

US residents gorging on data bytes: study

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A man uses a laptop computer at a wireless cafe. If the data devoured in the United States last year were converted to text there would be enough books to bury the country under a pile seven feet (two meters) deep, according to a study released Wednesday.

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US residents consumed about 1.3 trillion hours worth of [information](#) from radios, televisions, computers, newspapers, mobile telephones, and other sources, according to researchers at the University of California, San Diego.

That translated into an average of nearly 12 hours spent daily by each US resident [watching television](#), listening to MP3 players, scouring the Internet or tapped into other sources of data.

The information tally was the equivalent of 3.6 zettabytes of data, or 34 gigabytes per person per day. Thirty-four gigabytes of digital data would fit on about seven standard DVD disks.

Radio and TV remained the dominant sources for data flooding people's lives, accounting for 60 percent of the total hours, according to the study

by the university's Global Information Industry Center.

"Despite this, computers have had major effects on some aspects of information consumption," researchers Roger Bohn and James Short concluded.

"Thanks to computers, a full third of words and more than half of bytes are now received interactively."

Reading, which had been in a decline blamed on television, tripled from 1980 to 2008 because it is the overwhelmingly preferred way to receive words on the Internet, according to Bohn and Short.

Television, film and videogames laden with graphics were prime sources of data bytes. About 55 percent of information consumed was from computer games; 35 percent from television, and 10 percent from movies.

"We defined information as flows of data delivered to people and we measured the bytes, words, and hours of consumer information," Bohn and Short said.

"Video sources (moving pictures) dominate bytes of information."

The authors acknowledged that measuring in bytes gives more weight to data-rich content such as videogames that account for a small fraction of words consumed.

TV remained the single largest source of information, accounting for more than 45 percent of all words consumed in the United States.

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