"Left click. Highlight. Right click. Copy. Paste.” I have recited these words at least a dozen times to an older family member who can’t seem to learn how to write in a digital world. Even simple tasks like indenting lines, deleting words, or uploading documents flummox her. I have tried for years to educate her on how to write with mouse and keyboard instead of pen and paper, but for some reason, she can’t grasp how to write using electronic media.

This family member, however, is only one representative of a generation which struggles to use technology to communicate. Sure, writers can still write using pen and paper, but how will that information be disseminated, how quickly, and to whom? Many would argue that in order to transmit writing that is relevant, writers must fluently use the technological resources around them. Such a belief, however, is provincial as it fails to take into account the importance of respecting, preserving, and even appreciating analogue forms of communication. While these methods may be tiresome or outdated, they still have an important role to play in our culture and society.

That said, let me share the story of how I became a “digital writer.” I was fourteen years old and had just used my brand new hotmail account to send an email to a young Italian who I hoped would be my pen-pal. His response came back in less than twenty-four hours, something that would never have been possible had we attempted to communicate the “old fashioned” way. Even though email (and later on, instant messaging) was our preferred means of communication, I have to admit that I relished the occasional handwritten postcard or letter that arrived in my mailbox. There was something so personal, so intimate, and so real about receiving a tactile message from someone who lived in a place I had only seen pictures of.

Today, however, postcards and letters are passé (not to mention expensive) and the days when writers could live peaceful lives without clicking the word “send” are over. What’s more, we live in a world where most people believe that not knowing how to use technology to write is the equivalent to admitting that you don’t know how to drive a car. Considering this, what is the solution for individuals like my family member who just can’t get the knack of writing in our digital age?

One obvious solution is education. We tend to think of young college students when we envision school and writing, but this idea can be...
deceiving. For years, older generations of writers have been taking writing courses or, more commonly, educating themselves on how to improve their digital writing skills. Take my dad, for instance. When last year he decided to create a Mardi Gras group, he realized that he would have to write reminders, minutes, and mission statements using social networking sites like Facebook. With minimal effort, he created a Facebook account and joined the ranks of virtual writers worldwide. Now his problem isn’t digital illiteracy but instead figuring out how to manage the time he spends writing online.

Aside from education, perhaps a better solution (and the one I favor most) is that of accommodation. Okay, so many old-school writers aren’t so savvy with virtual messaging and maybe by the time we get grandma’s handwritten letter it’s obsolete. But who really cares? Catherine Field, a contributor to The New York Times, reminds us that “a good handwritten letter is a creative act, and not just because it is a visual and tactile pleasure. It is a deliberate act of exposure, a form of vulnerability, because handwriting opens a window on the soul in a way that cyber communication can never do.” Ms. Field’s assessment rings true. There really is something beautiful about receiving a message that involves no internet connection, no silicon, and no computer.

So, the next time I sit down with my family member and begin to teach her how to copy and paste, I’m going to stifle that internal groan and remind myself that there’s nothing wrong with being an analogue girl in our perhaps overly-digital world.
Anyone who has taken an introductory Communications course or has read any of Neil Postman’s cautionary tales against television news has heard of Marshall McLuhan’s puzzling catchphrase, “the medium is the metaphor.” He contends that placing content in any particular medium is not innocent, but rather is downright political, shaping the actual content conveyed based upon the biases of various media.

His main example is that news is trivialized by television news shows. Another example is the fast-advancing technology that has come to our humble writing center. Everything from working on student laptops in the center to online sessions has been marked by the influence of medium upon the things we can say. Though there are a multitude of unconscious changes that must occur when the writing center goes technological, the following are some serious “bents” of the media we employ around here.

One example is the online writing consultation. When consulting online, the lack of body language becomes an issue. It makes us unable to utilize attentiveness and movement as we only have audio communication and the text for the client and the consultant to read. This does more than just remove body language from the equation; it also creates a precarious space in terms of tone. While a non-threatening stance might mitigate a harsh tone in an in-person session, in an online environment, these tasks are compromised. There are also the politics of both people holding a cursor rather than a pen. Cursors make changes immediately; pens make notes for later changes. Having the Internet at one’s fingertips to research questions is another benefit. We would have simply talked through the research question before.

These “bents” of media don’t merit throwing away technology; instead, they demand that we pay attention to the biases that our various media promote. By understanding where different messages are best conveyed, we can more strongly use the media available to writing center consultation. When consulting online, the lack of body language becomes an issue. It makes us unable to utilize attentiveness and movement as we only have audio communication and the text for the client and the consultant to read. This does more than just remove body language from the equation; it also creates a precarious space in terms of tone. While a non-threatening stance might mitigate a harsh tone in an in-person session, in an online environment, these tasks are compromised. There are also the politics of both people holding a cursor rather than a pen. Cursors make changes immediately; pens make notes for later changes. Having the Internet at one’s fingertips to research questions is another benefit. We would have simply talked through the research question before.

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J.Lo cried on American Idol last night. That was the major story on both of the 24-hour news networks on the televisions in the café. Images of J.Lo and American Idol contestants were mingled with the colorful commentary of overzealous newscasters. By their excitement, one would think that J.Lo’s tears constituted some sort of national emergency -- a cultural crisis of sorts. The networks alternated stories of J.Lo with stories of Charlie Sheen. Interviews with Sheen had been boiled down to soundbites of the celebrity’s most insane ramblings. He snorts cocaine, sleeps with porn stars, and snubs his nose at nearly every conservative sensibility. A genuine American bad boy. On these networks, I watched television for a while, waiting for the moments of clarity. The moments in which the newscasters suddenly become cognizant of their real mission as journalists. The moments when real news peeks its head from a glimpse of the ugly state of the world.

Right now, Libya is on the brink of civil war. Protesters are marching west towards the capital of Tripoli, building momentum in hopes of overthrowing their corrupt leader and his sons. They want to oust Gaddafi from his life of opulence, ending a regime marked by state-sponsored terrorism and oppression. The protesters have met tremendous resistance. They have faced down military forces loyal to Gaddafi. These forces have fired shots into crowds of protesters using anti-aircraft guns, killing hundreds and wounding many thousands more. In Tripoli, citizens are being forced to stay within their own neighborhoods. Some can barely leave their homes. Subsistence has become a problem for most as food shops have shut down in anticipation of the on-coming storm of violence. Families have been separated as military forces arbitrarily establish boundaries trying their best to contain the flood of citizens who are attempting to flee the city. Tripoli is on lockdown, and its citizens face countless dangers as the fight to overthrow Gaddafi slowly makes its way to the capital.

These stories paint a picture of a scared, embattled citizenry. A people unsure of the future of their country. A people struggling to exist against the storm of chaos forming around them. The thing is, though, I didn’t learn most of this from any major US news network. I learned most of it, directly or indirectly, from the Internet.

The coverage by 24-hour news networks of the violence in Libya, or any other conflict in North Africa or the Middle East, is strikingly consistent. Images of men dressed in tattered clothes waving AK-47s triumphantly in the air as mobs of protesters shuffle their way down crowded streets are the typical background for commentary that usually highlights only the most momentous events of the ongoing unrest. The stories of violence are short, interrupted by discussions of how this uprising will affect the price of oil. Will the suffering in Libya affect how much you pay at the pump? Our priorities have never been clearer.

Much of the news about the violence in Libya has come from social networking sites, blogs, and streaming reports from Al-Jazeera. My best friend moved to the United States from Libya a few years ago to finish a graduate degree in English. She has been glued to Al-Jazeera’s online coverage for the last few weeks. Al-Jazeera has been unable to get reporters into the country, so they have relied on telephones and the Internet to get firsthand accounts of the unfolding violence. Facebook has groups dedicated to providing a forum for those trapped inside Libya. Libyan users post updates of the progress of the rebellion and attempt to account for the injuries and deaths incurred during confrontations with Gaddafi’s forces. Tumblr, Twitter, and YouTube have served much the same purpose. Images, stories, and occasionally even videos of the events in Libya make their way onto the Internet where they are quickly spread through the intricate web of social media. Shortly after that, the blogosphere picks up on the trails started by social media, and bloggers begin the process of trying to stitch the stories and images together to give us some clear picture of what’s happening with

War and the Internet by Brian Wilson and Ghada Gherwash, Writing Center Consultants
No one listens to music that way anymore.

Tony Zancanella, 2006

Shuffle by Mark Vogel, English Faculty

A new order flowing and layered
loud and brash though shrunk
to miniature—old notes ripped from context,
made mobile.

Freshly married freed songs
powered by battery magic
push to the attic macho components
collecting dust. In the closet vinyl
sits rigid, and one by one labeled
cassettes unravel and lose a voice.

Ears clean and oiled, screwed to headphones
vibrate in morning profundity—
bongos, pedal steel, Charlie Parker sax,
o my Miles Davis murmuring sly funk.
In the distance Sneaky Pete pedal steel
as prelude and in highway swirl

Manu Chao and Aretha and alt-country
blend miles of beat,
old and the new as naked lovers
Coltrane and Dylan take turns,
before Steppenwolf croons
a classic carpet ride.

Already on the digital calendar
squeezed tiny—faces and art
and song titles, all the music in the world,
a crowded line at karaoke
ten thousand strong.

WAR continued from page 4
the rebellion according
to the people who are
actually living it. The
Internet has changed the
way we understand and
perceive war. During the
first Gulf War, I sat at home
after school and watched
American media coverage
of the unfolding conflict.
The images I remember
were similar to those I see
coming from major news
sources today. The stories
only spoke of violence as
something far removed
from life in the United
States. It was always
something happening
“over there.” A living hell,
no doubt, for soldiers and
civilians caught in the fight,
but something distant for
the rest of us. It’s hard to
attach yourself to the people
when you only hear stories
of broad, sweeping events.
The Internet is changing
that. With personal stories
being told by Libyans
through social networking,
it’s hard not to feel
somehow more connected
to the events happening a
world away. It’s harder, if
not impossible, to ignore
the suffering.
A HIPPIE TYPED THIS
BY MARTHA MCCAUHEY, PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY

I type faster than I write with a pen. Not only are my scholarly papers and creative ruminations typed, but so are my Christmas letters and my grocery lists. And yet I am tired of the regimented, conformist way in which all my words appear on the page. I yearn for the low-tech, creative, authentic style found in the beautifully hand-lettered books of the 1970s. The hippies in that era challenged conventional faith in authority with both the content and the style of their literature. The original Our Bodies, Ourselves and The Massage Book, for instance, featured hand-lettered covers and hand-illustrated images.

The pièce de résistance, of course, is the famous 1977 Moosewood Cookbook, featuring Mollie Katzen’s delicious vegetarian recipes—all penned in her own beautiful handwriting and adorned with fancy scrollwork and sensual drawings of food.

I’m still a hippie at heart, which is why I can’t help feeling like an uptight stiff doing all my writing with word processing software, churning out prose and published work that is so woefully standardized. And so I want a new font: A Moosewood font. I’ll remain on the computer typing my prose, but my thoughts will come out in a beautiful, hippie-like, anti-authority style.

I think Mollie Katzen, who now has her own website and speaker’s agent (how things have changed since the 1970s!), might find my idea compelling and potentially profitable (did I mention how things have changed?). Of course this Moosewood font would contain not just her hand-lettered letters from A to Z but all the necessary symbols for expressing grooviness that our current ways of writing on computers prevent. Holding down the Option and the Q keys, for example, would give you the peace sign, Option+O the yin-yang symbol, and Option+Y would, of course, put the two-finger peace sign on your page. Option+W would make a little person—an “Establishment” white man—appear. Option+P would be a pot leaf and Option+B would give you the raised fist of the Black Power movement. Other key options could give you Katzen’s lovely cherubs, strawberries, apple slices, bread loaves, and zucchinis. (Vegetarians cook with zucchini a lot. In fact, an anti-zucchini symbol might be nice in this font package.)

Functions like “word wrap” would wrap the hand-lettered letters into a pretty little circle, as on Katzen’s page with the recipe for the famous Moosewood Fudge Brownies, or put my words into text boxes made of little hand-drawn snowflakes (as on her page with the recipe for Cossack Pie) or miniature hearts. My readers would want to eat my words as much as I want to eat the Cranapple-Walnut Cake, which is “very moist [heart, heart, heart].”

With the click of my mouse, I could spread flowers and vines and butterflies across my page, the way they appear on Katzen’s recipe for Cascadilla (a chilled, creamy tomato soup for those who don’t know). I doubt that I’m the only one who’d appreciate the Moosewood font. I’m pretty sure hip interior designer Jonathan Adler would want to buy it, too, if only for the butterflies and hearts.

But this would not really be my own creation, you say. I’d be buying a font using someone else’s handwriting. It would violate the true spirit of the authentic self-expression championed by hippies in the 1970s. Of course it would. Like everything to which the hippies introduced us, all we have now is a standardized, commoditized version of their creative, anti-authoritarian world. And I am willing to purchase it, my little moral universe in a font.
**A Deer John Letter**
by Catherine Talley, Co-editor of ReVisioner

Dear Red Squiggly Line Under My Misspelled Words,

I know that you are trying to help, and you DO help. You really do. I know I can’t spell “definite” without you. I totally appreciate the fact that you have helped me hide my deficiencies in understanding accept vs. except, their vs. there, and then vs. than. That has made a huge difference in my professional persona. But your input can be a bit distracting. Is it absolutely necessary for you to alert me to an error the very second that I make it? Sure, I will need your help when I get to the editing stage, but when I’m just trying to get the words to come out of my head, I need to be able to make mistakes so that I can finish my thought. But you keep popping up, sometimes four or five times in one sentence. It’s hard for me not to stop typing right then, backspace, right-click, and correct each error immediately. That means that sometimes it takes me five minutes to get to the end of one sentence because I have to keep thinking it all up again.

So I’m writing to you to let you know that I need our relationship to change. It’s not that I don’t love you, but I think we need some time apart. This afternoon I’m going to click on File/Options/Proofing and un-check your auto-correct and proofreading functions. This isn’t goodbye. I’ll re-check you back into existence as soon as I finish my first draft, but I think this is the right thing to do. I hope you understand. Keep being the wonderful, accurate, expedient self that you have always been. We will see each other soon.

With warmest regards,
Catherine

P.S. Please tell Green Squiggly Line Under My Run-On Sentences that I’m doing the same thing to him. He and I aren’t as close as you and me, but I guess he deserves to be notified too. Thanks.

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**Muybridge**
by Mark Vogel, English Faculty

What distinguishes a technological world is that the terms of nature are obscured; one need not live quite in the present or the local.

Rebecca Solnit in River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West.

In blindness without restraint a familiar remaking with technology, the first trains eating forests,

speed belching forward through cheap towns already in decay. Rising higher, poisonous clouds spew noise and smoke while behind schematics Commerce flunkies prod a ravenous beast with alienation. Closer home hidden magnets attract trucks bullying cracking concrete rivers, and close and local machines whir and bang black and white until pronounced dead.

Deafening metal collects in parking lots and somewhere off the interstate gassy landfill maws grow greened erasure beside museums of unhinged excess.

In an invented present animated dust drowns the mundane, and chemical fumes bend brown and white and pink jet trails.

In charged air the unlabeled takes shape, and from a distance clinical cameras focus, ready to capture static deaths. Behind the scenes a thousand cloned Engineer Muybridge action figures retool robotic choreography, injecting like a fix (again) electricity into the swirl.
When I’m assigned a paper, I do what most college students do after receiving an assignment. I log onto Facebook to procrastinate. Facebook is an open forum website where members can communicate with other members. My study of Facebook began indirectly when my professor assigned a paper on a word and its impact on language. After writing a list of several words, none of which I liked, I logged onto Facebook for a break. On Facebook, I started to notice all the words that people use differently in this generation. It dawned on me that these words had changed because of the development of Facebook. I then noticed the difference in spellings and sentence structure. Facebook has not only changed the meanings of words, but it has changed social language as a whole.

In recent years, Facebook has revolutionized how people, especially teenagers, communicate with one another. Facebook has established a place where people can communicate with one another on a face-to-face level through writing. Through these written conversations, Facebook has made major changes to social language in ways such as changing the connotations of words, turning sentences into fragments, and having intentional misspellings. But language change is normal. This diversion in language is presented. This diversion in language is logical and acceptable because it reflects the rhetorical environment in which it evolved—casual and informal.

To understand Facebook’s contribution to writing, you must first understand how Facebook works. Facebook revolves around, and begins with, the user, also known as the Facebooker. The Facebooker creates his or her page to represent himself/herself, otherwise known as a profile. A profile contains the individual’s basic information, a picture, and friends. Friends on Facebook are people who the Facebooker knows and who the Facebooker communicates with. The primary functions of Facebook, besides sharing digital media, are status updates and wall posts. A Status update is text that reflects what the Facebooker is feeling or thinking and is shared with all of their friends. Wall posts are when one user writes on another user’s wall. A wall shows everything a Facebooker has been doing on Facebook and everything that individual’s friends have written. Through these wall posts, Facebook creates an environment for its users to communicate unlike any other situation has allowed. Previously, the only written conversations were carried out by letters or mail. Although letters are conversations, they lack the instant responses between the two communicating. Facebook’s ability to have instantaneous responses gives its users the illusion that they are having a face-to-face conversation. This illusion has led to the changes in social language caused by Facebook.

The dialogue used on Facebook between two users is related more to talking than it is writing, despite the fact that it is written in text. Techniques such as correct spelling, proper grammar, and even some aspects of Standard English are not incorporated when Facebook users communicate. What needs to be said is simply written, there is no additional concern for formality. Without this regard for Standardized English, new connotations of words and new ways of writing words have been developed rapidly and with great enthusiasm among Facebookers.

The word friend has had its meaning shifted from a noun to a verb within the past seven years. “Have you friended me yet?” is commonly asked on many high school and college campuses. To become someone’s friend on Facebook, you have to send or receive a friend request. Users have thoughtlessly changed “will you send me a friend request?” to the simple phrase “friend me?”. Facebook is full of broken sentences and is growing increasingly informal. When scrolling through Face-
Today vs. Yesterday

by Laura Trent, Student

It was one of those crisp fall nights that aren’t too cold and the sky is clear. My roommates and I, along with another friend or two, were sitting out on the back porch of our house in Boone. Our house is surrounded by trees with no street lights, so you can only imagine how beautiful the night sky looked. The conversation at the time was about how rarely we enjoy this kind of night now that we are older and times are different. I wasn’t participating in the conversation at the moment because my mind was wandering back to when I was younger.

I lived in this two-story, yellow house in a busy neighborhood in Hickory. All the houses were back to back with some fences in between them, so it is pretty easy to say that everybody knew everyone else’s name and business most of the time. My sister is 3 years older than me, and I grew up with kids all over the neighborhood. During the day we would play with our certain groups of friends. This included running around in everyone’s yards playing “spy,” riding bikes, playing basketball, climbing any tree we could find, or jumping on the trampoline. As if the days weren’t exciting enough, after having to be dragged in for dinner, all the kids in the neighborhood would regroup when it got dark. With our bare feet we would disperse everywhere for the nightly game of hide-n-seek. The only thoughts running through our minds were ‘how in the world am I going to make it to base without being tagged?’ and ‘watch out for the mean dog in that yard.’

Coming back to the conversation, I realized something. Not once did my mind recall a cell phone, computer, or iPod. Immediately, I brought my friends in on my thoughts of how much technology has affected our lives. We discussed how we don’t hear from our younger family members about going outside to play with friends. By sharing childhood memories, we concluded that it is a tragic thing that today’s youth are so influenced by the advancements in technology. The best memories I have from my childhood involve being outside with no worries in the world except having a good time with my friends and family. I wouldn’t change those times for an iPhone or a new laptop.

The conversation continued on for another hour or so. I still sat there after everyone continued inside the house. Looking up at the sky, I thought of how there’s no way we would have the knowledge we have of such beautiful, natural, things if it weren’t for our advances in technology. Therefore, it really is a conflict of interest. Where would the world be without technology? Would humans be healthier than they are now? Would humans be just as knowledgeable? I will say this: While I wish children today would learn to enjoy what they have outside of their house, I do believe that life thrives on change and improvement.

FACEBOOK continued from page 8

book’s news feed, there are plenty of examples of broken sentences. For example, my friend recently posted a photograph of her college dorm room. Underneath the photo is now a stream of feed from my friends that reads: “your room WOULD be pink!” “I like!” “roooooooom for activities!” Within these responses there is no regard for proper sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, or grammar. This informal language is easily expressed and is reflecting the casual rhetorical situation in which Facebookers are communicating.

A major part of the informal social language used on Facebook is the misspelling of words. Although many have speculated, even feared, that these misspellings might carry over into the user’s writing in the non-virtual world (in school, essentially), after examining the words you can tell that most misspellings are intentional. Since Facebook conversations are written like verbal conversations, these misspellings could be used to express a verbal dialect that the Facebooker enjoys within this language community. Walt Wolfram, author of Dialects and American English, says that misspellings of words have been used before in literature to help define a character in a story. The phonology of English can have little to no variation with the change of the spelling of the word, but the reader may be able to understand that a certain misspelling conveys a dialect that the writer is trying to express, says Wolfram. For example, one of my friends recently updated her status to read: “Ellen Orr has had a fab mornin of racquetball and picnicking in my gma’s front yard!”

With the given misspellings, sentences can seem more carefree, more casual, and sometimes more fun.

With these word changes and the type of informal language used, Facebook has developed an internet dialogue. This internet dialogue has become easily understood by the wide range of Facebook’s users. It evolved not from Standard English, but from social English. What this means is that Internet dialogue is not formal language and does not regard regulation and rules well. It is casual, informal language that is free to be typed without conscious thought. This Internet dialogue fits the rhetorical demands of Facebook’s many communities. Since Facebook is a place for socialization amongst friends, casual language is what its users want.
Beating the Machine

by Mackenzie Dolmovich, Student

It was the library which I found myself in at 5:32 in the morning: a trend that had become nearly too common. I was hyped-up on so much caffeine that the fly on the wall could not have escaped my attention. The security guard was probably wobbling on the thought that I might just be in possession of some cocaine.

Despite the jitters there was no denying that I was in the zone, and I had just finished writing a paper that would likely blow the pants off any ill-prepared reader. Pressing the print button radiated such a delightful feeling that I think I even caught a smile from the guy three rows down as if to say, "congrats man, you made my pants off any ill-prepared reader."

I proceeded to walk over to the printer swiping station, where under normal circumstances I would swipe my card, be charged a small fee, and be on my way. It is an epigram originating from Edward Murphy that states, "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong." Obviously, nobody likes a "Negative Nancy," but his statement does hold true. That being said, there I was staring at a black, non-responsive screen. I had no way of knowing when the technicians would get the campus servers back online, so I quickly began pondering a new course of action.

In my rush of negativity I had forgotten that I had a portable laptop printer that could slap ink to paper at a speed of nearly two sheets every 30 minutes. Despite the quality, or lack thereof, I realized the portable unit would have to be my tool of rectification. I made it to my house and dug the mechanism from the abyss that is my closet. I finally had everything set up and once again hit the magical icon that turns my screen into a tangible piece of paper. I knew there would be a substantial wait time on my finished project, so I set out to make a sandwich to nourish my sleep deprived body. I soon returned to my room

MACHINE continued on page 12

Chalkboard Blues

by Amanda Bond Mitchell, Writing Center Consultant

A young man walks determinedly down the aisles of his classroom, carrying a bulky laptop. His students glance happily at the video that he has pulled up for them about the American Revolution. The novelty of the computer in the classroom is new to these students, and their eyes betray an eagerness for the new toy.

This young man is my husband, and he did his student teaching abroad. When he taught in South Africa, he had no SmartBoard, no projector, no laptops, not even a whiteboard. He only had chalk and a chalkboard. The bare classrooms were full of lecturing teachers, monotonously droning on about the mundane subjects teachers usually lecture about. My husband was appalled with this stifling, archaic method of teaching. The lack of technology and interactive classroom environments were completely baffling to my husband and me.

As products of an educational department that emphasized 'collaborative learning' and 'integrating technology', our natural inclination was to rebel against this system of traditional teaching styles. However, after observing the school for a few weeks, my husband began to appreciate the stamina and sheer knowledge that was required by these traditional teachers. He learned that while technology and student-centered learning are valued, there are also benefits to creating a more structured educational system.

But do not let me mislead you. He didn’t turn into a staunch lecturer, scornful of computers in the classroom. It wasn’t until he was without any technology that he realized just how useful it can be. Once he got a chance to lead his own class, he was constantly frustrated by the lack of resources. A light would flash in his eyes as he thought of a pop culture connection to a historical event. But then it would be snuffed out by the realization that, once again, he would be unable to effectively communicate that connection because of a lack of technology.

By the end of his internship, my husband had successfully found a way to bring technology into the classroom by lugging around our old-school, massive computer. He proudly displayed maps, videos, and photos from around the world, allowing the students to make connections between the ideas of the past and their influences on our future.

I think both my husband and I learned a very useful lesson that summer: don’t be afraid of advancing technology, but, also, don’t be afraid of the traditional. There’s a reason people have been lecturing for most of the history of the classroom, but there is also merit in realizing how technology can enhance teaching. Don’t be afraid to combine methods because that is what works best for the students. In the end, that is what it’s all about.
There is an app for cats. You can go to Apple’s AppStore and download it to your iPad or iPhone. This isn’t an app for cat owners or cat lovers. It is an app for cats, the four-legged furry creatures that sleep at the foot of my bed (or sometimes on my face). I had mixed feelings about this when I discovered it. My first reaction involved skepticism and perhaps a trace of cynicism. I didn’t really believe that this app was for an animal; I thought it was just being advertised as such so that dopers like me would investigate it. And of course, I did investigate it, and I downloaded it. I even paid the ninety-nine cents for it, propelled alone by curiosity and disbelief. It turns out that the app is actually for cats.

When I opened the app and put it on the floor next to my cat, Alice, she looked at it, pondered it for a minute, and then she began to play the game.

The app places a mouse on the screen of my iPad. It’s a very cute mouse; it’s the actual size of a mouse, and it moves precisely the same way that a mouse moves. This little virtual mouse darts across the screen randomly, disappearing from one corner and reappearing in another. Sometimes it pauses; sometimes it runs in circles; sometimes it scurries straight across the screen. Alice watches the mouse for a little while. Her head darts back and forth as she locks on to the image.

Then the tip of her tail will begin to twitch. That’s when I know that she’s gearing up for an attack. Once her confidence is high and her instincts are sharp, she pounces on the mouse. Sometimes she hits it; sometimes she misses. The mouse is really fast.

When she hits the mouse, it squeaks, just like a real mouse. It also freezes for just a moment, much like a real mouse will temporarily freeze from the shock of the attack. The squeak and the momentary paralysis further convince Alice that she has succeeded in her hunt, and she is propelled to continue. Her attacks become more frequent; the squeaks get louder and more desperate, and both Alice and her owners are thoroughly entertained. Every time Alice hits the mouse, she gets 100 points. If she hits the mouse twice in succession, she gets 200 points, and my iPad keeps track of her progress, saving her points each time I close the app. And while I am fully aware that Alice is not keeping track of her points, the app allows me, her owner, to track her success and post her high scores to Facebook. From there, Alice can compete with my other friend’s pets, and I can exercise bragging rights for clearly having the smartest, quickest, and coolest pet among my group of peers.

The only glitch in the process of Alice learning the game was a brief time when she tried to figure out where the mouse went once it ran off the screen. She would look at the sides of the iPad, behind her, at our other cat, and a few times she stuck her paw underneath the iPad, thinking the mouse was under there. But this period of confusion quickly faded, and Alice decided that she didn’t care where the mouse went, so she just stopped thinking about it.

I’ve never been entirely comfortable with the fact that my cat has her own app. Clearly I’ve embraced the idea and bought the product, but I still harbor some reservations over the entire concept. My cat, who clearly has no understanding or interest in computers (evidenced by her tendency to plop down on my keyboard when I’m working) is now an active participant in the age of technology. Where once Alice lived in a world where mice came in only two forms (alive or replicated as a plush toy), now Alice lives in a world that is (partially) virtual. What she could count on as ‘real’ before was based on tangible, three-dimensional data that occupied a physical space. Now her definitions of ‘real’ include two-dimensional images that appear to occupy physical space but actually do not. Was I supposed to do this to my cat?

Did downloading the mouse game for Alice serve as the first step towards her own technological dependence? Will she, upon next encountering a real mouse, turn up her nose at it and look around for my iPad? After all, I’d much rather play Poppit! on my computer than physically pop balloons in my living room.

There are no real answers here, and I can’t go back in time. The fact of the matter is that technology has seeped into almost every facet of daily life.

Things that I thought could never exist now do exist. A device that holds every song I’ve ever heard and liked in the palm of my hand? Yep, that exists. A tool that checks every word I write for grammatical accuracy? Yep, that exists too. And now, a game that my cat understands how to play using a touch screen and a recording of a squeaky mouse. It exists. For better or for worse, Alice has been assimilated.
Technology and Shoes by Lindsey Shapiro, UWC Desk Assistant

It was late at night as I tiptoed gingerly across the damp grass. It was the green on the 14th hole of the neighborhood golf course, and it was just me and a blanket of stars. I took a deep breath as I pulled my hair into a low ponytail and shook my muscles out. All I remember after that was the feeling of dirt and grass between my toes, the wind on my face. It was an exhilarating run, and one of the firsts without strain or injury. My knees no longer hurt, and shin splints were a thing of the past. I would have never thought to run sans shoes, but after my close friend ran a marathon in those silly Vibram Five-Finger shoes (essentially running barefoot), he suggested I give it a try. This idea, at first, seemed counterintuitive, but it got me thinking. Why do we need the latest running shoes? The modern running shoe has only been around since the 1970s, and for millions of years before that, humans had safely been running with thin-soled shoes, sandals, or no shoes at all. It makes sense that our body and feet would know how to properly orient themselves as they strike the ground; it is a basic evolutionary adaptation that we developed as we became upright, bipedal beings. Why then, are the “newest shoes” with the “more advanced technology” greater than something nature has perfected over millions of years? These shoes claim to fix pronation, weak ankles, and any ailment you could think of; yet research is starting to show that these shoes are actually causing the problems in the first place.

By providing cushioning and a thick sole, the newest running shoes actually make the foot strike with the heel first, the thinnest and boniest part of the entire foot. The shock is then sent up the leg and into the lower back, and it actually maximizes the amount of force placed on the whole foot. It doesn’t allow the feet to supply feedback and analysis of the environment. When barefoot running, as our bodies have been designed to do, the fleshy pad of the forefoot is supposed to strike the ground first and splay the toes to absorb the shock and weight of every stride. The actual amount of force and shock produced is significantly less than with shoes. Consider the 250,000 sweat glands we have for cooling and the fact that there are more nerve endings on the soles of our feet than any other part of the body. This indicates that being able to touch and feel the ground is highly important. Some of the world’s fastest runners are in Kenya, where they run barefoot on hard dirt paths, granite, and shards of volcanic rock. They let their feet read the ground underneath, and their bodies adjust automatically. The Tarahumara tribe in the Copper Canyons of Mexico is full of the world’s best unknown ultra-marathoners. They run up to 200 miles at a time with sandals or no shoes at all.

This is evidence that these isolated populations have not been exposed to technology as we know it, let alone the best name-brand running shoe on the market; yet, they continue to produce some of the world’s greatest runners. I can understand that as humans we want to advance; we want to be first; we want to have the best resources at our disposal. Maybe it took the founder of Nike late nights in a basement with glue, rubber, and a waffle iron to produce a better shoe. But for what purpose other than to make a profit? I have nothing against technology. We live in an era where it is central to our daily functioning, but please, let nature take its course. We were born to run; it has been programmed into our DNA. So why should technology change something that has been worked and finely tuned to near perfection? I don’t know about you, but I’ll stick to my late night runs on the cool grass—barefoot.

with my large, delectable sandwich in hand and looked down at the finished product. For anyone who has never seen the ink cartridge in a laptop printing unit, it is about the same size as the space under my thumbnail. In place of what I dreamed would be words on white paper, there were faded symbols that I didn’t feel would be fully appreciated by my professor. I had just finished balling up the useless sheet of scribbles when it dawned on me that I had not seen any more paper in the printer, and I knew I had none in the abyss. I was irate at this point, but by no means was I going to come out a loser in this showdown. I sat down, and finally reached my calm, cool, and collected mode. I looked around my room and pondered about a plausible means by which to fix my problem at hand. My brain was pumping data through like a power house processor without the registry errors. Then, like a stick of dynamite blowing up, the means by which I was going to come out victorious exploded from the deepest regions of my neural network. I made the mistake of taking the convenience of technology for granted, but by God, I was going to come out on top.

I strolled into class equipped with a hat covered hairdo that was too cool for everyone to witness. I sat through the class, struggling to hold open my eyes. It was like a gift from the heavens when class was called to an end, and she asked us to bring our papers to the front. I reached the head of the herd and was standing front and center. I gave her a look that said, “Don’t test me, I’m a champion,” and then laid down my stapled notebook paper covered in beautiful 12 point, Times New Roman, pink colored font.
What Happened to True Life? by Kirby Peterson, Student

A couple of years ago, I spent a week in the Dominican Republic. It was an experience I will not soon forget. I learned a lot throughout the course of the trip. One of the most significant things that I learned was about how technology has changed our world. I had no anticipation of learning about westernized society’s use of technology; the purpose of the trip was to help teach English to elementary-aged children. This was through traditional teaching methods, nothing “high tech”.

Each day, when not at one of the local elementary schools, I spent a great deal of time at a city park near where I was staying. The town that I stayed in was not a very big one. It seemed that almost everyone knew each other.

The park was a gathering place for the local children and even some of their parents. It was a place where people could meet to share life together. No appointment or prior meeting was required to enjoy time at the park. One could go to the park without plans and have a perfectly good time. People of various ages met with no intention but to enjoy the day and each other’s company.

I was truly surprised to see how easily individuals could create something out of nothing. The ends of a couple of benches became goalposts for a pickup game of soccer between children young and old. No one was left out. Shouts of “Pásamela” (Pass me the ball) flooded one corner of the lively park. Nearby a few young adults watched as the children played, some of them parents, others just neighbors. They spoke of life, the goings on of the day, and town gossip.

At another end of the park was a small playground. Surprisingly, this was not the most popular destination of the children in the park. It seemed understood that the playground and the surrounding sand was reserved for the youngest children and their parents. Throughout the park a sidewalk was laid between occasional plots of raised land surrounded by concrete slabs that served as benches. A local boy would sometimes cruise by on the sidewalk in his worn rollerblades, while others would race around, coming up with games of their own.

Many of the children arrived at the park with their siblings, some with none at all. Children as young as four entered the park without the supervision of their parents, even if only for a short time. Meanwhile, back in the United States, children are monitored with close observation to be sure that they do not injure themselves. In this park though, there was little need for supervision; the park was a community itself. Those in the park took care of each other; if someone was injured, they knew how to handle it. If little Juanito began crying it was usually for attention, but hearing a bellow from Tomás meant something was wrong.

As I observed the different interactions in this small park on the second largest island in the Caribbean, I wondered where this sort of life had gone. Growing up, I remember playing street hockey with some friends from around the neighborhood. It was not anything planned or very rigid; we just played because it was something to do. But that seems like a long time ago now.

It is as if the computer has become one of our best friends. Ever since the Internet became so widely used it has slowly crept into our lives and stolen moments of what was once an innocent childhood. People are no longer as willing or eager to spend time with people that they do not already know. Those we do know, we know better than we may have ever known without recent technological advances. It is as if we are growing farther from those we do not know and closer to those that we do. It is a rare occurrence to strike up a conversation with someone on the street.

TRUE LIFE continued page 15

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If I were a punctuation mark, I would be a dash because I seriously have to limit my use of them when I write as I’m prone to extended and profound pauses. I remember the day I learned how to properly use a dash; my life hasn’t been the same since.
- Meg McSwain, Writing Center Consultant

If I were a punctuation mark, I would be a pair of brackets because I’m always being asked to explain myself further.
- Catherine Talley, Co-editor of The ReVisioner

If I were a punctuation mark, I’d be a colon because I’m kind of an ass.
- Kyle Blochl, Writing Center Consultant
Log Out and Sync with Nature
by Kelly Gooderham, Student

When was the last time that you went outside and just sat on the lawn? Any lawn, be it on campus, in your yard, or just right in front of some store (secretly enjoying the bizarre looks you’re getting, of course), and just sun bathed? Not because you want a good tan, but because you want to feel the warmth on your skin, feel the grass between your toes, smell nature. Think of a time before we knew there were holes in the ozone layer and found out that UV rays were bad for you. Think of a time where it just felt good to be outside and away from things. I am sure you’re thinking, “Well, yea, I did that last summer, like, every day!” But what I am really asking is, have you done it while leaving your phone at home? Forget the laptop and iPod; just bring a book if you want entertainment! We all remember those, right? They’re those rectangular thingies that you don’t have to plug in?

The average person today would say that they cannot (or just refuse) to live without their blackberry, smart phone, iPod, or laptop. They all say that without Twitter or Facebook that their lives would “fall to pieces”. Take it from me (the one, ironically so, writing this on a laptop), life would feel prehistoric at times, but much healthier. Don’t get me wrong, I love technology and what it’s done to our world. I have a Facebook account, I own a cell phone, and no, this is not my immaculate handwriting (like I am some monk!). Take one step away from today’s world, however, and imagine a place where you still went to the mall or the beach and actually talked to the people you were with instead of texting or Twittering to everyone on your contact list or making updates like “So-and-So’s at the mall/beach, hanging out with friends!”. (Who cares?) Imagine the world where you still picked up a book (focus, the rectangular thingies, remember?), and smelled the paper, felt the binding, and read from pages, not a computer screen.

I am not some old “fuddy duddy” trying to tell younger generations that life was better when I was their age. My generation was just after the current college students of modern day. We were the ones known as the “Video Game” generation. We played the first Nintendo, had the brick cell phones, tested out the first Macintosh computers, etc. The Video Game generation set the stage for what is popular and chic today, in my opinion, and we told it! My generation is just as wrapped up in technology as anyone, but we still know what it was like before all of this. We still know and understand that this earth was given to us, Mother Earth, as a gift and we should cherish it.

So go outside! Light a candle, read a book, take a hike, or just talk. Put down your “lifelines” and enjoy life for what it is and what it always has been: Natural.

Unscramble!

A N O U E U S H A H E N P E D T O L S
R T O O L S S S . W E H A P T O U R

Answer: "We shape our tools and then our tools shape us." Marshall McLuhan
Into the Great Beyond
by Caitlynne Garland, Student

This is all I have ever wanted: To explore nature, to live from the Earth. I don’t have to deal with money or people; it’s just me and my boys, trudging through the wilderness together. I wear my house on my back, and I find the food I eat. The dogs have become more wild, hunting for most every meal, but that’s how dogs are supposed to be. They are getting back to their roots. Technology is rather important to my success. I am able to check my status on my solar powered GPS. The system is so accurate of my status, I have been able to stay camped in the same spot for a couple of years now.

This makes the gathering of food much easier. I planted a small garden next to a stream. I built a stronger shelter to cover my tent, and I have even begun setting traps to help the boys find dinner. You see, I ran out on life years ago, seven years ago to be exact. I was tired of the greed, the jealously, the people I was forced to spend every day with. So I left. I packed a backpack with the essentials and some food to get us going. I walked out my back door with four dogs in tow and headed for the trees. I haven’t seen another person in seven years, heard them, yes, but I have yet to lay my eyes on one.

I used to hear them in the middle of the night, tromping through the trees, their evil dogs on chains that rattled in my ears for hours later. I knew they were looking for me, but I had become an expert at hiding, at being invisible. But now, my status has moved to the bottom of the list, they have stopped looking for me. It’s has been years since I have been woken by the chains in the night, and it’ll be years still.

1/4/3011 7:00 a.m.
I awoke to the warmth of my tent. I was surrounded by my four dogs, my life. The little ones were sharing my sleeping bag, while Timber, the largest of them all huddled next to me. It was cold, and I knew there would be fresh snow on the ground. I hesitated in my sleeping bag a few minutes longer, trying to summon the courage to venture outside. I wiggled free and slipped on my boots. As I unzipped the tent’s flap; the boys ran out to greet the snow. The cold bit my face, and the wind whipped the trees. Today was the day I needed to check the traps. Oh! The cold was so much. I had lived through seven of these winters before, but each year they got worse and worse. This year had been terrible so far. I walked the perimeter of my structure, everything looked stable. I could hear the boys tearing through the snow in the distance. The little ones would be back soon, begging to return to the warmth of the tent.

I sat on a tree truck and started thinking about my life. I habitually pulled out the GPS and checked my status. What if I was alone? Would I be able to survive in these conditions alone? Status: dead. There are no more dogs, I have the last four, unless you count those devils the searchers use. Dogs don’t live forever, the youngest one is eight. I shut off the GPS and my mind with it. No use in worrying, whatever will be, will be. I heard a thundering through the trees and in true fashion the boys rounded the corner at full speed. Timber flopped in the snow and the little ones ran toward the tent. It would be a few more months before they are willing to stay outside.

I opened the tent’s flap, grabbed my hat, and started walking, Timber hot on my heels.

1:04 pm
The ice crunched under my boots. Winter is my favorite season, so magical. The snow and the sun dance a beautiful dance together, and the wonders never cease. Timber and I go on walks every day for the majority of the day. I am looking for footprints, and he is looking for sticks. When he digs one out of the snow, we play for a while, but he quickly loses interest. It has been five years since I saw footprints, a very good sign. As we meander along, I pull out the GPS and check again. Status: dead.

8:54 pm
Building a fire is always troublesome, but this time of year if I don’t build a fire, I don’t eat. The fire crackles quietly with the boys scattered around. I thaw chunks of deer meat over the fire for them and I cut up potatoes for myself. While I wait for the meat to thaw I check the GPS.

Midnight
I sat up in my sleeping bag. A noise woke me up. Timber is standing at attention at the flap of the tent. There is a stirring outside; there is a sickness in my stomach. I listen with all my might and hear nothing. No calling, no chains, and no barking. Maybe a deer … or a coyote. I lie awake for a long time listening for anything. Suddenly Timber begins to growl, a deep and menacing growl. I struggle to my feet. I still hear nothing outside the tent, but I now know something is out there. I reach for the gun I keep in my bag, grabbing the GPS out of habit. I wait for what seems like an eternity for the machine to load. There is a loud thump from outside, and I hear the scrape of a chain. Timber’s hair bristles, and he is ready to fight. The GPS falls from my hand at the sound of the chain, and I scramble to pick it up. My eyes focus on the words splayed across the screen. Status: Alive and Found.

TRUE LIFE continued from page 13 for no apparent reason. We usually try to stick to those we know, thus narrowing our horizons. There is so much potential in the world but we miss out because we are no longer as comfortable as we once were with people we do not already know. True, it is now significantly easier to keep in touch with people across the world with services that allow us to even see their faces as if we were in the same room. However, is that what we were made for?

Were we made to remain cooped up in our rooms feigning true community through a computer screen? True relationships involve interaction, and I believe that while technology does facilitate our interaction with others, it also keeps us from new interactions and new experiences. Technology makes it too easy to discover something without having to truly experience it for what it is worth. As we move forward in an age of digital software, social media, and the like, we must not forget to experience life as it happens. True life is about taking risks, being open to new ideas and opinions, and sharing life with those around us. May we never forget that in this ever-changing world.
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