

THE FACTORY TIMES

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A MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD DESIGNER

Hey all! I'm Bobby Zuch, the Lead Designer of The Factory Times. It's been one hell of a year, hasn't it?

When this quarantined semester first started, we honestly weren't sure what to do with this organization. Our main issues were about the campus population, and the spread of germs amidst the pandemic. Almost nobody was on campus, and printing out issues would mean that people would have to dispose of each copy that they touched instead of putting them back on the racks. On top of that, our design team was non-existent. But thanks to an announcement that Kyle put out in the Student Community Mailer, we were able to fill our empty designer slots with a very diverse group of artists! Over the last few months, they've created a multitude of article designs that we wouldn't normally be able to fit into one print issue, due to page limitations. But from this point on, until this whole situation clears up, we will be producing our future issues for digital viewing, with as many pages as we want!

You may also notice a lack of the monthly "Scenes from Poly" and "Poly Polls" pages. It's sad for me to see these pages go, as I had a lot of fun making them. These will not be going away permanently, and I wish to be able to re-incorporate these in the future, but their comeback will more than likely have to wait until on-campus restrictions are loosened.

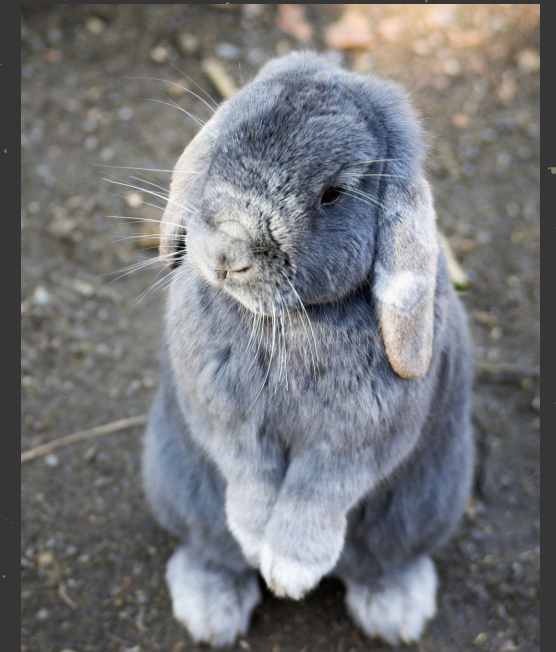
In short, I'd like to personally thank our brand new team of designers for joining and sticking with The Factory Times in the creation of our first Fall issue! And a huge shoutout to our writers for continuing to write weekly content for us as well. This has been a very busy semester so far, so I really mean it when I say:

Thanks, everybody.
-Bobby Zuch

(P.S.: I wanna know what you think of this issue! Given that our views are now pretty much untraceable, I'm curious to see some feedback, and how many people care enough to read this. Shoot an email to thefactorytimes@gmail.com. Maybe we could even do a viewer mail page...!)



In the Seto Inland Sea of Japan, lies a small island called Okunoshima, two miles off the coast of the Japanese city of Takehara, in Hiroshima Prefecture. These days, it is nicknamed Usagi Jima, which translates to Rabbit Island, home to hundreds of rabbits. Tourists can buy a mere bag of rabbit food to feed the rabbits. They will run in stampedes, hop on your lap, or climb on your arms. Strangely though, nobody really knows how the rabbits got to the island in the first place.



Okunoshima was a cultivated area until the Russo-Japanese War occurred. Forts were built to protect it as families lived there. Around 1929, the Imperial Japanese Army initiated a secret program to develop chemical weapons after conducting extensive research that the U.S and Europe were doing the same. Chemical munitions plants and toxic gas reactors were built to create a ton of gas poison. These gas poisons were used against Chinese soldiers and civilians in the 1930s and 40s during the war in China, killing approximately 80,000 people; because of this, the locals will sometimes call it "Poison Gas Island" and it was removed from Japanese maps to hide the operation from the public.

When World War II ended, the Japanese government had to dispose of the poison gases to prevent trouble from other countries. It's rumored that rabbits were brought to the island as test subjects for the chemical weapons. Some people speculated that rabbits of today are descendants of these test rabbits, but experts have said that they were euthanized after operations shut down.



There is a rumor that a group of kids in 1971 released eight rabbits near Okunoshima. As Okunoshima was abandoned for decades, the chemical plant buildings deserted, no predators, and the fact that they are fast-breeding mammals, their population has grown rapidly. It gained popularity when bunny "stampede" videos released, shifting the composition of tourists from Japanese elderly people and local school children to a wider demographic.

A big influx of tourists can bring a wide array of problems for the rabbits. Rabbits, naturally herbivores, are known to munch on leaves, roots, wood, seeds with an occasional snack of dung. However, people perceive animals to eat carrots, lettuce, and cabbage, which is what the tourists bring to feed the rabbits when they visit. This diet poisons the rabbits because their digestive system is too sensitive to break down the vegetables, as such, it is preferred to give them high fiber foods.



Rabbits need to eat every day. With their current diet, rabbits feast ravenously one day and starve later in the week, depending on the weather and school schedules, which influences tourism. There, rabbits usually populate in the grass waiting to be fed and watered. The island rabbits have a two-year life expectancy while they could live up to 10 years if they were in a more typical domestic situation.

If you end up visiting Okunoshima, you will for sure end up falling in love with these creatures. You can access the Bunny Island from the Hiroshima Station (there are several local trains and a ferry that are available as well). Okunoshima is a difficult destination to reach but worthwhile to see the country's picturesque coastline and its friendly bunnies.

Okunoshima has a beach, an onsen, a poison gas museum, campsites, and a hotel to have the best vacation ever along with rabbits. It's best to practice safety rules: don't run after bunnies or with them in your arms, as they can easily stress out; do not play with them in a public road to avoid traffic accidents, do not put your hands close to their mouths - they will bite you because of bad eyesight - feed them with proper food, and of course, no dogs allowed.



Designed By: Medhellyne Edwards

North Korea Lauanders Over \$170 Million Through U.S. Banks

Written and Designed by: Paul Gluck

From 2008 to 2016, through both the Obama and Trump administrations, one thing has stayed constant, the tightening of sanctions on North Korea. North Korea, since the early 1980s, has had a “secret” nuclear arms program that has consistently threatened to disrupt the relative peace throughout the world. From apparent nuclear warhead tests in the capital, Pyongyang, to launching intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) towards Japan in 2017, North Korea has been a constant threat to peace in east Asia. In reaction to these acts, many countries such as the US have put steep economic sanctions on them as a means to discourage the nuclear program. This in turn, has led to North Korea being an extremely poor country, famine and disease still rife in much of the country.

Due to the crippling weight of this economic depression, North Korea has often used methods to try and avoid US sanctions, many of them involving their neighbor to the north, China. There has been a recent leak of secret documents from an investigation into suspicious bank activity reports, by the Treasury Department’s Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, known as FinCEN. These documents report that the North Korean government moved \$174 million dollars through US banks such as JP Morgan Chase and the Bank of New York Mellon. Though FinCEN has denounced and condemned the leaking of the documents, they have not commented on the contents of the reports.

In one of the reports, a CEO of a company in Dandong, China, a city right on the North Korean border, laundered money for the North Koreans through her business and made almost no attempt to hide it. The US indicted the CEO and other executives with charges of money laundering and helping North Korea evade international sanctions; however, China has not extradited them, so the charges are still pending.

The banks marked some of the payments as “suspicious” after processing, as most of the money was going to seemingly shell companies in Cambodia, China, and Singapore. One of the transactions included a Singapore shipping concern called United Green Pte. Ltd. United Green Pte. Ltd. has a director by the name of Leonard Lai, who was reprimanded by the US in the past for a different company he had, which had connections in apparently trying to move weapons from Cuba to North Korea.

One key thing to note is that although the banks marked the transactions as “suspicious” they still processed the payments and received their cuts. The only reason these transactions were caught was because banks were prompted to comb through its records as a result of a "government inquiry." The banks allowed many of these payments to companies who had been open with their dealings with North Korea. One executive was even interviewed by the Associated Press in a report detailing their trade with North Korea in 2014 and is quoted by the Stimson Center as admitting to North Korean trade as far back as 2010.

JP Morgan Chase, one of the two main banks involved, was quoted as moving at least \$89 million to these shell companies. Chase, ironically, was one of the four banks bailed out by the US taxpayers during the 2008 financial crisis, with taxpayers paying over \$25 billion to keep the bank afloat. Even though previously listing these shell companies as “suspicious” and with possible ties to North Korea, they still carried out at least 14 more wire transfers.

It is unknown why they allowed these payments to carry on, but the bank has said it has invested in efforts to bolster anti-money laundering measures. China has refused to comment on these reports or aid US officials in bringing those indicted to justice. Since 2017, the United States has had North Korea on the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

- Paul Gluck

“Hey Seamus, it’s Minnie... again. Today has been one of the worst days of my life. First, I found out that my hours at work are being cut, I may not have enough money to pay for rent. Then, my cat Mickey snuck out the door when I was going to get the mail and ran right into oncoming traffic. Luckily he was able to avoid becoming roadkill, but I have absolutely no idea where he is; I’m thinking of putting up posters around town and hoping someone finds him. Today wasn’t entirely bad though, I watched Bambi for the millionth time today, and I only cried twice - that’s a new record! But, I didn’t come here to tell you about the latest Disney movie I watched. Today is a very special day, Seamus, it’s our six month anniversary! I can’t believe it’s been six months since... well, you know. Well, it’s getting dark so I’m going to head out. I’m looking forward to all of the adventures that we’ll have together, and I can’t wait until the day we can see each other again. I love you, Seamus, and I always will...”

Minnie Morris is in her mid-sixties. Minnie Morris is a line cook at a Mexican restaurant. Minnie Morris is obsessed with Disney movies and never goes a day without watching one. Minnie Morris is single and ready to mingle.

Minnie Morris is in love with Seamus Smith. Seamus Smith was in his late thirties. Seamus Smith was a chiropractor. Seamus Smith was obsessed with hiking, often seen around a variety of mountains in the summer months. Seamus Smith was happily married with three children. Seamus Smith was not in love with Minnie Morris.



Minnie Morris was diagnosed with chronic back pain. Minnie Morris was referred to Seamus Smith’s office. Minnie Morris was made speechless by how attractive he was. Minnie Morris was faking some of her pain so she could see Seamus Smith more. Minnie was in love with Seamus Smith.

Seamus Smith had no idea that Minnie Morris was so obsessed with him. Seamus Smith had no idea that Minnie Morris was faking some of her pain. Seamus Smith had no idea that Minnie Morris wanted him to leave his wife. Seamus Smith didn’t know that Minnie Morris was a psychopath. Seamus Smith was not in love with Minnie Morris.

Minnie Morris ran out of money to pay for Seamus Smith’s treatment. Minnie Morris ran out of vacation days at her job. Minnie Morris ran out of excuses for missing work. Minnie Morris ran to her car to follow Seamus Smith home one day after his office closed. Minnie Morris is in love with Seamus Smith.

Seamus Smith didn’t realize that somebody was following him home. Seamus Smith didn’t realize that Minnie Morris was psychologically ill. Seamus Smith didn’t realize that nails were placed on one of his tires. Seamus Smith didn’t realize that Minnie Morris had a knife in her passenger seat. Seamus Smith was not in love with Minnie Morris.

She visits him every other day but never has to knock. She brings him flowers in the spring, but they always die after a week or two. She talks to him about Disney movies for hours, but he never responds. She would stay through the night, but she is scared of the dark.

JUSTIN SAVOY

short story, fiction

Designed by:

YELIZAVETA KIUCHUN

BIKING IDEAS FOR BEGINNERS

Although I have always been terrible at making plans, this predicament has only been exacerbated by Covid-19. While it may have taken me an hour to decide what to do prior, it would be but a slight exaggeration if I said it now takes twice as long when health, safety, and government restrictions are considered. Despite this, I have always felt completely liberated from these lengthy internal delegations when hit with the irresistible urge to ride my bicycle. Biking is healthy, enjoyable, and inherently deferential to social distancing guidelines (unless you ride tandem, but I will conveniently ignore this). If those of you on campus who have bikes that they never use feel similarly impelled, I will share some good ideas for navigating Utica on your rims.

When I first moved into the SUNY Poly dorms, I was shocked at how hilly the surrounding land was. Before I had really made friends, I would ride my old dingy Mongoose down the hill of Oriskany and walk it back up for hours at a time. However, I soon began to look elsewhere to ride because I wanted to actually be able to pedal without the risk of hitting someone walking on the paths (also, I crashed into the Campus Center's loading dock one time). If one wishes to avoid a similar fate, I would strongly recommend going across the street from the Dunkin' Donuts right off campus on River Road. There, you will find a small green sign pointing towards a discrete trail surrounded by foliage.

Although this initially runs parallel to the highway, it is separated from vehicular traffic entirely. As one continues, they are placed in a remote trail that grows more exciting at every turn. There are deep forests, steep declines, and paths towards a rickety

metallic bridge encompassing the canal. This path is decently maintained, although you may have to walk around a fallen tree every so often. It is lightly trafficked with many different paths within it, so it can provide means for many biking adventures before getting boring. However, if it ever does, I recommend racing down Mulaney Road, which is just off campus and immediately adjacent to Hilltop Drive. The grade is insanely steep by novice standards, making it easy to go close to thirty miles per hour while zipping down the precipice.

While this may all sound thrilling amid the doldrums of quarantine, I know that not everyone reading this has a bicycle. For some of you, it may be a simple matter of heading down to the nearby Walmart and paying a cool hundred for a hot pink Huffy. However, economic insecurity becomes a more pressing concern than ever during times like these, which is why I emphatically suggest heading down to the Utica Bike Rescue if money is preventing you from riding. This non-profit shop has helped restore my neglected rusty bicycle to working order gratis, and they will also gladly donate bikes to those who could not otherwise afford them. I hope to see some of you on local trails soon (it's getting a little less fun having them all to myself!)

BY: JACQUES ANTHONY BETTIG

DESIGNED BY: YELIZAVETA KIUCHUN

HIKING IDEAS FOR BEGINNERS

By: Jacques Anthony Bettig

It has been roughly half a year since COVID-19 insidiously took hold of the Empire State and quickly devolved into among the most frightening microcosms of the virus' spread on the planet. Such trying circumstances naturally were met with stringent restrictions, many of which are still active in apprehension of an expected second wave. For those on campus who wish to avoid a listless rut while respecting the regulations in place, I strongly recommend exploring the nearby Adirondacks.

Their expansive peaks begin a mere forty minutes north of Utica, with many climbs accessible for beginners: I speak as someone who grew up in New York City and had never ascended a mountain until recently.

If you would like a quiet spot to explore alone or with a small group, I would advise traveling to Echo Cliff via the Panther Mountain Trail by Lake Piseco. I make note of group size because although this peak is not as heavily trafficked as the others I will discuss, there is also not as much room on top to socially distance.

This half hour walk is relatively short in distance, although the steepness of the trail is what makes it longer. There is one moderately sized rock near the top to clamber over, but once this is accomplished, one is suddenly confronted with the unobstructed views the cliff has to offer. I personally just made this climb a week before writing this, and the privilege to gaze at endless miles of autumn foliage just beginning to change was marvelous.

If you would prefer a slightly shorter walk, it would be worthwhile to instead visit the Bald Mountain trail close to Old Forge. Not only is the trip to the top slightly quicker, but there are a few lower tiers of clearings to stop at for a break while enjoying a view of the world below. If you decide to proceed to the uppermost peak, you will find a metallic structure looming curiously over the precipice; this is the Rondaxe Fire Tower, and it is sometimes open for the public to climb. However, this additional ascent is not requisite to fully appreciate Bald Mountain's stunning panoramic views.

Although there is sufficient room on top, this is also an extremely popular trail, so I would recommend going early in the morning to avoid crowds. Finally, there is the Kane Mountain trail, which is the best option for a socially distanced climb. There are a multitude of trails to arrive at its peak, which means fewer precarious encounters with maskless mountaineers. Additionally, there is plenty of room on top, which makes it the ideal hike for larger groups.

To put the space afforded into perspective, I was able to play an impromptu touch football game with my friends there last spring while easily avoiding steep areas. The one drawback of this vast expanse is that it does not quite offer the same views as the two aforementioned peaks. However, this inconvenience can be circumvented, as there is a fire tower atop Kane similar to that of Bald Mountain. Once one climbs this, they can enjoy just as mesmerizing of a view as they could nearly anywhere else in the Adirondacks.

The majesty of the great outdoors is a luxury that many Poly students fail to take advantage of. Utica has its nice areas, but I never truly appreciated Upstate New York until I first set foot in its mountains over a year after starting college. If you do not have a car, I would encourage finding a friend who does to take you (if they feel comfortable with being outside amid the pandemic). We will swiftly enter another of our region's notoriously frigid and drawn-out winters soon, so assuming you are interested, I recommend making one of these magical treks posthaste!

*Designed By: Mcdhellyne
Edwards*

Transfer Of Life

It was the perfect day to hunt. The leaves had just started to fall, the air was crisp and smelled faintly of honey crisp apples. This time of year was perfect for hunting, as it was much easier to navigate, the sound of leaves being stepped on often meaning that supper was near. It takes a lot of patience to succeed during a hunt, not uncommon to go home empty-handed. However, it is crucial to bring home meat during the fall months, as winter is approaching dangerously near. A winter without enough meat is a death sentence, and Tokala is not willing to see that happen. Tokala is the chief of the goose tribe, the most powerful among them all. It is his responsibility to make sure his fellow tribesmates make it through the winter, especially since the other tribes are not so generous when it comes to food during this time of year.

All of a sudden, the sound of leaves being crushed can be heard within a short distance of Chief Tokala. He looks up to see a magnificent deer standing just a few feet in front of him. Grabbing an arrow from beside him, he gets ready to take a shot with his bow. He lines up his shot to ensure that the deer will die immediately, and so the meat will not be tarnished. Slowly pulling back his arrow, he is about to conquer the beast.

“Chief Tokala, it’s happening! You have to get back now!”

The chief is startled by the noise and shoots the arrow into the ground a few feet away from the deer. Noticing this commotion, the deer bolts back into the woods for protection. The chief looks over at the now revealed Yuma and gives him a piercing glare.

“This better be good, or you’re going to be responsible for the number of people that deer could have fed.” He picks up his bow and starts running back to where he came from.

The chief was determined to get back to his village in record-breaking time, his wife and soon to be child waiting for him there. He knew that his wife was very close to having their child, but the threat of having a dangerously low meat supply was too important to ignore. He still feels a pit in his stomach about him potentially missing his first child’s birth. After all, somebody has to take over the tribe one day after he is gone, and his child will be the first one in line.

“Yuma, how long ago did she start having contractions?” The chief murmurs under his breath, pausing to breathe during the sprint back home. Chief Tokala is not exactly built like a runner. He is a solid 270 pounds and utilizes walking as his main source of transportation. His solid black hair that goes down to his shoulders sways in the wind as he continued to get closer and closer to his village.



“Not too long. I found out right as it started happening, and immediately left to deliver the news.” Yuma said. He was much smaller than Chief Tokala. He could not have been any taller than 5’6”. He had brown straight hair that went all the way down to his eyes, looking like an insect compared to the chief, who towered a foot higher than him.

“Good. I don’t know what I would do if I wasn’t there for the birth of my firstborn.”



Yuma looks up at the chief and starts to see a tear stream down his face. This is the first time he had ever seen the chief cry, but depending on how things transpire at home, it very well may be the last.

Yuma was informed by some of the tribe members taking care of the chief’s wife, Odina, that she was experiencing some complications. It was not looking great when he left to get the chief, suddenly fearful that she may not survive childbirth. Yuma did not tell Chief Tokala this however, not wanting him to worry about anything else besides the birth of his firstborn. However, Yuma cannot imagine the guilt that he would feel if he did not warn Chief Tokala of his wife’s condition.

The sound of screaming could be heard throughout the village, the entire tribe congregating outside of the chief’s home. Inside was his wife, Odina, accompanied by two other female tribe members who were trying to comfort her and relieve some of the pains of childbirth. There were a variety of herbs and broths laying on a table in front of Odina. Many of the ingredients used were found right outside of the village, having been used by the tribe for generations to ease pain and help women during childbirth. However, by the sound of the screaming, it seemed as though the pain wasn’t going away.

“I don’t know if I can handle this pain much longer. Something must be wrong, it shouldn’t hurt this much.” Odina looks over at the two women for answers, but they were just as confused as she was. All they knew was something wasn’t right, and she was dealing with excruciating pain.

“I know it hurts, Odina, but I need you to keep drinking the broth we have. Keep pushing as hard as you can. The longer it takes, the more pain you will have to endure.” One of the other women taking care of Odina holds her hand as she continues to give her the herbs.

“I’m trying...” Odina says to the two women before taking a big breath and exhaling, followed by a piercing scream that ripped throughout the village and beyond.

“You made it! Your wife is...” The individual starts talking as Chief Tokala pushes past him and rushes towards the location of his wife. He sees the entire tribe waiting outside and starts shoving people to the side to see what was happening. In front of his home were the two women that were taking care of his wife. One of them holding a blanket in her arms, a tiny head popping out of the end. The chief immediately runs towards the blanket and holds it close to his heart. The child looks up at the chief and reaches for his face.

“Where is Odina?” The chief looks over at the other woman, who immediately points her eye in the direction of the ground. She continues doing so for a few seconds before looking at the chief directly in his eyes.

“Chief Tokala, your wife died during childbirth. We are so sorry.”

The chief looks past the woman and rushes into his home to see his wife. All he could see was a blanket on his bed covering her.

The deer wasn't the only thing Chief Tokala lost today.

BY: JUSTIN SAVOY

DESIGNED BY: YELIZAVETA KIUCHUN

Thoughts on Labor Day

Although Labor Day in past years was always apt to conjure images of a late summer sun and the grizzled wafts of a rustic barbecue pit, my relationship with the holiday grew somewhat more complex in recent years. Due to college's August start, I was forced to imbue new meaning into a day which was then spent away from family, instead celebrating in stolid lecture halls. In my freshman year, my reaction to this fate was mostly one of indignance. “Why must I endure this monotony,” I obstinately wondered, “...when this is the one day where this country explicitly grants a reprieve from hard work?” Granted, being a student was not exactly labor, but I justified this some outrage on behalf of my professors.

Over time, these frustrated thoughts lent themselves to the realm of philosophy, as I began to further ponder America's relationship with labor. I soon learned that many countries celebrated their workers not during September, but on the first of May. This was not some improbable coincidence, but rather a collective nod to May Day, for this date was chosen over a century ago in the spirit of Marxist solidarity. Considering the contentious relationship a substantial number of Americans have with communism, the insistence on celebrating four month later was not what surprised me (although this is telling).

Rather, what baffled me was the disparity in how the occasion was recognized domestically and abroad. Most countries direct all of their schools and businesses to shutter on their respective laborer celebrations, while the United States grants no such mandatory holiday. Indeed, no federal holiday in our republic is one in which all employers are compelled to give any time off. Is it not bizarre, even ironic, that the common American has no claim over the day ostensibly designated for them?

Some may try to justify this aberrance in the libertarian spirit, arguing that employers have the freedom to run their businesses as they please, employees being free to work somewhere else if they do not like it. However, I feel like such distinct American modes of thinking fumble over the nuance that comes with handling a nation of three hundred and thirty million. Yes, employers should be accorded certain freedoms in managing their businesses, but to see the consequences of not checking these liber-

ties, one need only look at the past century and a half. If the same reasoning had been applied in our fairly recent history, could it not vindicate those who put children in coal mines, and even those who owned slaves?

Moreover, the freedom attributed to the latter party in this argument is far more elusive. Although the days of conspicuous bondage are gone in America, present still are the tethers which bereave the working class of much of their social mobility. As a nation of optimists, we tend to overestimate the ease in which we may reposition ourselves in the job market to capture more security and dignity. However, when so thin a safety net exists for so many, and with countless career prospects bleak in our current economy, it is unreasonable to expect workers to “go somewhere else” if something as seemingly inconsequential as a worker's holiday is not granted.

This position is pragmatic, except in its determination of what is inconsequential. I do concede that one day off in a year of hundreds does not make too great of a difference, however, America's failure to grant nationwide respite during Labor Day stands behind an intellectually dishonest line of reasoning that has been used to justify far greater woes endemic to her land. If we are to truly be an equitable nation, the concession must be made that the liberties of one party are susceptible to encroaching upon those of another. Once enough of us come to this realization, we can demand that certain easements be extended to us which were previously denied in the name of freedom, including that of a day off on the first Monday of September.

Jacques Anthony Bettig

Designed by: Yelizaveta Kiuchun





TEACH YOUR HOME A LESSON

By: Christopher Bovee De Soto

Buying a new home during a pandemic is nothing I'd wish on my worst enemy, but the force of "adulthood" nonetheless moved my husband and I to purchase our first home together. With that being said, several other considerations were necessary, at least in our minds; a couch and a loveseat (or maybe a sectional), and a new bed frame. While setting up our National Grid electricity and gas accounts, I came across an advertisement for Google's "Nest Learning Thermostat". As I read, I learned that they offer rebates at the time of purchase with an active account; as such, I immediately jumped to take advantage of the deal. Now that I was in that home energy mindset, I recalled a home energy monitoring device I had investigated a few years ago from a company called Sense, which at the time seemed cost-prohibitive. Presently however, recently purchasing a home suddenly made \$299 (Sense) and \$174 (Nest), plus tax and shipping, not seem like such lofty purchases, especially if they're so easy to install, configure, and they work as described.

In the lead up to the purchase of both devices, I made sure to watch both installation videos from start to finish. Google's tutorial empowered me with literally all the knowledge I needed to do the installation. Everything starts with turning off the breakers. I had to turn off both our air conditioning system and our furnace, since both provide power on an individual basis straight to the thermostat wires. From there, it was harder removing the old thermostat from the wall than it was physically attaching the various plates and base of the Nest device. Once I had everything firmly affixed to the wall, I was able to snap the front on, and flip the breakers back on. The device soon powered up with the familiar multicolored G logo. Using the phone-based app, I was able to get going in about 10 minutes, three of which were just waiting for the device to fully boot for the first time. Once connected to the (you guessed it) Nest Wi-Fi system I have set up, I immediately found the menu option to check for updates and forced them to download immediately. The first step, after putting any device on your home network, is to bring it up to date. After that, keep monitoring the devices to ensure they update periodically.

The Sense home energy monitoring device was more involved in its installation. I elected to install the device inside the circuit breaker panel, which happens to be in our basement. That means I had to take the front of the panel off and expose the internal wiring. But before that, I knew the device uses wi-fi, so I installed a fourth mesh router on our home network in the basement to service the monitoring device. After turning the power off to the whole house, I removed the panel and fixed clamps around our two main lines, nestling the grey wires behind all the existing wires. I then located a 240-volt circuit breaker that I knew was no longer in use and installed the power for the unit as instructed by their video and quick-start guide. Once I had the wires connected to the breakers and panel, I extended the wi-fi antenna out one of the holes punched in the side, so that the metal of the panel and door wouldn't interfere with the signal to the basement's new mesh router. After I had everything connected, I put the panel back on, flipped on the 240-volt breaker, and began the app's setup. One tip; don't try to set up the device while you're standing physically between your router and the device; it took me two tries to join the Sense device to our Nest Wi-Fi because my body and my phone were blocking signals, but it worked (eventually), immediately giving out useful data about the overall energy consumption of our home.

In terms of installs, both the Google Nest Learning Thermostat, and the Sense Home Energy Monitor were easy if you have the confidence to turn breakers on and off and use a screwdriver. To be honest, I didn't have to turn off our whole house for the Sense install, but it must always be done out of an abundance of caution because electricity can kill you. It can also mess up the equipment you're trying to install, so even if you don't hurt yourself, you'll void the device's warranty. With the thermostat, the difference was immediate. The house has been cooler, and various smart features keep the fans going, for instance, to blow around the air for more even distribution. The energy monitor has already started collecting statistics and, according to blogs I've read, will continue to collect data for several weeks before giving insight into individual appliances or electronics that the device has detected. For now, I can't wait to get home, turn everything off, and then turn things on one-by-one to see what kind of power drain all our devices truly possess. The Sense monitor can be purchased with an extra set of clamps that will monitor the output of solar systems and generators, allowing for environmentally friendly expansion. The Nest system can also be expanded with temperature sensors that can be purchased separately and placed throughout the home.



Disclaimer: I'm no stranger to electrical work, or HVAC work, so these processes came easily to me. If you have any doubt, contact a licensed electrician or HVAC technician before purchasing and installing anything yourself. Your life is not worth a new gadget for your house.

Designed By: Mcdhellyne Edwards

Buildings and Tensions Explode in

Lebanon

Written and Designed by Paul Gluck

Almost two months after the massive Beirut explosion, there is even more chaos in Lebanon as suspicious fires rage and more explosions occur throughout the war-torn country. The country, still reeling from its 15 year long civil war that ended in 1990 and pummeling economic recession, has been plagued by a string of questionable explosions and fires over the past 2 months.



It all started with the now infamous Beirut explosion on August 4th, where 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, stored in a port warehouse, exploded, killing at least 190 people and damaging almost every part of the Lebanese capital.

The explosion was so powerful that it was recorded across the globe and in the United States as a seismic event with a magnitude of 3.3, which is the same magnitude as a minor earthquake. Following the explosion, protestors flooded the streets over the assumed Government negligence allowing the explosion to occur. The Prime Minister and his cabinet resigned 6 days after.



The remnants of the port where the explosion had occurred.

However, it has been anything but smooth sailing for the country of Lebanon since this horrific event.

On the morning of September 10th, Beirut residents woke up to a black sky as a fire raged across another port warehouse, this time one that was storing tires and oil. Some residents confessed to fleeing the capital in fear of another explosion.



Thick black smoke plume rises above the ruin of the original explosion (Hussein Malla/AP)

The Lebanese Army was called to control that fire and authorities report that the fire was under control by early evening, though it did little to the hearts of the Lebanese. The thought that another explosion could happen again was now in the fore-front of their minds. And unfortunately, it did.

On Tuesday, an arms depot that belonged to the Shi'ite Muslim extremist group, Hezbollah, exploded, injuring several people and terrifying the Lebanese people.

The explosion occurred in the town of Ain Qana in southern Lebanon, which has become infamous as a stronghold of Hezbollah, which it has used to wage war against Israel to the south. Hezbollah, deemed a terrorist organization by 21 countries, as well as the Arab League and the European Union, has been cited as saying the explosion was due to a "technical error".

As of now, a common what, maybe a common who, behind the recent string of explosions has not been found.

- Paul Gluck

KEUKENHOF: LARGEST GARDEN IN THE WORLD

BY: LINDA PAREDES

In Lisse, Netherlands, there are grand flower gardens called Keukenhof, located in the Duin en Bollenstreek (Dune and Bulb) region of Holland. Known as the Garden of Europe, it stretches 32 hectares of land, filled with beautiful flowers as far as the eye can see.

Keukenhof was a part of the Teylingen Castle estate, built in 1641, where the grounds were used mostly for hunting. Countess Jacoba van Beiren added a small herb garden near the kitchen in the 15th century, giving the nickname Keunkenhof, meaning kitchen courtyard. She would gather fruits and vegetables from the Keukenduin (kitchen dunes) for use in the kitchen. She took care of the garden until she passed away at the age of 35, passing down her estate to wealthy merchants for many years.

Fast-forward to the 19th century, Baron and Baroness Van Pallandt inherited the land and wanted to build a more structured garden around the castle. They contacted Architects Zocher, who designed Vondelpark in Amsterdam, to design their garden. The landscape that was completed in 1857 still forms the foundation of the park today.

In 1949, a group of 20 leading flower bulb growers and exporters came up with the plan to use the estate to exhibit spring-flowering bulbs. Keukenhof became known as the spring park, opening its gate to the public in 1950 and becoming an instant success, with 236,000 visitors during its first year.

Today, about 800,000 visitors come to visit the Keukenhof garden. It gets hectic at times but once you pass the main entrance and the crowds, it becomes a beautiful sight to behold. The park is well-organized due to the accessible walking paths, as well as the hosting of five indoor pavilions that include exhibits, restaurants, and other facilities.



Every year, the park has exhibitors participating in the decoration of the garden Keukenhof, who were part of the Dutch manufacturers. Each manufacturer is granted a defined area decoration that is arranged with different flowers. As a result, if you ever visit Keukenhof, you will find that every corner you go is unique.

The park mainly includes the tradition of Tulip cultivation in the Netherlands. Tulips have become a symbol of the Netherlands because of Carolus Clusius, a botanist from the city of Leiden, One of the foremost plant collectors and enthusiastic scientists in Europe, he brought bulbs back from Vienne to his hometown of Leiden in 1593, spreading the tulip bulbs across Holland that then became popular in the 17th century.



The best time to visit the park is from the middle of March till the end of May when the flowers are in full bloom. There are collections of tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, orchids, roses, carnations, irises, lilies, and many other flowers. Between those weeks runs the largest flower show - lasting only 10 days - displaying beautiful, flourishing flowers. Every fall, gardeners' plant new bulbs with a completely new design, taking about 3 months to grow since it is a special-fast growing variety.

If you enjoy the botanical garden or flowers in general, Keunkenhof is the best place to visit. It will surely blow your mind as to how far the flower gardens spread, leaving in its wake a wide variety of fantastical flowers.



Animal Poetry

- Justin Savoy

Haiku #1: The Cunning Cat

A mouse on a stroll,
Unaware of the danger.
A cat claims its prey.

Haiku #2: The Generic Giraffe

A very long neck,
Some spots to help them stand out.
And a long black tongue.

Haiku #3: The Joyful Jaguar

A jaguar roams,
Greeting everyone they meet,
With a huge smile.



Haiku #4: The Baffled Bee

A wandering bee,
Found itself far from the hive.
Not sure what to do.

Haiku #5: The Tearful Tortoise

One hundred years old,
Living alone in the pond.
He just wants a friend.

Acrostic Poem: Animal Mania

Alligators love showing off their teeth to passerby.

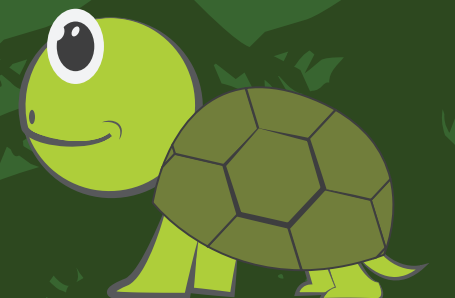
Narwhals are great at making cotton candy.

Iguanas travel from tree to tree, looking for insects to eat.

Mosquitoes frantically search for flesh to bite into.

Anteaters are nature's vacuum cleaners.

Lions enjoy soaking up sun in the Savannah.



-Designed and Illustrated by: Joshua Myers

WOAH!

HOW TO IMPROVE A CHARACTER 20 YEARS LATER

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY: KYLE FRENETTE

With the recent release of *Crash Bandicoot 4: It's About Time* (Heh. Clever Title.), many "Crash Bandicoot Enthusiasts" and avid gamers alike eagerly awaited to see how a brand new installment to the series would improve upon series staples such as challenging platforming levels, gameplay mechanics, and of course; a simple, yet wacky storyline.

What they weren't expecting was the rebooting of a long-forgotten character, providing a fresh and inviting dynamic nearly two decades later. A character who was once a bland, one-dimensional shell, now becoming a prime example of character development and improvement.

In "Crash 4", our main protagonists, Crash and Coco, eventually run into (...well, more like being saved by...) an alternate dimension variant of a familiar ally, Tawna Bandicoot. For those unfamiliar with Tawna, she was last shown in the original *Crash Bandicoot* as the damsel in distress captured by the nefarious Dr. Neo Cortex, a goal for Crash to reach so to speak. Now, 20 years later, we see a much more extroverted Tawna (with a rocking new hairdo I must say) heroically slashing her way through time and space, like some kind of dimensional travelling pirate.

Now, diving beyond the surface level of an admired heroine, some of you may be questioning how/why this is "quality character development". In fact, some of you may be rolling your eyes in disgust, claiming this as nothing more than a politically correct feminist change. However, I would like to present the reasons behind such a remarkable upgrade through a simple reasoning: Tawna had no character before.

In the realm of 1996, the first *Crash Bandicoot* game, how much did we really get to know Tawna? She was seen being held captive in the opening cutscene... and then hugging Crash after being rescued in the ending cutscene. That's it. Two cutscenes. We saw her as a vessel in need of rescuing, and then we saw her get rescued. Here lies the biggest problem with stating that "feminism changed Tawna's character"; She had literally no personality whatsoever. Simply put, being the "damsel in distress" is not a personality, it's more of a statement or an attribute than anything else (if it was a personality, it'd be a rather insulting one). She was a mission for Crash, an endpoint for him to reach on his journey, which ultimately means she was more of an object than a character. Regardless of whether you're a man, woman, or any other gender, this kind of trait does not define who you are, it's a shallow representation that places you as more of a thing than person...er bandicoot. There can't be a change to a character if there was no character.

Now let's contrast this with the Tawna we get to see in 2020. This Tawna, the one who boldly helps Crash and Coco on their journey, is a solo hero due to the fact that her versions of the two marsupials are (presumably) dead. Because of this traumatic experience, we see her struggle working with others, despite the fact that she does so as a need/feel to protect the two family members she once lost. With a thirst for adventure, a burning desire to help those she cares about, and a fair bit of charming social awkwardness (not to mention an unexpected hobby in scrapbooking), we see Tawna overcome triumphs and adversities; we see her being confronted with her (not fully explained, but heavily implied) past through N.Tropy and ultimately end the adventure in a new dimension, learning she doesn't have to go through her struggles alone, all with a newfound family to love.

This new Tawna is heavily improved due to the amount of depth in her character. We see the range of emotions that make up her personality. We see her motivations and (some of) her history. We're happy to see her progress throughout the game's narrative because we get to know and understand who she is. She's beyond a simple plot device, she's a developed being who an audience can care about.

In response to some of the backlash concerning the "feminist character change", this goes beyond the fact of male or female. This isn't simply altering a character's qualities because "modern girl", this is expanding upon a once one-dimensional figure and investing a relatable and interesting persona into it. Regardless of what gender you are, there's a big difference between changing an already established character, and building upon an area that didn't exist before.

And besides, some people dismiss the growth in female leads like it's a bad thing.

Indeed, if you were a female (no matter what age), who would you rather want to look up to? The captured broad in need of rescuing? Or the awesome space pirate lady, with a heart of gold deep down, who wants to protect those she cares about? While there are unfortunately some rare cases where already strong or memorable female identities are changed for the sake of a more progressive message, I often admire this modern movement as expanding figures and implementing new role models for others to look up to. A chance to give newer generations more positive character types that were once scarce in media.

In conclusion, I find Tawna Bandicoot to be a near-perfect example of character development. Toys for Bob, the developers of "Crash 4", went above and beyond in installing a new breath of fresh air into a previously bland entity. They provided a source of inspiration and female empowerment in a strong and quirky personality; a personality that has already captured the hearts of many, leaving a burning want for more.

(*And seeing Tawna finally feeling free from her past burdens and living a new life with her new family in Crash and Coco definitely has me yearning for more.*)

7 ANIME SHOWS TO CHECK OUT THIS FALL

Interested in what anime show(s) you should start watching? Not sure what's currently airing? Here are seven anime to check out this season:

(*Some of these shows are currently in the midst of multiple seasons. While spoilers will be limited here, it is recommended to begin from the first season if you are interested.*)

ATTACK ON TITAN (THE FINAL SEASON)



AIRDATE: December 7

Eren, Armin, Mikasa, and other members of the Scouting Legion protect humanity beyond the towering walls of fortified cities from massive, man-eating Titans that devour humans. The fortified walls end up breaking apart, causing more powerful Titans to show-up, wanting to destroy humanity. Now, the Scouting Legion must decide whether they kill all the Titans for a peaceful life or be devoured – ending the existence of humanity.

YASHAHIME: PRINCESS HALF DEMON

AIRDATE: New Episodes Every Saturday

The sequel to the anime series, Inuyasha, takes place several years after the events of the original. Sesshomaru's daughter Towa is separated from her twin sister Setsuna and ends up in the modern era, where she is adopted into Kagome's family. One decade later, she returns to the past and reunites with Setsuna, who has become a demon-slayer working under Kohaku, not remembering her past. Towa, Setsuna, and Moroha, the daughter of Inuyasha and Kagome, go on a quest to restore Setsuna's memories.



HAIKYU!! TO THE TOP



AIRDATE: New Episodes Every Friday

Following the story of Hinata, a boy who loves volleyball, he aspires to be the next pro volleyball player. Losing his first tournament to the "King of the Court" Kageyama, Hinata wishes to surpass Kageyama, only to end up on the volleyball team with him in Karusuno High School. Picking up from last season, they have made it into the National Tournament, aiming to win no matter how hard the opponents ahead are.

BLACK CLOVER

AIRDATE: Every Tuesday

In this world, magic is everything. We follow Asta and Yuno, who are both found abandoned at a church on the same day. Yuno is gifted with exceptional magical powers, while Asta is the only one who's left without magic. However, at the age of fifteen, they receive a grimoire, a book that enhances their magical powers, leaving Asta to gain a rare Grimoire of Anti Magic that negates and repels his opponent's spells. Yuno and Asta now face off as rivals, challenging themselves to reach their common dream to be the Wizard King. Currently, Asta and his current Magic Knight group, the Black Bulls, are trying to discover devils and the forbidden magic across the world.



BORUTO: NARUTO NEXT GENERATIONS



AIRDATE: Every Sunday

A spin-off and sequel to Naruto, it follows Boruto, son of Naruto, as he enrolls in Ninja Academy to learn the ways of the shinobi. Accompanied by Sarada, the daughter of Sakura and Sasuke, and Mitsuki, together they form Team 7 along with Sarutobi after graduating from the academy. Currently, Team 7 finds themselves undergoing missions to protect the Hidden Leaf Village.

FIRE FORCE SEASON 2

AIRDATE: Every Friday

This anime follows the story of Shinra, as he joins the Fire Force, a fire department company that consists of pyrokinetics fighting to end the burning of Tokyo from other pyrokinetics. Shinra has the devil's footstep where he ignites fire on his legs, prompting the White Cloaks and their Knight of the Ashen Flame to seek him and his brother, Sho, to enact a scheme to repeat the Great Disaster.



ONE PIECE



AIRDATE: Every Saturday

Luffy is on a quest to become the king of all the pirates. Sailing through the treacherous waters of the Grand Line and beyond, he is not willing to give up until he gains the greatest treasure on Earth: the legendary One Piece! Currently, Luffy and his crew, the Straw Hats, are continuing their adventures in Wano while fighting against powerful emperors.

Written By: Linda Paredes

Designed By: Yelizaveta Kiuchun

SOCIETAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN

ITAEWON CLASS

**WRITTEN BY: LINDA PAREDES
DESIGNED BY: KYLE FRENETTE**

Itaewon Class is a Korean Drama series about ex-convict, Park Saeroyi, wanting revenge against Chairman Jang Daehee and his son for covering up his father's accident. His plan is to destroy Jangga - the company that Jang worked so hard to keep thriving for his family - by opening his own pub restaurant, Danbam. He hires a crew: Jo Yi-seo as the manager and Choi Seungkwan, Toni, Ma Hyon-yi, and Jang Guen-soo as waiters. The drama touches on power-play, transgender, racial profiling, and other issues that intrigue the viewers, enticing them to know more about the story.

Daehee utilizes money and the status he has in society to get Saeroyi's business into bankruptcy. Oh Soo-ah, Saeroyi's long-time crush, falls victim to Daehee's power as he grants her a scholarship and job opportunity if she as the witness falsely accuses Saeroyi of attempted murder of Daehee's son, Jang Guen-woo. Oh Soo-ah feels awful for what she does but finds herself trapped as she becomes allegiant to Daehee. He obligates her to know how Saeroyi and Danbam are doing. Daehee believed that it wouldn't survive until Yi-seo boosts the popularity of Danbam using social media and improving the food menu. As a result, Daehee decides to buy the restaurant to put Saeroyi in his place. When Saeroyi looks for an investor for his pub. Daehee once again, using his connections, sets up an investor that would help franchise the pub, only to be out of business.

Jang Guen-soo, the son of Jang Daehee, gets called the coward frequently by his father, his brother, and Yi-seo. Guen-soo decides to do something right by working at Danbam to re-pay for charges that Yi-seo did because she is underage. He then plans to be the chairman of Jangga in order to win Yi-seo's heart. However, he realizes after Yi-seo ends up kidnapped by his brother Guen-woo, that he hates what his father has done and wants to be free from him and the hurt inflicted on the people he once called friends. He saw that his father only cared about his company, treating him more like an employee than family. Working at Danbam, he felt like he was part of a family rather than just a business.

Next, we have Toni, a Guinean-Korean, believed by Seungkwan, Hyeon-yi, and Yi-seo that he is American, but is ultimately Korean. Yi-seo hires him as a waiter because she believed that he spoke English but discovers he does not. When the whole crew decides to go to a bar, Toni was not allowed to enter because of him appearing American. Saeyori gets angry with this fact, deciding to help find his father to prove his Korean nationality.

Hyeon-yi reveals that she is a transgender after Seungkwan, Guen-soo, and Yi-seo go to a club. Yi-seo wanted to fire her as she felt it would jeopardize the reputation of Danbam. Saeroyi denies it as he believes that there is nothing wrong with her sexuality. Her sexuality gets brought up again when Guen-soo, working at Jangga to be the chairman, reveals to the public that she is transgender to prevent her from winning a food contest. Everyone judges her, but she ultimately confronts her fears and ends up winning the contest.

Saeroyi, the main character, always confronts any challenge given by Daehee. Saeroyi wanted to be a police officer but ended up becoming a convict. In Korea, if you become a convict, you are not allowed to enter the police academy. As a result, Saeroyi decides that if he cannot achieve his dream, he would plot out his revenge on Daehee by opening his own pub. After being released from prison, he worked in fishing ports to earn money to start the pub. During his time in prison, he spends the time reading business books which other convicts thought was absurd. Seungkwan was one of those convicts who thought the same, but after seeing that he owned a pub in front of his eyes, wanted to be out of his criminal lifestyle he had.

This k-drama brought out issues that are going on in Korea and around the world. As a person who listens to Korean music, I knew a bit of Korean culture, but this drama went in depth of the grand issues plaguing Korean society. Every episode felt captivating to watch as we learn at the start of the few episodes the plot of revenge. I supported Saeroyi to get revenge for his father's accident. However, as we get into the last few episodes, we see that his crew members questioned what he will do after his revenge is done. Seungkwan questions Saeyori's relationship with Yi-seo, having told him many times that she loved him. Seungkwan ponders why he has not said his true feelings to her as he and Hyun-yi notice that he does care for her. Saeroyi eventually comes to terms with realizing that revenge was all for nothing, realizing he could have settled down with the person who mattered the most, Yi-seo. When he rejected her feelings the first time, it was because she was underage, but he also felt at peace when he was with her. His life was once filled with nightmares from his father's accident, but now is filled with sweet memories because of her, ending up together and happy.

Itaewon Class does a good job demonstrating the characters' struggles and misfits, and to prove that they have the ability to improve themselves and be successful.

BTS: From Nobodies to Legends

-Written by: Linda Paredes

BTS, known as Beyond the Scene in English and Bangtan Sonyadean in Korea, is one of the most popular bands in the world today. The members of BTS are RM (Kim Namjoon), Jin (Kim Seokjin), Suga (Min Yoongi), j-hope (Jung Hoseok), Jimin (Park Jimin), V (Kim Taehyung), and Jungkook (Jung Jungkook). Debuting seven years ago in a small company called Big Hit Entertainment, they were like most of the other k-pop groups, but their popularity grew due to their different styles of music and ability to utilize social media to communicate with their fans. Today, they are well known all around the world, being the first K-pop artists to sell the highest number of albums, charting the top of the Billboard Charts, and recently breaking Youtube music video views in 24 hours.

BTS debuted in 2013 with the song, “No More Dream,” and released an EP called 2 Cool 4 Skool, though it was received with a lot of negativity by the Korean Industry. BTS were barely able to perform on stage, being that they were in a small company and not popular. Their first full-length album, Dark & Wild released in 2014, led to a large growth in their fanbase and BTS began selling out their international tours. However, their label company was going through a financial crisis, making it harder for the boys to get enough resources to produce music. The band released “The Most Beautiful Moment in Life, Pt.1” and “The Most Beautiful Moment in Life, Pt.2” in mid-2015, which topped six international music charts, including Billboard’s World Albums chart. They became the first k-pop group to achieve such a feat and continued to impress with the release of their LP, Wings, in late 2016, becoming the first k-pop artists to have three albums in the Billboard World Album Charts. They received their first Artist of the Year recognition from MAMA, an award show in Korea, and after that, the whole world started to recognize the talents of BTS. Their presence grew so large in the US that they won the Top Social Artist Award at the 2017 Billboard Music Awards.

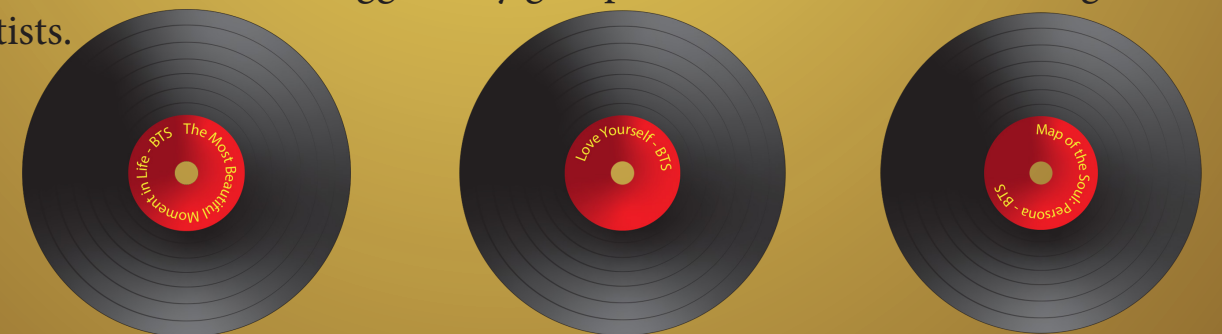
They continued their success by releasing their next trilogy: Love Yourself. Their fifth EP, Love Yourself: Her in late 2017 became the first K-pop album

to debut in the Billboard 200’s Top Ten, entering the chart at number seven. They released their full-length album, Love Yourself: Tear and performed “Fake Love” at the Billboard Music Awards for the second time in a row and in mid-2018, repackaged both the Her and Tear albums into Love Yourself: Answer, concluding the trilogy. At the end of the year, they sold-out a global stadium tour and started their next trilogy of albums: Map of the Soul.

Map of the Soul: Persona mini-album was released in early 2019 with the title track “Boy with Luv” climbing into the Top Ten of the Hot 100 and Billboard 200, becoming their third number one in a year. This year, they got to perform with Lil Nas X on the Grammy Awards stage with the song “Seoul Town Road” RM’s version. They released their fourth LP, Map of Soul: 7 with the title-track “ON,” and the album produced 4 million album sales in over a week. Last month, they released their first English Single Dynamite that broke the Youtube MV video record of 101 million views and debuted Number 1 on the 100 Hot Billboard Chart. They are indeed monster record breakers as ARMY works hard for every BTS comeback release.

BTS’ path to global fame hasn’t been an easy road. They started from the bottom in a small company and moved their way up as every album they have put out shows their growth as musicians and the hard work they put in each release. BTS have thanked ARMY for their continued support and love they have received, knowing they are the reason that they are successful. BigHit Entertainment last year made a revenue of 587.2 billion won (\$507.9 million) which is no doubt thanks to BTS.

However, the fate of the band is unknown with the oldest member, Jin, being forced to enlist in the Korean military, which every Korean male must do after the age 30, at the end of 2021. No matter what happens to BTS, they have made their mark in the world as one of the biggest boy groups worldwide, demonstrating their growth as artists.



-Designed and Illustrated by: Joshua Myers

Emojis in The Workplace

Written By: C. L. B. de Soto

Designed By: Joshua Myers

The last six months, equating to a mass exodus from our offices, cubicles, and study spaces to our homes and spare bedrooms, has brought a plethora of challenges on the information technology front. How to securely work from home became a big question. For some companies and institutions, the transition to remote work is easier than others with different platforms having different quirks and options for deployment on everything from company laptops, to mobile phones and regular home PCs. One common theme among the available platforms is the ability to chat in real-time with colleagues instead of writing an email or placing a call. With chatting comes the inevitable subject of emojis and the role they play in modern workplace communications. But first...



A Brief History of Emojis

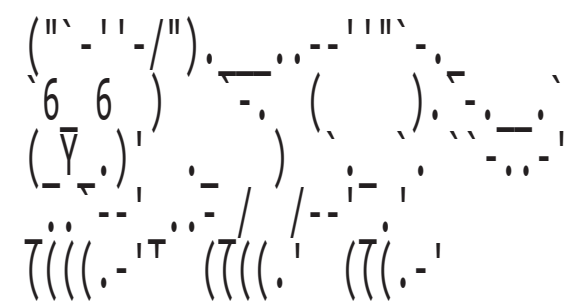


120 years ago, typewriters were an essential business tool. Sure, secretaries back then were hired based upon how good their handwriting was, and looking back, we can see it as the beginning of the decline of cursive and maybe even the hand-written note. But a typewritten letter on stationary showed that a business had money, at least enough to afford such apparatus. A clerical worker, well trained in typing, can produce volumes of documents faster than writing by hand. Around that same time, folks must have noticed that a colon, a minus sign, and a close-parenthesis looked like a sideways smiley face and thus emoticons were born...

: -)



From those very early days came the renaissance of typography as an art form for the clerical public, as the means and methods for creating such art became more accessible. Technology helped usher that in with its march towards modernity in 1963 with the invention of the American Standard Code for Information Interchange, or ASCII. This standard codified 95 available characters from the English language, and 33 control characters for use on what was known as a Teletype system, something of a daughter of the typewriter and a cousin of the computer keyboard. The ASCII system coded these characters into 7 bits, that is, a combination of seven 1's and/or 0's. These characters, intricate for their time, were then combined on screens and paper to form more than just words, and from the hands and minds of clerical professionals, ASCII Art was born.



Go Wildcats

As Teletype machines morphed into number-crunching computers, the variety and availability of fonts and applications for arranging digital typography exploded. In 1978, ASCII Artists and their sideways smiley faces found a new home in a typeface known as Zapf Dingbats that quickly made its way into a popular computerized font. Sort of like a low-quality emoji, this font took the normal alphanumeric keyboard layout and replaced letters with whimsical iconographic characters. When computers finally started to appear in primary and secondary classrooms in the 1990's, a newer typeface with many more iconized symbols, Wingdings, was added to a short list of generally available fonts.





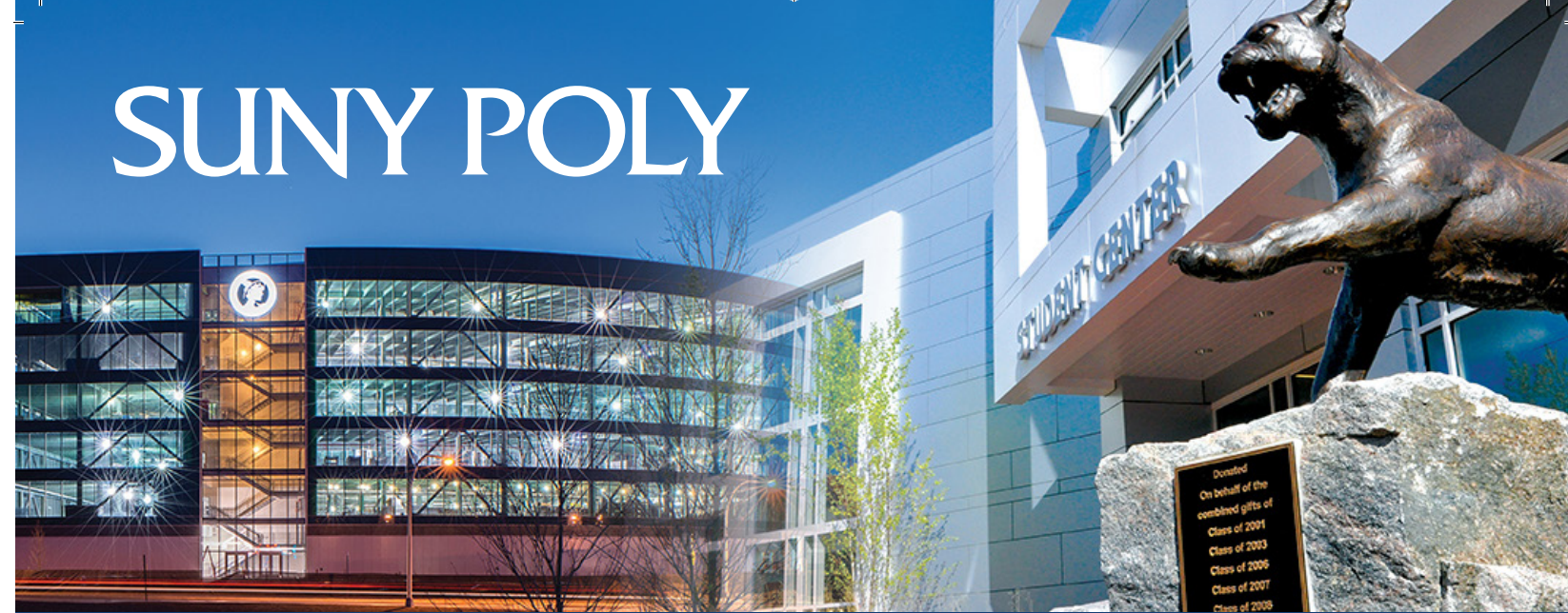
Windings evolved a second, and even a third iteration before the Internet really took off. In 1997, just in time for that Internet take-off, Webdings were born. Like their Wingding predecessors, Webdings are composed of common iconographic symbols, specifically controls. Whereas Wingdings were for Microsoft Windows controls, Webdings were centered around webpage controls. They came about in a transition period between many text-based websites and services switching over to newer graphics-oriented layouts. What users may not have expected was that another standard was about to sneak up and take ASCII's place, and its name is Unicode.

Unicode version 1 came out in 1991 and gradually opened digital fonts and typography to what are now 154 national scripts and writing systems. In October 2010, however, with the release of Version 6.0 of the Unicode Standard, we see the first real emoticons, or emoji, in their full-color iconographic glory. Availability wasn't instant, but after a few years, emojis were part of the standard character offering on most mobile devices. Since then, every major version of Unicode has included more and more emojis for our enjoyment and use in both asynchronous and synchronous communications, including Unicode version 13, which just released in March.

With that, the question can be asked again, "What is the role of emojis in modern workplace communications, and especially now when an estimated half of the workforce is now working from home?" In the last six months, and necessarily so, virtual communications have moved into the forefront for students, teachers, and all manner of newly minted 'work-from-home' professionals. Emojis are time and space saving examples of iconographic characters that can bring a new edge to our sense of style and efficiency in the office and in educational settings. Emojis aren't just for text messages anymore, since we can't see our smiles through masks, a well-placed smiley face emoji in an email or a thumbs-up in a chat, can really brighten a colleague's day.



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