

## Reduce-Reuse-*Recompute!*

One issue facing technology use these days is the overwhelming potential for waste. Computer equipment is finding its way into landfills at an alarming rate as we strive for continued improvements in speed and power. Of course, this is an issue that divides us into groups of *haves* and *have nots*. While some readers may contribute annually to the great landfill of plastic, glass and cathode ray tubes (just one internal component of conventional computer monitors that is extremely toxic), others may be using equipment for a decade wishing they had something new. Connecting these two groups may be one way to reduce the landfill.

### Donate-Don't throw away

If you are lucky enough to reside among the *haves*, you should celebrate and share. While you may think your two year-old CPU is outdated and of no use to anyone, others might greatly appreciate such equipment. Such donations regularly go to NGOs around the globe, but there are organizations involved in relocating equipment to disenfranchised groups in the U.S.A. as well. This applies to printers, scanners, monitors, cables, keyboards, and just about any other device you may consider discarding. Some programs even incorporate job-training programs in conjunction with the refurbishing of this kind of equipment.

### Sometimes it is Better to Receive:

If you feel your school might benefit from donations, you can also find information online. There are a variety of organizations that cater to the needs of educators who lack appropriate technology. Many federal and state programs also provide services that distribute computer equipment to public schools through these means as well as grants and awards. If you can't find what you need through donations, you may want to consider purchasing used equipment as a way of lessening the environmental burden (and saving money).

### Considerations

There are some basic guidelines that can assist you on either end of these transactions. If donating computers, it is general practice to erase the hard drive so that personal information is not available to future users. If you are accepting donated equipment, you should be certain that it is in good working order or that you have the required help to make it so. Also, be certain that the equipment in question is appropriate for your needs. This might include determining what level of ongoing maintenance and repair certain items may need as well as what additional materials they may require.

It may be tempting to go overboard when it comes to donations. I have volunteered for a non-profit that has accepted dozens of donated inkjet printers of many makes and models. Ink for inkjets is expensive and cartridges are not interchangeable. This group wasted lots of money on cartridges for individual printers that stopped working or were otherwise phased out for the most recent donations. I found a donated laser printer (which operates on cheaper toner and is shared by all individuals in the office) and they are now in much better shape. One appropriate piece of equipment serves them better than many inappropriate ones had.

### Volunteer

This brings up the most valuable technology components: knowledge and experience. If you have no equipment to donate, you can still help others by volunteering. You can help to train those who are on the less fortunate end of the digital divide, provide support for a non-profit organization or other group that holds meaning for you. You may be surprised to find out how much you already know as well as how much you can learn from the experience.

Visit <http://gregling.net/donate> for resources related to donating, applying for donations and purchasing used computer equipment.