April 2009
Facebook, Twitter and Blogs

For April, I discuss a variety of ways our children communicate and the new technology they use to do it.

I don’t know about you, but it seems that our children are way ahead of us with regard to using today’s social networking technology to communicate with others. Some of the technologies our children are using include: Facebook, Twitter, blogs and probably others that I don’t even know about. My goal in this blog is to provide interesting, offbeat, and helpful information about the newest communication technologies.

I will start with Facebook because the College of Liberal Arts (COLA) now has a Facebook page. COLA is on the cutting edge! The COLA Facebook page can be found on the web. Facebook can provide us parents with quite a bit of interesting information. We can keep up with all the news and events happening on campus in one glance. For instance here are the top 5 items currently discussed on the COLA Facebook page: (1) COLA professor discusses the legend of the vampire and why it persists in almost every culture today (2) A new scholarship program, the Forty Acres Scholars is announced (3) A professor discusses the link between strained marriages and heart disease (4) COLA Career Services Director, Kate Brooks, discusses how to map out a career path in a tough job market and (5) UT researchers complete the first high-resolution CT scan of the world’s most famous fossil, Lucy, an ancient human ancestor who lived 3.2 million years ago. In short, there is something for everyone on the page and I was able to glance through it in just moments.

Having three daughters, I had heard of Facebook but never tried to explore it. Twitter, on the other hand, was new to me until I began to research it for my blog. It seems to post short messages about the user’s every day life -- something like, “I saw Joe at the ballgame yesterday and learned he is starting UT Law in the Fall. Congrats Joe!” UT has about 30 Twitter accounts that are run by different groups. You can get more information for Twitter online. This webpage explains a lot about it and how you can get started with your own account. Give it a try.

Blogging about other blogs. There are many bloggers at UT. One blog has a teasing name, Longhorn Confidential and has a clever way to show the students what college life is all about. There are 8 student bloggers from different majors and different graduating classes that share their unique college experience. It is a great look into the everyday life of a student at UT. Parents can also find blogs from students studying abroad at abroad at the UT Study Abroad website. Another great blog for students as well as parents is the literary blog ShelfLife@Texas. ShelfLife@Texas discusses literary news from across campus and includes new book announcements written by UT faculty and alumni.

I hope you learned something about the new technologies our children are using to communicate with each other. I sure have. Go Horns!
Jeff Davis will address a new topic of interest to parents on his blog every month. If you would like to suggest a topic, please send your suggestions to emnorris@mail.utexas.edu.