*Daily Monitor Roving Eye Article:*

**THE HANDWRITTEN LETTER IN THE COMPUTER AGE**

For those fortunate enough to have access to a computer both at work and at home, its screen, keyboard and printer have had a massive effect on handwritten letters and communications.

So, if you now generally use a computer to write personal letters to family and friends, what effect does this have when you do choose to write by hand to them? Let’s consider, in very simple fashion, such a personal handwritten letter and its variables (underlined below) and take a sample of one – my wife!

The most obvious variable is overall number. My wife tells me that in the early 1990s, she would regularly handwrite four or five letters per week, but that in 2011, this had fallen to a mere one or two every few months, because of her increased computer usage.

The next variable is length. Some of her 1990 handwritten letters would be as much as 10 pages long. Whereas today, with the coming of the computer age, and having grown used to typing on a keyboard, she can now only manage one or possibly two handwritten pages before her hand starts to ache. This aching has two effects. Firstly, the letter is brought to a hasty conclusion, hence its short length. Secondly the quality of handwriting greatly deteriorates – a clear script at the start and more of a scrawl by the letter’s end.

Moving to the quality of content, she feels that handwritten letters require more careful forethought, as without the benefit of computer aids such as spellchecking, deleting, inserting, cutting and pasting etc., there has to be more consideration about the letter’s content and composition before putting pen to paper.

Then there is the type of paper to use. Interestingly, my mother-in-law (who lives in the UK) recently complained that it was becoming increasingly difficult to buy a small (A5) writing pad, whereas reams of A4 computer printer paper are found in abundance. How does the situation compare in Uganda?

A sample of one is not a statistical survey. But readers who have computer access at work and home might wish to go through the variables for personal handwritten letters underlined above to see if the effect of the new technology is the same or different than my wife’s experience.

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