COMPUTERS ARE BETTER THAN BOOKS

by

Andy Foster

Computers are better than books. Infinitely better.

Why do I say that? Well, most people already believe it, for one. Look into the average American home and what will you find: Nintendo's, Sega's, fast personal computers with more memory than the average human brain, modems, and thousands of dollars in computer software. You don't find stuffy books like Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Homer's *The Iliad*, or Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. No siree, bob. Nor even books written solely by American authors, like Ed Abbey's *Down the River*, Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, or Robert Heinlein' *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Too boring! Give us a video game instead. Now, *there's* bell ringing! *There's* adventure! *There's* murder and intrigue all reduced to a level I don't even have to think about *or* feel. I can stare at my video game or my computer *for hours* and get all the exercise my fingers and wrists need in the risk-free environment of my home. (ZZZZZT! EXCUSE THE SHORT CIRCUIT, but I've been spending so much money on my computer that I can't afford to fix the wiring in my home. IT'S NOT A PROBLEM. There's

only been ONE small fire.) Here, on my computer, I only risk running out of time (Please, God,

don't take me out before I finish this game!) or out of money to pay for it (bigger disaster).

Besides, I LOVE staying indoors. There's nothing like being tied to an electrical outlet or

an extension chord. Makes me feel fetal. Plus, everytime I'm locked inside a windowless, air-

conditioned building, I grow like a flower does. What an experience! It's like being inside

Folsom Prison and I didn't even have to commit a crime! WHY would I EVER want to go

outside, anyway, when all I ever get from it are mosquito bites or sunburn or windburn or

the cold stings of rain on my face? All that weather does is mess up my hair! I can experience

weather *the way I like it* by sitting at my computer, calling out on a telephone and ZAP!…I'm

looking at a satellite picture of weather ACROSS THE WHOLE UNITED STATES!

Yes, it does look like it's going to rain outside but the weather report didn't mention that and the

satellite picture is all I need. Why, only God sees pictures like that!

Those stupid books, on the other hand, go anywhere and *are* anywhere. God, they're in

people's dining rooms, on their couches, in their bedrooms, even out under their *trees!* And

what's worse…what's *really horrendous* is that *no special equipment is needed to haul them*

around! Some of the darn things are so small they'll fit into a shirt pocket. What a problem that

makes. How am I going to be able to tell who's important if I can't see a person's *accessories...?*

Besides, if I just bought books, I'd be out of debt in no time and I'd never build a better

credit rating doing that. A book usually costs only a few bucks, maybe fifty for a super-duper,

large-sized, hardcover, autographed version…while the newest computer systems cost

THOUSANDS of dollars! Like the new One Thousand Eighty Six computer that has a thousand

zillion megabytes of RAM and runs at 6,433,256 Gigahertz and has a 15 million gigabyte

hard drive. What a machine! Why, it will <u>literally</u> drive the earth's sun BACKWARDS! (Won't

that be a kick! Wonder what happens if we all do that at once?) Why, the cost of the machine

alone GUARANTEES *lifetime Gold Cards*, and that's not even considering the extra cost of the

<u>moving van</u> it'll take to get it home and the EXTRA LARGE TRANSFORMER the power

company will HAVE to install in the field right next to your house. And, I almost forgot, there's

the *upgrades* to the computer. Why, right now, they're already working on an Eleven Hundred

Eighty Six that's so fast that everything within twenty feet of it is accelerated to the <u>speed of</u>

<u>light!</u> Stuck in a bad marriage? NO PROBLEM! Just walk into a room, close the door behind

you, turn that baby on for ten seconds, turn it back off, walk out, get in the car, buy some

flowers, and go visit your ex-spouse's grave! (CAUTION: DON'T LET YOUR SPOUSE BUY

ONE OF THESE MACHINES!)

Those stupid books, on the other hand, just sit after you buy them. You leave one lying

around and the next thing you know someone's read it and wants to *talk* about what it says. Or

WORSE, some kids find it and they want you to *read* it to them. I hate seeing the rapt glow on

their faces. Who needs imagination? I want reality.

Besides, with a computer, I can turn it on, leave the kids staring at it, and not pay any

attention to them. They'll be better citizens for that. Think of what they'll learn. Yes, I have

heard of the old computer axiom: "Garbage in: garbage out". But that doesn't apply to humans,

just machines, and especially not to kids. I turned out okay, didn't I?

I've heard the talk that there's too much computer data that does nothing to add to the

quality of our lives. It's a lie. Even if it was true, books aren't any better, even if it is easier to

know what's inside them and the market makes them stand on their own. And as for the

argument that only the affluent have access to computers, well, humanity either needs to get on

the boat or get left behind. Books *can* be had by everyone, but our country runs on ideas and

computers can store so many...so many, many, many! Why, there are people out there willing to

spend *their entire finite lives* searching through it all just to find *one thing* of value...

Most people don't *really* want to learn much of anything, anyway.

Yes, sir, computers are definitely better than books. A million years from now those

wonderful beneficiaries of our super-duper technologically driven society will be able to tell a lot

more about us from the fossils of our old computers than from those of our books. Why, by then,

no one will need to read (or talk or write, for that matter) anyhow. If you want to know

something, you'll just unzip your acid-rain suit, take off your smog mask, remove your toxic

waste golashes, plug your brain right into a machine, and all you need to know will be just

transferred right in.

(ERROR: INSUFFICIENT MEMORY TO RUN APPLICATION!)

GLRB! FRIP! FRACK! ACK! My computer just *locked up!* Damn

it, this is the third time this week! Better find the software manual. Now, where's that book...?