

## Script

**Narrator:** The mechanization of writing began with the invention of the printing. Whereas orality was charged with emotion, literacy was ordered and rational. The printing press interest intensified this effect and imposed a level of standardization in language that had not been realized before.

By the mid 19th century a shift began to take place as typewriting became a viable alternative to handwriting. There were many inventors of the early typewriter, but the first truly commercial machine was introduced by Sholes and Gilden in partnership with gun maker Remington. Their design also introduced the QWERTY keyboard which is still in use today.

**Studies weekly:** Christopher Sholes was born in 1819 and as a young boy worked in a printing shop. Eventually he became a reporter and printer and later an editor of a newspaper. Christopher wanted to make a machine that people could use to print words with their hands and by 1867 he invented the typewriter. He had a very hard time selling the typewriter and so he sold it to Remington Arms company who started selling the typewriter. He spent the rest of his life making improvements to his invention, like adding the SHIFT key. Although his invention was amazing, he died in 1890 without ever getting rich from his invention.

**Narrator:** Soon typewriters became four times faster than copying text by hand. One continuing premise of ETEC 540 is remediation, or the process by which one technology changes and gains new and presumably better aspects of the thing that's changing, while holding on to the characters of the original. The introduction of the typewriter and the social and educational applications of this new invention fall neatly into this consideration. Ong writes that whereas handwriting "moves words from the sound world to a world of visual space, print locks words into position in this space"

The uniform look of the typewritten word lends itself well to business communication, and is faster and more consistent than handwriting. In short, with the introduction of the typewriter, writing became easier to read and faster to write. It was, however, less personal and unique, as with all technology, there are gains and losses, and the emergence of the typewriters is no different. As Polt indicates, "things always transform the activities they enable"

The typewriter creates more distance between the writer and the text. It's interesting to note that those who viewed the typewriter as impersonal, had come to view the pen as an extension of their hand and therefore more personally connected to the paper. This clearly demonstrates the slow process of remediation of writing. Whatever the phase of the remediation of writing in which the writer finds themselves, tends to dictate the perspective they hold about the technology.

**Voiceover narration simulating Auden:** "Much as I loathe the typewriter, I must admit that it is a help in self-criticism. Typescript is so impersonal and hideous to look at that, if I type out a poem, I immediately see defects which I missed when I looked through it in manuscript."

**Narrator:** Ralph Nader political activist famous for his technological asceticism views all breakthroughs in communications technology as distractions rather than tools of empowerment. Well, not all technology . . . he treasures his Underwood typewriter

**Voiceover narration simulating Nader:** "When the lights go off and the electricity is ruptured, I am still working."

**Narrator:** Whatever your perspective or your position on handwriting vs. typewriting, In the 1940s and 50s new technologies such as the typewriter produced many low-paid, routine office jobs. Women were hired as typists, because they were cheaper to employ than men and clerical work paid more than any other job available to women at that time. This resulted in changes to the gender dynamics in the workplace and the role and power of women in the late nineteenth century. Women entering into the workforce as typists, gave rise to the secretary.

**Janson Media:** If you want to become an expert typist, learn to work like one. The typewriter is the one piece of Office Technology that really and truly help women move out of their homes and into the workforce. You won't get to be an Admiral, but you may be the Admiral's secretary.

Right at the start they were typewriter refer to both the machine and a woman who operated it. Of course the irony of it all is that the secretary may be dying.

**Narrator:** Mediation never stops. The literature we have been reading for this course is relevant but dated. Bolter wrote 17 years ago that we are in the late stages of print, and we would have to agree, and it can certainly be said that that has evolved tremendously from 17 years ago with the explosion of the internet. A more relevant argument moving into the second half of the course would be to focus on the late stage of keyboarding as voice to text recognition begins to begin to mediate print. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this assignment, I want to examine typing and handwriting in the context of education. Is there a better way to learn? Furthermore, as students write less, there is less and less of a need to teach cursive writing.

**Vox:** Cursive handwriting became more commonly sort of at the same time as education became more democratic, and so in the 1920s which was when education was becoming much more universal, not just at the elementary level but sort of continuing on past that, that also when they developed a new method of writing cursive. Certainly, if you have a grandparent with beautiful handwriting, they are probably writing the Palmer method. This is a big debate. Is there a reason to learn cursive, besides sort of a nostalgic idea that this is an important skill that you have as an adult. The argument in favor are that it is a fine motor skill, it's good for kids to learn and use their hands this way.

**DNewsChannel:** Scientists are now discovering that learning cursive for cognitive development because because it teaches the brain functional specialization. That's what allows your brain to integrate like sensation movement and thinking in the most efficient way possible.

Brain imaging studies show that writing in cursive, unlike typing, activates multiple areas of the brain at once and is especially good for fine motor coordination.

Learning how to write by hand is one of the best things a kid can do for their brain. There's actually a study done at Indiana University last year where psychologist took a group of pre-literate five year old kids and had them perform various task related to reading and writing while undergoing a brain scan. Turns out the kids who practiced writing, even if it was in ring and not cursive, displayed significantly more neural activity who were simply looking at letters

**Narrator:** So that means that the cognitive benefits are there regardless of whether you're printing or writing.

**Vox:** The arguments against the teaching cursive is that nobody has shown that is really a major benefit to learning cursive. So it's a lot of time and energy spent in the third and fourth grade learning basically a second system of writing after you've already learned to write

**Narrator:** Anne Trubek, author of the History and Uncertain Future of Handwriting, would agree that it's unnecessary to teach cursive writing in the elementary grades.

**Anne Trubek:** The idea of cursive is to go faster. The first cursive script was in Egypt. We think of Egyptians Hieroglyphs. Most of what people were writing in Egypt, like they were doing in Sumer, was you know, memos to the boss. So they developed a faster way to get those memos written than hieroglyphs and that was the first cursive. That is the practical reason for cursive. You don't have to stop and pick it up and go go faster.

But cursive also in the west over the last hundred, two hundred years has had another purpose which is about showing your class your status, your intelligence all these other reasons that take is beyond just the utility.

There's absolutely no correlation between the quality of your handwriting and your intelligence. None, whatsoever, period.

What I'm trying to say is that our relationships, our ideas about handwriting are specific to our place in time. They haven't always been true and they won't always be true in the future.

There have been a few very small studies. First of all, you can't really do a study that is going to prove anything, because you can't have a sample size of these 1000 kids only learned

how to type. and these 1000 kids only learn cursive and here's the difference. there is just no such thing.

There are a very few studies that show that there are some different cognitive things that happen with cursive vs. keyboarding, but there's a lot of independent variables that aren't being accounted for so I think the science, the jury is out about the science. Period.

I think it's true that for many people, writing things down helps you remember. I think that's about habits and associations. Your whole life you have written things down to remember them, it's like grooves in your brain. The best way. . . The people in oral cultures had much better memories than any of us do here today, because they never could write anything down which meant that they had to think about and think about it and store it in their brain. That is a much better way of remembering something than writing it down. Of course, writing gives us history, so it gives us cultural memory.

But I would the answer your question is that it's your habits and associations with writing things down, and it's not true for everybody, and it will be less and less true for people who aren't growing up writing things down to remember.

The idea of throughout the history of writing and changes in technology was has been, for the most part, how can we get writing to match the pace of thought?

**Narrator:** This is an idea that bears repeating. The evolution of writing changes in technology in technology has been a quest to get writing to match the pace of thought.

**Anne Trubek:** In fact the best form of writing is voice recognition software. Now you're back to Socrates. Socrates didn't like the whole writing thing because he just saw all these problems with writing as compared to speech.

Any kind of writing is a form of mediation. There's something in between your thoughts and the expression. Voice recognition software takes away that that intermediary technology completely.

**Narrator:** That's where I'd like to end this exploration of handwriting to typewriting. Thanks so much for watching my documentary, and I'd like to leave you with one final thoughts on the subject.

**The FineBros (Lucas):**

Why is it?

Oh my God . . .

OOOh

What does that mean when I move this stuff?

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