

**E**volution is alive and well in the digital world of golf maintenance. We have some dinosaurs struggling to adapt and a new breed of turf-techies thriving in the climate of bytes and pixels. I like to think of myself as perhaps an alligator; a survivor who has adapted.

There's no question that computers are an everyday part of life now. Add in smart phones, tablets and digital cameras and we have a growing arsenal of new tools. These devices can also be time wasters if we get sucked into surfing the net without some self-discipline. Time management is critical when you are a turf manager.

The rise of the Digital Age has raised some interesting issues. First is the multitude of choices in terms of device specifications and features. Newcomers to this world can be intimidated by all the options. Bigger and faster keeps your new device in a constant state of obsolescence. My iPhone 3G is now 2 to 3 generations behind, and it just turned 2 years old in December. I realize that two years ago is like the Paleozoic Age.

Regardless of where you are on the digital frontier; blazing trails on blogs, vlogs, Facebook and Twitter, or playing catch up just learning how to attach photos to an email, one thing remains constant — quality triumphs over quantity every time. You have to do your research and learn the best way to use the newest device just like any new piece of turf equipment or chemical.

One example near and dear to my heart as a magazine editor is high resolution digital photographs. It might be tempting to set your camera to the “basic” or “normal” setting to cram as many pics as possible into the 1 GB memory card that came with your camera. Trust me, buy a 4 or 8 GB card and select the “jpeg.fine” setting so photos can be used in print publications like chapter newsletters and magazines like *Golfdom*.

I know more chapters are opting to go “all-digital” to save money in the budget. That is a case by case decision, but I can tell you that the bigger the publication the demand still remains for a hard copy version. The digital age makes

## The Digital Dilemma

BY JOEL JACKSON



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publications easier and cheaper to produce than before, but the image quality still needs to be as sharp as the old 35 mm negative. If you're buying your digital camera make sure it's at least a 5 to 8 megapixel device.

And websites! Just like opinions, it seems everyone has a website. Trouble is when I check in on a chapter's events calendar to see what's coming the next few months, the last entry is 2 to 3 months old. A website is handy because it's accessible 24/7, but it's just garbage if it isn't maintained properly. Even digital tools need routine maintenance.

Another concern I have is that the apparent convenience of digital tools and communications might erode the desire or willingness of superintendents to make the effort to participate in their local association meetings and events. There've even been attempts to create online-only conferences where attendees visit digital booths from the comfort of their Internet connection. As the time-crunch era converges with the digital age, I fear the loss of inter-personal relationships and personal enrichment so many of us have enjoyed in this profession.

You can search databases online for technical information and you might post a query on Facebook, but I maintain that two-way conversations at association events is the best of all worlds. Besides the hands-on answers to problems, you make friends for life by being there in person and not at the other end of a webcam. A 140-character text might get a faster answer than a trip to the local event, but the local event will reward you in so many more ways that can't be counted.

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