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The Disappearance of Technology: Toward an Ecological Model of Literacy

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Abstract: We tend to think of technology as a set of tools to perform a specific function. These tools are often portrayed as mechanistic, exterior, autonomous, and concrete devices that accomplish tasks and create products. We do not generally think of them as intimately entwined with social and biological lives. But literacy technologies, such as pen and paper, index cards, computer databases, word processors, networks, e-mail, and hypertext, are also ideological tools; they are designed, accessed, interpreted, and used to further purposes that embody social values. More than mechanistic, they are organic, because they merge with our social, physical, and psychological beings. Thus, we need to look more closely at how technologies are realized in given settings. We may find that technological tools can be so embedded in the living process that their status as technologies disappears.

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