Google: Intellect’s Friend or Foe?

The Benefits of the Internet, Not a Speculation of When Machines Will Take Over

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Literacy. To read and comprehend the written word. Competence and knowledge specifically are usually concerning the written word. Today, in the age of information and technology, it is the utmost importance that people, especially young people, are literate. The points brought up by Carr, are that the way we use and obtain information on the internet is changing the way we read, think, and comprehend.

The Internet is an amazing resource and tool. Websites can teach you a language you have never understood before within a fortnight. They can offer college level education courses, once only available for thousands of dollars, for the mere price of your time and attention. In many areas of the internet are being used for the sole purpose of expanding information and thought capacity.

Google is not making us stupid. There are of course distractions that can provide opportunities for simpler thinking. But I do not think the internet is any more of a threat to literacy than the education system and society as a whole. It may be changing the way we are reading now, but the internet is so vast and contains an immense amount of information. To read all the information and lengthy articles that you wish while using the same deep thinking techniques that you use while reading books is infeasible. To know the many subjects and information you can learn on the internet at an incredibly deep level is impossible. Our minds do not have the capacity to store information in that way, nor do we have the time.

Carr inputs the fact that our brains are “made to reprogram themselves,” suggesting that the temporary change in reading style will lead to the downfall of critical thinking. He also references Socrates argument against the widespread use of reading. When the first myths and stories were written down, and when those stories started to advance, when people discovered deeper writing skills, there would have to been a change in reading and thinking styles. Brains would have had to reprogram themselves to understand and absorb this new medium. They evolved, and after they evolved they grew. After humans understood the new medium, we found ways to advance it. Great works of literature were written. New genres were invented. Books were but into mass production to spread literature. I believe that history is repeating itself. With each generation that grows up with the Internet, they learn how to use it to their advantage. I believe that our brains will evolve. For now they may skim, just to absorb the enormity of information, but our generation and future generations will advance and apply deep thinking to the Internet.

The cons to using the internet that Carr offers are valid, though temporary and fixable. We can use the Internet for good. We can use the internet for the sake of learning. We can overcome the obstacles and the changing reading patterns.