
How Green is Your Publisher?

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Executive summary

- Economic and ecological concerns have pushed consideration of the sustainability of many industry practices to the forefront of social discourse.
- It should come as no surprise, then, that the newspaper industry is examining whether its practices are environmentally sustainable.
- This article reviews the business practices of the world's leading publishers, and spots a trend toward better use of the planet's natural resources by many prominent publishers.
- While many of them have a long way to go, there are indications that corporate sustainability procedures are taking root at many publishers. And, new digital distribution techniques can enable even more progress.

How Green is your Publisher?

In October 2007, NAA estimated that U.S. daily newspapers used 547,000 metric tons of newsprint. That equates to approximately **9.3 million trees**¹.

That's a lot of trees, and that's just the United States. But the picture isn't as bleak as these figures would imply.

Environment Canada and PaperCalculator.org, report that recycling one ton of newsprint:

- **Saves 17 trees**
- **Saves enough energy to power an average home for 6 months**
- **Eliminates 3 cubic meters of landfill material**
- **Saves 31,780 liters of water**
- **Creates 75% less air pollution**
- **Takes 43% less energy than producing a ton of paper from virgin pulp**
- **Creates 35% less water pollution**

According to Paul Boyle, Newspaper Association of America's senior vice president for public policy, **about 35% of all newsprint in North America is made from recycled material**. So the number of trees used in one month of newspaper production in the U.S. is probably closer to **6 million**.

The continuing trend to use newsprint made from recycled content in newspapers is encouraging, but what else are the world's most famous publishers doing to help reduce their carbon footprints? How committed are they to environmental sustainability?

Well, if their annual reports or website content is any indication, most newspaper publishers have a long way to go. But thankfully, there are some exceptions that indicate 'green' thinking is taking hold in some boardrooms.

One of the publishers more visibly active in the area of carbon footprint analysis and reduction is [News Corporation](#). News Corporation's newspaper segment, which includes News International and News Limited, publishes over 100 titles in Australasia, Great Britain and the United States. Highly recognized titles include *New York Post*, *The Times*, *The Australian* and *Daily Telegraph*.

News Corporation has publicly committed on its [website](#) to become carbon-neutral by 2010. The company provides details on how it measures its footprint and green-house gas emissions, and offers regular updates on its performance in reducing these each year.



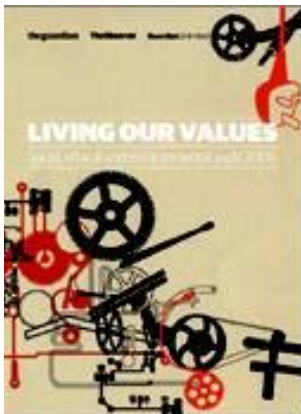
¹ *PaperCalculator.org* 2006

"We set up teams in each News Corp. business because we saw that this initiative has to be woven into what everyone does," says Rachel Webber, director of energy initiatives for News Corporation. News Corp.'s Energy Initiative is an excellent benchmark for other publishers to follow.

[Pearson](#) is an international media company with market-leading businesses in education, business information and consumer publishing. Probably most recognized for its flagship newspaper, *The Financial Times*, Pearson introduced its [Environment Policy](#) back in 1992. Its full environment [report](#) includes detailed performance data relating to its energy and water use, waste reduction and recycling, business travel and greenhouse gas emissions. In April 2007, Pearson announced its goal to be carbon neutral by the end of 2009.

[Daily Mail and General Trust](#) (DMGT), one of the largest international media companies in the UK, publicly discloses on its [website](#) the impact its divisions have on the environment, including waste newsprint, energy use, ink and plate use, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emissions and paper purchasing. The company has established targets for energy reduction under the UK Government's climate change agreement process, and all printing centers have environmental management practices in place.

DMGT has invested in new, more environmentally friendly printing equipment and continues to explore opportunities for environmental improvements through its various working groups. In addition, a number of the printing centers have 'green' travel plans for their staff that include car sharing, public transport schemes and recommended routes for walking or cycling to and from work.



The Guardian Media Group, owned by [Scott Trust](#), has been proactively auditing and reporting on its environmental sustainability practices in its [Living Our Values Report](#) since 2004.

The public report includes annual targets and company performance in the areas of editorial, operational and supply chain management. *Living Our Values* won an ACCA award in 2006 in the category 'innovation in social reporting' and was recognized for being "a pioneering effort, the first of its type in the sector" by the judges.

[Johnston Press](#), one of the top three largest local newspaper publishers in the UK, publishes its environmental policy on its [website](#), stating that the protection of the environment is one of its key corporate responsibilities. As early as 2002, Johnston Press introduced a scoring methodology and audit program developed by independent environmental risk consultants to facilitate the ongoing monitoring and control of its [environmental policies](#) and procedures.

Johnston Press is diligent in its measurement, reporting and auditing of its environmental impacts on energy usage, water, gas consumption, waste, greenhouse gas emissions and newsprint usage. Against a UK target of 67% recycled newsprint in newspapers, Johnston has achieved 90%.

The [New York Times Company](#) shares on its [website](#) that it is strongly committed to protecting the environment in all of the many communities in which it operates. The company works with the [Northeast Recycling Council](#) to encourage the newsprint industry to make much greater use of recycled fiber, however, the average recycled fiber content for NYT newsprint is only 26% - quite a bit less than the industry average.

But, says NYT, it has invested in other ways to reduce its environmental impact. Soy-based inks are used in the color sections and waste ink is recycled or disposed of as non-hazardous material. In August 2007, *The New York Times* newspaper moved from a traditional 'broadsheet' size of 54 inches to a 48-inch web width, and switched to lighter-weight newsprint that further reduced their newsprint consumption. They use recyclable plastic in all of their delivery bags, and are exploring the use of a bag manufactured, in part, from reprocessed resin.

In 2007, NYTimes.com launched [Dot Earth](#), a blog about climate change, the environment and sustainability by paper's Andrew C. Revkin. Additionally, the International Herald Tribune hosts [Business of Green](#), a global dialogue on the environment.

[CanWest MediaWorks Inc.](#), a subsidiary of CanWest Global Communications Corp., that publishes *The National Post* and 10 other dailies including *Vancouver Sun*, *The Gazette* and *Calgary Herald*, does not publicly disclose much information about its environmental practices in its annual reports or website, some of CanWest newspapers are taking the initiative to become more sustainable or support sustainability causes.

The [Gazette](#), has been proactive in measuring its impact on the environment by hiring [Zerofootprint](#)² to calculate its carbon footprint. A newspaper that uses only 20% recycled newsprint, The Gazette admits that it has considerable work ahead of itself to tackle the major problem of newsprint consumption and travel costs of employees, but it is moving in the right direction.

In British Columbia, the *Vancouver Sun* sponsored [30 Days of Sustainability](#) and the CanWest Media Sales office shut down their office lights and computers on Wed, May 16th (2007) in support of the [Turn It Off BC](#) campaign for sustainability.

Interestingly, in December 2007, CanWest News Services calculated the environmental cost of ten lords-a-leaping, five gold rings, two turtle doves, and a partridge in a pear tree. If it can measure the carbon footprint of the 12 days of Christmas, surely full disclosure of its own carbon footprint can't be far away.

[Fairfax Media](#), New Zealand's largest media company, has a strong focus on innovation and leadership. It is recognized for premium newspapers such as *The Dominion Post*, *The Press*, and *The Sunday Star-Times* in New Zealand, while Australian publications include *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, and *The Canberra Times* to name just a few.

² 'The Gazette' in Montreal Examines Its Carbon Footprint, E&P Dec 21, 2007

Although Fairfax does not publish an environmental policy on its website, a number of its reporters have won environmental and conservation Qantas awards. Fairfax Media was also a founding partner of [Earth Hour](#) – a grassroots initiative that had over 2,000 businesses and an estimated 2.2 million Sydney residents turn off their lights for 60 minutes on March 31, 2007 at 7:30 pm.

Beyond those few who are showing promise, many publishers do little more than comply with laws and regulations. For example: [Journal Register](#). If its 2006 annual report is any indication, it would appear that the Journal Register is not a serious contender for any 'Environmentally conscientious Publisher of the Year' award. The company states, that: "To the best of the Company's knowledge, its operations are in material compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations as currently interpreted." Now there's a caveat-filled statement if I ever saw one!

[Gannet](#) claims to be one of the industry leaders in the use of recycled newsprint, with 77% of the company's 2006 newsprint purchases containing "some" recycled content and it has published an [Environmental Policy Statement](#) on its website. But one wonders if that is in response to it facing a number of legal actions. Some of the company's newspaper subsidiaries have been "identified as potentially responsible parties for cleanup of contaminated sites as a result of their alleged disposal of ink or other wastes at disposal sites that have been subsequently identified as requiring remediation".

The newspaper industry has never really been known as "early adopters" of technology, but there are some publishers (e.g. CanWest, News Corp., Fairfax Media, DMTG, and The Washington Post) that are actively promoting their digital editions to their print subscribers, encouraging them to choose more environmentally-friendly alternatives to the printed newspaper. These progressive publishers are also adopting new online [advertising models](#) to profitably transition themselves into this new digital world.

So the future looks bright for these "green" publishers, but what will happen to the laggards? An interesting study would be one which correlates their financial success (or not) with their commitment to sustainability.

[NewspaperDirect](#) will continue to follow and report on the progress of those publishers who take sustainability seriously by committing to continue to reduce their impact on the environment and the size of their carbon footprint.