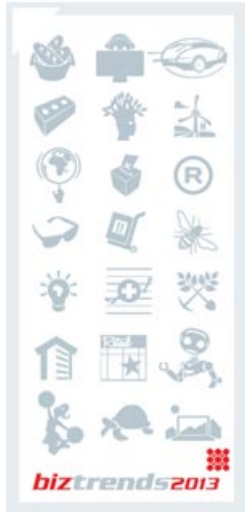


# Who said magazines are dead?

 By Sue Disler

14 Jan 2013

What an interesting dilemma it was for me moving into publishing almost three years ago. The glossy was HERO and *digital* was a very, very bad word indeed. The environment was not dissimilar to the ad industry - and the old adage of "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" reared its ugly head - again!



But I was excited that, for first time, I could really get to grips with CONTENT. In advertising that's the missing, quintessential link. The beauty of publishing is we, as publishers, are sitting with copious amounts of content, all of which people really want to read (and yes "engage" with).

## Historical, time-stamped journey

In order to understand where I am headed here, let me contextualise my thinking by way of illustrating a historical, time-stamped journey of sorts:

- The world's first magazine, *Erbauliche Monats-Unterredungen* (*Edifying Monthly Discussions*) was published in Germany in **1663**. I am not sure how riveting - but first none the less!
- The oldest consumer magazine still in print, [The Scots Magazine](#), is apparently the world's best-selling Scottish-interest publication and has been around since **1739**. It has a circulation of 28 357 with over 100 000 readers monthly, a website, iOS apps, 960 Facebook fans and 3007 Twitter followers - for a rather niche market, that's not bad!
- In **1843** [The Economist](#) began examining news, politics, business, science and the arts. Currently, it prints 1 474 803 weekly, has 6 824 623 traffic globally and are accessed by 650 000 unique devices via iOS and Android monthly. It also has 1 306 289 Facebook fans and 2 695 187 followers on Twitter. In 1946, it started the *Economist Intelligence Unit*, a service for clients to tap into their research and audience. More recently, it added a content marketing arm and acquired a content-focused PR shop, essentially to act more like agencies in helping brands strategise, create and distribute branded content.
- [The Atlantic Monthly](#) was founded in **1857** by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and others. Nowadays, it attracts its print, digital, live, and mobile audience with breakthrough insights into the worlds of politics, business, technology, culture, and the arts. It prints 10 issues a year (1,16 million readers a month), was voted one of the 50 best websites by *Time* in 2012 (5 million users per month), has 3,2 million mobile users each month and full digital mag versions available on Kindle, Nook and Google Newsstand. Bookmark them if you haven't already.
- In **1899**, [National Geographic](#) first appeared. Today, it "strives to inspire, educate, and empower the audience by delivering world-class editorial content, using state-of-the-art multi-media tools, in a highly informative, entertaining, and visually compelling format". And it certainly does that, with 20 million uniques globally, 215,48 million unique page views, 5,79 million video views. Its YouTube channel has enjoyed 859 714 457 video views since May 2006 and currently has 1 264 426 channel subscribers. It also has 10,73 million Facebook fans, 1,98 million Twitter followers and has won 2 Webbys in 2012: Best Green Website (People's Voice) and Best Online Magazine (People's Voice).
- South Africa's very own [Farmers Weekly](#), established in **1911**, also sports a website, Facebook page, Twitter following and digital magazine.
- *De Huisgenoot* (now SA's largest circulating print title [Huisgenoot](#)), came on the scene in **1916**, with President Paul Kruger on the cover. The first ad for that issue incidentally was for Stuttafords. It has 198 140 Facebook fans and 27 114 Twitter followers, apps and 64 762 uniques a month on its website.
- Condé Nast launched [Vanity Fair](#) in **1914**.
- **1933** saw [Esquire](#) launch the first men's magazine.
- The first magazine devoted to adolescents, [Seventeen](#), graced the shelves in **1944**.
- [Drum](#) launched in **1951** and with a website attracting 47 138 uniques a month, apps, a YouTube channel, 38 013

Twitter followers and 68 648 Facebook fans, it's safe to say it's still popular.

- Television's popularity resulted in a major drop in ad revenue and circulation in the "50s, so in **1953** [TV Guide Magazine](#) made an entrance.
- [Fair Lady](#), born in March **1965**, prints 56 986 copies with a readership of 737 000 each month, has 10 650 Facebook fans, 7121 twitter followers, two websites plus Zinio editions.
- In **1967**, [Rolling Stone](#) launched - the start of popular special-interest magazines.
- [People](#) launched in **1974** with Mia Farrow on the cover, heralding an explosion in niche magazines that continues today.
- **1987** saw SA weekly [You](#) launched. It has 49 628 Facebook fans, 18 161 Twitter followers, Youtube channel, app and 35 796 monthly uniques.
- In the '90s, magazines began to publish on the Internet and, in **1993**, [Wired](#) arrived with avid curiosity.
- From **2000** onwards, we saw Zines - Internet only magazines published by thousands of home-based publishers.
- Then the digital newsstands started to appear on Apple's iTunes, Google Play, [Amazon's Kindle](#), [Barnes & Noble's Nook](#), [Next Issue](#), [Zinio](#), the "new kid" on the block, [Magzter](#) currently doing the rounds in SA) plus SA's very own [Snapplify](#) making it easier for publishers to distribute, save costs and, of course, make money!

And I could go on... but all of above illustrates that the magazine (or rather magazine-type content) is clearly not dead in print, nor digitally. In fact it has survived, and adapted, happily to the times/media/technology and by all accounts will continue to do so!

I won't go into the nitty-gritty, but when I suddenly started hearing our editorial teams conceptualising how content spanning social media, apps, web, mobile, print of course, but offline channels too, I knew the old dogs had learnt new tricks, including me :)

### Proof is in the pudding

The proof, however, is in the pudding with Vodacom's [now!](#) [disclaimer: New Media client], that's now non-issue-based and responsively designed mainly for mobile devices. Mercedes' [MBlife](#) [disclaimer: New Media client] follows a similar strategy complementing a quarterly print magazine. [Eat Out](#) [disclaimer: New Media client] is accessible not only via website, app, Facebook and Twitter, but also via the [Go! travel app](#), [iafrica.com](#) and built into the free [Telmap Navigator](#) sat nav app available on iOS, Blackberry and Android too.

Technology is purely the enabler... we could be publishing via [3D printing](#) some time very soon. Ultimately, though, it's content that fuels the trends, and to quote [David Armano](#):

**"In 2013, content will not only be king, but queen, prince and jester, too!"**

Stats sources: [Effective Measure](#) and various magazine websites.

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Updated 9.12am on 16 January 2013: *Fair Lady* information added.

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