

a little CRC...



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Five Reasons to Stop Being a Luddite

The original Luddites may have had a good point. They were a group of polite textile artisans in 19th century England who got angry and destroyed the mechanical looms which were replacing them. Olde English housewives also knew what they were about and pronounced 'you can't stop progress.'

Luddism is a relatively serious issue in computer training. We all know someone who is resisting learning to use a computer despite the obvious benefits. Not computing is now becoming as serious a personal disadvantage as not driving, not reading or not writing. Of course you can survive without any of these skills but life is more difficult and opportunities are less. Of course if you have someone close who can use a computer for you it makes it easier but you should use such support to learn the skills, not rely on it to be there forever.

At the CRC we are witnessing many Northcliffians abandon their Luddite tendencies. We do our best to hold their hands and make it easy for them. If you want to give it go come in on a Tuesday morning at 10am and enjoy the free basic computer training. Our usual computer access fees apply but these are minimal.

So what made our Luddite friends see the light and seize the computer mouse? Different reasons in each case: things which were important enough to them to break their resistance to change and learning something new:

1. Job Applications / e-mail

In business the majority of people now prefer email to communicate. If you need to apply for jobs now or in future you should get yourself an email address and start practicing. The easiest way is to sign up for a 'cloud based' email service like Gmail. This means your mailed is stored remotely (in 'the cloud') so that you can access it from any computer, anywhere in the world. This can be especially useful if you don't own a computer yourself or if you use a smartphone or multiple devices to access your email. These services are mostly provided completely free. If you use your local CRC you will pay minimal fees for computer use only.

2. The internet

What are the good reasons to get on the internet? Answer: Google Search and Wikipedia.

Once you have mastered its use, Wikipedia will answer just about any factual question you have within seconds. Eg. 'What's the origin of the stump jump plough?'

Google Search you use to find out 'how to' do things and detailed information. 'How do I stop my computer overheating in summer?' 'How do I decoupage a lamp shade with-

out creating a fire hazard?' 'What are the football results for Colingwood vs Carlton?' 'What movies are screening in Bunbury tonight.' I also use Google Search for currency and unit conversions '50 inch in mm' or 'What is 5 AUD in USD' (This means 'What is 5 Australian Dollars in US Dollars?') You can type either but the first is quicker.)

3. Social networking

As the younger generations become more attached to their computers then, if you want to keep in touch with them, you are going to need to occasionally go and meet them on their own territory. The social spaces of this generation are 'Facebook', 'Google +', 'Skype' and other similar places which are collectively called 'social networking services'. Living somewhere as remote as Northcliffe the benefits to communicating this way speaks for themselves.

Some worry that social networking will become a substitute, and a poor one, for face to face contact. I have seldom seen this is the case. There have always been 'shut ins' - those who don't really like to leave their houses. These 'shut ins' now have some social opportunities via their computers. In the meantime Social Networking has great benefits for those who like to socialise in person; Facebook is a great way for them to organise their dates. When you do meet in person you won't need to spend the first hour updating each other on what all the uncles, aunties, nieces and nephews are doing - you already know from reading each others Facebook pages. You can jump straight to talking about more important things.

4. Online Shopping

If you live in a place like Northcliffe online shopping is great. Type 'buy' and then the name of the widget you need into your Google Search box. Click on 'Results from Australia' if you want cheap postage. It makes visits to the post office more exciting when you are waiting for new toys to arrive.

5. Word Processing

Surely everyone knows this one by now? The days of carbon copies, retyping, tippex, and secretaries who retype your handwritten notes are long gone for most. With a bit of practice it's far quicker and faster to type as you think straight into a word processor. Then you can rapidly edit, delete and add passages at will, printing as many drafts as you like, address the same letter to five different people, etc. Free word processors are 'Libre Office' and 'Google Docs'. The second of these is a 'cloud application'. That means your documents are stored remotely and you can get to them from any internet connected computer, anywhere in the world, at anytime.

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