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## **No substitute for hand-written document**

THANK YOU, Alex Beam, for reminding readers that, although electronic communication has many virtues and is appropriate in a multitude of applications, it is not a replacement for the physical beauty, tactile pleasures, and inherent value of a document that is hand-written (“The paper chase,” g, Oct. 26).

As a calligrapher, teacher, and designer of one-of-a-kind, hand-lettered books, I confess to having an unusually deep attachment to paper documents.

But judging from conversations with friends, I’m not the only one who is saddened that today the virtual word seems to have more value than the written one.

For years I have produced hand-lettered documents for corporations who wish to recognize volunteers, retirements, benefactors, memorials, and other noteworthy individuals or occasions. A longtime customer of mine belongs to a professional association that, in the past, gave a personalized certificate to some members. For this year’s conference, my customer told me the president of the association will be sending out an e-mail that the individual can print.

I have a difficult time believing that recipients would print that e-mail message and hold onto it as a treasured recognition of their accomplishment.

Yet even if the message did find its way to the inside of a frame, it would have a short life. The ink used in the printing process probably would not be light-fast, and before too long, the frame would be holding a blank piece of paper — perhaps a fitting end to a virtual message.

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