

## **PUBLISHING STATE MAGAZINES: OUTLOOK FOR THE 80's<sup>1</sup>**

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*Abstract:* New trends which effect state magazines can be seen in 4 major areas of printing: typesetting, paper production, press and fulfillment and color reproduction. As computers become more commonplace, in-house typesetting is seen as a viable alternative for the smaller publication. Mill production and expansion schedules may force shorter run magazines to go to roll stock. This move can result in substantial savings if a partial groundwood coated stock is substituted for coated free sheets. The introduction of the mini web press makes this stock choice possible for the 25,000 to 100,000 run magazine. Innovation is finally reaching the bindery with jet inking now in use in some plants for direct label application. Further developments indicate the possibility of the printer eventually handling fulfillment. Competition could allow these costs to become negotiable. Computerization is impacting color reproduction, too. Laser scanners, offering greater speed and detail can be interfaced with the startling new computerized Response 300 for almost unlimited color manipulations and on-screen pre-press function. Market research is proving an important resource to state publications for improved reader satisfaction and promotional thrusts.

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Still one of the most effective I&E tools produced by the majority of state fish and wildlife agencies, state magazines face an uncertain future. Spiraling costs conflicting with tightening budgets have forced some agencies to cease publication. Realizing that remaining agencies have already exercised existing cost cutting options, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency investigated printing trends, technological advancements and market research, to determine possible resources available to publications in the 1980's.

Magazine production can be broken into 4 major categories, each of which presents its own set of requirements, challenges and advancements. These areas are: typesetting; paper; press, bindery and fulfillment and color reproduction.

### **TYPESETTING**

An overview of phototypesetting equipment indicates an increase in small, versatile units designed to make in-house operation competitive with commercial typesetters. Increased flexibility of scheduling, ease of update and correction and access make this option an economical, desirable possibility for smaller publications.

### **PAPER**

Availability will be a determining factor in costs of types of stock normally used in printing state magazines. An increasing demand for a product generally results in responding shortages and higher costs. When the product is paper, this situation is further complicated by delays while mills are expanded to meet the demand and by the higher costs of such expansion. As a result, the options open to publishers of shorter-run publications will narrow.

Coated stock has generally been considered most desirable for magazine printing since

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<sup>1</sup>This paper represents a combination of the following presentations at the Southeastern meeting: "Researching your magazine's readership" by Jack Shockley, and a synopsis of the panel discussion on "Printing Update 1980."

its glossy, hard surface holds ink well. This is especially critical to quality 4-color reproduction. Three types of stock are available with coated surfaces: groundwood (bark ground in with the hardwood), free (hardwood only), and partial groundwood (traces of bark particles with the hardwood).

Although all coated stock has a hard, slick surface that reacts well to ink, the amount of bark in the paper will affect its brightness (whiteness) and its ability to reflect colors. Coated free is the whitest, groundwood is the dullest, and partial groundwood is mid-range.

Prices vary according to production processes involved. Free stock is the most expensive since the bark must be removed and discarded. Groundwood is the least expensive since the bark is not removed and there is no waste. Partial groundwood is produced as an intermediate stage between groundwood and free stock in lieu of shutting down and cleaning the equipment. Thus partial groundwood contains traces of groundwood fibers mixed in with the free (hardwood) and falls mid-range between the 2 papers in price.

Mill expansion is occurring only for the coated groundwood. International Paper is scheduled to begin operation of their new machine later this year and will have tonnage for sale. Paper of this quality and quantity has not been available since 1973.

None of the mills have announced intentions to increase production of coated free stock which many of the state magazines currently use. Dwindling supplies of this paper will mean that availability will soon be only on allotment to major publishers and at a greatly increased price. Mill owners had theorized that publishers wanting coated groundwood were forced to substitute coated free stock during a shortage. However, their anticipated return to coated groundwood (which would lessen the pressure on the available free stock) is not indicated.

The best option for state magazines appears to be a partial groundwood coated stock. However, this paper is available only in roll form since waste and cost factors make sheeting impractical. Savings with this stock are significant. Available in carload lots, 60# partial groundwood coated rolls run \$37.00 cwt. compared to 60# coated free sheets at \$54.00 cwt. The new mini web will enable short run publications to take advantage of such savings.

## PRESS, BINDERY AND FULFILLMENT

Press directions indicate the greatest savings with the web press and the new mini web press. Previously, the speed and economics of the web were available only to publications with circulations over 100,000. The smaller version mini web now makes this option available to publications with runs between 25,000 to 100,000 copies.

New developments in presses have increased printing speed and efficiency only to be brought to a screeching halt in the bindery. Bindery equipment is just beginning to be examined for updating and improvement. Jet inking possibilities now in limited use open options for more fulfillment services to be handled in the bindery. Increasing postal rates and regulations may make the possibility of the printer assuming some of these distribution steps seem attractive. However, costs will shift accordingly from the post office to the printer. The major advantage to the publisher in such a shift would be the possibility of negotiation on mailing costs. Such price negotiation would not be possible with the post office.

## COLOR REPRODUCTION

Laser scanning has brought speed and detail to flexible art color separation. For the newest development in color, the laser is only the first step. Heralded as a "Buck Rogers" innovation, an electronic pre-press system known as the Response 300 is now available.

With the capability to prepare color separations from submitted art to plate-ready film through digital technology, this system replaces manual procedures and expensive conventional materials. It offers rapid on-screen electronic retouching, color-balancing and creative alterations for almost unlimited color possibilities. Although conventional color separating techniques remain available, laser scanning and the ultimate computerized technology of the Response 300 are the direction of the future in color reproduction.

## MARKET RESEARCH

It is wise for a publication to conduct market research. While information about the readership may be generally known, the publication's content may be off-target, or the publication may not be reaching a majority of its potential market. Research will isolate and identify your market's characteristics and elements, relate and interpret them. Provided the promotion is properly handled, this information can be used to increase the number of readers and reader satisfaction.

Publication surveys are of 2 basic types: readership profile and editorial (content) survey. Through the readership profile you can construct a model of your present readership. A scientific sampling as small as 300 readers can be conducted by mail or telephone. Telephone sampling is basically faster, more precise and complete though somewhat more expensive.

Although editorial surveys require the same methodologies, the margin of error is not as critical so the sample size can be smaller. From a practical standpoint, the object of editorial research is usually to acquire a "feel" for the readership's viewpoints and preferences rather than a scientifically accurate statistical report.

Questionnaires mailed with the publication are often used to save time and expense. However, this method presents the danger of skewing the results, giving a distorted, inaccurate picture.

A publication can initiate and process its own survey. For accuracy, outside assistance is recommended for questionnaire design, sample selection, tabulation, and analysis.

## CONCLUSION

Exploration and implementation of new technology such as small versatile in-house typesetters, mini web presses, partial groundwood coated stock, and laser scanned flexible color as well as market research can offer multiple benefits to publishers of state magazines.

Time and cost saving techniques, will obviously help the publication's budget and a healthier budget will allow the publisher to concentrate on the publication's content rather than its production funds. Also, through research, this thrust can be further refined to improve both editorial focus and expanded readership. These steps will increase the magazine's effectiveness as an important I&E tool.

Although budget cuts and inflation will continue to pressure state publications, there are steps that can be taken. An active approach to continued production will result in a stronger, wider-reaching, high impact state magazine.