

Barry Lawrensen
 Dr. William Brown
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Digital Communication Technology Inventory and Assessment

Item	Description	Cost
Nokia N73 Smartphone	GSM 4-band, plus 3.2Mp Camera/MPEG4 video	\$530 plus \$45 monthly service (phone service only; no internet; SMS \$.05 each but seldom used)
Canon GL1 Camcorder	Mini-DV Video Camcorder	\$1200, plus \$4.00 each for Mini-DV videotapes
Homebuilt Desktop Computer	Quad Core processor, 4x320Gb Hard drives, 8Gb RAM, WinXP64-bit	\$1700, plus \$1300 software (WinXP, Adobe Master Collection, Nero, etc.)
Notebook Computer	Clevo Dual Core Portable Desktop	\$1800
Home Internet Connection	Orange City Communications DSL	\$40 + \$8 taxes/fees per month
Home Theatre System	Assortment of Used and Refurbished Equipment incl. Projector, DVD, 7.1 Surround	\$2200 mostly purchased on ebay or discount online websites
Digital SLR Camera	Fuji Finepix S3	\$2400 plus \$3500 of Nikon Lenses
Digital SLR Camera	Fuji Finepix (S2 backup)	\$1800 original cost

The most pervasive digital communication technology in my life is my cellular telephone. The nature of my work in Audiovisual/Media Services requires me to be available (on call) nearly all waking hours. While the model I have supports MP3 playback, decent quality video recording and 3.2Mp still photographs for personal entertainment, this device is primarily used for personal communication. The dominant amount of cell phone calls are to and from my family, which does allow for a level of interaction with my family in a fairly demanding work position. Having unlimited minutes on my calling plan, I find that my cell phone has replaced 80% of my landline telephone usage.

Besides vital personal communication with my family, the cell phone does assist my work in being able to troubleshoot equipment, call for assistance from student staff or co-workers, or order pizza in the middle of a long workday between events. While commuting on the highway, I have found I can use my cell phone as an encouragement tool. I have some cherished relationships which I consider part of my personal mission field, in a few needy friends that seem to relish a listening ear. In my busy life, I believe being able to call these friends and spend 20 to 30 minutes on the phone with them. While this is not as valuable as face-to-face interaction, I do believe that Christ works through this. I believe in praying together with someone over the phone, and am not afraid to say, "Brian, before I go, may I pray for you over the phone?" I consider this a beautiful way to use this time and the technology. When driving later at night after work, I will call a friend or family member in another time zone, helping me stay awake and alert while driving. This time in conversational caring might otherwise be spent being self-absorbed in music-listening or hearing the mindless banter that often characterizes talk radio (which also helps me stay awake, but is certainly not as redemptive).

The extended features of my cell phone attracted me, particularly as a photographer in being able to have a 3.2 megapixel camera with a glass lens with me at all times. This has proved useful numerous times, though it is not sufficient quality to be considered a professional tool. I had hoped that the mp3 player functionality would be useful for entertainment, such as e-books from the local library, and some for personal worship, with praise songs played through the device while walking or commuting. Amazing as these multi-function devices are, especially for their small size, I have found the user interaction preferable with dedicated devices (separate mp3 player, cell phone, camera, and video recorder). Because of this lack of practical usefulness

in its multi-functionality, I confess that I should have spent less for a simpler cell phone.

For our family's personal entertainment, my son helped me to put together a variety of equipment for a home theatre system. This is obviously primarily for entertainment, with potential for family interaction while watching a movie together. This does become a drawing card to help our home to be a gathering point for our children and their friends, which we consider valuable in having some control over their activity (being in our home, rather than someone else's). Because we were able to assemble this at a relatively inexpensive cost, I believe this been worthwhile for our family, and honors God as long as we monitor that for which it is used and guard the amount of time spent with the technology. Admittedly, we have much more meaningful interaction together, sitting together playing a game than watching a movie.

I will group together my "professional media" equipment, ranging from my digital photography and video gear to my personal computers (desktop and notebook). These items are incredibly useful to me in my work, and do equip me for serving God's kingdom. Besides financial support for my family from work for hire, I have been able to produce materials for missions, from a 22-minute DVD project documenting the work of a Bible translator, to photographing families and designing prayer cards and other promotional material for the support of their missionary endeavors. I am grateful that I am able to purchase software for this part of my communications work at educational discount pricing, making it more feasible for my limited salary at a small Christian college.

Keeping proficient with the computer applications for digital media projects is the most challenging aspect of technological displacement in the time that I have for personal contact

ministry. This includes my family, as my most vital point of ministry, as well as my church, missions, and many wonderful relationships with people we have been privileged to know in many countries. These many contacts interact with my abilities, creating opportunities to serve them and to serve Christ. I struggle with the propensity to be a “Yes” man, finding it difficult to refuse an opportunity to serve and often seeing a need that will go unmet if I do not fulfill it. This underscores the value of becoming credentialed as a college teacher, that I may use my abilities to train and disciple others both in the arts and in opportunities for ministry.

Living in rural Iowa, I am physically isolated from the city and many face-to-face educational and training opportunities. Because of this, I find online learning very valuable as a lifelong learner. The internet provides the channel for many cost-free materials for skills development and enhancement, as well as online training I have found helpful at a reasonable price from Total Training (www.totaltraining.com). This company sells training DVD's, but has new online streaming media tutorials. I set aside at least three hours each week for these presentations, which allow me to learn with the instructor by following along myself with the same project files provided for my use. I find this method very helpful, often watching the presentation once to take notes, and a second time to then glance at my notes while doing the project being demonstrated.

I believe that my parents and my faith have helped instill in me, my wife, and our family, a positive living-out of good stewardship. We are careful in how we spend our money and our time, but we are willing to invest these in things that do have value. Then I strive to remember that as a steward of God's varied grace that I must not hold on too tightly to that which He has given me, which may mean selling or giving away technology that may become clutter and

interference in my relationship with God or others. I also have found opportunity to minister to others occasionally with technology, where I have observed another person's need for something that I have, and given this to them and helping them learn to use it. I believe it is important to carefully consider the honest usefulness of technology prior to making it a part of my life, for I wish to be the master of my technology, rather than it being the master of me.