The Case against Electronic Illiteracy

Katie Perry

This past summer, during the long hours spent at my summer internship, I had the distinct privilege of keeping company with a man old enough to be my father, one with nine children and one hell of a family history. Ted has been working on his family's genealogy for some time and, I hasten to add, I was only one of many pieces of it with me while I poked away at my keyboard just twenty or so feet from his desk. Ted brought many trea- suries to my attention, but one of his favorites I’ve never seen: a collection of letters written by his family in Ireland and kept in all their muss-y yellowing glory by one of his aunts. I’ve already been told that, judging by the letters’ contents, painstaking effort went into writing them. According to Ted, the language simply dazzles. The letters are not only storybook style, they’re also filled to the brim with a previously unimagined panoply of calligraphy and art. This is all well and good when we’re simply talking about how beautifully crafted letters, my great grandchildren will have a pile of scraps of history; they’re also works of art.

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The fact that my email is soon to become my legacy is a frightening thought. As I sit down to write this, I can see myself poised to face charges that could affect their post college life. Parents get involved, lawyers get involved, and you’ve got a real horror story on your hands. I’ll be lucky if future generations don’t consider me completely illiterate. I’ll be lucky if future generations don’t consider me completely illiterate.

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My challenge to all of you is to take a moment to sit down and write a thank you note every once in a while certainly won’t kill us.