

Leserskring: The story of South Africa's most successful commercial book club

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Abstract

Nasionale Pers established a mail-order book club based on the Bertelsmann model called *Leserskring* in 1980. The club became incredibly successful - by 1985 it had a membership of 250 000. However, technology and a changing South African landscape brought challenges to the club. In 2016, Naspers announced that the iconic book club's doors would be shut for good. Some believe that the club experienced its success due to the culture of reading and publishing that had developed among mostly white South Africans during the apartheid period, and that with democratisation the niche it once held slowly started to disappear.

Keywords

Leserskring / Leisure Books

Commercial book club

South Africa

Nasionale Pers/Naspers

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Introduction

Throughout the history of publishing in South Africa, commercial type book clubs were initiated without much success, or much lasting success. Then in 1980, Piet Botma was asked to start *Leserskring*, the commercial book club that became a highly successful endeavour for Naspers for decades². Botma employed Hannes van Zyl, who later became head of Tafelberg (a very successful local publisher), to help him with the club (he became head manager of *Leserskring* in 1986). Publishers were able to increase their print-runs tenfold at the height of *Leserskring*'s popularity. The club experienced its most successful time during the 1980s and 1990s, but there seemed to be a decline in the novelty of the book club as time went on and especially with the rising popularity of online sales (especially Kalahri.net – now Takealot – that sold a big variety of print books) and even e-books. In 2016, Naspers announced the closure of *Leserskring* and *Leisure Books* (the English equivalent), though it was bought over by another company and still exists today.

Nasionale Pers – later renamed Naspers – has a long history as a local publisher of especially Afrikaans books, and was known as having strong ties with the apartheid government. The company had to reinvent themselves at the dawn of democracy. Today Naspers is a big multimedia conglomerate with its publishing division (Media24) being only a small part of their business.

The history of Nasionale Pers and *Leserskring*

In 1914, there were very few Afrikaans books; English books were well established in South Africa, Dutch books were regularly imported and also written by authors in South Africa. At the time of the establishment of Nasionale Pers in December 1914, Afrikaans as a written

² Kerneels Breytenbach, 'Die nuwe man by Tafelberg', *Die Beeld*, May 1997, Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

language “barely existed” and there was “no reading culture among the Afrikaners”³. Nasionale Pers started off publishing a newspaper, *De Burger*. Through their publications, Nasionale Pers attempted to develop a reading culture among Afrikaners.

A few years later, they had started publishing magazines (like *De Huisgenoot*) and books. A first publication appeared in 1915, *Voor volk en taal*, a small soft-cover play⁴. “Various attempts were made to establish book clubs, without lasting success” [own translation]⁵ which would encourage reading. The first commercial book club in South Africa was called *De Burger-Leeskring* and was formed in 1918. The club did not have a big profit motive – focusing more on creating Afrikaans literature – but it did also serve as an extra revenue stream for the publishing company. According to unpublished documents produced by Tafelberg, Nasionale Boekhandel’s roots lie in the *Burger-leeskring*, a book club that published fiction and historical works⁶. The *De Burger-leeskring* closed in 1925, the same year Afrikaans became an official language in South Africa. The modern book sales club is assumed to have developed in central Europe in the 1920s, so the establishment of different book sales clubs for Afrikaans books at around the same time followed this trend.

Many marketing initiatives were attempted by Nasionale Pers (renamed Naspers in the 1990s), with book clubs being an attempt at creating awareness, stimulating reading culture and providing access to books. According to Beukes⁷ the “Nasionale Pers tackled all sorts of actions to promote the sales of books with the help of *Die Burger-Boekhandel* and *Die Volksblad-Boekhandel*” [own translation]. During the depression, the ‘*Volksblad-boekkring*’

³ Scholtz in Lizette Rabe, *'n Konstante revolusie: Naspers, Media24 en oorgange* (Kaapstad, Suid-Afrika: Tafelberg, 2015), 27.

⁴ C. F. J Muller, *Sonop in die Suide: geboorte en groei van die Nasionale Pers 1915-1948*, I (Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1990), 331.

⁵ W. D Beukes, *Oor grense heen: op pad na 'n Nasionale Pers, 1948-1990* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1992), 491.

⁶ ‘Tafelberg Geskiedenis’ (Tafelberg-Uitgewers, n.d.), Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum.

⁷ *Oor grense heen*, 491.

was established so that the decline in books being sold (and the wish to read books) could be counteracted. Every month, six books for adults and six books for children were chosen and offered at a discount ⁸. Another initiative included the sales of books at discounts for Christmas, and by 1936 ‘*Onse eie Biblioteek*’ was established ⁹. The latter initiative did well, and by 1945, 16 000 copies of Anna Enslin’s *Kwart voor middernag* was printed for it ¹⁰; before this, publishers would barely dare to have a print run of 2 000. Club membership started declining after 1947 however and closed down by 1955.

In the Cape ‘*Ons eie biblioteek-skema*’ club was, like most others, a month-club – a member would get a copy of a book chosen for him by the club every month. The member did not receive a catalogue and had no choice in the book they received. When Nasionale Boekhandel (NB) – the book publishing division of Nasionale Pers and today one of Naspers’ biggest publishers – was taken over by Tafelberg in 1959, they had their own month-club with 5 000 members, but this club did not last long either ¹¹.

Human & Rousseau, a publisher established in 1959, was in competition with Tafelberg, established in 1951. Nasionale Boekhandel acquired Tafelberg in 1959, and they acquired Human & Rousseau 1977. Consequently, by the time Nasionale Boekhandel attempted another book club in 1980, both Tafelberg and Human & Rousseau had been taken over by NB; this was important because the publishers involved with these imprints had a big role to play in the success of the club. With regards to publishing, the late 1980s and the 1990s was a time when Nasionale Pers (later renamed Naspers) experienced their biggest period of growth and new acquisitions. “It was during this euphoric period that Naspers...engaged in a number of acquisitions and mergers both in South Africa and abroad. Like other media companies in the

⁸ Beukes, 491.

⁹ Beukes, 492.

¹⁰ Beukes, 492.

¹¹ Beukes, 494–95.

United States, Europe and elsewhere, Naspers has transformed itself into a conglomerate offering multiple delivery platforms in the increasingly transnational and competitive”¹².

J.J. Human, co-founder of Human & Rousseau, was the man who took the initiative to establish this organisation¹³. “He had already had long conversations with dr, H. Zopp, head of the *Bertelsmann-Leeskring*, the big German book club organisation”¹⁴ [own translation]. Human started to suggest the idea of a book club, in order to broaden their distribution network for their books¹⁵. A proposal for a book club was made and taken to the Frankfurt book fair in 1977, where Danie van Niekerk and Koos Human met with Bertelsmann in order to discuss the best way forward for launching a book club in South Africa. NB invited two men from Bertelsmann, Vössing and Borsddorf, to South Africa to ‘investigate local circumstances and to give advice’¹⁶. In 1979 it was decided to go forth with the book club and Piet Botma, at that stage the senior assistant editor of *Beeld* (a newspaper published by Nasionale Pers), was offered the job. He accepted and immediately travelled to Germany to be trained intensively for three months by Bertelsmann in Germany, the Netherlands, Britain and Switzerland¹⁷. After his training, he reported to Bertelsmann that if NB were to open a book club in South Africa, they would differ in two ways from the Bertelsmann model – they would not do home visits to commission new members, and they would not be doing reprints. According to Botma, home visits in South Africa would be impractical with their ‘big properties, aggressive dogs and many robbers’ and that a ‘reprint club would not be successful in the eighties in an English

¹² Sethunya Tshepho Mosime, ‘Naspers Media Group : Ethnic Past and Global Present. Media Firms, Class and Ethnic Identities during the Age of Convergence and Expansion - the Case of Naspers in the First Decade of the 21st Century’, *Global Media Journal - African Edition* 8, no. 1 (1 January 2014): 71.

¹³ Beukes, *Oor grense heen*, 495.

¹⁴ Beukes, 495.

¹⁵ Beukes, 495.

¹⁶ Beukes, 496.

¹⁷ Beukes, 496.

book environment, of which South Africa was part’¹⁸ [own translation]. Bertelsmann did not agree with him, and believed that the club would fail without these specific implementations.

After his return, Botma proposed a ten-year budget for the book club – with an investment of a few million rand – because the ‘Bertelsmann-concept could not be approached in small scale’¹⁹. Funds did play a role, as the budget allowed for 22 personnel members, where Bertelsmann prescribed 55; the director of NB allowed only 13 to be employed²⁰. Furthermore, it was advised by Vössing that the book club should be started slowly, because if too many members were commissioned in the beginning, administrative issues would bog them down. If more than 3 000 members were commissioned in the first month, the club would fail as a result of this²¹. They did not heed this warning however; about a month after the club’s launch, the *Beeld* reported that *Leserskring* had had a good start²², and the club had grown to 3 000 members within three weeks. Although it was tough going for a time, the club made it and after two years they had 75 000 members²³. According to Botma, there was interest in the club from all over the country, which showed that the club was fulfilling a need²⁴. Many of the books on the catalogue were sold out within a few weeks and new stock had to be acquired quickly. A world atlas available on the catalogue was so popular the last thousand copies in London had to be sent for with some urgency²⁵. Of course, books included local and imported titles; often also translations of imported titles.

Various newspaper and magazine articles discussed this new endeavour by Nasionale Pers; most of them, of course, owned by the company (this helped with cross-marketing). With

¹⁸ Beukes, 496.

¹⁹ Beukes, 497.

²⁰ Beukes, 497.

²¹ Beukes, 497.

²² ‘Leserskring Spring Goed Weg’, *Die Beeld*, 26 September 1980, 4, Instituut vir eietydse geskiedenis.

²³ Beukes, *Oor grense heen*, 497; ‘Leserskring Spring Goed Weg’, 4.

²⁴ ‘Leserskring Spring Goed Weg’, 4.

²⁵ ‘Leserskring Spring Goed Weg’, 4.

its launch, P. J. Cillié, the chairman of Nasionale Pers, was interviewed in the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Beeld*. He said that they believe *Leserskring* could be the beginning of a ‘new day’ for books and ‘friends of books’ in our country, specifically the Afrikaans book. Bigger print runs could be possible within a few years, which would mean ‘extra incentive for authors’ and bigger ‘reading pleasure’ for readers²⁶. The book club was launched as an Afrikaans book club, though the English equivalent, *Leisure Hour*, soon followed. The club was advertised as a club that any ‘civilized’ person would want to be a part of. The responsibilities of members were low and the rewards high²⁷. For the publisher, it meant they had wider distribution than before, which meant they could reach new markets. Both English and Afrikaans books were on the catalogue, although the club, at this stage, was aiming at the Afrikaans reader. Books were offered from a range of genres in the non-fiction (art, religion, flower arranging, etc.) and English and Afrikaans fiction²⁸. “From time to time, new books [would] be made available exclusively to members of the club”²⁹. What made the club different to clubs run in the country before, was that it was considered a ‘bookshop through the post,’ because a particular book was not pre-picked and delivered to members³⁰. Furthermore, some opinion at the time considered the Afrikaans book to be stagnating because ‘*verstrooiingslektuur*’ (popular fiction) was becoming known as book club books, and the ‘high literature’ had more and more been relegated to the prescription market. *Leserskring* was a club wanting to change this trend³¹. Although a large proportion of the catalogue could have been filled with books from the NB group, the club was open to all publishers, which again meant a bigger variety for readers³².

²⁶ ‘Leserskring Sorg Vir Oud En Jonk: Die Heel Bestes Vir Elke Leser’, *Die Beeld*, 15 August 1980, 6, Instituut vir eietydse geskiedenis.

²⁷ ‘Leserskring Sorg Vir Oud En Jonk: Die Heel Bestes Vir Elke Leser’, 6.

²⁸ ‘Leserskring Sorg Vir Oud En Jonk: Die Heel Bestes Vir Elke Leser’, 6.

²⁹ ‘Leserskring Sorg Vir Oud En Jonk: Die Heel Bestes Vir Elke Leser’, 6.

³⁰ ‘Leserskring’, *Die Beeld*, 6 August 1980, 4, Instituut vir eietydse geskiedenis.

³¹ ‘Leserskring’, 4.

³² ‘Leserskring’, 4.

Leserskring was apparently the first club to be implemented and based on the Bertelsmann concept outside of Europe and the Americas³³. The club worked on the premise that members had to buy a book off the *Leserskring* catalogue every quarter; books were offered at a 20% discount to members³⁴. When launched, members were also required to remain a member for a minimum of one year.

In 1982, the English version of the club, called *Leisure Hour*, was formed. The aim was to target English speakers specifically, with catalogues and other marketing material appearing in English. It further aimed to ‘encourage reading among the population’³⁵. The club had also expanded to selling music and stationery. By this time, *Leserskring* had grown to have quite an effect on the South African publishing industry. “Orders of 2 000 to 5 000 books per title is quite common, while orders for the principal book of the quarter now isn’t generally less than 40 000”³⁶. Knowing the size of the industry, this is quite a feat! “Two years ago [1980] the print run for an Afrikaans book hardly reached 3 000. And countrywide there were so few bookstores, only a small percentage of the population ever made it over the threshold of a bookstore” (Muller 1982, 21). According to Muller, at this stage *Leserskring* had a total of 110 000 members with the initial goal of 200 000 members within 10 years projected to be met by 1984³⁷. Some South African titles had, by this stage, sold over 50 000 books through the club. Because of this, *Leserskring* had the power to commission authors to write books just for them (Muller 1982, 21).

³³ ‘Leserskring Sorg Vir Oud En Jonk: Die Heel Bestes Vir Elke Leser’.

³⁴ ‘Leserskring Sorg Vir Oud En Jonk: Die Heel Bestes Vir Elke Leser’, 6.

³⁵ ‘Nuwe Engelse Boekklub: Leserskring Kry Maat’, *Die Burger*, 7 August 1982, 8, Instituut vir eietydse geskiedenis.

³⁶ ‘Nuwe Engelse Boekklub: Leserskring Kry Maat’, 8.

³⁷ ‘Rondom Die Letterkunde: Die Afrikaner Lees, Bewys Leserskring’, *Die Burger*, 25 November 1982, 21, Instituut vir eietydse geskiedenis.

“By 1983 *Leserskring* was said to have 120,000 members while Leisure Hour had 15,000 and they were jointly responsible for the purchase of 500,000 books... By 1985, the joint membership had grown to 250,000”³⁸. By 1998, “more than a million people read the club catalogue every month and every 3,5 seconds a package is sent every weekday. Many Afrikaans books can be published because of the support of loyal members”³⁹. At this stage *Leserskring* were selling a variety of items other than their books, like CDs, VHS videos and pedagogic toys⁴⁰. Low prices and the lure of special items when ordering specific books meant that readers – especially Afrikaans readers – continued to want to be part of the club. It may also have been because “Afrikaans is getting less time on our TVs and this forces Afrikaners to find their entertainment in other ways”⁴¹. At this stage the SABC showcased both English and Afrikaans programmes, many imported from especially the United States.

Some initiatives were implemented by the club in order to adapt to the changing markets, but also possibly because the club was in decline and they were trying to attract new members, and keep existing members. In 2010, *Leserskring/Leisure Books* announced that they had moved online, so that anyone could have the opportunity would be able to order books and other products. Book Club members continued to get a discount of between 15-20% on selected books, while all other customers paid the regular price⁴². An incentive to join the club was a joining offer where non-members would receive 50% discount on their first purchase made online when they join the Club.

³⁸ Mike Kantey, ‘Publishing in South Africa’, *Africa Bibliography* 1989 (March 1990): xvi, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266673100005183>.

³⁹ ‘Taal Vlam Voort by Leserskring’, *Die Volksblad*, 29 August 1998, 2.

⁴⁰ ‘Taal Vlam Voort by Leserskring’, 2.

⁴¹ ‘Taal Vlam Voort by Leserskring’, 2.

⁴² ‘Leisure Books Goes Online, Offers to Non-Members’, April 2010, <https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/394/46521.html>.

“The “Open for Everyone” trial is another step towards opening our pre-selection of books to a wider audience, offering them a range that is specifically chosen by our expert book buyers and so easing the buying experience and preventing buyer's remorse. The model that is being piloted is designed to appeal primarily to online users and the news of uncapped broadband plays beautifully to the Clubs' strategy to increase their online activity. Barnett concluded that books are the anchor that educates, informs and entertains readers and that their selection of genres span many interest group as they aim to touch the lives of each and every customer in a meaningful and lasting manner”⁴³.

In 2014, *Leserskring* also launched an online romance book club.

“Besides gaining access to hundreds of Afrikaans ebooks categorised under ‘Romanties’ or ‘Passie’, members will also have access to a wide variety of English ebooks in ‘Love Story’ or ‘Sinful’...Ebooks are gaining popularity and since many avid readers seem to enjoy a number of romances every month, ebooks offer a perfect solution. With this club, members will meet characters created by well-known South African authors like Ena Murray, Schalkie van Wyk, Malene Breytenbach and Ettie Bierman as well as many famous international authors”⁴⁴.

Members needed to pay a R55 monthly subscription and would then have 30 days to choose one ebook from a pre-selected list. The romance club was called *Hartstog* and offered hundreds

⁴³ ‘SA’s Biggest Book Club Now Open for All’, Litnet Argief, 2010, https://argief.litnet.co.za/article.php?news_id=85332.

⁴⁴ ‘Leserskring Launches Afrikaans Romance Ebook Club’, *Good Housekeeping* (blog), 26 September 2014, <https://www.goodhousekeeping.co.za/afrikaans-leserskring-stel-nuwe-e-boekklub-vir-liefdesverhale-bekend/>.

of Afrikaans titles and even more English ones⁴⁵. However, this romance club does not exist anymore. This attempt at attracting new members does not seem to have been very successful.

Leserskring is the most successful book club in South Africa's history. Because the club has been around for such a long time, it has had to grow with South Africa and its changing politics and cultures, as well as the publishing history of the country. An analysis from titles sold between 2008-2012 through *Leserskring* shows there was a decline in the sales of romance, there was an increase in the sales of crime thrillers, an increase in general fiction titles filling the gap between romance novels and literary fiction and an increase in the sales of youth literature⁴⁶. Sales of romance novels decreased because a bigger product offering in terms of general fiction titles, which is also why the sales of crime novels increased. Youth literature sales increased because of a number of new authors and new titles (as opposed to reprints of classics). The sales of these genres indicate how the South African market had grown – after the end of apartheid, many local titles focused on apartheid-related stories, including stories of reconciliation. It was only much later that more 'frivolous' titles like crime thrillers were able to find their place in the local market.

Despite various strategies to attract new members or differentiate themselves in a changing market, Naspers made the decision to close *Leserskring/Leisure Hour* for good by the end of December 2015. This was following a year of strikes by the South African Postal Service, which had made it very difficult (and unreliable) to get books to customers. This was quoted as the biggest reason for the closure⁴⁷. However, "Suspicion runs deep that the reason Naspers is disinvesting in its print media is to plough money into its increasing investments in digital media and enterprises in other countries such as China and Brazil, where it's been

⁴⁵ 'Leserskring Launches Afrikaans Romance Ebook Club'.

⁴⁶ Galloway & Venter in H. P. Van Coller, *Perspektief & profiel: 'n Afrikaanse literatuurgeskiedenis. Deel 3*, Tweede uitgawe. (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2016), 524–25.

⁴⁷ Adele Changuion, 'Goeie Nuus Vir Leserskring-Boekwurms', *Maroela Media*, 23 June 2016, <https://maroelamedia.co.za/goeiegoed/goeie-nuus/goeie-nuus-vir-leserskring-boekwurms/>.

aggressively expanding”⁴⁸. Six months later, English company IMD Logistics announced that the club will reopen because they had bought it over from Naspers. They described *Leserskring/Leisure Hour* as ‘heritage brand’ that they did not want to see go⁴⁹. Although they had lost some members, they claimed to be excited about new opportunities. They have kept most of the organisational aspects of the club the same, as well as the logo and look of the company⁵⁰. The decision to keep *Leserskring/Leisure Books* going might not be surprising, considering the loyal following. One source claims that just over 20 000 club members have been with the book clubs (*Leserskring/Leisure Books*) for more than 20 years, 10 000 have been club members for over 30 years, 300 members have been part of the clubs since its inception in 1980 and since inception, the clubs have sold over 40 million books⁵¹.

Conclusion

Although various book clubs or readers’ circles had existed before *Leserskring* came about in 1980, most only had limited success (running for a relatively short time period).

Leserskring’s success could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, it was based on another club – the successful Bertelsmann Leeskring – which had tried and tested strategies. Nasionale Pers also implemented *Leserskring* with specific modifications for the South African market. *Leserskring* was launched during a time where the Afrikaans language enjoyed support from the (apartheid) government, and Afrikaans literature was growing strongly. Afrikaner culture and pride (and need for education) meant an audience that was hungry for not only local titles, but also imported and English books. *Leisure Hour* (today *Leisure Books*) followed two

⁴⁸ Martin Welz, ‘Making It Past the Post’, *Noseweek*, 2016, <https://www.noseweek.co.za/article/3616/Making-it-past-the-post>.

⁴⁹ Changuion, ‘Goeie Nuus Vir Leserskring-Boekwurms’.

⁵⁰ Changuion.

⁵¹ ‘Leisure Books and Leserskring Reopen’, *My Faith Magazine*, September 2016, <http://www.myfaithmag.com/article?id=302>.

years later for the English audience, though the publisher knew they had a very loyal Afrikaans market. The club was successful because readers could choose their books (it acted as a bookstore – readers were not forced to read specific titles), and it was beneficial especially for those in rural areas (for example on farms) with limited access to books. The club was advertised as being for ‘civilised’ or cultured people, which further motivated people to join in order to join the ‘cultured classes’.

Other strategies used by the club was gifting – members were offered gifts when they bought specific books identified by the club each quarter. According to van der Westhuizen ⁵², *Leserskring/Leisure Books* ‘manipulate their members through selective advertising and the catalogues they compile. They also market the books they have ordered in larger quantities more aggressively than the other books in their catalogues’. Of course, this strategy may be implemented by companies other than *Leserskring/Leisure Books*. They also quickly moved into the selling of non-book products like stationery, as well as music and films (CDs and VHS tapes, and later DVDs).

The club’s offering focused on mainly the Afrikaans and English white South African. Although globalization is evident through the selling of international titles, this is a representation of the South African trade publishing environment (and has some roots in colonisation). After the end of apartheid, Naspers’ image had to change, and though this may have flowed over into *Leserskring’s* image as well, the club remained focused on an Afrikaans and an English market. Of course, the black South African had to now be included in the market focus.

Although the issues with postal services has been touted as the main reason for the initial demise of the club, it cannot be ignored that the advent of online bookstores like

⁵² ‘Judging the book’, *Journal for Language Teaching = Ijenali Yekufundzisa Lulwimi = Tydskrif vir Taalonderrig* 38, no. 1 (1 June 2004): 147.

Kalahari.net (now Takealot) would have had a big effect on the club's following as well. With the club, you are forced to buy a title each quarter, and it is then delivered through the post. With online stores, you can choose a book and have it delivered whenever you want. *Leserskring's* main pull for customers was now also fulfilled by other businesses. Furthermore, the development of infrastructure and urbanisation has resulted in more access to books, even for those in more rural areas. Nevertheless, *Leserskring* offers a knowledge of books, a relationship with its customers (some have been members for decades), and gifting options. In fact, many complaints that were aired after the announcement of the club's closure was that the personal service received from *Leserskring* by its members would now be lost – and could not be found anywhere else.

Some believe that the club experienced its success due to the culture of reading and publishing that had developed among mostly white South Africans during the apartheid period, and that with democratisation the niche it once held slowly started to disappear.

Nasionale Pers has truly become an international, multimedia conglomerate, with their publishing division really being the smallest part of their business. As a result, the decision to close *Leserskring* may have been an easy one. The new owners have not changed much about *Leserskring*, the argument being that it has worked for so many people for so many years. It has been modernised however, and the website reads as an online bookstore, with extra benefits to members. Their website is largely English, with separate sections for schoolbooks, trade books and music; this may have affected the Afrikaans market. When the announcement was made that *Leserskring* was to close down, there was an outcry of disappointment among many of its loyal and longstanding members. IMD Logistics, being a smaller company, claimed that they could focus more on the specific needs of their clients. It may be too soon to tell, but I believe that while they may have kept their existing clients, they have not made much strides of growth. Nevertheless, the current amount of members may be sufficient for good business,

although it definitely does not have the same impact or same regard as before, and it is not the first place publishers go to in order to sell titles, especially because they ask for some of the biggest discounts of any bookseller in the country. For publishers, it may not be the best bet for selling their titles anymore (online booksellers have lower rates of discounts, and serve almost the same function).

Leserskring has been a household name, especially under the Afrikaans population. Changing politics technological advancements have affected the book club's image, and has forced them to come up with new ideas for differentiation – something they have not done successfully enough.

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