

British children's on-screen reading overtakes books

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A boy looks at a computer with Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling in London on June 23, 2011. For the first time British children are reading more on computers and other electronic devices than they are reading books, magazines, newspapers and comics, according to a study of nearly 35,000 youngsters.

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published Thursday.

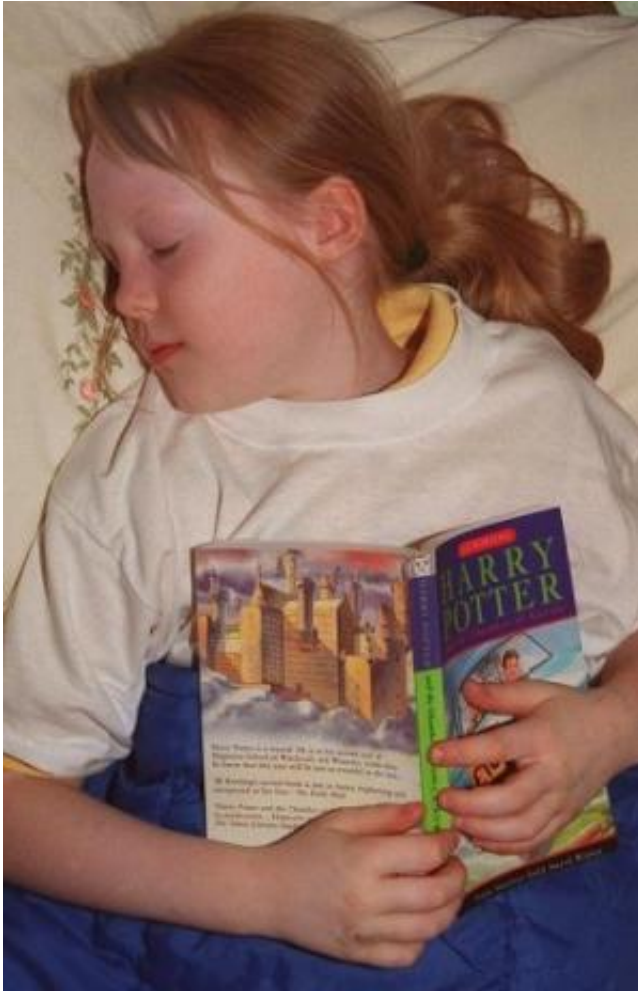
Some 52 percent of children say they would rather read on electronic devices while only a third (32 percent) would rather read a hard copy, the National Literacy Trust said.

It added that the trend could be "detrimental" to children's reading and urged a "healthier reading balance" between books and [electronic devices](#).

Nearly all children have access to a computer at home and four out of 10 now own a tablet or a [smartphone](#), said the trust, an independent charity promoting literacy.

The number of children reading e-books has doubled in the last two years, from six to 12 percent, it added.

The research among 34,910 young people aged eight to 16 also found that girls are significantly more likely than boys to read in print—68 percent versus 54 percent.



A young girl falls asleep while she waits for the launch of the new Harry Potter book at a London bookshop on July 7, 2000. Children now prefer to read on screen, with over half (52 percent) stating they would rather read on electronic devices while only a third (32 percent) would rather read in print, the National Literacy Trust says.

Girls are also more likely to read on a range of on-screen devices including mobile phones (67 percent of girls versus 60 percent of boys), e-readers (84 percent versus 69), and tablets (70 percent versus 67).

However, those who read daily only on-screen are barely half as likely to be above-average readers than those who read daily in print or in print

and on-screen (15.5 percent versus 26), the research said.

Jonathan Douglas, the trust's director, said: "While we welcome the positive impact which technology has on bringing further reading opportunities to young people, it's crucial that reading in print is not cast aside.

"We are concerned by our finding that children who only read on-screen are significantly less likely to enjoy reading and less likely to be strong readers.

"Good [reading skills](#) and reading for pleasure are closely linked to children's success at school and beyond. We need to encourage children to become avid readers, whatever format they choose."

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