

How to read a road map

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I was watching a DVD movie the other day from 2008.

That's not really that long ago. In the movie, the character enters a restaurant and asks if he can borrow a copy of their 'Yellow Pages.' The guy behind the counter handed him an actual book made from real paper, and yes, it had a yellow cover.

When was the last time you saw a yellow pages book unless you've got a hold-over from over a decade ago?

I used to get various versions of the Yellow Pages tossed on my porch every year, but I haven't seen one in a long time. Why waste the paper when it's all online?

There are a lot of things and occupations that have simply disappeared over the years. They quietly go away and you don't think about it until something or someone jogs your memory.

At one, there used to be ads in magazines stating 'You Can Be a TV Repair Man!'

Being a TV repairman was a stable and lucrative job at one time. Solid state technology rendered that profession obsolete almost overnight.

With LED TV's now the norm, I don't think anyone even knows how to repair one. If your television set runs into trouble and starts giving you a squiggly picture, it's easier and cheaper just to go out and buy a new one.

I have a fairly large collection of DVD movies, and yes, I have received considerable ribbing for this. 'Get Netflix!' people tell me. However, Netflix doesn't come with the special features, interviews, deleted scenes or outtakes I like to watch. Also, I just like the fact that I have an actual copy of The Maltese Falcon and Casablanca on my shelf.

I went into a local store, I won't say which one, but it rhymes with Walmart, to take a look in the \$5 bargain bins, from which I have found some pretty good and rare DVD's over the years.

The rows and rows of DVD's were now down to one half-row, and it was mostly TV shows by season.

I asked the sales person, and she told me they no longer had a video DVD department because no one buys them.

I guess Netflix won the battle.

Have you tried printing photos recently? It's getting hard to find a place to print a simple photograph. The store I dealt with for years, suddenly pulled the plug and removed all their printing machines.

'Not enough business,' they told me.

I have said in the past, there will be an entire generation of people who won't have any childhood or family photos. If you keep everything online, all it will take is a glitch on your computer to erase everything. On top of that, people forget, and don't realize until a few years later that old computer they dropped off at the recycling place also had most of the photos on the hard drive.

When was the last time you saw a motorist parked at the side of the road with a road map spread out over the steering wheel as they tried to figure out their route?

About five years ago I was heading to a town out by Lake Huron to film an internet commercial for a local business. I thought I had the route mapped out in my head, but somewhere along the line and a V in the road, I ended up in Listowell, and no idea how to get to this other town.

Do they even make road maps anyone? I wondered. I went to a gas station convenience store and asked the clerk if they had maps. He was quite excited to take me over to the store's map shelf.

Judging from his eagerness, I was probably the first person to buy an actual paper map in several years.

I bought a GPS unit the next week.

When was the last time you used a pay phone? They are still out there, there's one in my local mall, but rarely do I see anyone using it, and when I do, I wonder why?

The most recent data I could find, from 2015, said that Bell Canada had 636 pay phones that hadn't been used in over a year, and 10,501 pay phones that made less than .50 cents per day. That's a losing investment.

In our current germaphobe society, I would be surprised if anyone wanted to use a device a total stranger had just handled and breathed on.

A lot of things have gone away over the past few years.

I wonder what's next?