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Computers, the World's Greatest Invention!

From the very beginning of time, mankind has had within himself the desire to learn more about the mysteries of the universe. Ever since God breathed life into Adam's lifeless form there has been an instinct within him to make life better and more enjoyable. Thousands of year's later, mankind made perhaps his greatest conquest with the invention of the computer. Nearly seventy years has passed since the invention of the first computer in England, and even the greatest science fiction writer could not have written a better story than what society has lived during this time period. Without a doubt the computer has changed life like no other manmade creation; perhaps the biggest question is whether this change has been good or bad?

It would be hard to imagine a world without computers. For many of us it seems like they have always been here. Who can say when this technology explosion first happened? "Was it with the Deep Blue chess match, the online mourning after the death of Princess Diana, or did it happen last Christmas when hundreds of thousands of gift buyers chose to shop online" (New Wired World 534)?

Computers run nearly every aspect of ours lives, and depending on whom you ask that may be good or bad. Technology has in some way touched each of our lives and in most cases in a positive way. It would be hard to tell the patient who was being kept alive by a computer that computers are bad or the millions of people who fly each day that the computers that operate the airplane were no longer needed. Many of the factory and office workers that have lost their jobs to the technology explosion of the past decade

may have a reason to dislike the direction that we are headed. Although it is always terrible when jobs are lost, this time in history may be no different than when the industrial revolution occurred or the telephone was invented. In both situations jobs were lost and people were forced to adapt. Computers and the Internet are forcing people to become more educated and to open their minds to this new form of technology. Andy Yano, who is a Mechanic in the suburbs of Cleveland, is forced to spend two nights a week in a continuing education course just to keep up with all the changes. Andy says, “it’s a different world than when his father first opened his garage some forty-seven years ago” (McGinn and Raymond 542). Mechanics before him may have relied on manuals and volumes of books as references material, but now that same mechanic can access those same manuals from a compact disc or by browsing the Internet. What may have taken hours to research in the past can now be done in a matter of minutes. At first this doesn’t seem that important, but as global competition among businesses continue to grow, the need for more speed and reliability will be demanded from their customers. Companies can no longer be concerned with just competing locally, “a self-employed software designer in Peoria will be competing with his counterpart in Pohang or a digital typographer in Madrid will do the same with one in Madras” (Negroponte 536).

While corporations around the world are being forced to look for a different type of worker, the digitally trained employee, a new generation is bursting on the scene replacing both the Baby Boomer Generation and Generation-X. That new digitally trained generation, the net or echo-boom generation, seems to have arrived just in time as if they were destined to live in this era (Alch 1). Made up of those born after 1977, this generation is the first to grow up in the new technologically advanced society of the

twenty first century. Described as well educated and very computer literate, this new generation is ready to face the challenges of the new economy. This new type of worker is not only bringing their knowledge and skills to the job, but they are also forcing those who are less computer savvy to reassess their abilities.

Mankind has come a long way since his birth into this world. As we enter this new century, advances in computer hardware and software continue to grow. Computers are already capable of voice recognition and are quickly approaching the ability to think on their own. "Possibilities for the future are exciting and include such things as the ability to understand, respond intelligently to natural language, and to recognize patterns in medical procedures such as electrocardiograms and blood test with an accuracy rivaling that of human physicians" (Kurzweil 540). While the idea of artificial intelligences approaching that of human thinking is scary, we cannot ignore the medical and economical benefits these changes will bring.

Without a doubt the technological advances of the past century, in particular computers, has brought many positive changes to our world. We are often afraid of what the future may hold for our children and us. Many people fear computers because they have never used one, or some type of computer scam or fraud has ripped them off. As with anything in life, we must use common sense when using a computer or the Internet. We must remember that computers themselves are not evil, but only those who use them for evil purposes. Although computers have replaced many jobs and changed the workplace and workforce of our world, they have also created many more technical and high paying jobs. All of us must come to the realization that computers are here to stay

and will continue to affect our lives. Only we as a society can determine if those effects are good or bad.

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