



Book Matters: The Changing Nature of Literacy

Alan Sica

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Scholars have been puzzling over the “future of the book” since Marshall McLuhan’s famous maxim “the medium is the message” in the early 1950s. McLuhan famously argued that electronic media was creating a global village in which books would become obsolete. Such views were ahead of their time, but today they are all too relevant as declining sales, even among classic texts, have become a serious matter in academic publishing.

Does anyone still read long and complex works, either from the past or the present? Is the role of a professional reader and reviewer of manuscripts still relevant? *Book Matters* closely analyzes these questions and others. Alan Sica surmises that the concentration span required for studying and discussing complex texts has slipped away, as undergraduate classes are becoming inundated by shorter, easier-to-teach scholarly and literary works. He considers such matters in part from the point of view of a former editor of scholarly journals. In an engaging style, he gives readers succinct analyses of books and ideas that once held the interest of millions of discerning readers, such as Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* and the works of David Graham Phillips and C. Wright Mills, among others.

Book Matters is not a nostalgic cry for lost ideas, but instead a stark reminder of just how aware and analytically illuminating certain scholars were prior to the Internet, and how endangered the book is in this era of pixelated communication.

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