

If These Books Could Talk

App Concept Based on the Understanding Young Adults Perceptions of
Reading and Their Reading Habits
PWR Capstone Project Spring 2021 by Myrta Santana Santini

This project was inspired by my favorite activity, reading. In a society where we are constantly moving and everything is constantly changing, there is a sense of security that can be found in books. Regardless of if you read fiction or nonfiction, when one reads, you often get to take a break from your reality and the stressors that come with daily life, but like everything, it might not be for everyone. There are a wide variety of factors that contribute to people not reading, some being that they used to read and lost interest in it, or that they have never been able to fully give reading a chance. I want to expand on the latter idea by explaining that this is about individuals that have different sets of obstacles between themselves and reading, be it a language barrier, being neurodivergent, or struggling with their mental health, things that might affect your reading habits or lack thereof.

The purpose of this project was to explore the different types of reading habits exhibited by individuals between the ages of 18-25, considering more than just if they like to read or not. With the survey I wanted the participants to think about how they see themselves, and how things like mental health and being neurodivergent are valid reasons for finding reading as a challenge, and that there might be ways in which we could try to improve their experiences. I wanted to be able to share my love of reading, and the escape it provides me, to anyone who is even remotely curious about this. When reviewing the survey results, one of the main takeaways was how people's experiences from childhood influenced their reading habits and their confidence in this act. It was also interesting to see some people recognize their privilege when it came to the economical limitations that some face when it comes to reading.

After examining the limitations and challenges related to reading, the next step to this project was to apply the finding to an app and create a prototype that showcases what I have learned. In creating the wireframes for the app, I kept thinking about my audience and the survey results. One of my biggest goals was to make the app as inclusive and interactive as possible. One of the main reasons that participants gave for not reading is that they could not focus for that long or they felt pressure to achieve something, some disclosed that they would sometimes hyper focus and not be able to manage their time appropriately. From this came the idea to provide a reading plan, based more on time and not so much page count. Once you create the account for the app, you answer the questions about time, focus, and money, as well as what type of genres you like. It would also ask for some books you have read or have been meaning to read. This will then generate a personalized reading plan, that includes a journaling feature for those who want to write about what is working and what isn't, or what they are reading. This feature is meant for the user to evaluate what is working and be able to maybe adjust their initial answers and refresh their plan. This growth in a user would be a milestone and something that could be celebrated but it is not something that everyone should be expected to reach.

This project is meant to highlight individuality and to explore yourself and is very significant to me and my future because this is what I enjoy the most. Asking questions and sharing knowledge on things that I enjoy. While my plans are still unsure, I do know that graduate school and my Ph.D. are in the cards, and this sort of research is something that I would like to continue and do more of. PWR has taught me skills that made all this possible, from conducting the research, audience, and market analysis, writing a proposal, and applying other rhetorical strategies. Some of the most prominent strategies in this project are the use of pathos, through my personal experiences and reasoning for this idea; arrangement and delivery, because of the survey answers and their influence on the arrangement of the app and how the delivery would happen. I started this project with a very broad concept, and PWR and the skills I have learned helped me narrow down my focus and to refine my work and myself.

Statement Of PWR

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What is rhetoric? Why is it considered to be something negative? These are questions that I found myself asking when I first started in PWR. My knowledge of rhetoric was limited to the idea of the “rhetorical question” often described as a question that is underhanded and cannot be answered, while in reality that is an open-ended or simply unanswered question. PWR has given me the tools to not only learn more about myself but also how rhetoric is something that we use constantly. This statement? This is rhetoric.

Over the years we have been asked to define rhetoric at the beginning of the classes each semester, and each semester there was something new to add. This is rhetoric; the communication of new information, the act of communicating, the act of interpreting what is said and how it is said or written for that matter. Rhetoric is how you examine your surroundings, your audience, and all the influencing aspects and then apply them to what you will say.

As a PWR major I have often found myself leaning towards projects related to the current events and general struggles of Puerto Rico; a topic near and dear to my heart because this is where I was born and raised. When I moved to NC, I felt like I had to change or adapt, but PWR taught me that this isn't the case. Through rhetorical strategies like pathos, delivery, Kairos, as well as audience analysis, I was able to see that I did not need to change myself, but instead find the best way to inform my audience and help them see below the surface level. I felt like my civic identity was strongly tied to creating a space where safe conversations can ebb and flow while tearing down the misconceptions that society tends to have regarding racial and ethnic minorities, as well as those struggling socioeconomically. This is something that I am still building myself. I use my rhetorical strategies to insight change, but I also use them daily when working. Simple things like changing my tone depending on the call or email, thinking about the timing of conversations and when it is best to initiate them; rhetoric gives you the tools to be versatile.

The understanding of rhetoric and rhetorical strategies is something that is very much continuous. The rhetorical strategies that resonate the most for me would have to be audience analysis, pathos/ethos/logos, you-attitude, and the canons of delivery and arrangement. Audience analysis is one of the rhetorical strategies that I have used the most throughout my time at Elon. Broadly speaking I have used it in every project that is intended for more than just me as the audience. But a specific circumstance that comes to mind is when I constructed my portfolio. Now for this, my audience was more than just the PWR faculty at Elon, the reviewer would be from another institution. So, I had to consider that my audience was someone unfamiliar with my work, with my background, my personality and how it all tied together. Once I had a general idea of my audience and what were the minimum requirements I needed to mark off, I started thinking about how to take this a step further. This is where arrangement and delivery come in. Once I had the materials, I had to decide how to arrange them most effectively. While I knew that the immediate audience for my portfolio might not mind blocks of informative text, future employers might prefer a more direct approach. Once I reached an arrangement that made sense for my audience, I focused on the delivery.

A prime example of how I did delivery – and how I have improved since then – can be seen through the work I did for the PWR social media internship. The delivery of the messages for the major was very thought out, and there were so many different things to consider when delivering the message. I considered who followed our accounts, what groups were most prominent in the social media platforms, and how to adjust the messages accordingly. At the time, this idea of adapting the text was not executed most effectively. The text would normally be very equipped for Facebook or Instagram but would not be popular on Twitter. Being able to look back at this and see how much I have grown is something that PWR has also taught me.

Lastly, the three appeals and you-attitude. Even now, I tend to write as I speak, and I like addressing my audience and making sure that you are absorbing and processing the information. This statement is just as much for you as it is for me. While I use all the appeals, the most important one to me has always been pathos. When combined, pathos and you-attitude can be the best way to influence your audience and keep them engaged, because they become invested. I recently used these in a blog post for PWR 212 on tourist culture in PR. I used the personal connection to bring the viewer in and then used you-attitude to make sure the message stayed with them, reminding them to be respectful when visiting places that aren't their home.

Mastering all these skills, applying them to everything I do, as well as simply enjoying the constant learning – this is what PWR cares about, the skills they teach you that stay with you forever so that you may pass along the knowledge to others in the future.