Why I Own A Computer Essay, Research Paper

COMMUNICATIONS

COMPUTER SCIENCE

WHY I OWN A COMPUTER

What can a computer do for me? At my age, why do I need to learn about the Internet? Answers; a lot, and yes. Computers are capable of doing more things every year. There are many advantages to knowing how to use a computer, and it is important that everyone know how to use them properly. Using the information I have gathered, and my own knowledge from my 12 years of computer experience, I will explain the many advantages of owning a computer and how they important they are in your everyday life. I hope this helps others understand why computers and the Internet are so important to have access to.

Webster’s New World Compact Dictionary defines a computer as “an electronic machine that performs rapid, complex calculations or compiles and correlates data” (Computer, 1995, p.226). While this definition gives one a very narrow view of what a computer is capable of doing, it does describe the basic ideas of what I will expand upon. We have been living through an age of computers for a short while now, and there are already many people worldwide that are computer literate.

According to Using Computers: A Gateway to Information World Wide Web Edition, over 250 million Personal Computers (PC’s) were in use by 1995, and one out of every three homes had a PC (Shelly, Cashman, & Waggoner, 1996,p138).

Computers are easy to use when you know how they work and what the parts are. All computers perform the four basic operations of the information processing cycle: input, process, output, and storage. Data, any kind of raw facts, is required for the processing cycle to occur. Data is processed into useful information by the computer hardware. Most computer systems consist of a monitor, a system unit which contains the Central Processing Unit (CPU), a floppy-disk drive, a CD-ROM drive, speakers, a keyboard, a mouse, and a printer. Each component takes a part in one of the four operations.

The keyboard and mouse are input devices I use to enter data into the computer. From there the data goes to the system unit where it is processed into useful information the computer can understand and work with. Next the processed data can be sent to storage devices or to output devices. Normally output is sent to the monitor where I can view it or stored on the hard-disk or to a floppy-disk located internal of the system unit. Output can also be printed out through the printer, or can be played through the speakers as sound depending on the form it takes after it is processed.

Once I had grasped an understanding of the basic parts and operations of a computer, I then discovered how computers were going to make my life easier and more enjoyable.

Being computer literate allows you to use many powerful software applications and utilities to do work for school, business, or pleasure. Microsoft is the current leading producer of many of these applications and utilities. Since Microsoft is the largest software producer it stands to reason most people including myself probably use one of their products on a daily basis. As for myself, I use a variety of software products from many different software vendors.

Microsoft has also produced a software package called Microsoft Office that is very useful in creating reports, databases, spreadsheets, presentations, and other documents for school and work. Included in Microsoft Office, are Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, and Microsoft PowerPoint.

Microsoft Word is a word processing program that makes creating professional looking documents such as announcements, resumes, letters, address books, and reports easy to do. I use Word everyday in my job. I write many letters and other forms of communications to my customers or fellow employees at Hewlett-Packard.

Microsoft Excel, a spreadsheet program, has features for data organization, calculations, decision-making, and graphing. I find it very useful in making professional looking reports. I also use it for tracking my sales and income using its spreadsheet capabilities.

Microsoft PowerPoint is “a complete presentation graphics program that allows you to produce professional looking presentations” (Shelly, Cashman, & Vermaat, 1996,p. 2). PowerPoint is flexible enough so that you can create electronic presentations, overhead transparencies, or even 35mm slides. I don t use this as much as the others, but I do use it when giving tours to students who visit Hewlett-Packard.

When I using the Internet it allows me access to a vast resource of facts, knowledge, information, and entertainment that can help me do my work and have fun. According to Netscape Navigator 2 running under Windows 3.1, “the Internet is a collection of networks, each of which is composed of a collection of smaller networks” (Shelly, Cashman, & Jordan, 1995, p.12). Information can be sent over the Internet through communication lines in the form of graphics, sound, video, animation, and text. These forms of computer media are known as hypermedia. Hypermedia is accessed through hypertext links, which are pointers to the computer where the hypermedia is stored. The World Wide Web (WWW) is the collection of these hypertext links throughout the Internet. Each computer that contains hypermedia on the WWW is known as a Web site and has Web pages set up for users to access the hypermedia. Browsers such as Netscape allow me to “surf the net” and search for the hypermedia of their choice.

I have found millions of examples of hypermedia on the Internet. While surfing I also found art, photos, information on business, the government, and colleges, television schedules, movie reviews, music lyrics, online news and magazines, sport sights of all kinds, games, books, and thousands of other hypermedia on the WWW. Through the Internet I can use, electronic mail (E-Mail), chat with other users around the world, buy airline, sports, and music tickets, and shop for a house or a car. All of this, and more, provides me with a limitless supply of information for research, business, entertainment, or other personal use. Online services such as America Online, Prodigy, or CompuServe make it even easier to access the power of the Internet. The Internet alone is almost reason enough to become computer literate, but there is still much more that computers can do.

One of my favorite reasons for having a computer is for playing video games. With a PC you can play card games, simulation games, sport games, strategy games, fighting games, and adventure games. Today’s technology provides the ultimate experiences in color, graphics, sound, music, full motion video, animation, and 3D effects. Computers have also become increasingly useful in the music, film, and television industry. I have used my computer to compose music, create sound effects, create special effects, and create 3D life-like animation. I haven t done this but I know its possible to edit previous existing movie and TV footage into new programs, as seen in the movie Forrest Gump. All this and more can be done with computers.

I feel that there is truly no time like the present to become computer literate. Computers will be doing even more things in the future and will become unavoidable. Purchasing and learning about a new PC now will help put PC’s into the other two-thirds of the homes worldwide and make the transition into a computer age easier. I believe everyone should own a computer regardless of age. The time is now, and the future is here.

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