

Co-creating digital bibliotherapy

**Laura Dietz, Sam Duncan, Nenna Orie
Chuku & Katharine Smales**

The different worlds of reading

As adult literacy/basic skills teachers...where do we go for guidance on teaching reading?

- Reading education for different ages, phases and contexts
- Socio-cultural/ethnographic studies of reading in adult life
- Other ways that adult reading is explored

Bibliotherapy

- For example, see new book: [*A Hundred Years of Bibliotherapy: Healing through Books*](#), 2025, edited by Siobhan Campbell, Sara Haslam and Edmund G. C. King.
- Relates to ideas of ‘reading for pleasure’ and everyday adult reading
- Includes deliberate attention to using reading to aid wellbeing and/or ensuring the reading can still happen despite health-related challenges
- Tools or technologies can therefore be particularly important

Co-creating digital bibliotherapy: *designing effective and inclusive wellbeing interventions*

- Collaboration between colleagues in the UCL Department of Information Studies, UCL Institute of Education, colleagues at the Open University and the Reading Agency.
- A pilot project to better understand forms of digital bibliotherapy, and what interventions or innovations might be possible
- 16 (so far) individual interviews and 4-6 creative workshops, qualitative analysis
- Aiming to lead to a larger project

Some preliminary findings

- *Escapism realised*: barriers, accessibility, ‘flexibility to read in your own way,’ agency and control
- Challenges to ‘a programme,’ individual reading and book/reading groups...
- The contribution of COVID
- Companions/companionship, characters and voice
- Routines and boundary-setting
- Networks and different forms of community
- Reading facilitating community vs/and community facilitating reading

How does this relate to basic skills education?

- Contributes to our evolving understandings of reading (its varied roles in adult lives, the tools, technologies and skills involved, motivation, reward and challenges)
- Analysis around companionship and community is an important reminder for all forms of adult education (does adult education facilitate forms of community or do forms of community facilitate adult education? Why do people join classes? Why do they stay and return?)
- Lessons around technology: technology bringing barriers, and technology offering new solutions to barriers, as well as shifting both reading and learning practices
- What else?

Thoughts/suggestions?

Please stay in touch sam.duncan@ucl.ac.uk