



Tech NO

Taking a byte out of the computer age

Nothing can make me feel powerless the way technology does. When my son's Xbox stopped working briefly the other day, I can barely describe how utterly bereft I was. Being a control freak and having no control over something is not a good feeling.

We paid a tech-head to set it up and I watched him go through the process, but then promptly forgot it all. Luckily, my son, being a modern 11 year old, seems to know his way around it, although even he was stumped when it wasn't working properly that day.

I panicked and started searching the telephone book to get the geek around to help us again, but after a while the thing came back online – as these things tend to do – and everything was hunky-dory.

Maybe it's not as complicated as I imagine it is, and if I spent some time fiddling with it – a week would probably do it – I might surprise myself.

It's hard keeping up with technology when you still have one foot in what must seem to youngsters like The Stone Age.

I mean, when I started in journalism, printing presses were ancient machines that used hot metal and we wrote on rickety old contraptions called typewriters (and yes, that is me, right). I don't think my son has ever seen one, except in movies.

As a young journo working for *The Morning Bulletin* in Rockhampton, I wandered around Central Queensland with a notebook and a pocketful full of change so I could phone my stories in from public phone booths; how primitive.

We received wire copy by Telex (remember that?) and did all our research deep in the recesses of the newspaper's library, poring over yellowing cuttings for hours on end. Sometimes we even went out and spoke to people. No Google then, so how on earth did we manage?

When computers became commonplace, some of the older scribes regarded them as a tool of Satan and refused to use them at first. But I put aside my typewriter pretty happily because grappling with a visual display terminal, as they were then known, was much easier than typing on to multiple sheets of rough

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octavo paper that blew all around the newsroom when someone opened a window.

Not long after that, mobile phones started to come on the scene. Remember those large bricks that you felt faintly ridiculous holding up to your ear? Then technology went crazy.

So much has happened in three decades but I have tried to keep up. I have an iPhone and am on Facebook, but still, it's a struggle and doesn't always come naturally.

If it all becomes too much, there are ways of escaping all this. In fact, I wonder if the Amish are taking any new recruits? Just a thought.



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