

## Turning Pages

While attending lunch at a dental implant meeting recently, someone started a discussion about old things that can become new again. In this specific discussion, it was about vinyl—not the material that is sometimes used in automobile upholstery, but vinyl as it relates to record albums. Perhaps I need to explain. Years ago, there were stores we would go to in an effort to purchase music from artists we were interested in. The music did not come through the Cloud; instead, the music was carved onto a disk. No, it wasn't a DVD, nor was it a CD; it was called a "record album." The album itself was made of vinyl material, and there was a continuous groove cut into the vinyl that could be tracked by a "needle," which took the physical characteristics of the groove and turned them into music through a series of electronic signals. To use the vernacular of the day, record albums were "cool."

There were a variety of things that were attractive about the record album. The first thing was just the size of the album. It was 12 inches in diameter, not 11 or 13 but always 12, and had a centralized hole through which a centering pin was passed to ensure that the record would consistently turn with the groove, beginning at the outer aspect of the circular record and then progressing toward that center region. The information stored on a record was in essence a series of peaks and valleys associated with the groove that translated into an electromagnetic wave form that then became music. This continuous groove in the record provided the listener with a sense of connectedness. The 12-inch LP (long-playing) record could play somewhere between 30 and 60 minutes of music on each side of the record. Once one side was completed, you would physically remove the record from the platform that secured it and flip it over so that you could hear the second side of the record.

I'm hoping that the image I'm describing here provides a little nostalgic journey for people who lived through the era of the LP. Actually, that era was probably the longest period of time for an audio reproduction technique that had been experienced previously or since. Eventually, the LP was replaced by the compact disc (CD), which was replaced by the digital video disc (DVD), and today, all this musical information appears somewhere in the Cloud.

Well, the reason we were talking about "vinyl" was because the LP is making a comeback. What we have found is that in the digital conversion of analog sound,

some nuances of the analog environment are lost. In other words, digital may lack imperfections that make recorded music unique. Those nuances appear to be the reason that people are going back toward the use of long-playing record albums.

In addition to the sound, however, there are a number of other factors that add to the "coolness" of the record album. Not the least of these factors is the visual appearance of the modern-day turntable. The platform onto which the album is plated has always had to be a shock absorber so that movements within the room would not disturb the position of the needle in the groove. Today's turntables use polymer chemistry to create a rotating table through which light can be transmitted, creating a visually exciting experience. Every once in a while, I will show my wife pictures of the newest generation of turntables from McIntosh (not Macintosh from 1 Infinite Loop in Cupertino, California, but instead, McIntosh Laboratory from 2 Chambers St. in Binghamton, New York), but it is rare that she will provide a sufficient number of "ooh"s and "ah"s to confirm her appreciation of this esthetic audio reproduction device.

Eventually, the lunchtime conversation morphed from a resurgence of the LP to a discussion of books. It was interesting how every person at the table brought forward a unique opinion regarding the methods that are used to convey the written word.

Although no one had personal experience with the earliest written word, we all recognized that the first transition was when stone tablets (bulky and heavy, not to mention subject to shattering if dropped) gave way to scrolls that were handwritten and provided a somewhat permanent archive of the events that were recorded on the scroll. With time, the notion was that a continuous movement of the scroll in one direction would take the reader from beginning to end. Unfortunately, the scroll was also cumbersome to handle, and it was eventually replaced by documents that were recorded on pages. Between the development of the printing press and the assembly of pages into books, it seemed that we really were onto something as a form of communication and a method of saving things that we had learned for future generations.

Going around the lunch table, we commented on the feel of a book in one's hands. That esthetic associated with the turning of the page, the progress from beginning to end, even the weight of the book, which in and of itself conveyed a sense of substance, were

all discussed. One by one, we expressed our appreciation of books, but at the same time, we started to realize that books, and their first cousin, magazines, are harder to store than the data stored in the Cloud.

The initial description of books, magazines, and journals identified a near-universal (there were about a dozen people in the discussion, so this universe was limited) appreciation for the printed word and a similar appreciation for the delivery of this material in the form of books. And then, an interloper entered the discussion holding their Kindle and extolling its virtues. Here was a device that was smaller than any book on our respective bookshelves, and yet, this small device could be home to literally thousands of books. Moreover, this Kindle device could receive notes, bookmarks, and automatic links that could be sent to our friends. The opportunity to never have to worry about running out of things to read while away from the library seemed exciting. Suddenly, the group found itself turning toward the interloper asking questions, seeking advice, and considering that our traditional books may be facing an uncertain future.

We all seem to agree that there are some types of books that are easy to replace and some that would be nearly impossible to replace. As I'm writing this, I am holding in my hands the textbook *Tissue-Integrated Prostheses* by Brånemark, Zarb, and Albrektsson. The weight of this book goes far beyond its physical characteristics. A book such as this could, for me, never be replaced by digital data from the Cloud.

Saying this, I realize that in my mind, and on the shelves of my office library, the books that are most important to me may be of little value to my next-door neighbor. What my lunch mates and I would say is that just like some vinyl, some books will always be important, maybe even "cool," to us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steven E. Eckert DDS MS". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Steven E. Eckert, DDS, MS  
Editor-in-Chief