

Independent bookstores are more than places to buy books

By David Rosenberg, Slate

Like the independent bookstores he photographs, Bryan David Griffith is a bit of a throwback. He does have an email address, but if you want to reach him on the phone, you have to dial a landline, and most likely track him down through his answering machine. His yearlong project covering more than 20 independent bookstores around the country was photographed with a large format film camera; he travels to each location from his home in Arizona via a makeshift camper in which he sleeps, loads film, and stores his equipment.

“I’m kind of old school,” he said. “I have an engineering degree, so it’s not like I’m a technophobe. I just haven’t adopted technologies that don’t enrich my quality of life.”

One of those things he doesn’t want to see leave are the independent bookstores, a business he sees as a lot more than simply a place to buy books – they’re a meeting place away from the often segregated, homogenous world of social media.

“You’re going to encounter other people who work there or who will be there by chance who might have different experiences that you do,” he said. “I think that’s a healthy thing for our society to interact with and make friends with people who have different ideas than what we do.”

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