



## Family reading: digital meetings in a program to promote reading in a library

### Leer en familia: tertulias digitales en un programa de fomento de la lectura en la biblioteca

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**Received:**  
22/06/2020

**Accepted:**  
30/11/2020

**ISSN:** 1885-446 X  
**ISSNe:** 2254-9099

**Keywords:**

Digital meetings; libraries; families; reading programs; emergent literacy.

**Palabras clave:**

Tertulias digitales; bibliotecas; familias; programas de lectura; alfabetización emergente.

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#### Abstract

Families' active implication in literacy process has strong connections in children's lives as reader: creating print-rich environment and having many different types of reading and writing experiences supports literacy development and makes formal education easier. In this process, libraries are a fundamental base because they help families and children to access as many materials as literacy situations. Formation contexts are increasingly getting opened to the web and virtual environments and literacy, text and reading practices notion are widening too. In this line, this work shows a study that analyses with an *ad hoc* category system, 753 interactions carried out over 6 months in two digital meeting in a library program to promote reading with children from 2 to 7 years and their families. Results suggest that these digital meetings help to create reading communities that offer a digital area in which families can share experiences, doubts and materials and talk about children literature.

#### Resumen

La implicación de las familias de forma activa en el proceso de alfabetización tiene importantes repercusiones en la formación lectora de los niños: generar contextos ricos en material impreso y en experiencias relacionadas con la lectura y la escritura favorece el aprendizaje de la lengua escrita y hace que la enseñanza formal sea más sencilla. En este proceso, las bibliotecas son un pilar fundamental puesto que ayudan a padres y a niños a acceder tanto a materiales como a situaciones de lectura. Por otro lado, todos los contextos de formación se abren cada vez más a la web y a entornos virtuales y las nociones de alfabetización, texto y prácticas lectoras se amplían. En esta línea, el presente trabajo muestra un estudio que analiza y evalúa a través de un sistema de categorías *ad hoc*, 753 interacciones realizadas en dos tertulias digitales dentro de un programa de biblioteca de fomento de la lectura con niños entre 2 y 7 años y sus familias. Los resultados sugieren que estas tertulias digitales ayudan en la génesis de comunidades lectoras que ofrecen un espacio en el que las familias pueden compartir experiencias, dudas, materiales y conversar sobre literatura infantil.

This research has been conducted within project Art. 83 LOU n°2014/00278/001 with the University of Salamanca and funded by Fundación Germán Sánchez-Ruipérez.

Rodríguez, I., Ramírez, E., Clemente, M., & Martín-Domínguez, J. (2021). Family reading: digital meetings in a program to promote reading in a library. *Ocnos*, 20 (1), 23-37.  
[https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos\\_2021.20.1.2430](https://doi.org/10.18239/ocnos_2021.20.1.2430)



## Introduction

Schools are the institution that deal with the initial literacy process (in other historical moments, it the church or the families themselves carried out this mission) in most countries. Many states have given responsibility for such teaching to educational institutions, starting in the early stages of schooling. Schools are institutions whose practices are an extension of the society to which they belong and this society has a culture that is precisely what schools convey; therefore, although their work is less instructive and technical, social contexts are essential. What happens outside school is thus almost as interesting and relevant as what happens inside it, on the one hand, because it is demanded, on the other, because other institutions within society itself support and promote literacy in different ways. The importance attached to written culture within community and family settings is key in order to make this process more complete and successful. In this sense, libraries are an essential pillar in supporting this process, but families are a determining factor. The interest therein, the support they provide, the stimuli they offer, etc., are complementary formulas but they all are very relevant in initial literacy.

Active involvement of families in this process has important implications for child readers (Paratore et al., 2019). Thanks to the studies conducted by Sulzby and Teale (1991), we have a great deal of research that allows us to understand and value the influence of family contexts on the literacy process. The amount of experience and knowledge gained by children at home has been called *emergent literacy* or literacy roots, because the skills that are generated through those experiences are the first visible indication that children are beginning to become “readers” (Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2015). Children enjoy multiple informal literacy situations at home, which encourage their immersion in the literate world (Hoenig, 2020; Morrow et al., 2016; McLane and McNamee, 1999; Neumann & Neumann, 2009): reading posters or food wrappers, naming vehicles and shops while

walking with their families, language games such as rhyming, imagining a word by naming its initials, chaining words, moulding letters with modelling clay or while baking biscuits, talking with their parents, grandparents and siblings, performing short dramas, simulation games, playing they are reading and writing, singing and inventing songs or poems, etc. These actions improve language in general and help them to learn written language. Shared reading and storytelling in these contexts has been the most studied activity and the one that seems to have the greatest impact on this learning (Canfield et al., 2020; Piasta, 2016).

Research has highlighted that continuous practice of shared situations around books, stories and informative texts fosters the development and learning of three types of skills: 1) linguistic: expressive and receptive vocabulary, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, understanding of the functions of written language, among others (Enz & Stamm, 2015; Heidlage et al., 2020); 2) cognitive: theory of mind and socio-cognitive skills, comprehension skills, general knowledge about the world or knowledge about print (direction of reading, that letters are different from pictures, etc., for example) (Cunningham & Zibulsky, 2015; Vargas-García et al., 2020); and, 3) affective and motivational, greater interest in reading and greater predisposition towards printed material (Pezoa et al., 2019).

When families create a literate environment at home (rich in materials and experiences of various kinds), formal schooling becomes easier (Allington et al., 2010; Morrow et al., 2016). Cunningham and Zibulsky (2014) explain how a child’s reading volume, which often begins with literacy experiences in family and community contexts, has reciprocal and exponential effects on his overall reading ability. Children who start school with these more developed initial skills will follow a faster pace of learning, which will allow them to enjoy this activity and be more willing to be in contact with it. In turn, this will provide them with more vocabulary, more

general knowledge about the world and more and better reading skills, which ends up becoming a learning loop.

There are two main approaches to how families should carry out these literacy practices: on the one hand, those who advocate that literacy experiences at home should be free, spontaneous and natural, and on the other hand, those who opt for a more instructional approach (Neumann & Neumann, 2009). In this sense, we know that reading experiences shared with children, following certain parameters, are very useful in promoting reading. Thus, Lenhart et al. (2019) found that accompanying shared readings with questions, naming of images and defining difficult words was more conducive to learning expressive vocabulary than when it was not done. Following this more instructional approach entails the risk that parents might turn into teachers and even of generating feelings of guilt in families if they do not make every interaction with their children a learning experience (Neumann & Neumann, 2009). We find another option in experiences in community contexts, such as libraries and their programmes to help and guide families of young readers in the process of learning the written language and in accessing and selecting materials.

These programmes can provide strategies and guidance for selecting materials and implementing shared reading practices that are not only more effective but also more fun and engaging (Clark, 2019; Monsour, 1991). For example, Levin and Aram (2012) designed a programme that helped mothers learn shared reading strategies and found that this “training” had positive effects on the reading practices developed by families at home. If, as we argued earlier, the volume of reading and access to printed material is a determining factor in reading and school success, libraries are essential because they can also generate inclusive literacy practices: 1) they provide material to families who could not otherwise afford to create those rich and varied contexts in print that we discussed earlier (Allington et al., 2010; Brockway & Ghoting,

2019); 2) they provide the opportunity to generate feelings of belonging to a community even if they come from immigrant and other cultural backgrounds (Flores, 2019); and 3) they allow for literacy experiences of children with neurodevelopmental disorders to be normalised (Simpson et al., 2020).

Although so-called family literacy programmes have sometimes underestimated parents’ knowledge about how to help their children with reading and writing (Compton-Lilly et al., 2019; Gadsen, 2017), the fact is that these types of programmes have shown an interest in supporting parents in generating literacy practices and helping them to do shared reading (Enz & Stamm, 2015, Levin & Aram, 2012). For example, Troseth et al. (2020), created a programme to help parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds to share conversations and readings with their children through eBooks, and found that upon training parents made up to three times more significant communication exchanges with their children. The programme designed by Barratt-Pugh and Haig (2020) in community and library contexts, highlighted that families’ participation in these activities offers the possibility of expressing their opinions and experiences through stories; it also helps mothers (in this case, participants) to feel much more competent in the implementation of literacy activities at home. In this context, the role played by librarians as cultural agents and promoters is fundamental, as a source of knowledge about materials and as an example of shared reading practices (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2016; Moreno et al., 2017).

Currently, both the concept of literacy and the practices and contexts of reading and training in relation to the promotion of reading are not only linked to contexts and physical/face-to-face supports, nor to the formats traditionally assumed as ways of reading/writing. Teaching and learning relationships and processes are increasingly extending beyond their usual spaces into more varied learning environments that require different kinds of connections and

resources (Lankshear & Knobel, 2010). Canonical reading and writing practices, traditionally seen as legitimate and correct, have given way to much broader, more personal, more extensive and much more varied formats of written communication (Aliagas, 2012; Aliagas et al., 2009). Therefore, library programmes include an increasing number of actions on the web, in the form of book clubs, live conversations or asynchronous participations where users can share their interests and impressions about the readings or ask for help (Álvarez-Álvarez & Pascual-Díez, 2018; Moreno et al., 2017). These collaboration-based virtual spaces allow participants to move from mere consumers to active agents in the creation of content (Coll & Monereo, 2008). The use of these virtual spaces in family literacy programmes is in line with the ideas of Clark (2019), who argues that many families join library programmes for reasons other than developing emergent literacy skills and exposure to print-rich contexts.

In this context, we intend to analyse various issues related to the virtual space generated in a programme to promote reading in libraries, for children aged between 2 and 7 and their families, with the aim of assessing their actions and training possibilities. Specifically, our objectives are the following:

- To reflect on the role that a virtual space plays in a programme to promote reading with families.
- To analyse the actions carried out to connect the virtual space with the face-to-face space in the programme.

## Method

This work is part of a wider evaluative research carried out over 6 months on the development of the Reading Houses programme of Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez Foundation, at its headquarters in Peñaranda de Bracamonte (Salamanca). The programme had 4 groups of children (2 for children under 3 years old and two for children between 4 and 7 years old), who came with their families to

face-to-face sessions in the Foundation's library, where several reading promotion activities were carried out by two librarians in addition to storytelling activities. In addition to the face-to-face sessions, the programme included actions to promote reading at home such as the lending of materials and books and digital chats. In this case, we analysed the interactions of the website that hosts these digital chats, generated as a complement to the face-to-face sessions. In total, we analysed 753 interactions made by all participants during 6 months. Digital discussions are organised in two groups (Reading Houses A and B and Reading Houses C and D), parallel to the face-to-face session groups, each managed by a moderator/librarian.

## Participants

Two librarians managed the two Reading Houses' digital reading rooms. They are professionals with extensive training in promoting and fostering reading at an early age, with extensive use of the virtual platform and a remarkable knowledge of apps, online activities and both digital and traditional materials and books.

Each family unit is considered a participant in the discussion, so that a total of 52 families, with children aged between 2 to 7, participate in the study: 10 families of children under the age of 2 and 11 families with children under the age of 3 make up the Reading Houses A & B group; 14 families of children aged 4 and 5 and 17 families of children aged 6 and 7 make up Reading Houses C & D. See some data relating to families in table 1.

A significant percentage of the participating mothers (62.86%) have an university degree, while the fathers predominantly have the educational level of a school qualification (42.86%). All families have extensive use of technological resources, especially computers (97.14) and tablets (91.43%). Practically 50% of the participating families are considered to be Average Readers (45.71%). All participants were involved in the programme on a voluntary basis. In order

**Table 1**  
*Education use of technological means and reading level of the participants*

Education Families (%)	Technological hardware used by families at home (%)		Self-perception of families as readers (%)			
	Father	Mother				
Primary education	2.86	0	Computer	97.14	Reads quite often	14.1
School graduate Graduate in secondary education	42.86	11.43	Tablet	91.43	Quite a lot of reading	17.14
General Certificate of Education	14.29	8.57	Smartphone	85.71	Average reader	45.71
Vocational Training	22.86	14.29	Video game console	22.86	Barely reads	22.86
3-year bachelor's degree	11.43	31.43	DVD	2.86	Total	100
4+-year bachelor's degree/ Degree	5.70	31.43	Internet	88.57		
No reply	0	2.86	Total	100		
Total	100	100				

to preserve their anonymity and facilitate the processing of the data, each family was assigned a code according to when their participation in the discussion started.

**Instrument of analysis**

The website where the talks take place adopts the social network design model. The content is displayed according to the chronology followed when the participant is added. Participation is multidirectional: registered users can take part in the communications, either on their own initiative or by replying to other members. On the last day of the month, the research team downloaded all the entries, which were classified according to whether the interaction was done by the moderator/librarian or by the participating members. Once this classification has been made, we counted, firstly, the volume of participation in the case of moderators/librarians and individually for each member; secondly, we analysed each interaction based on four dimensions in the case of the moderators/librarians: content, format, relationship of the virtual site with the face-to-face sessions and training strategies; and based on two dimensions for the participating members: content and format of participation (table 2).

**Results**

In order to be able to analyse in detail how the website was used, we firstly presented the data referring to the role played by the moderators/librarians and, secondly, the participation data of the different members. In both cases, we organised the information around three dimensions, detailed in the methodology section: frequency of participation, content and format.

With regard to the presence of the moderators/librarians, we found different frequencies of interaction depending on the month, the week and the moderator herself. In the case of the moderator of Reading Houses A and B, February and June were the months of greatest participation, while the moderator of Reading Houses C and D interacted with the participating families more often in February and May. Overall, the moderator of the second group of Reading Houses interacted with the families 20% more than the moderator of the first group. However, they use the same strategy in both cases to make the website more dynamic: they interact in response to user demands. Thus, two or three times a week, the moderators make different entries on the website to respond to the needs, questions and concerns of the participants.



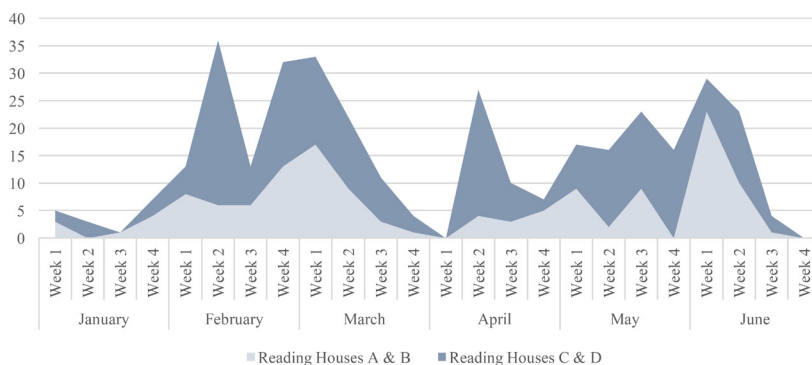
**Table 2**  
*System of categories and dimensions analysed*

Dimensions of participation of moderators/librarians and members of Reading Houses		Dimensions: training actions for moderators/librarians.	
Content of the participation	Information on the development of the project	Relationship of the virtual site with the face-to-face sessions	Contents
	Results of proposed activities (pictures, collages, stories... about how the actions proposed and suggested in face-to-face sessions have been solved)		Digital resource
	Proposal of digital activities or actions		Analogic resource
	Proposal of analogic activities or actions		Activities
	Storytelling of personal experiences (pictures, collages, stories... about how readings are dealt with, which books are chosen, how children respond to them, what emotions the readings arouse, etc.)		Information on the sessions held
	Guidance and questions		Information on face-to-face sessions to be held in the future
	Proposal for digital reading resources		Developing content in collaboration
	Proposal for analogic reading resources		Summary and recapitulations related to the project
Format of the participation	Written	Training strategies	Video tutorials
	Written + Multimedia		Reminders
	Resource inventory		
	Visual		
	Written + Hyperlink		
	Written + Visual		
	Visual + Hyperlink		

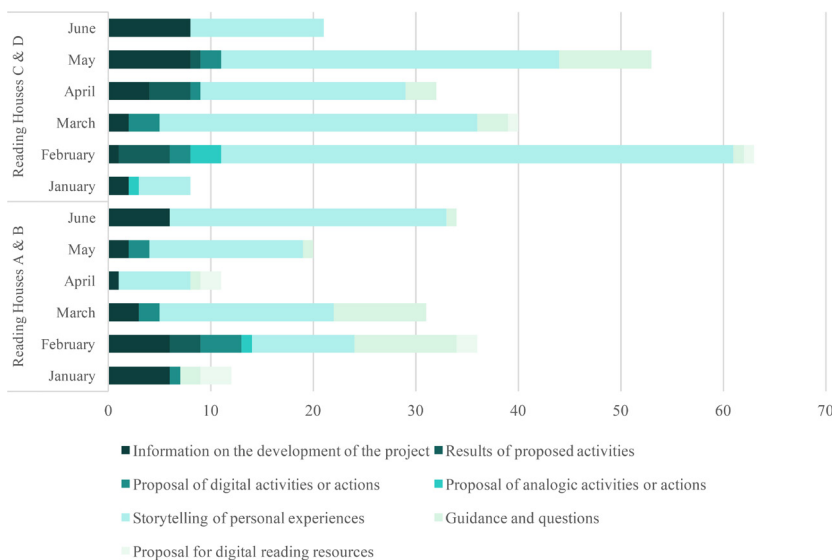
As shown in figure 2 on the content of the messages, although entries on the website serve different purposes, most show information about the project and the face-to-face sessions (16.67% moderator A and B; 11.52% moderator C and D) or tell personal experiences (52.78% moderator A and B; 70.04% moderator C and D). The

meaning of the latter should be qualified, as in most cases it is a question of providing feedback to the participants' interventions (e.g. *Manu* (fictitious name) *had so much fun with the Duck Rabbit; Great! I see you have already read a lot of stories! We will have to exchange our backpacks soon*) or give your opinion on the issues that are due in the

**Figure 1**  
*Participation of moderators/librarians over time*



**Figure 2**  
 Contents of the participation of moderators/librarians over time



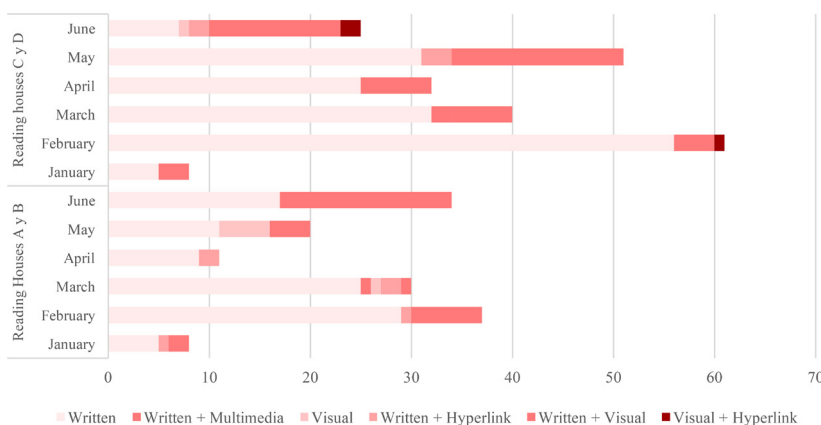
talks (e.g. *Not all children like the same stories, it is okay if you do not read any of them*). Other types of interventions with high frequency are those that guide and solve doubts about the reading material or the ways to interact with apps or on paper (e.g. *Try to find a pleasant moment for both of you, not necessarily before going to bed; those stories have a QR code to download a song, you can also use them*).

With regard to the format adopted by the interventions of both moderators, two stand out above the others: Written (68.57%: moderator A

and B; 71.89% moderator C and D) and Written + Visual (22.14% moderator A and B; 23.04% moderator C and D). As mentioned above, one of the contents that appears most often, and which uses this written format, is that which serves as feedback to participants' interventions.

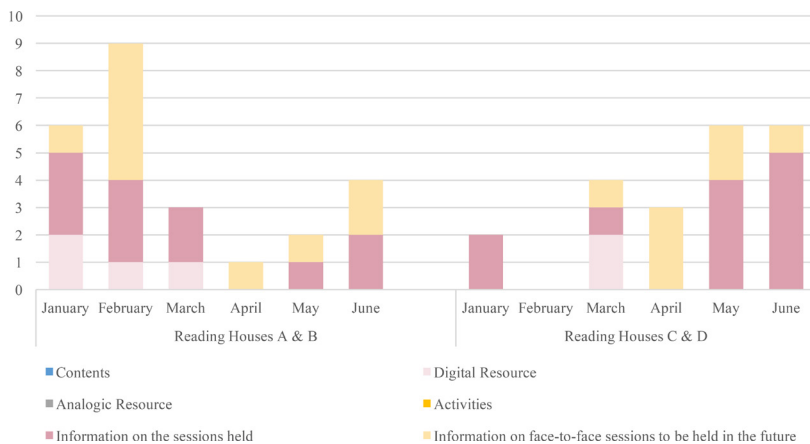
Both moderators/librarians relatively frequently use the creation of web entries to provide information on both past and future face-to-face sessions. Thus, information is given on unforeseen changes in space and time (e.g. *We will be meeting again on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Remember we will be*

**Figure 3**  
 Format of the participation of moderators/librarians over time



**Figure**

*Relationship of the virtual site with face sessions over time*



meeting in the big room this time) or small summaries of the sessions already held (e.g. *Will it be a duck or will it be a rabbit? The other day we were playing with Amy Krouse’s Duck Rabbit! In some it looked like the duck, but... Oh! it was the rabbit. Now you can play at home, where will the Duck Rabbit appear*). Under no circumstances is the website used as a space for creating content or carrying out specific activities.

The use of training strategies from the virtual space is infrequent, both in the moderator of Reading Houses A and B and in those of Reading Houses C and D. In both cases, only brief syntheses or recapitulations of the project or reminders of some aspects dealt with in the face-to-face sessions are made. Only 7.29% of the interactions of the moderator/librarian of Reading Houses A

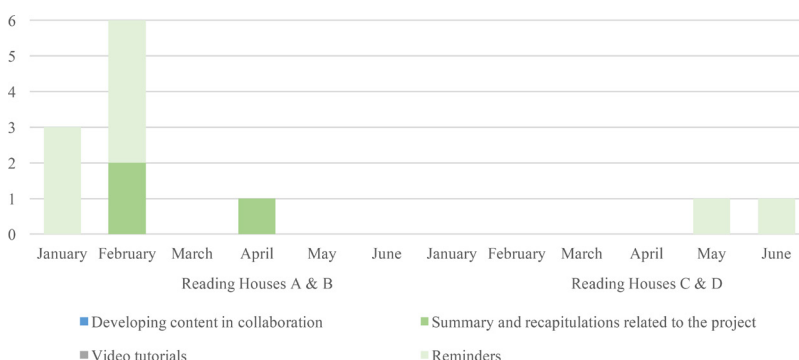
and B, and 0.93% in the case of the moderator of Reading Houses C and D, can be considered training strategies (synthesis and recapitulations or reminders of content addressed in the face-to-face sessions).

Once the presence of the moderators/librarians was described, we analysed the interventions of the participating families, taking their frequency, content and format into account.

In general, the two discussions on the website were well welcomed by the participants. Therefore, in the first one, 80.95% of the participants in the project actively participated, while in the second one 87.09% did so.

**Figure 5**

*Training strategies from the virtual space over time*





**Table 3**  
 Frequency of participation by members

READING HOUSES A & B							READING HOUSES C & D						
Particip	January	February	March	April	May	June	Particip	January	February	March	April	May	June
FAB 1	M	M	M	-	M	Q	FCD 1	-	Q	Q	-	M	-
FAB 2	M	S	S	M	Q	Q	FCD 2	F	-	-	-	-	-
FAB 3	F	R	R	Q	-	Q	FCD 3	-	R	F	F	Q	Q
FAB 4	-	Q	R	-	Q	Q	FCD 4	F	-	Q	F	-	F
FAB 5	-	F	-	-	-	-	FCD 5	-	F	-	F	-	-
FAB 6	-	F	F	-	-	F	FCD 6	-	-	F	F	-	-
FAB 7	-	F	-	-	-	-	FCD 7	-	F	-	F	F	-
FAB 8	-	F	-	F	F	-	FCD 8	-	Q	F	-	Q	-
FAB 9	-	F	Q	F	-	-	FCD 9	-	Q	-	F	Q	F
FAB10	-	F	F	-	-	-	FCD 10	Q	Q	F	F	Q	F
FAB11	-	F	Q	-	-	-	FCD 11	-	-	-	-	Q	Q
FAB12	-	F	-	F	-	F	FCD 12	F	Q	F	F	Q	-
FAB13	-	F	F	-	-	-	FCD 13	-	F	Q	-	F	-
FAB14	-	-	F	-	-	-	FCD 14	-	Q	-	-	Q	-
FAB15	-	-	F	-	-	-	FCD 15	-	-	F	-	-	-
FAB16	-	-	F	-	-	-	FCD 16	-	-	F	F	F	-
FAB17	-	-	F	-	-	F	FCD 17	-	F	F	-	-	-
							FCD 18	-	Q	-	F	Q	-
							FCD 19	M	Q	M	M	Q	-
							FCD 20	-	M	-	-	-	-
							FCD 21	-	Q	Q	M	S	M
							FCD 22	M	Q	-	-	Q	M
							FCD 23	-	Q	M	M	Q	-
							FCD 24	M	Q	M	-	-	-
							FCD 25	-	S	M	M	S	M
							FCD 26	-	Q	M	M	Q	-
							FCD 27	-	-	M	M	M	-

Legend: D: Daily; S: Weekly; Q: Fortnightly; M: Monthly

As seen in table 3, the participation of families in Reading Houses A and B is very uneven. Only one of the members (FAB 2) is actively involved in each month analysed. The most common pattern responds to biweekly or monthly interventions. This does not mean that participants make one entry only, but that they usually enter the website one day a month and make their contributions by answering all the questions asked, giving their opinion or responding to the activities required by the moderator. The months with the highest number of interventions are

February and March, in terms of the number of participations, coinciding with greater activity by the moderator in these same months.

As he pointed out, 87.09% of the members of Reading Houses C and D actively participate in the website's chat room. In table 3 we see how this participation is -again- certainly uneven. Only one of the members (FCD 10) actively participates in each month analysed. Again, the most common pattern responds to fortnightly or monthly interventions, which usually corre-

**Table 4**  
*Content of members' participations (in frequencies)*

READING HOUSES A & B					READING HOUSES C & D				
Participants	Outcome of proposed activities	Personal experiences story	Guidance and questions	Proposal for digital reading resources	Participants	Outcome of proposed activities	Proposal of digital activities or actions	Personal experiences story	Guidance and questions
FAB 1	1	8	2	1	FCD 1	3	-	9	-
FAB 2	2	22	-	-	FCD 2	-	-	2	-
FAB 3	1	15	1	1	FCD 3	13	-	17	-
FAB 4	3	16	-	-	FCD 4	3	-	4	-
FAB 5	-	1	-	-	FCD 5	2	-	2	-
FAB 6	2	2	-	-	FCD 6	-	1	2	-
FAB 7	-	1	-	-	FCD 7	4	-	3	-
FAB 8	-	4	1	-	FCD 8	3	-	11	-
FAB 9	-	5	-	-	FCD 9	3	-	4	-
FAB10	-	3	1	-	FCD 10	2	-	15	-
FAB11	1	1	1	-	FCD 11	-	-	21	-
FAB12	-	4	-	-	FCD 12	2	-	12	-
FAB13	1	2	-	-	FCD 13	3	-	3	2
FAB14	1	3	-	-	FCD 14	-	-	3	-
FAB15	-	1	1	-	FCD 15	2	-	2	-
FAB16	-	3	-	-	FCD 16	1	-	8	-
FAB17	1	1	-	-	FCD 17	1	-	2	-
					FCD 18	3	-	10	-
					FCD 19	2	-	11	-
					FCD 20	1	-	1	-
					FCD 21	5	-	13	1
					FCD 22	1	-	7	-
					FCD 23	3	-	24	-
					FCD 24	1	-	5	-
					FCD 25	7	-	14	-
					FCD 26	2	-	11	-
					FCD 27	1	-	4	-

spond to several entries on the same day, contributions answering all the questions asked, offering their opinion or responding to the tasks required by the moderator. The months of greatest intensity in the digital chats are February and May, which are also the months of greatest activity for the moderator/librarian.

Analysing the content that families bring to digital chats allows us to find how the actions of two categories are more frequent both in the group of younger children and in the group of older children: 1) “Results of proposed tasks” (photographs of handicrafts, collages or drawings related to the readings carried out in

**Table 5**  
*Format of members' participations (in frequencies)*

READING HOUSES A & B					READING HOUSES C & D			
Participants	Written	Visual	Written + hyperlink	Written + visual	Participants	Written	Visual	Written + visual
FAB 1	10	-	1	1	FCD 1	3	1	8
FAB 2	6	-	-	18	FCD 2	-	-	2
FAB 3	12	2	1	5	FCD 3	8	3	19
FAB 4	6	1	-	9	FCD 4	4	-	3
FAB 5	1	-	-	-	FCD 5	1	-	3
FAB 6	4	-	-	-	FCD 6	1	-	1
FAB 7	1	-	-	-	FCD 7	2	-	5
FAB 8	5	-	-	1	FCD 8	7	-	7
FAB 9	4	-	-	1	FCD 9	3	-	4
FAB10	3	1	-	-	FCD 10	7	5	5
FAB11	2	-	-	1	FCD 11	7	7	7
FAB12	3	-	-	-	FCD 12	9	1	3
FAB13	2	-	-	1	FCD 13	3	-	2
FAB14	3	-	-	1	FCD 14	-	-	7
FAB15	1	-	-	1	FCD 15	-	-	4
FAB16	1	-	-	2	FCD 16	1	4	4
FAB17	2	-	-	-	FCD 17	-	1	1
					FCD 18	5	-	8
					FCD 19	3	-	10
					FCD 20	-	-	2
					FCD 21	14	-	5
					FCD 22	6	-	2
					FCD 23	24	-	3
					FCD 24	3	-	3
					FCD 25	8	3	10
					FCD 26	3	2	3
					FCD 27	1	3	1

the face-to-face sessions), with 11.40% for talks A and B, and 23.29% for talks C and D, and 2) “Story of personal experiences” (e.g. *Laura* (fictitious name) *did not like the moustache story at all, she was scared*), with 80.70% for the A and B talks, and 75.34% for the C and D talks.

Asking for help in receiving guidance and asking questions is a marginal action in the use of both chats. Most often participants comment on how they have coped with reading a book (e.g. *We made up a song to tell the crocodile’s [story]; Charlie the Chicken [a puppet] has accompanied us while*

*we read his story*), what their children’s favourites have been, if any emotions have been aroused (e.g. *The [story] one of the colours was very funny*), which ones they have already read or how some activity they have carried out has turned out. Participants from Reading Houses A and B are less active than members of Reading Houses C and D, who respond more to the activities proposed by the moderator/librarian (0.7 interactions on average per participant, in the former; 2.5 in the latter). In both talks, all participants tell their personal experiences, although participants from Reading Houses C and D are again much more specific in

their stories (8.15 interactions on average per participant, compared to 5.4).

As with the moderator of the discussion, the formats most used by the participants of Reading Houses A and B are the Written format (58.4% discussion A and B; 43.16% discussion C and D) and the Written + Visual format (36.28% discussion A and B; 46.32% discussion C and D). Participants tend to respond to their peers (e.g. *We have not read that one yet*), give their impressions (e.g. *I found it a bit sexist*), opinions and experiences through the written text. They also use the written text accompanied by a photograph to illustrate what they are presenting and to respond to the tasks demanded by the moderator. On the other hand, in Reading Houses C and D the Written + Visual is the most used format of participation. This format, used by all participants, involves the complementary use of text and images (e.g. *We have taken the Duck Rabbit to Grandpa's orchard!* + picture). However, a high number of participants also choose to use the written text exclusively as a mean to respond to the moderator's demands or to express their ideas, opinions or experiences.

## Discussion and conclusions

This work responds to the interest in investigating and interpreting the actions carried out in a virtual space linked to a library programme for the promotion of reading with families of children between 2 and 7 years old. To this end, we analysed 753 interactions carried out over 6 months between families and moderators. The results allow us to reflect and draw some conclusions on the use, content and usefulness of these networked gatherings on reading and children's literature.

The format used in this type of platform, similar to social networks such as twitter, fosters the development of asynchronous communication exchanges. This type of communicative participation can be useful since it makes it possible to generate content and entries online

at the times that the user chooses/can/likes. This allows us to understand participation in the gathering which, as we saw before, responds to several entries on the same day with a fortnightly frequency.

In the context under analysis, texts constructed throughout the asynchronous interactions use writing alone or are accompanied by pictures, both by the moderators and the participants. Lankshear and Knobel (2010) report that the format through which information is transmitted, so-called text, has been modified and enriched with other languages, such as visual. In this sense, participants, especially families of older children (Reading Houses C and D), use communication formats that bring text and image together to enrich and illustrate their ideas, experiences, and to respond to the tasks demanded. On the contrary, librarians, who are responsible for the talks, opt for a more canonical interrelationship format (writing), perhaps because more value is placed on these practices in more or less formal contexts when they are presented in a written format, also more formal, than when it is done through drawings, emoticons or pictures (Aliagas, 2012; Aliagas et al., 2009).

As for the content, we find the two types of agents involved: families and moderators. Moderators/librarians play the role of site facilitator (they provide feedback, answer to participants or propose activities), but, above all, they act as librarians: they offer information and advice on how to deal with the readings, recall aspects they have already seen in the face-to-face sessions, recommend and suggest material and how to use it, remind or announce changes in spaces and times in the face-to-face actions, etc. In this sense, what is surprising is that librarians offer guidance and queries, although requesting it is a marginal action in the participants. If in digital book clubs librarians take on the role of managing conversations about books (Moreno et al., 2017), in this case we would add the preservation of the librarian's role.

It would be easy to think that families use a space for dialogue like this, around stories, to ask for help and guidance on how to tackle the readings, what material to use or how to do it. Assuming this idea without verifying the families' actual participation would be to underestimate the knowledge parents have about how to share spaces mediated by books and stories with their children, which is common in family literacy programmes (Gadsen, 2017).

When we analyse how families participate in this web site, we find that a kind of reading community is built in which, as shown by the examples of their interactions, participants express how they have done a specific reading, what preferences their children have, what emotions they feel, what materials they have used from those provided, share and suggest readings and resources, ask each other questions and support each other's actions (the latter is also a very frequent action of the moderators/librarians), especially in the discussion of families with older children (Reading Houses C and D). This feeling of belonging to a community has been highlighted, among others, in the study conducted by Flores (2019), who reports on the value of family literacy programmes as a facilitator of social cohesion. Clark (2019) argues that families attend these types of programmes for a variety of reasons; no doubt some of them are to access material and learn ways of interacting with reading, but, as users of this social network have shown, having a space to talk about reading and how to use it throughout upbringing can be very attractive elements within these programmes. On the other hand, this opportunity can help families to become (even more) committed to promoting reading in the early ages, since talking about books stimulates a taste for reading and texts (Álvarez-Álvarez & Pascual-Díez, 2018).

The analysis of the digital gatherings around family reading shows promising possibilities for this type of action from libraries, perhaps not only because of the promotion of reading in the

early ages, but also because of the options they offer in the creation of reading communities.

Inherent limitations of an evaluative study to generalise results should not detract from their value, since the objective of case studies is more focused on in-depth understanding and interpretation of different phenomena and on reflection rather than replication. On the other hand, although choosing to quantify the categories of the system causes us to lose -partly at least- the richness of the particular, of the content of the participants' discourse, it offers us the possibility of finding and comparing patterns, actions, profiles and activities between groups. In any case, more studies of this kind are necessary to help families and librarians design and implement actions around reading and literature in the early ages on the web. It would also be very interesting to incorporate the work of schools simultaneously to complete the analysis of the literacy process.

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