
***Viewpoint:
Dog-eared address books are dead -
Social media is the new locator***

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In the 1980s, the ways to permanently locate someone was through their home address for post and fixed line for communications.

Remember how Mum and Dad would keep a telephone book on the sideboard by the home phone downstairs? This would usually be a dog-eared fake-leather bound volume with the letters of the alphabet running down the side as section dividers. ABC, DEF, and so on, down to WXYZ all clubbed together. Familiar entries would have the addresses and numbers crossed and re-crossed out, and in some cases re-entered sideways on the margin of the page when all the white space on the page had run out. The address book took center-stage for occasions when we'd send cards, such as Christmas and its cultural equivalents. Our fixed communications service provider and the postal service (often the same organization) were the gatekeepers, and as far as telephony was concerned we paid a fairly hefty price for the privilege of being connected.

1980s



By the 2000s, our permanent locator no longer contained a physical address.

Because most of us were no longer posting each other letters, we didn't have a need to write down everyone's address. In fact the address book had almost disappeared completely. And for most, we didn't have a fixed line number either, as we found that this would change whenever people moved home. There was a much better alternative by now: the mobile phone number. Mobile took over as the new constant because even as we moved from street to street or city to city, the mobile number would remain the same (thanks also to number portability). Our mobile communications service provider became the new gatekeeper, and we paid a reasonable (and not hefty) price for the privilege as there was a lot more competition in the market.

2000s



By the mid-2010s, our permanent locator no longer contained a physical address, nor a fixed line number, nor even a mobile number.

Now the new permanent locator has become the social network profile. No matter where we live or work, anywhere on earth, or whether we are temporarily away from home on holiday or business, our LinkedIn profile, Facebook page or Whatsapp account are the surest way to reach us. We can use these methods to even reach people we know but who we haven't spoken to in twenty years (such as old school friends). Today, there isn't really a single gatekeeper any more, and the price to be reachable is virtually free, because all of this is done over the internet and the only cost involved is anything being paid for internet access.

2010s



*Average number of social media accounts per person**



* Average is derived from the number of social media users in each country

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“I lost my phone last month and a clutch of important numbers. But I have restored most of what I lost by sending people LinkedIn or FB messages. losing the numbers has therefore been irritating rather than devastating, thanks to social media.”

Over the past thirty years, the center of gravity has shifted in the communication world from fixed to mobile to social media. Whilst fixed line players have conceded relevance in this matter, mobile operators don't need to, provided they can show customers that they bring essential value to the delivery, security and enrichment of the communications experience.

Thank You



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