

Nathan Hallam

Eason

ENGL 101C

16 November 2020

### A contrast between physical and digital reading.

The preservation of thoughts and ideas is important to a society, but with a decline in reading among American adults the use of physical reading material has been in decline. Partly due to a lack in desire to read, but also in part to the use of the internet among young audiences. To revitalize reading among Americans, e-reader technology was created in hopes that young tech savvy children would be more inclined in their use. However with the rise of e-reader technology, physical books are becoming more of an authentic relic among the older reading audience. Comparing the two mediums of knowledge, each has their benefits with each reader, and the use of one over the other will change depending on one's circumstances. E-readers can be expensive outright but save in space, while books are cheaper to buy but can be damaged if mishandled. Depending on the buyer, availability, storage, and ease of use may be considered.

Purchasing a product relies mostly on the store of purchase, the stores stock, and the buyers wallet. Not all stores have a mass quantity of a product, and will typically try to not over or under buy. Because of this physical books can be hard to find. If it is either an actual store such as Barnes and Noble or a virtual retail such as Amazon, stock will be limited or nonexistent. Orders may be placed to acquire the desired product however an increase in time will be paid for the wait. Conversely ebooks may be purchased from a variety of online retailers as long as the buyer's wallet is full and a connection to the internet is established. On top of the availability of ebooks the cost to purchase one is relatively cheaper than a normal book. Worldreader noted that

many ebooks cost one-half or less of a comparable hardcover, with some books available free for download (Vaughn). The only difference in the purchase of a physical or virtual book is the price of purchasing an e-reader. Using the Amazon kindle lineup as an example, a dedicated e-reader will cost from \$50 USD to upwards of \$200+ USD. This price accounts for the size of the screen, the size of the storage device and the features included with the device.

On the account of storage both physical and virtual storage methods have the pros and their cons. Physical books are simpler in that they take actual space within a room. This makes a collection of books noticeable and the accomplishment of reading all the books on the shelf more apparent. Something of note however is that if a book is misplaced or stored incorrectly damage can occur, requiring the purchase of another copy. On the other hand virtual books can be stored in one place and are easy to locate. E-readers can be loaded with many different ebooks at the same time, making them more convenient than traditional print books (Berger). An ebook is more convenient to carry around, making road trips with an entire library possible. The only downsides is the lack of material presence, and if the storage location of the ebooks is damaged in any way all the information is lost. Despite this with the use of purchasing accounts, an Amazon account for example, ebooks can be reacquired of the internet given any annotations of bookmarks will be lost. For this reason, no matter if it is physical or digital, books need to be stored properly or they may be lost.

A well cared for book gives well managed access to a reader. The ease of access of a traditional book is most apparent in its authenticity and the nature of how it was made. Most people understand how a book is used and is thus easy for new readers to get a hand of. People who read traditional books alone will defend that reading print on paper is the only true and useful form of reading, arguing that an ebook on a portable device lacks the tactile and olfactory

richness of holding a printed book, and that the feel, smell, and heft of a printed book all contribute to the overall experience of reading (Peters). Even more on this, printed text contributes more to the learning experience as well, with printed books scoring significantly better on reading comprehension tests than those who read texts digitally. "When you read on paper you can sense with your fingers a pile of pages on the left growing, and shrinking on the right. You have the tactile sense of progress, in addition to the visual ... [The differences for Kindle readers] might have something to do with the fact that the fixity of a text on paper, and this very gradual unfolding of paper as you progress through a story, is some kind of sensory offload, supporting the visual sense of progress when you're reading. Perhaps this somehow aids the reader, providing more fixity and solidity to the reader's sense of unfolding and progress of the text, and hence the story," (Flood). Opposite this the dedicated e-reader can compete with its arsenal of built in tools for aiding young readers. With the use of built in dictionaries, the ability to change the size of the text, and the occasional colored pictures, developing readers can have an easier time learning to read on an e-reader than a traditional book. With this, and although not necessarily actual reading, books can be enjoyed by anyone in the virtual format through audiobooks. Since audiobooks do not require the user to be looking and reading text, other activities can be performed such as long distance traveling, gardening, and other situations where holding a book could prove troublesome or downright dangerous (Peters). Both traditional and newer methods of reading have their pros and cons with education, and both are beneficial in the pursuit of knowledge.

Traditional print books and virtual books both have benefits and setbacks when it comes to the consumer market and individual usage. Traditional books are as said, traditional, and give the authentic, tactile feeling of reading and gives the reader a sense of accomplishment when

doing so. Print books are proven to have a higher retention rate because of this and thus may be better for students who are studying or doing reading comprehension exercises or tasks. Ebooks and e-readers on the other hand are easy to store and move around, make a plethora of books accessible at the press of a button, and make learning new words easier with built in dictionaries. The only downside of a dedicated e-reader would be the upfront cost but ebooks are versatile in that they can be read on any device with ereading technology. For someone who likes to travel and loves to read, an e-reader may prove a good purchase. But no matter the person, reading is an important part of a civilization, preserving its history, as well as creating and sharing ideas. Books are meant to be enjoyed by the reader no matter the format, may it be traditional, virtual, or even the occasional audio. But reading is in a decline with newer generations, so the preservation of reading as a skill is apparent and may even lead to problems in the future. Or perhaps a society where reading is not important is on the horizon?

Works Cited

- Berger, Adam. "Print vs. Digital Media: Overview." *Points of View: Print vs. Digital Media*, Mar. 2016, pp. 1–5. *EBSCOhost*,  
[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib&db=pwh&AN=84783567&site=pov-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib&db=pwh&AN=84783567&site=pov-live).
- Flood, Allison. "Readers Absorb Less on Kindles than on Paper, Study Finds." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 19 Aug. 2014,  
[www.theguardian.com/books/2014/aug/19/readers-absorb-less-kindles-paper-study-plot-ereader-digitisation](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/aug/19/readers-absorb-less-kindles-paper-study-plot-ereader-digitisation).
- Peters, Tom. "The Future of Reading." *Library Journal*, vol. 134, no. 18, 2009, pp. 18. *ProQuest*,  
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/196823510?accountid=33851>.
- Vaughn, Vanessa E. "Counterpoint: E-Books Offer Significant Advantages over Printed Books That Will Attract New Readers." *Points of View: Print vs. Digital Media*, Mar. 2016, pp. 1–5. *EBSCOhost*,