

Technology in My Life

Svetlana Burenina

BEFORE YOU READ: Read the title and the headings in the article. Notice the pictures. What do you think this article will be about?

First: A Scary Vacuum and a Russian Abacus

My first encounter with technology was in my childhood. It was a scary vacuum cleaner. It seemed like a huge loud monster, and I hid from it under the table.

I also remember the tool that my mother used in her accounting work. It was a strange metal device. She turned levers and twisted a knob, and the strange thing moved and tinkled. I was delighted. This shiny black device beckoned to me. I knew only two other items with handles, a meat grinder and a sewing machine. This device was not like them. My mother called it an Arithmometer. She used it for counting and calculating. My young brain did not understand. To me, it looked magical! I played with it as long as I could. It was heavy, so my mom rarely brought it home. But whenever she did, I liked to twist the handle and hear the clanging sound.

Then: Science Fiction and Early Computers

In my youth, I loved to read science fiction. I admired the worlds created by Isaac Asimov. They were inhabited by technology and robots. Space ships traveled between stars, and intelligent



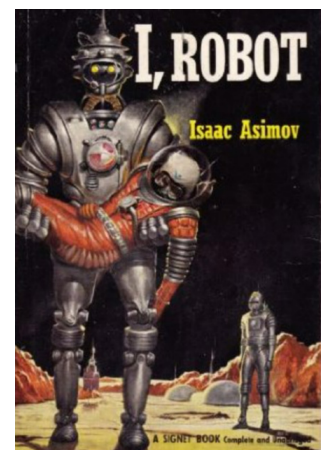
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machines had human sensitivities! It seemed fantastic and yet real. I wanted to live in those worlds. It seemed like a close and possible future!

When I went to university, large computers already existed. We studied simple programming languages, such as Basic and Fortran. We wrote lines of commands on paper and gave them to assistants who transferred them to punch cards, which were then inserted into a huge computer, the size of a house.

When I graduated from the university, I went to work at a research institute in the automation department. It was an emerging line of work. We were young engineers, and we were the only ones who could use the computer for work. While other departments did everything the old-fashioned way, by hand, we pushed buttons and got beautiful machine-made results. Several years of my life passed during the development of modern technologies, and my skills also evolved. Those years were amazing! We grew up together!

Now it is difficult to imagine life without computers. They are everywhere. We use them for study, work, communication, and entertainment. They manage production, launch spaceships, watch the seabed, and assist in surgery, among many other things. We live in a world of dynamic technology. It grows and develops to meet our needs.





Above left, two women work at a main frame computer, circa 1969. Photo by arbyreed on Flickr. Creative Commons 2.0. Above right, a person uses a laptop to attend class by Zoom. Bottom left (p. 28) a Russian Arithometer.

Now: An Electronic Brain in Every Device

When the pandemic began, computers and the internet became a lifebuoy for humanity. In long-term isolation, they helped us to stay connected to others, keep working, and be safe.

Today my life is inextricably linked with technology. In the morning the phone wakes me up, breakfast is prepared for me by an automatic cooker, and a smart car takes me to work. The computer is waiting for me in the office and helps me to do my tasks. Almost every device has an electronic brain. I have continued to develop my skills to use these devices. Whether it is learning what buttons to press on an air fryer or how to operate a video meeting through Zoom, I have had a lot to learn.

Technology Helps Me Do More

Today I have a new profession. I am a mental health counselor. I conduct most of my meetings online, and it doesn't seem strange anymore. It has become a regular thing for us. My home is now in the U.S., and I study English online at Holyoke Community College (HCC), which has opened a new door in my life.

At HCC, I got the chance to practice my language skills, which increased my confidence.

I also received more opportunities through this community college for other training and scholarships that are very useful for career and personal development. This may not sound like much to others, but to me, this has opened my eyes. Technology has helped me acquire a new sense of freedom, expand my knowledge, and build my own future.

In the famous words of Teddy Roosevelt, which I so often use with my clients, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." Technology helps me do more with what I have, where I am.

AFTER YOU READ: How has the author used technology in her life? Write a short memoir of your life, describing the role of technology in it.

Svetlana Burenina is a student in the ESL class at Holyoke Community College in Holyoke, MA. She moved to the U.S. from Russia in 2020. She works as a mental health counselor with Russian-speaking people. Her goal is to improve her English and become a licensed social worker. In addition, she takes classes to develop her computer skills.

