***Editorial Views***

*By Rob Crassweller*

**“Technology & Communication”**

With the beginning of a new year, which will be my 32nd at Penn State, I like to look back and reflect on how things have changed over the years. What amazes me is how the technology and communications in the orchard business has changed. I know this dates me, but I remember when Jim Travis and I were the first extension group at Penn State to put out our Fruit Times Newsletter electronically via email. Back then it was crude and only consisted of text. Now I look at the Fruit Times Newsletter posted on the internet with the capability of including color images, charts and tables.

I would put together material for this publication by cutting and pasting articles from print newsletters. Cutting and pasting was an actual physical process then that involved the use of scissors and scotch tape onto sheets of paper. Now it is all electronic “cutting and pasting” followed by emailing the material to Maureen.

In getting ready for the winter meeting circuit, I am preparing “slides” on PowerPoint. When I came to PSU we used actual film slides and physically carried them in plastic carousels. The biggest fears were worrying if the top of the carousel came off and the slides spilled out or if the slide was put in backwards or upside down. We thought State College had come of age when we finally were able to get 1 hour slide making service. Now we change our “slides” up to the ten minutes before we make the presentation.

The availability of information has also changed dramatically. Google has now become a verb and we can search for anything. Of course, some of the information pulled up on a google search can be subject to errors; since anyone can upload anything. Now after making my initial google, I perform an advanced search and use information only the .edu or .gov domains when I want to insure accuracy.

Communications between people has shifted as well. I receive questions from around the world about growing fruit trees from seeds or answering people about why there is no fruit on the apple tree. By the same token, I can contact colleagues seamlessly in New Zealand or Italy. I can read the latest research or extension bulletins on-line. Any grower can also have similar access to this information.

Fruit growers are now more educated and more traveled than in the past. I remember putting together tours to out of state orchards such as to Washington and British Columbia in 1989. Many of you had never been there before. In 1996 we traveled to New Zealand. Now, the

Young Grower’s Alliance regularly travels to surrounding states. They have organized tours to New Zealand and will be going to South Africa this coming year. Many of you have toured orchards in Australia, Tasmania, Germany and Italy. You have attended fruit meetings in Bolzano, Italy on a regular basis.

Finally, the most amazing new technology is the minicomputer we wear strapped to our belts or in our pants pocket – the smart phone. You can call anywhere in the world from the seat of a tractor. Send images of a problem you see in the orchard. Send and receive email while working in the field. The profusion of ‘aps’ for the phone runs the gamut from identifying weeds, insects or diseases. You can look up a pesticide label to make sure your rates are correct. Want to learn how to prune sweet cherries, that is available on-line.

The *Commercial Tree Fruit Production Guide* will be available in the tried and true physical format but also as a searchable pdf to use in the field. I cannot wait to see what changes in technology and communications will happen in the next thirty-two years. It is truly an exciting time to be in the fruit business.