Explaining to students the importance of reading: is it possible in digital age?

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Students say

• I had started reading e-books on my laptop but I din’t like the position in which I had to sit. I set myself a goal to buy an e-reader to overcome this obstacle. (Z.D.)

• I don’t use the computer too often (for reading). I have a DVD player to watch movies. I adore Tv and I don’t exaggerate when I say I could’t live without it (movies, etc). (K.K.)
Students say

- I never found the time to read books, and now, that I started at the University I am sorry about this. Now I see what I lost…but somewhere deep in myself I adore books, I only need more time to read. But this is changing now. I already started reading love stories advised from friends (The Shadow of the Wind etc.) and I like this more then technology. I visit bookstores more often, I am on my way to the bookstore in search of a new title to read. (n.n.)
Students say

• At the University I have again developed my interest for reading in firsts place because I attended the course on Literature. I started reading books in English. My plan is to read a second and third book about president Roosevelt. I often visit bookstores. (n.n.)
Hillesund, 2002

• The point of writing is reading. By the act of reading we receive messages, gain information and enjoy stories. Reading is the final goal of writing and constitutes the essence of all text cycles.
Why this question?

• We all have personal experiences with reading
• We have all been students
• Some of us are still students or work with students
• We all agree: the learning environment has changed dramatically, sustained reading is declining.
Introduction

- New media age
- Sustained reading, expert reader, sustained screen reading
- Plasticity of the brain
- Text technologies
- Ongoing digital transformation
- A relation between text materiality and ways of reading
- Text cycle
- Digital reading
METHODOLOGY

• ...THE ENTIRE SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE (IS) BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT THE DEEPEST LOGIC OF THE SOCIAL WORLD CAN BE GRAPSED ONLY IF ONE PLUNGES INTO THE PARTICULARITY OF AN EMPIRICAL REALITY, HISTORICALLY LOCATED AND DATED, BUT WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF CONSTRUCTING IT AS A SPECIAL CASE OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE...AS AN EXEMPLARY CASE IN A FINITE WORLD OF POSSIBLE CONFIGURATIONS. Bourdieu, P. 1998
Literature review

- “...a child’s greatest achievements are possible in play – achievements that tomorrow will become his average level of real actions and his morality.”
- “I have three questions left to answer: first, to show that play is not the predominant feature of childhood, but is a leading factor in development; second, to show the development of play itself, i.e., the significance of the movement from the predominance of the imaginary situation to the predominance of rules; and third, to show the internal transformations brought about by play in the child’s development.”

• “All examinations of the essence of play have shown that in play a new relationship is created between the semantic and the visible – that is, between situations in thought and real situations.”
“A central notion in Piaget’s ambitious project is that intellectual competence represents an integrated ensemble of operations built from reflections on child’s actions in the world.”
Piaget, Jean. La Psychologie de l’enfant, 1966

“A second seminal claim is that intellectual development passes through a series of connected stages, in which some knowledge from an earlier stage is incorporated into the next. The third critical assumption, Platonic in flavour, is that a unified cognitive competence that serves adaptation is the telos of development.”
“This is the thesis, expounded by psychologists and sociologists alike, that what matters for behavior and development is the environment as it is perceived rather than it may exist in “objective” reality.”

Ecological Models of Human Development

URIE BRONFENBRENNER

Urie Bronfenbrenner argues that in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. This system is composed of five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. They range from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family, to the macrosystem, which refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs, and bodies of knowledge.
In this essay I will claim that e-books are a social necessity and make this claim the premises of further arguments. I will argue that exactly because e-book technology meets the requirements of the network society, its development and diffusion will trigger major changes in the book industry and in our concepts of books and reading.

- Critical commentaries on the neoliberal state – as a species of habitus itself: structured and structuring, durable, generative, and in progress
- Bourdieu’s work was incorporated into symbolic interactionalist and international sociolinguistic work with a principal focus on the concept of literacy as cultural capital
- Art institutions, such as schools, are places of education, “branches of the consciousness industry” and thus places of political contestation.

- The social classes, (are) enhancing the efficacy of the objective mechanisms that determine the distribution and ensure their reproduction, by adding to them the consent of the minds which they structure.

- THERE IS AN URGENT NEED TO EXPLORE AND RECOVER ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF LITERACY EDUCATION
However, students in this study primarily used their phones for social purposes, and valued constant contact and the ways in which the phone provided a connection to friendship networks.
Many researchers who study youth literacy practices across contexts contend that there are points of intersection between young people’s everyday and school-based literacies that offer opportunities for making learning relevant to their lives, as well as opportunities to address issues that might arise for youth in their everyday practices.
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This publication is the product of a collaboration that started in the fall of 2010 when a total of eighty New School faculty, librarians, students, and staff came together to think about teaching and learning with digital media. These conversations, leading up to the Mobility Shifts Summit, inspired this collection of essays, which was rigorously peer-reviewed.
• Furthermore, while continuing to provide the necessary access to digital text, academic administrators and librarians need to be aware of students’ continued desire to read from print, as well as their need for the availability of appropriate spaces — such as library reading rooms and study halls — suitable to the time-dependent and cognitively intensive activity of deep reading, whether it is done on paper or on a screen. Though perhaps taken for granted by many readers, educators cannot afford to forget the continuing centrality of reading — with all its technological, behavioural, and neurological facets — both inside our campuses and in the wider societies in which we live.
• What we intend to do in this book is to construct an empirically grounded argument on the social logic embedded in wireless communication, and on the shaping of this logic by users uses in various cultural and institutional contexts – an argument whose analytical value should stand by itself.

1. Statistical overview of the diffusion of wireless communication
2. Data on patterns of social differentiation in the diffusion of the technology
4. Deep connection between wireless communication and the rise of a youth culture (mobile youth culture)
Conclusions - society

• The decline that we see in reading has not only cultural consequences, but social and civic consequences that are very frightening for a democracy.

• German reaction to PISA results

• …the most powerful influences affecting the development of young children in modern industrialized societies are the conditions of parental employment. (Carr, 2010.)
Conclusions - teachers

E-books are more likely to be a part of the solution rather than a symptom of the illiteracy problem.

Professors and librarians should recognize students’ needs for individualized coaching, so that students’ abilities to find, select, and evaluate resources may be improved.
Conclusions - teachers

Above all, the value of “high touch” interactions (human–mediated) with students in addition to “high tech” interactions (computer–mediated) should not be underestimated.

In a world influenced by a powerful online culture, we must remain committed to motivating our students to take the time required for in–depth reading. Independent learning, which continues to be based on in–depth reading, will always take time.
Conclusions - publishers

Publishers of electronic materials should take full advantage of the multimodal leaning styles that can be addressed by well designed electronic publications.

The future social organization of digital text cycles (for e-magazines, e-journals and e-books) is uncertain, depending, on the outcome of economic and cultural struggles.
Conclusions - students

- Lack of time
- Lack of advise
- If childhood is really the most important?
- Can we rebuild what was lost in childhood?
- What are the alternative models of literacy education?
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Thank you

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