  Work Smarter, Not Harder

As we advance further and further into an age driven by technology, concerns begin to rise: is our reliance on the internet and cyberspace a serious problem? In his article “Is Google Making Us Dumber?”, Nicholas Carr preaches against the dangers of our need for instantaneous information through an example of our shallow reading habits and internet research. However, the problem is not nearly as damaging as he makes it seem. In today’s society, there are practical uses to skimming the internet. While our brains are changing, they are not necessarily developing in a negative way.

Nicholas Carr believes that our style of “efficiency” and “immediacy” while skimming is “weakening our capacity for the kind of deep reading” that promotes deeper thinking. But is skimming really that bad? He describes it as efficient, which is defined as producing the maximum amount with the least effort, generally something that humans strive for. Skimming allows us to absorb the big picture presented by the text, rather than the smaller extra details that are not necessary. The human mind is allowed to keep what is important and discards what will be useless clutter in the grand scheme of things. Skimming is a human adaptation used to survive in the new world being built around us: one that is moving faster and is becoming more advanced. Previously, deeper reading may have been a necessary aspect in comprehension, but in the age of timed standardized testing and limitless news, skimming through the large amounts of information and picking out what is needed is a vital aspect in being able to grasp the knowledge needed to carry on.

  Still, the question presented by Nicholas Carr still stands: is Google really making us dumber? He presents anecdotes and studies that show people’s declining attention span and the increase in Internet use.  But while there may be correlation between the two variables, he has no scientific proof that there is causation between them, something Carr admits himself. On the contrary, Google may actually make us smarter. Intelligence is something that can be measured in the quality of the choices we make, whether they be on an IQ test or simple common sense in everyday life. With Google, we have a multitude of information at our fingertips that we can scan through and pick out the best information we need to make the smarter decisions. If the aim is to work smarter rather than harder, then scanning for the essential information on Google would satisfy that aim more than fully reading through a long piece of writing and trying to analyze it.

The points made by Nicholas Carr in his article were justified. The endgame for humanity is to improve through the means that we have available, and we do not want to lose any of the progress we have made. At any rate, we are not regressing intellectually through our leaps in technology. The way we get our information and process it may be different, but different does not mean bad. If the world is changing the rules for how we should think, then we need to be able to change with it.