



The Luddite Librarian

"I fear the day technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots." **Albert Einstein**

Dear reader, you may deny this, but I know it is true! Every one of us has a bit of the Luddite within, and that means each of us has drawn a line in the sand, where technology goes too far for comfort or ethics, or perhaps its burden of expense upon our humanity is too great. Despite our reckonings, I admit, technology impacts our creativity, the true topic of this essay.

In an attempt to remove the grain from the chaff be reflective and identify the moments when you are most creative, and these may just be when you are rationalizing at work, that is, why you are late....again, or why your cubicle smells like Cheetos. The human mind has a grand capacity for spinning truths, for seeking gold from straw through spinning, and really, all this without technology.

There perhaps are two camps on this matter. If you are a creative individual, and you know you are if you have ever delivered your boss a lame excuse, you may prefer to do your imagining sans technology. I think of Beethoven walking in the Vienna woods for inspiration or Whitman lying in a glade or on a knoll simply listening and observing. Others must have the gadget to click.

All this tongue-in-cheek drivel is but a small hope that you will think on your dependence of tools and devices. The Luddite Librarian cannot hide behind words forever. I am, quite rightly, of multiple worlds. By day I am, as the moniker directs you to think, a librarian with limited passion and patience for innovation of any kind. But, when the clock has closed on the work day and I shed the cream colored sear sucker suit, my two tone shoes and ivory fedora, in times off

The Technophile

Each of us has, at some point, had a dream. The nature of those dreams allows our minds to wander to creative, inventive, extraordinary places. Some of those places are real, some have yet to be built.

As we move through our days, technology can enable us (did you have to wind your alarm clock last night?), to propel us quite literally forward (cars, trains, boats, planes), and facilitate our imaginations (CAD programs, word processing, music production software, and so many more).

While there are clear limits to the usefulness of the human infatuation with technology, to be a luddite is to resist forward momentum. And some resistance is meaningful, to be sure: just walk down a retail aisle of kitchen utensils and think about the prospect that some things become more cumbersome as they specialize. But remember that technology that is currently considered commonplace sometimes felt terrifying, unnecessary, odd, or extravagant to previous generations when those objects were encountered as cutting edge technologies. Like anything, it is meaningful to be mindful, but we must not resist technologies, concepts or creations merely on the premise that they are new. And there may be a limit on the luddite desire—people want to buy records, not velum or phonographs. We lost some sound quality when we moved to the durability, then portability and now digitally based music, film and photography, and people long for the rich experience of the sound produced by a record.

Samuel Morse was motivated to develop a new technology, the story goes, by the slow arrival of a letter that informed him that his wife was very sick. By the time he returned home by carriage to

and on weekends, I am a land manager with dirty fingernails in tattered work clothes. The point of this is I prefer the smaller tool, and ideally, the quiet hand tool. No one hears the crow caw or the pine sigh in a wind when the chainsaw is whirling. Yes, the handsaw and pruner are tools and technology, but are minimal intrusions upon nature. With those tools I am able to look up, to smell the fir and the blackberry, to hear the squirrel scolding, like me now, chattering. In short, I commune with nature, which possesses a voice that inspires creativity.

One may rub up against creativity playing a video game or watching a movie. I profess that a child's play world ought to be a tree or meadow, or a corn field, which was one of my playgrounds and which taught me more of geometry and visual perspective than any textbook. It is an underprivileged rearing indeed that does not include trees to climb, trees in which to learn the rudiments of paltry carpentry, and yes, trees to fall from. Certainly gravity is most effectively taught when one learns first hand. That first treehouse crafts a kingdom, perhaps a universe in which a child shapes self with a minimal amount of technology. Would Bart Simpson beso imaginative if not for his treehouse?

There is time enough to learn the artificial, cyber qualities of human existence. Creativity's seed is planted more readily in the wild, not vicariously in a Stratolounger. We must cast aside the gewgaws of modern society in selecting the best toys for sane and sensitive child development. May all of us retain the childlike in our personal lives, and compartmentalize the geek as an indentured servant of Big Boss Man.

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New Haven from Washington DC, she was dead and buried. Frustrated at the speed of long distance communication, Morse worked to develop the telegraph. He witnessed a clear problem and worked to solve it with new technology. He dreamt of a world where communication with his sick wife could have been more efficient. With that dream Morse changed the way we communicate. Email, text messaging, the telephone and cellular telephone all owe a debt of imagination to the telegraph. These technologies may not enhance creativity or intelligence, but they do certainly allow easier communication between people who are far away from each other.

While these technologies do not think for us, or even necessarily inspire our creativity, we can communicate, to move from thought to action, much more quickly than our grandparents' generation. Have we lost some imagination? I, dear reader, am not sure. I do believe that technologies have the power to inspire, to increase the length and quality of life, and to enable the realization of those creative moments, whether they came to you in a dream, on a walk in the woods, or while captivated by a screen.

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