

High-end pens drying up with technology

By Erin Toner, NPR

We tweet. We text. We email. But how often do we really write anymore? Not much, if you look at the business of selling pens – or “fine writing instruments,” as shop owners call them. With their writing tools becoming obsolete, pen stores have folded, including a century-old shop in New York.

But despite the tech-heavy trends, a few old fashioned pen stores are still holding on.

Walking into Daly’s Pen Shop in Milwaukee, Wis., is like leaping back in time. Ninety-year-old, custom-made wood storage cabinets line the walls, antique ink bottles lurk on the shelves, and Sinatra songs serenade customers as they walk in.

The pens range from the Japanese Pilot Namiki pens – retractable fountain pens that range from \$150 to \$300 – to the Waterford pens, as in Waterford Crystal.

Daly’s owner, Brad Bodart, points out classic Cross Rollerball pens for \$40, and fancy Montblanc fountain pens that sell for \$1,000. He says that whatever the price point, a good pen completes the package.

Daly’s Pen Shop in Milwaukee, Wis., opened in 1924. While other pen stores have closed across the nation, this place has kept its doors open.

“You have a nice pair of shoes, you have a nice belt, you have a nice handbag and you have a nice pen,” Bodart says. “Nothing bothers us more than seeing a business person pull a Bic out of their pocket.”

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