

Technology at the expense of reading.

Do you miss the touch of a crisp new book, where the purchase was an experience of hours of meandering through cramped and overstocked aisles, stopping every now and then to tilt your head to the side in search of the perfect story? You would then emerge from the often dusty shelves with a cramped neck and a brand new book just begging to be opened. You chat to the bookstore assistant about your new purchase who offers an ever promising, "I have read that twice and I loved it." Arriving home you flick the jug, it boils for what seems like eternity while you slip into your favourite pjs or trackie dacks readying yourself for a marathon event of escapism, relaxation and sensory stimulation. You lovingly place your softest pillow on the sofa where an imprint of your bottom has been made from years of reading, you gather your plush blanket, delicately and precariously place your coffee in arms reach and there you are ready to undertake a gruelling reading marathon. Kids interrupt, the phone rings, the washing machine finishes, there's a knock at the door and there you are, moulded into the sofa with your newly purchased piece of paradise, touching, caressing, fondling each page as you say to yourself just one more page...two minute noodles will be fine for dinner tonight right?

Or are you the modern day reader who likes to sit on the sofa with a hardened cold laptop on their legs, typing in url after url address, cunningly looking for the best buy, the online company that saves you money on delivery and perhaps delivers a bonus, credit towards your next impersonal experience. As you find the book you want, you click your mouse which sends your book to an icon of a shopping basket and then asks if you would like to continue shopping? There are no personal exchanges of information with a bookstore assistant except for your credit card number and confirmation of your delivery address which is all automated anyway. You then log off waiting 3-5 days, you hope, for your book to arrive. Your book then arrives in a terrifying cold plastic satchel where the delivery driver throws it on your doorstep as they rush off to their next delivery. Ripping open the satchel you find your much wanted online purchase creased through the cover and after flicking through the book you discover it really wasn't the one you wanted after all. You then catch yourself saying "I should've gone to the bookstore." Rather than logging on again to find out how to return your purchase you learn that the process is so complicated and time consuming that you may as well throw it on to the pile with the other 10 unwanted online purchases and call it even.

Maybe I am just cynical about technology and what I see to be the lost art of actually reading 'real' books. Yes technology has its place in our society and most certainly in our classrooms however are we teaching our children to love the entire process of reading or are we teaching them to enjoy the technology and that reading is just a by-product, a leftover of that technology. With Angus & Robertson and Borders having closed their retail stores technology has certainly spoken. However is it really the voice we want to hear?

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