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Growing Up with Technology: From Toys to Tools

Abstract

All forms of tools and technology has always been an important part of my life. From crayons to computers, and computers to laptops, the technological world has grown as rapidly as my development. After discussing my interesting childhood, the paper explores the beginning of my personal musical and technological understanding. Through the use of Postman and personal stories, I will show the impact technology as had on the many aspects of my life. Without technology, the life I have lived thus far would be very different.

To describe the relationship I have with technology, I have to tell my favorite childhood story. At the age of five, my father found a pink mouse and mouse pad for our computer. This little pink thing became my favorite part of using the computer until it suddenly stopped working. Sometime after my father removed the mouse from the computer, I asked him to use it as he took a nap and naturally the answer was yes. When he woke up from his nap, I was sitting at the computer playing my games using the same pink mouse he removed. When asked how I connected it to the computer, my answer was “I just did it.” My father was not surprised because this wasn’t my first run with tools and technology.

From birth, my parents have always stressed the importance of understanding others and being understood. Some of my earliest memories are sitting in my father’s lap while he read books to me and coloring pretty princesses with any family member I could find. As the oldest sibling to seven and the youngest cousin to everyone, I was always curious to learn about the books and words that filled them. The only time I was allowed to watch television was for afterschool cartoons on PBS and Saturday mornings on ABC. I’m actually happy I avoided too much tv time because I despised anything that took away from my time looking at books I did not understand.. My family took pride in the work that was done at school, so from the moment I started reading and writing I was expected to produce excellence. For me that was never a problem because books became my best friend.

I have always been an awkward child; the type that can articulate a point very well but struggled to be social with those of my age group. My preschool helped fuel that awkwardness by taking students to the library every Friday. I would take out seven books at a time and have them read and ready to be returned by the Thursday night before my next trip. This pattern became personal visits in the fifth grade, until at thirteen, I began to take biweekly trips to the library, where the librarian and I would compare notes on many different books. By the age of seven, my punishments were no longer staying inside, but my parents found it more effective to take away my books and library card until I behaved accordingly. The more I read, the less I wanted to be around people.

My greatest influence in regards to reading and writing was my English teacher in my junior and senior years of high school. Mrs. Cook-Person was the greatest hippie with a Masters I had the pleasure to meet. She truly understood the needs of her students and met them. As many of us came from West Indian parents who gave little guidance besides focusing on school to achieve more than they could, the teachers that attempted to make a difference were very welcome. Throughout my childhood being literate and intelligent was to always be my goal but at this point in my life this wonderful woman helped me understand the path I would choose for myself.

Around this same time I began to drift away from the 90’s R&B and the calypso of my childhood and pick up on the different sounds that the world had to offer. As YouTube became more popular and Limewire changed the way society exchanged files, I began to listen to any and everything I could understand. Every song imaginable was available with a single search. In similar respects, Neil Postman stated,

In a technocracy, tools play a central role in the thought-world of the culture. Everything must give way, in some degree, to their development. The social and symbolic worlds become increasingly subject to the requirements of that development. Tools are not integrated into the culture; they attack the culture. They bid to become the culture.(Postman 28).[[1]](#footnote-1)

With music, the addition of technology took away the sacred nature of the exchange between artist and audience. This connection that allowed the free expression of music in its truest form was broken.

“And so two opposing world-views—the technological and the traditional—coexisted in uneasy tension.” (Postman 48) This perfectly describes the role social media and technology as a whole has played in my life. To go through the many platforms that have come and gone since dial-up became a familiar sound would be an essay in itself. To name them I would start with Bebo, MySpace, Aim, Facebook, Instagram, and last but not least Twitter. There are many more social media platforms but these were the ones that took a hold of my generation and never let go. The most relevant being Facebook, is both a distraction and a blessing. It allowed me to keep in contact with old teachers and reconnect with childhood friends, but the endless amounts of videos and posts became an academic hindrance. It limited my focus and crippled my creativity.

To say technology has not helped me would be untrue. Technology has been a help and a harm since birth. Through the early stages of my development to now, It has been a path of internal discovery predestined by the turns of the current century. I am unsure what technology will present, but I am ready for the challenge.

1. Postman, Neil. Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology. New York: Knopf, 1992. 28,48. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)