

► Profile

And the winner is ...

The wheel of invention is spinning constantly. Inventions have altered our lives. Simplified it. Revolutionized it. And transformed it.

We asked Bala Kathiresan, CIO of Niagara Health System, to tell us about one technological invention he couldn't live without, and why.

BALA KATHIRESAN

Bala Kathiresan is the Chief Information Officer for the Niagara Health System, an organization created in 2000 as a result of the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation to merge eight hospitals in the Niagara Peninsula. He is responsible for the Information Management Portfolio that includes information technology/systems, telecommunications, health records and patient registration. As the CIO of the Niagara Health System, Bala developed and implemented the first information systems strategic plan bringing together eight legacy organizations. Bala holds a Bachelor's degree in Commerce and a Master's in Business Administration. Prior to joining NHS, he was Vice-President of Healthtech Inc. His career as a consultant gave him the opportunity to work with many healthcare organizations across the country.

After dashing the hopes of my parents, who envisioned me as a successful chartered accountant, I went on to break a whole lot of other hopes and expectations that included leaving India for the Western world. Based on my track record of following traditions, I imagine that I will have my share of "paybacks" from my two young daughters! At least I have a few years to prepare for those.

Growing up in the early 1970s in the southern part of India, I was exposed to very few technologies – a far cry from what one would see in India today. There were two technological media "inventions" that transformed me early on in my life, and I continue to enjoy them today – the telephone and radio. Radio was our family entertainment system. I have many fond memories of our family gathering around on special occasions to listen to a live broadcast. Today, I still appreciate and have great personal pleasure in listening to the radio, both at home and in my car. It is also a way to attempt to transform my mood on the drive home from work – although since the drive has become shorter in the recent months, a blessing for my family – my ability to unwind via radio has diminished. I'm amazed at how far the radio has come in its



Photo by Blair Gable

“I’m amazed at how far the radio has come in its uses – from radio drama to newscasts to all types of music; it is now a vital telecommunication link in the NHS.”

uses – from radio drama to newscasts to all types of music; it is now a vital telecommunication link in the NHS. The NHS uses wireless radio to communicate between our eight sites, for everything from providing critical patient care information to e-mail, our sites depend on high-speed wireless radio communication.

Being a first-generation immigrant who has all but a few of the family members in Canada, it is the telephone would I would miss the most. From my regular call to my parents to calls to many close relatives and friends during special occasions, the telephone keeps us connected. Though the younger generation has adopted online chatting and Yahoo Messenger as the new way of staying in touch, the telephone is still the main communication link for me. So – thanks, to an “old” Canadian, Alexander Graham Bell, from me, a “new” Canadian, for keeping us all connected!