

Technology: friend or foe

[Technology](#), [Information Technology](#)



Flying cars, time travel and computers built into our body- that is what I thought about when I thought about the future of technology as a child. Now, as an adult, I have begun to wonder if the impact of technology has been positive or a negative. Is technology bringing us together or separating us further? Are we smarter because of the instant access to billions of websites containing information on everything you can think of, or are we more unwise? I would love to ask the many people who had a hand in making the world wide web what it is today if they regret it. While researching this topic, I came across many opinions. There is no doubt that technology has indeed added convenience to our lives, but I wonder if it is enhancing our intelligence. I do not foresee a drop-in technology usage anytime soon. My opinion changes from day to day, which is why I decided to use this as my essay topic. I will be discussing two conflicting articles dealing with the aforementioned issues, while showcasing the finer points in both and elaborating a little on the sources they used in their articles to back their opinions. The first article is written by Hermann Maurer and is titled “ Does The Internet Make Us Stupid?” The second article is written by Marc Prensky and is titled “ H. Sapiens Digital: From Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom.”

Technology Foe?

Mark Bauerlein, a 57-year-old college professor of English at Emory University, writes in his book “ The Dumbest Generation,” “ the intellectual future of the United States looks dim” (Herman, 2015). No one would agree with Mark Bauerlein more than Herman Maurer, who mentions him in his article and goes on to point out that Bauerlein’s book is hilariously sub titled

“ How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future (Or, Don't Trust nyone Under 30)” (Herman, 2015). In addition, he goes on to state that Bauerlein was probably also the first to diagnose that ICTs are increasing the generation gap, since young people, in their effort to be “ in,” learn increasingly more from peers, than adults learn from one another (Herman, 2015). Herman Maurer also talks about Carr, writer of “ The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains”. Carr stresses one aspect that has been recognized by neuroscience and brain science for some time: use of new technology comparable to the internet creates new habits and changes the brain (Carr, 2008). The plasticity of the brain can work against us by reinforcing certain behavior (Carr, 2008). Carr gives an excellent example of how our brains have been changed by the internet down to the way we read and write (Carr, 2008).

This contributes to the environment of notification technology. One example Carr uses, is the fact that newspapers have made their articles shorter since people's attention span has shortened due to technology (Carr, 2008). All the authors mentioned in his article share one concern, fear for our future. They emphasize loss of brain function. The author of the article, Hermann Maurer, goes on to talk about how he feels we are headed towards a global attention deficit syndrome (Herman, 2015). Maurer feels that we spend so much time on our phones and on the internet, whether it is YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, emails, text messaging, snapchat and even binge-watching television(etc), that we are lacking in spending time doing meaningful and productive things (Herman, 2015). Whether it be texts or social media or even and that feeling when you are really into a show and it leaves you on a

cliff hanger every commercial notification can be addictive. One can see how this could make someone not be able to do the things that really matter or concentrate on other things such as reading a book. Easy access to bites of information causes people to be less likely to memorize facts because they simply do not need to (Carr, 2008). This alone threatens how well our memory works (Carr, 2008). Some may have seen this in their own memory with spelling.

Marc Prensky author of the article, “ H. Sapiens Digital: From Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom”. Begins his article saying that, “ Digital technology, I believe, can be used to make us not just smarter but truly wiser” (Prensky, 2009). This is a Stark contrast to Maurer. Prensky explains that the instant access to all recorded history will have an overwhelmingly positive effect on our youth (Prensky, 2009). According to Prensky, data gathering tools aid in judgement and decision making by helping us to get loads of information from many resources we may not have otherwise had the resources to find (Prensky, 2009). Digital tools, such as; virtual reality tools, online databases, and online collaboration tools, help us to make complex analysis. Those tools may also be used to figure out what if situations. (Prensky, 2009). Some types of digital extensions he talks about are SmartBrain and Emotive systems, which allows people to control their actions in video games with their brain (Prensky, 2009). He explained that the air force was experimenting with these technologies to teach pilots how to fly (Prensky, 2009).

Half computer? Or half human?

Other technology is being used to enhance communication through use of voice-stress analysis tools, which will allow users to perceive deception and automated translation utilities will help create translations free of human bias (Prensky, 2009). Prensky uses Steven Johnson, author of “ From Everything Bad is Good for You: How Pop Culture is Actually Making Us Smarter,” as a resource to back his claims about internet making us smarter. Johnson talks about how prior to the internet, information was hard to find, and those who had access to a lot of information were typically well off financially; but now everyone has a somewhat equal opportunity to become well versed in many subjects (Johnson, 2005). That state of mind would definitely go against what Maurer talks about in his article, which declares that google has made fact checking both lazy and inaccurate (Herman, 2015). Asserting that it is proven through the fact that you can type in most any question and get conflicting answers (Herman, 2015). This is made worse by people’s tendency to believe everything they find in google or really, anywhere on the internet (Herman, 2015). Coupled with the fact that Carr feels that our technology dependency is causing us to have shorter attentions span means; when most people look up information, and find an answer instead of reading the entire article, they get bored and stop after a few paragraphs (Carr, 2008). According to Carr, they then end their research right there instead of reading it entirely or reading at least a few more before coming to a conclusion or making a decision . According to Carr, people before the internet had to do countless hours of research before finding

information on their topic showcasing that people are indeed becoming less intelligent (Carr, 2008).

Truce?

Both Prensky and Maurer believe the brain is plastic and continues to adapt to the input it receives. (Herman, 2015) (Prensky, 2009). They both reinforce the idea that frequent interaction with technology changes the structure of the brain (Herman, 2015) (Prensky, 2009). Prensky even says that our brains will look different than future generation's brain because of this (Prensky, 2009). Prensky elaborates on how digital enhancements have already helped enhance our cognition (Prensky, 2009). The example he uses is electronic storage like the cloud to help with memorizing things (Prensky, 2009). Both Prensky and Maurer used examples and references to back up their claims. This is important for anyone wanting to find credible articles that accurately describe whether technology is helping or hurting us. Another thing that Both Prensky and Maurer agree on is that there are times when technology can be helpful. Even though Prensky primarily talks about the negative impact of technology, he also says that technology has had an overwhelmingly positive effect on medicine, production and even transportation (Herman, 2015).

In closing, both articles give us valuable insight on the positives and negatives of technology use. Most people already know that too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. Take heed to what has been discussed in these two incredibly informative articles and use them to help make the most of the technology. Whether technology is friend or foe depends on its role in one's life, use the information found to create something new. In fifty

years the world will be undoubtedly more technology dependent but people now can use all our extensive access to so much information to create a better world for everyone.

References:

1. Carr, N. (2008, August 1). Is google making us stupid? . Retrieved from The Atlantic: <https://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google> (accessed July 11, 2018).
2. Herman, M. (2015). Does the internet make us stupid. Viewpoint, 2-4.
3. Johnson, S. B. (2005). Everything bad is good for you: is the internet making us stupid? what is the internet doing to our brains. New York: Riverhead Books.
4. Prensky, M. (2009). H. Sapiens Digital: From Digital Immigrants and from digital pioneers to digital wisdom. Innovate Journal of Online Education, 3-5.