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# In Study, Children Cite Appeal of Digital Reading

By **JULIE BOSMAN**

Many children want to read books on digital devices and would read for fun more frequently if they could obtain e-books. But even if they had that access, two-thirds of them would not want to give up their traditional print books.

These are a few of the findings in a study being released on Wednesday by Scholastic, the American publisher of the [Harry Potter](#) books and the “Hunger Games” trilogy.

The report set out to explore the attitudes and behaviors of parents and children toward reading books for fun in a digital age. Scholastic surveyed more than 2,000 children ages 6 to 17, and their parents, in the spring.

Parents and educators have long worried that digital diversions like video games and cellphones cut into time that children spend reading. However, they see the potential for using technology to their advantage, introducing books to digitally savvy children through e-readers, computers and mobile devices.

About 25 percent of the children surveyed said they had already read a book on a digital device, including computers and e-readers. Fifty-seven percent between ages 9 and 17 said they were interested in doing so.

Only 6 percent of parents surveyed owned an e-reader, but 16 percent said they planned to buy one in the next year. Eighty-three percent of those parents said they would allow or encourage their children to use the e-readers.

Francie Alexander, the chief academic officer at Scholastic, called the report “a call to action.”

“I didn’t realize how quickly kids had embraced this technology,” Ms. Alexander said, referring to computers and e-readers or other portable devices that can download books. “Clearly they see them as tools for reading — not just gaming, not just texting. They see them as an opportunity to read.”

Milton Chen, a senior fellow at the George Lucas Educational Foundation, said the report made the case that children want to read on new digital platforms.

“The very same device that is used for socializing and texting and staying in touch with their friends can also be turned for another purpose,” Mr. Chen said. “That’s the hope.”

But many parents surveyed also expressed deep concerns about the distractions of video games, cellphones and television in their children’s lives. They also wondered if the modern multi-tasking adolescent had the patience to become engrossed in a long novel.

“My daughter can’t stop texting long enough to concentrate on a book,” said one parent surveyed, the mother of a 15-year-old in Texas.

Another survey participant, the mother of a 7-year-old Michigan boy, said, “I am afraid my son’s attention span will only include fast-moving ideas, and book reading will become boring to him.”

More than half the parents surveyed said they were concerned that as their children spent more time using digital devices, they would be less interested in recreational reading. The study did not try to measure whether the digital devices actually did detract from time spent reading.

The study also examined the effect of parents and teachers on children’s reading habits. Children ages 9 to 11 are more likely to be frequent readers if their parents provide interesting books to read at home and set limits on time spent using technology like video games, the report said.

The report also suggested that many children displayed an alarmingly high level of trust in information available on the Internet: 39 percent of children ages 9 to 17 said the information they found online was “always correct.”