...Living simply

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few weeks in the summer, so I made do with ceiling fans and a portable air conditioner instead.

Luxuries become necessities

If you were to make a list of all the household technology that has become commonplace over the last 25 to 30 years, most of the items on the list would be electronics.

Here's the list of inventions I came up with:

— 1. Answering machine/ voicemail/call-waiting/caller ID;
— 2. Fax machine;
— 3. Smoke detector/carbon dioxide monitor;
— 4. Personal computer/ laptop computer;
— 5. Cell phone/pager (Remember when only doctors had pagers?);
— 6. Internet;
— 7. Cable TV/satellite TV/high definition TV/plasma TV;
— 8. Automatic car starter;
— 9. Video technology (VCR, video camera, video games);
— 10. Digital camera;
— 11. MP3 player, such as the iPod;
— 12. GPS (Global Positioning System); and

A few years ago, most of the items on this list could have been considered luxuries rather than necessities, but how many do you take for granted in your everyday life?

Some of these are so commonplace that we hardly think of them as separate from ourselves. They are, rather, extensions of our selves, to use the terminology of anthropologist Edward T. Hall.

However, think again of the cost. If you purchase a High Definition plasma TV at approximately $3,000, the latest laptop for $500, and a GPS system for $500, you've already spent $4,000 — that's half of the average American family's credit card balance of $8,000. At plus or minus a 16 percent interest rate, that's a heavy burden of high-interest debt that is nearly impossible to pay off by making the minimum required payment each month.

When I contemplate that scenario, I'm content with my rabbit ears and dial-up.

On the other hand, I really would like one of those "roomba" vacuum cleaners that propel themselves around the floor. Now, if they would just invent one that will dust the furniture, too...

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