Fluid Access Requires Fluid Training

In Nicholas Carr’s “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” he writes of the damage that the Internet wreaks upon the very wiring of our minds. According to Carr, human attention spans are decreasing gradually due to the fact that there is a bombardment of information constantly demanding our attention. However, he only analyzes the negative effects of the Internet. “Fluid intelligence” is the ability to make sense of chaos amidst ads, hyperlinks, and headings. By doing so, we open ourselves to the improvement, not the degradation of our minds. Although Carr is correct in saying that our repetitious usage of the Internet alters our reading habits, in actuality, he simply struggles with the changing era; instead, we must build our “fluid intelligence” to adapt to the plethora of information.

Even though Carr writes about the massive amount of information and distraction in the Internet possibly eroding our minds, he does not consider that we can merely adapt to better work with this amount, thus gaining more knowledge. He has not considered the idea of “fluid intelligence.” Jamais Cascio, in an article posted in *The Atlantic* titled “Get Smarter,” wrote that it is far too late to turn our backs on the advancements that we have made concerning the Internet. Rather, we should focus on the benefits that we have already received and will receive as the Internet advances. Cascio discusses tired reading “habits” used when information was exclusively physical rather than digital. He describes these habits as “futile” because our methods of obtaining information are much more advanced, making the former habits outdated. As the abundant wealth of information has adapted, humans must also.

This idea of an adaptable, malleable brain is also discussed in Carr’s article. James Olds, a neuroscience professor, posits that our brains can “reprogram” themselves, even “on the fly.” Since our brains can acclimate rapidly, there is no need to worry about it falling behind in our technological times. Carr asserts that people lose focus easier now, but he does not maintain that the ease of finding information is a benefit; therefore, we do not need to focus as much time on filtering through unimportant information. In previous years, people searched in books for gaining knowledge but Google has made this far less time consuming.

While Carr thinks that the Internet is decreasing human’s attention spans, he ignores the capability of the brain. Furthermore, the ability to access information when needed is immensely important in today’s society; humans nowadays require knowledge on multiple bases. As Cascio states, Google is “...the solution.” Through fluid intelligence, our ability to problem solve allows us to function in a society where information is needed at a rapid pace. Instead of Carr focusing on his lack of an attention span, he would be better served simply training himself to use technology more effectively. In this new era of technology, we must make ourselves able to analyze amidst the chaos so Carr’s beliefs do not become reality. We must not become the artificial people he thinks the Internet is making us out to be.