

# Pascal's room, Berlin rabbits, the digital wave ...and libraries

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# Pascal's room, Berlin rabbits, the digital wave and libraries

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- The digital wave is about to make Pascal's belief come true. This French philosopher wants us to stay in a room – to think of what really matters. It was all about our death. And God.

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- Today, people and users (my son mainly) stay in a room quite a lot of time. But it's not for the same purposes. It's all about computers and the Internet.

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- So, people and users are not going anymore in our libraries. But there's still hope. It's all about rabbits and borders.

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- Just forget the δόξα.
- Facts and convictions about the future of libraries and librarians, in a totally subjective way.



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- « J'ai découvert que tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de ne pas savoir demeurer en repos dans une chambre ».

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- “All of man's misfortune comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to sit quietly in a room”.



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- For Pascal, we have to stay in a room because what is important is God.
- By now, we may stay in a room because all what is important for us is here.

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- It is now not necessary to leave home to reach everything that man has been seeking "away from home". All knowledge is online.

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- Now, Pascal's advice is becoming true. But it's not about God anymore.

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- If you believe the proponents of the catastrophic future of libraries, the digital wave will wipe out the library as a place, what it contains and the services it offers...

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- ... but it may only be true for a certain kind of library.

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- So, are a physical location,  
collections and services of use  
anymore ? Shall we disappear ?

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- In fact, the Internet and Pascal's room have much to share...

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- ... but it's mainly about  
« divertissement ». Let's talk for  
example about “collective  
intelligence”...



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- Let's talk too about digital natives.  
Are they ?

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- Increasing the stock of information and products available online does not increase knowledge : "less is more".

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- What if the librarians were the Berlin rabbits of the digital wave?

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- The library as a « third place »...  
between Pascal's room... and  
work. A real place, a virtual place.

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- Librarians (and libraries) can and must flourish in the no-man's lands that the digital wave generates.

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- Because there's still so much borders between users in their Pascal's room and the digital wave...
- Between users and documents...

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- Because there's still so much borders between users in their Pascal's room and the digital wave...
- ... among users...



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- Because there's still so much borders between users in their Pascal's room and the digital wave...
- ... and within places.

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- And if, in fact, man could not be satisfied with “Pascal's room” ?
- If he simply could not find in himself and in an isolated place the entire satisfaction of his needs ?

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- Never yield to the idolatry of technology for technology's sake.
- We must advocate the return of human contacts, however imperfect they may be.

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- “With iPods and iPads and Xboxes and PlayStations – none of which I know how to work – information becomes a distraction, a diversion, a form of entertainment, rather than a tool of empowerment” (President Obama).

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- "The more we make case of  
ourselves, the less you suffer. I think  
the opposite" (Alexander Jolien,  
French philosopher gravely  
disabled).

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- Pascal is not true : to stay in a room is what makes us unhappy.

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- And I do love rabbits. I don't eat them anymore.