



## An Update on Sustainable Print Strategies

In a list of the Top 1000 Paperback Nonfiction sellers through Baker & Taylor this year to date, we find that “green” topics are well-represented in a variety of subject areas, referenced in about 2% of all titles:



93	<i>The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time</i> (Three Rivers Press)
119	<i>Gorgeously Green: 8 Simple Steps to an Earth-Friendly Life</i> (Collins)
225	<i>Go Green, Live Rich</i> (Broadway Books)
236	<i>Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things</i> (North Point)
243	<i>Growing Up Green: Baby and Child Care</i> (Simon & Schuster)
334	<i>Living Like Ed: A Guide to the Eco-Friendly Life</i> (Clarkson Potter)
361	<i>The Hot Topic: What We Can Do About Global Warming</i> (Harcourt Harvest)
577	<i>Silent Spring</i> (Mariner Books)
713	<i>50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth</i> (Hyperion)
724	<i>Plan B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization</i> (W.W. Norton)
764	<i>From the Fryer to the Fuel Tank: The Complete Guide to Using Vegetable Oil As an Alternative Fuel</i> (Tickell Energy Consulting)
790	<i>Solar Power Your Home for Dummies</i> (For Dummies)
817	<i>Green for Life</i> (Greenleaf Prodigy)
855	<i>Green Babies, Sage Moms: The Ultimate Guide to Raising Your Organic Baby</i> (New American Library)
869	<i>Screw It, Let's Do It: 14 Lessons on Making It to the Top While Having Fun and Staying Greener</i> (Virgin Books)
919	<i>Don't Throw It Out: Recycle, Renew and Reuse to Make Things Last</i> (Rodale)
962	<i>Raising Baby Green: The Earth-Friendly Guide to Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Baby Care</i> (Jossey-Bass)
983	<i>365 Ways to Live Green</i> (Adams Media)

Sales rankings accessed via Publisher Alley®.

In terms of awareness and publicity, then, it's been a relatively good year for the environment. But one nagging reservation for authors on “green” topics is this: books, though quiet and unassuming on the shelf, have a rather large carbon footprint. Some considerations:

- Fiber sources and additives used to make paper
- Paper manufacturing by-products
- Printing chemistry and waste
- Publisher proofing
- Bindings and coatings
- Collateral print marketing
- Freight throughout the supply chain

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All manufacturing processes and product supply chains challenge the environment in similar ways, but books are not high on the list of recognized threats. Fuel consumption (automotive and home heating), household chemicals, and household waste occupy the forefront of that arena.

Those who work in the book publishing industry are aware of the impact their businesses have on the environment, however. Pub Alley subscriber Fulcrum Publishing, publisher of such titles as *Stop Global Warming* (2006) and *Going Green* (2008), feels the responsibility to “walk the walk” that their list communicates: says Haley Berry, production editor, “You can’t publish books like those and not think about how your organization is impacting the environment.”

### What can be done?

It may seem hopeless—unless the industry moves exclusively to electronic distribution, sizeable paper fiber and fuel demands will persist. Yet, the industry—to include logging companies, paper mills, merchants, printers, and publishing companies—is taking more steps than the public might imagine toward “sustainable printing.”

### It starts with the trees.

The three offset printers among Alley Talk advertisers—Malloy, Sheridan, and King Printing—have all obtained “chain of custody” certification from the

Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). For a printer, this requires a demonstrated and audited awareness of fiber origin in the paper they supply. In becoming certified, the printer gives its customers the option to label their product as meeting FSC criteria.



**These FSC Product groups contains a mixture of FSC certified material and other controlled sources**

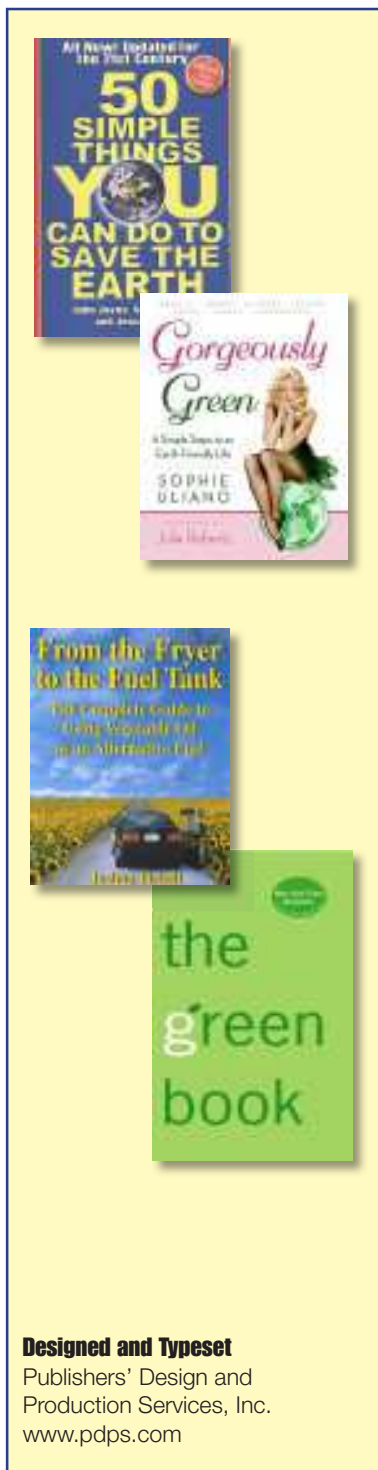


**This FSC product group contains 100% FSC certified materials**



**This FSC product group contains 100% post-consumer reclaimed material**

The FSC is the most well-known certification body, and its logo on a product is accompanied by a statement regarding the source of the wood fiber used in its production. Below are sample labels, which give an indication of how fiber source is described. The “Mixed Sources” label, which is most commonly applied, does leave paper mills some wiggle room: it states that the fiber is from “well-managed forests and other controlled sources.”



The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a similar organization that certifies forests in North America only. It requires disclosure of the percentage of fiber in a product that was derived from an SFI forest (Malloy and King Printing are also SFI certified). Also in North America, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) certifies Canadian companies according to that group's National Standard for Sustainable Forest Management. This is worth noting, since a fair percentage of book paper used in the US comes from Canada.

Throughout the world, only about 10% of forests are certified by any relevant group. In North America, however, this relatively small proportion of forests is the source for much if not most of the paper used to print books.

### No small commitment.

Becoming FSC- or SFI-certified in the chain of custody requires more than lip service from printers, logging companies, paper mills, and paper merchants. There is an up-front financial commitment—perhaps \$10,000 per certified site—and in order to maintain the certification a company must pass regular audits. Often, this means that at least a portion of one employee's job is devoted to maintaining standards within the organization.

### Certified forests versus recycled paper content.

A certified forest pledges to minimize the strain its activities place on the environment, and to compensate for harvests with new growth; it must also demonstrate a commitment to the welfare of forestry workers. Use of fiber from a certified forest, however, does not address any concerns related to recycled paper content. Some major publishers have made commitments to using a percentage of recycled paper in their products:

Random House:	Pledged 30% recycled content for books printed on uncoated stock by 2010. Actual achievement for 2007 was 16%.
Scholastic and Simon & Schuster:	Both pledged 25% recycled content by 2012.

As often happens, smaller presses follow benchmarks established by industry leaders. In the case of recycled paper, the large trade houses are aware of the positive effect their increased demand for recycled paper will have on paper supply.

In the past, recycled book paper was more expensive than paper made from virgin fiber, and to a certain extent this is still the case. There are several factors that determine this, including the cost of recycled pulp on the open mar-



**Fulcrum's Berry describes her perspective, as well as some misgivings:**

"Color work is the most troublesome area, because it's still not really cost effective to print color anywhere other than Asia or Mexico. Besides the fact that most of the coated paper available in those markets does not contain recycled content and is not environmentally certified, a lot of it comes from boreal forest or ancient-growth forests. That's very problematic, not to mention the fact that we have little to no way of knowing or controlling whether labor in those plants is humane, much less environmentally sound."

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ket. Says John Walsh, associate director for design and production at Harvard University Press, "Although the higher PCW (post-consumer waste) content is usually somewhat more expensive, there are opportunities to get more for less." According to Walsh, the key for publishers in accessing this cost-effective recycled stock is to purchase bargain paper themselves and to be on the lookout for competitively priced printer-supplied paper.

At Fulcrum Publishing, Berry agrees that paper with recycled content is generally "the main expense" for publishers considering sustainable print strategies. She sees promise in printer-supplied paper: "Most of our printers have switched to natural house stocks that contain at least 30 percent PCW or PCR (post-consumer recycled). At that level of stocking, the price point they're able to pass along is close to what it would be for a virgin sheet." This is important, since many publishers cannot support the head count required to manage a paper-purchasing program. In addition, there is sometimes a larger minimum order required by mills on recycled stock, presenting a further burden for the small publisher.

### **Beyond the presses.**

It's exciting to see some of the changes taking place behind the scenes at publishing houses as well, since many of these indicate a larger commitment to the cause. Some publishers encourage employees to work from home for at least part of their 40-hour week, recognizing the contribution they can make to fuel conservation. An even larger change can be observed in the way that publishers handle their prepress production work, from reading electronic manuscripts to approving final materials for the printer.

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Not so long ago, it was common for a publisher to submit artwork (later files), receive color "matchprints" and galleys (both film-based and shipped between publisher and printer via overnight courier), and even then, to travel to the printer for a press check in order to provide final approval. Now, film is almost completely absent in prepress, and publishers increasingly recognize the time, cost, and resource savings in checking so-called *soft proofs*—electronic output viewed, and sometimes approved, on-screen. Press checks are extraordinarily rare. The savings in material and transportation, when multiplied by the number of books produced each year (400,000–500,000), is absolutely impressive.



## Being green in a four-color world.

While we consider everything domestically from sustainable forestry to recycled fiber content, chlorine-free paper, the welfare of loggers, soft proofing, and the potential of moving catalogs online (an initiative led by the aptly-named Above the Treeline), there is one area in which another shade of green often trumps our best intentions. For a variety of reasons, four-color (4/C) text printing has traditionally been more costly in the US than in other countries. The increase in fuel costs has cut this margin recently, and American printers can also now bid more competitively by maximizing the economy of digital prepress.

Nevertheless, many US publishers continue to award 4/C jobs to printers abroad.

For some publishers color work is a non-issue, but any major house with juvenile titles confronts the issue as a part of its daily business. The Green Press Initiative, a nonprofit group that works with a variety of industry of stakeholders to advance sustainable and environmentally sound printing practices, recognizes that “there are FSC-certified mills in China and Japan,” but the process of sourcing FSC-certified paper is undoubtedly murkier than it is domestically. Further, the GPI notes, “In Asia there are no government guidelines for delineating postconsumer recycled content as in the US.”

It’s hard to say which market factors will give way first—Will rising fuel costs and technological advances negate the cost advantage of printing overseas for American publishers? Will international influence or competition for American business cause overseas manufacturers to change their practices? Or, will US publishers, authors, and consumers accept higher list prices for books produced domestically, in accordance with their standards? The number of domestic printers who handle four-color book work is diminished, but those who remain stand ready to grow their business. Those of us who follow trends in sustainable printing have our eyes trained on this market segment. To achieve real results in the area of environmentally sound publishing, one way or another, cyan and yellow have to produce a consistent, reliable shade of green.

*Editor’s Note:* The Green Press Initiative, mentioned above, has begun a membership campaign. Book publishers and printers and printers are encouraged to explore the details here:

<http://www.greenpressinitiative.org/membership.htm>

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