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Distracting or Desperately Needed?

“Marigold? MARIGOLD!!” I suddenly realize that my roommate is yelling at me to come down to dinner. She has probably been calling for a good two minutes, but being absorbed in six different AIM conversations, I was simply too busy to hear her.

“You’re always talking on the computer and you don’t hear *anything*,” she complains when I finally make it down to the kitchen. All I can say is, she’s one to talk. She is the one who hyperventilates and starts screaming if our Roadrunner goes down. At least I can keep calm enough to head to one of the public computer labs and use their internet connection.

Ok, so this is somewhat of an exaggeration, but there is no denying that computers play an integral part in our society. They manufacture goods, calculate huge numbers in seconds, speed up our banking, and make it possible for me to type this essay the day that it is due. Computers also allow for the processing and distribution of the infinite amount of information that people feel obligated to share, and that others need. How would the guys on my floor last year have been able to play 12-person games of CounterStrike while still locked away in their individual rooms, if they had no computers that could share the required information?

Personally, I feel that as a college student in the United States there is no way around a certain dependence on computers. The requirements of most of my courses make it imperative that I have access to the internet. Many professors post important announcements and assignments online, and without that connection I would have a hard time keeping up with my classmates. If I refused to use the services provided online, the professors would have to prepare individual copies of all those important documents, just

for me. If you have met some of my teachers you know that is not going to happen. In some cases, I would rather jump off the Sentinel, than ask for special treatment.

Also, as I hinted earlier, computers make writing a good deal easier. An astonishing amount of time is saved by typing rather than hand writing, and once a document is typed on the computer, multiple copies of it can be made (so, joy of joys, the entire campus can be littered with innumerable copies of Gracie's Dinnertime Theatre every single week). A typed document also looks sleeker and more professional, making it the obvious choice for business correspondence, essays, and reports.

Email provides for speedy communication, which can be important for those in the professional world, and also for college students who naturally have no time to talk on the phone with Mom, or send Grandma a handwritten birthday card. Of course email also makes it possible for you to receive 8 different advertisements for unspeakable websites in the span of 30 seconds.

As spam email demonstrates, there are certainly unfortunate aspects to a computerized society. Computers are distracting because they give access to a wide array of entertainment. By going online, people can play intense games, watch movies, find music, and take 8 billion different personality tests that afford such worthwhile information as what Care Bear you are. Or, they consider themselves high above that internet junk, they can be perfectly satisfied with the random games that come with their computer platform. These games afford welcome breaks, like the one I took from this essay to play a quick game of Spider Solitaire. I swear I don't do it too much. I can tell when it gets out of hand, because sometimes I can still see the cards rearranging themselves in my mind even after the computer is off and I am lying in bed.

Now in talking about distractions, one cannot forget INSTANT MESSENGER. Hooray! Now people can talk to each other all the time without ever having to go outside! When chatting online, it often does not occur to someone that the outdoors might be a nice thing to glimpse once in a while. And AIM allows people to forgo tact, restraint and politeness. Your boyfriend can take advantage of the fact that even though you are typing that lab report at midnight and it is due at nine o'clock the next morning, you won't ignore him IMing you, even though he would never have the nerve to call or knock at the door at this hour.

So we boil this down to the question: could I live without a computer? Well of course I could *live*. I don't plan to stop breathing if some gargantuan power surge suddenly sizzles my laptop's circuits. I do think I could function without a computer of my own. However, I believe I would need access to other computers to treat my withdrawal – I mean – so I could use useful programs such as Word and mycourses. To achieve the goals I have set for myself as a college student at RIT, working with computers seems inevitable. I would like to ponder this thought for a while, but right now I'm kind of tired, so I think I will lie down and fall asleep by counting the little Solitaire cards that are jumping around in my brain.