

Our Information Society is Not Yielding More Knowledge

In today's world, modern celebrities and artists seem to be primarily concerned with their image and whether or not it is aligned with the politically correct thought of the day. It is for this reason that it's easy to sit up and take note when a celebrity actually goes against the grain of today's conventional wisdom and thoughtfully points out problems that are being overlooked.

The most recent instance of this came from the lips of Charles Dutoit, a famous Swiss conductor who heads the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Speaking with *The Telegraph*, [Dutoit explains](#) that his illustrious career did not start with a bang. Instead, he worked his way through the ranks slowly, taking time to observe the greats and let their advice sink in and marinate in his own thoughts and practices. Such a process, he implies, is what made him one of the world's greatest conductors.

But such is not the case for today's students. Speaking specifically about his field of music, Dutoit notes:

*"Nowadays young musicians have everything under their fingertips, they can learn a new piece just by listening to it on YouTube. **They are amazingly well-informed but they have no culture. In my day everything was slow, but it meant that it was rooted,**" he says. "You had to seek things out and work on them slowly with the score."*

Oddly enough, his words resonate with a [recent article](#) issued by *NPR*, which examines the ever-popular practice of incorporating laptops or other electronic devices into classroom lessons. Teacher James Welsch thought the idea was

great... until he began noticing that material simply did not stick with his students anymore. Their writing – and hence thinking – grew more disjointed, while their test scores failed to show any signs of improvement in learning.

These two separate observations gave me pause. So often, Americans exalt in the fact that they live in the modern information society. Because of this reality, it's easy to believe that we're also living at the zenith of culture and knowledge that no other society has ever experienced.

At the same time, we're faced with the reality that the retention power of that knowledge simply doesn't exist. This is seen through the [Nation's Report Card](#), which demonstrates that roughly a third or less of students are proficient in nearly every subject; through the [empty rhetoric](#) of political candidates; and even through the [recent quest](#) to remove the memory of historical individuals from public view.

Is it possible that some of these problems would be solved by a greater intellectual humility? As a nation, would we be wise to take a step back, recognize that the information society does not necessarily equal knowledge, and then be willing to take the time to ground ourselves and our children in the practice of drilling deep and thoughtfully processing what we learn, instead of being satisfied with knowledge an inch deep and a mile wide?