



A Day in the Print World

By Pete Rivard

September 29, 2005 -- Home from PRINT 05 and winding down my morning stroll with the dogs I rack my brain for some ideas on how to help the marketing guys at the college understand how our lives are intertwined with print, and how to craft that message to the high school crowd. Absent mindedly, I pull the morning paper out of its poly bag advertising some cell phone offer and read that the FEMA guy either was fired or he wasn't and the Northwest mechanics are still on the picket line. The prognosticators in the sports section report that one more loss and our football coach is either going to get canned or he isn't. There's a tack-sharp four-color image of Culpepper firing a frozen rope to a Cincinnati Bengal.

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I wonder if some sort of virtual fly through of McCormick Place would be cool. Maybe something like that, to show the sheer scope of Print 05. All the different stuff--Once in the house, I grab a box of cereal bars, pull one out and briefly admire how the logo on the metalized foil wrapper, doubtless backed by an opaque white, is dialed in to the same logo on the four-color folding carton. I tear open the wrapper and wolf down the contents. How do I interest the average adolescent--who isn't looking past the party on Friday--in an entire career? How to make print relevant?

I pile my laptop bag in the back seat and drive off to work. About six miles shy of the college my route begins to run parallel with the light rail tracks. A two-car commuter train paces alongside me for two or three minutes, both rail cars an insane shade of lime green featuring huge black silhouettes boogying to whatever their iPods are pouring into their ears. Where does a kid come into contact with print, I muse? I barely notice a building with a three-story banner advertising the Cirque de Soleil show running for the next few weeks. I wonder if that was printed with the Scitex Vision that was cranking out 12 foot wide banners in Chicago?

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I stop by my mailbox before heading to the elevator, my box the usual overflowing cornucopia of personalized, colorful postcards, brochures, magazines and envelopes. **Whoa. One of these cards is lenticular. Cool. Can't throw that one out.** Brings to mind those HumanEyes folks at the show, with those eye poppin' 3D pieces. Look, the Konica rep sent a nice thank you card for that BizHub1050 purchase. Classy card stock. C'mon, Pete. Stay on task. How do I explain the relevance of print to the young 'uns?

I make my usual grand entrance into the back of the classroom, with

my steaming Starbuck's coffee cup in hand, their perfectly round logo somehow looking just right on that conical surface. Two young ladies in the back row are scrutinizing the song lyrics on a CD insert, the open tray revealing a CD printed with a spot-on reworking of the 4-color insert. Maybe I'll ask these two for some ideas later.

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The class starts extricating their textbooks from their backpacks. One student idly peels the beautifully printed poly belly band off his water bottle, feigning boredom, though this is the kid that reads everything twice, just waiting to pounce in case the instructor misconstrues an acronym or needs assistance listing all eighteen upgrades of the Postscript3 RIP over the previous technology.

Three or four of us instructors sneak off campus for lunch at the local bistro. I splash iced tea on my menu. No problem, it's laminated. Nicely designed. Has these ghosted back tire treads running behind the typography, which is well organized and a pleasure to behold. Returning to campus after lunch we stroll past Katrina relief posters taped up along the main building's usual traffic patterns. Where do kids interact with print, I wonder? Too bad I wasn't able to get them all down to Chicago for PRINT 05 so they could see all that is really happening in this industry and how print touches so much of their lives.

I come home to see my high school sophomore, resplendent in his Green Day T-shirt listing all 2006 concert dates on the back, parked in front of the GameCube, pouring over a gamer's 'zine for invincibility cheats. He needs to start thinking about where he's going to file all the college mail that should start trickling in this year, increasing to a torrent next. An A student equally adept with the tennis racket and the baritone horn, he's going to get slaughtered with stacks of stochastically rendered leafy campuses.

Oh yeah, the marketing the relevance of print thing. Well, nothing comes to mind today. I'll figure out something tomorrow.

Please offer your feedback to Pete. He can be reached at:

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