Bethany Nagle  
A Cycle of Essays  
Writing 400

An Affair to Remember  
Essays on my relationship with books, e-Readers and society

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An essay introducing my love of books and dislike of technology

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An essay exploring the affair I claim to have with books

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An essay reflecting on my experiences as well as reflecting to the future of changes that society will be facing; to be read as a continuation of “Why?”

Why?

When the sun shines brightly and the temperature rises to over 80 degrees, you can find me by the pool. Most people in this scenario would be cooling off by splashing in the water, sipping on a frozen drink of choice, or sweating it out in the strong rays by working on their tan; but not me. I am the girl who heads off into the shade to devour another chapter of my favorite book of all time, as I do every summer. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.* An American classic, this book struck a chord within me the first time I read it for my freshmen year high school English class and every summer I have found it necessary to pick it up and reread. The adventures Tom endures and the friendships he creates come to life at every turn of the page. It’s almost as if I am there with him, helping him trick his friends into painting his fence or joining him as he runs away from his Aunt Polly.   
 To me, this is what a good book does. It captures you, makes you part of it. It does not have to be critically acclaimed, although that’s often how it goes. I personally despise *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, yet I am glad I had the opportunity to read and discuss it. I enjoy work by Charles Dickens, even though it can be tough to plow through. I abhor *Beowulf* or any type of mythological writing. And more than anything, my heart belongs to J. K. Rowling. Everyone has their personal favorites and their own ideas about what should qualify as a good book. This attraction I have to books must be more than just finding pleasure in reading. I feel a connection; these books aren’t written for me specifically but sometimes I feel as if they were.  
 I feel driven to these works, a passion for these written words. But why? Charles William Eliot, the 21st president of Harvard, stated, “Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.” It’s true. I have felt this way since I was a little girl, exploring the libraries during my summer mornings. I would often grab a Nancy Drew book and not set it down until I finished it, front to back cover. After reading it, I would reflect on the story and how awesome I thought Nancy was. I felt that I knew her, that I really knew her, as if she were one of my friends that lived down the street. I would breathe in the words and as I turned each page, I felt as if my life was somehow entwined into *The Quest of the Missing Map.* I was not a delusional nine year-old girl that thought a character from a book was my friend; but Nancy seemed real to me. Seeing as I have found myself an avid reader from a young age, it would come as no surprise that I picked a major at the University of Michigan that involved nothing else but reading. Article after article, book after book, haven’t I exhausted myself yet? How can I still feel such strong attraction to books as an adult, a 22 year-old history major at the University of Michigan? I read every day, all day, for every class. I exhaust my eyes; my brain often feels too full to take in one more chapter. Still, nothing makes me happier than meeting up with Harry Potter for a few hours, or reading through a book set on the coast of Cape Cod. I feel a connection to these stories. Even though they are not my own, I absorb myself into them. Did my early childhood passion for reading help develop my studies of history that ultimately attributed to a passion for reading and books that I can’t quite explain?   
 A few months ago I was reading over issues of *Perspectives on History*, the monthly publication from the American Historical Association. The current president, William Cronon, had written an article that really hit me. It was titled, “Recollecting my Library… And Myself,” and he tried to explain his calling towards books and his own library. One particular quote caught my eye and almost triggered a tear. Cronon said, “In our efforts to understand the past, we trace a serendipitous journey from document to document, moment to moment, place to place, in which the books we read (like those we write) become milestones in our emerging sense of not just our subjects, but of ourselves.” It was upon seeing this that I finally started to understand my own short journey with books. They did become part of me. They were part of me. These books almost seem to latch on to me, an emotion of mine, and won’t let go of my feelings until I have read the whole thing. And even then, it sometimes stays. It lingers at the bottom of my heart, always on my mind. I have even felt the need to reread the book to really finish it, to really understand what the book was trying to tell me. This relationship I have with books, it appears to be similar to that dreaded talk you have when breaking up with a significant other; you both know where the plot is going but you have to go through it again to finally understand why. It kills you, yet you know in your heart it was the right choice and somehow you end up feeling fulfilled.   
 It should come as no surprise that this passion I have for reading and for owning books would lead to me to wanting a personal library. A big one. Expansive. Complete with one of those wooden library sliding ladders. I guarantee that I go to libraries more than the average 22 year-old. There is a calm that comes over me when I am surrounded by books. As Cronon said, these books are part of who I am.   
 It is upon these realizations and conclusions of my book loving that have made me a hater of the internet, of digital publications, of e-Readers. I cringe when I see a nook commercial on television or when I overhear someone discussing the annotations they made for their readings on their iPad. A part of me feels like I’m dying; my heart feels as if it is breaking in two. Why do people use these devices? Why don’t they want to hold a beloved book in their hands? Sure, it is easier to carry a 7-10 ounce Kindle instead of 6 books, but why would you want to? What is appealing about this option? Why are people gravitating towards these items?  
 This isn’t to say that I hate technology. I love using my emoji icons on my iPhone and I frequently check my school’s newspaper website to see if the daily news is worth me going in search of a hard copy version of the paper. I check Facebook constantly every day; I use Twitter to communicate with many friends and acquaintances. I even do some of my banking online. But I don’t read. I refuse.   
 I don’t wish to come across as an ignorant, un-educated soon-to-be college graduate that has hatred towards the internet and technology. But I have a hard a time understanding why people aren’t missing their love of books and holding their daily newspaper in their hands, their emotional connection to whatever adventures they want to pursue or knowledge they wish to learn. What are they possibly getting out of an e-Reader or online accessibility to books, magazines and newspapers that I simply do not? What is so appealing in these new forms of receiving information that I am clearly choosing to miss out on? Simply stated: Why is this change occurring?   
 Do people no longer love books and newspapers?

I cannot wrap my head around such a thing.  
 The closing of Borders was so traumatic to me that when I walk past Ann Arbor’s former downtown Borders location, I have to look away. I cannot bare the emotions that go with staring into the empty windows, longing for shelves full of books and magazines. I miss browsing among the selections, looking at people of all ages pondering the decision of which item to buy. To me, the experience at Borders was priceless, and unlike any other shopping I have ever done. Now I must settle for driving out to Barnes and Noble, which just doesn’t quite have the magic touch that Borders was able to bring to a bookstore.  
 Perhaps I have an obsession with books, of ownership. Maybe I was born into the wrong time period. Or could it be that I just have yet to experience the benefits of e-Readers and online subscriptions. It could easily hold true that I have focused on my love of books for so long that I have pushed myself away from the new forms of information that are becoming more popular in today’s world. By purposely making choices to read hard copies of anything, I have strayed away from all new forms of reading. Alienating myself has helped my passion of books grow, but is it holding me back?  
 This is what I intend to find out. What are the benefits from feeling the way I do? Who else feels this way? I can’t be the only human being left on the face of the earth who truly enjoys purchasing books and purposely reading a hard copy. I’m not the only one who would rather sit down with my Sunday morning cartoons, news and advertisements all laid out in front of me with my coffee in hand.  
 But what is the other side… what am I missing out on? Does everyone want to go along with this new transition? How are these changes affecting society, not just on a personal level but for businesses or education? Things are changing fast and as far as I can see it now, they are only changing for the worse. This is silly of me to assume, however, since I never have made an attempt to understand what the other side has to offer. What keeps drawing people to making book purchases and newspaper/magazine subscriptions by using apps or through the internet?  
 Perhaps exploring some of these issues will give me more insight as to why I am so attached to books. Is it because of what lies within them… the stories just come to life on the page, versus reading on a screen? This could help me to begin to fully understand why I enjoy reading my Sunday newspaper and getting newsprint ink on my hands instead of glancing over it on my computer screen. I already know that I am too distracted when I’m using the internet. I constantly bounce around between opened windows and can never seem to focus on one thing. But are there other reasons to why I don’t prefer to read online? It’s kind of strange, seeing as the accessibility to newspapers online is much more ideal than having to run out in the snow to grab the morning issue. After thinking about it, these new ways of reading and accessing information are easier ways, more efficient ways, cheaper ways. Why am I so turned off by them? After all, I am a college student. I do not often have free time or extra money. Could I use a little change?  
 This is what I hope to explore. I wish to learn the reasons behind my passion for book loving, for libraries, for bookstores. I want to know why I would rather receive hard copies of books as a present than the newest Kindle Fire. In turn, I want to understand the other side. What are the amazing attributes of digital publications that I am missing out on? After I explore these two different formats of publishing, I plan to further the discussion by seeing how these changes in publications are affecting our society. This can include anything, but I am hoping to focus on education, health and environmental concerns. These are issues that most of us are probably unaware of and do not understand how they will affect us in the future.   
 Who knows, after doing some research, maybe I will completely change my position. I love my books but will I love them in the future?  
 Let the publication wars begin!

For the Love of Print

           I remember saving up five or ten dollars from my allowance and going to the local drug store to pick out magazines that focused on my favorite teen sensations.

        I remember being eight years old and begging my parents to drive forty-five minutes to the closest Borders so I could use my birthday gift card.

        I remember when I was twelve and I found a box full of letters that my parents wrote to each other when my dad was in the Air Force.

        I remember all throughout my childhood when my Grandma would buy me every new Harry Potter book. She would pre-order it, write a little message that said, “Happy Reading! We love you! Grandma and Grandpa” in it and then drive down to give it to me on the day of the release.

        I remember specifically taking Advanced Placement Literature my junior year of high school so I would have the chance to read classic novels and poetry.

        I remember my first two years at the University of Michigan when I would wake up early during the week to head to my learning community’s office to snatch a free copy of the New York Times before they were all taken.

        As you can see, I’ve had a physical and emotional connection to pen and paper since I was a young girl. All these memories are important to me. I remember them vividly. They have made me who I am.

        But why do I feel so connected to these books or magazines? It is obvious that I love reading, I always have and for many reasons. To begin, I have always loved the way in which reading was able to transport me into another world. Literally. When I was a young girl between the ages of eight and eleven my mother and I would read the different books within the American Girls series; I enjoyed traveling back in time to different periods of American history, from the colonial years all the way through World War II. I loved spending my summer days at the library alongside Nancy Drew attempting to solve another mystery. Going to Hogwarts with Harry, Ron and Hermione was also something I enjoyed doing on my free time. These adventures always filled my passion for adventure and curiosity.  I loved being able to “experience” new people and new ways of living; these books introduced me to new opportunities that I would never have had the chance to experience on my own. I mean, do you actually have a way to access Hogwarts? I didn’t think so.  
 I’ve also always loved reading because I’ve really had a passion for learning. For years I cried on the last day of school. I’m not kidding. I can actually remember crying on the last day at least through 5th grade. Reading has given me a way to learn. I read things for fun as a little girl to learn about my favorite animal, the dolphin, or to learn about the place we were going to for our summer family vacation, Cape Cod, or even for independent study assignments in school, such as when I studied Pearl Harbor, the sturgeon fish, or the African country of Kenya.

As I started to reflect on this love of reading that I’ve realized I’ve had, wouldn’t it make sense that I would also love to read no matter the format? It came across to me that the answer is no. I love my books, old or new. I love my newspapers and magazines that I can pick up at the store or have delivered to my house. So this love of reading, while it is a strong influence in my life, isn’t honestly all about the reading. It’s about the book, the newspaper. It’s about the physical being.  I despise e-Readers and internet subscriptions. I can only see myself using those options if those are the only ways left that I have access to newspapers or books. I will never subscribe to a newspaper online.

        I mean, why should I?   
 With realizing this, my love of reading and books but hatred of e-Readers, I have started to understand that I need to explore why I have this fascination towards books in order to not be biased in saying that books are better than e-Readers or online subscriptions. After all, there have been a few times where I stayed home on a snowy Saturday morning and did library research in my bed on my computer thanks to the workings of the internet and the librarians who were available to help me via the online library chat. Without this fancy shmancy technology that I so happen to despise, I would have been unable to complete the research assignment from my own home and would have had to trek through the snow, uphill both ways for forty miles, to make it to the library that morning.  
 So why do I love books?

        Part of the reason I love hard copies is because I love the clutter. I love the mess it takes and the space it fills up in your house. I love having bookshelves full of classic or modern literature. I love having a special shelf to display your favorite titles or series. No home is complete without a coffee table book, or a newspaper on the kitchen table. I like being able to see them. Books have always been a part of who I am; therefore I like to see them representing me throughout my home.

I also believe that books are truly a work of art. I know many do not agree with me when I say that books are beautiful and that’s fine with me. We all see beauty in different things. But more times than not I have found myself admiring the binding of a book, the color of the title in contrast to the cover, the worn and yellow pages, or even the smell it has. These things are fascinating to me. The appearance of the book casts a spell on me, one that I am unable to break free of.

        But clutter and appearance aren’t the only reasons due to physical attributes that I love books.  I love owning the book and having possession over it. The satisfaction I receive from perusing through a bookstore, glancing through a few books and making a purchase does not even come close to the feeling I receive when I click a button that says I just renewed an online subscription to the New York Times. The feelings just cannot compete.

        Honestly, buying things online, or having access to books or newspapers online, doesn’t even make me feel like I actually own something. I like to feel that I have complete control over my things and without being able to physically hold an online subscription, it feels to not even be mine. When you use electronic devices to read you can no longer share your books, magazines or newspapers with whomever, whenever. That’s why, according to Matthew Ingram, “It’s better to think of an eBook purchase as an agreement to rent access under specific terms rather than an actual acquisition of something tangible,” (Rent 2). It’s not to say that eBooks are bad, but they are just different. When I finish an inspiring books, I can’t lend it to my grandma the next time I see her simply because she does not own an e-Reader.  
 I seem to have these specific memories all dealing with the physicality of literature: buying magazines of my favorite teen pop sensations, attempting to understand the sweetness behind the letters my parents wrote to each other when they were my age, being overwhelmingly excited for my grandma to deliver the most recent Harry Potter book. These are only a few examples of how paper has touched my life, and I can only begin to explain the importance these experiences have been in my life.  
 I was recently in Portland, Oregon with some friends and we traveled to Powell’s City of Books, one of the largest bookstores in the country. It is four stories and takes up more than a whole city block. Naturally, I was amazed. In awe. I could have spent hours in this place. The towering shelves of new and used books made me want to explore every inch of the store. There were people there from all walks of life, different ages, genders. I wouldn’t say the store was crowded, but there were people at every turn. It made my heart happy to see people, especially those from a young generation, still amazed by these books. I loved every minute of it. Even waiting in the long checkout line to purchase my books.   
 The best part about the whole experience, however, was when I was on my way out. Back in the corner, visible only because some people had moved out of the way, was a small display of e-Readers. There was no one over there, besides an employee with a bored look on his face. I watched the display for several minutes, and no one walked up to it, let alone talk to him about e-Reader options. That made me smile. There were still people on this planet that loved owning books. And magazines. And even newspapers.    
 And all at once, I felt it. No one made an announcement in the store and I didn’t actually talk to anyone else who was perusing the bookshelves. But I knew that we all loved it there. That somehow, all of us were connected by our love of books and of ownership. And all seemed right in the world.  
 After this trip out to the West Coast, I started to dig deep into my relationship with books. I wanted to explore the idea that using e-Readers or online subscriptions to publications feels like I’m cheating on books. Somehow through my short 22 years a relationship has grown with these books. But how?  
 I honestly believe it goes back to my mother and father. Both of my parents like to read for pleasure. My dad enjoys fiction books about anything, but especially historical non-fiction work about anything related to the sea. He gravitates towards books about pirates, captains or ship sinkings. He has read all of Jimmy Buffett’s books many times, which holds true to his character. Even though my father tends to read less academically acclaimed novels, he always loved *The Old Man and the Sea*. I’ve always found that interesting, because my father tends to not be “book-smart.” He can fix any issue on a car or with a computer however he stopped helping me with my homework once I reached junior high. But the fact that he loves these books really influenced me when I was a young girl. My father has always enjoyed expanding his own horizons and giving himself the chance to go on his own adventures through reading. I have found that this is one of the origins of my love of books.  
 My mother’s history of books is a little different. My mother may perhaps be one of the smartest women I have ever met, so it should come as no surprise that she is an avid reader. I grew up with her constantly reading the local newspaper, news and entertainment magazines, books, and now even blogs. She always found it important to bring these things into my life. At a young age, maybe eight or nine, she signed me up for a subscription to the American Girl magazine, a magazine targeted at pre-teen girls with fun stories, crafts, recipes, etc. In order to get my interested the Harry Potter series she read a chapter with me every night before I went to sleep. She gave me countless rides to the library over the summer. She always hyped up a trip to Borders, even though we had to drive almost an hour into Cleveland to get the closest store. She now enjoys reading everything, but usually different things than my dad. She’s a big fan of James Patterson... pretty much any book that is gigantic and has several hundreds of pages, she’ll enjoy. She definitely doesn’t read the classics anymore, although sometimes she’ll talk with me about some of the books she read in high school or college. My mother also frequently exchanges books with my grandma and they often have chats; it’s almost like they have their own little book club.  
 My parents are not completely responsible for my love of books, but I can tell you that I’m sure that’s where it started. Being brought up in a home where daily pleasure reading was emphasized, it can be hard to turn away from it. One of the hardest things I had to adjust to in college was simply not having the time to read my own books of choosing.   
 It might not make sense to anyone else, but it makes sense to me. I love reading. I love books. I love owning them. I love staring at them. I love having them on my bookshelf, arranged in all different ways so I have to tilt your head just the right amount to see what the titles are. I love the happiness I get when I walk into a bookstore and you peruse the selection of books or magazines; the time I take glancing at everything makes my selection much more special. I love the feeling I have when I hold a book in my hand and open it for the first time, hearing the binding crunch and the fresh pages be turned from the right side to the left. I love the bright colors of the magazine, and the surprise of all of the images when I glance through it the first time. I love the inserts I can take out of it, whether it’s a perfume sample, a coupon at my favorite clothing store, or even one of those discounted subscription mail-in cards. I love the way newspapers can fold into any shape I want them to be, and I love the newspaper ink that gets all over my hands and it can be difficult to wash off.  
 I know most people don’t feel this way, and that’s okay. I don’t quite understand how they cannot love books and magazines, but I understand we are all different. By analyzing my past I have found that my love of books does stem from somewhere, which I would say is my parents. They encouraged me to develop a love of reading, which ended up taking off on a whole level of its own. I feel that if I could explain this to people when they ask me why I love reading or books in the way that I do, they would begin to understand. Maybe even start to feel the same way I do. I accept that most people will not, however. I just hope that this transition to electronic devices doesn’t leave those of future generations to not have the chance to have this love affair with books.  
 I think there’s still hope. Recently in downtown Ann Arbor, a new bookstore has emerged. Titled Literati, the bookstore has opened in the wake of the closing of Borders. I have yet to explore the store, but every time I have walked past it has been packed with customers of all ages. Perhaps this a sign... maybe the closing of Borders had people realize that they still loved books and wanted them to be a part of their lives.  
 We may never know. And in fact, it’s too hard to tell where the future of books lay. But I strongly believe that I’m not the only person out there who loves books in this way. If we unite and stick together, we can keep the spirit of books alive.  
 For now, that’s all a girl can hope for.

Technology At Its Finest

Recently I came across an article by David Marshall that stated, “Can you remember when you bought your last CD?” I stopped to think for a minute and realized that I couldn’t think of this. I, unlike most of those in my generation, still pay for my music through iTunes. Yet I can’t remember the last time I physically bought a CD. Music is music, no matter what format.   
 But for me, this doesn’t hold true for books.  
 It has been made clear through this series of articles that I’m a lover of books, bookstores, purchasing hard copies of newspapers and magazines, etc. The only way I can immerse myself in another world is to be shut off from technology completely. If I am at all “plugged in” I find myself unable to focus on what I’m reading; I feel this constant pressure to check my email, Facebook, Twitter, my text messages. It’s an obsession that I can’t seem to shake.  
 To be honest, however, I have never even held and e-Reader in my hand. How can I possibly have such an aversion to these devices if I’ve never even tried them out? It seems to be somewhat of an unfair bias. These electronics clearly have some amazing qualities, otherwise they wouldn’t be selling. So why not go see for myself?  
 I headed to the Best Buy in Ann Arbor and decided to take some notes about every device I tried out. It’s a good thing, because I don’t even remember most of the things I played around with. However- I do remember one: the Kindle Fire, made by Amazon. I took a liking to this bad boy.  
 This was one of the coolest things that I have ever touched. I came across it during the middle of my Best Buy exploration and was fascinated right away. It’s sleek touch-screen, the brightness, the vivid colors—right away I saw the beauty of it. Within my first few minutes of fooling around I was able to navigate to the different options for books, games, apps, internet, music, etc. There were tons of free copies of movies, music downloads, TV episodes, magazines, apps and games. I was amazed at the unlimited cloud storage for all content provided by or purchased from Amazon. I soon found my way to the “Favorites” feature in which I started marking up all of the games, books and magazines that I personally enjoy. It was such a thrill, going through this new experiencing and realizing that so many of my favorite things could literally be kept in one place for constant access. In fact, I found myself having—gasp!—fun.  
 I spent most of my time primarily with the book function of the Kindle Fire. There was no delay when making selections of books or magazines or when turning the page, unlike some of the other devices I used (note: Kindle Paperweight). I was able to choose different color selections for the books, such as: white, sepia or black. There was the option to note or highlight words or phrases, which I was aware of previously, but I was unaware that I had the option to tap a word and receive its definition without leaving the page.  
 There were a few special features for the Kindle Fire that I took an exceptional liking too. First, Amazon Prime members could borrow tons of selected items for free. Not to sound like a little kid in a candy shop, but I thought that was awesome! Who doesn’t like free stuff? I also really liked the special feature I found for magazines. I pulled up a recent issue of Marie Claire and was flipping through the first few pages when the “simple text view” popped up. I clicked on it, to see what it was, and it was a new format of the magazine pages made for easier e-Reader use. It contained the same content, but many things were switched around and some font was changed. I went through the whole issue using both formats, and found to like both of them and to have the option to choose.  
 Throughout the experience of using the Kindle Fire, however, I found myself making some realizations, too. For instance, when I was going through Marie Claire I flipped fast through all of the ads. I couldn’t even tell you what any of them were, or if they were the same ads you see in the regular magazine. Anytime I saw large pictures, I just turned straight to the next page with white space. During this, I also realized that I really missed the perfume samples. That’s actually one of my favorite parts of magazines like Marie Claire, Cosmo, Glamour, etc. Something else that occurred while I was looking through the books was the definition feature when selecting a single word. Is that actually necessary? I guess it helps simplify our lives and gives the reader a chance to have a less disruptive reading experience by providing the definition right there instead of having them leave the page to find the definition from somewhere else. But chances are I forgot exactly what I looked up 30 seconds after I did it because I wasn’t really that focused on it.  
 After a while, I noticed that my hands were getting irritated. The size of the Kindle Fire was too big to be held in one hand, but not big enough to share between two. I turned it horizontally so I my hands would have more to grab onto. While I was reading about the description on the display card, I also realized the Kindle Fire had a color LCD screen, which was amazing because the colors were vivid and super bright. But this also means that it will tire out your eyes eventually. I wish this had e-ink, like most of the Nook devices. E-ink presents the look of a book page, which I appreciated more.  
 The Kindle Fire was great. In fact, I was finding myself wishing I had the extra $159.99 to purchase it right there on the spot. But thinking about it, it was nothing more than a giant cell phone or tiny computer. I enjoyed playing around with it, but I came to the understanding that I would probably never purchase it because I’d rather invest that money into a reliable computer, not a hand held device that I would use in addition to a computer. Maybe that’s the poor college student in me talking, but it in no way seemed like something that I would actually benefit from having.  
 The Nook HD provided a similar experience, although I was a little less impressed. I also have this theory that Borders would still be around if it weren’t for Barnes and Noble, so perhaps I have a slight abhorrence for anything created by the Barnes and Noble brand. For the Nook HD, I appreciated the multi-tab browsing feature, as well as the Wifi that was built in. Overall though, I started to fall in love with the Nook Simple Touch with Glowlight.  
 I can’t exactly say why I loved the Nook Simple Touch with Glowlight more than any other e-Reader I tried out. It was light as a feather, the battery life is extra long, lasting for about one month, ways to adjust the font sizes and brightness easily. My favorite thing about this handy little device, however, was that it has e-ink enhanced with Glowlight. As stated by Barnes and Noble, “This revolutionary built-in reading light delivers optimized illumination never before seen on e-ink displays. So now you can enjoy just-like-paper reading at its best—whether you’re curled up in a bed or outdoors in bright sun.” I found this to be my favorite feature on any e-Reader or tablet. Glowlight was different than increasing the brightness level on a color LCD screen; it offered a revolutionary experience. I enjoyed Glowlight so much that I even had fun when just turning the page. It changed my whole experience with Nooks. I found myself preferring Kindles throughout my journey down the Best Buy isles but the Nook Simple Touch with Glowlight definitely redeemed Barnes and Noble.   
 I decided to have the full e-Reader and tablet experience I should see what other options are out there besides the Nook and Kindle. I spent some time on the Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 and iPad 2, but seeing as I use both PCs and Mac computers daily, this wasn’t a new experience for me. I was able to navigate around them just fine and was not surprised by any of the features they offered. I honestly just felt like I was using smaller version of my laptop. Seeing as I dislike reading on computer screens anyway, it should come as no surprise that I was not a fan of reading on these tablets either. Another tablet, the Nabi 2, also caught my eye. The Nabi was a 7” screen device that was designed for children that has special parental control options for games, books, music and movies. Once again, a new product, but not something that I was out to look for. The Kindle Fire and Nook Simple Touch with Glowlight are definitely the products that struck me.   
 I left Best Buy feeling a little disappointed that I wasn’t able to take one of these e-Readers home with me. I really enjoyed reading sections of magazines, books and newspapers on each device. I found all the little features really fun and I was surprised at how easy it was to use the e-Readers. One of the reasons I have strayed from them was because I have a hard time adapting to new technology and get frustrated easily.   
 I have never been against change, but I also never saw a reason to explore the e-Reader option when I still had access to books and magazines in hard copy format. This is one of the reasons why I was never able to understand why people chose to use these devices in the first place. But now I get it.   
 For me, I was attracted to the convenience. I actually really liked the idea of once you finish one book or magazine, you could easily make another selection and continue reading. That’s more difficult to do with hard copies, seeing as you have to remember to have more materials with you. On a recent trip to Seattle I actually found myself wishing I owned an e-Reader so I could have many options for entertainment on the plane. I brought along a few books and magazines and they took up most of the available space in my carry on. If I would have had a Kindle or Nook instead, not only would I have had more room in my carry on but I also would have had more options of what to read or watch.   
 The clutter, the physical convenience, ability to search and markup—I get it now. Marshall says these are a few of the main reasons he enjoys using his e-Readers and no longer purchases books. That, along with the price and ability to read across platforms. And I don’t blame him. Books can take up a lot of room. Not just a lot. I mean *a lot.* And many times it can be hard to figure out what to do with all of them. It seems like a waste to just throw them out, but what if you can’t figure out where to give them to? Quite a hassle these books can cause. Not just with the clutter, but having to carry them around. Marshall is right; sometimes it’s really great to be able to carry around several titles all in one location.

Because

I vividly remember my first writing assignment I received at the University of Michigan my freshman year. It was on a Wednesday in English 125 with George Cooper. He gave us an assignment to search for a Hawk in the Ann Arbor sky and then write about the hawk’s journey. How was I supposed to know where to find a hawk or what its journey was? I started thinking that maybe this assignment was not supposed to be taken literally. But once I considered that option, I also had absolutely no idea as to what I was supposed to do or how I was supposed to interpret the essay prompt. Naturally, as a freshman from a small town, I was terrified. I ran around to my newly met friends and roommate, asking what I should do. I honestly had no idea and they didn’t seem to care. Why should they? They had enough of their own problems to worry about with their schoolwork and adapting to a new college lifestyle.

For me, the worst part was that I was more afraid of failing than anything else.  
 But that was what Professor Cooper had in mind. He purposely gave his terrified freshmen an assignment to make them think and explore outside of the box to see what they were capable of. While my essay is not the best well-written piece I produced at the University of Michigan, it’s something I’m particularly proud of, mostly because of how scared I was to write it.  I have never been a risk taker in my personal or professional life, nor will I ever be, but this was an essay that helped me get over the idea of getting negative feedback from a professor or peers. In fact, most of the things I wrote for this course were horrendous in the stage of the first draft. Professor Cooper was able to provide me with a unique way to connect to my writing and find ways to edit papers and reflections that I had never stumbled across before. He made failing at writing okay.  
 This, in part, is how I view most of my undergraduate experiences at Michigan. There were many times that I was terrified--terrified of that chemistry exam, reading 400 pages within two days, giving a presentation in a foreign language. But I pushed through them to learn something about myself. Sometimes, it was proving to myself that I could tackle speaking in Italian for 7 minutes in front of my class without passing out. And sometimes it was to show that I had to accept I wasn’t good at everything, such as the D+ I received in chemistry. Learning about myself is what my journey at Michigan has really been about. Sure, receiving an A on my recent Blue Book exam has helped boost my ego, but grades aren’t really what matter to me. I strive to learn.  
 My strive to learn was what essentially drove me to this project. I started off above discussing some experiences I’ve had at Michigan, but many of them don’t necessarily include books. But they *have* included the opportunities I have had to grow and appreciate how to write, and write well. Which eventually is related to my love of books. I have found that the way I have learned to work at my writing and appreciate both the good and the bad has helped me to be able to appreciate both the good and bad of the book world, which in modern times even includes e-Readers. I love books. No one could argue against that. But I’ve never completely understood why, nor have I tried to understand why others don’t love books.   
 But, now I do.   
 First off, the physicality of books is just simply not appealing to everyone. Just because I enjoy lugging around several books to and from the library at school or around the airport does not mean that others do. In fact I won’t lie, it’s kind of a pain, so I can only imagine how others feel. They’re heavy and get in the way. They take up space on shelves and desks, or in boxes stuffed away in the attack. I love the appearance of books on shelves and coffee tables, although I can easily see why other people do not and just view them as “clutter;” It’s still a little too difficult for me to refer to books as such detrimental term.   
 I also realize that books simply cannot “abracadabra” everyone into feeling the love I have for the actual appearance of the books. Not everyone is going to be able to find books to be as beautiful as I do. That’s okay. It’s allowed, in fact. If everyone found books beautiful and wondrous then I would have nothing to write about or spend my days pondering as I walk up and down aisles of bookstores.   
 Plus, not only do books take up a lot of space but also if you don’t want to hold on to them when you’re done with them, what *are* you supposed to do with them? They kind of appear to be these evil little minions that you can’t get rid of. You could even start staying that they are bad for the environment. Wasting all this paper...  
 Let’s be clear for a second. I do not think they are bad for the environment. In fact, I personally believe that a book being bad for the environment is an irrelevant argument that people use when they don’t have other positions to take on why they are not a fan of books.  
 But in all seriousness, let’s take a look at some numbers. Melissa Douthit, an active writer and self-publisher who has been discussing the debate of print versus digital for quite some time on her blog,  melissadouthit.com, has done some research in preparing some numbers for evaluation on the effects of paper to our environment.

“**1.** Nearly 4 billion trees are cut down each year for the paper industry.  ([**Green Answers**](http://greenanswers.com/q/99811/forests-trees-plants/how-many-are-cut-down-each-year-produce-paper) &[**ecology.com**](http://ecology.com/features/paperchase/))

**2.** For America alone, 900 million trees are cut down for paper and paper products and the US accounts for 25-30% of paper usage worldwide.  ([**Green Answers**](http://greenanswers.com/q/99811/forests-trees-plants/how-many-are-cut-down-each-year-produce-paper), [**ecology.com**](http://ecology.com/features/paperchase/) & [**Recycling Facts**](http://www.headwatersrecycle.com/why.html))

**3.** Americans use over 67,000,000 tons of paper each year, or 600 pounds per person (749 pounds according to [**ecology.com**](http://ecology.com/features/paperchase/)).  ([**Recycling Facts**](http://www.headwatersrecycle.com/why.html))

**4.** It takes more than 500,000 trees to produce the newspapers Americans read each Sunday, yet only 30% of all newspapers are recycled.  ([**Recycling Facts**](http://www.headwatersrecycle.com/why.html))

**5.** Every day, Americans buy 62 million newspapers and throw out 44 million. That’s the equivalent of dumping 500,000 trees into a landfill every week.  ([**Recycling Facts**](http://www.headwatersrecycle.com/why.html))

**6.** In the manufacturing process of recycled paper  ([**Recycling Facts**](http://www.headwatersrecycle.com/why.html))

74% less air pollution is generated

35% less water pollution is generated

58% less water is required

64% less energy is required

**7.** World consumption of paper has grown four hundred percent in the last 40 years.  ([**ecology.com**](http://ecology.com/features/paperchase/))

**8.** In the U.S., the forest and paper products industry generates $200 billion dollars in sales every year, accounting for 7% of the total manufacturing output of the United States.  ([**ecology.com**](http://ecology.com/features/paperchase/))

**9.** About 28% of all wood cut in the U.S. is used for paper making and according to a 2000 report by PaperCom Alliance the demand for paper worldwide has grown 30% in the past 6 years and is projected to grow even more.  ([**ecology.com**](http://ecology.com/features/paperchase/))

**10.** Toxic Release Inventory report published by the [**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**](http://www.epa.gov/tri/), pulp and paper mills are among the worst polluters to air, water and land of any industry in the country. The [**Worldwatch Institute**](http://www.worldwatch.org/) offers similar statistics for the rest of the world. Each year millions of pounds of highly toxic chemicals such as toluene, methanol, chlorine dioxide, hydrochloric acid, and formaldehyde are released into the air and water from paper making plants around the world.  ([**ecology.com**](http://ecology.com/features/paperchase/))”

-Melissa Douthit, www.melissadouthit.com

Numbers 4 and 5 are directly relevant to our discussion, although all of the information about paper is relevant in the arguments I have been making through the previous essays. Paper use is becoming a problem. In fact, I would almost go as far as to call it paper abuse. We are overusing our resources and being irresponsible with our decisions in regards to paper. How many newspapers are read on Sundays? 62 million. How many are thrown out? 44 million. That is ridiculous, people. Even as an avid reader of the Sunday New York Times, I will not support the use of newspapers if this is what people are choosing to do to our environment.   
 Now also consider that there are many books that sit around in everyone’s home. People probably don’t want to throw those out, but they also don’t really have anything to do with them. And can they actually recycle books with covers? These questions, and many more, are the issues society is facing with respect to continuing to use print publications. Without this issue being addressed and solutions being offered for the overuse of paper, society may very well think the easiest solution is to completely switch over to the use of digital publications.  
 Another important aspect of this debate is monetary reasons, specifically advertisements. Ad companies have even stated that they would much rather prefer to have their ads in hard copy magazines than visible online or through an e-Reader. A professor of Journalism in Communication Studies of Gardner-Webb University agrees with this idea and stated, “There are also signs that advertising still works better in print form over online.” I agree with this, as ads are kind of fun when you’re flipping through a magazine. The bright colors, enlarged pictures of the newest shade of nail polish or the fancy way a mascara is supposed to elongate or separate your lashes, I do like seeing those. I also really like smelling the perfume or cologne scents that are placed deep within the pages of a magazine. Yet, anytime I’m online, if an ad pops in and obscures my view, I just get pissed off. I don’t even look at the ad; I just look for the fastest way to click on the X to make it go away.   
 There are other reasons that I’m still for print publications being used. One important fact to consider is that not everyone receives their news online or via e-Reader. The obvious grouping of people to fit this category would be the elderly. University Business reports that 35% of those ages 65 and older receive their news online, which means that 65% of older Americans do not use the internet for any means of receiving news. As this generation ages, I’m sure these numbers will change. But it is unlikely that a natural shift from newspapers to online subscriptions will happen in only a few short years. Younger generations may abhor printed newspapers but there are still many people around who enjoy receiving their paper delivered every morning.   
 The issue that should be receiving more attention than it’s getting, however, is not advertising and budget issues, nor is it related to the environment. It’s about current lawsuits happening in our society that seem to not be receiving coverage that relate to online version of books as well as Nooks, Kindles and other e-Readers. Google Books is a common resource used by the general public for many reasons including receiving copies of full books online, often for free. Google Books is currently finishing up a lawsuit in regards to them illegally using scanned copies of author’s works without their permission on their website. Last June, “New York federal Judge Denny Chin granted class-action status to authors using Google Books for digitally scanning their copyrighted books, allowing every author to believe that their copyright was infringed can join in on the class-action suit,” according to publiclibraries.com. Copyright issues in regards to online publications are just now starting to arise and start playing a bigger role on what can and cannot be purchased online, which may even lead to increasing prices for access to online resources.   
 Archiving newspapers is also becoming an issue for online libraries and archives. Lawsuits such as *New York Times v. Tusini* are forcing tough decisions for archives of whether or not to close specific archives, or recreating their archives according to what had a copyright title and what did not. With that said, many parts of newspapers aren’t making it into archives, so research cannot be effectively continued out. It’s as if the librarians of today are marking choices of what we will be able to reflect back on tomorrow. With print publications, this is never an issue.   
 There are many issues that are developing in society, and all of which affect me when I pursue my love of books. I recognize the ease of using online subscriptions and e-Readers, but I will forever and always be loyal to the hard copy of books. This comes from my upbringing as a small town girl in Ohio, where my mother and father encouraged me to develop a strong set of reading skills at a young age, which helped me in continuing a love of reading. Put I do realize there are some serious issues appearing in society. Anything ranging from companies going out of business to issues within our own environment to perhaps limiting people to their resources because of them not having options of how to access their materials... we could debate this for hours, and I would love to continue this discussion. There is no way that one simple series of articles can cover every issue within the battle of print and digital publications.  
 It is true, however, that our society is going through changes. Print publications are slowly making their way to being the minority in the way that books, newspapers and magazines are being accessed.  The importance of print is so prevalent in society that many will not think about it actually being able to disappear. Yet, if all publications are switched over to all digital, it will simply be lost with time. We still enjoy reading our newspaper Sunday morning even though we could technically just login to our computer. There’s some magic spell it holds, or as I say, it can “abracadabra” you into feeling happy and nostalgic.  I hope throughout this series of essays you have found the way that you connect with print publications, whether it be through your favorite childhood book, your current magazine subscription you receive in the mail every Friday, or through your love of your local library. I have faith that these things can still stay in society for now.  
 As my grandma always told me, “Happy Reading!” Thank you for going on this journey with me. While I hope you now go and purchase a print publication of a book or magazine, I promise that I will be completely understanding when I see you sitting across from me in a coffee shop with your Kindle. After all, I did find out how nifty those little gadgets are. Before too long, I will probably and unfortunately find myself purchasing one of those, too.