

Using Internet sites such as Google makes people smarter, survey says

February 22 2010, By Frank Michael Russell

Google and other Internet sites aren't making us stupid: They're making us smarter, according to an overwhelming majority of 895 experts surveyed by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project and the Imagining the Internet Center at Elon University.

"Three out of four experts said our use of the Internet enhances and augments human intelligence, and two-thirds said use of the Internet has improved reading, writing and rendering of knowledge," study co-author Janna Anderson said in a statement Friday.

"There are still many people, however, who are critics of the impact of [Google](#), Wikipedia and other online tools," said Anderson, director of the Imagining the Internet Center at North Carolina's Elon University.

Anderson and Lee Rainie, director of the Pew project, conducted the survey in response to author Nicholas Carr's July/August 2008 Atlantic Monthly cover story, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"

Anderson and Rainie invited business executives, scientists, consultants, writers and tech developers "to share their views on the Internet's influence on the future of human intelligence." The survey was "opt-in," so it wasn't a representative sample.

From the Pew project's site at pewinternet.org, here's a selection of responses, including from Carr:

- Carr: "What the Net does is shift the emphasis of our intelligence, away from what might be called a meditative or contemplative intelligence and more toward what might be called a utilitarian [intelligence](#). The price of zipping among lots of bits of information is a loss of depth in our thinking."
- Google chief economist Hal Varian: "Google will make us more informed. The smartest person in the world could well be behind a plow in China or India. Providing universal access to information will allow such people to realize their full potential, providing benefits to the entire world."
- Craigslist founder Craig Newmark: "People are already using Google as an adjunct to their own memory. For example, I have a hunch about something, need facts to support, and Google comes through for me. Sometimes, I see I'm wrong, and I appreciate finding that out before I open my mouth."

(c) 2010, San Jose Mercury News (San Jose, Calif.).

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Citation: Using Internet sites such as Google makes people smarter, survey says (2010, February 22) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-02-internet-sites-google-people-smarter.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--