For over thousands of years, man has pursued progress. From the wheel to the printing press to the light bulb, technology has caused radical changes in the lifestyles of human beings. Now, in the twenty-first century, entire libraries are available at our fingertips, and we can send a message across the globe in a mere instant. Sophisticated programs make once-daunting tasks achievable, and different mediums allow people to express themselves to the world. However, Nicholas Carr suggests that our minds are adjusting to the new format of information in a way that is deteriorating our capacity for retention, concentration, and contemplation. We believe that the way our brains function may be shifting with the changing times, but technology is not the sole enemy. The Internet has triggered an age of free information, and, without it, society would be lacking a profoundly powerful asset.

In the past, people visited physical libraries to dig for information. They spent hours shuffling through the card catalog and poring over books. This system, when compared to the Internet, is inefficient. Google and other search engines allow us to answer our questions without expending large amounts of energy. A library search is great for researching for a report, but it is not worth looking up a small fact. Google allows us to do that. Carr argues that the swift, staccato format of our information system causes our minds to replicate that pattern, giving us short attention spans and clipped thoughts; however, we believe that our technology does not make us “stupider.” If anything, we learn a wide range of information from our online searches.

Also, the Internet allows information to be updated live. Physical books take years to run through the publishing system, and it is too expensive to replace them often. The information on the Internet is up to date, relevant, and easy to find, which means the material we know is usually accurate if we use a credible source. Discerning sources as credible or not shows critical reading, which indicates an active involvement in one’s learning.

Hyperlinks let us see different opinions on the same topic, which leads to a wider understanding of the material. Bias can be accounted for since many views are considered, so individuals can decide their opinions for themselves, furthering their journey toward self-realization. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs includes self-realization in its highest tier, which definitely does not point toward stupidity.

Carr blames technology for causing his concentration deterioration, but our lives are exponentially busier than they were two decades ago. Children, careers, and other responsibilities also cause distraction and stress. In the past, people have complained about the changes brought about by new technology, so the growing pains of our time are just the same. Perhaps, if our processing habits are indeed changing, it does not signify any drop in overall intelligence but simply a new way of doing an old task. The Internet is tool for research and communication, and there is nothing stupid about utilizing our tools.