THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC BOOKS ON STUDENTS' LEARNING SKILLS – ELECTRONIC OR TRADITIONAL BOOKS?

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to determine how eBooks influence student's learning skills. Technology is tremendously growing and improving nowadays, and it has brought a great influence on education, as well. Ignoring the natural resistance to change, it cannot be denied that the process of reading has changed with the emergence of digital technology. For example, the introduction and developments in e-readers in recent years have rendered eBooks competitive to conventional paper-based books. But is there a difference in how people perceive/understand between reading from paper books and reading using digital media? The digital era is here to stay, and it is best to find a balance such that it does not compromise on a skill set that is central to our intellectual property.
Keywords: technology, education, eBook, paper book

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, technology has revolutionized our world. It has changed the way we communicate, pay bills and transfer money, and most importantly it has made our lives easier and faster by discovering many multifunctional devices. Technology pays a large role in many aspects of day-to-day life, and education is no different. It is rapidly changing the way students learn and how instructors teach. As it continues to evolve, it brings in many new opportunities and challenges both for educators and students. In many International and foreign schools computers have already replaced chalkboards as the go-to tool in classrooms today. And it is not just happening in higher education; technology is a part of education for children of all ages. This trend is also implementing into our country's educational system, and it is followed by the usage of some social networking sites designed specifically for education.

Social networking is a great example of technology that can help-or hinder- education, depending on how it is used and integrated into teaching plans. However, using social networking as part of the learning process can also have many benefits. Students who are more introverted may open up and be in touch more with faculty and other students when they are communicating through social networking. It also affords students the opportunity to collaborate and work together in a whole new way.

Electronic book or eBook is a form of publishing in a digital medium. They are considered as text documents covered and published in a digital format that displays on specialized reading devices or computers. They have two main components, hardware and software. (Terence Cavanaugh, 2004). Because reading is a basic component of most educational activities, providing alternative formats and supports for reading activities becomes necessary to reach all students, including distance learning classes and special need students. Studies have found advantages of using electronic text technology applications with struggling readers because of the nature of electronic text over paper-based (McKenna, Reinking, Labbo, & Kieffer 1999).New tools now allow students and other readers to interact with the text to the extent of taking notes, marking, highlighting, drawings, bookmarks, searching, and even interacting with associated dictionaries. According to one EBook Company, using the PDF format a gigabyte of storage could contain over 200 illustrated college reference books, or 350 legal volumes, or about 2,500 600-page novels (Munyan 1998). With modern editors eBooks can be easily created from web or word-processed documents. By creating their own eBooks and using available online libraries, teachers can expand the accessibility and ease of use both for themselves and their students. EBooks can also allow to teachers to carry with them or already have on their computers some texts, sites, articles and maybe special libraries that are related to their field of study.

Nowadays many online libraries and bookstores freely distribute or sell eBooks which include literature from various different fields of study, such as: classic literature, philosophy, science, and many others. Because the material is in electronic format, it allows students to copy and paste information which they can later use in writing reports, homework, or can just use them as notes. Teachers can also adapt texts for some special needs students using, for example, highlighting, or make notes for some specific questions. Many studies identify the usage of eBooks in an educational setting with the usage of printed materials because electronic texts can be books, articles, documents, or anything that normally can be printed on a paper. As for me, one of the big advantages of eBooks is also that teachers can compile student reading material from many different sources that students can access easily on either their computers, tablets, or some other handheld devices. This method can be very convenient for students

who cannot otherwise use paper materials and books and for distance education students as well. It allows both teachers and students constant access to various resources. Many students also like the fact that if they are reading some large paper book, they do not have to carry it around, and they can read it in a public transport, as well as while travelling and on their way to and from the University (Lam, P,Lam, J. &McNaught,C.).

2. TRADITIONAL BOOKS VS. EBOOKS

Over the past years, reading books remains as one of the most popular ways of spending leisure time for most people. Books have surrounded us since childhood, as an integral part of our education and work, and throughout entire life. Technical progress did not leave aside this important sphere of human existence, and as a result modern marketing is offering us devices for reading, eBooks.

According to me, eBooks will be an excellent choice for people who travel a lot, appreciate their time, prefer functional things and are familiar with technology. Before the advance of technology and the usage of eBooks, I used to carry traditional books with myself, usually when I was travelling to my Faculty, or some other place that was not that close. I also have to admit that I would usually choose books that were not very heavy, because of the travel conveniences. Now, I prefer to use eBooks, especially while travelling. Some of the advantages of traditional books definitely are: reading ease, resale value, no devices, no batteries, no warranties needed, and maybe the most important one – tradition. One of the most useful sites for me, and ones that I use most commonly are: *Open Library* – It is very easy to handle it, you just have to have an account, and you do the research by typing the name of the author, the title of the book, or the main theme; *Internet Archive* – It consists of many different titles, from various fields; *Book Boon* – For this site you actually do not have to have an account. It is very convenient because it is arranged in various science fields which makes it easier to find what you are looking for; *Manybooks.net* – You also have to register in order to have the access to this website; *Free eBooks; LibriVox; Smithsonian's Digital library ; Europeana…* In our country one of the most used sites for the electronic access to scientific pieces of information are: *COBISS, KoBSON, i Phaidra*. KoBSON units many different aggregators, and every of them has its own searching engine. One of the most used and most accessible ones are: *JSTOR, EBSCO, Emerald, Springer-link…*
In recent years, while everything around us is getting switched to the digital, the question of eBooks compared to printed books is a constant debate.

3. RESEARCH METHOD
Research question
''The influence of eBooks on student's learning skills'' is my primary research question because since I was a student, I wanted to find a way to make it easier for me and my colleagues to find necessary information. Some information was impossible to be found in our Faculty libraries, so we were constantly looking for some alternatives, usually online. I did my research on the Faculty of Business and Law studies, because business, economics and law are specialized fields of study, they often learn about some ancient laws, rules, definitions that are only available in traditional books, but also these are fields that are constantly improving and growing, and as we all know, books are not updated as often as electronic platforms. The question that follows from this is: Which types of books are more convenient, useful and approachable for students? EBooks or traditional books?
The aim of the research
The purpose of this research was to determine whether traditional or eBooks are more useful and more used by University students. When I was a student, as I have mentioned before, I often struggled with finding some information in libraries and books, so electronic books (eBooks) helped me a lot to write some essays, do paper works and most importantly – it helped me improve my knowledge. Thus, I wanted to do a research to see what other students nowadays think on the topic and how they react on the usage of modern devices in education.

4. METHODOLOGY
Therefore, 80 participants took part in this study, aged from 20 to 22 years. As I have mentioned before, all students that have participated were students from ''Faculty of Business and Law studies Dr Lazar Vrkatic'', and it is the Faculty where I used to work as a Teaching Associate. Student's native language was mostly Serbian, and there were 2 students whose native language was French. None of the participants has any learning or reading disabilities.
The procedure
Due to the different level of English language, the questionnaire was written in Serbian language. University dean gave permission for this questionnaire to be valid. Students had 15 minutes to fill out the questionnaire which consisted of different types of questions.

5. ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED DATA AND DISCUSSION

Following questionnaire was done by 80 participants and has 3 main parts:

Part 1: This part consists of questions that can tell us about student's reading preferences. This first part is very important for the whole research because it focuses on student's reading habits and its frequency. The last question in this part is about eBooks and paper books, as an introduction for the next part, where questions are more detailed and precise.

Part 2: The second part of the research is the most important, where I ask questions about eBooks and paper books separately, where I can see why students prefer each of them and what their main reasons are.

Part 3: The third or the final part is composed of some concrete information about electronic books, where we can actually see their interest in using eBooks for improving their knowledge, for some exams, report papers, etc.

Research hypothesis

Before the questionnaire I have thought that students will slightly prefer the usage of eBooks, because from my point of view, as an English teacher I would like to somehow increase the interest in electronic services, because during my studies I have actually seen how many possibilities it can give us, especially for those who plan to continue their education on an even higher level. Many students may also prefer paper books, which is also great, but as I said, this might be the way to make them think of some other ideas and possibilities.

Research results

After reviewing research results I can conclude that many students yet use both traditional and eBooks, but the interest definitely grows for eBooks. Students find it more convenient and interesting. After the research I had the chance to talk with students who did the questionnaire and from the conversation I could tell that most of them had difficulties finding information for their essays and paper works in traditional books and University libraries, because most of the books available have just one or two samples. A small percentage of students told that they had some difficulties handling eBook services, but with the help of their classmates they have succeeded, and now they are keen on using it.

6. CONCLUSION

As we can see, both types of books have many advantages; the decision is ultimately up to the user. Some people find technology more convenient, while others find the weight and smell of books to be comforting. Too many people will continue to want a real book they can hold and after they can put it on the shelf. There is definitely something about the look of shelves full of books, not to mention browsing through them in the stores. Book's battery can never die; you can read it over and over. However, eBooks offer multiple advantages; they are easily readable and portable due to its size and shape. Furthermore, eBooks have one more big advantage, and that is that they are environment-friendly, and they save money. This question is becoming more and more important each day.

The importance of technology has always been essential to our existence. Many types of technology continue to grow over passing generations. Since the 1400s books have been vital to the ways in which we document facts, theories and experiments. This has evolved from important documentation being turned into electronic books to everyday brand new books only being available in the electronic form.

Currently companies are working on adding audio, video, and text-to-speech components for eBook software. Online bookstores are expanding their holdings of eBooks, with some of the college bookstore organizations including eBook forms of texts. As handheld computing devices continue to improve in their abilities and continue expand their market, it is expected that eBooks will expand with them.

As an English teacher, I would like to participate in the implementation of technology into schools and Universities. As a student I had many difficulties finding certain needed information, so now I want to erase this problem for future generations. Nowadays everything is available for anyone, and so does the information. Students should take advantage of it and work on self-improvement as much as possible. In that way there are not going to exist limits for them. Science is a beautiful field that still needs to be revealed, and technology with its constant advance can support it for sure.

To sum up, I had such a great pleasure doing this research, because it will help mi in a great measure to do further researches on this topic. As a future University teacher, I will be able to choose and combine materials that are most convenient for my students. I will give my best to use technology and electronic services to spread awareness among younger generations. Many advantages that exist now, my generation did not have the opportunity to utilize it, so it should not be wasted.

What I have confirmed with this questionnaire is that no opinion is the same. Every human being has its own preferences, opinions and interests to which they aspire. Some students have old school habits and like to read and list books, keep them for themselves, exchange them with their colleagues, while on the other hand others follow urban, modern trends where technology is an indispensable part. Teachers should give their best to try to get to

know their students, and in that way try to figure out what teaching method is most appropriate for each student. In that way, both teachers and students will be satisfied, with a great will to constantly improve themselves in the future.

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Appendix
Questionnaire
1. How often do you read books?
a) Seldom b) Once a month c) Once a week d) Every day
2. When reading, do you spend more time reading Faculty related material, or reading other types of books?
a) Faculty related material   b) Other types of books   c) Both
3. When reading, do you prefer paper books or eBooks?
a) Paper books   b) EBooks   c) Both
4. If you chose eBooks, circle the reasons why do you prefer its usage:
a) Books are sometimes heavy.
b) It is easier for me to find needed information.
c) It is cheaper.
d) I can read it while travelling.
e) All above
5. If you chose paper books, circle the reasons why do you prefer its usage:
a) Books are more valuable.
b) I can have it for myself.
c) It is easier to read paper books.
d) Paper books are more convenient for finding needed information.
e) All of the above.
6. When reading eBooks which device do you usually use?
a) Computer   b) Mobile phone   c) Tablet   d) Other
7. How often do you go to the library?
a) Rarely   b) Once a month   c) Once a week
8. Do you feel more tired while reading online, or while reading paper books?
a) Reading online   b) Paper books   c) I do not feel tired at all
9. Are you familiar with any of these services :
a) KoBSON   b) COBISS   c) EBSCO   d) Phaidra
10. Would you like to have a computer in a classroom where you could look for any information that you need during class? YES/NO