

## A Community's Cyber Memories

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The presence of technology in our daily lives continually expands as newer, more efficient advancements are discovered. Whether it is the smartphone tucked into our pockets, the laptop we complete our work on, or the television in which we stream entertainment, technology encompasses every part of our routines. Nearly everyone possesses fancy tech-gadgets that assist in completing everyday tasks. I had not truly appreciated the importance of technology prior to the global pandemic because it has become so normalized within our society. Who would've thought that a hand-held device could inform and support millions of people during such an unprecedented time? My iPhone offered me a connection that reached beyond my household and allowed me to stay both mentally and physically healthy through multiple outlets.

Receiving the latest updates on the coronavirus helped keep me and my loved ones safe. The internet is notorious for unreliable information and a constant circulation of amateur opinions. There is a common understanding that one must not automatically accept all news presented online. This issue forced me to be hyper-aware of the resources I was utilizing when updating my knowledge on the virus. With a few strokes of the fingers, I contained the ability to receive expert scientific information within seconds. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention continues to serve the public as medical professionals publish the most recently confirmed facts regarding COVID-19. The CDC website provided the latest recommendations to properly ensure public health by sharing their research on such an accessible platform. In addition to this, I watched Governor Dewine's press conferences so that I could be obedient to state advisories and do my part to slow the spread. I feel as if it is my duty as a responsible family member, friend, and citizen to frequently go over the latest guidelines by relying on the internet's information to protect those around me. This process often provoked stress and fear, but I understood that I owed it to my community. The same technology that stood as a crucial informational source also served as an outlet for coping and comfort during the height of the pandemic.

We often overlook the power technology holds over our mental health. Studies have repeatedly shown the media's influence over our collective attitude towards certain occurrences and topics. While there is a negative association of this large influence, I look at it positively, as technology sustained me during difficult times. I am a very outgoing person who loves to keep myself occupied with multiple tasks and events, so naturally, isolation from social environments challenged me in a way I had never dealt with before. The absence of my friends and extended family left me feeling bored, sad, and frustrated. Similar to millions across the country, I adjusted to this new lifestyle by finding new ways to communicate with others. I utilized video chat applications more than ever to complete my first semester of college, check-in on friends, and celebrate the holidays with my family. I am so grateful for the presence of technology in my life because it kept me connected to the outside world by allowing me to socialize with others despite dangerous conditions. I kept myself occupied by talking to others, unwinding and watching my favorite Netflix shows, and diving into the world of fitness through online workouts. We often take for granted our ability to access these things so easily. The less fortunate are restricted by their financial status and therefore cannot obtain these opportunities for connection. This is an issue that should be addressed to improve the well being of the entire community.

Technology both informed and sustained me during the chaos of this global pandemic. I discovered a growing community of love and support as each person publicly documented how they coped with quarantine and offered pieces of advice. Technology encompasses Toni Morrison's idea of memory because it preserves important moments in our lives that illustrate our history through many creative channels. We can play a positive role in the lives of strangers and loved ones alike by continuing to share details of our lives that people can draw on for inspiration and education.