

Technology has its benefits and its faults. The assessment on both of these fronts differs among those who are affected. Part of the problems come, it seems to me, from its contribution to our forgetting how to do what we could do in a more manual society.

I suppose this could have been said ever since the Industrial Revolution and even thousands of years before that. But, at least, in regard to the here and now, it seems like new ways have made us unable to do much “by hand.”

The positive aspect for me, though, is that I can now do some things relatively well that were difficult or impossible for me years ago.

I was never a good typist. One year of high school typing class gave me enough competence to be able to produce college papers and thesis work in graduate school. That was all.

We had a very able typing teacher in high school. She must have lost sleep trying to think of ways to make me a better typist.

We learned to type on manual—that means non-electric, non-computerized machines. I suppose they were also a manifestation of technology, a machine that made it possible to produce even, newsprint-like text on paper. But, to today’s students, those typewriters are relics of the Dark Ages impossible to understand.

In our school we learned “touch typing” on typewriters with blank keys. By learning where each letter was located on the keyboard and practicing over and over again, we learned to type without looking at the keys.

That part was easy. What was hard was working up any speed. It probably was partly my excessive hand motions, though the teacher tried to cure that. She placed pennies on my wrists, and when they fell off as I moved my hands, I had to crawl around on the dusty hardwood floor of our old school to retrieve them.

I did learn to type, but I was never fast. I managed to earn an A in the class by virtue of doing successfully all of my homework, though I was just a little shy of the 50 words per minute she required for an A. Accuracy pulled me through.

Yet, today’s students would probably faint in they had that regime. If one made a mistake, there was no delete key to fix it. It required stopping, using a special eraser to remove the letter that was wrong, and then retyping it.

So, I appreciate our Mac laptop. I’ll bet I type many more words per minute than I did as a seventeen year old. Still, I attribute my strong wrists to those manual Royal typewriters. But, still, I I love the “delete” key.