



PRINTING - WHERE IS THE END OF FUTURE?

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Abstract:

Since the very beginning, printing has had a significant role in dissemination of information, diffusion of literacy, permanent storage of cultural heritage etc. During the centuries, printing - often recognized as the "Black Art" - has developed its own standards and rules, many of them being in effect until present days.

However, with the emerging new media, printing is today facing great challenges and uncertain future. Not only printers, but as well papermakers, publishers and - most of all - end users have concerns about the future of printing. There are also big discussions related to the roles of digital and conventional printing respectively.

It is notable that printing has experienced rapid technological development in last twenty years, partly as a result of overall technological progress, and partly under the pressure of new electronic media. The structure of printed products has significantly changed. Positive sign for the future of printing is that the overall world production of paper is increasing. Results can be seen on every newsstand or bookstore. Also, in certain areas, printing cannot be replaced with electronic media.

Still, the future of printing is disputable, but it is far from its end. Printing can and will survive only firmly incorporated into the entire media environment. New efficient tools in printing process will be developed and introduced, with further integration within the entire production chain. The same should be applied to colour management, process control and automation, resulting in new quality standards. Furthermore, special attention will be paid to the sustainable and customer oriented production. Extended functionality will provide added value to printed products, with new substrates, inks and - especially - printed electronics, intelligent and interactive prints.

Printing industry can face the structural and technological challenges by providing an effective framework for the creation of new products, services and business, improving quality and effectiveness, as well as environmental efficiency. These goals can be accomplished by networking of the printing industry with the research and educational sector, suppliers and end users, accordingly creating new knowledge and developing new channels for the exchange and dissemination of information.

Such networking will provide a new perception of printing, hence ensuring the sustainable future, not only of graphic arts, but as well to a number of sectors related to the printing industry.

Keywords: Printing, Media, Sustainability, Development, Networking