
In recent years, the rise of digital tools for processing, storing and sharing information has made it possible for us to rely less on print resources in our work and daily lives. Faced with the clear environmental costs of paper production, many of us hope that “going paperless” will help us to save trees and reduce our carbon footprint. However, the energy required to power data servers and electronic devices has a massive and growing carbon footprint of its own.

Faced with these tradeoffs, how can you choose the best option to promote your event? This Impact Guide outlines the environmental impacts of both paper and digital media to empower you to choose the most appropriate option to meet your event promotion needs.

The Hidden Carbon Footprint of Digital Media

It’s no secret that it takes energy to power our computers, smartphones and tablets. However, a lot of the energy our devices use is consumed behind the scenes by the data centres where our files are stored, managed and shared.

While going off the grid isn’t a reasonable solution, you can still reduce your digital footprint by managing your data use responsibly.

- Think carefully about which records you need to store and for how long. Delete unnecessary files as often as you can.
- Whenever possible, try to avoid sending emails with large file attachments.

Consult the following University policies for further guidance about when and how to dispose of digital records:

- Electronic Communications Policy: “Authorized Users shall routinely identify, separate and remove unwanted and unneeded junk mail, non-records, transitory information and personal mail from the Electronic Communication System.”
- Master Records Retention Schedule (MaRRS): Consult MaRRS to determine how long University records must be kept and when they should be deleted or destroyed.

Researchers estimate that communications technology could be responsible for up to 23% of global greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.


DID YOU KNOW?

West Canadian Digital Imaging prints all documents on FSC-certified paper.
Responsible Printing Tips

- **Print less.** Think carefully about how many posters, flyers, or handouts you actually need before you print. If you can print handouts double-sided or find a creative way to avoid printing them in the first place, do it!
- **Right-size your posters and flyers to minimize paper use.** Does your poster need to take up a full sheet of paper, or would a promotional postcard serve the same purpose?
- **Right-source the most sustainable paper option before you print.**
  - Whenever possible, choosing paper with high (70-100 per cent) recycled content (i.e. FSC Recycled label) helps to reduce the environmental impact of virgin paper production and diverts paper waste from the landfill.
  - Printing on Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified paper guarantees that your paper was sourced appropriately from sustainably-managed forests. Choosing FSC 100% paper means that all the wood used to make the paper came from FSC-certified forests.
  - Speak to your print shop about printing on recycled paper before you place your order. Budget for an additional charge for recycled paper.

Discussion Guide

When discussing ways to minimize your event’s promotional footprint issues with your planning team, you may wish to consider some of the following questions and ideas.

- **Event Planning:**
  - How do you share information with your team? Is it possible to share more information in face-to-face meetings?
  - How regularly do you delete temporary and unnecessary records from your email account, computer, or shared drives?

- **Event Promotion:**
  - As an alternative to printed posters, can you use an electronic bulletin board (EBB) in MacEwan Hall or the Taylor Family Digital Library to promote your event? EBBs operate at all times in high-traffic areas and do not rely on data streaming or cloud storage.
  - Can you print your promotional materials at reduced size or on recycled paper?
  - As an alternative to printing and mailing traditional invitations, can you use marketing software (i.e. Marketo) to send invitations and gather digital RSVPs?

- **During and After the Event:**
  - If you will be sharing handouts during the event, what is their goal? Can you print them double-sided, or would it be more appropriate to present the same information digitally (i.e. in the presenter’s PowerPoint) instead?
  - Can you use survey programs (i.e. Qualtrics) to gather and process post-program feedback?

Further Reading

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