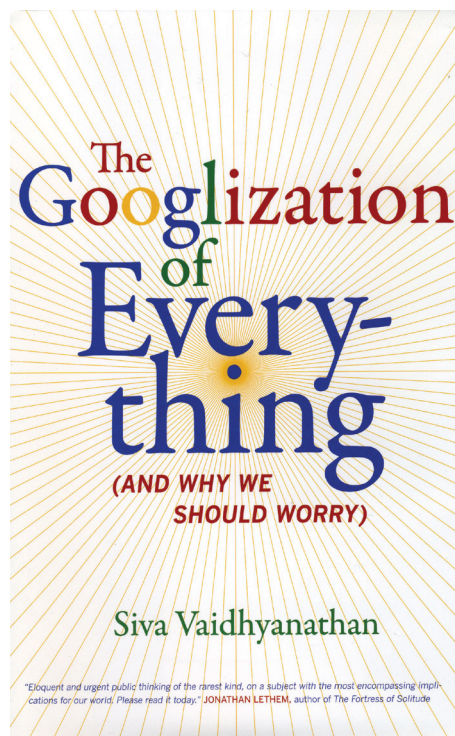


Beyond Google

The role of the teacher-librarian is increasingly multi-faceted and thankfully moving away from the monastic stereotype of the sexless bookworm. Or perhaps not. The hilarious vignette entitled “Medieval Help Desk” found at both www.youtube.com and at www.teachertube.com, illustrates our roles: we put students and teachers at ease with new technologies that facilitate research; we are indispensable resources for both staff and students; and finally, like Virgil, we can be counted upon, like Dante, to lead the school community through the labyrinthine paradise (or inferno) of information. Monks’ robes or nuns’ habits are optional.

Along with our colleagues in the classroom, teacher-librarians hold the keys to help unlock the vaults of print and electronic information; however, it is the mandate of the latter to facilitate



the quest for information (as opposed to knowledge!) The plethora of data available to students has become, ironically, an obstacle to the acquisition of knowledge. Blogs, podcasts, and aggregators (sites that “curate” other websites and sources) multiply by the thousands on a daily basis, democratizing the access and dissemination of information but at the same time, obscuring the distinctions between fact and fiction. We can all “find” information: it is what we do with it that has now reached the tipping point.

In his recent essay, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” (*The Atlantic*, July/August 2008), author Nicholas Carr posits that the ubiquitous search engine has indeed limited both our need, and indeed, our capacity to think deeply. We have become of a society of skimmers and scanners; this in turn, he asserts, has a physiological impact on the neuro-circuitry of our brains