

## Letter to the Editor

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rial and routine interactive exercises for advanced students, but even here, by their very nature, they may serve to limit students' access to the wealth of advanced material available in libraries, by encouraging them to be satisfied with the preselected collection recorded on the disk.

In some schools, children are now plunked down in front of computers to do their lessons, and sit there in isolation from each other, often with headsets on, so that they are totally cut off from their colleagues. Whatever happened to the idea of the school experience as a critical part of the socialization process for the very young? One begins to think that computers are being promoted by people who don't like other people very much.

In my view, the key to effective use of computers is selectivity. Computer word processing has revolutionized the way we write, and has generated whole new industries based on desktop publishing. Modern science and engineering would now be unthinkable without computers for data manipulation and management. However, computers have had virtually no impact on the way I teach or do library research, and serve a very limited function in communication (yes, I do have an e-mail address, and I use it quite often). Literature research is still carried out best manually. If you know something about a subject, go to the appropriate journals and scan article titles and see what is quoted in bibliographies. If you don't know anything about a subject, start with an encyclopedia or a recent textbook. There is no substitute for hard copies of books and journals. They are easy to use, carry around, scan, flip through, browse, copy. And there is no substitute for personal service from a real human being, whether it is at a library, a specialty store, or a travel agency.

Just remember this: the enthusiasm for the information highway comes mainly from computer nerds and those with a product to sell. Buyer beware. And by the way, everything I have said here has been said better and argued more completely by Clifford Stoll in his book *Silicon Snake Oil* published by Doubleday. Read it before you spend another dollar on computer technology!

## Letter to the Editor

### In Response to *Women in Geoscience* (Volume 21 Number 3)

Dear Dr. Thurston:

*Women in Geoscience* raises issues and comments on concerns which demand attention by all geoscientists. Geologists will be encouraged to know that Ms. Linda Thorstad, P. Geo., was recently elected as President of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia. Our legally mandated organization registers professional engineers and professional geoscientists and regulates their practice in B.C.

Linda is the first woman Professional Geoscientist to be elected president of any Canadian provincial association. She is a consultant and is endorsed by our 17,000 members through her professionalism, good works, and contributions to professional affairs.

Linda Thorstad is also Chair of the newly formed Canadian Council of Professional Geoscientists. Her considerable energy and skill will further the interests of all Canadian geoscientists.

Sincerely,  
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