

A: Drive is A: Failure

Justy Ragsdale
The Clackamas Print

Working in Streeter Hall's computer science and math labs at the college's main campus, I've noticed a strange phenomenon. Thriving in this unlikely indoor habitat is a species that is thought to be recently extinct, supposedly stamped out of existence by more highly evolved creatures.

The surprising survivor is not a mammal worthy of preservation, those reaching for trusty picket fences, bullhorns and Birkenstocks to relax. The unworthy beast surviving in our midst is the 3-and-a-half-inch disk, more commonly known as "the Floppy."

Students enrolled in "remedial" computer science classes, such as the CS-9x and CS-10x courses, are taught to use a Floppy disk as their primary method for portable memory storage.

Weighing in at a measly 4 megabyte maximum payload, the 3-and-a-half-inch drive, or "A: drive," has not been a feature of new computers for over 20 years. Even from a conservative perspective, the evolutionary timeline of personal computers, two years is a lifetime.

The memory storage device that has effectively replaced the Floppy is the USB drive (a.k.a. Flash drive, Thumb Drive, Jump Drive, etc.). Right now, one can go out and purchase a USB

drive boasting 128 megabytes of reusable memory for five bucks – that's over 90 times more space than a floppy. If one is willing to spend a little more, say as much as \$20, and shop around a little, one can easily find a one-gigabyte (that's 1028 megabytes – over 730 times the space of a Floppy) USB drive.

As I understand, there are two reasons why the CS department chooses to use Floppy disks instead of upgrading to something current: cost and ease-of-use.

The question of cost is more complicated than just instructing students to "use Floppies and not USB drives" or vice-versa, but more an issue of the pricey process of overhauling course materials and lesson plans for a large number of classes.

However, personally, I believe

that the ease of use matter is a moot point because USB drives are easier to use than Floppies.

All processes involved with saving and retrieving information are the same for Floppies and USB drives.

In addition to near-negligible space available from a Floppy, the devices are notoriously unreliable. Virtually every person with whom I've discussed the topic has horror stories about lost or damaged files on the disks.

According to my friend and co-worker Laura Bistline, malfunctioning Floppy disks are a common enough problem for CS classes that instructors have approached the Technology Tutors and Lab Monitors, concerned about the preponderance of missing or damaged homework files.

Bistline also a technology tutor and lab manager's office assistant said, "I don't understand why CS teachers come talk to a CS tutor and complain about the disks not working when it's a Floppy. In my experience, two out of three times [the Floppy is] not going to work."

There are many reasons for upgrading our classes and ditching the disks. Ironically, two of these reasons are cost and ease-of-use.

The cost of USB drives has been plummeting rapidly, dropping in price by about 50 percent per year. In a comparison of cost per megabyte, USB drives already blow Floppy disks out of the water, and the price continues to fall. USB drives have already been approved for purchase on campus, with CCC Book Grants.

USB drives are every bit as easy (if not easier) to use; it just plugs into a little port on the PC. Every computer in the Computer Lab has two USB ports right on the front, as well as another faster USB2 port on the back.

The most important reason for eliminating Floppy disks from Clackamas is the students. The purpose of the remedial CS classes and workshops is to introduce the personal computer to new users.

I don't think that teaching students to use obsolete hardware is a proper way for the college to prepare its students for the rapidly changing world of personal computers.

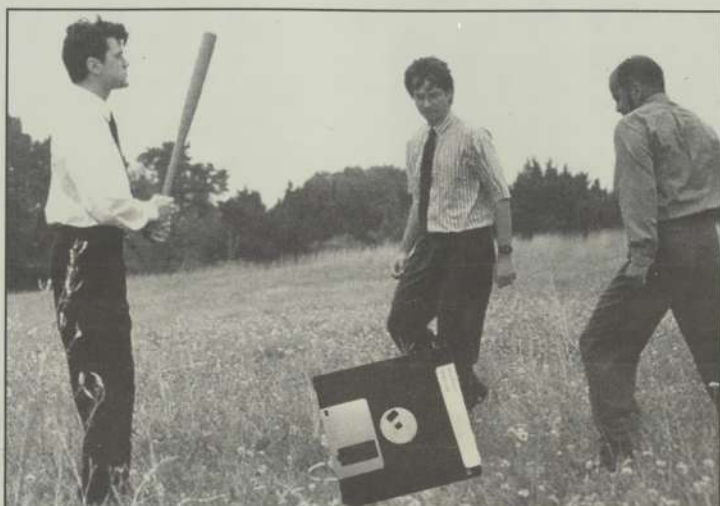


Photo illustration by Rachel Gillette Clackamas Print



John Edward confirms that "mediums" are small people

When it comes to pinheads, self-proclaimed "medium," and host of the shows *Crossing Over* and *Cross Country*, John Edward could be the granddaddy of them all.

Edward and other "mediums" use a mixture of both "hot" and "cold" readings during tapings of their television shows and live performances. With a "hot" reading, Edward has his associates speak with the audience before the show and then tell him all the information they have gathered about various audience members. "Cold" reading is the opposite, but I'll get to that later.

Now, Edward will not admit he does "hot" readings (for obvious reasons), but there have been many accounts from people who have attended tapings and live shows saying otherwise. Here are two examples:

1. A few years back, *Dateline* on NBC proved that Edward does "hot" readings and even caught him in the act on air.

2. The James Randi Association (a "psychic-debunkers" group) received a letter from a *Crossing Over* audience member describing how Edward's production assistants bugged the green room and used "ringers" in the audience.

During a cold reading (which is what Edward does most of the time), he's just making a series of guesses of "what dead person is in the room." He starts throwing out names and letters with the hopes that one of the audience members will have a dead relative of the same name.

After Edward guesses correctly on a name, he then tries to describe them by using even more guesses. Edward, as well as every other medium on the planet, is usually wrong when describing the dead person and describing their death. He just keeps guessing until he gets it right.

Watching *Crossing Over*, nobody would think that Edward has so many "misses." Well, thanks to the power of editing, a show that takes two to three hours to tape is whittled down to 58 minutes of Edward making no mistakes of all.

What really made Edward a pinhead was 9/11. A month after the terrorist attacks, he created a show that would feature him talking to the dead victims and their families. Fortunately, there was enough public backlash to force studio execs to drop the show.

Edward has made millions from other peoples' misery, and is a truly disgusting individual. His syndicated programs *Crossing Over* and *Cross Country* are still as popular as ever, and he's sold millions of books worldwide. Humans are a curious and gullible sort, and Mr. Edward has used that to make him one of the biggest pinheads on the planet.

Jon Edward's Pinhead rating is 5 out of 5.

Letters to the Editor:

CCC student opines on U.S. soldiers in Iraq

Over the break, I spent time with my friend who had just returned from Iraq. I found a true hero.

Although wars may be politicized, and may be questioned as wrong or unjustified, a hero like

[my friend] puts himself on the line, serving to extend and protect the freedoms we have.

While the definition of what war [sic] may be right, the soldier who volunteers and swears to protect our nation is honorable.

That subsistence of accepting and protecting our freedom, regardless of the war and cost even absent of war, is a heroic act. This is an ordinary soldier who signed up to put his life on the line to protect and defend all

that we have.

His service is valiant. This year, I am reminded and am truly thankful to those men and women like him.

- Tim Lussier, CCC Student

Democrat, Republican debate misses issue

I was one of the people who attended the stimulating debate arranged by the Democrat and Republican clubs. It was an excellent examination of the differences on various issues between the two parties, and I am grateful to the students who arranged it.

One of the topics touched on was the subject of illegal immigration. This is a very complex problem, both for legal North American

citizens and for legal and illegal immigrants. I have thoughts and feelings on both sides of the issue, but in this letter, I would like to point out two matters which ordinarily do not come up in discussions.

First, almost all of our ancestors were illegal immigrants; we took the land from the native tribes who lived here before we came. Second, one of my Mexican-

American students several terms ago wrote an essay concerning his entering the country illegally before taking the steps needed to become a legal citizen of the United States. He said that the Mexican government charges those who wish to immigrate here the American equivalent of \$300.00. This may not seem like much to us, but it is a fortune for most Mexicans. Therefore, only

wealthy Mexicans can immigrate legally.

I believe both parties need to take these two points into consideration in forming policies on illegal immigration.

- Diane Averill, English Instructor

To send a letter to the editor, e-mail it to chiefed@clackamas.edu, or drop it off at The Print office, Roger Rook 135.

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