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Opinions

Phone Books Becoming Irrelevant

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Posted by [Neal Leavitt](#) on February 4th, 2011 at 9:50 pm

Pity the poor phone book. In today's digital world, they are quickly becoming tomorrow's dinosaurs. Every now and then I'll pick one up when searching for a local vendor, but by and large, they tend to pile up and collect dust in our pantry and other assorted kitchen cabinets and drawers.

In fact, a Washington, DC firm, Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, recently queried 1,100 adults nationwide and asked these probing questions:

What is your primary source to find a phone number when you need one?

Do you find the phone book to be the most convenient source for finding phone numbers, or not?

When was the last time you used the phone book to find a phone number?

When a new phone book arrives, which one of the following best describes your response?

In thinking about how much you use the phone book, in five years do you expect you will be using the phone

book much more than you do now; much less than you do now; about the same; or not all?

Do the advertisements in your local phone book have any influence on the purchasing decision you make, or not?

Some interesting snippets from the poll:

3 out of 4 Americans rely on Internet and cell phones for finding phone numbers over the phone book.

Only 3 percent of Americans report they have used the phone book in the last week.

Nearly 8 out of 10 people 18-29 years old have no use for the phone book.

Nearly 25 percent of Americans toss out their phone books immediately; one-third of Americans under age 45 throw away their phone books when delivered to their door.

Almost 50 percent of respondents expect to use their book either much less or not at all in five years.

Michael Koretzky reported in MoneyTalksNews that last October, the Seattle City Council passed an ordinance creating an “Opt-Out System” so residents can stop receiving the Yellow Pages – which can sometimes arrive on their doorstep from multiple publishers per year.

“Based on information supplied by some of the yellow pages publishers, Seattle Public Utilities estimates nearly 2 million yellow pages phone books are dropped off in Seattle every year, costing approximately \$350,000 to recycle,” the city declared in a press release.

Koretzky added that the ordinance also requires Yellow Pages publishers to pay a “recovery fee” of 14 cents per book to help pay for that recycling.

“This being America, the entire thing will end up in court – the Yellow Pages sued the city last month.”

Seems like only the lawyers will come out ahead in Seattle – the phone book is basically on life support and will soon be as relevant today as the telegraph.

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