

# The Stavanger Declaration on the Future of Reading



*Press Release: The new importance of reading*

**The medium matters: Well over one hundred scientists publish interdisciplinary Stavanger Declaration on the future of reading in the era of digitisation in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 January 2019:**

**<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/themen/stavanger-erklaerung-von-e-read-zur-zukunft-des-lesens-16000793.html>**

Over the last four years members of the European research initiative E-READ have been researching the impact of digitisation on reading practices. The research has specifically focused on how readers, and particularly children and young adults, comprehend or remember written text when using digital materials compared to printed ones. The Stavanger Declaration, signed by well over one hundred scholars and scientists, is based on research by experts from a wide range of scientific fields, with different experiences and views, contains a summary of the outcomes. Its predominant conclusion is that the transition from paper to digital is not neutral.

One of the Declaration's main findings is that although comprehension may benefit when digital text presentation is properly tailored to an individual's preferences and needs, readers become overconfident about their comprehension abilities when this is not the case, leading to more skimming and less concentration on reading matter when reading digitally. A meta-study of 54 studies with more than 170.000 participants demonstrates that comprehension of long-form informational text is stronger when read on paper than on screens, particularly when the reader is under time pressure. Contrary to expectations about the behaviour of 'digital natives', such screen inferiority effects compared to paper have increased rather than decreased over time, regardless of age group and of prior experience with digital environments.

Research also indicates that reading has effects beyond the ones we consciously pursue when reading for entertainment, learning, and finding information. Given a reading diet of appropriate length and complexity, reading has the potential to foster mental focus, patience and discipline, offers emotional and aesthetic experiences, increases linguistic knowledge and enhances economic and personal well-being. Skimming texts doesn't bring such benefits.

In today's hybrid reading environment, paper and digital technologies each offer different advantages for different purposes. In order to properly manage the digital transformation, we need to gain a better understanding when to use which to best advantage. Therefore, the Stavanger Declaration calls for caution when introducing digital technologies to education and urges for further research on pressing issues regarding screen technologies and cognition. Teachers and other educators must be made aware that rapid and indiscriminate swaps of print, paper, and pencils for digital technologies in primary education are not neutral. Unless accompanied by carefully developed digital learning tools and strategies, they may cause a setback in the development of children's reading comprehension and emerging critical thinking skills.



The **Evolution of Reading in the Age of Digitisation (E-READ)** is a COST-funded European research initiative bringing together almost 200 scholars and scientists of reading, publishing, and literacy from across Europe. *[For more information please visit <<http://ereadcost.eu>>]*



The **European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST)** provides funding for the creation of research networks, called COST Actions. These networks offer an open space for collaboration among scientists across Europe (and beyond) and thereby give impetus to research advancements and innovation. *[For more information please visit <<https://www.cost.eu/#>>]*

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