

BookGlutton.com
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Demo: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=TkCoknkwa4>
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Art/Screenshots <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bookglutton/sets/72157603681050625/>

BOOKGLUTTON.COM LAUNCHES, CHANGES ON-LINE READING

A new website, BookGlutton.com, launches January 18th, and its founders think it will change the way people read books online. Described as a cross between a book, a computer and a book group, BookGlutton has created a web-based e-book reader that lets users discuss the book from the inside. Using web 2.0 technologies BookGlutton has turned books into conversations, allowing people around the world to connect and chat about books on a page-by-page level.

Travis Alber and Aaron Miller, BookGlutton's founders, say they came up with the idea because they have friends all over the world and wanted to be able to discuss books with them. "We needed to talk and look at the book, just like you would in a physical book club," says Alber.

Using BookGlutton's Unbound Reader is simple. After choosing something to read and opening the book (all via a web browser), two panels flank the text - Talk and Mark. The Talk panel allows users to have a real-time conversation with other users, which can be filtered down to only include users inside the same chapter (this keeps users from hearing end-of-the-book discussions). The Mark panel lets users make margin notes on any paragraph, and allows other users to respond.

BookGlutton's Unbound Reader is unique in its ability for people in different parts of the world to converse in real time about what they read, something no other e-book technologies incorporate. Unlike device-based e-book readers (Sony Reader, Amazon Kindle), and desktop e-book applications (Microsoft Reader, Adobe Digital Editions), the Unbound Reader is built entirely on open web standards. And unlike websites that feature e-books, BookGlutton does not require a user to download or install anything in order to read books. It adopts common features of device- and desktop-based e-book readers like pagination, typography, bookmarking, and annotation and puts them on the Web to allow conversing in a context-specific way about literature.

Not only does BookGlutton's social networking approach and web delivery make it the first web-based e-book "reader," as well as the first major exercise in social reading - it may also solve many of the problems with the device, desktop and download e-book categories. Instead of having to pay \$300 to buy hardware, users can read on computers they already own, and instead of having to pay more than the price of a paper edition and

install proprietary software on their desktop computers, users can read for free in their web browsers. BookGlutton is also positioned to be read on other kinds of technology. The re-flowable format lends itself to smaller or larger screen sizes, and BookGlutton will support multiple devices in the future.

Most of the content a user can read on BookGlutton.com is public domain. There are books in English, French and Spanish, with other languages on the way. In the future, BookGlutton will offer contemporary, copyrighted content for modest fees; public domain work will continue to be free. Alber and Miller also hope that user-generated content will keep the catalog fresh and conversations frequent, particularly for writers. The upload tool lets any user upload personal work.

Initial response has been strong from book clubs, students, and librarians, but the founders are focusing on the general reading population. “Walk into any coffee shop with wireless access and you’ll see someone with a laptop,” Miller says. “It doesn’t take any great stretch of the imagination to assume they’d sit there and read a book...especially if it’s attractive, easy to use, and something they can share with their friends.”

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