Who Stole My Time?

By Amanda Weikel

Whether it is watching Netflix, surfing the web, watching television, or reading a book, I seem to always be asking the same question. Where did the time go? In everyday life I sit at a desk for eight hours, ride the bus to school, attend an almost four hour class, ride the bus home, and immediately delve into some form of information consumption in the comfort of my own bed. This would be what my busier days of the week would look like and even during these days I seem to be asking where the time went, when I should be asking what stole my time.

The first and largest portion of my busy day is my nine to five office job. In the course of my eight hour day I only leave my desk maybe three times a day for about twenty minute increments and once a day for an hour increment. That means out of my eight hour day I am sitting in the same spot trying to make my “to do” list dwindle down to nothing for six hours. Well I can tell you that it certainly doesn’t feel like six hours. This morning I sat down at my desk and started to go through my emails at 9:00 am. The next time I looked away from my emails and at the clock it was already 10:30 am and it was time to do the mail. I tried to understand how checking emails became an hour and a half job and found it was not the act of checking emails that took an hour and a half, but the consumption of the information contained within these emails and the tasks that accompanied them. For instance, my boss needed a package sent via FedEx to Australia. This required me to consume lots of new information including: login information retrieved from another person in the department, different shipment times and rates, customs information and policies, and the format of inputting the address sent to me by my boss in the original email. In that case I identified that it was not the email itself that stole that hour and a half from me but the processes attached to this email.

Now of course not all lost time can be accounted for so easily. It is not uncommon for me to wake up on a Saturday morning at say 10:00 am and say, “I could probably squeeze in an episode of [Insert current binge watching series here] before I start on my homework or have to meet up with [insert social life here]”. So I lie down in my bed and turn on the episode I left off at. At the end of that episode I am left with questions, an overwhelming need to know more, or an urge to re-watch a most beloved scene in the next episode. So I start another episode without glancing at the clock. By the time I surface from my Netflix haze it is well past the afternoon and the only reason I even noticed the time in the first place was because my stomach growled.

So whether it is in a more productive setting like work, or a lazy Saturday I suffer from what *The Information Diet* refers to as a “Poor Sense of Time” or “Email Roz”. In other words “When I sit down in front of a computer, it’s almost as though I the world around it disappears” (pg. 67). Of course in my case it is not just a computer that steals my time. I also have missing time when I get sucked into listening to music on the bus, reading a book on a Sunday afternoon, or watching a marathon of beloved childhood movies. I believe the reason I am so susceptible to this particular kind of theft is my perpetual thirst for knowledge. This is especially well shown in the email example given in the second paragraph. Once I get started with one tidbit of information I have a tendency to need more and more until the physical needs of my own body tend to pull me back into reality. So I guess in the end it is my own brain and lack of self-awareness that is the thief. Maybe I should arrest myself.