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March 14, 2017

Essay #2 (Third Draft)

Operation Overload

The Internet is still only an infant child compared to the time line of human activity on Earth, and with technology advancing every day, there are endless possibilities as to what it can do in the future. However, with every positive innovation, there may be a negative consequence lurking in the background. Pulitzer Prize winner Nicholas Carr's "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" explains the many kind of dangers that may occur from people putting their full dependence on the Web, like lowering out capacity of concentration during research. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Associate Professor of German Studies and History at the University of Virginia, Chad Wellmon, counters many points stated by Carr concerning the Internet, pointing out how it is up to the beholder to make the Internet an intellectual tool or a harmful pass time in his article, "Why Google Isn't Making Us Stupid… or Smart". Along with every young child born today who are nearly guaranteed to have access through their phones or computers, the Internet is slowly making its way into everybody's life around the globe. With that being said, it is certainly easy for people to take side on the matter of whether the Web justifies its deceptions by how useful it is to everybody's daily life. The Internet is a young, confused child as those who build it and essentially 'raise it' decide what it can do for the human population and although some may view it as a harmful tool meant to lower our critical thinking skills, it is necessary to remember that it is up to the beholder to navigate the 'Information Superhighway' responsibly in order to retain those skills in the future.

The Internet, in its current state, can be a very scary place. Aside from the countless amounts of articles that can be found concerning strange conspiracies or scary tales, there are mass amounts of web pages and dangerous hyperlinks that exist and can't even viewed on a conventional search engine. The Deep Web is filled with strange sites that exist for dark reasons, like illegal black marketing, and contains an enormous amount of URL's that may potentially invite viruses and hackers into permanent residency in the user's devices. Another point, which may be more appropriate to the typical person, is the danger of depending on technologies that use the Internet. As students look up the answers to questions on their study guides moments before taking a test or while the manly husband tries to do some house repair with Google at their side making sure that they are doing each step correctly, our dependency on prior knowledge is slowly decaying while the dependency on search engines increases. Carr explains what the Internet may do when he says that, "As we are drained of our 'inner repertory of dense cultural inheritance'…we risk turning into 'pancake people'—spread wide and thin as we connect with that vast network of information accessed by the mere touch of a button" (Carr 8). It would be a complete tragedy if, for a time, somebody didn't have access to the Web due to connection problems when they really needed it and had no alternatives due to full dependency. While the people with pessimistic views on the Web explain the dangers of turning into the Borg from Star Trek, others are taking a more optimistic approach.

The World Wide Web is essential to our everyday life, bringing us closer to people we care about and providing useful, along with useless information at the click of a button, and it is safe to assume that the younger generations are guaranteed to love it. As a young adult, I can't live a day without a phone in my hand or a laptop on my lap. Without the Web, we would still be stuck researching a top through a wide array of books containing scattered information from

different point of views rather than searching an article or watching a documentary online that talks about the key points about what we were searching for in the first place. We would need to constantly wait for an opportunity to contact somebody until they were available for a phone call rather than message them immediately through text or email. Yes, there are some dangers of information overload with regards to research, but the same can be expected from reading several books that over the same information. Wellmon backs up this point by explaining that, "In this sense, technology is neither an abstract flood of data nor a simple machine-like appendage subordinate to human intentions, but instead the very manner in which humans engage the world" (Wellmon 69).

The recurring question that Wellmon and Carr try to answer is whether the World Wide Web is making us knowledgeable beings or mindless drones. Is Google taking away our ability to think critically, or is the point of the matter that we simply don't need to think critically anymore? For example, as a college student majoring in Engineering, it would be hard to believe that I don't solve even the simplest of problems without a good amount thorough, critical thinking, and you would be right, but there are a countless amount of times where having to critically think is clearly unnecessary and therefore inefficient to exert effort for due to that fact that I can simply look up the best solution to said problem and follow procedures easily through a step by step process that doesn't require any amount of critical reading at all. There's no need to reinvent the wheel when someone has already done the work for me, right? Wellmon continues this thought by stating, "The digital world will become a "single liquid fabric of interconnected words and ideas," a form of knowledge without distinctions or differences" (Wellmon 67-68). Having the Internet allows us to skip doing the dirty work and does not make us lose our ability to critically think, it just allows us to save our efforts for when it really

matters. On the other hand, an incredible amount of time can be spent using the Web as a way to distract one's self from problems they wish not to deal with at the time. For example, I watched *YouTube* videos, movies, gameplay, and all sorts of entertainment provided by the wide array of sources that the Internet has to offer rather than spending my time on things that really matter. Carr explains how nifty the Net can be in "diffusing your concentration" explaining that, "When the Net absorbs a medium, that medium is re-created in the Net's image. It injects the medium's content with hyperlinks, blinking ads, and other digital gewgaws, and it surrounds the content with the content of all the other media it has absorbed" (Carr 4-5). The distractions that the Web has to offer are quite a threat to a person's way of critical thinking. But the Internet doesn't simply spam a user with videos of cute puppies and kitties unless the user wished to view them in the first place.

Whether one agrees with Carr or Wellmon, like mentioned earlier, it is still too early to create an opinion on the incredible potential of the internet. Sure, our current version is full of deception and possible dangers that range from threatening viruses to distractions that can last the whole weekend, but with proper education on how to properly handle the Net and when to use it, people will be able to live in perfect harmony with the technologies that surround them. After many more countless years of hard work in perfecting the Internet and making it assessable to anyone and everyone, humans should be on the next evolutionary path to become superior, more efficient beings in the world to come.

Works Cited

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