



## Time to worry? | The Xpragmatic View



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For many of us, the Internet has become the primary information medium. At the same time, this medium is influencing our way of thinking and behaving. Do we have to worry?

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Recently, an article written by Nicholas Carr that was published in the July/August edition of [The Atlantic Magazine](#) got quite a bit of media attention.

In the article, titled "[Is Google Making Us Stupid?](#)", Carr describes his growing concern that the increasing popularity of the Internet as the primary information and communication source is gradually changing our way of thinking. As an example of this, Carr describes how it gets increasingly difficult for him to continue reading a book or a lengthy piece of text.

Well, as regular readers of his [Rough Type](#) blog, we can assure him that this evolution has no visible impact yet on his writing. Carr remains the sharp analyser he always was, always critical, sometimes plain cynical and scornful. Nevertheless, he has a valid point.

Never before, we have had more or easier access to information than today. Also for us, the Internet has become our primary viewport to the information world. However, this viewport features other interaction dynamics than more traditional information media such as books, newspapers and magazines. As a result, our way of using this medium is fundamentally different.

Part of this difference is essentially driven by information overload, by having too easy access to too much information, mandating an approach of quick scan and selection/rejection. Another part of this difference is driven by the capabilities and limitations of the interface which is more suited for very visual content and less suited for reading lengthy texts.

Therefore, our way of using the Internet is a very normal response to the realities of this medium. However, while adopting such approaches, this also influences our more general behaviour, making us more interested in the easy and quick result and less interested in the more in-depth time-consuming reflections. As Carr experiences or fears, this is likely to have an impact on our cognitive skills.

Well, we assume that neurologists are in a better position to comment on this, but we assume that Carr is partly right. The Internet has an impact on our way of thinking and behaving. On the other hand, do we have to assume that it is a negative impact?

In general, we have the feeling that our current world is getting much more fast-paced. Much more things become available and accessible than ever before. At the same time, our interactions with this broader world seem to become thinner, more superficial. Too many things to do and so little time. We have more and higher spikes of great experience but these feelings rapidly fade away. Is it wrong?

No, we don't think so. It is only different from what we used to experience. It is just an expression of the path we have chosen or that was chosen for us.

Is it the right direction? Nobody can tell. We are just continuing our journey. For us, the older generation, we experience a transition, some change of direction and we wonder what happens. For the younger generation, it is just business as usual.

Their time will come.

## About the author





Marc Buyens is analyst, management consultant and owner of Xpragma. Marc started Xpragma in 1999 after a 20+ years career in the IT sector. Today, he provides advice, training and mentoring services focusing on the intersection of technological evolution, organisational change and business strategy: a messy world of unfulfilled promises.

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