

Thursday, March 26, 2020



UNITED STATES SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES MAKE ANNUAL SALARIES STARTING AT \$174,000 BUT WORK LESS THAN 20 HOURS PER WEEK.

Congress fails to pass important legislation; takes recess anyway

Aides cite corruption, general fecklessness

Five hundred years ago, Christopher Columbus was on his knees in throne rooms throughout Europe, scrambling to finance his first voyage to the New World. Meanwhile, his Venetian countryman Aldus Manutius—scholar, printer, and entrepreneur—was establishing what would become the greatest publishing house in Europe, the Aldine Press. Like Columbus, Aldus Manutius was driven by force of intellect and personality to realize a life-long dream.

Aldus' greatest passion was Greek litera-

ture, which was rapidly going up in smoke in the wake of the marauding Turkish army. It seemed obvious to Aldus that the best way to preserve this literature was to publish it—literally, to make it public. The question was, how?

Although it had been forty years since the advent of Gutenberg's press, most books were still being copied by scribes, letter by letter, a penstroke at a time. Because of the intensity of this labor, books were

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few and costly. They were also unwieldy. Far too large to be held in the hands or in the lap, books sat on lecterns in private libraries and were seen only by princes and the clergy.

One day, as he watched one of his workers laboring under the load of books he was carrying, Aldus had a flash of insight: Couldn't books from the Aldine Press be made small enough to be carried without pulling a muscle? And could he produce the elegant, lightweight volumes he imagined and still sell them at an attractive price?

“It’s like they say one thing but do another!”

The first problem was how to print more legible words per page and thus reduce the number of pages. Aldus needed a smaller typeface that was both readable and pleasing to the eye. The work of the Aldine Press had attracted the notice of the finest typographic artists in Europe, so Aldus was able to enlist the renowned Francesco Griffo da Bologna to design a new one. Under Aldus’ direction, Griffo developed a typeface that was comparatively dense and compact and

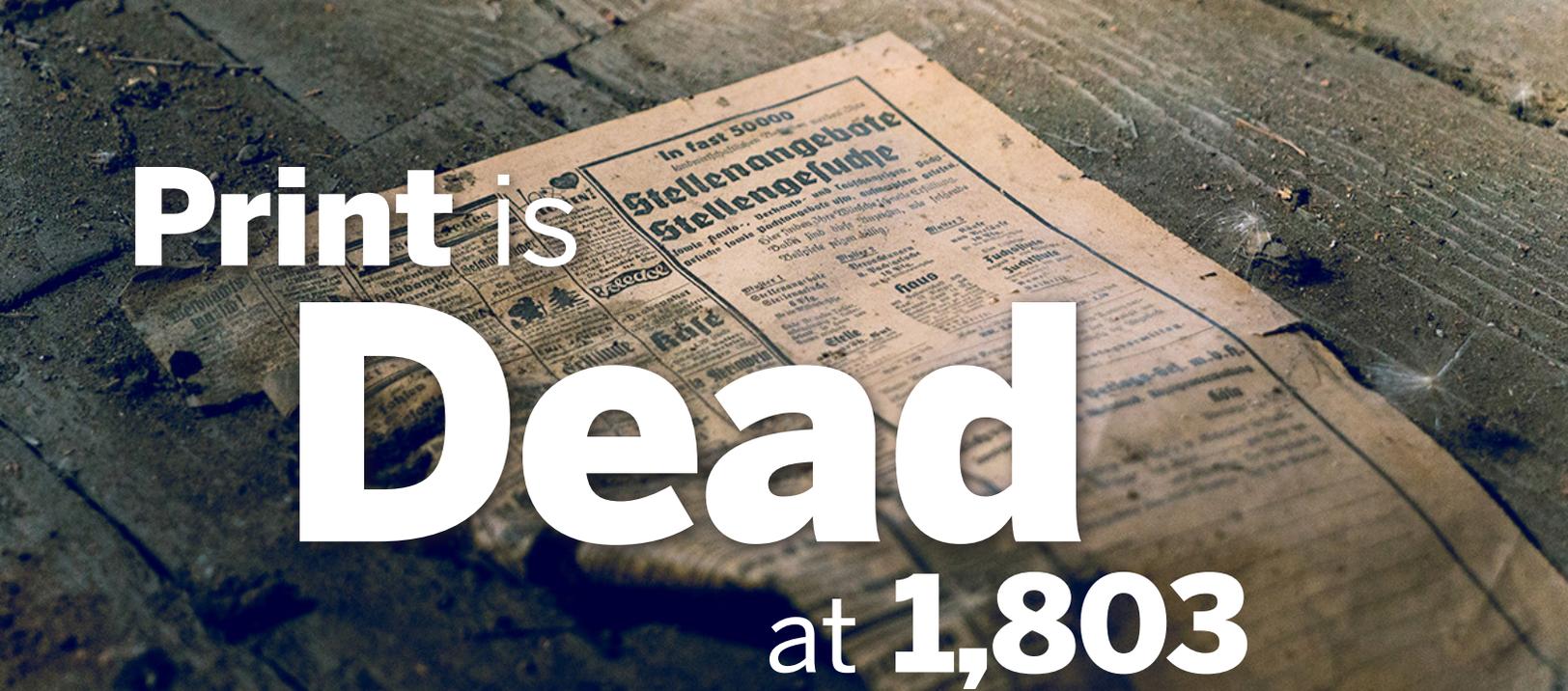
that imitated the calligraphy of courtly correspondence. The result of this Aldus-Griffo collaboration was the ancestor of what we now call italics..

The new typeface enabled Aldus to print portable and highly readable books. Besides the first edition of Dante’s Divine Comedy, Aldus published the essential texts of Greek literature: the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, the tragedies of Sophocles, the epics of Homer, and the treatises of Aristotle, thus rescuing them from relative oblivion.

The timing was perfect. With the growth of the merchant class in Venice, Florence, Naples, and Rome, a new market ripe for books had recently emerged. This newly prosperous middle class was flush with money and anxious for intelligent ways to spend it. The new books from the Aldine Press were an immediate success. As more books became available, the middle classes in Italy—and ultimately in all of Europe—grew more literate and the Aldine Press became more prestigious. And Aldus, the publisher who put books in the hands of the people, eventually lent his name to the company that put publishing in the hands of the people.

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Print is Dead at 1,803

Sources close to print, the method of applying ink to paper in order to convey information to a mass audience, have confirmed that the declining medium passed away early Thursday morning.

The influential means of communication was 1,803.

Print, which had for nearly two millennia worked tirelessly to spread knowledge around the globe in the form of books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and numerous other textual materials, reportedly succumbed to its long battle with ill health, leaving behind legions of readers who had for years benefited from the dissemination of ideas made possible by the advent of printed materials.

Reaction to print's tragic demise was overwhelming, with countless individuals within the publishing sector left reeling at its death.

"I'm in absolute shock right now," said Charles Townsend, CEO of Condé Nast Publications, who reportedly worked closely with the beloved medium throughout his career. "I knew that it had been struggling recently, but, still, I thought it had many more happy, healthy years in it. I always hoped it would be around forever, I guess. I loved print."

"And to think that we'll never see it again—ever, in any form whatsoever—it's just a lot to take in right now," he added.

Print was born in China in the third century, whereupon it quickly gained a reputation as an innovative means of both recording ideas and transmitting them throughout the world. Thanks to the overwhelming popularity of the cheap, mass-produced texts made possible by print, the groundbreaking medium ultimately came to be regarded as perhaps the most influential means of communication in the world.

However, though print enjoyed a long, illustrious career for centuries, effortlessly re-inventing itself countless times in order to better serve readers' continual desire for information, in recent years observers reported that the medium was gradually slowing down its output, with both the quantity and quality of its work suffering as it struggled to keep up in a fast-paced landscape increasingly dominated by younger, more nimble channels such as the internet, email, and social media.

Indeed, as print's status diminished, those closest to the once influential system of con-

"Anyone who had seen print in recent years knew it wasn't long for this world,"

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COFFEE: Good and Good for You!



Harvard University researchers followed more than 80,000 women for 10 years and found indications that coffee can be a positive picker upper. “Women who drank more than two to three cups of coffee a day were at about one-third the risk of suicide over the 10-year period compared to women who never drank coffee,” said Harvard Medical Center’s Dr. Ichiro Kawachi, who authored the study. The study of female nurses found 11 suicides among those who drank two to three cups of caffeinated coffee per day, compared with 21 cases among those who said they almost never drank coffee. Similar benefits were associated with the caffeine in cola, tea, and chocolate when consumed in the same quantities as that in coffee. “See!” said caffeine addicts everywhere.

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veying knowledge recounted the difficulty in being forced to watch the aging medium deteriorate as it struggled to survive.

“Anyone who had seen print in recent years knew it wasn’t long for this world,” said media analyst Jeff Jarvis, pointing to the multiple setbacks that hindered print in recent years as it gradually wasted away. “I can remember a while back when I opened my Sunday newspaper for the first time in I don’t know how many weeks and there it was, looking so thin, so lifeless. After that, I realized it was only a matter of time.”

“It did not go gentle into that good night, though,” Jarvis continued. “It was tough. Tough as nails to the very end.”

However, in spite of the tragic nature of its passing, many sources told reporters they were thankful to have had the opportunity to spend time with print while it was still

thriving, emphasizing their gratitude for the decades of enrichment and enjoyment made possible by the medium.

“You have to hand it to print, it really had an incredible run,” said Madison, WI resident and avid reader Emily Burnett, 39, noting that though she always knew in her heart print would pass away one day, it still hasn’t been easy to bid it farewell. “Look at print’s list of accomplishments: the Magna Carta, the King James Bible, the oldest surviving manuscript of the I Ching, the Declaration of Independence, the first edition of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, every single issue of *The Onion* ever printed. That’s quite a legacy print’s leaving behind. And the world will not soon forget it.”

“On second thought,” Burnett added, after pausing a moment, “the world will probably forget it pretty soon, actually.”

—*The Onion*



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