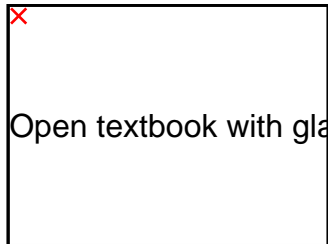




The 21st Century Textbook

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In their recent annual letter, Bill and Melinda Gates reflected on surprises they learned in 2018 and what the future might hold for 2019. One of the surprises has to do with the state of textbooks – that textbooks are becoming obsolete.

Although Bill Gates is an avid reader, he admits that the main limitation with the textbook is that, even though the book is rich with knowledge, it is still a limited way to learn something. He writes that "Even the best text can't figure out which concepts you understand and which ones you need more help with. It certainly can't tell your teacher how well you grasped last night's assigned reading." Technology gives us an opportunity to rethink the textbook and the learning process. With learning software, Gates suggests that a student could instead do a reading, then watch a video and play a game that reinforce the reading, then do some quiz-type questions to check for understanding, and then answer some additional questions that would zero in on what the student still doesn't understand. In the meanwhile, valuable data is being generated for the teacher to help her understand where her students are with the material and what specific instruction the teacher

should do to support students and fill in the gaps.

Gates writes that schools across the country are starting to scale available software to the point where many students now have access to digital curricula, ditching print textbooks in the process. Melinda Gates also notes that the demographics in higher education are changing such that there are more "nontraditional" students who are learning with digital tools that are complementing their busy life and work schedules. Digital tools are also helping students save money that might be the difference between continuing their education and stopping or dropping out entirely. (We also see particular promise with OERs, open education resources, and can provide a workshop on OERs for your agency if you would like to learn more – just contact us!)

Textbooks are another arena in education that technology is disrupting. As you schedule your next textbook purchase, consider the possibility of a technology purchase instead and whether your school is ready to ditch the textbook.

Source: [Bill and Melinda Gates – Our 2019 Annual Letter](#) 

(Also take a look at some other tech-related surprises, including: data can be sexist, and mobile phones are most powerful in the hands of the poorest women)