

## Who's the Greenest Printer Of Them All?



**W**ill green printing become yesterday's news? Could sustainable printing fall victim to economic realities? Ironically, as federal initiatives unfold to put U.S. businesses on a greener footing, the first inklings

appear that movements toward sustainable printing practices may be slowing. The likely culprit: the faltering economy.

By certain measures the movement to green printing has grown dramatically in the last two years. There were fewer than 250 FSC-certified printing locations in the U.S. when *GAM* first published a list of them in March 2007. The number has now mushroomed to over 1,600 locations. Likewise, the numbers of SFI-certified printers has increased more than five-fold, to 280 locations. However, other indicators are beginning to show mixed signals on the commitment to green, though the reasons may be open to interpretation.

Deflationary trends are appearing in conference attendance, for example. At the January Business of Green Media gathering at Cal Poly State University, where content and sponsorship was robust, attendance was on the light side. At this month's March PIRA Sustainability in Packaging conference, registrations were off by nearly a third from last year's 350. The NEHS environmental conference, March 16-18 in Indianapolis, is likewise tracking behind last year's record of 220 attendees.

### Last year's news

Many factors affect conference attendance, though, most importantly the current spike in corporate bans on travel. But results in a benchmark study of *The State of Sustainability in Graphic Communications*, to be released at the NEHS conference, do reflect deflationary trends in green interest. Conducted by Reed Business Information in conjunction with three printing trade groups—PIA (commercial),

SGIA (screen) and FTA (flexo)—the study reports a consistency in the emphasis on sustainability year-to-year: 73% said there was increasing emphasis on green in the past year; 24% said it was the same. (The corresponding figures were 75% and 23% in 2007.) However, 4% reported a decrease in emphasis on sustainability. The figure was 2% last year. To statisticians, that's a significant change: 100%.

### Maple-Vail's achievement

Perhaps it's the proliferation in green awards. When sustainability becomes a mere marketing gambit, there is a risk that its meaning is diluted. We distract ourselves and print buyers from the goal of truly sustainable printing. The matter of sustainable manufacturing, whether in printing or any other industry, demands a deep analysis, hard labor, and going into applied research rarely understood when the plaques are being handed out during the cocktail hour.

Maple-Vail Book Manufacturing Group represents what it takes. The

York, PA, firm spent more than a year developing a thin ink film that allows it to radically reduce VOC emissions. The special ink and fountain solution allows it to print with VOC emission levels in the 1-2.5% range for sheetfed presses. (It got down to 19-25% VOC levels previously with soy or petroleum-based sheetfed inks and fountain solutions.) After running this branded THINKTech process on sheetfeds, Maple-Vail adapted it for web offset printing. This slashed its VOC emissions to a mere 3%, one-tenth its typical web printing range of 34-42%. And it did the unthinkable: it turned off its web ovens, likewise eliminating the need for web chillers. Now that's a sustainability achievement that truly warrants an award. ■

Diluting the meaning of sustainability risks distracting the printing industry and buyers from true green enterprise.

Editor-in-Chief

bill.esler@reedbusiness.com

Editor in Chief  
**Bill Esler**, 630.288.8538  
bill.esler@reedbusiness.com

Senior Editor  
**Lisa Cross**, 630.288.8539  
lisa.cross@reedbusiness.com

Contributing Editor  
**Linda Casey**, 630.288.8746  
linda.casey@reedbusiness.com

Senior Art Director  
**Anne LoCascio**, 630.288.8565  
anne.locascio@reedbusiness.com

Senior Project Editor  
**Roger Ynostroza**, 212.933.1549  
rogerynostroza@msn.com

Project Editor  
**Tom O'Rourke**, 815.469.3052

Regional Editor  
**Joann Whitcher**, 631.271.1324  
joann.whitcher@reedbusiness.com

Technology Editor **Henry Freedman**  
Paper Editor **Trish Wales**  
Workflow Editor **Hal Hinderliter**  
Best Practices Editor **Kevin Cooper**  
Finishing Editor **Don Piontek**  
Sustainability Editor **Don Carl**

Publisher, Printing & Packaging Group  
**John Bold**, 630.288.8835  
jbold@reedbusiness.com

Interactive Program Manager  
**Gabriel Weckesser**, 630.288.8121  
gabriel.weckesser@reedbusiness.com

Internet Marketing Specialist  
**Maria LeMaire**, 630.288.8531  
mlemaire@reedbusiness.com

Production Manager  
**Shirleen Kajiwara**, 630.288.8433  
shirleen.kajiwara@reedbusiness.com

Classifieds Production Manager  
**Gwen Kennedy**, 630.288.8440  
gkenedy@reedbusiness.com

Contracts Coordinator  
**Maureen Lesko**, 630.288.8076  
mlesko@reedbusiness.com

Group Production Director  
**Karen Ruesch**

VP Finance **Jane Volland**  
Director of Finance **Tracy Mugan**  
Audience Marketing **Marketa Dixon**  
Prepress Manager **Pat Theobald**

**REED BUSINESS INFORMATION**  
CEO **Tad Smith**  
President, Business Media Division  
**Jeff DeBalko**

Senior VP Finance **John Poulin**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS & BACK ISSUES:**  
www.getFREEmag.com/gam  
800.446.6551; Fax: 303.470.4280  
subsmail@reedbusiness.com  
**Reprints:** 800.290.5460 (ext. 149)  
graphicarts@theysgroup.com.

**LIST RENTAL:**  
Graphic Arts BlueBook, 630.288.8541  
berkemmm@reedbusiness.com

**Graphic Arts Monthly**  
2000 Clearwater Drive  
Oak Brook, IL 60523  
Fax: 630.288.8537  
Sales: 630.288.8530

*Graphic Arts Monthly* (ISSN 1047-9325; GST 123397457) is published monthly by Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., 8878 S. Barrons Blvd., Highlands Ranch, CO 80126-2345. Periodicals postage paid at Littleton, CO 80126-2329 and additional mailing offices. Circulation records maintained at Reed Business Information, 8878 S. Barrons Blvd., Highlands Ranch, CO 80126-2345. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40685520. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: RCS International, Box 697 STN A, Windsor Ontario N9A 6N4. Email: Subsmail@ReedBusiness.com POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Graphic Arts Monthly, P.O. Box 7500, Highlands Ranch, CO 80126-7500. PRINTED IN USA.