

Q?Crew Captain Talk – ‘Cellphones: Unseen Connections’

[00:00.15- 00:44.12] Hi, I'm Margaret, and this summer, I helped design an exhibit about cell phones. A month before I applied to the Q?Crew Captain Internship, I attended a San Francisco Ballet performance with one of my friends. The second act of the ballet was centered around our relationships with our phones. One dancer moved around the stage looking down at a screen, as the world continued around them. They were turned inwards, head tilted downwards. Their movements were halting and less graceful. The dancers around them didn't have screens. These dancers were graceful and they didn't stumble around the stage. They were joyful and connected to each other. At the end of the act, I felt defensive and angry. There was no nuance to this performance.

[00:46.63 - 01:08.66] It was every article sent by an older relative that warns of cell phones and our impending doom because of them. I never understood these articles, these articles about horns growing on our heads, and relationships ruined by excessive phone use and digital addiction. I understand them and most of them are in fact based in fact, but they aren't true to my experience with my phone. This is what I use my phone for in a day.

[01:08.66-01:38.61] Yes, I use my phone for almost three hours every day, which I can admit is too much. But I need it, and I use it when I'm exhausted and stressed from school and work. I go from texting a friend in Bulgaria about how she is, to wishing another friend happy birthday, to looking up the hours for that Pad Thai place I love so much. I go from reading articles, to watching a Tiny Desk Concert, to playing a mindless mobile game, and back again. All these things say something about me, about who I am, and I've never seen any media that encapsulates this duality accurately.

[01:36.21-01:58.37] I've never seen anything that explains why I hate and love my cell phone, and most importantly, I've never seen any media that tries to engage with me where I am, that doesn't scold me for how I use my phone, and encourages me to look deeper at my phone usage. And then I saw the project description for *Unseen Connections*, Natural History's cell phone exhibit, and I knew I had to be a part of it.

[01:58.37- 02:22.44] It was important to me that the exhibit was going to be accurate and nuanced. That it refused to slip into the realm of scolding its teenage audience. My partner and I were tasked with holding focus groups to gauge the opinions of teens on a variety of exhibit content. We held five focus groups: *What in Natural History Teens Find Compelling*, *Title Testing*, *I Hate/Love my Cell Phone*, *Spectrum*, and *Exploded Cell Phone*.

[02:26.98-02:50.48] During these focus groups, we polled participants, and then had a discussion about their responses. During this discussion, people talked about the stress and anxiety they feel when they lose their phones. They described the fear and concerns that they have, that companies and their parents are invading their privacy. One girl in particular discussed a time when she was using Safari to look up a recipe for hummus, and then switched to Instagram, where she got an ad for hummus. Another boy talked about being cyber bullied in middle school.

[02:52.31-03:25.20] Some of these stories may sound a little silly, and some of them are deeply serious and personal, but all of them are a part of these people's lives. All of them offer some insight into their

lives. And cell phones prompted these discussions, because cell phones are personal. Whether you hate your phone or love your phone or are confused by your phone, you feel things about your phone, and as weird as it is to say, you feel things toward your phone. This summer, I learned how important it is to have these conversations, and that they're worthwhile conversations, even if they are difficult. Thank you.

[03:25.20] (upbeat music)

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