

Book Review

Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age *by Jessica Pressman*

Reviewed by Emily Dundon

In a world where digital screens dominate our very culture, Jessica Pressman's *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* offers a redefining dive into the evolving relationship between people and books. Published in 2020 by Columbia University Press, this book isn't just for those who love to read—it's for those who love the very idea of books, in all their forms, and how publishers must face ethical decisions about preserving such books.

In the introduction to this piece, Pressman begins by defining what she calls “bookishness.” Before understanding this concept, one must understand “being bookish.” A “bookish” person is often someone who reads a lot, while “bookishness” is an identity that thrives on all things related to books, from the physical object to the culture and community surrounding it. This distinction is crucial for understanding the rest of the book, as Pressman meticulously unpacks how bookishness permeates our modern, digital age. The introduction lays the foundation for the rest of the book, ensuring that readers are well-prepared for the following chapters. As Pressman guides us through the intricacies of bookishness, it's clear this isn't just a nostalgic look back at the physical book; it's an exploration of how the very essence of books has evolved and continues to influence our lives, even in a digital world.

One of the book's most striking points is its reflection on loss and the creation of fakery in the bookish culture. While we certainly have not lost books by any means, it does feel like we have lost something uniquely pure due to the digital age and resulting fakery. Pressman states, “Bookishness

registers a sense of loss and promotes remembrance.” In this remembrance, as society advances in technology and moves away from the physical book, there’s a growing culture seeking to recreate the bookish experience in new, innovative ways. This can be linked to the ethical responsibility of how publishers use this innovation but also work to preserve the print culture. Speaking from personal experience, certain readers may prefer print over e-books. The author does an incredible job at using real-life examples from other authors and her personal experiences to paint a picture of bookishness for her reader. From computer cases resembling closed books to the nostalgia-laden aesthetics of digital reading apps, *Bookishness* highlights how these modern artifacts are tributes to the fading era of holding physical copies of books.

Pressman has taken what seems like the simple concept of loving books and expanded on it so profoundly that it lingers in the mind long after the last page. *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* is not just a study of our love for books—it’s a reflection on how we remember, adapt, and continue to cherish what books represent in an increasingly digital world, and how we have an ethical obligation to balance technology and print. I found myself wondering what Pressman would think today, considering this book was written four years ago. *Bookishness* as a culture continues to expand deeper into the digital, which can be seen by the growing online community of “BookTok” and “Bookstagram.” Jessica Pressman’s *Bookishness* is a must-read for anyone interested in the intersection of books, culture, and technology. It is a thought-provoking exploration of books as a culture and our ethical responsibility to preserve literary culture, making it a perfect addition to the bookshelf of someone who calls themselves bookish.

References

Pressman, Jessica. 2020. *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age*. New York: Columbia University Press.