# CODA
# The multimodal reader: Or, how my obsession with NRK's *Skam* made me think again about readers, reading and digital media

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**Abstract:**
Using a mix of autoethnographic stories and 'critical side-ways thinking,' this Coda re-examines the key terms of the special section on 'reading, readers and digital media.' The author's fan practices as a follower of NRK's transmedia television show *Skam* inform both observations about and re-conceptualisations of the literacies and reading practices that transmedia texts require of their audiences. The Coda maps out some common ground for the fields of reading studies and media studies (and, to a lesser extent, fan studies), and it raises some questions about the methods and methodologies that researchers might engage as we investigate multimodal media practices in a mobile, networked multimedia environment.

**Keywords:** *Skam*, transmedia, multimodal reading, transliteracy, fandom, reading studies, media studies

First, a confession of sorts. Reading books is not always my first-choice leisure activity and I can go for months without reading a novel or a poem in my spare time. Between 2016 and 2018 I really struggled to read for pleasure, perhaps because it was a period that included several major life events. Professionally, I am supposed to be all about books and reading: my training is in literary studies, I work in a Department of English and Film Studies, and I am a researcher who investigates cultures of reading. And it's certainly true that I am always interested in other peoples' reading habits even when my own are stalled. My relationship to watching television, by contrast, has been constant and untroubled throughout my life: television has always been a source of delight and fascination for me, and my taste in

television could be described as even more catholic than my taste in books. From my early television-watching days I have especially enjoyed following serial fiction whether it was a BBC adaptation of a 'classic' literary text, or an American or Australian soap opera. Some of my most vivid media memories are of watching, talking about and becoming addicted to specific TV series in the company of friends during lunchtime at school and university in the pre-digital and pre-cable days when the UK had only three channels. My first act of genuine fandom in relation to any medium may have been begging my mother to make me a jumpsuit so that my friend Karen and I could play *Charlie's Angels*. Hers was a rusty red colour and mine was an odd kind of dusky blue. It was the late 1970s and we looked amazing.

During my (nearly) fifty years of media consumption both television and books have undergone tremendous technological changes, especially in terms of the devices available for reading and viewing, the range of content that can be accessed, and the speed at which that content can be obtained. This coda is an attempt to understand these changes experientially in terms of my own recent media consumption, and professionally in terms of how those experiences have made me reconsider the relationships among the terms of our special section title: 'readers, reading and digital media.' My obsession with a transmedia show that is primarily tele-visual took me back to reading, but not in a way that I could have predicted. It changed not just what I read, but also my choice of reading device. And it made me a more self-reflexively multimodal reader. What follows is a mix of autoethnographic stories and critical 'sideways' thinking. It is my way of pulling the threads of contemporary reading studies through the dynamics of a 'live' event and the textual ecology of a web series in order to re-frame 'audience' as a productive term for reading studies scholars working within a mobile, networked environment. This coda is also intended as a provocation to colleagues who specialize in media other than codex and digital books to re-consider the role of reading, readers and digital media in relation to the audiences, practices and objects that drive their research. I offer it as part of our collective project of steering a path between media blindness and media relativism (Thon 2015).

## Media moment 1: Participating - From audience member to fan

In August 2016 I attended an energetic live event at the Melbourne Literature Festival featuring YA (Young Adult) authors David Levithan and Rainbow Rowell. I went with one of the contributors to this special themed section, Beth Driscoll, and given our common scholarly interest in readers and the publishing industry it was a combination of work and pleasure that prompted our attendance. The sold-out session with the two best-selling American YA writers attracted an audience of over 400 people, the majority of whom were in their late teens and early to mid- twenties. What impressed me on that day was how much both writers loved the YA genre, their respect for their readers, and the knowledge that the audience demonstrated through the questions they posed to Levithan and Rowell. The pace and energy were pitch perfect throughout the ninety minutes allotted for the event, thanks to lively banter between the authors on stage, a humorous and brilliantly dramatised joint reading from Levithan's novel, *You Know Me Well* (co-authored with Nina LaCour [2016]), and an energetic question-and-answer session with an eager audience.

After the event, the authors spent two hours cheerfully talking to all the young people who had queued up to meet them, often signing well-thumbed copies of their books at the end of each conversation.  Some readers brought along four or five paperback books and a few gave them gifts of fan art.  These transactions between reader and writer foregrounded para-social relationships over commercial ones, and the cultural capital of owning a collection and possessing detailed knowledge of the books over any (new) economic exchange.

The practices of this particular group of reader-fans made explicit the tensions between readers' desires and publishers' goals that inflect the organization of literary festivals.  For publishers, literary festivals offer publicity for authors and on-site book sales.  For readers, festivals offer the chance to find out more about 'the why behind the book' (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo 2013, 214-225); to have their 'middlebrow' tastes legitimated (Driscoll 2014, 2016) and, depending on the location (e.g. urban or rural) and type of literary festival (e.g. a destination festival like Hay-on-Wye in the UK, or city literature festival), reaffirm or establish a relationship to a place (Weber 2018).  On this occasion, neither book sales nor affiliation to place or to a middlebrow culture of reading were important.  The readers' practices we observed were more reminiscent of fan behaviours at a convention like Comic-con.  Although both Beth and I had seen readers behaving as fans at literature festivals before, especially at signing tables where there is an opportunity to meet a writer they admire, we were impressed by the mutuality of this fandom in which both readers and writers were serious participants.  Moreover, readers do not typically bring fan art or their entire collection of a writer's books to an event at a literature festival. Professionally and intellectually I did not think more deeply about this event and what it suggested about contemporary reading practices because I became quickly pre-occupied with other projects.  But, as a leisure reader, my curiosity had been piqued. I left the festival having witnessed a series of friendly, sincere and well-informed writer-fan interactions and I wanted to find out what had inspired such enthusiastic behaviour.  I turned to Levithan's books, buying many of them as e-copies on my newly purchased e-reader, and I began to enjoy reading fiction again in a way that I had not experienced in a long time.

## Media moment 2: Watching – From reader to viewer

In early 2017 I moved on from Levithan's novels to other YA fiction with LGBTQ2S+ themes written in the high school romance genre alongside selected works of YA dystopian fiction recommended by one of my then PhD students, Sean Donnelly, who specializes in that field (2019).  I continued reading on an e-reader, not because I was ashamed to be seen in public with a YA book cover, but because I had run out of shelving space for codex books.  If I'm given a choice, I would rather read a novel on paper and, at first, I struggled with having to use yet another screen as part of my daily reading habits in addition to the computer that I used for work, and my smartphone on which I mainly read the newspaper, text messages and the BBC weather app.  Content – or more accurately – genre carried me through my resistance to the e-reader.  I have always been a fan of high school stories in any medium and it wasn't long before I was watching episodes of *Degrassi: Next Class* on my tablet. My increasing comfort level with screens (and a concomitant reliance on networked mobile devices) was matched by a further extension in my viewing habits one insomnia-filled night

when I resorted to watching a film on my smartphone.  Watching *and* reading to be more exact, since the film was in German and I had to rely on the sub-titles because the seven years I spent learning that language as a young person may as well never have happened: in middle age I have become shamefully monolingual.  Again, my preference for and knowledge of the high school romance genre carried me through the rather awkward reality of trying to decipher text on a small screen (not easy on the eyes even with varifocal lenses in your glasses).  As my insomnia continued, I found other films to watch and I became accustomed to reading tiny sub-titles when necessary.  Meanwhile, YouTube was busy designing my 'algorithmic self' (Cheney-Lippold 2017) which, I strongly suspect, is rather different from the parameters and identifiers I would use to describe my social self.  Without realizing it, I was being primed by both my new media habits and by algorithms for an experience of immersive, cross-platform multimodal fandom.

## Media moment 3: Following - From fan viewer to fan reader

Sometime in March 2017 I clicked on a YouTube thumbnail and discovered *Skam*. The web series written, directed and edited by Julie Andem and produced for NRK (Norwegian state television) was my first experience of engaging with a transmedia show. I was only just in time to follow the final season as it was broadcast on-line with additional text messaging material on NRK's website, fictional character profiles on Instagram and Snapchat, and a YouTube channel called 'Hei Briskeby' for a series 'made by' a group of twenty-year-old male, Muslim characters.  Like the TV series *Shameless,* each of the four seasons took the point of view of a different character.  In another possible referential nod to the British show, 'skam' is Norwegian for 'shame.' Season four was mostly filmed from the viewpoint of Sana, a seventeen-year-old practicing Muslim of Moroccan descent who wears a hijab, listens to rap music and is part of a female friendship group that is central to *Skam'*s longer narrative arcs. Two of Sana's friends, Eva and Noora, are the lead characters in seasons one and two respectively. Sana's ability at biology and her nerdy dedication to doing well in school cements her friendship with the similarly ambitious Isak, a white, gay teenager whose struggles with his sexuality and attitudes towards mental illness form the focus of season three.  The YouTube thumbnails I clicked on had featured Isak and his boyfriend, Even. Images of the two boys were the way that most fans outside of Scandinavia discovered *Skam* and their circulation by teenagers on Tumblr and social media, tagged for LGBTQ content, was the main means by which the show became internationally successful (Donadio 2016; Wheeler 2018).

Following season four in real time was something of an 'extreme sport' – the phrase that Andem herself used to describe the experience of making the show when she announced its completion (Leszkiewicz 2017).  Although I watched the clips on a variety of devices (tablet, PC, smartphone), my smartphone rapidly became the most significant one because of its mobility.  Medium and format also determined my choice of device. *Skam* was deliberately filmed to fit a small screen and its primary distribution was via short clips between 1 and 10 minutes in length. These were date-stamped with the same day and time

that they were released on-line. The scene depicted in each clip was temporally matched to the date-stamp.  Not only did this use of mimesis contribute to the realism of the series which was set in a high school that was still being attended by some of the actors, it made me, as a follower of the series, acutely attentive to both chronological time and the pace set by the show's producer.  In some respects, watching *Skam* in real time was like a return to older forms of scheduled broadcasting, albeit without a publicised schedule.  I learnt quickly to rely on other, more active, audience members to guide me. Alerts received on my smartphone via Twitter and YouTube proved crucial to keeping up with plot, and to locating English sub-titles, fan commentary and translations of the 'official' SM posts.  It was my first experience of being part of an audience that had to be ready to receive content at any hour of the day and of 'layered content' delivered across multiple platforms (Evans 2015). Although it is entirely possible to make sense of the narrative via the filmed segments which can be viewed as more traditional episodes (clips were combined each week to produce a Friday evening broadcast on NRK television), there are plot details and aspects of characterization that emerge only via the text messages, Instagram posts and 'Hei Briskeby' YouTube videos.  By the final week, I was so hooked that I watched the clips 'live' as they were streamed in Norwegian, and I tweeted about my excitement (although this was the only way in which I directly connected with other fans). After the last clip dropped on 24 June 2017 there was fanfiction for those of us who couldn't bear to leave the characters and their world behind.[1]  And that's how I became a reader of fanfiction on a smartphone.

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My path from audience member at a literature festival event to a fanfiction reader was shaped in part by device and platform affordances. The familiarity of a beloved genre also underscores my experience of adaptation to different devices. But the media moments I have narrated as a chronological sequence could also be re-told to highlight the co-extensive realities of my digital media practices. Reading – especially of digital text – and watching, especially television, whether it was scheduled or streamed, were habits that co-existed throughout the three 'media moments.'  Their co-existence in my life is a banal fact that underscores my affiliation to a specific fictional genre and two older media forms rather than their newer, digital versions. What changed about my media habits was more about cross-platform engagement, the use of multiple screens on a daily basis, the way that a transmedia text changed my sense of temporality being structured by the pace of an online broadcast narrative, and the different layers of media texts that sutured me into their flows and rhythms.[2]  What altered in terms of my media practices and what cuts across all three vignettes was the way that being part of an audience took on more significance for me as my confidence with following and participating in a transmedia show increased.  While being part of an audience (of readers, viewers and followers) was immensely pleasurable and developed my transliteracy skills, what might I take back into my professional world of

reading studies, where, as we outlined in the introduction, conceptualizing readers as audiences has not often been an explicit part of our methodology?

First, the audience for a transmedia television show like *Skam* engages in a variety of reading acts and literacies as they move through the ecology of texts that make up the layered content. Multimodal reading of different types of textual material published on different platforms using a variety of affordances was the only way to keep up with a 'live' story-line that was deliberately disaggregated (in terms of plot) by its creators. Reframing my own transmedia experience as multimodal reading privileges one among a number of media competencies that *Skam* required of its audience, but it is helpful for identifying a range of practices that were essential for following and participating in the series.  My own reading practices included scanning and skimming (alerts; Twitter threads; Instagram tags); fast reading (sub-titles and text messages from the characters' accounts); immersive reading (translations of the scripts posted on Twitter and Tumblr; fan fiction) and re-reading (everything if you wanted to crack all the inter- and intra-textual references).  In her contribution to this themed section, Brigitte Ouvry-Vial reminds us that multimodal reading is not a new practice but one with a long history. We should, however, ask what the readers of newer media formats like transmedia texts and dramas bring to that history.

Part of the answer, I believe, is that the reader has the possibility of making actual, as opposed to imagined, connections with other members of an audience. In that sense, transmedia artefacts share with live events like my literature festival experience, the tangible realization of an audience.  Immediacy (a well-accepted feature of participatory culture *pace* Jenkins) is another quality that both types of reader experience share. But transmedia affords scholars of reading cultures more than just a ground for comparison with older types of reader-text or reader-writer engagement.  Transmedia texts of different types, whether they are focused around television, drama, fiction or a game present an opportunity to study readers performing as transliterates.  Joseph Thomas and his colleagues offer an enticingly expansive definition of transliteracy that includes a range of communicative practices and objects when they describe it as 'the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks (2007 quoted in Atkinson 2014, 2205).  How do these and other aspects of transliteracy such as puzzle-solving or, 'the cracking of ciphers (and discussing these online)' as Alison Gibbons describes it in an article about the readers of a printed multimodal novel (2017, 335), converge or co-exist alongside other acts and practices of media engagement with the storyworld of a transmedia text? How might we measure, describe and analyse transmedia experiences of reading where immersion and connection with an audience may be experienced as an additive process as the reader moves across platforms? As essays in this themed section by Balling et al, Enslinn et al and Marcinkowski all demonstrate, there is a great deal more to 'digital reading' than skimming. Reader mobility, interaction and immersion can be enhanced and manipulated through programming and hardware design to create experiences of reading that intensify feelings of embodiment or attachment to location as well as to other readers.  Digital media,

in other words, can produce specific qualities of reading experience as well as new user-object and reader-reader encounters.  While not wishing for scholars of contemporary reading cultures to be ahistorical and relativist in our approach to readers' engagements with new media and technology, I do want those of us affiliated to reading studies to investigate and articulate the qualities of experience that are only possible when readers act within a mobile, networked, multimedia environment.

Second, across the media moments I have narrated, I was not only a multimodal and transliterate reader but also a fan. In reading studies and book history research there is a tendency to prefer the terms 'keen reader' or 'avid reader' rather than to use the term 'fan,' unless the texts being consumed or reviewed fall into specific categories, for example comics or genre fiction like romance or mystery (Driscoll 2016b,425). Genre hierarchies and the cultural capital associated with reading print underpin these terminological choices. New media and new technology challenge us as scholars of reading to think differently as several contributions to this themed section demonstrate by variously referring to users, prosumers, and produsers. Modes of user engagement and participation made possible by ambient literature or fiction written for smartphones, or software written for e-readers, have required us to borrow theories and vocabulary from cognate fields including media studies, code studies and critical infrastructure studies (see for example, McGregor, Rowberry and Barnett respectively, in this themed section).  Meanwhile, within media studies, to take just one of these adjacent scholarly domains, users may be conceptualized as 'inherently cross-media' according to Stine Lomborg and Mette Mortenson in their introduction to a special issue of *Convergence* (2017, 343).  They continue*:* 'Traditional conceptions of media users – understood as the individuals or collectives (audiences, publics, spectators, etc.) at the receiving end of mediated communications – are put under pressure by the convergence of mass and interpersonal media on digital platforms and services.'  In the contemporary media environment, users thus become participatory, curative and connective.

My own engagement with a transmedia show involved becoming entangled in its textual ecology, some elements of which were integral to the drama and were controlled by the NRK production team, while other parts, especially the labour of translation and fanfiction, were fan-made and peritextual.  Unlike some web series such as the German show *About: Kate*, *Skam* was not designed for intradiegetic commentary (Stollfuss 2018).  Fan work, whether in the form of Facebook or Twitter comments, original art or fiction, was extrinsic and complementary to the narrative rather than directional.  In contradistinction to Beth Driscoll's adoption of John Fiske's marker of fandom as 'textual productivity' (Fiske 1992 quoted in Driscoll 2016b, 425), my own practice as a fan of *Skam* was dominated by following and reading content rather than by producing or curating it.  Had I been younger or braver or more new-media-savvy, I might have made a Tumblr site or started a fiction on Wattpad, but instead I followed, lurked and admired the efforts of others (and by 'admire' I mean that I left and still leave 'kudos' for writers on AO3 rather than posting comments).  I behaved, in fact, like the readers who tend not to appear in research about contemporary

reading practices because, in spite of acting like fans about specific genres, series, characters or authors, we leave behind few to no traces of our enthusiasm online. Moreover, as reader-fans who are not textually productive, we will probably not be selected and may not volunteer for online or face-to-face interviews and focus groups (although we might complete a short online questionnaire every now and again).

For the field of reading studies, this is a timely reminder that we need to keep being creative about our use of mixed methods of research in order to involve different types of readers and those who do not identify as readers at all. We can then provide more nuanced analyses of readers-as-fans and also try to account for the various reading practices involved in non-book-centred fandoms like transmedia dramas. These challenges can also be situated within an understanding of fandom as a set of habits and practices located within everyday life (Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington 2007) that can also include toxic and anti-fan practices (Hills 2018; Proctor and Kies 2018). These conceptualizations from 'third wave fan studies' recognize that fan practices are now 'beyond niche and beyond cult' (Stein 2015, 13) and are just as likely to reproduce inequalities of power as they are to resist or counter mainstream culture or corporations (Thomas 2011, 4). Social practices of reading, that is, the sharing of reading experiences, connecting with other readers virtually or face-to-face, and participating in events connected with writers and texts, can also reproduce forms of social exclusion, hierarchies of taste, and cultural bias. The forum moderators for online reading communities, for example, can sometimes use their gate-keeping and mediating powers in highly directive and exclusionary ways (Thomas and Round 2016). Negotiations of authority, expertise and taste can occur within online reading communities alongside more explicit conflicts about social difference (Rehberg Sedo and Grudz 2012). Recent work on the various historical phases and social practices of online fan fiction communities (e.g. Busse 2017) and on digital fandom more broadly conceived (e.g. Booth 2017) traces many varied creative and community practices that resonate with scholarship in reading studies about shared reading. Reading studies scholars working with contemporary culture and media still have much to learn from fan studies – and vice versa. Or, to picture it another way: if fan studies scholars were once the cool kids hanging out in the basement at parties while wearing limited edition cult t-shirts, then reading studies scholars were the nerds squashed into the kitchen examining the labels on the wine bottles (and most likely being able to name the font used). But now, digital media, celebrity culture and mobile technology have pushed us all into the living room and we find we have more in common than we realized.

Third, my multimodal reader-fan practices made me reflect upon the interplay of older and newer forms of media within my everyday life, while also contemplating what was distinct about engaging with a transmedia text (in a translation created by unpaid translators) produced by a state television company in a 'small' nation-state. When, in a moment of aca-fandom, I attended a presentation by several members of the production team at City University in London (November 2017), I was struck by the possibilities afforded to them by the very constraints of making television for a small population in a

language that is not widely spoken internationally.  Funding and personnel were secured because NRK, in common with many other state networks around the world, has a mandate to make programmes that resonate with the values, needs and interests of its national audience. Julie Andem, the showrunner, was able to undertake extensive research with Norwegian teenagers ahead of scripting the series. Her team employed a development technique known as the Baltimore Method in their evolution of the show as a cross-platform experience that exploited the social media used by Andem's interviewees themselves – mainly 16-year-old girls – who were also the show's target demographic. The team also described the local conditions that made their transmedia series possible: the ubiquity of smartphone ownership in Norway, alongside the quality of hi-speed broadband and the widespread use of streaming services; and the reality of their own workplace which was that NRK had been making web series since 2007 in an attempt to win back a teenaged audience. The mix of innovation and tradition at play in their conception and delivery of *Skam* is mirrored in its aesthetic: the longer scenes are shot like classic TV drama, and the episode-length weekly re-broadcasts attracted an older generation of viewers who had not watched the online clips.  In her book about millennial fandom in a transmedia age, Louisa Stein examines how web series made for that demographic have a 'multiplatform cultural life [that] includes audience engagement and fan authorship' (2015, 10). Creators of fan content 'embrace' a style that incorporates 'a do-it-yourself collective ethos tempered with indicators of professionalism' (12). The producers of *Skam* facilitated the community that grew around the series online by providing a steady flow of 'professional' content on various platforms while barely regulating fan-made content as long as it was non-profit. Moreover, they chose not to make any legal interventions with regard to the fan-driven circulation of the show beyond Scandinavia which marked the regional limits of their negotiated licensing for the large amount of popular music used in (and integral to) the show.

We could understand this relationship between old and new forms, professional and 'D-I-Y' content, as a deliberate retooling of television to fit newer modes of distribution and viewing or, as Elizabeth Evans suggests, as 'the industry's desire to regain control in [a] changeable media landscape.' (2015,112; Nele 2014). Evans argues that transmedia text 'demonstrates the intersection between narrative and the industrial and technological context from which it emerges' (112). The intersection becomes especially visible in moments of direct communication between producers and fans which are often made possible by social media.  Andem, for example, used (and, in fact, still sometimes uses) her own Instagram account to directly address *Skam*'s audience, and very occasionally incorporated fan texts into the final series of the NRK show.  In the 2018 American remake of season 1 set in Austin, Texas, for which Andem was also the showrunner, industry control of content became less explicit but more pervasive. The web series 'dropped' on Facebook Watch and Facebook's ownership of Instagram enabled the media managers, Mari Magnus, who was also the social media director for the NRK show, and Michael Hoffman, a social media strategist, to create historical Instagram profiles of the characters going back to 2016 (Max 2018). Hoffman and his team also created GIFs and paid some teens to produce fan

content. As more than one journalist pointed out, *Skam Austin* was an advert for how to use Facebook (Kang 2018; Lesziewicz 2018). Nele Simons argues that such actions are as much about 'managing and protecting the brand value of a TV series' or, citing Matt Hills' term 'fanagement', as they are about 'serving loyal viewers and fans' (2221). We can see some parallels here with the behaviour of the celebrity reader-producer and reader-fans in Marsden's and Branagh-Miscampbell's essay about Zoella's book club in our themed section.

There are other parallels in terms of the producers' control of a complex media environment: commercial book publishers continue to experiment with different forms of e-publishing and digital media as a means of gaining traction in a mixed economy of print and digital text (Horne 2018; Murray 2018). Publishers form relationships with readers who have established litblogs (see Driscoll in this themed section) or vlogs, enter sales agreements with celebrity readers who maintain a visible online presence (like Zoella, and Richard & Judy in the UK), and variously seek out ways of influencing readers through social media. But the print publishing industry is notoriously slow to change and, specifically in the anglophone market (which is large, transcontinental and in spite of rights agreements protecting different territories, difficult to 'control' or reach, unlike a nation-state delimited by a minority language like Norwegian) is arguably less effective at establishing relationships with its audience than online self-publishing operations (Martens 2016). Amazon marketplace and self-publishing platforms including Wattpad and AO3 maintain a much more intimate and direct series of connections with readers through reviews, feedback and commentary features, forums, writer-authored websites and Tumblrs (Bold 2016). Significantly, Wattpad's explicit intention is to generate stories for all platforms and media across the entertainment industry, including print: as their own advertising reminds us, Beth Reekles began writing *The Kissing Booth* on Wattpad in 2011 when she was 15 years old, and it became a Netflix original film in 2018. In between those two formats of Reekles' story the novel was published in print by Random House UK (a fact not mentioned in Wattpad's online time-line). The social community generated around a fiction like Reekles' provided an audience for both the novel and the movie – the latter had poor reviews but nevertheless was highly successful on Netflix (Rao 2018). As Hannah McGregor's article about Harry Potter podcasting (in this themed section) also shows us, readers of popular fiction can make loyal and active audiences who are prepared to follow and re-consume content across platforms and media, both old and new, both commercially produced and fan-made.

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One of the problems of focusing on 'reading' and 'readers' of print is that they can quickly become exclusive categories: what about people who for economic, political or social reasons cannot read or access reading material? What about readers with physical or mental challenges who read audiobooks or who adapt texts using contemporary technologies? What about readers whose primary cultural affiliation is with oral culture?

Some, although not all, of these issues are pursued in the contributions to this special themed section. What the essays demonstrate is that thinking about readers, reading and digital media expands our sense of what reading is and who does it; how it occurs at the intersection of technologies and media, and how it demands a range of competencies from its users. The participatory culture made possible by web 2.0 also refocuses our attention on the notion of audience and its relevance for active, performative readers as well as the fans lurking on AO3 and Wattpad. To adapt Lomborg and Mortensen's point (2017, 343), we might also consider how transmedia practices and transliterate multimodal readers put pressure on the older ideas of readers as either individuated subjects or collectives.

To return to my own transmedia experience briefly, it showed me how new media, new formats and new technology can change long-term habits and retool practices that have stalled. My obsession with *Skam* reshaped my media use to produce a contemporary multimodal reader. I hope that the readers of *Participations* find the wider implications of that re-formation and the conditions that produced it as intriguing as I do. I also hope that the articles in this special themed section suggest to you many further ways in which the study of readers, reading and digital media intersect with your own passions and fields of research.

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## Notes:

[1] The various remarks also offer another means of staying in the world (or parallel universes) of *Skam*.  If I thought watching the OG was an 'extreme sport', then trying to follow 7 remakes in 7 languages is beyond extreme, producing 'Skam burnout' for some fans (BrieCheese).  As of April 2019, the remakes are: *Skam France*, *Druck* (aka Skam Germany), *Skam Italia*, *Skam Austin*, *Skam Espana*, *wtFOCK* (aka Skam Belgium), *SkamNL*.

[2] After reading a draft of this coda, Alexis Weedon asked how my transmedia experience was different from binge-watching boxsets. I believe that both can involve intensive and immersive

modes of consumption, but it is the layers of media texts characteristic of transmedia, not all of which share or produce the same sense of temporality, that distinguishes the two experiences.