

PROMOTING A SUSTAINABLE PAPER ECONOMY

By Jay Storfer, MES and Natalia Swierczynska, MES, York University

Today, the global demand for paper has placed an unsustainable burden on our forests. Widespread over-harvesting has caused significant depletion of old-growth forests. Of the remaining old growth forests in Canada, 40% of BC temperate rainforests and 65% of Canada's boreal forests are earmarked for logging.

Markets Initiative is an environmental group working to move industry away from harvesting old-growth forests, instead promoting sustainable paper use by Canadian publishers. Markets Initiative has been successful in winning over 67 book publishers and 34 magazine publishers to its vision of a sustainable paper economy. Raincoast Books, a prominent signatory, has responded to the Markets Initiative's pledge by publishing the Harry Potter series on post-consumer paper. "As a book publisher we consume an enormous amount of paper. We can make a big difference by working with our suppliers to develop papers that have the lowest environmental impact possible" says Raincoast president, Allan MacDougall.

Today, the global demand for paper has placed an unsustainable burden on our forests. Widespread harvesting has resulted in significant depletion of old growth forests. Of the remaining old growth forests in Canada, 40% of B.C. temperate rainforests and 65% of Canada's boreal forests are earmarked for logging. Environmental organizations such as Markets Initiative have worked tirelessly to redirect industry away from harvesting old growth forests and promoting sustainable paper use to end-consumers.

Barking Up The Right Tree

"As a book publisher we consume an enormous amount of paper. We can make a big difference by working with our suppliers to develop papers that have the lowest environmental impact possible" says Raincoast President, Allan MacDougall. Today, the global demand for paper has placed an unsustainable burden on our forests - over million hectares of Canadian forests are harvested annually.

Raincoast Books, based in Vancouver BC, has taken the sustainability pledge seriously. As the exclusive Canadian distributor for publishers from the U.K., the U.S. and Canada, Raincoast is a rare combination seen in Canada. When Raincoast Books was founded in

of 10 to over 100 people, built a list of distinguished distributed publishers and held over 200 titles under their own imprint. The future of Raincoast was altered significantly in 1999 when they were approved become the sole Canadian publisher and distributor of the extraordinarily popular Harry Potter series. As of spring 2002, more than 5 million copies have been sold in Canada.

In 2002, Markets Initiative Campaigns Director Nicole Rycroft made a captivating presentation to Raincoast executives to sign on to their paper sustainability pledge. Because paper is a core aspect of their business, excessive use of paper does have a negative on the environment. The enormous popularity of the Harry Potter series provided an opportunity for Raincoast to educate readers on importance of preserving our forests and influencing a market shift for sustainable paper processing.

Raincoast garnered unprecedented attention for being the only global publisher to print *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* on 100% post-consumer recycled, chlorine free paper. The success of the initiative has been furthered greatly by J.K. Rowling's public endorsement.

Their commitment to sustainable paper purchasing policies was rewarded in 2003 by receiving the prestigious BC Ethics in Action Award for Environmental Excellence.

1976, it was not the leading Canadian publisher, distributor and wholesaler we know it as today. The company started shipping books for Toronto publishers on a commission basis.

Growth at Raincoast was rapid. It was not long before they became a full-time publisher. In 1994, Raincoast Distribution formalized its own publishing division called Raincoast Books. In the proceeding years, Raincoast grew from a dedicated staff



New Society Publishers thinks globally, but acts locally

New Society Publishers (NSP) is combining grassroots activism with corporate social responsibility.ⁱ When it comes to ingraining sustainable principles as a core competency they truly walk the talk. Emerging out of the 1970's anti-Vietnam war sentiment in Philadelphia, New Society emerged as a multifaceted grassroots organization determined to educating the public through socially conscious alternative material.

Co-owners and editors Judith and Chris Plant have expanded New Society into "publishing books that contribute in fundamental ways to building an ecologically sustainable and just society".ⁱⁱ In successfully maintaining a grassroots feel in their growing business, New Society has developed a strong brand power. Having established a distribution partnership with Consortium Book Sales & Distribution, the fifth largest book distributor in the US, New Society was able to access a larger target audience south of the border.

Despite its small size of 7 full time employees, the company has experienced tremendous growth over the last ten years while maintaining a commitment to print all their books on post consumer recycled, chlorine free paper. Similarly, all of its office paper contains 80% recycled fiber and is recycled directly at their headquarters on BC's Gabriola Island. One of the most unique features about New Society Publishers is that the company actively cross-subsidizes a series of less popular projects which otherwise would not have been published. Chris Plant would like to see growth in a variety of niche markets for sustainable living literature.

From its inception NSP has made every attempt to be sustainable in all of their operations. As a book publisher NSP is conscious of paper use and the ecological

interdependence of forests. Inertia within the paper industry prevented NSP from securing a long-term supply of cost-effective alternative to virgin paper. But high premiums and low supply prevented the publisher from taking on the project.

Markets Initiative's 2002 "old growth free" campaign presented an opportunity for New Society to join a consortium of socially conscious publishers searching for affordable supply of old growth, chlorine free paper. After tirelessly searching for a steady supply of post consumer recycled paper they were able to strike a deal with Manitoba's worker owned Friesens publishing - taking both a great risk and a leap of faith in the experimental project. Chris Plant adds, "Books are made from paper. Paper comes from trees. So as it presently stands, book publishing contributes to deforestation and global climate change, but, with our new policy, we are very pleased to say that it no longer has to be this way". Being synonymous with sustainability, New Society is taking steps to become a carbon neutral publisher. The proposed five-to-ten year initiative would be the first in Canada.

Seedlings for Success

The paper industry is one of the largest consumers of forests in North America. In Canada the forestry industry is valued at \$74 billion. Soaring paper use has gone largely unnoticed for decades reaching levels in Canada of 164 kilograms per person per year.ⁱⁱⁱ In the past environmental organizations had been advocating more sustainable paper use, however it was not until the creation of Markets Initiative that this multi-organizational cause could be presented in one voice. Since 2000, Markets Initiative has been working with the Canadian publishing and paper industry to develop market demand for old growth free and post consumer, chlorine free recycled

paper. Campaigns Director Nicole Rycroft says, "We don't want people to stop using paper. Paper is such an integral part of our society. What we would like to see is that it is used in a more efficient manner, which has financial benefits to the end consumer and uses viable alternatives to virgin paper."

Currently, the most progressive paper is 60% post consumer recycled fibers, and 40 % FSC certified virgin fiber. Markets Initiative's ideal paper composition would be 80% post consumer and 20% agricultural fiber. Their success thus far in getting over 110 signatories to the sustainability pledge has been convincing publishers that using old growth free paper is not only environmentally and socially beneficial but bona fide competitive advantage.

As end use consumers publishers are learning how to utilize their purchasing power. To further aid companies in the transition towards sustainable paper use, Markets Initiative designed an Ecolit to help companies outline long term purchasing strategies.

By educating companies about sustainable forestry practices, eco certification (FSC), and paper alternatives, Markets Initiative is making publishers aware of the unsustainable paper trail.

Markets Initiative's vision is to be the driving force behind 'tunneling through the cost barrier'.^{iv} The paper cycle is a myriad of inefficiencies. As pioneers of the sustainable paper initiative they are not looking to reinvent the wheel only improve it for future generations. Prior to Markets Initiative no Canadian publishers printed on post consumer paper and nor did any pulp manufacturer stock it. Inspired by the commitment of Canadian publishers similar initiatives are on track in the U.S., U.K., Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Austria, and Spain.



ⁱ George, Bill. 2003. Authentic Leadership Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value. Jossey-Bass. New York.p.110-115

ⁱⁱ New Society Publishers. 2004. About Us New Society Publishers. <http://www.newsociety.com/aboutus.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Abramovitz, Janet. "Paper Cuts" World Watch Institute Paper #149, pp.10-15.

^{iv} Adopted from Paul Hawken's book *Natural Capitalism*