

MARGARET ATWOOD'S ORYX AND CRAKE, TECHNOLOGICAL COLONIALISM AND THE DYSTOPIAN FUTURE FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Blaire Kuntz

Margaret Atwood's 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake* presents a grim portrait of a dystopian technological society beset by rampant inequality resulting from corporate greed and the deleterious effects of global warming. The novel discusses the future of books and reading in a gloomy manner, with the physical book largely relegated to museum status, having been replaced by digital sources and e-books. In the novel, the masculine pursuits of science and technology reign with scientists and technological experts living in opulent gated communities, while the feminine pursuits of arts and humanities are denigrated and enjoy low economic prestige. Atwood's vision of the future of books and reading has gradually come to pass in the modern academic library with physical books seen increasingly as an economic burden which are supplanted by e-books and other digital sources, even as researchers warn us of the negative effects of online reading which results in skimming and a subsequent decrease in critical analyses and empathy. Meanwhile, senior academic library administrators, schooled in the ethos of modern neoliberal economics embrace a colonial technological future of robotics, artificial intelligence, and security surveillance with little thought given to the harmful effects both to the academic library and society at large.