Google Helps, Not Hurts

(Disclaimer: Google was used in the construction of this essay.)

Imagine you are eating Lucky Charms, and as you bring that pot of gold to your lips, you become distracted. What exactly is the ingredient list of these delicious marshmallow substances? Your inquiring mind forces you to find the answer, so you decide to Google it. Fast forward five months. You hail a cab on Fifth Avenue, and the host of Cash Cab, a popular game show, asks you, “What are the ingredients of the marshmallows in Lucky Charms?” Bam! You’ve won $50,000 on Cash Cab. You donate it to a charity (that you have discovered on a Google link) and suddenly you have given food, shelter, and clothing to an impoverished community in a third-world country. As far-fetched as this anecdote may seem, Google does provide us with opportunities to expand our minds with a click of a button. While Mr. Carr makes a valid point that Google can “make us stupid”, in the right context Google actually makes us smarter.

While the argument that Google makes us smarter is quite difficult to prove, it is reasonably plausible that the search engine makes us more efficient in the process of acquiring knowledge of subject matter. In years past a person would have to go through several steps to gather information on a specific topic. At one time “browsing” meant spending inordinate amounts of time scanning card catalogs and roaming through rows of books to find the resource that might or might not be useful in your search. Now Google, with a click of a button, instantly accesses numerous sources that can be easily navigated and checked for the information we need.

Not only does Google make us more efficient in terms of speediness of gathering information, it also requires us to be smarter in our decision-making. Because we have so many sources at our fingertips, we must become more aware of the difference between fact and fiction and what makes a source credible. Any person can publish information online, so in turn we must be critical of any source we read or use for a reference. By asking questions and ruling out bias, we think deeper, thus causing us to become smarter decision-makers.

In addition to finding an abundance of sources on Google, we also find differing viewpoints on world issues. Because we are subjected to these different viewpoints, we gain a broader view of the world, thus making us more receptive and tolerant to other perspectives.

Ultimately, Google in itself does not make us smarter. In turn, Google is not a tool that dislodges our thought process. It is a tool that enables us to find information in a more efficient manner, contributes to critical thinking which leads to smarter decision making, and exposes us to ideas that would be otherwise difficult to obtain. If Google is utilized correctly, it has the ability to shape our minds for the better, indirectly making us smarter.