

## **E for environment**

**A recent study puts the US book industry's carbon footprint at 12.4 million tons. Publishers are committed to reducing it - and one way is by in-house e-initiatives. Jim Milliot reports**

08 April 2008

The first attempt by the American publishing industry to establish environmental benchmarks determined that the entire publishing process - from harvesting trees to dumping returns in landfills - emitted about 12.4 million tons of carbon dioxide in 2006, with each book sold accounting for 8.85 pounds of emissions. The findings were released in *Environmental Trends and Climate Impacts: Findings from the US Book Industry*, a survey coordinated by the Book Industry Study Group and the Green Press Initiative and sponsored by a number of publishers, manufacturers and booksellers.

According to the study, the cutting of trees accounts for nearly 63% of the industry's carbon footprint, while paper production and printing accounts for 26.6%. The major impact of harvesting forests is largely due to the loss of carbon dioxide storage that comes when trees are cut. (An opposing view maintains that the model used to determine the impact of tree harvesting does not take into account the planting of new trees and therefore overstates the impact of tree loss.) Distribution and retail activities, which some industry members thought would be a major contributor to carbon emissions, accounts for a relatively small portion: 12.7%.

Tyson Miller, founder of the Green Press Initiative, which has been working for seven years to improve the industry's environmental practices, says the results underscore the importance of having the industry focus on ways it can reduce its consumption of paper produced from virgin forests. Andrew Van Der Laan, Vice-President of production planning at Random House and Deputy Chairman of the company's green committee, said Random's own carbon audits for 2006 and 2007 also show the outsized impact the use of paper by the industry has on the environment. The twin findings reinforced Van Der Laan's conviction that the industry must focus on paper reduction rather than looking at buying carbon offsets as the first option in reducing publishing's carbon footprint. "We should be redoing our processes before we try to buy our way out of trouble," says Van Der Laan.

The two most efficient ways to lessen the industry's dependency on the use of virgin fibre are to increase the use of recycled paper or to increase the use of Forest Stewardship Certified (FSC) fibre. Random House was the first major trade publisher to announce a programme setting a target for increasing its use of recycled paper, with a commitment to print 30% of its titles on recycled paper by 2010. Van Der Laan says Random is ahead of schedule in reaching its target - the group has already reached its 2008 goal of having 15% of its coated paper and 10% of its uncoated paper made from recycled paper. Just as encouraging to Van Der Laan is the fact that Random has incurred no extra costs in using recycled paper, and he expects that, as more companies commit to using recycled paper, costs will come down: "Supply will follow demand."

Karen Romano, Vice-President, Production and Manufacturing at Simon & Schuster, hopes that is true. S&S announced its own targets for using recycled fibre in November, as well as a commitment to buy at least 10% FSC-certified paper. Romano says it has been difficult to find a steady source of supply for FSC-certified paper, and S&S is also monitoring the availability of recycled paper. The downturn in the American housing market, which has resulted in fewer lumber scraps - a significant source of both fibre and energy for paper production - is one reason for her concern, as is the growing demand overseas for pulp, which has squeezed an already tight paper market. Still, Romano says, S&S believes it can work with its vendors to hit its 2012 target of having 25% of its purchased paper come from recycled fibre.

Penguin Group Chairman and CEO John Makinson cites the uncertainty of the availability of used wood pulp as one reason the company has not yet made a recycled paper commitment,

although he hopes to have a goal in place by next year. According to the survey, all but 4% of responding publishers said they have at least addressed the question of increasing their purchases of recycled paper, with 54% claiming that they have already set targets.

The BISG survey did find that, according to information from six mills, the use of post-consumer content in book papers rose from 2.5% in 2004 to 13.3% in 2007, although the study acknowledges that the overall percentage of post-consumer content from all mills is probably lower than 13%. Reports from 13 printers also show an increase in the use of post-consumer-waste recycled fibre, with the total jumping 852% between 2004 and 2006.

While the use of paper is the largest contributor to the industry's carbon footprint, it is certainly not the only factor. Transportation of titles - the study estimated that shipments of books traveled 1.25 billion miles in 2006 - and the disposal of returns into landfills also make a significant impact.

Publishers' carbon footprint from such things as office energy use, the internal use of paper and travel, contributed 6.6% of all industry carbon emissions. Several publishers have begun to attack the issue of paper use by distributing manuscripts electronically in-house. Late last year, the S&S sales division launched an electronic manuscript programme, in which all sales reps were given an e-book reader instead of photocopied manuscripts. S&S estimates it could reduce the number of galleys reproduced for the sales group by 20,000 annually. Hachette Book Group USA also began an electronic manuscript project last fall, distributing 50 Sony Readers to editors, publicists and sales staff. The project has since been rolled out to most departments, and a total of 275 Readers have been given out so far.

The use of e-galleys is just one way publishers are developing programmes to limit their environmental impact. The study found that 59% of the respondents - which included publishers, retailers, printers, paper mills and distributors - have formulated or are working on company-specific environmental policies. Among the many steps publishers are taking to cut down on waste are increasing the use of digital catalogues, instituting recycling programs for technology trash, and using green cleaning supplies.

While GPI's Miller supports all those efforts, for him the most important action still revolves around decreasing the use of virgin fibres. "It you want to have a carbon-neutral policy, you can't get there without doing something about paper," Miller says, noting that publishing remains way behind the newspaper and packaging industries in its use of recycled paper.

The study cites two goals developed by GPI and included in its position paper Book Industry Treatise on Responsible Paper Use: increase the use of recycled fibre from a 2005 estimated average of 5% to 30% by 2012, and increase the use of FSC or equivalent certified paper to 20%.

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