

Excessive texting can pose dangerous distractions

By Alana Gibson
STAFF WRITER

Texting ferociously, I approached the curb and noticed the feet of others begin to cross the street. Without interrupting my activity I too began to cross, and soon realized it was just a woman and I stepping into traffic. Startled, we leaped back in an attempt to dodge the SUV that had the right of way. Looking at each other we silently agreed that our respective text messages were no longer significant.

The convenience of text messaging and other instant messaging devices on phones is pretty evident. It's succinct and almost thoughtless. Daily "wat-chu-up-to's" from friends can make any work day more bearable, and costs less than a phone call.

Though simple, texting remains a task, and for those multi-taskers who text while driving, crossing a street, or operating machinery, the danger exceeds the convenience.

Nationwide Insurance recently determined that nearly 40 percent of survey respondents between the ages of 16 and 30 admit to text messaging while driving. This admission is no surprise to emergency room doctors who have noticed an increase in deaths and injuries involving texting.

The recent commuter-train collision that resulted in the deaths of 25

people and injured more than 130 has also been linked to text messaging after the National Transportation Safety Board's investigation learned that the engineer had sent and received texts before the train's collision with a freight locomotive.

Some would venture to argue that text messaging actually makes you dumber.

"The act of texting automatically removes 10 I.Q. points," said Paul Saffo, a technology trend forecaster in Silicon Valley to The New York Times. "The truth of the matter is there are hobbies that are incompatible ... it is the same with texting and other activities. We have all seen people walk into parking meters or walk into traffic and seem startled by oncoming cars."

I would argue that text messaging has improved typing and reflex, though I do not enjoy dodging cars.

I do not think that messaging makes us dumber so much as it impairs our judgment.

I praise text messaging for its convenience, but it poses a distraction worse than talking on the phone. Unlike talking on the phone and driving or crossing the street, for most of us text messaging involves focusing on the screen. Regardless of how much attention is devoted to the screen, we've become less aware of what's going on around us.

Lawmakers and service providers

are beginning to implement policies to limit distractions posed by text messaging. In California lawmakers are attempting to ban text-messaging by drivers, and Verizon has already developed usage controls in which parents can determine the hours when their children can send and receive texts.

The discreet nature of text messages has made conversing possible even in places that aren't the most appropriate. Too many of us have stood in line behind someone waiting for them to address the cashier as they remain engrossed in their private conversation.

How about when that flashing light or buzz gets the best of us in class? We look up a few seconds later and realize we're too far removed from the lesson.

"It's annoying and distracting listening to other students clicking away at their phones in class," said junior Darius Askew. "What's worse is when you're trying to focus and someone's phone keeps buzzing. It's supposed to be discreet but it's not, it's annoying."

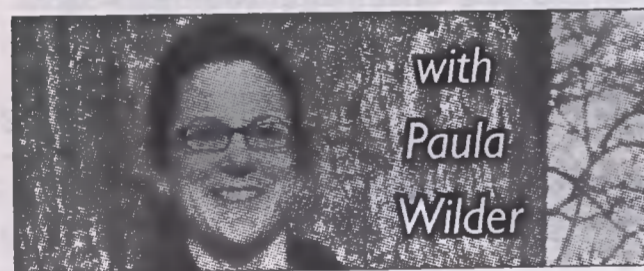
As your fellow textually-active schoolmate, I am not advising abstaining from text messaging. However, it seems that we could make a concerted effort to detach ourselves from our phones, temporarily. I'm sure our thumbs wouldn't mind the rest.



ADA STEPHENS/GUILFORDIAN

Sophomore **Mary Simpson** is much more interested in her text message than her nutrition. Recently, it was announced that a person's IQ drops 10 points after excessive text messaging.

Today's Lesson: Take care of yourself (and ward off the plague)



It's creepy and it's gooky,
Mysterious and spooky,
It's altogether ooky...

What is it? Unfortunately, it's not a new rendition of "The Addams Family" – but it is what's coming out your nose and going down your throat if you have the Guilford Plague.

It seems that practically the whole campus is sick. I'm sure you have heard the coughs, the sneezes, the sniffles, and the worst – the whole continuous nose blowing throughout your entire class.

Last week one of my classes was interrupted about 20 times (well, maybe I'm exaggerating a little) in order to bless every sneeze. I know the sneezes can't be helped, but my suggestion for the future is just to grant one blessing over the whole entire room at the start of each class.

After all the nose-blowing and sneeze-blessing, I decided it was time to find out what kind of funk has infiltrated our campus.

The best place to find the answers is the Student Health Center.

As I made my way down the steps into

the basement of Founders, I was a little bit nervous.

Did I really want to go into a mass of people being treated for the plague? I had somehow managed to maintain my health and didn't want to wade into an ocean of germs.

But in the true spirit of investigative journalism, I stepped into the health clinic without regard to the dangers that I might face.

One step, two steps, and on I went down a deserted hallway. I was getting closer. My heart rate increased.

I rounded the corner and to my surprise, I stepped into a deserted health clinic.

What I found instead of a mass of germs was a couple of clinic workers calmly filling out paperwork and answering the phone. Not one germ-infested student was to be found.

I expressed my surprise at the empty room and believe from the looks on their faces, that for a moment the staff thought I might need a psychiatric evaluation. After I explained my purpose, they seemed to relax.

Helen Rice, director of student health, was willing to take a few moments to help answer some questions and even dispel some myths.

I told Rice that I had heard a rumor that the Health Clinic has given 300 strep tests.

Rice laughed and assured me that although there are probably 300 students who

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are sick, there has not been a strep scare.

The so-called Guilford Plague is really – drum roll, please – just the common cold.

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Because students are coming from different places and bringing different germs, people get sick since they aren't immune to those germs. Weather changes also contribute to problems; as well as stress, lack of exercise, and lack of adequate sleep.

Rice recommends taking pseudoephedrine and ibuprofen for cold symptoms.

Rice also offered some suggestions on how to stay well (the parentheses are mine):

- ✕ Bathe regularly (please!)
- ✕ Wash hands regularly (let's not be gross)
- ✕ Clean door handle
- ✕ Clean cell phones
- ✕ Exercise

- ✕ Eat properly (a candy bar at 2:00 a.m. doesn't count)
- ✕ Don't put pens/pencils in mouth (especially if you never wash your hands)
- ✕ Wipe down computer
- ✕ Wipe desks / tables with handi-wipe (cleaning seems to be a constant)
- ✕ Take a multi-vitamin

Rice also suggests getting a flu shot.

On Nov. 6 the Health Clinic will be offering the shots for \$27. Even though clinic services aren't usually available to CCE students, they will be able to receive this shot. Appointments will be required, but Rice stated that more details would be available after fall break – so watch the Buzz.

As I left the clinic, I breathed a sigh of relief!

Guilford has not been infiltrated by a plague, there isn't a strep epidemic, and there definitely won't be a revival of "The Addams Family."