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Center for the Study of Language and Society

Das **CSLS** lädt herzlich ein zum **VORTRAG** von:

Naomi Baron

American University, Washington DC, USA

Print's Persistence in a Digital World

Tuesday 6 October

18:15 - 19:30

Raum F-121

UniTobler

Lerchenweg 36

3012 Bern

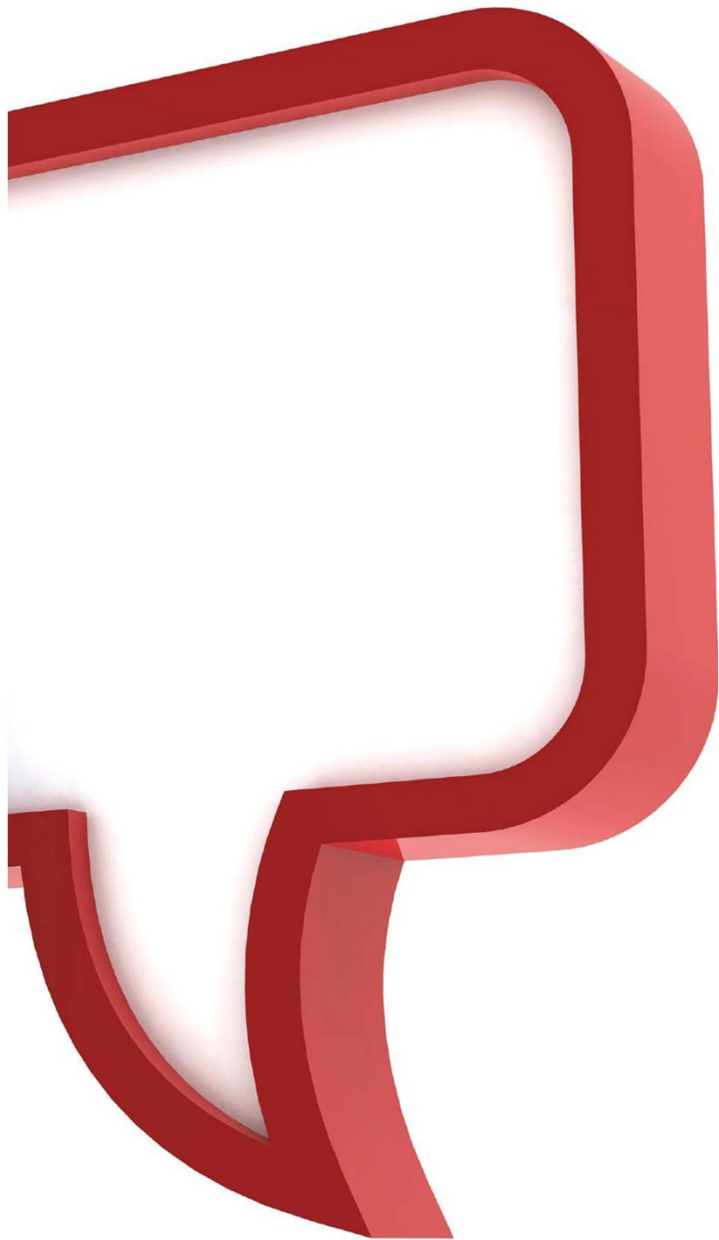
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ABSTRACT: In late 2012, the venture capitalist Ben Horowitz proclaimed, “Babies born today probably will never read anything in print.” His pronouncement was not altogether outlandish (at least in the USA), given that eBooks were experiencing triple-digit annual growth. Online learning encouraged online reading, and proponents of digital books touted such benefits as convenience, democratic access, lower cost, and presumed benefits for the environment. Those advocating for print were branded old-fashioned – or worse. Yet attitudes and buying patterns have been shifting. Those who worry about what might be lost with a decisive shift from hardcopy to screens are increasingly getting a hearing. Concerns include a decline in reading of lengthy, complex texts; a lack of incentive to re-read; and most centrally, diminished ability to concentrate on a text. One sign that the American public is reconsidering the mix between print and digits is the dramatically slowed growth rate of eBook sales, matched by modest gains for print. This lecture draws upon Professor Baron’s recent book *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World* to explore the pros and cons of print versus digital reading, and includes both prognostications and recommendations.

Naomi S Baron is Professor of Linguistics and Executive Director of the Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning at American University in Washington, DC, USA. A Guggenheim Fellow and Swedish Fulbright Fellow, she is the author of eight books, including *Alphabet to Email: How Written English Evolved and Where It’s Heading* (2000) and *Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World* (2008), which was winner of the English-Speaking Union’s Duke of Edinburgh English Language Book Award. Her newest book, *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World* (2015), examines how digital devices are changing our understanding of what it means to read.