

In school, there were two kinds of tests. The regular kind where you learned and memorized all you could and then did your best on the test. The 2nd kind was the Open Book Test. Where you could use your notes and text books to figure out the answer to a question.

The 2nd was always preferable to the first because it was always a lot easier to prepare reference than to memorize.

Come finals time, a schedule of traditional tests meant packaging hours and hours to study. It was the ultimate experience of Information Overload. It also was the quickest way to forget everything you just learned the minute the tests were over. In fact, if you hung out with my friends and me, the minute tests were over, every penny we had was destined to be spent on beverages that killed more than a few braincells.

Today, life is so much simpler. I can't remember the last time I had to go to the library or bookstore to search for a book on a topic that was important to me. I can't remember the last time I HAD to invest the time to read a book as opposed to choosing to read a book that I wanted to read.

There was a time when I would scour online forums looking for any information that would give me an edge. Those days are long gone.

Today, I still read a ton of magazines that I both enjoy and which give me a solid foundation of information that help me professionally and personally, but I don't stress that I might miss something. I don't stress if I don't read an issue immediately when it comes out, or if I'm out of town when its delivered. I used to.

Two things have changed dramatically over the past 5 years. The first is that search engines have matured to the point where just about everything is indexed, from webpages to books to videos. Life has become an open book test. Between Google for News, video and web, Live.com for images, icerocket.com for blog and RSS and Amazon for books, its pretty easy to find everything and anything from anywhere. It doesn't matter if I'm in front of my PC, or sitting on an airplane or just with my phone at a game. Information is available.

The 2nd is the threading of information. Sites like Techmeme connect articles so that its easy to not only keep up with technology topics of interest, but to follow related conversations. Techmeme like sites are popping up for most vertical categories, so keeping up is far far easier than the old days of waiting for your PC Week , InfoWorld and Computer Reseller News !

Information overload is having to read everything and remember it. Open Book life means knowing where to look to catch up when you are ready to catch up.. I will take the Open Book Life anytime