Exploring a Post-Literate Future

The Beyond Literacy Thought Experiment

or

Exploring Participatory, Online Writing: the Good, the Bad, and the Trolls

Michael Ridley
University of Guelph

TUG Conference | April 19, 2013 | CIGI Waterloo
“Where did you go on your sabbatical?”
Reading and writing are doomed.

Literacy as we know it is over.

Welcome to the post-literate future.
www.BeyondLiteracy.com
Editorial Team

Michael Riley is a librarian at the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Until January 2012 he was the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Librarian in a position he held for 18 years. Over the past 9 years he has been speaking, writing, and teaching about issues related to library and the role of literacy. A biography and CV is available on his website: [Exploring the Information Ecology](http://www.michaelriley.ca).

The Editorial Team for Beyond Literacy is comprised of the students in the School, University of Toronto course INF331H Special Topics in Information: Beyond Literacy. These students were the authors and contributors of the project. As part of the course they acted as researchers, writers, administrators, reviewers, technical support, moral support, and many other functions.
The Challenge:

Online e-book
Serialized publication
Graduate course
Collaborative authorship
Networked conversation
Sustain reputation
Exciting & Terrifying
“Bovine Excrement.”
“If you have any young friends who aspire to become writers, the second greatest favor you can do them is to present them with copies of *The Elements of Style*.

The first greatest, of course, is to shoot them now, while they’re happy.”

Dorothy Parker
So, Why Do This?
Author Control Not!
Seriously, Why Do This?
“The incunabula period of the digital age.”

T. Scott Plutchak
University of Alabama
Howard Rheingold

Faculty (Berkeley, Stanford, MIT)
Social Media Guru
Visionary

21st Century Fluencies
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21st Century Fluencies
Attention
Participation
Collaboration
Critical Consumption
Network Awareness
What Worked?
• writing short pieces & serialization
• popular, casual tone
• letting go; people joined in
• WordPress (supported tools)
• a plan: followed & abandoned
• technical help
• diversity of voices & ideas
What Not So Much?
• media interest
• commenting
• text / multimedia
• WordPress template
• pre-arranged contributors
Not so cute after all

Trolls
Beyond Literacy:
14,000+ (and counting) spam comments
Was It Worth It?
“Try again.
Fail again.
Fail better.”

Samuel Beckett
Association of College & Research Libraries

Ontario Library Association

iSchool, University of Toronto

First Year Seminar Program
University of Guelph
The Beyond Literacy Thought Experience

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Candidates for Post-Literacy

- Bio-Computing / Neural Prosthetics
- Telepathy / Techlepathy
- Collective Unconscious / Consciousness
- Drugs / Cosmetic Neurology
- Machine Intelligence
- Post-Humans