

## We are all a little illiterate

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“The Internet is the future, but ...” When talking about the Internet, this phrase will crop up sooner or later. It’s like saying, “We can’t not talk about it any more, but ...”, and then listing all possible faults, limits and dangers. This great innovation is compared with traditional forms of communication. And so, we hear, “You’d better not take away our notice boards, leaflets, the direct relationship between people.” These statements conceal a senseless fear that sees the Internet as the enemy of everything that has existed thus far. This opinion is understandable, but not very logical.

The Internet is an alphabet, it reproduces the “perfection” of the Web, and not only symbolically. Like the wonderful work of the spider, the Internet is fascinating, but also dangerous. It cannot be life, but is part of it, because the Internet is not only a means, an instrument like any other. It changes a number of fundamental elements of our everyday lives; just think of the concepts of space and time.

The Internet is community and participation. It is listening and communication. It is a genuine alphabet. Until forty years ago, letters were learnt with long practice. Weeks were spent copying lines and crosses, and the exercise books of first year primary school students were battlegrounds, tidy and repetitive. It was only after this long practice that the students began to work on vowels and consonants. Then the method changed, and students began by reading and writing whole words and phrases immediately, and through these, discovered the alphabet.

Today, we are all a little illiterate, and we are trying to discover what the Internet is still holding back from us. How we speak about it, analyse it, demonstrates our difficulty in understanding a phenomenon that is so complex and upsetting. There is the continual need to compare it with what we have thus far been accustomed to. This is understandable, but it is of little use.

The Internet still does not have its own literature, and it would take a lot to produce some, because this would require research in the sector, that is, about its actual use, not by curious, but fearful dinosaurs, but by protagonists.

The Web is still an adolescent, and so, its identity has still not yet been formed. As a result, numerous communications “experts” are behaving like shocked parents who find they no longer recognise their children.

There is nothing like social networks to show us what type of society we are living in. And as with growing children, what is most important is to listen. No one wants to do away with physical notice boards, paper, meeting places, face-to-face conversations. Every social component is part of society’s heritage, and we must take care of it. The Internet facilitates and develops all of this, but more effectively.

Facebook, blogs, social networks and forums are only parts of the valuable alphabet that, day after day, is enriched with new letters and new language styles. It is more difficult to learn, but it holds a far greater fascination than filling pages and pages of lines and crosses.

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