



More often than not, references to paper and print these days are wrapped around an underlying assumption: that they're things of the past.

Don't you believe it.

Paper and print are far from obsolete. In most cases, they're superior choices to digital text. And now there's more evidence backing up that truth. An article in the April 2013 issue of *Scientific American* states that paper — not digital text — is what the brain prefers. People absorb information better when they read it on paper. The article cites studies done around the globe on the subject.

Two Sides U.S. Inc., a nonprofit organization that strives to promote the responsible production and use of print and paper, addressed the findings in a recent blog. "Since the 1980s, there have been more than 100 comparative studies in the United States, U.K., Taiwan, Sweden, Norway, France and Japan to explore differences of how people read and comprehend on paper versus screens," the blog states. "While technology continues to improve, it still hasn't reached the comprehension level of traditional paper users. What we have learned



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from these studies is that readers prefer real paper over its electronic counterpart and achieve high levels of comprehension and retention with paper.”

No contest

The *Scientific American* article points out that reading from a screen is more mentally taxing than reading from paper. Paper reflects ambient light, but computer screens, tablets and other digital readers shine light on people’s faces. Over time, reading on screens can cause eyestrain, headaches and blurred vision. The overall effect is a diminished ability to concentrate.

But paper has more going for it than kindness to the eyes. As the Two Sides blog says, researchers have found that the very layout and form of a printed book helps the reader. “When recalling a passage, people often picture it on the page,” the blog explains. “An open book’s many corners are landmarks that make such memories stronger.” The thickness of read and unread pages help, too, and give people a better-defined sense of space than a screen can provide.

The *Scientific American* article isn’t the first source to make a case for the benefits of printed reading materials. An essay in “Paper Because: 28 Collected Essays,” published in 2012 by paper manufacturer Domtar, covers the subject in detail. “It has been proven that paper is a better tool for fully assimilating information,” the essay states. “Researchers at Cambridge University based this conclusion on a number of factors ranging from the ease and speed of visually/spatially locating content on a printed page compared to a screen, to the distractions of reading online, and the functionality of a screen-based document compared to the printed version.”

The subject also is visited in an October 2012 article in *Education News* about an FCC plan to transition students away from paper. “There seems to be a growing amount of research suggesting that retention is a problem with information gained from a computer screen opposed to reading from the page of the book,” says the article, which cites the research of psychology lecturer Kate Garland of the University of Leicester in England. In her study, Garland presented psychology students with economics material they weren’t familiar with in digital and printed formats. Students had to read the digital material several times to gain the same level of understanding they got from the print versions.

In another study involving university students — this one was conducted by the University of Virginia Darden School of Business — 75 to 80 percent of the participating students using a Kindle device indicated they would not recommend it for in-class learning. The students said the digital reader was too rigid for use in a fast-paced classroom environment and does not lend itself to moving between pages, documents, charts and graphs as easily as paper alternatives.

In addition, a study at Princeton University said the classroom experience actually was “somewhat worsened” by using an eReader instead of textbooks.

A touching read

The sensation of handling paper is an important part of the reading and learning experience, says Anne Magan, a Norwegian researcher quoted in the Domtar essay. “The feeling of literally



being in touch with the text is lost when your actions — clicking on the mouse, pointing on touch screens or scrolling with keys or on touch pads — takes place at a distance from the original text, which is somehow, somewhere inside the computer, the e-book or the mobile phone,” she says. “Materiality matters...One main effect of the intangibility of the digital text is that of making us read in a shallower, less focused way.”

The *Scientific American* article addresses the physical nature of reading printed material, too. “When reading a paper book, one can feel the paper and ink and smooth or fold a page with one’s fingers; the pages make a distinctive sound when turned; and underlining or highlighting a sentence with ink permanently alters the paper’s chemistry.” These experiences matter to the reader more than one would think.

In the end, research on the effectiveness of learning from paper sources compared to screens only helps strengthen the case that people in the printing and publishing industries have made for years.

As the Two Sides blog says, “(Paper) fills a key society role by helping readers create their own unique experience whether it is through learning and study habits or getting personally involved in a work of fiction.”

Put another way, paper isn’t going anywhere. 

One on one

JPA profile: Brock Isenberg, quality, binding department
Number of years with JPA: 3 years (with 39 years of experience in pre-press areas)

Why he loves JPA: "I like the small-company feel," Isenberg said. "I enjoy getting on the floor and helping people out. I like the teamwork and communication."



Debbie and Brock Isenberg



Bride and groom Ashton and Bob share a happy day with Patricia, Alexis and Stacey (at left) and Brock, Debbie and Tara (at right). Grandsons Devonte and Jacob are in front.

Family life: Isenberg and his wife, Debbie, have been married for more than 20 years. "She's a great partner," Isenberg said, "and I have four wonderful daughters." Those daughters are Patricia, 30; Stacey, 27; Ashton, 25; and Tara, 19. Tara is a student at Illinois Wesleyan College. The others are out of the house, but still relatively nearby. The family gets together occasionally for picnics, short trips and holiday celebrations. In addition to his daughters, Isenberg has three grandchildren ranging

in age from 9 to 13 and a beloved Shih Tzu named Winnie. "She walks me, so she's like another boss in the family," he said. Being the only male in the house can be tiring at times, Isenberg admits. During those moments, he takes refuge in one of his two man caves.

Hobbies: Isenberg is an avid traveler and has visited, so far, 43 U.S. states. When he's home, he loves grilling (year-round), fishing and watching sporting events. "I'm sports crazy: football, baseball, basketball, hockey, NASCAR. I love it all." Isenberg is even more likely to be watching the game if the St. Louis Cardinals are playing. He's a huge fan of the baseball team. Additional interests include growing tomatoes and flowers. Isenberg enjoys his hobbies, he said, but he finds work rewarding, too. "I've been working since I was 9."

One cool fact: Isenberg says he'll never take his life for granted. "I was just lucky to be born," he said. "One of my grandfathers was shot in World War I, and the other was shot in World War II." Isenberg enjoys exploring history through his collections, including beer mugs and clocks. He has a timepiece dating back to 1843. "I'm just hoping they'll be worth something when I'm gone," he said. 📷

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RECIPE

Chocolate Éclair Dessert

- 2 individual packages of graham crackers
- 2 3-ounce packages of instant vanilla pudding mix
- 3 cups of milk
- 1 8-ounce container of frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 16-ounce package of prepared chocolate frosting

Line the bottom of a 9x13 inch pan with graham crackers. In a large bowl, combine the pudding mix and milk and stir well. Next, stir in the whipped topping. Spread half of the mixture over the graham cracker layer. Top with another layer of graham crackers and the remaining pudding. Top all with a final layer of graham crackers and frost with chocolate frosting. Refrigerate until serving.

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