

Chris's Corner: The Risk of Technology

It's pretty remarkable what we all can do in our everyday lives because of computer technology. The kids of today don't give it a second thought as it has been a part of their lives from day one.

Movies on demand, video games, digital music players, computers and smart phones, could any of us, over the age of 50, have imagined the wonders of modern technology?

Have a question? Google it. You can get answers right here, right now from a device in the palm of your hand! What's an encyclopedia?

Want to know how to repair something, cook something or make something? Search for a video on YouTube.

I don't know about you all, but sometimes I find myself wondering what this reliance on technology does to our brain function. Do you think, that over time, as you rely more on tech and less on brain that your brain is being rewired to farm out some of its data processing to computers?

Think about what the advent of the calculator did to our abilities to perform simple arithmetic. How about spelling words?

I remember a few years back, the mother board on my pc went out and my hardware company had a heck of a time sourcing a replacement and I was without a pc for several days. I was trying to manage my business and personal life on a smart phone, I got by, but I really noticed a sort of mental fog and physical withdrawal from my limited connectivity.

It's the same feeling we get when we leave home without our phones, a sort of nakedness, as if we aren't fully dressed.

Because of the reliance on these devices we have all figured out to back up our data and have redundant systems so that when something fails we have a means to recover and get back online. Hopefully we have learned.

With computers we are slowly moving away from the “printed” word. Books, magazines, legal files, manuals, you name it, are all being digitized overtime and eventually hard copies of anything will be a thing of the past.

What happens when we no longer have printed records and everything is stored digitally on your hard drive and it goes bad?

At one time Iraq was the technological and intellectual capital of the ancient world. Genghis Khan and the Mongols invaded, killing millions of inhabitants but just as horrifying they destroyed every book, paper and written record in the land. They say the rivers were black with ink because what they didn't burn they threw in the river. Iraq, according to many historians, has never recovered from the loss of their records and intellectual property. True story.

So as we go digital, we are at a risk for losing the human record. What happens if we take it step further and hedge our bets by storing in the cloud? What happens if everything is stored in Google servers and other cloud servers and a catastrophic electromagnetic blast, either naturally occurring or in the form of some weapon, wipes out our digital records?

We would be back in the Stone Age without original hard copies. Something to think about as all of us relies more and more on technology to get by.