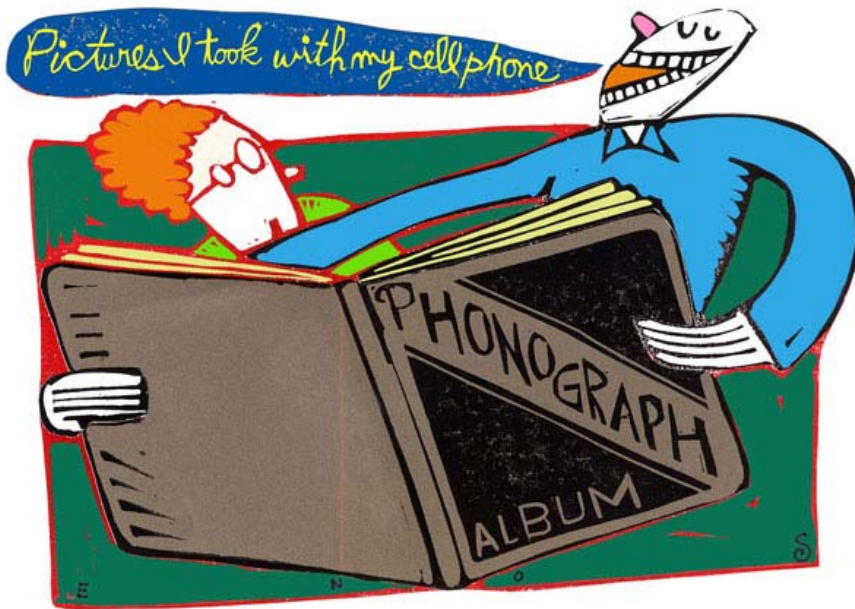


Overly Wired? There's a Word for It

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Randall Enos

By LISA BELKIN
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WAS there gridlock before there were automobiles? Was there jet lag before there were airplanes? Who was the first person to say "I Googled it" or "he's cyberstalking me"? At what moment did a "web log" turn into a "blog"?

Language makes things official. Change in the pace of life over the last decade can be measured by change in our vocabulary. We I.M., we get phished, we have PIN's. We HotSync, therefore we are.

Does a phenomenon fully exist until it has a name? Dr. Edward M. Hallowell thinks not, and he knows more than a little about naming a trend into existence. He was the first to name adult attention deficit disorder, or Adult A.D.D., back in 1995, and now he is taking on the rest of modern life in "CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked and About to Snap! Strategies for Coping in a World Gone A.D.D." (Ballantine Books, 2006). The frenzy of our wired world, he argues, is giving nearly all of us the symptoms of attention deficit disorder. To conquer the enemy, he says, we first need to name it.

So he has come up with the following suggestions, among others:

¶Screensucking, which he defines as "wasting time engaging with any screen — for instance, computer, video game, television, BlackBerry." He goes on to use his new word in a sentence: "I was supposed to write that article, but instead I spent the whole afternoon screensucking." That concept hits particularly close to home.

¶EMV, or E-Mail Voice. This, Dr. Hallowell writes, is "the unearthly tone a person's voice takes on when he is reading e-mail while talking to you on the telephone." Researchers at M.I.T., he tells us, have developed a program that can electronically measure how engaged people are in a conversation, giving scientific certainty to your suspicion that you are not being listened to.

¶Frazzing. Defined as "multitasking ineffectively." The term multitasking itself was originally coined to describe what a computer does during the microseconds between keystrokes. Then it came to mean something humans are proud to do. And when we crash (also a computer term) while trying to multitask, we frazz.

¶Gemmelsmerch. "The force that distracts the mind or steals it away from what it wants to do or ought to be doing." For example, "Accidents along the highway are high in gemmelsmerch, compelling

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drivers to slow down and gawk. A jackhammer outside your window is high in gemmelsmerch. Getting news that you will be audited by the I.R.S. is high in gemmelsmerch. ... As if covered in a radioactive cloud of the stuff, the world has never been as high in gemmelsmerch as it is today."

These are all good words. But Dr. Hallowell's list is far from complete. A world transforming itself at an almost cancerous pace requires an exponentially new vocabulary. Coined with the help of some friends — particularly my husband, Bruce Gelb, word maven extraordinaire, and Al Cattabiani, founder of Garagista Records and the best punster I know — here are a few of my own additions:

¶Spammified: to end up in your spam folder by mistake. This is becoming the new "check is in the mail" excuse for why we don't answer e-mail messages. "I am so sorry, but I only just got your message. It had been spammified."

¶Cellopain: the jerk who talks loudly and obliviously on his cellphone in a crowd. There are other words for this person, but they are not printable.

¶Regurgimailer: people who forward to everyone they know everything that lands in their in-boxes. Warnings about techniques that rapists use in parking lots; photos of adorable missing children; heart-warming lists of why women and their friendships are so wonderful; jokes about, well, everything. The fact that most of the items either have been traveling the Internet for years or turn out not to be true, or both, does not stop them. A word to regurgimailers — check Snopes.com before you forward, please.

¶Reverberon: the kind of e-mail described above, which has been forwarded endlessly and everywhere.

¶Telamnesia: a condition that restricts you to talking only to people who are on your speed-dial list because you no longer keep phone numbers in your head. For me, this includes my own home, which I misdialled the other day.

¶Logonorhea: a related condition that renders you unable to use certain online accounts because you can remember neither your screen name nor your password.

¶Bluetooth fairy: a person who walks around with the blinking glow of a Bluetooth headset permanently in one ear. I stand guilty as charged.

There are more, of course. Send me yours. And e-mail this to everyone you know. If it doesn't end up spammified, it can become a reverberon.

This column about the intersection of jobs and personal lives appears every other week. E-mail: Belkin@nytimes.com.

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