English articles

It's useful to read articles in English, even if you don't understand every word - it will help you increase your vocabulary and keep up to date with things happening in English-speaking countries!

*This page will be updated on **Mondays**. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

Articles of the week

Why Choosing Something To Watch Feels So Difficult

By Michael Dinich | Wealth of Geeks undefined

Too much of a good thing? Streaming service subscribers report that content overload and hidden fees are leading to frustration and subscription fatigue.

In fact, the new survey of 2,000 American streaming service subscribers revealed that the average

person spends 110 hours per year scrolling through streaming services, struggling to find something worth watching — a stark reminder of the “too much content, too little time” dilemma.

Commissioned by UserTesting and conducted by Talker Research, the study revealed one in five believe it's harder to find something to watch today than it was 10 years ago. According to them, the underlying cause comes from being overwhelmed by too much content.

Many struggled with having larger content libraries (41%) and feeling like there's too much original content being produced (26%).

Watch Recommendations: A Double-Edged Sword

And although 75% appreciate streaming service algorithms serving them accurate recommendations, 51% admitted the quantity of recommended content is also overwhelming, explaining they want to watch everything recommended to them.

Nearly half (48%) do not have traditional cable anymore. And those that choose streaming platforms do so because they like the variety (43%), the shows they want to watch are not on cable (34%), and they find streaming more convenient for on-the-go viewing (29%).

However, people are generally dissatisfied with the current streaming services available. In fact, 51% would rather have more streaming service options — even if those options included ads.

When asked what their “dream” streaming platform would look like, top features included premium channels and networks for no added cost (40%) and an easy-to-navigate interface (39%).

Further, 52% said a platform's user interface plays a massive or significant role in their decision to subscribe.

The average person said all of the above should be available for no more than $46 per month — although 11% admitted they'd willingly pay over $100 per month for the service.

“The streaming landscape has evolved from solving the problem of content access to creating a new challenge of content discovery,” said Bobby Meixner, Senior Director of Industry Solutions at UserTesting. “Our research shows that despite advanced recommendation algorithms, viewers are spending nearly five full days each year just trying to decide what to watch–time that could be spent actually enjoying content.”

The study also found a number of frustrations streaming subscribers have experienced.

A substantial 79% expressed frustration with streaming services requiring additional subscription fees for select content.

When encountering those added fees, the majority (59%) are unlikely to pay and would instead look for content on a different platform they subscribe to (73%), give up and watch something else (77%) or consider canceling their subscription altogether (37%). Nearly one in five (19%) would sign up for a free trial of a platform to find a show they want to watch.

Respondents also showed disdain for platforms pulling shows without notice, which directly impacts loyalty.

Over the past year, 69% have opened a streaming service at least once to find the show they were looking for is no longer there.

Forty-four percent said they would likely end their subscription to a streaming service and subscribe to a new one just to continue watching a favorite show, and 56% would cancel that subscription as soon as they finish watching said show.

Challenges in Cancellation

But when canceling, nearly a quarter (23%) have experienced difficulties, claiming it's hard for them to find the cancellation option on the platform's website (39%) or that the cancellation process was overly-complicated with multiple steps (36%).

“We're seeing a fundamental shift in how streaming platforms need to approach user experience,” continued Bobby Meixner. “With 52% of subscribers saying interface design significantly impacts their subscription decisions, and 79% frustrated by hidden fees, streaming services must balance content abundance with accessibility and transparency to maintain subscriber loyalty.”

Survey Methodology:

Talker Research surveyed 2,000 American adults who subscribe to at least one streaming service; the survey was commissioned by UserTesting and administered and conducted online by Talker Research between Nov. 2 and Nov. 7, 2024.

AI is a game changer for students with disabilities. Schools are still learning to harness it

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

For Makenzie Gilkison, spelling is such a struggle that a word like rhinoceros might come out as “rineanswsaurs” or sarcastic as “srkastik.”

The 14-year-old from suburban Indianapolis can sound out words, but her dyslexia makes the process so draining that she often struggles with comprehension. “I just assumed I was stupid,” she recalled of her early grade school years.

But assistive technology powered by artificial intelligence has helped her keep up with classmates. Last year, Makenzie was named to the National Junior Honor Society. She credits a customized AI-powered chatbot, a word prediction program and other tools that can read for her.

“I would have just probably given up if I didn't have them,” she said.

Artificial intelligence holds the promise of helping countless other students with a range of visual, speech, language and hearing impairments to execute tasks that come easily to others. Schools everywhere have been wrestling with how and where to incorporate AI, but many are fast-tracking applications for students with disabilities.

Getting the latest technology into the hands of students with disabilities is a priority for the U.S. Education Department, which has told schools they must consider whether students need tools like text-to-speech and alternative communication devices. New rules from the Department of Justice also will require schools and other government entities to make apps and online content accessible to those with disabilities.

There is concern about how to ensure students using it — including those with disabilities — are still learning.

Students can use artificial intelligence to summarize jumbled thoughts into an outline, summarize complicated passages, or even translate Shakespeare into common English. And computer-generated voices that can read passages for visually impaired and dyslexic students are becoming less robotic and more natural.

“I'm seeing that a lot of students are kind of exploring on their own, almost feeling like they've found a cheat code in a video game,” said Alexis Reid, an educational therapist in the Boston area who works with students with learning disabilities. But in her view, it is far from cheating: “We're meeting students where they are.”

Ben Snyder, a 14-year-old freshman from Larchmont, New York, who was recently diagnosed with a learning disability, has been increasingly using AI to help with homework.

“Sometimes in math, my teachers will explain a problem to me, but it just makes absolutely no sense,” he said. “So if I plug that problem into AI, it'll give me multiple different ways of explaining how to do that.”

He likes a program called Question AI. Earlier in the day, he asked the program to help him write an outline for a book report — a task he completed in 15 minutes that otherwise would have taken him an hour and a half because of his struggles with writing and organization. But he does think using AI to write the whole report crosses a line.

“That's just cheating,” Ben said.

Schools have been trying to balance the technology's benefits against the risk that it will do too much. If a special education plan sets reading growth as a goal, the student needs to improve that skill. AI can't do it for them, said Mary Lawson, general counsel at the Council of the Great City Schools.

But the technology can help level the playing field for students with disabilities, said Paul Sanft, director of a Minnesota-based center where families can try out different assistive technology tools and borrow devices.

“There are definitely going to be people who use some of these tools in nefarious ways. That's always going to happen,” Sanft said. “But I don't think that's the biggest concern with people with disabilities, who are just trying to do something that they couldn't do before.”

Another risk is that AI will track students into less rigorous courses of study. And, because it is so good at identifying patterns, AI might be able to figure out a student has a disability. Having that disclosed by AI and not the student or their family could create ethical dilemmas, said Luis Pérez, the

disability and digital inclusion lead at CAST, formerly the Center for Applied Specialized Technology.

Schools are using the technology to help students who struggle academically, even if they do not qualify for special education services. In Iowa, a new law requires students deemed not proficient — about a quarter of them — to get an individualized reading plan. As part of that effort, the state's education department spent $3 million on an AI-driven personalized tutoring program. When students struggle, a digital avatar intervenes.

More AI tools are coming soon.

The U.S. National Science Foundation is funding AI research and development. One firm is developing tools to help children with speech and language difficulties. Called the National AI Institute for Exceptional Education, it is headquartered at the University of Buffalo, which did pioneering work on handwriting recognition that helped the U.S. Postal Service save hundreds of millions of dollars by automating processing.

“We are able to solve the postal application with very high accuracy. When it comes to children's handwriting, we fail very badly,” said Venu Govindaraju, the director of the institute. He sees it as an area that needs more work, along with speech-to-text technology, which isn't as good at understanding children's voices, particularly if there is a speech impediment.

Sorting through the sheer number of programs developed by education technology companies can be a time-consuming challenge for schools. Richard Culatta, CEO of the International Society for Technology in Education, said the nonprofit launched an effort this fall to make it easier for districts to vet what they are buying and ensure it is accessible.

Makenzie wishes some of the tools were easier to use. Sometimes a feature will inexplicably be turned off, and she will be without it for a week while the tech team investigates. The challenges can be so cumbersome that some students resist the technology entirely.

But Makenzie's mother, Nadine Gilkison, who works as a technology integration supervisor at Franklin Township Community School Corporation in Indiana, said she sees more promise than downside.

In September, her district rolled out chatbots to help special education students in high school. She said teachers, who sometimes struggled to provide students the help they needed, became emotional when they heard about the program. Until now, students were reliant on someone to help them, unable to move ahead on their own.

“Now we don't need to wait anymore,” she said.

This story corrects that Pérez works for CAST, formerly the Center for Applied Specialized Technology, not the Center for Accessible Technology.

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