How People Discover Books Online
What is Goodreads?

Goodreads is the largest site for readers and book recommendations in the world.

A community of 7 million readers who recommend books, write reviews, compare what they are reading, keep track of what they’ve read, form book clubs, and much more.
Our Mission

To help people find and share books they love.
Deep Reading Data

250 million books shelved, growing at 14 million a month
What is a “book shelved”?

A Dance With Dragons (A Song of Ice and Fire, #5)
by George R.R. Martin

4.11 avg rating — 25,038 ratings — published 2011 — 19 editions
Books Discovered - aka the To-Read Shelf

63,000,000 books marked as to-read

As many books as the combined collections of the Library of Congress, NYPL, and the Boston Public Library
5,750,000 books marked as to-read in January 2012
books in the Chicago Public Library’s collection
In January 2012...

Every second... 2 books were discovered on Goodreads
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>cover</th>
<th>title</th>
<th>author</th>
<th>avg rating</th>
<th>rating</th>
<th>my rating</th>
<th>date read</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="cover" /></td>
<td>The Orphan Master's Son</td>
<td>Johnson, Adam</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
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<td>Jan 16, 2012</td>
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<td>The Cuckoo's Egg: Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage</td>
<td>Stoll, Clifford</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
<td>not set</td>
<td>Apr 01, 2011</td>
<td>view</td>
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<td>Brave New World</td>
<td>Huxley, Aldous</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
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<td>Walton, Sam</td>
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<td>Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century</td>
<td>Thompson, John B.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
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They read books, too

1,220,269 books finished
453,529 books started

(in January 2012)

A book is finished every 2 seconds
Top To-Read Books in January

- The Hunger Games
- The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo
- Divergent
- The Help
- The Fault in our Stars
- Steve Jobs
- The Night Circus
- 11/22/63
- Bossypants
- Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close
- Cinder
- Water for Elephants
The Long Tail

Top 5,000 books: 56%
(99.9% not shown)

Top 40 books: 5%

391,031 unique titles
What we really want to know

How did those people find those books?
19% During Registration

The average engaged reader adds over 30 books to their to-read shelf during registration.
Rate Books that You've Read

We've got recommendations for you in Classics, Fantasy, Mystery, and more! Continue rating books to get even better results, or see your recommendations.

Fiction

Want to read

More like The Catcher in the Rye

Want to read
Registration flow is focused on popular books

Popularity of book

Books added to to-read
19% from search

People hear about a book, search for, and add it to to-read.
Conversation, email, tweet, FB post, IM, blog post, pin, check-in, comment...

Hey, you have to read Ready Player One!
Search has the long tail

![Graph showing the long tail phenomenon in searches and registrations.](image-url)
13% from recommendations

Launched in September, our recommendation engine plumbs 20 billion data points to deliver personalized recommendations to each reader.
If you liked these books, thousands of other readers liked these similar books...
Goodreads Recommendations designed to hit mid-list sweet spot

**Goodreads Recommendations**

**Registration Flow**

Books added to to-read vs. Popularity of book (Orange bars)

Books added to to-read vs. Popularity of book (Brown bars)
9% from friend updates

The average engaged Goodreads member has 19 friends.
Serendipitous discovery by seeing what friends are reading and browsing their shelves
Friends also alert you to a wide variety of books

Friend Updates

Search
8% from authors’ or series pages

76% of authors have written more than one book
Goodreads has great author profiles

**Patrick Rothfuss**

<table>
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<th>Madison, Wisconsin, The United States</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>genre</td>
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**About this author**

It all began when Pat Rothfuss was born to a marvelous set of parents. Throughout his formative years they encouraged him to do his best, gave him good advice, and were no doubt appropriately dismayed when he failed to live up to his full potential.

In high-school Pat was something of a class clown. His hobbies included reading a novel or two a day and giving relationship advice to all of his female friends despite the fact that he had never so much as kissed a girl. He also roll-played and wrote terrible stories about elves. He was pretty much a geek.

Most of Pat's adult life has been spent in the University Wisconsin Stevens Point. In 1991 he started college in order to pursue a career in chemical engineering, then he...more

**Series by Patrick Rothfuss**

**The Kingkiller Chronicle** (3 books)

*by* Patrick Rothfuss *(Goodreads Author)*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 4.52 avg rating — 54,300 ratings

**Crónica de un aseisno de reyes** (1 book)

*by* Patrick Rothfuss *(Goodreads Author)*

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ 4.49 avg rating — 19,107 ratings
Books from authors you know are well distributed
7% from lists

Goodreads has over 11,000 member created lists with over 5,000,000 votes.
People Love Lists

Can't Wait Books of 2012
1,139 books — 6,711 voters

Silicon Valley
105 books — 37 voters

Best Young Adult Books
4,997 books — 22,083 voters

Best Books of the 20th Century
3,800 books — 20,776 voters

Books That Should Be Made Into Movies
6,253 books — 17,473 voters

Books that everyone should read at least once
3,933 books — 16,579 voters
Lists are great for finding popular and mid-list books

**Listopia**

**Registration Flow**
6% from mobile apps

Over 800,000 app installs (iPhone, iPad, Android)
When you hear about a book on the go...
Mobile is well distributed

Mobile

Search
2% from giveaways*

In January 2012, we ran 1,065 giveaways and shipped 8,035 copies. 839,145 people entered.

* Actual discovery from giveaways is not well tracked
Giveaways are our single best free way to build buzz pre-launch
Giveaways are all about new titles

Giveaways

Books added to to-read

Popularity of book

Registration

Flow

Books added to to-read

Popularity of book
People discover books in diverse ways

- Search: 19%
- Registration: 19%
- Recommendation Engine: 13%
- Friend Updates: 9%
- Genre Browsing: 9%
- Author & Series: 8%
- Lists: 7%
- Mobile: 6%
- Other: 7%
- Giveaways: 2%
Search was our top method of discovery, and those users had heard of the book elsewhere.

How did those people find those books?
Do you often find books from the following sources?

- Known author: 96%
- Friend (offline): 79%
- Goodreads friends: 64%
- Goodreads recommendations: 60%
- Bookstore: 59%
- Amazon: 54%
- Library: 54%
- Goodreads browsing: 43%
- Newspapers: 40%
- Author's website: 26%
- Radio: 15%
- Facebook: 14%
- TV: 9%
- Publisher website: 8%
- Twitter: 6%

Survey of 3,248 people
Once you get a reader to discover an author you’re golden.

96% of people say they often read authors they already know.
Friends are a powerful way to discover books

- 79% often discover books from friends offline
- 64% from friend updates on Goodreads
Twitter and Facebook are not great sources of discovery

- Known author: 14%
- Friend (offline): 6%
- Goodreads friends: 14%
- Goodreads recommendations: 14%
- Bookstore: 14%
- Amazon: 14%
- Library: 14%
- Goodreads browsing: 14%
- Newspapers: 14%
- Author’s website: 14%
- Radio: 6%
- Facebook: 6%
- TV: 6%
- Publisher website: 6%

Good for engaging with your favorite authors, but not great for finding new books.
Something fun: Measuring Media Promotion

When a book is mentioned in the media it often gets a “pop” on Goodreads
Media Spikes

- **Morning Edition 2/6**
  - The Fear Index by Robert Harris
  - NPR

- **Morning Edition 2/7**
  - The Miseducation of Cameron Post by Emily M. Danforth
  - NPR

- **How To Be Black**
  - Baratunde Thurston
  - NPR

- **Fresh Air 2/1**
  - Book Review 1/15
  - The New York Times
Appeared January 4 On The Daily Show

Users who added book

- Added by searching for book
- Added from friend updates
Avid readers discover books differently from casual readers.

Friends are important, but not enough for avid readers. Avid readers discover books more often from Goodreads Recommendations than casual readers.

Avid = 49+ books per year
Casual = 12 or fewer books per year
Fantasy, SciFi, and YA readers are more likely to read more from an author they know.

And they’re more likely to discover books by browsing genres and lists online.
Romance readers are especially fond of Goodreads Recommendations. And they’re more likely to discover books by browsing genres and lists.
What does “discovery” mean anyway?

Discovery means all the touchpoints in the mind of the consumer it takes to get them to decide to purchase and read a book.
Marketing Adage

It takes about 6-12 touchpoints in the mind of the consumer to get to a purchase.

The stronger the touchpoint, the fewer you need.
Between us and our readership, there’s a brick wall and we have little hammers, and if we keep hitting the wall eventually we’ll punch through it.

- Marketing Manager at a large publishing house, quoted in Merchants of Culture by John Thompson
Discovery happens in lots of ways
- there is no magic bullet

But there are a few things to keep in mind.
Long Tail Books

Word-of-mouth is most effective for long tail books. Focus on your core readers.

Goodreads giveaways can drive a lot of initial awareness among the right readers.
Mid-List Books

Market to existing fans as much as possible.

Focus on marketing to readers of your comparable titles. They will put your book on the right lists and ensure the recommendation algorithm picks it up.

Friends are crucial.
**Bestsellers**

Maximize your consumer touchpoints around launch.

Be ready to capitalize on any media hits.
Convert broadcast mentions into word-of-mouth buzz.

Goodreads amplifies the effect of a traditional media mention and sustains attention for the book.