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Author of "Foucault's Pendulum" Umberto Eco spoke at Traves Hall in the Douglass College Center Monday about literature and the new millennium.

Author speaks of books' future in high-tech age

By Vivek Kaliraman

Author/Philosopher Umberto Eco spoke about the future of books in the new millennium in a visit to the University.

The author of works including "The Name of the Rose," "Foucault's Pendulum" and "The Island of the Day Before" told an audience Monday at Traves Hall in the Douglass College Center that while there are new technologies that replace the old forms of communication, books will remain important.

"Books will remain in this world not only for literature but for any circumstance in which one has to read carefully to reflect and speculate," he said. "Books belong to this class of instruments which once invented have not been further improved like hammer, knife, spoon and scissors."

He said despite the fact that "there are other means to receive information, books have proved to be the most suitable instrument for transmitting information.

"Computers might be diffusing a new kind of literacy but com-

puters are incapable of satisfying such intellectual needs as reading a poem or a newspaper," he said.

"World wide Web and CD-ROM will certainly render encyclopedias and handbooks obsolete, because these are expensive, voluminous and occupy precious shelf space," he said. "New technologies which tailor the books according to the desire of the buyers might eliminate bookstores but definitely not the books."

Eco said the World Wide Web expands literary possibilities.

"We are marching towards a liber-

ated society where hypertext will serve as a tool for more freedom and creativity."

"A story can be infinite and at every narrative junction every contributor can take the story on a different path and the story can continue for years," Eco said.

The changing role of books in society has led people to speculate about the "survival of the very notion of authorship," he said.

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