



Libraries and Learning Services

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Version

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Personal reading challenges. An easy addition to New Year's Resolutions, and there are lots of options available to help you reach your goals. I've been setting myself reading goals for years – the most memorable when I was still a student and pledged to read 150 books during the year. Now that I'm working full-time, all the time I used to be able to dedicate to reading has disappeared into the void, and I'm left trying to find alternate challenges that focus on what I read, not how much. I set myself challenges and goals in order to help me find the motivation to carve out time in my week or month specifically for reading.

Two options for great websites which allow you to count the books you read per year are [Shelfari](#) and [Goodreads](#). Shelfari gives you a visual representation of the shelves of books you have read, and is quite useful to keep track of specific cover art of books (if you are into that kind of thing). Goodreads also allows you to set a reading goal (mine is 60 books for 2016), and has a great app which makes it all a little bit more simple to use on the go. Both sites allow you to review books, join groups, and participate in community activities.

The other way to set reading challenges is to decide on a specific set of books to read, or an attempt to take control of chaotic TBR piles (To Be Read) - and let's face it, as librarians we probably all have an out of control TBR. There's always the option to follow the guidelines of a predetermined list; an opportunity to attempt to read a specific genre and explore the top [science-fiction](#) books, top [fantasy](#), or must-read [classics](#). Challenges can also include such things as [the BBC list](#) of things you should have read, or challenge yourself to read the same books that [Rory Gilmore](#) did during *Gilmore Girls*.

A particularly good challenge to set yourself is one that will get you out of your reading comfort zone. Whether that involves joining a book club, or reading things alone at home, expanding what you read can reap many rewards. One challenge in particular that I'm attempting this year is the Book Riot [Read Harder Challenge](#). It has categories specifically designed to challenge you, not only to find books that fit, but ones that you will finish (and possibly enjoy). Things such as reading a play, read a book out loud, read a book set in the Middle East, read a food memoir, read a book about religion, and read a book with a main character that has a mental illness will challenge you to read about people and topics you might never have explored otherwise. There are a plethora of options, and I've found this particular challenge to be my favourite so far.

Reading challenges should be seen as an opportunity to step outside of your comfort zone, and experience great stories. It can allow you to connect with people and situations that you've never personally experienced. Reading challenges can be personalised to your own life, your interests, and the time you have available to dedicate to a challenge. It's a great opportunity, and something we librarians especially should strive to do, in our own personal way.