

Eichhorn

End of Forgetting

Growing Up with Social Media

Thanks to Facebook and Instagram, our childhoods have been captured and preserved online, never to go away. But what happens when we can't leave our most embarrassing moments behind? Until recently, the awkward moments of growing up could be forgotten. But today we may be on the verge of losing the ability to leave our pasts behind. In *The End of Forgetting*, Kate Eichhorn explores what happens when images of our younger selves persist, often remaining just a click away. For today's teenagers, many of whom spend hours each day posting on social media platforms, efforts to move beyond moments they regret face new and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Unlike a high school yearbook or a shoebox full of old photos, the information that accumulates on social media is here to stay. What was once fleeting is now documented and tagged, always ready to surface and interrupt our future lives. Moreover, new innovations such as automated facial recognition also mean that the reappearance of our past is increasingly out of our control. Historically, growing up has been about moving on—achieving a safe distance from painful events that typically mark childhood and adolescence. But what happens when one remains tethered to the past? From the earliest days of the internet, critics have been concerned that it would endanger the innocence of childhood. The greater danger, Eichhorn warns, may ultimately be what happens when young adults find they are unable to distance themselves from their pasts. Rather than a childhood cut short by a premature loss of innocence, the real crisis of the digital age may be the specter of a childhood that can never be forgotten.

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24,00 €

22,43 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780674976696

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-674-97669-6

Verlag: Harvard University Press

Erscheinungstermin: 01.07.2019

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2019

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 333 g

Seiten: 192

Format (B x H): 144 x 216 mm

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20.07.2024 | 04:31 Uhr

