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## Technology tradeoffs

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## Quad 136

### Technology Tradeoffs



It goes without saying that technology has greatly improved the lives of nearly everyone on the planet and has transformed the world we live in. We in higher education ask ourselves virtually every day how to use, adapt and respond to technology. Yet it is important, even as we use our smart phones, socialize via Facebook and swim in a technological sea, to ask what is being lost from earlier periods, from a world where even PCs did not exist.

An interesting *New York Times* article offers an example of a tradeoff that we don't often consider. "[What's Lost as Handwriting Fades](#)" examines the brain science behind writing and reports that the physical act of writing, in all its messy glory, helps learning. Among other findings:

*Two psychologists, Pam A. Mueller of Princeton and Daniel M. Oppenheimer of the University of California, Los Angeles, have reported that in both laboratory settings and real-world classrooms, students learn better when they take notes by hand than when they type on a keyboard ...the new research suggests that writing by hand allows the student to process a lecture's contents and reframe it — a process of reflection and manipulation that can lead to better understanding and memory encoding.*

This is heartening news for anyone who has ever been skeptical of Powerpoint presentations AND student demands that the slides be made available, "So we don't have to take notes and can concentrate on the lecture."

So for our current generation of elementary school digital natives who are honing their keyboard skills, it would not hurt to get out those Crayons and pencils and practice your letters.

For all the real benefits of technology in our brave new world, there are tradeoffs.

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Michael Hemesath | June 19th, 2014 | Categories: [Higher Education](#) | [0 Comments](#)

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Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John's University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] [PrezHemesath](#).