The elusive internet café

I am sitting in what used to be commonly called an “Internet Café”, but what are now commonly referred to as “Cafés”; more specifically, Uncommon Grounds on Argyle Street (interestingly enough, that URL didn't show up until the second page of search results for "uncommon grounds halifax" on google). However, I am unfortunately relegated to composing this blog entry in Word, rather than the webpage itself because I can’t connect to any access points whatsoever. Very disappointing.

I have enjoyed a very nice coffee and a ham and gouda sandwich, but I feel rather misled, not only by the lack of Internet in this internet café, but also by the lack of power outlets. In fact, this place is *so* lacking in power outlets, that it can only have been by design. There’s only one other person in here with a laptop, and we’re forced to sit next to each other because the only outlet in the place is here.

Ok, let’s think about this: If you’re going to bill yourself as an Internet Café, then perhaps the principle things you should have, besides coffee, would be uh…Internet, and power. Come on people.

[Edit: Ok, I found out later that the internet thing was because I had to actually register with them. Fair enough. I should have found that out, but the lack of power outlets is still reprehensible.]

[Edit2: Found out later still that if they did indeed have wireless internet at this location, then I would have to register with them. They don’t currently, but it’s in the works, I’m promised.]

Now, if I were to review the place as a pure café rather than an Internet café, then they would surely fare much better. They have great coffee and damn good food at prices that are considerably lower than Starbucks. It’s all good on that front.

There are a number of clever idiosyncrasies that make this place pretty cool: The Andy Warhol-style pop-culture murals on the walls, the fact that everything is stainless steel, and the way they serve the coffee for “eat-in” customers in clear glass glasses. Second, but certainly not in my mind, are the tip jars; yes, they have more than one. Every day there is a trivia question posed to the customer with three possible answers, and a tip jar for each one. It’s like you’re supposed to “vote” for your answer by tipping. Personally, I think they seed one of the incorrect answers so obsessive-compulsive people like me will feel an unconscious desire to fill up the correct answer bowl with money. Damn them! A daddy-long-legs isn’t even a spider!

On the down side, this particular location doesn’t seem to have nearly the comfy seating area that the other two Uncommon Grounds locations do. There are only two plush leather seats in the whole place, and nary a couch to be seen. It’s much smaller than the others, but man, this hard backed bench is doing nothing for me.

In conclusion, if you’re just looking for coffee and a bite, then any U.G. will do, but don’t bother hanging out in the Argyle Street one…It’s like they designed it to make you want to leave.

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