

The Power of the Net

Lesson 9

It's all about the Internet this time. Enjoy! ☺

American writer Nicholas Carr's claim that the internet is not only shaping our lives but physically altering our brains has sparked a lively and ongoing debate, says John Naughton. Below, a selection of writers and experts offer their opinion. Are our minds being altered due to our increasing reliance on search engines, social networking sites and other digital technologies? (...)

"Over the past few years, I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. (...) I'm not thinking the way I used to think. I can feel it most strongly when I'm reading. Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy. My mind would get caught up in the narrative or the turns of the argument and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel as if I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle." (...)

There's no doubt that communications technologies shape and reshape society - just look at the impact that printing and the broadcast media have had on our world. The question that we couldn't answer before now was whether these technologies could also reshape us. Carr argues that modern neuroscience, which has revealed the "plasticity" of the human brain, shows that our habitual practices can actually change our neuronal structures. The brains of illiterate people, for example, are structurally different from those of people who can read. So if the technology of printing - and its concomitant requirement to learn to read - could shape human brains, then surely it's logical to assume that our addiction to networking technology will do something similar?

Retrieved from: *The Observer*, 15 August 2010.

Find words in the text that mean the following:

- ✓ stimulate sth of importance, stir, cause to happen → _ _ _ _ K
- ✓ change, amend, transform sth → _ L _ _ _
- ✓ try to repair, work aimlessly or unskillfully with → _ _ N _ _ _ W _ _ H
- ✓ impatient, restless, agitated, uneasy → F _ _ _ E _ _
- ✓ insubordinate, disobedient, swayed by caprice → _ A _ W _ _ _
- ✓ occurring during the same time period → C _ _ C _ _ _ _ N _
- ✓ suppose, postulate, take for granted → _ _ S _ _ _