THE
CHALLENGER

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Tech Issue

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Technology in the Classroom

By Lyndi Schiff

Many teachers have different views on what exactly technology adds or detracts in the classroom. There are various types of technology as well; these range from a calculator to a smart board. There are many teachers that utilize these in their classrooms on a daily basis, but some would prefer to go without. This does not even begin to address online homework or online classes. After talking to various teachers, it is obvious that there is no one right answer when it comes to technology in the classroom. Rather, each teacher will utilize technology in the way he or she finds best matches the curriculum.

Calculator

Do you remember when a calculator was considered the coolest thing ever? Probably not, since the first calculator was invented in the early 1900s. The pocket ones became popular in the 1970s. So why do I mention this? I took a class at Harper, Math 130, where the calculator was not permitted in class. There is a very good reason for this, which is because we are losing the basics. This class teaches math to students in the education program who will be our future math teachers. The instructor believed that in order to teach the basics we needed to know how to calculate the basics ourselves. At first, most of the students were skeptical to not have our calculators in class. The work seemed so much more difficult. It was not until the end of the semester that students realized how far we were from knowing the basics of math. All of our homework became so much easier, even without a calculator, because we had finally mastered the basics. It became obvious that sometimes technology is not good in the classroom.

Alphasmart

Another concern with technology is that we are forgetting how to write. Handwriting (both print and cursive) is taught in elementary schools. Unfortunately, computers are used to type most major assignments and essays. Children typically write with a pen or pencil for journal-style writing only. I remember that starting in first grade we had alphasmarts. Jen Cecere, my former schoolmate, said, "With the dependence of alphasmarts growing, it's bringing down the importance of penmanship." Alphasmarts were small computer-like machines that had a keyboard and showed three lines of text. Once a student was done typing into an alphasmart they could connect this device to a computer to go back and edit the work and print it. This is a great idea that taught children to use computers at an early age. However, it also had children using penmanship even less. There are now laptops and ipads in some classrooms to help teach children how to type. Kelsey Philipps, a seventh grade student, said, "I love that my [Literature] class gave us ipads. Class is so much more fun!" It is unfortunate that we are sacrificing the basic skills of penmanship to incorporate fun technology. The best part of talking to Kelsey was I followed up with her a month after I got this quote and she had a new story for me. "I hate my ipad! The class is so much more difficult with the ipad technology breaking down all time." I found this entertaining since it proves that while technology is helpful, it can also be difficult.


Ipad

Computers not only inhibit penmanship and mathematics, but also spelling and grammar. Almost all computers now have spelling and grammar check. Harper student Cheryl Gistenson stated, "My computer makes a noise when I spell something wrong and automatically corrects it for me. I want to know how to spell it right so I respell it on my own until it is right." I am the opposite of Cheryl; I let my spell check and grammar check work its magic. I trust my computer to get it right. This might be part of the reason I'm not an English major anymore! On occasion, I will use my MLA handbook to learn the rules, but most college students, myself included, find it much easier to let the computer do the work for us and save the time. I suppose my system isn't completely reliable. In the process of writing this article, I trusted my computer that we are "loosing" basic skills, but human editors caught the mistake.

MLA Handbook

vs.

ABC ✓
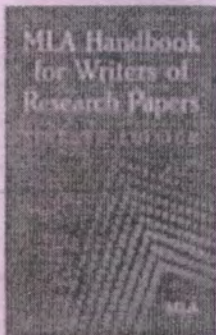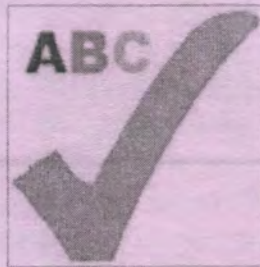
Spelling and Grammar Check

This is not to say that laptops and computers are bad things. They have served as great technology and help students in classes. The main benefit to students is the ability to research so easily with the internet. I don't enjoy going to the library and getting dust in the face when grabbing an old book of facts. Well, actually I do, but friends of mine say, "That's weird. Why aren't you just using google?" Most people enjoy the ease and efficiency of the internet.
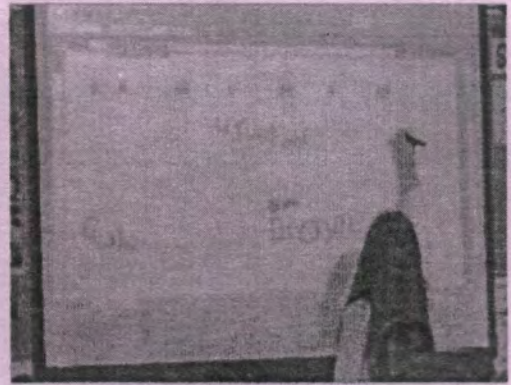
Smart Board

Another great aspect of computers in the classroom is smart boards. Shirley Alonzo, a teacher at Macarthur, told me, "I miss my smart board. It made interactive learning and class participation much easier." This is completely understandable; smart boards allow students to go up and work on an electronic board connected to a computer, while the whole class can see what they are doing. This is a real upgrade from overheads and whiteboards. Students enjoy all of the colors and game activities that smart boards allow them to share with their class.

There are also online assignments and classes. I've never taken an online class, but I have taken a class with online components. I thought class was a waste of time, and I wished I had not bought the textbook. The companion disk that came with the textbook had an e-book on it. Also, all of the homework was online. It was even worse that when I signed up for the class the course description said nothing about the class having all online assignments. I truly felt cheated of my time and money for this particular class. I have heard that some online classes are very beneficial since they allow you to work from home and most of the time at your own pace. It is unfortunate that I had such a horrible experience and I hope no one else suffers through a technology-based class that they weren't expecting to take.

Hopefully, you are enjoying this article in print. The Challenger does not use any technology to publish online. Who knows if this is good or bad. You decide!

Social Media Impating Our Daily Lives

By Lyndi Schiff

4:00 a.m. My phone alarm wakes me up. Before I even get out of bed, I check my texts, then my e-mail, then my Facebook. Then I can begin my day. Social media plays a huge role in many lives already. This started with the invention of the internet and e-mail. Now, there is not anything you cannot do online. Online we make friends, we date, we discuss, and we read. You name it; it can be done online. It makes you wonder if we're loosing touch with life outside of our computers.

When it comes to my computer, it's difficult for me to part with it. Just this week I found out my brother was using my computer behind my back because he left his Facebook page open on it. An evil voice made me write, "Reasons not to use my sister's computer without permission. 1. She will find it and realize I left Facebook open. 2. She will tell everyone that it is amazing that I have a girlfriend. Please explain (tagged his girlfriend in the status)." Let's just say, I don't think he'll disrespect my computer again, and if he does, the computer now password protects itself thirty minutes after it goes into idle.

So how does my story apply to all the technology-driven social functions? Well, I could have just called my brother and been like, "Hey you're a jerk. Next time you want to borrow my computer, ask, or at least put it away." But it was so much sweeter to get social revenge on him, especially since it was online, so all of his friends could see and since he was at work for another four to five hours, he was defenseless to delete the post.


We rely on the Internet for so many things now that even our vocabulary has changed. Rather than saying, "I'm going to look something up online", we now say, "I'll Google it!" Rather than saying, "I'll send you a letter, note, or invitation" we say, "I'll e-mail you" or "I'll Facebook it!" When did Google and Facebook become verbs? My favorite is for inviting people to any number of occasions where a decent size group of people is going. We don't invite people in person, but we will tell them, "You should check the event's page." It seems that we are so lazy that we can't figure out when we're meeting with our friends except for checking an invite on Facebook.

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The is just for the friends we actually know. What about all of our Facebook friends that we have either never met or rarely see anymore? Why are we friends with these people on Facebook? The best answer I could find is that there isn't one. But, I also found a solution invented by Jimmy Kimmel. He has decided that November 17 every year you should go through your friends list and delete anyone who isn't really your friend. It is called National Unfriend Day and it began in 2010. If you want a good laugh or find National Unfreind day interesting, YouTube National Unfriend Day. There I go now using vocabulary only found in social media.
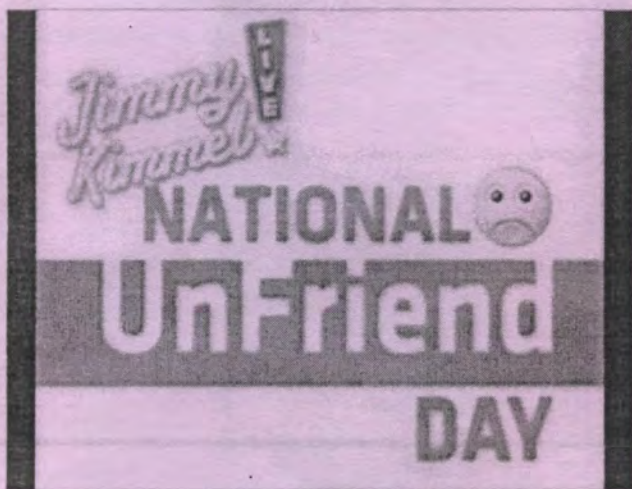
Another new media trend is online dating. Maybe this would not be as popular if people would get out from behind their computers and get out a little. I am not knocking online dating because I know for many people it has its benefits and conveniences. However, if you are doing online dating, you may want to avoid craigslist. I had a friend who would go on craigslist as if it were a free dating site. He invited one woman to his house and this is what he told me the next day: "I'm not sure what that was that I went out with last night, but I'm swearing off craigslist dating from now on." To this I simply responded, "told you so!" The scariest part is he went on another craigslist date only a month later. That is just a horror story I heard from him. I have also seen people who say they met online and have a great relationship.

Another friend of mine has been on a couple of dates using Plenty of Fish. He unfortunately refused to even give me a quote because he is ashamed to be a twenty-two-year-old using a dating website. I even promised he would remain anonymous! Many people use match.com or e-harmony.


Even though I did not meet my boyfriend on a dating site, technology played a large role in how we started dating. The first time he asked me out, he used AIM. He was having a bad day so I wrote, "I owe you a hug." He responded with, "and a date to homecoming." I went with him to the dance. Then about six months later, he decided to "ask" me out. I had just dropped him off at his house and then went home to go to bed. When I got there I got a text message saying, "We are together." Surprisingly, we began dating and the relationship is still going strong nearly five years later. I was curious as to why he asked me out in a text instead of in person, as well as why he did not "ask" me out. He told me that he was too scared that I would say no. Technology was definitely on his side when it came to dating.

I think the most intimidating way social
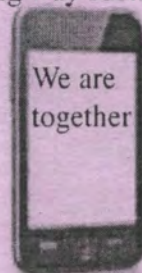
media is being used is in the professional world. It is very easy now to look at an applicant's profile page to determine if he or she would be a good fit for the position, so remember, a picture is worth a thousand words. This is even more terrifying when we consider that many interviews are being done online through services like Skype. Kristen, a friend of mine, was interviewing for her first real job after college. When they told her she had to do a video interview, everyone who she lived with, myself included, were caught off guard. We helped her clean her room and determine where the best place for her computer would be. We finally caught a spot with great lighting and nothing distracting in the background. She later told me that the interview was no joke. She said, "It was just as intense as a normal interview, if not more. I could not get a read on the guy if he liked me for the job or not." It is crazy to realize that soon everything will be available online. That is if there is something we can't find online already.

It is somewhat sad that we can't just go out and meet people the way we used to. Even when

we meet people in class, they are classmates until they accept your friend request on Facebook and then all of a sudden you're best friends with them. What would happen if there was no social network for us? Would we all have no friends? What if there was no Internet browsing? Is it really that difficult to find common interests with people in clubs and activities? Would it be so strenuous to walk up to a person and start a conversation? Finally, how difficult can it be to pick up a book to look something up? I definitely don't follow my own advice here, but I also don't see a problem with doing things the "old fashioned" way. The social media has created a new place for all of us and it is only developing more and more each day.

A Day In The Life of Cheryl

By Cheryl Gistenson

Imagine you step outside on this blustery winter day to grab the morning paper. Still in your slippers, maybe you dart out into the cold and step right into a pile of doggy poop. Now you've got to wash them. You could buy new slippers, but whatever you do, this five minute activity has now turned into a much longer hassle. However, most of you probably laughed when you read this. You likely thought, "No, I just grab my [insert name of expensive, fancy electronic device] and check my apps and the internet." Or possibly even quicker than that, many of these devices give real-time alerts, and you're told when there's important-to-you news.

Not only are these new devices convenient for getting information quickly, but they have also lightened our load. A "phone" is now a computer, an iPod, a radio, and just about anything else you want it to be--as long as there's an app for it. You can listen to audio books and read newspapers and magazines too. You could be at a restaurant when someone sends you an email, and all you would have to do is pull the phone out of your pocket and reply.


Macbook

Phone

Ipod
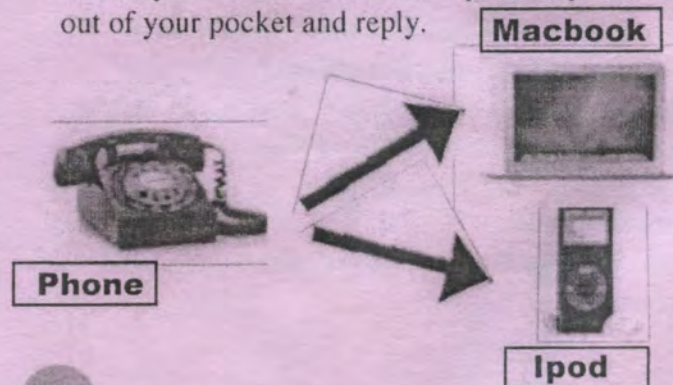
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You could do this, but not me. For a long time, I was stuck in the cellphone stone age. I am completely blind, and it was not until about five years ago that assistive technology became available for all the booming technology advances. In fact, I had the text message function shut off on my phone because my forgetful friends would always send me texts. Even though I had a phone with an iPod and a camera, they weren't much use to me. Another problem I started noticing was that the devices that worked well for me (a simple flip phone with buttons) were becoming harder and harder to find.


Flip Phone

I also hated doing any housework because of the changes in home appliances. Three years ago, my mom bought a new washing machine, and at the age of 22, I had to have my mom start doing my laundry again. Nothing seems to have buttons anymore! The machine had a flat surface with words printed on it. Like with most microwaves and dishwashers these days, you just have to put your finger on the area and push in.
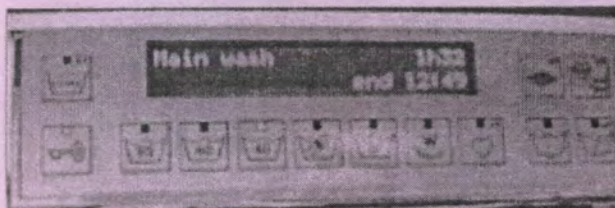
Washing Machine

Aside from not being able to cook my food, wash my clothes, and use the dishwasher, I cannot use most of the features for cable TV, and I have trouble with a lot of DVDs. The On Demand menu and other displays, such as the menu for DVDs, are not always the same format. So, even if I wanted to take the time to memorize things (which I do A LOT) I couldn't. I'm left to flipping through hundreds of stations. Or, in the case of DVDs, I have to sit through the 10 minutes of previews to wait for the movie to automatically start.
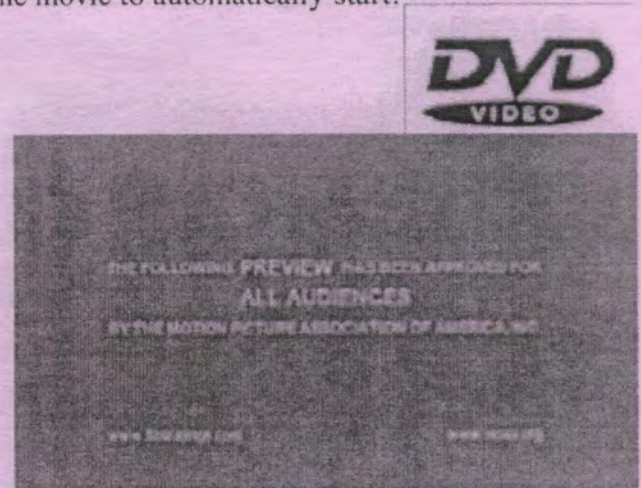
Even though I can complain a lot about today's technology, I also realize there are plenty of advantages for me too. All Apple products are accessible. This means that there is a program on the device that, in my case, attaches a verbal description to everything: text on the screen, including whatever I type; actions, such as my clicking on a link or closing a window; and anything else you can think of. This opens up the world to me! Not only can I do simple things like write a word document, but I can also do anything if there's an app for it. For example, VizWiz allows me to take a picture of something (text, clothing, etc); record a question, such as "What color is this shirt?"; and choose by what method I want it answered (employees, email to someone,etc.). I have an app that reads my paper money, and it has a vibration setting so the whole world doesn't need to know what I'm carrying on me.

Even more crucial than these examples is my laptop; I don't know how I'd be getting through school if it wasn't for the assistive technology. I'm typing this article on my computer, and a stereotypical Midwest-dialect, male voice is repeating each word back to me. When I'm done with it, I'll be able to email it and then go to Facebook and complain about my late hours. (I don't even want to know what time it is, but I could check if I did. 1:46AM)

Camera

Macbook

The point is, while technology has become somewhat of a hassle, I don't know where I'd be without it. I have a talking scale, a talking body and cooking thermometer, and multiple talking alarm clocks. My iPhone has reconnected me to the world. It seems that this generation has forgotten how to talk over the phone, and I felt I had been excommunicated for a few years. But, when I got my iPhone, I was able to use Apple's screen reader program. Now, I not only text, I also use email and a million other helpful apps.

It's amazing to see the explosion of innovation, but it's more exciting to be able to use it. There are so many other forms of helpful programs and equipment for people with all sorts of different medical conditions. Plus, there are so many advantages for the entire world. Think about it next time you answer an email in the park or take a photo of a check in order to deposit it while you're in your kitchen. More importantly though, remember to appreciate nature and human interaction. Look at some ducks at the park instead of your messages, walk to the bank to get some fresh air, and step outside and grab that newspaper!

Iphone

Newspaper