

In his article “Why I Am Not Going to Buy a Computer,” Wendell Berry explains thoroughly why he does not use a computer and, in fact, why a computer is not needed at all. Although Berry’s distaste for computers stems from pure environmentalism, his standards for technological innovation are truly on target for anyone who values efficient technology and human relationships. Berry’s belief that technology does not always equal progress is one that can be proven when examining the negative effects on life and relationships.

If computers and technological advances are supposed to amount to progress, then why does it seem that our lives are suffering because of technology? Computers today are faster and more powerful than computers men sent to the moon. Text messages can now be sent in a matter of seconds, which seems efficient compared to mail that takes days to arrive. We should feel like we have all the time in the world because our computers can do most everything for us in a matter of seconds. But in reality, the opposite effect has occurred, and we feel more hurried than ever before. Berry is right on point when it comes to the notion that technological advances do not always equal progress. A recent study shows that 51% of citizens would prefer more time than more money, while another study indicated a disorder in frequent computer users called “Information Anxiety.” Information anxiety occurs when citizens feel they have too much information to handle and eventually become stressed when they cannot process all of the information. Given this information, it is safe to say that computers only cause more stress, more time consumption, and more money. These problems do not equal progress.

Unless progress is isolation and declining interpersonal communication, then computers are not giving us progress at all. Berry presents the critique that he does not want a new device that comes between “anything good that already exists, and this includes family and community relationships.” Some believe that because computers give us the option to communicate more

means that we are communicating better. This is not necessarily true. We need face-to-face communication in order to speak well and communicate adequately. Computer applications such as email and social networks provide the opportunity for communication on a wider scale, but they do not provide the social interaction needed to form real relationships. Email was designed to make communication more efficient and easy. However, now people use these technological “advances” in place of communication. This is certainly not progression.

We are all waiting for the modern equivalent of the printing press, that invention that launches us to a new level as a society. Unfortunately, the computer has not proven to be that invention. I spend more time on Facebook and the Internet than I do with my family or my studies, furthering alienation from people who are important to me. As Thoreau said, “Men have become the tools of their tools.” This is the true indictment of technological innovation.