**Introduction**

The analysis that can be drawn from the work of professor Levy is that there is a phenomenon that he develops called “Information Overload.” He begins by identifying what the concept is and how it has increased the in recent. Levy begins by identifying what information is. He states that information is defined differently according to various thought camps. He states that the various philosophical perspectives of defining what information is doesn’t provide an effective platform for discussing the concept of Information Overload. Levy, rightly, doesn’t spend much time defining what *information* *is*. He defines what by contrast what Information Overload is and that it has increased in recent decades; Some of what can be inferred is that from the increased throughput of the information that a person’s capacity to properly process and in-turn properly respond to information is either limited or not entirely developed such that the increased interaction with information causes Information Overload.

Bogost, a video game developer and prolific columnist for the Atlantic writes in a recent article that an application and proposed resolution to Information Overload. Bogost’s application of Information Overload begins with referring to a number of individuals that a person can reasonably have meaningful relationships with. That any individual can have at a maximum 150 meaningful relationships according to British psychologist Robin Dunbar. That number descends to around 15 for relationships that sustain some kind of intimacy or that a person could be described as one of those friends could be called a ‘best-friend.’ Bogost then refers to the concept of Information Overload as seen in social media. Where Levy generally explains the concept of Information Overload, Bogost applies the concept very specifically to how a person is negatively affected through the ever-increasing abundance of social media posts and proposes solutions that largely have to do with throttling the content that is published specifically on social media.

This Paper will introduce a person to the concepts of what Information Overload is according to Levy, discusses how the concepts of information overload are applied in Bogost’s article and then a discussion results wherein the concepts are discussed and developed from the foundation of these two texts with topics of how to address the negative affects of information overload, I will discuss and summarize the two texts and the greater concepts referred therein.

**Levy and Bogost**

Bogost seems to pick up where Levy leaves off; Levy defines what Information Overload is, what the history and where Information overload comes from, Bogost then the applies the concept aside from calling the phenomenon by a different name other than Information Overload, but applies it specifically to the spectrum of social media.

**Levy - What is Information**

*What is even information?* Levy defines information by introducing various philosophical definitions. Levy cites Shannon and Weaver define identifies the bits of data that culminate in the transmission of a signal as the definition of what information is. Others take the position that information must have some inherent meaning or value to truly be information that the transmission medium is not the focus but does distinguish between information is and what information is not. Some designate that the physical property of information, such as a tangible document, is a sense of the *concept* of information. Still others support information as an idea rather than a thing or an artifact.

**What is Information Overload**

Having defined the positions of what information is, we now move to what Information Overload is. Levy gives an introductory illustration, Information Overload is seen as a conveyor belt that, at an increasing speed, delivers a desserts to a person eating those desserts. Levy illustrates the steps that a person interacts with Information. Although it is implied, the assumption is that the person has decided to consume the desserts (made a volitional decision to willfully interact with information).

These steps are for the **‘human’** to process information to distinguish between a ‘**computer’** and a human interacting with information.

Step 1: reception – to receive the information to a person

Step 2: processing – to perform a process to understand the information

Step 3: reaction – to then make some kind of decision based off of the processed information.

The illustrated concept is that a person who is experiencing Information Overload is inundated with information to where the process of reception, processing and making decisions based on decisions is negatively affected.

The concept is described as specifically as a symptom of a disease without rightly identifying the actual cause of the disease; thus the procedure for making decisions based on information is negatively affected, not necessarily making the disease of Information Overload the fault of the ***proliferation*** of the information, the ***abundance*** of information itself or the ***individual’s*** efficiency and capability with responding to the information. Levy introduces the idea that Information Overload is subjective based on if the person *feels* overwhelmed by information contrasted to simply the state of being overwhelmed by Information.

I will go further than that and say that what a person’s perspective and response of whether or not they themselves are suffering from Information Overload once confronted is subjective. (Here the situation is that a person is ‘spoken to concerning their performance being negatively affected.’)

* Then must a scientific metric be defined for an individual to say with some authority that they are experiencing Information Overload?
* Is that a necessary stop to suggest what the proper resolutions to such a condition would be?

**Levy’s History of Information Overload**

Levy cites the time-period of the 1960s pretty heavily. He cites that as early as the 1960s, scholars surmised that urban areas would be saturated with information within the next half-century. Referring less to the medium of transmission, a different study of Information Overload from the 1960s stated that the ‘flood’ of publications would throw a prospective person going from living in a society of information scarcity to information over-abundance. Still another study from the 1960s made the claim that no manager could possibly be capable of processing all of the information presented to them or would spend the majority of their time processing all of the data.

**Levy – Parting Illustration**

Levy presents an interesting illustration to summarize what Information Overload is; He brings up the reaserch of a psychologist who uses an electrical circuit to discuss the negative effects. There is an interesting contrast to make, however, and that is that circuits cannot feel stress and other than heat, they don’t suffer any physical harm from being overloaded. They just fail to process the data (this point is intended to introduce a concept there are other negative effects of a circuit being overloaded with data, but by-and-large, the circuit just drops the data) He concludes citing, “Just as the body cracks under the strain of environmental overstimulation, the ‘mind’ and its decision processes behave erratically when overloaded”

**Bogost**

Building on Levy’s platform, he cites a quantifiable number that psychologists have related that a person has in terms of the amount of the maximum number of meaningful relationships. This is established at the beginning of the Bogost’s discourse as a way to prompt the rest of the position. Given that, according to psychologists a number of meaningful relationships and then relationships that are considered intimate are reserved for 15. After establishing this fact, Bogost then develops the concept of how a person is inundated with information through social media. Then calls out social media as having far too much information to have meaningful relationships.

**How Social Media is Information Overload**

Whereas there is big business in having a lot of followers on social media, translating to a drive in creating for yourself more followers for the sake of a campaign, the implication is that there is a healthy number of individuals that any person can have either meaningful or intimate relationships with and that interacting with more individuals than this (as a baseline) is an overload. Bogost implies denouncing social media as proliferating far too much information for anyone to healthily interact with.

Bogost’s proposed solution to the amount of social media information are various forms of throttling. Bogost then develops his idea into that the resulting relationships create what sociologists call “weak ties” and then the implication is then that the individual becomes used to weak ties and the resulting relationships more prevalently define the person and their social interaction negatively by this type of overload.

Bogost places special attention on the responsibility of the parties placing the social media content on to web. This is a something to be noted because his proposed solution to this aspect of Information Overload is to ensure that whoever is publishing the content and the quantity of social media posts per person/party is restricted to a certain amount. Interesting that the entire situation of Overload isn’t addressed here, which will be one of the platforms of my discussion.

**Summary**