SINGAPORE: The average workplace may be increasingly wired up, but the office of the future may not necessarily be a paperless one.

According to one academic, even as mobile technology allows employees to take their work anywhere, it does not mean more work is actually done.

Subhas Anandan, lawyer at Khatter Wong Partnership, said: "I don't carry a mobile phone."

While Benjamin Lim, director of Creative Division at Iwa Design, said: "Wow, that's one thing I cannot imagine because be it for my diary or my schedule, everything is in my PDA. So without that, I think I'll be totally lost."

Mr Anandan, one of Singapore's most prominent legal eagles, said: "As it is, your life is already very stressful in the office and in court, why want to carry home the stress?"

And although his office is wired, pen and paper are still Mr Anandan's means of communication.

If he needs to reply to emails or be contacted, his secretary does the job.

But that's not good enough for interior designer Mr Lim, whose mobile phone lets him work on the go.

Presentations are no longer confined to bulky projector machines.

And thanks to 3-D software, clients know just what to expect before the job is completed.

Mr Lim is one of the 1.2 million Singaporeans who can access the internet on their mobile phones and this number is rising annually, which means the mobile office is a growing reality for many.

Although it has become almost impossible to avoid using technology in the workplace, it does not mean the humble pen will become obsolete anytime soon.

In fact, leading stationery makers here say sales figures of office stationery have gone up. But as more pens and whiteboard markers are being bought, people are also losing them faster.

And even with the best software tools, there are some things technology cannot replace, said an academic.

Dr Adel Dimian, Singapore Management University, said: "At some point, I think we will come full circle. In other words, we'll be able to send so much information or do so many creative things, that we'll have to come back to the basics, for example, what are the elements of design, a good presentation and a good speech?"

"Technology won't make those things better. Mobility will make those things go back and forth faster, but it won't necessarily be better work or more productive work."

Mr Anandan said: "Sometimes I envy the passengers on the plane who work three hours non-stop. And I say, well, actually three hours could have been spent working, but I'm reading a Harry Potter book or something like that! So sometimes there's a tinge of regret, but nope, on the whole no."

It seems the mobile office has its appeal, even among the most technology-averse.

- CNA/so