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Is Google Making Us *Smarter*?

Agreeing that Google makes one “stupid” is agreeing that the internet does not positively affect society intellectually or that the internet causes the decline of cognitive behaviors. Being a search engine with practically endless knowledge, Google allows one to unleash their natural ability to obtain information. Nicholas Carr believes that the internet deteriorates society’s ability to learn and decreases the user’s ability to concentrate . Carr is blinded to the fact that having internet access in the early stages of child development helps to expand the minds of adolescents before they begin to mature.

Carr mistakes a new way of accessing information for an inefficient technological reality. If used in a correct manner, the internet has the potential to strengthen human minds. Author and scientist Paul Zimmer explains that “humans are ‘natural born cyborgs,’and the Internet is our giant ‘extended mind.’” Google is a great source of knowledge that allows one to obtain information that could improve the mind so much that it could change the future. An example would be the increasing amount of children and young adults in first world countries who are taught by and exposed to the information presented by the internet in prestigious schools. Due to this environment, some of these individuals may one day cure epidemic diseases, undo climate change, or innovate the world to be closer to a Utopian society.

According to Carr, concentration and deep-reading has become a struggle due to computers. However, many people oppose this view. Paul Jones, director of Ibiblio, says that “Google allows us to be more creative in approaching problems and more integrative in our thinking. We spend less time trying to recall and more time recalling solutions.” In this century, everything is becoming digitized; therefore, we are adapting to the internet. The internet has caused people to develop certain behaviors that are more effective in our intellectual environment. The opposing viewer, Carr, says that,”My mind now expects to take in information the way the internet distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski.” This statement suggests that humans cannot process high amounts of information, but is not necessarily true due to the fact that Google presents both print and image based information. Print usage may be slowly decreasing but visual syntax is becoming a more powerful medium. Therefore, humans process the same information but in a different method.

Whether or not Carr wants to believe it, computers are becoming a useful new language and a vital platform that is used today. Many, like Carr, would say that the internet distracts people from actually learning the information; however, Google continues to satisfy our natural need for curiosity and a larger education.