

The Future of Reading



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FLICC Forum on Information Policies

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Forum Call

The world is currently awash in conflicting theories about reading. Book sales are plummeting while readership is increasing, reversing 20 years of downward trends. Numbers of online readers continue to spiral upward yet these digital readers are still committed to print materials. More people are using public libraries and online library visits are soaring, yet nearly half the states are cutting library funding. Demands for more data and more research echo across academia, industry and government while print and electronic publishers are downsizing. Federal libraries are in high demand but are asked to do more with less funding and staff. Social media becomes a politician's best communication vehicle and new weapon of the revolutionary while traditional news media retool or disappear.

Whatever society's future, the future of reading is inexorably tied to the future of information.

The 2009 FLICC Forum will bring together renowned scholars, information practitioners, professionals and social observers who will take a broad look and comment upon at the questions of the day:

How proficient are today's readers? Is literacy now a social practice rather than a basic skill? Will electronic media create a "reading class" or facilitate the re-evolution of "voice" as the primary mechanism of knowledge transfer? Is visual literacy, using diagrams and clouds, destined to compete with or supersede conventional, words-only texts?

Does a fast-paced society make reading an inefficient way to gain knowledge? Does burst technology shorten attention spans? Could enhanced cognitive technology play a role? Will future generations develop new neurological functioning that will alter how they acquire and store information or generally interact with their environment?

Do trends in reading reflect conclusions from human factors research? Does generational theory apply to readers, researchers and readership? Will e-books put more information in front of avid readers or make more readers out of Internet searchers? Are online readers competing with offline readers for publishing and library support? Are information professionals the new standard bearer for reading and research excellence? How can any library or information program continue to increase its services exponentially when staffing and budgets keep growing tighter?

Join this dynamic discussion among participants, presenters and panelists for a look behind the trends and analysis on this most basic skill and a look forward to not only the future of reading, but how its future affects the reader, researcher, librarian, policymaker, leader and citizen.