

# Immersive Media & Books: Consumer Behavior and Experience with Multiple Media Forms



Engaged with 4+ books per month (48+ books per year)

## AVID BOOK ENGAGERS

*Engagement: buying, borrowing, subscribing to, reading or gifting a printed book, an ebook, or audiobook in part or in whole*

## Black and Latinx Millennials



High proportion of avid book engagers are Black, Latinx and millennials compared to general survey population. How can the industry better reach them?

## DISCOVERY

How

25%



Where

25%



Why

25%



Did you know?

75%

of respondents are library card holders

1 in 3 PEOPLE

Bought a book in a bookstore that they first found in a library



## About Immersive Media & Books 2020

This is the first study to capture data about how people engage with books, video games and TV/movies. The study's main emphasis is on behavior with books. The full report has granular demographic data: three age groups, five U.S. regions, and seven racial/ethnic groups. The report illuminates reading and entertainment behaviors of very specific ages/gender/race/regional groups. Learn what motivates your customers and library patrons by viewing the full report [here](#).

## Report Highlights

- **Millennials** are the most avid media engagers (defined as those who engaged with 4+ books per month).
- **75% of respondents have library cards**; there are significant variations by race/ethnicity and U.S. region.
- Greater percentages of **Black and Latinx** respondents are avid book engagers than the general survey population.
- Avid book engagers (53%) are also engaging avidly with **video games and TV/movies**.
- **Multitasking** is high for audiobooks (70%) and ebooks (61%). "Immersive" reading is just one way people engage with (usually printed) books.
- **Pirates are also customers**. 41% of book pirates not only buy books, but buy the same book in multiple formats.
- **Libraries are tools of discovery** and potential catalysts for bookbuying.
  - ◆ 31% of respondents eventually buy books in bookstores they discover in libraries; 35% eventually buy online books they discovered in libraries.
  - ◆ 30% of respondents buy the book rather than wait when a book is unavailable from the library.
- **Book discovery is context-agnostic**, especially for millennials. Contrary to popular belief, **bookstores are not just showrooms for Amazon**.
  - ◆ 44% of respondents bought a book in a bookstore that they first found online
  - ◆ 43% of respondents bought a book online that they first found in a bookstore
- **Word-of-mouth circulates rampantly, but there's no dominant context**. Even recommendations from friends, the top category, is just 20%. The full report shows a long list of ways people hear about books.
- **Genre** is the most important factor for book purchasing (39%).

- **83% of respondents engage with books for reasons *other* than entertainment** (work/school, self-improvement/hobbies, and gifts).

## Considerations for Actions

- **Meet the needs of Black and Latinx millennials (avid book engagers); avid book engagers drove the sales surge during COVID.**
  - ◆ A racially diverse market for book content is already here and can be nurtured.
  - ◆ Publishers, authors, and booksellers who don't serve nonwhite readers and authors are leaving money on the table.
  - ◆ Librarians can reach a more diverse patron base by exploring more expansive collections, including self-published titles.
  - ◆ Active work against bias will increase the bottom line by creating favorable conditions for nonwhite authors and readers to thrive.
  - ◆ See documentation of book publishing's structural racism at [#publishingpaidme](#) data [here](#); [We Need Diverse Books](#), "[Comping White](#)," [Lee and Low Diversity Baseline Survey](#).
- **Use data in the full report to answer highly nuanced questions. Examples:**
  - ◆ Marketing a title in the Southwest? Favor word of mouth through family and friends; host family-friendly book events at libraries and bookstores.
  - ◆ Marketing a book to Black millennials? Favor online marketing, author events, and shelf talkers in physical bookstores.
- **Book pirates are also customers.**
  - ◆ Engage in sampling efforts and strategic giveaways. Make it easier for customers to try products and buy in legitimate ways.
- **TV/movies and video games provide easy ways for customers to sample their products and find communities.** In other media, book customers are habituated to highly personalized product recommendations. How can books compete?
  - ◆ Libraries: Rethink library organization by media type; consider how to engage with patrons and encourage discovery across media.
  - ◆ Authors: Consider cross-media discovery and rights opportunities for licensing book content in other media. This is especially important for unagented authors, self-published authors, and authors working with small publishers to consider.
  - ◆ Publishers: 2-hour product samples would make book purchase less risky to people accustomed to streaming vast libraries or watching game playthroughs before purchase.

- **Libraries augment book purchases.** People who discover books at libraries often go on to purchase those books (or other, related books) in bookstores and online.
  - ◆ Libraries: Consider ways to drive library users to bookstores when the book is unavailable from the library, such as a 2-hour ebook/audiobook lending as a sampling strategy. This is also an opportunity for libraries to promote greater usage of their digital collections.
  - ◆ Authors: Continue to engage with in-person and virtual author events at libraries—these are two of the primary places that people discover new books.
  - ◆ Publishers: Think of libraries as a vital space of discovery and a potential ally in combating piracy.
- **Genre is #1 way people find books. Genre is basically user-friendly metadata.** Genre is like a brand expectation: it lowers the risk of guessing wrong when investing time and money in books. Streaming media and games use [machine learning to personalize product recommendations](#).
  - ◆ Publishers: Encode products with nuanced BISAC and other metadata keywording, particularly in products where the genre doesn't signal what readers can expect, such as literary fiction.

### How the survey was conducted

4314 respondents were recruited through the research and data company Qualtrics in two rounds during September and November 2020. The survey captures self-reported behaviors *before* the COVID-19 pandemic and *during* it. Quotas for age, race, gender, and region were implemented to ensure that the survey demographics reflect the general U.S. population. All respondents answered yes to a screening question: *have you engaged with at least one book in the last twelve months?*, about 75% of the U.S. population ([Pew](#)). This survey may capture *more* than 75% of the U.S. population because it asks about *book engagement* behavior: reading for entertainment (50%) but also using books for work or school, using books as reference manuals for hobbies, and giving books as gifts (combined, 50%).

### About Portland State University

**Dr. Rachel Noorda** and **Dr. Kathi Inman Berens** are professors and researchers in the book publishing program at Portland State University, home to the only graduate program in book publishing in the Western United States (and only one of eight in North America). Drs. Noorda and Berens are the report authors and lead researchers of the Immersive Media & Books project.

### **About Panorama Project**

The Panorama Project is a cross-industry, data-informed research initiative focused on understanding the impact of library holdings on book discovery, author brand development, and sales. It is guided by an Advisory Council including representatives from Penguin Random House, Sourcebooks, Open Road Media, American Library Association, Audio Publishers Association, NISO, OverDrive, and Ingram Content Group. For more information, visit [panoramaproject.org](http://panoramaproject.org).