

Celebrating the Printed Word

Transcribed by Evernote

Good evening.

I rejoice in the printed word. I celebrate the printed word. The printed word is most everything. The printed word is an awesome spectacle. It makes everything wonderful.

Often times people believe there are competitors to the printed word vying for our attention. One of these many people naturally consider a competitor is none other than television. There's a number of reasons people compare and contrast television to printed word. One of the greatest the contrast between the two was put in the book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* by Neil Postman. He didn't contrast the two based on content, but instead based on structure, based on the way he believes they organize our minds. He says, "There are two types of minds: a typographic mind and a telegraphic mind." He says, "the typographic mind is based on reading printed work. He says this type of mind is based in text and information. He says this mind is a more

evolved, intellectual, sophisticated, advanced, and developed mind. While he says The telegraphic mind is based on the images and sounds of television. He says this type of mind is less evolved, less intelligent, less sophisticated, less advanced.”

Once, after giving a presentation, I received some very illuminating feedback. The person said to me, “When I speak, it is as if I am reading a book.” Why would this be the case? I think it might have to do with the fact I don't consume television. I read and write. Thus, my mind thinks in the typographic way. I'm not suggesting I am superior to anyone else. What I am suggesting is if you give up television, if you read, instead of watching television, you can develop a different way of thinking. Certainly, he is suggesting the way I'm thinking, perhaps, is thinking along lines of text, of information, not images. Thus, it may seem so different the way I speak to the way other people speak. I believe this could happen to anyone else who doesn't consume television. I wonder... How that would happen. I imagine it certainly would.

Sometimes people consider computers to be just like television. For a number of reasons, I don't believe this to be the case. There was an excellent website

which listed some reasons. One of the reasons they didn't list gets back to Neil Postman's entire thesis. Computers The Internet are based in text, in information. The whole information age, the information superhighway denotes this is founded on information. Therefore, I conclude the Internet and computers are typographic, not telegraphic. When you're on the Internet, there's lots of words out there. That is the foundation of the Internet. Therefore, you are developing a typographic mind by... Going on the computer, which you are not doing by going on television.

Sadly, reading is considered repulsive to many. It's surprising to see, very sad and shocking to see, lots of people not liking reading. I personally find this hard to understand.

I find reading very enjoyable. I find it very pleasurable. It's one of my favorite pastimes. Many people believe it's a chore, it's a burden. It's a difficult task to get through. There has been a couple of reasons proposed why people don't like to read these days. One of these is by homeschoolers. Homeschoolers say our school system gets people to not like learning. Reading is a central part of

learning because it associates anxiety with the learning process [say the homeschoolers]. They say the school system makes learning unenjoyable, therefore people don't want to better themselves.

There is another reason why people don't read much these days. Some say it's because television divides for their attention, not only in the amount of time they spend But they say the way television structures one's mind, it makes one less desirable to want to read because they are hyper-stimulated by the television. They cannot get that same hyper-stimulation through reading. It's very sad when television can do this to us.

Computers have an interesting role today. Some believe computers are going to lead us to a paperless society. Some say that is where we should go. I personally have a problem with this. I don't want us to have a paperless society. A paperless society, to me, has something wrong with it. Fortunately, some say this is not going to happen.

I saw one excellent display at the Viterbo College in La Crosse, Wisconsin, which listed a number of reasons why we are not going to become a paperless society in the near future. To me, I believe we are

living in a very special time. Today we both have the electronic word and the printed word. Those in the past didn't have electronic word. Those in the future may not have the printed word. Therefore, we can reap the benefits of both. I don't believe one is better than the other. I believe they both have their functions and uses. Therefore, I believe it's best to try to have a balance of the two, to have a society where we can have the benefits of both. If we are only having one, we will be missing out.

I see signs everywhere that we are leaving this modern age we have been a part of for so long. It seems to me we are entering a postmodern age. I am very saddened to see this because I believe there are areas of postmodern age which trouble me. There are areas of the modern age which I find very virtuous. Many historians consider the pretty press, specifically Gutenberg's movable type, to be one of the greatest inventions of the modern age. I would even go as far as saying it's a quintessential invention of the modern age. I would suggest this invention is the foundation of the modern age. Any age which is founded on a printed word certainly has something going for it. If we are to become a postmodern society, we will be founded on something else. Since I believe so strongly in the printed word, I can't believe something else will be

superior to the printed word. Therefore, whatever we are founded on, to me, I believe, will be inferior.

There are a couple of main types of printed word. We have the academic professional type of printed work. Also the non-academic, non-professional, layperson printed work. Is one better than the other? No. They both have their purposes. If we want to kick back and relax, we're probably going to read a layperson book. If we want to find some important information, some statistics, some research, we want to do a paper, we'll probably go to academic research. Printed word. All depends what we need. Therefore, I believe we need both of them.

I believe the library is one of the greatest institutions out there. It is, of course, a place where we have lots of printed word. These days we have other media too. It's free. It's one of the greatest forms of entertainment for any price. It is a great use of tax dollars. In fact, I would even suggest it's a great example of socialism done right. The library is using the government to do something good, something very positive. In fact, in this one desk reference book, I read this figure that only 1-2% of our taxes go to libraries, yet 50% of the people out there use libraries in some capacity. Therefore, this is a great use of funds. We are getting a lot out of our dollar

when we send it to the libraries. We certainly can imagine other foolish ways the government spends money, but this is a good way. I get spent hours upon hours at libraries. It seems the fun never ends there. You often hear people say, I'm bored, there's nothing to do around here. But if there's a library in your town, this is probably not a legitimate excuse. This is probably not a legitimate excuse.

Anyways, my parents live in Byron, Illinois. The population is 3,500. They have a nice library there. People think there's nothing to do, but even they have a library. Thus, there's no excuse for other people to say there's nothing to do. At libraries, I like virtually every section. I specifically like non-fiction, but occasionally I will dabble in fiction. I like to read the trivia books, I like to read books on religion, philosophy, books on social issues, biographies, books on health, diets, books on geography, sometimes even poetry books. The library has all this and more. The library is one of the best institutions we have in our society.

What are some types of printed work?

There are a wide variety of printed work. This is why I may in the future reminisce for the old days. When I reminisce nostalgically for the old days, I will not be doing this in the same way as some others do today. You hear older people, sometimes even not too old people, do this. Usually they are reminiscing for just a different decade, a different time period. But what I would be doing is reminiscing for a different era.

Earlier I mentioned I believe we are entering a postmodern age, which would be much different than the modern age. Thus... In years in the future, what I have grown to love may not be there. Naturally, I will wax nostalgic about that. I am of the generation, the first generation, to have personal computers around all my life. But also, I have always had books around all my life. Today, it seems that the electronic word is slowly replacing the printed word. Many of the uses the printed word had once upon a time, people are going to electronic word today.

I remember when I was in elementary school, I did a report. I didn't go to Google.com. Google.com wasn't

even around when I was in elementary school. What I did is I went to the old-fashioned hardback encyclopedia. I got my information that way. I don't think I can ever give up the printed word, since it has been so much a part of me for my 25 years. I don't believe tradition is good for tradition's sake, but when tradition is positive, we should keep it. Thus, I hope we can always keep the printed word around.

Magazines are a very prominent type of printed word. Magazines are special in the sense they have a certain function. Magazines tend to be very glossy, they tend to be very attractive looking. They're great if you want some commentary on a specific issue that's happening in society. Maybe you can get some insight on this Iraq war or the presidential race or whatever else is occurring. There are a wide variety of magazines out there. Virtually any topic which has a sizable portion of the population interested in, they have a magazine about. There's magazines on sports cars. There's magazines on basketball. There's magazines on art. There's magazines on housekeeping. There's magazines about celebrities. There's magazines about news. There's magazines about business. There are magazines about collecting. There's tons of different magazines out there.

Sometimes even large organizations put together a magazine about their organization. I've seen groups such as the AARP, also big universities put together a magazine. I've seen some fraternal organizations put together a magazine. Sometimes the smaller organizations can't afford to do this, because it costs a lot to put together a magazine. Therefore, we don't see lots of magazines from some of the smaller groups.

Academic journals are another prominent type of printed work. Academic journals are great to go to to get latest research on a given topic area. They're great to go to if you want some very professional interpretation of your subject matter. They tend to be updated fairly frequently, therefore you can get the latest information in your subject area.

Sometimes you find they're even written so well they're readable by anyone, yet at the same time conveying very important information. Just like magazines, there's a wide variety of academic journals out there. Virtually every discipline has an academic journal. In fact, we'd be hard-pressed to find a major discipline today that doesn't have at least one academic journal out about it. Many disciplines, in fact, have academic journals for sub-

disciplines. Let's take sociology, for example, since that's the field I'm in. There are journals on deviance, there are journals on gerontology, there are journals on criminology, journals for sociology statistics, there are social psychology journals, social movement journals, virtually every major sub-component of sociology has a journal about it [as I have seen and others have noted]. I imagine this is also the case in other disciplines.

One of my favorite types of written word is the zine. The zine is a very special form, not to be confused with the magazine. In fact, I believe the zine is a superior form of the magazine. Zines are written by everyday people instead of being publishing houses. Zine writers like to trade their zines with each other. They tend to be more raw because they don't have these big publishing houses behind them [like zinesters have noted].

If there's great variety in magazines, there's even greater variety in zines because the writers don't have to write about something which lots of people find interesting. They can write about anything they want. I have seen zines about subjects ranging from punk music to politics to humor to poetry to fiction

to cartoons to even a zine dedicated to talking about Applebee's chicken fingers. They range the gamut.

I personally, in addition to reading zines, I like to write zines. I write three zines of my own. I like to give these out to people for free. Because it is a labor of love to me, like to trade these zines with others. I write one zine about poetry, one zine about satire, one zine about essays and reviews.

In my essays and reviews zine, you can see what books, zines, audio tapes, music I listen to, thus you get a good idea of what I'm exposing myself to. It's great to use zines to review other forms of the printed work. I get a special sense of satisfaction from reading long books. You feel very accomplished when you're able to tackle 400, 500, 600, 700, even 800 page book. It's a major accomplishment that not many people are doing these things. Sometimes when the books are well written, a 400, 500 page book is much easier to read than a poorly written 90 page book. Also, if they have a very good typeface, it's very easy to read the book.

To some, the typeface doesn't seem very important. But to me, it's essential. I have put down a very interesting book because the typeface was horrible. It wasn't readable. It was either too small or

unattractive to the eye. Sometimes both. Sometimes, if the typeface is interesting, the material may not be as interesting as other subject matters, but I can read. Read it. It seems to me that once upon a time the older books used better typefaces than they do today. Don't know why that is, but it's very interesting. I like to read books around the turn of the century because they seem to have very neat typefaces.

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In addition to reading long books, it's great to read books that are considered classics. Some books are considered classics for whatever interest you have. They're general classics. Certainly novels such as Adventures of Tom Sawyer, To Kill a Mockingbird, and others are considered classics. Other books are considered classics depending on your subject you're interested in. In certain areas, There are books which people consider you have to have read to be fully knowledgeable about the subject area.

I would like you to do an experiment. Go to the library at closing time. You must go to a public library. An academic library. This is because public libraries people go to because they are interested in reading for pleasure. Academic libraries people often go to because they're required to for some course. Go to one of these public libraries. Compare the number

of people there at closing time versus the number of people who are at the bars during Crime, bar, crime. Certainly this is no comparison at all in our society because certainly way more people will be at the bar. To me this is very, very sad. Oftentimes people consider libraries for dorks and losers, yet bars are for cool people. They believe bars are where the fun is, libraries are completely dull. To me, they got it backwards. I don't see how much fun can be had in the bar. I see the library as incredibly fun. I see it as one of the best canons out there. What does it say about our society? It's saying we exalt the decadence that occurs in the bars because so many people go there, yet we don't uplift what's glorious in society. Libraries. So much money is channeled towards creating bars. New bars are popping up all over the time. Yet, new libraries are nuts. Even in the smallest towns, you have at least several libraries, several bars. You may have one library if you're lucky. The bigger towns have endless bars. The ratio of bar to library is a very big one. To me, this is a very sad thing. Phenomena. There is a bar in La Crosse, Wisconsin, which tries to joke on this theme. It's called The Library. Their motto is, when your parents ask where you are, tell them you're at the library. You technically, of course, what they're saying is you technically will not be blind because you're saying, "I'm at the library." Of course, parents

don't naturally associate the term "library" with the name of a bar. I find this humor to be really stupid, personally. It's sad that they are mocking the institution of the library. It's sad that you would mislead your parents. Your parents would think you are bettering your mind, but in reality, you are decreasing your mind. Very, very sad to me. I believe the library is a good alternative for these bars. I believe it would be better to close down some of these bars to pop up libraries in their place. To me, that would be the way to go.

I was wondering, do you have any questions

One of my other favorite types of printed word is the leaflet flyer. This has very special uses. When you write a leaflet, it can only be so long. Thus, you have to be very terse, very concise in what you write. Leaflets tend to be written differently in content too. They tend to be very persuasive. Their goal is to get someone to accept a viewpoint. Thus, they often tend to have very colorful, very descriptive language. Thus, leaflets can be very fun to read. They're often very hard hitting. They get to the point. Very good. I believe anyone who is an activist should at least sometimes pass out leaflets. I have passed out a number of leaflets myself over time. Sometimes just

passing out leaflets, other times in conjunction with some other demonstration or event. I believe it's a very ennobling activity.

There was One speaker I heard who said, "When you're an activist, don't think there's some work that you're too important to do. Don't think you're too much of a big shot that you can't do some of this dirty work." I believe he's exactly right. I believe even leaders should be out there passing out leaflets. I personally like to be a leader. I try to be a leader. I also realize I want to do this dirty work too because it's useful to be done. It needs to be done. It makes one better. There's a saying that "if you're a leader, you shouldn't ask anyone else to do anything you yourself wouldn't do." Therefore, it behooves one to pass out flyers if one is going to ask someone else to pass out fliers.

I hate it when I pass out a leaflet, a political leaflet, then somebody asks, "What are you selling when they see me pass out the leaflets? It thus seems everyone is so accustomed to buying and selling. It seems as if they believe that is everything in our lives, therefore that's what everyone is doing. I'm not selling a product. I may be selling an idea. I may be selling an ideology. I may be selling salvation. I may

be selling a ticket to liberation. And just not some rascals.

Newspapers are surely another prominent type of the printed word. Virtually every country has a newspaper out. Many countries have thousands of newspapers out. Many times, many different languages. In fact, if you look at history, you will see newspapers from the beginning of our country. Historians will tell you this. I have a problem with much history of the mainstream media. Therefore, I don't like mainstream newspapers. Mainstream newspapers are better than some of the rest, but not by much, because they don't have the Federal Communications Commission suppressing them.

I like alternative newspapers. Sometimes there's general alternative newspapers, other times There's specific alternative newspapers. Newspapers, unlike magazines, are much cheaper to produce. Thus, some of the smaller organizations and groups can put together their own newspaper. I have seen many political parties, the smaller ones, put out their own newspapers. They could never imagine putting out a magazine.

Newspapers tend to be even more timely than magazines. Therefore, you can get events that just happened yesterday. I am proud to say on my old campus I was part of an effort to get an alternative newspaper established on our campus. We didn't think our campus paper was necessarily bad, we just believed it didn't do everything we wanted it to do. We believed there was room for more. Therefore, we did a lot of work to get a newspaper going. They called it *The Voice*, the very noble effort we put forth. Even better yet, a couple of years later, there were people on our campus who really got it going. They produced a newspaper called *PowerPoint* which had lots of issues out. They [said they] covered political issues that the regular newspapers were not covering. They [said they] gave perspectives we wouldn't find in other areas. They served their niche really well.

If we are to sell products, one of the best products to sell is books. Therefore, bookstores are a good model. I believe taverns should close down in their place to sell books. They want to make money, that's fine, but they can make money selling products which are good for people. Bookstores have lots of money to spend since they are driven by profit. Thus, libraries may be strapped for cash, but bookstores can get the latest books. They can get the best books.

Libraries may have difficulty obtaining these. Virtually anything the customer demands, the bookstore is carrying.

You will see a major change from the old bookstores to the new bookstores. Once upon a time, the old booksellers didn't like it very much if you came into their store looked over their magazines, spent lots of time reading their material. They were thinking if you stood there reading their material, you would get what you want to get from it, you wouldn't want to buy. Well, today, the bookstores are oriented completely different. Some of the old booksellers would be back there. Because these bookstores have very comfortable seating, they encourage you to come in there to peruse the books [Like some say]. The old booksellers thought this would be detrimental to their profits, but obviously this is working since Barnes & Noble and Borders have many, many outlets all over the place. [Like some say] They have found that it doesn't decrease profits, but in fact increase profits. Thus, it's an approach they believe is worth trying.

Bookstores are a very good activity for one to have for an outing. If you have money, maybe you can buy a book. Personally, I don't buy many books because I believe many are available at a library. If you don't

have lots of money, you can look at books there. Good way to entertain yourself. If you have just a little, maybe you can buy a drink at one of their coffee shops. Thus, you can be courteous to them for providing you all these books to look at.

These days, In addition to the general library, we see lots of specialized libraries, personalized libraries. Many public figures have their own libraries. You certainly hear about professors having their own libraries often at their home, which is a smaller room filled with books or whatever they're interested in.

Specialized libraries can be especially neat. They are a great concentration of resources on a given topic. If you're interested in that topic, it's often in Goldmine. You often find rare and obscure books, other printed material in these libraries you may not find in other places. Many organizations and groups have their own specialized library.

Once I got a tour of the Freemason lives in La Crosse, Wisconsin, they had a large library on Freemasonry books. If you're interested in Freemasonry, this would be the place to go. If you

want to look for a book on World War II or how to raise dogs, probably not the place to go. Here's just in the subject matter an excellent place.

I have seen health science libraries. I have heard other organizations have excellent specialized libraries of their organization's purpose. Virtually any organization at their headquarters, which is any big organization, will have some type of library. They may not formally call it a library, but essentially it is one. If you go to the Communist Party headquarters, for example, I imagine there's a specialized library on Marxist material. Some progressive people put together what are called info shops: These are collections of frigid word, pamphlets, leaflets, magazines, newspapers, books on progressive issues. You will see these in places like Madison, Minneapolis.

I was just reading, I just got a newsletter from one organization that talked about all that goes into an info shop. It's a good idea to get people exposed to different views.

The printed word is something very special to me, to our society at large. I rejoice in the printed word. I celebrate the printed word. The printed word has done so much for us. The printed word is extremely glorious. I hope it stays with us for a long time. It has done us a lot of good. It has enriched our lives immensely. We owe much to the printed word. Let us celebrate the printed word.

Good night.