

Reading (in) the News: Understanding Media Discourse Around Community Reading Events

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1. Community Reading Events, Media Discourse and Corpus Methodologies

The past decade has seen the emergence of the community reading event or mass reading event: a programme organised by a library, municipal government, university, broadcaster or other organisation in which members of a community, town or country are encouraged to read one book, or in some cases several books together and to participate in related activities. The phenomenon has spread unevenly across a number of countries: born at the Washington Center for the Book at the Seattle Public Library, it has proliferated across the United States, and has been taken up to a lesser extent by towns and universities in Canada. There are currently two programmes running in Australia, one in Trinidad and Tobago, and a handful in the UK, including Bristol's Great Reading Adventure, Liverpool Reads, One Book for Stevenage and One Book One Edinburgh.²

This paper comes out of a three-year AHRC-funded transnational project which investigates community reading events across three countries by using multiple disciplinary approaches. These include ethnographic participant observation, interviews with participants and non-participants in focus groups, online questionnaires, literary analysis of texts, and discourse analysis of the materials disseminated by the event organisers. Corpus linguistics is useful in adding further methodological tools to this arsenal. It offers, firstly, the means to interpret a large body of media texts whose size is otherwise prohibitive, and secondly allows the research team to access the reception of these events by media commentators, another constituency in addition to the producers and participants who are already under investigation. I have devoted the concluding section of this paper to considering some the advantages and the pitfalls of using corpus methodologies in conjunction with other disciplinary approaches.

A further advantage is that concordancing facilitates comparison across different national sites and between different genres of community reading event. I have therefore selected for this study three different national sites, and three different kinds of community reading event. The first, Canada Reads, is a programme disseminated over the radio to an entire nation, in which a panel of celebrities whittles down a shortlist of five titles from Canadian literature to one winner that the entire nation is then encouraged to read. The second, The Big Read, is a programme which is centrally funded and administered by a national body, but carried out by individual communities across the US. The third, Richard and Judy's Book Club, is disseminated through a prominent TV programme and supported by cross-promotions in bookstores. While Canada Reads and Richard and Judy's Book Club are disseminated by the mass media and hence are not in the same format as conventional community reading events (or 'One Book' programmes as

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² The Center for the Book at the Library of the Congress website has an extensive (if out of date) listing of many of these programmes across the US, Canada, the UK and Australia. See <<http://www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/one-book.html>>.

they are sometimes called), they do still fit the pattern of a programme which encourages individuals to read one book or group of books, in order to discuss them together or listen to them being discussed.

2. Methods and Materials

I assembled three specialised corpora by searching LexisNexis for “Canada Reads”, “Big Read” and “Richard and Judy’s Book Club” respectively.³ As I was interested in the differences between the discourses around these community reading events in different countries, I compared my analyses of each corpus against the others, rather than using reference corpora as comparators. Further analysis could fruitfully be undertaken by comparing each specialised corpus against reference corpora of media texts in US, Canadian and British English, but this is outside the scope of the present study.

Searching for articles on The Big Read and Canada Reads published in the last three years fortuitously yielded corpora of comparable size (see table 1). Searching for Richard and Judy texts published in the last three years yielded a smaller corpus of roughly one-third the size of the other two (202 632w), so here I opted to include Richard and Judy articles from all previous years. This produced a corpus of 406 768w which was twice as large as the first one and hence a much better source for comparison. It was however still only two-thirds the size of the other two corpora, so I compensated for this when carrying out frequency calculations in the analysis below by adjusting the figures so they were proportional to the corpus size. Widening the time limits of the Richard and Judy search did not greatly alter the period of time from which the media texts were drawn: the first article in the Richard and Judy corpus is only six months earlier than those of the other two corpora.

Mass reading event	LexisNexis database used	Number of articles	Word count	Date range of articles
Canada Reads	All News, All Languages	771	674 565 w	22 June 2004 – 15 June 2007
The Big Read	US News	624	591 065 w	29 June 2004 – 17 June 2007
Richard and Judy’s Book Club	All News All Languages	478	406 768 w	16 December 2003 – 16 June 2007

Table 1: Size, date, and provenance of corpora obtained through LexisNexis

As I had assembled these corpora on the basis of field (topic and purpose) in order to investigate the lexical patterning around the concepts of books, reading and community, I used MonoConc Pro 2.0 and employed a stoplist to exclude function words. For all three corpora, I generated frequency lists, and used these to provide clues to the fields and concepts of interest that might emerge from the collocate data. I then performed searches using the wildcard character * on the terms *book**, *read** and *communit** and generated collocate frequency tables

³ Using the search term “Richard and Judy’s Book Club” also brought up articles containing the term “Richard and Judy Book Club”. Both phrases are used by the media texts, and indeed by the programme’s own website.

for each of these. It would also have been useful to obtain Mutual Information figures for these terms and their collocates, but this is not within MonoConc's capabilities.

In my analysis I looked predominantly for two kinds of lexical patterning. The first was for semantic preferences for particular fields (for example the nation, social institutions, and the book trade). The second was evaluative language. Here I followed Hunston and Thompson's (2000: 5) definition of evaluation: "the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about." Hunston and Thompson identify four parameters of evaluation – good-bad, certainty, expectedness and importance – of which this study considers only good-bad (14-18, 22, 25). They describe evaluative language as allowing the researcher access to "the values ascribed to the entities and propositions which are evaluated", and as I was interested not only in how these community reading events were being discussed but also in how books and reading were being evaluated in the context of these reading events, a focus on the evaluative dimension of these media texts was warranted.

3. Findings from Each Corpus

3.1 Canada Reads

Now in its sixth year, Canada Reads has been running since 2002. It is disseminated on the national broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). In 2004 it was also televised, on CBC Newsworld, but has not been televised again since. The pre-recorded broadcasts take place over five days, and each day there is a half-hour debate between five celebrity panellists who have each chosen one book to champion. At the end of each debate one book is voted off, until only one is left. In its early years the programme described this as 'the book all Canadians should read'; in later iterations this deontic modality disappeared almost entirely and the winning book was instead framed as 'the book all Canada reads'.⁴

3.1.1 Frequency List

The term *Canada* is the first item in the frequency list at 0.42 percent, a finding which can be partially attributed to the fact that it is contained in the search term. However, only a few places below in 8th place is *Canadian* (0.22 percent), suggesting the prominence of nationalist discourse around the programme. Interestingly there are no other closely related terms (no *nation* or *national* for instance) as are found in the Big Read data. The term *cbc* is some way down the list at 0.08 percent, with 495 instances; it is evidently of limited interest as the institution behind the programme, given that there are fewer mentions of *cbc* than there are articles in the corpus:

⁴ The Canada Reads website can be found at <<http://www.cbc.ca/canadareads/>>.

ir favourite book before and during the CBC debates. Students in Grade 4 to 1
 etition organized and broadcast by the CBC. During Canada Reads, five Canadian per
 4-15. Thur: Canada reads with the CBC: Eyeopener host Jim Brown and friends a
 This year's Canada Reads contest on CBC featured a final showdown between Marg
 part of the lead-up to the debates, a CBC film crew, Morrissey, Canadian literatu
 R11 LENGTH: 786 words HEADLINE: CBC fishes 1928 novel out of obscurity; Ro
 campaign.) On public radio broadcaster CBC, five authors duked it out, Survivor -
 - will go. Before the taping, the CBC had solicited advice for its panellists

Table 2: Concordances of *cbc*

The frequency list does not appear to exhibit any particularly unexpected terms. There are lexical items relating to the field of reading: 1375 instances of *book* (0.22 percent), 941 of *books* (0.15 percent), 903 of *reads* (0.14 percent), 865 of *read* (0.14 percent), 595 of *library* (0.10 percent), 549 of *novel* (0.09 percent), 534 of *story* (0.09 percent), 425 of *reading* (0.07 percent), and 368 of *author* (0.06 percent). However, as will be seen below, this frequency list is nonetheless useful in providing a basis for comparison with the frequency lists of the other two corpora.

3.1.2 Collocate Patterning Around *book**

A clear sense of a positive semantic field coheres around the lemma *book** , with the following positive evaluators occurring:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>celebration</i> (13) <i>favourite</i> (6) <i>best</i> (5) <i>good</i> (4)	<i>winning</i> (23) <i>favourite</i> (19) <i>good</i> (17) <i>great</i> (11) <i>must-read</i> (6), <i>appropriate</i> (5) <i>popular</i> (4) <i>inspirational</i> (4) <i>essential</i> (3) <i>better</i> (3)	<i>lover's</i> (6) <i>lovers</i> (4)	<i>grand</i> (7) <i>championed</i> (4) <i>important</i> (3)

Table 3: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with positive evaluative terms

yesterday, each championing a favourite book. Singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwrig
 llow voters to opt for their favourite book, eliminating one of the five titles in
 comments and vote for their favourite book before and during the CBC debates.
 ts and ask them to pick their favourite book. One book will be voted off the list e
 to convince the nation their favourite book is the best entry in the 2007 CBC Cana
 comments and vote for their favourite book by participating in the "Sarnia-Lambton
 ds celebrities choosing their favourite books and defending them on-air in a series
 ng or right in choosing one's favourite books of the year, no rules or regulations,
 E: Celebs back to pitch their favourite books BODY: Canada Reads, CBC-Radio'
 y panellists to choose their favourite books to defend on the program, it has revive
 nada Reads asks for lists of favourite books while Combat des livres asks for argume
 e asked to choose their five favourite books. The production team then selects from

Table 4: Concordances of *book** demonstrating collocation with *favourite*

Negative patterning is much more limited:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
	<i>f---ing</i> (6) <i>brazen</i> (3)	<i>brawl</i> (3)	

Table 5: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with negative evaluative terms

Furthermore, these instances of negative evaluative language can be accounted for by their context. The term *brawl* comes from one of the show's nicknames for itself, a 'book brawl', while *brazen* is from the name of a publisher ('Brazen Books'). The *f---ing*, more intriguing, comes from a quote by one of the celebrity panellists:

"It's a f---ing book," he fumes. "No kids were harmed during the writing of the book. No child actors were made to do things they didn't want to do. It's f---ing words."

The author of the article repeats the phrase *f---ing book* later on in the article, and the article appears three times in the corpus, hence there are six iterations altogether.

There is some lexical patterning which refers to other literary-type events not specifically related to Canada Reads (Indigo being a prominent Canadian bookselling chain):

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
	<i>indigo</i> (13) <i>oprah's</i> (5)	<i>club</i> (105) <i>clubs</i> (13) <i>signings</i> (10)	

Table 6: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with literary events and institutions

When taken in comparison with the Richard and Judy data, however, this patterning around bookselling and book events can be seen to be fairly minimal. It can be deduced that media commentators do not find the book industry or the commercial processes associated with publishing to be particularly relevant topics of discussion in the context of Canada Reads.

3.1.3 Collocate patterning around *read**

There is the same emphasis on a positive semantic field around the lemma *read**, with even fewer negatively inflected collocates. With a comparable number of keyword matches (2698) when compared with those for *book** (2710), *read** also has a richer set of collocates: 128 and 150 collocates appear three or more times in the 2-left and 2-right slots respectively, compared to

123 (1-left) and 125 (2-right) for *book**.⁵ What might this signify? One possibility that seems persuasive when the character of the debates are considered is that it is the *act* of reading that is central to Canada Reads – the act of making sense of the book in discussion, using it for example to work through questions of national identity – rather than the book as object. This interpretation is supported by the occurrence of a significant number of lexemes in the collocate frequency table relating to the idea of reading as ‘sense-making’:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>teaching</i> (5) <i>comments</i> (3)	<i>hearing</i> (8) <i>response</i> (7) <i>storytellers</i> (7)	<i>comments</i> (20) <i>debate</i> (18) <i>debates</i> (10)	<i>think</i> (8) <i>respond</i> (8) <i>reflect</i> (6) <i>debate</i> (4) <i>stories</i> (3) <i>answer</i> (3) <i>message</i> (3) <i>opinions</i> (3) <i>discussion</i> (3)

Table 7: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with the idea of sense-making

words) in advance, and all members will read and comment on each other's work. ng author will be invited to London to read from and discuss the book in May. inference, this book will be essential reading for anyone trying to make sense of Nor e was one of three teenagers invited to read and debate books on a local version of ackles play reading BODY: Ever read a good book and can't wait to discuss i dience participation. Book clubs invite readers to join them in discussing Guy Vanderh ll of them to come and enjoy some good reading discussion, make new friends and enjoy nesdays, Scott Thompson and a panel of readers will share their thoughts on the Gover

Table 8: Concordances of *read** demonstrating a semantic preference for the concept of sense-making

There is some of this sense-making discourse around *book**, but it is not as pronounced. Given this finding, it seem probable that the Richard and Judy data would invert these findings, and focus more on the book as object, and on its sale and promotion, than on the act of reading and sense-making. As will be seen below, this is indeed the case.

Something else of interest in the patterning around *read** is that there are eleven different forms of the lemma *canad** appearing in various places in the collocate table. Some of these can be explained by the search term, *canada reads*, but other lexemes are prominent, notably *Canadian* and *Canadians*. In comparison, versions of *canad** appear eight times in the *book** collocate table, suggesting that nationalist discussion is more closely linked to the act of reading than to the book as object. Clearly, however, there are synonyms such as *literature* and *classic*

⁵ The initial *read** search produced 2822 matches; manually removing words which were brought up by the *read** search but were not lexemes of the lemma *read* (for example *ready*, *readily*, *readiness* and the skier *Ken Read*) yielded 2698 matches. Removing the 725 instances of the phrase *canada reads* took the number of *read** matches to 1973.

with which lexemes from the lemma *canad** could be collocating, so this is a tentative rather than a conclusive finding.

3.1.4 Collocate Patterning Around *communit**

Examining the collocate patterning around *communit** brings into relief the diversity of the patterning of *book** and *read**. Lexemes collocating with *communit** appear to have nothing to do with Canada Reads, and indeed when the Key Word in Context lines for these are examined, this is borne out. Where *community* and its lemmas appear in these Canada Reads media texts, they are rarely connected with Canada Reads, or the act of reading, or with the book as object, but are rather employed to describe groups of people or locations which have come up incidentally in discussion:

slice of social history. It was a community where most of the men worked as Pullm
the trials and travails of the black community in Montreal," says her friend Ken Ale
ation," Sarsfield says, but "the whole community" and her joy in her childhood neighbo
tten in 1927 detailing life in a small community and his love of fishing, which he cal
were at-risk youth! They didn't have a community centre!" As we walk up Yonge Stre
deference to the voices of folks in my community. After growing up in hybrid North End
rtunity to discuss the book with other community members in an online environment.
y progressive literature to the Guelph community. Saturday's live debate features four

Table 9: Concordances of *community* demonstrating lack of reference to the act of reading together

The one exception to this is *Mennonite*, which refers to the community who are the focus of one of the winning Canada Reads titles, Miriam Toews's *A Complicated Kindness*:

Nickel, whose life in a small Mennonite community in Manitoba has been thrown into dis
ry of a teen growing up in a Mennonite community and looking for a way out. GRAPHIC:
troubled life in a Manitoba Mennonite community, defending against picks from other

Table 10: Concordances of *community* demonstrating collocation with *Mennonite*

These lines show that the kind of community being discussed is the town where the fictional heroine of the novel lives, as opposed to discussions of real-life communities and their response to or activities around the novel. With 511 iterations of the keyword, there is clearly not the same volume of instances as for *book** (2710) and *read** (2698). It therefore seems reasonably clear that media commentators do not link participation in Canada Reads to the idea of community.

3.2 The Big Read

The Big Read is a programme which was set up by the US National Endowment for the Arts in response to the 2004 'Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America' report, which maintained that 'literary reading' was in decline across America. In 2006 the NEA funded ten communities to hold Big Read programming around a single book chosen from the NEA's list of four approved canonical titles: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. In 2007, 72 towns across the US were funded to take part in the programme and the

list of books had been expanded to eight. At the time of writing there is further expansion planned, with a list of twelve books, and a projected figure of two hundred communities per year taking part.⁶

3.2.1 Frequency List

From the Big Read frequency list a clear sense of the importance of institutions emerges: *library* (0.27 percent), *center* (0.26 percent), *program* (0.15 percent), *city* (0.15 percent), *public* (0.15 percent), *national* (0.15 percent), *county* (0.14 percent), *community* (0.14 percent), *museum* (0.13 percent) and *school* (0.12 percent) are all in the top fifty most frequent lexical words. These all appear above the terms LexisNexis attaches to the header of each article (such as *load-date* and *headline*), so all appear more frequently than the number of articles in the Big Read corpus. In comparison with the Canada Reads frequency list, there are fewer lexemes belonging to the field of reading: both list *book*, *books*, *read*, *reading* and *library* in their 100 most frequent lexical words, but in addition Canada Reads includes *reads*, *novel*, *story* and *author*. This suggests that there is more discussion around reading and books in the Canada Reads articles, and therefore less of this kind of talk in the Big Read articles. There must therefore be more discussion of other topics, with discourse around institutions suggesting itself as one likely possibility. A further point of interest is the prominence of terms indicating the prevalence of web addresses: *www* appears in 10th place (0.29 percent), *com* in 28th place (0.17 percent) and *org* in 32nd place (0.16 percent). The internet is evidently an important point of reference for The Big Read. Interestingly, this is not the case for Canada Reads, despite the fact that its website contains a great deal of information about the programme: *www* and *com* come in at 79th and 80th most frequent (both 0.07 percent)..

3.2.2 Collocate Patterning Around *book**

In this corpus, the lemma *book** evinced a semantic preference for activities and events around reading. There were more than forty-five instances each of *club*, *discussion*, *signing*, *discussions* (1-right slot) and *discuss* (2-left slot) collocating with *book**, and many other events and experiences appeared elsewhere in the collocate table, table 11.

The examples in tables 11 and 12 are all ways of sharing books together, and this is compatible with the findings in the frequency list, given that institutions such as libraries, centres and programmes are entities that make it possible for, and indeed encourage, people to come together to do things, in this case to share books and reading. Forms of the lemma *discuss* are particularly prevalent, but in contrast to the *read** collocates in the Canada Reads corpus where discussion was also prominent, it is noticeable that in the Big Read data there is not the same profusion of synonyms. The lemmas *discuss*, *talk* and *say* appear, but this puts the emphasis on self-expression rather than the sense-making lemmas found in Canada Reads.

⁶ The Big Read website can be found at <<http://www.neabigread.org/>>.

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>discussion</i> (7) <i>presents</i> (6) <i>discusses</i> (6) <i>activities</i> (6) <i>gathering</i> (6) <i>events</i> (6) <i>speaker</i> (4) <i>festival</i> (4) <i>programs</i> (3) <i>discussions</i> (3) <i>discussing</i> (3) <i>readings</i> (3)		<i>festival</i> (28) <i>clubs</i> (25) <i>groups</i> (14) <i>group</i> (11) <i>project</i> (7) <i>festivals</i> (5) <i>giveaway</i> (5) <i>program</i> (5) <i>signings</i> (4) <i>readings</i> (4) <i>awards</i> (3)	<i>discussion</i> (12) <i>groups</i> (7) <i>discuss</i> (6) <i>discusses</i> (4) <i>conference</i> (4) <i>project</i> (4) <i>program</i> (4) <i>organizations</i> (3)

Table 11: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating a semantic preference for activities and events

ject encourages people to read the same book and discuss it and the issues it raise
57. April 17: Tillman Hill Adult Book Club discusses "To Kill a Mockingbird."
deputy editor of The Washington Post's Book World, discusses and signs The N Word:
ary, 8701 W. Commercial Blvd., Tamarac. Book review discussion on Fahrenheit 451.
books. We gave away 500 copies. We had book groups, discussion groups, blogs, readi
sent a theater production based on the book. Readings, discussion groups, art exhib
Big Read Event: A brown bag lunch and book club discussion led by Washington Univ
urch: The Big Read, Mt. Zion's version. Book for discussion is "Gilead" by Marilyn
y black author Zora Neale Hurston. Free books for discussion group participants are
eening of the 1962 film version of the book; panel discussions at coffeehouses, mus

Table 12: Concordances of the lemma *book* demonstrating collocation with the lemma *discuss*

As with the Canada Reads corpus, there is the same emphasis on evaluating books in a positive light. Examples include:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>importance</i> (3) <i>powerful</i> (3)	<i>good</i> (48) <i>great</i> (27) <i>classic</i> (8) <i>wonderful</i> (7) <i>cool</i> (4) <i>award-winning</i> (4) <i>prize-winning</i> (4) <i>prize-nominated</i> (3) <i>recommended</i> (3) <i>life-changing</i> (3)	<i>lovers</i> (9)	

Table 13: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with positive evaluative terms

er world by losing ourselves in a good book -- only to find truths about humanity come together by reading the same good book. And they're having fun together by bringing a program to make the reading of a good book a civic activity," NEA Chairman Dana Graws all of us away from reading a good book. Social commentators have observed that bringing fun together by bringing this good book to life. Later this week at the library

ODY: If you're looking for a good book, the Idaho Falls Public Library wants to connect around reading a good book," said IMLS Director Dr. Anne-Imelda Mung, from discovering the joys of a good book. "We need to restore literature through reading by picking a single good book that everybody in the area can read at

Table 14: Concordances of *book* demonstrating collocation with *good*

Again, negative patterning is sparse:⁷

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>ban</i> (3)	<i>banned</i> (19) <i>illegal</i> (4)	<i>controversy</i> (4)	<i>illegal</i> (11) <i>worst</i> (3) <i>errors</i> (3) <i>banned</i> (3)

Table 15: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with negative evaluative terms

As limited as this negative evaluative patterning is in comparison with the positive patterning, it is much more extensive than in the Canada Reads texts and shows an evident emphasis on banned and illegal books. Coupled with the references to awards and prizes in the positive evaluative patterning, this can be taken as further evidence of the emphasis on institutions: the positive or negative value of a book is being judged in part by whether it is honoured by institutions such as award bodies or libraries, or condemned by other institutions (such as the law and the state) as transgressive.

3.2.3 Collocate Patterning Around *read**

Not only is *read** a prominent term within the Big Read corpus – at 4142 matches⁸ it contains about one and a half times the number of instances of the lemma *read** as Canada Reads, despite being a slightly smaller corpus – but there is also greater consistency in the lexical patterning around the term. Several themes emerge from the collocate frequency table. Firstly, positive evaluative language is more prominent for *read** than for *book**:

⁷ I have omitted *wild* and *crazy* from table 15 as both these terms can have positive connotations when used as slang. I have also omitted *kill* as the context makes clear that each instance comes from the title of one chosen novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

⁸ The initial *read** search produced 4183 matches; manually removing words which were brought up by the *read** search but were not lexemes of the lemma *read* (for example *ready*, *ready-made* and *readily*) yielded 4142 matches. Removing the 1475 instances of the phrase *big read* took the number of *read** matches to 2667.

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>successful</i> (12) <i>love</i> (12) <i>encourages</i> (11) <i>encourage</i> (11) <i>encouraged</i> (10) <i>importance</i> (6) <i>joy</i> (5) <i>joys</i> (3)	<i>encourage</i> (26) <i>encourages</i> (8) <i>eager</i> (4) <i>innovative</i> (3)	<i>success</i> (3)	<i>pleasure</i> (16) <i>great</i> (7) <i>joy</i> (6) <i>good</i> (5) <i>important</i> (5) <i>happy</i> (4) <i>celebrating</i> (4) <i>enrich</i> (3) <i>fun</i> (3)

Table 16: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *read** demonstrating collocation with positive evaluative terms

There are only a few terms connoting negative evaluation, and many of those that do appear can be directly linked to statements that have been made by Dana Gioia, the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, about the need to encourage reading in an era in which reading is apparently ‘at risk’ and ‘in decline’:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>decline</i> (15) <i>rebel</i> (5) <i>refuses</i> (3)		<i>expensive</i> (5)	<i>risk</i> (36) <i>declining</i> (5)

Table 17: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *read** demonstrating collocation with negative evaluative terms

"a universal decline in reading" over the past 20 years, argued the NEA boss. "The is measurable decline in reading." After opening remarks by Mayor Fabrizi, attendee ed a dramatic decline in reading for pleasure among the American public, said Paulett tudy that showed literary reading is declining dramatically in the United States. "And ed a critical decline in reading among American adults. Drawn from a U.S. Census o combat the decline in reading that their study documented. Over the next couple ing about this decline in reading, so the NEA is sponsoring the "Big Read," a program the past decade. Literary reading is declining among all age groups, but the steepest

Table 18: Concordances of *reading* demonstrating collocation with the lemma *decline*

If, as we have already seen, the media is generally positively disposed towards the act of reading, with respect to The Big Read it offers hardly any criticism of the act of reading at all. At the top end of the collocate frequency table for *read** can be seen a lot of patterning around the concept of community, which is to be expected given the emphasis on the social and social-institutional dimension of the programme.

Valley Community College or East Greenbush Community Library. Even allowing for these, however, the Big Read corpus exhibits a much greater incidence of the term than the other two corpora.

Two 1-right collocates in particular stand out in the collocate frequency table. Firstly, the recurrence of *communities nationwide* (13) supports the observation from close analysis of the Big Read website that the programme is interested in both individual communities and the broader community of the nation:

nt for the Arts that is occurring in 72 communities nationwide in the first half of th
ightenment. Aberdeen is one of 72 communities nationwide selected to receive an
year has been adopted by more than 100 communities nationwide. At the very least, goo
breadth of activities that our Big Read communities nationwide -- including Bridgeport
of \$10,000 to \$20,000 to more than 100 communities nationwide to start monthlong read
owment expand the Big Read to reach 400 communities nationwide. Testifying on beha
hed "Reading at Risk" grants to help 72 communities nationwide sponsor programs that w
y NEA Chairman Dana Gioia, who invited communities nationwide to participate in The B

Table 21: Concordances of *communities* demonstrating collocation with *nationwide*

Secondly, *community book* (12) appears in the table, which is interesting as these two words do not generally form familiar noun phrases such as *community college* or *community program*. The fact that this phrase is relatively prominent in this corpus but is absent from the other two corpora is evidence not just for the greater prominence of 'One Book' reading events in the US, but for the contention that community reading events have become prominent enough within the cultural imaginary to begin to appear in the lexicon. This prominence within a significant number of media articles suggests that readers are being perceived by journalists and editors as being sufficiently familiar with the idea of community-wide reading events for these terms to be used without the need for glossing.

snacks from the Millennium Cafe for a community book discussion. Information: 580-454
on, she started a national movement of community book reading (to say nothing of serv
r the class as part of the Big Read, a communitywide book reading program. Three st
Building on the success of last year's communitywide book read event in Catawba County
part of the Miami Valley's Big Read, a communitywide book reading featuring the book b
's stories as part of a Catawba County community-wide book project, which encourages
icture Saturday in Newton as part of a community book-read project and a traveling pho

Table 22: Concordances of the lemma *community* demonstrating collocation with *book*

Another interesting finding from the collocate frequency table is the appearance of a number of verbs to do with the act of participating in or being included in a community:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>reaching</i> (8) <i>build</i> (7) <i>encourage</i> (6) <i>provide</i> (3) <i>join</i> (3) <i>conduct</i> (3) <i>bring</i> (3) <i>involve</i> (3)	<i>participating</i> (9) <i>encourage</i> (6) <i>encourages</i> (6) <i>build</i> (5) <i>unifying</i> (5)	<i>participating</i> (7) <i>include</i> (3)	<i>participating</i> (6) <i>participate</i> (5) <i>develop</i> (4) <i>encouraged</i> (3)

Table 23: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *communit** demonstrating a semantic preference for the concepts of participation and inclusion

The emphasis on being part of a community – especially the recurrence of forms of the lemma *encourage* – suggests that media commentators are picking up on, and helping to reinforce, the NEA’s often-iterated statements that The Big Read is not merely about reading, but about encouraging people to participate in their communities, and so helping the communities themselves to develop.

It is partly to be expected that there would be more talk around the idea of community in conjunction with The Big Read, as the programme’s organisers repeatedly describe it as something which takes place in communities across America (as opposed to Canada Reads which is disseminated over the radio to the entire nation). Comparing the two collocate frequency tables suggests that for all Canada Reads’s attention to questions of Canadian national identity, the concept of community is not being discussed in relation to the individual locations and groups in which people listen to the programme: it is the ‘imagined community’ of the nation that is the central social grouping of the Canada Reads media texts. An important caveat to bear in mind, too, is the greater keyness of the lemma *communit** in American English as compared to British and Canadian English. As Leech and Falton (1992) observe, differences in word frequencies may be attributable to cultural rather than merely linguistic differences. But this in itself reveals something of the object of study at hand: as Baker (2006: 148) puts it, ‘keywords not only point to the existence of discourses, but they help to reveal the rhetorical techniques that are used in order to present discourses as common sense of the correct ways of thinking.’ The very much larger number of instances of the lemma *communit** within the Big Read texts is to my mind strongly indicative of an important difference in the way both organisers and participants think about, and carry out, mass reading events in these three countries, as well as a reflection of the term’s greater prominence in American English.

3.3 Richard and Judy’s Book Club

Richard and Judy is a magazine-style show that is broadcast on the British TV channel Channel 4. The show runs for an hour and goes out in the early evening, from 5-6pm in 2007. In 2004 it began a book club segment, with a list of 8-10 books which viewers can purchase beforehand through the Richard and Judy website. Each episode, one book is discussed for about 8 minutes by the two presenters, Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan, and their celebrity guests. There may also be a pre-recorded presentation about the book, the location in which it was written or set,

and/or the author. There is another book club during the summer, Richard and Judy's Summer Read, with a slightly different format and a shorter list of books.⁹

3.3.1 Frequency List

The first interesting finding is the presence of three lexemes from a lemma that is absent from the frequency lists of the other two corpora: *publish*. The frequency list contains *publishing* (0.11 percent), *publishers* (0.07 percent) and *published* (0.06 percent). Given that *pounds* (0.07 percent) is also present in the list, it can be seen that questions of production and cost are visible in these texts in a way that they are not in the Canada Reads and the Big Read media texts. Three further terms present in the Richard and Judy corpus and absent from the other two corpora are *prize* (0.12 percent), *award* (0.08 percent) and *orange* (0.06 percent, referring to the Orange Prize for fiction). These also relate to structures within book production, and suggest more of a preoccupation with the value of these texts as determined by award-giving bodies than is evident in the other two corpora.

A further contrast lies in the emphasis on the author in the Richard and Judy corpus: it contains *author* (0.10 percent), *authors* (0.07 percent) and *writing* (0.07 percent). None of these terms or synonyms for the act of authoring appear in The Big Read frequency list, and in Canada Reads there is only *author* (0.06 percent) which only just makes the list in 100th place. Yet again, this illustrates the emphasis on mechanisms of book production. Terms relating to the nation are present: *uk* (0.10 percent), *british* (0.09 percent) and *london* (0.09 percent). These percentages are however lower than parallel terms in the other corpora: *canada* (0.42 percent), *canadian* (0.22 percent), *toronto* (0.12 percent) and *ontario* (0.08 percent) for Canada Reads, and *national* (0.15 percent) and *american* (0.11 percent) for The Big Read. Questions of nationalism are evidently not so prominent in this UK context when compared to the two North American contexts, but to gain a more nuanced picture this would benefit from comparison with reference corpora in British, American and Canadian English to see how prominent questions of nationalism were in news media texts more generally.

3.3.2 Collocate Patterning Around *book**

As expected, the Richard and Judy corpus reversed the emphasis on reading over books as seen in the two North American corpora: it contained 4582 instances of *book**¹⁰ compared to 2710 in Canada Reads and 3226 in The Big Read. When the size of the corpora are taken into account, the difference is enlarged still further such that the incidence of *book** is 280 percent larger than that of Canada Reads and 206 percent larger than that of The Big Read. The Richard and Judy texts thus focus on the book as object as opposed to the act of reading.

Looking at the 1-right collocate frequency table it is evident that references to *book clubs* are responsible for a very large number of the search term hits (848); looking at the 1-left column reveals that 551 of these are references to Richard and Judy's (or the Richard and Judy) Book

⁹ The Richard and Judy Book Club website can be found at <<http://www.richardandjudybookclub.co.uk/>>.

¹⁰ The initial *book** search produced 5129 matches; removing the 547 instances of the phrases *richard and judy's book club*, *richard and judy book club*, *r&j book club* and *r&j's book club* took the number of *book** matches to 4582.

Club itself. An unexpected finding was the prominence of *british* as the third highest lexical collocate with 136 occurrences in 1-left position; however once this term was viewed in context the majority of instances were seen to refer to the British Book Awards. The term *uk* was also fairly high at 17th place, with 26 occurrences. Nationalist discourse was expected from the two North American programmes, given the way both were framed by their organisers, but as this was not something that was particularly evident in the book club segments of the Richard and Judy show, it was surprising to find it in the data. Again, looking at the context provided by the concordances gave a fuller picture: *uk* is used either in URLs (e.g. *Guardian.co.uk/books*, *timesonline.co.uk/booksfirst*, *www.observer.co.uk/bookshop*) or in reference to commercial entities:

is already having an impact on the UK book charts, with Kate Mosse's Labyrinth Juliet Miller's history shows that the UK book market has operated with fewer regulatory infrastructure investments in the UK book industry during the year - and had been by has about 35pc market share of the UK book wholesaling business, a figure that Mr Cault is exhausted. Halfway through a UK book tour and not so fresh from back-to-back events an pounds-8 million impact on the UK book industry with their Richard & Judy Book Club site. Despite the upturn in the UK book market in general thanks to last year's groups accounted for 51.8 percent of UK book sales Publishing group Market

Table 24: Concordances of *book* demonstrating collocation with *uk*

Lexemes offering a positive evaluation of *book** (particularly *best* and *good*) appear disproportionately often when compared to the other two corpora. When compared to the Canada Reads *book** collocate table, it can be seen that the positive adjectives in 1-left in Canada Reads are somewhat more nuanced than the Richard and Judy 1-left collocates: where those in Richard and Judy are predominantly synonyms of *good* (*best*, *wonderful*, *great*, *excellent*), those in Canada Reads supply more shades of meaning (*must-read*, *appropriate*, *popular*, *inspirational*, *essential*), giving some indication of why the book is good along with the fact that it is considered good. Comparing the Richard and Judy data to The Big Read data, the same preoccupation with prizes and awards is seen, but there is also noticeably much more positive evaluative language in the former than the latter. This was an unexpected finding, given the effort made by the producers of The Big Read to emphasise the positive qualities of books and reading:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>popular</i> (13)	<i>best</i> (29)	<i>prize</i> (81)	<i>winner</i> (12)
<i>winners</i> (9)	<i>good</i> (28)	<i>winner</i> (10)	<i>great</i> (5)
<i>love</i> (7)	<i>favourite</i> (19)	<i>awards'</i> (9)	<i>winners</i> (5)
<i>triumphed</i> (6)	<i>wonderful</i> (13)	<i>favourite</i> (7)	<i>best</i> (5)
<i>enjoy</i> (6)	<i>great</i> (12)	<i>lucky</i> (4)	<i>bought</i> (5)
<i>delighted</i> (5)	<i>important</i> (11)	<i>lovers</i> (4)	<i>win</i> (5)
<i>won</i> (5)	<i>win</i> (10)	<i>prize-shortlisted</i> (3)	<i>welcomed</i> (4)
<i>win</i> (5)	<i>winning</i> (7)		<i>awards</i> (4)
<i>wins</i> (4)	<i>love</i> (7)		<i>good</i> (4)
<i>celebration</i> (3)	<i>popular</i> (7)		<i>whitbread</i> (4)
<i>prize</i> (3)	<i>successful</i> (6)		<i>recommend</i> (3)
	<i>excellent</i> (5)		<i>prize</i> (3)
	<i>enjoyable</i> (3)		

Table 25 (previous page): Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with positive evaluative terms

One of these positive evaluators, *wonderful*, turns out on closer examination of the context to be a comment from Judy Finnigan endorsing one of the books which has been quoted many times in different articles: “*This is without a doubt one of the most wonderful books I’ve ever read,*” she said. This repetition of an endorsement from an individual with cultural authority occurs with another positively evaluative term, *important*. One of the judges for the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction described Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* as ‘a moving and important book by an incredibly exciting author’, and this was repeated in many of the media texts. Here the corpus enables us to see that one way in which media commentators deploy Richard and Judy, and the show’s relationship to various prize-winning novels, is as an arbiter of cultural value: endorsements are repeatedly quoted and the positive evaluation of these novels are thereby cemented.

There is more variety in the collocate pair *great books*. Interestingly, the collocate pair *great book* does not appear, suggesting that it is the category of ‘great books’, rather than the quality of an individual book, that is under discussion:

nd are pleased to have found six great books for our viewers to enjoy on their sun l
or. I prefer to think about great books rather than great writers. Great author
uchstone of greatness for me, and great books are friends. I want to read them and r
nd are pleased to have found six great books for our viewers to enjoy on their sunlo
the opportunity to share in some great books?" says its spokesperson. But wil
e her choices? 'I just select 10 great books,' she says. 'I know it sounds corny, bu
No. The perk is access to great books and getting to meet exciting people. W
ng? Again, not all her books are great books but some, such as The Golden Notebook,

Table 26: Concordances of *books* demonstrating collocation with *great*

A further striking feature of the *book** collocates was the presence of many terms connected to the processes of buying and selling books, including the names of retailers.

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>sell</i> (8)	<i>buy</i> (15)	<i>sales</i> (60)	<i>sold</i> (10)
<i>bestselling</i> (5)	<i>sell</i> (10)	<i>trade</i> (33)	<i>ottakar's</i> (7)
<i>market</i> (4)	<i>whsmith</i> (9)	<i>industry</i> (32)	<i>buy</i> (5)
<i>bought</i> (4)	<i>bestselling</i> (8)	<i>market</i> (20)	<i>sales</i> (4)
<i>pounds</i> (3)	<i>waterstone's</i> (8)	<i>buyer</i> (7)	<i>sell</i> (4)
<i>sold</i> (3)	<i>buying</i> (7)	<i>buyers</i> (6)	<i>pounds</i> (3)
<i>borders</i> (3)	<i>selling</i> (6)	<i>pounds</i> (6)	<i>waterstone's</i> (3)
<i>tesco</i> (3)	<i>ottakar's</i> (5)	<i>shops</i> (4)	
	<i>consumer</i> (4)	<i>retailer</i> (4)	
	<i>best-selling</i> (3)	<i>bought</i> (4)	
	<i>borders</i> (3)	<i>retailing</i> (4)	
		<i>bestsellers</i> (4)	
		<i>buying</i> (3)	
		<i>stores</i> (3)	
		<i>publishers</i> (3)	
		<i>amazon</i> (3)	
		<i>markets</i> (3)	

Table 27: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating a semantic preference for terms connected to buying and selling

The concordance lines make particularly clear the media interest in the impact of Richard and Judy's Book Club on book sales:

read," said Finnigan, whose impact on book sales in the U.K. has been compared to
 ove it. Each series brings 1.8 million book sales that wouldn't otherwise happen. E
 Judy reading club has a novel effect on book sales BYLINE: By Nigel Reynolds Arts
 Judy's Book Club. The effect on book sales was nothing less than phenomenal.
 rds such as the Booker in its effect on book sales. One in four of all books
 ne of the great engines of contemporary book sales, depends in its judgements on th
 biggest marketing phenomenon in British book sales. The eight include the come
 udy Book Club, a formidable engine for book sales. The ceremony will be shown
 ard and Judy are set to trigger another book sales boom with the announcement of th
 and Judy book club on Channel 4 has for book sales. THE WINNERS Record o
 le Cactus TV boss. The impact on book sales last year was dubbed the "Richard

Table 28: Concordances of *book* demonstrating collocation with *sales*

In light of this emphasis on the commercial aspects of Richard and Judy's Book Club and the book business more generally, it is interesting that one of the prominent terms in the table of positive evaluators was the lemma *win* and its synonyms. The corpus thus helped to demonstrate a persistent pattern whereby books were imbued with value not according to a standard of literary value, but based on an award or prize.

Finally, patterning around lexemes denoting the UK and other countries was interesting in its contrast to the North American corpora, which focussed much more closely on the country of origin:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>britain's</i> (5)	<i>british</i> (136) <i>london</i> (10) <i>britain's</i> (7) <i>african-themed</i> (4) <i>scottish</i> (3) <i>german</i> (3)		<i>britain's</i> (8) <i>british</i> (4) <i>british</i> (3) <i>patriotism</i> (3) <i>britain</i> (3)

Table 29: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *book** demonstrating collocation with terms associated with different countries

While the concept of books was seen by those commenting on Richard and Judy to be an appropriate ‘carrier’ for discussion about the nation, this was evidently not the case for the act of reading.

3.3.3 Collocate Patterning Around *read**

Here again, the expected finding that *read** would be less prominent than the two North American corpora was born out: the Richard and Judy corpus contained 1443 instances of *read**, the Big Read 4142 (or 2851 when considered in proportion to corpora size) and Canada Reads 2698 (or 1697).¹¹ The lemma *read* thus appeared in the Richard and Judy texts only 51 percent as frequently as in the Big Read and 85 percent as frequently as Canada Reads.

The collocate frequency table for *read** is much shorter than for *book**, and also much less extensive than the *read** collocate tables in the North American corpora. Richard and Judy, at least as it is discussed by the media, does indeed seem to be more interested in discussing the book as object, and the entity of the book club, than than the process of reading. Compared to the extensive and in places hyperbolic list of terms providing positive evaluation of *book**, there were notably few such terms for *read**:

2-left	1-left	1-right	2-right
<i>good</i> (5) <i>popularity</i> (4) <i>inspiring</i> (3) <i>fascinating</i> (3)	<i>best</i> (106) <i>favourite</i> (17) <i>good</i> (14) <i>great</i> (10) <i>best</i> (6) <i>enjoy</i> (4) <i>wins</i> (4) <i>love</i> (3) <i>enjoyed</i> (3) <i>'best</i> (3) <i>enjoyable</i> (3)	<i>award</i> (21) <i>prize</i> (7) <i>love</i> (3)	<i>pleasure</i> (3) <i>pulitzer</i> (3)

Table 30: Selected entries from collocate frequency table for *read** demonstrating collocation with positive evaluators

¹¹ I have excluded instances of *read** which were part of the phrases *canada reads* and *big read* for this calculation.

Much more discursive effort goes into emphasising the positive aspects of books than reading in relation to Richard and Judy's Book Club. Yet again, too, there are hardly any collocates giving a negative evaluation of *read**. The predominance of *best* in the 1-left slot is due to recurrence of the Richard and Judy Best Read of the Year award. The prominence of *favourite* is due to reiteration or paraphrasing of a comment by Judy Finnigan about Lori Lansens' novel *The Girls*.

Overall the *read** collocate frequency table appeared to have far fewer discernable patterns than the North American corpora – some vocabulary from the field of television could be discerned, and as expected there were lexemes from the structures of book production, but otherwise the list was reasonably well balanced. As such this data serves to foreground the unusual nature of the vocabulary around reading as sense-making in the Canada Reads corpus, and the nationalist discourse in both North American corpora.

3.3.4 Collocate Patterning Around *communit**

With only one item in the collocate table, there is evidently negligible patterning around the idea of community in relation to Richard and Judy's Book Club. This is still an important finding, however, as it provides a context against which the NEA *communit** collocate table may be measured, and potentially interpreted as unusual. It also provides a comparator for what appears at first to be only a small amount of patterning in the Canada Reads corpus, but which is in fact more pronounced than for other mass reading events. These findings are in line with the data already obtained through other disciplinary channels on the prominence of community in the three national contexts, but comparison with a reference corpus would nuance this finding still further, as at present the interpretation relies on the researcher's intuition that the lemma *community* is generally more prominent in American English than in Canadian English, and in Canadian English more than in British English. The figures, proportionally corrected to allow for corpus size, are represented in figure 31: the Big Read has 1283 occurrences of *communit**, Canada Reads 511 (40 percent of 1283) and Richard and Judy just 26 (2 percent of 1283).

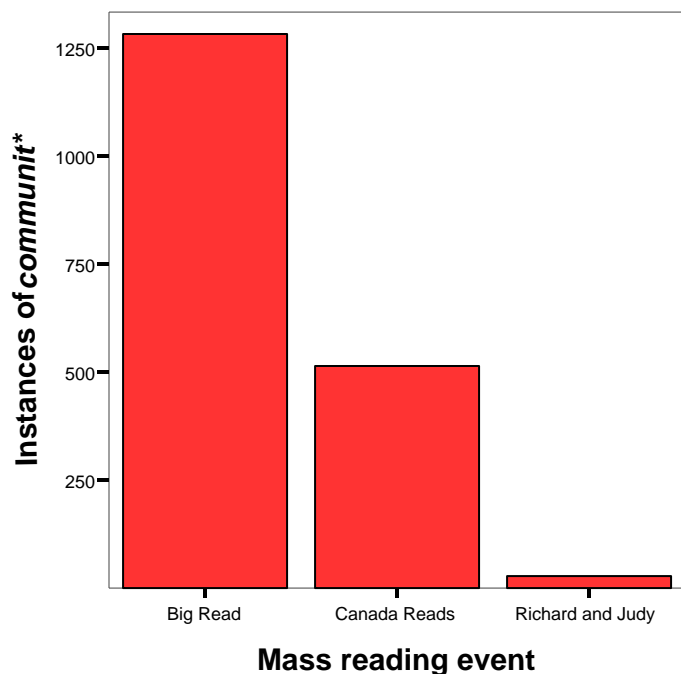


Figure 31: Graph showing the number of occurrences of the lemma *communit** across the three corpora

4. Summary of Findings

One of the central aims of this investigation was to examine the semantic prosody of the lemmas *book*, *read* and *community* in relation to these community reading events.¹² I determined that in all three corpora, there was a very strong discourse prosody of positive evaluation around the lemmas *book* and *read*. While it might be expected that a noun lemma such as *book* would be more likely to be modified by positive evaluators than a verb lemma such as *read*, the Big Read data proved a useful point of comparison here, as it furnished more positive evaluators for the lemma *read* as for *book*. In the Richard and Judy corpus the overabundance of positive evaluative language could be traced in part to the reiteration of endorsements from those in positions of cultural authority or media prominence. The fact that it was the Richard and Judy corpus that had the richest selection of positive evaluative terms could further be linked to the promotional aspect to the show: the presenters were unlikely to say anything negative about the books they (and their production team) had chosen, in conjunction with the book's publisher, to promote.

Another important finding was obtained by comparing the frequencies of the lemmas *book** and *read** across the three corpora. This demonstrated that the book as object was much

¹² Baker (2006: 86-87) is helpful on the distinction between the concepts of semantic preference and semantic prosody (or discourse prosody). He describes semantic preference as being concerned with aspects of meaning which are independent of speakers, and discourse prosody as denoting the relationship of a word to speakers and hearers, and hence more concerned with attitudes and evaluation.

more the focus of Richard and Judy than the act of reading, and that the act of reading was much more of a focus for the Big Read (and to a lesser extent Canada Reads) than the book as object.

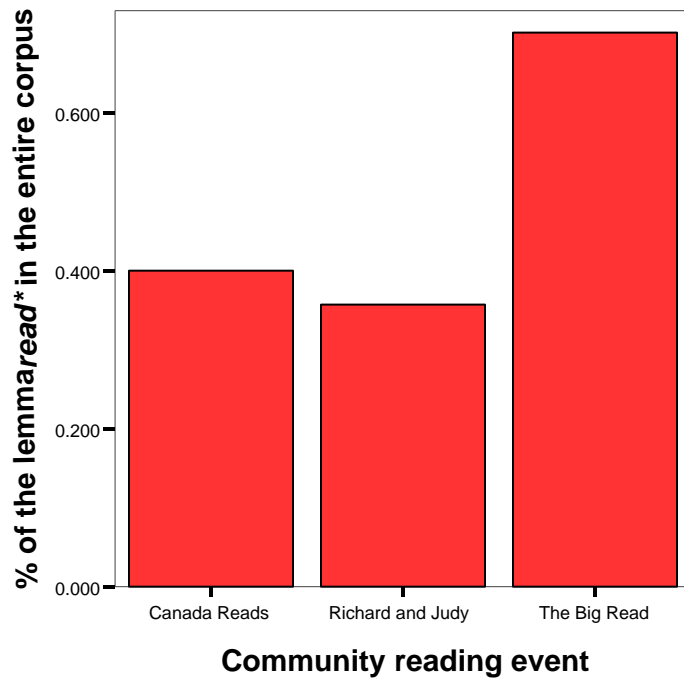


Figure 32: Graph demonstrating the percentage of the lemma *read* in the frequency lists of the three corpora

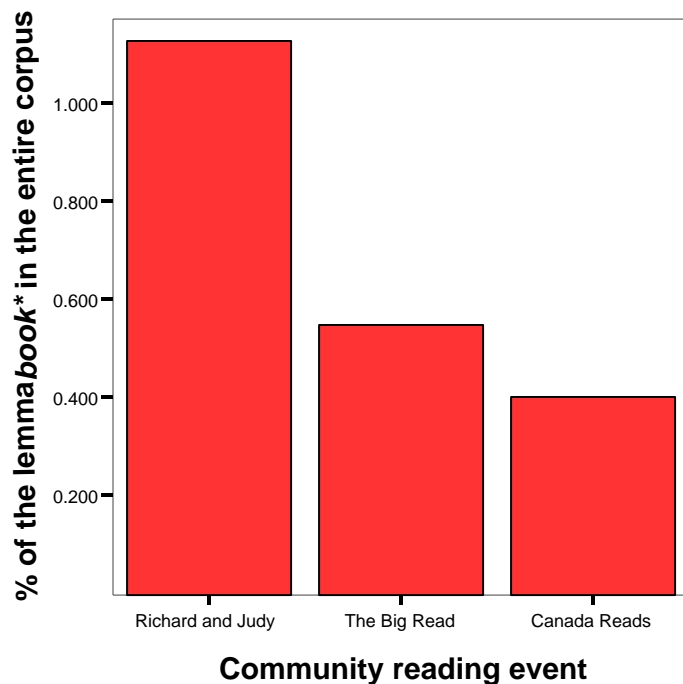


Figure 33: Graph demonstrating the percentage of the lemma *book* in the frequency lists of the three corpora

That this was more than a function of the presence of the terms *book* and *read* in the titles of the two programmes was supported by other findings. Firstly, there were many terms connected with the book industry and the commodification of the book as object in the Richard and Judy corpus; one of its more prominent lemmas, *publish**, was absent from the top-100 frequency lists of Canada Reads and The Big Read. Secondly, the Richard and Judy corpus contained markedly fewer (about half as many) positively evaluative collocates for the lemma *read** as for the lemma *book*. In addition, the collocates for the lemma *read** in the Canada Reads corpus demonstrated the term's semantic preference for 'sense-making', indicating that the Canada Reads media texts were devoting lexical resources to discussing the processes involved in reading.

What looked initially like unsurprising findings in the Canada Reads frequency list – a high incidence of lexical items relating to the field of reading – was in fact useful in serving as a reference corpus of sorts. This helped to demonstrate that the other two sets of media texts did not spend as much time within the field of reading as they might have, and instead devoted space to other topics such as social institutions, community, and the commercial aspects of the publishing industry.

In addition to the discourse prosody of positive evaluators for books and reading visible across the corpora, what emerged strongly from the Richard and Judy data was a semantic preference for terms connected with the publishing industry and book trade such as *sales*, *industry*, and *prices*. The prominence of the lemma *publish** in the Richard and Judy corpus was in line with focus group discussions in which Birmingham residents, unprompted, asked insistent questions about the publishers of Richard and Judy's selected books and what each stood to gain from the publicity given to the show by the books. Corpus methodologies made visible the parallel between these focus groups transcripts and a similar emphasis in the much larger number

of media texts on the publishing apparatus behind the books. Corpus methodologies by themselves cannot of course adjudicate on the question of whether it was the media texts or the show itself which were responsible for the emphasis on mechanisms of publishing and profit-making by focus group members, but it seems likely that those individuals who had not seen the Richard and Judy Book Club (as some had not) were receiving, and trusting, the message being disseminated by the media that the commercial aspect of Richard and Judy's Book Club was worthy of attention. In contrast, the realms of production and commercial value were largely avoided for Canada Reads and the Big Read in both focus groups and media discussions. This was not because questions of endorsement and the advantages accruing to publishers were not at stake. Both the Richard and Judy books and the Canada Reads books were sold in bookstores with stickers on their covers linking them to their respective mass reading events. UK focus group members talked at some length about seeing Richard and Judy stickers on books and either selecting them or purposefully avoiding them as a result. Canadian focus group members did occasionally note the presence of Canada Reads-stickered novels in bookstores, but this did not generate much talk about how the presence of a promotional sticker affected purchasing choices.

Other factors presented themselves to account for the way that the Big Read and Canada Reads corpora did not frame the book as a commodity in the same way the Richard and Judy texts did. While the Big Read texts were canonical classics and hence less capable of generating large profits for their publishers, the Canada Reads texts were for the most part contemporary novels, and could therefore be considered to have many of the same issues of promotion and publicity around them as the Richard and Judy texts. It is possible to speculate that the Canada Reads media texts evidenced much less talk about questions of a commercial nature due to the different formats of the shows. In order to participate in Canada Reads, listeners tuned in to the (free) national broadcaster and listened to radio shows discussing the books at length for half an hour at a time. If a listener had not read the books in question they could still enjoy the spirited discussion, and indeed focus group members reported doing just that. The book discussions on Richard and Judy, however, were much shorter and more truncated: there was barely time for the two presenters and their two guests to offer a comment or two each, then there might be a pre-recorded presentation for several minutes, and then the show moved on to its next segment. To get the most out of the Richard and Judy book club, it could be considered that participants needed to have read the books themselves, to a much greater extent than for Canada Reads.

The lemma *book* was found to be strongly associated in The Big Read data with activities, events, and institutions, and when this was taken in comparison with the Canada Reads data it suggested more of an emphasis on social behaviours – coming together and expressing one's view about a book – rather than the more reflective activities of sense-making as for Canada Reads. There was, correspondingly, much more interest in the idea of community in relation to the US events than for those in the UK and Canada. This was to be expected: the Big Read is framed as a programme that 'provides citizens with the opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their communities',¹³ and its website repeatedly characterises those for whom the programme has been set up as 'communities'. Furthermore, lexemes from the lemma *community* appear twenty-five times in the 1 359 words on the Frequently Asked Questions page. This emphasis on community in relation to reading also served to foreground the absence of interest in this aspect of a mass reading event by the Richard and Judy texts, and the comparative lack of interest by the Canada Reads texts.

¹³ The Big Read website, Frequently Asked Questions, <http://www.neabigread.org/faq.php> accessed 13 June 2007.

Finally, nationalist discourse was most prevalent in the Big Read corpora, something that – along with the prominence of the lemma *communit** – suggested that media commentators were reproducing with some fidelity the NEA’s emphasis on reading as a means of bringing together communities and improving America through reading and through the Big Read. The fact that the smallest amount of nationalist discourse came from the Richard and Judy corpus was not surprising, as it is the one programme out of the three that is disseminated not by a national broadcaster or government-funded organisation, but rather by a commercial television channel with tie-in promotions with a major bookseller. For all the disdain with which some focus group members talked about Richard and Judy’s Book Club, it appears to be the one event of the three that carries the least ideological baggage for its organisers. This does not however prevent it being treated as the most suspect of the three events by focus group members and media commentators alike for the relative transparency of its links with commercial entities.

5. Using Corpus Linguistics in a Multi-Disciplinary Research Project

This study is evidently a broad-brush use of corpus linguistics, with minimal use being made of statistics or more delicate analytical tools. I have for example concentrated on lexis and have not attended to grammar, and undoubtedly very many interesting points have been omitted as a result.¹⁴ I consider, nonetheless, that even with this relatively crude approach I have been able to obtain plenty of salient information, and that I have shown that corpus methodologies allow researchers from other disciplines to test their hypotheses or confirm their intuitions from smaller bodies of data and ethnographic fieldwork. Aston and Burnard (1998:13) point to the value of corpus linguistics for other disciplines: ‘corpus-based work has wider affinities than many other branches of linguistics, since the study of language-in-use as something to offer historical, political, literary, sociological, or cultural studies, and has profited from the resulting synergy.’ Stubbs (2006: 28), too, suggests that this is one of the directions in which corpus linguistics should be moving: ‘To date, much corpus analysis has been rather narrowly linguistic, and therefore, also in this sense, descriptive rather than explanatory, and it may now be time to try and relate it to classic problems of social theory’. This project, while not laying claim to the status of a ‘classic problem of social theory’, is still an example of an attempt to observe, describe, analyse and theorise the interrelation of language, cognition and culture within the context of contemporary shared reading practices, and it is an investigation which is enhanced by the use of corpus techniques to access the patterns of language use being iterated by media commentators as they refract, reflect, produce and contest their societies’ views of community reading events.

I have used these corpora synchronically rather than diachronically, though it should be noted that the rise of the mass reading event (in its One Book One Community incarnation) has occurred so recently that a diachronic analysis would yield interesting findings, especially as event organisers and discourse producers crystallise their ideas about the social ‘work’ mass reading events are considered to perform. This indicates a further advantage of corpus methods: once researchers have carried out the laborious work of ethnographic study which, in requiring

¹⁴ The distinction between the book as object and the act of reading as process could, for example, be explored with much more precision by tagging the corpora with grammatical tags and carrying out a grammatical analysis. This would provide a much more nuanced picture than the broad hypothesis that the Richard and Judy media texts focus on the (noun form of the) book and the North American media texts on (the verb form of) reading.

them to be in the field, must be carried out over a limited period of time, they can take advantage of corpus tools to analyse media texts available remotely, which can be used to judge how language use has changed in the intervening period.

An additional value of corpus methodologies is that they can provide confirmation of, or indeed challenge, findings obtained by other means. Many of the findings in this paper are closely in line with the observations made in focus groups. The presence of nationalist discourse around North American community reading events, for example, coupled with the almost total absence of this in the context of the UK, allowed me to confirm some of my hypotheses about the social function and significance of these events. Elsewhere my intuitions were challenged, for example the unwillingness of media commentators to offer any explicit negative evaluation when discussing Richard and Judy and their book choices. A further advantage was that the corpus analysis alerted me to aspects of these reading events that I had never before noticed and to which I am now attentive in the rest of my data: the emphasis on the author in Richard and Judy, the proliferation of institutions in discussion around the Big Read, and the way that the phrases *community reading events* and *community book events* have now passed sufficiently into the lexicon of American English as to be a referent with which media commentators are increasingly assuming their readership will have some familiarity.¹⁵

Part of the potential ‘cross-referencing’ capability of corpus analysis in multi-disciplinary projects such as this one lies in the fact that it works through a different channel – the textual – to other aspects of the project. Of particular interest in this respect was the unwillingness of media texts to associate negatively evaluative terms with books and reading in the context of Richard and Judy’s Book Club. Focus group members gave very clear interpersonal and behavioural signals of disapproval and disdain towards the programme – scornful tones of voices, laughter, eye-rolling and so on. In this interpersonal context, it was possible to hear tones of voice and observe body language, and hypothesise that where focus group participants felt unable to explicitly voice their cynicism about Richard and Judy and the large profits being made by the show, the publishers and the authors, they were managing to convey this suspicion through comments that did not necessarily contain any lexical evidence of negative evaluation. I expected to find the equivalent stance in the media texts, but this time conveyed lexically due to the absence of interpersonal and behavioural resources. However, negative evaluation appears to have been carried in the Richard and Judy texts not by overtly evaluative language but instead more subtly by a profusion of lexemes associated with structures of production such as publishing, publicity and retail. These two types of data thus complement each other, with the focus groups suggesting a way to interpret this semantic preference. If media commentators and focus group members were both highly reticent to cast reading in a negative light, then negative evaluation of books and reading in the context of a magazine-style television show was, I have hypothesised, sufficiently fraught as to need to be coded by reference to discussion of other things such as structures of book production and promotion. Without the focus group data, it would be difficult to make this connection from the corpus data alone. Without the corpus data, however, it would be difficult to identify (from the relatively small amounts of focus group transcript text) isolated instances of discussion of structures of book production as part of a broader discursive strategy aimed at discrediting Richard and Judy’s Book Club without appearing to negatively evaluate books and reading.

¹⁵ I want to note, however, that comparisons of focus group transcript data with media texts must be done carefully: this involves a comparison of written and spoken English, which as Biber et al (2002) have shown are often very different kinds of language.

This example illustrates Baker's (2006: 18) point that because corpus data does not interpret itself, the researcher must elucidate the patterns she finds within a corpus, postulating reasons to explain them and searching for further evidence to support these reasons: 'Our findings *are* interpretations, which is why we can only talk about restricting bias, not removing it completely'. Evidently this is not an exhaustive analysis: discourse about community reading events is occurring in other countries and geographical contexts, in other media texts not indexed by LexisNexis, and in lexical and grammatical patterns I have not noticed or had the space to discuss here.

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