

Dominic Cole's IELTS and Beyond

Model paragraphs showing how to link paragraphs together

Some people believe that the internet will replace traditional books in the future. Do you believe this would be a positive or a negative development?

One reason why the loss of print books would be a step backwards is that people would probably just read less. This is because there is good research that shows children who have been brought up in the internet age in fact read less than children who only read books in their early years. This is probably due to the fact that it is easy for them to become distracted while reading online because the reading material is less attractive than the images, video and other media that are just one click away. For example, a child is likely to be tempted to watch a video of the book on Youtube rather than turn the page.

A second reason for believing that it would not be beneficial for the internet to replace traditional books relates to quality. While there are more books available online than ever before, it is much less easy to determine whether those books are of high standard because almost anyone can self-publish in this digital age. In contrast, traditional books are almost always produced by a publishing house that have a rigorous system of editing with the result that the reader knows that someone has carefully selected and improved the material before publication.

As technology progresses, so has the way we read books and many people now prefer to read using new forms of technology such as e-readers. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this new form of publication?

The clearest advantage of this new technology is that it enables people to read at their own convenience and whenever they want. The main reason for this is that almost everyone nowadays has access to some form of digital reader either on their telephone, tablet or a dedicated e-reader such as the kindle. More than that, it is generally true that they will carry this technology with them wherever they go and that means they can sit down and read anytime and they do not have to remember to take their book with them. This can be easily seen by the number of commuters that now read books on their journey into work; people that in the past may not have bothered to carry a book as it was too heavy.

There are of course some disadvantages to this technology. Perhaps the principal problem is that not everyone is equally comfortable reading in a digital format and that some people, mostly the older generation, still find the technology a barrier. It is certainly true that the so-called digital native generation who have grown up with computers as part of their everyday life are typically much more confident users of these e-books. An illustration of this from my own experience is how my younger cousins had to teach my grandparents how to turn on their new e-readers that had been given for Christmas.

Some people believe that newspapers and books will eventually be replaced by new forms of technology such as the e-reader and the internet. What is your opinion?

There is some reason to believe that newspapers and books will not survive into the future in their current form. The main evidence for this is that it is clear sales of books and newspapers have been plummeting for some time and that this is partially due to the advent of e-readers and the internet. While it is not possible to make a completely accurate forecast, the probability is that this trend will continue and that traditional print publications will become increasingly less popular. One explanation for this is how the younger generation typically prefer to read books or access the news using the internet or an e-reader.

Despite this, it is still likely that traditional print media will not completely disappear for a variety of reasons. One reason is that some book lovers are often traditionalists who dislike innovations and that these people will continue to buy books in their printed format, albeit in reduced numbers. In the same way, many academic institutions depend on printed materials for educational purposes as they are seen to be more reliable and they too will help maintain the print industry. Finally, we are not yet at the point where everyone has access to digital technology and that may never happen, with the result that the print industry is likely to survive.