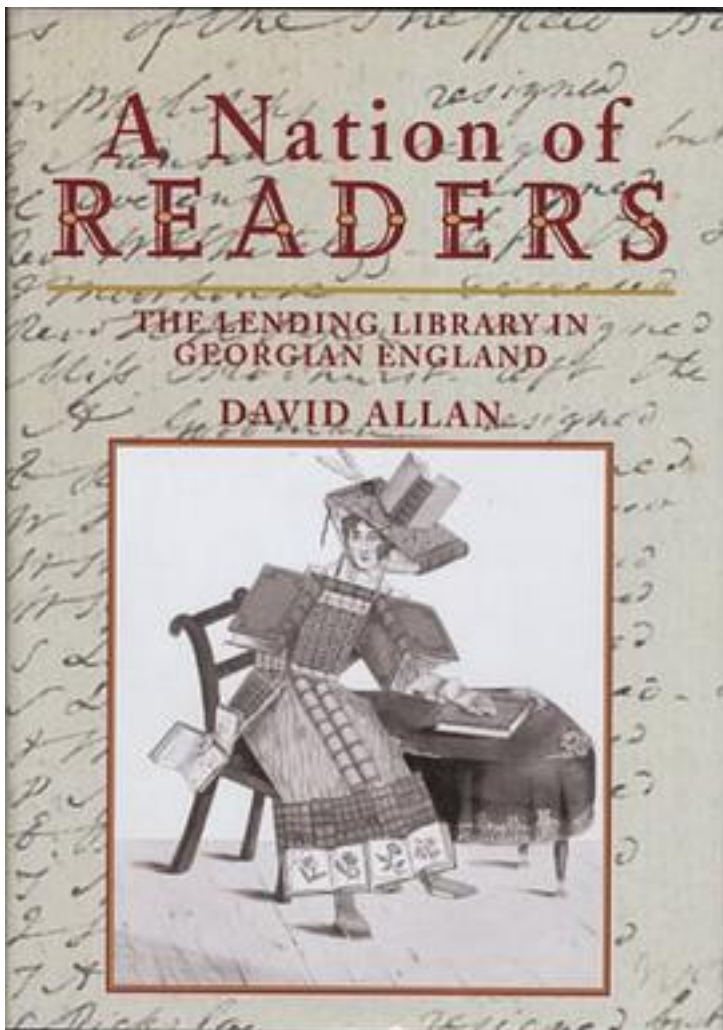


A Nation of Readers



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Reading was one of Georgian England's defining obsessions, holding numberless

individuals in thrall and serving also as the natural focus of intensive comment and controversy. This pioneering study of its organisational context explores the origins, organisation and impact of book clubs, reading societies, subscription libraries and circulating libraries, together with the opportunities increasingly offered to readers by a variety of other collections, including those provided by religious, educational and recreational institutions. "A Nation of Readers" argues that the proliferation of library facilities greatly extended the quantity and diversity of texts available. It also suggests that the resulting circulation of books on a previously unimaginable scale made possible the creation of a substantial and broadly based reading public, thereby adding immeasurably to the cultural vitality that so distinguished Georgian England.

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