The death of the book, the post-Gutenberg era: when we speak of the digital age as an "after," we imply a set of assumptions about the "before." For decades, futurologists have spoken interchangeably about living "after" print and "after" the book, but those terms are hardly synonymous. First, because not all books are print. In our time, the e-book was preceded (as it continues to be outstripped) by the audiobook, for which the crucial technology is not the cassette tape or the mp3 so much as the car: the twentieth-century highway system undid the ascent of silent reading first enabled by the nineteenth-century railroad network. (Or vice versa: without the newspaper and the radio, commuters might have been hard put to spend as many hours on the road.) And even before any of those technologies, manuscript circulation continued to compete with print well after the invention of movable type. Right up to 1789, many political periodicals in Europe were hand-copied by professional scribes; as a more flexible, more discreet, more distributed technology than print, handwriting allowed radical writers and publishers both to avoid censors and to create a loyal coterie audience that forged collective identities through the act of forwarding or exchanging materials. If that description sounds reminiscent of Web 2.0, a missing link may diminish the uncanniness: the oldest distribution technology (hand copying) and the newest (the internet) flank media such as the mimeograph, the hectograph, and microfilm, now too old to be sexy but too new to be quaint (Binkley). During the Cold War, in the Eastern bloc and parts of Southern Africa, the photocopier filled similar functions.

So, not all books take the form of print; nor does all—or even most—print take the form of books. As Simon Eliot reminds us, just over a century ago, the 1907 Census of Product-
tion in Britain estimated that books made up 14 percent of the total value of print production—with printed books forming an even smaller fraction, since the 14 percent included manuscript books and ledgers. Instead, Eliot estimates, “the two areas of largest value were . . . jobbing printing and periodical printing. The most common reading experience, by the midnineteenth century at latest, would most likely be the advertising poster, all the tickets, handbills and forms generated by an industrial society, and the daily or weekly paper” (Eliot; see also Guillory). Even earlier, in eighteenth-century Philadelphia, Ben Franklin’s press cranked out auction announcements, lottery tickets, handbills advertising runaway slaves, and newspapers crammed with classified ads, as well as “Bills of Lading, Bills of Sale, Powers of Attorney, Writs, Summons, Apprentices Indentures, Servants Indentures, Penal Bills, Promissory Notes, &c” (as one advertisement put it). “Jobbing printing”—that is, jobs worked off on a single sheet of paper and usually paid in advance, locking up neither type nor capital—has always comprised the bulk of printers’ output; the first wave of printers lived off the demand for indulgences (an ironic counterpoint to the Protestant myth of the press as an agent of secularization), later generations for broadsides, handbills, menus, and the like. Especially in colonial or provincial contexts, such printed matter had less in common with books than with objects that involved no textual content at all. Amazon.com’s rise from a seller of books to a clearinghouse for everything from lipstick to vacuum-packed steaks reinvents the colonial American model in which booksellers could survive only by supplementing their goods and services with postmastering, auctioneering, and selling stationery, musical and mathematical instruments, patent medicines, lottery tickets, “whalebone, live goosefeathers, pickled sturgeon, chocolate, and Spanish snuff” (Amory, “Reinventing the Colonial Book”). Even within that part of Franklin’s business that did involve the press, his output included labels for medicine bottles, wrapping for soap and “500 advertisements about thread” (Green and Stallybrass 25). What he didn’t print, with a handful of exceptions, was any object that we would recognize today as a book—let alone as a work of literature.

The few products of Franklin’s press which we would recog-
nize as such—signed volumes—took the form of what he called "book-work," and we call vanity publishing. If a small-town preacher wanted to commission a book of his own sermons, for example, Franklin charged three times the manufacturing cost—up front. A supply dominated by pompous folios never matched a demand limited to single-sheet ephemera, yet vanity publishing remained buoyed by writers' investment in the idea of the book, regardless of whether anyone would buy, let alone read, it. Even today, when the blog might be expected to render self-publishing obsolete, the web (in the form of Amazon.com) has instead encouraged the growth of vanity presses: in an age when more Americans self-report writing poetry than reading it, the book's very impracticality marks its contents as literary.

There's nothing new, then, about the book's precarious perch within a larger media ecology. Nor is there anything new about the contrast between how small the book looms by any quantitative measure and how large it looks in our cultural imagination. Digital media aren't replacing the book; they're replacing the file, the directory, the calendar, the form. Conversely, the screen has no more power to topple the book from its symbolic pedestal than did the ledger, the newspaper, the mimeo, or the photocopy. On the contrary, the less often books are read, the more often they are read about: we can all identify with the Henry James character who "thought highly of literature, for which she entertained that esteem that is connected with a sense of privation."

The screen can connote work or play; the book (except for academics) only leisure. But this elevation—or reduction—to a plaything is a historical anomaly: for most of its lifespan, the codex has been a tool. If we now associate print with "curling up in bed" or "reading from start to finish," it's only because searchability has now been outsourced to electronic media: even the telephone book that was once synonymous with the book tout court ("are they in the book?") is no longer one of the two books found in every American household—the other being that equally random-access volume, the Bible. In fact, Peter Stallybrass has shown that the early Christians adopted the codex (as opposed to the Jewish scroll) precisely because of its amenability to random access—a quality that would later be borrowed by ledgers, dictionaries, directories,
and other everyday genres of the book. Since Gutenberg, most steady sellers have been both utilitarian and nonlinear: reference books, textbooks, cookbooks, and Bibles make up publishers' safest stock in trade. Back in 1994, when Annie Proulx waved aside the e-book on the grounds that "no one is going to read a novel on a twitchy little screen. Ever," she elided the more mundane genres that had already begun to migrate to twitchy screens: printed telephone books, manuscript address books, loose-leaf binders of photocopies. If "print" shouldn't be confused with "book," nor should "codex" be confused with "novel."

As Paul Duguid pointed out only two years later, those supercessionist models in which screen displaces book—"ceçitueracela," as Victor Hugo's character says of the book and the cathedral—rely on a narrow understanding of what a book is, or was (Duguid). The range of different practices in which a single medium can be enlisted—be it page or screen—stretches wider than the difference between one medium and another. You can't take a chained folio to the beach, any more than you would want to read a telephone book by the pool. Yet the three aspects of reading for which Proulx makes the novel stand—absorption, linearity, imagination—continue to haunt analyses of digital media more sophisticated than hers. When in First Monday Clifford Lynch observed that the most successful digital texts have been those that are "more like reference databases than traditional books that are read sequentially from beginning to end," his invocation of "traditional books" ignored the longstanding dominance within print media of genres that invite random rather than sequential access (Lynch 9; see also Snyder). Nothing is so traditional as the dictionary—yet when commentators on digital media need to name the baseline against which those new forms are defined, the kind of book that they invoke is more often a novel than a reference book, a directory, or a catalogue. (Or even an essay. When in 2004 the National Endowment for the Arts warned that screen time was threatening "literary reading," its statistics excluded nonfiction: the Da Vinci Code counted, not the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire).

Linearity provides a proxy for attentiveness: when Marshall Poe aphorizes that "a book is a machine for focusing attention;
the Internet is machine for diffusing it," he reverses the age-old assumption that the kind of continuous reading prompted by the codex and exemplified by the novel undermines self-discipline. Online, one actively resists the temptation to navigate away from a page; but in the age of the codex, "page turning" looked passive and inertial, while forging one's own path through text (whether by flipping back and forth to endnotes or following hyperlinks) manifested initiative.4 We want reading to look laborious, but not utilitarian—in fact, the less useful, the more virtuous. Once, reading was imagined as a drain on productivity; today, vocational reading has become invisible because it deviates from our need for the esthetic to embody purposiveness without a purpose.

As a result, the way we do use digital media gets compared to the way we wish we used printed books: real apples with ideal oranges. When we lament the decline of "reading," we're referring both to something broader (attention, absorption, esthetics) and to something narrower (either the reading of that small fraction of texts that belong to literary genres, or that small fraction of reading which occurs outside of occupational or educational contexts). In the NEA's 2002 survey, Public Participation in the Arts, the questionnaire specifically excluded instrumental reading: "With the exception of books required for work or school, did [you] read any books during the LAST 12 MONTHS?"5 "Books required for work" account for much of the publishing industry—and not just when the worker is a professor or an editorial assistant. In the last generation before reference books migrated online, a third of the dictionaries sold in the United States were bought not through bookstores, but through office supply chains like Staples.

If the NEA continues to diagnose a disappearance of readers, this may be because it looks in the wrong places. By framing "surfing websites" and "e-mailing" as competitors to "reading," its time-use questionnaires deny that the former might constitute a subset of the latter. It's true that little of what gets read online includes "novels or short stories, plays, or poetry" (the categories measured in 2002)—not, at least, unless you count the kind of stories (as Jean-Jacques Rousseau put it) "that you read with one hand." Pornography fits nowhere into the study's neat division between "reading for literary ex-
perience,” “reading for information,” and “reading to perform a task.” Nor does that all-time bestseller, the Bible.

In little over a century, we’ve gone from a culture that equated reading with laziness to one that defines it as hard work. Yet we also want to quarantine it from the utilitarianism of “work or school.” No wonder, then, that a generation logging ever more hours in the office and on the Blackberry is hard to recognize as a generation of readers. One recent study explains children’s reluctance to read by the plethora of other activities competing for their time, including “chatting on MySpace” (Rich). But unless participants resemble the two Jane Austen characters whose conversation is limited by their being “each far more ready to give than to receive information,” chatting on MySpace must involve reading one’s interlocutor’s messages (Austen 17). Like the purloined letter, on-screen reading remains oddly invisible to researchers. At the dawn of the digital age, McLuhan told us that the medium is the message; now, the meaning is imagined to inhere in the platform. If a novel reprinted on the Kindle counts as “reading,” why not text that was born digital—or even paratext (the sidebar or taskbar on your spreadsheet) or metadata (the tags and titles on YouTube)?

This isn’t to say that the problems faced by the NEA sprung out of nowhere in the digital age. The state's first large-scale intervention into pleasure reading—in the form of the public libraries founded after 1850 in Britain—already sparked a debate over whether entertainment that happened to be vehicled by print should be classified with literary books, or with other (nontextual) forms of entertainment. As Robert Snape shows, libraries' uncertainty about whether to stock fiction “crystallized questions also raised in debates about whether to provide smoking and game rooms, block out betting information in newspapers, or impose silence”—all policies that implied some understanding of reading as either connected to, or standing above, social life and bodily pleasures (Snape, Leisure and the Rise of the Public Library 3). As with present-day debates about whether libraries' computers can be used for gaming, shopping, or pornography, the first generation of controversies about public libraries circled around the question raised by Jeremy Bentham in a different context:
The utility of all these arts and sciences—I speak both of those of amusement and curiosity—the value which they possess, is exactly in proportion to the pleasure they yield. Every other species of preeminence which may be attempted to be established among them is altogether fanciful. Prejudice apart, the game of pushpin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of pushpin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either. Everybody can play at pushpin: poetry and music are relished only by a few (Bentham 206).

The Lord Mayor of Sheffield, for example, asked why the public should subsidize reading but not sports, and M. D. O’Brien’s A plea for liberty: an argument against socialism (1891) asks “If one man may have his hobby paid for by his neighbors, why not all? Are theatre-goers, lovers of cricket, bicyclists, amateurs of music, and others to have their earnings confiscated, and their capacities for indulging in their own special hobbies curtailed, merely to satisfy gluttons of gratuitous novel-reading?” (Snape, Leisure and the Rise of the Public Library 70). Conservatives invoked a similar logic to challenge the cheap rate at which (beginning in 1848 in Britain) printed matter could be sent through the mail: why, they asked, should the government subsidize catalogues, advertising circulars, and books of patterns?

Even where no state funding was at stake, the question of what exactly counted as “reading” made visible tensions between a rhetoric of moral, economic, or intellectual self-improvement and a reality in which literacy was put to more mundane uses. In her classic 1911 study of a manufacturing town, Florence Bell remarks that among factory workers, “About a quarter of the men do not read at all: that is to say, if there is anything coming off in the way of sport that they are interested in, they buy a paper to see the result. That hardly comes under the head of reading” (Bell 207).

Books are crucial to the history of literacy, of course, but so are bookies. This is why, as soon as public libraries were founded in the nineteenth century, librarians began to black out the sports pages (Snape, “Libraries for Leisure Time” 50). David Mitch has correlated the spread of literacy with the national sport network made possible in turn by the growth of
railways and telegraphs. Betting spurred on interest in sporting news and sales of newspapers: "Many a man made the breakthrough to literacy by studying the pages of the One O'Clock" (Mitch). Librarians, however, refused to recognize that "study" as "reading": thus, R. K. Dent took the initiative to black out the betting news in every newspaper that entered his library, insisting that his target was not a particular class of text but rather a particular class of reader, "numbers of rough and ill-behaved fellows, who . . . persisted in disturbing the peace of the reading rooms, and interfering with the comfort of quiet readers at the newspaper stands" (Dent 11). (Or as Thackeray punned, "I can't write a book, but I think I can make a pretty good one on the Derby" [Thackeray 756].)

In 2007, the NEA responded to the crisis diagnosed by their latest survey with The Big Read, a campaign that offered communities a single book to read in synch; Fahrenheit 451 was the first text featured. In the same year, Amazon launched the first mass-distributed e-reader under a name whose metaphorical invocation of Prometheus tugged against the more literal allusion to book-burning. Or, perhaps, the idea that battery-powered e-readers consume energy while printed books can only produce it. Bradbury himself quotes Hugh Latimer declaring, at the stake: "we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out" (Bradbury, 1953 p. 40). Digitizing books does not, of course, imply burning them—even if Amazon's digital rights management policy gives no guarantee that e-texts won't be yanked from circulation after consumers have blithely discarded their hard copies. But the use of fire to figure the relation of screen to page lends a new lease on life to Bradbury's Cold War parable.

In Fahrenheit 451 the NEA found its mirror image: a fictional state proscribes books, a real federal agency prescribes them. What it found as well was a way to dramatize the smaller, subtler cultural choices made by individuals. A book bursting into flame is easier to visualize than a book gathering dust. Yet Bradbury himself seems unsure of whether the threat of books comes from state coercion (the firehouse) or from consumer choices (the "televisor"). Sometimes, the target seems to be a physical object: bound pages get burnt regardless of their content. At other times it looks like high culture,
oral as well as written: his is a world full of "actors who haven't acted Shaw or Pirandello for years." "It's not books you need," one character tells another, "it's some of the things that once were in books. The same infinite detail and awareness could be projected through the radios and televisors, but are not" (82). Bradbury anticipates the NEA's confusion about what lies at risk: great literature (as opposed to the genre fiction which Fahrenheit 451 itself exemplifies)? Pleasure reading (as opposed to reading to grub grades or grub money)? The reading of books (as opposed to the reading of reports issued by government agencies)? Reading mediated by some surface older than the LCD—book, scroll, tombstone?

The medium was the message—in Fahrenheit 451, but also for Fahrenheit 451. When François Truffaut "projected" Bradbury's middlebrow book into a highbrow film (this in the same decade in which McLuhan, Havelock, and Levi-Strauss took on orality through the medium of the printed book), he also shifted its contents from text to image: we see numbers on-screen, but no letters. In the film, suspects are denounced by placing a photo of them into a pillarbox; in the novel, in contrast, the fire station's modernity is marked by a machine that spits out addresses, and the firemen respond to "complaints signed in telephone duplicate": "That would be Mrs. Blake, my neighbor, said the woman, reading the initials." Truffaut's vision of a bookless future achieves more coherence than Bradbury's, where the firemen who insist proudly that "we haven't any books" go on to "drwlw forth their rule books, which also contained brief histories of the Firemen of America." In the original, even the fireman's matchbox reads "GUARANTEED: ONE MILLION LIGHTS IN THIS IGNITER": neither a totalitarian bureaucracy nor a consumer economy can be imagined without writing. TV renders reading unnecessary, one character explains, if you "give the people contests they win by remembering the words to popular songs": but how to check the results without a written record? Like some high-end interior decorator, Montag's co-conspirator Faber keeps his TV set hidden behind a picture frame: an older mimetic medium layered on top of a new one. But even this visual medium turns out to obey an alphabetic logic: "Montag," the TV set said, and lit up. "M-O-N-T-A-G." The name was spelled out by a voice.

The bonfire or the TV, the match or the plug? After showing
Montag a two-way radio whose “beetle hum” uncomfortably echoes the insect metaphors used elsewhere in the novel to denigrate mass culture, the owner of the camouflaged TV adds “good night and good luck.” Any contemporary reader would have recognized the tagline borrowed from a two-year-old CBS show, “See It Now,” whose anchor’s second most famous one-liner was “I wish goddamned television had never been invented.” The first show to broadcast live from both coasts, “See It Now” at once imitated and drove out of business his earlier radio show “Hear It Now,” itself modeled on a series of records. In that context, “good night and good luck” sounds like the message sent from TV to radio, or radio to record, or record to book: again, ceçi tuera cela. For Bradbury, however, the allusion allows the novel not to be superseded by TV, but rather to incorporate it. Same content, different medium (“See It Now” shared Bradbury’s anti-McCarthyite agenda): if you can’t beat ‘em, quote ‘em.

Where Bradbury translates televised speech into print, Truffaut would go on to transmute a printed text into speech. Not just by adapting a book to film, but also by expanding the final scene in which characters do something uncannily similar: they “become” books by choosing one (rather like the library patrons who participate today in “Adopt-a-Book” schemes) to preserve by memorizing and reciting. As Jonathan Freedman points out, no one wants to be Mein Kampf. Nor does anyone volunteer to be one of the issues of Playboy in which Fahrenheit 451 was serialized, let alone the current TV Guide.

If the book isn’t and has never been the primary vehicle of print, much less of information, and if even the majority of books are mundane rather than literary and random access rather than linear, why do discussions of digital media always proceed as if the book—paradigmatically, an esthetically ambitious novel—were the entity suddenly being toppled from its supposedly traditional pedestal? This is less of a paradox than first appears. As the book becomes less quotidian, it becomes more visible: even within academia, the period in which libraries slashed book budgets and university presses slashed acquisitions coincides with the moment at which the history of books established itself as a free-standing field, complete
with journals, textbooks, and degree programs. Outside universities, meanwhile, studies of gaming or social networking continue to command smaller audiences than books about books, whether middlebrow surveys like Alberto Manguel's *History of Reading* (1996), antiquarian polemics like Nicholson Baker's *Double Fold* (2001), or mumblecore trivia like Henry Petroski's *The Bookshelf* (1999). Bibliolatry infiltrated genres ranging from self-help (*The Little Guide to Your Well-Read Life*, self-published in 2005 by the CEO of a firm that sells retro booksnakes, inkwells, and Personal Non-Digital Assistants) to film (in bibliodocumentaries like Mark Moscowsitz's 2002 *The Stone Reader*, a vaseline-filtered road movie chronicling the director's testosterone-drenched search for the author of a sub-faulknerian Great American Novel) to autobibliographies (Seth Lerer's term) and "bibliofessionals" (Mikita Brottman's) whose antisocial tenor is best summarized by the title of Maureen Corrigan's contribution to the genre, *Leave Me Alone, I'm Reading* (2005). Where Cold War works like *Fahrenheit 451* celebrated an oppositional subculture of readers as vehemently on screen (in the Truffaut adaptation) as on the page (in Bradbury's original), Web-2.0-era digital media instead celebrate their launch by thematizing the solitude of an individual provincial reader. Thus, Sony's e-reader is advertised with a sample screen from *The Secret Life of Bees*: "I was the only student who didn't groan and carry on when Mrs. Henry assigned us another Shakespeare play. Well actually, I did pretend to groan, but inside I was as thrilled as if I'd been crowned Sylvan's Peach Queen." As the reading of books ceases to be a practice, it becomes an identity (to be marked with bumper stickers, tee shirts, and other nonbibliographic forms of text), and as other means for storing, retrieving, and authenticating information become more practical, the book begins to look more sacred.

But maybe "begin" is wrong word, since the book's cultural value has never been limited to its function as a vehicle for information. Even during its most monopolistic period—after the advent of print, before the triumph of radio—the book has held meaning not just for readers but for users and has acquired value not just through reading but through handling. Until the end of that period, the fetishization of the book
looked even more literal. The term originates, of course, in a religious context—as a term used to describe someone else's religious practices, in the process of distancing yourself from them. In the British empire, Protestant missionaries described their goal (in positive terms) as spreading literacy (to enable everyone to read the Gospels); on the ground, however, they often seem more concerned (in negative terms) with limiting bibliolatry. They worried, that is, not only about the inability of the poor, the heathen, (and often the Catholic) to read their sacred text, but also about the ability of those populations to put the Bible to uses other than reading. The first English explorers found the natives of Virginia, for example, “glad to touch [the Bible], to embrace it, to kisse it, to hold it to their brests and heades, and stroke all over their bodies with it” (Wogan 407). Elsewhere in the present-day US, native graves have been found to contain a leaf torn from a Bible (Amory, “The Trout and the Milk: An Ethnobibliographical Talk”). Protestant missionaries faced a double bind, as worried that converts would value the Bible for the wrong reasons as that they would refuse to value it at all. Or more precisely—since in times and places where paper was scarce, no book could be entirely worthless—they worried that the book would be perceived either as something more than a carrier of text, or something less. The fear that (as one in India put it) natives would exalt the Bible to a “fetish” or subject it to “pharausal idolatry” coexisted with his equally sharp anxiety that free paper might become waste paper: that pages of the Bible could be spotted wrapping goods in the bazaar, or worse (Viswanathan 51). Elevating the bible to a sacred object was as dangerous as reducing it to a material one.

In colonial contact zones, that is, the zero-sum relation between the power of the material book and of the verbal text became starkly visible. But a subtler version of the same conflicts already existed within Protestant Europe, where a Bible could be kissed to lend weight to an oath, stuck under invalids' pillows, used as a shield against bullets, and even eaten (Cressy 98–99). Decisions were made, and the future predicted, by what page the Bible fell open to. Births and deaths were recorded in blank spaces of Bibles (often the only writing surface available in poor households). Nor was it easy to dismiss those practices as remnants of pagan or crypto-
Catholic superstition: the same Protestant clergy who accused others of "idolatry" for investing the book with totemic powers laid themselves open to that charge when they placed their faith in the dissemination of printed matter. As nineteenth-century missionaries developed a network to distribute Bibles throughout West Africa, some Africans began to call books the "white man's fetish." And the charge of bibliolatry could even be extended to freethinking intellectuals—characterized in 1890 by the journalist Francis Hitchman as "people in whose eyes a book is a species of Fetish, and who look upon printed paper with as much reverence as do the Mahometans" (Hitchman 151).

The latest survey suggests that 92 percent of American households own a Bible; the average household, in fact, lists three. That fewer than half those respondents can name the first book of the Old Testament reminds us that reading is not the only use to which books can be put (Adams and Heath 8). Like the exercise bike sitting the basement, the book sitting on the shelf tells us nothing about practices but a great deal about promises. A joke from 1823:

Some gentlemen of a Bible Association lately calling upon an old woman to see if she had a Bible were severely reproved by a spirited reply. "Do you think, gentlemen, that I am a heathen, that you should ask me such a question?" Then addressing a little girl, she said, "Run and fetch the bible out of my drawer, that I may show it to the gentlemen." They declined giving her the trouble; but she insisted upon giving them ocular demonstration that she was no heathen. Accordingly the Bible was brought, nicely covered; and on opening it, the old woman exclaimed, "Well, how glad I am that you have come; here are my spectacles that I have been looking for these three years, and didn't know where to find 'em." (Miscellaneous Cabinet 184)

We think of spectacles as a tool for reading books, but the joke reminds us that books can also be tools for storing spectacles. Twenty-first-century surveys conclude that the presence of the number of books owned in a household correlates more strongly with standardized test scores than does either reading aloud or parents' educational level. In fact, visits to a li-
brary are an even weaker predictor: better to have books lying around unread than to read books that don’t belong to you.1

Bibles make visible a problem that dogs secular books in more subtle ways: the fear that people don’t value books enough finds its obverse in the fear that people value them for the wrong reasons. Those reasons can involve investing the physical object with too many powers (“idolatry”), or investing its linguistic contents with too few. Home-decorating manuals for two centuries have debated whether it’s vulgar to buy your books by the yard; terms such as “furniture book” and “sofa-table book” (in the nineteenth century) and “coffeeable book” (in the twentieth) make clear how sharply any attention to the material form of the book detracts from its textual contents. The functionality of the screen is merely the last of the long list of factors that reduce the book to a fetish: paper and glue provoke the same reverence in successive NEA reports as a gilt frame from a museum goer, regardless of what happens to be inside it. On the kitchen counter, a laptop; on the coffee-table, a book.

NOTES

1 Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady, ed. William T. Stafford (NY: Library Classics of the United States, 1985), 240. Wendy Griswold predicts a future in which “reading will retain and even increase its prestige as it becomes seen as an endangered practice. Institutions will celebrate and facilitate reading. Nonreaders will honor it and encourage it among their children. Reading will not just give access to cultural capital: the practice itself will be cultural capital” (Regionalism and the Reading Class [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2008], 66–67).

2 Stallybrass adds that “When cultural critics nostalgically recall an imagined past in which readers unscrolled their books continuously from beginning to end, they are reversing the long history of the codex and the printed book as indexical forms. The novel has only been a brilliantly perverse interlude in the long history of discontinuous reading” (“Book and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible,” in Books and Readers in Early Modern England, ed. Jennifer Anderson and Elizabeth Sauer [Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2002], 27).

6 The Administration of the Post Office, from the Introduction of Mr Rowland Hill's Plan of Penny Postage up to the Present Time, Grounded on Parliamentary Documents, and the Evidence taken before the Select Committee on Postage (London: J. Hatchard, 1844), 103.
8 Newsweek symposium on “Reading and Writing after Print Culture,” New York, November 2007.
10 “The Role of the Black West Indian Missionary in West Africa, 1840–1890,” Ph.D. thesis (Temple University, 1972), 121, quoted in (Hofmeyer, 2001). And as Patrick Harries points out, Africans who invested books with totemic powers could look uncannily like “Europeans who invested the bible with supernatural powers when taking an oath, or who read the Good Book as divine revelation or self-evident truth” and who “collected books not for the information and ideas they contained, but in order to present a show of knowledge and wealth” (Harries, 421).
11 On reading aloud and library visits as compared with owning books, see Levitt, 2006, 172–173; for parents’ educational level compared with presence of books in the home, “To read or not to read” 75. Similar results are cited in McQuillan, The Literacy Crisis: False Claims and Real Solutions, 1998, and Krashen, The Power of Reading, 2004. In another counterintuitive study, “the amount of shared parent/child reading time did not matter, on average, for the reading skills of either group of kids [mothers who read an average amount and mothers who spent an unusually high amount of time reading]. What mattered instead . . . for the kids of the highreading moms was how orderly the family’s home was” (http://www.slate.com/id/2212318/).

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Miscellaneous Cabinet 1.23 (1823): 184.


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