It is key to the Blackberry that it leave a signature: "Sent via BlackBerry from T-Mobile" or "Sent from my Verizon Wireless Blackberry." (The iPhone operates according to the latter, more personal formula, leaving a "Sent from my iPhone" signature.) Derrida writes of the signature:

By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer. But, it will be said, it also marks and retains his having been present in a past now, which will remain a future now, and therefore in a now in general, in the transcendental form of nowness (maintenance). This general maintenance is somehow inscribed, stapled to present punctuality, always evident and always singular, in the form of the signature. ("Signature, Event, Context" 328)

The corporately signed message does not hang in the air; it arrives immediately as spatialized screen text, and identifies both its technology and its network. No addressee is typically named. Nor is the message typically signed specifically by its author—save perhaps by the "Address Book" of the device, which automatically links a number to an abbreviated name. Given names are effaced. The enforced signature frames the message, symbolically dividing it from the infinite mass of ever-evolving (con)text to which the device is immanently connected.

The Crackberry's addictive properties are well known. "Blackberry thumb" has become a proverbial condition. As important as its "functionality" in business applications, the Blackberry conveys the social status of being in constant communication. Like e-mail, the Blackberry probably tends in the aggregate to increase productivity. Even so, the Blackberry is a space rather than a machine—the pocket-size equivalent of an eighteenth century coffeehouse. The Blackberry transcends utility, it is a total life experience. What is said of the coffeehouse in the following sentence could be said of the Blackberry:

"The coffeehouse functioned as a social setting, a place for communication and discussion, while the coffee served in it no longer played any discernible role" (Schivelbusch 62). The Blackberry is indispensable to its users—it centralizes written and oral communication, can function as a notebook and a camera, has global positioning and maps, access to the World Wide Web, access to one's finances and to most of one's other life records. The company who manufactures this Swiss Army Knife of computers is aptly named Research in Motion. It is possible to view the surface of the earth from space, to schedule a romantic rendezvous, to trade stocks, to view pornography, to listen to music, to research the catalogues of all the world's great libraries—all from this wallet-sized device, which operates wirelessly on the installment plan throughout most of the country, if not throughout most of the world.

Sent via Blackberry from T-Mobile
Tuesday, January 22, 2008 8:37 p.m.

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Works Cited
