

## Book Review: Digital Dieting

Reviewed by Margaret Katny

Brabazon, Tara. *Digital Dieting: From Information Obesity to Intellectual Fitness*. Ashgate, 2013 333pp ISBN: 978 1 47240 9379 Price: £35.00

Tara Brabazon's new book is the last volume of a trilogy dealing with online learning. It follows "Digital Hemlock", which dealt with consequences of administrators (often failed teachers or academics) running online education for economic gain rather than to benefit learning. The second of the series, "The University of Google", mapped the costs of deskilling information literacy and the decline in the profile of librarians.

"Digital Dieting" brings together these subjects and places them in the learning landscape that has developed in the last decade. This landscape is described as a cultural shift from searching for information (on Google, of course) to over-sharing where recording and sharing individual, daily details takes precedence over reading and scholarship in the traditional sense.

Tara Brabazon questions the standards of teaching and learning at universities and argues for quality control to digital environments.

The book includes numerous examples of communications from students demonstrating their deskilling (searching rather than researching) and self-focus

and lack of respect for any knowledge beyond the self (sharing rather than searching). The image of the student that emerges from this book is that of a self-centred, highly dependent, somewhat manipulative individual with a short attention span, who is unable and unwilling to engage in reading or thinking, and who treats academic staff as shop assistants who must serve his or her interests quickly. The book is indeed dedicated to a young man fitting the above description so that he may “recognize the privilege of learning and the joys of scholarship”. At the other end of the scale, the book also contains splendid examples of students undergoing digital detox and developing their literacy skills.

This aim of this book is to present a series of models to “organise and improve our engagement with the on- and off-line moment”. The readers are asked to consider digital dieting to manage information obesity, and to select less information of higher quality by using media literacy skills. The book suggests several methods of achieving digital media literacy, turning social media into educational media and exploiting the iPad effect for its academic applications.

Tara Brabazon writes passionately and with commitment. Her book carries emotional energy that stems from her extensive experience of teaching and the conviction that the students deserve the best education that can be given to them.

The book is supported by relevant bibliographies and a thorough index.

It is a very engaging read for all information professionals with interest in information literacy.

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