**Addicted to Tech?**

Smartphones, social networking and the internet are destroying our identities and ruining our lives. At least, that is what two new books, iDisorder by Larry Rosen and Digital Vertigo by Andrew Keen, would have you believe. I am not so sure.

Rosen, a psychologist at California State University, argues that over-reliance on technology can cause psychological problems, ‘the iDisorders’ of the book’s title, but I struggled to find any causal link in chapter after chapter of correlations He describes how overuse of hand-held devices and general exposure to technology can cause various psychological disorders. But of course, the disorders existed before these technologies, and Rosen fails to convince that their incidence is on the rise.

Digital Vertigo is equally unconvincing. Keen whose previous book The Cult of the Amateur spoke out against user-generated content, states that privacy ‘is being dumped into the dustbin of history’, warning that we cannot trust the large corporations that run the Internet with our precious personal data. It’s a viewpoint I am entirely sympathetic with, but Keen’s argument, woven between name-dropping anecdotes from Silicon Valley conferences and well-known quotes from the film The Social Network, left me unconvinced. As keen points out, we must all take personal responsibility for the information we put online. However, social media needn’t inevitably lead to the problems he suggests. I have found Twitter, Facebook and other online services essential for initiating and maintaining major social connections. In fact, without social networking, I would be short one wife, one job and at least half a dozen close friends.

These technologies are tools, and like all tools they must be used correctly. Cars are far more dangerous to society than Facebook. According to the World Health Organization, 1.2 million people die in road traffic accidents each year. As a society we accept this because of the benefits that cars offer, and we work to mitigate the downsides. It should be the same with smartphones and social networking. If you cannot go five minutes without a status update then, yes, you should properly step away from the touchscreen, but let’s not ignore the great opportunities these technologies offer for fear of some unproven and unrealised disaster. People used to worry about the effects of the telephone on society, but 150 years on, we seem to be managing just fine.

**Questions:**

Do the following statements agree with the information in the reading passage (Yes/ No/ Not Given):

1. Rosen has demonstrated a connection between overuse of technology and certain psychological conditions.
2. Rosen provides evidence that the conditions he describes are becoming more common.
3. Keen’s previous book has been very influential.
4. Keen is right to warn about the threat to privacy posed by the internet.
5. An international body is concerned that social networking might be addictive.
6. There may be people who are over-dependent on electronic devices.