

# Proceed with Caution! Trigger Warnings in Online Book-related Information Grounds

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## ABSTRACT

Online book-related communities serve as information grounds where individuals gather to recommend and discuss reading material of interest to them. The information flow within these groups often evolves to include the sharing and receiving of warnings about content that some readers may find distressing or triggering. Although intended to be helpful, the sharing of trigger warnings could lead to a reader's decision to avoid content that may elicit trauma responses, resulting in a forfeiture of the potentially therapeutic benefits of such content. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the role of trigger warnings within online book-related information grounds. This pilot study seeks to explore the upward trend of trigger warning usage by utilizing text analysis to determine the frequency at which GoodReads users include trigger warnings in their book reviews. By shedding light on the prevalence of trigger warnings in platforms like GoodReads, these early findings suggest that while newer titles in the sample contain 20 times more trigger warnings than older titles, the presence of trigger warning in reviews of classics has also been steadily increasing in the last five years. These results serve to initiate broader conversations about the impact of trigger warnings in book-related virtual information grounds, the need for curriculum on trauma informed LIS practices in iSchools, and implications regarding readers' advisory and collection development in library settings.

## ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

social media; information seeking; information use; reading and reading practices; readers' advisory services.

## AUTHOR KEYWORDS

trigger warnings; avoidance; online book communities; information grounds; adult reading materials.

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