

The Death of Print Media

ARCH 346: Anthropology of Design

By Evan Kirkiles

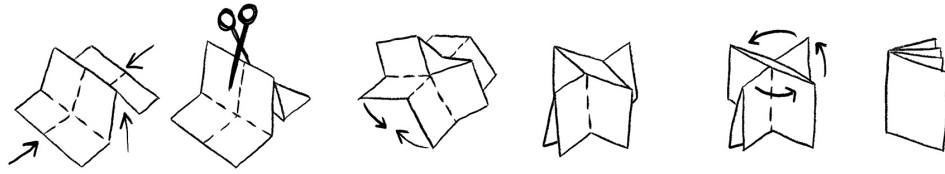
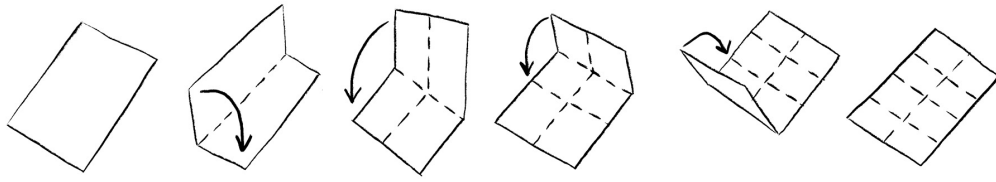
My final project for ARCH 346 is a design response exploring the concept of the death of print media. The main body of the project is less the content in the zines than the CSS layout framework seen on this page that allows printing zine impositions directly from the browser. The goal is to straddle the line between digital and print publishing, creating a unified format that can exist both on the web and in printable book form without additional labor.

Since the inception of digital publishing, print publishing has been in decline. This project investigates a technical manner by which print and digital might be merged in a democratic, distributable manner. Naturally, I do not expect to match the massive featureset of an enterprise tool like InDesign—rather, I envision this project as a zine publishing framework. Zines have historically been produced by communities with minimal resources and a DIY attitude, for which the portability of a website-based typesetting program would be quite useful.

INSTRUCTIONS

For best print output results, please use either Chrome or Firefox. Enable backgrounds, but disable headers and footers. Pick any page size or orientation you wish and the framework will attempt to morph its content to match. Sample outputs can be found on the right.

To fold and assemble the zines, follow the below guide:

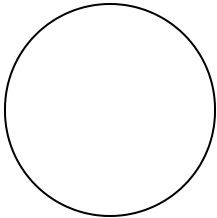
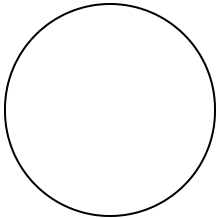


THE DEATH OF PRINT MEDIA

Design

ARCH 346: Anthropology of

Beyond engagement, help
keep print media alive. Buy a
magazine or a newspaper.



- TA: Nabil Haque
- Professor: Vyjayanthi Rao

Many thanks to the instructors
of this course for the many
insightful discussions and
readings:

- `pagduin around`
- `leave unassembled`
- `source code`
- `Share a link to the`
- `at your library`
- `Print a page > HTML tag`
- `Embed your page`

Feel free to distribute any
channel you wish:

This compilation of zines is a
capstone design response for
ARCH 346: Anthropology of
Design. It encompasses two
topics under the umbrella title
of "The Death of Print Media":

1. An Abridged History of
Printing
2. Print Media is Dying

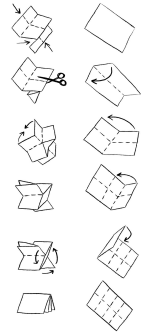
Unlike expensive, enterprise-
built design software like
InDesign, the languages of
HTML and CSS—as open
source standards—defy
traditional monetary
boundaries. Every computer-
wielding person has access to
these tools—and the free
nature of the web means
distribution of web-print zines
also comes at zero cost. This
zine itself can be printed
directly from its webpage.

With this set of zines as
example, I hope to provide a
basic, democratic framework
for simple 8-page zine layout
with HTML and CSS.

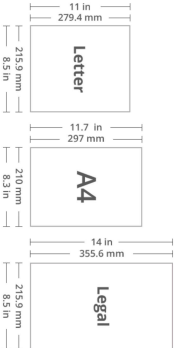
In keeping with the open nature
of the Web, the code used for
building the zines in this
manner is entirely public.
Future work will be done to
adapt the HTML and CSS
framework to support larger
signatures beyond the simple
8-page single-sided spread.

These zines benefit from a
design language like CSS in
that they have no fixed
dimensionality or aspect ratio.
They can be printed in portrait
orientation or landscape
orientation, on A4 or Letter, to
no degradation in layout (as
content length allows).

Importantly, these zines were
designed entirely with HTML
and CSS, printable directly
from the website they are
distributed on. Each is an 8-up
zine, functioning as bite-sized,
digestible pamphlets on their
topics.



Much of the inspiration for this
project comes from prior work
in web-to-print projects like
Paul Soulellis's Printed Web.

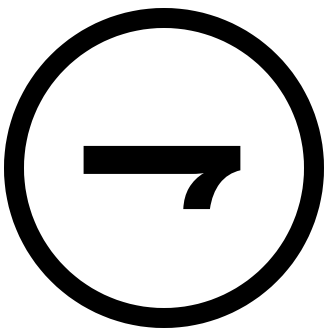
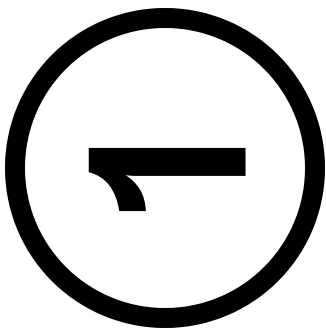


AN ABRIDGED HISTORY OF PRINTING

Printing from Mesopotamia
to New York.

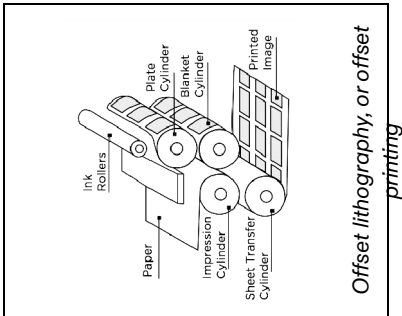
REFERENCES

1. <https://printinghistory.org/timeline/>
2. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/printing-publishing>



Today, the capabilities of computers and digital machines make even letter-by-letter of movable type required; instead, digital files output with computer programs can be sent directly to a printer for automatic output with innovations like laser printing.

Present



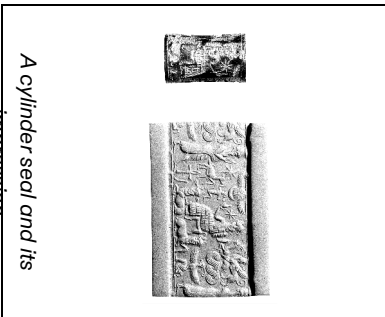
Offset lithograph, or offset printing

1900 - Present

photocopier and risograph machine make printing accessible to all.

The 20th century saw the rise of **offset lithography**—the process of transferring ink from a plate to a rubber blanket before printing—which soon became the dominant form of commercial printing as a result of its efficiency and cost-effectiveness. At smaller scales, the

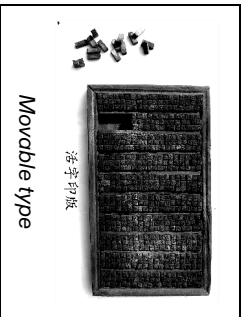
3000 BCE — 500



A cylinder seal and its impression

The earliest known forms of printing were in Mesopotamia and China, where **cylinder seals** and **woodblocks** were used to imprint images on surfaces as early as 3000 BCE. Cylinder seals imprinted cuneiform writing on clay, whereas woodblocks functioned like stamps for reproducing scriptures and artistic images onto cloth like silk.

500 — 1100

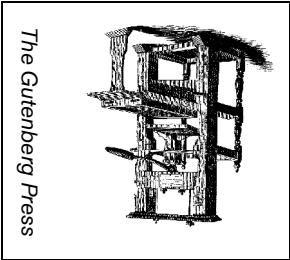


Moveable type

By the second century CE, Chinese artisans began using woodblock printing to reproduce texts and images.

Woodblock printing remained dominant until the 11th century CE, when Bi Sheng, a Chinese inventor, developed **moveable type** using clay. Korea later created metal moveable type in the 13th century. Instead of having to carve unique blocks for each page, moveable type allowed for the reuse of individual characters, making printing more efficient—though still tedious.

Circa 1440 — 1600



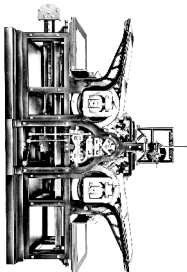
The Gutenberg Press

Around 1440, Johannes Gutenberg revolutionized printing with the popularization of a

mechanical moveable-type printing press, which made mass production of texts like the Gutenberg Bible possible. This set off the printing revolution in Europe, standardizing languages and democratizing access to knowledge. Compared to the Asian moveable type, Gutenberg's process was *mechanical*, not manual, and could output up to 40 times as many pages.

1800 — 1950

By the 19th century, the invention of **steam-powered printing presses** and the **rotary press** allowed for the mass production of newspapers, periodicals, and books, making printed media even more affordable. Literacy rates skyrocketed as populations contended with this now accessible deluge of information.



A steam-powered printing press

PRINT MEDIA IS DYING
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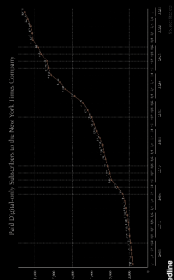
REFERENCES

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/newspapers>
2. <https://www.marketingscharts.com/cross-media-and-traditional-231522#>

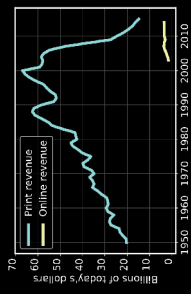


In response to these pressures, print outlets have been forced to adapt. Some have reduced publication frequencies or transitioned entirely to digital formats to cut costs and remain competitive. However, digital advertising revenue has not fully compensated for the loss in print advertising, leaving many print companies struggling to find sustainable business models. Social media continues to disrupt the traditional news distribution model, and has become the primary source of information for many consumers, leading to a decline in engagement with conventional journalism. For print media to survive, it must find new ways to engage with the youth.

NYT Digital Subscribers



NAA Newspaper Revenue

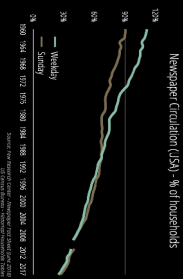


Print media is dying. As readers gravitate toward online platforms for their news, entertainment, and information needs, physical newspapers and magazines are increasingly dropping in both relevance and revenue. While print media once served as the cornerstone of public discourse and a primary source of knowledge, it now faces a multitude of challenges that have led to its steady decline.

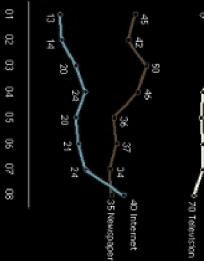


People simply do not consume information in the same way as they once did. With the proliferation of smartphones and other mobile devices, readers now expect immediate, personalized, and interactive content that print publications by definition cannot provide. Digital platforms—social media networks and online news outlets, for two—offer a level of immediacy and customization that traditional print cannot match, leading to a significant drop in newspaper and magazine readership. According to the Pew Research Center, weekday newspaper circulation has decreased by over 50% since 2008, a clear indicator of this consumer behavior shift.

Newspaper Circulation



Where Do You Get Most of Your National and International News?



TV vs. Internet vs. Newspaper

The rise of digital advertising has also severely impacted print media's traditional revenue streams. Advertisers are increasingly opting for digital platforms that offer targeted marketing options based on user data, providing a higher return on investment. As a result, there have been significant losses in advertising revenue for both newspapers and magazines, which once relied heavily on classified ads and print campaigns. Industry consolidation has further exacerbated the issue, as many media companies have downsized or gone out of business entirely due to dwindling profits.