

or the belief among older students that if extensive reading is required, the hardcopy results in better education. One of the main reasons they prefer books over e-books is the ease with which they can highlight, make annotations in the margins and locate certain passages more easily.

Perhaps even more surprising, parents employed in Silicon Valley digital technology professions prefer to have their children educated with print rather than eBooks or eTexts. In addition, the use of any digital screen by children under 2 should be limited, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Besides a short overview of the evolution of reading throughout the centuries, Professor Baron includes chapters on *The Appeal of Words Onscreen*, *The Web Ate My Print Option: One-Off Reading*, *Your Brain on Hyper Reading* and *The Future of Reading in a Digital World*, where many issues and debates are aired. We

erroneously believe that everything digital will take less of a toll on the environment but, in fact, to make a printed book, two-thirds of a pound of minerals are required, versus 33 pounds of rare minerals from conflict areas in Africa for a single eReader. One hundred kilowatt-hours of fossil fuels, creating 66 pounds of CO₂, are consumed to manufacture an eReader, whereas a book, using a renewable resource, takes just 2 kilowatt-hours and produces 100 times less in greenhouse gases. Keep in mind that digital data warehouses use 30 billion watts of electricity worldwide, or the same energy produced by about 30 nuclear power plants.

Statistics from student surveys Professor Baron carried out over the past few years in the U.S., Japan and Germany show a surprising preference for reading in print, whether for academic purposes or pleasure: "...when it comes to pleasure reading, students in all three countries favored print over digital." In all three countries,

students prefer a hardcopy when reading lengthy texts, whether for schoolwork (92% in the U.S., 77% in Japan, 95% in Germany) or pleasure (85% in the U.S., 74% in Japan and 88% in Germany). While some studies show better comprehension of texts in print than onscreen, others indicate there is no difference at all, but reading in print reduces distraction and increases mental focus since there are no hyperlinks or hypertexts to lure the mind away from the main story or subject, leading Professor Baron to state, "Given these findings, I can only wonder why the educational establishment is pushing students toward digital reading."

Professor Baron's highly-readable study raises many questions and provides quite a few answers. A must-read for all involved in the education system. ■