

Technology craze destroying social interactions

by Alanna Goldstein
The Silhouette
(McMaster University)

HAMILTON, O.N. (CUP) -- If you have watched any television in the last couple of weeks, you may have noticed a commercial for the latest piece of cell phone technology on the market. As if having multiple personalized ring tones and constant access to the Internet weren't enough, now cell phones are channeling television through their tiny screens.

I used to be one of these cell phone junkies: pulling it out every few minutes to check the time, to check for messages, anxiously jumping every time I heard a ring or felt a vibration, wondering if, this time, the call was for me. So silly really, but it reflects our desire to be constantly connected, and our fear of being out of touch.

The commercial for this stupid product says it all. The ad

features digitized cartoon characters wandering around, watching the hockey game on their cell phones, and shows them running into things, walking into elevator shafts and just generally ignoring one another as they go about their daily business.

Maybe this sounds a bit extreme, but what good can possibly come of individuals watching television on their cell phones?

I'm sure that there are lots of television freaks out there who love the idea that they can watch their favourite episode of the O.C. at any given moment.

After all, what is the point of living if we don't know how Ryan and Marisa break up this week? But in a society that is already so fragmented, where people fly through their daily routines, barely breaking their stride to avoid other pedestrians and rarely making eye contact as they attempt to exist within their own little bubbles, why do we need yet another piece of technology that only encour-

ages this individual alienation?

Are we so afraid to actively participate in our environment that we would rather escape to the make-believe world of television, even when out in public?

The Walkman phenomenon was the first indication of where individual technology would take us. With its arrival, we were suddenly able to physically exist within a certain space while mentally drifting away to a world in which we were the only inhabitants. No need to actively engage ourselves in our world by listening to the sounds around us, so long as we were capable of physically navigating our space.

But now with the advent of this new piece of technology, individuals are not going to be able to accomplish even this much.

As the commercial suggests, we are all going to be ignoring each other's physical presence, cell phone in hand, earphones blocking out any outside distractions, existing entirely within a world of

our own choosing. How nice.

We will never have to talk to or look at anyone else. We can be complete individuals, avoiding any of those annoying social interactions that help to create a cohesive society.

After all, why have a relationship with another human being when you could have one with a piece of technology? Other humans are demanding and frustrating. They make us question our ideas and ourselves; they force us to be empathetic and understanding.

Relationships with humans are hard work and there is no guarantee that they will be mutually satisfying.

Material goods however, give without demanding anything in return. They supply easy answers, bring fleeting moments of happiness, and give us a sense of identity that would be much more difficult to attain if we attempted to build it through our interactions with one another and the world.

Yes, we are lucky to live in an era of such technological success. We can become virtual robots, mediating all of our experiences to our own satisfaction so as to never suffer a moment of unhappiness in the imperfection of the real world.

If we are so desirous of constant pacification, we ought to forget about leaving our homes altogether, strap ourselves into our computers, and let technology fill in for our senses.

Remember the Matrix my friends; here is where it begins.



The wanderings and thoughts of Kip Kellogg

by Vin Doctor

Kip Kellogg had trouble sleeping. Kip could never fall asleep. He'd lay there for a spell, just thinking, then Kip would get right up. He'd pull on his pants, find his dirty sneakers, and go wandering into the night. Trying to find that something, that something that would make real sense.

Kip wandered over a couple of streets, then came to a magazine stand. He wasn't all that interested in buying one, but he figured he'd have a peek anyway. Kip looked through the first few, but all he saw were pictures of celebrities. So he took a few from the back row, and gave those a glance, but they were the same as the others. Just articles and stories about famous individuals or movie stars or whatever. Then Kip realized that every magazine on the rack was pretty much the same thing, and that didn't make sense to him. It made him think that people were more interested in other people's lives than they were about living their own. So Kip put the magazines back and continued on his walk.

He preferred that to Hollywood.

Kip walked a few more minutes, then took a break and leaned up against a wall. As he was standing there, he suddenly heard the roar of an engine, and then a car came flying by, full of teenagers who were screaming and yelling. One of them leaned out the window, and fired a beer bottle right at Kip's head. Kip managed to duck right before it hit him, and the bottle smashed up against the wall. Kip was covered with beer, and there was glass all over the sidewalk. The kid driving honked his horn over and over again, and they sped off down the road. Kip got up off the ground, and wiped the beer and glass off his coat. Then he looked over in the direction of the speeding car, and he just shook his head. In a way, he actually felt sorry for them. Odds were they'd be in real trouble by the end of the night, or maybe even worse. It was always the same with teenagers, figured Kip. They all think they're going to live forever.

Kip was pretty upset after that, so he bought some bread and went to feed the ducks in the little pond he always visited. The ducks were still there, and Kip was

still surprised to see them out at night. He tossed them the food, and watched as they swam over and gobbled it up. Kip always liked animals. There was something about them that made him feel calm. Maybe it was because animals were innocent, and didn't judge you or look down at you. Maybe it was because they didn't want anything from you, or try to use you or take things from you. Whatever the reason was, Kip felt better when he was around them. They always made him see things in a much better light, and he always appreciated them for that.

Kip finished feeding the ducks, and thanked them for calming him down. Then he wandered across the street and walked past a mailbox. As he did he noticed an old man, who was trying to mail a package that was way too big for the mailbox. Kip stopped him, and told him that he needed to go to the Post Office. The old man seemed confused, and just stared at him. So Kip explained that the package wouldn't fit inside the mailbox, and that it had to be sent in a special way by the people at the Post Office. This time the man seemed to understand, and

he walked off very slowly. Kip felt sorry for the old timer, and figured his mind might be going. It reminded Kip of another old guy he had once known, several years back. His name was Mr. Rotenzi, and he used to run the corner store next to where Kip went to school. He was a nice guy, and used to talk to Kip all the time. But then, his wife died, and he had trouble speaking after that. He'd just stay inside the store all the time, sitting behind the counter. It was a very sad thing, but what happened next was even worse. One night the store got robbed, and because Mr. Rotenzi had trouble speaking, he didn't tell them where the safe was, so they shot him six times. Kip had cried when he heard about Mr. Rotenzi being dead. It was something he wouldn't forget. It was a terrible thing they had done to him. They shot an old man just because he was too sad to talk.

Kip now felt worse again, so he wandered back into the city to see if anything would cheer him up. He looked in through several store windows, but nothing seemed to work. He really wanted to end the night on a good thought, but

it didn't look like it was going to happen. Kip even thought about feeding the ducks again, but figured they had gone to sleep by now anyway. He just couldn't stop thinking about Mr. Rotenzi, so he couldn't cheer up. Kip had pretty much decided to go home at that point, but before he did he passed a store selling television sets. As he did he saw a commercial that had an old couple holding hands, and it made Kip think about Mr. Rotenzi and his wife. Maybe, thought Kip, that was them right now. Maybe, if there was a heaven, they were together again at last. Kip didn't know if it was true, but he certainly hoped it. There may not be fairness in this world, but maybe there was another place where it existed for everyone. If that was the case, it made sense to Kip. In fact, it made real sense. He just hoped that heaven truly existed. He really hoped it wasn't just a dream.

Finally Kip went home, undressed and went to bed. He closed his eyes against his pillow, and tried to sleep like the rest of the world.

But sadly, Kip couldn't sleep. Like always, he was wide awake.

The Brunswickan

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21 Pacey Drive, SUB Suite 35
Fredericton, NB, E3B 5A3
main office • (506) 447-3388
advertising • (506) 452-6099
fax • (506) 453-5073
email • bruns@unb.ca
web • www.unb.ca/bruns

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

STUDENT UNION

STUDENT UNION BUILDING

TELL YOUR PROFS WHAT YOU THINK

On-line course evaluations will go from 00:01am on November 17 until 11:59pm on December 7. Login to "My E-Services" to tell your prof what you think about their teaching. Student feedback helps instructors develop their tradecraft in that it gives them an honest assessment from a student's perspective. Let your voice be heard.

LOOKING FOR STUDENTS WHO KNOW THE DEBATES

Students need to be on the cutting edge of student-academic issues. Want to help your fellow students get up to speed? Need excellent resume experience? The SU, in partnership with Student Affairs and Services, needs students who are interested in helping other students understand their academic rights and responsibilities. The training session will be held November 18, SUB 103, from 11:30am-1pm. Contact academic@unb.ca, or langmaid@unb.ca

ENGLISH CORNER CAFE

"The English Corner" will go live November 17 and 21, in SUB 103 @ 7pm. Sit down with a cup of something and help people out with their English language skills. Questions? Contact academic@unb.ca or sonam.maekey.penfor@unb.ca

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STUDENT HOME HEATING REBATE

Some students will qualify for the provincial home heating oil benefit that provides a one-time, extraordinary home heating oil refund of up to \$200. To be eligible, applicants' 2004 income must be less than \$45,000, and home heating oil must have been purchased to heat the principal place of residence. Applicants must have been NB residents on December 31, 2004, and must not be in receipt of regular monthly income assistance. When applying, individuals will have to provide proof of eligibility.

Application forms for oil heating rebates are available throughout the province at Service New Brunswick (SNB) offices; online at www.snb.ca and www.gnb.ca, Keyword: Finance; or by mail from the Department of Finance, Revenue and Taxation Division, P.O. Box 3000, Centennial Building, Fredericton, N.B., E3B 5G5. For more information, call 1-800-669-7070, 8:15am to 10pm, Monday to Friday, and 10am to 5pm, Saturday.

STUDENTS, BE ADVISED

The University Administration and faculty union, the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers (AUNBT), have been negotiating a new Collective Agreement since their last contract expired.

Until this point, they have not signed a new agreement. Students are advised that a work stoppage is one possible outcome in this situation.

Your SU is actively monitoring the situation, and will keep you informed as it progresses. We sincerely hope that their new Collective Agreement will be signed without any work stoppage, however, we recognize that this is a possibility and are taking steps to prepare.

If you have any questions, please email academic@unb.ca or external@unb.ca. SU Council meetings are held every Wednesday in SUB 103 at 6pm. All students are encouraged to attend.

EXAM DATABASE

Unfortunately, this amazing resource is still under construction, and will not be ready to help you until next semester at the earliest. If you'd like to speed up the process, you can help by emailing your old tests/exams to academic@unb.ca, or drop them off at SUB Room 126.