Farther, Faster, and Facilitating

Every day, programs and websites help humans to learn faster and more effectively than at any point in history before now. Numerous websites, for example, provide countless benefits through articles or additional media to their visitors on a daily basis. Other sites allow an expert to easily converse with the knowledge-hungry in order to satiate the latter’s educational desires. Intelligence can be viewed in different ways, one of which is the ability to efficiently manage and apply data obtained from information sources.

All around the world, intellectual conversation and learning takes place electronically at every second. Posts can range from videos on YouTube and their comment sections to Prezi presentations. Often times, people unrelated to the media’s intent benefit from another’s work, which in turn may cause those recipients to post more information online in order to spread knowledge to all. In a way, the Internet has fostered a place for intellectuals to gather and learn together. Many sites have formed as forums of new ideas, innovation, and the exchange of art, science, and understanding of the human experience. For example, much of the website, Reddit, is devoted to academic pursuits such as /r/Askscience, /r/Writingprompts, and /r/TodayILearned. Clearly, people value this data since it reaches daily front pages for all to see.

The Internet may be changing how some academics read and digest long articles; most of the general population, however, is not attempting to read long scholastic reports for complex data. Those people aren’t interested in detailed analysis; their only intent was to receive baseline facts as quickly as possible. This clearly must work since according to Google CEO Eric Schmidt, from the beginning of the universe to 2003, humans had generated five exabytes of information. Today, humans generate five exabytes every two days, a mind-blowing change.

Over time, people have been figuring out ways to accelerate access to information. The first step in the process was the use of pictograms on cave walls followed by organized systems of writing. Since writing, the system of organization is what has changed. First tablets of clay were used until they were replaced by scrolls, then books, and then the Web. The organizational changes have not changed the medium, only how people access it. We still read, we simply read to maximize the amount of information obtained in the least amount of time and the fewest keystrokes.

Many unique definitions of intelligence exist, but a key one describes effectively managing and putting to use information taken from a multitude of sources. Currently, Internet access allows humans to gather information from a plethora of sources and mediums, many of which provide unimaginable benefits to humanity. According to Buckminster Fuller, an architect noted for his Knowledge Doubling Curve, since the dawn of the Internet, humans’ information levels have doubled every century, but now, human information levels double every thirteen months. Whether you think the Internet is monitoring or controlling us, the increased levels of knowledge and intelligence are undeniably shocking.