

## With so many apps out there, do we rely on them too much?



BY DAHLIA KURTZ, QMI AGENCY

FIRST POSTED: MONDAY, JUNE 11, 2012 02:00 AM EDT | UPDATED: MONDAY, JUNE 11, 2012 10:00 AM EDT



It seems if you need help with anything, there's an app for that. (Shutterstock)

Why put on your thinking cap, when you can simply turn on your thinking app?

Applications are programs on your mobile, tablet or computer - some free, some paid.

There are a million apps for that - literally. According to comScore, these programs account for four of every five U.S. mobile minutes. But most of us don't realize how appy we are.

Don't think you rely on them? Well, if your phone has email, Twitter, Facebook or instant messaging, you don't only rely on them, you respond to them at the drop of an alert.

With them we can do some remarkable things we couldn't do before, but we may not be able to do things now that we once did either.

Nicholas Carr is the Pulitzer Prize finalist for *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. In his book, Carr writes, "The Web provides a convenient and compelling supplement to personal memory - but when we start using the Web as a substitute for personal memory, by bypassing the inner processes of consolidation, we risk emptying our minds of their riches.

"The Net is making us smarter, in other words, only if we define intelligence by the Net's own standards."

And how standards have changed over the past few years.

Who knew when the iPhone launched in 2007 - followed by the App Store and other smartphone providers - that slinging a wingless bird at a pig would become one of society's favourite pastimes. Yes, Angry Birds now has 1 billion downloads to date.

In February, Apple announced its 25 billionth download, while the International Data Corporation now forecasts annual mobile app downloads to increase from 30 billion to 200 billion by 2016.

By then we'll be telling our kids, "When I was younger I used to walk to school without an app - in the snow."

There are programs that make the worst picture-takers look like professional photogs, and some that turn the tone deaf into Tone Loc (or artists who actually sing). There are apps to help you lose weight, be happy, do homework, and even fight Internet addiction (to be fair, Sam Malone in Cheers was an alcoholic who owned a bar).

There's an app to find the cheapest gas (is there such a thing as cheap gas anymore?), and one to help you live forever through a final message when you die.

Of course there's one to get your guy to take out the trash (so long as he's not addicted to Angry Birds).

What started as mindless games may have turned into mind-substitutes. Still, this slight disconnect from the mind could be strengthening our connections more than ever.

Barry Wellman is a professor of sociology at the University of Toronto. He says, "We're more connected with others because of our apps. For example, it's easier to find their houses or to keep track of our dates when we're going to meet."

Wellman's research indicates that on a 5:1 basis Canadians feel technology helps families stay more connected. He notes, "The evidence shows that integrating apps into our lives extends our relationships and activities, rather than making them more shallow."

Today they're just apps, tomorrow they're our virtual assistants. It's expected that these programs won't just make you more productive at work; they'll actually do some of it for you.

But there's one app that everyone should rely on more: the human brain. Use it before it becomes appsolete.

#### **App-etite for instruction:**

- **HusbandMotivator:** Get your husband to do (or stop doing) things.
- **iHusband:** Auto-responses for your wife. Guaranteed to make her think you care.
- **If I Die:** Create your digital afterlife.
- **Lose It!:** Lose weight one byte at a time.
- **Confusometer:** During class, anonymously tell your prof you're stumped.
- **JiWire:** When not connected, find the closest WiFi to get connected.
- **SelfControl:** Fights Internet addiction. Seriously.
- **Baby Connect:** Keep track of baby's poops.
- **Pair:** For long-distance relationships, literally feel your partner's touch by thumb kissing.
- **GasBuddy:** Find the lowest gas prices. (Good luck.)

#### **CONTEST**

Got curls? There's a unique product line for that. You can win a Curly Hair Solutions gift basket valued at \$220. "Like" Dahlia's Facebook page - Dahlia Kurtz: #eSaidSheSaid and use her "Promos" app to enter, or follow @DahliaKurtz on Twitter and tweet this story with the hashtag #eSaidSheSaid.

# POLL

How often do you use apps?

**50%**  
**Every day.**

**73**  
**votes**

**8%**  
**Most days.**

**11**  
**votes**

**11%**  
**A few times a week.**

**16**  
**votes**

**14%**  
**Rarely.**

**20**  
**votes**

**17%**  
**Never.**

**24**  
**votes**

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