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1. Introduction

Have you ever encountered the following scenario? I think most of you would find yourself familiar with the following scenario or even have the same experience. When you doing your essay as a student or searching information for your project as a worker, using the famous search engine like yahoo or Google, you will find piles of information on the internet whether they are relevant to your topic or not. Soon you will find that the more information you find and gather on the internet, the more difficult for you to do your task as not only lots of time is spent on gathering the information, but also, you need to spend enormous time on going through the information provided by the search engine. Worse still, much more time is needed for you to make a decision on which information is useful and relevant for your work, which is not.

Some may comment that development in IT (Information technology) makes our lives easier and more comfortable as compared with several decades ago, nowadays, with technological advancement like the widespread of e-mail and existence of various search engine like yahoo and Google, availability of different kinds of electronic sources on the internet such as electronic library and websites from all over the world, we can access to loads of different kinds of information without any major difficulties and without the restraint of national boundaries .

However, facing the huge amount of information available on the internet, searching the useful and relevant information for your work or for your paper becomes a real headache, even a nightmare for many people. Lots of time is spent and even wasted on searching and going through the data while the final result may be quite or even extremely disappointing as only little or limited relevant information has been found. Some people point out the negative aspect of technological development as they criticize that development in IT can lead to information overload.

2. Argument of development in IT can lead to information overload

First of all, before we start writing this essay, we should define the key term “information overload” clearly, according to Wikipedia, information overload (aka information flood) is a term that is usually used in conjunction with various forms of Computer-mediated communication such as Electronic mail. It refers to the state of having too much information to make a decision or remain informed about a topic. Large amounts of historical information to dig through, a high rate of new information being added, contradictions in available information, and a low signal-to-noise ratio make it difficult to identify what information is relevant to the decision. The lack of a method for comparing and processing different kinds of information can also contribute to this effect. A recent article in the New Scientist claimed that exposing individuals to an information overloaded environment resulted in lower IQ scores than exposing individuals to marijuana although these results are contested. The same article also notes that a night without sleep can be as debilitating as over-exposure to information. The term was coined in 1970 by Alvin Toffler in his book *Future Shock*.

Wikipedia also states that information overload can be seriously problematic and troublesome, “Part of the problem of *information overload* can be traced to interruptions in the workplace. In 2005, research firm “Basex” calculated the cost of unnecessary interruptions and related recovery time at “\$588 billion” per annum in the U.S. alone. That figure was updated to “\$650 billion” in early 2007.” From the above example, we can obviously see that how information overload causes severe harm to the workplace. Huge amount of money is lost (the amount can be as large as \$650 billion) because of this problem alone.

Moreover, Wikipedia insists that “many academics, corporate decision-makers, and federal policy-makers recognize the magnitude and growing impact of this phenomenon” (information overload). Academic professional Carlson agrees with Wikipedia that development in information technology triggers the problem of information overload. He states that rapid increase of internet pages aggravates to the difficulty for us to find out the real information that we need and leading to poor results for information searching since traditional information

searching strategies become more and more ineffective to solve our problem, “Initial user benefits from search engine technology have been critically degraded over time by the rapid increase of Internet pages. Traditional retrieval strategies therefore yield increasingly poor results due to a dramatic increase in ballast in the results. Search engine users thus increasingly experience information overload. Technical approaches to dealing with this problem have caused an initial euphoria, yet have proven ineffective in solving the problem.”

Another scholar, Bray provides further support to the above agreement of Carlson that development in IT (information technology) can lead to information overload, given the following example, “someone who is part of the growing information economy - loses 2.1 hours a day to interruptions associated with multi-tasking. If those workers make an average of \$21 an hour, that adds up to \$588 billion a year, more than the gross domestic product of Argentina.” In fact, Bray unveils the seriousness of the problem of information overload as not only lots of time is lost on this issue, worse still, economic loss (loss of money and manpower altogether) inevitably becomes one of the result of the problem. In fact, information overload unbelievably causes loss in economy that the total amount of loss is more than the gross domestic product of a country. It shows that how this problem seriously and negatively affects our lives and even our economy.

3. Conclusion

To make a final conclusion, to a large extent, I agree with the statement that development in IT (information technology) can lead to information overload. Not only Wikipedia mentions the seriousness of the problem of information overload since it makes traditional information searching strategies becomes more and more ineffective to solve our problems, thus, making us more and more difficult to find the relevant and useful information that we really need. Academic professionals like Carlson and Bray also point out that the problem of information overload alone can make severe harm to both our lives and our economy as the total amount of economic loss can be as large as the gross domestic product of a country, Argentina.

References:

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