

The Pendulum seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty as well as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas.

# Editorial

## Loss of humanity at the hands of technology

The age we live in is truly one that is ruled and dictated by technology. Today, everything people do is in the context of technology and constant connectivity. Many argue that mankind's constant need for technological expansion is degrading society into a culture that is obsessed with the here and now, only focusing on the future and rarely on the past.

Many scholars in academic circles argue that the human race is losing touch with the natural world and is replacing it with an artificial and superficial world. Rarely do people actually take the time anymore to appreciate what makes mankind actually human, what gives them their humanity.

This is the point that John Paul Russo made in his recent lecture at Elon. A professor of English at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla., Russo warned against the extinction of the humanities. He discussed this rising trend of technological dependence, or rather the decline of the humanities, being the social sciences of literature, history, language and the arts.

Russo cited that literary reading rates are down on all demographics, and reading levels have declined across the board, especially among the traditionally higher educated. People are reading for leisure less, as our culture has quickly transformed into a visual one. People figure why read the book when they can watch the abbreviated and often misconstrued movie version.

Another point that Russo commented on was the transformation of language after the introduction of technology. Russo said that technology establishes ambiguous words, words without meaning or any deeper connotation,

as its diction. If that confuses anybody, simply take a look at the outrageous language of "text-speak." The "words" like "lol," "brb" and "ttyl" now dominate people's written language and even their spoken language at times. A fuming creative writing professor vented when a student used "brb" in an oral sentence. "Be right back" has three syllables; you're not saving any time by hacking it down to "brb," he said.

Even more so than literature, history is disregarded as a fundamental humanity. Russo commented on The Guardian's

the classroom. "While [student's] handwriting was atrocious, their typing skills were phenomenal," Russo said. People often can't imagine life without some form of technology present to keep them entertained or connected. People need that cell phone to text their friends with, or need that mp3 player with which they can listen to their favorite tunes.

A religion professor recently challenged his students to a task that seemed daunting to many. The assignment was to put away all cell phones, all iPods, all forms of

Russo explained how the English department once received a fax that was sent miles into the air to a satellite and was relayed back down to the fax machine in their office. The fax came from the office next door in the same building.

"Face to face contact has been replaced with face to machine contact," Russo said.

Another one of Russo's points was surrounding technology's impact on the world in more of a physical sense than an academic sense. Russo commented on the environmental degradation of the Florida everglades, stating, "It takes more technology to stop technology from destroying the environment." This is coupled with environmental issues that seem to have no solution like global warming. It's a global case of entropy, and Russo made it seem as though little could be done against the growing destruction of technology. As Russo also said, "progress is irreversible and unstoppable."

Is society truly destroying its foundation and transforming into a baseless culture that many academics view as soulless? Unfortunately, while Russo did outline what he obviously views as an important issue, he failed to detail any specific solutions for the problem.

He didn't outline how to reignite literary interest in youth in the United States, or how to pique curiosity over history. While this may stand as a huge issue in the way of the future of the humanities in the way of academia, it seems little can be done short of an entire cultural reevaluation of what is valued and important to society.

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discounting of British students not knowing who Winston Churchill is, saying, "O Guardian, whom are you guarding?"

But in this era where culture and society is shifting and evolving so fast, almost nothing is what it was like in the past. How are people supposed to relate to eras in the past when it was such a different time back then? More so than just a time difference, the past seems like it is worlds away from where people are right now. Students "view the past as strange, confusing and unnecessary," Russo said.

"This generation was reared in the midst of a communications revolution," Russo said. For many of the students of this age, the computer was a natural and integral part of

connectivity to the outside world, and go out into a secluded space for half an hour and just sit, disregarding all commitments and engagements that keep society in its constant rat race of life. Picture it as a 30-minute experience of Into the Wild.

How many people can envision their lives without the constant connection to the world? For many people, their lives rely on the interconnectivity that technology provides. Russo described how 15 years ago the office in his English department had four secretaries and seven machines. Now it has four secretaries and in the range of 50 machines, ranging from fax machines to computers to printers to cell phones to microwaves.

## Illustrating the Issues



MORGAN LITTLE | Cartoonist

### THE PENDULUM

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