

Join a Reading Community Online!

These days, it's more likely to be glued to your screen than to the latest literary release (Twilight books aside!). But did you know that reading is hotter than ever before? You heard me—books and their readers are going online, in a big way.

Social networking sites that promote reading, reviewing books, and sharing books with others are springing up all over, and they present the perfect opportunity to make reading fun—and social! We've got the scoop on the best sites to get into the world wide web of book lovers:

What You Need:

- An internet connection
- A collection of books you'd like to share

What You Do:

- **Shelfari.com** With Shelfari, you can create a shelf displaying what you're reading, what you want to read, and what you've recently finished, and show it off for all to see (you can even design your personal shelf to be wood, glass or stone). But that's not all—the social networking features of the site allow you to create a profile, befriend other users, and review and recommend books to the reading community.
- **Bookcrossing.com** Let your favorite books out into the wild with this unique site, which allows members to track books after leaving them for strangers in cafes, train stations, and parks. Simply register your book on the site by assigning it an I.D. number, affix a Bookcrossing label in the book with the number and an explanation of the concept, and release the book! As your book is “caught,” you will receive updates and comments from the readers who've found the book, and you'll be able to track the book as it travels around the world. If you want to catch a book, simply consult the “recently released” list for a newly liberated book near you, and be sure to add an entry to the book's log once you've found it.
- **Bookmooch.com** Have you ever wanted to snatch an under-appreciated book from a friend's shelf, and give it the love and attention it deserves? With Bookmooch, you can do just that! Where Bookcrossing leaves things to chance, Bookmooch allows readers to send and receive books at no cost aside from shipping. The site operates on a point system: you get one-tenth of a point for posting a book of your own to be “mooched,” and one point when you send a book to someone who requested it. When you want a book, it costs you one point to get it. And there you have it! Simply search and request books you want, or send books that you no longer want to someone who will read and appreciate them.

The Internet is no longer just a place to surf, chat, and research that boring school paper. Each of these unique sites shows how worldwide communities are flourishing online, and how books are bringing people together like never before. So clean off your bookshelf, mooch out some tired books to new readers and release some into the wild to be caught— one person's tired old paperback can be another's treasure!

