
Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience
by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

'It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,' the Queen remarked.
'What sort of things do *you* remember best?' Alice ventured to ask.

Lewis Carroll
*Through the Looking Glass
and what Alice found there*

The Queen goes on to remember the future punishment of the King's messenger. Further discussion continues what would happen if the messenger was punished but then didn't commit the crime. The Red Queen insists that the messenger would be improved if he were punished without committing the crime because punishment improves people. I know that the next thoughts will be heretical, especially at this time of year, but - here goes: every time we purchase technology we are punished because we do not know what the future holds. Formats will change, new computers will be more powerful and smaller.

That's right. Mr. Technology is revealed to be wearing no clothes. All of the newest and best converging technology in the world cannot respond with the same sensitivity as a seven year old singing with her classmates. No matter how much RAM you have, how many virtual instruments, how many gigabytes of hard drive you can access your computer still only 'knows' one thing; is voltage present at some location or not. Even more worryingly if there is no electricity, it can't even make that decision because without electricity, as far as we can tell, it is unconscious.

So as you leave catalogs open with advertisements circled or casually mention that it "...would be fun to have a digital camera to show Grandma what the new school looks like..." remember that our memory only works backwards. Cast your mind back...

The smallest child in your choir came up to you after the holiday performance and apologised. In all the excitement, they had forgotten the words and stopped singing. You went to her house for the holidays for the first time; the scarf was incredibly tight around your neck, the wind was cold as you walked up the drive to the door and as you stepped through the door the warmth of room fogged your glasses and you tripped on the boots on the mat and fell flat on your face, crushing the flowers you were carrying. What were the sounds, the colours, the smells?

Somehow, the right words were said, the correct thing done, care was given and that smoothed the way and made things right again. The warmth, concern and love all flowed and somewhere in your memory the event was lodged. What will take you back to those special places - a smell, a piece of music, an image, the weather? What do you see and hear when you are 'there' again? We have powers that scientists are only beginning to understand. Some can hear a pitch and give it a name; others hear music and see colours while others see colours and hear music. The gifts we possess are limitless and open to the future. Technology is only a tool that we use to capture a moment and externally store it. It is the internalisation of that moment that makes it timeless.

So as we hint towards the things that will create the images and sounds that may externally start a memory, let us look within ourselves. Let us rejoice in our humanity and give thanks for all of the love that has brought us to this place; the love that holds us together in this place; and the faith in the love that will lead us into the future. We must always be aware that the gift of our love will create the sounds and experiences that may live on in the memories of others long after we have gone.

And unlike computers, many of us have had our most precious memories created without electricity. Standing in the darkened church, the minister lit his candle from the one candle on the altar and passed it, first to the ushers, then to the choir. He began to sing and the choir and congregation joined in. As the light and sound grew and grew, the flame was passed down the row of seats. My father passed the flame to my mother, and she passed it on to me and as our candles were lit, we joined the singing. Sometimes even now as I light a candle, especially at this time of year, I can see the glow reflected in my parents faces and hear these words and sounds echoing in my memory;

Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

All of life's richest blessings in this holiday season.

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