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Jillian Reynolds '19

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Question:

I was working on a project in the student lounge when it suddenly hit me: It's so nice to be able to work anywhere on campus. I can always find somewhere quiet to concentrate and connect to the internet. I was wondering, Abbot, what was campus like before campus-wide WiFi was available, and when did the campus finally offer campus-wide Wifi?

Jillian Reynolds '19

Answer:

My dearest Jillian,

Though I am vastly unequipped to comment on the ins-and-outs of technological progress, your question most certainly highlights the ever-changing world with which we interact as we pursue our studies and advance educational opportunities for our students.

Dear me, as I hark back, it occurs to me that, at the time of the founding of our dear college, even such a now-venerable initiative as the Dewey Decimal System was still finding its place in the libraries of the period. Our students then consumed composition books and pencil lead in much higher quantities than those of today. Social networking happened over meal times or games of cards, and streaming was something only the rowing team would refer to.

Melvil Dewey's process and ideas have stood the test of time. Not so the clothes and hair styles of his period! But as campus fashions have changed, so have the ways our students delve into the treasure house of information.

Ask the Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

 Submit Your Question

From my seat – at that time outside Todd Wehr Hall – it would not have been until the late 1990s and early 2000s that I began to notice more and more students carrying around what looked to me like foldable, ahem, "TV" sets, and there were frantic searches for, if I recall aright, such things as "ethernet cables." For the life of me I could not fathom what an ethernet was, but it seemed to be of particular importance to our students. As the years rolled on, I would see these foldable devices become so small that they could fit into a student's pocket.

I do well recall the year 2005 when I heard students' jubilation at the news that we now had this new amenity called WiFi in certain buildings – radio wireless local area networking of devices, as I understand it. Who would have fathomed it! Now, I was learning, the young people no longer had to worry about their "data plan" and their parent's reactions to what they called "overages," I believe. By 2010, this WiFi was available campus-wide, and it had most certainly changed my understanding of what could be tallied as study spaces on our campus. Never before had I imagined that a research project could be completed from a cozy chair in one of our student lounges!

I should add the great pride I feel to witness how, in my new home (our very own Mulva Library), our staff has adapted and embraced this burgeoning technology. Indeed, they seem to thrive mightily in this new world of fast-moving information! They serve as a beacon as they bring these wonderful new resources to our students, faculty and neighboring community.

Responses to "Ask the Abbot" questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

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