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Introduction

Taking the whole of society into account, reading literature online is a marginal phenomenon. However, if we analyse a wider spectrum of practices related to coding and decoding alphabetic texts, we could formulate convincing answers to questions about the role of the Internet in shaping Poles' reading habits. In this paper, we will

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- 1 Since Spring 2015, when this article was written, the National Library has carried out two reading research projects. Both of them confirm the hybrid nature of today's reading world where digital and analogue practices complement or facilitate one another rather than simply compete. However, the 2015 and 2016 surveys point also to significant differences between analogue and digital practices with regard to social status. It seems that while analogue reading is especially important in childhood and adolescence as a means of educational advancement, reading traditional books or newspapers rarely gives adults a chance to climb the social ladder. What correlates with a higher social status in adult life is rather the versatile usage of the Internet. See Dominika Michalak, Izabela Koryś and Jarosław Kopeć, *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2015 roku* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2016), accessed September 2, 2017, <http://www.bn.org.pl/download/document/1459845698.pdf>; Izabela Koryś et al., *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2016 roku* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2017), accessed September 2, 2017, <http://www.bn.org.pl/download/document/1492689764.pdf>

present our conclusions drawn from the analysis and interpretation of social and demographic data on Polish readers: those who use new technologies and read literature online as well as those who prefer analogue media. Our main conclusion is that digital practices go hand in hand with analogue ones. We also argue that the social traits that have divided readers of the print media in the last decade, may soon – with great probability – be reproduced in the digital environment. The seemingly egalitarian online reading world is likely to become as clearly stratified as that of print.

About our Data

Our key source of data about Polish Internet users were surveys carried out by the National Library. We mainly refer to the research conducted in the autumn of 2014 on a representative sample of 3000 Polish citizens of at least 15 years of age. The research concerned print and digital reading practices. In this article, we also refer to several earlier researches carried out by the National Library and other surveys involving Internet users. All of the data visualized in tables below are taken from the TNS research conducted for the National Library in 2014, unless stated otherwise. All correlations characterising the entire sample of the research are relevant statistically ($p < 0,05$). Exceptions to this rule are clearly marked.

Typology of Internet Users

Although the division into users and non-users of the Internet is still one of the most important categorizations in quantitative research concerning this medium, it is also obvious that even a rough description of today's users of the World Wide Web requires more detailed categorizations because it is a much larger and more diversified group than even a decade ago.² In this article we put forward a typology of users based on the results of the National Library's survey from 2014 – including the digital division.

Respondents were asked twelve questions regarding their practices on the Internet during the previous month (table 1). All practices are positively correlated – none of them “polarize” Internet users by unequivocally dividing them into its advocates and critics, nor do they merely “accumulate” in

2 Dominika Czerniawska, *Wykluczenie cyfrowe. Strukturalne uwarunkowania korzystania z Internetu w Polsce i województwie mazowieckim* (Warszawa: MGG Conferences, 2012), *Trendy rozwojowe i zmiany gospodarcze w regionie* (Warszawa: MGG Conferences, 2012), 11, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.mgg-conferences.pl/media/pdf/reports/wykluczenie-cyfrowe.pdf>

a straightforward, algebraic manner. Between people who do not use the Internet at all (non-users) and people declaring all practices mentioned in the research (omni-users), there emerge various combinations of practices clustering around common behaviour corresponding with various ways of using the Internet. In order to identify these clusters, we applied the latent class analysis method.

Table 1. The share of respondents declaring to undertake following Internet activity within the last year

During the last month, while using the Internet, did you...	Yes, I did
use e-mail?	54%
search for practical advice or tips?	47%
visit a social media portal?	45%
use a search engine other than Google?	45%
search for information related with your work or education?	41%
use an online encyclopedia?	40%
download free content?	26%
read a blog post?	26%
take part in a discussion or post a commentary under another post or article?	23%
upload something to the Internet?	21%
read literary pieces?	18%
download paid content?	15%

According to this method, on the basis of the observed indicator variables, it is possible to identify a number of separable latent classes. Our indicator variables were respondents' declarations concerning their online practices, as a result the classes we have identified differ in a statistically significant manner in terms of Internet reading practices. Apart from constructing the empirically grounded typology, this method classifies all of the observed cases (respondents) by assigning each of them to one of the separable types singled out by the algorithm.³ Effectively, such typology may be used as a dependent variable (see Table 2).

3 Maria Nawojczyk, *Przewodnik po statystyce dla socjologów* (Kraków: SPSS Polska, 2004), 247.

Table 2. Frequency and share of types of Internet users

Types of Internet users	Frequency	share in %
occasional users	395	13,2
social media downloaders	339	11,3
social media users	330	11,0
practitioners	295	9,8
readers of literature online	225	7,5
omni-users	357	11,9
non-users	1059	35,3
Total	3000	100,0

The proposed categorization is a typology, which means that we have divided respondents with respect to their resemblance to a given type. It may happen, therefore, that among omni-users, who are supposed to answer “yes” to all questions concerning Internet usage, we will find someone who said “no” to one.

Literacy and the Social Structure

In the following, we present the primary social and demographic conditions of Internet usage. We then compare them with corresponding determinants relating to reading habits to discern discrepancies and analogies. We assume that statistical correlations between one’s position in the social structure and her or his digital or analogue reading can help identify institutions and underlying forms of capital playing the key role in culture transmission.⁴ In fact, this is what we are aiming at in this article: being aware that the picture that emerges from surveys is generalising and coincidental, we nevertheless believe that comparing data concerning participation in digital and analogue culture may help answer questions about the supposedly egalitarian nature of the Internet.

4 This assumption and the research method – oriented to search for homology between the social structure and divisions related with the style of participation in culture – are mainly inspired by Pierre Bourdieu for whom this homology of social and cultural divisions (and not individual dependencies) were the starting point of the reflection upon the transmission of culture and social inequalities. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Dystynkcja* (Warszawa: Scholar, 2005), 129-148, 215-223.

In Poland, the Internet gained popularity as a meta-medium for participants of print culture. Sebastian Wierny showed that in 2002 only 1% of all Internet users – ten times less than in the entire population – were excluded from the print culture, that is they did not read books or periodicals.⁵ Ten years later, the corresponding figure was 14 times higher: participation in the culture of print did not overlap with the digital divide any more.⁶ This change suggests that popularization of the Internet has made its culture more diverse: there has appeared a realm where readers and non-readers of print media could theoretically meet. If however the Internet was to overcome the old divisions, it should also prevent reproduction of social and demographic differences dividing the two groups within the digital world.

Research conducted at the beginning of this century proves that the digital divide was determined by such traits as age, place of residence, education, profession and salary.⁷ Pensioners, villagers, people with no education and low income were only sporadic users of the new medium, in contrast to young, educated, well-situated inhabitants of cities. Current research indicate that these features still distinguish Internet users from non-users, but the proportion between the number of members of these two groups has reversed. Using the Internet is no longer an indicator of high social standing. It is rather a lack of contact with this medium which makes it possible – with large probability – to identify the least visible groups in collective life, especially the elderly.⁸ At the same time, the “hard barriers” in accessing the Internet (such as underdeveloped infrastructure in the rural areas or respondents’ wealth) have lost their significance.⁹

5 Sebastian Wierny, “Co czytają Polacy, czyli uczestnictwo w kulturze druku w Polsce na progu XXI wieku,” in *Książka na początku wieku*, ed. Grażyna Strauss, Katarzyna Wolff and Sebastian Wierny (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2004), 11–45.

6 Olga Dawidowicz-Chymkowska and Dominika Michalak, *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2012 roku. Transmisja kultury pisma* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2015), 298–301.

7 Janusz Czapiński and Tomasz Panek, *Diagnoza społeczna 2003* (Warszawa: Wyższa Szkoła Finansów i Zarządzania, 2003), 211–216, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.diagnoza.com/files/raport2003.pdf>

8 Dominik Batorski, *Polacy wobec technologii cyfrowych – uwarunkowania dostępności i sposobów korzystania*, in *Diagnoza społeczna 2013. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków – Raport*, ed. Tomasz Panek and Janusz Czapiński (Warszawa: Drukarnia Braci Grodzkich, 2014), 366. See also Dominik Batorski and Jan M. Zając, *Między alienacją a adaptacją. Polacy w wieku 50+ wobec Internetu* (Warszawa: Koalicja Dojrzałość w Sieci 2010).

9 Batorski, *Polacy wobec technologii cyfrowych*, 365.

If we were to examine solely the digital divide, the Internet undoubtedly breaks social barriers. It seems also a promise of a more open culture for future generations since most schoolchildren use the Internet frequently, and only a few percent of them do it less often than once a month.¹⁰ However, to verify whether some old social divisions are reproduced by the new medium or not, we should look closer at Internet users and the practices they are engaged in.

We tried to establish which of the several features of one's social status most strongly and most independently correlate with the respondent's association with Internet user types denoted earlier in this text. In order to discern them, we applied the CHAID analysis. How does the algorithm work? Let us imagine a hypothetical settlement where the rule is that the inhabitants of each block of flats share at least one quality and that neighbours from each floor are possibly alike. In our research we took into account several social and demographic features. Theoretically, our "settlement" may have been designed in many different ways. In practice, however, some traits turned out to divide respondents more sharply than others, and only few variables determined the arrangement of our hypothetical neighbourhood.¹¹ Due to the vastness of the diagram illustrating the results of the CHAID analysis, we decided to describe its results.

The most significant variable included in the analysis,¹² that is the trait that divides our ordered settlement into blocks, is a *g. e.* Variables determining the layout of each "floor" – are indicators of *c u l t u r a l c a p i t a l*. This means that both variables overlap. As a rule, respondents who have achieved

10 Zofia Zasacka, *Czytelnictwo dzieci i młodzieży* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, 2014), 173.

11 An excellent, detailed description of the algorithm may be found in the "Internet Statistics Manual" published by StatSoft, accessed March 10, 2015, http://www.statsoft.pl/textbook/stathome_stat.html?http%3A%2F%2Fwww.statsoft.pl%2Ftextbook%2Fstchaid.html

12 In the analysis, we considered the following variables: basic demographic features (sex, age, marital status, children under 15 in the household), indicators of cultural capital (respondents' education, command of foreign languages) including indicators of cultural capital acquired at home or typical of the whole environment (parents' education and profession, the level of readership in the family and among friends, as well as variables which characterize respondents' literacy upbringing: whether respondents' parents read books to them in their childhood, whether they were encouraged to read, whether books were purchased for them, whether they were encouraged to participate in afterschool activities, whether adults in the family read books themselves, whether they put emphasis on pupils' results at school and whether respondents read school-recommended readings), the social and professional situation, indicators of the economic capital (monthly net income of respondents and their households, evaluation of their financial situation).

a higher education level are more likely to use the Internet in ways employed by younger generations: education makes them technologically younger.

Let us get back to our metaphor to support this hypothesis with statistical evidence. Non-users of the Internet comprise 35% of the settlement population. But in the block inhabited by respondents over 67,¹³ they amount to 89% of the tenants. In the building inhabited by respondents between 57 and 66 years old, it is already 70% and in every subsequent building this rate drops. Only 4 out of 100 people living in the block inhabited by the youngest respondents (15-22 years old) are non-users of the Internet. In all the buildings inhabited by respondents under 57, the majority of people use the web, but each of the buildings is statistically dominated by users of a different type.

The block inhabited by 51-56 year-olds is still dominated by non-users (56%); at the same time, the number of occasional users is almost 1.5 times bigger than in the entire settlement. Among 39-50 year-olds, the largest group is constituted by the interactive one (twice as many as on average). In the building inhabited by 22-28 year-olds, there are almost 2.5 times more downloaders, while among the youngest respondents, omni-users are dominant (36%, i.e. three times as many as in the entire settlement). The interrelation between the manner of using the Internet and the respondents' age reflects the history of the Internet's development: in the late 1990s it was still a very limited medium available to a fraction of the population, then it expanded mainly as a source of information, and finally the Internet has become the platform of social life and expression.

Nevertheless, if we take a closer look at the inhabitants of particular floors, the picture gets complicated. It turns out that some of the older respondents resemble the younger ones (and *vice versa*) in their style of using the Internet. What makes respondents "younger" (or "older") is their cultural capital: level of education (in the case of adult respondents) or parents' investment in education (in the case of the youngest respondents).

The group of 51-56 year-olds with primary or vocational education are non-users, more or less, as often as representatives of the older age group. The Internet is used with almost the same low frequency by respondents between 39 and 50 who describe members of their close family as "rather non-readers of books" (non-users amount to 63% in this group). Among younger

13 The reader attached to survey data being presented in equal increment age groups, may be struck by age groups which were not rounded up. These categories, however, are empirical (just like all other categories depicted in the analysis), hence we cannot expect them to be as neatly divided as the arbitrary ones.

respondents (28-38 years old) with vocational education or less, there are over 2.5 times more occasional users than on average. The youngest, unless in their very recent childhood they participated in afterschool activities, are twice as often – similarly to their older friends – in the community of “down-loaders”. In the case of respondents over the age of 28, higher level of education, its continuation or participation in afterschool activities (in the case of the youngest group), bring them closer to the styles of using the Internet characteristic of younger generations or (in the case of the youngest ones) to that of omni-users.

It should be stressed that Internet practices of the youngest respondents are closely linked with their participation in afterschool activities. This correlation reveals how the older generation contributes to recreating divisions of class and culture. It also shows that family home is an institution of fundamental importance to the development of e-culture. What impacts the future reading practices, however, is not the power of family bonds, but rather the educational aspirations of the family with regards to their children’s upbringing. Families facilitate rather than just provide socialization to the digital world. Similarly, the relationship between the style of using the Internet and education in the case of adult respondents does not mirror the relevance of educational programmes (in most cases it had nothing to do with the Internet) but the role of schools (especially universities) as meeting places: institutions linking us with people who use the Internet. The complex interrelation between education and Internet practices support the thesis that our social status (our professional circles, family and friends) to a large extent shape our way of using the Internet.

Methods of using the Internet are related with social and demographic variables in the same way as analogue literacy. First of all, age and education are the main determinants of our fluency in decoding print media. The research conducted by the National Library since 1992 shows that the elderly and uneducated do not usually participate in the culture of print. The group most attuned to such a culture are young people who are university graduates or still students, whose friends read books and whose parents are well-educated.¹⁴ Secondly, also in the case of traditional literacy

¹⁴ Izabela Koryś and Olga Dawidowicz-Chymkowska, *Spółeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2010 r. Bilans dwudziestolecia* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2012), 26-37; Olga Dawidowicz-Chymkowska and Dominika Michalak, *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2012 roku* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2013), 311-314; Izabela Koryś, Dominika Michalak and Roman Chymkowski *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2014 roku* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2015), 6-13, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://bn.org.pl/download/document/1422018329.pdf>

(particularly book reading), the interdependence between age and education is significant. Even though on average Poles read less and less with time, this tendency is less noticeable among well-educated people, and least visible among children of educated parents. The elderly (over 60) who have higher education, unlike their peers without education, still read books and periodicals.¹⁵

Thirdly, in the case of literacy – both analogue and digital – we observe a similar pattern of giving up reading. *The Social Diagnosis* [*Diagnoza Społeczna*] from 2013 demonstrates that uneducated, elderly people and villagers are statistically more likely to stop using the Internet.¹⁶ The National Library research shows that the same features (especially combined with low cultural capital) coincide with quitting analogue reading. The Internet, however, is still younger than one generation, so we cannot tell whether this pattern is going to last.

In the 2014 survey, which we studied more closely than previous data, the conditions of transmitting reading culture were related to one's upbringing in the family and the reading habits of friends. The survey's results back the previously formulated theses according to which educational differences and the fact that readers usually associate with people similar to them, are one of the main barriers to spreading readership. If the Internet indeed gets adapted in a way that is typical of literacy, we may expect that inequalities related to using the Internet are not a temporary phenomenon. They will keep reproducing, even though the ways of using the Internet are bound to evolve. What seems fundamental to greater egalitarianism of the social life online – just like in the case of print literacy – is decreasing educational inequality, particularly that brought on by the inherited social capital. In spite of appearances, these inequalities have not diminished in the post-transformation Poland and, as we have attempted to show, they are reflected in the divisions in the digital world.¹⁷

Who Reads Online, and What?

It is hard to examine reading behaviour in detail using surveys as researchers usually pre-define respondents' answers and are forced to rely on their

15 Dawidowicz-Chymkowska and Michalak, *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2012 roku*, 26-28, 62-69.

16 Batorski, *Polacy wobec technologii cyfrowych*, 366.

17 Zbigniew Sawiński, "Zmiany systemowe a nierówności w dostępie do wykształcenia," in *Zmiany stratyfikacji społecznej w Polsce*, ed. Henryk Domański (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFIS PAN, 2008), 43.

declarations. Drawing conclusions is then based on *ex-post* declarations, distorted by both the limitations of human memory and the social context of the interview. It should be stressed that in Poland, reading books is a socially valued activity – the fact that whether we read at all and what books we read may incite social judgement can therefore impact respondents' declarations.

Such difficulties are also experienced by researchers examining electoral preferences. It is widely known that some respondents tend to deny their support for extreme political factions, instead they prefer to point to widely accepted establishment parties and avoid revealing their sympathies towards the radical ones. We suspect that a similar mechanism may be influencing reading research in Poland leading to, for example, inflating the reading rate or influencing declarations on reader's choices.

In the case of reading literature on the Internet, an additional difficulty lies in the fluidity of the research subject. In our 2014 survey we asked respondents if they had read any "literary works" online in the past month. To our surprise, 36% of respondents who declared to have read a literary work on the Internet during the past month also stated that during the past year they had not read any books. We cannot tell, however, what they read and how they understood the term of "literary work". Were that poems, fanfiction, unpublished literary pieces on literary websites? Or only book reviews and interpretations on blogs or, in the case of students, summaries of school readings or "cribs"? Whatever it was, they called it "literature".¹⁸

Surprisingly, reading literary works on the Internet turned out to be a highly selective activity: an activity that allowed for the statistically significant identification of a specific type of Internet users. The type is composed of users for whom reading literature online is one of very few activities, and of omni-users who are distinguished by the fact that they take part in all activities. What is interesting is that both groups behave similarly with regards to analogue reading, that is a similar percentage in each of the groups declared that they regularly read such literary genres as comic books, poetry, prose fiction, science and popular science books (Table 3). The regularity of reading books is comparable as well; moreover, it is higher than the average (reading seven or more books per year was declared by 20% of respondents in each of the groups). A positive correlation is also observed in the case of other book-related practices, like using public libraries, purchasing books as a gift or collecting books (Table 4).

¹⁸ Similarly, it is also likely that, when asked about books read in the past year, respondents tend to name paper books rather than their electronic counterparts. Low rates of e-books registered in the National Library's surveys indicate that respondents do not always consider reading literary works in digital formats as "reading books."

Table 3: Characteristics of types of Internet users

Types of Internet users:	average age (in years)	% of pupils/students	% of those who read comic books within last month	% of those who read poetry within last month	% of those who read science and popular science books within last month	% of those who read fiction within last month
occasional users	43	5%	1%	4%	7%	21%
social media downloaders	32	19%	9%	7%	22%	35%
social media users	37	9%	4%	6%	17%	36%
practitioners	42	4%	1%	4%	16%	37%
readers of literature online	37	15%	14%	20%	38%	48%
omni-users	31	27%	13%	21%	37%	48%
non-users	59	0	2%	3%	4%	18%
Total	44	8%	5%	8%	16%	30%

Table 4. Reading and book-oriented practices of various types of Internet users, the share of respondents who:

Type of Internet users:	Read an e-book within a year	Listened to an audiobook within a year	Read 7 or more books within a year	Bought a book as a gift for someone within a year	Used a public library within a year	Own collections over 100 books at home	Own both p-books and e-books or audiobooks
occasional users	3%	12%	7%	14%	10%	11%	4%
social media downloaders	25%	35%	14%	14%	17%	18%	9%

Type of Internet users:	Read an e-book within a year	Listened to an audiobook within a year	Read 7 or more books within a year	Bought a book as a gift for someone within a year	Used a public library within a year	Own collections over 100 books at home	Own both p-books and e-books or audiobooks
social media users	10%	22%	13%	18%	15%	17%	8%
practitioners	10%	20%	15%	15%	14%	19%	7%
readers of literature online	28%	34%	20%	26%	24%	28%	15%
omni-users	34%	33%	20%	21%	19%	28%	13%
non-users	1%	13%	6%	9%	7%	12%	6%
Total	12%	21%	11%	15%	13%	20%	8%

Certain similarities between readers of literature, omni-users and downloading social media users with regards to analogue readership practices can be explained by a relatively bigger number of students in these groups. Among pupils and students, the highest share of book readers can be observed (77% in comparison to 42% in total population). However their motivation for reading books is of extrinsic (imposed by educational requirements) rather than of intrinsic nature. Since the educational system in Poland does not instil a habit of reading or passion for literature in its students, many of them give up books upon graduation.¹⁹ The link between education, cultural capital and reading is clearly observed in groups of non-users and occasional users of the Internet. Respondents belonging to these categories declare undertaking digital and analogue reading practices most rarely, which confirms that digital exclusion in Poland is embedded in cultural and educational rather than solely economic inequalities. According to the data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland, the majority of respondents who do not use the Internet at home explain this with “lack of such need” or “lack of skills” (“lack of financial resources” is not an obstacle)²⁰. In the case of non-users, the same reasons – namely “lack of

19 Koryś and Dawidowicz-Chymkowska, *Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2010 r.*; Michalak and Dawidowicz-Chymkowska, *Stan czytelnictwa w Polsce w 2012 roku*; Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Społeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce. Wyniki badań statystycznych za lata 2009-2013* (Warszawa, 2014), accessed March 10, 2015, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/nauka-i-technika-spolczenstwo-informacyjne/spoleczenstwo-informacyjne/spoleczenstwo-informacyjne-w-polsce-wyniki-badan-statystycznych-z-lat-2009-2013,1,7.html>

20 Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Społeczeństwo informacyjne w Polsce. Wyniki badań statystycznych za lata 2009-2013*.

skills necessary for enjoyable reception of fiction and non-fiction” and “lack of such need or habit” – would be applicable also to reading of books.

Our reconstruction of online reading models is based on respondents’ answers regarding books they read, including books in digital formats. Out of 1,275 book readers in the 2014 survey, only 43 declared they read books in non-analogue formats. Their number is too small to allow for any quantitative conclusions, but they provide a rough qualitative insight into how digital and analogue practices interrelate.

Out of 43 respondents, 11 readers enlisted books in digital formats only which means that, most likely, they completely shifted from “paper” books to digital media. The rest of the group members combined reading of both digital and analogue books with a clear preference for the traditional medium. This tendency remained unchanged between 2012 and 2014 surveys, although the number of texts downloaded from the Internet slightly increased (from 26 in 2012, to 38 in 2014). Digital formats were used as carriers of popular best-sellers such as E. L. James’s trilogy, George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire*²¹ or novels by Jodi Picoult, as well as more ambitious works, such as Wiesław Myśliwski’s *A Treatise on Shelling Beans* (2007), *Stommowisko* by Ludwik Stomma (2013) or Dorota Masłowska’s *Honey, I Killed Our Cats* (2012). In 2014, in addition to school required reading (*Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz, or *Krzyżacy* by Henryk Sienkiewicz) read by teenage students in Poland, literary classics in the digital format were named by both a well-educated academic living in a big city (Jonathan Swift’s *Gullivers’ Travels*) and a qualified worker with secondary education living in the countryside (Sienkiewicz’s *Trilogy*). The Internet turned out also to serve as a source of manuals, guidebooks, cookbooks, travel books, fantasy books and detective stories. The e-books listed by our respondents were either legally purchased, illegally downloaded or received as a gift. The number of users of digital formats in the sample is nevertheless too small to determine whether this diversity (of literary genres, readers’ social backgrounds or sources of books) is characteristic for the digital circulation of literature in general.

The data indicates however that reading books in digital formats is complementary or additional to reading analogue books, and is a mark of readers’ versatility. Readers using copies in both forms (digital and analogue) acquire books from more sources than average readers (the Internet plays a secondary role here; public libraries, their own and their friends’ collections or book purchases are equally important) and are distinguished by being consistent and coherent in their reading choices. They often read according to the

21 Books listed by respondents have not been annotated as we do not have precise information regarding editions they had in mind. We only quote titles and names mentioned by respondents.

“monographic” or “serial” method, which means that they systematically read pieces by their favourite author, also keeping the chronological order of publications and reaching out for the most recent books, not yet available on the Polish market. We can observe “obtaining” books in digital formats which are hardly available in the printed form. For instance, one respondent found it interesting to “confront” Polish editions of books borrowed from the public library with their digital originals in English (available online).²²

In some cases books in digital formats can proliferate to those social environments where “analogue” books are hardly available, rarely present or welcome. An iconic representative is an 18-year-old student living in Silesia. She is of a rather underprivileged social background (a daughter of a blue-collar, working single mother). In her home, there is no habit of buying books, people in her close environment neither read books (she describes her family and friends as non-readers), nor ever did (no memories related with reading books from her childhood). The girl reads only some of the obligatory school readings and rarely goes to the library. However, the deficit of analogue books in her environment is compensated by intensive reading of fiction downloaded from the Internet – read systematically and serially (e.g. Claire Cassandra’s *City of Angels* or the *Grey* series by E. L. James). It is hard not to get the impression that in the environment where the habit of reading books is particularly rare, and not necessarily socially accepted, the Internet enables access to literary works unavailable otherwise and allows for their “safe” reception, as digital reading may be hidden under the cover of “usual” computer usage. It also allows for a discreet reading of books that are potentially frowned upon (e.g. *50 Shades of Grey* downloaded by teenagers living in the countryside).

AFK or IRL? Digital Analogies to Analogue Practices

Many Internet practices have their analogue counterparts. An example of such a pairing is reading physical books and reading literature online, or meeting with friends in person and using social media. The relation between these practices seems to be a fascinating problem. The question is whether Internet practices push out their analogue equivalents or whether they coexist with them, as in the case of readers who read e-books in order to have access to texts unpublished in Poland.

Obiegi kultury – a research conducted by Centrum Cyfrowe “Projekt: Polska” pointed out the fact that people who download free or unlicensed files from the Internet also read more, and more often, in “paper format” than people

22 The order of titles listed by the respondent allows us to presume that reading original versions was complimentary to reading these books in Polish.

who do not download any files.²³ The researchers conclude that: “despite having access to digital content, Internet users do not abandon traditional channels of access to books.”

Acquisition of cultural texts is just one among many practices within the Internet environment that people engage in as an equivalent to certain offline practices. To fully respond to the question whether online practices push out offline ones or whether they are complimentary, we decided to take a closer look at a wider spectrum of reading practices. Referring to the types of Internet users described in the introduction to this paper and comparing the types of users it defines, together with offline practices corresponding with the ways in which they use the Internet, we found a series of positive correlations between online and offline practices.

Table 5. Free-time activities of different types of Internet users

Type of Internet users:	Socializing offline*		Reading periodicals in paper edition		Reading a blog post	Watching TV during a day (average)	
	NOT	YES	All types of periodicals	Periodicals on hobbies		I don't watch TV	I watch over 4 hours
occasional users	49%	51%	63%	11%	0%	2%	11%
social media downloaders	45%	55%	68%	21%	38%	4%	12%
social media users	43%	57%	70%	16%	64%	3%	10%
practitioners	51%	50%	77%	13%	0%	2%	11%
readers of literature online	52%	48%	72%	10%	35%	4%	8%
omni-users	51%	49%	65%	21%	91%	10%	6%
non-users	56%	44%	62%	4%	0%	3%	24%
Total	51%	49%	66%	12%	25%	4%	15%

* Respondents were asked the following question: “If you had five more hours of free time, how much time would you devote to going out with friends and family?”

²³ Mirosław Filiciak, Justyna Hofmokl and Alek Tarkowski, *Obiegi kultury. Społeczna cyrkulacja treści. Raport z badań* (Warszawa: Centrum Cyfrowe Projekt Polska, 2012), 61-62.

Among the respondents associated with the type 'social media user,' that is Internet users who focus their online practices around social media, only slightly over 43% answered "none" to a question about how much time they devote to social meetings with their friends and family, going out to a café, pub, restaurant, etc. In contrast, it was more than 56% among non-users. In the group of omni-users this percentage was lower than among non-users – it was less than 51%.

Reading paper periodicals also positively correlates with using the Internet. Non-users read periodicals less frequently than all groups of Internet users – during the 12 months preceding the survey nearly 62% of non-users read a newspaper, magazine or periodical, whereas the highest percentage was associated with users-practitioners at 77.29%. All other groups of users also read periodicals more often than the non-users.

When planning our research we formulated a hypothesis that high readership of blogs among the omni-users might be followed by their slight interest in printed periodicals, especially related with hobbies. It turned out, however, that the group of the most active Internet users read printed periodicals related with hobbies over five times more often than non-users (20.51% vs. 4.31%). At the same time, 91% of omni-users declared reading blogs during the month preceding the survey. It seems, therefore, that both of these practices – reading newspapers and blogs – coexist in this group with intensity impossible to find in other analyzed segments.

The most explicit negative correlation of online and offline practices was found by comparing Internet use with television watching. The respondents were asked about the number of hours per day (on average) they devoted to television watching during the week preceding the survey. The answer "over 4 hours" was given by non-users almost 4 times more often than in the group of omni-users (24.17% vs. 6.44%). The almost exactly reversed proportion was noted for the answer: "I do not watch television" (10.08% of omni-users, 2.74% of non-users). It seems that if the Internet really pushes out any offline activity, it is watching television.

The conclusions drawn by the authors of the *Social Diagnosis 2013* are seemingly contradictory. They draw attention to the fact that despite the popularity of the Internet, the time we devote to watching television is increasing. But when they look at groups which we also compare in our research – Internet users and non-users – they state that "the mentioned effect is a result of various behaviours of users and non-users. The former spend less time watching television, while people who do not use the Internet spend more time in front of the television set."²⁴ The authors, therefore, point to the fact that television

24 Batorski, *Polacy wobec technologii cyfrowych*, 319-320.

is becoming less important to Internet users, but not on the society-wide scale. Our conclusions are not in conflict with the *Social Diagnosis* as we do not speak about the tendencies in the whole of society, but about the difference in television watching habits among particular types of Internet users and non-users.

Positive correlations between the frequency of online and offline practices in particular groups prove that, to a great extent, the Internet strengthens or complements analogue practices. Social media users more often want to go out with friends to pubs and restaurants. Put another way, people who socialize offline more often, also use social media more frequently. There are more such pairs of practices that are mutually positively correlated, as we tried to show on the basis of a big set of data coming from our research.

In the discourse describing new technologies and the ontological status of the digital world – digital representations, mediations and “virtual realities” – we find two polar definitions of the digital. On the one hand, we speak about virtual reality: a vision of the alternative world existing somewhere in the silicon chips of computers, well-grounded in cyber-punk fiction; on the other hand, we speak about reality dilated or extended by adding the digital (so-called augmented) reality. When a lawyer asked Peter Sunde, one of The Pirate Bay founders, when he had met his colleague IRL (in real life), Sunde replied: “We don’t say IRL, we say AFK (away from the keyboard). We think that the Internet is for real.”²⁵

Our conclusion about the hybrid, digital-analogue, nature of cultural practices today is supported by the conclusions of the authors of the *Obiegi kultury* report mentioned earlier. The report also convincingly demonstrates that when we speak about analogue practices in comparison to digital practices, spaces of implementing these practices are not rigidly separated – they rather seem to co-exist next to each other. Omni-users outside the Internet are simply AFK, but they are still the same readers.

Conclusion

As depicted by the examples of readers of literature on the Internet for whom the Web is an “escape door” from their social class culture, new technologies at times help bridge social divisions. However, representative research show that only a small share of our society manages to climb the social ladder this

25 The conversation registered for the documentary *TPB AFK: The Pirate Bay Away From Keyboard*, directed by Simon Klose, accessed March 10, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTOKXCEwo_8

way. On the whole, digital reading goes hand in hand with analogue reading and thus is unlikely to do away with social differences dividing analogue readers and analogue non-readers. The previously formulated fear – that those inequalities may reproduce in the digital environment – is thus backed by empirical data. Our conclusions undermine the belief that the Internet brings about a truly equal public sphere.

Translation: Marta Skotnicka