

THE PROGRESSIVE DISAPPEARANCE OF HANDWRITING OR, THE INSANITY OF THE LAPTOP

by
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Writing is several thousands of years old, dating back to the very beginning of human history. It has been a crucial factor in the progress of civilization. Without writing, humanity would not have been able to become what it is today.

Writing is a tool for preserving knowledge, and allows for its transmission down through the generations. Learning to write, especially in today's society, is just as important as knowing how to speak your native language, as well as being important for learning foreign languages. However, since the arrival of computers, handwriting has been pushed aside in favor of typing on a keyboard, whether it's on a laptop, a desktop computer or a smartphone.

If you attend a class in a lecture hall now you will see that more than half of the students are taking notes on laptops and, what's more, teachers don't write on a chalkboard but instead uses slide shows, very often created with PowerPoint.

This observation raises a number of questions about the fate of handwriting. When it is taught in elementary school, handwriting is one of the essential skills that every scholar needs to know. And yet some officials in National Education are talking about introducing tablets and computers into elementary schools. What would happen to our schools if, from the very youngest age, we teach children to write using a computer rather than having them take notes by writing in notebooks?

Here we can see very quickly the paradoxes that computers and their excessive use create. A child who learns to write on a computer will no longer be capable of writing a simple sentence on a piece of paper.

That can seem like an exaggeration and yet the majority of today's students take notes in class with the help of a laptop, with all of the limitations that that entails. The digitization

of society has led to excesses which we are not even aware of. Paper mail is in free fall in favor of e-mail. Almost no one corresponds using paper mail anymore. We have arrived at an aberration that doesn't seem to be abating. If this continues, the manufacture of laptops will become the largest industry in every production sector, and we will all be forced to use these computers for even the smallest daily tasks.

Looking ahead a little bit, someone without a computer will essentially have returned to the Stone Age, before writing was invented.

We are unwittingly headed toward a disaster where our entire computerized society will collapse like a sandcastle in front of a powerful wave. Our dependency on computers will become such that the smallest electrical blackout will be practically fatal for a very large portion of the population.

But it's not just a blackout that could have serious consequences for individuals. There is another paradox, which is that owning a computer will become more important than food. Even now it's no longer possible to find a job without using a computer, which shows just how dependent we have become. As a result, someone without a computer is systematically excluded from the job market. This means that computers are excluding individuals more than they are liberating them.

Therefore, in the near future, being able to write on a piece of paper will no longer be of any use if you don't have a computer. In this respect, as Edgar Morin wrote, "We are advancing like tightrope walkers toward a catastrophe."