

Ending an online course with a unit about technology is not only ironic but also very fitting. Being asked to think about our own education, and lives and how it is shaped by technology while also asking us to examine how technology is shaping our instruction and our students' lives is phenomenal! I find myself changing my opinion and outlook on technology pretty much daily; certainly as I read the different resources through unit 6 my opinion fluctuated.

I was born in 1989 so I sort of grew up as technology grew up. I was not born with a smart phone in my hand like the kids of today, but as I grew up I was able to watch technology grow up as well. I remember at a very young age having an experience with technology; we had a computer in my house pretty much as long as I can remember. I don't have any recollection of one outstanding day in which technology was a part of my life. Growing up I wasn't allowed to watch much TV or spend a great deal of time on the computer. You could say my parents limited my 'screen time' although in the 90s that wasn't a parenting topic that was discussed much if at all. When I was very young I remember learning math using computer games, in fact most of the computer activities I did as I was fairly young were educational games. Now that I am a parent and an educator I have found myself questioning the validity of the educational content of some of the more 'educational' games out there. I remember Math Blaster and Reading Blaster as fabulous games in which I was able to practice my basic phonics and arithmetic skills. But when I see the educational games in present time there is no denying the benefit of them, they are attention grabbing, and they have educational content, but are they doing more harm than good?

As I grew up I did begin spending more time on the computer, not only were my interests changing, as I became more social, but also the things you could do on the computer were changing. In my elementary school 1-5 grades I remember we had a computer lab. In our computer lab I remember learning how to type, it was a skill that we all needed to know our teachers told us, I wonder now why it is that we still teach our students how to type at a young age, and some programming or computer classes are available in some districts, but there is not a requirement for schools to teach students how to use the internet responsibly. Or how to make the best use of our technology; but I am getting ahead of myself. As I continued to grow not only did the technology grow, and my need to be more social grow, but the availability of technology began to grow. When we first got Internet access it was dial up, I could only go on to check my Juno mail account, and only for a few minutes a day. I would be tying up the phone line and my father who was self employed needed to be able to receive calls. It was only a few years later that we got access to cable and DSL internet, so I was able to spend more time online, with this new found time I was given online I started to use the internet for research for classes, but also for social networking and chatting. Reading the conflicting viewpoints on whether or not the internet is making this generation more or less intelligent really start to link with my own personal use of technology at this point. Throughout Unit 6 people talked about whether reading on a computer really counted as

reading, and whether youth today truly know how to read and comprehend anymore. Speaking from my own personal experience and use, I know that I was raised to be a reader. My parents always read to me at a young age, I was taught to read at a very young age, and by the time I was in middle school and early high school I was an avid reader. I remember many times going to the library to check out research books even! Not just fiction! I believe that the ability to have pretty much limitless access to information via the Internet was a detriment to me. I know that I am not as strong or as avid of a reader as I should be, or as I once was.

Fast-forward to present day, I am finishing up my third year of teaching high school (four if you count student teaching) I am a 2007 HS grad and a 2011 MSU grad, and I am currently of course pursuing my masters degree entirely online through MSU. I am no stranger to technology. I utilize it in every aspect of my life, my own education, my teaching, as well as in my personal life. I truly view technology as both a blessing and a curse. I believe we are all far too tethered to our technology; we constantly need to be in contact, need to post on social media, and have in my opinion greatly lost the ability to problem solve without Google. I am fearful that we are losing the ability to be imaginative. As an educator I am eternally grateful for technology. The fact that pretty much no lesson plan, worksheet, test, or lab needs to be invented entirely from scratch any more is remarkable. I truly have no idea how teachers 'did it' before the Internet and computers! But on the other side of this coin, I think I might be a better teacher if I had to do more of the thinking myself! Just like I think my students would be better students if they actually had to think, and research topics. They are conditioned to simply search it online.

While in my masters program I took a course about technology and teaching. I found it to be a very interesting course; I thought that I knew a lot about tech resources for instruction until I took this course! It really opened my eyes up to how many resources existed! I was able to not only explore different technology resources but I also was able to read a lot of resources about technology instruction. The textual information I read in that class did address the debate on technology and this generation but nowhere near as much as Unit 6 did. Despite my use of technology in my personal life and my schooling, and my reliance on it in my professional life I am still deeply conflicted on whether it makes us better off as humans or not. I do genuinely agree that responsible Internet use betters our society tenfold, unfortunately we do not teach our students how to adequately use the Internet. I have talked to my students at length about what is credible and what is not; and I still have many students who cite Wikipedia; or user created weebly site and the like in their research papers. I am not saying that no educator teaches these subjects but I argue that we all must; and it must be a part of our state mandated curriculum.

I believe that technology has really played a role in shaping me both as an educator and in my personal life. In many ways it has changed me for the better however in many other ways I believe it has changed me for the worse. I am thankful for the wealth on information technology but I also feel as though it has taken away some of my ability to truly read and comprehend, push myself to do my best, as well as develop more

personal relationships. I am so thankful to have gone through this self-reflective journey in this last unit of our class. I find the autobiographical method of inquiry to be very interesting and rather applicable in this sense. I do not think that other things we have studied would have lent themselves to the autobiographical inquiry style as well as the technology topic. In each topic we have covered we have done some self reflection and thought about how the material connected to us personally however since technology is ever changing; and all of us experienced it in different ways due to our age and our upbringing it was something we really needed to look at as a personal journey, through technology. Whether technology is a blessing or a curse may never be known; but we can continue to strive to make the best of the technology. We as educators need to continue to push our students to understand, and respect technology, give them the chance to utilize technology in a responsible manner. As telephones lead to the 'death' of the snail mail, TV the death of radio, and countless others I'm sure, it is quite possible that technology will change the way we teach, learn, work, play, and interact forever. I just hope that our new generations don't lose the ability to connect personally, and lose the feeling of holding a book in their hands. But perhaps that is just nostalgia speaking, whatever the case I am truly excited to see what the future holds.