

# Book chats at Manchester Met

Gopal Dutta

28<sup>th</sup> June 2018

# Book chats pilot project

- Some context: MMU Love to Read
- Planning the book chats
- Promotion
- Running the chats
- Reflection
- What next?



Manchester Met Uni   
@ManMetUni

Follow



New at [@MMULibrary](#): Book Chats. Talk about a book you love, what you're currently reading or just take a break from your studies with free coffee and biscuits. Weds 7th March 2-3pm, All Saints Library Chat Zone [bit.ly/mmubookchat](http://bit.ly/mmubookchat)



6:15 AM - 6 Mar 2018

6 Retweets 5 Likes



6



5

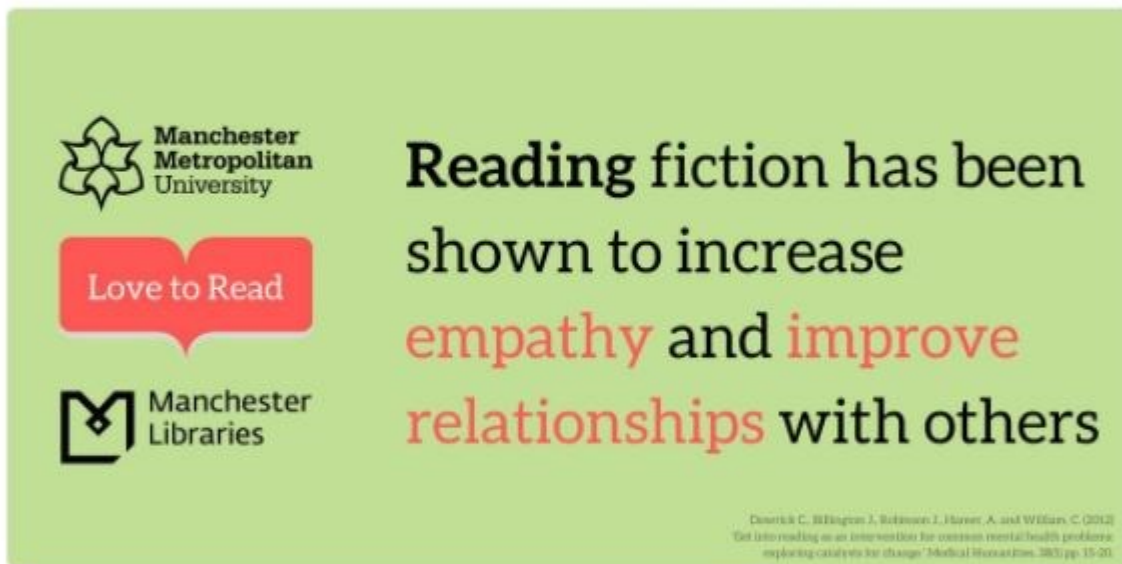


MMU Library

@MMULibrary

Following

Dreading having to spend time with friends and family over the holidays? Worry not, reading can help. #LovetoRead ❤️📚



12:53 AM - 19 Dec 2017

10 Retweets 17 Likes

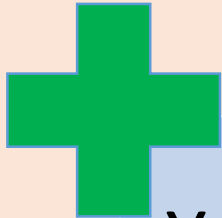


🗨️ ↻️ 10 ❤️ 17 ✉️

# MMU Love to Read

- Started May 2016
  - idea from Graduate Trainee
  - My role = web presence...
- About 10 staff of all grades involved:
  - various projects / degrees of engagement
- Built upon partnerships:
  - Wakelet (from start)
  - Manchester Public Libraries (from Jan 2017)
  - Counselling, Health and Wellbeing team (from Jan 2018)
  - Welcome team (from April 2018)
- Leisure reading as a means of aiding academic learning
  - Wellbeing benefits
  - Public library provision?

- Funding = 1 “mobile” shelf, 2 banners and cushions
- Approx 150 books borrowed from Manchester Public Library (increasing to 300)
- Books exchanged in blocks three times per year



Young adult

Cookery

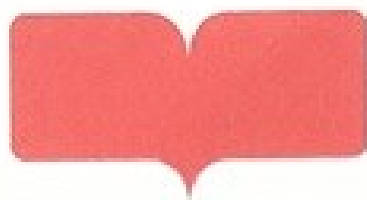
Mental health

Thrillers

Travel guides

Non-fiction





Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University

Thank you for taking a book.

Please let us know what you think of the project and the books in the collection.

Comments: AT UNI YOU CAN FORGET READING  
CAN BE FUN. THIS IS A GREAT  
WAY TO BRING FUN READING BACK

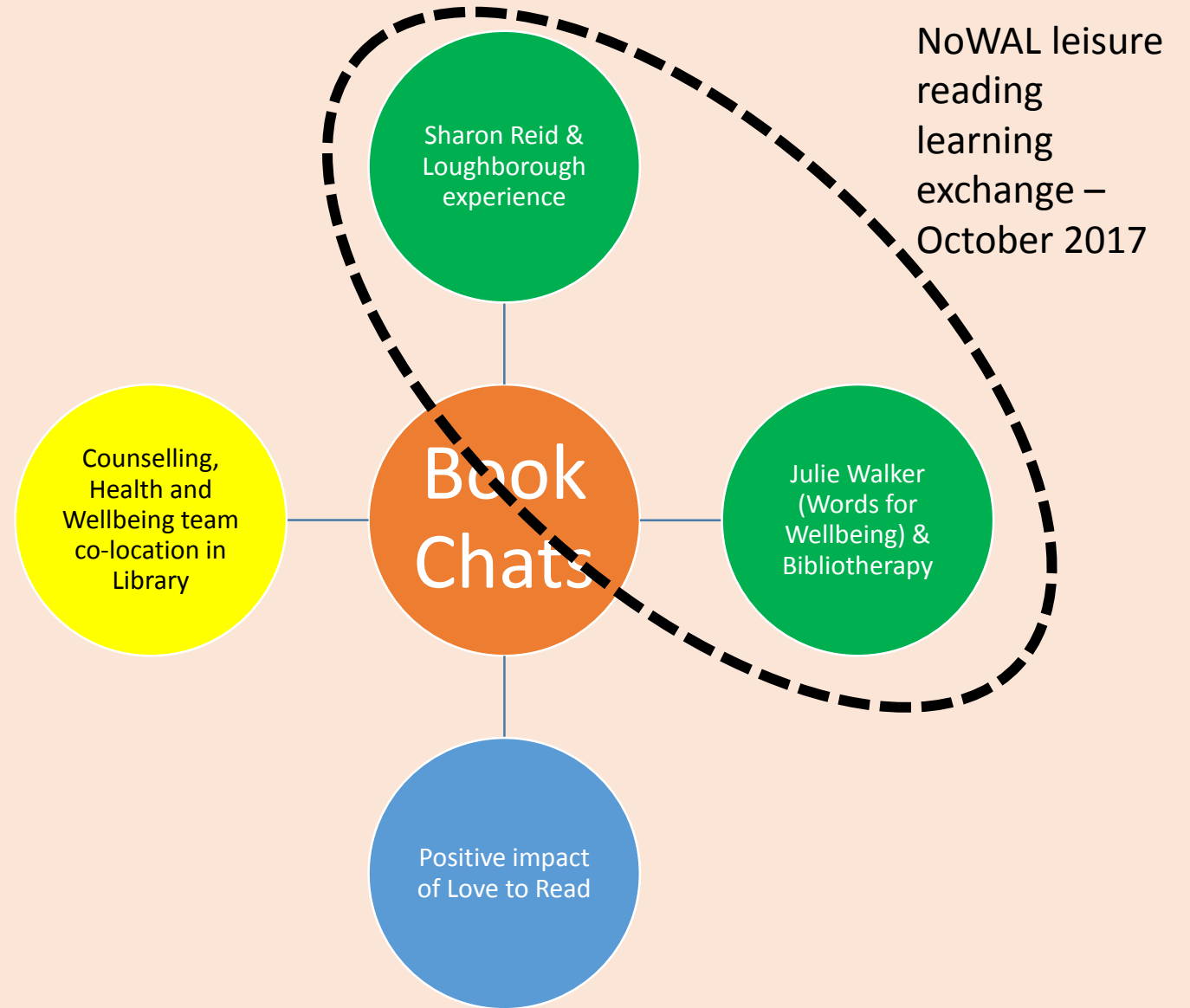
Alternatively you can comment via Twitter (@MMULibrary) or  
Facebook (@MMULibraryServices)



Manchester  
Libraries

Love to Read

# Book chats – where did the idea come from?



# Some definitions

- “Bibliotherapy is the use of fiction and poetry to support and improve positive outcomes for people with mental health and wellbeing issues.” (Julie Walker, <http://wordsforwellbeing.com/>)
- Book Chats are:
  - Not book clubs / reading groups / book groups (but may overlap or lead into them)
  - Not necessary to have read anything in advance
  - Focus on informal conversation rather than reading
  - Participant led – “here and now” rather than prepared
  - Much easier to show rather than tell...

# Book Chats – your go

Chat with  
the person  
next to  
you for a  
couple of  
minutes

Ask one another:  
“What are you  
currently  
reading” OR  
“What’s the last  
thing you read?”

Some more  
questions:

“What is it about?”

“Are you enjoying  
it?”



# Preparation

- Manager buy-in via project proposal setting out:
  - Bibliotherapy training (cost involved)
  - Partnership with Counselling, Health and Wellbeing
  - Student engagement benefits (vs helpdesk / information literacy)
  - Time and place
  - Staffing
  - Content TBC (based upon meetings and training)

## Project proposal: Bibliotherapy training and book chats

Gopal Dutta 31/10/2017

### Summary

The Love to Read team would like to run "book chats" with the students, possibly working in partnership with the Counselling service. In order to aid the planning and delivery of these chats, we would like to access training from Julie Walker, a bibliotherapist..

# Promotion

- In the library:
  - ONLINE: [Blog post](#) and social media
  - PRINT: Flyers, A3 posters, A1 sandwich boards
  - FACE TO FACE: Lunchtimes in library entrance
- Around the University:
  - University calendar
  - Posters in different buildings
  - Plasma screens
  - Departmental facebook groups



# Book Chat

**We are setting up a new 'book chat' group open to all students**

Meet in the Library Chat Zone on alternate Wednesdays, 2–3pm, starting Wednesday 7th February.

Chat about your favourite fiction, non-fiction or poetry over free coffee and biscuits.

No need to read anything in advance!

**For more information, check [bit.ly/mmubookchat](http://bit.ly/mmubookchat) or speak to a member of Library staff**



Love to Read

**LIBRARY**  
[www.library.mmu.ac.uk](http://www.library.mmu.ac.uk)

# The Chats...

- Planned to run them fortnightly Feb – April = 7 sessions
- 1 each of library staff and CHW staff for each 1 hour session

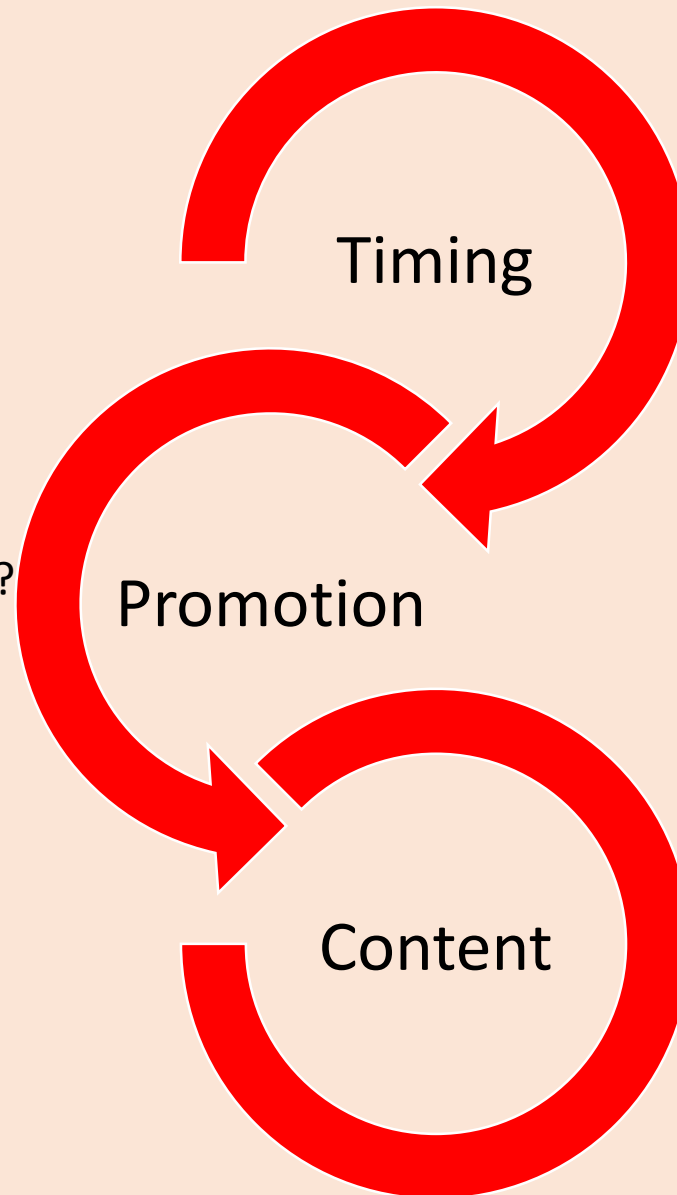
BUT

- Zero turnout for first 4 sessions
- Decided to discontinue



# So what went wrong?

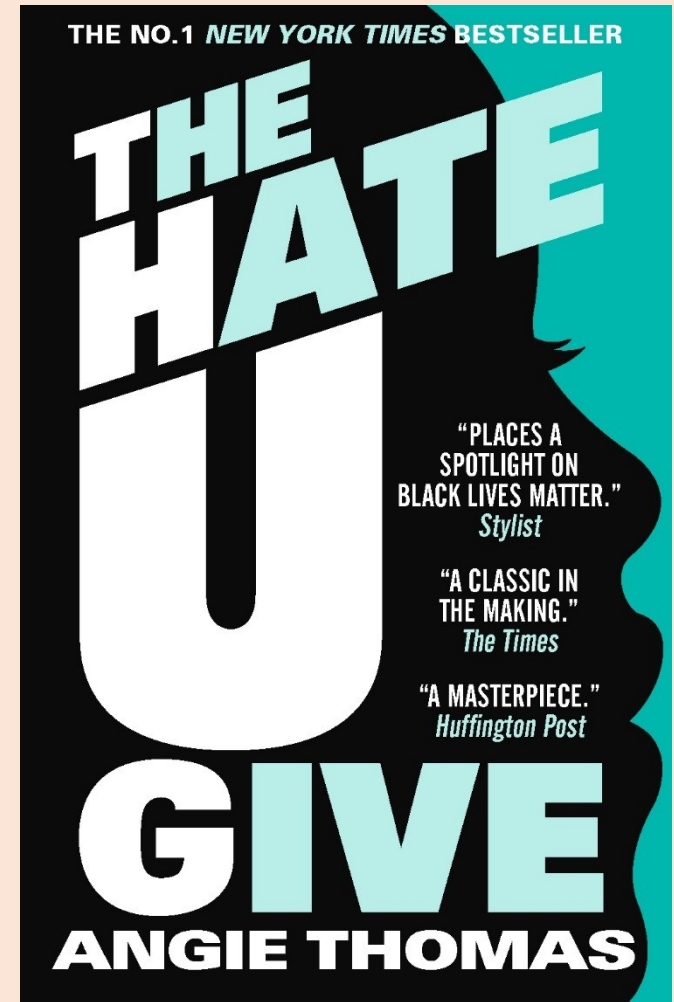
- Difficulty of promotion outside library
- Not enough promotion?
- Needs to be attached to a bigger project?
- “You can be soft, but still need to have a very clear invitation” (Janneke Geene)
- “People need to see things three times, from different but trustworthy sources, in order to become convinced.” (Janneke Geene)
- Embedding takes time (MPL collection)



- Wrong day? “I’m working”
- Wrong time of day? Need to offer a range
- Wrong time of year? “I’m too stressed”
- (Wrong place?)
- Mental health / wellbeing aspect off-putting to some? (Sharon Reid)
- Too vague? And therefore easy to ignore?
- No indication of actual content (Sara Bosley)
- Students want structure, despite what we may think? (Student feedback)
- Poetry / non-fiction off-putting?
- Bibliotherapy unsuitable for students / “category error” to try to engage in this way?

# What next?

- Partnership with Arts & Humanities Outreach Officer
  - Saw our promotion outside the library!
  - Book chats as part of a wider programme: “poetry corner”; “philosophy and coffee”
  - Staffed by student facilitators: sometimes you need someone else to say what you want to say?
- Tie in with Welcome/Induction book giveaway offer
  - Success at other Universities (Kingston, Leicester)
  - Student feedback about Induction:
    - Sustained engagement; ways to make friends
  - Traditional book groups to start; might continue
- Rebranding a corner of the Chat Zone as “The Corner”



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