered. However teens are reviewing ARCs, it is important to note that publishers only produce ARCs for lead titles in a given season. Those titles are the ones they are attempting to position as bestsellers in the marketplace and are more likely to have mass appeal. This means that books from authors with proven track-records in the market have an enormous advantage over debut novels from first-time authors. Also, books from large publishers with more resources have distinct advantages over smaller publishers, because they are able to attract greater attention to their books. The result is that those who buy their books based on peer-to-peer recommendations within a publisher's site are shopping at the literary equivalent of the GAP clothing store. Buyers are free to choose from denim, khaki, or corduroy, but the buyer cannot go beyond the GAP brand. When translated to books, readers become limited to a selection of one-size-fits-all, commodified, transmedia literary products. Certainly, while empowerment exists for teens (as expressed through their membership and their participation), such empowerment exists only within a restrictive, digital enclosure around a predetermined group of books.

Beyond Publishers' Websites: How Teens Participate in Books Online

Compared to publishers' sites, the librarians I interviewed had similar problems of funding and staffing as did the small publishers I described in the previous chapter. They experienced limited success with social media. For example, a study of the New York Public Library's Teen Central website (Martens, 2012), revealed that the library experimented with social media such as Facebook and Twitter to reach teens. As of April 1, 2012,

the page had 295 "likes," and just nine updates in the first three months of the year. This means that the site was updated less than once a week. The lack of updates could indicate either a lack of staff members to support the effort, or that the existing staff had no extra time to manage it. A posting on March 23, 2012 coincided with the release of the *Hunger Games* film based on the novel by Suzanne Collins, and wished viewers a "Happy Hunger Games Day" (Teen Central@NYPL on Facebook). At that point, the library's teen-targeted Twitter feed had been stagnant since April of the preceding year. Viewed again on January 1, 2015, there had been no additional activity. There was no Tumblr page for the library at this time. On January 1, 2015, the Facebook page had 382 likes, which is an increase of 87 likes in almost three years—certainly not a significant increase.

In addition to Facebook, the New York Public Library also has a blog (linked from its main page) called "Stuff for the Teen Age," (NYPL, "Stuff," n.d.) which remains active as of 2015. The blog is firmly grounded in the library's historical roots. This reflects the "NYPL Books for Young People" list started by Mabel Williams at the New York Public Library in 1929.

> For 80 years, New York Public Library staff shared the best titles for teens in an annual list called Books for the Teen Age. [In 2009] Books for the Teen Age became Stuff for the Teen Age, a multimedia, multi-format, targeted, and teen-tested list of the best of the year in teen books, music, graphic novels, movies, games, and more (Honig, 2010).

This shift from "books" to "stuff" as described above, is indicative also of the Teen Central Librarians collection development policy. Books weeded from the collection are replaced with "stuff" including yoga mats, musical instruments, and a sewing machine—items which allow teens to have a tactile experience, or used in combination with how-to-videos on YouTube, teach teens a new skill. This also connects to the rapid transformation of libraries in North America, from a focus on learning through books to a focus on learning through a variety of media and experiences, which now has evolved into the Makerspace Movement.[5]

Libraries too are expanding into online participatory fora, and librarians across America are increasingly establishing online participatory sites for

[5] For more information about Maker Spaces, see https://youthserviceslibrarianship.wikispaces.com/Makerspaces

teens to participate in reading and writing activities via the library. Some examples include: (1) Washington Centerville Public Library's (WCPL, 2015) Teen Writing Group called *Write Here, Write Now*; (2) Mahomet, Illinois Public Library's *Teen Creative Writing Workshop*, which encourages teens between the ages of twelve to eighteen to unleash their "creative writing power!" (Mahomet, 2015); and (3) The Pasadena, California Public Library's participatory blog for teens: *Teens Writing for Teens* (Pasadena, 2015), which features short stories, artworks, and reviews by teens.

Conclusion

Since they started in approximately 2007, publishers' participatory sites began to shift the traditional means of determining distinction in literature for young people, from librarians to the teens themselves. In the previous model (which existed since the beginning of the 1900s), distinction was determined largely by those adults (such as librarians) responsible for connecting young people with books. In that model, young people's voices were largely silent. In contrast, publishers' sites created visible reading audiences, providing evidence of readers' personal reading responses within the site.

As of 2015, with an abundance of social media tools, and free, online software that makes it easy to develop websites, readers' participation has progressed beyond publishers' proprietary "digital corrals" into a wider range of options allowing libraries, individuals, and independent companies to enable even broader online reader participation in the books they love (or love to hate). Using digital tools is an obvious (and inexpensive) way for youth services librarians to redefine the field for the digital age, and many are already doing so. One such example is Oakland Public Library in California. This library's Teens Page (Oakland, n.d.) links to a Pinterest page called OPL Teen Picks. The Sno-Isle Libraries, in Marysville, Washington, features reviews by teens, for teens within its site (Sno-Isle, 2015). While they do not have the same access to authors that publishers have, the advantage of library sites is that they are non-commercial, and are able to present more of a survey of the field, as opposed to an overview of one publisher's list.

New opportunities for reader participation range from reviewing books to creating them, whether that means participating on sites owned by the largest publishers, or those run by libraries, or self-publishing on platforms such as Teen Ink, Wattpad, and Movellas, which will be described

in the concluding chapter of this book. In the next chapter, which focuses on Hachette's *Twilight Saga* site, I will show how online opportunities for participation moved beyond reviews and consumer research on *RandomBuzzers*, and towards reader fans as content co-contributors.

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CHAPTER 5

TwilightSaga.com (2009–12): Fandom and the Lifespan of a Corporate Fan Site

Introduction

This chapter follows the lifespan of the *TwilightSaga.com*[1] corporate-owned fan site (www.*TwilightSaga.com*), analyzes how user participation changed within the years of peak activity of 2009–2012, and includes a look at where *Twilight* fandom was in 2015. A cycle of interactivity is revealed as Hachette, the site owner, initially established the site and filled it with content, then gradually decreased involvement, and finally, lost control of it and moved it to another platform. As this happened, consumer resistance appeared from within the site, and power was—at least temporarily, in the hands of the consumer, until the publisher refocused its attention on the site.

Transnational Publishers and the Push for Commodity Books

André Schiffrin recounted his own experiences with the publishing industry's mergers and acquisitions of the 1980s in his polemic, *The Business of Books: How the International Conglomerates Took over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read* (2000). Schiffrin experienced this first hand as his family-owned publishing house, Pantheon, was absorbed by Random House.

[1] NB: I've used *TwilightSaga.com* throughout this chapter when referring to Hachette's website, as the book series has the same name.

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Random House later became first Bertelsmann, and then in 2013, Penguin Random House. In his book, Schiffrin argued that such mergers lead to an emphasis on creating commodity books. Instead of emphasizing quality or other attributions, these commodity books' most important feature is their ability to generate substantial sales. As a result of this shift in climate, rather than seeking manuscripts that might receive literary awards (which often do not translate into book sales) publishers must increasingly focus on finding the "next" *Harry Potter* that will find room on booksellers' ever-decreasing shelf space. The rise of transnational publishers combined with a shrinking marketplace for selling books has led to commodification of books and readers as well. While appealing mostly to girls, *The Twilight Saga* series, by Stephenie Meyer, was a phenomenon of similar magnitude to *Harry Potter* in terms of book sales, international editions, and licensing programs.

When consuming a product such as *Twilight*, readers are commodified via their participation. As argued in Martens (2010), "In the case of books, commodification occurs when the market value (or net profit) replaces the inherent literary value of the book" (p. 243). Also, profitability is measured not just by book sales, but also by the audience, which becomes valuable to the publisher. In the case of such blockbuster books, the audience's value is based on its labor, which is defined as the work its members contribute to the success of the series. The focus on earnings power first commodifies books as literary products, and then commodifies readers by having them work for the books they read as: (1) peer-to-peer reviewers; (2) marketers; and (3) suppliers of user-generated content.

However, despite audience commodification, publisher inactivity has potential to shift power from the structure to the consumer. For example, Mark Andrejevic (2008) writes that the possibilities of interactivity in mass media change mass culture from being top-down, homogenous and non-participatory, to one that is active, creative, and participatory. In other words, this signals a shift from an active audience to an audience of laboring, active participants that Toffler (1983) calls "prosumers," or producer/consumers. As evidenced on *RandomBuzzers* in the preceding chapter, participatory book-related sites represent a shift to an audience of active, laboring prosumers, and are part of the trajectory toward multiplatform books, which will be explored in the following chapter. Multiplatform books are those in which a consumer must read across multiple media platforms in order to derive full meaning from the text.

These books allow user participation in different forms, from contributing content, to playing games on a book-related site.

In the print-exclusive era, we saw how marketing to young people occurred using top-down methods, as publishers reached teens via adult gatekeepers. Previously, when using print-based strategies to market to teens and their gatekeepers, publishers would buy mailing lists of contacts to whom they could send publicity material. These mailing list contacts included reviewers, librarians, and other gatekeepers who promoted books to young people. This process was expensive, because in addition to purchasing this list of contacts, marketing material had to be created, printed, and mailed.

New methods of using digital technologies allow for disintermediated spaces in which teens are reached directly by publishers, and book marketing to teens is now a collaborative, community effort between publishers, authors, and readers. In the case of *TwilightSaga.com*, digital mailing lists were easily constructed using the site's "invite" tab. By encouraging participants to "invite" everyone in their mailing list, the publisher could quickly assemble a user-generated email database of potential *Twilight* fans, to whom the publisher could efficiently and cheaply send future publicity emails. This new marketing effort is far more effective than printing material and buying mailing lists, but also shifts the strategy from publishers liaising with gatekeepers to publishers being in direct contact with fans.

In the last chapter, we saw how teens provided immaterial labor as peer-to-peer reviewers, marketers, focus-group subjects, and providers of consumer research within the *RandomBuzzers* site. Here, we will see how Hachette expanded upon this type of audience participation by channeling brand reader fandom onto a corporate-owned site. Hachette's *TwilightSaga.com* fan site expanded upon all of the types of immaterial and affective labor provided by *RandomBuzzers* participants. However, unlike the *RandomBuzzers* site, which covered all books for teens published by Random House, *TwilightSaga.com* focused exclusively on a single series, and on the "brand readers" who were bonded to that series via their participation within the site.

TwilightSaga.com was hosted by the Hachette Book Group (owner of Little, Brown & Company,[2] the publisher of *Twilight* books), and

[2] Little, Brown is a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group, a transnational publishing company formed when the French company Hachette Livre acquired Time Warner in 2006.

was created for fans of the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer. Similar to *RandomBuzzers*, participants, in this case *Twilight* fans, served as peer-to-peer reviewers and marketers, and as providers of consumer research. What is different from *RandomBuzzers.com* is that the participants have an additional role of suggesting, or even creating, content within the publishers' proprietary "digital corral" (Andrejevic, 2007), the boundaries of which are governed by the site owner's End-User License Agreement (EULA).

As such, the *Twilight* audience was put to work in all of the activities that existed on *RandomBuzzers*, but also in creating extension stories of the books via fan fiction, and in generating and re-generating interest in the books. In doing so, *TwilightSaga.com* increased the options for participation beyond what was possible on the *RandomBuzzers* site and towards the type of participation we will see in the next chapter, about the multi-platform series called *The Amanda Project*.

Research on this chapter began in 2009, when the popularity of the *Twilight* series was at its peak. As of 2012, all four books had been published,[3] and four of five movies[4] based on the books had been released. With the series complete, the publisher could no longer rely on an annual blockbuster film release, and while *Twilight* gradually moved to Little, Brown's backlist, the series continued to have a renewable stable of readers. As the publishers' focus turned to new products, the popularity of the series shifted into the hands of the websites' participants.

Commercializing Culture: Toward a Political Economy of Reading

Shortly after arriving in the United States in the 1930s, Frankfurt theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (1972) criticized the mass produced "culture industry" they encountered. While Adorno and

(Hachette, "About," 2012). The publisher of the *Twilight Saga* is herein referred to as either "Little, Brown," or as "Hachette."

[3] *Twilight*: book published in 2005, movie released in 2008; *New Moon*: book published in 2006, movie released in 2009; *Eclipse*: book published in 2007, movie released in 2010; *Breaking Dawn*: book published in 2008. Part 1 of the movie was released in 2011, part 2 in 2012. Book publication dates are from Amazon.com, and movie release dates are from imdb.com.

[4] The last book in the series, *Breaking Dawn*, was made into two separate movies.

Horkheimer did not entirely think audiences were dumb, they did consider them to be lazy. As such, they argued that the producers of culture created products that were dumbed down to meet audiences' tastes. In describing the difference between a "citizen" audience (an educated audience seeking information) versus a "consumer" audience (seeking primarily to be entertained), Butsch (2011) writes: "Virtuous citizen audiences were expected to seek news and cultivation and act after calm deliberation. Mere consumers sought entertainment and self-indulgence, acted on emotion and impulse, and were invariably identified as lower class, women, children, and lesser races" (p. 154).

The political economy of contemporary, transnational publishing favors formulaic, one-size-fits-all products—the type that could become a mega-phenomenon, blockbuster series. Since the Frankfurt theorists, many others, including Garnham (1990), Schiffrin (2000), McRobbie (2003), Sonnet (2003), and Shimpach (2005), have written about the commodification of cultural products, and others, such as Smythe (1981), Meehan (2002), and Martens (2010), have written about the commodification of audiences. In the case of *The Twilight Saga*, with its best-selling (commodity) books, the associated website required users' labor to support the publisher's sale of such products.

Gatekeepers' Taste and Teen Taste: A Conflict of Interests?

Twilight's record-breaking sales did not result from winning prestigious literary awards. Instead, the franchise's success was based on the transmedia world-building fortuitously enabled by the series, and also on recognition from its brand readers. Its success came from not only the book sales, but also the movie franchise and from a wide range of licensed merchandise, all of which pointed back to the books. Whatever the author's literary aspirations may have been with the series, *Twilight* is arguably a product that entertains. Its success was so influential that it parented numerous derivative books—even causing the launch of a new genre in Barnes & Noble bookstores called "Teen Paranormal Romance." Fans' appetite for the series grew so big that Meyer's books alone could not satiate it, continuing after the last book in the series was released and consumed. *Twilight* therefore epitomized the type of publishing phenomenon that is so attractive to a publisher's program.

The discussion of "culture" versus "entertainment" is a key topic not only among the Frankfurt theorists, but also among gatekeepers in the construction of children's literature. *The Twilight Saga* books belong to what Bourdieu (1984) calls the inalienable cultural field. But, the commercialization of this series, along with its associated fandom, also places *Twilight* in the realm of entertainment, and as such, there is a convergence of culture and entertainment within this property. The brand readers of this series participated within and beyond the rules of the site's EULAs, and eventually descended into subversive behavior, as we will see later in this chapter.

Books in the *Twilight* series may not have won any of the literary awards for Young Adult literature juried by adult gatekeepers. However, when teens were involved in the decision-making, such as on lists like the American Library Association's Best Books for Young Adults (BBYA) and *Teens Top Ten*, *Twilight* fared far better. As we saw earlier, the BBYA list includes teen input, but the librarians (gatekeepers) make the final decisions about which titles are included or excluded. In the case of *The Twilight Saga*, only the first book in the series appeared on a BBYA list in 2006. However, when teens selected their favorite books on the YA Galley Project's *Teens Top Ten* list, the series did very well. This indicates a difference of perception between gatekeepers and teens about what constitutes a "good" book. Each year that a book in the *Twilight* series was published, it appeared at the top of the *Teens' Top Ten* list (see Table 5.1). Clearly, the series appealed more to teens than to gatekeepers because the gatekeepers were dismissive of these books.

Direct communication between publishers and their reading publics circumvents the gatekeepers (or guardians of cultural and moral values), which allows for a direct discourse between the publisher and the reader that is grounded in commerce. This also means that publishers have an opportunity

Table 5.1 How *Twilight* titles ranked on the *Teens Top Ten List* and *BBYA* lists (2006–9)

Year	*Title*	*Place on teens top ten list*	*Appeared on BBYA list*
2009	*Breaking Dawn*	#2	No
2008	*Eclipse*	#1	No
2007	*New Moon*	#1	No
2006	*Twilight*	#2	Yes

Note: Table modified from (Martens 2010, p. 248)

to best control their brand—provided that proper moderation over that control is in place. According to Renfrew (2013), the blockbuster status of the *Twilight* series was earned by worldwide sales of more than 100 million copies of books in the four-book series, and *Twilight* movies grossing $3.3 billion in ticket sales. Clearly, at its peak, a media property such as *Twilight* was so valuable that the publisher had to safeguard the franchise. In 2010, Little, Brown's marketing staff did not consent to be interviewed about any *Twilight*-related activity, and their protective stance demonstrated the value they attributed to this commodity product. Yet once Stephenie Meyer stopped writing additional *Twilight* books, and other books began to replace *Twilight* in popularity, the publisher's focus shifted.

In its arc as a bestselling series, from books to movies and to licensed merchandise, *The Twilight Saga* was exploited in more ways than most. Typically, once books in a series have all been published, a series moves from the publisher's frontlist to the backlist. But, in the case of the *TwilightSaga.com*, the active, online fan base served as a digital extension of the series on the accompanying website, as well as an ongoing licensing program which extended through the final film's release in November 2012. *The Twilight Saga* revised the rules, keeping the series active in the frontlist far longer than is usual.

Even though all four books were published as of 2009, in 2012 the website still had a significant number of active participants, and served as a way for new fans to become engaged with the series. This made it difficult for the publisher to disengage. In turn, the website kept the book series alive in a way that would not have been possible with print marketing only. Subsequently, the publisher was forced to continue to dedicate resources (including staff) toward what otherwise should have been a backlisted book series.

World-Building: *Twilight*-Style

Henry Jenkins (2006) writes about the importance of "world-building" in successful transmedia properties.[5] Books in Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga* provide an example of fortuitous world-building.

[5] The difference between "transmedia" and "multiplatform" products is that transmedia exists on multiple media channels, and can be enjoyed separately on each platform. For example, the *Harry Potter* books can be read on their own without watching the movies, and the movies can be watched without reading the books. Multiplatform products integrate one media form with another, and require cross-media participation in order to get the full entertainment experience.

While not planned as such, the milieu created by Meyer in her books translates smoothly onto multiple, intertextual platforms (from books to film to licensed merchandise), on which the basic plot stretches slightly into other dimensions in each new format, while always referring back to the original content.

The *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer represents a perfect example of a commodity book. The strength of the series from a commercial perspective is in the establishment of the *Twilight* world, which was open to interpretation by users, and representable on multiple commercial platforms.[6] Another strength of the series is its appeal and flexibility. For example, in response to a fan's question on Stephenie Meyer's website: "What does Bella look like?" Meyer responded: "I left out a detailed description of Bella in the book so that the reader could more easily step into her shoes" ("What Does Bella," n.d.). The fact that Bella is only vaguely described in the books means that, for the readers, Bella can look any way they want, including like the readers themselves. Licensors capitalized on this, and a large range of products helped fans adopt their own *Twilight* identities. In 2009, at the height of the series' popularity, "Twi-fans" could purchase Bella's prom dress, wear *Twilight* perfume or make-up, or drive Edward Cullen's car (Volvo is the official brand of Edward Cullen). Through the consumption of licensed material goods, readers could construct their own *Twilight* identities.

Twilight's "Wild West" Fandom on the Web

According to Butsch (2011), "public ownership positions the audience as citizens, while commercial ownership positions them as consumers" (p. 154). The commercial ownership of *The Twilight Saga* site had a significant focus on audience members as consumers. Before the Hachette site, fans initiated and engaged independently in various online activities around *Twilight*. Initially, those independently created *Twilight*-

[6] According to Meyer, the first *Twilight* book came to her in a dream ("Official Stephenie Meyer, 2014"). As a result of that dream, Meyer received an advance of $750,000 for a three-book deal (Valby 2008), which represents an enormous investment in an unknown author, and an unusual commitment on part of the publisher. But as of 2009, 40 million copies of books in the series had been sold—just in the United States (Memmott and Cadden, 2009)

related fan sites on the web positioned participants as engaged citizen fans, ungoverned by rules for participation other than those they created themselves. These fans created sites around their own favorite aspects of *Twilight* that attracted them to the series. In December 2009, Stephenie Meyer's website listed 371 such *Twilight*-related fan sites. By April 2012 ("Twilight Fan Sites," n.d.), she listed 374 fan sites—just in the English language. While three more sites do not represent a significant increase over two years and five months, what is noteworthy is that this fan activity seemed to be ongoing, despite the fact that all books in the series, and all but one movie, had been released. But, a careful analysis of these sites conducted in April 2012, demonstrated that despite the fact that the links to the site were still provided, many were inactive and others had disappeared entirely. In order to confirm, the first twenty links were opened, and then each subsequent 10th site (the 30th, 40th, 50th, etc., for a total of 55 sites) was checked. Of these fifty-five examined sites, the first seven were "active" (and "active" means that the link opened), with posts made during 2012. Two more were "active," but it was not clear when the most recent activity occurred. Furthermore, another one was "active," but all the internal links in the site were broken. The last "active" one had a working link, but content was no longer related to *Twilight*. Seven were inactive since 2008, three inactive since 2009, five since 2010, and seven since 2011. Twenty-one had completely vanished, and one now had content in the Cyrillic alphabet. Details and sample sites are shown in Fig. 5.1.

The fact that so many of the sites had vanished by 2012 indicates that the brand reader fans of *Twilight* had either migrated onto Hachette's

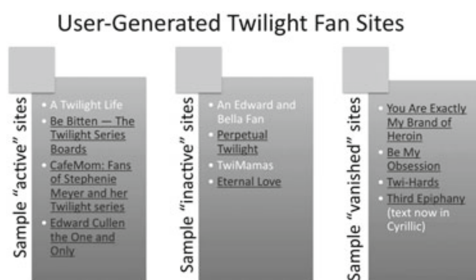

Fig. 5.1 Examples of *Twilight* fan sites and their status in 2012

official site (the corporate site dominated fan participation), or that *Twilight* fandom had simply decreased after the height of the series. In May 2015, the analysis was repeated. Meyer's site listed 376 sites, but after clicking on the first twenty and then every tenth link (as examined earlier), this time, none of the links were "active," thus providing evidence that Hachette's site had killed independent online fan sites around *Twilight*. At the same time, independent fan sites were migrating onto social media platforms instead.

Pulling Fans from Independent Sites onto the Official Hachette Site: The Team Edward vs. Team Jacob Debate

Prior to the establishment of Hachette's *TwilightSaga.com*, lively debates in online reviews of *New Moon* (the second book in the series) on weRead (weRead 2010) and Amazon.com, dating back to 2006 and 2007, showed signs of a developing schism in the *Twilight* fan base as "Twifans" allied themselves with one of the two male romantic heroes of the series—either choosing Edward, the vampire, or Jacob, the werewolf, for Bella, and by extension, for themselves.[7] Evidence of this division is shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Evidence of the emergence of "Team Edward" vs. "Team Jacob" on Amazon.com[a]

Edward fans	*Jacob fans*
"Thank Goodness. Don't get me wrong, Jacob is great. But, I (and almost every girl who has read the series) really like Edward." ("R. Young," February 11, 2007)	"If u re-read New Moon and forget about edward and see the situation more clearly, I bet youd like Jacob a LITTLE better. Im a jacob fan and tell me im crazy or whatever i dont care but seriously…." ("Sherrie James," July 30, 2007)
"If Bella chooses Jacob, I'll send Edward my number." ("iLeana," June 6, 2007)	"Jacob is just as devoted to Bella as Edward and much nicer . . . Bella is way to crazy about Edward." ("R. Johnson," August 1, 2007)

Source: Martens (2010), p. 252

[a]Spelling is faithful to the original

[7] The next portion draws on Martens (2010).

In 2009, online fan sites echoed the fan division surrounding the two romantic leads encountered in collaborative reviewing sites, such as weRead and Amazon.com. Amateur fan sites allied themselves with one romantic hero or another, naming their sites after their preferred hero, as in "Team Edward Cullen," "Obsessive Edward Cullen Disorder," "Team Jacob," or after the popular debate: "Edward vs. Jacob." The fan sites and online reviews, all freely accessible on the web, documented what fans liked and revealed alternative markets. Shimpach (2005) describes online fan activity as a "source of free, reliable, and motivated labor" (p. 352), and monitoring fans' Internet activities would have been relatively easy for Hachette's staff. Martens (2010) elaborated:

> Although nothing on Hachette's *Twilight Saga* website indicates when it was launched, The Internet Archive's Wayback Machine tracks the site to September, 2007, when Hachette first posted a quiz called "Who should Bella choose?" ("Internet Archive," n.d.). When *The Twilight Saga* website was launched, the Jacob vs. Edward discourse was already present on Amazon.com as evidenced by users' comments. Arguably, Little, Brown created *The Twilight Saga* website in response to user-generated content on the web, and this "Who should Bella choose" quiz addresses the Edward vs. Jacob discourse. *The Twilight Saga* website bills itself as "The official online destination for all Twilight fans" (*Twilight Saga*, n.d.), and in 2009, it [had] 250,000 members (*Twilight Saga*, November 20, 2009, para. 2), which represents a lot of experts providing free consumer research (pp. 252–3).

As of May 2012, membership in the Hachette site had nearly doubled to 499,355 members, but as with the independent fan sites mentioned above, it would be difficult to determine how many members were actually active contributors. By 2012, most fan activity related to *Twilight* had migrated from independent fan sites to the official Hachette site, and Team Jacob or Edward discussions had been buried on the Amazon site. A search for such activity on Amazon.com revealed few user reviews, but instead, revealed evidence of how authors and publishers (other than Hachette) use the *Twilight* brand intertextually as their own currency for recognition. A search in 2012 for "Twilight Team Edward" on Amazon.com retrieved a self-help book entitled *Where's My Edward: Seeking a Forever Romance* by Laura Gallier, published by Destiny Image Publishing. This book is ironically about seeking a healthy romantic relationship (unlike the one featured in *Twilight*). Another derivative work that attempts to capitalize on *Twilight*'s popularity (and eagerness of fans

to extend the *Twilight* experience beyond the life of the series) is: *Edward or Jacob? Quick Quizzes for Fans of the Twilight Saga* (*Quick Quizzes for BFFs*) (Scholastic, 2010).

On independent *Twilight* fan sites, participation was by earnest, dedicated fans of the series, and centered around book-related content. On the corporate-owned Hachette site, while fans were just as dedicated, here their participation emphasized commerce—from the publisher promoting products, to the publisher extracting labor from the consumers. Links were provided to sites offering copies of the books for sale, opportunities to pre-order movie tickets, or for tickets to the *Breaking Dawn* concert series. All of these links were broken as of May 20, 2012, which pointed to the looming mortality of the site. While the emphasis was still on marketing products, the publisher also sought to extract labor from the fans in the form of consumer feedback, peer-to-peer marketing, and content creation.

From Subculture to Mainstream: How Hachette Attracted Twi-Fans

Dick Hebdige (1979) described subcultures as ones that are removed from the mainstream, and some of the independent *Twilight* fan sites pointed to fringe-level obsessions with characters from the books.[8] One such site was "My Brand of Heroin" (which also referred to a quote from the book). But Hachette's "official" *TwilightSaga.com* site converted the subculture of *Twilight* fandom, which existed independently on the Internet, into a mass-market, mainstream, commodified digital corral of commercial content.

Communication between like-minded individuals served to build community on the site. Fans were united around their affective relationship both for the *Twilight* series (even if they belonged to separate "teams"), and for the series' author, Stephenie Meyer. Since the site promised access to Meyer (even in the most limited of ways, such as what in 2012 were outdated Q&A sessions with the author that appeared on the site), the "official" billing interpellated participants. The additional "team" areas of the site allowed participants to distinguish themselves from the masses of *Twilight* fans by aligning with, and building community (or in some cases, warring factions) around their favorite characters.

[8] Characteristics of the dedicated fan have been parodied since William Shatner's skit of *Star Trek* fans on Saturday Night Live in 1986 (Shatner, SNL, n.d.).

TwilightSaga.com's Digital Corral

Hachette offered participants specific guidelines to regulate their participation on *TwilightSaga.com*. For example, one such guideline gave Hachette rights to use material uploaded by users. Those users (who read the guidelines) were notified that: "by submitting content to this Site, you are deemed automatically to grant us the perpetual, worldwide right to use, reproduce, modify, adapt, publish, translate, distribute, perform and display such content (in whole or in part) in any and all media, and to license others to do so. You also grant us the right to include with any such use your username" (*TwilightSaga*, "Guideline 2," 2012). By posting content under this rule, participants granted Hachette the right to repurpose their user-generated content free-of-charge, as it wished, and the publisher could choose to exploit it or remove it at any time.

Despite the restrictions on the site's use, it is unlikely that many fans read the guidelines, which were buried at the bottom of the front page of the site. The next section of this chapter explores the types of activities that were available to Twi-fans on Hachette's site, after the books had all been published, and movies had all been released.

What Could Fans Do on the *TwilightSaga.com* Site in 2012?

By 2012, with broken links and dated content, much of *TwilightSaga.com* began to resemble a digital mausoleum of *Twilight* fandom. Table 5.3 demonstrates the activities that were still available during the final days of the site.

Despite broken links and decreased opportunities to participate, in 2012, membership continued to grow. On May 23rd, 2012, the site boasted 499,355 members, and when last checked in January 15, 2013, there were 500,346 members. Many of the site's activities were discontinued by 2012; however, the "Groups" tab became the most vibrant online community of the site, because it was entirely user-driven. The primary groups, "Official Team Edward," "Official Team Jacob," and "Official Team Bella," continued to thrive, and the strongest evidence of users' participation appeared in these types of groups. In other active groups, such as "*Twilight* Mums," mothers discussed topics relevant to parenting, such as when to give your teens the sex talk, and not necessarily topics relevant

Table 5.3 Activities for participants on *TwilightSaga.com*

Tab name	*Activity under tab*
Invite	Allows participants to invite everyone in their email contact lists to join *TwilightSaga.com*.
My Page	This is a page for participants on which they can blog, participate in discussions, and upload content.
Members	Provides information about current membership. As of May 23rd, 2012, there were 499,355 members listed.
Books	Provides a list of the original four books in the *Twilight* series, as well as spin-off products, such as movie companion books, journals, and notebooks.
Stephenie	Has two tabs—a link to "in the media," and a link to Meyer's own author site. "Q&As" has question-and-answer sessions (participants posed questions, and *Twilight*-related figures provided answers).
Q&As	The outdated Q&As were either from 2009 or were undated, and included one with Stephenie Meyer, one with Catherine Hardwick (who directed the first book-related film), one with Jodelle Ferland (who played the character Bree in the third movie), and an undated Q&A with Stephenie Meyer about Stephenie's book *The Secret Life of Bree Tanner* (which refers to a book published in 2009).
Discussion	The link on the "discussion" page led to an error page stating "Our apologies this page was not found."
Media	Under "Media," there are 1,286,992 photos uploaded by users, the publisher, etc., 34,434 videos (many of which had nothing to do with *Twilight*), music, audio books, and a link to "Asset Builder" which is "Coming Soon!"
Groups	The most vibrant tab on the site.
Blogs	Under "Blogs," there were 33,092 total blog posts.
Links	Connects to "About," which is Hachette's privacy policy, and "Links," a newsletter which link is no longer active.

Source: Martens 2012, p. 220

to *Twilight*. As of April 24th, 2012, there were 20,111 members of the "Official Team Edward," and the most recent activity had taken place two days earlier, on April 22nd, 2012 at 6:00 pm. Less interesting to members perhaps was the "Official Team Bella" group, which had only 7,514 members. A 2012 post included a *dub step* remix from a song by Linkin Park called "Numb," which although it followed a musical trend, and may have been an attempt to convey the participant's cultural citizenship, did not have anything specifically to do with *Twilight*. This also hinted at a lack of monitoring on part of the site owners. Fan fiction also appeared on each of the "official" team sites.

Prosumer Fans

Andrejevic (2007) writes that the idea of "mass" culture, which used to be top-down, is now partially in the hands of more people as co-creators. Participatory media, in theory, should lead to a positive experience on the part of consumers, which in turn, encourages them to return to the site to participate more. However, it is not clear if fans were aware of how their participation was being used, or perhaps more importantly, if they cared that their user-generated content was being used free-of-charge for the corporations' benefit. The entertainment value perceived by the consumer in participating was obviously worth the exchange of labor.

"Prosumers" (Toffler, 1983), who in this case were participating site members, contributed to creative cultural production by: (1) providing a rich supply of user-generated content including fan fiction, music, pictures and videos; (2) acting as peer-to-peer marketers (supplying email addresses of friends, and writing favorable comments within the site); and (3) providing free consumer research for the publisher. In addition to collecting evidence of the participants' tastes and interests, the publisher was also able to solicit consumer feedback directly from its consumer base. This included asking fans to post ideas for new *Twilight* products or requesting their design input. This helped contribute to the prosumer model, because the intended audience for future products supplied feedback about such products during development—which if all worked as intended, the audience would later buy. An example of the publisher seeking consumer feedback, in which Hachette solicited feedback on a cover design of a forthcoming graphic novel based on *Twilight*, follows below.

In April 2012, on the main page of the site, Hachette posted proposed cover design images by Young Kim for the forthcoming: *Twilight*: *The Graphic Novel* (Vol. 1) and *Twilight*: *The Graphic Novel* (Vol. 2). As they logged in, users saw these images first, and were asked for input about the design: "Do you like the idea of the meadow scene being on the cover?" Participants voted, and their answers are presented in Table 5.4.

One reader, "Halek," provided commercial feedback, saying that she would love to see what she calls "the canonical imagery" of this illustration as a poster, which could indicate that she would purchase

Table 5.4 Free consumer feedback on *TwilightSaga.com*

"smitten by_twilight": May 23, 2011 at 1:11 pm	*"Gina": May 24, 2011 at 10:52 am*	*"Halek": May 23, 2011 at 1:31 pm*
Beautiful art, best Edward I've seen yet IMHO.	Ohh it's gorgeous! And I agree-I would love to see it as a poster😃	Looks awesome, and I hope that the image is made available as a poster. Young Kim has done a terrific job of adapting the book and illustrating the Guide with her style that has the sleekness of the Asian style but avoids excesses of exaggeration. It should endure as canonical imagery of the Twilight series. The meadow scene is the centerpiece of Stephenie Meyer's lasting contribution to the romance, supernatural, and vampire genres. I don't literally believe in the supernatural, but if I did I'd say that her dream of the meadow is of genuine vampiric inspiration. (I came to Twilight as longtime fan of the vampire genre with a lot skepticism, but I was won over by the first movie and the books.)

Source: Martens (2012), p. 225

a poster if it were available. Since her comment was posted publically, other community members with similar taste and passion for *Twilight* might also have the same purchase intentions, which could encourage the publisher to produce such a poster for sale. In addition, by posting the question on the front page of the site, other users have no choice but to see it as they log in. This means that the poster served several purposes. First, the publisher was able to solicit feedback. Second, the survey also served as marketing for the forthcoming graphic novel. Third, the survey provides evidence of an existing audience when the publisher's sales staff brings sample material to potential buyers. These three options represent the utility of the site, as long as the participants cooperated and behaved as the publisher intended. But as time went on, and the book series ran its course, fans behaved quite differently, as we will see in the next section.

"Here We Are Now, Entertain Us"[9] Resistant Behavior on *TwilightSaga.com*

Hachette established *TwilightSaga.com* in an effort to engage the *Twilight* brand readership within a proprietary site. Just as *RandomBuzzers.com* existed to support Random House's marketing efforts, labor by contributors on *TwilightSaga.com* supported Hachette's marketing efforts. In hosting the site, Hachette may have expected a similar, civil discourse as had existed on *RandomBuzzers*. However, Hachette could not have anticipated that the supportive audience participation on the site which had existed earlier would degenerate into online misbehavior.

The publisher's EULAs served as the figurative fence around the digital corral, and initially, helped produce a cooperative and productive audience. A cooperative audience observes the rules and guidelines of the site, and a productive audience participates in a way that could be economically useful to the publisher. In most cases, the publisher could reasonably expect this in exchange for its investment in maintaining the site. As long as fans were willing to play by the site owner's rules, they were welcomed to participate. Until about 2012, the rule-breakers, such as anti-fans who preferred to criticize *Twilight* on the anti-fan site, *TwilightSucks.com*, remained relegated to the subculture, or the fringes. In 2012, when all books in the series had been published, and the last movie released, *TwilightSaga.com* future was uncertain. Amid mounting resistant behavior by users, there was evidence of the publisher's increasing loss of control.

In 2012, after all four books in the series were published and four out of five related films had been released (in 2012), the site was no longer as commercially valuable to the publisher as it was in 2009. Aside from promoting continued sales of books and related movie videos, all money-making opportunities related to the series had been exhausted. Almost every spin-off imaginable had already been released, and the publisher's attention turned to promoting other books on its list, and looking for the next big book that would eventually replace the enormous hole left by *Twilight*'s demise. As the publisher's interest decreased, this once-vibrant fan site began to slip into a state of neglect. Participants found holes in

[9] "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana (1991). Lyrics by Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselic, and Dave Grohl.

the figurative fence, and rebellious, rule-defying fan behavior emerged. An emerging subculture became increasingly vocal within the site.

Yet neither fans nor publisher could entirely relinquish the site, and each had their own separate reasons for wanting to keep it alive. For the publisher, the site served to attract a perpetually renewable audience, a source of consumer feedback, community-built peer-to-peer reviewing, and possible ideas for other derivative works on a popular backlist title. The dedicated fans meanwhile, were not ready to cease their community-based interactions. There were still participants in fan-formed online discussion groups, role-playing games continued, and fan fiction was still being written. But among the positive contributions, negative interactions were increasing, and fan-to-fan insults were on the rise. For example, in 2012, under the "Groups" tab, users posted insults in language that blatantly disregarded the site's EULAs, belittling members of other teams. Such insults were interspersed among posts that contained more serious discussions, including those describing what happened to *Midnight Sun*.[10] The Team Edward versus Team Jacob discussions continued, but disagreements had become more belligerent. Above the contentious users' posts, "The Team Edward/Team Jacob Treaty" was displayed—perhaps an attempt by the site owners to generate a peaceful (and more productive) discourse between the opposing fan factions: "Team Edward or Team Jacob should not make any rude, insulting, or threatening comments to one another. Team Edward or Team Jacob members should not post in each other's forum unless they have something positive to say" (*TwilightSaga.com*, "Official Team Jacob" 2015).

As a consequence of the series' success, and because every year brings a fresh crop of teenage girls who are potential *Twilight* fans, it was difficult for the publisher to relinquish the site, even as fans disregarded the publisher's attempt to restrain them (via user guidelines), and abused the site with rule breaking. By 2012, rule enforcement required staff moderation, which cost money—perhaps more than Hachette could reasonably continue to allocate.

By 2012, as *Twilight*'s overall media presence slowed, Hachette's engagement with fans decreased as well, and in no way reflected what it had been in 2009, at the height of book publication and movie release.

[10] *Midnight Sun* is Meyer's unfinished *Twilight* story, told from Edward's perspective. It was hacked and posted online without her permission.

Instead of publisher-driven content, which had been the case earlier, by 2012, most of the activity on the site was contributed by the fans themselves. With less monitoring, online *Twilight*-related activity soon disintegrated into a Wild West of disorderly activity that was beyond the publisher's control. While *Twilight* remained a bestselling title (see Table 5.5), once the final movie was released in 2012, it was clear that the publisher had moved on. As such, the remaining activity on the site tended to be user-led, and it echoed the material that existed freely on the web prior to the construction of Hachette's proprietary site.

Based on the frustrated tone of revised rules posted on the site, it was evident that the publisher had been forced into a position of moral stewardship on the site. The fear of anarchy on the site forced the publisher to maintain staff presence, but did not allow for as much engagement as it did at the site's inception. For example, the mounting loss of control was exacerbated by decreased publisher activity under the site's tabs. In addressing rule breakers (or potential rule breakers), the publisher's moderators (or "Mods") became parental in tone, as if they were scolding misbehaving children. The paratextual elements of the rules, as summarized by moderators, included bold, underlined text, and use of all uppercase letters, which reinforced the stern tone of the first rule, delivered as a shout:

> The fighting, drama, threads that intentionally or unintentionally create conflict MUST STOP. The initial boards were removed because **fans wouldn't play nice**. Our rules are rules that WILL BE ENFORCED. You risk temp to perm ban if you cannot adhere to them, no matter WHAT ... No more warnings. We suggest you read the rules before posting blogs, comments, posts, replies, pix, etc. (*Twilight* rules, 2012, 2015, "fighting must stop").

And the sixth rule:

> The *TwilightSaga.com* was designed to be a home all things Twilight! Discussions and groups related to Twilight or closely related subjects are strongly encouraged. And while we appreciate that you are also fans of other things (like the many and varied works of Aaron Spelling? Seriously?) to keep the site focused and manageable groups not related in some reasonable way to the *Twilight Saga* will be closed (*Twilight* rules, 2012, 2015, "Rule 6").

Table 5.5 Evidence of the *Twilight* series' continued strong sales in 2012 and 2015

Title	*Hardcover*	*Trade paper*	*Mass market*	*Kindle (paid)*
Twilight (2005)				
2012	#5,291 all books; #40 in Teen Horror	#34,183 of all books; (no other categories)	#3,718 of all books; #2 in Spine Chilling Horror	#2 in Kindle Store; #2 in Teens Horror
2015	#63,490 in Books; #164 in Dating & Sex; #270 in Horror; #349 in Science Fiction & Dystopian	#9,692 in Books; #53 in Teens Horror; #77 in Fantasy	#302,537 in Books; #202 in TV, Movie, Video Game Adaptations; #964 in Paranormal	#5,286 Paid in Kindle Store; #9 in Teens Horror; #27 in Paranormal
New Moon (2006)				
2012	#15,390 of all books; #100 of "Teen Horror"	#8,499 of all books; #58 of "Teen Horror"	#7,179 of all books; #4 in "Spine Chilling Horror"	#873 in Kindle Store, #5 in "Teens Horror"
2015	#116,909 in Books; #449 in Science Fiction & Dystopian; #457 in Horror	#14,403 in Books; #131 in Paranormal; #163 in Science Fiction & Dystopian	#5,819,704 in Books. Other categories N/A	#6,212 Paid in Kindle Store; #10 in Teens Horror; #28 in Paranormal
Eclipse (2007)				
2012	#8,513 of all books; #59 in "Teens Horror"	#4,117 in Books; #37 in "Teens Horror"	#44,178 in books; #78 "Spine Chilling Horror"	#881 in Kindle Store; #6 in "Teens Horror"
2015	#93,948 in Books; #119 in Vampires; #379 in Teens Horror	#19,857 in Books; #13 in TV, Movie, Video Game Adaptations; #92 in Teens Horror	N/A	#9,225 Paid in Kindle Store; #14 in Teens Horror; #76 in Science Fiction & Dystopian
Breaking Dawn (2008)				
2012	#2,688 of all books; #26 in "Teens Horror"	#26,938 of all books (no other categories)	#2,442 of all books, #22 in "Teens Horror"	#484 in Kindle Store; #1 in "Teens Horror"
2015	#74,503 in Books, #188 in Dating & Sex; #304 in Teens Horror	#15,386 in Books; #77 in Teens Horror; #139 in Paranormal	#7,101,553 in Books. Other categories N/A.	#7,206 Paid in Kindle Store; #10 in Dating & Sex; #11 in Teens Horror

Source: 2012, 2015 Rankings retrieved from http://www.Amazon.com

It was clear that the level of supervision required to maintain new rules was insufficient. One could imagine a few junior staff members exhausted from babysitting the participants' online activity. Earlier, in response to fans breaking rules by posting sexual content, a desperate request under "moderator announcements" stated:

> Hi all—
>
> Just a quick note about role play characters and profiles:
>
> Listing yours or your characters' sexual status is not allowed on this site. This means listing or mentioning whether or not you or your character is a virgin, how far you've gone, etc. This is considered sexual content, not to mention that it's not safe to do.
>
> If you have this information on your profile, please remove it. If you've been posting this information in your character info on your role plays, please go through your posts and delete it. We are issuing warnings and bans for this.
>
> There is no reason for you to mention anything about being a virgin unless you're planning on sexual role play, which is also not allowed, and is grounds for a permanent ban.
>
> Thanks—
>
> Mods
>
> (*TwilightSaga.com*, "Moderator," December 2, 2010)

Unfortunately, for the Mods, as soon as they were able to contain misbehavior in one section of the site, those misbehaviors popped up elsewhere. The participants on *TwilightSaga.com* were not interested in behaving. They were seeking entertainment and not enlightenment. Throughout the site (especially in the Edward and Jacob groups), there was plenty of nastiness interwoven between the nicer comments. In a discussion on April 17, 2012, users discussing the benefits of Edward versus Jacob were engaged in a hostile discussion as shown in Table 5.6.

While they certainly were not "ill-informed" because of their status as expert fans, by the late stage of *The Twilight Saga*, participation on *TwilightSaga.com* became anarchic. Building on Fiske (1989), teenage excorporation (in the case of *Twilight Saga*, primarily females) happened as users reappropriated portions of the site, creating communities of transgressive interactions that extended beyond and violated the EULAs.

TwilightSaga.com established a new model for marketing, reducing the publisher's need for traditional marketing techniques. In this example, Hachette was able to rely more on the author's efforts to market herself as she collaborated with fans via social media and participated on the

Table 5.6 Excorporation (Fiske, 1989) on *TwilightSaga.com* (*TwilightSaga.com*, "Official Team Edward," April 17, 2012)

Estrella, April 12, 2012 at 12:26 am	"Giraffe coolbro" ……….. why don't you go F**K YOURSELF YOU IGNORANT PIECE OF S#IT ………We are here because of something we love and if you can't respect that then you obviously have no life.
"Jessica Lilly Cullen," April 15, 2012 at 1:12 pm	i agree with Estrella if you aint going to talk about the one thing we all have in common you can do what you do best GO F**K YOUR MOM/DAD UP THE A**.
"Danielle," April 15, 2012 at 5:37 pm	TEAM EDWARD ALL THE WAY! Why r u guys team Edward? I think Jacob would be a terrible bf [boyfriend] because he goes kissing girls behind their bfs backs!!!

publisher's website. At the American Library Association (ALA) conference in 2009, despite its blockbuster status, Little, Brown did not display a single *Twilight* product in their booth. It was not necessary, because traditional marketing efforts had been replaced by participatory "prosumers" who were conducting much of the marketing online via their participation on the site.

Where Is *Twilight* Now? Beyond the Corral

Hachette's *TwilightSaga.com* had successfully established itself as the official *Twilight Saga* site, and by 2012, independent, *Twilight*-related fan activity on the web had decreased significantly. Some, such as the anti-fan site, *TwilightSucks.com*, had moved onto different social media platforms—in this case, Tumblr and Facebook. The *Twilight Sucks* Facebook presence was alive and well on April 29, 2012, with over 143,000 "likes," up-to-date page postings, and other activities.

Technology has changed the way books are created and marketed, but the platforms for those related activities are ever-evolving. By 2015, *TwilightSaga.com* had moved onto Little, Brown's interactive teen site called *NOVL* (*NOVL*, n.d.), along with other books from the imprint. A new initiative involving user-generated content had been announced. Tongal, a partnership between Stephenie Meyer, Lionsgate, Women in Film, Volvo, and Facebook, was seeking user-generated film shorts using the *Twilight* world via Facebook,Twitter, and Instagram. A contest from April 10, 2015 encouraged readers to enter a contest to "Be a Twilight Storytellers Fan Correspondent." The winners would get to visit the site of a *Twilight* Short Film and act as a liaison between the film and the

fans, informing fans of news about the upcoming films (*NOVL*, "Twilight Storyteller," 2015).

Publishers' book-related websites are also being replaced by social media sites, which include (as of this writing) Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest, as social media represents a "push" at the consumer, rather than forcing the consumer to "pull" information from a site. By 2015, the *Twilight* site had been shut down, and participation had moved to social platforms. On Instagram, hashtags such as #Twilight, #TwilightSaga, #edward and bella, and #bellacullen, continued the rivalry between fan factions. In May 2015, examples of social media activity were still available around *Twilight* (see Table 5.7).

In deciding to use websites and social media platforms to promote books, publishers must first be knowledgeable about the most current and popular social media platforms inhabited by teens, and also must commit to moderate such sites for the duration.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how a publisher's interactive book-based site encouraged teens to participate around a beloved series, and contribute their own book-related content within a proprietary, "official" site designed for fans of the *Twilight* series. This site enabled a direct communication between the publisher and its brand readers, and in doing so, it commodified both the books and their consumers. Before Hachette's site existed, freely created online fan content represented a "Wild West" of unregulated activity: from fan sites; to anti-fan sites; to fan fiction sites. In contrast, Hachette's official site initially established a controlled "digital corral" (Andrejevic, 2007) of fan activity, which could be moderated—and exploited—by Hachette, as a source of peer-to-peer marketing, consumer feedback, and user-generated content for future derivative products. The initial intent of the site was to allow for interaction between those fans who behaved in appropriate ways—those seeking information about the series, and serving as contributors to such series, and not for unruly mobs interested in breaking the site's rules and regulations. At the height of *Twilight*'s popularity in 2009, the publisher could not have anticipated how the site would degenerate three years later. Eventually, this meant reduced in-site moderation, and fans' increasingly transgressive behavior led to the site being shut down. Despite desperate attempts by the site's moderators

Table 5.7 *Twilight*'s migration onto social media (2015)

Social media platform	*Handle, hashtag, or link*	*Last date a post appeared*	*Brief description of content*
Twitter	@TwilightSaga	May 19, 2015	Fan profile with promotion, fan activity.
Twitter	@Twilight	May 19, 2015	Official Twitter profile for *Twilight* via Summit Entertainment
Twitter	#JacobvsEdward	October 22, 2014	References the "Team Edward" vs "Team Jacob" narrative which originated on *TwilightSaga.com*.
Facebook	https://www.Facebook.com/twilight?fref=ts	May 20, 2015	Tongal: A partnership with Stephenie Meyer, Lionsgate, Women in Film, Facebook, and Volvo—this page is a contest for fans to create their own *Twilight-world-based* film shorts. 44 million page likes.
Facebook	Twilight Forever (https://www.Facebook.com/TwiilightersForever?ref=br_rs)	May 20, 2015	Fan page. Originator unclear. 570,000 likes
Facebook	Twilight Will Remain in My Heart Forever (https://www.Facebook.com/groups/247348655451977/)	May 20, 2015	Closed fan group with 14,943 members.
Instagram	*Twilight Saga*. Twilight. Every. Day. (https://Instagram.com/twilight/)	May 20, 2015	Run by Tongal (see above under Facebook). Photos, quotes, material on Stephenie Meyer and about the actors from the movies. This is Tongal's Instagram page. 231,000 followers.
Instagram	#the twilightsaga (https://Instagram.com/thetwilightsaga/)	January, 2013	Photos from the Movies. Run by Summit Entertainment.

Instagram	remembertwilight (https://Instagram.com/remembertwilight/)	May 20, 2015	A fan account dedicated to *The Twilight Saga*. Mainly photos of the movie cast. Originator unclear. 400,000 followers.
Tumblr	http://twilight.tumblr.com/	December, 2013	Photos, gifs, etc. from the movies. Run by Summit Entertainment. Posts have an average of around 200 notes, with some having more than 1,000 and other having 75.
Tumblr	http://twilightsagadaily.tumblr.com/	May 20, 2015	Edits and gifs of the characters (mainly from the films), not the actors. Originator unclear. Notes average around 400, with some getting well over 1,000 and others getting 0.
Tumblr	http://twilightforever.tumblr.com/	March 23, 2015	Edits and gifs of the characters (from the films) and the actors. Originator Unclear. Notes average around 500, with some getting over 6,000 and others getting as low as 12.
Pinterest	https://www.pinterest.com/Robpatz/	November, 2014	Photos of the characters and cast of the *Twilight* movies. Originator Unclear. 10,735 pins. 1,011 followers.
Pinterest	https://www.pinterest.com/debdavis60/the-twilight-saga/	May, 2015	Photos, edits, and videos from the *Twilight* movie, as well as drawings of the *Twilight* characters. Run by Debra Davis. 1,504 pins. 451 followers.
Pinterest	https://www.pinterest.com/amctheatres/the-twilight-saga/	2013	Photos, posters, and promotional images for the *Twilight* movies. Run by AMC Theaters and amirosie. 50 pins. 3,640 followers.

to encourage users to comply with the rules, eventually enforcement became impossible.

The next chapter will examine how publishers expand their exploitation of their reading consumers beyond peer-to-peer marketing as on *RandomBuzzers*, beyond information gathering as in *TwilightSaga.com*, and asks them to contribute as co-authors, as is the case with *The Amanda Project*, which is a multiplatform book series integrated with a participatory website for teenage girls.

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CHAPTER 6

Reading *The Amanda Project:* The Lifecycle of a Pioneering Multiplatform Book (2009–2012)

Introduction

Viewed together, the three case studies in this book present a progression of how publishers have used technology to engage young readers in book-related activities on publisher-owned websites. Chapter 4 focused on the *RandomBuzzers* site, and how readers became critics and peer-to-peer marketers of Random House titles. In Chapter 5, Hachette's *Twilight Saga* site showed how fandom could be corralled onto an official, corporate-owned site. In doing so, Hachette was able to co-opt user-generated content for its own marketing and creative purposes. This chapter builds upon these models for participation to show how economic frameworks converge with cultural frameworks. *The Amanda Project* was an early multiplatform book published first by Fourth Story Media and, subsequently, produced in partnership with HarperCollins. *The Amanda Project* consisted of a traditional book series (printed paper pages encased in covers), which was integrated with an interactive, participatory website which served to extend the narrative into a virtual version of what Genette & Maclean (1991) calls a book's epitext.[1] This significant digital component enables a type of interactivity which alters the traditional print reading experience.

[1] Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean (1991) define "epitext" as the exterior presentation of a book, including cover, title, name of author, reviews, interviews, etc. For an updated discussion of epitext and peritext in the digital realm, see McCracken (2013).

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The books were about three previously unacquainted ninth graders who were united in their quest to find their mutual friend Amanda, who has mysteriously disappeared. Amanda left clues for the teens all over their homes and school, and together with help from the online Amanda-reading community, they had to piece together the clues in order to find her. Each of the first three stories was told from the perspective of one of these friends. The fourth was told from an additional friend who knew Amanda in childhood. *The Amanda Project* was a pioneering multiplatform book series for girls. Largely orchestrated by the publisher, and written by work-for-hire authors, it was a top-down, proprietary product that merged traditional book production with technology. Users were invited to participate in the series' creation by uploading their own content, which could be incorporated into future books. *The Amanda Project* site provided girls with creative agency as peer-to-peer marketers and as content creators of *Amanda*-related works, or of their own original work which they chose to upload onto the site. With this new model of production, *The Amanda Project* redefined traditional notions of books and of authorship, blurring lines between author–reader and producer–consumer.

This new model for book production extended the tools analyzed in Chapters 4 and 5. It also connected to the political economy of the publishing industry, which favors the type of literary cultural products that maximize sales by appealing to the largest possible number of readers. If successful, the work-for hire structure, and possible "free" user-generated content model, would save money for publishers on authors' royalties. As we will see in this chapter, while Fourth Story Media and HarperCollins' groundbreaking efforts present an innovative example of a multiplatform book series, ultimately, this series was not commercially successful.

Around 2007, advances in technology enabled a disintermediated relationship between publishers and their young readers. Previously, Young Adult books were primarily selected for a teen readership by adult reading experts including editors and librarians. But, studies of the *RandomBuzzers* and *The Twilight Saga* websites from 2009 to 2012 revealed a new model of selection. On these sites, a disintermediated, "bottom-up," peer-to-peer mechanism of selection had been established directly between readers and the publisher. Previously, traditional dissemination methods of getting books into the hands of young adults included librarians as key intermediaries between publishers and teens, serving as guardians of culture and filters of taste. As such, librarians and publishers worked together to shape the field of children's literature, and it is important to understand

the collaborative relationship between librarians and publishers to determine how the field has evolved. But new, online, participatory websites represent a disintermediated space, one in which publishers can communicate directly with Young Adult reading consumers, and where teens' labor around books—especially their work as reviewers and as peer-to-peer recommenders of books—establishes new methods for determining distinction in the field of Young Adult literature. This new model of book production reflects a larger cultural trend of user input in product development, as producers increasingly use social media to poll consumers on products from film and television to breakfast cereal and snack foods.

There is a history of publishers soliciting feedback from readers in the print realm. For example, Edward Stratemeyer encouraged readers to send in "the names and addresses of other boys and girls to whom you want us to send catalogs" (Rehak, 2005, p. 99). In doing so, the Stratemeyer Syndicate built an incredible mailing list, which could be used to market future editions of books. Technology allows for an expansion of this type of user involvement. *The Amanda Project* attempted to capitalize on teens' desire for agency by publishing a series that claimed to address their reading desires by soliciting: their peer-to-peer reviewing and marketing skills; their feedback; and for the first time, sought their user-generated content as a source for the series.

Analog Precursors to Multiplatform Books

Transmedia products, which include books such as *Harry Potter* and *The Twilight Saga*, exist simultaneously on multiple media platforms as traditional printed books, films, and licensed merchandise. All of these can be enjoyed independently of the others. Similar to transmedia products, multiplatform books also exist on multiple media platforms. But, in contrast to transmedia products, multiplatform books use technology to integrate content across interrelated platforms. Examples of such platforms might include printed books, Internet-based content such as interactive websites, blogs, YouTube videos, and also collector cards, games, derivative consumer products, and related shopping sites. Therefore, unlike transmedia products, in order to derive maximum meaning from the texts, readers are required to participate with the content simultaneously via more than one such platform.

Multiplatform books have emerged from a tradition of interaction in particular types of books for young readers. According to Eliza Dresang's

Radical Change Theory, three digital age principles, "Interactivity, connectivity, [and] access" (Dresang & Kotrla, 2009, p. 94) help publishers identify and understand young peoples' reading behaviors. Books defined as digital age books must combine a "highly interactive reading experience with vivid visual appeal, intertextuality, and multiple layers of meaning" (Dresang & Kotrla, 2009, p. 93). In addition, the synergy between reader and text must create something out of their interaction.

Precursors to multiplatform books include books such as the fractured fairy tales of the 1990s. One such example is John Scieszka and Lane Smith's (1992) *The Stinky Cheeseman and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. This title spins the traditional tale from a tasty gingerbread man running away from would-be captors, into a far smellier and less-appetizing Stinky Cheeseman who escapes the hands of his creators. Other tales in this collection refer intertextually to their traditional precursors. While this book is humorous to all young readers, those familiar with the original story of the gingerbread man will have a deeper understanding of the humor and plot twists. In this example, paratextual elements on the title page, table of contents, and even the ISBN number, become book characters that address the reader directly. Text is super-sized, inverted, and otherwise playfully designed, demanding a non-linear reading, which in turn implores the reader to interact (generally by shouting at the characters and their silly behaviors). "Digital age books" such as fractured fairytales, always have an interactive element in which the reader is expected to respond to the printed book in words or actions. In the case of digital integrations of books, readers are expected to expand upon stories in online fora from fan fiction to websites to wikis, and increasingly, across social media sites.

Other print precursors to multiplatform books include E. Packard's *Choose Your Own Adventure* stories, published by Bantam (Packard, Biographical Note, n.d.), which were popular in the 1980s and 1990s. These stories allowed readers to choose a particular path for the hero or heroine by "flipping" to differing page numbers based on that choice. Other publishers, from Disney to SeaStar books, have published variations on Packard's format, all of which give the reader agency and provide interaction with the story. The work of reader response theorists, such as Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, and Louise Rosenblatt helps to uncover relationships between readers and texts in the realm of print. But digital reading environments provide concrete evidence: "New digital technologies enable online book-related environments in which readers provide

concrete evidence of their taste—while building virtual communities of visible reading audiences" (Martens, 2016).[2]

Authors and publishers have been able to create a plethora of new avenues for reader interaction in the digital realm. A front runner published in 2006 by Running Press was *Cathy's Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233*. This title encouraged reader interaction, with phone numbers to call, and websites to browse, extending the book into epitextual environments in which they could interact with the story. Scholastic's multiplatform series *The 39 Clues* (Amazon.com, n.d.), was launched in 2008. These books use collectors' cards, an interactive website, games, and contests to expand upon print-based stories. Because this series is for children between the ages of eight and twelve, laws such as the Child Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) apply, and the amount of interaction is limited. *The Amanda Project,* for children aged thirteen and up, expanded the interaction afforded by *The 39 Clues*. Multiplatform books change reading formats but readers must adapt too, gaining multiliteracies as described next.

Reading in Digital Formats

As technology changes books, the nature of reading changes too. A novel must no longer be strictly defined as pages of text encased in a decorative cover and/or jacket. Deriving meaning from multiplatform texts requires readers not just to be literate, but also to be multiliterate. Ruth Sylvester and Wendy-Lou Greenidge (2009) define four such multiliteracies including: (1) *technological literacy*, or the skills needed to use a computer; (2) *visual literacy*, or the ability to decode and comprehend "icons on the tool bar, navigating the Web, and encoding images in multimedia projects" (p. 284); (3) *media literacy*, the ability to "access, evaluate, and create messages in written and oral language, graphics and moving images, and audio and music;" and finally, (4) *information literacy*, the ability "to find, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information" (p. 284). These literacies combined expand upon what traditionally was known as literacy, and are required to read digital texts, which move from linear to non-linear formats.

[2] See Martens (2016) for a broader discussion of reader response theory in the context of digital environments.

In addition, "multimodal" (Hassett & Curwood 2009) texts, with visual and interactive elements, are non-linear. The reader derives meaning from a combination of text, image, and interaction. *The Amanda Project* is one such multimodal text. In addition to reading the print-based books, and in order to derive maximum meaning from such texts, readers must go online and participate in the website, which in turn, requires the types of multiliteracies described above. Multiplatform books such as *The Amanda Project* also have a social element, as it is now possible to engage with other readers of the same text via social media including websites, blogs, YouTube videos, and Facebook pages, thereby blurring fiction with reality and leisure with labor. Reading multiplatform books and certain digital formats requires more work than simply opening a book. As we will see in this chapter, the readers of this study had some interesting responses to leisure reading of such multimodal texts.

Constructing *Amanda*

The first book in what was originally intended as an eight-book series, *The Amanda Project: invisible i* [sic], was developed by Fourth Story Media, and then published by HarperCollins in 2009. Author credit on the cover is attributed to Stella Lennon. But according to the author's credit on the book's title page, Melissa Kantor is noted as the author. Additionally, Kantor writes to teens, as an author in the series, on *The Amanda Project* website. Yet, despite two "author" names, the copyright for the book was issued in the name of the publisher, Fourth Story Media. This indicates that the book is a work-for-hire, in which the author receives a flat fee for writing the book, and the publisher controls all rights and book-related income with no additional royalties due to the author. This is a model frequently used by publishers of book series, ever since the twentieth-century precedent established by the Stratemeyer Syndicate, an early book packager. Stratemeyer's famous series (including *The Bobbsey Twins*, *The Hardy Boys*, and *Nancy Drew*), were mass-produced books that followed a basic plot recipe. They were written by a stable of work-for-hire authors, all of whom published under a series-specific pseudonym (Laura Lee Hope in the case of *The Bobbsey Twins*, Franklin W. Dixon in the case of *The Hardy Boys*, and Carolyn Keane in the case of *Nancy Drew*[3]). *The Amanda Project* added a twist to this traditional model of creative production, by including

[3] See Rehak (2005) for more information.

users' contributed content to stories by the work-for-hire authors. If this were to become a successful model for a series—in which the first book was written by a work-for-hire author, and subsequent books in the series were composed by user-generated content, and shaped by the publisher's editorial staff—it would establish a new model of collaborative literary production. Under this model, authorship would become a collaborative effort between a publisher, editorial staff, work-for-hire authors, and "prosumer" reader contributors. Foucault (1977) writes that modern definitions of authorship are about copyright, ownership, and the law, and he asked whether we have arrived at the point where "discourse would circulate without any need for an author" (p. 138). A collaborative work such as *The Amanda Project* has the potential to fall into the category of unauthored discourse, because its premise was to create a series using work-for-hire authors combined with freely contributed and virtually anonymous content from users.

As a book series integrated with a website, *The Amanda Project* extended the reading experience beyond the books themselves. While the books could be read independently of the website, the site greatly expanded upon content in the book, adding details about characters. In addition, a participatory element allowed readers to develop their own storylines, which, according to the website, might be incorporated into future books in the series: "Amanda's story will be published as an eight-book series—and each book will include writing from readers like you" (*Amanda*, "Tell Me More," 2012). The website echoed some of the book design, with a photograph on the home page featuring a girl with her face obscured, similar to the cover of the first book. In 2009, a YouTube video on the site with female voiceovers beckoned potential readers, inviting them to read the books, browse the website, and in response to clues and prompts, write their own Amanda-related content, which could be included in future books in the series. By 2012, that same video also appeared on Amazon.com (Amazon.com, "Amanda Video," n.d.), and was available via smartphone by scanning the Quick Response code (QR code) on the cover of the books. Clearly, the publisher was using this series to reach readers via new technological innovations. Participation on the site occurred in a shared, social space, which then helped to create a community around *The Amanda Project*. According to the website in 2009, readers could contribute their own stories, plotlines, and artwork, and hope that HarperCollins would incorporate them into future books in the series. Unlike the analog precursors to multiplatform books, or other books which incorporated

technology, such as *Cathy's Book, The Amanda Project* represents the first instance in which readers had potential to creatively shape future books in a series for a widespread audience.

COPPA: *Amanda* and the Law

One of the challenges with earlier multiplatform book series such as *The 39 Clues* (launched in 2008), which was targeted at children between the ages of eight and twelve, is that in the United States, children's online participation is restricted by laws such as COPPA. This law limits interactivity between children and a site's owners. COPPA defines a "child" as "an individual under the age of 13" (FTC, "COPPA," 1998), and websites that seek to have children under thirteen participate on a website must first obtain parental consent. It seems that the creators of the website were not initially aware of this law, as in a 2008 *Publishers Weekly* interview, Lisa Holton, the founder of Fourth Story Media, describes *The Amanda Project* as "an interactive, collaborative fictional mystery series for girls aged 12 to 14" (Andriani, "Lisa Holton," 2008). However, as the project developed, the site owners moved to comply with COPPA. Subsequently, the site's privacy policy read as follows:

> If a user under the age of 13 attempts to register, the account will automatically be flagged as a pending and limited membership account and we will inform the child that parental consent is required to activate a full membership account. Depending on the level of activity the child wishes to obtain, a parent's consent is required by accepting our "Notice to Parents" e-mail. A more detailed description of the level of activities is presented in the "Notice to Parents" e-mail that parents receive from us. Until this level of verifiable parental consent is obtained, the child will only have access to certain features of the site and have limited access to TAP (*The Amanda Project*, "Privacy," 2010).

Branding *Amanda*

As we saw on *The TwilightSaga* site, *Twilight* became popularized first by reader fans, who built the brand's success from the bottom up via their readership and participation in fan-created online sites. As they expressed the desire for related products in the marketplace, the publisher was able to create or license such products in order to fill consumer demand. In the case of *The Amanda Project*, Fourth Story and HarperCollins attempted

the opposite. They started with a product and a website, and then sought readers' participation to help brand the series before it had attracted a dedicated fan base. Licensed merchandise, such as t-shirts, also served as advertising for the series. In 2012, participation on the site included contributing to and commenting on stories, posting clues about Amanda's disappearance, assuming identities as her friends or classmates, answering the post of the week, uploading content to the "Zine," participating on the debate threads, taking quizzes, and playing games. Compared to *The TwilightSaga* site, where the number of group members posted next to each group provided proof of participation, that information was not included on *The Amanda Project* site, and it was not clear how many teens were participating.

The Twilight Saga had the good fortune of evolving into a flexible transmedia product. Instead, from its inception, *The Amanda Project* was intentionally constructed to be flexible, in order for users to be able to contribute and alter the plot. As we saw in Chapter 5, Stephenie Meyer chose to keep her descriptions of Bella vague, so "that the reader could more easily step into her shoes" (Meyer, "What Does Bella Look Like," n.d.), and descriptions of Amanda are frequent and precisely rendered—in ever-changing ways. Amanda is described as a fashion chameleon—one minute dressing like Audrey Hepburn, the next like a hippie. In this way, as with Bella, there is an Amanda-identity for every reader.

While some users self-identified as male (such as "Rogue" who claimed to be a brother of another participant called "Rebelle"), the paratext of both the website and the books indicates that both the books and the website were designed to attract girls. For example, the books and website featured extensive use of the color pink, large pictures of girls, flowery designs in the marginalia of the books, and the website featured a shopping component. *Twilight*'s popularity led to a successful licensing program, including clothing and accessories which could be purchased at retailers such as Hot Topic. Although *Amanda* never achieved the popularity of *Twilight*, Fourth Story and HarperCollins attempted to instill a similar commercial component to the site, perhaps as a shortcut to branding. In 2009, a link on *The Amanda Project* site allowed members to shop at a store so that they could dress like Amanda. Many have written about the activity of *shopping* as a feminine activity (Seiter, 1995; Fiske, 1989; McRobbie, 1982), particularly in the realm of shopping for fashion. Seiter (1995) wrote about the connections between marketing toys and labor, and how girls' toys historically have been created around essentialist views on women's work.

These include a 1928 advertisement for a toy kitchen to 1950s toys related to cooking, childcare, and shopping (shopping baskets). By the 1980s, Seiter found that toys for girls "were miniatures of [products] their mothers were actually using, inculcating brand loyalty in household purchasing at an early age" (Seiter, 1995, p. 76), and throughout Seiter's work, she demonstrates connections between gender and shopping.

Shopping on *The Amanda Project* site was closely related to branding, because shopping activities resulted in users providing consumer research and promotional opportunities for the associated retailers. For example, in 2009, "Users can enter the 'Amanda brand,' by participating in a competition to design an outfit for Amanda by using new clothing from a 'vintage-inspired' online store called ModCloth, almost like dressing a virtual paper doll" (Martens, 2011, p. 60). By 2012, the partnership with ModCloth had vanished, and shopping options were limited to *The Amanda Project* t-shirts, buttons, and other simple items most likely produced by the publisher. There was a new competition for readers to create an Amanda-inspired outfit from a store called Plum Willow, which might have indicated that an emerging partnership was in place, but there was no link from the website to connect to Plum Willow. Participants creating an Amanda-like paper doll using Plum Willow clothing served both to promote the series and Plum Willow. Here, not only did Plum Willow get to advertise its clothing in an innocent paper-doll format disguised as play, but the retailer also received free consumer research by asking participants to post about their favorite outfits.

The problem with the Plum Willow paper doll on *The Amanda Project* site was that even though it appeared on the website and not in the books, it bordered on bringing advertising into books. This was similar to the much-criticized *Cathy's Book,* in which the publisher, Running Press, made a deal with Cover Girl Make-Up and incorporated careful descriptions and specific names of lipsticks and other make-up into the text of the book.

Additionally, discussion was limited on *The Amanda Project* website. *TwilightSaga.com* included hundreds of discussion participants on popular topics, and numerous groups and pages within the site such as the Official Team Edward page (*TwilightSaga.com*, "Official Team Edward" 2012). In contrast, "recent topics" (June, 2012) on *The Amanda Project*'s site had only between one and seventy-two responses, which showed that participation was far from that of *TwilightSaga.com*. Granted, few products could reasonably expect to attain *Twilight*'s commercial success, but as a publishing phenomenon, *Twilight* serves as a useful benchmark for comparison.

Laboring for *Amanda*: Attracting Affective and Immaterial Labor

On the *Twilight Saga* site, fans (mostly female) participated because they already loved the books and the characters. The site allowed them to participate in their *Twilight* fandom while waiting for the next book or film in the series, or extending the conversations after the series ended. *The Amanda Project* site had an additional challenge, because in order to be successful, it had to attract the same feelings of affect that the *Twilight Saga* site generated, yet with a series that had not yet been popularized by readers. It attempted to do so by creating a community around participation, as girls built online friendships and exchanged personal information in a shared experience that centered around *Amanda*.

The Amanda Project site members were encouraged to post personal details about themselves in their biographies, which were then shared with other participants. Question prompts guided their posts, asking them about their favorite music, their idea of a best first date movie, or even what they liked to eat for breakfast. Open-ended prompts required even more personal details such as:

1) I sometimes pretend to ______;
2) I am completely indifferent to _______;
3) Do you believe in revenge?
4) Would you do something if you couldn't tell anyone?
5) Do you find the need to clean your room before you do your homework?
6) Book that changed my life: _______;
7) Best book I pretended to read, but didn't: _______

(*The Amanda Project*, "Members," 2012)

For the publisher, these questions subtly extracted consumer research data from their audience. Participants might have been attracted to the social side of information sharing, which is reminiscent of an earlier era of pen-pals, in which children would write letters to virtual strangers and form friendships by sharing information about themselves. Almost like online, social pen-pals, *The Amanda Project* encouraged a similar sharing of personal information for community and relationship building in a shared, online space. In participating, users created identities for themselves, and found like-minded people. As with the pen-pal experience, which would expand the letter-writers' horizons by connecting people in different

geographical areas, participants on *The Amanda Project* site claimed to come from all the English-speaking countries in which the transnational corporation HarperCollins had divisions. As such, site users identified themselves as coming from Australia, England, Wales, Canada, and the United States. Contributing around books in *The Amanda Project*, by means of readers' continuation stories, their clues, and book-related ideas on a corporate website, constituted a form of social reading that occurred asynchronously across international borders and time zones.

Multiplatform books offer possibilities for social reading and for providing agency for readers that is centered on book-based activity, and for individual meaning making based on the texts. In theory, the EULAs helped to provide an environment which appeared to be safe in the eyes of parents and caretakers, primarily by capitalizing on the cultural capital associated with reading. While the site incorporated elements of gaming, its overall focus was first on reading, which made it appealing to the gatekeepers—at least at first glance. Having children participate in a seemingly educational, reading-related site automatically pleases parents and gives them a false sense of safety. Had they taken a deeper look at some of the darker user-generated content participants posted on the site, they might have felt differently.

Acknowledging Participants

The Amanda Project's publisher acknowledges user-generated content in the second, third, and fourth books in the series by "thanking" contributors in an appendix at the back of the book. But by only acknowledging their usernames, this essentially means the contributors are recognizable only to those who know them by those names. The following example of user credits is from *Shattered* (2011) and is "written" by Nia, a character from the book, which extends the fictional line into the non-fiction paratext of the book:

> A Big Round of Thanks
> I could not have recounted my story in such detail without the help of everyone on the site. You are my eyes and ears, and do not think that any observation, no matter how small, ever went unnoticed.
> Herewith, an index of your amazing contributions.
> —Nia[4]

[4] Nia is a character in the book, and one of Amanda's friends.

Many thanks to:
Punkeddrama (page 17)
OMGitsDalia (page 27)
Zephyr (page 56)
M. Katty (page 74)
LittleStar (page 77)
Squanky Donkey (page 84)
Mary_Dee (page 84)
Lemongreen (page 109)
Loicamar (page 114)
BlueRoseGrey (page 114)
Raemcellen (page 119, page 210)
Thelittlelion (page 120)
Blackbird (page 141)
Madibee (page 153)
Animangaroo (page 174)
TwilightMist (page 193)
Sabrina10 (page 208)

Just how these users contributed material—or what they actually contributed—is unclear. While "Nia" refers to this list as an "index," searching on the online pages listed yields no further clues as to exactly what material was user-generated versus written by the work-for-hire author. A three-page epilogue called "How I Met Amanda," seems to be a user-contributed story of how "Stef Stone" first met Amanda. A bio states: "Olivia Moore [aka Stef Stone] is a high school senior in Oregon, and hopes to be a writer one day. In her free time, she enjoys playing tennis, writing for her school newspaper, and spending time with her labradoodle, Micalene. She loves reading, and *The Amanda Project* is one of her favorite book series." Self-identifying as a senior in high school, Olivia (aka "Stef Stone") is beyond the target age of *Amanda Project* readers, which also feels inauthentic. Is she really a reader, or someone hired by the publisher? On the website, there is evidence of frequent contributors and respondents on the site in the "Zine" and "Debate," such as Rebelle, AngelOfMusic, and claudia. In some cases, they seemed to be directing the conversations or offering frequent feedback to users, which raises questions about their identities—are they really eager fans, super-users, or agents of the publisher, working to maximize users' contributions? Readers cannot be sure. On the other hand, readers found their own ways of modifying the site's rules to suit their own needs.

Amanda's Rules: Enforcing and Resisting

Similar to *The Twilight Saga* website, it was clear that participants, allegedly teenage girls, subversively circumnavigated the rules and guidelines of *The Amanda Project*. In this context, such circumnavigation and transgressive behavior hints at the type of resistant behavior John Fiske described in his writings on homeless men who excorporate the dominant message in the movie *Die Hard*,[5] and on Madonna fans[6] who interpret messages of female empowerment from her sexualized persona.

In the later stages of *TwilightSaga.com* (2012), Hachette's moderators made desperate attempts to enforce the rules. On *The Amanda Project* site, rule enforcement focused more on censoring language than on censoring content. For example, participants found that improper language was edited out of uploaded content, redacted with the term "[Removed]," in its place. Yet, users created their own codes for bad language. For example, they substituted symbols for letters in the middle of words readily identified as vulgar language, posed those words as questions, or used double-entendres. One user tested the limits of the site by asking about whether or not s/he was allowed to say [examples of vulgar language]. Members posting to each other (or those posing as members) also warned each other of words and expressions which could not be used. In places where participants found work-arounds, it seems that censorship on the site was automated and enforced by algorithms—by Robocop—rather than by human moderators.

Content was not censored in the same way that individual words were. As long as a reader did not use vulgar or sexual language, almost any content was acceptable. A disturbing post from a self-described twelve-year-old "cutter"[7] who describes serious family problems of infidelity and divorce (as shown in Fig. 6.1) made it past the site's moderators. Number four on this poster's list: "If the world ends this year, I honestly wouldn't care" sounds like a post from a troubled teen.

This raises important questions of how far a site owner's responsibility extends in a website designed for young readers. The poster above does not include any vulgar language. However, it does describe personal problems that reflect real-world issues that are far beyond the sanitized content

[5] Fiske (1991).

[6] Fiske (1989).

[7] A cutter here is one who intentionally harms himself or herself.

Fig. 6.1 Unsupervised online

of the books in the series. Also troubling, is that the poster self-identifies as a twelve-year-old (#10 in Fig. 6.1), which is younger than the thirteen-year-old limit for the site's approved participation age.

The site owners disengage themselves from responsibility for this type of content in their privacy policy, placing the primary responsibility for supervision of minors on parents as follows:

> TAP uses both technical filters and moderators who supervise what happens on TAP in order to offer a nice and safe environment. The moderators also answer members' reports of unpleasant and unsuitable behavior but we still urge all parents to be actively involved in following their children's activity on the Internet. *However, we cannot block all conversations and materials containing objectionable content on TAP.*[8]
>
> If you become aware of objectionable behavior or content on TAP, we encourage you to contact us immediately at mail to: abuse@theamandaproject.com (The Amanda Project, "Privacy" 2010).

[8] Italics are mine.

It is not clear to whom the site owners are writing; but chances are, they are addressing those, such as parents or guardians, who might be interested in monitoring a child's Internet activity, rather than young participants themselves. In addition, while user-generated content might initially have been more closely monitored by site owners (when the series began in 2009), three years later, in 2012, on-site supervision seemed more relaxed. Another example of questionable content—in this case poetry from TheRiverFlows—follows here:

> *If I Was Gone*
> If I jumped, would you mourn, or say that I didn't deserve to be here anyway?
> If I hung, would you cry, or bury me personally?
> If I overdosed, would you tell that it was drugs that did it, or say it was a tragic accident, a young life lost?
> If I finally made that one cut too deep, would you go after me, or deny that It was your fault?
> Dedicated to you, mom.
> (TheRiverFlows, 2012)

This example reads like a suicidal cry for help, and because the poem still appears on the site in 2015, it seems unlikely that this twelve-year-old's mother (to whom the poem is dedicated) is supervising her child's posts. This post is disruptive to the publisher's motives in two ways: first, as a post from an under-age participant; and second, as a post with overly personal content that is not especially relevant to the series.

As of June 7, 2012, quasi-inappropriate content (certainly for the youngest readers) reigned free, as participants excorporated the site with uses that suited them—but probably not the publisher—receiving only mild verbal scolding by the moderators (compared to what was found on *TwilightSaga.com*). Similar to *TwilightSaga.com*, *The Amanda Project* participants engaged in plenty of online squabbles with hostile language among participants, such as the conversation in Fig. 6.2, in which a popular contributor threatened to leave.

This evidence of hostility appeared on the site despite the fact that user guidelines specifically directed users to respect one another:

> **DON'T BE A HATER**
> You know what that means. Follow the golden rule and treat everyone like you'd like to be treated. RESPECT one another. (*Amanda Project*, "Guidelines," 2010)

BlueRoseGrey 03.13.2011

*head desk * what have i started...

I have no plans of leaving TAP, none whatsoever.

I won't be having any arguments on my Zine, Art, etc. So, any arguments end HERE. I agree with MizzTomato. Cuddles489, thank you for trying to make amends with whatever stuff went down.

*slams fist on table * Enough of all this "I hate you" shiz. We are not here to hate and troll on people, we're here to enjoy each other's company, make friends, show are art, show are writing, and above all anything about Amanda. So.

I'm not saying that you have to be all buddies with someone, but please don't drag everyone down with your personal arguments.

DoReMi 03.13.2011

Understood.
Let's take it to my forum

BlueRoseGrey 03.13.2011

*face palm *

that wasn't meant either...

LittleStar 03.13.2011

It's Like World War One Here On TAP!! Just Please Cut It Out Everyone!! Enough With Hating Eachother!! A Week Ago TAP Was Awesome As Always But Its Going Overboard With These Rude Comments!! The Point Of This Site Is To Help Find Amanda And Solve Her Mystery!

DoReMi 03.13.2011

I'm sorry
I should leave...

Fig. 6.2 Hostility on *The Amanda Project* site (BlueRoseGrey, 2011)

Thomas and Grampa T/Christopher look at each other and nod. Thomas pulls out a key and unlocks a drawer in his desk, pulling out a white envelope. "This is the letter your parents left me thirteen years ago, along with the tape," he says. I don't try to grab it, knowing he'll just [removed] it away. "So, if I give you this letter, will you join this team?"

Fig. 6.3 Censoring content

The site moderators in *The Amanda Project* used the same kind of frustrated scolding language used by moderators of *The TwilightSaga* site in Chapter 5 in response to similar bad behavior. And similarly, moderator's efforts were largely ignored.

The Posting Guidelines also asked users not to:

> **POST ANYTHING OFFENSIVE OR VULGAR**
> Again, you know exactly what that means. No profanity or foul language. And nothing sexual, racist, or hateful (*The Amanda Project*, "Guidelines," 2012).

The "protective" algorithm used for the site missed a word like "shiz" in line six of Fig. 6.2, demonstrating how users cleverly circumnavigated the rules. Frequently, members asked about what words could be used or complained about members who used vulgar language. Also, members discussed censored language among themselves. In a story contributed to the Zine, the term "[removed]" appears, and in thirty-six responses from readers, they debated what that missing word might have been (Fig. 6.3).

It seemed that the site owner was using filtering software to arbitrarily remove words of questionable content, including words with multiple meanings. However, as in the case above, this resulted in over-censoring, which resulted in readers becoming increasingly skeptical about how the site actually was monitored. Despite mild evidence of moderators' presence on the boards, it seemed that the site owners were relying on the guidelines (which were most likely not read by participating teens) and by a policing algorithm to control online behavior—with mixed success.

In spite of the negative exchanges on the site, as of June 2012, the site owners still initiated weekly calls for participation on the first page of the website, by posting a clue and asking readers to respond. The series was never as successful as was initially anticipated, and as publisher presence on the site decreased, so did its monitoring. As with *TwilightSaga.com*, decreased par-

ticipation also pointed to a change in the publisher's strategy—a move away from *The Amanda Project*, and onto other frontlist projects.

Bad online behavior, as demonstrated on *The Amanda Project* site, is an unplanned consequence of multiplatform books. The graffiti-like transgressions on online boards, thinly-veiled vulgar language, hostilities among participants, and posts of questionable (and alarming) content, such as the suicidal poetry, could not have been anticipated by the publisher at the outset of the project. As *The Amanda Project* was not as successful as may have been hoped, towards the end, moderating and maintaining the site grew beyond the publisher's capabilities. In addition, by 2012, the type of rebellious fan activity that appeared on the site was progressing toward participants' personal interests and away from the corporation's original intent for the site.

Publishers' Assumptions, Teens' Perceptions

As a way to bridge conflicts between children's interest in gaming, and gatekeepers' interest in reading, publishers perceive multiplatform books as a way to attract children more interested in gaming back to books. Multiplatform books also represent a way to capitalize on the very same media (digital platforms) that have in recent years, presented a threat to the traditional side of the publishing industry.

Certain publishers pursuing multiplatform books are making assumptions about digital formats, but their assumptions may not correspond to what young people want, or to how they perceive leisure reading. While *The 39 Clues*[9] multiplatform book series for children aged eight to twelve incorporates a book series with a website and collectible gaming cards, the multiplatform precursor, Running Press's *Cathy's Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233* (Stewart, 2006) asks readers to respond to clues in the book by calling a phone number. *The Amanda Project* was the first book series integrated with a website that asked readers to essentially serve as content co-creators by contributing content via the site. As the originator of *The 39 Clues* series at Scholastic, it made sense that Lisa Holton would pursue other multiplatform projects beyond her tenure at Scholastic. According to an interview in *Publishers Weekly,* "Before launching Fourth Story, Holton became obsessed with all things digital …[and] spent the

[9] *The 39 Clues* is a series of books by assorted authors. The first book in the series, *The Maze of Bones* (2008) was written by Rick Riordan and published by Scholastic Press (Amazon.com, 2012).

last year 'living at game conferences'" (Deahl, 2009, para. 12). Similar to the "large publisher" interviewed (see Chapter 4), Holton had definite impressions about how young people interact with technology, which she then applied to her book-based projects:

> As each new generation comes up, they interact with technology and the Web in a totally different way than adults do. And what we call multitasking is not, to them. They move in and out seamlessly. They can be listening to music, chatting with their friends, looking at something online, reading. They did not grow up pre-Internet. I continue to think about where books fit into their lives (Andriani, 2008, para. 3).

Publishers of multiplatform books are convinced that young readers are multitasking while reading—and already immersed in multiple media platforms—whether or not the "books" they read are as well. *The Amanda Project* was started at Fourth Story Media, but before publication of the books, the series was sold to HarperCollins. While those creating digital formats for young people are quite convinced of their mission as evidenced by Lisa Holton's quote above, findings from interviews of two assigned readers and a focus group of ten teens revealed some surprising attitudes about their leisure reading preferences.

Teen Readers of *The Amanda Project*

Aside from legal age restrictions, in terms of determining what the appropriate age is for the site, two thirteen-year-old female readers were assigned to the first book in the series. The first reader, "A," attended a private school in the Southeastern United States. After reading *The Amanda Project* and looking at the website, she described the books as "inauthentic," saying that the characters in the books played on "a lot on typical teenagers' stereotypes." She also reported that the books would appeal more to middle-school-aged children than to high-school-aged children, because the characters in the book are only in ninth grade ("A" interview, February 5, 2012). This reader preferred reading non-fiction over fiction, but she felt that the site was interesting, and might attract those who like "those types of books [i.e., fiction]." If a non-fiction book that she liked had a related website, she would consider participating. "A" got her book recommendations from friends, parents, Amazon.com, and B&N. "A" was not active on many social media sites, and did not use Facebook or Tumblr, but she corresponded with friends via email and AOL Instant

Messenger (AIM). In general, when she went on websites, she did not read the EULAs, and she was not aware that content posted on *The Amanda Project* site could be used by the publisher.

The second reader, "O", who attended a public middle school in the Northeastern United States ("O" interview, November 5, 2011), reported that the site was "cool," and liked how readers could get feedback from each other. However, similar to "A," she also described the story as being too young for readers of her age, even though she was a year younger than the characters in the book. She said that she was not confident about her own writing skills, and as a self-described shy person, she liked that readers could participate anonymously, as she felt that a "lot of teens feel like they'll be judged" by their peers (which, in fact, they are anyway, as evidenced by the inter-member squabbling described above). "O" usually got book recommendations from her school librarian. While she thought online book-related discussions were interesting, "O" had never posted information online because her parents do not want her to do so. She was aware of privacy issues and, like "A," did not frequent social networking sites. Also like "A," "O" did not read the EULAs of sites, but she was aware of them. "O" thought the Amanda story was interesting, and hoped that the next book would say more about Amanda's parents. She thought that "Amanda is weird—so out there," and hoped that "they clear things up in the next book" ("O" interview, November, 2011).

Teen Focus Group on Digital Reading

A focus group interview was also conducted during August 2011 with ten high school students, comprised of five males and five females, between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. These teens were all fulfilling a high school graduation service requirement by volunteering in the library, and were recruited by the supervising librarian. The library was in an affluent suburb in the Northeastern United States. Half of the teens owned some sort of digital reading device (such as iPads, Nooks, or Kindles). When asked about how they participated in books online, several of these teens had participated in writing fan fiction (mostly *Harry Potter*), but none had heard about *The Amanda Project*. The teen librarian had bought a copy of the book for the library because of all the initial hype, but had not been impressed with it. Tellingly, as teen readers confirmed, she was also unsure of where to shelve it: whether it belonged in the children's section or in the teen section, and this points to a problem with transmedia formats—how to classify them. As Weedon, Miller, Moorhead, and Pearce (2014) write,

the "high levels of media convergence [and rapid rate of change and evolution of such media] that characterise the current marketplace make any attempt at a simple, neat taxonimisation of media texts difficult" (p. 112).

Some had read books in the *Skeleton Creek* series by Patrick Carman, which required readers to read approximately twenty pages and then watch a video on a website. Some of the teens read other people's reviews on Amazon.com. When asked about what else they were usually doing when they read for pleasure, this group contradicted publisher (and *Amanda Project* founder) Lisa Holton's views on teens's reading habits. Rather than constantly multitasking while reading in digital formats, these teens preferred to do their leisure reading uninterrupted. They did not like to go on Facebook or the computer while reading. They liked to just read, and most read at bedtime. The participants of this study also reported that leisure reading was best conducted in print formats, perhaps because print enabled a type of escapism not possible with digital devices.

These findings point to a discrepancy between publishers' assumptions about how teens read and about how these young people perceived their own reading preferences. During the focus group, the teens expressed almost nostalgic sentiments about the materiality of printed books, praising sensory components of reading: the smell of books, the ability to fold down a page to mark a spot, as well as how reading print allows readers to note progress of how much has been read in comparison to how much remains to be read. But these readers also expressed resistance to the notion of a borderless book that required participation on multiple media platforms.

For book recommendations, these readers tended to look on library shelves. If a book they liked came from a particular spot on the shelf, they looked in the same area for others by the same author or in the same genre. One participant noted that she got recommendations from her mother. Also, similar to the two assigned readers of *The Amanda Project* above, and as assumed about the online participants in general, focus group participants unanimously reported not reading EULAs before participating in online activities. When asked what motivated them to participate, for example in writing fan fiction, they noted that teens are willing to contribute content to "see their name in print," for "fame," for the pleasure of "getting published." One teen added that people "write fan fiction because they want to change the story, because they're not really satisfied with it, so to get that satisfied feeling with the story, they write their own" (Focus group interview, August 18, 2011).

Sample responses from this group of teens about reading are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Teen focus group responses to reading in digital formats

Focus group process	*Answers*
After asking who reads on digital devices, individuals were asked about the devices they named. In response to a question about how he liked reading on his Nook, one male teen said:	"Yeah, it's ok, I mean I still like regular books better"
Another male teen described how he liked reading on his iPad:	"Not so much, I just don't—it's not satisfying to me. It's just like—you feel like—it's like you're researching kind of when you're on a computer kind of thing—doesn't seem real. I just like regular [print] books"
Reasons why they preferred print formats over digital. One male teen said:	"I definitely like being able to turn a page and like fold down a page to make a book mark [they like to see evidence of their progress as they read]"
A female teen said:	"I like the smell of books!"
A male teen said:	"Yeah, I like new books"
Smell was seconded by another female teen:	"Yeah, you get that smell!"
In response to what else these teens do while reading, teens responded that they did not do anything else because they read [fiction] in order to relax. A male teen said:	"You're in your comfort zone [when you read]. Comfy wumfy"
Another male teen said:	"You're also like into the book so don't want to do anything else—you want to keep reading and just find out what happens"
Another male teen said:	And if the phone rings: "You kind of ignore it—can't someone else take the phone? And then you get the evil look why didn't you pick up the phone it's right there?"
View of the future (understands implicitly that print will disappear):	"I feel like these new technologies are not really appealing to our generation right now—because we were reading these [print] books when we were younger—I'm pretty sure that by the next few generations—books will be gone"

Source: Martens (2012), p. 264

Granted, this group of ten teens represented a small segment of the overall teen population, and the results are not generalizable. Additionally, the fact that these teens were library volunteers, and as such, likely to be a bookish group compared to the teen population at large, might have resulted in their reported passion for printed books. But, overall, while

the focus group teens were nominally interested in digital formats of reading (especially in cases of school work or non-fiction reading), when it came to their leisure space, they were critical of attempts by publishers to encroach and capitalize on their participation. The two assigned readers of *The Amanda Project* also added that the story was full of stereotypes, and that they did not automatically embrace this highly commodified book.

Perhaps leisure reading in print formats represents a form of resistance for these readers—a way to temporarily block technology from their lives, to remove themselves from the pressures of always being available on social media, via email, or by phone. As Janice Radway's (1984) romance readers read to escape the monotony of their daily lives, these young adult readers could arguably have been carving out print reading time as a way to escape pressures presented by ubiquitous technology and by expectations of constant multitasking. The resistance among this group was not gendered, but it might have been age-based. More research with a larger sample is necessary in order to examine whether this phenomenon is limited to library volunteers, or to this particular suburb, or if indeed it is farther reaching. In addition, repeating the same focus group study on an ongoing basis, as technology continues to evolve and becomes more prevalent, might produce different results. But despite these drawbacks, the focus group interview did reveal something about what teens—at least this particular group of teens—thought about reading in digital formats in 2012.

Since then, other researchers, such as Norwegian researchers Åse Kristine Tveit and Anne Mangen's (2014) comparing tween's reading in print and digital formats, have found similar results about the appeal of print. Given the reading support that printed books provide through the linear structure of the narrative, Phillips (2014) advocates for what he calls *slow books*:

> If books in digital form enable us to read faster, this may not necessarily be a good thing. To relax, to engage in deep thought are not encouraged by rushing through at speed. Just as we have a movement for slow food—in reaction to fast food—we should be advocating slow books—read aloud to children, broadcast on the radio, or taken at a leisurely pace in whatever format (p. 45).

Alexa Internet Analysis: Comparing Case Studies

Before all four books in the series had been published, it was clear that there were problems. Although *The Amanda Project* was initially planned as an eight-book series, it soon became apparent that it would not become popular on the scale of blockbuster bestsellers for young adults. As a result,

Table 6.2 Comparison (2012) of ranking and demographics of *RandomBuzzers.com*, *TwilightSaga.com*, and *StephenieMeyer.com*

	Random-Buzzers site	*Twilight Saga site*	*The Amanda Project site*	*Stephenie Meyer's official site*
Global rank (determined by a combination of page views and visitors)	396,006	266,251	4,237,703	75,782
Local rank (US)	19,809	92,581	n/a	19,136
Reputation (based on # of sites linking in)	215	985	120	4307
Audience snapshot	Mostly female, ages 18–24. Most have children. Most have no college education. Most browse from home.	Mostly female, 18–24 year-olds. Most have some college. Most are browsing from home or school. Those with children are commensurate with general population.	Mostly female Age group 25–34 is underrepresented. Males are underrepresented. Those with grad school degrees are overrepresented. People with children are overrepresented.	18–35 year-olds. Females "greatly" overrepresented, males are "greatly underrepresented." People with children are overrepresented. Most browse from home, and those with some college are overrepresented.

Source: Data compiled April 20, 2012, from Alexa Internet

the series was cancelled after the fourth book. Web analytics were used in order to compare participation on the case study sites of this book, and also on a site known to be popular among young people, Stephenie Meyer's official site (*StephenieMeyer.com*, n.d.). Alexa Internet, owned by *Amazon.com*, was founded in 1996, and crawls the web in order to create snapshots thereof (Alexa, "Technology," n.d.). According to Alexa Internet data, the comparison showed that the *StephenieMeyer.com* site generated far more traffic than *TwilightSaga.com*, or *RandomBuzzers The Amanda Project* site performed far worse in terms of traffic. Ironically, while *The Amanda Project* book series was intended for teenage girls, the primary users were women with children and post-graduate degrees.[10] Details appear in Table 6.2.

[10] The description of the core audience for *The Amanda Project* site leads me to make certain assumptions about a particular frequent site visitor.

In the "Global rank" numbers above, websites are ranked in terms of how many views they got globally. A lower number indicates a higher rank, which places *StephenieMeyer.com* in first place, *Twilight Saga* in second place, and *RandomBuzzers* in third. *The Amanda Project* ranked literally millions of sites below the closest one at number 4,237,703 of all websites globally. The number of sites linking in indicates how many other sites point to these particular websites. Again, *The Amanda Project* had only 120 sites pointed to it, compared to 4307 pointed to *stepheniemeyer.com*.

The End of *Amanda*: The Life Cycle of a Multiplatform Book (2009–2012)

As indicated by the Alexa Internet results above, *The Amanda Project* was not getting many views. As Fiske (1987) writes, "The attempt to produce a culture for others, whether that otherness be defined in terms of class, gender, race, nation, or whatever, can never be finally successful, for culture can only be produced from within, not from outside" (p. 517). As a multiplatform book, *The Amanda Project* was not able to build enough of a fan base of "culture produced from within" to make it successful.

This study was conducted at an early stage of multiplatform books, as print formats started expanding into online and e-reader formats. Multiple longitudinal studies would better confirm whether publishers' projections about children's emerging reading habits materialized, or whether young readers will actually resist using e-readers and digital formats for leisure reading. What can be determined already as a result of this study is that a poorly written series will not succeed, whether it is solely in print or in an attractive multiplatform format. The teen readers of *The Amanda Project* who were interviewed for this study were overall not impressed, and especially felt that the series was too young for them. The series initially struggled to establish itself. The first book, *invisible i* [sic], was published in 2009, but the second book, *Revealed,* was not released until June 2011, which is a long time for fans to wait for the second installment. The third, *Shattered,* was released in December 2011, and the fourth, *Unraveled*, was released in June 2012. While the first book came out first in hardcover, subsequent books in the series went straight to paperback, which was perhaps a harbinger of the demise of the series. In the United States, only hardcover books are covered in review journals, so publishers usually prefer to release books in hardcover first, with paperback editions following a year or more later.

Table 6.3 Comparing rankings of books in *The Amanda Project* series

Title	*Amazon.com ranking number (of all books sold)*
Book one: *Invisible i*	520,341
Book two: *Revealed*	480,443
Book three: *Shattered*	402,996
Book four: *Unraveled*	315,682

Note: Amazon.com rankings are from August 13, 2012, and the most recent editions (paperback) were ranked

Kirkus Reviews, a prime (gatekeeper) review journal of books for young readers, described the first book in 2009 as follows: "The ending has no resolutions for any of the story lines, which bodes well for the series but not for frustrated readers who have sat through 300 pages to get there—but they can play at the website, right? A baldly predatory attempt to get into teens' wallets" (*Kirkus*, "Predatory Attempt," 2009). User reviews on Goodreads[11] were mixed, ranging from "it just didn't come together," to "Way to cliche [sic]" to "better than I expected" to "pretty good" (Goodreads, "Pretty Good," 2012). Reviews of *The Amanda Project* books continue into 2015, ranging from: "This book was a waste of precious reading time" (Goodreads, "Pamela," 2015), to "Amazing! Well expressed, nice written. Too mystery. Waiting for more!" (Goodreads, "Fay Wildflower," 2015).

The series was planned as an eight-book series, but perhaps in view of production problems and mediocre reviews, the following note was printed at the back of the third book: "The Amanda Project Concludes with *Unraveled* ..." (Valentino & Stolarz, 2011) indicating that the fourth book would be the last in the series.

An indication of how the books in the series were selling could be seen on Amazon Best Sellers, which ranks books in terms of sales numbers (Amazon.com, "Rankings," 2012). Rankings of the first three books in the series is compared to all books sold by Amazon.com (including adult titles) as of June 12, 2012, and results are shown in Table 6.3.

In comparison, in 2012, the mass-market paperback edition of the first book in *The Twilight Saga, Twilight*, was ranked as number 4,897 of all

[11] Goodreads, a social book reviewing site, was launched in 2007. For more information, please see: http://www.goodreads.com/about/us

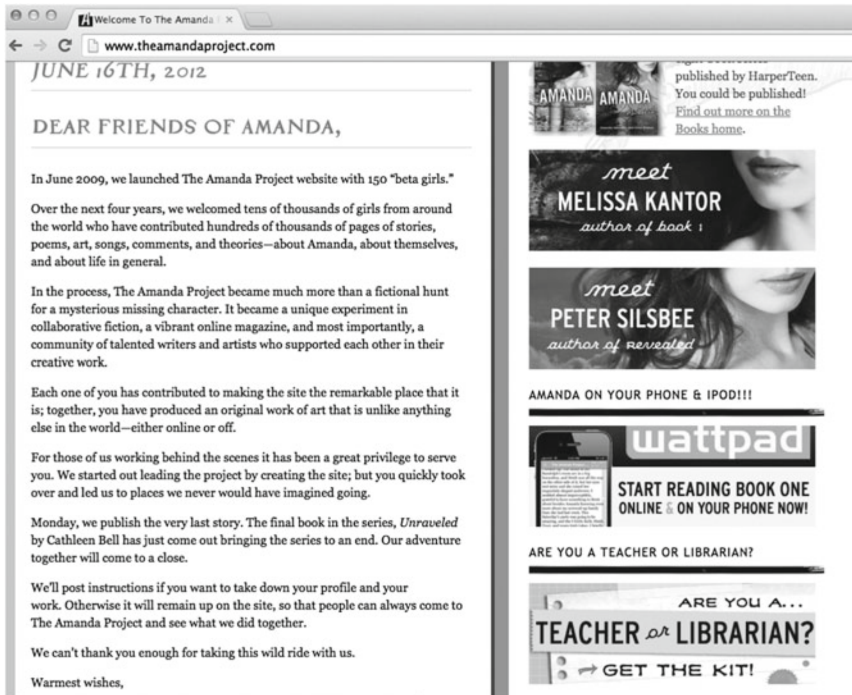
books sold on *Amazon.com*—significantly further up the list. Therefore, for publishers using digital platforms to engage with their readership, a key challenge is to remain current on the latest technology and social media platforms used by young people. In 2009, the publishers created book-related websites for popular fiction; but by 2012, the audiences had migrated onto Facebook or Tumblr, similar to what happened with *The Twilight Saga* site as noted in Chapter 5. The problem with "pull" media, such as websites, is that readers have to remember to go onto these sites. With "push" media, such as social media, updates automatically appear in users' newsfeeds. *The Amanda Project*'s Facebook page (only one) had 4654 likes as of May 30, 2012 (which increased to 4,669 as of June 12, 2012). On June 5, 2015, there were still 4,234 likes, but the most recent post was from over three years ago, on March 19, 2012. This represents a very small Facebook presence, compared to that of *Twilight*. On May 30, 2012, *The Twilight Saga* book page alone had 3,701,966 "likes" and the movie page had 33,781,321.

Already experienced with multiplatform books as the publisher of *The 39 Clues*, *Skeleton Creek*, and in 2012, the *Pottermore*[12] website, Scholastic is one of the big six transnational publishing companies.[13] As the only one focusing exclusively on the juvenile market, it has emerged as a leader in digital formats for young readers. In 2012, Scholastic launched *Storia*, its online imprint and store for book-related web applications (apps) (O'Brien, *Endgadget*, 2012). It remains to be seen whether readers will eventually embrace digital formats as much as publishers hope that they will; but at a time when publishers must branch into new areas in order to seek profits that elude them from print formats, digital formats have become the venture of the moment. Book apps have become their own controversial and oft-criticized format.

In the end, there was not enough productive immaterial labor conducted by readers to warrant keeping the site alive, and it was "closed" (as shown in Fig. 6.4). On June 16, 2012, *The Amanda Project*'s moderators posted a letter to its participants.

[12] *Pottermore* is J. K. Rowling's online continuation site for fans of *Harry Potter*, launched in 2012.

[13] The big five publishers are, according to *Library Journal* (2013): Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Penguin Random House, and Simon & Schuster. In the case of books for young people, Scholastic must also be included in this list, making it a big six in children's publishing. Retrieved from http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/09/publishing/now-there-are-5/#



JUNE 16TH, 2012

DEAR FRIENDS OF AMANDA,

In June 2009, we launched The Amanda Project website with 150 "beta girls."

Over the next four years, we welcomed tens of thousands of girls from around the world who have contributed hundreds of thousands of pages of stories, poems, art, songs, comments, and theories—about Amanda, about themselves, and about life in general.

In the process, The Amanda Project became much more than a fictional hunt for a mysterious missing character. It became a unique experiment in collaborative fiction, a vibrant online magazine, and most importantly, a community of talented writers and artists who supported each other in their creative work.

Each one of you has contributed to making the site the remarkable place that it is; together, you have produced an original work of art that is unlike anything else in the world—either online or off.

For those of us working behind the scenes it has been a great privilege to serve you. We started out leading the project by creating the site; but you quickly took over and led us to places we never would have imagined going.

Monday, we publish the very last story. The final book in the series, *Unraveled* by Cathleen Bell has just come out bringing the series to an end. Our adventure together will come to a close.

We'll post instructions if you want to take down your profile and your work. Otherwise it will remain up on the site, so that people can always come to The Amanda Project and see what we did together.

We can't thank you enough for taking this wild ride with us.

Warmest wishes,

Fig. 6.4 The end of *Amanda* (*Amanda*, 2012)

This letter indicated that the site would remain open, yet it was unclear if it would be in the publisher's best interest in the long run to keep the site running. To do so would require an ongoing investment in hosting the site, and in paying moderators, given the tendency for users' excorporation (as evidenced on *The Twilight Saga* site), or users' resistance, as seen on *The Amanda Project* site. Of course, the reader participants of *The Amanda Project* were not pleased with this decision, as demonstrated in Figure 6.5. below.

These responses from teen participants seemed heartfelt and sincere, and they expressed a sense of dismay that the site was ending. An appropriately named member called "Fight4theSite" wrote: "TAP is falling apart at the seams. WHY?" which validated the sense of community that existed on the site among its members (even if that community was too small for the publisher to remain engaged). This sense of community seemed to be what drew readers back to the site.

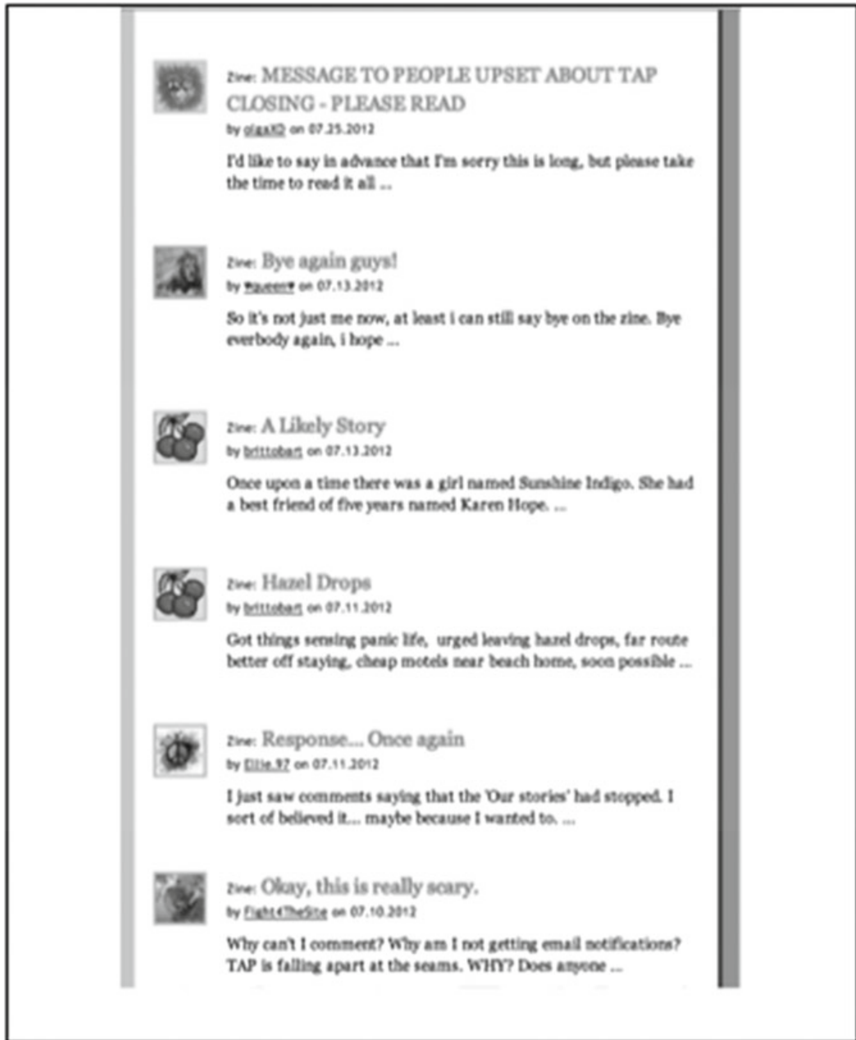


Fig. 6.5 Readers respond to publisher's decision to end *The Amanda Project* (Amanda Project, "Message," 2012).

Regardless of the fact that the site owner's letter stated that the site would be kept active, participants were already experiencing limited access to it. The participants expressed their uncertainty about what would happen to the site, and were frustrated about perceived future limitations on participation. They enjoyed having and exercising their agency, so as soon as the publisher decided to stop, their agency ended. Like the teens interviewed for this chapter, who claimed never to read EULAs, the site participants probably did not read *The Amanda Project's* EULAs either, and therefore, did not understand that their "agency" here was tenuous, at best. They had neither ownership nor control over their own posted content, nor on discussion board conversations. Friendships and communities established through the site could vanish at any time, as users could be banned, all at the discretion of the publisher. This experience emphasizes the ephemeral quality of participating in digital platforms, and highlights the ultimate control that publishers have over proprietary sites.

Conclusion

Multiplatform books are expensive to start up and to maintain. The field of publishing is a business first and a cultural institution second. When a book series such as *The Amanda Project* is not profitable, the publisher has no incentive to keep publishing it and maintaining an online presence. When print editions of books go out of print, eventually a publisher's stock of such books is pulped and recycled. In cases where a book or series amasses a *Twilight*-sized audience (because fans are not ready to leave and because the site serves the publisher's interest of providing advertising for a backlist series), the websites must continue to be maintained long after the initial popularity of the series has waned. As a trailblazing multiplatform book series, *The Amanda Project*'s creators had no model to follow and could not have anticipated the ongoing levels of moderation that would be required. This represents a larger than usual financial investment in a series for a publisher. With a book series that was not contributing to the publisher's economic goals, the owners of *The Amanda Project* site decided to be proactive in terminating their responsibilities and costs.

Dresang and Kotrla's studies on children and reading, such as one at Florida State University with middle school students and digitally designed non-fiction texts, showed that in the case of non-fiction, many students responded favorably to digital formats (Dresang & Kotrla, 2009, p. 102). This also corresponds to the preferences of teenagers interviewed here as

part of a focus group, who claimed to like reading non-fiction in digital formats. Those creating multiplatform works of fiction for young readers anticipated that readers would respond as favorably to reading fiction as other readers did to reading non-fiction in digital formats (as in Dresang and Kotrla's study above); but this was not the case with *The Amanda Project*.

Despite the overall weak response in the marketplace to *The Amanda Project* and its inability to achieve enough longevity for all eight of the planned books in the series to appear, multiplatform books continue to be published, and those producing them have much to learn from *The Amanda Project*. Publishers such as Scholastic's Storia imprint, and Bloomsbury's Spark (launched in 2013), have already made enormous investments in these new products. Yet, with regard to readers' consumption of books, as more digital formats are introduced, something about teens' leisure reading experience seems to be missing in the transition. Fan culture, as constructed by a publisher as in the case of *The Amanda Project*, is not nearly as effective as the type of grassroots fan culture that arose organically around a popular series such as *The Twilight Saga*. Free, online resources, such as Alexa Internet analysis and Amazon.com sales rankings, both revealed *The Amanda Project* to be a small player as far as the overall world of Young Adult fiction is concerned. HarperCollins, who most likely had their own access to more sophisticated, paid web analytics, discontinued the series, and the participatory portions of the site were reduced.

As Fiske (1987) wrote, in creating cultural commodities, two economies are at play—the financial and the cultural. While *The Amanda Project* had strong support from the financial economy that established it—via the printed books, the associated website, and the publisher's marketing campaigns, "meanings, pleasures, and social identities" (p. 506) within the cultural economy of what is exchanged and circulated, cannot be bought. In other words, in order for a cultural commodity to be successful, it must be accepted into the cultural economy. Unfortunately, for *Amanda*, this did not happen. While there was plenty of financial economy involved in *The Amanda Project*, part of the reason for its demise was that it was not embraced by a large enough scale of fan-readers, and subsequently, the cultural economy did not gain enough traction. When economic and cultural frameworks collide (Fiske, 1987), unsuccessfully in this case—economics prevail.

Previously as gatekeepers, librarians had coveted access to teens, which publishers sought in order to market books to this population. This, in

turn, placed librarians in a powerful position as arbiters of taste. In addition to their access to teens, librarians also served as primary reviewers and awarders of books, and as such, they could help influence the success of a book. New technologies of production are shifting configurations of how books are disseminated to teens and how literary content is produced and packaged.

A Note on Preservation

While it is possible to archive websites and digital files, it is not yet clear what publishers are doing to preserve digital portions of their multiplatform books. If, in fifty years, a researcher wants to study early twenty-first century multiplatform books, will he or she be able to do so? Also, what if someone wants to read them? In the case of books like *Skeleton Creek,* where the printed book represents just half of the story, what happens when the technology evolves beyond our current websites and links, and the videos are no longer accessible? Ironically, it seems that despite the latest technological advancements, the printed book may be the version of the story that survives—which should please the resistant teens of the focus group. In 2015, *The Amanda Project* site remains up. A login from 2012 still works and while very limited content has been posted since 2014, from the publisher and from the participants, the possibility of *Amanda* moving to a new participatory platform, Wattpad, could mean that the site could be resuscitated. Libraries have historically served as archives of our cultural output. At this point, at which no one seems to be archiving sites associated with books, it seems that such archiving tasks should naturally fall into the realm of work associated with libraries.

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CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

From Anne Carroll Moore's work at the New York Public Library at the turn of the twentieth century, to Margaret A. Edwards at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore in the mid-twentieth century, to the "radical" teen librarians of the 1970s, youth services librarianship has always been aimed towards improving the lives of young people through literature. Since the fields of children's literature and children's librarianship were—and are—interconnected, both fields reflect their times. Today, librarianship for young people is about giving them autonomy and agency, and the books published reflect similar values.

Evolving digital technologies create spaces where young peoples' voices can be heard, and the three cases of this book demonstrate progressive expansions of the type of interaction enabled in such digital spaces. Publishers' participatory reviewing sites that began around 2007, such as the *RandomBuzzers.com* site analyzed herein, allowed a new way for young people to connect with others around books in an online social space. Here, teens were given agency and respect, as their literary opinions were sought as expert book critics and reviewers. Disintermediation on such sites meant that publishers have an opportunity to connect directly with their reading audiences. The teens were driven back to the sites because they received access to authors in a way that would not have been possible with physical book tours and author visits.

The *TwilightSaga.com* site supported an expanded form of fan participation. The site encouraged submissions of fan-created content (which of course could be repurposed by the publisher as desired), and in doing

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so, established a new model for marketing to teens. Between Stephenie Meyer's social engagement with fans on her personal website and on Hachette's "official" *TwilightSaga.com* site, fans had access to this best-selling author. As such, traditional marketing methods were replaced by participatory "prosumers" who supported publishers' marketing via their peer-to-peer engagement with the author and with each other.

RandomBuzzers, *TwilightSaga.com*, and *The Amanda Project* each present new models of engaging teens. *The Amanda Project* builds upon the marketing model from *RandomBuzzers* and *TwilightSaga.com*, and adds a new model for content production. By directly soliciting users' content for future books in the series, *The Amanda Project* further expanded upon the progression of digital capabilities in engaging teens around books. In theory, by building upon the work-for-hire model started by Edward Stratemeyer and the Stratemeyer Syndicate, *The Amanda Project* model could eventually be used to create a series that is written (free-of-charge) by participatory readers, instead of by work-for-hire authors.

Ongoing Challenge to Participatory Formats: Moderation

As we have seen herein, site moderation increasingly became the Achilles heel for publishers hosting early participatory sites around books. Fans on *TwilightSaga.com* turned the site into a necropolis of bad behavior, and participants on *The Amanda Project* site were censored—at least when it came to using rude language. While *RandomBuzzer's* moderation focused on keeping content free from abusive language, moderation on *Figment,* the site that evolved out of *RandomBuzzers.com*, presented an evolutionary change, as it seemingly added a focus on the users' well-being. For example, under the "community" tab, the site listed descriptions of what participants should do if a *Figment* user posted worrisome personal details:

> *I'm worried about a fellow Figgie (self-harm/depression/abuse)—what should I do?*
>
> If you are concerned about another Figgie's health and well-being send their profile URL along with a screenshot attached of the chat you are concerned about to safety@figment.com (*Figment*, "FAQs," 2014).

While this digital connectedness allows readers to participate in every stage of the book, from co-creating, to reviewing and disseminating

(marketing), to consuming, it also lets authors have almost instant reader feedback as they write:

> Authors can keep in touch with their audiences whilst writing their books and obtain feedback on material and plotlines. They can have access to real-time sales data, for example through Amazon, to help determine which of their books demands a sequel. They can ask their readers to suggest or vote on the best title for their work; and fans can see on a dashboard display how many words of their next work have been written. Given access to the data now being gathered by ebook sellers, authors would have the opportunity to check up on how their books are being read, and gain feedback on which pages are skipped and which passages cause their readers to linger. (Phillips 2014, p. 18)

In order to demonstrate progression of reader interaction around books as afforded in digital environments, this book focused on three specific examples, but other examples existed concurrently. As a contemporary blockbuster appealing to both boys and girls, *Harry Potter* is the elephant in the room. Its unparalleled success in multiple media formats has generated academic courses, publications, and a conference. This means that the book series and Rowling's interactive *Pottermore* site could be the subject of multiple books in their own right. *Pottermore* validates many of the concerns—especially around site moderation—raised by the case studies of this book, and a relaunch of the site coincided with the conclusion of this book.

J. K. Rowling, creator of the *Harry Potter* universe and author of the books in the series, debuted her *Pottermore* site with a limited release in July 2011. The first rendition of the site was originally a partnership between the author and Sony. This partnership ended in 2014, and a new, redesigned site launched on September 22, 2015. The initial design provided fans with access to Rowling, insider scoops, and opportunities to engage in game-related activities surrounding the series. While a primary goal of the original site may have been to create a participatory venue for *Harry Potter* fans, certainly another equally important purpose was to exert control over the digital rights to the series. As such, *Pottermore* provides an example of how one author was able to take control of her content in the digital realm. *Harry Potter* e-books are available for purchase on Amazon.com, but once there, readers are sent to the *Pottermore* website (Amazon.com, n.d.) to complete the transaction.

This is significant, because it represents the first time an author has been able to exert some control of his/her intellectual property on Amazon.

Instead of earning its full share from sales of the e-books, Amazon.com is reduced to earning “an affiliates’ fee from this transaction, much less than it would expect to receive selling an ebook through normal conditions” (Jones, 2012, para. 4). Of course Rowling’s sales history is beyond compare, and allows for her level of control. Therefore, even though her example is ground-breaking, the future will tell if this is an isolated example, or if it becomes a harbinger of change in Amazon’s business practices. Either way, critics of Amazon were impressed with Rowling’s accomplishment. According to Jones (2012), “With one flick of his wand Harry Potter is redefining the digital experience for the many, while diverting the mighty Amazon. It’s the boy wizard's best trick yet” (para. 8).

Rowling is notoriously protective of the *Harry Potter* universe. She has been involved in several lawsuits protecting unauthorized use of, and modification of, her characters: (1) from injunctions to keep books from being released ahead of time; (2) to attempts to block teen fan fiction, including fifteen-year-old Claire Field’s *harrypotterguide.co.uk* (McCarthy 2000), and Heather Lawver’s online school newspaper called *The Daily Prophet* (Dargis & Scott, 2011); to (3) to blocking the Harry Potter Lexicon website by webmaster Steve Vander Ark. Post-lawsuit, Vander Ark was allowed to publish *The Lexicon: An Unauthorized Guide to Harry Potter Fiction and Related Materials*, but it was a shortened version of the original. In response to such lawsuits, *Harry Potter*’s young fans asserted their power. When Warner Brother’s attempted to shut down sites by Lawver and other young fans, Lawver helped start a boycott of Potter merchandise, which became known as the PotterWar (Dargis & Scott, 2011). As Lawver demonstrated with her grassroots boycott, Potter fans are sizable in number, fiercely loyal, and highly vocal.

One of the great appeals of commercial sites such as *TwilightSaga.com*, *The Amanda Project*, and *Pottermore*, is the agency afforded to young fans. But for site owners, that agency must be carefully balanced with moderation, and online supervision quickly becomes one of the biggest challenges in the day-to-day operation of book-related sites for young people. In April 2015, *Pottermore* stopped allowing user comments in order to curb the need for moderation. Andrew Sims (2015) elaborated in his blogpost: “*Pottermore* has removed the ability to comment, upload/view fan art, and update your status. The site purposely did not give users any warning about the removal of these features because they didn’t want people who incorrectly use them to take advantage of the news before closing” (Sims, 2015, para. 3). Fans were not pleased by this development, and in reaction to it they used Twitter to express their frustrations. Similar

to frustrations about the loss of community expressed by *The Amanda Project* participants when that site shut down, a tweet from *Pottermore* fan Kaydee King @sassylemon123 on April 14, 2015 summarized what surely was the displeasure of many: "I'm so upset that @pottermore has removed the comments, I didn't get to say bye to some of the people I cared and loved. #deadpottermore" [sic] (King, Twitter, 2015). Despite fan discontent, by mid-April, there was no indication that *Pottermore* site owners had responded to fans.

In anticipation of the September 22, 2015 relaunch, the site owners attempted to address potentially disgruntled participants in advance by offering a consolation prize on the *Pottermore* Facebook page. This prize was a downloadable certificate of participation: "As we prepare to move beyond the gates of Hogwarts, we want to thank you for sharing the Pottermore experience with us so far. Here is your Pottermore Certificate, a personalised, printable memento for you, which is available until 1:00 pm (British Summer Time) on 16 September" (*Pottermore*, Facebook page, September 3, 2015). The certificate was available prior to the September 16 shutdown (before the relaunch).

Additionally, in an effort to communicate with readers and retain *Pottermore* participants (new and old), "The Pottermore Correspondent" attempted to justify the relaunch: "What's this shiny new website? It's the digital heart of the Wizarding World, that's what" (*Pottermore* correspondent, 2015, para. 1). In anticipation of fans' questions about the shutdown of the previous site, site moderators posted: "Where did the old one go? Ah, website heaven? We've held the ultimate House Cup, postponed Potions class, and shut down the original *Pottermore.com*. The honest-to-Merlin reason for doing that? We have so much more to give you; writing, movies, plays, books, characters, places, backstories, and it's rumoured that discovering your very own Patronus is also in the works …" (*Pottermore* correspondent 2015, para. 9).

Both Twitter and Facebook are significant sources of fans' comments. As of October 1, 2015, there were 730,078 "Likes" on the *Pottermore* Facebook page. After the relaunch, fans reacted on social media, especially Twitter. Within forty-eight hours of the relaunch, over 5,000 tweets appeared on Twitter. While many were excited about the new content and design, others were deeply disappointed. Two days after the relaunch, starting on September 24, 2015, a hashtag "#BringBackOldPottermore" appeared, with posts from around the world in English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Russian, demonstrating the international reach of *Pottermore*. Many fans were not pleased. Those who had participated in gaming features of

the earlier design wondered where all their "(virtual) worldly Pottermore possessions—like their wands, trunks, potion ingredients, and their pets—would go once Pottermore changes" (Devoe, 2015, para. 7).

Two themes emerged in the tweets. First, those who had enjoyed games on the site posted tweets such as:

> @zoe_holdt: Not that I hate the new #POTTERMORE … But what's this blog-ish design where i can't even play the story? AND I COULDN'T FINISH MY POTION!!
> @priyanka_k: My house! My badges! My potions class! My Galleons! How could they?! I need my #pottermore!
> @DutchDisaster: Wait so now you can't get yourself sorted on @pottermore anymore?!?!?!??! It's the only reason I visited the site … #pottermore

Other fans who felt robbed of their sense of belonging in the Potter universe wrote:

> @ksniehaus: the new #pottermore makes me feel like i got kicked out of hogwarts
> @hebaia995: I miss brewing potions collecting points for my own house plz #BringBackOldPottermore I feel like a MUGGLE now@pottermore @ oldpottermore

A tweeter, @mrsexsherlockd, summed up much user sentiment by simply writing: "fucking hate new #pottermore."

However, unlike their lack of reactions to the April announcements, *Pottermore* site owners acknowledged fans. When fans expressed their frustrations on social media, "*Pottermore*'s social media team used its defense against the dark arts skills to mollify unhappy fans" (Ross, 2015, para. 4). The day after the relaunch, the *Pottermore* correspondent posted a response titled: "Oof. You have had a lot of things to say about the new *Pottermore*" (*Pottermore* correspondent, "Oof," 2015). In this post, the *Pottermore* correspondent highlighted a range of user comments, and offered answers—and in some cases, consolations:

> Isabella Guerzoni @Hey_beells
> [Tweet]
> #POTTERMORE IS A BLOG NOW??? WHAT HAPPENED TO MAKING SPELLS AND BREWING POTIONS?? @jk_rowling im sorry, but i like the old version better : 9:48 am—23 Sep. 2015
> [Response] Isabella Guerzoni @Hey_beells

> [Response]
> I'm so sorry you miss the old version of Pottermore and I do understand. It was great fun. But I bet you two Butterbeers and a Chocolate Frog that you'll come to love our new site more.
> (*Pottermore* correspondent, "Oof," 2015)

It is impossible to know exactly how many participants there were on the original *Pottermore* site, but according to *The Bookseller*, *Pottermore* maintains a staff of thirty-five people (Jones, 2015). This staff size approximates staff size at a medium-sized publishing company, which would indicate that they are supporting a sizable online audience. The newly designed site offered previews of new writing by Rowling, marketing and new content for *Harry Potter* (such as a forthcoming play), as well as marketing for new books by Rowling. As part of the relaunch, a new story about the background of the Potter family was released free-of-charge on September 21, 2015.

According to Susan Jurevics, *Pottermore* CEO:

> When *Pottermore* first started, it was positioned for the next generation of readers, and that next generation was almost by default tagged to be children. So the current site gamified the content, making it very simplistic in terms of collecting things and casting spells. That was appropriate for children, but that wasn't actually the core audience (Jones, 2015, para. 5).

As such, addressing the core audience was a key reason for a redesign. An analysis of the original *Pottermore* site found that users tended to be young adult and female, and tended to use mobile devices rather than desktop computers. The first *Pottermore* site appeared in 2011. Although the iPad was launched in April 2010 and smartphones were available, in 2011, iPads and tablets were not yet widely used. By 2015, advances in smartphone technology and the broader availability of sophisticated phones and tablets meant that more young people were participating via mobile platforms. Logically, it follows that the redesigned site presented a shift to mobile platforms for non-linear reading, eliminated gaming—including the very popular sorting hat feature—and disabled comments. It also shifted the focus from the youngest readers of the series to those older readers who had grown up with the books. Games and other participatory elements were replaced with additional back-stories, information about the Potters, and news about the latest Potter-related products. The contents are Rowling-centered, and the site provides her with a forum

for communicating directly with fans in a controlled and comment-free environment.

According to Jones (2015), Anna Rafferty, a *Pottermore* executive, said the new site would feature three times as much fresh content as that sourced from the books. "We are opening up all that content—this world is expanding and we want people to have access to all of that, whether they are superfans or not … There are going to be hundreds of thousands of landing pages. It's an immersive world, but one you can rummage around in" (Jones, 2015, para. 11). As of 2015, the new *Pottermore* will continue to sell the *Harry Potter* e-books and digital audio downloads, but this might change in the future. For now, general use of the site will remain free-of-charge.

The *Pottermore* correspondent serves as a bridge between corporate control and fan agency. Pushing fans' comments outside the digital corral of the *Pottermore* site and onto social media platforms reduces the need for constant moderation. In other words, fans are still able to exercise agency and be vocal, as long as they do so outside of the site's boundaries. But the fact that some comments (good and bad) are acknowledged and addressed directly by the *Pottermore* correspondent, may serve to lessen the blow of completely blocking comments within the site, and time will tell if this is an acceptable solution for both site owners and fans.

Beyond participatory websites for young people, and since the case studies of this book, opportunities for multiplatform participation have expanded in new directions. There are now multiple international, online, and not-book-specific sites addressing teens, reading, and writing, including *Wattpad, Movellas*, and *Kindle Worlds. Wattpad*, a free social platform for sharing stories, was launched in 2006, and is based in Toronto, Canada. Writers upload stories and benefit from reader feedback. Readers benefit from free stories, and from opportunities to influence projects as they are written. Authors such as Sarah Mlynowski (described in Chapter 3) use *Wattpad* to get story feedback as they write, to build an audience of fan readers, and to attract interest from traditional publishers.

The site brands itself as "the world's largest community of readers and writers," (*Wattpad*, "About," 2014). They also claim to have 35 million "Wattpadders" with 75 million uploads in fifty languages (*Wattpad*, "Press information," 2014). What is interesting about *Wattpad* is that *The Amanda Project* has resurfaced there. Sample chapters from each of the four books have been posted, and readers are asked to respond: "Have a story about Amanda you'd like to tell? Tag it 'myamanda' and we'll add it to our library …" (*Wattpad*, "Amanda," 2015). *The Amanda Project*

had 12,100 “reads” on *Wattpad*, but it is unclear whether or not the site is currently active. *Wattpad* user, “infinite_xoxo,” reviewed *The Amanda Project* as follows: “This plot sounds very similar to ‘Paper towns’ by John Green” (*Wattpad*, “infinite_xoxo,” 2015).

The Danish site *Movellas* was launched in 2010. It migrated to the United Kingdom in 2013, and according to the *Guardian*, “it now has 20,000 ‘movellas’ on the site, one of which—a fan fiction story about the pop group One Direction—was signed up by Penguin last autumn” (Flood, 2013, para. 7). This presents a new production model, which actually works backwards, as authors first find an audience, and then receive a contract from a traditional publisher. “*Movellas*, he says, is showcasing ‘poetry in a digital age’” (Flood, 2013, para. 12). Unlike fan fiction or teens’ own blogs or websites, these sites are vetted by adults, and the content is governed by the site owners’ terms of use.

Amazon *Kindle Worlds* started in 2013. As Philips (2014) writes, “Amazon came up with a new model to monetize fan fiction, *Kindle Worlds*, which distributed income from e-books both to the self-published author and the original rights holder” (p. 10). On *Kindle Worlds*, readers are writers, readers comment (thereby providing feedback to writers), and readers read— a cycle of participation (see Fig. 7.1). Similar to *Wattpad*, by creating novellas on *Kindle Worlds*, authors (not necessarily originating

Fig. 7.1 *Kindle Worlds* production cycle

authors), help extend interest in a series by publishing shorter novellas while readers wait for the next book in the series.

In addition to their participatory content-creation sites, several traditional print publishers have made inroads in establishing digital-only imprints, such as Scholastic's Storia imprint, or the Bloomsbury Spark digital imprint, started in 2013. "Bloomsbury Spark is a one-of-a-kind, global, digital imprint from Bloomsbury Publishing dedicated to publishing a wide array of exciting fiction e-books to teen, YA, and new adult readers" (Bloomsbury, "Spark," 2015). This represents an increasing commitment on the part of publishers toward digital formats.

So, given the directions in which capabilities for self-publishing are going, one might ask why authors would still want to work with publishers? Perhaps as Phillips (2014) writes, authors "may just want to write and are less interested in the business and marketing activities" (p. 20). Despite what we have learned about publishers' expectations that authors will do their own promotional work, especially via social media channels, authors still like to work with publishers. "Publishers offer belief, encouragement, and validation of a writer's work—this still works for many readers as well" (Phillips, 2014, p. 20).

What Is the Future of the Book?

It seems that for a variety of reasons, print is not yet dead. The readers of the focus group study in Chapter 6 had sensory reasons for liking printed books. They praised the smell of books, the ability to fold down a page, and the way that one's reading progress could easily be measured. Perhaps as Pires Franco (2014) writes "current attitudes to digital is that they have often created unnecessary antagonisms in relation to print, and probably hindered the evolution of book forms while also obscuring industry (and academic) analyses with an excessive focus on difference and threats, rather than coexistant diversity and continuities across media" (p. 33). Books construct our social identities. For example, there are certain books we want others to know that we are reading. "Consumption of books therefore is part of the development of our own identity and we use [physical] books to say something about ourselves and to create our life space" (Phillips, 2014, p. 42). Initial research on reading in digital formats reveals much about what is lost. While more research is needed in this area, for now it seems that there is plenty of room for print books and digital formats to co-exist.

Pires Franco (2014) writes that not only are the definitions of format changing rapidly, but "reading" as a verb is no longer sufficient to describe the action of using such digital content. "Does it matter whether people's cultural values and social habits are moving from reading print books to perhaps *using* digital books or *playing* gamebook interactive apps?" (Franco 2014, p. 39). What if *The Amanda Project* had existed as a digital only format, in which readers had all experiences within the same device? Would it have been more successful if readers had been able to participate directly within an e-book, rather than having to switch between platforms of printed book and tablet/computer/mobile device?

What Is the Future of the Library?

All of this presents new opportunities for libraries in two parts: archiving, and engaging young people. Participatory sites such as those described herein are ephemeral, fleeting in nature. For example, users have no control over the content they contribute. Also as discovered by the participants in *The Amanda Project* and *Pottermore* in particular, owners can completely remove entire sites and the content simply disappears. Therefore, since libraries already serve as cultural stewards in the realm of print, perhaps libraries could use digital tools to archive participatory digital content. This would allow that content to be accessible by those who created it and also by future researchers.

In addition, libraries provide the ultimate in democratic access to information. As such, it seems that libraries have unique opportunities to use freely available tools to interact with, as well as engage, young people around reading in print or digital formats. As noted earlier, many libraries are already doing so. Yet by engaging in these interactions, libraries face the same types of concerns as publishers do: how to navigate COPPA laws and how to moderate such sites. In terms of engaging with young people in the digital realm, these areas are of the greatest concern.

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Methodological Appendix

Research Questions and Methodology

This book examines how technological formats are changing books and the reading experience for young people, focusing on an extended framework. The primary goal with this research was to conduct a critical analysis of a shift in the cultural production of literature for young people, to view the impact of conglomeration on the field as has occurred since the 1980s and 1990s (Schiffrin, 2000), and to examine how this conglomeration in turn exaggerated an emphasis on profit rather than on literature.

The research questions were organized around dimensions of this phenomenon, including creation, production, dissemination, reception, and materiality. They have been studied in a historical and comparative framework, comparing established configurations of production, dissemination, and consumption to revised ones, which incorporate technology.

The purpose of this research was to examine an emerging phenomenon and a contemporary practice of producing multiplatform books. Multiplatform books use technology to extend book-based content across numerous media platforms (from printed books to the Internet), and increasingly utilize production and consumption practices from other media industries—from film to television to gaming, which rely on consumer feedback and user-generated content. These cultural commodities require consumers to read content across multiple media platforms in order to derive full meaning from the text and allow user participation in different forms, from playing games on a book-related website to

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contributing material to books in a series. In order to present the current phenomenon within a broader framework, the study identified three levels of participants in the field of cultural production for young people: (1) publishers (representing production and dissemination); (2) librarians and other gatekeepers (representing reception and criticism); and (3) adolescent consumers (representing consuming readers) in a comparative and historical framework. All of this contributed to the main research objective of investigating a moment in the established configuration of book production, dissemination, reception, and consumption, revealing inner workings of the field as technology produces a shift and creates new relations of control and resistance within convergence culture as applied to book production in a historical narrative around the field. The case studies used to illustrate how publishers are using readers' labor are as follows: (1) Random House's *RandomBuzzers* site, which solicited peer-to-peer book recommendations, marketing, and consumer research; (2) Little, Brown's "official" *TwilightSaga.com* site, which emulated fan content found freely on the web, and it then steered such fan contributions toward their own proprietary site on which fans contributed free consumer research, peer-to-peer marketing, and—additionally compared to *RandomBuzzers*—user-generated content; and finally, (3) an early multiplatform book project, *The Amanda Project*. In *The Amanda Project*, the publisher (first Fourth Story Media, and then HarperCollins), sought labor from fans in ways similar to those sought on both *RandomBuzzers* and *The Twilight Saga,* but in addition, it sought unpaid user-generated content for story lines and plots for the series.

Various viewpoints, from publishers, librarians, and teen consumers were provided herein in order to produce a rich understanding of this phenomenon.

For purposes of this project, the date at which the configurations shifted from old to new is herein identified as 2007, which reflects the year in which two of the three websites used in this research were founded. This year also marks a point during which the top publishers of books for young readers established interactive websites. As of 2012, the Big Seven publishers of books for young people were (in alphabetical order): HarperCollins; Little, Brown (Hachette); Macmillan; Penguin Putnam; Random House; Scholastic; and Simon & Schuster.

Multiplatform books are enabled by technology, but other interactive formats established earlier provided inspiration. Books such as Edward Packard's *Choose Your Own Adventure* series, which were popular in

the 1980s and 1990s, allowed readers to choose a path of their choice for the hero or heroine of a book. In *Cathy's Book: If Found Call (650) 226–8233* (Stewart and Weissman, 2006), readers could call phone numbers to leave messages for characters in the book. *RandomBuzzers.com*, and *TwilightSaga.com*, represent publishers' proprietary websites which encourage readers' online participation—first as peer-to-peer reviewers on *RandomBuzzers*, and then as reviewers, fans, marketers, and providers of consumer research and content on *TwilightSaga.com*. Both of these are described in detail in later chapters: *RandomBuzzers* in Chapter 5, and *Twilight Saga* in Chapter 6. Scholastic's *The 39 Clues* series (multiple authors, of which the first was published in 2008) is the first multiplatform book project for children ages eight to twelve, and incorporates books, a website, and collector cards, which each contribute to meaning making within the storyline. Like *The 39 Clues*, *The Amanda Project* (2009) is a multiplatform project, consisting of a book series integrated with a participatory website. As in *Cathy's Book*, the protagonist (Amanda) has gone missing; except with *The Amanda Project*, instead of calling a phone number to leave clues, which presumably only the publisher has access to, with *Amanda*, readers are supposed to "help" find her by leaving clues and other content on an integrated and social website. According to the publisher, users' clues could become part of future books in the series, which for the first time, allows readers to participate in writing a book series. *Skeleton Creek* (Carman, 2009) is a multiplatform book series for boys and girls which incorporates not only books and videos, but also Facebook and other social media platforms; and while readers cannot contribute content to the books (as on *Amanda)*, they can participate via social media.[1] The timeline in Fig. A.1 demonstrates the progression towards the recent phenomenon of multiplatform books, which incorporate books and technology.

The last entry on this timeline does not refer to an individual book or to a series, but instead to the 2012 launch of Scholastic's Storia imprint, which demonstrates a significant commitment to digital formats by a top publisher of children's books.

In order to study the emerging phenomenon of multiplatform books and digital formats within historical and contemporary frameworks,

[1] Readers also participate by making their own parody videos of the videos in the series and posting them on YouTube, in which they imitate the hand-held camera used in the official videos. One such example from August 31, 2011, by thecrazypeoplez1 is here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXsRFLPQrxc. This is a possible topic for future research.

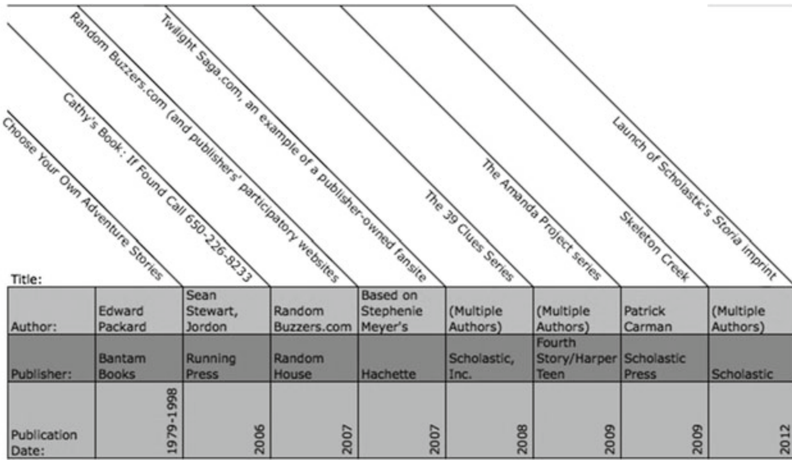

Fig. A.1 Timeline leading to multiplatform books

Fig. A.2 outlines the research process within two frameworks: the historical framework on the left, and the contemporary framework on the right. Within each framework, I examined the perspectives of those whom I identified as the three levels of participants in Young Adult literature: producers (publishers), critics and disseminators (librarians), and recipients (reading consumers). In order to get at meaning, I collected data within each of the participant groups as described in detail below. The plan outlines a multiple-method, multi-dimensional approach that combines several strategies for data collection including interviews, a focus group, case studies, and document analysis of blogs, websites, newsletters, web analytics, and trade literature.

Research Questions

A complex approach was developed in order to study this emerging phenomenon of a shift in existing configurations of production, which prompted my engagement with the topic and led to a historical and comparative analysis. Figure A.2 outlines the research steps, which were organized around the main research objective of examining how technological formats are changing books and the reading experience for young people,

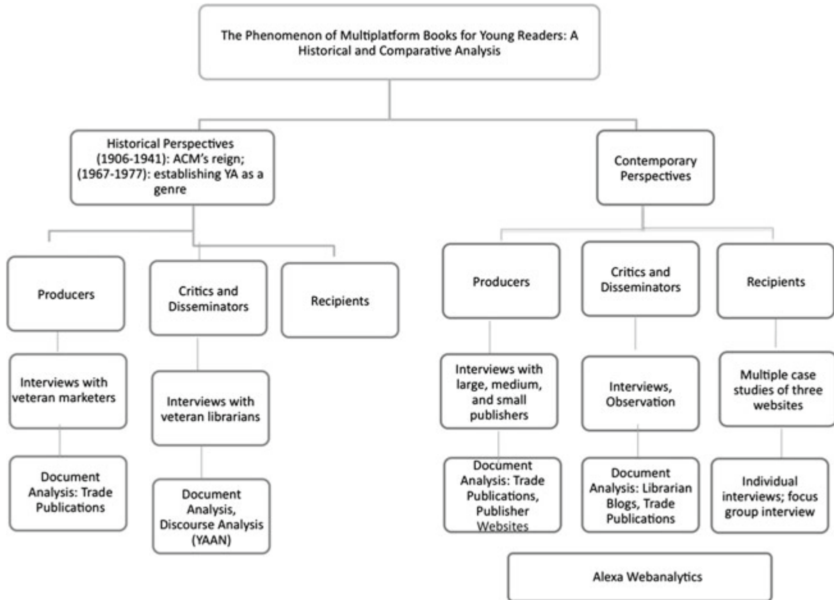

Fig. A.2 Overall research plan (Note: This figure presents an overall research plan for this work with historical perspectives on the left, and contemporary perspectives on the right. In each case, the research is divided into the three levels of participants, including publishers, librarians, and teens)

and studying a contemporary practice of producing multiplatform books for teenage readers. This practice increasingly mirrors production and consumption practices in other media industries which rely on consumer feedback and user-generated content that is freely accessible online. As this phenomenon evolved out of prior configurations of production, dissemination, reception, and consumption, this research explores transmedia and multiplatform books as emerging publishing phenomena—from historical models anchored in print culture to contemporary forms that reveal more complex and interactive reading experiences. In order to provide a perspective on the two points of comparison, the methodology is divided into two sections: "Historical Perspectives" and "Contemporary Perspectives." Each of these sections delves into three layers of participants: producers (including publishers and authors), disseminators and

critics (the gatekeeping critics and awarders of such books), and recipients (in this case, the teenage reader-consumers).

The research questions are presented in the next section, reflecting a comparative and historical perspective that guides this research throughout.

Research Question 1

Within the emerging configuration (after 2007) of the field of cultural production for young people, how is the use of technology (represented herein by the phenomenon of multiplatform books) providing a disintermediated relationship between publishers (producers) and young readers, and how is this relationship changing the *producers*' role in the field? And to nest this question in a historical context, how was their role different before 2007?

Because producers (including publishers, authors, and teens) represent the creation, production, and dissemination side of the phenomenon of multiplatform books, this question aims to uncover how publishing such books can be compared with traditional methods of production. The assumption that the Internet enables a direct, disintermediated relationship between publishers and teen consumers via publishers' online book-related sites helps to understand how, in this environment, publishers are using content contributed by readers, and how such content is redefining the traditional publishing model of creation, production, and dissemination of transmedia texts and multiplatform books.

Research Question 2

How is the new configuration of the field of cultural production for young people (again represented herein by the phenomenon of multiplatform books and the technological innovations which lead to them) changing the role of the *critics and disseminators* of Young Adult literature compared to the historically established model?

In the field of Young Adult literature, critics and disseminators have traditionally been librarians. As key arbiters of taste, they were responsible for the first layer of reception (via their work as reviewers and awarders) as books were published and disseminated into the marketplace. The direct discourse between publishers and teens on publishers' websites within the new configuration, and on peer-to-peer reviewing on sites like Amazon.com, Shelfari, and LibraryThing, is challenging librarians' role

as cultural intermediaries between publishers and teens. How does this disintermediated relationship between publishers and teens impact the role of Young Adult librarians? How does peer-to-peer marketing and reviewing on websites impact the role of librarians as arbiters of taste and distinction?

Research Question 3

How does technology (again represented herein by the phenomenon of multiplatform books and the technological innovations which lead to them) establish an audience of participating *readers* around interactive, book-related sites, and how does this shift in literacy compare to how forms of reading were studied historically, prior to technological interventions?

Because teenagers are the traditional consumers of Young Adult literature, this question sought to understand the changing role of consumption when literature is presented in new formats. How do teens consume multiplatform books—not just as readers, but also as content creators, reviewers, and peer-to-peer marketers? Why are teens willing to volunteer hours of free labor on book-related sites? How do communities of readers arise online? How do they experience agency in participating? Is there evidence of resistant behaviors?

Research Question 4

How is technology changing the *materiality* of books for young readers compared to materiality in earlier configurations in the field? And what does a visible, material audience mean to the overall field of cultural production for young people?

This question aimed to find out how reader participation changes literature and the reading experience. Creation and production of books in the digital realm changes their materiality from books for a mass audience printed on paper to new formats of presentation in which evidence of an active, participatory audience exists via comments, reviews, and user-generated content. How are transmedia and co-created multiplatform works changing the nature of what we understand by the term "book"? How does user-generated content and collaborative book projects such as *The Amanda Project* change what we understand by the concept of "authorship?" And how do they transform the act of reading?

By addressing the three layers of participants in the field of Young Adult literature—the producers, the critics and disseminators, and the readers—as well as the changing materiality of books for this market, it was hoped that this research would provide comprehensive insight into a phenomenon that has engaged all dimensions of an existent framework.

Figure A.3 expands the research plan from Fig. A.2, to explicitly outline the methods of data collection for each of the four research questions within the historical and contemporary frameworks. The four research questions that address areas of involvement of the three layers of participants in the field of literary production as related to young adults are: (1) the producers, which include publishers and authors; (2) the critics and disseminators, which include librarians, online reviewing sites which are not owned by publishers, and booksellers; (3) recipients, which include reading consumers; and (4) the materiality of books and how the Internet and multiplatform books are changing the actual material reading platform.

	Historical	Contemporary
RQ1 (Publishers)	Interviews with veteran book marketers	Interviews with book marketers at a large, a medium, and a small publishing company. Document analysis of trade publications
RQ2 (Librarians)	Interviews of veteran librarians Document analysis and content analysis of YAAN Archival and historical research	Interviews Observation Document Analysis of YALSA blog
RQ3 (Teenagers)		A focus group Interviews Observation Three progressive case studies
RQ4 (Materiality)	Archival and historical research	Alexa Web Analytics Amazon.com Rankings

Fig. A.3 Methods used to address research questions (*Note*: This figure presents the methodology for a comparative and historical study of the rise of multiplatform books for young readers)

In order to answer the first question on how technology is changing producers' roles in the field of Young Adult literature, I relied on interviews of veteran and contemporary marketers, on trade literature, and on Alexa Internet web analytics and Amazon.com rankings. In the old configuration of the field, those in the marketing department were traditionally responsible for connecting books with a readership; and in the case of Young Adult literature, this was done through their relationships with gatekeeping librarians who had access to such readership. In the new configuration, publishers' interactive websites provide a disintermediated relationship directly with the teenage readers. Web analytics helped provide information about who was participating, and Amazon.com's rankings enabled a comparative analysis of the popularity of each of the case study sites of Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Limitations include the choice of publishers—since I was unable to gain access to Hachette's marketing department (as discussed in Chapter 3), I interviewed marketing staff from a small, medium-sized, and large publisher in order to construct an analysis of how different-sized publishers were using digital technologies to reach teenage consumers.

For the second question on the role of critics and disseminators, I interviewed two veteran librarians who had worked as Young Adult librarians in the 1970s, and three contemporary librarians. I conducted comparative document analysis of the YAAN newsletter (1973–9) and the YALSA blog (established in 2008), and I observed teens participating in a 2009 Best Books for Young Adults Committee meeting. Limitations here included a small number of interviews. The two veteran librarians both worked primarily in California, a state which had a leading role in America during the counterculture of the 1970s. The contributions from the YAAN newsletter were from across the United States, and while they confirm that the issues addressing the librarians interviewed were similar across the United States, interviews with veteran librarians from different geographical regions would have expanded the results. Another limitation is that the research on the YAAN newsletter covers seven years, but the research on the YALSA blog was only from October 24, 2011 to December 30, 2011. Unfortunately, time allowed only for a comparative snapshot, and instead, this becomes an area for future research.

The third question, on readers and changing formats of literacy, was studied via a focus group interview of ten young adults, through interviews of two teenage girls who had been assigned *The Amanda Project* to read, by observation of a Teen Advisory Group meeting, and by analysis of participation on three progressive case studies. In this section, limitations

include the fact that I had to assign readers, rather than finding fans of the series. If in the future another multiplatform book project for teen readers becomes more successful than *The Amanda Project*, it would be worthwhile to interview its readers.

In order to answer the fourth question, on how technology is changing the materiality of books for young readers, I looked at the case studies, at Alexa Internet analytics, and at Amazon.com rankings. Most interesting here was the way that materiality was shown to be twofold in the new configuration of publishing: first in regard to changing formats from print to digital, but also as it applies to audiences, as digital formats reveal a reading audience in participatory fora around books. Limitations of methods used to answer this question include the fact that I used free web analytics software, rather than software available for a fee. For-fee software would have provided richer results.

These methods corresponded to the research questions, which target the three levels of participants (publishers, librarians, and teenagers) in historical and contemporary frameworks and the operations of data collection. Materiality emerges through data collected on the participants, but evidence of materiality was also studied in a contemporary framework using case studies. All of the methodologies and approaches to data collection, with their assumed approaches to analysis, are listed and discussed with regard to their overall contribution to the study.

In order to address the research questions, methods common to media studies and book history were used. These included interviews, case studies, and document analysis. Multiple case studies were used to examine the new publishing phenomena, which includes a disintermediated sphere of publisher–teen interaction, as shown in Fig. A.4. Together, the three case studies demonstrated a progression from early publisher–teen online interaction to complex, multiplatform, co-created book projects, two of which started in 2007, and a third in 2008.

Launched in 2007, 2007, and 2008 respectively, these three sites served as progressive levels of inspiration (see timeline, Fig. A.1), giving publishers ideas first of how to channel user-generated content onto proprietary sites, and then demonstrating how this content could be manipulated for the publishers' purposes, from creating means of peer-to-peer reviewing, to providing consumer feedback, and then to providing content which could be repurposed by the publishers into new products. Each case represents an array of emergent ways in which users' participation benefits the producers—from peer-to-peer book recommendations

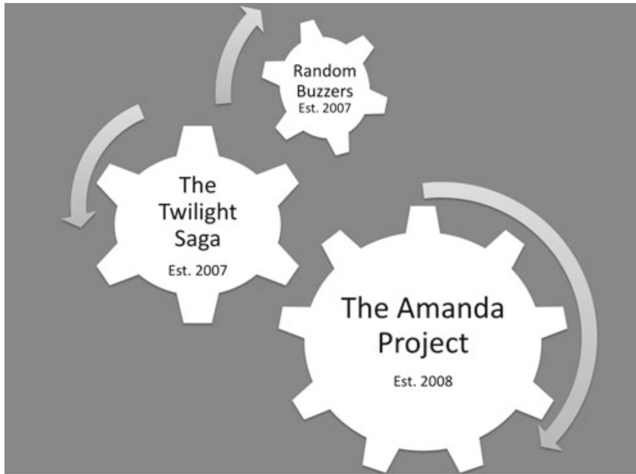

Fig. A.4 Three progressive websites (NB: Established dates were identified via the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine (Internet Archive, 2012)

on *RandomBuzzers* to a digital corral of fan culture on *TwilightSaga.com*, to user-generated content and contributed storylines on *The Amanda Project*. They were selected because, considered together, they demonstrated a progression of user participation that has enabled multiplatform books.

Research Process

In 2009, when I first encountered publishers' online teen sites, the top seven (later top six) publishers of children's books (HarperCollins; Little, Brown; Macmillan; Penguin Putnam; Random House; Scholastic; and Simon & Schuster) had developed sophisticated teen sites. Random House's site *RandomBuzzers.com*, with its system of remuneration and rewards in the form of currency and badges, was the most sophisticated among the publishers' sites.

Like *Harry Potter*, the books in *The Twilight Saga* had endless amounts of user-generated fan content available online, but instead of studying *Harry Potter*, I chose *The Twilight Saga*, because as a best-selling phenomenon, it was an early example of how Little, Brown created a proprietary

fan site which emulated content freely available on the web, and then channeled such content into its site on which the publisher's End-User Licensing Agreements (EULAs) would govern use and control of content. And finally, *The Amanda Project* was chosen because it is an early example of a multiplatform book project which incorporates peer-to-peer reviewing as on *RandomBuzzers*), and fan content (as on *Twilight Saga*), and then in addition, gives readers the opportunity to contribute content to future books in the series, serving as co-authors or collaborators on the series.

Data collection and its analysis occurred simultaneously (Yin 2004) and soon revealed disconnects in terms of publisher expectations, and teen engagement.

The research methods for this project included: interviews and a focus group (between 2010 and 2012); observation in two teen libraries (in 2011) and at the American Library Association's Best Books for Young Adults Committee meeting (in 2009); an analysis from 2009 to 2012 of three websites that reflected aspects of the multiplatform phenomenon and included *RandomBuzzers*, *Twilight Saga*, and *The Amanda Project*. Document analysis included archival and historical research conducted on the *Young Adult Alternative Newsletters* (I received a nearly complete set from their editor, Carol Starr, whom I also interviewed), as well as document analysis of the YALSA blog and other blogs related to Young Adult literature.

Extensive document analysis was also undertaken on the three case study sites: Random House's *RandomBuzzers* site, Little, Brown's official *TwilightSaga* site, and on *The Amanda Project*. Analysis of the websites chosen for the case studies illuminated how teens were participating, and how publishers sought user-generated content. Using the *RandomBuzzers* site, I created a spreadsheet analyzing sample users (67,524 as of 4/5/12), including users' gender, hometowns, when they became members, last login, numbers of posts, numbers of comments, numbers of Buzz Bucks earned, and "other," which refers to any information users chose to share about themselves.

Google alerts for references in the media to aspects of the case studies, and document analysis of trade publications supported findings; and sales rankings from Amazon.com and web analytics using Alexa Internet helped illuminate how popular (or unpopular) the case study sites were.

As a comparison to the three case study sites, I also scanned other publishers' sites and book-related sites that feature user-generated reviews, such as Amazon.com, weRead, Shelfari, and LibraryThing, on which I looked for evidence of user participation, user motivation, and

publishers' use of such user-generated content. I used the list of fan sites reported on *Twilight Saga*'s author Stephenie Meyer's site ("Official Stephenie Meyer," 2012) to compare online content and activity to that which appeared in Little, Brown's site. When I looked for evidence of active/inactive/vanished statuses, I found that many of the fan sites (of which there were 374 as of 4/29/12) had become inactive since 2008, 2009, 2010, or since 2011. I briefly examined an anti-fan site, *Twilight Sucks: Welcome to the Community of the Undazzled* (Twilight Sucks, n.d.), and an alternate site: *TwilightGuy.com* (Nation, Twilight Guy, n.d.) to compare activity on these sites to the fan sites listed by Meyer. While the fan sites were in various stages of decline, the anti-fan site was still active, and its presence had expanded to Tumblr *Twilight Guy* had become a commercial site, including paid advertising.

I conducted twenty-one interviews from September 2010 to January 2012 including publishers' marketing staff: one veteran, and three contemporary. In targeting publishers, book marketers were chosen over editors, because historically and traditionally, book marketers were those who established relationships with the children's librarians who served as cultural intermediaries between publishers and Young Adult readers. In the contemporary example, book marketers are those who seek a disintermediated and direct relationship with teenage readers by connecting with them on the web via social media sites, and on the proprietary online book-related sites they construct for the publishers they represent. Historical perspectives on publishers were examined by interviewing a veteran book marketer who was one of the first to work in library marketing within the field of children's books. This veteran marketer was also a source of snowball sampling for retired Young Adult librarians.

Other marketing subjects were recruited through snowball sampling, starting with personal industry contacts. Marketing staff from the publishers of each of the case studies (Random House, Little, Brown, and HarperCollins) were not included as interview subjects. I initially approached Little, Brown's marketing department via a high-level editor at the company, but the interview request was declined (because of a "corporate policy" not to discuss *The Twilight Saga* with anyone outside the company). Because of this, other publishers were contacted instead, based on my own contacts in the publishing industry. This also allowed for a more critical look at the websites in question. Since all publishers are now pushed to use social media in marketing to teens, interviewing marketers within three sizes of publishing companies contributed information about

how publishers were using user-generated material, and what publishers were doing to support these efforts.

Each publisher's size was established by the number of titles published per year using the Children's Book Council's member information site (cbcbooks.org, n.d.). For example, a "large" publisher is defined here as one who publishes more than 150 titles per year. A "medium" sized publisher publishes 25–150 titles per year, and a "small" publisher releases fewer than twenty-five titles per year.

Five librarians were interviewed, including Carol Starr and Patty Campbell, two veterans of Young Adult librarianship who had been active and pioneering influences in the field starting in the 1970s (and were suggested by a former colleague and veteran marketer)[2] and three contemporary Young Adult librarians—one from a suburban library in the Northeast (recommended through a mutual contact), one librarian from a large urban teen library serving young adults from across a major metropolitan area of New York (recommended by a faculty member in my graduate school), and one librarian who works with teens in a school setting as well as in a public library setting (recommended by the suburban librarian above). With the exception of the focus group, half of which was comprised of males, all the other interviewees were female.

The interviews also included a focus group interview with a group of ten teenage volunteers working in a suburban library during the summer of 2011 (access was provided via the Northeast suburban librarian above). I conducted observation at this library in order to examine the collection, look at how the teen room was set up, and observe what teens were doing at the library, and I attended an evening Teen Advisory Group Meeting there in October 2011. Observation was also conducted at the urban library for young adults in the major urban center, where I spent two hours in October 2011 in the library observing teens and looking at and photographing the collection, and at a Best Books for Young Adults Committee meeting at the 2009 American Library Association Conference in Anaheim.

Because it proved to be impossible to find teens who had read *The Amanda Project* on their own (possibly because of librarians' own challenges with this series, such as deciding where to shelve it in the library age-wise, and possibly because of other problems with the series described in Chapter 6), two daughters of friends, both willing to read the first two

[2] NB: The librarians named in this book gave approval for use of their names.

books in the series, were recruited. One girl was from the Northeast, and one was from the Southeast, and they read their assigned books during Fall 2011. Interviews with teens—those in the focus group, and the two *Amanda Project* readers—challenged initial researcher assumptions.

In addition to examination of websites and interviews with three levels of participants in the field of cultural production for young readers, documents provided additional insight. Document analysis was conducted on the Young Adult Alternative Newsletter (YAAN) published from 1973 to 1979, as well as on librarian blogs, primarily the *YALSA Blog*,[3] but also on sites by librarian bloggers such as *Seven Impossible Things Before Breakfast* (Danielsen, 2012), *Educating Alice* (Edinger, 2012), and *A Fuse #8 Production* (Bird, 2012), in order to examine librarians' perception of their role in the field, and to compare how the field has changed. In order to compare the *YAAN* newsletter with the contemporary *YALSA Blog*, I created spreadsheets for each, and grouped topics of the newsletters and the blogs thematically.

An online web analysis site called Alexa Internet (owned by Amazon.com) was used to perform web analytics on the three case study sites, as well as related sites, and this allowed me to collect information about site status and general demographic information about site users (male, female, education level, age, etc.). While there were limitations with the Alexa Internet analysis, it did provide a useful snapshot of users of the three case study sites. Another Amazon-owned tool, Amazon.com's "Rankings," was used to demonstrate sales of books in the *Twilight* series.

Articles from trade magazines, such as *Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal*, and *The Horn Book* were consulted, especially for articles about changes in the field of publishing. Articles about publishing in newspapers including *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* contributed information and updates about the latest industry developments. In order to monitor breaking news, I created Google alerts for the following terms: "Amanda project," "e-books," "Fourth Story Media," "multiplatform books," and "transmedia storytelling." I also received email updates from *TwilightSaga.com* whenever new content was uploaded to groups I had selected, such the fan groups around the two romantic heroes of the series: "Official Team Jacob" and "Official Team Edward," and whenever new discussions were started. This helped

[3] YALSA is the Young Adult Library Services Association of the American Library Association. The blog is maintained by YALSA staff and contributing members.

establish activity levels on the site, especially after the last book in the series was published.

This multimethod approach helped illuminate the development of multiplatform books and the trajectory of the fields of publishing and librarianship as they related to the formation of Young Adult literature.

Institutional Review Board Approval Process

The Institutional Review Board at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, which oversaw this research, required me to have three levels of consent forms for interview subjects: a "Consent" form for participating adults; a "Parental Consent" form authorizing me to interview children; and a "Child's Assent" form for minors. The research of this book was deemed to be "confidential," as opposed to "anonymous," because the records included some information about the subjects, and because I was interviewing people face-to-face. In addition, per language on the consent forms, the data collected from the human subjects "include[s] some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists." In the case of the Child Assent form, the language further specifies: "Some of the information collected about you includes your age, whether you are a boy or a girl, and your reading habits. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location in Rutgers, under lock and key. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law."

In terms of benefits and risks, the Parental Consent form states: "You/your child have been told that the benefits of taking part in this study may be educational and entertaining, and will provide information about the field of Young Adult literature. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study." The general consent form states: "While there are no direct benefits to you of participating, your participation will expand on an overview of the field of Young Adult literature, which will help us understand how books are created, marketed, and read today." As far as risks are concerned, the subjects of this study were not anticipated to encounter any. Research subjects were told that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time—also that they could choose to not answer any questions they wanted to skip.

Especially in the case of the publisher interviews in which they described their companies' publishing plans, and in the case of the veteran librarians who have celebrity status in the field, it is relatively easy for those familiar with the business to guess at their identities. As such, the veteran librarians were contacted post-interview for permission to include their names, and such permission was granted. I also obtained permission to use a professional transcription service for help in transcribing recorded data on some of the lengthier interviews.

Librarians were asked about their career choices—why they became YA librarians, and about their work with teenagers. Also, I asked them what they thought about publishers' participatory sites, their relationships with publishers, and about their committee work. The veteran marketer was asked to speak about how marketers reached young people under the previous configuration of the publishing industry, and contemporary marketers were asked about their digital platforms for young readers, their digital initiatives, and about how they are using the Internet to reach teens. Teens were asked about how they participate in book-related sites online, and about where and how they like to read.

The next section addresses the possible audience for the research of this book, as well as the significance of the study.

Audience and Significance of Study

This interdisciplinary work contributes to the understanding of the field of cultural production of children's literature, at a point of transition from print to digital formats, as seen through the lens of multiplatform books. Scholarly interest in this work could come from: (1) those in fields such as publishing studies and book history, who are interested in the comparative and changing models of cultural production for young people, and those interested in studying reading in digital formats; (2) those in fields such as literature, especially from those interested in children's and Young Adult literature; (3) academics in the field of library and information science who are interested in the history of, and changing role of librarianship for, young people (and also in studying reading); (4) scholars from media studies, as this book-related research has many parallels in entertainment, especially music and television; (5) those who study affective and immaterial labor in various manifestations; and (6) those who study audiences, as this research includes fandom, resistance, and a visible audience around reading, enabled by digital technologies.

Practitioners, such as librarians and others interested in intercepting the commodification of literature for young people, are also expected to be an interested audience for this project. In particular, I originally intended this research to provide such information to those who work to get books into the hands of teens and provide comparative insights into how they, too can use digital tools of engagement parallel to those used by publishers. The historical perspective here demonstrates the evolution of the field, but also shows comparative models of collaboration. Challenges here—as evidenced by observations of lack of activity on, for example, the New York Public Library's social media sites for teens, and confirmed by librarians—have proven to be related to budgeting and staffing, as staff is required to maintain websites and social media sites.

In addition, the producers—those working in the publishing industry to create and market cultural products for young people—would most likely be interested in the findings, as they relate to bridging technologies of production from print to digital formats, because they provide insight into the way teens are receiving, manipulating, and subversively resisting cultural products produced for them (Fiske, 1989), including digital formats of books. The significance of this study is in providing a rich understanding of a phenomenon and the various levels of teens' understanding of digital cultural products created for them, and in comparing this to publishers' plans and goals for such products, all in a historical and comparative framework.

Limitations

Because this study is qualitative and relies on small sample sizes from different fields of influence, there are many limitations to this research. For example, I interviewed only two teen readers of *The Amanda Project*, both of whom were "assigned" the reading. I wanted to interview true fans of the books, or at least those who had found the books on their own and read them, but unfortunately, I was not able to find any, despite soliciting the help of several librarians who work with teens. This could be in part because the librarians themselves were unclear about this series (one librarian was not sure whether it should be shelved in the children's department or in the teen department), and in part because of the limitations of the series itself, as expressed by the assigned readers (who found it to be "too young," and complained that it relied on stereotyped depictions of what teens are supposed to be like). It was not possible to study readers of other multiplatform book projects, because at the time of this research, this was

an emerging phenomenon. And while other multiplatform book projects existed (such as *The 39 Clues),* what was interesting about *The Amanda Project* was that the publisher solicited user-contributions for building the series. At the time, this was the only series that included that feature, and it was the only multiplatform project for teenage readers.

While demographic data was not collected, the focus group of ten teens represented an ethnically diverse group equally divided between males and females, and all lived in a wealthy community with plenty of access to technology (as demonstrated by the fact that half of the teens owned an e-reading device).

Future research should include teens from communities of varying socio-economic levels to find out how less-privileged teens might respond to leisure reading in digital formats—and about their access to such formats. In addition, the fact that the teens were all library volunteers arguably indicates that this was a "bookish" group of teens compared to the population at large. It would be useful to take a sample from a more diverse group of readers (and "non-readers").

Time was a major limitation, as more time could have meant more interviews with more librarians, more teens, and more publishers of books for young people. I also started my study with some personal assumptions. I assumed that the current generation of teen readers would be fully ready, willing, and able to migrate from printed books into digital formats. When I interviewed publishers about their e-publishing plans, they supported my initial assumptions with their own enthusiasm for digital formats (as evidenced by significant financial investments in new and expanded websites, in social media efforts, and in the staff to support both). But reactions from teens did not support this assumption. A longitudinal study should be conducted to see whether or not digital formats for leisure reading eventually become embraced by teens.

In addition, Alexa Internet web analytics presented a few limitations. First of all, Alexa Internet is owned by Amazon.com, and this corporate ownership might have skewed the results. Another study conducted with a different web analytics tool might confirm the accuracy of the Alexa Internet results. Additionally, I used a free-of-charge version of Alexa Internet. In addition to using another tool for confirming accuracy, a for-pay site, such as Compuscore, might have provided richer details. Additionally, the Alexa Internet results of users of *The Amanda Project* indicated that the majority of users were both in my age (forties) and educational bracket (graduate student), which could indicate that perhaps I might have been one of the primary users of *The Amanda Project.*

And finally, a key limitation to this book is timing. Because I examined an emerging phenomenon, the technology used was changing. For example, in 2009, when research started, publishers interviewed herein were all establishing and maintaining teen websites for their Young Adult titles. While those websites still existed in 2012, efforts had moved on to marketing via the social media sites inhabited by teens, including Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter.

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