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Journal Entry

How I Didn't Download Ebooks

I haven't gone anywhere for more than a month. We have much snow, and it's been quite cold. We live in town now, in a neighborhood. I'm not interested in most places to go in town, and I avoid going out to slippery roads and sidewalks.

Usually, I don't get restless. I practice my songs. I write essays, short stories, poems, songs, parts of books. I keep my website going by putting on more fiction, essays, poems, songs, my own, and others, when I find appropriate work by others. I review and revise my own work I'm going to use on my website.

If I'm putting on something I've published, I may originally have limited the number of words I used for the piece. The Christian Science Monitor, for example limits essays for its home forum page to 800 words. I've published about 150 essays there. Since I have no length limit for material I put on my website, I may want to expand a previously-published essay before I put it on. Any other piece I'm thinking of putting on, I read and revise as needed. Even assiduously-polished writing can often used more polishing.

I read published books, too. I prefer reading on my ereader. As I've gotten older, injuries I received many years ago when a drunk driver hit me, limit me physically. Holding a book open in a position to read is harder than holding a small, light ereader.

I don't sit for long in one position, either, because a pinched nerve, a result of that wreck, means my butt gets sore rapidly, and I have to exercise to stretch nerves and muscles. Today, I didn't want to write, practice music, or work on my website, partly because I didn't want to deal with all the soreness, necessary exercises, nor frustration that come when I sit very long at my computer or with my guitar. Combined with my edging into laziness and temporary rebellion against essential work patterns, doubt about the value of my self-directed work descended on me, as it sometimes does, and I couldn't muster enough motivation to keep going.

I thought I might check some ebooks out from the library, read just for recreation, ignore my own work for a while, avoid my computer, avoid my

guitar, move from one chair to another as necessary to minimize soreness as I read.

I turned on my computer, went to the library website, and spent over an hour trying to get some ebooks for my ereader, without success. I can't just check out a book in epub format. I have to register with Adobe, download and install software on my computer, then download books not in epub to my computer, convert them to epub, and load them onto my ereader. I tried to complete that process.

Printing on my computer screen said I'd successfully completed the task of downloading, and I now have the ebooks on my computer, but the books aren't on my computer, or if they are, I can't find them. I've spent over an hour pursuing the dream of having nice books to read, and I've achieved nothing.

I quit. Phooey on it. If I got a book, I probably wouldn't like it anyway. I've been rejecting most of the books I've tried to read the last few years. Often, books are so poorly written, I can't tolerate them, or if they're well written, I wind up not interested enough in what they're about to continue reading.

I have found good books that really interest me though, enough to encourage me to never give up looking for new material to read.

I email a complaint to the library and say the process of checking out books in epub format is way too complex. Why can't I just check out an epub file and read a book? I already know the answer probably has to do with digital rights management, to protect against people giving the book away with no money for the author or the publisher. That is the answer that comes from the library, along with an offer to help me work through getting epub files.

I appreciate the kind offer to help, but I'm turning away from trying to find new material to read and back toward my own writing and working on my website. My guitar shines invitingly at me from its stand beside my writing table.

I tell Laura what I've gone through, and she tells me of a similar experience she just dealt with, trying to follow up on an offer for a free trial for movies and television series on her computer. Maybe confusion and frustration is the price we often pay for working with technology. But, without our computers, I might have used even more time to drive on dangerously slick roads to the library and check out books that turned out

not to meet my needs, and she might have driven to a movie that she didn't like very well. So maybe we haven't really, this time, lost time and gained frustration because of modern technology. I also recognize that forces I don't completely understand often drive me back toward my own creative work.

I sit down in our living room and continue reading where I left off in the Christian Science Monitor, a weekly news magazine that gives a calm and balanced approach to world news. An article about Rachel Brown and a document she worked with the United States Holocaust Museum to develop, "Defusing Hate," excites me. I've been working on an essay about how we can't fight hatred with hatred and expect to make progress toward reducing hatred in the world.

I look up the document online, download the PDF file to my computer, and skim through the document. I haven't read it in detail yet, but I've read enough to know it's important and to realize, once again, that there seems to be a lot of hate in the world, but there are people working effectively to reduce hate. A more positive feeling about humanity, about today, about the value of work focused on positive goals floods my existence.

Time away from my own work helps me find perspective enough to know continuing with my writing, website, music, exercising is still what I want to do with most of my time. I'm not going to have time to read a book for recreation now, after all.

I'll use some of the energy my renewed enthusiasm has created to write an essay describing how seeming to be blocked in my effort to find an ebook helped bring back into focus my drive to create and what it aims me toward.