

# Digital life – how technology has changed us

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Digital Life Every day people are hit constantly by a bombardment of online media. It used to be that people would see billboards, TV commercials and magazine, but with advancement of technology people remain wired into the internet 24/7. "Smartphones" are a great example of a device that promotes constant connections. It enables people to be connected to online media at all times. The effects that this constant connection has had on people in general are life changing.

We can certainly agree that the lives of everyone who has access to these connections will change over time. The primary change that is happening in everyone's life is the way we communicate with each other. Just 10 years ago cellphones were starting to become more and more popular. They evolved from big briefcase sized machines to something that can easily fit in your pocket. Even then though, calling someone was the primary way of communicating over distances. That has changed and is no longer the case.

With advancements in Email, texting and social networking, they have all moved to a more popular position than making calls. Whether people need to relay small pieces of information or have a long conversation, texting and emails tend to be what they use. While this may not seem like a big deal to most people, one can argue that it is making the people that use this form of communication over calling or face to face interaction become stumped at interacting with people and sometimes have trouble communicating face to face at all.

An interesting issue connected to this is that as a result of real life communications not being a primary skill, some people resort to purely online relationships. Particularly online gamers who play games like World of  
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Warcraft or other Massive Multi-player Online games. These relationships range from simple friendships to as far as marriages which take part online entirely, but sometimes turns into something in the physical world. There have actually been many cases of people who met playing games online, then decided to meet in real life and ended up getting married.

While the presence of online dating has been around for a while with sites like eHarmony, these sites still primarily run on face to face interactions and people have an idea of the interests and likes of the people they attempt to form relationships with. In the worlds of online gaming, one can argue that even though it is formed by two people, it is to a great extent mostly anonymous. On eHarmony you know what the other person looks like while in online games, you only know who the other person wants to look like.

The person someone falls for online can be the exact opposite of what the other person believed they were getting into. All of this stems from the fact that some people who become accustomed to the online world and online media turn out to have severe communication issues in the real world that causes them to turn to the people they interact with online. Increasing the rate of socially inept people is not the only effect that the internet is having. Due to the massive daily usage of Social Networking websites people take part of everyday, a problem with narcissism is arising.

The problem with this is that if people have problems with things like self image, they resort to these networks. Facebook promotes negative parts of the personality directly linked to disruptive forms of narcissism, which was promoted by a study done by Christopher Carpenter. The study stated that among other aspects that are promoted by online social networking, “ a <https://assignbuster.com/digital-life-how-technology-has-changed-us/>

sense of deserving respect and a willingness to manipulate and take advantage of others" is highly promoted. Pearce 1) It is thus clear that there is various social problems that arise from online media, not just social ineptitude. While the previous drawbacks of the connected world were looking at the social sense, something occurs in the person that hurts their sense of being alone. Since people are constantly on their internet enabled devices, they lose a sense of the things around them. They forget about the beauty of nature, among other things. Since humans by nature seek companionship, they make the life altering choice to remain connected at all times.

In doing so one loses the knowledge of the beauty of being alone outside. Like Sherry Turkle said on a radio interview " If you don't know how to be alone, you'll only always know how to be lonely. If you're always reaching for the device, the cell, the Facebook, the sharing, you lose that. " (Tippet 1) What she is trying to say is that because of our fear of loneliness, we remain connected to online media all the time thus losing our ability to embrace being alone and absorbing the wonders around you. Another huge change it has in our life is in the cognitive sense.

When people need to know a bit of information they used to go to the library or find it in the newspaper among other sources. Over time it got to the point where it was as simple as " googling" for it. Currently it has gotten to the point where people rely on a small number of sources for information. The biggest one being " Wikipedia. org," which is a free online encyclopedia that anyone can edit and is maintained by other people. While there used to be a

process that makes you think and search for information through stacks of books and articles, today it is not as interactive as it was then.

The result is a slump in many habits like studying and similar queries of knowledge and the increase in bad habits like laziness and reliability in sloppy sources. An undeniably great change that happens to people with constant online media is in the way they think. This relates to the changes in how people hunt information as well. Advertisement is probably the biggest part of online media. It is what fuels it as of the online world is funded through advertisement. While there is undoubtedly good products still in production today, it is not uncommon to see bad or unreliable products become successful.

The reason for this is that people are bombarded by online advertisements so much more often now that they assume a product is the best if it has a huge advertising campaign. The more a product advertises, the more people it reaches and sells to. Thanks to companies like Google and Facebook, it has become easy for any company to reach millions of consumers ready to give their money away. Most consumers have the idea that they need to buy things to make them happy or more complete. This is implanted in them by the massive amounts of online media they face everyday.

One of the issues with this is that many consumers do not bother to do research on products they buy. They simply buy them because they are popular or because they have been advertised heavily. The same way that people have gotten lazy at hunting down information and learning, they have also become susceptible to having their ideas and thoughts molded by big

business advertisements. The presence of technology and online media can definitely make some people forget they are human, but only to an extent.

If we connect some of the negatives the online world has brought along as it developed, we can see that some human qualities are lost as well, or at least weakened. Curiosity is one of the parts of humanity that is waned thanks to the internet. Due to information being readily available at the click of a mouse, the human desire to learn has lessened in many people. While they still go to school and get degrees, most people no longer absorb information around them or that available to them in libraries, for example.

People don't take in stories and knowledge and hold them dear simply because if they are ever needed, they can be instantaneously looked up or downloaded. Another way that the internet can help people forget they are human is by allowing them to become anyone they want to be. This is a by large the main reason people play video games. Online games allow people to become anyone they would ever want to be from a warrior to a hero. There is nothing to stop them from achieving what they want online except time, and so very much time goes into achieving their online goals.

People become so immersed into their online persona that they completely forget about their real life responsibilities among other things they ignore. Not only do some people build marriages and friendships online, but in doing allow their online personas to become their main one. Their online lives become more important than their physical lives. It is undeniable that humans are now evolving alongside technology. The further that technology evolves, the easier it is for humans to stay wired into the internet. People

can now be connected at all times so of course it will have an effect on how humans evolve.

I believe humans will instinctively always know that they are only human. However this will have an effect in that more people will turn to the internet and online media to direct their lives, since many people believe others will know how to do things better, and seek out that wisdom online, but we run into a big issue here. We can already see how online media is making people multitask badly and how it severely decreases focus amongst many. Nicholas Carr speaks of a subject called Neuroplasticity which talks about how our brain is constantly changing and evolving.

Due to online media, it is being trained to “ take in information very, very quickly in a very interrupted, distracted way little bits of it come at us all the time. “(Carr 1) Therefore we are actually evolving in such a way that we are gradually losing focus. One can argue that over time, with the growth of online media, focus is the main skill that may be lost almost entirely. Nicholas Carr states in an Interview on PBS News Hour that the because the internet serves distractions at all times of the day, that our focus is the target of it. What we're losing is the ability to pay deep attention to one thing over a prolonged period of time. ” (Carr 2) We are evolving away from deep thought, because information is so readily available, and it presents itself to us in in the form of hundreds of small distractions every day. With online media constantly distracting people with Facebook and Twitters, some researchers wondered what life would be like for a person that would be abruptly disconnected from this constant link to the web. A group of scientists decided to put this to the test on themselves.

The scientists were all shocked at what happened on the third day of their experiment. Richtel, a journalist who followed the scientists on a vacation, stated that " You start to feel more relaxed. Maybe you sleep a little better. Maybe you don't reach for your phone pinging in your pocket. " (Digital 1) After just three days of being disconnected, the sense of extreme urgency that was causing the scientists to sleep less and constantly check their phone had faded away to a certain degree. It was obvious there, that there is something positive in disconnecting even if you do it just for a small amount of time.

In conclusion, online media will constantly try to take our attention off other things, and this trend shows absolutely no sign of stopping. It has undeniable effects on peoples social lives as well as their minds and how they think. As was stated by people like Carr and Carpenter, it is not a good direction in which things are evolving. While these problems are constantly growing, very few things are being done to stop them and even fewer are successful. As long as this trend continues, the chance for people to turn it around and begin using their brains as they were used before gets lower with time.

It is up to the people what powers they give to online media, but trends point to them gaining more steam. The choice to disconnect is completely in the hands of the user, but users will most likely stay online. Works Cited Pearse, Damien. " Facebook's 'dark Side': Study Finds Link to Socially Aggressive Narcissism. " The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, 17 Mar. 2012. Web. 27 Mar. 2012. . " Nicholas Carr's: The Shallows. " PBS. Ed. Jeffrey Brown.

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