What I’ve Learned About Computing

CS 101. Computers: Applications and Implications

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1 Introduction

When I need to listen to online articles, doing so from my phone is preferable, especially while riding the bus. However, I can set up my laptops to listen as well. On the Chromebook and Mac, I use the Natural Reader Chrome browser extension for this task. Once I select a passage of text to highlight, I can click the Natural Reader extension icon on the Chrome address bar to activate it and click a button to stop it. I prefer this over setting up the MacOS Text to Speech features in the System Preferences area.

I set up Canvas Notifications for all my courses, so I am immediately notified when students have written to me via the Inbox or Assignment Comments. The first deadline is easy to find in the Coming Up list, the Assignment/Module list, or the Calendar. The pattern of due dates is Tuesday night for discussions and Sunday night for projects.

Because I have so many Canvas Discussions to score each week, I use the expand/contract icons and the reveal arrow to reduce the amount of scrolling. Then I click on a single entry of threads I want to read. If I need to find a specific student or topic, then I type it in the search box. Because I make a lot of typos, I use the Edit menu to fix grammar and spelling after my initial submission. I use the link, image, media, and list editing icons to improve the way the threads look. To quickly get to Canvas, I just type part of the word "canvas" and Chrome remembers my options. I choose the correctly spelled URL to get here.

At home, I use a 14" Acer Chromebook computer with a 1080px resolution high definition display. The keyboard is compact and the trackpad is big. The Chrome OS operating system is "edgar" version 10176.72.0 (Official Build) stable-channel and the browser is Chrome 64.0.3282.167, which I found by typing: chrome://system/ into the Chrome browser address bar. This screen loads slowly for some reason. I also found it by clicking on the system settings icon clicking the Device option. The Random Access Memory (RAM) holds 2gb of data so I can have a lot of extensions, tabs, and apps open at once. Read-only Memory (ROM) is harder to locate. I used a Google search to locate articles that tell me I have 8Mb, which is not much, but Chromebooks don’t need a lot because they are just running a browser. The system settings tell me there is an Intel Celeron Central Processing Unit (CPU) number N3160 running at 1.60GHz. The computer comes with an internal Solid State hard drive (SSD) which holds 32Gb of data (software and files). I can plug in two USB devices, one MDMI, and one pair of headphones. It also has a security cable port.
On my Mac, I store course folders in the Documents folder and make aliases for them and/or add them to the Finder sidebar. I don’t use the Desktop area for storage because it doesn’t get included in backups, is difficult to organize, and can slow down processing. I can instead drag an Alias (pointer) of the Documents > Course folders to the Desktop. My Chromebook hard drive (SSD) is not well organized because it is mainly a downloads folder, which I delete periodically after moving the files to folders on my two Google cloud drives. I made folders for each class on the drive and within them, add term-specific folders, then I add Shortcuts (aliases or favorites) to the system menu. All other projects I’m involved in have folders inside folders so I can quickly locate and backup multiple items. Using search is the fastest way to find a file, however. The Chromebook does not have a ‘desktop’ area, so I can’t overrun that area with all of my files, which would slow down processing.

Since I learned to use an Apple IIe computer in 1985, I have been typing with keystrokes. I started with Save, then Open, then close the Window, select All, Bold and now use Esc to stop an action, space bar to pause a movie, Increase and Decrease to zoom in and out or to change the size of fonts.

I use the Language Tool for Chrome to check spelling and grammar I am an inaccurate typist. I described above how I added an extension for Natural Reader and the process is the same. Google Docs and MS Word do have spell checking as well. I also have Grammarly installed but it tends to be slow inside Canvas. It also works well in Wordpress, where I spend a lot of time. I forget to add items to the personal dictionary, which would save me time in the long run.

I set up Google Calendar to import Canvas Calendars for each course using the URL provided in Canvas. However, it doesn't seem to sync often enough to be helpful. It is there by default when I am logged into my OSU Google account, though. I can change the settings and activate notifications if I like.

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Bibliography