

January 14, 2020

Having started teaching at Cariboo College in 1980, I have witnessed monumental technological changes over four decades. One such change, which still pains me to recall, happened during the 1980's (it would be wonderful to know the date) when I entered the college library intent on repeating my usual course of action, starting with searching the catalogue: I found that the catalogue cards, housed in those lovely long, thin wooden drawers, were being retired – replaced by a machine.

Of course, I registered a protest. When it became clear that the library staff would not cease and desist, despite my logic, I opted for compromise: I argued for at least holding on to those trusty sources of information that had stood me in good stead since childhood, opening up worlds to me. What if there was a power outage? What if the unsightly machines broke down, or, worse still, took over the sacred site? When would it be too late to go back to the tried and true? Eventually realizing that I was testing the patience of the staff, I left, dejected – but not before I received a sympathetic pat on the back and a souvenir catalogue card.

Researching from my laptop this morning, I learned that I was not the only hold out. According to the *Smithsonian Magazine*, it was not until 2015 that the organization that printed and distributed catalogue cards stopped production; it was a relief to learn that I am not alone in recognizing the beauty and utility of the old-fashioned card catalogue. Although I acknowledge the efficiency of that ugly 1980's machine (and the several generations that have replaced it) I do miss those wooden shelves and trusty catalogue cards. I am just thankful that the TRU library is still staffed by friendly, helpful, and patient humans – and I am distrustful of the automatic check- out.

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