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Ten superpowers the Internet gave us

by [Alex Bowyer \(/about#team\)](#) (@[alexbfree](#) (<http://twitter.com/alexbfree>)) on April 18th, 2010



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Welcome, Human 2.0.

We may not realize it, but the Internet has given us superhuman abilities. We acquire new capabilities each year, and technology lets us to do things that would have seemed impossible 30 years ago.

Here are ten superpowers that you and I have today:

1. I speak all languages.

Google translate

Translation

[Translated Search](#)

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Hear your words spoken in a foreign language

Translate text, webpages and documents

Enter text or a webpage URL, or [upload a document](#).

I am Human 2.0, and I can communicate with you in your own language

Translate from: Translate
 Translate into:

English to German translation

Ich bin Human 2.0, und ich kann mit Ihnen in Ihrer eigenen Sprache kommunizieren

<http://translate.google.com/>

Having a common language is no longer a requirement for communication.

Type something into [Google Translate](http://translate.google.com/), select a language, and there's your translation. In some languages you can even hear your words read aloud. Google Chrome now automatically translates foreign language sites as you visit them, giving you access to previously unavailable knowledge. It's not perfect yet, but it's good enough.

You can even communicate in real-time with speakers of other languages, thanks to [IBM](http://www-01.ibm.com/software/pervasive/ws_translation_server/) and [Google](http://googlesystem.blogspot.com/2007/12/translation-service-for-google-talk.html) (<http://googlesystem.blogspot.com/2007/12/translation-service-for-google-talk.html>). The BBC recently ran [an experiment](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/8575526.stm) (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/8575526.stm>), where speakers of seven different languages successfully debated a number of global issues without concern for language.

2. I move objects around the world in seconds.

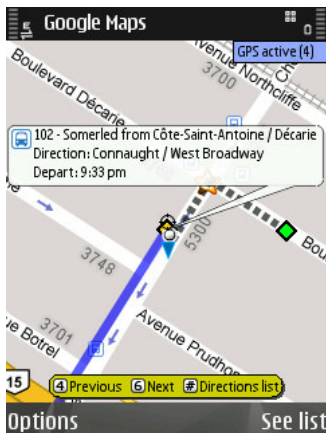
Size doesn't matter in the digital world.

Today, many everyday objects can be reduced to 1's and 0's and relayed across the planet in a fraction of the time and cost of a physical transfer. They can be returned to the physical world at their destination by printing or CD burning. TV shows, manuals, scribbled notes, family photos, music CDs; just some of the [possessions I digitized](#)

(<http://alexbowyer.blogspot.com/2009/01/digital-downsizing.html>) when emigrating to Canada to save on transport costs.

Digitizing is limited to recorded media today, but new **3D printers** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3D_printing) will soon let us digitize and recreate physical objects, even the kitchen sink! The video above by Adrian Bowyer (no relation) gives a glimpse of what's to come – a factory for every home.

3. I always know the fastest route, even if I'm lost.



(<http://www.google.com/mobile/maps/index.html>)! can get where I want to go sooner, and without thinking.

Montréal has excellent public transport. But I can't know every bus route, stop location or service time. Fortunately, thanks to my **N95** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nokia_N95#N95_8GB_28N95-2.29) and **Google Maps for Mobile** (<http://www.google.com/mobile/maps/index.html>), I don't have to.

Wherever I am, wherever I want to go, I can quickly find out which way to walk, what service to get, where to change, and what time I will arrive.

To do this on your own, you'd need to carry a stack of timetables, maps and phone books, and then cross-reference them on the move – a daunting prospect for even the most organized person (which I am not!). All this complexity has been reduced to a simple search.

4. I am omniscient.



(http://www.flickr.com/photos/question_everything/1460025318/)

We can now instantly recall more information than ever before in human history.

The traditional "pub quiz" is endangered. Why? Because no matter how obscure the question, almost all general human knowledge is online, instantly accessible to anyone on their phone.

Ask me any question, and I can find an answer in less than a minute via **Google** (<http://www.google.com/>), **IMDB** (<http://www.imdb.com/>) or **Wikipedia** (<http://en.wikipedia.org/>). I can even identify a song that's playing with **Shazam** (<http://www.shazam.com/>).

But this power has a dark side; we sacrifice accuracy for speed. We mustn't forget the art of researching beyond what is published online, or how to discriminate between fact and opinion.

5. I speak to the world.



(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/roland/54381130/>) *Information flows freely, with no respect for hierarchy or authority.*

In the Middle Ages, only the church and state could communicate nationally – by having their scribes copy manuscripts. The printing press spread knowledge wider via books and later newspapers, and publishing control shifted to media moguls and publishing giants.

The Internet levels the playing field, and puts us in control, putting those same publishing empires under threat.

Now, anyone can put up **their own website** (<http://sites.google.com/>), **publish their own e-book** (<http://www.lulu.com/>), or **send a message to anyone that wants to listen** (<http://www.twitter.com/>), without leaving home or spending money. People now connect and interact anywhere, **in** (<http://www.power2010.org.uk/about/about-power-2010>) **many** (<http://www.craigslist.com/>) **new** (<http://www.chatroulette.com/>) **ways** (<http://www.fiverr.com/>). The Internet is transforming society once again, perhaps even more than the printing press or the written word did.

6. I remember everything.

(<http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/cambridge/projects/sensecam/>) *Outsourcing your memory frees your mind to focus on the moment and get more done, be it work or pleasure.*

You can capture your entire life digitally. Some people already do, like **Gordon Bell** (<http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/projects/mylifebits/>) and **Sunil Vemuri** (<http://web.media.mit.edu/~vemuri/>) (who we interview on a forthcoming podcast). Digital cameras bring the cost per photo close to zero. Wearable cameras like **SenseCam** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsoft_SenseCam) allow your entire experience to be captured and indexed. We can capture thoughts too with **Regall** (<http://www.regall.com/>), **Evernote**



(<http://www.evernote.com/>), [Remember The Milk](http://www.rememberthemilk.com/) (<http://www.rememberthemilk.com/>), or just an [iPod](http://www.apple.com/iphone/iphone-3gs/voice-memos.html) (<http://www.apple.com/iphone/iphone-3gs/voice-memos.html>).

Why would you want to do capture everything? [Whole books](http://totalrecallbook.com/) (<http://totalrecallbook.com/>) have been written about this – but advantages include better decision making, uncovering subconscious behaviours, improving your health, and becoming more reliable.

7. I talk to my friends anywhere, any time.



(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/davidden/372310312/>) *Location doesn't matter any more. We needn't both be present to communicate.*

Today, we have a plethora of communication options. Mobile phones, email, [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/) (<http://www.facebook.com/>), [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/) (<http://www.twitter.com/>), [Skype](http://www.skype.com/) (<http://www.skype.com/>), [Oovoo](http://www.oovoo.com/) (<http://www.oovoo.com/>), and hundreds more services, let us talk with our friends no matter where they are, or where we are.

Gone are the days of calling someone's house to contact them. With mobile phones we make fluid plans that can change at the last minute. Thanks to voicemail, SMS and email, we can leave messages for our friends when they're unavailable.

We can communicate online, in groups with participants scattered across the globe. We travel and maintain relationships. You can even find out where your friends are, or will be, using services like [Dopplr](http://www.dopplr.com/) (<http://www.dopplr.com/>) or [Foursquare](http://www.foursquare.com/) (<http://www.foursquare.com/>) – and alter

your plans to coincide so you can meet up.

8. I watch the world.

Cellphones and webcams are my eyes and ears.

Not long ago, all we learnt about the world came from newspapers and TV. Now that people can connect directly, we no longer need the media to inform us. Major news stories [break on Twitter](http://twitter.com/jkrums/status/1121915133) (<http://twitter.com/jkrums/status/1121915133>) or [spread virally](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lp0IWv8QZY) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lp0IWv8QZY>) in minutes. News travels on the basis of interest alone. We are entering the age of the citizen journalist.

But you can find more than just news now. You can listen to local [radio stations from other countries](http://www.radiotoplist.com/radio%20stations) (<http://www.radiotoplist.com/radio%20stations>). You can view live webcams from around the world ([ChumbySpy](http://www.chumby.com/guide/widget/ChumbySpy) (<http://www.chumby.com/guide/widget/ChumbySpy>), shown above), assess the mood of [people in a given country](http://techie-buzz.com/social-networking/local-trends-for-cities-countries-on-twitter.html) (<http://techie-buzz.com/social-networking/local-trends-for-cities-countries-on-twitter.html>) or [globally](http://twistori.com/) (<http://twistori.com/>). You can observe [local communities from afar](http://www.upmystreet.com/local/edinburgh.html) (<http://www.upmystreet.com/local/edinburgh.html>) or see who is [updating Wikipedia around the world](http://www.jkozma.net/wpv/index.html) (<http://www.jkozma.net/wpv/index.html>) in real time.

9. I explore the world from my armchair.



(<http://maps.google.com/maps?>

[f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&geocode=&q=bondi+beach,+nsw+australia&sll=41.355056,-72.092478&sspn=0.00331,0.006968&ie=UTF8&hq=&hnear=Bondi+Beach+NSW,+Australia&ll=-33.89134,151.2](http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&geocode=&q=bondi+beach,+nsw+australia&sll=41.355056,-72.092478&sspn=0.00331,0.006968&ie=UTF8&hq=&hnear=Bondi+Beach+NSW,+Australia&ll=-33.89134,151.2)

When I travel digitally, the world is my oyster.

They say that travel broadens the mind. But don't worry if it's not practical, you can now explore parts of the world you've never been to, from your own computer.

You can [zoom in on any part of the planet](http://earth.google.com/) (<http://earth.google.com/>) and find tropical beaches, vast canyons, or [unusual sights](http://www.googleearthcoolplaces.com) (<http://www.googleearthcoolplaces.com>). You can [walk the streets of cities in far-flung corners of the world](http://maps.google.ca/maps?f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&q=raffles&ll=1.295241,103.85443&sspn=0.003432,0.005477&ie=UTF8&radius=0.19&split=1&rq=1&ev=zi&hq=raffles&hnear=&ll=1.295171,103.853406&spn=0.0007521) (http://maps.google.ca/maps?f=q&source=s_q&hl=en&q=raffles&ll=1.295241,103.85443&sspn=0.003432,0.005477&ie=UTF8&radius=0.19&split=1&rq=1&ev=zi&hq=raffles&hnear=&ll=1.295171,103.853406&spn=0.0007521) or find videos that put you [right in the heart of a place](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XQGG91R6M) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XQGG91R6M>). You can go shopping in a [virtual Oxford Street](http://www.nearglobal.com) (<http://www.nearglobal.com>), or [plan adventure trips before you buy in 3D](http://www.exodus.co.uk/holidays/tpp/video) (<http://www.exodus.co.uk/holidays/tpp/video>).

[New technology from Microsoft](http://www.ted.com/talks/blaise_aguera.html) (http://www.ted.com/talks/blaise_aguera.html) shows that it will soon be possible to jump from static street view images into live video recordings transmitted by citizens around the world.

10. I exist online, 24/7.



(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jerrycooke/3171393927/>)

Online, we never sleep.

We used to think the web was like a magazine. Now we realize it is much more than that, it is a place to live.

We each have our own corners of the web now – blogs, homepages and social profiles. They act as our proxy, delivering our photos, ideas and persona to passing surfers while we sleep. Virtual worlds from Second Life to World of Warcraft allow us to create whole new identities, avatars that exist in cyberspace, separate from us.

We can send questions into the ether using services like [Aardvark](http://www.vark.com/) (<http://www.vark.com/>), [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/) (<http://www.twitter.com/>) or [Google Groups](http://groups.google.com/) (<http://groups.google.com/>), and find an answer awaiting us when we awake. [New “agent” software](http://www.human20.com/why-you-should-let-your-computer-spy-on-you/) (<http://www.human20.com/why-you-should-let-your-computer-spy-on-you/>) acts on our behalf, organizing our data, cross-posting links or automatically handling enquiries without us having to lift a finger. The Internet is part of us.

I am Human 2.0, and these are my superpowers.

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- [Post to Delicious](http://www.shareaholic.com/api/share/?title=Ten+superpowers+the+Internet+gave+us&link=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.human20.com%2Ften-superpowers-the-internet-gave-us%2F¬es=&short_link=&shortener=bittly&shortener_key=rednodbitcurrent%2525257CR_3f99b94e3922da8ee76fb8e0c5d63ab9&v=1&apitype=1&apikey=8afa39428933be41f8afdb8e) (http://www.shareaholic.com/api/share/?title=Ten+superpowers+the+Internet+gave+us&link=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.human20.com%2Ften-superpowers-the-internet-gave-us%2F¬es=&short_link=&shortener=bittly&shortener_key=rednodbitcurrent%2525257CR_3f99b94e3922da8ee76fb8e0c5d63ab9&v=1&apitype=1&apikey=8afa39428933be41f8afdb8e)

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[...] 2.0 is a person, imbued with superpowers that let him learn, play, and love in new ways. It's also a society, rethinking how to vote, [...]

2. [To translate the world, just photograph it | Human 2.0](http://www.human20.com/to-translate-the-world-just-photograph-it/) (<http://www.human20.com/to-translate-the-world-just-photograph-it/>)
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[...] wrote recently about our ability to speak all languages. It seems that this power just got even greater, thanks to a new mobile application from Google. [...]

3. [“Hyper-definition” Cape Town images allow World Cup fans to take a virtual tour | Human 2.0](http://www.human20.com/hyper-definition-image-of-cape-town/) (<http://www.human20.com/hyper-definition-image-of-cape-town/>)
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[...] week the FIFA World Cup kicks off in South Africa. We've written previously about virtual tourism, the idea that you can explore a place before you go ever physically go [...]

4. [We Could Be Heroes](http://sarah-morqan.com/2010/09/09/superheroes/) (<http://sarah-morqan.com/2010/09/09/superheroes/>)
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[...] This article says that we have superpowers – that the internet has given us super-human abilities. But even if so, superheroes had flaws. Superman had kryptonite... Spiderman was kind of a dork... Wolverine had those tragic sideburns. My point is, what are our flaws? Have our newly acquired superpowers made us forget our inadequacies, at our own peril? [...]

5. [Behavioral Analysis and the Age of Metrics | Human 2.0](http://www.human20.com/behavioral-analysis-and-the-age-of-metrics/) (<http://www.human20.com/behavioral-analysis-and-the-age-of-metrics/>)
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[...] Life visualizations will empower us to make better decisions. The only caveat: As we use this new power to reduce many decisions to equations, we'll need to be careful not to sideline those [...]

6. [Tweets that mention Ten superpowers the Internet gave us | Human 2.0 -- Topsy.com](http://topsy.com/trackback?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.human20.com%2Ften-superpowers-the-internet-gave-us%2F%23more-1871%3Futm_source%3Dtwitterfeed%26utm_medium%3Dtwitter&utm_source=pingback&utm_campaign) (http://topsy.com/trackback?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.human20.com%2Ften-superpowers-the-internet-gave-us%2F%23more-1871%3Futm_source%3Dtwitterfeed%26utm_medium%3Dtwitter&utm_source=pingback&utm_campaign)
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