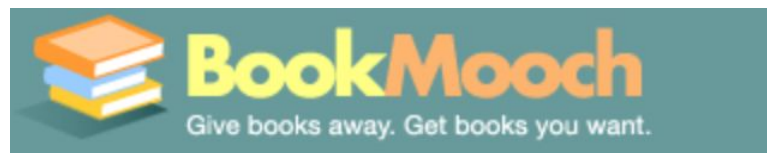# BookMooch

BookMooch runs on a **point based** system. A first time user has to register the books they want to give away, and once they receive a request from others, they can mail their book and accumulate points. The cost of mailing is borne by the user. Users can then use their points to request books (1 point for a book from one's country, 3 points if mailed from another country). Members also gain points when they add new books to their inventory to give away and when they give feedback on the books they receive. Users receive points if a book they sent gets lost in the mail, but if it happens too many times, their account is automatically deactivated.

Their intention is to keep used books **in circulation**: book owners may find it emotionally difficult to part with books and prefer to send them off to someone who will read them, and in turn, they might want new books. BookMooch 'finds new users'. If users don't want new books in exchange, there is also an option to donate to charities and win points. The points can in turn be donated to charities so that they can order books. The BookMooch network also makes books from other countries and other languages accessible, since the founder who lived in international locations noticed that some books were only in print in one country and not available in others (e.g. published in France and not in stock in the United States).

Along with points, there is another metric that users have to maintain called **feedback score**: unless a user has poor feedback (i.e. user is responsive, books they send out are in good condition), other users might refuse their book requests. Users also need to have a **2:1 ratio**, for every two received, they have to send out at least one book.

Their business model is based on commision from Amazon's book database. Each book has a profile (see below) with an Amazon link, and the founders get commission if users buy the book from Amazon instead of requesting it from another user on BookMooch.

The platform has discussion forums where users can interact with one another, arrange get togethers and and host book clubs.

Users had a member page, which contained biographical information, book preferences and previous mooching history (see below). They could also keep a wishlist and if a book on their list became available on their site, they'd receive a notification from the system.

BookMooch reached 300,000 members in 2016, though activity has died out since then.

Number of members
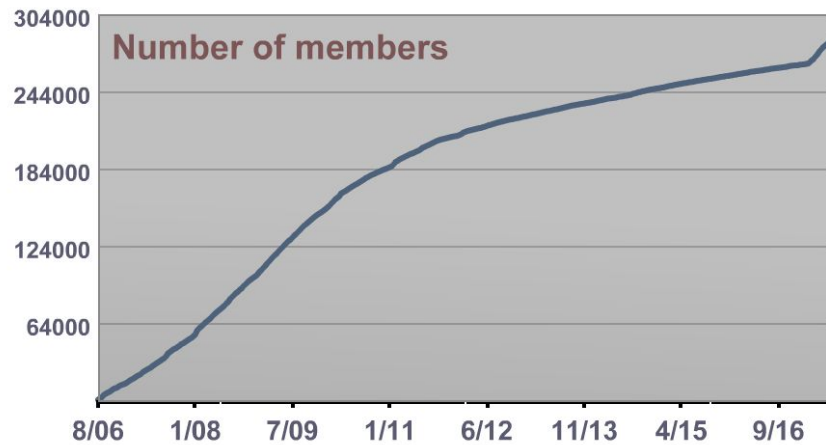
Demographic data is unavailable, but most books and online communications on the portal are in English. Wikipedia says they reached over 90 countries and at their peak, 2,000 books were swapped each day.

More than ⅓ of their members gave books and received them from the site, though users sent more books than they received.

Members who have given a book

Members who have received a book

Online articles suggest that this was a major issue. Most users felt that they were sending off more books than they were receiving. [The wait time was too long](), and many requested books were never available on the site i.e. no one ever registered to send them. Also, the most widely available books were "The Da Vinci Code" and "Memoirs of a Geisha" or other outdated bestsellers.

Book Crossing

BookCrossing.com is a book-sharing website where each book gets a tracking number. Users leave their books at a public place such as a park bench or a coffee shop ("wild release"), and other registered users in the area receive an email alert to hunt for it. The website is also synchronized with users' Goodreads accounts. The portal has nearly 2 million users, with the greatest activity in the United States, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom.

In general, the wild release feature is very popular among its users. Book profiles often come with journal entries i.e. where users found their books and what their reading experience was like, which is similar to the letters feature we discussed before. During my survey of the website, I saw that numerous books had been released and found, as of March 2020.
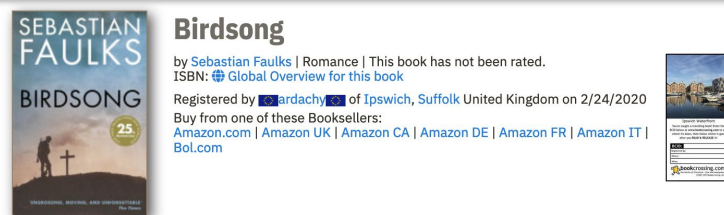
Journal Entry 2 by ▪ardachy▪ at Lexden Park in Colchester, Essex United Kingdom on Monday, March 02, 2020

Released **9 hrs ago (3/2/2020 12:00 PM UTC)** at **Lexden Park in Colchester, Essex United Kingdom**

WILD RELEASE NOTES:

On a picnic table.

Journal Entry 3 by Tess020320 at Colchester, Essex United Kingdom on Monday, March 02, 2020

Found in the park this afternoon and a book I always thought that I would like to read so a good surprise ending to a dog walk! Looking forward to starting it. New to this site so have spent the last hour or so trying to work out how to use it and what it's all about!

Mobile Apps

I didn't find any wildly popular mobile apps for book sharing. Two developers in Paris released Booxup in 2015. The app allows users to scan the barcodes of their books and add them into the app automatically. Then, using geospatial information tracked through users' mobile phones, the app finds books that were listed close to them. In recent times, their marketing has shifted away from book exchange to a selling-based platform i.e. "buy books cheaper or sell yours", geared their economical book readers and students looking for cheap textbooks.

Narola, a software company in India, also designed beeapp.io, a mobile app which allows users to exchange, lend or sell books with other bibliophiles within 50 kilometers. It has features like chat and payment and rating system for the book and the lender. No statistics are available on the number of users and whether the app took off, but the lack of google search results outside the company website suggests that the app was not popular.

Main Takeaways

- BookMooch, a book sharing website, attracted many users and had a comprehensive point based system which incentivized user engagement, but many complained that they didn't receive books as often or quickly as they sent them out. Although the platform has died out since 2016, previous user engagement suggests that a market exists.
- BookCrossing was an improvement on BookMooch with its "wild release" feature and remains popular among its users till date, but requires looking for books inside one's neighborhood.

- Mobile apps are not popular, or exists as book selling platforms as opposed to book exchange