(another) Library Lost

"Have you seen the new *gadget* that just came out", a person exclaims with pride.

"It is the new Gizmo Version 800!. So much better than the less *blingful* version 700. Wow! I can't wait to get one!", the same person brags.

This "shiny object" syndrome has been happening at an increasing rate in every part of our lives. From the electric toothbrush which claims to help you brush better/faster, to the newest watch that knows what you want before you.

I admit, gadgets are cool with new tools that allows us to do this/that in different/faster ways and brings us a sense of adventure along with a "hey, look at me and how I now own it!" pride.

I have been programming these devices since 1984. Feeding their logic (now on my 24th language, *erg*) has allowed me to pay the bills, create new things, and most importantly to me, help others.

However, living in this furthering immersion of technology throughout my years has given me an opportunity to observe myself and those in the community on the ways we are all changing.
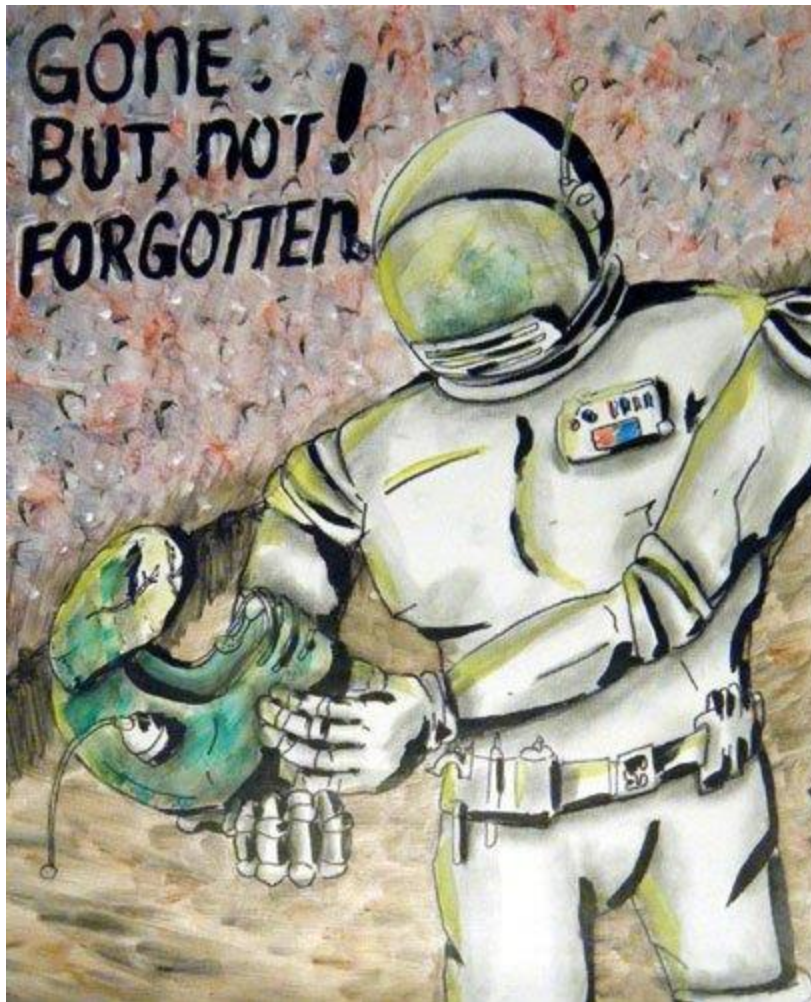
What is disheartening about these new things that we (mostly) voluntarily bring into our lives is that even though they often showcase benefits, like:

- don't hand write it! type and print it faster, and more copies!
- forget about taking 30 mins to cook that meal, do it in 45 seconds!
- no more wasting time in the card catalog, now you can find it on a screen!
- tell your family NOW what you are doing on your cell phone/tweet!

...they also bring negativity along with the ride.

And the infinite list goes on. Each with valid points of making YOUR life easier/faster, more convenient.

Being one of the last holdouts (less < 1%) of those who feel a cell phone is more of a burden than a benefit, I do not own or use a cell phone. And, amazing as it sounds, I am still here, still surviving and still enjoying life. When I take my breaks/lunch at work, I actually do 'break', without interruption and return relaxed to my world of coding.

(But, I have digressed away from my main focus on this article...the Library!)

In each community, there is/was an establishment founded for the good of the people...the Library. What a generous, community building, rescue type place to go to when you need information, assistance, etc. Since our lives are built around information, this place has been a sanctuary for any person across the spectrum to come to for help, and a lot of times, to come together. No matter the level of income or residence (I believe little green aliens would probably be allowed too?).
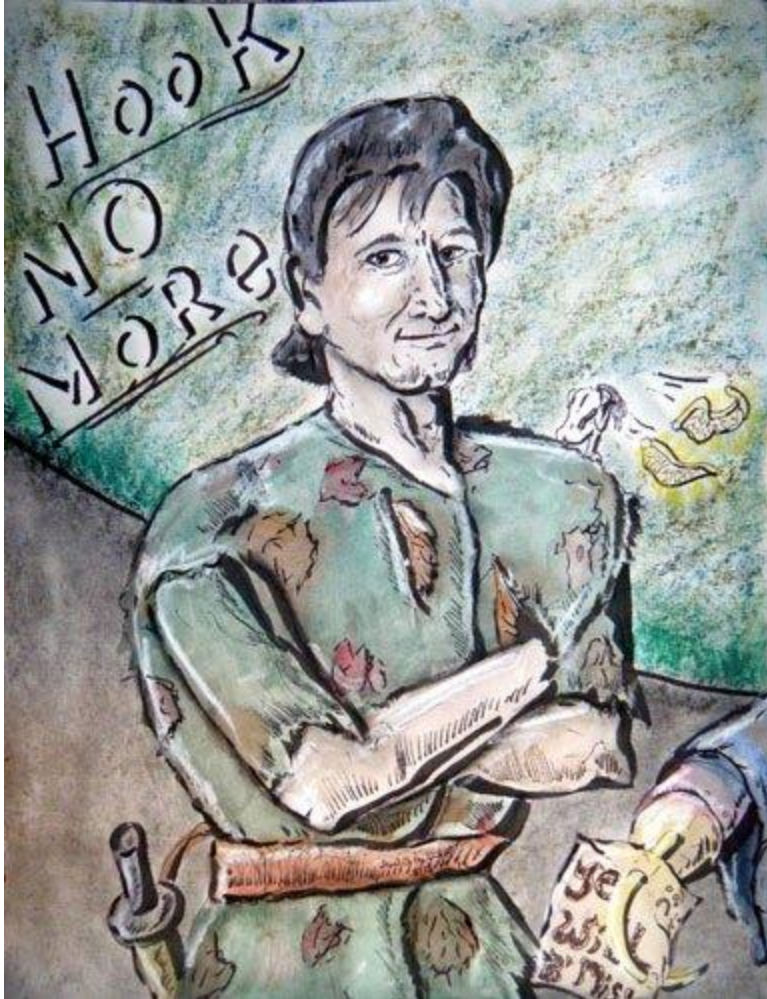
It is a place where you could browse through the "Per" section and find books on subject you had never thought about. You may have started looking for "Periscope",.but a couple books on "Persons Of Interest" and "Periodontal Techniques" caught your eye. You grabbed them as well, sat in one of the cushy chairs and opened up a whole new world. Maybe becoming a dentist later in life?

One of the joys as a father, is/was going to the library, watching the kids run around the "kid's section" (which I enjoy fondly to this day). The kids books are notoriously bright in colors, facial/creature expressions. Around the shelves are usually toys, stuffed animals, and sometimes an old bathtub or two with carpet in it to feel comfortable reading a book and feeling that "I'm a cool kid!" as others walk by.

I was recently visiting one of the malls we frequent and noticed that a couple years ago, a large section that had been turned into a city library, had recently been chopped in half, with the remaining section being less about books, and more about a row of screens, tablets, etc. The

power of the tech once again winning out over the power of the manual tools (flipping pages, scanning book titles).

Long gone from most (if not all) libraries, is the card catalog. I can't explain how many titles I came across and checked out only because I ran across it on a card on my way to another. Disappearing as well are the comfy chairs, reading rooms, slowness and peace.

What concerns me even more about these changes is not the removal of the 'old' for the 'new', but, the change it is causing in those using. Smiles are replaced by blank stares (if you are lucky enough to have someone actually look you in the eyes). Groups of kids playing around the big monkey or tub, is replaced by each sitting at individual screens playing an online game or "educational" program. When they do get up, they don't talk to each other, since they either don't acknowledge each other or they have already shared everything online in chat rooms, tweets, etc, and so there is nothing left to say in person.

As we see, experience, and sometimes purchase the new *bling* for our lives, we should also be asking...:

- do we remove a lot of feeling from our words when we 'type' it out faster, instead of writing it slower?
- is the 45 second meal made of preservatives/bad stuff really good for us, or are we saving 45 seconds now, but, removing minutes off our life later?
- is talking on the phone/Internet to say it "NOW" better? Or holding onto our daily experiences until we can share them in a longer face to face conversation more enriching?

To all of the libraries, librarians and all those who support/visit them, I tip my *virtual* hat to you and appreciate what you have given over the years, and use up one of my good luck charm wishes in the hopes that we do not lose (and maybe gain back) more of your manual offerings, as opposed to the automated ones.