

Nine things that will disappear in our lifetime

Whether these changes are good or bad depends in part on how we adapt to them. But, ready or not, here they come. *My comments are in italics.* I believe the original was written in the US

1. The Post Office. Get ready to imagine a world without the post office. They are so deeply in financial trouble that there is probably no way to sustain it long term. Email, Fed Ex, and UPS have just about wiped out the minimum revenue needed to keep the post office alive. Most of your mail every day is junk mail and bills.

Ten years ago, 90% of our trip registration forms came by post. This year it was under 10%.

2. The Cheque. Britain is already laying the groundwork to do away with cheque by 2018. It costs the financial system billions of dollars a year to process cheques. Plastic cards and online transactions will lead to the eventual demise of the cheque. This plays right into the death of the post office. If you never paid your bills by mail and never received them by mail, the post office would absolutely go out of business.

Ten years ago, we got 22 times as many cheques as bank transfers. This year, bank transfers were 3½ times as common as cheques.

3. The Newspaper. The younger generation simply doesn't read the newspaper. They certainly don't subscribe to a daily delivered print edition. That may go the way of the milkman and the laundry man. As for reading the paper online, get ready to pay for it. The rise in mobile Internet devices and e-readers has caused all the newspaper and magazine publishers to form an alliance. They have met with Apple, Amazon, and the major cell phone companies to develop a model for paid subscription services.

How many people under the age of 50 do you know who rely on a newspaper as their main source of news? And, if that's happening to newspapers, can magazines be far behind? Magazines depend on advertising as much as on sales. I can't speak for most businesses, but from the tourism industry, I know that print ads are becoming less and less effective. If that's happening across the board, how long before many advertisers start cutting their print ads back?

4. The Book. You say you will never give up the physical book that you hold in your hand and turn the literal pages. I said the same thing about downloading music from iTunes. I wanted my hard copy CD. But I quickly changed my mind when I discovered that I could get albums for half the price without ever leaving home to get the latest music. The same thing will happen with books. You can browse a bookstore online and even read a preview chapter before you buy. And the price is less than half that of a real book. And think of the convenience! Once you start flicking your fingers on the screen instead of the book, you find that you are lost in the story, can't wait to see what happens next, and you forget that you're holding a gadget instead of a book.

If you are going on a long walk, a book is still a better bet than something that needs batteries. But for how long. If the readers use less power while storing more and more in less and less space, I could see how they could become a better bet than a printed one, even on a two week walk.

5. The Land Line Telephone. Unless you have a large family and make a lot of local calls, you don't need it anymore. Most people keep it simply because they've always had it. But you are paying double charges for that extra service. All the cell phone companies will let you call customers using the same cell provider for no charge against your minutes

My internet connection is via a landline. When there is a good alternative, that need will disappear. Given the variety of calls I make, a land line is still substantially cheaper for me than a mobile – how long will that last? Some parts of the world have jumped past ever using landlines. The only reason they are still relatively cheap here because the infrastructure is already in place.

6. Music. This is one of the saddest parts of the change story. The music industry is dying a slow death. Not just because of illegal downloading. It's the lack of innovative new music being given a chance to get to the people who would like to hear it. Greed and corruption is the problem. The record labels and the radio conglomerates are simply self-destructing. Over 40% of the music purchased today is "catalogue items," meaning traditional music that the public is familiar with. Older established artists. This is also true on the live concert circuit. To explore this fascinating and disturbing topic further, check out the book, "Appetite for Self-Destruction" by Steve Knopper, and the video documentary, "Before the Music Dies."

7. Television. Revenues to the networks are down dramatically. Not just because of the economy. People are watching TV and movies streamed from their computers. And they're playing games and doing lots of other things that take up the time that used to be spent watching TV. Prime time shows have degenerated down to lower than the lowest common denominator. Cable rates are skyrocketing and commercials run about every 4 minutes and 30 seconds. I say good riddance to most of it. It's time for the cable companies to be put out of our misery. Let the people choose what they want to watch online and through Netflix.

Netflix is an American company which, I believe, recently set up shop n Australia. If you watch a lot of movies, it's worth checking out.

8. The "Things" That You Own. Many of the very possessions that we used to own are still in our lives, but we may not actually own them in the future. They may simply reside in "the cloud." Today your computer has a hard drive and you store your pictures, music, movies, and documents. Your software is on a CD or DVD, and you can always re-install it if need be. But all of that is changing. Apple, Microsoft, and Google are all finishing up their latest "cloud services." That means that when you turn on a computer, the Internet will be built into the operating system. So, Windows, Google, and the Mac OS will be tied straight into the Internet. If you click an icon, it will open something in the Internet cloud. If you save something, it will be saved to the cloud. And you may pay a monthly subscription fee to the cloud provider. In this virtual world, you can access your music or your books, or your whatever from any laptop or handheld device. That's the good news. But, will you actually own any of this "stuff" or will it all be able to disappear at any moment in a big "Poof?" Will most of the things in our lives be disposable and whimsical? It makes you want to run to the closet and pull out that photo album, grab a book from the shelf, or open up a CD case and pull out the insert.

Putting things into "the cloud" is an interesting idea. At least until some hacker manages to destroy a part of it.

9. Privacy. If there ever was a concept that we can look back on nostalgically, it would be privacy. That's gone. It's been gone for a long time anyway. There are cameras on the street, in most of the buildings, and even built into your computer and cell phone. But you can be sure that 24/7, "They" know who you are and where you are, right down to the GPS coordinates, and the Google Street View. If you buy something, your habit is put into a zillion profiles, and your ads will change to reflect those habits. "They" will try to get you to buy something else. Again and again.

That's only part of the story. Think about the things that people, especially young people, put up on places like Facebook and You Tube. They can last far longer than people might want. Looking for a job? [Your social media history can be a new hurdle](#). It's not just Facebook & You Tube, it's every little blog you may have written, every photo someone might have taken of you and labelled with your name.

All we will have left that can't be changed are "Memories". – And then probably Alzheimers will take that away from you too !

Where does it end? Maybe it will be like a science fiction story I once read where virtual reality became so good, that "real reality" couldn't compete. People hooked in and were fed intravenously as they lived in worlds far more satisfying than the real one could possibly be. Technology hasn't got there yet, but given the way things are progressing, it might not be all that far away.