

westerly

Life is a breeze. Here's where to catch it.

File This

A peaceful revolution is underway. Read about it on a box, a shirt or a card.

TIME WAS, when some industrialist set up a cotton gin in your neighbourhood, you could count on a ready bunch of Luddites to go smash it. Now you can't even arrange coffee for two without e-mail.

Get used to it: technology is here to stay. Or instead, join the handmade, homemade, low-tech underground arising as a stylish and entertaining alternative. Leading the pack on this antidigital front is Vancouver's new Regional Assembly of Text, an analogue junkie's paradise with its fervent embrace of stationery goods and quirky homage to the alphabet. Small caps, all caps and everything in between, letters adorn simple boxes, stylish tees and glassware. Aside from their prized metal filing cabinets and clunky typewriters set out for visitors' use, owners and Emily Carr grads Brandy Fedoruk and Rebecca Dolensstock hand-printed wrapping paper, iron-on letter patches and quaint form letters. Relationship etiquette is a cinch when all >

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> you have to do is fill in the blanks: "Dear *recipient's name*, I am extremely flattered and *verb* by your affection for me." They even run a button club. The privileges of membership include a different button mailed to you monthly and thoughtful extras like a change-of-address card should you happen to move midyear.

Thank-you cards and hand-written missives were anachronisms mere months ago; now they're hipster material. When The Regional Assembly of Text hosted its first monthly letter-writing night, it wasn't prepared for the response. "We thought it would just be us and few friends," confesses Fedoruk. Instead crowds surged; lines queued at those vintage typewriters. Word of this low-tech chic is getting out. Celebrities have been sighted sans PDA, instead sporting Hemingwayesque moleskin journals. *Esquire*, arbiter of all things swell for men, recently reported on the latest must-have masculine accoutrement: a delightfully cumbersome 1940s-style telephone receiver that plugs into your wee cellphone. Meanwhile other stores have been spotted brandishing anti-technology cool: one called the Petri Dish in Vancouver hosts monthly button-making workshops too.

The Regional Assembly of Text's next letter-writing night is January 12—and it's free. How quaint is that? www.assemblyoftext.com.—Amanda Ross

An old photo of your school library—or a new low-tech high-concept shop in Vancouver?