How big was the printing industry in 2004 in terms of annual revenue? It seems like a pretty straightforward question — but depending on who you ask, the answer was either $162 billion or $82 billion. How big is the industry in terms of locations? Depending on which source you consult, it’s either 43,000, 34,000 or 27,500. But this question is a little trickier: are we counting companies, establishments, plants, sites or what?

All of this data comes from highly reputable sources that have been tracking the printing industry for decades. So how can the numbers be so radically different? It is, after all, the same industry... isn’t it?

It all comes down to definitions and terminology. Some sources include newspapers as part of the printing industry while others don’t — because they view them as publishers first and foremost who happen to deliver content on newsprint. Others include newspapers but don’t view manufacturers of folding cartons or corrugated boxes or flexible packaging as part of the printing industry. Many times we are left with a mixed bag when market segments are not clearly delineated or are left out of the equation altogether.

This begs the question: “Can we all come to agreement on just what segments comprise the industry?” That’s become a critical point of focus for PRIMIR, the Print Industries Market Information and Research organization. PRIMIR has committed to bring together consultants who regularly publish data on the size and growth prospects of the printing industry to debate and come to resolution on clear and uniform definitions we all can stand on. A desired outcome of this effort would be that consultants would publish their numbers along with footnotes listing the specific industry segments included in their forecast.

As a first step, PRIMIR invited a dozen of the leading industry consultants and hosted an in-depth session on this topic. The debate was intense and animated, and some progress was made. With regard to the question of reporting the size of the industry by number of locations, the group came to agreement on the following hierarchy:

Company → Establishment → Plant

A company may have many establishments and plants at various locations around the country. Some of these establishments may be “sales offices.” For the purposes of identifying viable locations where NPES members may sell products, only “plants” where production takes place are of interest.
Ralph Nappi
NPES President

Strategy is a Commodity, Execution an Art

Last November the business community lost one of the great management gurus of our time, Dr. Peter Drucker, who provided sage advice and many lessons during his six decades of consulting and teaching. The most noteworthy for me was his statement “Strategy is a commodity, execution an art.” How many sound strategic plans sit on shelves gathering dust after months of endless management and staff retreats, debates and discussions?

In 2003, Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan authored the year’s best-selling business book, The Discipline of Getting Things Done, which sends another strong message for today’s business leaders that planning is only part of the equation for success.

Since joining NPES, I have been visiting many members and speaking with many more. One encouraging lesson I’ve learned is that our industry hears Drucker’s point loud and clear. Our member companies understand that strategic planning is only worth something when it’s fulfilled with a clearly-conceived action plan.

Equally encouraging is the message from our members’ customer base. At the NPES Annual Meeting and at the VUE/POINT® advisory meeting in November, I was impressed by print company leaders’ accounts of how they’ve transitioned their businesses to adapt to the changing environment. A brief sampling of soundbites reflects their new approach:

“We offer integrated communication solutions. It’s not just about printing anything anymore.”

“We don’t sell printing; we sell speed.”

“We’re not hiring printing sales reps, but seeking out top flight advertising account executives.”

I hear many such statements from leaders who have been effectively implementing strategies to not only survive but thrive in a declining market.

THIS PAST HOLIDAY SEASON MADE ME RE-THINK THE OLD business adage that I once viewed as untouchable: “Markets make businesses, businesses do not make markets.”

If you subscribe to XM radio or own an iPod, you know that even mature industries like music and entertainment have been completely turned upside down. If there was ever an example of creating a market, here it is. In the fall of 2004, I bought a new car. With the car came a three-month complimentary subscription to XM radio. I joked to family and friends, “Who would ever pay for satellite radio when the car includes a six-CD changer, AM-FM radio with 18 pre-set channels and a cassette player?” After four weeks of using XM radio, I signed up for a three-year subscription!

Another example: Last November some very good friends gave me an iPod. I thought, “That’s cool, but when will I use it?” These days I am listening to digital books and watching Podcasts of Sunday morning news shows. Talk about creating markets! I’m not so sure that when XM and Sirius were doing their market research, customers said “Can you please provide me with 24/7 commercial-free disco music via satellite anytime, anywhere I want it.” And today a very small electronic device with a funny name and designer colors has saved the old-line computer company called Apple. And iPod has little to do with their core competency — computers!

In our industry a similar opportunity and transition is occurring. Recognition of the broader business is vital. Are we in the print business or paper business or are we in the information business? Remember the old railroad axiom? Are the railroad companies in the railroad business or in the transportation business? If iPod is a computer company, maybe the question we need to ask is not what business are we in, but what business should we be in?

THERE’S STILL A HEALTHY OUTLOOK FOR PRINT.

Studies indicate that the catalog and magazine businesses are still in a growth mode. And even in the embattled book publishing industry, people are still more inclined to open a book by a fire on a cold night as opposed to plugging in a notebook computer. Even today’s electronically-savvy college students prefer books to their “e” siblings.

But there is still no doubt the pie is getting smaller for what we currently do. Like our best customers, we must adapt. At the risk of over-simplifying, here are three potential avenues for consideration. The first is determined if you are the low-cost supplier of a product or service to your current marketplace. The second, be a high-end or niche player; third, view the business in an extremely different light by being broader in your consideration of the market and analyze exactly what business you should be in.

Dr. Drucker noted that strategy without execution makes an organization a commodity, NPES cannot afford to be a commodity for your business.

If NPES is good, we help you understand and identify the emerging trends in our industry. If NPES is very good, you look to us to provide strategies to help you deal with those future forces and trends. If NPES is excellent, you will look to us as an integral business partner and consultant to help you implement the strategies that make your organization thrive in the future. ●

Printing Processes vs. Segments

Another factor contributing to confusion is the tendency to report data that is mixed by market segments and printing process. For instance, it’s not unusual to see charts that segment data by commercial printers, packaging printers and “digital” printers. The question here is whether or not “digital” printers are a market segment like commercial printing or a process/technology used by commercial printers. There was much debate about this issue in our first meeting and more discussion will be necessary before agreement can be reached on this. Preliminary agreement was reached on “process” breakdowns for the industry as follows:

- Lithography (Web and Sheetfed Offset)
- Flexography
- Gravure
- Screen Printing
- Letterpress
- Electrophotography/Ink Jet (i.e. digital printing)
- Other

Indeed, there are several consultants and PRIMIR members who are adamant that “digital printers” are a unique market segment...stay tuned for details!

Market Segments vs. Products Produced/Applications

Is direct mail a product produced by a commercial printer, or are there enough printers specializing in direct mail printing to constitute a unique market segment? Similarly, are catalog printers a...
How can the numbers be so radically different? It is, after all, the same industry... isn't it?"
Having served as a consulting economist for NPES for two decades, Michael Evans shows little sign of slowing down. We sat down with him recently to get his thoughts on the global economy, opportunities abroad, and the launch of Worldscan, a new global forecasting publication for NPES members.

What’s been driving you to build up a global outlook in economic forecasting?

All manufacturing is becoming a global economy. In many cases there is no such thing as US company, or a German company or a Japanese company; they’re all internationally linked. We see this trend more perhaps in the auto industry than in others, but it’s coming. You get Part A from this country, Part B from that country, put them all together in Country C and ship them to Country D. If times are not flexible enough to take advantage of cost differentials on a worldwide basis, they’re probably not going to be in business much longer.

Global competition will force tariffs to come down over the next decade.”

It used to be to a large extent that international meant Europe and obviously that’s not the case anymore. Whether you think China or India is going to be the biggest success story of the 21st century, obviously the action is heating up in Asia.

How would you compare the opportunities in India and China?

India is just as big as China, and they have certain advantages that China doesn’t have — like the English language, rule of law, and a stable banking system. Obviously there are disadvantages; everybody knows about the horrendous red tape bureaucracy and lack of infrastructure. Nobody is saying that India is another United States yet. The point is they have a tremendous, enormous growth potential.

Are there other countries in the Asian region that members should be looking at?

The whole Indian subcontinent — Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other smaller countries are certainly going to be an area of explosive growth. Indonesia — that’s over 200 million people, a big country. Other places are emerging as well, smaller countries like the Philippines and Malaysia that are sort of niche product places but are also growing rapidly. The growth tigers had a bad fall in the late 90’s but they’ve come back. You definitely don’t want to ignore Asia.

What about barriers? We’ve heard that tariffs are an issue, especially in our industry.

They are a serious problem, and in my opinion they are going to come down — not in every country every year, but over time, countries that insist on keeping their tariffs high are essentially going to be shut out of world markets and wither on the vine. Global competition will force those tariffs to come down over the next decade or so.

What’s your perspective on doing business in the Middle East?

You have to be very careful about going into the Middle East even if the area you pick is modernized, westernized pro-capitalist, etc. It is the toughest call in the world because the politics change so quickly. I would give it a few more years until things settle down. The Saudi Foreign Minister said recently there’s going to be civil war in Iraq. I don’t know if he’s right or not but these guys are a lot closer to these things than we are and that didn’t sound like a very encouraging forecast to me.

What about Worldscan? What’s your vision for it, what specifically can members anticipate? What should they be expecting from this new publication?

Worldscan is patterned on MarketScan in the sense that the first part is a discussion of the economy and the second part is a discussion of specific product lines of printing machinery and supplies. In the first part I provide brief discussions of most key areas of the world. In the western hemisphere we’ve got the US, Canada, Mexico and Brazil. In Europe we’ve got Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Eastern Europe and Russia. In Asia we have Japan, Korea, China, Australia and India.

I discuss the outlook for all these countries, and try to compare it in most cases to the consensus outlook so that people will know where my views differ on the subject. You can get the consensus anywhere; the point is what’s really going to happen.

From the point of view of NPES member company leaders, what are the top tier
Domestic and international are two entirely different sets of indicators. The indicator that bridges both is obviously what’s going to happen to the value of the dollar and key currencies. The trade weight average of the dollar, or if you happen to do a lot of business in Japan — then the yen would be important or the Euro, whatever it is.

Domestically, you have to have some idea what the Fed is going to do. That’s actually not as difficult as it used to be, because the Fed has become more transparent over the years. For example, if the Fed is going to tighten up on interest rates then you know the economy is not going to grow as fast next year and vice versa. You have to at least be aware of that.

We don’t have as many good measures of the industrial sector as we ought to but new orders are still important. You still want to keep your eye on capital goods, new orders. There is what we call a core rate excluding aircraft and defense, because those orders just bounce up and down. I still follow that one closely.

On the other side, inflation is basically not a problem these days except for materials and energy inflation, which as far as I can tell is not predictable as it depends on geopolitical situations.

Internationally, besides the value of the dollar, you need to take a longer term perspective. You want to see which areas of the world are growing fast and which are not — obviously that’s a big focus of Worldscan.

It seems like you’re getting some enjoyment from the international perspective.

There’s a quote I like that I saw a few years ago: “In the 21st century there’s going to be two kinds of economists: international and unemployed.” I’d rather be the former.

Membership Points of View

Promoting the Potency of Print

For this month’s Point of View, we asked NPES member delegates to share their stance on promoting print as a viable communication medium for the future — in the face of competitive pressures from web and e-media.

Betty LaBaugh
Public Relations Manager
Presstek

“The dynamics of the printing business have changed dramatically with increased competition from alternative communication media. Yet print still has a strong role to play far into the future. Our challenge as an industry is to educate marketing professionals on the most effective means for integrating multiple media — including print — into a multi-channel business communications strategy. The most effective printed communications will be increasingly targeted and relevant to the recipient. As a result, we will see even shorter run lengths and tighter cycle times than we are seeing today.

“At Presstek, our efforts are focused on delivering affordable solutions to our customers that enable them to produce short-run color profitably, yet at a price point that takes into consideration the increasing demands on their customer’s marketing budgets. Presstek is working to make this a reality for the small- to mid-sized printer through the delivery of both educational initiatives and innovative products and services.”

Chris Morrissey
Corporate Vice President, Marketing
Sun Chemical Corporation

“Print is a core business for Sun Chemical. We support initiatives like The Print Council to help keep print at the forefront of the communications scene. Statistics show that print is still the kingpin of the advertising world; and packaging is growing in communication impact — more than ever, it has to jump off the shelf. When you look at new products, pouches, labels...there is more unique printed coverage than ever before. We’re helping to drive the aesthetics of print, in terms of coatings, matte and gloss effects, metallics...all to make the medium more attractive, whether in commercial, publication, or package printing.

Eric Frank
Vice President, Marketing
KBA

“One of the ways KBA promotes print is through technology innovation. We’ve developed presses that print on a wide range of substrates, enabling communication through paper, board, various plastics, even lenticular printing. With an expanded portfolio, printers can better promote their offerings and the medium as a whole.

“We recently introduced the world’s largest printing press, an 81-inch. I’ve been working with a lot of customers on point of purchase and retail marketing, to show the new color capabilities and quality they can get in super large format. So now, stores that might have leaned toward putting their promotional campaign on the internet can take advantage of a very attractive large format print media option.

“KBA is also very active in business development with our customers. When a new equipment purchase is made, we meet with their sales, production and support staff, to develop messaging, expand their marketing horizons, and educate them on the value, versatility, and ROI of print.”
Universal McCann Insider’s Report Projects Growth for Direct Mail; Other Ad Media Are Mixed

The “Insider’s Report” by Robert J. Coen, Senior Vice President and Director of Forecasting at Universal McCann, is a widely cited compilation of current advertising data and predictions for the future. Mr. Coen has spoken and participated at NPES events like PRINT OUTLOOK.

In the most recent edition, Coen notes that when all the numbers are in, 2005 ad spending totals are likely to fall below previous projections...but he also sees strong growth in direct mail and some other print media.

Following are some excerpts from the December 2005 “Insider’s Report” (reprinted with permission).

Universal McCann now expects U.S. advertising in 2005 to total $276.0 billion for a gain of 4.6% over 2004. Last year we forecast that U.S. advertising would increase 6.4% in 2005, but now it is apparent that U.S. ad growth in 2005 fell somewhat below our expectations...

Next year we will look for better advertising growth in the U.S.

Spending for advertising by national advertisers was soft in 2005 in most media except for cable television, direct mail, and the Internet...

Most local retailers have reduced the share of their marketing budget spent on traditional media advertising. Expenditures for price promotion announcements distributed by mail or newspaper inserts have replaced a lot of radio, television and newspaper display ads...

In the past, when the return to higher ad spending has appeared, the trend continued for a number of years until the economic recovery ran out of steam. In 2005, despite reasonably good economic conditions, the advertising expansion faltered and, for the first time in recent history, failed even to keep pace with nominal GDP...

Dot-com consumer advertising continues to grow and these new marketers are expected to expand their role in media and marketing again next year... there are signs that special sectors...like dot.com marketers, have increased their spending in the traditional mass media while also undoubtedly raising budgets for their Internet promotional activities...A cross-analysis indicates that the dot.com expansion in spending has not seriously affected any group.

On an annualized basis, nearly 10 billion more pieces of mail ads have been sent in 2005 compared to the year 2000.

2005 Budgets of National Advertisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>% Change Over 2004</th>
<th>2005 Projections ($000,000)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 TV Networks</td>
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<td>Spot TV</td>
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The Outlook for 2006 National Advertising

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<td>Spot TV</td>
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Spring Meeting in Tucson: Mark your calendar for the NPES Spring Meeting being held March 23-25, 2006 at the Loews Ventana Canyon Resort in Tucson, Arizona. Program and registration materials will be mailed to members later this month. February 22 is the cut-off date for room reservations with the NPES block. Contact the hotel at 520/299-2020 to make your reservation. For more information contact Irene LaBranche at 703/264-7234, or e-mail ilabran@npes.org.

VUE/POINT® Conference Update: The Graphic Arts Show Company (GASC) has released program details for the 2006 VUE/POINT® Conference, April 10-12, at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, FL. Among this year’s sixteen featured panel discussions will be:

- Walking the Walk — A Look at Those Who Have Become More Than Just Printers
- Solution Selling — How to Retool Your Sales Team
- Opportunities in Wide Format Printing
- Remote Workflows Realities
- Ramping Up for Web-To-Print
- Digital Asset Management — Has it Become a Required Offering?
- Building a Business from One-To-One Marketing
- Learning About Lists — The ABCs of List Procurement
- Why You Should Embrace Mailing and Fulfillment

Michael Vinocur, the event’s manager, emphasized that this year’s conference will be more than technology — it will be about growing attendees’ entire business. Attendees are encouraged to bring their families to take advantage of the Conference’s proximity to the many attractions that the Orlando area has to offer, including Disney World, Sea World and more. The Conference registration deadline is February 27. Complete information about VUE/POINT can be found at www.vue-point.com.

Marketing Opportunities in China: China is a ripe market for sales; the country’s printing industry is growing by about 10% yearly. NPES will exhibit product information literature for member companies at two prominent trade shows in China this year; Printing South China in Guangzhou, March 7-10 and All In Print China in Shanghai, June 14-17. Companies participating can enhance their efforts by using the NPES booth and the marketing services of the U.S.-Sino Printing, Publishing and Converting Technologies Training Center. The center can translate literature into Chinese and print on site, as well as refer manufacturers to dealers and distributors. For more information about these services visit www.npes.com.cn and click on e-assistance. To contract for services, contact Greater China Project Director Ya-Ping Zhou at 619/238-4222, or e-mail npeszhou@aol.com.

A new Standard for exchanging variable data to output devices has been approved by ISO. It allows content creators and print providers greater flexibility in design, development, exchange and production of documents by enabling a greater variety of output devices to be used by authoring systems using variable data. The standard specifies the methods for the use of Personalized Print Markup Language (PPML) and the Portable Document Format (PDF) for the exchange or identification of all elements necessary to render a variable data imaging job as intended by the sender. It specifies document layout and content data and makes provision for product intent specifications using the Job Definition Format (JDF) (e.g. paper selection, binding, finishing, etc.). ISO 16612-1, Graphic technology - Variable printing data exchange - Part 1: Using PPML 2.1 and PDF 1.4 (PPML/VDX-2005) has been published as an ISO standard. An order form for this publication is available at www.npes.org/standards/orderform.html. For more information, contact Director of Standards Programs Mary Abbott at 703/264-7229, or mabbott@npes.org.

California Fax Ban extended: A federal judge has extended the stay on aspects of the new California law banning advertising faxes into and out of the state. The original stay was to have expired January 31, but has now been extended through February 27. A decision could be announced before that date. Following the hearing, NPES and other opponents of the law are optimistic that the court will grant a motion for partial summary judgment on the pre-emption issue that only Congress has the authority to regulate interstate commerce. For more information contact Government Affairs Director Mark J. Nuzzaco at 703/264-7200, or e-mail mnuzzaco@npes.org.

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By Steve Lopez

In Defense of Newspapers

I don’t know if you’ve heard the news, but I’m dying. That’s right. I’m a newspaperman. Vultures are circling as I speak. I’m vinyl records. I’m VHS. I’m the Pony Express. In lieu of flowers, please buy me a drink.

They say the cause of imminent death is the flight of readers and advertisers to cable television and the Internet, but let’s not overlook the self-inflicted wounds. In a 30-year career I’ve worked for seven newspapers and three corporate conglomerates referred to by some of my peers as the evil axis: Gannett, Knight Ridder and the Tribune Company.

Despite gargantuan profits by those behemoths, the wizards in charge have skimped on promoting their own newspapers. Wait a minute. Aren’t they in the business of convincing companies they’ve got to advertise to survive? Yes, I understand we’re in the midst of a vast reinvention of the media universe and some of these forces are irreversible. But if our ship is going down, can’t we at least put up a better fight? Make some waves? Send up a flare?

I CAN’T FIGURE OUT WHY, BUT no newspaper executive has ever followed my suggestion on how to properly promote the product. Here’s what I’d do in my TV ad.

A guy is walking down the street. He comes to a newsrack with a fabulous array of headlines and it stops him in his tracks. Now the guy reaches into his pocket for two quarters. Two quarters. What else can you buy for 50 cents?

The moment he plunks the coins into the box you see a shot of our team on the scene in Baghdad, a local politician in handcuffs after a big Page One expose, the sports columnist is going toe-to-toe with the Dodger owner, the car columnist test-driving the sporty new convertible and the perfect shot of the prep stud on a touchdown sprint. I’d point out in my TV ad that 50 cents buys you a seasoned editorial staff of 900 people covering every corner of the world and you also get the TV listings, the box scores, the crossword puzzle and enough coupons to cut the cost of dinner in half.

For these reasons and more, you’re going to miss us when we’re gone. Wait till all you’ve got to choose from is one of the thousands of fly-by-night Internet news sites or one of the millions of blogs posted by unapologetically biased hacks who haven’t left the house in five years. Boy, are you going to miss us.

IF NEWSPAPERS DIE, YOU’LL STILL HAVE radio, sure. But you might also find yourself fiddling with a laptop that keeps crashing the moment it finds the story you want. Even in the best-case scenario, you can’t pass the A section to your wife or husband and take the sports or entertainment page to the bathroom. Divorce rates will spike. As for you older folks out there, imagine trying to read the news of the new Medicare prescription plan on a cell phone screen.

All of this unpleasantness can be avoided, you know. And the cost to you? Two quarters, 50 cents...the last great bargain in America.

Steve Lopez is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times. This piece was transcribed from his commentary on National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” on December 16, 2005.