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Essay

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A year ago I hated computers and I was convinced they hated me. I really had no reason to like them, anyway. We didn't have one at home (and still don't). I wasn't into video games, and if I ever needed a paper typed, my mom offered the lowest price per page around.

I think the thing I hated even more was the computer whiz who sat behind me in statistics. Of course, he had his life-size Hewlett Packard that could calculate the standard deviation of a bacteria colony in a second but that takes you an hour just to figure out how to turn it on. The disgusting thing about this guy was that computers had taken over his mind. I honestly thought he had magazine centerfolds of Macs and IBMs on his bedroom walls. He totally dissuaded me from ever becoming interested in computers. And the thought of finding him alone in a computer lab scared me!

A lot can happen in a year though. My life was changed in that amount of time. It was in college that I discovered electronic mail, better known as e-mail. A couple of my friends from home insisted that I get an e-mail account once I got to school. I shuddered at the thought, because I had seen what an account, so reluctantly I went with her to register.

Before I knew it I was sitting in front of a computer screen revealing to this machine my full name, social security number and date of birth. As if this wasn't bad enough, I had to come up with a user name. This is like a nickname between me and the computer or something. (All I knew was that this was getting too casual, too comfortable.) And it couldn't be just any user name. This name I would have to keep for the rest of my college career—and who knows how long that will be! Talk about pressure. At the very least, I should have received some warning. They should tell you when you get your acceptance letter from the university to start thinking about your user name. That at least would have given me some time to make the decision.

As I peeked over to see if my roommate had come up with anything, I was terrified to see her look back at me with the same pained expression! Defeatedly I typed in my nickname from back home. All creativity had left me, and that was the only thing I could think of.

Then came the password. Hadn't I been through enough? As I wiped away the beads of perspiration from my forehead, I searched for the perfect password. The ultimate, unbreakable, unguessable password.

Of course, I picked a word that even that guy on "Get Smart" could have figured out. At least it was over. I was registered, and I left swearing I never wanted to see a computer again. (Besides, I had to wait a day before I could send anything.)

When I thought the worst was over, I realized I now had to learn how to use e-mail. I found out that there's never just one way to do anything on a computer. Every function can be done at least three different ways.

I went to the help room, with all the brochures and easy learning guides for beginners. I was determined to master this. Looking back, I am surprised at my ambition toward the whole thing. I must have been delirious from the registration ordeal!

Something must have changed, because my roommate and I found ourselves writing on e-mail until 1:30 or 2:00 a.m. sometimes. It got so bad that instead of talking to each other, we would send each other messages from across the lab. We were hooked.

Now, one would think that I would realize how much time I was spending on the computer and that I would wise up and budget my time better. One would think that, yes, but before I knew it my roommate was bringing her computer to school, and my hopes of leading an e-mail-free life were lost.

Having a computer in my room was probably good for everyone, though. Once, after walking across campus to the computer lab and finding that all of the computers were being used, I found myself torn between just waiting for the next available computer and pretending to have an epileptic seizure. I thought that with the seizure, when the first person either got out of his chair to help me or just to get out of my way, I would miraculously regain control and dive for the chair, as if the dive were my last convulsion and the chair just happened to catch me! A computer in my room not only saved me the trek across campus, but I think it saved the psychiatric ward from sending someone out after me!

I must argue that my addiction to e-mail is justified. I mean, who cannot love the system which lets you write as many letters as you like, to as many people as you want, anytime you want, for a fraction of a campus computer fee? Is the United States government aware of this? Maybe this is the reason the price of postage is going to have to be raised. All I know is that e-mail is faster than any mail carrier I have ever seen, and I don't have to lick anything to use it! Need I say more?

I tried to fight it. I never wanted to like something associated with computers as much as I do. It just happens. I thought that in order to enjoy computers I had to be like that computer maniac in my statistics class. But I think I am safe—I still do not know how to work a Hewlett Packard.

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