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## Why Can't I Just Google the 1938 Britannica? (757 words)

My daughter, Kelly, loves to ask about how hard life was when I was a kid. "Well," I'll tell her, pausing for drama, "we didn't have cell phones...TV remotes...or fast food restaurants with drive-thrus!"

"Man," she'll say, shaking her head. "How did you live like that?"

It's true, today we have a lot of "modern conveniences" we didn't have when I was growing up. But frankly, some of those modern conveniences aren't all that convenient. The Internet, for example. When Kelly has to write a report for school, her teacher says, "Use the Internet." The problem is, finding what she needs on the Internet always seems to take forever. Like the time she was looking for facts about "The Lewis and Clark Expedition." By the time she finished, I think she'd spent longer than they did on the actual expedition. Even worse, I had to keep an eye on her the whole time. I haven't let her go on the Internet alone since she did a search for "Eleanor Roosevelt," and ended up with "Naked Girls Named Eleanor."

So when Kelly came home from school today and said, "Hey mom! I need to use the Internet!" I thought about how much I miss the good old days. When I was a kid, if I had a question, I found out the old fashioned way - I asked mom and dad. No matter what they were doing, they were never too busy to stop and tell me, "Go look it up in the encyclopedia."

Remember what it was like before the Internet? When everything you needed to know was in the encyclopedia? Back then, if you were really smart, you might be called, "a walking encyclopedia." (If you do remember, right now you might be called, "old"). Those were simpler times, when you only needed "Windows" if you wanted to look outside. If you had an "Apple," you were either going to eat it or make a pie. And people had yet to experience the hassle of being "PC," let alone the nightmare of owning one.

Like most families, we owned a set of encyclopedias that was really, REALLY old (my husband says his family's set was chiseled out of stone tablets). Some door-to-door salesman persuaded one of my ancestors to "make an investment in the future." By the time we got a hold of it, our set had been passed down through

more generations than bad breath and bunions. But don't get me wrong - its age didn't keep it from being educational. I learned about a lot of interesting things like "mold" just by looking at volume 13, where my dad accidentally spilled his Coke in 1946.

The encyclopedia was completely safe - the worst thing I ever experienced while using one was a paper cut. Plus, it was easy to use - everything was laid out in alphabetic simplicity. It was perfect for copying, um, I mean CONSULTING for school reports. Unless, of course, I was looking for something that happened in the past fifty years. A report on World War II? Sorry, these babies were printed BEFORE then. In that case, I'd pick a different topic (maybe the Religious Wars?) that was covered in our ancient encyclopedia set. My parents said that taught flexibility.

I wasn't the only one who used the encyclopedia in our family, either. Once I looked for the "B" volume for a report on Biology. My dad was already using it - to level the corner of his workbench. My brother used stacks of encyclopedias to hold down his blankets when he built forts. My mom made bookmarks by pressing fresh flowers between the pages.

Now I'm stuck with the Internet, which can't do any of those things. Once again, Kelly and I sat at the computer to work on her latest assignment. And once again, we had nothing but trouble. First the cable modem wasn't responding...then the server was down...then Google told us our search was too broad. After all that, Kelly was exposed to some very graphic profanity. "Sorry," I said, frustrated. "I really shouldn't say those bad words."

I guess I'll have to get used to the Internet, because the encyclopedia is as likely to make a comeback as the dodo bird. At least I was lucky enough to inherit my family's old set. Unlike bad breath and bunions, I'd never get rid of them. Because you never know when they'll come in handy. In fact, my computer is sitting on a stack of them right now.