Written any good books lately?

Description

A recent article in the Times Higher Education (THE 2-8 Sep 2010, pp.36-39) by USA author and professor of English Dale Salwak, laments the decline in deep, appreciative reading of substantial texts:



s of thinking that electronic media flourish on simply preclude reading represents.â?• Reading practices, at least amongst nging.

Access and availability have developed rapidly over the past 10 years. The access to complete articles, particularly through Google Scholar, JSTOR, and online journal subscription services has increased. Presumably previous centuries also saw radical changes in the forms through which texts were consumed: inscriptions, parchments, scrolls, illuminated manuscripts, heavy tomes, pamphlets, posters, and lightweight paperbacks. Now we can add short text formats on mobile phones, urban screens, screen-based publishing, portable e-readers.

To add to the changes in reading I would add that we need to pay attention to the bourgeoning of new writing practices, with which reading is inextricably connected. One well-read colleague once confessed he was actually more interested in writing than reading. For some scholars, reading makes them want to write all the more. Such well-published academics are at one extreme of the spectrum of those who feel a compulsion to write, a process abetted by digital tools for generating, editing, correcting, and distributing texts. The new media outlets include blogs, on-demand book printing, public e-journalism of various kinds, and collaborative writing (through wikis). Conventional publishing outlets are adapting to the new media of reading and writing. Routledge authors are asked to provide blog-like chapter summaries suitable for disseminating content on the web and through e-readers via whatever electronic developments might arise in the future.

Attention focuses on the quality of these texts, how works are judged, and whether there will ever be a sufficient pool of readers to consume so much writing. Of course, a handful of interested readers may be sufficient to justify the effort of the writer, and authors have time on their hands. Geert Lovinkâ??s book â??Zero Commentsâ?• brings to light the issue of writers without readers. The question now remains as to whether bloggers are sufficiently well-read to be able to situate what they write in a broader intellectual context. Is our increased propensity to write compensating for our apparent lack of deep, sustained reading?

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Author
rcoyne99