

PressLines

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Looking at the Future of Print

There is lots of news about print these days, mostly about its decline. We read about newspapers folding, magazines moving to digital versions and, most recently, an announcement from California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger that his state would transition to digital textbooks beginning with high school math and science books this fall.

Separating Fact from Fiction

In all of these instances, there are elements of fact as well as fiction in reporting the future of print. First of all, there is no question the nearly unprecedented slow economy is impacting print in both the newspaper and magazine categories. While there is



clearly evidence in newspapers, for example, that the model is changing, the advertising slowdown definitely heightened the industry's problems.

And while there will likely be some severe pain in the process, there will eventually have to be reconciliation between "free" online content and "paid" print content. In truth, online advertising does not carry the load, and much of the reporting, particularly investigative reporting, originates and receives funding from the print side. If a more equitable pricing model ultimately evolves, print may well again attract a portion of its readership that shifted to the lure of free content.

Otherwise, online will have to pick up a larger share of the cost burden or eliminate much of the more expensive and valuable reporting. There are no guarantees of the final outcome, of

course, but the comparatively "free lunch" of online content will almost certainly have to change in the future.

Magazines Face Market Challenges

Like newspapers, print magazines suffered a major advertising hit that sent many titles, even those well established and profitable, reeling with the economy. But as David Mammano of Next Step Publishing points out in a recent *Folio*: article, "Top 10 Reasons Print Should Remain a Vital Part of Your Marketer's Mix," print actually performs quite admirably in not only delivering great content to readers, but also in:

- Delivering great brand opportunities
- Generating leads for advertisers
- Driving amazing amounts of website traffic for both the magazine and its advertisers

In the case of his own company's publication, *The Next Step Magazine*, Mammano says, "...our magazine is the number-one driver of traffic to our website. It's like buying keywords, only better!" The same holds true for many catalog marketers. Remove the print catalog as a driver of website traffic, and the e-commerce site looks very different from a

profit and loss standpoint.

Does that mean digital versions are just a fad? Definitely not. Some publishers and their audiences may find them a suitable alternative while others won't. In other instances, they may prove valuable in enabling more startups, less expensive international distribution, opening new custom publishing options and in simply providing greater consumer choice.

Digital Textbook Initiatives

Although Governor Schwarzenegger's announcement to transition to all digital textbooks made plenty of news, there are many missing and even some misleading details. For example, the claim that "free" content would be available over the web is simply not possible. As you educational publishers know, printing and distribution costs are only part of the equation in the development of a textbook series, and the other costs will in no way disappear.

Then there is the problem of providing e-book readers and/or computers as well as a myriad of other problems not necessarily easily addressed in a large and highly diverse school system like California's. That's to say nothing of the governor's suggestion that teachers might download and print textbooks themselves. Really? When and on what?

Actually, the California initiative is not the first. There are a number of smaller scale programs involving digital books at both the elementary, secondary and college levels. There are mixed results.

For example, a pilot program at Northwest Missouri State University involving 240 students using the Sony Reader and books published by McGraw-Hill,

revealed a number of challenges from battery-life issues to students struggling to deal with a wide range of e-book applications. In a survey conducted in March during the school year, nearly 40 percent of the participants agreed with the statement, "I study less because the e-textbook makes studying more difficult."

Nevertheless, e-books now play, and will continue to play, a role in education, as they should. But our prediction is that a significant number of offset-printed textbooks and classroom materials will combine with digitally printed books and pure electronic forms well into the future.

What Do We Know for Sure?

Stating anything with certainty about the future is dangerous ground, especially in these volatile times, but we feel confident that the communications world will become increasingly multi-channel. What's more, print will play a significant role in the multi-channel world. In fact, we see new issues surfacing as electronic volume increases that will make print more valuable than ever.

For instance, email boxes will become increasingly cluttered and recipients even less patient with unwanted email. That could easily lead to more restrictive anti-spam legislation. Already Canada has proposed legislation that would require permission to send an email to anyone with whom an organization does not have a prior relationship – similar to our Do Not Call legislation.

Regardless, we do envision greater use of database marketing techniques that will continue to result in more targeted, personal-

ized communications. Mass marketing is declining and will continue that trend into the future.

Organizations that are able to identify their best customers and create effective dialogue and messaging will have a significant competitive advantage.

Ripon Printers Takes Proactive Approach

Ripon remains optimistic about the future of print, and we are taking every step possible to remain a viable source for our customers. We are financially sound and will continue to bring you the advanced print-related technologies you need to succeed. Included among Ripon Printers' commitments and investments are:

- Continuing to build our short-run offset capabilities to match changing markets
- Acquiring time and cost-saving collaborative premedia workflows for online job entry, soft proofing and many other tasks
- Installing a digital storefront for online ordering and web-to-print production
- Installing a 4-color, variable data digital printing system for short run, on-demand needs
- Incorporating sustainable printing practices that include both FSC and SFI chain-of-custody certifications
- Developing CoMailing options for greater distribution efficiencies

Most importantly, we remain more committed than ever to working collaboratively with your team to address the challenges of being an effective player in a multi-channel marketplace. We encourage your feedback and suggestions as we move forward together. **RIPON**

Perception is Reality

Early this year, John Thain, the ex-head of Merrill Lynch, was explaining that spending \$1.2 million redecorating his office was “a mistake in the light of the world we live in today.” Like many of you, my response was, “when is it ever a good idea to spend \$1.2 million on redecorating an office?” The problem is one of focus. I suspect that the people on Wall Street live in a different reality and are probably blind to some of the things you and I take for granted.

I had a reality check last week as I was helping out in a small group activity with a handful of third grade children. The adult leader showed remarkable patience and she was able to lead the students, accomplishing what they needed to do during the short hour. I emailed her, complementing her on a success-



Andy Lyke

ful session. Her reply was, basically, “thanks, but did you notice that there wasn’t much discussion, that some children didn’t get a chance to speak, and that some were not focused?” She was right – there were many good things that happened, but my version of reality didn’t square with hers, and obviously she was right.

What’s hard about having the right focus is we believe things that square with our belief system. We talk with people who either agree with us or may not be willing to tell us bad news, or what they really think.

My point is we need to be open... or we may miss something because we are focusing on the wrong issue. How often does this occur when talking to a co-worker or family member? It even happens when we say one thing but perhaps our words or body language says something different.

The old saying is that perception is reality. May your perceptions truly reflect reality... and you are able to focus on what’s important. **RIPON**

Ripon presents Co-distribution Session at ACCM 09

Ripon Printers’ Jerry Eiler teamed with Shoup Manufacturing’s Deb Denman to present a co-distribution seminar at this year’s Annual Conference for Catalog & Multi-channel Merchants (ACCM), the largest conference for 360⁰ marketers. Titled “Making the Right Co-Distribution Choice: CoMail, CoBind, CoPal,” the session helped small and mid-market catalog marketers understand and evaluate the potential of postage-lowering distribution options for their organizations.

Eiler presented the nuts-and-bolts of co-distribution while Denman provided a case history of how CoMail helped Shoup Manufacturing save upwards of 10 percent in postage costs per mailing of the company’s 266-page catalog. “Deb and I were both pleased with the

excellent turnout and interest level of the audience,” said Eiler, Ripon Printers’ bindery technical engineer. “Clearly the marketplace is seeking more information about co-distribution options.”

For more information about co-distribution, please contact your Ripon Printers representative or send an email request to info@ripontprinters.com. Be sure to ask for a copy of the Shoup Manufacturing case study. **RIPON**



Jerry Eiler, Ripon’s bindery technical engineer, co-presented a session on co-distribution of mail at ACCM 09.



Ripon Printers is a
Wisconsin Green Tier Participant

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2009 Contest Season features a Clean Sweep!

The **Graphics Excellence Awards**, sponsored by the Printing Industries of Wisconsin, is a competition that promotes excellence in print communications and recognizes companies and individuals who create the best in print media. In the ninth year of this competition, nearly 900 pieces from Wisconsin printing and graphic arts firms were entered.

The most surprising thing about this year's competition is that all of our 28 entries were recognized! We earned a **Badger – Best of Category**

in the *web press printing/coated or uncoated stock - 1, 2 or 3 colors* category. The Lake Land College [Mattoon, Illinois] 2008-2010 catalog earned the Badger as well as a first place in the Web Offset Association contest. All told, we earned eight awards in the three *web press printing* categories.

Projects done on our new Canon C6000 full color digital press won awards in three categories: *digital printing on demand, booklet/brochure series, and customized/personalized/variable data digital printing* – for *PressLines 19.1!*

A few of the other categories where awards were given include: *service catalogs 4 or more colors, product catalogs 4 or more colors, product/service catalogs (cover:*

sheetfed, interior: web), directories & source books, and newsletters.

In its 25th year, the **Web Offset Association Print Competition** recognizes exceptional achievement in print throughout North America. More than 400 entries in 32 categories were judged.

In the 2009 competition, we earned two firsts, two seconds and one third place awards.

- Coldset printing/uncoated other than newsprint/ 1, 2 or 3 colors – a first and third.
- Magazines/uncoated – first.
- Heatset printing/uncoated stock/ 4 colors – second.
- Coldset printing/newsprint/ 1, 2 or 3 colors – a second. **RIPON**

