My generation is numb. We are stolid creatures, traipsing around the earth robotically, our devices—cell phones, iPods, laptops—perpetually glued to our hands. I remember elementary school, when my world was filled with a thirst for knowledge, when the smell of books was intoxicating and wisdom was a gift. Striving to learn was as natural as breathing. It seems that our yearning for information has died along with the old means for obtaining it. Hardcover textbooks, the Dewey decimal system, and handwritten bibliographies have been replaced by the internet. When I was in elementary school, the internet was a vast frontier, discovered yet undeveloped. Back then, instead of doing what would now amount to a 30- second Google search, I cracked open pocket- guides for MLA citation and browsed the Encyclopedia Britannica in order to obtain information for a report or project.

The internet has made us more efficient, enabled us to gather facts with the click of a button; however, efficiency does not imply efficacy. Sure, we can search data quickly and easily, but the process soon becomes muddled by the amount of opinion, false information, unnecessary advertisements, and excessive banter. I shouldn’t have to push my way through excessive words and buttons and blabbering to get to what I need. The internet is too static, overwhelmingly two- dimensional in a way that puts a barrier between us and the information at hand. My generation seems to take knowledge for granted, because its accessibility renders us indifferent.

The internet is growing by the minute, exponentially, so how can I claim its inertness? It just sits there, motionless, a machine. Books, on the other hand, have movement, fluidity. I can open and close them with my hands, feel the binding wear and the pages flip. I can hear the crinkle of the paper, and I can smell the love between the pages. I can’t smell the internet—or perhaps I’ve been around it so long, that I just can’t smell it any more.