

'Print on Paper – Vital in Today's Multi-Media Society'

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Speech to the All Parliamentary Print Group, House of Commons, July 6th 2010

It is appropriate, particularly in this place, to remember that in 1215 the Magna Carta was signed and written on four pieces of parchment. Fortunately neither King John, nor his barons, possessed a laptop and entrusted this historic document to a floppy disc or memory stick. It would probably not have survived to this day had they done so.

Recording of important events and expressing oneself on paper requires that ideas and information are communicated only after much thought and structure. The Magna Carta, and other important documents, was not dashed off like a two line email.

Perhaps the gentleman whose email advised that the 11th September was a good day to bury bad news, had wished he'd spent some time, in which to gather his thoughts, on a letter or memo. We've all fired off quick emails in haste, and often regretted so doing, but considered communication, using the medium of print and paper, ensures that what we say is what we mean to say and, for the reader, presents something of value and more than a casual sound bite.

Where am I going with this? Well, my message to you all here today is that, in a multi-media world, where technology now offers a variety of ways to communicate, there is still, and I believe increasingly, a need to ensure that the permanence of the printed word, and its unique power to communicate is understood. Print on paper is not old fashioned. It is highly relevant today and its importance must be understood and its position in a multi-media world re-evaluated.

According to Greenpeace, electronic waste is now the fastest growing component of the municipal solid waste stream. In Europe e-waste is increasing at three to five percent a year, almost three times faster than the total waste stream. The amount of electronic products discarded globally has skyrocketed recently, with 20-50 million tonnes generated every year. Electronic waste (e-waste) now makes up five percent of all municipal solid waste worldwide.

So, when e-readers and other mobile devices are hailed as more environmentally friendly than traditional print, offering a choice of thousands of book titles, remember that perhaps only a book a month is read by an average reader and mobile electronic devices have a lifespan of only around two years. So, the environmental claims of trendy electronic devices are looking increasingly hard to justify.

A recent Swedish study revealed that reading the news on line for more than 30 minutes consumes 20% more energy than reading a traditional newspaper.

The printed word on paper has been around for over 2000 years and yet, for this ubiquitous product in our daily lives, its *raison d'être* is being seriously questioned.

There's common agreement that the Print and Paper industries, perhaps better and more widely described as the Graphic Communications Value Chain, have not, so far, invested to communicate their own case to a changing world. In this vacuum negativity has been the outcome.

So if our industry wants to ensure that all the positive aspects of Print Media are given the prominence they deserve, then it's time to get stuck in and make sure that our voice is heard.

There are two clear issues to address:

1. The case for Print Media in a multi-media world must be strongly made focussing on its clear ability to inform and persuade; achieving more immediate and long-lasting results for stretched marketing budgets. In short we need to tell media decision makers that Print delivers an impressive return on advertising investment.
2. We need also to tell the world that Print Media is a highly sustainable product and an irreplaceable vehicle for mainstream education. Our children must be encouraged to appreciate books and understand that by so doing they are not destroying the Amazonian rain forests. Print on Paper is a totally recyclable product originating from a renewable and natural resource.

For a long time now the industry has tolerated misinformation about its environmental record without firm response. European forests, where 94% of our paper is sourced from, have grown by 30% since 1950 and are expanding by 1.5 million football pitches every year. The paper industry is Europe's largest user of biomass renewable energy and recycling rates for paper are running at record levels. So where's the story for a wasteful and destructive industry!

And, of all the timber used worldwide, it is rarely realised that only 11% is used directly for making paper, with the majority, 55% being used for fuel and 34% for construction and other uses. The use of timber is increasingly being seen as a preferable resource to reduce the use of fossil fuels. Print on paper must be seen as one of a number of sustainable forest products.

So who perpetuates the myths about the industry? It's not hard to find well meaning but misinformed culprits. Corporates, particularly utility companies, often in an effort to reduce costs, unwittingly or cynically perpetuate untruths with Greenwash; stating that e-billing or other forms of e-communication are better for the environment and that, by switching to online documents, we will 'save forests' and be more environmentally responsible. I am pleased that British Telecom and British Gas, have understood the issues and are among other responsible organisations who no longer make unproven environmental claims relating to e-billing.

With European forests covering 44% of the land area and growing by an area four times the size of London every year, 'saving forests' by reducing print and paper consumption is clearly disingenuous.

And those advocating a switch to electronic communication conveniently avoid the fact that the IT industry is heavily carbon intensive and is the fastest growing user of energy. It has been predicted, if current rates of growth are maintained, that 50% of household energy requirements in the next ten years will be required to run pcs, servers and other communication equipment. So where's the evidence that the e-bill or the on-line catalogue is more environmentally friendly?

Email traffic today is 7 – 20 times more carbon intensive than traditional mail and with 15-20 trillion non-spam (legitimate) emails and > 60 trillion spam emails sent annually, targeted mail can be the sustainable way to get your messages across.

And Government can help by separating the idea of responsible consumption, which we all need to adopt, from the notion that print and paper is bad which it is not. And driving people away from print and paper has other consequences.

Children now spend six hours a day in front of a TV or computer and a quarter of five-year olds have the internet in their room. By the time they leave primary school, two in five have internet access in their room.

Children are spending twice as much time in front of a TV or computer screen as in the classroom and three quarters of Britain's parents are too busy to read bedtime stories to their children, according to a recent study.

As a result of the increasing online time, research has found that reading books is falling out of favour, with 74% of 5 – 16 year olds saying they read for pleasure, compared to 84% in 2006. By being seduced by new media and forgetting the environmental and social benefits of print on paper we are encouraging a whole generation to abandon print media. The consequences for literacy are truly worrying and now being understood.

What can the Government do?

Firstly, recognise that the printed word is highly effective; commercially persuasive and socially vital; playing a central role in the battle to preserve the nation's literacy

Secondly, understand that print and paper, whether it be a book, a magazine, a newspaper, a vital piece of packaging, is one of the few ubiquitous mass produced sustainable products.

Finally, realise that well targeted print can be less energy intensive than the many electronic alternatives.

So let's get a sense of proportion. In reality the challenge for Print Media may not be so great as may at first be supposed. The environmental and social arguments in support of Print and Paper are compelling and from a marketing perspective the

effectiveness of Print Media, as part of today's modern media mix, can be proved by data.

The argument for print media can be won but it is up to all of us to understand that, in a world of stretched resources, print and paper, based on a natural and renewable resource, may be the sustainable way to communicate.
