

Is There a Way to Stop America's Minds from Closing?

A few years ago, a friend of mine expressed a sentiment that many of us have probably felt at some time or another:

"I want my children to have a better education than I had."

Now, this friend happens to be a very talented, intelligent, and well-educated young lady. For her to say such a thing speaks to the fact that almost all of us have [holes in our education](#), particularly in this day of proliferating knowledge.

I was reminded of this conversation when I heard that MIT has [begun to create](#) the "[Essential Knowledge](#)" collection, a series of books which give individuals a basic overview of topics commonly referenced, but in which many feel clueless about.

As I flipped over to see the listing of topics covered thus far, I couldn't help but notice how many of them were related to the digital society we live in. Perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised, particularly considering that this series is released by MIT (a school with the word "technology" in its name), but it left me asking: What about all the other historical, philosophical, and other classes of knowledge in the world? Is it no longer important in a digital age to have a working understanding of these areas?

While many in our culture might conclude that it is not, former University of Chicago professor and author Allan Bloom adamantly believes it is. In his book, [The Closing of the American Mind](#), Bloom explains how many young people today can no longer understand the cultural elements surrounding them because they were not instilled with the longstanding canon of knowledge from the past, largely through great books written by Shakespeare, Dickens, and many others such as those listed

in [The Well-Educated Mind](#).

Such a state has far reaching consequences for how individuals conduct their lives, as Bloom goes on to note:

“Lack of education simply results in students’ seeking for enlightenment wherever it is readily available, without being able to distinguish between the sublime and trash, insight and propaganda.”

Today’s young people seem easily swayed by the latest and greatest opinion that comes sweeping through their college campuses or shows up in their social media feeds. Is it possible that such sway occurs because students simply do not have the knowledge base which was once common to Western Civilization?

If we want our children to have a better education than we had while avoiding being swayed the wrong way by propaganda and other information, are we going to have to reintroduce the great books and ideas of the West back into schools? And if the schools don’t take up this banner, will we have to train our children to [educate themselves](#)?

Image Credit: Karrie Nadalo (cropped) bit.ly/1eBd9Ks