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Irony

The computer and the smart phone have the potential to open most of the world to us – to view distant lands and outer space, and to learn about multiple subjects, yet they usually close us into a smaller space, the size of a screen, so that we risk missing the real world around us.

While the Internet gives us potential access to more and more knowledge (or at least information), we usually are unaware of what's really "out there." We're missing out on a whole realm of "nearby knowledge" that we used to tap into. We no longer scan the library shelves looking for a specific volume and in the process finding dozens of neighboring books on topics that we weren't aware of before, some of which might prompt new research or new interests. We are now limited to key search words and advertisements to very specific areas. Now that we can request a specific journal article we are less apt to skim the contents of various journals to see what else might be helpful or interesting. We have traded breadth for depth in our learning.

Narrower

We have also become narrower in our knowledge of musical styles. When "top 40" or "easy listening" radio stations were popular, people listened to a huge repertoire of songs, some of which they liked (and some of which they didn't), expanding their base of musical "literacy." Today we typically select an artist or a genre we already like and put them on our playlist. In customizing our reading and listening we are narrowing our horizons.

Technology once promoted unity, but now technology is being pushed so far that it promotes diversity. Network television homogenized society by making the whole country depend upon three centrally controlled networks for their information and entertainment. Cable television, on the other hand, allows the viewer to choose among an enormous number of channels. Broadcasting is giving way to narrowcasting in which channels are aimed at particular interests and particular segments of the audience. [1]

REFERENCE

1. Veith, G. E., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Crossway, 1994, p. 145.