In the article “Compose Yourself,” under “Hard Pressed,” Joseph Epstein, a serial author, is quoted as writing “Among our newspapers as they now stand, little more can be said in their favour [sic] than that they do not require batteries to operate, you can swat flies with them, and they can still be used to wrap fish.”

Yikes! Someone else in class blogged about the idea that the last newspaper will be recycled in April 2040 and wondered what the art teacher would protect the art tables with – great thought!

It’s odd to think that anyone would have this opinion of a newspaper, but I can certainly see the merit of the idea after further thought. Readers do want an opportunity to voice their opinions about what they read and even contribute to the story – essentially have a conversation about what they read in the paper on-line with others – and not just with others they know, but with anyone who is willing to have the conversation. With traditional, in-print, newspapers, this simply isn’t possible.

Just before reading the article, a friend called me to discuss an article that was in our local newspaper about a decision our School Board had made. Five years from now, will this conversation still take place over the telephone as it did tonight or will it take place online through an IM or blog? I can’t say for certain, but I certainly wouldn’t place any bets on the conversation still happening thanks to “Ma Bell.”

When I think about the way even I communicate with family and friends, I find it hard to believe that young people will not continue to change the landscape of conversation. Today, at 34, I have many, many conversations with my best friends through text messages. Sometimes plans for an entire weekend are made without every actually “saying” anything to each other. I am able to discuss books I’ve read with people all over the country, thanks to sites like [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com). It has essentially become an on-line book club.

Yes, the way we are getting our news and information is changing drastically. And WHO is contributing to that information is changing. Are newspaper’s best features what Epstein stated above? I don’t think so. I believe they still have a place – especially for truly “local” news. For those of us in small towns, I think many of us still subscribe to the “local” paper for the gossip around town and the photos of our children holding their reading and phy ed. For these small, often family-owned papers, they aren’t going to go on-line soon. And this kind of local news isn’t going to be covered by major newspapers. For the time being, anyway, I think art teachers can breathe a sigh of relief. Their art tables will stay clean for a few years yet.