



How current and future users will access archives: you might not want to know

Professor David Nicholas, CIBER Research

The beginning

CIBER studying virtual scholars/researchers for 15 years and people thought then we were bonkers talking about *bouncing, promiscuity, fast bag pick-up, reading 'lite' and digital consumers*. Not now!

Talk built on huge evidence base; result of studying the usage logs of millions of virtual scholars on many web platforms. Never known so much about how researchers/people find, 'read' and 'use' information.

Based on what people *do* in digital space; not what they *say* they did or *wished* they did. Have problems recalling what they did in digital space (partly because cannot remember and partly because they would rather not tell)

They don't know/care whose information they are consuming or whether its an archive, library, monograph, journal or blog. The disintermediated and enfranchised digital consumer is on the road. We are all researchers and librarians (but we don't behave like them)

Dam burst and it keeps on bursting

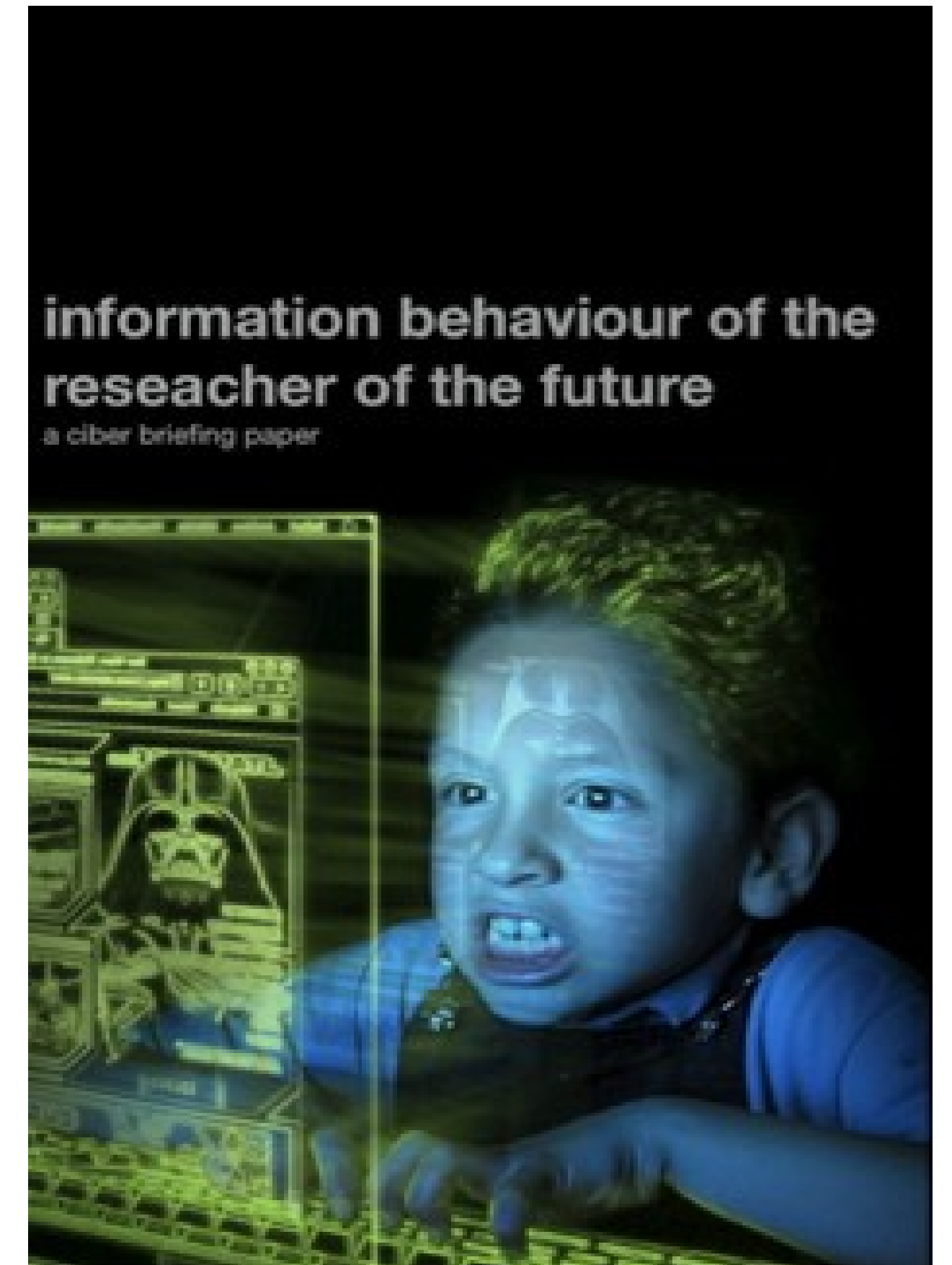
Decade ago CIBER surprised information professionals with revelations of what the newly dis-intermediated Google Generation were up to in the virtual, unmediated information space. GG, the born digitals, are disruptive & feeding into the market

Seen nothing yet, with information professionals (and society) barely taken breath and stock, another revolution is on us, and has a greater weight behind it

GG have been empowered by a smartphone that will take a form of behaviour already alleged as 'extreme' to a completely different level. **The end of culture as we know it!** (and I only have 20 mins to talk about - welcome information 'lite')

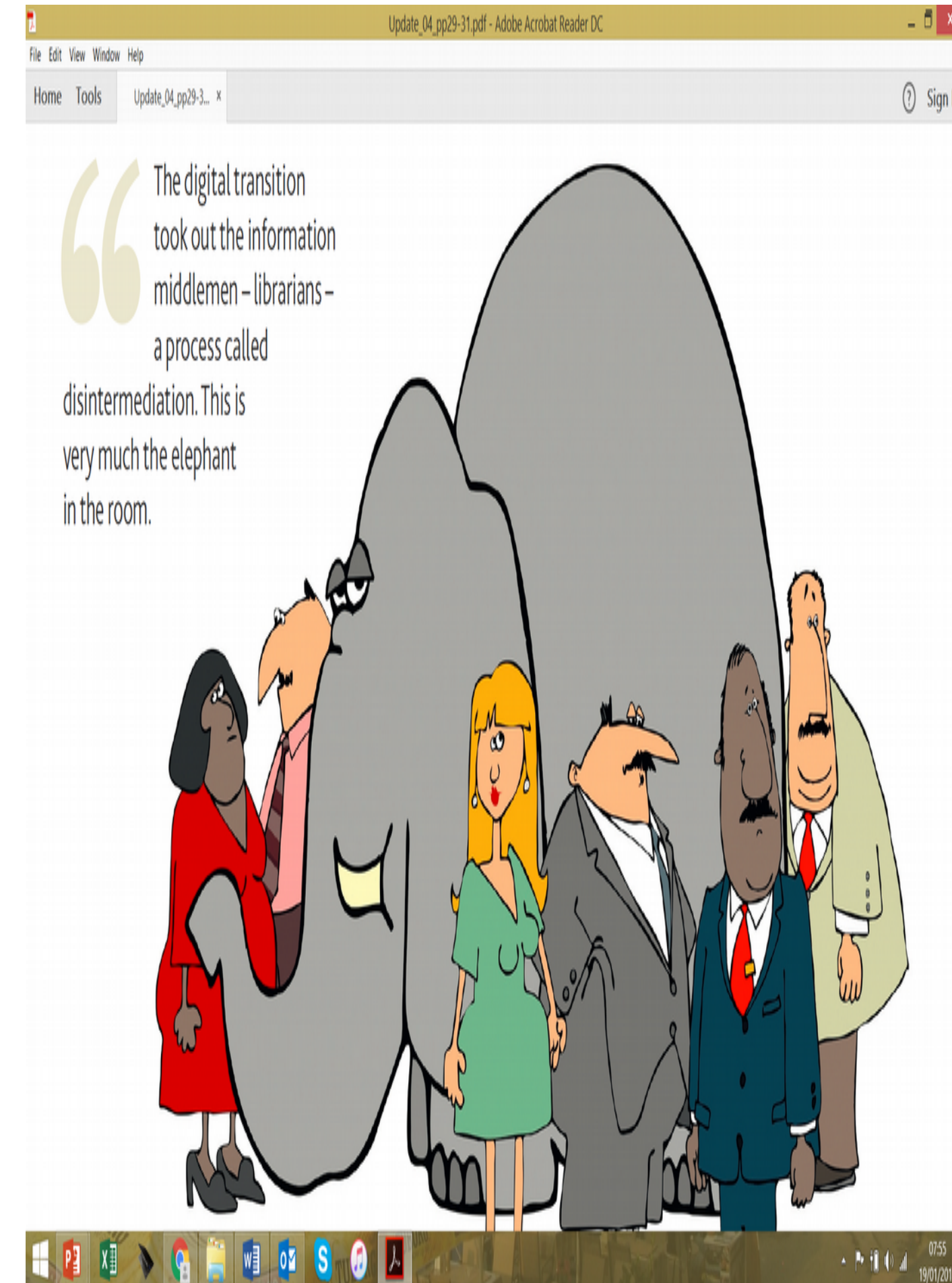
First transition, from physical to digital, transformed the way we seek, read, trust and consume information, but environment where these activities conducted had not changed - still in the library/office, and/or on a device primarily designed for the desk/office bound.

Last year mobile became main platform for accessing the web we are ALL *untethered*. The phone has become the library/archive



Game changer

1. Mobiles meet information needs at time of need, rather than cold store until reach the office etc. Mean more needs are met, but probably not well, but acceptable (standards have dropped).
2. 'Big deals' provide fantastic access to information to privileged few; mobile provides access to masses of information for everyone/anywhere; and, open access increasing the haul (rapidly);
3. Smartphones are social media devices and stride major information domains, informal & formal
4. Intrinsic part of the digital consumer purchasing process – used to search for information prior to purchase, during process itself and to make purchase and shopping behaviour sticks
5. Trust mobiles more than any other information technology (and people)
6. Smaller screens and moving around mean different ways of interacting and this impacts on use.



Basic characteristics of digital information seeking/consuming behaviour

Foundations of digital behaviour already in place (brain rewiring) on which mobile-induced behaviour will build

Hyperactive: love choice and looking. Connected to big fat information pipe 24/7

Bouncers: most people view only 1-2 pages from thousands available; 3 is a lot

Promiscuous: around 40% do not come back

One-shots abound: one visit, one page

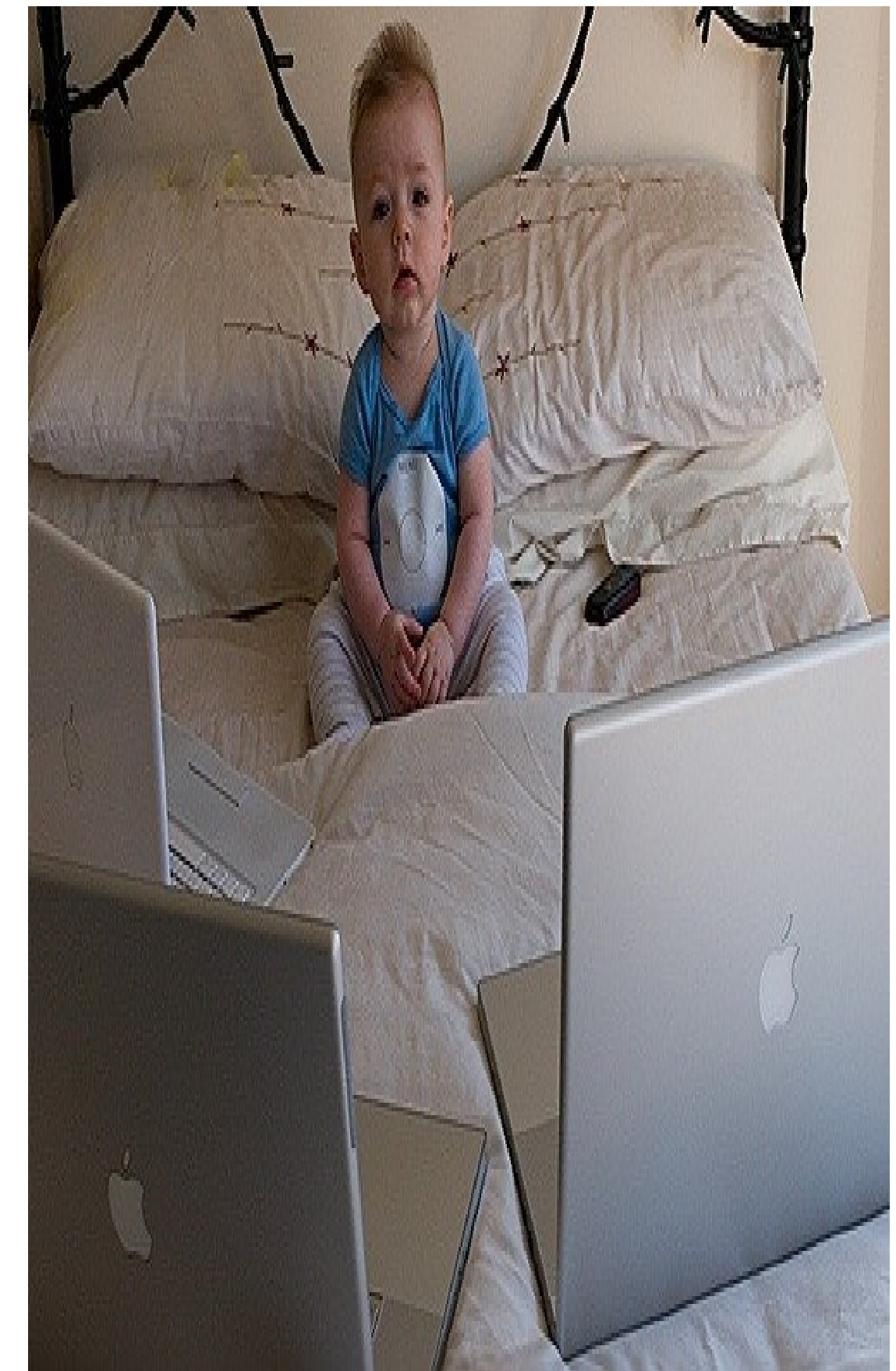
Because:

- Search engine searching (lists) and links (enjoined to go elsewhere)
- Massive and changing choice
- So much rubbish out there
- Poor retrieval skills (2.2 words per query; first page up on Google)
- Forget: leave memories in cyberspace; adds to 'churn' rate
- Direct result of end-user checking
- Multi-tasking - more pleasurable doing several things at once



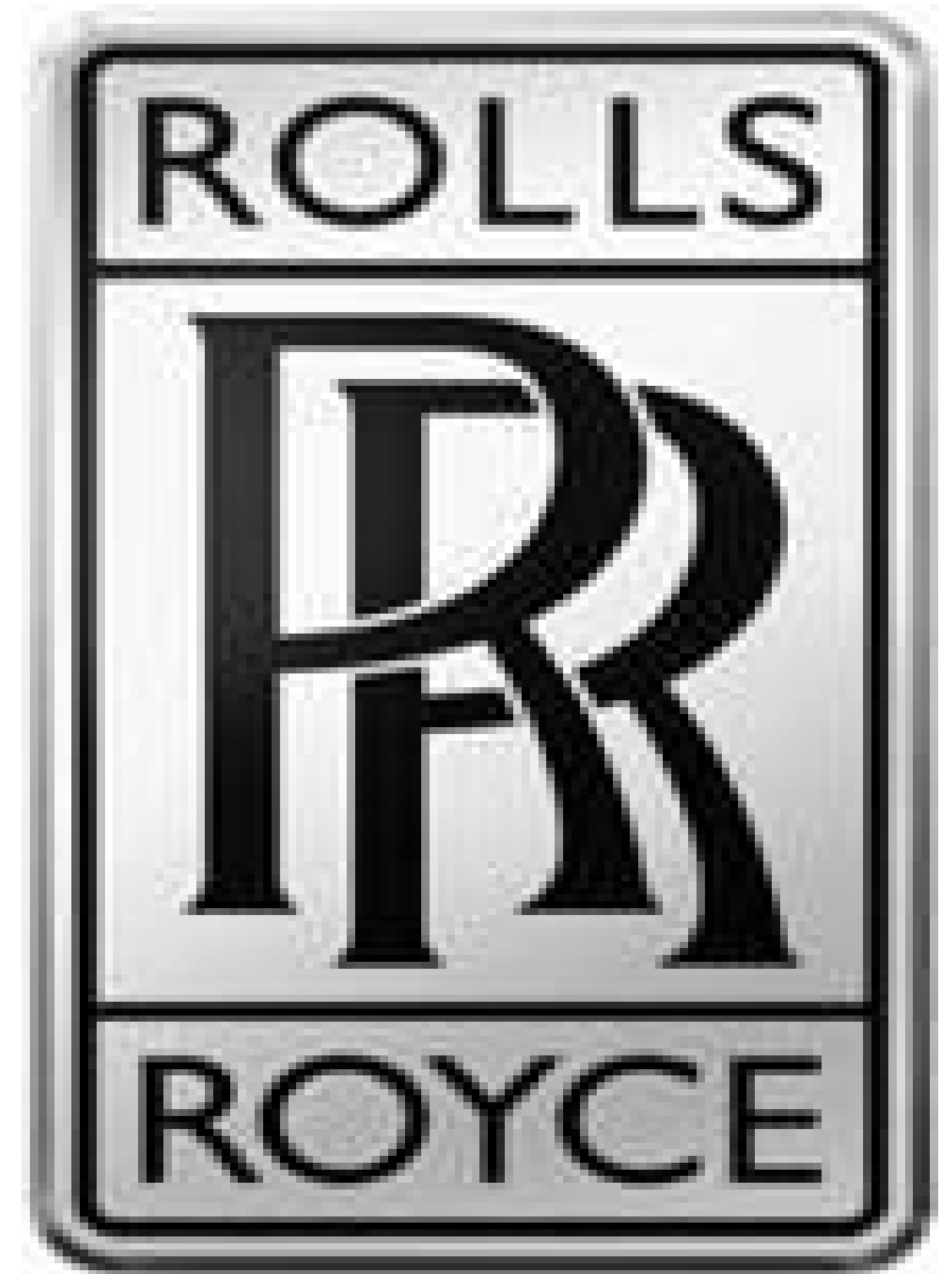
Horizontal has replaced the vertical, reading is 'out' and fast view 'in'

- People '**skitter**' (moving rapidly along a surface, with frequent light contacts or changes of direction). Power browse.
- **Nobody does much reading** or not what is traditionally thought to be reading (reading whole documents). A 'deep' read can mean 10-15% of a doc.
 - People often go online to **avoid** reading; prefer the visual (Europeana)
 - Only a few minutes spent on a visit; **15 minutes is a very long time**;
 - Shorter articles/doc have **much** better chance of being used
 - Abstracts never been so popular (charge for them, give away PDFs)
- **Fast information.** As in life (Information) snack/bite has replaced the three course meal (whole document)
- Conditioned by emailing, text messaging, tweeting and PowerPoint to like fast shots of information. Mobiles, of course, the ultimate **take-away**



Trust and authority up for grabs

- Huge choice, overload, so much churn, no intermediaries to help, and so many players. Means responsibility & authority impossible to establish in cyberspace. Don't even know whose information it is!
- So how to choose? First ones up, by cross-comparison, look at a review, ask a friend via Facebook or twitter (OK assuming they know) or trust Google
- Historically trust signified by 'established x years'; probably works the opposite way now
- Also, what you think is a trusted brand is not necessarily what other people think. Younger they are less likely to recognise traditional brands. Tesco!

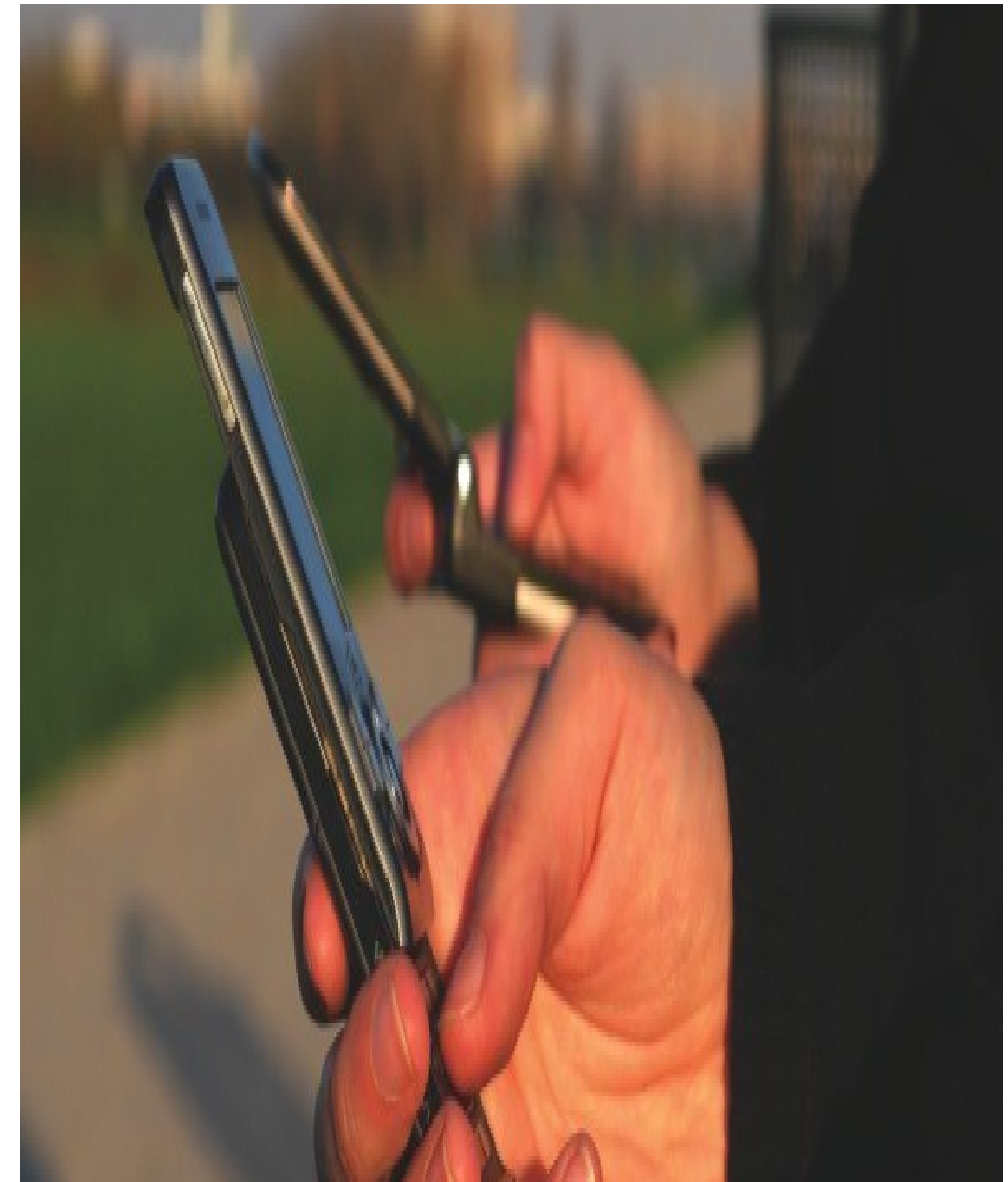


Now what then of mobile behavior on top of this?



Key characteristics

- Ask a **young person** about a library and they will point to their mobile phone
- Could not have come further from the initial concept – no walls, no desks, no queuing and no intermediation
- **Information 'lite.** Visits from mobiles *much less* interactive: *fewer* records/pages viewed, *fewer* searches conducted; *less* time spent on a visit.' Very little research on show. Two minutes a long time.
- Use peaks at nights and weekends; that from desktops on Wednesdays and late afternoon. Searching and reading has moved into the **social** space
- So searching/reading has become faster, lighter, more abbreviated and less thoughtful and precise



Final reflections

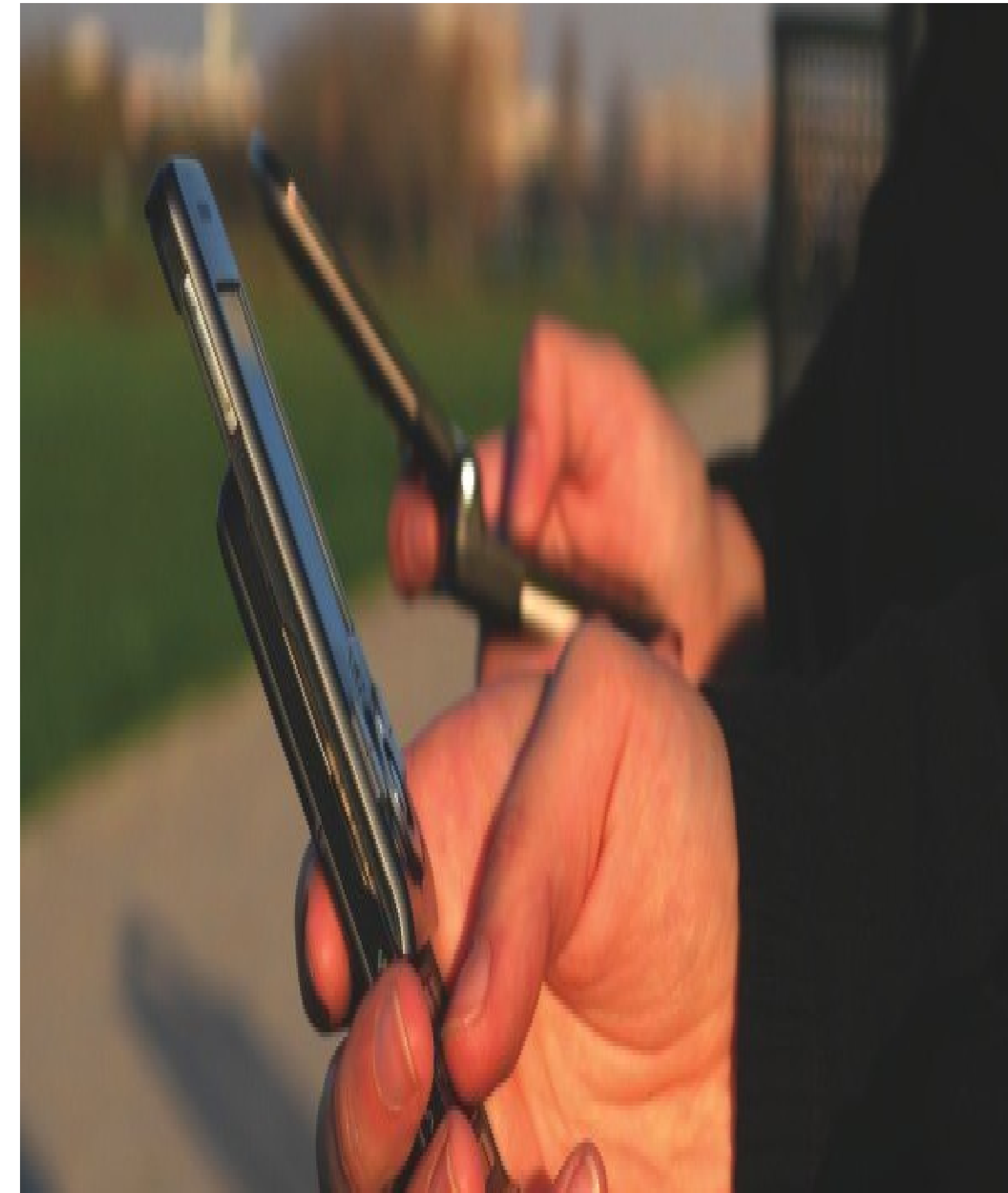
Not just behavioural changes:

- neurologists & cognitive psychologists tell us:
- digital behaviour changes pattern of connections in brain and young brains rewire quickly
- brain gets endorphin rush for finding (but not) consuming information. Skittering could impact negatively on established skills as chips away at capacity to concentrate & contemplate
- memory is shrinking as a result of over reliance on Google and digital consumption leaves less of an imprint on the mind

Take all this with the behaviour we have described and...

Propensity to rush, rely on point-and-click, first-up-on-Google answers, along with unwillingness to wrestle with uncertainties and an inability to evaluate information, could keep us stuck on surface of 'information age'

... and it might be making us stupid



Challenges for information professionals

- Mobile constitutes another MASSIVE round of disintermediation and migration to the digital space. Perception that library/archive's information universe has shrunk as a result of everyone else's being massively expanded. Researchers' information horizons once bound by library/archive, but not anymore. Its **borderless**
- Libraries/collections perceived as *incomplete* sources of information and researchers increasingly less likely to trust intermediaries to make the critical decisions on what is and what is not in the walled garden on their behalf.
- Today everyone is a skittering researcher and everything an archive so how do you deal with that, remembering the born digital are only just beginning to flex their muscles?

