Technology has always been a significant aspect of my life. I won’t even consider the radio or television, as they were well established gadgets by the time of my birth. I am a child of the eighties and video games were still in their infancy. I still remember my stick figure handheld video games fondly. Who would’ve thought of what the latest Playstation or Xbox would be capable of? Yet, all of these advancements have especially social media have provided tremendous opportunity for expression, albeit at an uncertain cost. I hope to explore technology as it has impacted my brief life.

I was born in 1980, and I always thought it was the perfect year to be born. That year signified the end of the disco era and the beginning of the most significant technological advancements since Fordism. The children of the eighties were the first to be born into a digital world. This new world put information instantaneously at our finger tips and connected people globally. This essay is about my experience with technology and how it has impacted my life.

I have to start from the beginning to lay the foundation of this journey, as I believe my perspective is unique. I was able to witness firsthand the introduction of the digital age and witness the end of the industrial era. I learned to read relatively late at the age of seven. I don’t recall ever playing with crayons outside of some formal school activity. I remember learning to write but I never enjoyed it; to me, it was a chore. It was my mother who taught me to read, and it was an arduous task; however, I was always very good at math, and I was even able to solve word problems at that age.

Around that same time, I started taking apart small electronic devices in the house. I wanted to see what was inside of these devices and learn how they worked. At first, I was admonished for breaking apart these devices, but soon enough I was asked to fix some of these same devices by my parents. It wasn’t long before my family started saying I was destined for a life in the scientific field. My parents pushed formal education upon my siblings and me. They believed it was the only way to get a job which would provide the type of lifestyle they wanted for their children.

I spent the first 8 years of my life living in the Caribbean. Technology is always a little slower to arrive on the small island, but somehow my father was able to get a Commodore 64 desktop computer. I remember spending countless hours trying to tinker with it. Despite the significant cost, my father never seemed to mind me playing with it; in fact, he seemed to encourage it. We eventually moved to the United States and my father further developed his interest in computers. I eventually became his computer wingman. Everything he did with a computer I watched and learned. He eventually bought my very first PC video game. I still remember it like it was yesterday. It was a soccer game. The problem with computers during that time was lack of uniformity; there were different operating systems (OS) like Macintosh, DOS, Windows, PC-DOS, OS2,ect. It required significant detective work and computer troubleshooting skills to get a program to work on a PC. I eventually found this to be more fun than actually playing the game, and from that day on I was going to enter the technology field.

Even with my interest in computers my parents continued to push reading and writing to all of their children. I still found I didn’t enjoy reading anything outside of comic books and technology. I only read and wrote when required to do so for school. My parents were a little more forward thinking when it came to my culture: they allowed their children opportunities to enter into adult conversations on occasions, as long as we were able to give an informed and logical statement. I loved these dialogues with my parents, aunts and uncles. This was how a significant aspect of my culture was passed on to me. These oral exchanges were how I learned my ancestry and the expectations they had for me.

As the decade came to an end, I saw the emergence of the Internet. This was a major shift in the way I communicated with friends and family. Today, my world is now experienced through the power of the internet. Every decision I make regarding purchases, investment, education, etc. is all made with the help of the internet. I no longer read traditional print magazines, instead I read the digital versions. I have even changed the way I use telephones or cell-phones for internet capable phone services. I use Google applications many aspects of my daily life. I can’t imagine modern life without Google and a cell service.

One of the main reasons I returned to school was to explore my interest in writing. I found a joy for writing poetry and simple prose. I started writing very simple verses, but as I researched styles, authors, and general poetry forms I my interest grew. I believe the easy access of information played a significant role in my development. I was able to quickly find and read dozens authors within a very short period of time. I could publish online and receive very quick feedback; this allowed me to improve further. I also found with all of the online resources it is much easier to write more meaningful verses. I have at my fingertips dictionaries, thesauruses, and even rhyming dictionaries (rhyming words based on syllable counts). It still takes creativity to foster something of value, but it is a much less arduous process.

I have used social media to spread some of my own writing but don’t use it with much consistency. I personally find too much drivel posted on most of these websites. I rather read news which has been cultivated by professionals. I understand I lose some of the spontaneity during this process, but it lessens the effort it takes to accept an online article as authentic and factual; there is an abundant amount of misinformation on the web so a certain amount of incredulity is justified.

I’m concerned about the way social media has allowed people to live socially introverted lives and still believe they are social individuals. There are some people who believe their online social lives are more important than actually meeting people and enjoying genuine live conversation. I see there is a benefit with social media, but there aspects which really irritate me. Do I really need to know the up to the minute details of someone’s daily activities? I don’t care if a person is about to eat breakfast, lunch or dinner, nor am I concerned about what they are about to watch on TV.

With all of these social media websites, it is free to use but at what cost. I cannot help but think of Postman’s statement, “…. Technological progress worked most efficiently when people are conceived of not as children of God or even citizens but as consumers – that is to , as markets.” (Postman 42) All of these large social media companies are selling personal information gathered from the “free” use of these websites. This information is gold in the digital world. I grew up in a era when privacy truly meant keeping information away from strangers; now, it doesn’t matter which mega company know s what some of the most personal information about us, the type of information which truly makes each of us unique as individuals. These companies look at people as data to be crunched and sold to the highest bidder.

Also, have we as Americans taken Postman’s advice, “….when we admit a new technology to the culture, we must do so with our eyes wide open.” Have we as a society really looked at what was lost with social media? I have more friends (social network friends) today than ever before, but do I really know them? Is it enough to know their favorite color is blue, and they like the NY Giants. I can’t help be believe deeper more intimate connections are being lost. Maybe it’s just me, and I’m being a luddite in this new world. I only like the people I’ve shared a meal with know what scares, excites, and motivates me; these are the people I call friends.