

## The greening of publishing

**Simon Juden**

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The position of publishing as the UK's largest media sector not only brings the kind of recognition and support from Government that the PA exists to nurture, it also carries responsibilities. Arguably, none is more urgent than that of the environment. I believe every publishing business should do as much as it practically can to ensure that the growth we seek for the sector is sustainable. We all know what's at stake; we all bear a duty to ensure that the trade plays its part in addressing the environmental impact of UK Plc. The Environmental Action Group (EAG), which we run jointly with the BA, has been formed to work on this issue; there is also a separate Publishers Green Network which works closely with the EAG. Both groups bring together large and small players from across the trade.

The industry target of a 10% absolute reduction in emissions from a 2006 baseline by 2015 is a challenging one, but I believe it's achievable. Indeed, some publishing houses are already promising to deliver even more. There has been genuine and tangible commitment from large and small houses, and we must all work together to turn that commitment into outcomes.

There is now a website, [green4books.org.uk](http://green4books.org.uk), sponsored by the EAG, which has details of how individual houses can measure their footprint and, critically, concrete, practical steps that can be taken by the smallest publishing houses as well as the corporates to make a real difference in their own businesses. The website will regularly be updated with case studies of actual programmes in actual publishing businesses together with the outcomes.

Obviously, different organizations will have different imperatives and will want to achieve their goals in the best way for themselves, but the site's content - for example, how to create a policy document that brings tangible benefit rather than just looking nice on the wall; how to emit less carbon and recycle more; how to use packaging more efficiently - is designed to be functional and directly applicable to business as it actually is today.

In its study of the US book trade, the Book Industry Study Group has calculated that over 60% of the carbon footprint of a book is due to forest carbon loss; a further 22% comes from paper production, about 10% in retail energy and about 8% in terms of landfill emissions.

Deforestation releases as much CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere in a single day as eight million people flying from London to New York. The ethical and sustainable sourcing of paper is a critical question for our industry, and is not helped by confusion between different labelling standards. That said, the FSC brand has genuine consumer recognition, and in my personal view represents the most likely way forward for our industry. Of course, recycled paper also has its place, but it can never be the whole answer: each time paper is recycled the fibres shorten until they can't form paper any more, and each recycling uses both energy and bleaching agents.

Neither is "e" necessarily the answer: the lazy assumption that e-books provide a solution is challenged by early studies, and while not enough credible research has yet been done to reach a definitive view, what's clear is that to hope the digitisation of the consumer trade will naturally bring reductions in emissions of its own accord is not tenable. Indeed, if you believe (as I do) that the future involves far more than just digital versions of today's products - my own view is that tomorrow's markets will involve different content reaching and engaging different audiences in different ways, adding to what we have today - the need to take action now becomes ever stronger.

Looking at the way we transport books - shrinkwrapped on pallets, or stacked in plastic totes; through a decentralised network or a hub-and-spoke system - can make a huge difference. Equally, a variety of "quick wins" such as lowering the thermostat by a degree or two and turning off the lights at the end of each day can save a lot of money as well as the planet. But,

of course, the elephant in the room is returns, in particular "shelf-skimming" of backlist stock which is then re-ordered the following month or after the financial year end. How the industry will tackle this issue is as yet uncertain - but tackle it we must.

What is unanswerable is the urgent need to take action now. I strongly urge everyone not yet engaged with this issue to visit the green4books website and start work today to ensure they are not left behind.

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