

Is Technology Addiction the New Barbarism?

I have often been called a Luddite. It's not a very nice word and it's not a very nice thing to be called. For those who have no idea what the word means, the original Luddites were workers during the early years of the Industrial Revolution who smashed machinery in factories because they believed it had caused the loss of their jobs. In modern parlance, a Luddite is a retrogressive thinker who doesn't like or trust new technology. To be labeled a Luddite is to be consigned to history's waste-heap, just like the original Luddites who failed to prevent the rise of the machine and the "progress" it heralded. Although I resent and reject the Luddite label, I do refer to myself sometimes as a technoramus because, as a techno-minimalist, I do not even try to keep up with the latest technology, nor do I spend much time with social media. I'd rather read a book, dine with friends, or watch the sunset. I am beginning to think, however, that it is not I who am a technoramus but those techno-addicts who are no longer able to engage with reality because they are constantly ensnared by technology.

A series of recent studies highlights how techno-addiction is leading to a new barbarism; how it is creating a whole generation of students who are incapable of study.

A University of Nebraska-Lincoln study [found that 80 percent of college students](#) send text messages during class. A professor at the University of Waterloo placed a postgraduate at the back of the lecture hall to observe his students. More than 85 per cent of them were using their laptops for things unrelated to class. A Cornell University [study](#) confirms that most students engage in some form of high-tech extra-curricular communication during class.

Considering that students are meant to be paying attention to their professor, the only valid argument for using laptops in the classroom is for the taking of notes. Since we can type faster than we can write, this would seem to make sense. Yet [a study from Princeton University](#) shows that we process information better when taking notes by hand precisely *because* writing is slower than typing. Since handwritten notes help students learn and retain the material being taught in class, the only real reason for the use of laptops in the classroom disappears.

[Another study](#) illustrates that people better comprehend what they're reading if it's on paper rather than on the screen. [A study](#) from the University of Stavanger in Norway revealed that readers on Kindle struggled to remember plot details in comparison with those who read printed books. Another study discovered lower levels of comprehension in those subjects reading PDF versions of texts.

I now realize that being a techno-minimalist does not make me a technoramus. On the contrary, I now know that my techno-minimalism prevents my becoming technoramus. A technoramus is not one who is ignorant of technology but one who is ignorant of everything except technology.

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Further details of the studies referenced in this article can be seen here:

<https://aeon.co/essays/can-students-who-are-constantly-on-their-devices-...>

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