

DOES GOOGLE MAKES US SMARTER OR DUMBER

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Does Google make us Smarter or Dumber?

These days, being connected depends not on our distance from each other, but from available communication technology. Obtaining any information may be at our fingertips through an online search engine. Google has been the vehicle of vast information online. With just a few clicks we are immersed with data that no one can imagine. Google is perceived as the premier search engine widely used by many, including myself. I use Google to obtain personal information and relevant scholarly information needed for my profession as an educator. It is hard to imagine searching for information before Google entered our lives. The days of hunting through stacks of dusty and disorganized piles of printed journals, scoring indices in large, heavy bound back volumes are fading rapidly. Google is known as a search engine, but there is barely any searching involved because there is enough information on the world wide web (Leslie, 2014). Google frees us from the need to contemplate, discuss and learn. With Google networked, we become less accustomed to pondering, analyzing and connecting pieces of information the way we used to do when we read them on physical pages of a book or article (Shovlin, 2015). Nicolas Carr stated in the article that reading books and lengthy articles have become difficult. He says: “my concentration often starts to drift after two to three pages, I get fidgety and lose the thread. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle“ (Carr, 2008).

A study published online in Science suggests the ways we handle information are already beginning to show the imprint of the new age. People recall information less, and instead, can remember where to find the information they have forgotten (Badke, 2010). Small reported that certain types of memory are improving. When the brain reroutes how we recall information, it develops different types of memory capabilities (Small & Vorgan, 2008). Example: If somebody asks you how many national flags have just one color, do you think first about the actual flag? Or

does your brain jump right to how you would find it? If you're an active Google user, you are probably thinking about keywords. The more you do it, the better you get it. The brain is very specialized in its circuitry and if you repeat mental tasks over and over it will strengthen certain neural circuits and ignores others (Small & Vorgan, 2008). Google aims to eliminate the difficulty and frustration of the users during a search with the hope that the brain integrates new information securely (Leslie, 2014). It is important that internet users flick through the pages, the eyes land to information that you become curious for more details. Curiosity is the response to an information gap where individual just enough to know that you do not know everything, you experience the desire to know more. The gap between question and answer is where creativity thrives, and scientific progress made (Leslie, 2014). Badke perceived that the human brain is an outdated computer that needs a faster processor and a bigger hard drive, and Google encourages our minds to skim from information to information rather than concentrate (Badke, 2010). It is our human nature to be curious at something that we need to get an answer or gather information. It is our human responsibility to fine tune the information gathered, update our knowledge and continue to enhance our brain activity just the same way we update our computers.

As a nurse practitioner, we are interested in information relevant to our profession. We are interested in scientific research, and evidenced-based result related to the specific topic such as brain increased activity during a particular event. Small and Vorgan's study focused on measuring the brain function during sessions on the internet using Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging, and the result showed an increase in brain activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex after a five-day session (Small & Vorgan, 2008). This iBrain research is useful in determining if the internet made the users dumber. The report showed that reading capability

was not lost altogether, and the brain adapts to the electronic environment by training itself to process a large amount of data more efficiently with increased and frequent internet use (Small & Vorgan, 2008).

Does Google make us dumber? Yes, but not just Google. Now, with all the answers on the phones and at our fingertips, no one bothers to remember anything. It is unfair to blame the base stupidity of the human race on the search engine. However, the search engine and the computer has made the human minds lazy, and our brains have evolved, so we do not recall things the way we used to. Yes, it is making us stupid because it doesn't require as much brainpower, and we don't have to think as much. Just a few taps on the keyboard, and bam! Information. We don't have to use our brains to process whether it is relevant information, or even if it is biased or credible. We don't have to remember anything, and we don't even have to write down anything, like the URL. Just look it up again, and then there it is. Or we can look it up in the history of our searches. We don't have to review anything. We're not even learning anything! Our generations are becoming even stupider while we look up more and more! Some of my classmates don't even know what a typewriter is. I believe the reason that we are becoming less intelligent is that we have started relying on the internet and electronics for everything. If we were to use Google for the tools, I stated above, and we took. Unfortunately, as a society, I believe we are becoming dependent and not allowing ourselves to grow the way we could be. Although it does give people almost everything at their fingertips, which is helpful in some ways, I believe it is a dis-service in other ways. People do not know how to find anything at a library anymore. People do not need to remember things anymore because it is at such easy access at any moment. Having a book vs. having a website, a book you need to read a lot more of to find the answer, running into other important information you could use in the future. With a

website you can pinpoint only the information that you want and bypass everything else, missing sometimes valuable information.

Does Google make us Smarter? Google Is Not Making Us Stupid. Google is no more than a tool to look up information. Millions of people use it, many who are very smart. It is a resource to help people find information. I think that as Google adds more to its site, people are becoming smarter because they can get creative with the ways they use it to find what they are looking. People who are already smart use Google to help them find the answers to life's great questions, find out if there is a name for the concept or phenomena running around in their heads, to deeper research the media they consume to provide a richer context. Smart people have the desire and ability to expand their understanding of the world by any constantly means possible, be it through observation, reference books, the internet, television, film or any other types of arts and media.

Google technology users, including myself, look up basic information we needed easily and expeditiously. If we are curious enough to find more details based on Google results, it can enhance our knowledge and intelligence, improve our ability to find meaning in confusion. In a survey released by the Pew Research Center and American Life Project, seventy-six percent of the respondents agreed that by the year 2020, people's use of the internet would enhance their intelligence. With my knowledge and experience acquired for many years learning the traditional way and enhance by the use of the web tools using Google, I believe I am much smarter now that I used to be many decades ago. It is up to YOU to search for what's useful then REMEMBER this information.

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