Is There a Text in This Class?

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As the professor walks into the classroom, the students are intently focused on their screens. Some are on laptops, gaming or checking Facebook updates; some manipulate their tablets; some furiously tap out text messages on their smart phones; and some are scrolling through mp3 players to locate the perfect pre-class anthem. (What sort of music gets *you* in the mood to learn about photosynthesis or Plato's Theory of Forms?) And then there is the kid writing with crayons. He just stares out the window as drool pools on the floor and flies circle his head.

Class begins. "Could you all put your phones away, *please*?," the professor asks, realizing that this is like prohibiting tattoos at a NASCAR race. He picks up a piece of chalk and begins writing the outline for the day's lesson. ("Chalk" is a brittle, typically white, substance that was once used to write on chalkboards. Traditionally $CaCO_3$, more recently $CaSO_4$. "Chalkboards" are surfaces that adorned the walls of classrooms prior to "Smart Boards". Now, boards are smart, but people are dumb.)

But as he writes, he also listens — and thinks to himself: Is *that* the sound of note-taking? Is *that* the silence of serious concentration? Something is amiss. There should be more shuffling. There should be more whispering back-and-forth. The students should be asking each other where they are headed for lunch. With Spidey sense activated, the professor turns to face the class.

Student X is looking down at his lap. He doesn't realize that the professor — and eventually the entire class — is looking at him. Or maybe he does. Which would be worse? His head has not moved for some time now. His hands are not visible in their subterranean space, although his shoulders twitch now and again as he smiles. He seems quite focused. Is he praying? Or meditating? The other students begin whispering to one another, taking bets on what he is doing. One contends that he is counting the teeth on his zipper. Another posits that he is in a trance, perhaps silently protesting the class. Yet another suggests that we pretend he is a cow and then tip him over.

Reflecting longer than he should have on that final suggestion, the professor eventually
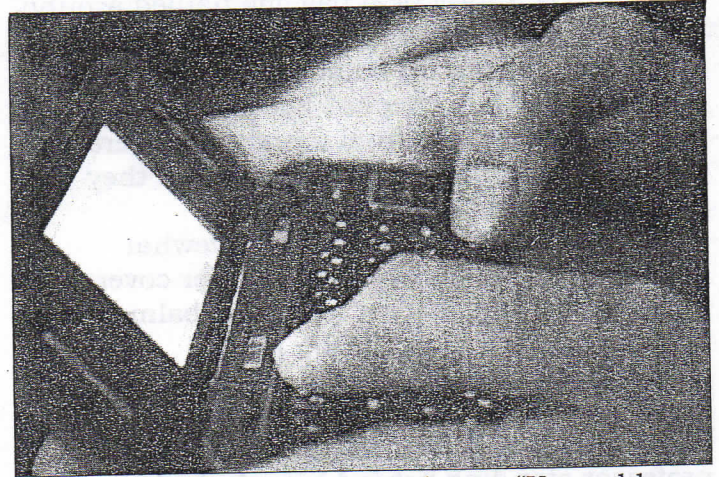
realizes what is going on and says "X, could you please put that away?" "Huh? Put *what* away?" X wonders aloud. "Your phone," says the professor, wondering where and when in his extensive graduate school training he was supposed to have learned the behavioral psychology of cell phone text message-profiling. Meanwhile, X jostles back and forth in his seat until he is sitting on top of the device — still feigning ignorance well past the point of plausibility. "I don't *have* a phone" he keeps insisting, curiously content with this patently obvious lie. "Oh yes you *do*!" another student blurts out while waving a phone above his head, "you just texted me and said the professor is totally boring!"

With his face now redder than the middle of America on an election map, X capitulates and retrieves the contraband from his crotch. He promises it will "never happen again". "It better not", the professor scolds, before giving X the 2-fingers-to-the-eye/pointing maneuver popularized by Robert DeNiro's character in the movie *Meet the Parents*. On the upside, with collectively-felt guilt permeating the room, our hero was able to translate the now-supplicant students' attention into nearly 10 full minutes of uninterrupted learning! That is, 10 full minutes without students sending text messages, or updating fantasy football rosters, or tweeting about which Kardashian presently has the largest derriere. It was glorious.

That is, until the professor saw her, Y — a recidivist textual offender — doing the old sneak-a-peak-in-the-purse maneuver. Silently observing her behavior and tracking her movements, he crept along the front wall. He

knew how she operated. She was a deft manipulator of that device and was seemingly incapable of parting with it for even minutes at a time. As he expected, the large, fashionable, and entirely impractical bag she hauled around was now on the table before her and, as she ostensibly applied lip balm (with the cap still on), she stealthily checked her phone for important messages from friends who were *also* not paying attention in whatever class they happened to be in at that moment.

The carelessness of Y was somewhat surprising. Usually she had a better cover. Not only did the "application" of the lip balm cause her to laugh out loud ("LOL", for the uninitiated), but of course it called for an immediate reply. Indeed, so focused was she on her response that she *still* did not sense the professor standing behind her. As he looked over her shoulder and read about how bored her friend was in Calculus class, a new message arrived. It was from Z and it said "Like, OMG, he is rite behind u!"

At this point, the professor wondered why Sisyphus didn't just give up and fall down in front of the boulder. It would have been a quick and somewhat noble death, albeit rather painful. Chagrined, Y turned around and pledged that it would "never happen again", even as she slid the phone inside her sleeve. Meanwhile, the empty promise she'd just broadcast to the class invited a loud chuckle from the back of the room where X — on his 7th suspicious trip to the pencil sharpener (without a pencil) — was already pulling his phone from his pocket in order to text the story to his roommate. LOL!

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Rearranging Library Collections: a New App

Norman D. Stevens, The Molesworth Institute

Since its founding in the 1950s The Molesworth Institute has always sought to push the boundaries of the application of new technologies to issues fundamental to the work of the Library Profession. Some projects of note dealt with using computers to analyze library postcards, tracking umbrellas in libraries, robotic book return systems, and developing the world's first fully electronic libraries in France, Italy, Sweden, and the United States.

With the retirement of Norman D. Stevens, one of its founders, as Director in 2011, the Storrs, Connecticut, based staff of the Institute decided to explore yet another area of where the newest technologies might be pushed to their limits.

The initial emphasis was on identifying an area of library operations that has seen the least change in its management since 1876 or before. It was quickly determined that the arrangement and management of library collections offered the most fascinating opportunities. While a variety of arrangements have been used, virtually all have focused on keeping the library's books in some recognizable order. Indeed, librarians in Alexandria initiated the use of the alphabet as a means of arrangement.

There have been a variety of mainly ill-fated attempts to handle the physical storage of a library's collections in terms of maximizing the use of space. Those range from Fremont Rider's decision at Wesleyan University to cut down and rebind virtually the entire collection, to the disastrous Randtriever in the Ohio State University Medical Library and later a similar compact storage system at the Cal State Northridge University Library that was demolished in the Northridge earthquake.

All of the systems used or proposed, no matter how imaginative they may have seemed, have only addressed the most efficient use of space and not the needs of library users or the effective use of library personnel. A random sampling of available information revealed that the average academic library in the United States now makes at least one major shift in its collections a year, 6 to 8 minor shifts, and employs the equivalent of from 3 to 10 employees to reshelf materials. Some use of