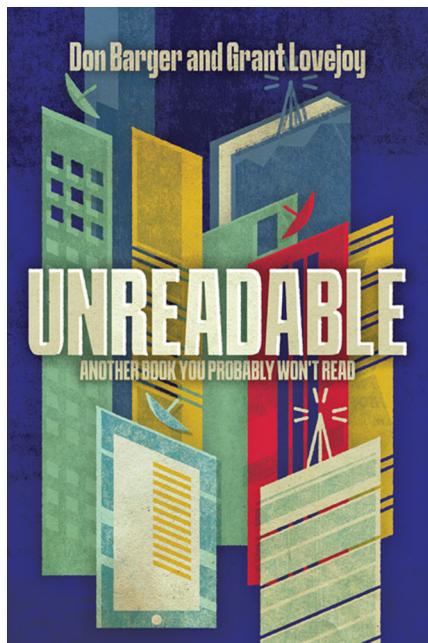


REVIEW: *Unreadable: Another Book You Probably Won't Read* by Don Barger and Grant Lovejoy

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REVIEWED BY
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Barger, Don and Lovejoy, Grant, *Unreadable: Another Book You Probably Won't Read*. Richmond: International Mission Board. Pp 123, ISBN: 979-8-9881-1584-7 \$17.99 paperback.



In contrast to their book title, *Unreadable*, Barger and Lovejoy have written a highly readable book that motivates one to want to read this book. Their catchy book title encapsulates their main thesis that people are increasingly less inclined to read print. The book is well-structured, with organized headings and page numbers, and written in a conversational tone that feels as if one was conversing with both authors over coffee. In addition, the authors cleverly provide QR codes that present the key points summarizing each of the 12 main chapters.

Barger and Lovejoy begin by stating that they initially did not want to write this book, which is based on their qualitative research on orality. They conducted 200 semi-structured interviews with the goal of understanding how people acquire information today and their preferred modes of obtaining knowledge. The participants for their research came from both rural and urban settings in all the continents except Antarctica.

As the reader moves through the book, Barger and Lovejoy present an overview of their research methods and then discuss a brief history of communication and the spread of information. This process initially relied on oral methods, later accelerated by the printing press, and has since shifted to electronic means. They also define orality and how orality strategies are relevant for all communication efforts when people “value voice and visuals over print” (p. 17).

One of the strengths of *Unreadable* lies in the perspective that Barger and Lovejoy present due to their extensive experience as orality researchers and practitioners. In addition, their service as long-term missionaries overseas in this field enhance their perspective on orality ministry and digital technology. Their research is solid as they draw from more than 200 interviews, along with case studies and detailed testimonies that further illustrate their points regarding modern communication models. For example, the stories of Yasmin and Alex present real-life applications of non-print ways that people around the world access information.

The learning activities at the end of some of the chapters (chapters 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10) help the reader reflect and think through points of application. They also include practical suggestions for helping one to be more effective in understanding one's context, the listener, and how to craft one's communication in an increasingly digital age.

In today's world of information consumption through apps, sound bites and other non-print channels such as text messages, audio messages, podcasts, Snapchat, memes, and TikTok amongst others, *Unreadable* is significant in addressing various communication modes.

One of the main points the authors make, supported by their research, is the increasing shift in how people consume information and acquire knowledge from mainly print in the past to now through digital ways.

Unreadable is geared towards helping urban church leaders understand how the new generation acquires information and the most effective ways to communicate with them. However, the principles and information presented in this book also has relevance for people wanting to communicate effectively with the appropriate ways of transmitting information in today's social media-saturated contexts. I recommend this book for those seeking to understand how various audiences best receive and acquire information. When applied to those involved in sharing the Gospel to different peoples and in different contexts, these principles and best practices become especially crucial as the goal is transformation in beliefs and worldview. In conclusion, this is one book that readers will be highly motivated to read and recommend to others who desire to communicate effectively in this increasingly digital age.