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ENGL 303: Dr. Ballentine
The Final Reflection: Online Versus Print Reading
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At first, I thought online books were the answer to my long awaited prayers -- not really, but you get the point. Having the ability to lower the risk of having back problems in your later years, not having to dig through my book bag to find the book I need for class, saving hundreds of dollars a semester on books that I do not even use, and best of all, having my books available to me within a couple clicks. With all of that, you think that you will have all of the advantages with online reading versus reading printed materials, right? When I first starting reading my books and other materials online I found it to be a great experience. Brighter fonts, being able to navigate through the material quicker, and the ability to read them at any place you desire; night and day. But later on, I discovered that online reading was no better than reading printed material. Getting eye strain, headaches, and distracted repeatedly from constantly reading materials online forced me to go back to reading printed materials. Maybe continuous reading of online material is not for me and that I should stick solely to reading printed material. But rather or not I decide to go back to online reading or stick with printed material, we are in the day and age where online reading is becoming the new trend. And how technology is quickly changing, ranging from tablets, smartphones, ebook readers, and PC's, we may be a society where we are only reading material online.

Other than what I have already mentioned, what are the pros and cons of reading online versus printed material? Does reading the other way make you smarter, a fast reader, or give you a better experience than the other? Well according to study author, Ann Mangen, an associate professor of literacy studies at Norway's University of Stavanger, says that online reading may not be as rewarding or effective as printed reading. Stating that online reading involves a lot of physical manipulation of the computer that it interferes with our ability to focus on and acknowledge the things we are reading; online text goes in an up and downside direction, robbing us of a feeling of integrity; and features such as links to videos and animations, leaves little room for awareness, which limits our ability to illustrate what we are reading. She quoted, "The visual happenings on the screen... and your physical interaction with the device is distracting" and, "All of these things are taxing on cognition and concentration in a way that a book is not." Her study also suggests that the indications of digital technology should be acknowledged when deciding to embody computer teaching tools into classroom instructions. She then concludes that online teaching tools, such ebooks, are being used from K-12 even though there are none to little research on their effect on learning and development (Ballantyne, Coco).

Does Mangen suggest people who read printed material are smarter than those who mostly read online materials? She claims that reading online is not as effective as reading printed materials, and that reading online only leave room for distractions and lack of imagination. So, clearly, she's saying that people who solely read online material are not smart and that we lack having an imagination.

According to the Department of Education, just over a fifth of 17-year-olds said that they read printed material every day, which is down from nearly a third in 1984. Nineteen percent of 17-year-olds said that they do not read for fun at all, which is up nine percent from 1984. They also found that children between the age of 8-18 are spending more time on the internet. In a study of 2,032 children, the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) found that nearly half of the children use the Internet on a typical day,

up from under a quarter in 1999. The average time the children spent on the internet rose to one hour and forty-one minutes, up from 46 minutes in 1999 (Rich, Motoko).

I am not quite surprised by the numbers, but a little worried. Seeing that in just a few years a higher percentage 17-year-olds admitting that they do not read printed material on a daily basis and especially seeing the increasing amount of the time children spend online makes me wonder if Mangen was right. Is spending more time online and drifting away from reading printed materials going to make us ... idiots?

I wanted to get an input from college students on whether they prefer to read printed material or online material. Out of 20 responses, 18 students said that they prefer to read printed material, while only 2 people prefer to read online material. You would think out of all the college students -- like me -- who owns an iPad, laptops, smartphones, and eBooks, that you would have gotten a different response out of the survey. Maybe that college students at WVU do not like reading online material, and prefer to stick to printed materials. I mean, we like to buy textbooks so that we can sell them back for a little over half it is worth, right? But it makes me wonder, if current college students prefer reading printed materials over online materials does that mean that the new "trend" of online reading did not start till recently? Because in 1984 the reading percentage was higher than it was in 1999, and children were on the internet for a shorter time in 1984 than those in 1999. I am not saying that my small survey is one-hundred percent accurate, but, it does give a hint to the fact that maybe those who were born more recently are the ones who are adapting to the online reading a lot quicker than us college students.

According to a summary written by Center for Teaching and Learning, students who read printed material are likely to read text faster on paper than reading text presented online, readers can adjust themselves to the text provided on paper better, it is harder for students to interpret online text and to keep notes, students tend to copy and paste, students prefer paper over texts, and that students are less likely to read online material ("Brief summary on online reading vs. print reading"). A solution that could fix this issue is to have schools limit the use of online assignment/readings, require students to hand write notes in class, and if they are to read online material, have them summarize what they have read to ensure that the students are reading the online material. Though those suggestions are just my opinion, I think those are just few of the steps we need to proceed with to ensure that students are reading continuously, online or not.

With those statistics, I do not understand why people would want to move from print reading to online reading. I somewhat want to blame the teachers -- K-12 in general -- for the increase number online reading, because online reading or activities should not take place for children at an early age, and it is sad that the children's parents does not do anything about. Don't parents want their children to be able to read, clearly? Which is why it causes people like Mangen to call online readers idiots -- well she didn't directly call us idiots, but she was hinting it.

Online reading may have its ups and downs -- mostly downs, but online reading is something that most of the world is moving to and there is nothing we can do about it in this given age. But just because we are moving to online reading, it does not mean that we should lessen on reading printed material. Studies has shown that reading printed material has a better advantage over online material when it comes to

comprehension, the reading rate, interpretation, and actually reading the material. That reading printed materials over online material gives its readers the ability to have an imagination. Children are spending more time on the computer than ever and older teens are not reading as much as they should. These are the problems that online reading has caused. I'm sure the intention of online reading was not to try to get people to stop reading printed material, but to at least give readers the ability to explore more written content. But the problem is that we have let ourselves and others take too much advantage of online reading and very much left reading printed materials behind us. Again, I do not see the advantages of online reading over reading printed material, I just do not understand why the education system and people who read online material continue to read content that does not have any, or very little, advantages, other than saving you a few dollars.

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