

Cites & Insights

Crawford at Large/Online Edition

Libraries • Policy • Technology • Media

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The Front

Toward 15 and 200: Your Help Wanted

The February 2014 *Cites & Insights* was whole issue 170, and 2014 is the 14th volume of *C&I*.

I'm asking your help to encourage me to get to Volume 15 and Issue 200 (which would presumably be in Volume 16, if you want to be picky about it).

More specifically, I'm asking for donations, as I have been for some time. (If you're wondering: last year, I received a number of donations, totaling in the low three digits.)

There's always a Paypal Donate link on the [C&I home page](#). But this time, instead of just The Ask, there's more to it.

No sticks, only carrots

I am *not* going to threaten to shut down *C&I* if I don't reach a certain goal. Nor am I planning to hold my breath until I turn blue.

Instead, I'll offer carrots—perquisites to encourage you to donate. Here's the deal—and the campaign runs now to June 30, 2014:

Supporters: \$30 or more

If you think *C&I* has been and continues to be worth at least \$2 a year, but you're not ready to go for more, this is your level: At least \$30 (\$2 times 15).

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For this, you get the following:

1. Recognition in a future *C&I* (probably the August 2014 issue), using the name you prefer when I send you an email “thanks!”—unless you say you’d prefer to be anonymous.
2. If I reach the base goal of 50 substantial contributions, you’ll be part of the *C&I* advisory panel for July 2014-June 2015, asked to weigh in on some future decisions including, probably, a poll on coverage emphasis in 2015 and beyond. I don’t promise that I’ll do whatever the majority says; I do promise I’ll pay close attention—and the poll will only be open to the advisory panel.
3. *C&I* advisory panel members will, at least four times a year and as often as monthly, receive advance notice of new issues of *Cites & Insights*, typically email a day before public notice appears.

Sponsors: \$50 or more

If you figure *C&I* is worth \$0.25 an issue in the long run, this is your level: \$50 or more (\$0.25 times 200).

For this, you get all the perks of supporters, plus the following:

1. If there are fewer than 50 contributors at either level by July 1, 2014, you’ll get a free PDF ebook—and probably a choice of more than one, at least one of them no longer generally available.
2. If there are 50 to 99 contributors at either level by July 1, 2014, you’ll get a free PDF ebook, your choice of either a new one or an existing one (a limited list of choices).
3. If there are 100 contributors or more, you’ll get a free PDF ebook—and one option will be a new book that’s exclusively available to sponsors.
4. You may be offered the chance to advise on *what* new book gets prepared.

In all cases, I’d expect that the ebooks would be ready before the end of the year.

Cites & Insights Annuals

Here’s another way to support *C&I*—and get some or all of 8.5 inches worth of *C&I* in the process. (The full set of annuals is about 8.5 inches thick, including about 2.3 million words.)

Paperback annual volumes of *Cites & Insights* are available for all but the first five volumes. Each volume is 8.5" x 11" and includes all issues as originally paginated plus indexes to those issues. Each volume from 2009 on includes an overall table of contents.

Each volume except 2007 and 2011 has a wraparound cover based on a photo taken by Linda Driver (my wife) during our travels; volume 6

has two photos, one on the front and one on the back, and volume 11 has a single photo on the front.

Volume 6 (2006) includes an exclusive introduction. Volume 7 (2007) includes the special non-issue *Cites on a Plane*, which was only available online for two weeks in January 2007 and is now only available in the 2007 annual volume.

Purchase of any volume includes an \$8 donation to keep *Cites & Insights* going.

Volumes 1-5 could conceivably be added, and all volumes could be converted to hardcovers, but only based on expressed demand to waltcrawford@gmail.com

This section shows the size, price and a few highlights for each volume. This same content—along with a small version of the full cover for each volume—[appears here](#) and will be updated each year to include the newest volume.

2006

[Volume 6 \(2006\)](#) -- 388 pages, \$25.99

Highlights of this 14-issue volume include:

- Library 2.0 and "Library 2.0"--the most widely-read essay in the history of C&I
- The Diamond Anniversary issue, 75 brief essays
- Finding a Balance: Libraries and Librarians
- Looking at Liblogs: The Great Middle
- Pioneer OA Journals, a two-part essay
- and, of course, much, much more

2007

[Volume 7 \(2007\)](#) -- 405 pages, \$25.99

Highlights of this 13 (plus 1)-issue volume include:

- *Cites on a Plane: The Phantom Edition*, selected reprints from the previous 18 months
- Civility and Codes: A Blogging Morality Play
- *Cites on a Plane 2*--all about the conference life
- August 2007, the (almost) all-philosophy issue: on the literature, on authority, worth and linkbaiting, on disagreement and discussion, on ethics and transparency.
- and dozens of shorter essays

2008

[Volume 8 \(2008\)](#) -- 346 pages, \$23.99

Highlights of this 12-issue volume include:

- *Discovering Books: An OCA and GBS Retrospective*

- Thinking About Kindle and Ebooks
- TechNos and TechMusts
- On Semantics, Reality, Learning and Rockstars
- Updating the Book Discovery Projects
- On Conferences in a Time of Limits
- Libraries and the Social Web
- How Common is Common Language?
- Writing About Reading
- and much, much more

2009

[Volume 9 \(2009\)](#) -- 434 pages, \$26.99

Highlights of this 13-issue volume (the largest to date and, with luck, the largest ever) include:

- A was for AAC: A Discursive Glossary, Rethought and Expanded
- Making it Work: Shiny Toys or Useful Tools? (Blogs and wikis in libraries)
- The Google Books Search Settlement (a whole-issue essay)
- Making it Work: Thinking about Blogging, Parts 1, 2 and 3
- Writing about Reading 2, 3 and 4
- Public Library Blogs and Academic Library Blogs
- The Liblog Landscape 2007-2008: A Lateral Look
- On Privatization
- Library 2.0 Revisited
- Public and Academic Library Blogs: Limited Updates
- Copyright Currents: Musings on Fair Use
- Library Access to Scholarship (a whole-issue essay on OA)
- Making it Work: Purpose, Values and All That Jazz
- as always, much, *much* more in this enormous volume

2010

[Volume 10 \(2010\)](#) -- 419 pages, \$25.99

Highlights of this 12-issue volume include:

- Making it Work: Thinking about Blogging 4 and 5
- Trends and Forecasts
- Making it Work: Philosophy and Future
- Writing about Reading 5: Going Down Slow
- On Disconnecting and Reconnecting
- The Zeitgeist: hypePad and buzzkill
- Old Media/New Media
- The Zeitgeist: There is No Future
- The Zeitgeist: One Facebook to Rule Them All?

- On Words, Meaning and Context
- But Still They Blog: The Liblog Landscape 2007-2009 (an issue-length essay)
- and more

2011

[Volume 11 \(2011\)](#) -- 290 pages, \$22.99

Highlights of this 9-issue (plus hiatus announcement) volume include:

- Five Years Later: Library 2.0 and Balance (in two parts--February and March)
- Forecasts and Futurism
- Writing about Reading (in two parts)
- The Zeitgeist: 26 is Not the Problem (about libraries and ebooks)
- Writing about Reading: A Future of Books and Publishing
- and more, although less more than usual

2012

[Volume 12 \(2012\)](#) -- 410 pages, \$25.99

Highlights of this 12-issue volume include:

- Public Library Closures: On Not Dropping Like Flies (and, later, Public Library Closures 2 and 2010 Update)
- Futurism and Forecasts (two separate essays)
- Copyright: Fair Use, Parts 1 and 2
- Give Us a Dollar, A Case Study and, later, two commentary essays
- It Was Never a Universal Library: Three Years of the Google Books Settlement (a book-length single-essay issue)
- Words: Thinking About Blogging, Parts 1 and 2
- The Liblog Landscape: Where Are They Now?
- Policy: The Rapid Rout of RWA
- Libraries: Walking Away: Courage and Acquisitions
- and more

2013

[Volume 13 \(2013\)](#) -- 414 pages, \$25.99

Highlights of this 12-issue volume include:

- Catching Up with Open Access, Parts 1 & 2 (and Hot Times for Open Access)
- Academic Library Circulation: Surprise! (two parts: 2008-2010 and 2006-2010)
- The Death of Books (or Not) and Deathwatch 2013!

- The Mythical Average Public Library
- The Big Deal and the Damage Done (excerpts)
- Social Networks
- Books, Books and (Books?), a set of excerpts
- Erehwon Community Library: A \$4 to \$1 Example
- The Ebook Marketplace, Parts 1 and 2
- and more...

Media

Thinking about Magazines

Late in 2013 (between Thanksgiving and New Year), I was reading a professional magazine and came across a piece by a supposed long-time expert. Among other things, this expert flatly predicted that, by 2020, the only magazines left would be a few digital holdouts hanging on for dear life. This was presumably based on the continuing precipitous decline in print magazine readership and advertising over these many years. Actually, that's presuming it was based on any data at all, as opposed to assurances by Gurus that Digital Conquers All.

I've read quite a few other remarkably ignorant and wrong-headed comments about the future (and present!) of magazines over the last few years. At times, it seems as though a fair number of commentators made up their minds about The Future in 2005 or so and haven't seen any need to think about it since then. Or at least not to check the facts once in a while.

Thus we get fairly common beliefs such as the idea that essentially all daily newspapers are on their way out as part of a rapid disappearance, that all print media are vanishing (and, I hear in some comments, good riddance) and so on. With magazines, there's another aspect to many of the things I've read: To wit, a lot of people who don't subscribe to magazines (other than, say, celebrity/gossip type) don't *get* magazines: they don't understand how magazines function. For example, I've seen people suggest that a magazine is just a bunch of articles (and ads) bundled between covers, and that people would be better off forming their own bunches of articles to suit their personal needs. (Never mind that many of the better articles out there are paid for by magazines, and that if the magazines disappear, so will many of the articles.)

This essay combines some of my own thoughts, some *facts*—and a fair number of citations to embellish and enrich the facts.

A Sidenote about Newspapers

First, *newspapers are not magazines* (in general), just as *journals are not magazines* (in general: *Science* is one of the few possible exceptions). There

are always exceptions, including the silly “magazines” included with many Sunday newspapers and *The Economist*, which calls itself a newspaper but which most people would regard as a weekly newsmagazine.

Second, daily newspapers aren't *really* on the verge of disappearing entirely, at least not any time soon. [Here's a graph](#) that looks pretty damning—that big blue line falling all the way from the top of the graph in 1981 *almost* to the bottom in 2011: the end must be nigh! Unless you look at the numbers on the left-hand edge and realize that it's typical chartjunk: The vertical axis begins at 1,350, not 0. Since the top data point is 1,730 (making the top of the chart 1,750), this means 77% of the graph has been omitted.

Yes, the number of daily newspapers has declined—although most of that decline (as far as I know) has been in afternoon dailies. The 2011 figure is 1,382: 79.9% of the 1981 figure, 1,730.

What? There are 80% as many daily newspapers as there were 30 years ago? How can that be? Surely the decline must be speeding up? Well...there were *seven fewer dailies* in 2011 than in 2010. The decline appears to be faster before 1998 than since. (1998: 1,489; 2011: 1,382—92.8% as many 13 years later, or a loss of 107 in 13 years.) If you extend the rate over the past 13 years, that suggests that by 2024 we'd be down to 1,282 daily newspapers.

Am I saying daily newspapers are doing great? Not at all. Although Sunday circulation appears to be rising, circulation has been decreasing somewhat—and ad revenue decreased a *lot*, especially classified ads. But that's quite different than saying print newspapers are on the way out. (In practice, the number of morning dailies was rising for quite some time.) One difficult aspect of daily papers is that they were such cash cows for so long—thanks mostly to classified ads—that companies paid *way* too much to buy them, going deeply into debt and suffering after Craigslist undermined classified-ad revenue. Quite a few daily newspapers are back to being profitable—but modestly profitable, not enormous cash cows.

There are also weeklies and other “non-dailies.” Many more of them than dailies—at least 6,700 in 2004, according to [one data source](#), although another piece of data (end of next paragraph) suggests this may be low. Many community newspapers are entirely ad-supported, and many of them seem to be doing very well.

For those who don't already know, I no longer subscribe to a *print* daily newspaper. I still subscribe to the San Francisco *Chronicle*, but it's the Kindle edition, simply as a matter of economics and convenience—we had delivery problem—and because Hearst now expects subscribers to pay roughly half of the costs of the newspaper. Print subscriptions are up to \$600 per year, compared to \$60 for the Kindle version. (We also get—and read—the local weekly, which includes a good-quality slick monthly magazine and really is local.)

I'll leave you with one interesting tidbit: [according to Steve Myers](#), working from Stanford University analysis of Library of Congress data, there are currently (OK, 2011, but close enough) about the same number of U.S. newspapers as there were in the 1890s: something over 13,000 in all. (That suggests that there are close to 11,000 non-dailies, which might be true.) Print newspapers aren't disappearing at an increasing rate, and seem unlikely to go away entirely for decades. But this isn't about newspapers; it's about magazines.

The Story is Doom; Never Mind the Facts

Did you know that restaurants are doomed in San Francisco? After all, dozens if not hundreds shut down in 2013. And yet, no responsible media outlet would run such an outlandish story—because The Story isn't Doom. Selective reporting can be wildly misleading, but if it supports The Story, it seems to be acceptable.

I was going to start this essay by providing typical definitions of “magazine” and offering my own thoughts on the subject. But a funny thing happened: I went to Wikipedia to see what it gave as a definition. It's [one of those definitions](#) that's technically defensible but effectively meaningless, as it lumps all serial publications together as “generally published on a regular schedule and containing a variety of content.” (Actually, that may not even be true—as Mr. Magazine, from whom we'll hear later, defines “newsstand magazines,” many are one-shots, *not* published on a regular schedule. But that overcomplicates things.) At the end of that largely useless article, presumably as an ending of some importance, is this sentence:

In 2011, 152 magazines ceased operations and in 2012, 82 magazines were closed down.

Hey, in 2012, millions of Americans died. Therefore, America is *doomed*. Unless you also look at births. Going to [the source for that factoid](#), itself decidedly a deathwatch-style story, we find the shutdown number (which is for U.S. and Canadian magazines, although it's reported in an international newspaper) [in a press release from MediaFinder](#).

Here's the first paragraph of the press release:

In 2012, 227 magazines launched, compared to 239 magazines in 2011, reported MediaFinder.com—the largest online database of U.S. and Canadian publications. During the same period, only 82 magazines closed, compared to 152 magazines in 2011.

So it would be equally factual and much more meaningful to reword that Wikipedia sentence as follows:

In 2011, 87 more U.S. and Canadian magazines were launched than ceased publication: 57% more new magazines than dying magazines. In 2012, launches exceeded closures by an astonishing 145, with 177% more starting than stopping.

More than 2.5 times as many magazines started up as stopped in 2012. Therefore, what, *magazines are dying*? And yet, the article (in *International Business Times*) makes it a terribly sad affair:

One of the saddest things about being a media reporter these days is having to report on the constant stories about once-profitable magazine brands imploding into shells of their former selves. So many print publications are folding that it hardly qualifies as news. But if you're old enough to remember when the dead-tree model was king, you can't help but mourn the passing of titles that once presided so authoritatively over their respective domains.

In other words: Screw the facts, *the story* is death. That's what you report. The wan excuse for this nonsense? "This being the digital age, we're still grading on a curve."

Not to dwell on that *International Business Times* article, but it goes on to offer profiles on the "notable deaths" in 2012. Which include *Spin* (which retained a digital version), *American Artist* (purchased and dumped in print by the new owner; still operating a digital version), *Sporting News* (a weekly, the toughest magazine category—and still digital), *NFL Magazine* (only published *four issues*—that's a notable death?), *Whole Living* (a minor part of Martha Stewart's empire), *Healthy Cooking* (merged with another magazine), *Nintendo Power* (Nintendo stopped subsidizing it), *Newsweek* (still digital and—oops—coming *back* to print), *The Daily* (which was *never* a print magazine; it was a digital newspaper). I count two significant losses there, and that's being generous to *Spin*—and note that of the *print* magazines, only two actually went away entirely.

Journalism (print or otherwise) has gotten so lazy that even a clear case of growth in magazines is written up as doom, with a line like "So many print publications are folding that it hardly qualifies as news." Whereas, before digital doomed print, magazines went on *forever*—like, oh, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Life*, *Look*, and thousands of lesser-known magazines that have come and gone over a couple of centuries.

What has happened is much more complicated, and most certainly does not point to the impending disappearance of all (or most) print magazines by 2020 or any other medium-term date. Broadly, it's fair to say that—as with most other medium except maybe movies—some of the magazines that "everybody reads" have gone away, while thousands of specialized magazines continue. It was never the case that everybody read *Saturday Evening Post*, but there was the *sense* that everybody did.

It's like TV. By the standards of the 1970s, the highest-rated series currently on broadcast TV could be cancelled for lack of viewership. Does

that mean TV is failing? Not really (although some gurus seem ready to proclaim that as well)—it’s still by far the largest ad medium and most people still watch series TV. But in the 1970s, people mostly watched series on three or maybe four networks; now, there are scores of broadcast and cable choices as well as series from newcomers such as Netflix. Whatever series you mention, it’s now true that most people—at least three out of four—*don’t* watch it: That’s just a fact of modern life. A series watched by two percent of TV households may survive today; a couple of decades ago, anything less than fifteen or twenty percent could mean cancellation. More people watch more TV, but that viewership is spread more thinly across more choices. (Apparently, as noted in the next section, the 25 top print magazines reach more adults and teens than the 25 top TV series.)

Doing the Numbers

Let’s defer the philosophical discussion—what is a magazine and what makes each one different—a little longer. It makes sense to offer a few real-world numbers up front, if only because the “all print is doomed” Big Story seems so hard to dispel.

The source for information in this section is the PDF version of the [2013/2014 Magazine Media Factbook](#) from the MPA, “the association of magazine media.” As with most such associations, MPA doesn’t represent all (or even most) publishers: it includes 175 domestic publishers with more than 900 titles, some 30 international companies and more than 100 associate members. (I’m guessing that MPA originally stood for Magazine Publishers Association.) The link to the PDF shows up as an Attachment on the linked page.

MPA is, of course, determinedly pro-magazine (but platform-independent, not pro-print), but most of the information appears well sourced—and, unlike some other media, most magazines are legally required to provide honest circulation figures: any magazine that mails any copies using the USPS magazine rates must publish circulation figures on a regular basis.

I’m going to skip right past most of the Factbook, but here are some key points (with page numbers from the PDF), noting that all of these figures are for the U.S. and Canada, just part of a very healthy international magazine scene:

- While magazines come and go, more than 150 print magazines have been around more than 50 years—and 47 have been around more than a century. [P. 84]
- Looking only at *consumer* print magazines (there are thousands of business-to-business magazines), there were almost 12% *more* of them in 2012 than in 2003—7,390 compared to 6,234. There have been more than 7,000 for the past five years. [P. 85]

- While the total magazine audience among adults (18+) is slightly smaller in 2013 than in 2011, it's slightly larger than in 2012—and up considerably from 2004 (187.1 million compared to 178.7 million). [P. 86]
- Total verified sales for consumer magazines did indeed drop—from a peak of around 369.8 million in 2007 to 311.7 million in 2012, a drop of 16%. But much of that drop is a continuing fall in newsstand sales (with fewer bookstores and newsstands), from 51.3 million in 2004 to 26.5 million in 2012 (a drop of 48%): subscriptions fell by 12%. More significantly, I think: subscription sales are actually *up* slightly from 2011 to 2012. (Those figures include digital subscriptions, but that's only about 2% of the total.) [P. 86]
- Magazine ad revenue—again excluding *Parade* and other Sunday newspaper inserts, as all these figures do—is down, but not all that badly: \$19.5 billion in 2012, down from \$20.1 billion in 2011 and a high of \$25.5 billion in 2007. In fact, ad revenue is higher in 2012 than it was in 2003. [P. 90]
- This is a different figure, but it's one that will come into play later: Across consumer magazines monitored by Hall's Magazine Reports (again excluding Sunday newspaper inserts), 55% of pages are editorial, 45% are advertising—and that ratio has been very nearly constant for the past decade (the highest ad ratio was 2004, with 48.1% ad pages, 51.9% editorial). [P. 93]

Do those numbers suggest a failing industry about to disappear? Not to me. Now, let's start talking about what magazines are and some details of how they're doing.

A Magazine Is...

The Bing dictionary says:

periodical publication: a publication issued at regular intervals, usually weekly or monthly, containing articles, stories, photographs, advertisements, and other features, with a page size that is usually smaller than that of a newspaper but larger than that of a book

[Dictionary.com](#) says:

a publication that is issued periodically, usually bound in a paper cover, and typically contains essays, stories, poems, etc., by many writers, and often photographs and drawings, frequently specializing in a particular subject or area, as hobbies, news, or sports.

[Merriam-Webster \(online\)](#) says:

a type of thin book with a paper cover that contains stories, essays, pictures, etc., and that is usually published every week or month

[Wiktionary](#) says:

A periodical publication, generally consisting of sheets of paper folded in half and stapled at fold.

There are lots more, but those four provide a good starting point (except for the last, which is both useless and nonsense given the percentage of magazines that are perfect-bound).

Specials and frequency

Mr. Magazine™, Prof. Samir A. Husni, founder and director of the Magazine Innovation Center at the University of Mississippi's Meek School of Journalism and New Media, specializes in newsstand magazines (many magazines rarely appear on newsstands) but defines them more broadly to include singletons: magazine-like creations that aren't intended for regular publication. You know the kind—special issues of other magazines that appear around certain deaths and other special events, for example. This discussion will mostly focus on what Husni calls “frequency magazines” and most others would call magazines. Husni reserves “frequency” for publications planned to appear at least quarterly; specials include annuals and what he calls book-a-zines.

There's a *big* difference. For example, in November 2013, there were 71 new launches: 56 specials and 15 “frequency.” Similarly, in October 2013 there were 32 “frequency” introductions and 83 specials. The numbers earlier and most of those later refer only to “frequency” magazines. For 2013, *not including December*, there were 182 new quarterly-or-more-frequent magazines and 610 specials, so the year's likely to wind up with fewer new titles than 2012, somewhere right around 200. (Worth noting: Husni doesn't include a magazine until he actually owns a copy—announcements don't count.)

What about those specials? Husni's site includes a [launch monitor section](#) that includes a monthly post with numbers and cover photos for all the frequency and specials he found (he buys 'em all). So, for example, consider November 2013. Magazines launched with the expectation that they'd appear regularly (which usually means quarterly or more and most commonly some variation of monthly) include *Art Desk*, *babybug*, *combustion*, *8x8*, *First Coast*, *Flatt-38*, *Jesus of History*, *Nude*, *Rhapsody*, *Sea Island Life*, *Train*, *World Wildlife*, *Active Lifestyle* and *Politico*. Specials include things like *TV Guide's* tribute to Billy Graham, an *Us* special on “Catching Fire,” *Life* specials on Miracles and JFK's death, *Mother Earth News' "Guide to Self-Reliance,”* a *Rolling Stone* special on Paul McCartney, *three* special issues from *People*, two from *Time*—oh, and here's another one from *TV Guide*.

Most discussions of magazines include only those appearing at least quarterly. Depending on who's talking, they may include only consumer magazines or many more. How many are there in total? In the U.S. and Canada, somewhere between 7,390 and 70,000, depending. Let's just say "a lot."

What isn't a magazine

Sometimes it's easier to define something by what it's not. The Dictionary.com definition is a good starting point, but it's worth narrowing. For example:

- Magazines aren't journals, although a few journals may be magazines. I define journals as periodicals (print or otherwise) consisting primarily of peer-reviewed scholarly or research articles. *Library Journal* is a magazine, not a journal (it may be defined as a trade magazine and not included in the 7,390 count; the same goes for *American Libraries*). Difficult cases include, for example, *Science*, which could be considered both a journal and a magazine.
- Magazines aren't newsletters, although there are also tricky cases. One distinguishing characteristic may be that magazines normally have cover pages that don't include editorial copy and are usually (not always) heavier stock than the rest of the magazine, while most newsletters have copy beginning on the first page. (Yes, *Cites & Insights*—once printed out—is a newsletter, but since it's not newsy, I call it an e-journal. It's certainly not a journal.)
- With apologies to *The Economist*, magazines aren't newspapers, although many newspapers include magazines. I note that most numbers involving magazines leave out the national weekly newsprint "magazines" like *Parade*—and I'd guess that magazine counts in general leave out things like the San Francisco *Chronicle's* monthly magazine (which is magazine-size and on slick paper but not available as a separate subscription) and my local case, *The Independent's* monthly magazine (which resembles a magazine in every respect except that it comes as part of the free *Independent*—the local weekly paper—subscription). As far as I'm concerned, *The Economist* is a magazine.
- Most magazines are roughly full-page size (somewhere in the neighborhood of 8" x 10.5" in the U.S., sometimes a little bigger or a little smaller), but there are lots of digest-size magazines (typically around 5.5" x 8.5") and the occasional oddball that's tabloid-size or close to it.

Does that help?

Personality, specialty and intended audience

Good magazines are never simply random collections of articles by various authors bound together between covers. I can't imagine a magazine of that sort would last very long. (If you're wondering: There is a *Random Magazine*—a humor magazine in India—and was for some time also an art-oriented online *Random Magazine*.)

Realistically, every magazine has a *personality*—which you could call an editorial vision or a persona, if you prefer. I was about to write that every magazine is curated, but that's another overuse of "Curation"; the right word is edited, not curated.

Every magazine also has a specialty, even if that specialty seems to be "general interest." I think of *People* as a celebrity magazine (along with *Us* and several others). Some specialties are broad; some are extremely narrow. You might be surprised at the number of magazines in some specialty lists—and most such lists are likely to be incomplete.

Every magazine *should* have an intended audience (or, if you must, a demographic), which relates directly to the specialty and can help define it. Without an intended audience, the magazine's editorial team has no basis for determining such things as the level of language, typical length of articles, importance and number of photographs and more. Of course, many magazines have readers who are outside their intended audience, but there should be a reasonably well defined core group, the group to which the magazine is marketed and the group likely to be loyal to the magazine.

Which brings up another aspect of successful magazines: They have loyal readerships, people who read them year after year. For ad-driven magazines (many but certainly not all), loyal readerships provide the basis for selling ads. Most magazines encourage reader loyalty by offering subscription prices that are much lower than newsstand prices, sometimes astonishingly low (especially if a magazine is close to a breakpoint in guaranteed circulation, which affects ad rates). Many subscription-based magazines offer multiyear subscriptions that are significantly lower per year than single-year subscriptions—both to enhance reader loyalty and because gaining new readers and renewal mailing campaigns are both expensive.

Note "subscription-based": It is *not* the case that magazines are all available by subscription. So, for example, my own situation (noting that I'm an avid magazine reader from way back): I believe I currently subscribe to 16 magazines—but I get 24. The others? *AARP The Magazine*, *AARP Bulletin*, *American Libraries*, *VIA*, *Nature Conservancy*, *World Wildlife* (a newbie—WWF just started publishing a slick quarterly!), *Church & State*, *On Investing*. These are magazines that come as a result of being a member or contributor to some organization or using some business—and that doesn't include *Smithsonian*, for example, where a subscription is itself a membership. Hmm. Between drafting and

editing this essay, 24 became 25: the ACLU just started publishing a slick probably-quarterly magazine, *STAND*.

Maybe I'd define a magazine as "a publication—print or digital—that appears at least four times a year, has front and back covers without editorial copy in its print version, isn't primarily made up of peer-reviewed articles, offers an edited package of content aimed at an intended audience in a narrow or broad field, and has a well-defined personality."

If you don't understand the personality, specialty and intended audience of a magazine, you probably won't like or understand the magazine. If you think magazines don't *have* personalities, specialties, intended audiences and loyalty, then you're probably more inclined to believe they're on their last legs. I believe you'd be wrong. I anticipate that by the time I die there will still be thousands of print magazines in the U.S. and Canada, almost certainly with at least a couple hundred million subscriptions and total revenue (ads and subscriptions) well into eleven digits.

Package and familiarity

Every good magazine is not only edited, it's a designed package—a package that typically has some consistency from issue to issue. The package is one reason magazines work well in print (and possibly less well in digital form); subscribers look forward to getting the next package and can read a package when and where they like, or let it sit in a pile until they're ready.

Ads are part of the package for most (not all) magazines, and—unlike radio, TV and online, where they're almost always interruptions to be endured, they can add value to the package. They don't have to be endured: You can always flip past ads. But for most specialty magazines (that is, for most magazines), many and sometimes all ads *relate* to that specialty. In the process, they provide additional information. The sound and home theater magazines I take would be less valuable without the ads; that's also true for the cruise and travel magazines.

Most magazines are *familiar* packages. Once you've read a couple of copies, you can anticipate the flow of material in each issue: not the specifics, but the general approach. In many cases, there will be contents page(s), some set of columns or short service-oriented items, some set of feature articles and photo essays, possibly some set of reviews, and frequently a special final-page feature. That's a typical approach, certainly not the only one. There may be special issues that deviate widely (you expect that too), but it would be as odd for *People* to have a 15,000-word investigative essay as it would for *Fortune* (where you *do* expect 10,000 to 15,000-word essays fairly frequently) to have a 10-page photo spread on fall fashions. For good magazines, familiarity breeds loyalty.

What's out there

I can't begin to describe the complexity and extent of magazines even in the U.S. and Canada. (Is there a country that doesn't have at least a few local magazines? Maybe Monaco—but even there I can find half a dozen with little difficulty. South Sudan has at least two.)

You know there are car, motorcycle and bike magazines—one medium-sized publisher (which also publishes *Stereophile* and *Home Theater*) publishes several dozen all by itself. One source lists more than 220 car and motorcycle magazines just in the U.S.; another lists 247 car magazines in the U.S. and UK. A magazine for cat fanciers? At least half a dozen in the U.S., and there are breed-specific magazines. Faith-related magazines? Dozens, probably hundreds, including those published within denominations.

Gone to conferences or done business traveling? Surely you notice that almost every hotel in almost every city has at least one and frequently more than one *local* magazine in its rooms—the weekly ad-filled things on where to eat, the infrequent slick lifestyle magazines and in many cases regular magazines. I can't imagine how many of these there are, but it *must* be in the hundreds just within the U.S. Some are sold well beyond the locality.

There are quite a few literary journals (that is, magazines), and still some number of fiction-oriented magazines. I've subscribed to three print science fiction (and in two cases fantasy) magazines for many years; while their numbers are reduced and there's so little advertising that subscriptions aren't bargains, there are still three "major" and a number of minor magazines in this field.

As with almost any other magazine category, each magazine has its own personality, even if it's aiming at the same audience as others in the category. Any reader who's read *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* and *Analog Science Fiction & Fact* and *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* for more than a few issues should be able to distinguish them easily: The one tending toward fantasy (and coming out as six book-length issues a year to save postage), the one focused on hard science fiction, the one that's a little harder to define but seems to attract a lot of the best-written SF. Similarly for business magazines (that is, *consumer* business magazines such as *Fortune*, *Fast Company* and *Forbes* rather than the huge number of business-to-business magazines): each one has its own personality.

The sheer complexity of the magazine field and the sheer *number* of magazines—most of them with only a few thousand or tens of thousands of loyal readers—strike me as reasons to believe magazines will be around for a very long time. Well, that and the fact that people keep publishing new ones. Every single month.

Enough of my philosophizing. Let's see what some others have had to say about magazines.

The Philosophy of Magazines

The items here are mostly from Mr. Magazine, Samir Husni, with a couple of items from *Media Life Magazine*—an online-only trade publication that I probably wouldn't call a magazine (articles are added almost every day, but it's not a package that emerges with a set frequency), just as I'm not sure either *Salon* or *Slate* is really a magazine.

So, What is a Magazine, Really? Read on...

This piece by Samir Husni, Mr. Magazine, [appeared on June 11, 2010](#) at *mr. magazine* (which has a tie as its “i”—ties are his other passion besides magazines). While I don't agree with Husni on everything, the first paragraph nails it in some ways—and, I think, explains why so many gurus don't *get* magazines and finds them easy to dismiss:

Being in the content business and being in the magazine business are two completely different worlds. While the magazine business deals with content, content is only but a fraction of what makes a magazine. The myth that is now sweeping our industry that we are content providers and it does not matter how our customers get their information may be the Trojan horse that will aid some publishers continue on their print suicide path.

He notes with amazement that some people equated magazines with music and wanted to sell them the way iTunes sells music. He thinks pretty much everything about the two media is different.

Like music, each and every magazine can be used as a medium to deliver a message, but if that was all what magazines do, than we would have been out of business long time ago and we would have one format, maybe an iMagazine that delivers all the content you need to select and choose from for your daily needs, wants and desires.

He says each and every magazine issue is “a total experience that engages the customer's five senses. Nothing is left to chance.” I suspect that's not true for some magazines—that aspects of the total package aren't carefully thought out—but it's true for most of the good ones.

Every issue is a complete new experience with a sense of ownership, showmanship and membership and is renewed with the arrival of the next issue. The total experience of flipping through the pages of a magazine, looking at the different dimensions, shapes, and other physical properties (including the colors we use on every issue whether it is the famous *TIME* red border or *National Geographic* yellow border) create a unique relationship with the customer issue after issue.

There's more—and I'm beginning to agree with Husni that digital packages are something other than magazines, at least most of the ones I've seen.

The first comment is interesting—the commenter thinks that only “an elite few magazines” qualify for his description and that most are just a bunch of articles and ads. I think that's wrong. Husni isn't saying that every single magazine is a *first-rate* package, just that every magazine is, in fact, a designed package. That's certainly true for all 25 of the magazines I see regularly, and it's been true for every magazine I've glanced at on newsstands.

Another comment, from one who's been debating print vs. digital with Husni for some time, is interesting because it essentially rules out most existing digital-only “magazines” as being magazines at all:

We believe that a magazine must be paginated, edited, designed, date stamped, permanent, and periodic.

But this person is a digital absolutist. He says expecting a magazine to be printed with ink on paper “is unreasonable and would doom an otherwise vibrant industry to the monasteries of time long past.” There it is: No discussion allowed, *print is dead*. Because monasteries?

He also pokes at the point that Husni's post is a post in a digital blog, not an article in a printed magazine. Which Husni takes care of nicely:

As you well know, my blog is NOT a magazine (although it meets your criteria for one)... I have nothing against blogs or digital, but they are NOT magazines. I have used and will continue to use all the technology available both on the web and mobile to enhance and amplify the future of print in the 21st century and beyond.

I don't think Husni's blog does qualify based on the commenter's criteria: It's not really paginated and it doesn't have a set periodicity. In any case, the commenter's poke is as silly as somebody attacking me for writing pieces that support print books and publishing them in an ejournal. Unless I say “the only things people should read are printed books.” Since Husni has never, to my knowledge, said “the only things people should pay attention to are print magazines,” this is pointless.

From Publishing Executive Magazine: “Mr. Magazine's M.O.: Let My Magazines Grow”

Another one from Husni on his blog, [this time April 4, 2011](#), his first regular column at *Publishing Executive Magazine*—one of those thousands of specialized magazines most of us would never hear of. Husni's clear about not praising *all* magazines:

The medium is A-OK, if not more than A-OK. The medium is at its best today; the problem we have is with the message. Plain and simple. Most of the messages out there are outdated, tired, weak, out-of-touch and,

above all, unnecessary, insufficient and irrelevant. So, don't kill the messenger just because the message stinks. There were more ink-on-paper magazines started in 2010 than in 2009. In fact, the total number of such titles, including the specials, book-a-zines and annuals exceeded 800. That is almost 100 more titles than 2009. Were all of those magazines worthy of arriving at the nation's newsstands or in your mailbox? Definitely not! Did they contain content that is needed, wanted or even desired by our customers? Mostly not! Did those magazines create ways to grab the attention of the customers, keep their attention and leave them wanting more? Amazingly, only a few did that! So we need to stop cursing an entire industry—a very good one, indeed—and blame our ills. [Emphasis added.]

So he's saying most new arrivals in 2010 were unneeded, unwanted and undesired—and he thinks one reason is “an antiquated, advertising-centric business model.” That and new technologies that make printing so cheap that lots of people think they can be magazine publishers.

Which gets to a different aspect of magazine philosophy, one where I have to admit that *as a reader* I'm in a different place than I might be *as a magazine admirer*. In the latter role, I get what I think Husni is saying (here and elsewhere): Great magazines should be worth paying serious prices for, and nearly giving them away (with nearly all revenue coming from ads) cheapens magazines.

But as a retired magazine-lover on a somewhat limited income, I have to admit that I *delight* in the fact that I can typically try out a new magazine for the cost of some unused miles on an airline I never plan to fly again—and that some of the magazines I enjoy most can be renewed for less than \$1 an issue, sometimes a lot less.

Husni uses as an example of doing it right *The Surfer's Journal*, which began in 1992 at \$12.95 a copy and is now \$15.95 a copy in its 20th year (it comes out every other month). I'm guessing you can't get this specialized magazine cheaply by subscription and that surfers care about it a lot. (I just checked: it's \$63 for one year or \$118 for two years—which isn't cheap, and attests to the magazine's value. It's “reader-supported,” which I take to mean that it has little or no advertising.) Now, thinking about it, there *are* magazines I pay a fairly high price for: the three science fiction magazines are all several dollars per copy by subscription—I think \$6 for one of them—and neither *Cruise Travel* nor *Smithsonian* is dirt-cheap.

Maybe I'm misreading the column (which is aimed at publishers, not readers). I certainly can't fault the three “must-haves” identified by Sue Roman of Taunton Press:

“First, will the readers support the magazine? That means, will they pay a subscription price and single-copy price that is sufficient to profitably produce the magazine. Second, is there a strong base of

advertisers who want to specifically reach these people? Third, is the subject matter well-served by the format of the magazine? Can it be compellingly communicated on a magazine spread, and is there an ongoing conversation about the topic that will keep the magazine lively for years to come?”

Technically, the second is *not* necessary as long as the first is well established (*Consumer Reports* is one example). (Taunton Press publishes five magazines, one each in five different areas: woodworking, homebuilding, cooking, sewing and gardening. In all but one case, take “Fine” and add the area and you have the name.)

Do social media types also read magazines?

Here’s one from *media life magazine* [on May 19, 2011](#) by Diego Vasquez. And the answer—for “social media types,” specifically the assumed persona of heavy social networkers (female, 18-44, probably a college graduate, probably a mother, household income above \$50K)—is “yes, and a lot more than most adults.”

The article provides responses from three “experts.” Two of them basically give the same answer, and it’s an answer based on research. The third seems to say “nah, the research must be wrong because Digital.” This “expert’s” admitted “gut instinct”—which is that the majority of social media users *must* “gravitate towards digital magazines and interactive content”—is clearly more important than, you know, *facts*.

The Mr. Magazine™ 2012 Manifesto: AN ENCORE LUCKY 13 FOR A HEALTHY, WEALTHY, AND LIVELY MEDIA FUTURE

I could do without ALL THOSE CAPS, but that’s the title on Husni’s [January 2, 2012 post](#) at *mr. magazine*. He links back to a [2011 “manifesto”](#) which had 13 points, and provides a new or upgraded set of 13 points. Some of the more interesting points (for those who aren’t themselves magazine publishers):

Stop using the words New Media in reference to digital media only. Every new issue of your magazine, every new program of your television or radio programming, every new app of every medium is new media. We were, are, and will continue to be in the business of constantly creating new media....

One size does not fit all, and one medium does not satisfy all. To some, print is king and to others, digital is queen. However, for the majority of the upcoming young and restless, it is ALL not “either or.”

Before you decide on a platform, remember the good old adage in journalism: Know the audience. It is not the technology that creates the experience with the customers, but rather the customers who create the experience with the content and the technology.

Stop preaching and promoting your own demise in some platforms. If you do not believe and do not promote all your media, then you do not have anyone to blame for your demise but yourself. *{Could we get that rebranded for libraries and librarians?}*

Do not sacrifice print on the altar of digital. Killing the golden goose will not provide you with lots of golden eggs.

That's five out of 13. The rest are also worth reading. (The last one and a related one before it are pointed: Magazines with digital editions almost all find *most* revenue coming from the print edition. This should not be surprising.)

The "Mr. Magazine™ Manifesto 2013": PUBLISHING IS BELIEVING AND 12 OTHER MANTRAS OF WISDOM

Jumping ahead a year, this appeared [on January 8, 2013](#). Husni loves baker's dozens. A few of this round, at least one of which strikes me as excessive:

The future of print is becoming more a collector's item than a disposable item. A magazine should possess some collectible value that offers something timely and timeless.

Killing a magazine in print, hoping it will survive on the web never worked, is not working and never will work. Once you are out of sight, you are out of mind. Even the "successes" in this case are a fraction of their print predecessors.

Like all creations, magazines have a time to be born and a time to die. No, not the demise of a genre of magazine; rather the loss of some titles and birth of others.

Unless your magazine content provides the readers with a "losing themselves and their sense of time" experience, you are better off killing the magazine.

As usual, most of the items in the full list are sound enough—but here, I think the first and last are both overambitious. Although that may be part of the point: I sense that Husni would rather have there be a few hundred magazines than many thousand. (None of the magazines I get cause me to lose myself and my sense of time. Nor do I want them to.)

The Mr. Magazine 2014 Manifesto: Print IS The Future of Digital in 14 Points

Probably worth clustering the latest "manifesto" from Samir Husni with the others—this one appearing on [January 7, 2014](#) at *mr. magazine*. Husni starts out on a bright note, calling 2013 "the banner year where the persistent mantra that print is dead finally subsided." Subsided, one can only hope; disappeared, not a chance.

Husni regards these “14 truths” as truisms. I might be less convinced on some of them. He offers a paragraph of expansion for each point. I’ll list some of the more interesting points and, as appropriate, my quick summary or quick reaction in [brackets].

Print comes lately. [A number of web “brands” have become magazines.]

Print—old and new—has value. [Magazines as collectibles.]

Print’s bragging power. [Magazines on the coffee table start conversations; iPads don’t. I don’t buy this one.]

Print is ownership. [“Without physicality, human beings are obsolete.” Not sure what to say here.]

Print is ad-friendly. [One of the *strongest* points for magazines: appropriate and well-designed ads *add* to the experience rather than getting in the way.]

Print is the brand propeller.

Print is relevant. [True—but his discussion overstates magazine advantages over online in this regard.]

Print deals with humans. [This one’s silly: “More than 60% of Internet usage is machine-driven and generated.” So?]

Print is the future of digital. [Just precisely as true as “digital is *the* future of everything,” which is to say not at all true.]

Still, you may find it interesting.

For magazines, print’s still the thing

It always strikes me that *media life magazine* writers sound a little disappointed when they write something like this, but here’s Diego Vasquez [on January 10, 2013](#), with a subtitle “Strong connections with readers remains their most important asset”—which is, I think, right.

The piece itself is tricky. It’s an interview with an ad agency buyer, Carol Pais Hammond, that includes this in the prefatory material:

These days advertisers are looking to tie their message closer to the magazine’s editorial content, hoping to enhance their own credibility by trading off the credibility of the magazine. Though traditionally editors have avoided such ties, the need for advertising is forcing some publications to reexamine their long-held insistence of keeping editorial separate from advertising.

That’s a disturbing suggestion; as far as I can see, *Fast Company* has no such separation, and that bothers me a lot. The first of three trends Hammond was watching for in 2013 is this:

Continued blurring of the lines between editorial and advertising. Consumers seek that voice of authority and authenticity, and the closer an advertising message can get to living in that space of editorial versus advertising, it benefits from the halo of journalistic credibility that underlies a publication. How far will advertisers push that envelope, and how far will magazines allow it to be pushed?

I believe that's the wrong way around: Push that envelope and the result is not that advertising gains authority, it's that editorial copy loses it. (The other two are "brand extension" and "launches, closings and redesigns"—but that third has always been a significant part of the magazine field.)

Part of what Hammond says about why magazines remain important to media buyers seems worth saying:

Print—for a variety of reasons involving format, content, voice and opinion—allows us to draw consumers into a deeper, more meaningful dialogue. It is not simply a one-dimensional message delivery vehicle, it's a conversation-starter/moderator, an opinion-influencer, it provokes, it inspires. And in its printed form especially, it does all this in a format that insists upon a multi-layered, tactile relationship.

It defies a click-through mentality.

As is her closing point: Magazines are personal.

Print Magazines Are NOT Going the Way Vinyl Went... and That's Why.

Here's one that *really* relates to the heading for this section, [from January 28, 2013](#) as Samir Husni waxes philosophical about magazines and music, kites and wind:

Comparing magazines with music is like comparing a kite to the wind that carries it across the sky. The kite is tangible, and watching it brings its own kind of joy to the experience; the wind is gossamer with no visual substance, yet as real an experience as your hair lifted off your neck on a hot day.

It doesn't matter to you how you receive that breeze when your skin is hot and sticky. It can be from an opened window in your kitchen, to the sun roof in your car; the end result you anticipate is the same...to cool off from that sweet breeze.

The kite floats back down to you when you're finished running across the field with it, the diamond shape bright with spring colors and virtually alive from its race across the blue sky, plastic still popping and breathing from the exertion. It's substantial and real...you can touch and feel its presence.

So, he says (oversimplifying—this is very different prose from most Husni posts), most people want their songs and aren't much concerned with how they arrive: The medium isn't (usually) a tactile presence (although the surprising *growth* of vinyl suggests that this isn't true for some people). On the other hand, a well-designed print magazine is real, tactile, an "intimate and personal experience," devoid of popup ads and third-party tracking. (There's a *lot* more in the post and it's fairly eloquent.)

He gets back to his main point, one that may apply to books as well: Digital is a new medium (he says "media," and actually "set of media" may be more correct). It doesn't replace the print experience, and isn't really trying to...except that some *publishers* seem anxious to force people off print and onto digital.

Here's the thing: If you don't accept that "the print experience" and "magazine as package" are meaningful concepts, none of this makes sense...but then, you probably haven't read this far unless you think I'm an aging eccentric who should be humored.

An Industry that Continues to Give Birth is NOT a Dying Industry...Examining the Retail Records of 25 New Magazines of 2012 (Amended)

We'll finish this section with one that could slide over into a discussion of magazine sales—Husni's dissection of what happened with a couple dozen recently introduced magazines. Actually, the first part of the title of [this June 12, 2013 post](#) may be all that needs be said, but let's continue.

I really don't understand why it has always been acceptable for individuals who have killed products that don't sell, don't work or don't have readership or viewership, to blame an entire industry for the demise of specific products. It is like saying television is dead because M.A.S.H. is no longer on.

Magazine publishing *has* become "cable-ized": Instead of three major TV networks and three major magazines, each circulating more than 10 million copies, we have many networks...and many more new magazines, mostly more specialized.

He identified 25 new magazines. The first-issue circulation *totaled* just over 900,000, but the *median* first-issue circulation was just over 9,000: these mostly started out as small-circulation magazines. At the end of 2012, the total circulation was just under 1.1 million—although the median circulation was down to 7,600.

The overall message is similar to what you could say for new restaurants or almost any new business:

Magazine publishing is just like gambling, the odds are always against you, but once you hit the jackpot, the rest is history.

Go gamble, or for that matter, launch a magazine.

New Magazines

I have a bunch of items tagged “mag-int” for “introductions,” but I covered some of that in “The Story is Doom; Never Mind the Facts” earlier. Still, it’s worth noting some items on new magazine launches—most (but not all) from Samir Husni’s *mr. magazine* blog.

Digital maybe Goliath, but David is Out There (and that’s not Creative Nonfiction) with few other ink on paper magazines reminding us that PRINT IS NOT DEAD! Part 1

This [May 9, 2010 post](#) from Husni apparently came at a time when “all the attention has been focused on the iPad and the future of digital publishing.” He says nobody seemed to notice that 64 new magazines were launched in April 2010—18 more than in April 2009. Only 16 of those are what I’d call true magazines (planned for at least four issues a year).

He arrives at the cute title (although, for magazines, print is pretty clearly still Goliath) because the first magazine he discusses is *DAVID*. It’s an interesting combination: Not merely a local magazine (Las Vegas)—but a religion-specific local magazine, aimed at the Jewish community.

The most amusing part of this particular post is a comment from Bo Sacks, who says:

You keep broadcasting that some pundits are prophesying that print is dead. To whom are you referring? To the best of my knowledge, you are the only one who keeps repeating that phrase.

Apparently Bo Sacks lives in a very different world from some of us. (He doesn’t see print as dying, but touts digital as being cheaper and having a broader reach.) Husni’s polite response is that he keeps getting calls from reporters and media folks who presume that print is dead or dying because some magazine was sold or shut down. (*DAVID* seems to be alive—a monthly, offered free at 150 Las Vegas points or \$36/year by subscription.)

Sidebar: There are a *lot* of local magazines in Las Vegas. *Las Vegas Magazine*, a weekly; *Vegas*, apparently a slick monthly; *Luxury Las Vegas*, which may be digital-only; *24/7 Magazine*, a monthly; *Las Vegas Woman*, a quarterly; *Vegas Seven*, another weekly; *What’s On The Las Vegas Guide*, yet another weekly; *QVegas*, a gay-oriented monthly; *My Vegas Magazine*; *BLV LDS Las Vegas*, which seems to be every other month but the latest online issue is April/May 2013; *Vegas*

Player Magazine; *Las Vegas Black Image*, a monthly; *STRIPLV*; and apparently more...

Year-End Statistics: “Magazine Launches Outpace Closures in 2010: Mediafinder Reports That 193 Magazines Launch and 176 Fold”

This [December 16, 2010 item](#) at *ResourceShelf*, actually from MediaFinder, takes things back a year earlier—and suggests that “OMG! Mags are either dying or going digital!” may be one of those stories that’s mostly past its sell-by date. Even in 2010, there were more new magazines than shutdowns—but not by much. Then there were more launches and fewer failures in 2011—and, while launches were down in 2012 from 2011 (but up from 2010), failures were way down, to less than one-half of 2010 figures.

MediaFinder says there were 596 closures in 2009—and, given the depth of the recession, maybe that’s not surprising. (This piece doesn’t say how many new magazines there were in 2009.) The story also discusses digital conversion—and here, there were only 28 print magazines converting to online-only in 2010 (15 of them business-to-business), compared to 81 in 2009.

What categories saw the most new magazines in 2010? Food, regional, health and sports—in that order. Of course, some new food magazines were regional, which confuses matters.

100 plus More New Magazines Launched in 2010 than 2009...

Same year, but with a much different definition of “magazines”: this is Samir Husni’s [February 3, 2011](#) analysis of the changes. Given his broader definition, there were more than 805 new titles in 2010, compared to 702 in 2009. For “frequency” magazines, presumably MediaFinder’s area, he sees 187 in 2010 (six fewer than MediaFinder), down nominally from 197 in 2009.

Magazine closures way down this year

Oddly enough, *media life magazine* did get it right in the lede for [this October 2, 2012](#) “magazine short”:

So far this year magazine launches have outpaced closures three to one.

At that point—covering the first nine months of 2012—there were 181 new and 61 gone. The final ratio wasn’t quite that close, but this was still the story—that, and the huge drop in closures (from 128 in the first nine months of 2011 to 61 in the first nine months of 2012). Top areas for new magazines were regional, food and “lifestyle.”

In a [December 29, 2012 post](#), Samir Husni celebrates the sheer diversity of new magazines—and his count of new quarterly-or-more-frequent launches is a little higher than MediaFinders, at 242. He says

this is the most launches since 2007, when there were 248 regular-frequency magazine launches. He chose five “most notable launches” that illustrate the sheer diversity of new magazines:

Recoil (a “gun lifestyle” magazine), *Highlights Hello* (an offshoot of *Highlights* aimed at children aged 0 to 2), *Dujour* (a magazine targeting audiences with net worth of \$5 million or more!), *Howler* (a soccer magazine that was crowd-funded)—and *Cosmopolitan for Latinas*. Checking a year later, *Dujour* is still around (quarterly, \$28/year or \$50/2 years, so us lowlifes can read about the super-wealthy), as are *Recoil* (six issues a year, I think; \$49.95/year, \$89.95/two years), *Howler* (quarterly, unclear how to subscribe), *Highlights Hello* (monthly, \$34.44 for one year, with multiyear subscriptions and the offer to switch to *High Five* (ages 2-6) or *Highlights* (ages 6-12) when that becomes appropriate) and *Cosmopolitan Latinas*.

About the new World Wildlife Magazine

I’m not going to quote the very long title of [this December 2, 2013 post](#), mostly an interview with the editorial director of the new print magazine—but you might find the interview interesting. I certainly find it interesting that the editorial director steadfastly avoids mentioning *Nature Conservancy*, the beautiful and very effective magazine from the organization of the same name—and I also find it interesting that apparently the issue we received is likely to be the *only* print issue we receive, because we don’t contribute enough to deserve the print version. Such is life.

The new magazine isn’t for sale, and the digital version will be available to everybody. Oh, wait: reading further, I see that we *might* keep getting it because we’re long-time supporters. It’s an interesting approach.

2013 New Magazines: Survival is Way UP, Launches are Barely Down... The Mr. Magazine™ Year-End Wrap-Up

What about 2013? Samir Husni posted this [on December 26, 2013](#). While *total* new launches were barely down from 2012 (865 rather than 870), *frequency* launches were down significantly: 183 rather than 231. But here’s an interesting point: 85% of those 183 magazines were still operating after a year—and that’s much higher than the previous high of 70%. Lots of magazines fail almost immediately, similarly to many other startups, but apparently those starting in 2013 were better thought out: Fewer flameouts.

He also notes that a number of successful websites have launched magazines. Top categories for 2013 magazines are special interest/lifestyle, crafts/games/hobbies, “epicurean” and regional.

The Death of ~~Magazines~~ Newsweek

I have eight items tagged “mag-death”—but opening up that list, I see that *all* of them are about newsweeklies (including one very silly item—we’ll get to that) and almost all are about *Newsweek*. Since that’s an odd story with an as-yet-unknown ending, we’ll take the whole set in the usual chronological order.

Newsweek Has Fallen Down and Can’t Get Up

That’s how Jack Shafer (or *Slate*’s headline writer) put it [in this May 3, 2010 article](#) at *Slate*, that online non-magazine that’s devolved from a solid journalistic effort to mostly being linkbait. Shafer doesn’t see it as being about *Newsweek* or possible bad decisions: as far as he’s concerned, it’s The Death of the Newsweekly. Here’s the lede:

The 30-year debate in the journalism reviews, among industry analysts, and over beers between reporters about the fate of the newsweekly category was settled today by Washington Post Co. Chairman Donald E. Graham, who announced that he wants to sell *Newsweek*. If the infinitely patient and hideously rich Graham can’t see a profitable future for the money-losing magazine, that future doesn’t exist. The category has finally gone to mold and will, in another 30 months or 30 years, advance to putrefaction.

At this point—May 2010—it wasn’t even about shutting down; it was about selling off the magazine. That final sentence is a great non-prediction: “in another 30 months or 30 years...”

Here’s the thing: I mostly tend to agree. Newsweeklies have for some time (or *Time*) struck me as stuck in an impossible position. *Good* daily papers have the kind of analysis and depth that newsweeklies used to have (because the internet and TV have taken over the headline business), and it’s tough to do “monthly-quality” reports on a weekly basis. Also, postage costs, a killer for some magazines, are a bit more than four times as tough for weeklies as for monthlies. (One of the previously-big three print science fiction & fantasy magazines, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, went to publishing double-length issues every other month *specifically* because of postage costs.)

The article quotes Jon Meacham in an analysis that’s similar to what I just said in the previous paragraph. Unfortunately, Shafer follows that analysis with a commentary that is, well, just wrong:

The problem with Meacham’s musical-chairs analogy is that he neglects to mention that a chair is removed as each dance begins and that whenever the music stops, a player gets bounced from the game. This week’s loser looks to be *Newsweek*.

That assumes a zero-sum game or worse—that it’s not possible for new magazines to be added to the mix. By now, you presumably know that this is

pure nonsense—that at least since 2009, magazine launches have outnumbered deaths each and every year.

Newsweek's print days are numbered

Bill Cromwell posted this item [on July 26, 2012](#) at *media life magazine*—and note that it's more than *two years* after Shafer's obituary. The new owners (Graham did indeed sell the publication—for \$1, to IAC/InterActiveCorp, which frankly had no business buying a newsmagazine) said they'd go to online-only. That would, according to Cromwell's story, leave "*Time* as the only newsweekly of the original Big Three still putting out a print edition." (*US News & World Report* had gone from weekly to monthly to online to, I think, entirely defunct.)

Turns out the announcement was an "eventually," not a "real soon now," but given that the new owner merged the magazine with the online *The Daily Beast* under the "leadership" of Tina Brown, it should not have been a surprise. So far so good, but this paragraph is, I'm afraid, typical of *media life's* bias:

Of course it's hardly a surprise anymore when a magazine goes online-only. U.S. News & World Report made the move in 2010 after years of struggle, including a move from weekly to monthly.

As Mr. Magazine points out, actually it is still unusual for this to happen. Tina Brown, to be sure, had already basically given up on print. In denying the immediacy of the move, she said that Barry Diller "made the uncontroversial, industry-wide observation that print is moving in the direction of digital."

The Newsweeklies Are Dead; Long Live the "News" Weeklies: TIME, Bloomberg Businessweek and The Week. The Digital Age Ink on Paper Trio of "News" Weeklies

Much as I am royally sick of the "X is dead, long live X" cliché, [this August 29, 2012 piece](#) by Samir Husni at *mr. magazine* is right on the money—including his selective use of scare quotes. He also calls "newspaper" an oxymoron:

I am going to take the liberty to declare one word, newspaper, an oxymoron. That moment in time when you realize how contradictory a word is: news and paper. I mean, come on. Today, the two are definitely not synonymous. Most people are getting their news (as in Who, What, Where, When, Why and How) from anything but a paper: the internet, their cell, tablet and any other mobile apparatus that may come to mind. So if the "newspaper" is an oxymoron, what can one say about the "newsweeklies?" The words "news" and "weekly" maybe even a worse (if there is such a thing) oxymoron than the words news and paper.

As I've noted elsewhere, our own reasonably good-quality daily paper (which we read on a Kindle Fire HD 8.9) made an editorial decision *many* years ago to become a daily magazine, scrapping the inverted-pyramid style for many stories and assuming that most readers already know the headlines.

The focus of Husni's piece is a trio of weekly magazines that he believes takes the place of the so-called Big 3. Since he lists them in one of his typically overlength post titles, I won't list them again. Husni says *TIME* continues to do well as a "glossy, intelligent weekly" and that the renamed and revitalized *Bloomberg Businessweek* "has gone way beyond business and has become the pulse of every aspect of our daily lives." (Note that Michael Bloomberg purchased a failing business weekly for almost nothing—and, despite the general assumption that it would soon die, revitalized it. As a print publication.) Then there's *The Week*, which I've honestly never heard of and which Husni calls "the Rolls Royce of all weeklies." I trust he doesn't mean ridiculously expensive and costly to maintain...

All three weeklies appear on your newsstand or in your mailbox on a Friday, prepping you for the weekend and really (to borrow a phrase from another great magazine, *Mental Floss*) make you feel smart again, without insulting your senses, all your senses, and by assuring you that they appreciate and value your time (no pun intended). Those magazines collectively are providing some of the best content and design that is out there, and are offering the biggest compliment a reader can get: a magazine that actually values YOU, the customer.

So, before you bemoan the "news" weeklies or the entire magazine business for their woeful presence in this digital world, go grab a copy of the three mentioned magazines and see whether they do value your time and that they do treat you like a customer who counts rather than just being a number in the business of counting customers.

In a footnote, he recognizes *The Economist*, but says he was looking for three *American* "news" weeklies.

Checking online, these magazines cost \$30, \$35 or \$60 respectively for one year of delivered print (*TIME*, *BloombergBusinessWeek*, *The Week* in that order) or a little more (except for *TIME*) for combined print & digital. Those are all plausible, unlike *The Economist's* \$135.

Newsweek is ending its print edition

The other shoe finally dropped in October 2012. This October 19, 2012 item at *media life magazine* by Toni Fitzgerald notes the announcement that the print edition was ending on December 31, 2012—and said it had been "on deathwatch" ever since it was merged with *The Daily Beast*.

Slate ran [a short item](#) on this, with this somewhat disingenuous quote from the publisher on why print was going away:

Currently, 39 percent of Americans say they get their news from an online source, according to a Pew Research Center study released last month. In our judgment, we have reached a tipping point at which we can most efficiently and effectively reach our readers in all-digital format.

Or maybe, despite some absurdly controversial covers under Tina Brown's editorship ("Heaven is Real"), people weren't buying what Brown was selling.

Newsweek: It's Suicide and Not Natural Death...

Samir Husni weighed in [on October 18, 2012](#), and you see his primary comment above.

The news about Newsweek today was no surprise to me, nor the predictions of the same doom and gloom media critics with their "print is dead" iconic analysis.

Print is not dead. Newsweek is committing suicide that is leading to its death in print first, and demise second. The magazine lost its DNA, or as I told the American Journalism Review earlier today, Newsweek ignored the audience. The magazine stopped giving the audience the intellectual stimulation magazines of that genre are in the business of giving. Newsweek is not The Daily Beast and The Daily Beast is NOT Newsweek. The audience was confused and so, it seems, the folks behind Newsweek. History teaches us, time and time again, that you can't mess with your DNA and expect to survive.

One commenter chose the occasion to proclaim The Truth as it is Given to Those Who Believe:

No matter how you look at it print will be dead. It will be for the next generation that will be raised without books, print will be dead. Look at South Korea going to digital text books in four years for my proof.

Damn. South Korea might go to digital textbooks? That's all the "proof" anyone could need. As for the "next generation raised without books," we're still waiting for that generation to be born—probably even in South Korea, since kids *should* be exposed to books long before they have textbooks.

Tina Brown Declares End of Reading

What do you do when your editorial oversight results in failure? *You blame the audience*. At least that's Tina Brown's tack in [this November 8, 2013 piece](#) by Jonathan Chait at *New York*.

Hey, she no longer reads magazines and says "The habit has gone," so that's pretty much the end of the story. She once edited two very good magazines (*Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*). Then she founded and edited a—well, I finally looked at the *Daily Beast*, and it seems to be

typical online fluff, with lots of big pictures, big type, not much of it—and somehow ended up with *Newsweek*.

Chait's quoting from a speech Brown gave (in her new role as an *event producer*, because that's where the money is). Key quotes:

And the written word is possibly, slowly going too, [Brown] told the audience during her session.

"I think you can have more satisfaction from live conversations," she said, adding we were "going back to oral culture where the written word will be less relevant."

Chait adds: "If we're going back to the oral culture, does the shift have to happen all at once? Can we transition through handwritten scrolls or cuneiform tablets first?"

This story has a bunch of comments, and some of them strike me as right on the money. For example: "If self promotion and sour grapes ruled..Tina Brown would be queen of the world." Or, at slightly greater length:

Collectively, we now produce more written material in a couple of years than was produced for the rest of human history. But sure, we're going back to the oral tradition. With insights like that, it's no wonder everything she's touched since the dawn of the internet has failed miserably.

A Different Kind of Deep Dive: Newsweek's Return to Print... The Mr. Magazine™ Interview with Newsweek's Editor in Chief Jim Impoco

Just to make this journey *really* odd, here's Samir Husni's [December 6, 2013 piece](#) at *mr. magazine*. That's right: Under its new ownership, *Newsweek* will return to print distribution in January 2014. The editor talks about "deeper dives," presumably longer stories with more context. (Impoco says that *The Week* and *The Economist* are "the two most successful magazines in print right now.")

Significant here: the new owners plan to charge customers what it costs to produce the magazine—although he doesn't say what that price might be. As much as *The Economist*? More?

That's the cycle. Not sure how much it says about print magazines in general, since weeklies are such an odd bunch (and such a small slice of print magazines, despite Impoco's claim). Just thought it was an interesting cycle.

Digital Magazines

I should make a distinction clear here: there are web-based things that call themselves magazines—but there are also digital magazines, packages delivered to iPads or Kindles or the like. Those can be independent magazines or digital versions of print magazines, sometimes

adding more content to the print version. Most pieces here are about the latter.

Conde Nast rethinks its iPad strategy

Michael Grothaus posted this [on May 7, 2011](#) at TÚAW (whatever that is). On one hand, I think he's right in most of it. The message: trying to "bring magazines to the iPad" as one-off sales, where you buy and pay for each issue at \$5 or so, wasn't working: you couldn't get enough readers to interest advertisers. So Condé Nast (oddly, even though there's an acute accent over the U in this site's name, the story here never uses the é) was going to switch to subscriptions (and much more reasonably priced singles).

Grothaus says the annual subscription would be \$19.99, even for the *New Yorker*:

Know what that means? The *New Yorker* is gonna have me (and probably many others) as a subscriber next week. As for current print subscribers, they'll be able to access the iPad editions of the magazines for free.

And then Grothaus blows it—or, rather, includes an obligatory There Is Only One Future paragraph:

Other magazine publishers: pay attention. This is how the magazine industry saves itself.

A statement that makes no sense unless you're convinced print is dead and *everybody* will have iPads. (Turns out the abbreviation stands for The Unofficial Apple Weblog, which means the accent over the Ú is just silly. It's part of that media giant...AOL.)

Checking on December 31, 2013, I find that the print version of *New Yorker* goes for \$59.99 a year (not an unreasonable price for a weekly). The digital versions go for *exactly the same amount*, \$59.99: \$19.99 was way too low for a weekly. The digital version's no longer free with print subscription: the combo is \$69.99. (On the other hand, *Condé Nast Traveler* does offer the digital version free to print subscribers.)

Digital and On-Line is NOT the New Cemetery Plot for Print... and BoSacks Speaks Out. YOU BE THE JUDGE

With a title like that, do I need to name the writer? Let's just say he calls himself Mr. Magazine—and this post, [on August 25, 2011](#), is part rant, part sensible advice, made even more interesting because when Bob Sacks, the Judy to Husni's Punch, wrote a post addressing this one, Husni added Sacks' post to his own comments.

What Husni's saying, in brief and with a lot fewer capital letters: If your magazine is failing as a print publication, converting it to digital-only won't save it. You need to either reinvent the print version or kill it off.

I think that's probably right, and recent history suggests that most print magazines that converted to digital-only (there haven't been *that* many, but there have been some) either disappeared or became websites with *no* subscription revenue.

I suspect Husni's wrong when he says “[T]o create a digital publication, with all the bells and whistles digital requires, that cost is going to overcome the cost of printing and distribution.” Husni thinks true digital magazines need audio and video to make sense (if I'm reading him right) and doing these well is expensive. True enough, but I suspect it can be done for less than the overhead of printing and distribution, at least in some cases. (I've often said—and others have since confirmed—that being physical normally doesn't account for more than 14% of the *price* of a print book. But that's a book: magazines are a different ballgame, and I have no idea what the numbers are.)

Sacks misreads Husni's post, I think. He also calls the web “the future of the publishing platform,” which is interesting because iPad/Kindle/Nook subscriptions aren't really “the web” but also because he goes on to say that respected research firms think publisher revenue in 2020 will be 60% digital, 40% print. I suspect that's just plain wrong for magazines, but—as Sacks admits—even 40% of current print publishing revenues would be a *lot* of money. On the other hand, Sacks inability to distinguish the web from the internet (he repeatedly calls digital in general “the web”) doesn't incite trust in his expertise.

Rather than give it a separate heading, I'm going to mention a later Husni piece—much calmer, and with specific examples of print magazines gone digital—[on January 24, 2013](#). The most amusing or perhaps appalling example in that article is *Reality Weekly*—the “first magazine devoted only to Reality TV shows,” begun in 2012 by American Media, Inc., “a leading publisher of celebrity magazines.” AMI was going to sell this weekly at mass merchandise locations (Wal-Mart etc.) and price it at \$1.79. I'm cynical enough to suggest that this was never going to be much of a magazine, given the target audience, and indeed, the print magazine (a tabloid) lasted all of 29 issues. But when the print magazine died, the company said it would emerge as a *free* tablet app.

People actually read digital magazines (and they're ready to buy)

This one—by Jacqui Cheng [on November 21, 2011](#) at *ars technica*—is tricky. The story seems sound as far as it goes: there *are* people who read magazines on tablets; most of them want subscriptions, not individual apps; and they'd like to be able to buy stuff directly from ads and editorial (which most magazines don't offer because they're ported from print).

It's also clear what this story is *not* saying (Cheng doesn't claim otherwise): There's no indication that people are *generally* interested in moving from print to digital. The story's based on a survey of 1,009 adults, but the adults were chosen from digital magazine readers: It says

nothing about everybody else. Indeed, Cheng calls those who read magazines on tablets “a group of brave souls.”

The comments are interesting, including several people who love Zinio, several who hate it, the nearly obligatory two or three who don't understand magazines and therefore can't see why anybody *else* would pay for them, two or three who are proud of having switched everything to digital—and several who were upset that, at the time, tablet subscriptions frequently cost more than print ones did, even if the print sub included digital access.

What's behind the rise in digital magazines

Diego Vasquez offers this digicentric perspective [on August 16, 2012](#) at *media life magazine*. How digicentric? The subtitle: “They could overtake print editions as soon as 2020.” That's a true statement, just as I could become a billionaire by 2020. Likely? No, but “could” means “not impossible.”

The first line of the piece's introduction tells a slightly more nuanced story:

Digital editions make up less than 2 percent of total magazine circulation, but their numbers are growing at a torrid pace.

Remember when ebook sales were doubling every year? That's what happened with digital magazine editions between 2011 and 2012: they doubled...at about the time lots of people were getting color tablets. Remember how ebook sales *kept* doubling every year? Oh, wait... But where there's a Dramatic Growth Curve, there's a company selling it as The Future, in this case medialIDEAS, “a global research and advisory firm.” The rest of the story's an interview with a honcho from that firm.

The interview's interesting. The firm claims to have predicted an ongoing decline in print magazines in 2007, and says they're going from \$37 billion in 2007 to what they predict as a low of \$30 billion in 2014. Frankly, given 2009, that's not such a terrible thing. Ah, but the firm thinks most of the future is digital, so *most* magazine industry revenue will be digital by 2020. Why? Well, “we believe.”

Oh, and for digital to work, the magazine must not only create a distinct digital edition that's different from the print magazine, it must create *a distinct product for each platform*—PCs, e-readers, tablets, smartphones, smart TVs. Every magazine must do so “to remain relevant over the next ten years.” Which certainly implies print will be irrelevant, not just a minority.

Why tablet magazines are a failure

We'll close this section with Jon Lund's [October 6, 2013](#) piece at *GigaOm*—and it's important to note that Lund explicitly calls print

magazines and, I think, magazines in general “a sunset industry.” And, of course, it’s *GigaOm*, so there’s that.

Basically, he says magazines as apps are doomed *because they’re magazines*—because they’re edited packages of content rather than being stuff on the web. To Lund, a proper magazine is what he reads on Zite, Flipboard, Facebook and Twitter: “These apps don’t produce any content themselves. They’re merely curating what’s already out there.” Pfeh. “Curating?”

In any case, Lund’s pretty clear: the internet is *all about social networking*, and anything that’s not part of that is doomed. (High-quality paid editorial content? What’s social about that? In-depth research? Why, when you can tweet?)

He put together a list of the 25 bestselling digital magazines and how digital subscriptions compare to total subscriptions. Guess what? With a few exceptions—such as *OK! Weekly* and *Star Magazine*—the percentages are pretty low. The second-largest digital subscription base represents 6% of that magazine’s total paid subscriptions; the third and fourth are at 8% and 7%, and the sixth is at 4%. (The highest is impressive, but also phony, as Lund explains: the digital subscriptions for *Game Informer* come with purchases of GameStop’s premium loyalty cards, which offer discounts on videogames.) Only fourteen magazines have at least 100,000 digital subscriptions; that includes *Wired*, where digital represents 12%, and *Popular Science* with 8%.

The key here, of course, is that Lund’s not objecting to online: He’s objecting to *magazines*. As far as Lund concerns, only the web matters. He apparently subscribes to some magazines but doesn’t *get* magazines. That’s not unusual.

Sales and Statistics

I have a bunch of items tagged “mag-sales,” but I realize that they’re all basically saying the same thing, spread out every few months over two years: *Newsstand* magazine sales have been falling. *media life* changes the synonym it uses in the headline, but it’s basically the same story. And it’s largely—I believe—irrelevant to the ongoing health of *most* print magazines (although it’s a serious problem for celebrity tabloids and tabloids still pushing the birther story). Indeed, one of the stories identifies celebrity magazines as the biggest losers in newsstand sales.

Of course, *media life* oversells the story. In the December 2011 version, it says “Magazines have been hurting for some time...” but then, after noting another sizable decrease in *newsstand* sales, notes that total paid subscriptions were *up* 0.72% from the previous year.

Probably worth noting: All of these touted subscription figures are for some 400 of at least 7,000 consumer magazines in the U.S. and Canada: just the ones who are measured by one measuring service. Those 400 or so

probably represent the bulk of newsstand sales and probably include most million-selling magazines—but thousands of others are still around.

So instead of stepping through the same-old, same-old (where I consistently see that the *leading* publications within any field are doing much better than the trailing ones), I'll include just one item in this category, before moving on to statistics:

It's the Business Model, Stupid. The Three "Real" Reasons for Single Copy Sales Decline...

Samir Husni [on February 12, 2012](#), and it's worth repeating that he's a newsstand guy—that's his thing. It's an interesting discussion and I think he's probably right, but my perspective is different because I'm a subscription guy and believe subscriptions are the heart of *good* magazine futures, since it's subscribers who form an ongoing relationship with a title.

His three reasons, not including his commentary: high cover prices, "too many options" and very very low subscription prices. The second one's interesting: Husni appears to see the explosion of niche magazines as a bad thing.

Some years back choices were limited. If you were looking for a stamping or scrapbooking magazine, you were able to select between two or three titles. However now the options can be as high as 50 titles in each category. From gardening to quilting to tattooing more titles are bombarding the newsstands and making it harder and harder for folks to make a choice.

Except that the categories are also getting smaller, I think, especially for subscriptions.

Notes on magazine statistics

I'm skipping a few of the "stats" items too, because they turn out to be reports on magazine ad page sales—which to some observers are the only thing worth noting about magazines, but only of interest to me or, I believe, most *C&I* readers indirectly. That is: If a magazine doesn't bring in enough ad revenue, it must either raise subscription prices, reduce content or go out of business.

Samir Husni hates bargain subscriptions; if he didn't make that clear enough in the post just discussed, he certainly does in [a September 20, 2011 post](#) that calls very low subscription prices suicidal.

An [item](#) at Spyglass Intelligence LLC shows 2011 revenues by category for the twelve largest U.S. consumer magazine publishers and an interactive chart for magazines in each of 19 categories from those publishers, or for each publisher. It's an interesting picture. For example:

- The biggest magazine publisher, Time Inc., had \$1.179 billion in subscription revenue, \$1.019 billion in ad revenue—and \$450

million in single-copy sales. That third figure has doubtless dropped (note that Time publishes *People*, which by itself accounted for \$266 million of that \$450 million).

- The second-largest, Hearst (magazines only), is a *lot* smaller: \$499 million subscriptions, \$816 million ads—note that Hearst magazines are far more dependent on ads than Time magazines—and \$252 million single-copy sales. The biggies here are *Cosmopolitan* (\$100 million ads, \$84 million single-copy, only \$39 million subscriptions) and *Good Housekeeping* (\$114 million ads, a mere \$16 million single-copy, \$89 million subscriptions).
- It's another sizable drop to third-place Condé Nast, with \$390 million subscriptions, \$694 million ads, \$149 million single-copy. About those ads: Its top magazines by total revenue are *Vogue* (\$110 million ads, \$25 million subscriptions, \$18 million single-copy) and *Glamour* (\$87 million ads, \$30 million subscriptions, \$26 million single copy), and if you've seen some of the brick-heavy issues of these and similar magazines, this all makes sense. (The publisher's third biggest is *The New Yorker*, \$34 million ads but \$70 million subscriptions and \$9 million single-copy: it's the biggest for this publisher in terms of subscription revenue.)
- For individual magazines, *People* is by far the biggest in terms of revenue, with Time's *Sports Illustrated* second (subscriptions \$262 million; ads with \$151 million; single-copy sales are \$17 million).

I found it mildly interesting that Source Interlink, publisher of two magazines I subscribe to along with several dozen car, truck, motorcycle and related magazines, isn't among the top twelve. (The smallest of those 12 is Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, with \$163 million total revenues for 2011.)

Miscellany

Let's close with a few miscellaneous items, mostly from *mr. magazine* or *media life magazine* (as is true for most of this roundup).

In defense of the American magazine

This [January 12, 2011 piece](#) at *media life magazine* has Diego Vasquez as a byline but appears to be by the MPA president (based on the subtitle "MPA president disputes notion that magazines are in decline"), who seems to be pictured but not named. It's a response to a December 2010 piece that apparently said the outlook for magazines is bleak and predicted that print editions will matter less and less over the coming years. The response begins with this simple (and, I believe, correct) paragraph:

That's wrong.

The response says the outlook for magazines has brightened, that the bond between readers and print magazines is “as strong as ever,” that readership remained (fairly) steady throughout the recession—and that readership among young people is growing.

The piece then takes an odd turn as a defense of *print* magazines:

We are at the advent of possibly the greatest creative revolution in the history of magazines. Our content is incredibly well-suited to digital platforms, especially the tablet. And magazine edit teams—writers, editors, ideographers, photographers and graphic designers—are already creating tablet-friendly content that showcases the enduring qualities of magazine media: curated stories, long-form journalism, a strong sense of community, and award-winning photography and design.

It also says magazine “brands” are selling lots of other stuff, which has been true for a long time. In the end, while it's hard to argue with the final paragraph (below), this is sort of a half-hearted defense of *print* magazines:

It's impossible to know what the future holds for any form of media, especially considering the breathtaking pace of technological development. But we do know that magazine publishers who have successfully positioned their brands to serve their audience and advertisers on all platforms are eager to embrace the future.

The misleading numbers and headlines and the industry that does not care to promote and defend itself!

This [February 10, 2011 piece](#) by Samir Husni at *mr. magazine* is worth reading, even if it is a little ranty. He *correctly* argues with an e-newsletter item with the heading “All Magazines See Declines in Single-Copy Sales,” which was wrong on the facts (as is typical, it's always a mixed bag—for example, in the period discussed that time around, *Vogue*, *Fortune* and *Rolling Stone* were among those with *rising* single-copy sales). Then he goes into an extended complaint about numbers in general, including his own.

A good point: the Audit Bureau of Circulation, quoted in many or most of these “falling newsstand sales” stories, covers fewer than 500 magazines. A less-good point: Husni's claim of “9,200” magazines on newsstands in 2009. Why less good? Because only about one-third of those 9,200 are *magazines*, that is, are published at least four times a year. (There are a lot more than 3,000 magazines, but many magazines aren't widely distributed on newsstands.) Of course, ABC doesn't even cover one-sixth of those magazines, but that's a different issue.

Later, as part of a long series of questions, Husni makes a very good point (useful for those who write off magazines because the huge general-interest magazines are largely gone):

How are the announced numbers this week compare to those of other media industries? Remember when three television networks each had 70 million viewers at any given time? What happened when the total number of television channels changed to 600 plus? Does any of those 600 channels command a 70 million audience on a regular basis? Is TV dead? Is Cable dead? You get my drift.

Well...apart from omitting PBS, it was probably never true that *every* network had “70 million viewers at any given time,” but it’s certainly true that the highest-rated scripted ongoing series on TV today have smaller audiences than all but the lowest-rated scripted network series before the channel explosion. And, other than *AARP The Magazine* and *AARP Bulletin*, no magazine today has even eight million paid circulation (but eighty in the U.S. had more than a million paid circulation [in the second half of 2012](#)).

Readers: Magazines aren’t that bad off

Bill Cromwell’s the one who wrote the “magazines in decline” piece responded to earlier in this section—but [this March 7, 2013 item](#) at *media life magazine* has a different tone, maybe because Cromwell’s reporting on reader responses. The readers are mostly media buyers and others of that ilk, and it’s fair to assume that they’re digitally inclined if they’re reading and responding to the online site.

The occasion of the survey was a plan (since abandoned) by Time Warner to sell off *most* of its magazines to Meredith, the second largest magazine publisher. Instead, Time Warner is spinning off Time Inc. as a separate company this year. With more than 130 magazines, including some of the largest (and now including American Express’ magazine operation), Time Inc. will continue to be the largest magazine publisher by revenue.

While the story here doesn’t mention overall numbers, it does talk about percentages. Only 8% of those responding thought that magazines were in dire straits, while 12% thought the magazine industry was “vital.” In between, 26% said “great but not awful” and 30% said “not as bad as people are saying.”

“Our Audience Wants Print,” Says Steve Lacy, CEO of Meredith. The Breakdown: “2% Digital, 98% Still in Print.”

Husni again, this time [on October 2, 2013](#) at *mr. magazine*. Meredith is the second-largest magazine publisher and specializes in women’s magazines—Husni calls it “the media company that reaches 100 million women.” (The dozen Meredith magazines in the top hundred have a total

of some 25 million subscribers, which is a good start—those magazines include *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Family Circle*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *FamilyFun*.)

The key message is in the title above, but the piece—based on a keynote Lacy did at Husni's conference—is worth reading. For example:

Our sales in print are up more than our sales in digital. Not on a percentage basis but on an absolute basis. Two percent, guys. You have 98 percent that's still in print. I'm a huge believer in the tablet. It's the first time you can bring together what was in print but the seamless transition to digital and we can add video to it, it's got to be a richer experience right, but guess what? She wants print. So we have to do all of it. It's about that simple.

I would love all of our consumers to be rushing to the tablet but in fact industry wide except in some very vertical publications that create time sensitive information, it's 2 percent of the audience. And don't let anyone fool you with other numbers because it's not true.

Note that this is in late 2013, not early 2010. Lacy does claim that Meredith reaches "100 million unduplicated women every month"—including a lot in Meredith's "digital environment," since the magazine "brands" all have websites.

The thing is, Lacy isn't especially *fond* of print: he doesn't regard paper, printing and keeping the USPS solvent as being "particularly valuable to our consumer." He says directly "I would love to get out of the paper business." As for magazines in general and the idea that, because they're not up to digital in putting out headline news, they're doomed:

There is this very unfortunate belief that everything in print is going away. And there are some very challenged print media brands, but in most cases, they are print media brands that create time sensitive information. So, if you didn't read it today, or this week, by the time you get next week's, it's yesterday's news. But most of us are not in that business. We are in an enthusiastic area. The vast majority of the content that we create in this industry is in fact, over the relative near term, evergreen content that can be very easily extended across platform. And I dismiss the naysayers who say, "Oh my god you're in the magazine business, have you bought your coffin yet?" It's simply not the truth.

It does appear that Meredith is a traditional (by which I mean good) publisher when it comes to the advertising/editorial firewall. Here's what he says:

We never mess with the creative group. We've got little creative groups all over the country. We've never fiddled with them. Sometimes they're in remote places. Eating Well is up in Vermont so

it's still up in Vermont. But we bring the sales and marketing together. We bring all the purchasing together. We bring the finance together. And those things that either the consumer customer can't see or the advertising customer can't see, we centralize. We don't mess with the editor-in-chief, we don't mess with the creative vision because that's really how the audience got aggregated.

How Do You Amass A "Fortune" And Learn To Hang Onto It In this Digital Age Of Uncertainty? A Conversation With Andy Serwer, Managing Editor, Fortune Magazine. The Mr. Magazine™ Interview.

This time ([October 11, 2013](#)) it's an interview (or portions of transcriptions of a conversation at that same conference) with Andy Serwer of *Fortune*—a print magazine to which I subscribe (I'm not really in the target audience, but I find it worthwhile).

Serwer says *Fortune* is putting out its biggest issues ever (and says the same is true for *InStyle*, *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*—the latter two *not* from Time Inc.) and says this about that:

[I]f you ask a reader of those magazines if they would buy those magazines if there were no ads in it they'd say of course not. Those ads are part of the experience. And advertisers say "Hallelujah!"

I wonder whether that's as true for *Fortune* as for the others—but it's true that *Fortune* has a *lot* of advertorials, clearly-labeled multipage sections that provide additional editorial copy along with ads, and it's even truer that *Fortune* would either be very slender or cost a lot more if it didn't have lots of relevant ads.

As Husni points out, *Fortune* should be able to handle tough times: It began in the Great Depression—it was founded in 1930—and it had a \$1 cover price when other magazines were going for a nickel or a dime.

Apparently *Fortune* has been "reinvented," although I'm not entirely sure what that means, since it's still a healthy print magazine (with an odd publication pattern, more than monthly but less than fortnightly) with strong online presence. Serwer's another one who speaks of a "transition to digital." He also speaks of "digital dimes and nickels versus print dollars," a useful perspective at this point.

It's an interesting discussion from a person who's not fond of Special Issues but, instead, saw the need to have one of *Fortune*'s big "brands" (Fortune 500, "40 Under 40," top women in business...) represented in every issue.

It's also an interesting perspective on the issue of being a "little tail on a big media company": Time's magazine business, while a multibillion dollar business on its own, is only about 10% of Time Warner—and, not surprisingly, it was being starved for capital. Much better, probably, to be a smaller independent company.

An anecdote regarding editorial/advertising separation (which *Fortune* seems to be good at):

We write stories about the companies that advertises not only in our magazines but in all of Time Inc. magazines and that's not lost on some of these companies. From time to time we have written stories that have pissed off major advertisers of Time Inc. You know in the army when you mess up, you don't have to do pushups, but everyone in the platoon does. There was one in particular that said we're not going to pull ads from you, we're going to pull ads from all the other books. I thought that was really pernicious. The other managing editors were a little ticked off. We're constantly facing those pressures.

As for a shift from print to tablet or online, in this case with a magazine that targets affluent readers:

The other thing about business magazines is that we've got a tech savvy readership. Most of our readers have several smartphones. Everyone's got an Apple phone and a Galaxy Note and tablet and an Amazon device so they're trying everything all the time. Our first instinct is we have to rush into it willy-nilly and we have. Our tablet is fantastic, our tablet app is great and we were fairly early on.

What we discovered early on is that consumers have been a little slower to change over to the tablets and apps than what [we] thought. That's because magazine are a different experience and people are staring at screens all day long to the extent that your magazine is a respite from a screen. That is probably a really important point of differentiation.

Our magazine is information, vital information, but it's also something you can look at to provide, I don't know if it's recreation or relaxation, but a bit of a respite from work even though it's about business because it's often long form journalism, where you want to lean back as they say. In terms of us really pushing that way we've realized that we need to take it easy a little bit. We need to go very strong but not to lose sleep over the fact that our readers are not converting as fast as we thought because the reason is they like the magazine still.

He believes about 25% of *Fortune's* revenue comes from all digital sources, although not much of that is tablet subscriptions.

It's mostly the long-form articles that keep me subscribing to *Fortune*: They're frequently deep investigative journalism, they clearly don't kowtow to advertisers and they're very well done.

If other magazine publishers are as sensible about paying attention to their readers as *Fortune* appears to be, it's fair to assume that by 2020 there will be thousands of print magazines, including most of the larger ones that are around now—even as many of them finally figure out how

to do tablet versions that work really well, either as separate subscriptions or as complements to print.

Flying High, Sipping Whiskey, Reading Rhapsody in First Class. Print is Good. Simon Leslie, Group Publishing Director of Ink, Talks About the Power of Luxury and Print. *The Mr. Magazine™ Interview*

Let's end with an unusual one [from October 14, 2013](#)—another Husni interview, this time regarding a magazine you can't buy on a newsstand and can't subscribe to: *Rhapsody*. It's only available on United Airlines First and Business Class and United lounges. It's monthly, but it's not published by UAL; as with many airline magazines, it's done by a separate company. (That company, Ink Global, produces some three dozen airline and travel company magazines.)

Sidebar: I used to fly American quite a bit: it *does* publish its own magazines, plural: the twice-a-month *American Way* and the quarterly First, Business & lounge *Celebrated Living*. I liked *American Way* well enough that I would have subscribed to it if that had been possible. I see that the full contents of both are available online...which *Rhapsody* apparently is not.

I love this comment:

I had a conversation with an advertiser last week and they said, "Are you producing an app and a website for this?" I said, "Are you insane?" This is a first-class magazine. The only way you're going to get to read this magazine is if you travel first in business class. I'm not opening this up so anybody can just pick it up off the Internet. And she went, "Oh, that makes sense." Hopefully it does. One of the things that has happened, I'd love to say that I was clever enough to forecast this, but the general market of publishing has really helped our business. We publish magazines for 36 airlines all over the globe and we are seeing a little bit of a return to the inflight magazine. One agency said, "You will be the last man standing." And what we have is something that's there, it's three inches in front of their knees and they get to pick up at a time when they're most relaxed. So I don't think our type of media is going away and I hope to think we'll be launching much more of these magazines in the near future.

His company is very much involved in tablet versions—but he thinks ink on paper still has a special place and is likely to do so in the future.

Closing

There you have it—a miscellaneous bunch of items that may tell you more than you want to know about the *reality* of print magazines. Since my own conclusions mostly appear at the top, there's not much more to say here. I was going to include a link to and discussion of "slow media"

and the “slow media manifesto,” as in some ways good magazines—especially monthlies—are by definition slow media. But, sigh, the blog at the site seems to have petered out in 2012 and never did address magazine issues. Then again, it’s a website, and it’s hard to be slow on a fast medium.

The Back

Sound & Vision Redux

Steady readers may remember that I wrote off *Sound & Vision* in late 2012, after using it as an easy target for some time. Not renewing the subscription made me a little sad, as I’ve subscribed to that magazine—mostly under earlier names—for decades.

The magazine originated in 1958 as *HiFi and Music Review*, published by Ziff-Davis. A year later, the name changed to *HiFi Review*. Two years after that, it morphed again into *HiFi/Stereo Review*. The first part was dropped in 1968, leaving *Stereo Review*. I probably started subscribing to it sometime between 1968 and 1973.

I didn’t pay much attention to who published *Stereo Review*, as long as it was good reading and (generally) good information. Apparently Ziff-Davis sold it to CBS Magazines sometime in the 1980s, and CBS Magazines later became Hachette Filipacchi. I *do* remember when the magazine absorbed *High Fidelity* in 1989 and when the magazine became *Stereo Review’s Sound & Vision* (in 1999, according to *Wikipedia*), then just *Sound & Vision*. I would, I suppose, be a grumpy old man if I said that *Sound & Vision* was *never* as good a magazine as *Stereo Review*—it began a slow downward trend that accelerated in recent years (particularly after it was sold to Bonnier Corporation in 2009). For that matter, losing *High Fidelity* as a competitor in the mainstream-audio field didn’t help matters.

When I dropped *Sound & Vision*, I kept *Stereophile*—a very different and much higher-end magazine—and *Home Theater*, sister publication to *Stereophile* and generally, in my opinion, doing a better job covering the same territory as *Sound & Vision*. But...

It’s back. Or, really, the magazine isn’t but the name is. Bonnier sold *Sound & Vision* to Source Interlink Media, which publishes *Home Theater*. Source Interlink merged the two subscription lists—and retained the name with the longer history, *Sound & Vision*. So far, it appears as though the editorial approach is closer to *Home Theater* than to the mostly hollowed-out *Sound & Vision*—and in any case my subscription runs to mid-2019. So you’ll see *Sound & Vision* here and elsewhere as appropriate. But as far as I’m concerned, it’s an entirely different magazine.

Sidenote: The extent to which the new magazine is fundamentally *Home Theater* may be clear to some librarians: The October and November 2013 issues used *Home Theater's* volume and issue numbering (volume 20) rather than *Sound & Vision's* numbering inherited from *Stereo Review* (volume 78). They fixed that and explicitly apologized to librarians in the December 2013 issue.

A Little Deathwatch

Take this item (please). The reborn magazine retained Ken C. Pohlmann as a columnist and as always he's an odd combination of digital triumphalist, sloppy universalist and sad case. Take his October 2013 column, "The Next Big Thing."

He tells us "SACD and DVD-Audio are dead and gone" (in the course of noting that 3D TV hasn't caught on). In fact, quite a few labels continue to release hybrid SACD discs (SACD on one layer, CD on another, compatible with CD players); for example, the San Francisco Symphony's record label typically releases new recordings as hybrid SACDs.

A bit later we get: "Remember SQ Quadraphonic, and QS Quadraphonic? Neither does anyone else." BUZZ. Wrong. *Of course* I remember SQ quad; at one point, I had quite a few of them. (Some have since been rereleased as, ahem, SACD discs, since SACD can support multiple channels.) I would venture to guess that there are tens of thousands of us old farts who still remember SQ. Some of us even remember (shudder) CD-4, RCA's discrete quad LPs that required special cartridges capable of tracking up to 50KHz: It was the chess-playing bear of quad formats.

But then, the whole point (I think) of the column, if there is one, is undermined by Pohlmann's last example of—apparently—possible format wars: 4K TV and OLED. Except that the two are *entirely different* potential improvements in TV—it's like suggesting that plasma and HDTV or self-driving cars and solar panels are competitive technologies.

Of course, it's amusing that Pohlmann is writing off 3DTV, given that many pundits assured us in 2011 and 2012 that *our next TV would be 3D*, whether we liked it or not. Was Pohlmann one of those pundits? I have no idea.

Same shit, different medium

That's the title of Nicholas Carr's [December 21, 2010](#) post at *Rough Type*—a post in which he's quoting Marshall Poe, [writing at George Mason University's History News Network](#). Poe's title is a bit more refined: "The Internet Changes Nothing."

Poe made his first website in 1998 "during the Age of Irrational Exuberance"—a collection of online history links. The site was widely

used by history professors and students. Then, in 2002, Poe forgot to renew the URL...and an Australian purchased the URL and turned it into “Naked Russian Girls.” (I’m working from the Poe article, *not* Carr’s post, which doesn’t quote this.)

Right there, I’d stop and say, “You’ve learned that the Internet does not protect fools.” But that’s not where Poe goes:

We knew the revolution wouldn’t be televised, but many of us really hoped it might be on the Internet. Now we know these hopes were false. There was no Internet Revolution and there will be no Internet Revolution. We will stumble on in more or less exactly the way we did before massive computer networks infiltrated our daily lives. Just look around and you will see that the Singularity is not near. For some reason we don’t want to admit this fact. Media experts still talk as if the Internet is new, as if it is still evolving, as if it will shortly “change everything.”...

[I]t’s time to face facts. The Internet is not new anymore. It’s twenty years old. Commercial television was roughly two decades old in 1970; it was an established medium. No one then heralded TV as a revolutionary new technology. The Internet is not maturing. It is mature. TV’s programming and business models were rock solid in 1970; the new line up was always the old line up slightly modified. No one speculated seriously about any radical new broadcast TV format. Finally, the Internet has not “changed everything.” TV too was supposed to “change everything.” It didn’t. Rather, it altered what we did with our time. Before TV, the week had an extra twenty hours. TV took them away.

The Internet hasn’t even done that. Before the Web we were already used to sitting in front of electronic boxes for hour upon hour. The boxes have now changed, but they are still boxes. Of course the things we do on the Internet are different from those we did (and do) in front of the TV. But it’s important to remember that they are only *different*; they are not new. Think for a moment about what you do on the Internet. Not what you could do, but what you actually do. You email people you know. In an effort to broaden your horizons, you could send email to strangers in, say, China, but you don’t. You read the news. You could read newspapers from distant lands so as to broaden your horizons, but you usually don’t. You watch videos. There are a lot of high-minded educational videos available, but you probably prefer the ones featuring, say, snoring cats. You buy things. Every store in the world has a website, so you could buy all manner of exotic goods. As a rule, however, you buy the things you have always bought from the people who have always sold them... You look things up. The Web is like a bottomless well of information. You can find the answer to almost any question if you’re willing to look. But you generally don’t like to look, so you get your answers from

Wikipedia. Last, you do things you know you shouldn't. The Internet is great for indulging bad habits. It offers endless opportunities to steal electronic goods, look at dirty pictures, and lose your money playing poker. Moreover, it's anonymous. On the Web, you can get what you want and be pretty sure you won't get caught getting it. That's terrifically useful.

There's more to the post, in much the same vein, ending with this:

In the end, the message is the message, and the message transmitted over virtually all modern media, the Internet included, is this: buy something. That's not a bad thing, it's just the way things are in our world. It's time to face it—the Internet changes nothing.

Dystopian? Yes, I think it is—and unfairly so. So does Carr, who has a take on it that I like (noting that I'm not always a Carr fan by any means). He notes that *from a high perspective* Poe's right:

He puts his finger on a tragicomic fundamental of human existence: Whenever we come upon a wild new frontier, we jump up and down and say we're going to restart history, and then we proceed to do exactly what we always do: build houses, shops, brothels, bars, gaming emporiums, churches. And then more shops...

But:

The problem with a high vantage point is that you can't see the details, and if you stand there long enough you begin to believe that the details don't matter. But the details do matter. The texture of our lives is determined not only by what we do but by how we do it. And that's where media play such an important part: they change the how.

There's more in Carr's piece, but that's the core.

Fun with Audio Prices

Yet another installment—with the note that, just because I either can't hear or wouldn't pay for the differences doesn't mean that *somebody* doesn't. Or, for that matter, that some rich folk don't know they're paying for rarity and ostentation, not actual audio quality.

This time it's the Lamm Industries ML3 Signature monoblock power amplifier—and *Stereophile's* "LPs are always better and any sane person can *always* hear the difference in outrageously expensive equipment" reviewer starts out by telling us that video performance, "unlike audio," is based on a standard that establishes aspects of good performance. Because, apparently, "flat from 20Hz to 20kHz within 0.1 DB, with <0.1% THD at rated power" isn't, you know, a *specification* but just some dreamy idea. (The review's in the October 2013 issue.)

The gear in this case: power amplifiers with lots'o'tubes and two big chassis for each channel. Not much power by solid-state standards (32 watts

per channel). 170lbs. weight per channel. (How big? Each chassis is 15.8” wide by 20.2” deep by 8.2” high, and you need a lot of airspace for all those tubes.)

Frequency response isn’t wonderful (it droops at the high end, even in the manufacturer’s specifications) and if you’re so absurd as to actually *want* 0.1% distortion, you’ll get—well, nothing, because most distortion curves *start* higher than 0.1%. For 1% distortion into 8ohms, it looks like you get about eight watts. (You *can* get lower distortion by attaching 16ohm speakers to the 4ohm taps: a whole 4.5 watts under 0.1% and 12 watts at 1%.)

John Atkinson says “The measured performance...may well raise eyebrows,” but says it’s actually *good* for this kind of amplifier. More important, clearly to the reviewer and apparently also to Atkinson, the sound is “magical.”

Michael Fremer, the reviewer, admits that solid-state amplifiers not only measure better than tube amps, they also provide more transparency (they’re *truer to what was recorded*)—but he says “even the best solid-state amps produce an overhyped transient attack not heard live and can sound harmonically drab” and that they often add a “crunchy” sonic aftertaste. What I read here is that tube amplifiers are better *musical instruments*—they don’t reproduce what was recorded so much as they pretty it up.

Fremer admits that the Lamm sounded “lusher and bloomier than life” but it “never failed to create a warm sensation in my chest that flowed up to the brain and lingered there for as long as the tubes glowed.” Later, he takes a crack at objectivity, claiming that the Lamms are so “ruthlessly revealing” of differences among speaker cables that “even The Pathetic Randi would hear them.” If I was a billionaire, I’d love to bet Fremer the price of a pair of these amplifiers that neither Randi nor 8 out of 10 audiophiles would, in a blind test, hear the difference between any reasonably well made speaker cables and the most expensive cables *that don’t induce their own distortions*. But true audiophiles don’t believe in blind tests... Oh, the amp also doesn’t control bass as well as it should, but it was “nimble *enough*” for most purposes. I guess you have to expect compromises to get to a price point.

Any decent \$1,500 receiver would measure better than these monsters and provide a heck of a lot more power, but they wouldn’t be Magical. They also wouldn’t cost—wait for it—\$139,400. That does, to be sure, get you a pair, one for each channel. That’s an American comma, not a European one: it means a price just shy of one hundred and forty thousand dollars.

To put Fremer’s attitude in context, it’s worth quoting a bit of his November 2013 “Analog Corner” column, about a new “cheaper” model of a high-end turntable—the cheaper model going for a mere \$79.500: “I’ve heard that [a new model] may retain many of the Air Force One’s

features...while costing as little as \$20,000.” [Emphasis added.] When you hear \$20,000 for a turntable described with “as little as,” you know you’re in special territory.

Come to think of it, in that same issue he reviews a \$54,000 pair of amplifiers and describes it as “affordable”—but this time he at least has the grace to use scare quotes. (He’s contrasting the amplifier with its big brother, priced at \$140,000/pair.)

One day...

Just for fun, let me mock the back-cover full-page ad, for “The all new DeViolet audio system, from \$6495.” [Emphasis in the original.] It’s apparently the DeViolet D-110, the low end of this French company’s line of integrated amplifiers with digital/audio conversion and streaming built in. It produces 110 watts per channel. The tiny amount of copy calls it “the most successful high-end audio system in the world, the most critically acclaimed, the most purchased, and thanks to its unique ADH® technology, the best measured performance.” Since you can define “high-end” and “audio system” in many ways, there’s probably some definition that would justify these claims. I find it amusing that it’s called (elsewhere) a “complete” audio system—although it still needs a source of music (computer, hard drive, CD player, etc.) and speakers.

But what’s really amazing for this handsome, fairly expensive integrated amplifier is the company’s slogan, which takes up nearly half the page:

One day, everyone will own a Deviolet.

Right. Including the 80%-95% of people (conservative SWAG) who wouldn’t know high-end audio if it bit them on the butt, and those for whom even a \$20 upgrade to the cheapo earbuds that come with MP3 players is too much money for the change in sound.

Well, hell, if you’re going to universalize, why not do it on a grand scale? One day, everyone will drive a Maserati. Or a Bentley.

and off to one side...

Not worth a full minisnark, but I was a little astonished by this in Sam Tellig’s “Sam’s Space” in the November 2013 *Stereophile*:

...on some days, it seems that everyone is trying to turn CD into a legacy format. The gang making war on CDs now includes librarians, who’d like to get rid of books, too. [Emphasis added.]

Whaa? That is, as far as I can remember, the first time Tellig has ever mentioned librarians or libraries. Unfortunately, he’s probably right for *some* librarians; more’s the pity.

Unbundling Media

This [February 23, 2011 piece](#) by Om Malik at *Gigaom*, “Old Media Is Being Unbundled, Just Like Telecom Was,” could belong in a media roundup—but it’s such a classic of mediocre facts and gross generalization that I’d just as soon put it here.

The title tells the story, but Malik uses poor history to go overboard. Just for starters, he says “The large newspaper and magazine companies managed to survive the arrival of radio and television”—as though none of the smaller ones did? In fact, there are hundreds (or thousands) of small magazine publishers in addition to a few dozen large ones, and certainly hundreds of small newspaper publishers, if you include weeklies (which have been doing pretty well).

Malik suggests that media companies are about distribution, not content—and to read his account, you’d assume big magazine publishers somehow control all magazine distribution and single newspaper publishers control newspaper distribution. Not so. Most newsstand magazine distribution is handled by a group of distribution companies that are *not* (by and large) owned by big magazine publishers. At least around these parts, newspaper distributors serve all available newspapers in the area.

Then Malik describes the unbundling of daily newspapers, which is partly true (for advertising revenue) and partly based on Malik’s assumption that all readers find picking-and-choosing from multiple websites to be a wholly acceptable alternative to a daily newspaper. In fact, daily newspapers, while not as healthy as in the past, are still around—in part because we’re not all Malik. He calls those who get their “news” from many webpages “a new kind of information consumer,” but not everybody chooses to be that new kind, at least not all the time. Perhaps as a result, he also overstates the rate to which ad dollars are moving online. In all, it’s an article that just doesn’t fit into a serious discussion of media changes.

If I had to guess, I’d guess Malik’s one of those who believes a magazine is nothing more than a bundle of articles that would be better served up individually, just as he seems to believe that for newspapers. That may be true for Malik. It’s not true for everybody.

Cognitive Surplus Watch

About that TV viewing thing... Consider this [August 14, 2011 piece](#) by Nicholas Carr at *Rough Type*.

Thanks to the Internet, Americans are devoting less of their free time to watching television and more to creating socially useful stuff.

As if.

A year ago, the Nielsen Company reported that Americans' TV viewing hit an all-time record high in the first quarter of 2010, with the average person spending 158 hours and 25 minutes a month in front of the idiot box.* That record didn't last long. Nielsen has released a new media-usage report, and it shows that in the first quarter of 2011, the average American watched TV for 158 hours and 47 minutes a month, up another 0.2 percent and, once again, a new all-time high.* Twenty years into the Web revolution, and we're boob-tubier than ever.

Remember the cognitive surplus, Clay Shirky's wonderful phrase for the vast amount of creative energy released because nobody watches TV anymore? This is where that cognitive surplus is...except that, as Carr continues, those figures *understate* video consumption. Those are literally boob-panel (can't call flatscreens boob-tubes, I guess) figures, time spent in front of the TV. It doesn't include another 4.5 hours of streaming video on a computer—and more than four hours on a cellphone.

Carr also notes that it's not just TV: As of early 2011, people were devoting “200 million minutes a day” of the collective cognitive surplus to playing Angry Birds.

The Low and the High: Update

Since I did a full “low and the high” in July 2013, I'll just do an update this time around—cases where the cheapest or most expensive product in a category in the October 2013 *Stereophile* “Recommended Components” list has changed from April 2013. (*Stereophile* does this massive list—53 pages in the October 2013 issue, of which 16 are ads—twice a year.) I find it amusing that “ratings given components...are based entirely on performance—*ie*, accuracy of reproduction,” given how open some of *Stereophile*'s reviewers are about preferring musicality to accuracy. Once again, cables—which could run tens of dollars or tens of *thousands* of dollars—are not included.

CD-only, A and A+, low price

The CD player (actually a universal disc player) is still Oppo, but now the cheaper BDP-105 is in Class A at \$499. I'm not sure what happened to the Exposure integrated amp, but the bargain unit now appears to be the Bel Canto C7R at \$2,995. For speakers, there's the KEF LS50 Anniversary Model at \$1,499.99 a pair. That brings the total to \$4,994 (rounding up a penny)—a drop of \$1,194, even though the amp's twice as expensive.

CD-only, A and A+, high price

The TAD C600 preamp doesn't include a phono preamp but does sell for \$42,000. The darTZeel NHB-458 monoblocks are now \$163,900 at

December 2013 exchange rates. Looks like we're up \$14,031, for a new total of \$488,208.

CD-only, classes below A, low price

The TEAC combined CD player and receiver is no longer available, so the best bargains are the NAD C-515BEE CD player (\$499) (or the C-516BEE at the same price). But you also now need an integrated amp or receiver, and—curiously enough—the bargain here is also from NAD, the 40WPC NAD C 316BEE at \$379. Still nervous about the absurd \$49 Dayton Audio speakers, I'll go with the \$129.99 Pioneer SP-BS22-LR speakers. We're now up to \$1,007—a big increase, but still not bad.

CD-only, classes below A, high price

Wilson Audio Specialties discontinued the Duettes, so the choice appears to be Stenheim Alumine at \$12,795. So we're down \$1,105 to a mere \$40,393.

Adding LP, A and A+, low price

The VPI Classic-JMW tonearm is \$1,600. No other changes, so the total *extra* is down to a low, low \$10,735, or \$15,729 for the entire system (noting that two-thirds of that is for LPs).

Adding LP, A and A+, high price

The Continuum Caliburn turntable and tonearm is now up to \$200,000. (I erred in the July issue: since the Caliburn—then \$150,000—includes a tonearm, you wouldn't need the \$19,500 Durand Telos tonearm.) The total to *add* LP is now \$274,500. System total? \$762,708. In this case, I'd plan on another \$100K for suitable cables—what the heck, you've already spent three-quarters of a million dollars.

Adding LP, classes below A, low price

No changes. Still \$249. New total price \$1,256.

Adding LP, classes below A, high price

The Artemis Labs SA-1 turntable is up trivially, to \$8,500. Ah, but there's now the Dynamic Sounds Associates Phono II, not good enough for Class A but costing an impressive \$12,000. So the total to add LP is now \$25,394. New total system price \$65,787.

Next time (either six months or a year from now), we'll start fresh. As for me, if I won Mega Millions, had the room and planned to spend more time listening to music? Probably the Oppo, the Bel Canto or a good integrated receiver, and still the Triton Twos. But that's me.

It's All Streaming

Just a quick data note from the news section of the October 2013 *Stereophile*: CD sales represent 71% of German music revenue and 80% of Japanese music revenue—and in South Korea, the world leader in streaming everything, physical music media sales increased by 19% in 2012, while “virtual media” (downloads & streaming) decreased by 25%. As the reporter says, “there’s ample evidence that many music fans still like to own a physical disc of some kind.”

Stamping My Little Foot!

I’ve always tried to give audio extremists like Michael Fremer (*Stereophile*’s chief analog maven, who somehow always finds the most expensive gear to be *massively, audibly* superior to anything cheaper) the benefit of the doubt. He’s apparently wealthy, and maybe his ears really are so much better than mine that I might as well be deaf.

But then there’s this, in his October 2013 column. He talks about his divergent opinions on digital sound from Doug Pomeroy, an audio restoration expert who he admits has experience that “dwarfs his.” He says “I haven’t budged from my opinions about digital in the 12 years since” first talking to Pomeroy—but that’s not the damning part. This is.

Fremer has access to the original digital recordings of a new Tom Wait album, recorded at 24 bits and 96 kHz (as opposed to the 16 bit 44.8 kHz of CDs). He listened to it on “a *very* expensive and superb-sounding digital playback system.” Then he listened to the LP version—which was mastered from those digital files:

I don’t care that it was recorded digitally, then mastered to LP from the same 24/96 files, and I don’t care if the vinyl suffers “euphonic coloration”—it sounded *much* better, and drew me into the music as the files did not. I heard image three-dimensionality and instruments that were harmonically fully fleshed out, in a mix that, via the files, sailed into the silvery backwash. If that’s a result of “euphonic colorations,” bring ‘em on.

I submit that at this point Fremer can no longer be taken seriously as a reviewer of audio reproduction equipment. I don’t see how it is physically possible that converting a digital stream to an LP can result in *more* accurate sound (there can only be losses and distortions). Therefore, he’s saying that LPs are “more musical” *regardless* of accuracy. Up to now, it had never been quite so clear.

What’s even more amusing? Fremer *reviews* digital systems—even though, by his own admission, he can never find them really acceptable.

TEDdy Bears?

I'm clearly not the target audience for TED: Not wealthy or powerful enough to go to the Real Conferences, not willing to sit through streamed video of the lectures, somewhat skeptical of the whole approach. So I've mostly ignored the whole TEDmovement, along with the FastCoCult phenomenon and similar things.

Still, Alex Pareene's [May 21, 2012 Salon](#) article, "Don't mention income inequality please, we're entrepreneurs" tickled me. The tease: "At this point, TED is a massive, money-soaked orgy of self-congratulatory futurism" (There's a graphic consisting of big three-dimensional red TED, with the shadows revealed as \$\$\$.)

The hook, in case you've forgotten, is Nick Hanauer's TED Talk—where he made the argument that "rich people like himself are not in fact job creators and that they should be taxed at a higher rate." To which TED's Chris "Not the *Wired* one" Anderson responded by deciding to not feature Hanauer's talk on TED's site. Hanauer accused Anderson of censorship, which (as Pareene points out) is nonsense, but Anderson's action is still interesting.

In case you're unfamiliar with TED, it is a series of short lectures on a variety of subjects that stream on the Internet, for free. That's it, really, or at least that is all that TED is to most of the people who have even heard of it. For an elite few, though, TED is something more: a lifestyle, an ethos, a bunch of overpriced networking events featuring live entertainment from smart and occasionally famous people.

Before streaming video, TED was a conference — it is not named for a person, but stands for "technology, entertainment and design"—organized by celebrated "information architect" (fancy graphic designer) Richard Saul Wurman. Wurman sold the conference, in 2002, to a nonprofit foundation started and run by former publisher and longtime do-gooder Chris Anderson (not the Chris Anderson of *Wired*). Anderson grew TED from a woolly conference for rich Silicon Valley millionaire nerds to a giant global brand. It has since become a much more exclusive, expensive elite networking experience with a much more prominent public face—the little streaming videos of lectures.

Pareene says TED is one of *those* nonprofits, bringing in "a tremendous amount of money from its members and corporate sponsorships." Naturally, it's acclaimed by *Fast Company* (which Pareene calls "the trade journal of the breathless bullshit industry," although I thought *Wired* dominated that niche), saying TED's folks were "creating a new Harvard."

I didn't realize just *how* expensive TED's actual conferences are: \$7,500 to \$125,000 "donation"—once you get past the admissions

process. Most of us, of course, only encounter the videos, which Pareene calls “a reasonably good video podcast with delusions of grandeur.”

As to the case in point, Anderson’s public face is that the talk was just too mediocre to feature—but he sent email to Hanauer that suggests otherwise, with Anderson’s concern that “a lot of business managers and entrepreneurs would feel insulted” by the argument that multimillionaire executives hire more employees only as a “last resort.”

More in the article. Recommended.

The Newspaper of Record?

Or just another big metro newspaper with pretensions of grandeur? I know, I know, New York is The Home of All Culture and Business, and therefore its hometown newspaper must be the most wonderfullest newspaper there can possibly be, one that everybody who is anybody reads.

It’s also the newspaper that [ran an article](#) on a Silicon Valley sexual harassment suit that begins:

MEN invented the Internet. And not just any men. Men with pocket protectors. Men who idolized Mr. Spock and cried when Steve Jobs died. Nerds. Geeks. Give them their due. Without men, we would never know what our friends were doing five minutes ago. [Emphasis added.]

I didn’t see the article originally, since I don’t read the *New York Times*; I picked up Xenia Jardin’s discussion of it on [June 3, 2012](#) at *boingboing*.

Below the headline (“NYT” and the bolded first sentence of that lede) is a picture of a stern military person and the caption “LIKE HELL THEY DID.” The stern military person is somebody I met once, who had a lot to do with events leading up to the internet: Rear Admiral Grace Hopper. Jardin comments:

You guys, ladies suck at technology and the New York Times is ON IT.

[Radia “Mother of the Internet” Perlman](#) and the ghosts of [RADM Grace Hopper](#), [Ada Lovelace](#) and every woman who worked in technology for the past 150 years frown upon you, sir. Women may have been invisible, but the work we did laid the groundwork for more visible advancements now credited to more famous men.

“Men are credited with inventing the internet.” There. Fixed it for you.

I ragequit this article like, 10 times, and couldn’t get past that awful opening line. But eventually, I managed to put down my frying pan and unbunch my apron, and I sat down on my princess tuffet and asked a man to help me read the whole thing.

Jardin also points out the absurd caption for the photo of the plaintiff in the suit:

Ellen Pao, a partner at the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, has filed a lawsuit contending sexual harassment. The suit has surprised some people in Silicon Valley because Kleiner Perkins is among relatively few such firms there to routinely hire and promote women.

To quote Jardin:

Well, duh. If a VC firm does not hire any women VCs, then there are no women VCs at the firm to sexually harass.

There's more to Jardin's piece, which as usual is worth reading. (I'd also say at least some of the men who participated in creating the internet don't fit the stereotype in that lede, but that's secondary to the appalling first sentence.)

You might also read the Storify of related tweets and some of the comments—including one ignorant person who claims that it really *was* all men. They're quick to write off Hopper (and Hedy Lamarr, responsible for spread-spectrum technology), but have a *little* more trouble with Radia Perlman—and, of course, there were certainly many women involved in the internet's creation, most of them at less publicized levels.

The Last Laptop

I know, I know, citing Farhad Manjoo is as much shooting fish in a barrel as citing *Wired*—but this piece of combined Apple-worship and deathwatch from [June 12, 2012](#) at *Slate* really is too good to pass up. Here's the tease:

Apple's new MacBook Pro is the greatest, and perhaps final, version of the personal computer.

Right. Because *nobody else is going to release any PC model* after June 2012. The party's over...

The first paragraph tells us that Apple is the only company making “any significant profits” from smartphones or tablets: Take that, Samsung! And Apple's counting on us forsaking the “hulking desktops and notebooks that now clutter our lives.” A bit later we learn that Apple “is killing the PC,” apparently single-handedly—and “extending the life of the personal computer” with notebooks like the MacBook Pro. Because, of course, without Apple as the dominant manufacturer, *there would be no notebooks*. Right?

For some reason, Manjoo believes the iPad and the MacBook Air “will have to collide” and one will “win out.” I guess it's *not possible* to have tablets and notebooks coexisting—that wouldn't be the single

unitary path that every technology except, oh, nearly every technology in the past century has taken.

We're then treated to Manjoo's usual explanation of why everything except a Mac is crap and probably just trying to imitate the Air. Let's just quote the last four sentences:

Thanks to Apple, laptop computers have never been better. And, also thanks to Apple, laptops have never been more clearly destined for obsolescence. Let's just enjoy it while it lasts. After all, a faster, less smelly horse would have been pretty awesome, no?

I would comment on Manjoo's seeming familiarity with the hind end of said horse, but that would be mean.

It seems to be impossible to locate comments on older *Slate* articles. I'm guessing those on this bit of nonsense must have been fascinating.

The House of the Future...

...will look exactly the same... er, totally different.

That's the full headline (omitting the first two ellipses) of Curt Hopkins' [June 29, 2012](#) *ars technica* piece, subtitled "Smart systems and smart homes are going to change our lives—or are they?"

The article reports on a Pew Internet report, one of their "let's survey a whole bunch of people we regard as experts" series. (Full admission: A virtual friend who's been one of these experts asked if I'd like to be nominated for the panel. I declined.) In this case the topic—there's always a topic, sometimes in the form of a *very* leading set of statements—was how close we are to a smart world with "smart structures" and the like.

"The result was a fairly even split," said Janna Anderson, director of Elon University's Imagining the Internet Center, "between those who agreed that energy- and money-saving 'smart systems' will be significantly closer to reality in people's homes by 2020 and those who said such homes will still remain a marketing mirage."

Consider the alternatives these "experts" were offered. The hot version:

By 2020, the connected household has become a model of efficiency, as people are able to manage consumption of resources (electricity, water, food, even bandwidth) in ways that place less of a burden on the environment while saving households money. Thanks to what is known as "smart systems," the Home of the Future that has often been foretold is coming closer and closer to becoming a reality.

The cold alternative:

By 2020, most initiatives to embed IP-enabled devices in the home have failed due to difficulties in gaining consumer trust and because of the complexities in using new services. As a result, the home of

2020 looks about the same as the home of 2011 in terms of resource consumption and management. Once again, the Home of the Future does not come to resemble the future projected in the recent past.

The result? 51% to 49% hot to cold, or a tie by any reasonable standard. But let's back up a bit: The reality is that the bulk of homes in 2020 will *be* homes built by 2011, very few of them “smart homes” in any real sense—and retrofitting “smartness” is an expensive process. That may be reflected in the somewhat iffy final sentence of the hot scenario: although “the connected household has become a model of efficiency,” the result is still that the Home of the future “is coming closer and closer to becoming a reality.” (There's something odd about that coming/becoming combo, but that's irrelevant.)

In fact, of course, if two more smart houses are built in 2020 than in 2013, you can say “the Home of the Future is coming closer and closer to becoming a reality”—it would be true if not meaningful.

I didn't include this article in *THE BACK* to make fun of it; it's a good article, treating the subject with appropriate consideration. Consider:

The notion that people in general would want an integrated home is an appealing one to people who are personally inspired by the excitement of technological potential—even moreso perhaps to the people who stand to make serious cash out of the deal, companies like Panasonic (whose rice cooker can allegedly get recipes from your Android), Cisco (who makes the networking tech), IBM (who is selling sensors and consulting to governments from Dubuque to Rio) and General Electric (who is working on networked hospital suites). But many people want their homes to remain an island of stability and, well, hominess.

“People don't seem to want this stuff very much,” said Tracy Rolling, product user-experience evangelist (seriously?) for Nokia. “They like for their homes to be dumb. How many people do you know who have bought one of those alarm-clock coffee pots, loved them for a month, and then stopped using the alarm-clock feature all together? Smart homes are like that on a grand scale.”

Good point, that. I say this as a homeowner who *has* solar panels, who knows how much energy they generate each half-hour (it's a SolarCity installation with its own wi-fi network, and I have access to an individual webpage showing the results, which I can download as a spreadsheet if I'm ~~natty~~ energized enough). We also have a highly efficient HVAC with a reasonably smart thermostat, double-pane windows throughout the house and plantation shutters in every room but one—and I'm pretty much aware of our at-rest power usage (around 50-70 watts, at least before we were forced to use a set-top box). None of this requires “smart house” technologies.

As an aside, I notice that *ars technica* apparently now provides stable dates for its articles rather than the “about a year ago” I was getting. Yay for them. And for making comments available even after nearly two years. Seventy-seven of them on this story, and the second one I see (by “Luhman”) seems to state the reality fairly clearly:

I see the concept of the home of the future as being stuck in the same place it has been since Walt Disney first tried to the concept in the 60's. Adding technology invariable pushes the costs of goods higher. Technology changes to quickly for a regular person to be able to afford the investment. Few people will be willing to afford the investment when the risk of obsolescence is so real. I see few circumstances where an investment in technology actually saves money. There are lots of things I personally would rather spend my money on than smart appliances. I cannot see any real value they would bring to my life or that of my family. I imagine there are many like me, and until the value is real it will be a dream or something obtainable only by wealthy persons who have the means to be early adopters.

Followed by this, from “joshv”:

I live in a decidedly stupid home. It has up to date mechanicals and appliances, most everything new in the last 2 years—but not a single one of them can talk to any others, and none of them are connected to a network, let alone the internet. Am I missing out somehow? Do these things need to talk to each other to be high efficiency? No. Does my dishwasher need to talk to the electrical grid in order to conserve electricity and fail to dry my dishes? Nope, it does that all on its own. Does my TV need to talk to the coffee pot in order to know that it should draw no current when it's off? No.

If I want to conserve, and see that as a positive goal, I will set my thermostat higher (or lower depending on the season), use less water, recycle and compost, use targeted lighting sparingly, and make sure that computers and entertainment units sleep properly when not used, or are plugged into a power strip I can turn off. I fail to see how smart connected devices will help with any of this.

That's the general tenor. Of course, there's one typical American citizen who hosts his own domain, has a surveillance suite, operates an FTP server and...well, you know, just what most of us do. With relatively few exceptions, most *ars technica* readers seem grounded in the real world. Some interesting thoughts about security issues with networked appliances (could a hacker set your oven to max while you're away?)

A Quick Note

A baker's dozen of minisnarks? Around seven thousand words? Isn't that awfully long for THE BACK? Could it be that I was putting stuff together

while waiting for something to happen that would allow me to start in on a big, serious project—and really didn't want to start a big, serious essay while waiting? Is that what you're thinking?

What a scurrilous accusation! Correct, but scurrilous. At least now I've covered items tagged for THE BACK through June 2012. At this rate, I'll be caught up...maybe never.

Masthead

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