Growing Up With the Internet

For thousands of years the way people have read has stayed overall consistent. To read you would have to find the piece you want to read, retrieve and read it, then put it back and find the next one. This was a process that made what you read mean something more to you, due to the effort put into it. However, in recent years the expansion of the Internet has began to rapidly change that process. What are the changes and how will it affect humanity?

The first instance of the Internet happened in the early 60’s, which was only two computers connected through a network. The modern version of the Internet came in the early 90’s, and it has grown exponentially since. Now almost anyone can gain access to it very easily. It has taken over many roles since it’s creation, making many things faster and more efficient. There are many undoubtable advantages of some advancements, but when it comes to reading there is great debate on whether this change from the traditional, slow reading to the fast, fact based online reading is a good thing.

Nicholas Carr goes in detail on the transition readers have made from paper books to online reading. He explains how he personally has changed from reading deeply into traditional books and thinking deeply about what he has read, to being used to the fast paced reading style of the Internet. Carr says how for he and his literary friends, “The more they use the web, the more they have to fight to stay focused on long pieces of writing” (371). His explanation for this is that the Internet has caused the way we think to change. Our brains get used to the speedy convenience of instant information that we
start to become unable to work effectively without it. Instead of reading deeply into pieces he just skims across many pieces; never fully absorbing anything. Betty Sparrow goes deeper into it. Her studies have caused her to believe that the Internet is changing how we remember information. The instant access of it has caused us to focus more on where we got the information, rather than what the actual information is. She concludes by saying how our memory has adapted. It has gone from remembering everything important, to only remembering what we think we cannot find easily later, the rest we just remember where to find it (Sparrow). Loan also adds to the idea of internet changing how people read. He studied college students who surfed the internet and found four main changes in their reading practices. They went from sequential, to non-sequential reading, passive to interactive, concentrated to superficial, and in-depth to extensive (Loan, 2012). His studies back up the ideas of Sparrow and Carr.

Another point of Carr’s is about the amount of reading we actually do. The amount of text used on the Internet has caused humans to most likely read more than before the internet, when TV was the main source of entertainment, but the type of reading has changed. It has changed to focus on immediacy. This causes our brain to change and begin to match and mimic the technology it relies on, in this case the Internet (373). He goes on to explain the internet's overtake of other technologies, and in doing so changes them to be more like the fast paced, quick information style of the Internet. Trent Baston goes against Carr’s thinking. He says that though humanity is relying more on the Internet, it is not a bad thing. The Internet has a range of advantages. It is easy and cheap to produce things using it, but most importantly, it works with how humans naturally behave. It changes us from believing one book has the whole truth to being able to find multiple perspectives and ideas to create our own opinion and understanding of a topic (388). Through this we can go from only knowing what a limited number of authors think, to knowing points of view from every angle. You have the opportunity to know anything
you could want about what you’re reading. This changes not only how we read, but how we learn and think.

It is undoubtable that the internet is changing the way read and comprehend what we read. The effects are felt by many and there are constant studies going on over them. Some people fear these changes are damaging humanity, but others believe it

Works Cited


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