

Today's dorm rooms are filled with digital gadgetry

by Julio Ojeda-Zapata
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ST. PAUL, Minn. -- Strolling through a college dorm in the late 1970s or the early 1980s, you weren't likely to see anything more high-tech than an LP turntable, a color TV or, perhaps, a computer-science student communicating with a far-off mainframe computer using a primitive video terminal and a pokey modem.

The personal-computer age had dawned, but relatively few students took their own MS-DOS PCs or Apple machines to school along with their electric typewriters and Led Zeppelin posters. Their main on-campus exposure to PCs, if they were lucky, involved communal labs where they wrote their papers and perhaps dabbled in a bit of number crunching or desktop publishing. Internet access? Forget it.

How times have changed. Chat up students today and you may get dizzy as they list their digital gadgetry, which they use for education and entertainment.

From laptops and handheld organizers to portable MP3-music players and complex dorm-room video gear, college kids are increasingly on the cutting edge of computer technology and consumer electronics.

Take University of Minnesota student David Lindeman, whose high-tech arsenal includes a Power Macintosh G4 Cube computer, a Sony MP3 Walkman, a Palm IIIx handheld computer, a laptop, a pager, two digital-still cameras and a digital-video camcorder. "I tend to like little gadgets and toys," he says.

So do a growing number of college students, according to a recent SWR Worldwide study commissioned by the Best Buy electronics superstore chain, which compared the technological tastes and habits of 1990 students to those of 2000. Findings were based on a survey of 500 current freshmen and 500 adults who were freshmen a decade ago. Among the findings: -- More than half of today's freshmen have brought a laptop or desktop computer to college, compared to only 13 percent in 1990.

-- About 24 percent of today's students said they plan to bring a laptop to class regularly, compared to just 4 percent in 1990.

-- Twenty percent use cell phones and 11 percent use pagers.

-- The use of CD players has risen from 20 to 44 percent. Thirteen percent of the students use portable CD players.

-- Fewer than one out of three incoming freshmen waited in a registration line last fall, compared to nearly half in 1990.

About 17 percent of current freshmen registered via the Web or e-mail, compared to only 4 percent a decade ago.

Most colleges either require or highly recommend computers. But new gadgets -- including interactive Webcams, wireless PC mice, Palm organizers and even robotic miniature dogs -- are new status symbols in lecture halls and cafeterias, if conversations with students are any indication.

"We're all into the MP3 stuff, MiniDisc players, Walkmans, boom boxes," Tommy Singh, a student at Silicon Valley's Foothill College, tells the San Jose Mercury News. "Practically everyone I know has at least one of these things," and he says most of his friends have more than a dozen digital devices crammed into their apartments, dorm rooms or frat houses.

The MiniDisc music-disk product line -- which bombed when it was first introduced in the early 1990s -- has grown nearly 50 percent since August 1999, according to the EIA market-research firm. The leading musical technology maker, Sony, says its MiniDisc Walkman is flying off store shelves.

MiniDisc is "now really big with Generation Y because it's a way to make the ultimate music mixes on easily available and affordable media," says Tracy Fairington, a Sony marketing director.

Gadgets-about-college largely tends to be a guy thing. Male students are almost twice as likely to bring a pager to class, more than twice as likely to use a DVD player at school, and four times as likely to use a videogame console at school, according to the Best Buy-sponsored survey.

"You need a big-ass entertainment center (that includes) loud speakers with a big TV and DVD player," says University of Minnesota computer-science student Joshua Walker. "This has nothing to do with being wired, or a student, but it really helps to relax from the hectic college life." Oh, and "a good CD Discman is essential," the senior adds.

"Better yet is a MiniDisc player, or the new CD players that will read a writable CD filled with MP3s. That is a very cool toy." The personal computer figures prominently in dorm-room entertainment, too, says St. Olaf College student Richard Kurhajetz.

He left behind much of his equipment last semester while studying mathematics and computer science at the University of Lancaster in England, but not his college-techie ways. "I (was) able to make free overseas telephone calls through the Internet with my microphone and headset to call family and friends on their regular telephones, as well as (use) chat pro-

grams to talk real-time to friends back in the states and send and receive pictures and video real-time," he says.

Not all college students are ga-ga over gadgetry, to be sure.

Though Justin Coyne is a University of Minnesota computer-science major and part-time computer programmer, "I really have no use for PDAs, cell phones or pagers. I can't understand why people would spend so much money on such devices that would further clutter up their already-hecked lives.

"I do have a computer," Coyne hastens to add, "since it is almost necessary in today's college life.

Everything from registration, assignments and grades here (are) done on the Internet. But beyond that, I try not to let technology run my life."

Likewise, "I don't have a PDA of any kind, and I don't plan on getting one," says University of Minnesota sophomore Nathan Hemming. "A few of my friends have them, and their utility seems nil...I (do have)

a laptop computer, but I do not intend on bringing it with me to campus each day."

University of Minnesota sophomore Alex Anderson also has resisted buying a current-model PDA to replace his old Apple Newton, but he says "this might all change if some company starts making a cheap and compact handheld cell phone/PDA/MP3 player/book reader/GPS unit/kitchen sink with a rubberized exterior and a good screen, please! But that would make too much sense.

"Then again, I'd also need a reason to use such a thing," Anderson adds.

"I like technology...but it is not who I am."



KRT PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY BILL ALKOFER
Like many college students these days, Dave Lindeman of the University of Minnesota is wired and tech-savvy and owns many high-tech gadgets.

U. of Georgia running back arrested for stalking

by Matthew McGuire
TMS Campus
February 15, 2001

A University of Georgia football player was arrested Wednesday after a confrontation with the mother of his 17-month-old child.

Verron Haynes, 21, was released on \$7,500 bond after police charged him with misdemeanor counts of simple battery, stalking, making harassing phone calls and criminal trespass, police said. He will be arraigned on formal charges April 18.

A Georgia student told campus police that Haynes pushed her and threw her cell phone against a wall during a confrontation at her campus apartment Feb. 11, said Capt. Chuck Horton. Later that day, Haynes followed her to a downtown hotel where

another physical and verbal confrontation took place, Horton said. Hotel security went to the room and held Haynes until police arrived.

The Bulldogs policy calls for the automatic suspension of any player arrested for a felony charge but leaves disciplinary measures up to the head coach's discretion in cases of misdemeanor arrests. Head coach Mark Richt imposed "internal discipline" on Haynes, which could range from community service to early-morning running drills, said athletic department spokesman Claude Felton.

Haynes, a junior, played in all 11 regular season games last season and started twice as a running back. He carried four times for 14 yards and scored a touchdown in Georgia's Oahu Bowl victory.

U. of Iowa officials allow pep band to go ahead with 'Beer Song'

TMS Campus
February 15, 2001

Let the good times flow. After a three-week hiatus, the "beer song," a staple for more than 20 years at University of Iowa sporting events, is back.

University officials had previously asked the school's pep band to abstain from singing the lyrics to the polka song "In Heaven, There Is No Beer," which contains references to alcohol use, so that they could review the merit of the song.

But after reviewing the pros and cons of the song's content, and after fielding scores of e-mails from stu-

dents, officials decided that shelving the song's lyrics was not necessary, spokesperson Linda Kettner confirmed.

Kevin Kastens, the band's director, told the Daily Iowan that the song is "a very harmless tradition and should continue."

The decision to halt the song stemmed from a complaint by one parent that the lyrics promoted "excessive drinking."

The song, which has undergone numerous renditions, includes the lines, "In heaven, there is no beer / That's why we drink it here," and has similar verses for wine, drugs and sex.

Penn State University class teams students to design, market memorabilia

by Margaret Hopkins
Knight-Ridder Newspapers
February 19, 2001

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. -- Die-hard Penn State football fans may be able to enjoy the blue-and-white rushing game from their front stoops if a group of engineering and business students have their way.

The PSU Windrusher lawn ornament, an 18-inch football player in running stance, is the brainchild of five engineering students enrolled in Industrial Engineering 4971. Two students in Business Administration 497C are developing a business plan and marketing strategy for the ornament's future sale in local retail stores.

The Windrusher, whose legs and possible stiff arm will move by the wind or batteries, isn't the only item of Penn State memorabilia under design by students involved in this new engineering/business collaboration.

Also in the concept stage are a bank in the shape of a Nittany Lion that will have electronics that keep track of the amount deposited; a lock box or combination safe in the shape of Old Main; and a rotating Penn State logo that produces the Penn State fight song.

This is a textbook-perfect example of a win-win for students, local businesses and consumers.

Engineering students gain real-world experience solving design and manufacturing challenges. Business students develop hands-on experience as they evaluate product competition, create marketing surveys and develop an e-commerce site. Also mirroring the workplace is the teaming of students--each group includes electrical, industrial and mechanical engineers as well as business majors.

For the student entrepreneur, the course work can turn an idea into a workable business ready for start-up upon graduation or even earlier.

And lovers of Penn State memorabilia will have first look at what will almost certainly be one-of-a-kind collectibles.

"Engineers should learn by doing, and this is a perfect opportunity to do that," said Sanjay Joshi, one of five engineering faculty involved in the two-semester IME Inc. course.

Said Greg Pierce of the Smeal College of Business, "This collaboration gives our business students the chance to learn about the challenges of taking a real-world

product from idea to market in a way that a traditional classroom environment doesn't allow." From concept to application The collaboration between the engineering and business colleges has its roots in a meeting last November when Pierce, who is director of the Smeal business school's junior Core Honors Program, learned about IME Inc. and saw a potential fit for students in his two-semester business course.

"They were building products and we were building products," Pierce said.

A second meeting clarified what business students could provide their engineering counterparts: marketing surveys; target markets; supply-chain logistics; business plan preparation with five-year financial projections.

This week's opening of the eBusiness Research Center's e-Incubator Laboratory enables another real-life application: creation of a customized e-commerce site to market the product.

The e-Incubator Lab will host the site that has to be functional by the end of April, said Christine Hofer, a member of the Windrusher team.

"The eBRC lab offers software capabilities that we need," said Hofer, who's majoring in management science and information systems. "It feels like we're learning very practical applications." Pierce and the engineering faculty acknowledge there are some wrinkles still to be ironed out so that students can most fully take advantage of the collaboration.

For one, the two courses don't follow the same semester schedule, with the engineering component running from January to December while the business class goes from August to May.

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Last semester, engineering students designing the Nittany Lion trivia clock visited Polestar Plastics, a State College company in the plastic injection molding industry, Joshi said. Those students ended up using aluminum for their final product only because the university doesn't have the machinery to do injection molding.

This past week, the Lion Bankers--the group developing a bank that will keep a running tab of its dollars and cents--went to the Donosco foundry in Belleville to learn firsthand whether the product idea can be cast in aluminum.

"We want students to realize the more they talk to the experts in their fields, they more they can learn," Joshi said. "These people can become their contacts, their mentors."

Business students have expanded their circles as well. For market research, they visited downtown retailers to check out memorabilia prices and competitive products. This past week, several went to the intellectual property office to research licensing fees and agreements, Pierce said. In the future, students may travel to a regional machining shop to see how that business operates.

Business students also are tapping the expertise of Penn State alumni at corporations including Appleton Papers, Arthur Andersen and Merrill Lynch as part of the corporate mentor program.

"As students write their business plan sections, they are sending them to their corporate mentors for comment," Pierce said.

In the works are face-to-face meetings between students and mentors during Mentoring Day in March.

"Mentor contact and company visits give students the chance to get

into the real world," Pierce said. "This will be their method of operation when they graduate, and we're giving them experience with that." Researching South Beach Miami Another group of business students will get experience in "real-place" market research when they travel to South Beach Miami in April.

Those students, working on a business plan for a clicks-and-bricks salon/spa, will collect data on existing Miami salons, South Beach culture and demographics, said Jesse Peles, junior finance major and aspiring salon/spa entrepreneur.

Peles, whose parents operate a salon in Johnstown, plans upon graduation in May 2002 to integrate Internet technology with the salon's spa experience, possibly in Florida.

"I want to converge Web technology with the salon environment, so the site will be tied into an actual location," Peles said. "E-commerce is relatively unstable without a physical backup." Peles knows his idea won't fly just anywhere, so he and the group plan to check out what's in the market as they draft and hone their own ideas into a workable business plan. The group also is projecting expenses and sales and figuring out financial options for when the company starts up.

Essential for the development of the salon/spa's e-commerce site is the new e-Incubator Lab.

"The e-Incubator Lab offers me a virtual playground to learn how to run an e-commerce site and experiment with ideas and concepts," Peles said.

From ivory tower to work place Judy Olian, dean of the Smeal College of Business Administration, said courses such as IME Inc. and the honors business class enable students to "roll up their sleeves and experience the 'real work' situations they'll encounter as they make the transition into the work force." Larry Kreger, an industrial engineering student on the Windrusher team, has already begun to experience that transition. In the few weeks since the IME Inc. course began, Kreger has learned that ideas that fascinate engineers may not be suitable and appropriate for the marketplace.

He's also gaining an appreciation for how to communicate engineering concepts to vendors, marketers and even consumers.

"We're gaining experience in how to take an idea, assess its market and develop it for that market and then cross the bridges to produce it, market it and distribute it," Kreger said.

If Kreger and his group can navigate that crossing, the PSU Windrusher may score big in the ornamental lawn art playing field.

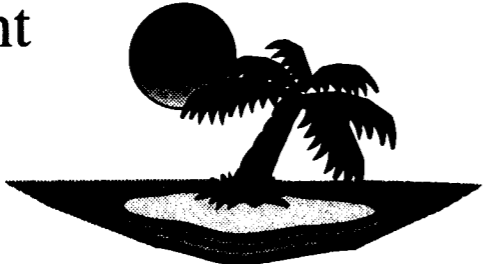
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