

Technology Tips

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PC vs. Mac- The Last Great Holy War

Over the last ten years or so when I've really become aware of the "brand" wars between PC's and Macs (on a professional level anyway), I've noticed that there's an irrationality that sets the two sides apart in more ways than just productivity or functionality. My system is better than yours is getting to be a bit old here folks. Since that's the case AND I keep getting asked for my opinion about which is really better for the purposes of a school community, I'll say this...BOTH

Let me clarify for you now folks. I suppose you could say that the whole argument is very similar to knowing what kind of saw to you might use when you're cutting wood for things as diverse as fire wood or finish work on pieces of furniture. For instance, you certainly wouldn't want to use a rip saw for finish work. The same thing has held true for the uses of PC's and Macs up until very recently.

Until the last few years or so, it was clearly evident that each of the platforms had their own

strengths and weaknesses. PC's for instance have always held more sway with productivity applications like word processing and spreadsheets where Macs have traditionally been used more in graphics, audio, and video editing.



As I said, in the last few years the development of software and various upgrades to operating systems have made the gaps in performance of these tasks negligible to the average user. An example of this sort of thing is the launch of the new [Windows 7](#) operating system from Microsoft. To be fair, many of the improvements that have been made with this system have yet to face the

test of time with the general public (although it has been beta tested for quite some time).

Here's a small excerpt from a review of Windows 7

"Where Vista felt like a sprawling mess, Windows 7 has patched up the holes and feels like a tight, unified mechanism. It's hardly full of surprises, but that's usually a good thing when it comes to operating systems. If you've never been a Windows person, there's hardly anything here that will change your mind about that. However, most human beings on this planet have some sort of interaction with Windows on a regular basis, whether by choice or necessity, and Windows 7 is great news for those millions of souls.

Instead of switching up the formula, Windows 7 is really an extension and a refinement of the true tenets of Windows (that we just made up): broad hardware compatibility, coatings of usability over deep functionality, and a "everything for everybody" approach to feature sets and

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Making it work for us-Do's and don'ts of techie stuff at Commerce Pt 3

Archiving E-Mail

The reasons for doing this are very clear folks. We discussed them last issue and I told you I would be getting very specific about how to archive your materials (email and attachments) this time out. Anyway, let's get on with it.

What we'll talk about first is a method for use with MS Outlook (for teachers using email functions on their desktop as opposed to Outlook Express which is the web based version)

1. The first thing you need to do is know which files are indeed ones you should be saving. Let's just say that they are:

ANYTHING coming from the City of Springfield, ANYTHING coming from the School Department's Central Office. The rest is certainly at your discretion although I would tend to lean toward saving stuff from Content Supervisors, Principals, AP's (Assistant Principals), and Department Chairs as well.

2. The next thing you need to do is create a folder that is named "email" on your desktop

3. Inside that folder please create a folder called "rcd" (received). Within this folder you'll be able to put all the email you've received from your "Inbox". I'm sure there are those of you who

will want to separate your messages up even further into various categories. By all means, go ahead. This is a system by which you have complete control and subsequently need to customize it to your own needs so you can find things easily.

4. Also inside the "email" folder, create a "sent" folder. If you write a great deal of email in response to, or as a product of, your work with your colleagues and students here at the good ol' HSofC (or anywhere else I suppose for those of you who might be reading this in other schools throughout the district) you'll

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Stuff To Know

ALL THE FOLLOWING ARE AVAILABLE IN B-010

- I am available to co-plan, co-teach, and work out just about any other method for the integration of technology in your classroom. I am a good resource for ideas and inspiration when you find yourself in a bind trying to find an activity that will make the most appropriate connection with a lesson.
- Schedule a time to get trained for the use of the laptop carts.

No training = No laptop cart use.

- The Springfield Public Schools has a district license for...

GradeKeeper

Please stop by B155 for details

- E-mail and MassOne accounts are a necessary part of what we do these days. If you don't have either one, please stop by B155 and sign up for them.
- If you're planning on the use of lap top carts, please reserve one as early as you can. Also, please be considerate of the needs of your colleagues when planning the length of time you'll need the cart you'll be using.

PC vs. Mac- The Last Great Holy War

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SKUs. With such broad aims, and such a diverse userbase, it's no wonder that there are plenty of spots where the OS still falls short, but taken as a whole it's clear that Microsoft has taken a strong step forward with Windows 7."

Miller, Paul. (2009, August 12). Windows 7-a review. Engadget, Retrieved from <http://www.engadget.com/2009/08/12/windows-7-review>

In any case, I could go on for another few years on the whole "My machine is better than your machine" thing. Here are a few links to get you started with some of the research to help you decide which side of the fence you'd like to be on. IMHO (In My Humble Opinion) either way, you win.

1. [Lifehacker-Mac OS X vs. Windows 7](#)
2. [Hasta la Vista, baby: Ars reviews Windows 7](#)
3. [Windows 7 on Wikipedia](#)

"Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. "

Henry David Thoreau

Making it work for us-

Do's and don'ts of techie stuff at Commerce Pt 3

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certainly want to think about separating your correspondence as you did in your "red" folder.

5. When you have both your "red" (or "sent") folder and MS Outlook opened, right click on the files you want to archive and drag them into the appropriate location in the folders you've just created.
6. CAUTION!!!! Before you delete the files from your MS Outlook "Inbox", make sure all the files have been properly saved in the appropriate folders.
7. If everything checks out (and there's no reason it shouldn't), then delete the files you've just copied from your inbox in MS Outlook. Repeat the process with your other files on the Outlook Exchange server (Sent files and the like once you have a place to put them.

Mind you, this is only one way of archiving. There may be protocols coming out soon and I will make sure that you all have them as soon as I have them available. Until then this should suit your needs. There will be more next issue.

DonorsChoose.org-"Ask and ye shall receive"

You know ladies and gentlemen, there are precious few wells we can go to again and again for resources. This "well" is more of a fountain for us. There are a number of projects right here at Commerce that have already been funded through this group of people trying to help out specific classrooms with specific needs.

The best way to re-introduce these folks to you is by using their own words taken directly from their site...

"Our system allows you to find what you need online, and you choose the exact materials you need for YOUR classroom.

Next, you'll aim to inspire donors by describing what you need, why you need it, and how your project will change your students' lives for the better.

Donors Choose

Every day projects are funded on our site, and yours could be next!

Word to the wise: projects under \$400 have the best chance of being funded.

Check back often – a donor may leave a personal message for you and your classroom letting you know why he or she chose to give to your project.

Send thanks

If (dare we say when?) your project is funded, we ship the materials straight to your school.

In return, you and your students

will write thank-you letters and take photographs of the project in action. We'll share your thanks with your donors, who love to see the impact of their gifts!"

One of the chapters of this group is run right here in Springfield! The Springfield Public Schools Alumni Gift Project was started by a group of really nice folks from the Classical High Class of '57 in 2008 and continues to help teachers today.

These folks want to help us work with our kids in a tangible way. Let's work with them and see if we can put together the sorts of classrooms we envision for the students. All it takes to start is one step folks.

Donors Choose



Some interesting prospects-Sites to check out

Because I'm a smart man and have the incredible good fortune to have an equally smart wife (although she'd probably say smarter and many times I'd agree), I recognize that there are times when we have to investigate some of the interesting web sites we find even further.

This weekend Terry was leafing through one of the magazines her mom Rita shares with her. While this certainly isn't unusual by any means, finding several pages worth of educational links for sites that offer everything from resource sites and search engines to social networks built around "learning math and math-based subjects like statistics, chemistry, and engineering" (1) in one of them is certainly welcome IMHO. I got back here to the good ol' HSofC Monday morning and looked through the pages Terry had so kindly torn out of the magazine for me. Here are some of the sites that perked my interest:

BibMe.com-creates bibliographies in whatever format (APA,MLA, Chicago, Turabian) needed. It's a free service and requires signing up. Well worth the time.

Cramster.com-This is, according to one

of their site descriptions "an online study community that offers homework help for math, science, engineering, and business classes by providing resources to accelerate and strengthen the learning process. The community is made up of high school and college students, educators, parents, and subject enthusiasts with the common goal of sharing information and helping students excel in their classes.". You can't say better than that.

Evernote.com- "makes it easy to remember things big and small from your notable life using your computer, phone, and the web. Get started today with a free account." Their site is just what it says it is in the description by creating digital notes for your ideas, pictures, scans, and quite a number of other files you want to keep in note form.

While none of these have been "officially" approved by the district, there is certainly room for all of us to investigate these resources and make recommendations for the future. Give them a look and make some observations. Once you do, let me know and I'll give the powers that be your opinions.

Research- What it is & how to use it Part II

In our last issue we spoke about what research is and what it is not. It was made perfectly clear that research is, because of the nature of our students and the resources available to them today, dynamic.

Today things are far from the dry and fairly dull experience it used to be back in the pre-internet days where students actually went to a library and pored over books of incredibly unreadable gibberish that generally did more to confuse the student than enlighten them. Today information is even more accessible to us than when Mr. Scott tried to access a computer for information on transparent aluminum and had to use a keyboard instead of voice activation and said, "How quaint" (Star Trek IV-The Voyage Home).

Since this is obviously the case, we have to stop saying things like, "Our students don't have access to computers" and "Our kids don't have the skills to do this". First and foremost, they do on both counts. Is it difficult to get to a location where computers are available during hours when school is not in session? Yes. Nobody ever said this was easy all the time. There are centers around Springfield that do provide access to computers. Some of

these include:

[The Springfield Public Libraries](#)
[Dunbar Community Center](#)

as well as all public schools. Obviously during the week either before or after school is best, but remember, there are always ways to set up a time for access when you're here at school.

Thinking in terms of just being able to log into the information and where to go is just the start of the journey we'll be taking in our journey to understanding research using the technologies associated with the web. As I said earlier, things are considerably different in terms of the body of knowledge that we can call on in an instant with little more than a cursory understanding of keywords. Our problem isn't so much being able to access it as it is understanding what we should be looking at in

relation to whatever it is we want to do. That being said, we should be worrying more about what the answer should be instead of trying to find it.

Very simply put, we need to understand the questions being asked so that when we do "see" the answer, we can recognize the facts for what

they are and apply them in an answer to our problem. Sounds simple right? In addition to this being the biggest reason our students don't even bother to answer open response questions on the MCAS and DBA's, this is the reason that so many of them say "I'd like to do my research paper on teen violence".

Just by entering the phrase "teen violence" into Google, I got over 14 million hits in about 1.7 seconds. That information, forgetting about the non-electronic resources we all want our students to use, is enough to help them research several volumes of a book, not a 5-10 page paper.

Even if we were to narrow the focus down to an essay of 500 words in answer to the question, "Discuss the motivations of the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence for contributing the passages they did and collaborating with Thomas Jefferson as they relate to the sentiments of British Loyalists." we still have a significant quandary about what to write as the topic itself is enormous. So, is the problem with our questioning techniques or with the facility of our students to answer them?

The answer is, both. Our question techniques have to become better, in addition to our student's ability to answer critical thinking questions. In order for the facilitation of improved research practices for our students to improve without lower standards, we have to develop our own questioning techniques in order to support leading the development of critical thinking skills.

"It is better to deserve honors and not have them than to have them and not to deserve them."

Mark Twain

And so gentle readers...

It's been a number of years since I've been back to Merry Old England for a visit, but this past weekend as the Patriots and Buccaneers played at Wembly Stadium, I was reminded of how much I've missed since I was there last.

Oh I'm sure that the "kebab" (pita bread filled with shaved beef or lamb and veggies topped with something that's similar tzatziki) guy who was right outside Victoria Station was long gone (he was about 150 years old when I was there). Although I'm quite sure that the pubs we used "crawl" were still operating, I'd be willing to bet that Millie from the "chip shop" 'round the corner off of Buckingham Palace Road (A main drag in that area) had moved on simply because the way I hear it, there's all kinds of gyms and fitness places around the area now.. In any case, I know that things have changed since I was there oh, these many years ago, but it would have been nice to experience the city with a few bucks in my pocket rather than taking trains from one end of the country to the other instead of staying in a B&B or a youth hostel.

Being a student, we were considerably

less uptight about things like food and drink back then. We ate and drank what we wanted. Of course, we also walked a lot of it off during the day too. I suppose we were kinda indestructible back then

Of course, the food in England wasn't what I wanted to talk to you about. I wanted to mention how much it seems as if one of my very favorite places has changed from the nice black and white, warm and fuzzy, analog version of itself into a veritable high-def, glam and glitz Euro-Disney shopping mall. It's as if the Dickensian, Sherlock Holmes London has given way to the worst nightmares of Orwell and Welles and become a digitized clone of every other great city in the "modern world".

Think about all the truly wonderful writing that came out of England, from about the early 1800's up until J.K. Rowling. It would amaze me if Austin Powers would want to live in the London of today rather than the swingin' Sixties (yeah baby).

What would the kids growing up listening to The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Kinks, Cream, Led Zeppelin and Blind Faith have done? How would we have gotten to appreciate how truly good American rock and roll is if we hadn't had

all this 80's rubbish from groups like Flock of Seagulls, Bananarama, Culture Club, and Duran Duran.

But even more disturbing was my contemplation of the imagery that was evoked by Mary Shelley in her ever-a-grand-bring-it-out-at-Halloween-classic **Frankenstein**. How would I have gotten in the mood with that one or with the Bram Stoker (even though he was, in fact, Irish) classic **Dracula** if I had the images of Trafalgar Square lit up like Vegas? How would I ever have known the sheer joy of the "game being afoot" in **The Hound of the Baskervilles** by Doyle if not for the aforementioned "nice black and white, warm and fuzzy, analog version" of London.

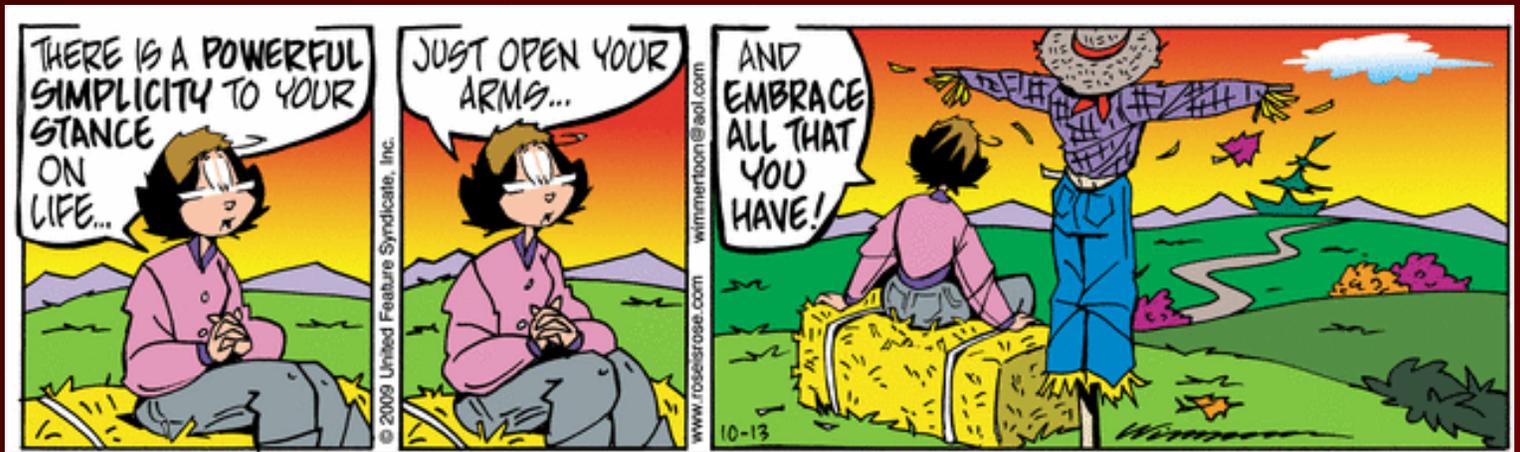
In any case, it was still nice to see The Tower, Tower Bride, Big Ben, The Houses of Parliament and the Patriots kicking some backsides even though I'll still remember .



Life Lessons in Imagery

Those of you who've been following this section of the "Tech Tips" over the last several years are fully aware that I've been showing that images we see everyday in newspapers and all sorts of other media are snapshots of life and that the comics we see are certainly excellent examples of this. Every day there are teachable moments to be found throughout the articles in the newspaper, and yet, somehow we neglect to include the gentle humor of Charles Schultz's "Peanuts" or the sometimes not-so-gentle reminders of our "common humanity" from artists like Tom Batuik and Gary Trudeau. I'll be mixing it up this year by giving you as much as we can without violating the "fair use" tenets of copyright laws as they apply in educational situations. Enjoy and share!!!

Ed Musiak



Rose is Rose By Don Wimmer; Created by Pat Brady



Dilbert By Scott Adams