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Leaving the Books Behind

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Leaving the Books Behind

by **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (University of South Carolina, School of Library and Information Science, Columbia, SC) <MMassey@gwm.sc.edu>

Dr. Feili Tu, my professor at USC in Research, recently told me about a book she felt I must read. The reference was to **Sherry Turkle's *The Second Self***, published in 1984 by **Simon and Schuster**. I was unsure why this particular recommendation had been made to me until I curled up with the book after the final class and papers were completed. This text examines the culture "of and created by" the advent of the computer. **Dr. Turkle** actually looks at how the computer has influenced our lives and changed our psyches forever.

Machines have always influenced our lives, giving us more leisure time to do things of pleasure or waste. I don't remember ever reading a book about how people react to a "thinking" machine and how it enhances or changes the way you think, act and emote on a daily basis. She calls the computer a "catalyst of culture formation." We are combining and recombining into groups of intense interests. We seek answers to problems and seek new ways of dealing with information, people, and processes. It has been a rebirth of the sixties, an intense intellectual examination era. Our new horizons soar to thoughts of "knowledge cooperatives" instead of "food cooperatives." We now think of computers as not only a means to an end, but a mind expanding way to visualize life and all of its retinue of difficulties.


I often wondered why I never fit into any particular group or discipline. Recently, I have understood that my mind flits about the world like a butterfly looking for a tidbit of information here and a bit of data there and sampling the world's crops of knowledge. Slowly, my mind pieces together those bits of information into reasonable streams of sensible answers for specific problems. Not only do I find the current difficulties solvable, but there are insinuations for further exploration along those lines. The computer loosens the barriers of my thoughts and allows it to explore so many problems and solutions and eventually conjoins even the strays of my ideas tossed in the air. I feel emancipated...free to think and feel and believe again.

About six years ago, I had a small stroke. All I could do was sit there and feel ineptitude ooze across my mind like a veil of darkness. I could no longer read English and understand it. The page was a series of printed symbols which no longer held meaning. At first I panicked, then lapsed into immediate depression, then became pensive about where we go from here. I was able to obtain a computer through the generosity of a merchant and began a systematic rehabilitation based on the computer, its thought patterns and its games. I was fool, therapist and patient in one, but I made very rapid improvement and began to read again. I had this kind of internal understanding, but expression of those thoughts took longer to achieve. Three years later, I was able to make my way hesitantly into

Graduate School. I was eager to learn. I could finally understand my passion for information research and my ability to translate that knowledge to the general public. I have a gift that I would not have understood without my daily conversations with the computer. The "thinking machine" provides me with an ability to examine all the situations around me, re-associate their meanings and parameters and come to some very original ideas that can help our library and perhaps those of the future.

The computer allows us to find our strengths and correct our weaknesses. It allows us the ability to explore all ideas, even those that seem strange or off-the-wall. It supports our adventures even when people around us do not. I remember buying my first computer. Well, actually, my husband bought it because he had a fascination for mechanical devices. I found it an immediate intrusion on my life, a competitor for my husband's attentions. I stroked it everyday but kept my distance. One day, I sat down, turned it on, and began a communion that has intensified each day of my life. Sometimes I believe it is the machine which puts life in my fingers. Perhaps, it is because I have been a person reliant upon touching and feeling the words and sounds of life, that this computer has enhanced that ability to once again communicate my unbound thoughts. Poetry flows with a power that impresses. Fiction seems to run from my fingertips with each touch of the keys. And now, I am able to conjure process changes for work and develop lists of routine instructions that actually make sense.

I cannot even begin to think about my library work without the computer. Yes, I remember the "good 'ole days" of card catalogs, manual typewriters, scrapers, electric erasers, embossers, pens, pencils, rulers, and even the first days of photocopiers. I remember the labor inten-

sive days which never allowed the freedom to spend time wondering about call number construction and subject headings, or the variety of serials problems. We would not have had the opportunity to set up electronic preprint libraries, worry about vendors and publishers from our technical services perspective, or even track the changes in the field. The computer has indeed matched us up in a charismatic and fruitful combination of needs and services that will carry us to the **Charleston Conference** and other meetings throughout the years to seek advice and share information. Yes, our "information cooperative" is unique and wonderful and services millions each day. For as much as I observe people utilizing the computer as a mindless machine doing the business of the day, I see our group observing, gathering information, and currying the favor of the "mindful coordination of parts and thoughts" for the higher purposes of resolve and culture manipulation. We have important and unique tasks to complete and do so with the teamwork of the best software and hardware possible in this new age of knowledge expansion. We will work hard to see that it continues in this manner. 

*We have now formed our **Writer's Group** and these very gifted students will be filling the **ATG** with words garnered from their courses and thoughts. This is a chance for you to become familiar with your new prospective colleagues and introduce yourself to them in November. In the months to follow you will be reading articles from **Nancy Loggins, Adrienne Fallaw, Abigail Rush, Allison Thiem, Peggy Cwiakala, Stephanie A. Kobezak, and Melissa Earley**. We hope that this will be an informative and entertaining process for everyone. — MM*

Lost in Austin

by **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (Director, Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward's University, 3001 South Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78704-6489; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8737) <leonhard@libr.stedwards.edu>

On April 17, 2004, I released another book at another airport. My first release was on March 15, 2004 at the **Will Rogers World Airport** and the book was *The Poorhouse Fair* by **John Updike**.

The second book, released on April 17 was *Self-Consciousness: Memoir*, also by **John Updike**. I left it at Gate 23 at 10:30 a.m. at the **Austin-Bergstrom International Airport**.

Why **Updike**? I didn't start out to make a statement about him but already have, but before I talk more about **Updike**, I should satisfy your curiosity and explain what I do when I release a book.

The first thing is to select a book, probably

a paperback that I have read and perhaps re-read and appreciated the book enough to want to share it. Next I go to www.bookcrossing.com where I register the book and watch with pleasure as a photograph of the very book in my hand appears on the screen. One day I am going to register one that is out of print and without an ISBN to see what happens.

After I register the book, I download (**Adobe**) a copy of the bookmark/release statement. In marked spaces, I write the book crossing identification number BCID and my name and the date of registration. This form is pasted inside the front cover of the book. In Oklahoma

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