The danger of uninformed criticism?

From the bubblin site:

> Here's a website (they call it a book) on Essentials of Image Optimizations by Addy Osmani.
>
> Excellent write-up but it takes about ~90 (+/- 5) scroll actions using a mousewheel to reach the bottom of the essay while also maintaining the reading direction i.e. making sure I "saw" all of the content (am emulating experience of committing to and reading the book for real here) sequentially. The same website takes close to ~194 swipes to scroll down to the bottom on an iPhone X Safari and ~244 swipes on the Android Galaxy Express 3 while also ensuring that all of the content was seen by me. I don't know about others, but I'd never scroll deeper than seven times for even the best blogpost of this decade on my mobile. A maximum of ten swipes if it's really interesting content or an important one.

The criticism of Ady Osmani's [Essential Image Optimization book](#) is poorly thought out. The book is laid out as a single page application but the critique makes the assumption that scrolling is the only way in which we navigate content. When I read the book I navigate to the table of contents swiping down twice or using keyboard navigation (built into the browser experience when HTML is coded properly) where I begin my exploration of the book which requires less scrolling. To return to the top I can either tap the top of the browser window or use command/control + up arrow to return me to the top of the document.

This is similar to the process of navigating a page using screen readers: you have the option of having the entire page read to you or navigating via [landmarks](#).

But even if I had no nagivate swiping down or using arrow keys or space bar or page up/down why would scrolling be a problem? The site provides a summary above the fold and the table of content below it so people will get the table of content only after they've decided they want to move forward with the site and find what they are looking for.

We don't always read technical books from beginning to end every time. These are not blog posts anymore than the Bubblin "super books" are and they

shouldn't be treated as such just to make an argument.

Biggest question is why does he consider the book to be a blog post and talks so condescendingly about the content he didn't author and that doesn't use their technology? Would authoring platform make a difference in the author's evaluation?

Does it need pagination? I don't think it does but perhaps it would have benefitted from being a multi-page application rather than a single page one or having links that would return you to the table of contents.

Where I have a strong issue is on the position the Bubblin author takes about people, who happen to work in technology, choosing to read a technical book as a paper book rather than using an online version. User preferences seem to not matter as much as the perceived shortcomings of the competing technology.

> Readers of Sarah Drasner's book on SVG Animations, however, we might be compelled to think, will prefer an e-book? Her fans are developers and tech evangelists who yap about digital coolness all day— about open web!— and it is clear that technology advances faster than a physical book could be doled out, so her book doesn't even make sense in atomic form, but does PDF or DOC file with faux pagination or an ePub file or an HTML page with reflowable content fulfil the perception of books held by the developer community?
>
> https://bubblin.io/concerns

I would say the answer is neither. I choose technical books in paperback format because they are easier to scan and the indexes are easier to navigate than a list of hyperlinks. So now we "yap" about the open web? Does it mean we should dogfood your product to prove that the web is a good reading medium?

What most people are saying, and something the author of the article chooses to ignore, is the fact that our relationship with printed books is much more than just a reading device. As Craig Mod points out in Future Reading:

> Once bought by a reader, a book moves through a routine. It is read and underlined, dog-eared and scuffed and, most importantly, reread. To read a book once is to know it in

> passing. To read it over and over is to become confidants. The relationship between a reader and a book is measured not in hours or minutes but, ideally, in months and years.

Does the technology match the comfort level of a printed book? No, it doesn't, at least not for me. Does the Bubblin technology change that? Most definitely not when I'm stuck on one font size throughout the whole reading experience.

And, before I'm reminded that this is an iPad first experience, I can double tap the screen of my Safari browser to enlarge the text when it doesn't fill the screen and double tap it again to return it to its original size.

Why people prefer to read in print?

How do you extrapolate the small research studies Bubblin presents in their essay to a larger population?

In [The Reading Brain in the Digital Age: The Science of Paper versus Screens](#), a much larger meta study, the report indicates that:

> Analyses revealed three significant moderators: (1) time frame: the paper-based reading advantage increased in time-constrained reading compared to self-paced reading; (2) text genre: the paper-based reading advantage was consistent across studies using informational texts, or a mix of informational and narrative texts, but not on those using only narrative texts; (3) publication year: the advantage of paper-based reading increased over the years. Theoretical and educational implications are discussed.

So while researching further implications of the difference between reading online and reading physical books I came across this [interview with Anne Mangen](#), chair of a research project about reading in an age of digital transformation.

> **How much time do we spend reading on screen and what are we reading?**
>
> The answer to this depends on how "reading" is defined. The research and statistics in this area vary depending on how the term is defined. Are we referring solely to the reading of

> textual material, or are we also including pictures, social media and hypertext containing links? If the latter definition is used, we can say that we are reading as never before and that the Internet has brought about an explosion of reading.[...]

The interviewer asks a followup question which, I think, is essential to this discussion:

> **When do we prefer a printed medium, such as a book?**
>
> There are many components, factors and conditions that can come into play here, such as the reader, the material, the purpose and the technology. Not only the reader's proficiency, background and expectations must be kept in mind, but also the type of material that is being referred to and the kind of screen that is being used. It is not a case of "one size fits all," but patterns are beginning to emerge from empirical research into the subject. The length of the text seems to be the most critical factor. If the text is long, needs to be read carefully and perhaps involves making notes, then studies show that many people, including young people such as students, still often prefer a printed book, even if it is available as both an e-book and in electronic formats with options for making notes, enabling the user to search for and highlight the text digitally. This is not the case when it comes to shorter texts.