**A Summary: Is Google Making Us Stupid?**

The internet is changing the way the Brain Thinks.

For author, Nicholas Carr, it was easy to get lost in books/ in-depth article, however now it is hard to pay attention for more than 2-3 pages. He finds himself fidgeting, brain jumping to the next thing. He then makes the assumption that the a) ability, 2) the access to diverse information 3) the searching for information is changing HOW we think, and possibly altering our ability to retain information and to concentrate. WHY? Because our attention span has been shortened by repeated short burst of web information that the internet presents and our hard wiring to assimilate this information into meaningful knowledge is being lost.

Media and the internet medium have an effect on our neural pathways that help shape how we think.

***“Media (computers) are not just passive channels of information.***

***They supply the stuff of thought, but they also shape the process of***

***thought.”*** Marshall Mcluhan.

Carr argues that with all kinds of information that is now available we think in a moving stream of thought (linear), and we are able to jump in and pic little bits of information here and there with no real depth much like the internet. All Ability for Concentration and retention is lost.

Univeristy College London did an experiment- and found that we do a form of skimming with online media. We read 1-2 pages then ‘bounce’, never returning to the old or previous source.

When we read online- we are doing this activity in a non-traditional sense, which is in-depth, critical thinking. Instead, ***we are “power browsing”.***

In the 70s-80s, Television was the medium of choice.

Now, Internet and Text Messaging = More Reading- however, it is a different kind.

Mary-Anne Wolf- ***“Not what we Read” – “How we read”- With the internet. The sole purpose of the Internet is efficiency & immediacy of information which may be weakening capacity for deep thinking.”***

\*Our brains are not fixed by adulthood and are infinitely malleable.

When we look at a clock, “we start to obey the clock” instead our senses begin to make our actions and thinking formulaic and timed corresponding to the time and then it becomes almost robot-like.

Google tries to achieve and create the ‘perfect’ search engine which is more like, Artificial Intelligence. They are always working on “one best method”—the perfect algorithm—to carry out every mental movement of what we’ve come to describe as “knowledge work.” The Search Engine does the thinking for us.

**“Intelligence is the output of a mechanical process, a series of discrete steps that can be isolated, measured, and optimized.**

***In Google’s world, the world we enter when we go online, there’s little place for the fuzziness of contemplation. Ambiguity is not an opening for insight but a bug to be fixed.”***

Online media content is surrounded by other content and advertising. Google collects our data with all our actions and clicks we make on the web. Our economic interest/consumerism is set so that we are driven to distraction. The purpose is to sell products by data mining our likes and dislikes and collecting the personal ‘crumbs’.

As Carr states, be wary of his skepticism “Just as there’s a tendency to glorify technological progress, there’s a countertendency to expect the worst of every new tool or machine”

So where he argues, we maybe in information overload and the losing capacity for concentration, there are obviously numerous benefits to this information technology revolution.

“As we come to rely on computers to mediate our understanding of the world, it is our own intelligence that **flattens**  into artificial intelligence.”

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Organizing your thoughts:

Is online searching using search engines such as Google taking away our ability to critically evaluate what we read because of skim browsing instead of reading in depth

Is the inherent way we use the Internet diminishing our thinking capabilities, making us ‘stupid’ or less likely to critically evaluate what we read? Is the gathering of information more than the information itself causing us to develop a different mind-set?

What are the major benefits of online researching and does it outweigh the possible negatives and drawbacks that Carr argues?

Would you like to see a ‘HAL’ (Artificial Intelligence/Super Computer) in the future? why/why not?

Are we as a species being faced with information overload?

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| PRO  What is GOOD about online searching | CON  What is BAD about online searching |
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