

Jessica Bloom  
Introduction to Writing Arts  
Professor Tweedie  
April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008

### “Technologies and Writing”

Ever since I can remember I have been using different technologies to write and express myself. Whether it was crayons, markers, finger paints, chalk, pens, pencils, or computer and cell phone keys, writing technologies have always played an important role in my life. Throughout the years, and as pop culture evolved, I’ve modified my writing technologies to keep up with the new “in” styles. As a child, though, I was pretty much in line with the mainstream technologies.

Growing up in Point Pleasant, going to the beach was a weekend ritual for my family. My earliest memory of *writing* was at the age of three when I would take shells or driftwood and doodle in the sand. Not that any coherent words were written, but I thought my creations looked brilliant at the time. Each grain of sand shifted slightly as I dragged the shell through it. Sometimes, I would use my fingers to make designs in the sand as well.

My next fad of writing included finger paints and chalk. It amazes me, today, how creative I was in terms of art. My finger paintings are still saved in my mom’s desk. Mostly, I painted rainbows and things that resembled stick figures of my parents. I mean, at the age of five or six my caricatures were not perfected. Chalk was also a top priority on bright summer days. I lived on a street with an unusual number of children the same age as me. So, when we were all home in the afternoon, we would all play together. The boys were usually wrestling in mud or throwing a football around. The girls, on the other

hand, were jumping on one foot to hop-scotch that was drawn on the street with chalk. This was also the age where crayons and colored pencils were at the top of my writing technologies list. Whenever I had a babysitter, I would always ask them to color with me. I think they got annoyed after a while because I could literally sit there for hours coloring in the Little Mermaid's red lips or Barbie's golden hair.

First grade was the time when I was encouraged to move away from finger paints and crayons and move to pencils and focus on handwriting. I got the award for neatest penmanship, although that would definitely not hold true today. Also around this age I can remember being extremely fascinated with art class. The teacher let us use pastels, charcoal, water paints every Wednesday for our art special.

When I was in second grade, I had a short-lived obsession with the permanent marker writing technology. Every color I could get my hands on, I would draw or doodle with. One day, my teacher gave a lesson on how we should write our name on everything we owned, like backpacks, notebooks, and so forth, so no one would take them, or if they got misplaced, could be returned to their rightful owner. Well, I decided it would be a good idea to take this lesson farther than just the classroom setting. When I got home, I took a black sharpie marker, the one with the extra large tip, and wrote my signature on literally everything that belonged to me. *Jessica Ashley Bloom* was written on the outside of my gray shuttered house. The lawn chairs were also a victim of my signature. Stuffed animals, toys, hats, clothes, literally everything I could find that I valued, I wrote on. Needless to say, when my parents saw their daughter's name in big letters on the house, they were astounded. I guess the teacher forgot to mention that we

should only write on school supplies that could easily get misplaced between the other kids in the classroom. Oops!

In third and fourth grade, teachers focused a lot on writing in cursive using black or blue pens. They had us using pens because they would know if we practiced writing for homework or not by how many mistakes we had on the paper. According to Caitlin Carpenter's article "Is this the end of cursive writing," 15 percent of students who wrote their essay [on a standardized test] in cursive did better than those who used some other type of handwriting. Now, I am thankful that my teachers emphasized cursive handwriting so much in grammar school.

When I went into middle school, I can remember my family got our first desktop computer. To me, this was the coolest thing in the world. Browsing the internet was the hottest thing to do. My favorite, however, was playing interactive games that had to do with math. I remember there was a robot that threw out times tables/fractions problems and I would have to get the answer correct before the time ran out in order to get a new piece of a puzzle. At the end, if I got all the puzzle pieces and put it together correctly, I won. This was also the time of dial-up cable modem. Now, I still laugh at the thought of waiting that long to connect to the server. At that time though, it was the fastest means of communication with others in cyberspace. This was also the time where email and instant messenger came into play. I got my first screen name and yahoo account. Daisyxo28 was the name I came up with so I could talk to my friends who also downloaded the instant messenger application. Back then, and still today, I spend much of my time communicating with my friends through instant messages.

For my eighth grade graduation my parents surprised me with a cell phone. It was made by Verizon and had a hot pink cover. It was also the size of a landline phone. It was huge! I did not start text messaging at first, because my parents were skeptical of how the whole system worked. However, after about six months, text messaging was exploding in middle schools everywhere. So, I obviously had to get texting.

Going into high school, the writing technology I used most was still the desktop computer, but the program was Microsoft Word. In addition to handwriting notes in class, I would also come home and type them out on the computer. For getting the neatest handwriting award in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, my writing in high school took a turn for the worse. I typed out most of my notes and also essays, poems, and stories that I wrote for school.

Toward the end of my senior year I got a laptop to go to college with. Unlike the household desktop, this was a portable utility that I could bring to the library to study, or just in the living room while I was watching TV. Still today, my laptop is my most prized possession. I have all my hard work stored on it since my freshman year of college. I would have to say at least 65% of my days are spent in front of the computer. A lot of this time, however, is taken up by facebook and myspace.

Before this class, I never thought of how writing technologies have shaped my life. Additionally, I never even knew how many different writing technologies there were. I only thought of pens, pencils, markers, etc... were categorized as writing technologies, not fingers, wood, shells, and all of the other previous things I have mentioned.

Overall, writing is a step by step process. In my opinion, the reason why writing technologies have been modified so much over the years is because our species is so concerned with the fastest means of communication possible. Take e-mail for example. We couldn't be satisfied with the traditional letter to someone; we needed a technology that sent the same information in a quicker way. Text messaging is also a result of wanting to communicate faster. So, in a world where people just get accustomed to a new technology, and then a new one is discovered, will we ever be complacent with the traditional pen and paper? Definitely not.

(Jim Porter's critique on my previous narration)

Jessica, after reading my article "Why technology matters to writing: A cyberwriter's tale" I would have hoped you to get the message that the computer per se is not the revolutionary technology. Also, the true art of writing exists apart from the machine; the can help or hinder the art, but is not essential to the art. You seem to be heavily relying on your laptop computer for everything. My advice to you, considering you want to be a teacher, is that you should shy away from your excessive computer usage and return to practicing handwriting. Maybe you can get back to the point in your life where your handwriting was neat, instead of typing out your notes. You know, teacher needs neat handwriting, and if you keep relying on the computer you will never get there. Don't get me wrong. The technological past does matter. It shapes who you are and also influences how you learn to compose and how you communicate in a social environment. I am certainly not saying to completely disregard the computer writing technology, I am just saying how you are going to influence children who are in middle school and you should just remember how at that age the computer did not matter that

much to you and you enjoyed many other writing technologies. So just remember to incorporate them into your curriculum since so many schools today are advocating the implementation of computers into classrooms today.

## Works Cited

Porter, (J). Why technology matters to writing: a cyberwriter's tale. 384-389.

Carpenter, (C).Is this the end of cursive writing? 1.