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<p style="text-align:center">Library? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Library!</p>

I have, at this point, been a Winthrop student for five years. That's thirteen semesters (I took classes three summers in a row). Over that period, I would estimate I have spent about thirty hours total in Dacus library. That includes the required "how to use the library" sessions that were required by multiple professors; it is probably also an estimate that errs on the side of generosity, if it is inaccurate at all. The truth is, I still think of libraries as a great place to pick up that new hardback that is a little too expensive to stop by Border's and pick up. In fact, unless required by the professor, I do not think I have ever used hard copy materials in writing a paper at Winthrop (other than the primary text, of course, which has almost universally been contained in a book I already owned), and I can only think of twice, off hand, when that requirement was made of me. Electronic research, mainly using the Dacus online databases, is, for me, the norm, rather than some aberration.

That being said, I do not fit the stereotype that Nichlas Carr's article, "Is Google Making Us Stupid," seems to paint of the online researcher. My research, I believe, is carried on in much the same way it would be if I was using print versions of the materials. My reading is just as in depth, my notes as numerous, and my use of the articles as thorough as they would be using more traditional methods. This difference between Carr's perception and my reality may be attributable to the nature of my

discipline (English), age, or my choice of electronic sources (almost exclusively scholarly databases). Regardless, despite my use of and love for technology as a research tool, I am not the scholar that Carr describes.

The differences between my process and the one Carr describes can be seen easily by walking through a hypothetical research process for the paper on Blake's poem "The Garden of Love." Since I have never written a serious paper examining poetry, I would probably approach the process the same way I have for countless prose pieces I have written about. Step one, of course, is reading the poem. If the poem was contained in an anthology or compilation that was required for the class, I would also read any biographical information provided on Blake, as well as any information on or analysis of the poem itself such as often accompanies pieces in an anthology. This reading, more than likely, would comprise the sum of my use of print-only materials for the paper.

Having read the poem, the next step would be to come up with a preliminary topic for the paper. I say preliminary because all too often what I set out to write about shows little relation to the end topic. This is one place where my almost exclusive use of electronic media in my research does have a major influence on my papers. If I can not find electronic articles that provide material for my paper, I often switch paper topics rather than expanding my search to print articles or books. Some might call this laziness; I consider it a survival method. If I could focus my life entirely on scholarly endeavors, I might be more willing to spend time in the stacks searching for the materials I need. However, my schedule has always included between thirty and fifty hours a week of work at one or more jobs. If I cannot find and use suitable materials on a topic without resorting to several hours in the library, I'd rather just write a different paper. In the case

of the "Garden of Love," the first thing that jumps out at me is the (what seems to me, anyways) interesting and unusual use of rhyme and meter in the poem. This would be my starting point for the paper.

I would, at this point, turn to my favorite source to begin my research – JSTOR. I love JSTOR for two reasons. The first is that it provides direct links to the articles that you find when researching. There is no series of links to follow that may or may not, finally, take you to an electronic version of the article, or only a reference to a print version that Dacus may or may not have. The second is that all of the articles on JSTOR are .pdf versions – direct scans of the original print material. Files of this type provide the feeling of using an original printed article, as well as removing any chance of alteration, error or omission that a retyped electronic version might contain. It also simplifies the citation process; most professors allow you to treat .pdf's as if you used the "hard copy" of an article, the rules for which are much more clear and simple.

When searching a database, I tend to start specific and work my way out, widening my searches as needed. For example, for the Blake paper my initial search string would probably look like this: **Blake "Garden of Love" rhyme meter**. Depending on the outcome of that search, I would probably proceed to broader searches, perhaps by removing "rhyme" or "meter" or both to see what others were writing about the poem, removing the title of the poem and searching for articles on Blake's use of rhyme and meter in general (for which I would probably add his first name), or possibly just searching the name of the poem.

Throughout my search process, if an article caught my eye – whether because it seemed to have bearing on my chosen topic, or because I felt its premise might lead to a

better topic – I would save it, preferably to a jump drive or other portable storage device.

I don't read articles as I go; storage space is cheap, easy to access and reusable. I would rather save every article on a topic than have to go back and search again for that one source that I thought I wouldn't use but decide later might work with the new direction my paper has taken.

For the purposes of this analysis, I will assume I was able to find enough related articles to feel comfortable proceeding with my original topic. I would next read each article thoroughly – either after printing them (if there are not too many, they are not too long, and I am somewhere where printing is not going to cost me too much) or, more and more often, simply in electronic format. If I have printed the articles, I would use a highlighter and/or pen to take notes and select what I think will be most useful for my paper. If I am simply using the electronic version, I would simply select and copy sections that I think I might use to a Word file, noting the article and page that each selection came from. Either way, I would keep the electronic copies of each file for later. As I write, I sometimes find myself needing additional quotations or facts to support my premises. I will often then use the "search" function in Adobe Reader to find statements or catchy quotations to help round out my paper, filling in any blanks that may have been left by my earlier excerpts.

An analysis of my writing process would be another whole paper in itself. For this paper, it should suffice to say that my composition process is exclusively electronic; I do not write longhand. It could, then, be considered an extension of my research style; it is also possible that my research style stems from the way I write my papers. Or, it could just be that necessity dictates that both research and writing be approached in roughly this

same way (my handwriting is abominable, and my wrists begin aching after a page of writing by hand).

While an analysis of my research procedure shows that I can be considered a part of this paradigm shift in research methods that Carr discusses, I believe it also separates me from those who seek to "zip along the surface" of the "sea of words" he describes. While my methods of accessing information differ greatly from what they might have been twenty, or even ten years ago, my procedure for analyzing and using that information is very much the same as it would be if I were digging through hard copies of scholarly journals and books. Rather than skimming articles for information and jumping from one to the next, I still dig deeply into each source, looking for the hidden gem that might not be visible from the surface. Nor have my patterns for reading in general changed; submersion into a book has always been my favorite retreat, and the day I lose the ability to plunge into those alternate universes will be a sad day for me indeed. I think that as long as I continue to combine classic methods with my use of technology, I may be safe from the "flattening" of my intelligence that Curr warns against.