

Opinion: Machines can't do everything

By David Brooks, New York Times

We're clearly heading into an age of brilliant technology. Computers are already impressively good at guiding driverless cars and beating humans at chess and Jeopardy. As Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology point out in their book "The Second Machine Age," computers are increasingly going to be able to perform important parts of even mostly cognitive jobs, like picking stocks, diagnosing diseases and granting parole.



David Brooks

As this happens, certain mental skills will become less valuable because computers will take over. Having a great memory will probably be less valuable. Being able to be a straight-A student will be less valuable – gathering masses of information and regurgitating it back on tests. So will being able to do any mental activity that involves following a set of rules.

But what human skills will be more valuable?

In the news business, some of those skills are already evident. Technology has rewarded sprinters (people who can recognize and alertly post a message on Twitter about some interesting immediate event) and marathoners (people who can

write large conceptual stories), but it has hurt middle-distance runners (people who write 800-word summaries of yesterday's news conference). Technology has rewarded graphic artists who can visualize data, but it has punished those who can't turn written reporting into video presentations.

Read the whole story