Sample Essay Annotation

Sample Essay
Don’t Let the Internet Scare You

Despite dire warnings from some who came to digital technologies late in life, the digital revolution has been overwhelmingly good for the way people think and the way they interact with one another. The digital era has enabled humans to extend the power of their brains by using digital devices to store memories, access new information, and connect with others.¹

Take Wikipedia. With a few clicks, anybody can be an expert in nearly any subject. This technology allows us to spend less time memorizing facts and more time analyzing them. However,² some people from previous generations might have spent a long time memorizing facts and dates in high school, and that might make them feel intimidated by the power of this easy access to information. As Nicholas Carr argues in “Is Google Making Us Stupid?,” the easy access to information is taking away his ability to focus.³ He says it is “chipping away my capacity for concentration and contemplation.” ⁴ Understandably, people like Carr might look down at things like Wikipedia since it makes their memorized knowledge less valuable. However,⁵ the easy access to information does not make us less smart. On the contrary, by having such easy access, we can focus on developing our thinking. It does not shorten our attention spans; it increases our speed.⁶

People like Vinton Cerf have a much more accurate view.⁷ Cerf claims, “One thing we know for sure is that the Web is a collaborative medium unlike any we’ve ever had before.”⁸ He recognizes that the Internet allows humans to interact and build relationships in ways that they have never been able to before. The result is that they can collaborate to build their knowledge and create new art and information in brand new ways. Like-minded people and relevant information are always only a few clicks away.

In fact,⁹ as Pamela Brown Rutledge argues in “Social Networks: What Maslow Misses,” humans need these kinds of connections in order to be happy. Far from making us stupid, these connections make us more fulfilled. Rutledge says, “From the Savannah to Facebook, social behaviors adapt to the environment to support the most basic of human needs. We strive to achieve it within the technological constraints of our environment.” She is completely right that humans have always desired and even needed these connections, and all technology has done is make it faster and easier to connect with others. Instead of making us shallow or ruining our attention spans, the Internet has actually helped us fulfill our social needs more easily, and that in turn makes it easier for us to accomplish our intellectual goals more fully.

New technologies can be scary. As these technologies transform our lives, that fear can push people to assume that the changes are bad. However, people are driven by the same
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desires to learn, create, and connect, and if the Internet can fulfill those desires more quickly and easily, it must be a good thing.\textsuperscript{xii}

\textsuperscript{i} Introduces the paper’s main claim  
\textsuperscript{ii} Transitional word demonstrates that the next idea will contradict the previous idea  
\textsuperscript{iii} Identifies counterclaim  
\textsuperscript{iv} Develops counterclaim and uses evidence  
\textsuperscript{v} Transitional word demonstrates that the next idea will contradict the previous idea  
\textsuperscript{vi} Distinguishes the claim and establishes significance  
\textsuperscript{vii} Refers back to the idea of the previous paragraph in order to logically sequence the upcoming claim  
\textsuperscript{viii} Supplies evidence  
\textsuperscript{ix} Transitional phrase to establish logical connection back to the previous paragraph  
\textsuperscript{x} This phrase indicates that the next idea will be based on the previous quotation  
\textsuperscript{xi} Concludes the essay by attempting to tie ideas back together and by extending and deepening the original claim of the thesis