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## Reading Times: Exploring the temporalities of reading

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## **Reading Time: Exploring the Temporal Experiences of Reading**

### **Structured Abstract:**

*Purpose:* To explore various concepts of time and temporal dimensions in the context of everyday reading experiences

*Design:* Theoretical bricolage that puts existing reading research into conversation with theories of time and temporalities

*Findings:* Three registers of time in reading are put forward: 1) libraries and books as places that readers return to again and again over time, 2) temporalized reading bodies, and 3) everyday reading as a temporalized practice

*Research Implications:* Using lenses of time and the temporalities, everyday reading is shown to be central to ways of being in time. Subjective experiences of time in the context of reading expands the limited ways that time is presented in much LIS reading research.

*Originality:* This paper offers a new conceptual framework for studies of reading and readers in LIS.

For those of us who study reading for pleasure in everyday life, reading is a rather messy, uncertain business. No matter how hard reading scholars and reading professionals (whether researchers, teachers, librarians, literacy experts, publishers) try to make reading fit into a set of ordered stages, phases, or stepped activities, readers are wily, and their practices resist such tidy formulations. This kind of reading—the reading that people choose to do, and the time in which they choose to do it—is often marked as distinct from other kinds of reading such as the reading that needs to be done for work, or study, or simply to get something done. At first glance, leisure reading presents itself as a way to escape the pressures of time in this era of hypermediated, 24-7 access to non-stop flows of information, however, a more careful examination of the experiences of voluntary reading shows us just how laden reading is with temporal meanings. Jutta Haider and Olof Sundin (2019) have made the case that ubiquitous searching and the use of search engines are among the most dominant temporal registers of everyday life. We put forward a parallel argument in this paper that reading is embedded with multiple temporalities that have profound consequences for organizing and enacting everyday life.

We emphasize how time functions throughout readers' accounts of their reading practices to show that reading carries temporal complexities that intersect with how readers use reading and texts to negotiate their everyday lives, identities, and biographies *as readers*. Temporalities are folded into the meaning of reading: for avid readers, reading is at the surface of their lives, and memories of reading are vivid, immediate, alive, even ones that are decades old (Tangerås, 2020). After a short review of the concept of time-use in selected Library and Information Science (LIS) research into reading, this paper focuses on three distinct temporalities of reading—the spatial time of reading, temporalized reading bodies, and reading as temporalized practice. Our purpose is to show the ways that reading goes beyond time-use to disrupt chrononormative time (Freeman, 2010) and how reading resists the institutionalized time

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pressures that define the contours of contemporary life with speed, acceleration, instantaneity, competition, and innovation (Rosa, 2018; Sharma, 2014, 2019). We put our ideas into conversation with a variety of theorists and researchers, and at times, we draw from our own qualitative studies of reading and readers—most with teens and young adults (e.g., Cedeira Serantes, 2020; 2019; 2018; 2016; 2014; Rothbauer, 2018b; 2011; 2009; 2006), some with adults including older adults (Rothbauer and Dalmer, 2018; McKechnie, Ross, and Rothbauer, 2006) [1].

In this paper we do not adhere to any singular or unified theory of time, and we use theoretical bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln, 1999, p. 8; Rogers, 2012, p. 6) to bring varied conceptions of time to our understanding of the multiple temporalities of the reading experience. Harmut Rosa has helped us to understand reading for pleasure, and the everyday reading experience, as an "axis of resonance" (2018). For readers, opening a certain kind of text that they themselves choose to read will reliably yield the kind of experience they are seeking. This is similar to how Rosa describes the particular axes of resonance related to experiences with music, museums, libraries, temples, or nature. Furthermore, that while such experiences "can never be completely controlled and predicted" they depend on social conditions and they "foster social relationships" that together can provide "something like a reliable axis of resonance". There is the expectation of the temporal experience of resonance – what Rosa calls its "moment-like" character. Following Rosa, reading allows for connection, "resonance", a way of being in the world (a "dispositional mode") that pushes back against the structural and systematic undermining that leads to alienated modes of being that do not allow for the "moment-like character of resonance". Dispositional alienation is characterized by institutional time pressures related to competition, acceleration, and innovation that force "instrumental modes of relating to objects and subjects". Rosa's concept of resonance allows us to conceptualize reading as a fundamentally temporal experience at both individual and collective levels, an experience, moreover, that can provide reliable moments of social connection and promote modes of being that resist institutionalized time.

### **Reading, Time-Use, Time Constraints, and Subjective Experiences of Time**

In research about reading habits, the study of time is not unfamiliar, although it is often (but not always) monotemporal, nearly wholly defined by concepts of clock time and time-use, and thus focusing on the phenomenon of time scarcity as a definitive characteristic of current reading habits (e.g., Johnsson-Smaragdi and Jönsson, 2006; Mokhtari, Reichard, and Gardner, 2009; Twenge, Martin, and Spitzburg, 2019) [2]. Furthermore, readers are frozen in time as specific kinds of readers belonging to particular age cohorts that are themselves bound by chronological or biological time: children (e.g., Kusolpalin, Luyt, Munro, and Lim, 2013), teenagers (e.g., Loan and Shah, 2017), young adults (e.g., Helkenberg, 2020), older adults (e.g., Lindberg and Hedemark, 2019), or as readers moving through time in transition from one state of readership to another, for example, from beginner or novice readers to more expert and proficient readers (e.g., Clarke, *et al.*, 2017).

Applying temporal lenses to the study of reading and readers forces us to engage with the messiness of reading in new ways. For example, reading has long been a mobile practice, that materially (i.e., the book, the text, that which is read) and actively (i.e., where and how we read) has adapted to different technological and social demands (see Borsuk, 2018). In some ways, reading studies anticipated some of the challenges of media research in locating media practices as these practices have become increasingly

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individualized and on the move because of digital devices (see Fornäs *et al.*, 2007). The result is increased mobility of media users and audiences, and the blurring of boundaries of leisure and labour time. The emergence of the audiobook as a reading format has slowly opened new research avenues. For instance, audio reading challenges traditional divisions in institutional time as well, merging work and leisure times. In their study of data from a Swedish audiobook subscription service, Elisa Tattersall Wallin and Jan Nolin (2020) noted, that the remediation of "reading by seeing" to "reading by listening" allows readers to increase time availability for this practice, to an increase in average time spent reading by 90-100 minutes per day (p. 486). Interestingly, this increase in time allocation was accompanied by changes in the readers' reading routines. Service subscribers read more during the day on weekdays (p. 485), a time that has conventionally been considered working time, in contrast with reading by seeing that continued to happen during times of leisure. This difference in the *when* of reading could be linked to a diversification of the *when*: work breaks, at lunchtime, commuting, exercising, or during errands (pp. 481-482). Tattersall Wallin and Nolin give a clear illustration of how reading practices complicate time routines, expanding beyond concepts of clock time and time-use.

Since the early 2000s a developing cluster of reading research that is situated in college and university environments explores the reading habits of students to understand the place of reading in their academic development, and to assess the value of leisure reading collections in academic libraries. Not surprisingly, time constraints—lack of time, not spending enough time, competition for time, time-wasting online distractions—are perceived to be the primary barrier to voluntary reading among students (e.g., Cull, 2011; Foasberg, 2014; Gallik, 1999; Gilbert and Fister, 2011; Jolliffe and Harl, 2008; Mokhtari, Reichard and Gardner, 2009; Smale, 2019).

Research that aims to understand the experience of reading from "ordinary" readers' perspectives often relies on the concept of recoverable reading narratives or histories, collected through interviews with readers, or through archival materials and memoirs that give access to readers' preferences and habits (Trower, Smith, and Tooth Murphy, 2019). Although rarely acknowledged, these narratives are themselves situated into broad temporal blocks—times in which people read more, read more deeply, read differently and different texts, and in times characterized by the varied speeds of living itself. The narratives comprise a series of reading events that correspond to widely understood biosocial time markers (e.g., age, major life events such as a birth, death, coming out). The act of reading is conceived of as a way to resist or escape the constraints of time scarcity and competition for time by compelling readers to slow down or speed up, to relax or to give attention to the text. Every empirical act of reading is loaded with temporal meaning from the ways in which readers make reading choices, turn pages or scroll screens, to the ways they manage and keep track of their reading habits, or narrate their reading histories. The very identity of being a reader, of defining oneself as a reader, is shaped by temporal dimensions.

Accounts of everyday practices related to reading that get at what people read and when, how they find and keep track of reading materials, and how they manage their reading preferences allow us to also see the discontinuities in linear timelines. These timelines correspond to how reading choices are often imagined in LIS – that is going from a need or desire for a particular book, for a particular kind of reading experience [3], to a site where such needs and desires can be matched with reading materials to the actual reading event (which is treated as a discrete series of actions itself), to reflection or feedback

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on whether the reader is satisfied, and then repeat the process at some other distinct point in future time (Wyatt, 2019) .

Some of the most consistent findings in reading research with teens and young adults (age categories that are themselves typically characterized as temporal transitions in biological time) are defined by time. The inability to regulate or control clock time and calendar time makes reading a near impossibility for many teens whose daily lives are fully committed to school, work, sports and other extracurricular activities, online pursuits like gaming and social media, and hanging out with friends (e.g., Lee 2019; Rothbauer 2009). Drawing from multiple research projects that explore reading engagement during the early teen years to young adulthood, Margaret Merga makes a useful distinction between two temporal modes: time allocation which is based on readers' choice, fluency, self-efficacy, and motivation to spend their time, and time availability which is based on academic requirements, extracurricular commitments, and everyday life responsibilities (Merga 2018).

As we can see in the aforementioned studies, time and temporality related to reading, especially reading habits, have been part of the LIS research landscape at least since the early 2000s. If lack of time affects the practices of readers across different formats and experiences, it also has consequences for their reading identities. In this paper we aim to expand the scope of this reading research landscape and complement the efforts of time-use studies by providing an analysis that surfaces time and temporalities as subjective experiences in reading. Catherine S. Ross's early work suggests the possibilities that such an emphasis could bring to our understanding of reading. In her now classic study of avid adult readers and the information seeking processes they use to make choices for their reading, Ross found that along with access to financial and cognitive resources, time emerged as central to readers' decisions (Ross, 1999, p. 791). For Ross, time availability is directly affected by the context of the reader's life; it is not a completely objective measure but just one factor in the selection of reading material that is, in turn, also affected by events in the reader's life (p. 789). Factors such as time, money, and cognitive energy are presented in terms of effort and cost to physically or intellectually access a book. Ross further distinguishes her approach to reading by examining how nonreaders and avid readers construct time in their everyday lives: nonreaders' decisions about reading are defined by lack of time and the need of temporal blocks of time to be able to read. Avid readers organized their time and "made time and built opportunities for reading into their daily routines" (p. 787).

These brief highlights from Ross's work point to conceptualizations of time that correspond to time-use approaches, however Ross also prepares the ground for more subjective understandings of time and temporality in readers' lives. When addressing a singular reading event with a particular book, Ross notes that the particular reading event is influenced by the reader's preferences developed during a lifetime of reading (1999, p. 789). Ross directs us to pay attention to the lifetime of the reader from the reader's perspective which helps to generate insights into the temporal imbrication of past and present and future. From Ross's work and other time-use focused studies we can ascertain that lack of time (either because of availability or allocation issues) is a constant barrier to reading, and that the ways that readers' experience time matter for their identities as readers as much as for their reading practices.

### **Three Registers of Time and Reading**

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Below, we explore three registers of time in the reading experience. We conceive of these as loose, "leaky", overlapping categories [4] recognizing the indeterminacy and contingency of subjective temporalities. It is worth noting that we use the word "register" here intentionally, and mean to convey the sense of register as in music or linguistics (i.e., a range of voice or instrument, tonal registers, or a variety or levels of usage), and the sense of register in art, architecture, and comics, where registers divide a work, design, façade into bands or sections. In his study of temporalities in the context of online news of extreme nature events, Anders Ekström (2016) also uses the concept of registers to "create a thickened and conflicted experience of time" (p. 5351). These senses of register capture the shifting dimensions of the three temporal categories we discuss below.

### *Libraries and books as "stable places of differentiated return"*

The subtitle for this section comes from Christina Lupton's analysis of eighteenth-century readers "for whom the time of a happy life comes into focus through loops of return to a single text" (2018, p. 31). Our discussion in this section goes beyond the stability afforded by the materiality of a *single* text, and we follow from Lupton's analysis to look at libraries and books as examples of places that provide stability for a return to reading, places that support reading as an everyday, lifelong practice. In her case study of the eighteenth-century British politician William Wyndham Grenville, Lupton writes: "For the real basis of Grenville's reading practice lies not in the content of what he read, or in a single instance of reading or response, but in the material infrastructure of the library and the books he uses as stable places of differentiated return" (2018, p. 83).

As we explored this register of time, trying to understand how books and libraries present temporal registers of reading, Sarah Sharma helped us with the distinction she makes between spatial time and temporal time. Spatial time is "a type of temporal mode particular to space. Spatial conceptions of time are still bound to an individual, bound to a particular space, bound to a particular activity" (Sharma, 2019, p. 198). In this analysis then, the material infrastructures of reading establish places to which readers return to read, and in so doing the sedimented layers of becoming a reader, and being a reader *in time*, accumulate.

Not surprisingly, libraries feature prominently in research with readers especially as reliable and recognizable sites from which to borrow and buy reading materials (see Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer, 2018). In LIS, we are accustomed to thinking about libraries as sources for reading material. When readers give an account of their reading histories, libraries, more often than not, are presented as stable sources not only for reading materials, but for self-directed learning and knowledge. However, as sites for reading these places play a temporal role in reading practices too. Libraries take up a position in readers' accounts of their reading as way to measure the passage of time over a lifetime of reading. In a study of rural and small-town youth, libraries, and reading, many of the teen participants were too busy to use the public library but it still figured prominently in their recollections of reading, emerging as a central symbol of childhood (Rothbauer, 2009).

Libraries temporalize reading in more direct ways too. Jane Garner's recent study (2020) examines the influence of books, reading, and libraries on the experience of time in prison using the concepts of chronopathic and chronotelic time (Johnsen, *et al.*, 2019). The former refers to the negative effect of

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excessive free time in prison and the latter to the behaviours and activities that prisoners take on to pass time productively and to survive chronopathic experiences (Garner, 2020, p. 1035). Choosing to read or visiting the library are described as chronotelic activities. Reading directly influences the participants' subjective experience of time and affects their feelings of boredom and monotony through the reassertion of some control over an excess of unstructured time. Garner writes, "reading library books enables prisoners to lose track of time and to even experience an acceleration of the passage of time" (p. 1045).

Young adult visits to libraries involve a negotiation of time, perhaps because the shifting of temporal gears is harder for them during this period of their lives so that reading choices are often made in relation to the materials that are literally at hand – on their personal bookshelves, in their homes (Rothbauer 2009). One reader describes this tension:

In terms of accessibility, I have to go to the library, put something on hold, I only have three weeks to read it. It has a lot of constraints associated with it, so I feel like if I just had my own personal library without having to dish out money or anything. I'd be more inclined to pick up a book because it's there" (Michael, 21-years, 2017).

Alexis, another young adult reader, gives another clear picture of how she must negotiate time, but her comments also subtly suggest the circular time of a return to reading. The books themselves represent a temporal plumb line from past to present to future:

"I have always enjoyed reading since I was very young. There have been periods of time where I have read less, especially fiction, less for pleasure. Then I always come back to it... I have a— BOX \*laughs\* of unread books that are piling up. And there are more piles elsewhere in my room [...] "I have other hobbies besides reading... So reading is not necessarily my go-to hobby. Like when I have time. But I do enjoy reading. I always come back to it" (Alexis, 23-years, 2018).

Even these short excerpts from interviews with young adult readers show how readers express their sense of their reading habits with temporal logics.

Comfort derived from reading is a common theme in reading research (Ross, McKechnie and Rothbauer, 2018) tied both to the temporalized reading body and to the temporal conditions of living. During the COVID-19 global pandemic we witnessed the media phenomenon of "pandemic bookshelves" in which people position themselves in front of their personal libraries for virtual presentations or media appearances as they broadcast from their homes and offices. This is yet another example of how libraries and books symbolize not only the "times we're living in" but also project the stability and comfort of libraries and books. [5]

Comics reading provides another example of how books represent stable places for reading practices. Until recently comics reading was associated with "light" reading or as materials to attract or support reluctant readers (Cedeira Serantes, 2020; Krashen, 2004). It is easy to find comics reader complaints about the lack of time as a barrier to reading, however, a consideration of temporal elements in the

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experience of comics reading reveals a complex interaction between reading material and a reader's subjective experience of time. In this light, comics reading engages strategic modes to allow for a flexible experience that smoothly adapts to temporal requirements, especially time scarcity. Participants in Lucia Cedeira Serantes's research respond to social time – acceleration, speed, and instantaneity – and characterize their comics reading experiences as a "quick" immersion in the text, easily adaptable to their mobile and busy lives (2016). Comics provide a stable and responsive ground for reading because their readers understand the temporal affordances: a comic can be read in a relatively short period of time, giving an immediate and potentially gratifying reading experience. At the same time, the visual and artistic elements of comics create an opportunity for readers to slow down. This tension between speed and immediacy on the one hand, and slowing down, on the other, produces an antagonistic temporal experience, that allows readers to take time, to stop, and to contemplate. Readers experience a sense of control that is generated through reading and exercised against feelings of accelerated time that permeates everyday life. This duality, for example, has made comics the material to return to so they can feel like readers:

"I won't go anywhere without them [her comics], [...] there was a period of time when I wasn't reading at all, because I thought I was so busy and didn't have any time but then I decided that reading is important to me, that it makes me happy so I need to make time every day to do it so it doesn't matter what time it is, 3:30am, 9:00 at night, I will read for an hour before going to bed, all the time" (Selina 24-years, 2011).

For some readers, keeping track of their reading is another temporal mode for shoring up the material infrastructure of their reading practice (Rothbauer and Dalmer, 2018). Notebooks with yearly, weekly, monthly records of authors and titles read, collections of borrowing slips, stored library borrowing histories, and folders full of reviews and notes of books to be read, [6] and books that have been read are all ways of representing a reading history with an "unbroken temporality" (Krekula, 2020). As Shelley Trower writes such lists "may also be a way for their authors to maintain a sense of their identity as readers, that can be sustained over time regardless of forgetting" (Trower, 2020, p. 291). These records represent stable past-present-future timelines with a simplicity that belies the ways that temporalities of reading are always folding in on themselves.

Spatial-temporal dimensions determine the kinds of reading experience people can have and when they can have them: the where of reading is closely tied to the when of reading. Another young adult reader captures this sentiment perfectly when she describes where she reads:

I primarily read in bed. It's usually at the end of the day when I'm like winding down. So, I'll often find myself reading in bed. But I also will read in coffee shops sometimes when I have some spare time and I'm about. I'll take a second, take a couple hours, and sit in a coffee shop. Sometimes I'll read in the library. If it's quiet on the subway, I'll read on the subway. I generally listen to audiobooks on the subway and while I'm like walking to places and stuff. I guess, yeah, I suppose...generally when I have time to sit and be by myself, just like quiet. So yeah, in bed, coffee shops, libraries, and on public transit (Carlos 21-years, 2018).

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If books and libraries create stable spaces for reading again and again over time, reading itself destabilizes time. In the sections that follow we explore the ways in which reading temporalizes the reading body, and argue that reading is itself a temporalized everyday practice.

### *Temporalized reading bodies*

In her essay on how temporal embodiment is gendered, Linda Fisher writes,

"Our embodied being is drenched with temporality, from the moment we appear in time to our fading out, our leaving time; when we are, in all senses, out of time. In between, temporality colors, conditions, and etches our experience and being by situating us, while simultaneously moving us along, structuring, regulating, "timing" us..." (Fisher, 2011, p. 91).

Following from this idea, we argue that bodies are also temporalized by and through reading [7]. Reading practices connect reading bodies in and across time, in terms both of belonging to certain bio-social-temporal cohorts, and of the temporal synchronization of bodies reading particular texts together in time.

When readers talk about what they like or love about reading, about how and what matters to them about reading, and about how reading matters to them, they often talk about what they are doing with their bodies (see McLaughlin, 2016). Readers tell us about their sensory, aesthetic, and visceral responses to texts, their memories of specific material texts, the spaces that their bodies need to read in and through (e.g., in bed, in motion, on trains, planes, line-ups and so on). The materiality of the reading experience is commonly expressed through the senses too: how the pages of the book smell, the heft and texture of a favourite, the smells, sights, and sounds of a library or, perhaps the blank, unyielding coldness of the screen (see Cedeira Serantes, 2019; and Schilhab, Balling and Kuzmičová, 2018). Prescriptions for reading at particular times come into play too: how many readers read before bed, at the end of productive time, family time, recreational time? How many readers begin their day with a coffee and a scan of the headlines, while weekends are time for a deep dive into news of the world? This is more than just "clock-time" – this kind of reading is woven together with our perceptions of our brains and bodies in motion and in rest: how we read with our bodies is related to when we read with our bodies.

Reading time is necessarily, fundamentally, first connected to the body, and then to different bodies, to other bodies. We see this clearly in the ways that reading professionals and scholars use biological time to organize certain reading bodies. Most recognizable is the generational age cohorting of readers as groups of children, teens, young adults, and new adults (see Bernier, 2020; Rothbauer, 2020). Readers do this themselves too – imagining certain kinds of books that are "age-appropriate" that correspond to specific biological, chronological ages. In LIS we have a long history of recommending reading materials for certain embodied identities including how bodies are racialized, queered, aged, or dis/abled. Reading bodies are further organized into temporalized clusters, for example based on how fast or how long they might take to read a text: readers who struggle with reading comprehension are recommended shorter texts with less words and less complex literary structure, car commuting bodies or people with vision impairments might be recommended audio books and talking books; bodies

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experiencing mood disorders or mental health issues are directed to calm the mind and body with certain kinds of texts that may have therapeutic benefits related to "being present in the moment" (e.g., Gelles, 2017).

It is also a commonplace idea that a reader identity develops in a fairly linear process, passing through age stages, as people become more experienced and expert readers over time. In this temporal understanding of "older equals better" there are certain formats and types of reading that are meant to be left behind. For example, if comics reading is a reading practice associated with childhood and adolescence (because of certain characteristics of the form but also because of the dominant cultural representation of comics readers as young fans), adult readers of comics are rendered anachronistic (Botsakis, 2011). It is a reading practice that has a "right time". In these terms, certain comics reading and comics readers are "out of time".

Bodies are synchronized in time too through shared reading practices. As Karen Tusting (2000) claims in her analysis of establishing a Catholic identity through literacy practices, the synchronization of bodies can occur through reading, especially when, for example, people are reading the same things, such as a bible, at the same time. This kind of shared reading practice can help to establish certain kinds of community identities that endure and cohere over time. Priscilla Coit Murphy (2005) shows that readings of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) catalyzed people into distinct groups whose members denounced or promoted her ideas about the damaging effects of pesticide. Time is central to Murphy's case study: the ways in which Carson's writings were serially distributed and promoted, and then published as a monograph that became a Book-of-the-Month selection, assembled readers in time, which in turn, generated nascent social movements for environmental justice.

Mass reading events during which entire neighbourhoods, cities, or nations read a single book together over a designated period of time (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2013) is another example of how reading experiences can synchronize bodies in time and space. Such reading events are temporalized too by making what might otherwise be an ordinary, typically mundane reading experience into a more special activity. There is an abundant literature on the sociality of reading, on how it builds and sustains connections with others, and helps readers to understand that they "are not alone" and to have moments where they understand their own place in the world (Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer 2018). Reading time is more than a simple way to pass the time, and becomes a special time (i.e., set apart in daily time) characterized by sociality and connection when shared with other readers who are reading and discussing the same book at the same time. [8]

Philip Davis (2017) describes a similar phenomenon in his essay about the work of The Reader, a UK outreach charity that trains people to facilitate "unprofessionalised reading groups set up in often hard-to-reach communities – working from below upwards, in prisons, drug rehabilitation centres, dementia care homes, libraries, schools, GP drop-in centres" (p. 114). Davis makes a link to readers in Dickens's time when shared public readings of his work "creat[ed] a series of inter-related communities existent at the same time across classes within the nation; humans reading aloud together in small family-like groupings, where the insides of people were turned more openly outside, to be emotionally shared" (p. 115).

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Shared reading assembles bodies in time, but the practice of everyday reading shifts time for readers, as we explore in the section below.

### *Reading as temporalized practice*

We acknowledge that situating reading practices into the contexts of "everyday life" immediately imbues the concept with shifting temporalities which, to borrow language from Haider and Sundin, "opens up for an understanding of everyday life that is more attuned to the intermingling of different structures of control, of various allegiances and demands than to the predominantly chronological notion, where one period follows after the other" (2018, p.3). Reading is a disordered everyday practice subject to temporal constraints while it is simultaneously a mode of decalibration and desynchronization from regimes of time (Sharma, 2019, p. 204).

Reading is iterative and enduring. It takes on value as a daily practice that accrues over time through the doing of it. It is defined in terms of intensity, frequency, and duration. In her research with avid adult readers Catherine Ross analyzed hundreds of interviews that were conducted over the past 30 years. She found that there is a clear apprenticeship of reading through an accumulation of reading episodes over a lifetime that make not only a practised reader, but give pleasure over time through a practised return to reading (Ross, 2014; Ross, McKechnie and Rothbauer, 2018). Christine Lupton posits a related notion in her studies of eighteenth-century readers with her claims for "reading as something conjugated in time" and for books as something that take time (Lupton, 2018, pp. 15-16). In trying to understand the idea of reading as a temporalized practice we need to accept that "making time and space" for reading is as important as the content of what is read and how it is received and used by readers. The intriguing temporal quality of reading is that it fits into daily routines and rhythms, but at the same time, it can be a revolt against temporal regimes. Reading in this register is about escaping time, or resisting the pressures of clock time—it is about *making* time.

Queer studies of time and temporality help us to see the possibilities for reading to disrupt linear time, to create temporal havoc in the sequential ordering of blocks of time and memory related to past to present to future ideas of self. As much as reading has to do with the temporal regulation of bodies and with the systematization of reading practices, as an everyday temporalized practice, it enables readers to break with the "binds" of time, to resist what Elizabeth Freeman refers to as chrononormativity defined as "the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity" (Freeman, 2010, p. 3). Reading for pleasure disrupts or at least complicates social narratives of productivity, accumulation, and progress by allowing the reader to exist both in and out of state time and its attendant chronobiological politics (Freeman, 2010, pp. 4-5; Pryor, 2017, pp. 10-11).

In *Reading and the Reader* (2014), Philip Davis proposes that reading serious literature can be a creative and, in some instances, even existential act that invites and challenges readers to a different type of thinking. One of the three factors that characterizes this type of thinking is the presence of a "second pair of eyes, created by the opportunity to reflect upon and test out equivalent selves in situations analogous to one's own, with more time in which to hold such contemplation than any first person ever has in the immediate thick of things" (p. 119). This act of contemplation allows for a process of making time, where readers create a space in time for a pause, for reflection, for engagement with the text in a

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different way, finding meaning not just about the text but about oneself. This notion is also found in the relationship between literature and empathy in the concept of "stillness", defined as a precondition for reflection and contemplation (Koopman and Hakemulder, 2015). These researchers are explicitly referring to the aesthetic distance of literary reading (e.g., "the slowing down of readers' perceptions of the fictional world, caused by defamiliarization") but the concept of "stillness" resonates in an analysis of time and reading.

The experience where the ticking of clock time stops, and the reader is not lost in the text, but in their own thoughts—is one of the hallmarks of a good reading experience, regardless of form. In her research about the characteristics of the reading experience, Gitte Balling notes two elements, as shared by her informants, that allow for a good reading experience: readers gain knowledge about the world and oneself, and forget time and place (Balling, 2009 cited in Balling 2016, p.44). Comics readers report a similar temporal experience of reading, one that may be determined by the mode of storytelling of comics, or, sometimes, by the reader (Cedeira Serantes, 2016). Kalo, for instance, mentions how comics allow the reader to "control the flow of time" and for Devi, it is important to "spend a lot of time on a page":

"I just think that comics as a medium is so cool, it fascinates me how much you can do with what you have, with the panels, with what you can do between the panels, how you can control the flow of time and also, leave it up to the reader to go through at their pace" (Kalo 20 years, 2011).

"I spend a lot of time on a page, I'll go through the writing while I'm looking at the images but then look at the images on their own and then look at the writing on its own" (Devi, 19 years, 2011).

Temporalities related to feelings about self, the past, present, and future are tied up and entangled in accounts of reading as well. An interview case study with five older adult readers (i.e., 75-years-of-age and older) found that reading was a "lifeline" for these readers. It functioned as a method of navigating episodes of one's life and was a way to preserve what was deemed important about living and life (Rothbauer, 2018a; Rothbauer and Dalmer, 2018). These older readers reflected on reading over the course of their lives, but we can see how a lifeline is constructed in a more immediate account offered by 24-year-old Selina as she describes her reading practice:

[...] in relationships that I had in the past where I haven't been able to have my own time, it would erupt in fights, if I don't have any reading time. So, I do very closely associate reading with having my own time to do what I want so that...maybe that's why I try making time for it every day. Even now at school I'm doing a lot of stuff but if I don't have reading time, that's when I will go off the deep end. (2011)

Daily reading practices go far beyond a choice of how to allocate one's time. Reading is a temporal mode of sense-making and identity formation, and a tool for managing time for contemplation and life review.

**Discussion: "My bookshelf is not just a bookshelf. It's time warp"**

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In LIS, attempts to understand what reading is and how it works, tend to focus on the “precise timings” of reading – what happened when we read what, and how texts are encountered in time and space. Readers who cannot or do not conform to these regularized routines of reading are often perceived as being trifling or non-serious readers at best, and at worst, as non-proficient or failed readers, or simply, as non-readers. We subtitle this section with a deceptively simple phrase from one of the participants in Julie Gilbert and Barbara Fister’s study of reading for pleasure among college students (2011, p. 488). It captures the potential of books and reading to disrupt—to warp—time for the reader. The three registers of time that we have put forward – libraries and books as places of return, the temporalized reading body, and reading as a temporalized practice – are at play here, and help us to draw out the overlapping temporal dimensions of reading.

These words from one reader remind us that a “bookshelf is not just a bookshelf”, and perhaps, we can go so far as to say, a bookshelf is *never* just a bookshelf. It represents a place where reading happens, a place of return that allows for reflection on past readings, a place that invites new readings and re-readings. However, the solid material presence of books on a bookshelf in a college dormitory also represent distortions in a reader’s experience of time and in space, at once situating a reader while moving them across time. We can extend the metaphor to the warp and weft of weaving too, to account for the ways in which reading is woven into the temporal textures of a lifetime. As readers, there are traces of previous reading experiences that accumulate, and seem to be always present, palimpsest-like, in the “here and now” when we read. Reading disorders, decalibrates, desynchronizes and then makes new connections. It makes a different mode of being in time, one that slips away from the urgent challenges created by chronic lack of time in contemporary life.

The discourses of speed are not adequate (Sharma 2014, p. 15) to properly understand the messiness of reading. According to Sharma, spatial time has “limited political possibility” because it is bound to particulars, unlike temporal time which “recognizes that all time is relations and collective regardless of choice (2019, p. 199). However, the quotidian and mundane practice of everyday reading still adds up to something, it accumulates. It contributes to Sharma’s collective temporal time, and it produces Rosa’s moments of resonance. The myriad mundane daily practices of reading: searching for and choosing a book to read, selecting a format, carving out time, turning the pages or scrolling on a device, listening on the way to work, becoming absorbed in a story, following an author, posting a review, sharing recommendations on social media, sharing ideas at a book club, finding other readers, placing a book on a shelf, contemplating a reading life—all this, and more, work together to produce the experience of being a reader. Following Rosa (2018), we see this as a “dispositional mode” that is characterized by moments of resonance when readers feel touched by the world encountered, and experience, in turn, iterative and periodic moments of response and connection. We contend that reading produces the time and stability that are conditions for resonance while at the same time, reading provides resistance to the instrumental values of time associated with efficiency, speed and control (Rosa, 2018, para.12). Everyday reading can also produce extraordinary “flashpoints, or ruptures” in time, what Jaclyn Pryor evocatively describes as “time slips” that offer “a glimpse and a glimmer of another world” (2017, p. 130). Being a reader is a way of being in time that tears at the temporal mandates of biological aging, the clock, and the calendar.

## **Towards a Conclusion: Implications for LIS Reading Researchers**

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This paper offers a new conceptual framework for studies of reading and readers that invites an amplification of the ways that time and temporality are understood and examined in much LIS reading research. The three registers of time that we propose emerge from joining existing reading research in conversation with theories of time and temporalities and offer examples of how reading research can reflect the messiness of the reading experience of real readers. When libraries and books are conceptualized as places to which readers return to read, one can more clearly recognize how the sedimented layers of becoming a reader, and being a reader in time, accumulate. Then, a more complex relationship between ordinary readers and time surfaces, one that goes beyond the usual focus on clock or institutional times. If, as we argue, reading takes on value as a daily practice that accrues over time through the doing of it, the need to go beyond a moment in time to understand the meaning of reading for readers becomes apparent. When we study reading practices as connected to reading bodies in and across time, in terms both of belonging to certain bio-social-temporal cohorts, and of the temporal synchronization of bodies reading particular texts together in time, LIS reading research can contribute to larger interdisciplinary discussions about temporality, embodiment, and media practices.

Reading, like other information and media practices, has boundaries and requirements: materials, literacies, time, space, subject knowledge. All these factors affect who we can be, who we would like to be, and who we are as readers. For example, the books we buy but do not have time to read still tell a story about who we would like to be as a reader, or who we are allowed to be. Time availability and time scarcity might affect our reading choices, but the books will still be there, on the shelf, in the folder, waiting to be opened, promising a path to a future reading experience, to a future reader. In other words, reading here, again, warps time, shifting from the present, to the past, to the future.

## Notes

1. Throughout this paper we use words from our participants when warranted, noting the year of data collection. As we do not report on our methodologies in this paper, readers are encouraged to seek out our previous publications for extensive explication of our research methods and findings. Unless indicated otherwise, excerpts are taken from interviews with readers from the authors' research projects into the voluntary reading practices of teens, young adults (15-25 yrs), and older adults (70 years and older). We draw from this interview data to illustrate the themes throughout this paper.
2. Pam McKenzie and Elisabeth Davies (2016) noted the lack of attention given to time and temporality in reading research in their essay on the circular time of re-reading personal notes, lists, and calendars.
3. See Keren Dali, Clarissa Vannier, and Lindsay Douglass (2020) for an extensive review of readers' advisory services over time and for their proposal for what they call "reading experience librarianship". See, also *Plotting the Reading Experience: Theory, Practice, Politics*, edited by Paulette Rothbauer, Kjell Ivar Skjerdingsstad, Lynne (E.F.) McKechnie, and Knut Oterholm (2016) for essays exploring the diversity of reading experiences through empirical studies with readers.

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4. For the concept of leaky categories we are indebted here to Melodie Fox’s (2016) analysis of Hope Olson’s contributions to intersectionality and classification.
5. This phenomenon was captured in early November 2020 by “Bookshelves in the Age of the COVID-19 Pandemic”, an online conference complete with its own social media hashtag #pandemicbookshelves (see <http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/book-history/conferences/bookshelves>).
6. The ubiquitous “to be read” or TBR folders on our computers represent a compellingly optimistic future when there will be time to read.
7. While beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting to think about the body’s responses to microtemporalities of reading too—those temporal processes that are beyond conscious cognition such as the eye’s response to the constant refreshing of digital text. For more on this, see Darren Werschler (2019).
8. We are inspired to think about reading this way—as moving from an ordinary or mundane time to a special time—by the analysis of Güliz Ger and Olga Kravets of the pleasures of tea drinking in contemporary Turkey (2009).

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