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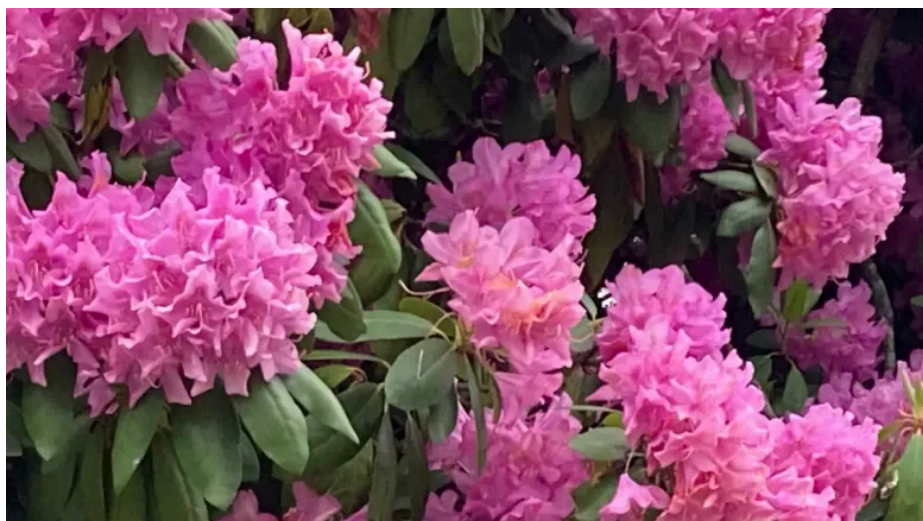
HOT TOPICS SEPTEMBER 3, 2025 | EMERGENCY WATER SHUT OFF ON BRACE AVENUE, CABOT STREET

SEARCH ...

HOME COLUMNS

School is on the way. A video with some tips on handling information tsunami.

TOPICS: Column Come Sunday Morning



POSTED BY: [DAVID FORTIER](#) AUGUST 24, 2025

by David Fortier | Aug. 24, 2025 |

Come Sunday morning, it's time to think school. In Bristol, students start on Wednesday, Aug. 28. Teachers will have been prepping for a few days. Here, we have two members of the family who teach. And there are the grandkids, three of whom are heading to classrooms.



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Having taught for years, and while now retired, my body and brain still rev up around this time. Already, I have had two “back-to-school” dreams—my body and brain’s way of preparing me for what’s coming—even though I will not be actually heading to any classroom.

What I will be doing soon, as part of our TBE mission, is to work with students at the Bristol Boys and Girls Club on learning about the news and creating podcasts. We will begin soon, and I will keep you apprised of our progress. The program is being made possible with a Main Street Community Foundation grant.

Over the summer, I have written a few pieces about how technology not only improves our lives but how it also changes us. One of the ways the internet, social media, the media and now AI have accelerated “change” is by transforming the flow of information from a trickling stream to an unforgiving massive tsunami erupting over our daily lives.

In the past, I have shared podcasts and books and articles that I have been reading. In this column and future ones, I will focus a little more on one or two—to reduce the tsunami effect. It is my tiny contribution.

So, here is one to focus on, and only one.

The video, “How to safeguard your mind in the age of junk information,” featuring professor of history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and popular science writer Yuval Noah Harari. Harari authored “Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind” and mostly recently “Nexus: A Brief History of Information from the Stone Age to AI.”

The video starts with this, “If humans are so smart, why are we so stupid?” In 13 minutes and 22 seconds, he covers the history of information and its distribution, from Roman and Chinese emperors to the use of A.I.

“Whenever a new technology is invented, it changes all the social and economic and political structures, and it often does so in a non-deterministic way,” he says in mapping out this territory through today with its ability to control vast populations through the use of 24/7 surveillance and, critically, the technology to analyze this information quickly.

People have always had private time, time off, Harari says, “Until the rise of A.I., even the most totalitarian regimes, like the Soviet Union, they could not monitor, they could not surveil everybody all the time.”

Previously, humans existed in a world where we functioned on “organic networks based on our organic brains. We run by cycles. Sometimes it’s day, sometimes it’s night. There is winter and summer. There is growth and decay.”

“Now we see the rise of a new type of information network which is inorganic, which is based on AI,” he says. “It need not have any breaks. There are always on

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He goes on to explain the effect of AI on the financial world, which once abided by this organic structure. Wall Street, for instance, closes every day and on the weekends. It is conceivable, he says, inorganic and an incorporated AI might even take advantage of its ability to operate 24/7 to become the richest person in the United States. (Corporations are considered persons, after all.)

“Corporations open bank accounts,” he says, “why can’t the AI do it? It’s a corporation. It can earn money and then it takes its money and invests it. And because it’s so good at making investment decisions, it earned billions and billions.”

His answer to this 24/7 inorganic creation? “What we need is living institutions staffed by the best human talent and with access to the best technology that will be able to identify and react to dangers and threats as they arise. So I’m not talking about rigid regulation in advance, I’m talking about the need for new institutions because you can never rely on just, you know, the letter of the law or on a charismatic individual, some genius to do it. In history, humans again and again encounter these problems and it always goes back to the same solution, institutions.”

Institutions, he says, healthy ones at least, have self-correcting mechanisms. This is at the heart of democratic societies: “A self-correcting mechanism is a mechanism that allows an entity to identify and correct its own mistakes. You don’t have to rely on the environment, on something out there to correct your mistakes. You can correct your own mistakes. This is a basic feature of any functioning organism. Like how does a child learn to walk? Mostly it’s self-correction. This goes all the way to entire countries. This is the heart of democratic systems.”

Elections are self-correcting mechanisms, he says. “...let’s try your policies. After some time, if you think you made a mistake, this was the wrong policy, this was the wrong party, there are another round of elections, let’s try something else this time.”

It is no surprise nor is it a coincidence, he says, that democratic conversation is breaking down across the globe “because algorithms are hijacking it.”

His recommendation includes banning bots unless they identify themselves. More important, his most significant recommendation is for people to go on information diets, the same way people go on food diets.

“Information is the food of the mind. More information isn’t always good for you. It’s actually good to, from time to time, take time for information fasts. When we don’t put anything more in, we just digest and detoxify. And similarly, we should watch the quality of the information we feed our mind. If we feed our mind with all this junk information full of greed and hate and fear, we will have sick minds.

The video is available by clicking [here](#). A transcript is available [here](#).

And I would be remiss if I did not mention my son, Greg, who made it to the Pokemon Go championships in Anaheim, Calif. What seems like ages ago, Greg took me for a walk around Bristol and explained Pokemon. Here is a link to that story: [“Pokemon Go lights up Memorial Boulevard.”](#)

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