

Celling out to technology

Students keep connected through several state-of-the-art means

BY STEPHEN WELLS
The Battalion

Being a student means being a human filing cabinet, paper-writing drone and *Animal House* character all at once. More often than not, students find themselves ensnared in a web of assignments, friends and the occasional call to Mom to warn her of the dirty laundry on its way to her mailbox. Keeping it all together requires the correct attitude and the proper tools.

Digital communication, once a device used by general contractors and Wall Street moguls to stay in touch, is now helping college students stay connected.

One of the digital devices students are becoming more familiar with each semester is e-mail.

Richard Lorbieski, the senior network administrator for Alpha 1 Internet Service Providers, said e-mail is a good substitute for more traditional means of communication.

"With e-mail, you have a method of communication that is just as reliable as a telephone, plus you have a record of the message," Lorbieski said. "Your messages are printable and easier to store for future reference. If you want to contact multiple people, using e-mail is easier and takes much less time than using a telephone or writing several letters and sending them all out."

E-mail also lends itself to sending casual messages between students. Sarah Moore, a senior speech communication major, said e-mail can help students keep in touch when they spend the weekdays buried in course work.

"I get jokes all the time over my e-mail so I check it when I need to relax," Moore said. "It helps pass the time when I'm taking a study break, and checking my e-mail lets me think I'm doing something productive when I'm really just killing time."

"My friends and I have a kind of chain letter thing going so when one of us gets something cool we all get to see it."

E-mail has some disadvantages. Careless typists should double check the address on their e-mail before sending anything out.

"If you put the wrong zip code on a piece of mail, at least the Post Office will put the letter in a dead-letter box or send it back to you and tell you there was a mistake," Lorbieski said. "E-mail is not as forgiving as that. Either the mail will keep telling you the message cannot be sent or it will go off to Never never Land."

Since students cannot just lug around a computer wherever they go, some have turned to cellular phones as another way to stay in contact with a fast-paced world.

Charles Culver, the owner of Skyline Communications, said a cellular phone gives a student flexibility few other forms of communications have.

"People buy cellular phones for security and convenience," Culver said. "Prices have dropped significantly, especially for digital phones. People can say they cost a lot, but the one time you need a cellular phone and have it ready, it's worth the expense."

"Cellular phones have become so commonplace that some students on the go all the time may as well shut off the phone in their apartment."

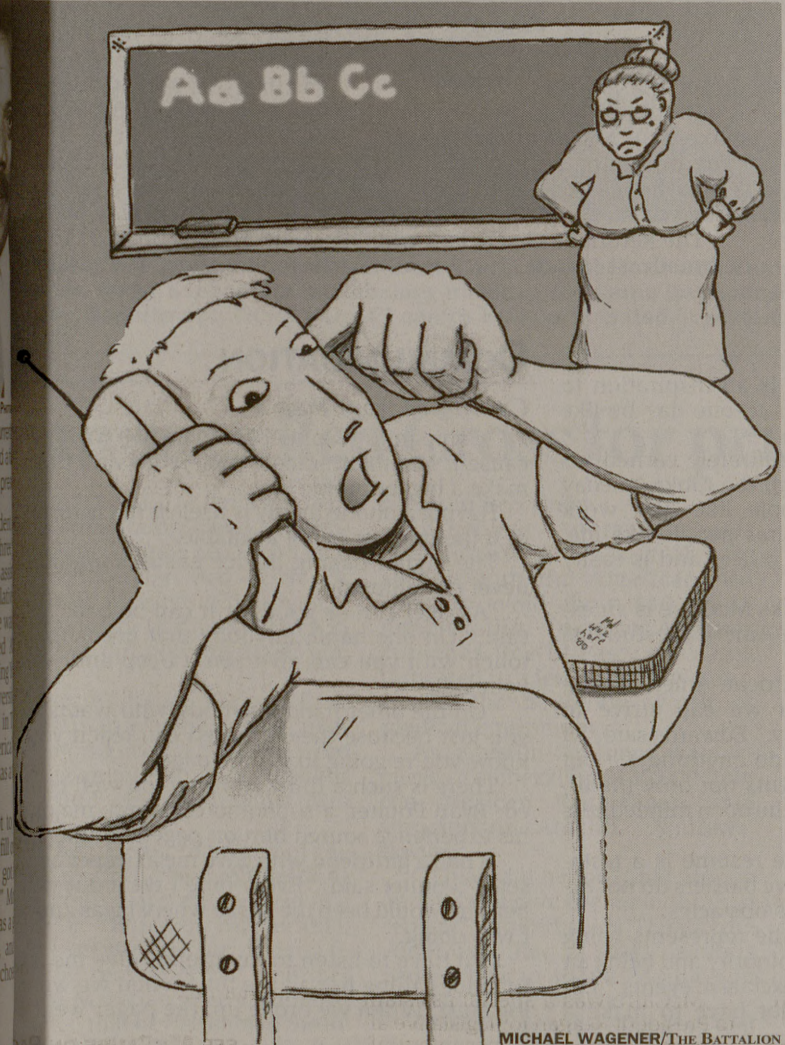
The downside of a cellular phone is the extreme availability of the owner to people determined to occupy their time.

"I see people go to a restaurant and have their phone on the table beside them while they eat," Culver said. "For me, that's my sanctuary. If there's somewhere I don't want to be called, it's at a restaurant while I'm eating."

Students should be aware of salespeople trying to sell them a digital phone, which is more expensive than an analog phone but offers the same service.

Students should educate themselves about the pros and cons of each type of phone before making a purchase.

"One popular misconception is the perception of digital and analog phones," Culver said. "It's almost become a marketing ploy by people trying to sell digital phones. They try to tell you that analog is obsolete, but listen to an FM station on your car radio or the stereo in your house and the sound quality is just fine."



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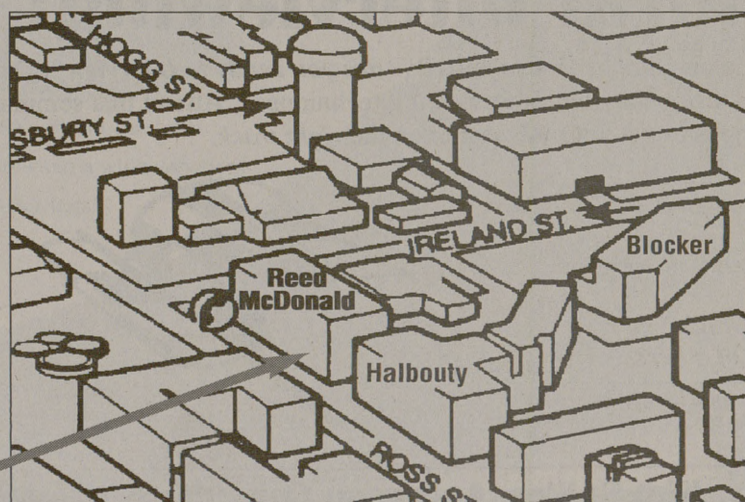
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