

INNOVATIVE NEW SOCIAL NETWORKING BOOK SITE HITS WEB

New York, NY - Amid reports of woes in the publishing world, an explosion of interest in web sites for readers has given many cause for hope. Social networks for readers combine Web 2.0 and the old-fashioned pleasure of curling up with a good book, an attractive option for a generation of web-savvy readers.

The latest and most innovative of these social networks for readers is Reading Trails (www.readingtrails.com). Founded by a group of young web entrepreneurs out of Northwestern University, Reading Trails features the unique concept of trails, sets of books linked in interesting ways.

Users have already created trails on a wide range of topics, from "Books that influenced Milan Kundera" to "Science fiction cult classics", and new trails are being added every day. Because a book can appear on more than one trail, these trails intersect, resulting in a network of trails that can be browsed to find unexpected reading.

The New York Times recently referred to Reading Trails as "a hand-cranked incarnation of Pandora, the algorithmic music recommendation site." The site's founders are flattered by the comparison, but emphasize the "hand-cranked" aspect.

"I might have said 'crafted' rather than 'cranked', because it's a very human system," says co-founder Nick Romeo. "Rather than a computer algorithm, our trails are designed by actual people who find these books meaningful, and have linked them together in creative ways."

Co-founder Nathaniel Rudavsky-Brody adds, "we originally conceived of Reading Trails as more than a social network where users amass huge lists of books. Rather, our users create content, like Wikipedia. In a sense everyone contributes toward a unique, collaborative way of organizing books."

In addition to creating and browsing trails, users can add friends, write book reviews, and view trails created by well-known authors and professors, making the site a useful research tool. "We hope the site can be useful to students, or anyone doing in-depth research on a particular topic, as well as the general public," Romeo said.

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