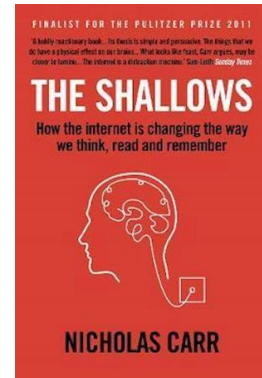


The Shallows

Synonyms to SHALLOWS (dictionary):

superficial, flimsy, trivial, foolish, silly, frivolous, empty, ignorant, unthinking

The Shallows: How the Internet is changing the way we think, read, and remember by Nicholas Carr



The book claims research shows "online reading" yields lower comprehension than reading a printed page. The Shallows was a finalist for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize in General Nonfiction.

"Is Google making us stupid?"

"As we enjoy the Internet's generosity, are we sacrificing our ability to read and think deeply?"

"Try to read a book while doing a crossword puzzle!"

Nicholas Carr is fascinated by the recent discoveries in neuroscience. Our brains change in response to our neural pathways. He explains how the printed book served to focus our attention, promoting deep and creative thinking. In a strong contrast the Internet encourages the rapid, distracted sampling of small bits of information from many sources. We are becoming even more adapted to scanning and skimming – and we are losing our capacity for concentration, contemplation, and reflection.

Scattered attention

Carr has realized that his thinking had become as fragmented as information is presented online, and as a result his ability to focus on one topic for more than a few seconds had ended. He found himself skipping from one bit of information to another - and stitching together the results found to form a work of his own. Online communication and online studying enable us to discuss with individuals we would otherwise never have been able to meet due to geographical or financial circumstances. But they come at a price. While the Internet demands our complete attention, the ability to concentrate over a longer span when reading is cut down.

Carr has realized, that his brain is demanding to be fed the way the Internet feeds it – and it is not the way he reads that has changed, but the way he thinks...

Individual memory and culture

According to Carr memory has a certain area to memorize stuff for a short time span. Usually, parts of the storage in the SHORT-TERM memory is further processed and passed on to other brain regions for LONG TERM memorization. Biological LONG-TERM memory is really the result of a process by means of biological,

chemical electrical and genetic signals. While SHORT-TERM memory changes the way synapse works, LONG TERM memory changes the brain cell's physiology. Individual memory shapes the self and sustains the collective memory. Therefore, LONG-TERM memory is very important, because memory is an important part of culture. Carr talks about outsourcing of biological memory to artificial memory. The latter is storage of static information, while biological memory is always in a state of progress.

The overflooded brain

The biological memory gets passed on to for further processing, the rest is forgotten after a few seconds. The capacity of the SHORT-TERM memory is quite limited. But the Internet fills it up with a constant flood of information, bit by bit, second by second, and its capacity is soon exhausted. Carr says, that in the effect no or very little information is processed into the LONG-TERM memory. Rather is the SHORT-TERM memory regularly flushed to make room for new input. Carr says: "Try reading a book while doing a crossword puzzle!"

Distractions and young people

Our brain has many functions and tasks, and deep and creative thinking is one of them. Carr emphasizes that deep and creative thinking requires a "CALM AND ATTENTIVE MIND". Taking the speed as well as the enormous quantity of internet information consumption into account, it might be difficult to develop a calm and attentive mind. Perhaps, this might be a cause for the LOSS OF COMPASSION, which is so often criticized among young people.

Carr: "Every click we make on the Internet marks a break in our concentration, a bottom-up disruption of our attention — and it's in Google's economic interest to make sure we click as often as possible," he writes. "Google is, quite literally, in the business of distraction."