

From Motorola to iPhone 13: Seventeen Years of My Cell Phone Ownership in Picture

Behold all the cell phones I have used since I moved to America 17 years ago. I have all my past cell phones because I have never used contract phones. Never! I'm always about four years behind the latest editions of smartphones so I can buy second-hand at 30% or less of the original price. A few weeks ago, my nuclear family did a serious meeting on my head and begged me to move with time—since they all use the latest editions of their smartphones. I yielded to their demand, partially, and bought an iPhone 13 to replace the iPhone X that I acquired in February of this year. I used an iPhone 6s for four years—from June 2018 to February 2022.

My iPhone 6s convinced me of the indispensability of smartphones in contemporary historical research. Last year, it helped me digitize at least 40,000 pages of materials from four archives for my history of Fuji book project. When I visited the United Kingdom archives in September 2018, it snapped about 5,000 pages of archival materials and photos for the animal's history book. My iPhone 6s came at a time when photocopying of archival materials was being replaced with cell phone digitization, which posed new challenges regarding the conditions of documents, archiving, access, and patrimony. With all my archival materials on my phone, I didn't have to worry about being exploited by customs officers and airlines for excess luggage and "contraband" at the airport. Before 2018, I used to record oral interviews in a tape recorder, but my iPhone 6s changed everything. The voice memo recorded at least 150 interviews conducted over 4 years.

The fact that I'm always behind in smartphone technology doesn't mean that I don't like to spend money. It's essentially about how I prioritize the utilitarian value of technologies and returns for my investment in them. I'm typing this Facebook post from an all-in-one desktop computer worth \$3,500. Specification: 27 inches screen; 2 terabytes hard drive; Intel Core i9 processor, 64 GB Memory; touch screen. It's a machine by all standards. It can download files at the speed of swallowing amala! I have two laptops that I use only when I travel, and three external hard drives capable of storing 35 terabytes of data. That's where I store all the videos from the Fuji documentary. My current technology investment pattern is consistent with my past preferences. Twenty years ago, I bought my first computer, a second-hand desktop, for N40,000—before I paid N14,000 for my first cell phone.

Interestingly, some people, who must write, have cell phones worth more than a laptop. Many don't even have a laptop at all and think that they can do everything on their cell phones. I'm not an expert in digital technology learning, but I know that screen displays alone can make a big difference in learning abilities and outcomes. Typing speed is not just about how fast we can punch smartphones, but how effectively we can translate ideas into text. Computer typing speed itself can shape mental cognition in a significant way. Do you wonder why digital plagiarism is on steroids? The discomfort of typing with one finger on a smartphone, ideas that require a computer workstation, breed appropriation of other people's work. In today's digital world, concise, but quality text content creation, for whatever reason, can make a big difference.

By the way, I hear people are upgrading to iPhone 14. That's their own problem! Please leave me in my iPhone 13 state of life. I'll join you later—in five years!

Yours Sincerely in History,
Isola Atoko waa gbowo nle