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Elements in Publishing and Book Culture
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BOOK CLUBS AND BOOK COMMERCE

Corinna Norrick-Rühl
Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

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Book Clubs and Book Commerce

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Corinna Norrick-Rühl

Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Author for correspondence: Corinna Norrick-Rühl norrick@uni-mainz.de

ABSTRACT: In the twentieth century, cumulative millions of readers received books by mail from clubs like the Book-of-the-Month Club, the Book Society or Bertelsmann Club. This Element offers an introduction to book clubs as a distribution channel and cultural phenomenon and shows that book clubs and book commerce are linked inextricably. It argues that a global perspective is necessary to understand the cultural and economic impact of book clubs in the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. It also explores central reasons for book club membership, condensing them into four succinct categories: convenience, community, concession and most importantly curation.

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KEYWORDS: book sales clubs, book distribution, book clubs, mail-order book culture, book ownership

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