

## The Medium and the Message

By Sam Vaknin, Ph.D.

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A debate is raging in e-publishing circles: should content be encrypted and protected (the Barnes and Noble or Digital goods model) - or should it be distributed freely and thus serve as a form of viral marketing (Seth Godin's "ideavirus")? Publishers fear that freely distributed and cost-free "cracked" e-books will cannibalize print books to oblivion.

The more paranoid point at the music industry. It failed to co-opt the emerging peer-to-peer platforms (Napster) and to offer a viable digital assets management system with an equitable sharing of royalties. The results? A protracted legal battle and piracy run amok. "Publishers" - goes this creed - "are positioned to incorporate encryption and protection measures at the very inception of the digital publishing industry. They ought to learn the lesson."

But this view ignores a vital difference between sound and text. In music, what matter are the song or the musical piece. The medium (or carrier, or packing) is marginal and interchangeable. A CD, an audio cassette, or an MP3 player are all fine, as far as the consumer is concerned. The listener bases his or her purchasing decisions on sound quality and the faithfulness of reproduction of the listening experience (for instance, in a concert hall). This is a very narrow, rational, measurable and quantifiable criterion.

Not so with text.

Content is only one element of many of equal footing underlying the decision to purchase a specific text-"carrier" (medium). Various media encapsulating IDENTICAL text will still fare differently. Hence the failure of CD-ROMs and e-learning. People tend to consume content in other formats or media, even if it is fully available to them or even owned by them in one specific medium. People prefer to pay to listen to live lectures rather than read freely available online transcripts. Libraries buy print journals even when they have subscribed to the full text online versions of the very same publications. And consumers overwhelmingly prefer to purchase books in print rather than their e-versions.

This is partly a question of the slow demise of old habits. E-books have yet to develop the user-friendliness, platform-independence, portability, brows ability and many other attributes of this ingenious medium, the Gutenberg tome. But it also has to do with marketing psychology. Where text (or text equivalents, such as speech) is concerned,

the medium is at least as important as the message. And this will hold true even when e-books catch up with their print brethren technologically.

There is no doubting that finally e-books will surpass print books as a medium and offer numerous options: hyperlinks within the e-book and without it - to web content, reference works, etc., embedded instant shopping and ordering links, divergent, user-interactive, decision driven plotlines, interaction with other e-books (using Bluetooth or another wireless standard), collaborative authoring, gaming and community activities, automatically or periodically updated content, ,multimedia capabilities, database, Favourites and History Maintenance (records of reading habits, shopping habits, interaction with other readers, plot related decisions and much more), automatic and embedded audio conversion and translation capabilities, full wireless piconetworking and scatternetworking capabilities and more.

The same textual content will be available in the future in various media. Ostensibly, consumers should gravitate to the feature-rich and much cheaper e-book. But they won't - because the medium is as important as the text message. It is not enough to own the same content, or to gain access to the same message. Ownership of the right medium does count. Print books offer connectivity within an historical context (tradition). E-books are cold and impersonal, alienated and detached. The printed word offers permanence. Digital text is ephemeral (as anyone whose writings perished in the recent dot.com bloodbath or Deja takeover by Google can attest). Printed volumes are a whole sensorium, a sensual experience - olfactory and tactile and visual. E-books are one dimensional in comparison. These are differences that cannot be overcome, not even with the advent of digital "ink" on digital "paper". They will keep the print book alive and publishers' revenues flowing.

People buy printed matter not merely because of its content. If this were true e-books will have won the day. Print books are a packaged experience, the substance of life. People buy the medium as often and as much as they buy the message it encapsulates. It is impossible to compete with this mystique. Safe in this knowledge, publishers should let go and impose on e-books "encryption" and "protection" levels as rigorous as they do on their print books. The latter are here to stay alongside the former. With the proper pricing and a modicum of trust, e-books may even end up promoting the old and trusted print versions.

Sam Vaknin is the author of "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited" and "After the Rain - How the West Lost the East". He is a columnist in "Central Europe Review", United Press International (UPI) and ebookweb.org and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in The Open Directory, Suite101 and searcheurope.com. Until recently, he served as the Economic Advisor to the Government of Macedonia.

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Condensers - The Liquid Producers

By Thomas Yoon

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Some people call them capacitors. Others call them condensers. These components store electrical charges.

Mechanical systems also have condensers. Condensers are found underneath steam turbines. Air-conditioning systems have condensers too.

How this name came about is a mystery to me. Perhaps it is because the condenser is the place for converting vapor or gas into liquid - at least for mechanical systems.

So it is a kind of heat exchanger. What is the cooling medium?

For air-conditioning systems, the most common cooling medium is water and air. The vapor to be cooled is the refrigerant. And you've guessed it... It changes hot refrigerant gas into liquid.

When it does that, heat energy is removed from the refrigerant. The heat gets transferred to the cooling medium.

Actually that's how heat is removed from air-conditioned space. The heat from a building is transferred to the refrigerant through cooling coils. This heat is then transferred to the condenser. The heat is then transferred to the cooling medium. The cooling medium finally transfers the heat to the atmosphere or to the sea.

Of course, there are many other components in between to make the system work.

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