Sara Wrazen

Dr. Koster

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Short Take 1

I start my researching process by first looking for a copy of the text online. It is much easier for me to have a copy of the text which I can print and mark up if I choose. I begin by searching for a copy of the poem on Google (my search engine of choice) using the keywords "William", "Blake", "garden", "love". After printing my own copy and reading it, I might search Google for any analyses of Blake's poem, checking for validity with each site. I make notes on a sheet of paper which I can refer to later in my research process.

Next, I proceed to the Dacus website for online databases. I then search for criticisms and analyses of the poem using the Literature Resource Center using the keywords "garden", "love", and "William Blake". Sixth in the list of eight results is an article Nathan A. Cervo titled "Blake's The Garden of Love". In a separate window on my computer I search for words from the article that I am confused about using dictionary.com. I learn from Cervo's article how some critics, including himself, view Blake's poem. I make notes on the paper at my desk again, to use later when writing my paper. I also save a copy of Cervo's article to my computer in order to refer to it later. Then, I continue searching Dacus online databases.

I type "William Blake" into the library's search catalog box. One of 218 results is a sound recording of Blake's poems which I can get from the library. I check it out and listen to the poems with a headset. I believe poetry is meant to be read aloud, to be listened to. There is so much you can garner from hearing a poem that would not otherwise be clear. After listening to the poem I am initially glad at the rhythmic beat. I discover the imagery made alive by my imagination in ways it was not when I read the poem on paper. It seems I missed a lot in my initial reading, so I read my copy again.

My new understanding allows me to draw some of my own unique conclusions about Blake's purpose. Now I can write my research paper. I can use the information I gained from Google, the online databases, and the recordings of Blake's poem to write a paper which presents my own informed views juxtaposed with the views of the other previous scholars from the essays I read. After moving through my research process I realize how much I rely on the internet. The web, which I always take for granted, is a central cog in my scholarly process. Although I am sure I could research without it, the process would take tons more time. Using the internet databases and search engines I was able to quickly wade through the seas of information and pick out the specific bits which applied to my understanding and dissection of Blake's poem in about an hour. Without the internet I am sure the process would have taken me days.

Nicholas Carr notes, in his article "Is Google Making Us Stupid?", that we

"now expect to take in the information the way the Net distributes it" (Carr 1). Even in my reading of the printed version of Blake's poem I missed bits of important information. I skimmed the poem for fast facts the way I often do material online, without even realizing what I had missed. It wasn't until the poem was read aloud to me that I caught the parts my brain had "filtered out". I find that I, like Carr, have a new way of receiving information due to the Net.   I don't think the internet will ever by my sole means of researching. After all, I still ended up at the library while researching the Blake poem. There is still no replacement for what can be learned at the local library, although the Net can speed things up. Tools like online databases and catalogs are invaluable replacements for days of sifting through journals and card catalogs.

Is the wealth of online knowledge at our fingertips really making us 'stupid'? I think we are just learning in a different way than was possible before the internet arrived and claimed such a prominent place in our society.