on the, gasp, worldwide web, if you're still connected – Baron singles out a few of the usual suspects in a line-up of the fearers and loathers: Plato, who thought writing, the shadow of the real thing, would rot our memories; Henry David Thoreau, with his observation that ‘We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas, but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate;' or the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel Morse, in turn sending out an SOS about a pernicious new telephone technology.

The knockout punch in any fight between the new and the good ol’ days, though, is the too-much-information charge that, with 955,454,536,342,364,788,009,876 web pages, and counting, according to WikiAnswers, there’s simply too much information. That’s a fair charge, Baron concedes, but adds, ‘There’s always been too much to read. Nobody read all the books at the Great Library of Alexandria’ – which, incidentally, was partially or completely destroyed by Julius Caesar’s fire in either the Alexandrian War, in BC 48, the attack of Aurelian in the third century AD, the decree of Theophilus in AD 391 or the Muslim conquest in or after AD 642, according to Wikipedia.

REFERENCES

This month’s Last Word was written in between time-consuming tweets, googles, deletions of RSS feeds and visits to Facebook by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher, and the 2008 highly commended winner in the Best Columnist category of the Melbourne Press Club Quill Awards for the Last Word.