

# The power of a pencil.

by Gianni Anchois

**Most bloggers and writers I know do it.**

We fill notebooks and scraps of paper with thoughts, excerpts from books and articles we read. Even in the age of Evernote, Google Keep and OneNote, we often still use the simplest of the tools: a pencil.

## **Commonplacing**

Hugely popular in the 17th century, commonplacing is a technique originally developed by John Locke and John Milton. This practice is all about building a sort of personal memoranda, particularly valuable and dear to the keeper of the common place book as it represents his or her personality: a unique book catering to its creator's interests. It's great for remembering useful concepts, facts, passages from books or simple curiosities.

*A unique book catering to its creator's interests, a personal way to curate information.*

## **Random notes**

My tens of Moleskine notebooks are nothing more than highly unorganised scrapbooks of annotations, but to me they represent a precious source of inspiration for blog posts, articles and even story plots.

There's an apparent complete randomness in those notes: profound reflections and whole passages lifted verbatim from novels and poems sit side by side with laundry lists and pocket money balances, sketches and diagrams about business models and ideas.

Somehow I believe that the very unstructured nature of those notes adds value to the whole collection. It fosters the discovery of obscure connections between thoughts, the aggregation of seemingly unrelated material into a fully formed piece of work. It uncovers possibilities and deepens the perspective by taking unconventional paths to build a richer picture.

### **A future of doom?**

Is commonplacing still valuable in today's information overload scenario?

Well, one could argue that precisely because of the overwhelming amount of information we have at our disposal, it has become even more important and relevant than ever to capture content and place it into context. Call it a personal way to curate information if you will.

And to be sure, you might prefer to use text editors and specialised software instead of Moleskine and pencil, but for me, and many others I know, the act of writing on a piece of paper works best to capture what really matters, when it matters. There is something in the movement of your hand and fingers, scraping a sheet of cellulose with a piece of graphite, that connects deeper inside, with your thoughts and most intimate feelings. I still haven't been able to reproduce that same special feeling when typing.

The contents of your common place book will empower you to build an altogether different story, or many stories if it comes to that. Unlimited flexibility and creativity potential.

As a blogger and writer, can you ask for more?

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