

My View On Computers

I chose to write this essay about computers because my father is probably the person most terrified by the technological revolution and will probably never accept computers.

In the 1950's the first computers were made, they were the size of a small room and could process about one thousand commands a minute. When you consider that the average computer these days can process just over three hundred thousand commands a second, then it does not seem all that impressive. These computers, though, brought with them a huge step towards the future.

Computers filled a void in my life that even a hugely popular "Sega Master System" could not fill. When I went to my prep school at the age of seven I looked at the computers and did not anything great, but then I went on the school computers and I found out an awful lot about them and an awful lot about the people around me.

I found out why the computer room was so popular as well. For a small school computer room, there was a surprising amount of illegal activity and between the people in there, there probably wasn't a computer game you could not get hold of.

Computers started to spread throughout the world, suddenly everyone was using a computer and suddenly everyone wanted them. To most people it was a completely irrational and illogical urge to get whatever was the latest technology but I actually knew to use these machines of wonder.

My father eventually caved into my request for a computer and I had to teach him how to use it. This is where the fear starts for many older people, they are being taught by the children. They perceive this as incorrect as, in theory, the children should be learning from them as they have more experience. They furrow their brows in a vague attempt to understand the situation but to no avail. At this point they go down one of two possible paths,

the first is the complete failure to accept life like this and will make a comment about the way children are “nowadays” and how they didn’t have all these “fancy machines”. The second route is the complete surrender to a world that is incorrect and at this point they will listen to the teachings of the children. Unfortunately my father went down the first path.

The first thing I did to this computer was to add my home-made password protection system. There was no way round it, within seconds of turning on the computer the message “Password Please” would come up on the screen. I wasn’t going to let just anyone into my files.

After a few months people started to show signs of recovery from the initial shock of the world being turned upside down and my father started to ask questions like “What are you doing?” and “Why have you put that password thing on the computer?”. At first I would just give a string of buzzwords and he would seem satisfied. “I’m just optimising the hard drive to give the screen a higher resolution.”

Just as the last of the “spooked” adults returned from their hiding places along came the Internet. Internet access was a must for me. My argument went something like this:

“Wow dad, look at all these pictures of stars and planets, they could be really useful for my Physics homework. There is so much information on the Internet these days and almost all of it could be used in my schoolwork. Imagine me going to school with my work bristling with extra information and me getting A’s and finally winning the respect I deserve. You don’t want to hold me back from that do you?”

This left me father little choice, the Internet it was. The Internet though was criticised by many journalists, who I do not doubt, have probably never been on the Internet in their lives.

Then one of the kids on the Internet ruined the state of paradise we had had for so long. They went on a chat room, decided to meet a person that they had spoken to there and then, to top it off, they ran away with them. All of a sudden my parents started to ask themselves questions (not a good sign) and I had become, in their minds, a time bomb. They started thinking that any day soon I would run off with some freak from a chatroom.

Journalists pounced on this opportunity to “freak out” almost every parent whose child had access to the Internet. They used phrases like “going into a chatroom” and “private messaging”. My parents read articles about chatrooms and took these phrases literally! They thought that I would go out of the house and wander into a chatroom and start taking drugs and drinking alcohol at the age of ten! For them a plus point of the computer was that it kept me inside away from all these things. They had a man come to the house from my dad’s workplace and install a filtering system. He made several unsuccessful attempts to by-pass my password protection but I had taken too many precautions for this to be possible. I laughed at him, until my father forced me to type in the password. He installed a filtering system which, to this day, I have not been able to find out what it filters, but if it makes my parents happy and not bothersome then I’m fine with my still unlimited internet access.

In some cases, the chatrooms on the Internet do have some paedophiles, maniacs and general nasty people in them. I have never met one in the estimated 50 or so hours I’ve spent in chatrooms. I check people’s profiles before I even consider speaking to them. The great thing about chatrooms is that you can be a different person. I have private messaged 4 different people at one time being someone different in each conversation. A different person with a different personality, different quirks and a different life.

Next is e-mail, yes, even e-mail is scary, complex and, in my father’s own word, “Evil”. Now my parents disliked e-mail so much that if I wish to contact a relative I must use the phone and risk getting into a conversation about how school is going, how I am and how well the relative in question’s curtains match the sofa. This is why I do not contact relatives. I once wrote my

Christmas thank you letters and sent them by e-mail. When they found out I had done this it my father's reaction went beyond fear, it was sheer wide-eyed terror followed quickly by anger. I got a 15-minute lecture and sent to my room. I saw no reason why the letter could not travel to their houses at 50 million kilometres per hour.

In conclusion I believe that computers can be used as tools for both good and evil. They can be used to improve our standard of living a lot and if adults came to terms with their existence then I'm sure they would be very grateful for the usefulness of these machines.