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A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution

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Reference \ General

Baron, Dennis. **A better pencil: readers, writers, and the digital revolution.** Oxford, 2009. 259p bibl index afp; ISBN [9780195388442](#), \$24.95. Reviewed in 2010mar CHOICE.

Baron (Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) offers a breezy overview of the ways that technology is shaping reading and writing practices. This book will be valued in the future as a well-contextualized survey of issues that surface among writers in the current online landscape. Today's reader will appreciate the conversational style and the reminders that many of the supposed consequences of the digital revolution were ever thus. Some may smile with recognition as they recall WordStar and the evolution of word processing applications. Much of the speculation about the effects of technology on writing will be too familiar to be fresh. The first half of the book is an engaging history of writing technologies enhanced with images and anecdotes that would be well placed in lectures for an undergraduate course on the history of the written word. Baron then moves to an analysis of the experience of writing and publishing, and concludes with an overview of innovations and the concerns of bloggers, wiki contributors, *MySpace* page builders, censors, and online privacy advocates, among others. Sources skew toward newspaper reports and brief online essays; the depth of analysis of the digital landscape in the second half of the book reflects that choice.

Summing Up: Recommended. Lower- and upper-level undergraduates; general readers. -- *P. Finley, University of Nevada, Las Vegas*