

Allison Todd  
Writing 510  
Short take 1

When I attempted my first real research project in 1986, our high school had computers, but we could not use them for research. Research was hell in the form of hours and days spent in the library. Luckily for me, I chose to research The Beatles and their impact on society and that granted me researching the likes of *Rolling Stone* and great articles about rock and roll, but limited where I could research as our high school was the second poorest in Kentucky and the library selection reflected our lack of funding. Therefore, I spent several weekends perusing the periodicals section and microfiche at the Cincinnati Public Library whereas I might require a couple of days in the library these days.

As the years pass, I realize that many influences such as environment, career, and geography have shaped my speaking and writing styles. Similarly, the internet has impacted my researching style. Efficiency is paramount to success. Visiting a library for days on end to take notes on articles is highly inefficient and I agree somewhat with Carr that we no longer perform the deep reading or focusing that we may once have because our brains have been shaped differently. To be honest, the mere thought of spending more than a few hours in Dacus Library promotes anxiety and nausea in me.

The first step I would take to research William Blake's *The Garden of Love* would be a Google search using "William Blake *Garden of Love*" and read the poem. Depending upon how much time I had to research the information, I would click on the applicable websites to take notes. Then, if there were several weeks to conduct the research, I would search for books on Amazon.com to purchase regarding the poetry of

Blake (I feel I must insert here that I don't have money to throw at Amazon.com, but I also do not have money to pay late fees. I love books and I have issues with returning them). If there wasn't time to order the books, read them, and take notes on them, I would at least write down the titles and authors to search for at the library.

When I think back to my first research project, I recall index cards by the hundreds filled with notes, call and page numbers, bibliography information, and anything at all pertaining to my subject. As that is my known method and because I love notes so much, I don't think that has changed very much. Once I am in the library, I tend to resort to the manual techniques familiar to me. So, in researching Blake's poem at the library, I could count on several hours and note cards until I felt I had enough information to construct the paper.

Finally, I would use my library notes to support the information I was using from the internet and develop my first draft. After much procrastination and several nights of good intentions coupled with bottles of merlot, on the evening prior to the paper's due date, I would edit and proofread the draft to develop the copy to be submitted.

My peers and I have discussed, on several occasions, how it feels like we have suddenly developed attention deficit disorder because we lack the focus and drive that we once enjoyed. Tasks that were simple five to ten years ago become complex and take longer to perform because there are so many distractions and we sometimes fail to grasp the whole meaning of what is expected of us because we only have the time to skim the objectives. I attribute this to age, responsibilities, a shift in my personal values, and possibly the internet.

I spend approximately fifty hours of my life at work each week. During my time there, I am interrupted continuously. I have adapted to hear a little of what people are saying and interpret their needs with a decent success rate. This is similar to the skimming I do when reading articles or even when I am reading a book; if it is a boring section, I skim over it. Like Carr, I find concentrating on long articles a struggle and in relation to the internet, if I do not have a hard copy of something to touch and write upon, I cannot comprehend the information as well. The technologies we possess have changed us in our learning, writing, speaking, and research styles similarly to the way Friedrich Nietzsche's writing style changed with the typewriter.

I think the internet has provided us with so much information that we are in a hurry to get to the next tidbit causing us to miss vital information in another. Because of all of this information, I no longer feel confident in performing manual research without the use of a search engine to expedite the process. Although I would spend some time in the library manually researching the information, I simply do not have the time to devote to inefficient methods and I blame that on the invention of the clock.

To summarize, my first instinct to beginning a research project would be to consult the internet, read the poem, browse the links, and search for information that may be credible. Next, I would consult the library (and/or books purchased from an internet website) and spend a few hours there taking notes. The next step would be to construct a draft. Finally, I would proofread, edit, and submit. My research techniques would not pose a problem for my future writing endeavors as I plan to use my writing experience for standard operating procedures and technical publications.

I do agree with Carr that our minds have evolved and that we do not go as deep as we did in the past as far as reading, thinking, and concentration, but I believe it is a combination of things and not only the internet. As Maryanne Wolf said, *how* we read determines who we are as much as *what* we read. Saying that we have read *A Brief History of Time* may be impressive, but if we can't back up our claim because we skimmed through the majority of the book, we appear rather doltish.