THE GREAT PRESS COLLAPSE

Background Guide

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AIDAN THOMPSON (HE/HIM)
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

It is my greatest privilege to welcome you all to SSICSIM 2023, as part of The Great Press Collapse. My name is Devarya Singhania (he/him), and I am a second year student at the University of Toronto, pursuing a specialist in English. My obsession with newspapers and print media over the years has led me to be curious about a world without it, and I am phenomenally intrigued and ecstatic to see how you all tackle this technocentric ban.

Such a ban has never come into effect in recent times, nor has it been discussed. So, the events of this committee will tend to lean towards fiction, however, the nature of the solutions cannot be too extravagant as it is set only a few months post the year 2023. All the agencies are real, and your background research of the agency will naturally have to pertain to the facts about the agency, and the resources at your disposal during the committee will also conform to your agency's endowment.

I had contemplated this scenario of a print-less world first in the 9th grade, while staring into a pile of my school newspaper lying on a desk. It perplexed me to see one's refusal to read their own school's newspaper, but the long-form articles in a tiny font were of no assistance. The issue was 3 months old, and even when I tried to read the feature on the US 2016 General Elections, I ran out of patience. News on websites hence, seemed so accessible. Selecting one particular article to read, and having it comfortably spaced out all over my screen. Eyes didn't have to be involved in an exercise. Since then I've never understood whether accessible, digital news is a greater way to obtain information than the bulky, often intimidating print media. Because this accessibility ushers motivation, but increases dependency on and use of technology. Is the print world beyond news? Does the

print medium demand exclusivity?

Even if SSICSIM 2023 is your first MUN conference, your fourth or fifteenth, I hope the agenda and the committee will imprint great memories for you, as you engage in debating the topic which seems to leave me sleepless on the second Thursday and fourth Tuesday of every month.

Our dais has a remarkable background and level of experience in MUN, and we will aim to create the most engaging crisis arcs, while ensuring an inclusive committee environment. The crises will be facilitated by our crisis manager Shreya and crisis analysts Fajar and Muskan, with Selena moderating the committee. If you face any difficulty before or during the conference, feel free to reach out to any dais member via email, and we will make sure to assist you in the best way possible.

With that, let me welcome you all again to The Great Press Collapse – a world headed towards forgetting their connection with the printed. The members of the executive board are greatly intrigued to hear your ideas and proposals around the ban, and cannot wait to see how the future around the print media arrives.

Shiny things but no paper rings.

DEVARYA SINGHANIA (HE/HIM)
DIRECTOR, GREAT PRESS COLLAPSE

INTRODUCTION

The role of the printing press is seldom investigated, and due to the enormity of commercial printing's nature, made easy due to easily available funds and technology, the printing press is taken for granted. We tend to associate the printing press primarily with printing books or newspapers, but it's such a radical form of technology. Industries affiliated with advertisements, stationery and even fashion rely on the printing press to assist them in their functioning. We are not prepared for the press' disappearance tomorrow.

Even as we deliberate the consequences of losing the press with an immediate effect, we need to discuss whether our resources allow for an alternative to come into effect at a similar pace. Are we able to shift all mediums online? We're always in the company of multiple printed goods. This anticipated vicissitude may appear hyperbolic to our current perceptions, but it does not seem superficial to imagine it as a reality post a few decades.

We have had intellectual resources in print disappear in history; most notably the Library of Alexandria. Political author Ray Bradbury in his dystopian science-fiction novel Fahrenheit 451 also explores the consequences of criminalising books. But we've never demonised their creator, the printing press itself. We've to now explore a ban on its functioning. With the public frustrated, agonised, confused and doubtful it is up to the agencies to marshal a solution.

DEFINITIONS

The Printing Press

Machine used to produce printed copies of documents, literature and records.

International Press Institute

An organisation which echoes and facilitates the functioning and freedom of the press.

Digital Printing

The process of printing digital-based images or files directly onto a variety of surfaces or substrates. It eliminates the need for traditional printing plates, as the image is sent directly from a computer to the digital printer.

Online Publishing

The practice of publishing content, such as articles, books, or magazines, in digital formats accessible through the internet. Online publishing allows for widespread distribution, easy accessibility, and interactive features not possible with traditional print media.

Print-on-Demand

A printing technique that allows for the production of small quantities of printed materials on an as-needed basis. Instead of printing large print runs, print-on-demand enables printing specific quantities as orders are received, reducing waste and storage costs.

Digital Disruption

The transformative effect of digital technologies on traditional industries and business models. In the context of printing, digital disruption refers to the impact of digital media and online publishing on the traditional print publishing industry.

Cross-Media Publishing

The practice of distributing content across multiple media channels, including print, digital, and social media platforms. Cross-media publishing aims to reach a wider audience and maximise the impact of content by leveraging various communication channels.

Freedom of the Press

The fundamental right of individuals and media organisations to express, publish, and disseminate information and opinions without censorship or government interference. It is an essential component of freedom of speech and a cornerstone of democratic societies.

Censorship

The act of suppressing or controlling the information, ideas, or opinions expressed in the media. Censorship can be imposed by governments, institutions, or individuals to restrict or manipulate the flow of information.

Media Literacy

The ability to critically analyse and evaluate media content, understand its biases and manipulations, and navigate the complexities of the modern media landscape. Media literacy empowers individuals to make informed judgments and participate in a democratic society.

HISTORICAL ISSUES

Invention of the Press in 1436

The root of this collapse stems from its very foundation; a fundamentally radical piece of engineering aimed to marshall a simplified distribution of knowledge. Johannes Gutenberg, a German goldsmith in 1436 is known as the inventor of the first automated printing press, known to be a fierce remark of modern technology. Due to high religious interests at the time of the invention, Gutenberg's Press was primarily used to print copies of the Bible, around 200 hundred of them; an early predicament of the press' use, as most kingdoms and nations employed the press for the printing of primarily religious texts (eg: the Ottoman Empire using their press to print Jewish religious texts, and later the Quran).

Since the material of the Bible was complicated, the press was associated with printing material exclusive to the scholarly, to the very few who were academically inclined to understand it. While the works were not accessible at the time of the print due to low literacy rates, paid academics or interpreters verbalised the news to public gatherings almost in a routinely manner to have them know a summarised version of the worldly agendas.

The Protestant Reformation of 1517

The printing press made it possible for new ideas to spread, especially religious writings in local tongues. This put the Church's authority over the interpretation and communication of sacred scriptures in jeopardy, sparking disputes and major religious movements like the Protestant Reformation of 1517.

Made possible solely through the printing press, the Protestant Reformation was a protest arising after Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. The Reformation questioned the Catholic Church's numerous teachings, practices, and abuses. Books were copied by hand before the printing press, which made

them expensive and time-consuming to make. The printing press enabled mass text production, making books more accessible and inexpensive. During the Protestant Reformation, this was critical for disseminating Martin Luther's ideas and works. Multiple copies of a text may be made simultaneously using the printing press, greatly decreasing the time necessary to distribute information. Thanks to the printing machine, Luther's 95 Theses, which he fastened to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church in 1517, swiftly travelled throughout Germany and beyond.

The legitimacy of the Pope, the sacraments, saint veneration, and the use of Latin in religious ceremonies were all contested by reformers like Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli. They emphasised salvation by faith alone and sought for a restoration to the inspiration of the Bible. Due to the Catholic ire for the Protestant reformers stoked by Rome and its representatives, the printing press received sincere criticism, as the public had not anticipated this great spread of uncensored speech.

The Ottoman Empire Banning the Printing Press in the 16th Century

Like other empires at the time, the Ottoman Empire aimed to retain centralised control over information and prevent the spread of viewpoints that would undermine its rule. The printing press was perceived as a danger to the security and authority of the empire because it might be used to spread dissident or subversive ideas. The Ottoman Empire had a strong legacy of manuscript creation and calligraphy, which were highly regarded techniques of information diffusion. The printing press was believed by the rulers to threaten the artistic value and cultural relevance of handwritten writings. They aimed to maintain calligraphic works' status as well as the conventional approaches to book creation.

The Ottoman Empire had ethnic and linguistic groups from all over the world. The government wanted to keep control over the languages used in official and religious literature, therefore they restricted the printing press. While the empire had diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, the government desired to maintain Ottoman Turkish and Arabic as the two official languages of government and Islamic learning, respectively. By restricting the creation and application of printing technologies, the Ottoman Empire fell behind

Western Europe and other countries in terms of technical and intellectual growth. This hampered the transmission of academic research, scientific information, and ideas to a larger audience. The restrictions on the printing press created an atmosphere of intellectual stagnation throughout the empire. Scholars and intellectuals encountered difficulties acquiring new ideas, participating in academic discussions, and keeping up with developments taking place throughout the world due to limited access to printed literature.

PRESENT DAY ISSUES

Modern Day Commercial Printing

 In the spread of information, commercial printing has been essential, aiding with the communication of information across huge geographic distances. Books and other printed materials are important resources for education, amusement, and the preservation of cultural traditions, while newspapers and magazines offer regular updates on current events. With the emergence of digital media, there has been a shift in reading and consuming patterns, which has had an impact on commercial printing. The growth of online platforms, e-books, and other digital media has changed the market for printed products. Because readers can now easily and immediately access news stories, blogs, and other written information online, print readership has decreased as a result. As a result, the market for printed goods has been negatively impacted by the decline in demand for printed newspapers, magazines, and books. Commercial printers have had to modify their products to reflect these shifting consumer expectations.

 Industrialisation of the press has allowed it to transform into a growing business. The printing business is now able to offer highly customised and personalised printed goods because of information sharing. Customer preferences and behaviour may be examined using data analytics, enabling firms to customise their marketing materials for specific clients. The efficiency of printed communication is increased by the inclusion of personalised material such as names or special offers made possible by variable data printing processes.

Environmental Consequences of Commercial Printing

Compared to the conservative use of the press in 1436, printing has now transformed into a commercial collective, one which has launched avenues for self-publishing of books, newspapers, magazines and simple daily documents – with no limits to the scope of its use

the sheer accessibility of it has stirred massive environmental concerns as paper exploitability is enormously common.

Commercial printing generates substantial amounts of waste throughout the production process. This includes waste paper, ink cartridges, printing plates, packaging materials, and other discarded materials. Improper disposal of printing waste can have detrimental effects on the environment, including pollution of landfills and waterways. Water is used in several printing-related operations, such as paper manufacture, ink mixing, and equipment washing. Water pollution caused by improper disposal of wastewater containing chemicals and toxins can harm aquatic habitats and lower water quality. These environmental effects can be lessened by putting in place suitable wastewater treatment systems and cutting back on water use.

Some suggested alternatives by the IPI:
- Investing in water-efficient printing equipment that incorporates technologies designed to minimise water usage.
- Ensuring regular maintenance of water-related equipment and filtration systems to resolve leaks or inefficiencies.
- Promoting waterless printing technologies, which eliminate the need for water-based inks and dampening systems and instead utilises specialised ink and plate systems that transfer ink directly to the paper.

The printing sector has promoted recycling and waste reduction in an effort to address environmental concerns. To reduce waste and save resources, recycling programmes for paper, ink cartridges, and other printing-related items have been put in place. The industry's environmental impact may also be reduced by switching to digital replacements for paper and implementing sustainable printing techniques. Presently due to the presence of the electronic medium, many believe the print media's need to be minimal and are questioning the enabling of its establishment.

REASONS FOR THE BAN

Resource Shortage

The IPI has been monitoring an increase in deforestation numbers, and fearing an increase they have marshalled that to be a primary reason in inciting the ban. The IPI's issued statement reads as follows: "We solemnly believe in the impermanence of paper, and recording its outstanding value, we do not see the press to have any monopoly or decree over its exploitation." Urging the benefits of the online mediums for newspaper agencies, the IPI currently sees no need to have the printing press function, especially in a manner which exploits a resource as valuable as paper.

Declining Popularity

Trends indicate that individuals have begun donating minimal time to print goods, from books, magazines to newspapers - there seems to be a lack of attention one is devoting to reading itself, and one isn't willing to carry printed goods since they supposedly 'occupy space'. As such is the case, the IPI is prioritising the needs of the consumers, and is employing these trends to impose the ban. They have issued the following statement: "Upholding the needs of the consumers, we will not be promoting the sale or manufacturing of printed media and will instead urge its substitution on online platforms."

The IPI's Demands in Your Statement

Even though the two primary reasons for the ban continue to be the resource shortages and a decline in their popularity, the IPI strictly demands that the agencies look beyond these issues as well when dealing with the ban. The advertising and marketing industries among others fear feeling ignored, as they have no means to print labels, posters or even pamphlets. While the newspaper agencies and authors seem to be the most severely affected, the IPI has demanded a holistic statement which offers solutions or suggestions in either reversing or dealing with the ban.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Do your actions guarantee a prevention of replication of the historical events? Will the limitation of the press lead to inhibition of intellectual thoughts? Do you want our literature and our heritage to only be remembered through digital forums?

How certain does the ban leave our freedom of speech to be? Is it a direct violation even if we are able to publish the same information on another medium? Does it limit our access due to monopolised prices? Is our speech still free, if we cannot publish information in a manner according to our discretion, but due to a lack of choice?

How is the future of incumbent socio political and economic actors affected, with regards to the need for posters and flyers in protesting or reforming?

How do you plan on balancing the impatience of the general public in deciding the way forward?

The IPI is not desiring a particular outcome. They are as open to sustaining the ban, as they are to overturning it. Do your policies offer a succinct, determinate outcome for either situation?

Is there a need for the press to become exclusive to only the agencies and authors?

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