



WITH THE STAGGERING AMOUNT OF INFORMATION, DIGITAL AND OTHERWISE, AVAILABLE TO US IN THIS OPENING ACT OF THE 21ST CENTURY, IT'S SURPRISING THAT OUR SENSE OF HISTORY DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE IMPROVED. LEADERS ARE BEFUDDLED BY THINGS THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN PAINFULLY OBVIOUS HAD THEY LOOKED AT A HISTORY BOOK OR TWO. IT'S AS THOUGH THEY ARE DRIVING A CAR WITH NO REAR-VIEW MIRRORS, AND ARE SHOCKED WHEN THEY CHANGE LANES AND GET SMACKED BY THAT OVERTAKING SEMI.

One of the many things a sense of history makes clear is how often, in our love affair with the future, the so-called "accepted wisdom" is willing to schedule a funeral for the present. For example, in the '30s, movies were going to be the death of books. In the '50s, TV was going to be the death of movies. And books. And radio. In the '90s, cable TV was going to be the death of network TV. On and on. And, as has been preached for at least a decade now, the Web is going to be the death of print.

So what does a sense of history tell us about the accepted wisdom? That it is almost never right. The new makes big waves, of course; the new changes the current — but it seldom replaces it. The mix alters, popularity waxes and wanes, but as the wizard kid with the glasses and the funny scar proves, it is always always always about the content, not the delivery method. Which is why young people who live much of their lives on MySpace and can text with their eyes closed are happy to wait in line to dive into a big, fat old-school book. To dive into a world and a set of emotions that come to life in their...what was that thing we all used to have? Oh yes — their imagination.

As the founder and president of a national design and marketing communications firm, someone whose stock-in-trade is the emotion and electricity contained in a powerful image or a well-chosen word, I am constantly asked by my clients whether or not they even need to do a print piece anymore. "Can't we just put it on the Web?" they say. "After all, isn't print dead?"

Well, no, it isn't, and here's why: there will always be a place for the tactile, ultra-portable benefits of print. Don't get me wrong — I love the Web, and there is every bit as much need for the aforementioned powerful images and well-chosen words in the realm of clicks and nav bars. But print will remain the vehicle that does experience best, does emotion best. It doesn't need a battery, you can see it in bright sunlight, it rolls, it folds, it has texture and softness and strength. Done right, it has animation and movement. Print touches people, for the very reason that they can touch it.

Now I'm not a dinosaur. Paper should be recycled — and today should be made from hemp, not trees. Print should be used selectively and intelligently. Information that takes lots of space, or changes frequently, should be left to the Web. In fact, most marketing-oriented print pieces should be portals to the Web. They should excite or motivate or inspire, or — lock your doors, Eunice! — all three. In the world of the Web, there is even less excuse for boring print pieces (or, to my mind, no excuse).

So the next time that the accepted wisdom tells you that print is dead, hold a beautifully designed brochure or book in your hands, open it like a pair of wings, touch it and let it touch you. No keyboard or mouse required.

Just make sure you put your web address on it.

