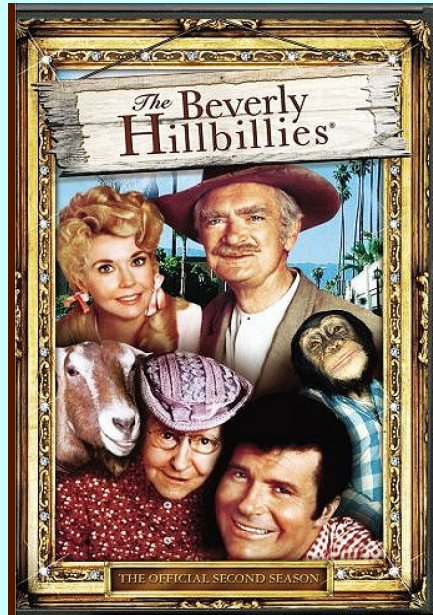


Dumbing it Down

George Orwell, in the book **1984**, feared that in the future books would be banned. Aldous Huxley feared there would be no one who wanted to read one.

Huxley also feared that the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevant data. As early as 1932 he saw the rising of a culture of trivia. Radio and "talking movies" were recent innovations that were greatly increasing the amount of time people spent on the irrelevant details of stars and celebrities. He described a future inundated with what he called the "feelies" and a society with an almost infinite appetite for distractions.



1964's Number One Show

Or Numbing it Up?

Most people alive in the Western world today have grown up on a diet rich in the empty calories of trivia and distraction. Which episode of *The Beverly Hillbillies* or *Dynasty* was the memorable one? We are constantly being seduced by the vanity fair and its mantra for us: **Entertain Me!**

Oddly, the modern world gives us easy access to cultural excellence. Great books, films, music and art are readily available, but it takes discipline to avoid being distracted by the fabulous but forgettable, to resist the non-stop array of mind-numbing stimuli thrown at us every day. Discipline – it's worth getting.

Great Expectations

In the 1980s, many educators were convinced that adding hyperlinks to text displayed on computers would be a boon to learning. Students would gain critical thinking skills with less effort. By the end of the decade [research](#) showed a very different result. Navigating hyperlinked documents led to problems. Students lost their concentration simply by having to decide

whether or not to click. Others couldn't remember **where** the home document was when they did click. Comprehension declined rather than rose.

[Other studies](#) revealed the following about documents peppered with hyperlinks : 1) people took longer to read them, 2) they didn't remember as well what they had read, 3) and they were seven times more likely to be confused.

People who had read normal text comprehended more, learned more, and remembered more.

In this case, new technology created great, but ultimately false, expectations. It is likely to happen again and raises the ongoing question of how cautious to be – a very difficult question indeed, especially where it concerns youth. As the early adopters, youth are often affected most.



Twitter is a microblogging service that allows you to follow the lives of your favorite celebrities, who tweet you (in 140 characters) the (usually) trivial details of what they are doing.



The top ten Twitter accounts are:

	Person	Followers
1	Lady Gaga	17,243,713
2	Justin Bieber	15,693,094
3	Katy Perry	13,115,131
4	Kim Kardashian	12,047,883
5	Britney Spears	11,979,680
6	Shakira	11,756,591
7	Barack Obama	11,624,886
8	Rihanna	10,975,406
9	Taylor Swift	9,983,652
10	Selena Gomez	9,137,116

Overwhelmed

Intelligence is, in part, the ability to transfer information from short-term memory to long-term memory and then to weave facts from long-term memory into the complex ideas.

However, when the brain is subjected to too many unimportant facts it becomes passive. We actually stop thinking and retain little in our long-term memory.



E-Learning

A recent [study](#) found that students rated PCs low as a reading platform. **Printed Books, Kindle, and iPad**, all scored fairly high on a one to seven scale at 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8, respectively. The **PC** scored 3.6.

The study noted that reading is only a part of what students do to learn. It also predicted that electronic reading devices will be re-designed for better results in helping students learn.



Hey, Good Lookin'

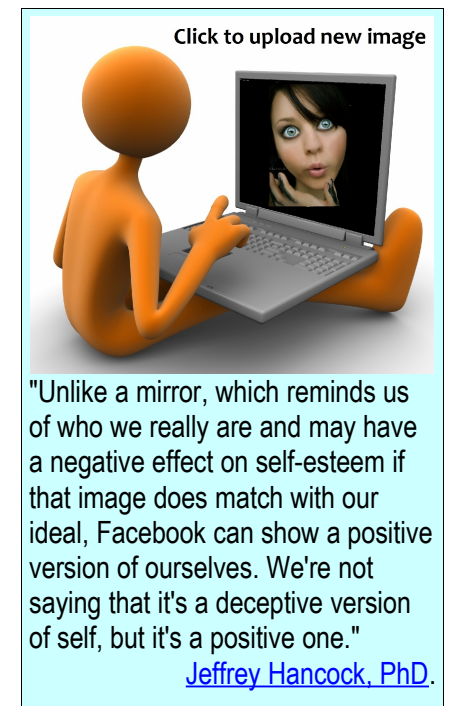
Narcissus was so in love with the beauty of his reflection in a pool of water that he could not stop looking at it. He died of self-admiration. The word *narcissism* evokes that sense of excessive self-love.

According to a study by Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, there was a 30% rise in narcissism among college students between 1982 and 2006. Narcissism has increased so much that the 2013 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* [will eliminate](#) narcissism as a personality disorder. The disorder is about to go Pluto.

In their 2009 book [The Narcissism Epidemic](#), Twenge and Campbell say the narcissism shift was quantifiable: the fivefold increase in plastic surgery in just ten years, the growth of celebrity and gossip magazines, the rising popularity of giving children unique names, and polling data on the importance of being rich and famous. (Half of 18- to 25-year-olds said that **becoming famous** was an important goal to them.)

Twenge and Campbell also note that the digital world allows "the

fantasy principle to trump the reality principle. The Internet makes it very easy to become someone you're not, and that alternative persona is usually better, or cooler, or more attractive. ...People who are desperate for attention have access to a huge potential audience on the Web."



"Unlike a mirror, which reminds us of who we really are and may have a negative effect on self-esteem if that image does match with our ideal, Facebook can show a positive version of ourselves. We're not saying that it's a deceptive version of self, but it's a positive one."

[Jeffrey Hancock, Ph.D.](#)

I'm teaching people to worship themselves.
~ Lady Gaga

Write to us at: kairos.editor@gmail.com

Previous issues www.kairos-na.org/Special_Archives