



Easy reading

Description

I am reviewing my early blog posts [Richard on the Holodeck](#) and [Shallow reading](#) from February 2013. In the first post I noted that some people see literature (e.g. a novel by Charlotte Bronte) as a substitute for living the lives of the characters.

In *Hamlet on the Holodeck* Janet Murray seems to suggest that reading a text is inferior to experiencing the events of the novel — living that life. The idea is that 3D digital scans, 3D printing and virtual reality (VR) helps us get off the page and into the story — literally. I presented the case that reading does not just point to life; it *is* part of living — living lives that include the practices of reading, interpreting and imagining.

The second post ([Shallow reading](#)) continued the theme. It's about the benefits and perils of skim reading texts in the age of the Internet. I wrestled with writer **Nicholas Carr's** anxiety that the Internet is eroding our capacity for sustained attention. I set his arguments against those of **Don Tapscott** who is more optimistic about networked reading and writing.

I played with Carr's thesis about shallow reading by skimming both Carr and Tapscott's books through their Amazon previews, acknowledging that for me, —shallow— reading can be efficient, creative, associative, and informative.

Both Carr and Tapscott wrote in the hyperbolic register of pop digital literature, but they captured something of the cultural mood.

It seems to me that the challenges posed by online reading are eclipsed now by the costs and benefits of reading and writing under the sway of large language models (LLMs). As in previous posts, I've been testing the application of AI in my own reading and writing. I asked ChatGPT to help with the following account.

Reading, writing and LLMs

Now, in 2025, both posts invite reconsideration in light of large language models (LLMs). Where once scholars worried about realism in reconstruction or about skimming versus depth, the challenge today lies in how we read and write in the context of generative AI systems.

The challenges include biases built into LLMs. There's the risk that through their polite agreeability they confirm user biases. We may lose skills in reading, writing, synthesising, comparing and comprehending texts critically for ourselves. The life and work skills that call on text production may be handed over to AIs, leaving job losses and diminished life skills in its wake.

My ChatGPT interlocutor was positive, suggesting a future involving collaboration between author/s, reader/s and machines.

Through many interactions, I think ChatGPT has picked up on my own intellectual biases and interests. It suggested that the interpretive burden has intensified. We are asked not only to dwell with texts, but also to question their provenance, authority, and purpose. Reading with AI is not passive consumption, but a hermeneutic exercise in sifting, comparing, and situating what the machine offers. I'll go along with that.

Beyond shallow

I notice that the two authors (Carr and Tapscott) have since turned their attention to other challenges in the digital world. Further exercising my prerogative as a "shallow reader" and pending a "deeper" reading, I asked ChatGPT to summarise their more recent works.

In his book *Superbloom: How Technologies of Connection Tear Us Apart* (2025), Carr engages with AI as part of his broader critique of digital culture and mediated communication.

In the book and in interviews, Carr describes how AI further blurs distinctions between real and artificial, and intensifies many of the problems he associates with social media and algorithmic mediation. He argues that AI-driven systems accelerate the erosion of boundaries in our lives, contribute to alienation, and complicate what it means to "connect."

Tapscott continues to participate actively in debates around technology, identity, AI, systemic trust, and the convergence of emerging systems. He is co-authoring (with Joseph Bradley) a forthcoming book *You to the Power of Two: Redefining Human Potential in the Age of Identic AI* (due December 2025).

In *that book*, Tapscott and Bradley anticipate a future in which personal AI agents (what they call "identic AI") evolve from being mere tools to becoming active participants in our lives. The authors suggest these agents will augment human capacities in work, identity, well-being, and learning, but also raise serious questions about autonomy, trust, and control. Tapscott seems to be exploring how AI blurs the line between subject and object: we no longer only use systems, we co-exist with them.

That said, the attached audio reads this post out loud and the two posts from February 2013.

Bibliography

- Bradley, Joseph, and Nicholas Tapscott. *You to the Power of Two: Redefining Human Potential in the Age of Identical AI*. Dallas, TX: BenBella, 2025.
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- Tapscott, Don. *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2009.
- Tapscott, Don, and Anthony D. Williams. *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. London: Atlantic Books, 2006.
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Note

- Featured image is by ChatGPT: â??Please provide a blog image made up of a dusty shelf on which are placed iconic objects from Hamlet, such as a skull, rapier, poisoned cup, flowers.â?•

Category

1. Artificial Intelligence
2. Podcast

Tags

1. reading
2. representation
3. writing

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