

Personal Essay

“Google is making us stupid, multitasking is draining our souls, and the “dumbest generation” is leading us into a “dark age” of book less “power browsing.” I borrowed this statement from the article “The benefits of Distraction and Overstimulation”, and yes, when I think about it, especially after connecting it to the show Black Mirror, Google is making me and possibly the rest of the world stupid. Multitasking does drain me out in ways that I don’t even comprehend and yes, as much as I love books, I am often guilty of just Googling things instead of actually sitting on a table in a library and putting in *effort*. Did I notice it until I was forced to think about it? No, of course I did not. Google doesn’t tell its users that it’s making them stupid, so how would I know? I didn’t know the very “Googling” of things made me part of the “dumbest generation”, simply because Google never told me that. I was somehow under the wonton impression that it made me proactive, that, if I Googled every single vacuous question that popped into my head, I was somehow making an effort. To break it to everyone reading this, it did not. It only made me more dependent. The more I could have known and more importantly was able to know without effort, about the most inconsequential of things, the more I wanted to know. But then, how is Google making me stupid?

Owing to the readings my parents made me do as a child, there is a great deal that I learnt about seemingly redundant things like the solar system or the animal kingdom as a child. As much as I hated putting down my copy of Cinderella and picking up an encyclopedia, I did it. And the more I did, the more I noticed how it made me *think*. Not in the sense of “What is Apollo”- something that I would now have typed into Google but it made me think in the sense of how and why was the Apollo made. Google is making me and if it is appropriate for me to say so, us stupid strictly in that sense. In the Black Mirror episode The Entire History of You”, it is shown that everyone has memory grains. It makes life so much simpler for them, right? Personally, I beg to differ. On the surface, yes, it does make life simpler. The efficiency of airport security increases, men can call on their cheating wives-it’s great. But it’s also making them stupid. So very stupid. Just like Google is affecting me. Apart from the fact that they literally lose power to memorize things, one of the biggest attributes that we are judged on in school (and with, I assume, good reason. Memory does, in some way, attest to our intelligence) and is taking away that power of their brains completely, but is also making them dependent. Spoon fed babies who are obsessive and cannot function without their grains or in my case, it’s making me a spoon fed, obsessive baby, unable to function without the most popular search engine in the world. How? Very simply put, all it takes to gauge where your marriage stands is attention to marriage, just like all it takes to satiate curiosity is, attention to the world around us. I am certainly not arguing that looking at butterflies will give me details on their biological composition, all I am saying is the more I look at them, the more interested I will be

Commented [TVG1]: This is a part that often goes unnoticed in this piece by most people but it is my personal favourite. I wanted to emphasize how important Google is in everyone’s lives but perhaps because it is already so important people don’t need the constant reminder and hence this might be a little redundant, even if I love it.

Commented [TVG2]: I know referencing Black Mirror might be bizarre here but it was specific to the assignment.

Commented [TVG3]: Even though I am writing a personal essay, I need to rope in Black Mirror from time to time because that was what the assignment was about.

Commented [TVG4R3]:

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Commented [TVG6R3]:

in them and the more I am interested in them, the deeper I will dig to learn about them, rather than merely skimming over a score of webpages, gathering all my information with only the blue hyperlinks that satiate my superficial questions with their short excerpts. But then again, the example about the butterflies was just as fatuous as my derived-from-Google-intellect. Maybe, my point will be clearer with a more personal and meaningful example. Take, for instance, me as a nine year old, in love with Enid Blyton and take me, as a 16 year old, in love with Jane Austen. The child that loved Enid Blyton did so with a passion. It was way more important for her to get into Enid Blyton's head and psyche than it was for her to know what year she was born in and how many suitors did she have or how she died tragically at a very young age. To do so, I rewrote her stories, rewrote her stories with my own characters and what not. As a result, I, even years and years later, can still confidently say I know more about the kind of author Enid Blyton was than I do about Jane Austen. I know her writing style, about her suitors, the brother she was closest to, even about her turquoise ring that Kelly Clarkson wanted to purchase, but I know not of her morals or her mindset when she sat down to write about Fanny Price and what was her inspiration for the same. That is the kind of stupidity I am talking about. On the surface, it may seem like I know a lot, but I know not of the things that matter. There are thousands of facts that are stored in my head, and while they may be impressive to spill out at a dinner party with snobs, Enid Blyton's date of birth is hardly going to be of consequence when I am forced to write a children's story. This is Google is making me stupid.

One might argue, surely, one will argue that it is important to get your facts correct before you distort and argue with them. But then, once you read the facts, do you distort them? Distort and argue aside, do you even question a fact that looks like it might have been the product of a Google search? I know I don't. For instance, talking about how x million people use Google everyday and ask the stupidest questions on Google might strengthen my argument way more than just talking about it might, right? Again, in the span of around 500-600 words, I repeat and say, I beg to differ. This is the things Google leads us to believe. If someone talks in numbers, they mean what they say because they must have Googled it and I trust Google. But no, why do I trust Google? Someone can make up statistics. Someone can make up a webpage with made up statistics. I can do anything on the internet. But no. I Googled this question I had and the very first webpage gave me a satisfactory answer. I am going to believe it for the rest of my life. It is the nature of the facts that Google churns out, almost like a genre, that forces us not to reconsider. To be honest, I will never question something presented as hard fact. Let me illustrate my point better with a story. In high school, I was on the debate team. And, like possibly every kid who debates, I loved, absolutely loved the feeling of being correct, of making an argument so scary, that the opponent failed to reply back with anything satisfactory. I remember one such very important debate during which I was determined to win. Debate started and both sides delivered their well organized speeches and soon we moved into the rebuttal round. It was me against our enemy school. I have to win this, I repeated in my head like a mantra. But the boy spoke before me, and unluckily used the exact same statistics I had, but

Commented [TVG7]: I know she is not the most popular author, especially here in the United States but since this is a personal essay, it was important to talk about her in this context because she was one of the first people that made me fall in love with reading and eventually writing.

Commented [TVG8]: Again, I understand that this needs context but I specifically left certain things that way so people would Google them ironically.

Commented [TVG9]: My paragraphs are super long and windy, much like my sentences because I am trying to make a point-that Google's three sentences rarely contain any information.

for his purpose. This sort of thing never happens. Well almost never, because that day, it did. I put down the my paper. It was my turn to speak and I didn't know what I was going to speak. But my long fostered confidence kicked in and I simply changed the statistics of my argument, keeping the premise the same. We won.

You see? No one questions something presented with confidence. And if I claim to have confidence, Google has both confidence and a certain credibility (that I don't deny) but this habit, of being accepting without question, when used for anything, be it Google or life, in my humble opinion, paralyzes mind growth like nothing else. That is also how Google is making me stupid, by making me mindlessly *accept*.

Another, more transparent way Google is making us stupid is by fostering "loss of authenticity". Like the episode 15 million merits, where everyone goes through the notions, we too go through the notions of Googling things with utmost disinterest, just for the sake of it. I google about Apollo because I feel like I should know about it, for when it comes up at a dinner party than because I want to, and so, I store in my mind Apollo's Wikipedia so that, I don't feel stupid when it comes up. But seldom do I make an effort, read up on it from different sources, books etc and portray any real interest. It's just going through the notions because what excuse do I have, now that we live in the Google era and I can know everything. Because of this, everyone knows the same things and everyone just recycles that information. Take what happened with me at the debate. This is also how Google is making me stupid, by telling me the same thing that millions other know and forcing me to stop my train of thought there.

I hope, very soon, we Google "how not to be made stupid by Google" and find a way out.

Commented [TVG10]: I don't know how noticeable it is but I switch off between long winding paragraphs and shorter, Google like three sentence paragraphs to create a stronger contrast to support my argument.

Commented [TVG11]: Fairly obvious by now but I am a huge fan of irony and an even bigger advocate of a sarcastic tone.