

Is AI Making Us Too Distracted for Nuclear Safety?

A new book warns that declining deep reading threatens rational thought—essential for reactor operations and safety cases.

THE DATA

20,000

Popular-science book titles published

In 2024, over 20,000 popular-science books were published, up from 1.2 million in 2000.

Despite a surge in titles, sales have dropped sharply—2.9 million in 2024, down from a peak of over 5 million in 2019. This paradox reflects a shift toward quantity over depth, with books becoming simpler and less cognitively demanding.

Source: Nature · Published October 12, 2026

https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-03224-7?error=cookies_not_supported&code=a474b8a2-d426-4011-a47f-87b0259d5a9c

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Simpler Texts = Weaker Safety Case Reasoning

This is not merely a cultural trend; it undermines the foundational skill of deep reading that underpins technical rigor in nuclear engineering, regulatory review, and risk assessment.

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AI Can't Compensate for Cognitive Atrophy

The solution is not more AI, but better cognitive infrastructure: training in deep reading, structured argumentation, and attentional discipline as core competencies in nuclear safety education.

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