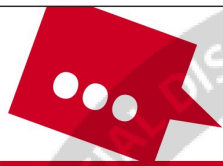


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YOUR OPINION

Reading with intention in the digital space

WHEN we ask whether people are still reading these days, the answer is not as simple as it once was. Reading today does not take place only within the covers of a printed book; it also happens across devices, through social media platforms, online articles, digital libraries and various multimedia forms.

For many, especially young Malaysians, reading has shifted into a digital space. This transformation should not immediately be regarded with concern. In fact, it signals that literacy is evolving alongside technology.

At the national level, Malaysia has demonstrated a serious commitment to strengthening literacy. The National Education Blueprint 2026–2035 places renewed emphasis on literacy development as a foundational priority.

Initiatives such as KotaBaca and Projek BacaBaca aim to foster a reading culture within schools and communities. Efforts to review programmes like Nilam (Nadi Ilmu Amalan Membaca) and reassess how the National Reading Index is measured indicate that policymakers recognise the need to adapt to changing reading habits.

These initiatives reflect an awareness that literacy must be supported not only through access to materials but also through sustained engagement.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that a large proportion of young Malaysians are now digital readers. This reality requires us to reconsider how reading literacy is nurtured.

One of the most influential forces shaping digital reading habits today is the algorithm.



Photo: 123rf.com

Social media platforms curate content based on users' previous interactions, preferences and networks. While this increases exposure to personalised information, it may also limit the diversity and depth of materials encountered. Over time, individuals may find themselves repeatedly engaging with content that reinforces existing interests rather than expanding knowledge.

This does not suggest that digital platforms are inherently detrimental. Rather, it highlights the importance of conscious participation.

Literacy in the digital age requires discernment. Individuals must actively seek high-quality reading materials, follow credible sources and engage with content that chal-

lenges and broadens their perspectives. Without this deliberate effort, reading may become fragmented, rushed and emotionally driven rather than reflective and analytical.

In this context, World Book Day (April 23) offers an opportunity to reframe our understanding of reading. It is not necessary to position printed books against digital platforms. Both have roles to play in shaping literacy.

Printed books continue to provide depth, sustained engagement and structured learning experiences. Digital materials offer accessibility, immediacy and exposure to a wider range of voices. The challenge lies in balancing these modes responsibly.

Families and educators play an important role in modelling

intentional reading practices.

Encouraging children to explore reputable digital libraries, long-form articles and well-edited publications can gradually influence their digital environments.

Even small actions, such as searching for meaningful content, subscribing to credible educational platforms and discussing reading materials at home, can alter the algorithmic patterns that shape daily exposure.

National infrastructure can support literacy, but the cultivation of reading habits ultimately takes place at the individual and community levels. A blueprint may provide direction, and initiatives may create opportunities, but sustained literacy development depends on how people respond within their own digital ecosystems.

As Malaysia continues to invest in literacy initiatives, it is equally important for individuals to recognise their role in shaping their reading journeys. Access to information is no longer the primary obstacle. The greater task is learning to select, evaluate and engage with information thoughtfully.

In an age where content is abundant and instantly available, literacy must be guided by intention rather than impulse.

By consciously choosing meaningful materials and encouraging others to do the same, we contribute to a reading culture that is adaptive, reflective and sustainable.

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