

Essay – 639 words

Dinosaurs and E-books

I like to think I'm technologically connected. I have a cell phone and I'm somewhat computer savvy. My children have iPods, iPhones, Blackberries, MAC computers, and they expose me to the wizardry of said devices as though they're trying to draw me into their techno-cult and I pretend to oblige. In that I'm a writer, I'm far better on paper than I am at verbally spouting my thoughts, so email serves me well. The fact that I am somewhat hermit-like makes technology even more appealing. But (there's that *but* thing again) I love books. I love the way they stack on shelves just waiting for me to need or want one of them. They're like old friends, the titles become symbols of stories I climbed into, the good ones, the ones whose characters lingered on my skin. When I glance at their titles or flip through their pages I am reunited with the characters and the moments we shared, recalling the late nights when I couldn't put them down while the dust bunnies gathered and the laundry accumulated and sleep was delayed, while I was lost in the story.

Someone once said that a house without books is like a room without windows. I'd have to agree. There's a theory afoot that books and the printed word will become as obsolete as dinosaurs and satellite dishes. I don't fret. We are a tactile bunch, we earthly beings; we touch and smell and need to use all our senses. We assess a lot of what we interact with by the feel of it: the nap of the cloth, the

texture of the flower, the softness of the baby's cheek. I may very well go the way of the dinosaur, hopefully later than sooner, so my perspective may be somewhat nostalgic, but our relationship with books is a very personal one, one that can't be replaced by some hand-held device that uploads and downloads and surfs and whatever else it is they do.

Years ago now, the music industry was threatened with the sound that computers can generate and the musician was warned of his/her extinction. Hardly. Our creativity is far more powerful than we can measure and literally pours out of us in many ways and on many levels. No computer can top that.

I look up at my shelf now and I admire my *friends*, the ones I know intimately. *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (Her birthday is one day before mine. Coincidence? I think not.) I was obligated in high school to read this masterpiece that won a Pulitzer for Literature in 1961 and I have re-read this same book no less than a dozen times, its pages are now bent and stained and faded, a lot like me. I love that I know just what page to go to when I want a sip of Harper's magic or a powerful reminder that honour prevails.

My daughter has the entire collection of the *Saddle Club* books. She shelves them wherever she is living as a reminder of her childhood, a shrine of sorts of having had dreams, some of them realized. No e-book can do that. If one of her books were to go missing, she would search it out like the shepherd and his lamb.

I walk into a library and it feels holy somehow, my silence almost automatic. It is as if I can feel the imagination and knowledge from all these bound collections,

feel it in the air, in the smell and sounds of the place. I like nothing better than to search the titles at bookstores and run my fingers down the books' spines, wanting to take a book home with me, to crawl into bed with and hope we become friends.

So, *beam me up, Scottie*, but leave me my books.

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