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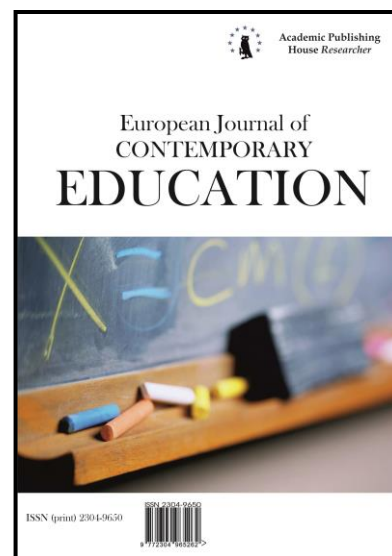
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## The Speed Reading is in Disrepute: Advantages of Slow Reading for the Information Equilibrium

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### Abstract

The study is dedicated to the impact of the speed and the acceleration on the preservation of the information equilibrium and the ability for critical thinking in the active person. The methods about the fast reading training are subjected to a critical analysis. On the grounds of the theory for the information equilibrium and the philosophy of the slow media, is derived the relation “slow reading – information equilibrium”. “Information equilibrium” is defined as “imposed by the information environment for natural and sufficient satisfaction of the individual needs, in the conditions of relative freedom.” It is supported the thesis about the rethinking of the positives of the fast reading and the rehabilitation and active promotion of the universal literacy in slow reading. The need of promoting the slow reading in the context of the requirements for urgent mass training on information literacy and for critical thinking at times of misinformation, fake news and post-truth has been empirically drawn and grounded. The author's suggestion is to move to a stratified and subordinate redefinition of the goals of the information and the media literacy. The idea is to develop a standard for “profiled” or “niche” information literacy – for each category of person (age, professional) to be written the relevant “maximum program” that does not exceed the rational and the advisable towards their potential.

**Keywords:** information equilibrium, information literacy, misinformation, fast reading, psychology of reading, sociology of reading, librarian as filter.

### 1. Introduction

In 2001 in his work “Tyranny of the Moment” the professor of Social Anthropology at the Oslo University Thomas H. Eriksen summarized: “In the age of the information, it is practically impossible to think over even on a single thought. The profound reasonings are constantly interrupted by the new fragmentary information” (Eriksen 2001: 5). Right at this time the

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requirements for the reader, acquaintance, rationalizing and constructing the social reality has grown immeasurable: the speed of his reactions shouldn't be at the expense of the economics of thought and superficial judgments.

It seems paradoxical but still at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became clear that the information could "involve" the individual in two absolute extremes – to ignorance and superinformation, to restriction of the freedom and to overspending with the claims of freedom, to enslavement and to anarchy. Somewhere between these theoretically cleaned situations is found every particular case of individual choice. From information decay can be protected only this one who finds the balance between the placed on the scales fanaticism and skepticism, "pilgrimage" and "tourism", cosmopolitanism and egocentrism can be protected.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

The main problem that provokes the present research are the strong fluctuations in the equilibrium "information environment – information comfort of the man". We will seek an answer to the question *whether the reading capabilities as a guarantee of the intellectual survival and as a basic technology of the information "self-defense" have been exhausted*. A particular subject of the presentation is the rediscovery of the old art of reading "Festina Lente".

The focus of the research is directed to the "slow culture" as a challenge to the culture of the speed and the effectivity and its impact not only on the mental and the physical health, the work and the relationships, but above all on the information, the learning and the accompanying reading process. The purpose is to find arguments for the positives of the "slow reading" towards the maintaining of the general information equilibrium of every citizen of the digital era.

### **Definition of Information Equilibrium**

Can the direct linking between the reading and the information balance be grounded? The theory of the information equilibrium is as necessary as the theory of the ecological equilibrium and the equilibrium in the society. Over the centuries, the failure of the human race regarding the attempts to produce such kind of theory in the field of the mass communications has been full. On 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1950 Pope Pius XII envisages the threat of the information and of the communication abundance that has occurred at the end of the 20th century: "It is not exaggerated if we say that the future of the modern society and the stability of its inner life depends to a great extent on the maintaining of an equilibrium between the power of the communication techniques and the bound of the reactions of the individual himself." (McLuhan, 1990). But what has actually been achieved? The information environment turned into a "prison without walls" for obedient, non resisting users.

Under the notion "information equilibrium" we will understand *"imposed by the information environment for natural and sufficient satisfaction of the individual needs, in the conditions of relative freedom"* (Tsvetkova, 2009: 155). The maintaining of an information equilibrium means that man can normally perform his role of a source or of a recipient in the information systems and of a relaxed user in constantly changing information situations. Equibalance behavior means not a closure in the shell, but an active resistance to the destructive barriers, to the objective circumstances striving to disturb it. To find the balance means to be discovered subjectively the necessary boundaries beyond which the person loses his integrity.

They form an alternative security field those low borderline can be called a "critical point of equilibrium" and the ceiling – the highest level of information stability. Every step upwards the ladder is taking away the subject from the critical point and increases the security field. The "survival" process is due to this mechanism.

The disturbance of the information equilibrium "recipient – environment" can generally occur in two ways – by increase of the speed of the information flow directed to a particular recipient and by supersaturation of the the information environment (or *infoglut*) with an unbearable amount of information. The experienced reader who is self-learning but besides this he is also a self-regulating system, will hardly permit an informational stressful situation; he even finds time for rest under the information "scope of fire". In the full sense of the word, he is able to keep his psychic and informational equilibrium even in contacts with aggressive media.

In one perspective of concern about the ergonomics of the training in the new literacies in the digital epoch, the equilibrium “recipient – environment” and the speed of the information could be regulated by the philosophy of “slowness”.

### **Definition of Slow Culture**

The culture of the slow reading or “Slow reading” is a derivative of the world movements “slow” that were born in 1986 as a counter-advertisement of slow-food – “Slow Food”, counterpoint of the a fast food chains “Fast Food” and grew up as communities resisting the fast city life, the fast technologies and the fast culture. The idea of slowness and the perspectives of the delay are supported by the directions of “slow upbringing”, “slow education”, “slow art” (“slow trends” in the art, supporting works that have been created for years), “slow horticulture”, “slow tourism”, “slow fashion” “slow money” (that calls for investment in provincial and organic farms), “slow software development” (slow software development for carefully written programs and exceptional design), “slow design” (dedicated to the development of an ergonomic for the reader page, of information architecture of the page, that reflects the point of view of the readers). As a whole the “slow movement” has the mission to regain a meaningful connection in the global state of coherence. It is a reaction against those aspects of the modern life in which the quality and the humanity are sacrificed on the altar of the convenience and the efficiency. It is justifiable for the movement to gain speed, because the more and more people recognize their discomfort from the fast tempo and the “excluded” character of their natural life.

In 2010 was proclaimed the concept of “Slow Media”, documented in the “Slow Media Manifesto”, widely discussed also outside Germany (Blumtritt, 2010). “Slow Media” have declared new competencies and a two-way commitment – on the one hand to increase the quality of the media content and on the other – for detoxication and ecology of the perception. In this context two phenomena are interesting. The more and more actual trend in the digital competencies among the journalists is the “Slow Journalism”. Slow Journalism is for focused minds that want more quality - more retelling, more story analysis and hard reading until they make sure that no stone was left unturned. Units of measure for Slow Journalists are months or years, not hour and day. Slow Journalism pleads for the freedom to lean on back in order to analyze the flood of news to reflect on them and to receive a sense of perspective. It is intended for journalists and readers who want to stay longer at one place. In 2015 in Norway was also launched the “Slow TV” project, overturning the ideas of watching at the screen in contemplation. As a whole the slow media propagandize the concentration on one task (monotasking). They do not stimulate the interactivity and sociability, but the informing in solitude and calmness and the reading in non-technological format. In other words, slow media are those media that are offering “*dietary*” reading and information.

It is important that the marketing also is accepting very well the slow media philosophy. This support has been successfully concentrated in the conception of the world-famous marketer Seth Godin: “Now it is a golden time for slow media. And today the problem is to be thoughtful enough and patient enough to waste (unlimited) time to create slow texts for slow reading. These can be media difficult to understand, difficult to use. But this is normal because the slow media is not a mass media. The slow media represent patience. There is no deadline, their text is not measured in characters or kilobytes. These are media that can afford peace instead of sensationalism, depth instead of superficiality. The slow media are not for amusing masses, but for the focused minority” (Godin, 2013).

The reading from the paper is a cure against the crisis. That's what declared the futurist Richard Watson at the end of 2009, when the world was going towards the economic crisis and the people were afraid of news for bankruptcies, inflation and uncertainty (Watson, 2010). Namely the content on paper (the heavy texts, the analyzes, the novels) and the print media first accepted to advertise with the new brand – as “slow media”. In this context was born the tendency of returning to the printed books. A significant action was accomplished by the Australian airline Qantas when it began publishing a series of short printed books by bestseller authors to distribute them to their elite passengers (Nawotka, 2013). The volume of these books is such that they can be read in one flight. With this move, the readers on board the plane were encouraged to change their readers and tablets with the more relaxed media – the paper book. People who realize that when they are reading from paper are more relaxed and they understand the majority of the content, who are

seeing the whole picture and have the patience to bring it into its context, are really multiplying. It would be fair the affirmation that the slow media are *a cure for readers "sick of hurry"*.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Speed is in collision with the nature of the reading

In the 21th century, the rapidity became a major indicator of efficiency and the speed – the most fashionable fetish. In all the everyday activities related to service and communication, are expected speed and timeliness. The today's mobile *Homo Informaticus* prefers everything that happens around him to be as proportional as possible to his tempo of life. And this tempo is getting faster, with which is minimized the people's ability to think.

It is known that the admission physiological capabilities of the man are too limited. The human brain perceives almost all of the signals, but it processes only the stronger signals received from the outside. However during an increased intensity of the information flow, the recipient's sensitivity to the weak signals is reduced, and his brain receives a limited information variety of limited perceived messages. There are created conditions for limited knowledge, based only on factual and often on contradictory information. When the events, the changes in the environment occur faster than the normal, man is able to react only selectively to the individual phenomena while in normal dynamics, the selective reaction is saving him from mistakes and failures.

What is the experimentally established data?

a) The amount of data that enters in the human brain today is minimum 100,000 bits per second and it can be perceived and used in fact between 25 and 100 bits per second (Semenjuk, 1988).

b) The biggest amount of data that reader can perceive is calculated in units per second: when reading in the mind – 45 units per second, when reading aloud – 30 units per second, when it is about correction reading – 18 units per second (Eljakov, 2005: 114-121).

c) The human brain is able to absorb (perceive and process) information with a maximum speed of 25 bits per second. At such a limited capacity and provided that every day we spare time for 50 pages of text, in our entire life we can read up to 3,000 books (Eljakov, 2005: 114-121).

d) The speed of transmission of the human nerve signal is up to 30,000 characters per second, while the signals in the computer move and process millions of times faster. Only in 2016 were recorded several new world records in the speed of data transmission though the Internet – firstly college scientists from the London University achieved a speed of 1,125 terabytes per second, and later on at the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg was demonstrated a speed of mobile Internet of 1,24 gigabits per second. In other words all the episodes of the HD Series "Game of Thrones" can be downloaded "all in a breath" – in less than 1 second (Maher, 2016; MegaFon, 2016).

e) Besides the unbelievable speed with which the changes in the present are happening, called Big Data, is standing a huge data growth – over 90 % of the created digital content is unstructured information (Schubmehl, 2014).

We can also try to formulate the effects on the intellectual abilities of the reader from the non-ergonomic speed of the communications and the information. (There are used observations on the information overload and the information stress by Prof. Thomas Eriksen, by Prof. Anatolij Eljakov and by Prof. Daniel Levitin (Eriksen, 2001: 59-60; Eljakov, 2005: 120; Levitin, 2017):

1) The person automatically "deletes" from his operative memory the previous data from the current information flow in order to liberate space for the newer, abundant and multiple messages.

2) The person remembers too little of the perceived current information, because the messages are generally submitted chaotically, fragmentary, out of any logical order and structure.

3) The person doesn't perceive the whole amount of information (he misses part of the information) because he doesn't have time to see it (to hear it).

4) The person increases his mistakes; he loses precision in his results because he doesn't have time to check and to discuss his actions.

5) The person perceives and processes precisely and accordingly to his task all the information, but later than the deadline.



6) The person perceives the information in a distorted light because he receives it in an unstructured shape that becomes a source of an incorrect concept of the facts and of wrong decisions.

7) The person refuses to perceive the information because he fails to follow it.

8) The person gets irritated and even in panic when he realizes that he didn't perceive or he didn't remember the full information on the topic he is interested in.

9) The person loses self-confidence from the accelerated tempos of his work activity, from the blurred borderline between free and working time, from the frequent reproaches "There is no time", and as a result of this, he resorts to pharmacological methods (antidepressants) to solve his problems. The acceleration and the uncertainty are right proportional, affirms Paul Virilio in his book „La machine de vision“ (Virilio, 1988).

10) The person willingly becomes hostage to the simplification of the intellectual operations, advertised as a liberation from the human suffering, deliverance from the mental tortures in time of super-speeds. Such is the propaganda style of Prof. Michael Dertouzos of MIT, one of the web's ideologists. When in 1997 he predicts the simplification of mental work through "electronic bulldozers", he defends himself with impeccable human arguments: "More contacts than we can remember, more complexity than we can cope with, higher speed than we can master – if we let these things overload us, we will suffer from stress and we will be ineffective." (Dertouzos, 2001). However, along with that, the simplifications suggest to the consumer a false sense of authority over the nature of things, even over the construction of the world.

11) The person easily amputates his sense of responsibility as the speed creates the "conveyor effect" and the "relay race effect" – you give the signal to the next on the route and you exclude yourself from the engagement with relief.

12) The person deforms his writing habits as speed influences on the syntax and on the style. A typical example is the phenomenon of "texting", the written slang of the SMS, criticized in 2002 by Howard Rheingold in his book „Smart Mobs“ (Rheingold, 2002).

13) The person destroys his abilities to think, to study and to create because of a sharp time deficit.

Especially adequate for the described situation is the episode of Winnie the Pooh, whom Christopher Robin pulls down the stairs, his head is striking the stairs and he is saying to himself – well, only if I had time to stop, to think. (Remembering the popular English play "Stop the World, I Want to Get Off"). The acceleration is not the most comfortable state of the human race. Because of the physics we know that the excessive speed deforms. But the contemporary active person has no choice: if he doesn't join this race, he just stays "on the platform".

### **3.2. Healthy skepticism towards the fast reading**

The speed with which our eyes are travelling along the route of the written page has serious and even surprising consequences about the way the words are giving meaning.

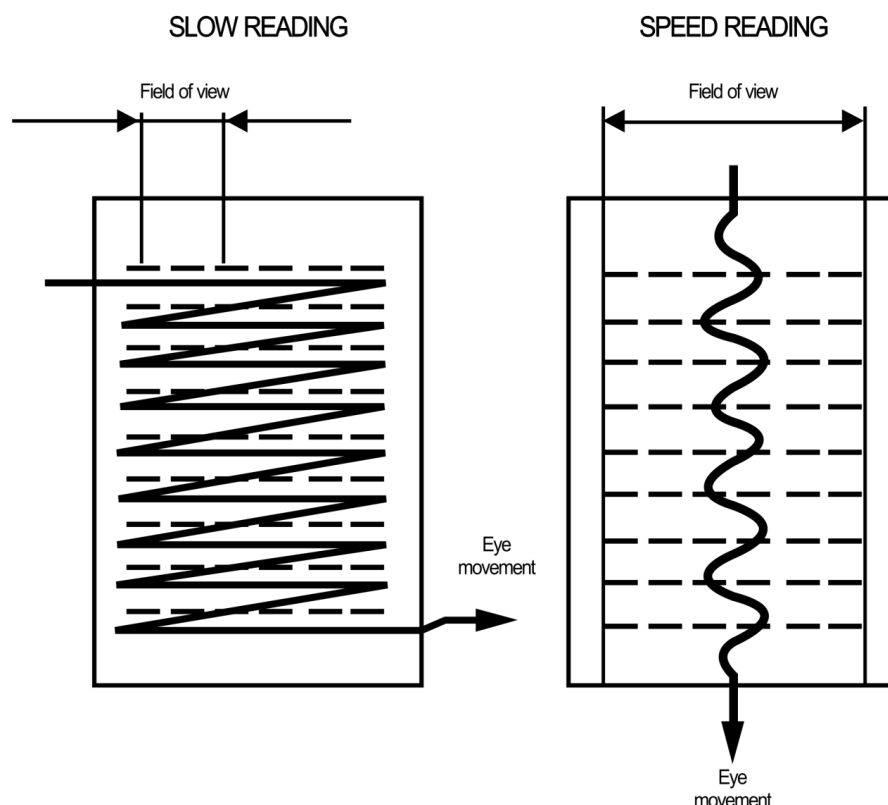
At a normal for the readers average speed of 150-250 words per minute, the champion achievements of the practice polygons of fast reading are truly enticing. The latest "revolutionary application" for fast reading in online environment "Spritz", created in 2014 by the based in Boston start-up, promises to its customers that with its help, they will read from the screen with an average speed of up to 1000 words per minute. We can add also the attempt of the average reader to be complexed with speed reading records. The fastest reader in the world – Howard Berg, popular with the inhuman reading speed of 25-30,000 words per minute (4 seconds per page), can read "War and Peace" (where there is around 560,000 words) approximately in 15 minutes. Another so-called world record belongs to Ann Jones, who reads 4700 words per minute, therefore she can read "War and Peace" for about 11,866 minutes.

The mentioned revolutionary method "Spritz" doesn't answer the question of whether the fast reading really contributes to the fast perception. In an advertisement, the entrepreneurs are saying that "the reader will be able to master a big part of the information", but they do not specify what they mean by "a big part" or how they will measure its "mastery". Another problem of Spritz is that it is helpless to the ability of a person to understand what they are reading and in this direction they do not give any hope to their users.

Each advertisement of fast reading methods is based on scientific evidences for minimizing of the eye fixations by the letter page at the expense of enlargement of the field of vision (peripheral

vision) of the reader with exercises. The physiological truth is that the visual analyzer perceives the letter / the word only when it stops, when the eye is fixed. And during the saccades (word-to-word jumps) we find ourselves in the so-called visual blindness – we don't perceive anything. In this case, the flying by a standard 30-line typewritten page (30 rows) only with 30 "stops" (1 fixation per row), instead with 60 or 90 "stops" (2-3 fixations per line for the normal reader), there is no way to perceive the text on the entire rows, no matter how developed his peripheral vision is. Until today there is no evidence of a natural intelligence that is able to overjump the natural admission capabilities of its nervous system.

It can be found that the most propaganda illustration of the fast reading methods is also the most compromising these methods (see [Figure 1](#)).



**Fig. 1.** “The Eye Path“ in slow and fast reading (transl. from: [Andreev, Hromov, 1991](#))

The fast reading instead of overcoming, it increases the errors while reading. The most fatal and the most difficult to overcome even for the most attentive reader are the risks from the so-called *errors of the visual perceptions*. These are errors of cultivated automatism in reading and are due to at least five natural laws of the eye. These are errors of the cultivated automatism in reading and they are due to at least five natural regularities of the eye. The first regularity of the visual perception is anticipation – a person automatically recognizes (identifies) the words through his past experience by comparing them with these ones kept in his memory. The second regularity is the contextual dependence – the visual perception of the word is under the influence of the context where it is found. The third regularity is filtering – the reader disregards the superfluous, the unnecessary according to him. The fourth regularity is a subjective blindness – the perception is a choice for each individual reader (“We see what we want”). The fifth regularity of the visual perception is integrity (holisticity) – the brain reads the objects in a “package”, i.e. not each letter individually, but the whole word. This regularity of the reading eye is also called “beginning-end”, because for the discerning of the word it is important only the first and the last letter to be at their right place.

The problems with the lapses of the reader's eye, with the optic frauds in the perceptual field, with the unread word, with the unseen letter, with the skipped conjunction or the preposition in

the sentence are familiar to every active reader, but the richest experience in this respect have the proof-readers. Examples from the bulgarian practice in cyrillic transliteration:

- “klasifikaciya – kvalifikaciya” (english: „classification – qualification”)
- “knigoznanie – knigoizdavane” (english: „book science – book publishing”)
- “predpolozheniya – predlozheniya” (english: „suggestions – proposals”)
- “diplomat – diplomant” (english: „diplomat – graduate”)
- “predgovor – pregovor” (english: „foreword – revision”)
- “udvoeno – usvoeno” (english: „doubled – mastered”)
- “osobeno – osoleno” (english: „particular – salted”)
- “otbori – otvori” (english: „teams – vents”)
- “tekst za izpit – test za izpit” (english: „exam text – exam test”)

▪ “Anastas – Atanas” – in the dozens of publications of the news on the election of a new rector of the Sofia University at 17.11.2015 his name – Anastas Gerdjikov – appeared as “Anastas” or “Atanas” in approximately equal proportion.

Even the most vigilant and experienced proof-reader (the typical slow reader with an “eagle eye”) is not insured by fatal (printed) errors that can overturn the meaning of the word or the meaning of the sentence. In this respect, the speed reading can’t exceed the slow reading, the only able to minimize the treachery of the visual regularities.

Maybe the most worrying in the speed reading programs is that in their control studies there is never any question towards the participants regarding the meaningful information that is contained in the read texts. The mechanics of the fast reading is generally recognition of the word or of the group of words. And the control tests of the trainings don’t include check-up of the *understanding* beyond the word identification. Perhaps the most authoritative expert on the subject of the eyes during reading, the psychologist Keith Rayner, after decades of systematic researches of the reading speed, is convinced that the fast readers are able to read so quickly just because they are trained to do less fixations (“stops of the eye”) at the rows: instead of reading each word, they are taking “tests” from the text, they are fixing at some words from here and there. When they examined them on the reading, they found out that they cope relatively well with some general questions related with the text, that they grasped from the passed on the run fragments and they supplemented on the basis of their pre-existing knowledges of the subject. But when they examined them on details of the text, they failed. The leading thesis of Keith Rayner and his colleagues today is that only at the level of mechanics (identifying words and phrases) can be achieved a reading speed, but not a success in the understanding. People do not read at a constant speed. Everyone uses different rates, which always depend on the difficulty and the purpose of the reading task. People don’t read at a constant speed. Every person uses different rates, which always depend on the difficulty and on the purpose of the reading task (Rayner, 2016).

The speed, with which we read something, must serve our ability to *remember* it more permanently. Logically, it is a priority in the advertisements of the fast reading, to be the affirmation that at high speed the text is memorized with 70 % better. But the recent studies made by the specialists in neurolinguistics and by the cognitive psychologists have shown that the better (which means the more durable) remembering in reading is achieved in slow reading, limited by difficult to spell out font. As a rule these are the serif fonts. The more complex, rich and filigree is the font of the text, the more time it takes to recognize the individual word, that however is leading to a stronger memory of the message, reads the conclusion on of the study by Connor Diemand-Yauman and Daniel Oppenheimer (Diemand-Yauman et al., 2010). I will allow myself to add that this study is strongly quoted in modern studies on reader literacy as it proves experimentally that the non-serif fonts, loudly propagated by Microsoft, even though having the advantage of easy decoding, they don’t help the remembering. From the point of view of the psychology of the communication design, when the reader has more knowledge of the wealth of the glyph configurations, it will extract more content in their recognition and decoding (in unison with the sentence “The more you know, the more you see”). Previous and subsequent studies continue to reinforce one more thesis - that the increased unreadability of the printed text forces the reader to examine the words more carefully that is leading to a richer, deeper memory of them and to a better meta-understanding.

Maybe the fast reading achieves a fast perception and remembering, but the complex cognitive operations such as *the comprehension*, even more *the rationalization* of the text, are



achievable at a pace in the range „largo – lento – adagio” (the slowest paces according to the music terminology). On top of that, the experts on fast reading methodologies mix the reading phases in an inadmissible way, that are moving in an algorithm as a rule – perception, remembering, understanding, rationalization.

The listed considerations make impossible the determination of the real benefit of the speed achievements of the fast readers and may serve as sufficient reasons for distrust towards similar, the more actively advertising services for reinforcing of the information (media and digital) literacy. It seems that the schools, the training courses, the fast reading simulators and the technology companies with analogic software for mass use succeed only in their public reflexions towards the skeptical aphorism of Anatole France: “Life is too short, Proust is too long.”

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1. Fairplay with slow reading**

A new trend in the digital era, such as “literacy for slow reading”, emerges just as tempting as the mainstream mania of fast reading. De facto, in parallel with the aggressive popularization of the techniques of “speed reading” (“fast reading” or “rapid reading”), is activated the voice of the slow reading fans. And if we use the marketing brands, we can say that “slow reading” imposed as a counterpoint to the “fast reading”, as Gourmet is a counterpoint of McDonald's.

Organized advocates of slow reading today are Slow books movement, Slow library movement, and from 2012 is released “Slow reading manifesto”. Very often actions for delayed rhythm of life include the slow reading as part of their program.

The scientific interest towards the slow reading is also growing. In the literary theory, it is associated with “close reading”, “intimately reading” or “unmediated reading”. It is activated the use of the terms “deep reading” and “immersive reading”. There are studies that are interested in the differences between the depth reading and the mainstream fashion of “super reading” – the “diagonal reading”, the photo reading, the skimming and scanning reading. A good source to explore the positives of the slow reading is the book of John Miedema “Slow reading” ([Miedema, 2009](#)). The author's thesis is that slow reading means exercising the right of choice for your own pace of reading and resistance of the compulsion of all the people to read everything and as quickly as possible.

The expression “slow reading” has been used by Friedrich Nietzsche: “I am a TEACHER OF SLOW READING” (the capital letters are by the original: [Nietzsche, 1982](#)). But the principle of “slow reading” itself draws inspiration from the old Jewish practice for studying of sacred texts, to which are specific the analytical reading, the team reading and the reading as comment. In fact there are interesting educational initiatives, ambitious to revive this forgotten art. The principle of the slow reading, based on the particular 2000-year-old Jewish reading technique for reading–consultation to sacred texts “Midrash”, is leading for the educational project “Eshkalot” (Moscow), dedicated to the traditional and contemporary Jewish culture. The organizers combine in an original way the ancient form of Beit-Midrash with the practice of “slow reading” in the sense of an anti-modernist gesture towards the unsatisfied with the too fast reading and the loss of a taste for reading. The method of the slow reading is applied in a group and consists in the fact that not the text is supporting someone's theses but on the contrary: the logic of opening of the discourse is determined by the process of reading the text. The task is to be offered volumetric and multi-layered to a highest degree reading of a book from which later every individual reader can take advantage. “Beit-Midrash” encourages the further independent deep and slow reading of the learners by giving them the tools about this – bibliography, approaches, teachers ([Eshkolot, 2016](#)).

The slow reading is directed traditionally to the literary reader. This heaviest category of readers who derive the biggest pleasure in the contact with the text may also have to be the most active lawyers of the slow reading. They affirm that during the fast reading, it is dangerously avoided the phase responsible for rationalization of the books. In the fiction the “talking” in mind is what makes the reader feel implicated in the story. To mark the characters and the objects by his own model. In the fast reading these mini-pauses and delays are missing and this limits the imagination. The advocates of the slow reading explain that it only in slow reading is reinforced the effect of re-reading, and only with slow pace is given the greater delight to the reader. In order to be fascinated by the mastery of the writer and to relax his imagination, it is necessary to make pauses

and to not miss any part of the text. And the maximum that can be achieved by the fast reading is to give possibility for fast processing of data in a large volume of text (Carbonell, 2012).

However reading is a cultural practice, and not only a technical method. Reading is embedded in the rituals, in the cultures, in the institutions, in the history – all that provides to the next generations one “genetically” important kind of knowledge that derives only from patience, calmness and static. The person learns to read in order to enter into cultures and communities to enter into the secrets of the religious experience, in order to share the messages of the literature and to enter in partnership with the authors, in order to compete with the others, in order to be recognizable and loyal towards the institutions. As a counterpoint of these values are the modern “hurried curriculum” and tyranny of the “teacher’s clock”, explains Thomas Newkirk, author of the book “The Art of Slow Reading”. The examination tests suggest a dangerous point of view about the reading and learning in children: that the speed has a key significance, that reading is a race, that rules are determined by the stop-watch. Exactly the opposite claims the author of this book: the excellent command of the learning material means a delay. The excellent proficiency is a harmony with the text, a voluntary act of attention, of vigilance to the mood, to the voice and to the sensitivity of the written language. You won’t become a freer reader if you read faster, ends Newkirk (Newkirk, 2012).

As a foundation of the information culture, the reading is the most effective and efficient method of filling in of the a priori knowledge and, accordingly, of achieving an adequate cultural level. The slow reading has a special role in the filling of the thesaurus of lasting knowledge and not for receiving of a quick information, because for its systematization and its permanent fixation in the memory, are needed pauses on each key word, on every information saturated paragraph, on every strophe in the poetic work. It is fact that a poetic text can’t be read quickly and just a professional reader of poetry can illustrate how the slow reading is called upon to discover what is kept in silence one “letter” image, what is over the time, the unnoticeable, the unpretentious.

Additional positives of the slow, the secluded and the silent reading can be found in his genesis. In the 13th-14th century in the European monastery and university reading-rooms, the reading ability in mind and an own pace generates key to the development of the civilization abilities: it puts the bases of the peculiar cluster reading with references and comparison, it emancipates the private intellectual curiosity, it cultivates the reading-reflection, the reading-contemplation and the reading-creature, it encourages the individual critical thinking, it commits conditions for expressing subversive ideas, it frees the personal opinions on the problems of the conscience, it increases the depth of the secular religious experience, it contributes to the development of the skepticism and of the “intellectual heterodoxy” and it gives an stimulus to the rush for reforms (Saenger, 1982). We can express the fear that in eventual escalation of the euphoria in the fast reading, the energetics of these qualities will be exhausted unnoticeably.

#### **4.2. Slow reading for information equilibrium**

The real and the objective view towards the over-saturated information environment, towards the intensive information flows, towards the jump in the quantitative increase of the information can’t be a cause for alarm of the modern paradox: simultaneously with the increase in the information growth, it can be felt strongly the need to speed up the paces of information extraction, i.e. the user not by will, but under the compulsion of the environment, he is encouraged to master fast reading methods, which in its turn is accompanied by the harm of these methods.

In order to keep his information equilibrium during his life, the individual has to read at least 20,000 books, however at a speed of three words per second. The quick reader experts affirm that this is not difficult, especially for readers of the visual type (80 % of all the people) whose capabilities allow them a run on the lines of the page and fixing of the eyes only on the most informative fields in the text. There are even recommendations for reading of newspapers by the methods the “beginning and end of the publication”, “paragraph by paragraph” or “just the title is enough” and the rest is implied.

The fast (speed) reading also can ensure an informational equilibrium for the user, but it brings a danger from information over-saturation and from here – from loss of his inner, mental and intellectual equilibrium. Only slow information behavior has the potential to revise and to balance quite a lot of objective and subjective states that already disbalance the information equilibrium and threaten the information health of the individual (see Table 1). The generalized name of the subjective states is explored interdisciplinary in the studies in medicine,

neuropsychology and cognitive psychology as “information diseases”. (For the factors of the era of Web 1.0 that violate the human information equilibrium, see more in: [Tsvetkova, 2009: 138-145](#)).

**Table 1.** Factors of information disbalance

Objective information states	Subjective information states
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information entropy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information frustration
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information chaos	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information deprivation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information mess	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information anxiety
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information saturation (infoglut)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information neuroticism
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information noise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information hunger (info-famine)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information attacks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information overeating (info-gorge)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Canalization of the interest and the search	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information burnout
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Misinformation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Digital Alzheimer
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information indoctrination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Apathy to the information order
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information manipulation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phubbing

There is a parable that can be an excellent illustration of the final result of the superhuman acceleration. An European adventurer was leading an expedition to Africa. For the long and difficult passage through the dangerous jungles he hired carriers from the local tribes. Enthusiastic on the fast reaching of the target, at the first day of the trip he didn't give a moment for a rest. In the morning, however, the carriers refused to move. Their argument was irrefutable: as the previous day they had to move too fast, now they had to wait for the souls to reach their bodies.

## 5. Conclusions

The outlined tense atmosphere of the actual information line, defined by the pressure of the time and the speed, provokes the experts to seek more individual approaches to solve the problems of the active person in the digital era.

Expecting revival is the described more than 80 years ago by José Ortega y Gasset role of the librarian as a “filter” ([Ortega y Gasset, 1935](#)). Here is possible an objection that in the epoch of internet the filters became too many and lead to fragmentary knowledge. But the philosophy of the filter's function of the librarian today won't be focused on the effect of the PR (a publicity of every appearing source of information), nor on the effect of the iceberg (service only with metadata), and on the reference filter serving with distilled and compressed information (secondarily processed resources) in a sequential order, on the librarian as a “virtual assistant”, on the librarian as an “intellectual interface” between the speed of the information flows and the limited time of the user.

It is possible a stratified and subordinate redefinition of the objectives of the information, the digital and the media literacy – for each category of person (age, professional), to be written the relevant “maximum program”, that doesn't exceed the rational and the advisable compared to their potential. A standard for profiled or “niche” information literacy center would free us from the overexpectation toward all the social and age groups and would outline for the citizen his fitting digital literacy and relevant to his capacity tools to manage the affecting him information.

An advisable universal tool is slow reading literacy, focusing on those sources that the virtual assistants – masters of the technology, will filter on a personal request. There is enough common sense in the thesis of the Professor in Medieval History Lynn White Jr. that “the technology opens doors, but no one is forced to pass through them”.

As it became clear, this new trend of “slow reading” is not a partisan march against the speed, but a chance for information survival and information freedom: everyone at his own pace and when the text requires this, to read not with a care for the clock but only with a care for the self. The philosophy of slow reading offers also a chance for happiness of the disorientated by the fierce speed of the multitasking and of the depressed, the desperate, the unhappy by lack of time people.

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