Parablility or Veracity of Paperless Society and the stand of Libraries

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Abstract

The pleas 'think before you print'; 'please consider the environment before printing this email'; 'go paperless or feel like a guilty hypocrite who kills trees'; 'save paper save trees'; 'go green go paperless', and the like, are the buzzing and oriented facets of environmental sustainability of the contemporary times in the arena of paper consumption. The papers are indispensable media of communication of information, but an assortment of constructs which are associated with it, are posing certain concerns to citizens in general and the environmentalists in particular. There is a large volume of deforestation caused by the usage and printing of documents. By tracking in a different line, we have a downpour of information screened by the digital world and the online portfolios of the vast arrays of linked and hyperlinked environment. From such state of affairs, it becomes viable to use less (almost meagre) quantity of papers and budge using digital resources and presumptions are also on rise to think of a society without papers. The study discusses the phenomenal changes in the usage of papers and the concept of paperless society or green society as envisioned by F. W. Lancaster under the influence and backdrop of digitization and the electronic milieu. It also portraits the role and services of Libraries and Information Centers in this direction of using lesser quantity of papers and the paradigm shifts of their services into the online systems. Nowadays, a sizeable portion of the library budget is allocated to the electronic/digital resources and the paper calls for the information literacy skills on part of users to adapt and become conversant with the behaviour of this unavoidable influence and impact of electronic environs which has not only overwhelmed all our educational services and programmes but also the entire fields of day to day life affairs.

1. Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization, we have been using different media to share our knowledge and information with one another but paper is the most widely used and a definitive vehicle for exchanging ideas and recording information. Truly speaking, our life is full of paperwork, both printed and digital. Our lives generate thousands of documents that account our existence. Paper is dazzling, because it is extraordinarily economical, a worldwide customary, and is very easy to use and read. Today's society is on the deck of endless information which is becoming easily available at finger tips, anywhere, anytime and the changes that occurred in the

society due to the digital and electronic environment is every bit as fundamental as the changes the printing press brought about. Paper has been the most common method of documenting information and this method of transmitting the written ideas has been so engraved into the psychies of today's society that relinquishing it, will be a very long time future and a dream as well.

The explosion as they say it during 1980's, in computer technology and computer usage changed our society profoundly with its wider implications in every facet of our life. Today the computers are a part of everyday life, they are in their simplest forms as digital watches or more complexly as managing huge power grids, telephone networks and the money of the world. The functions of a computer can be best described as: "It enables the mind to ask questions, find answers, stockpile knowledge, and devise plans to move mountains, if not worlds." Society has embraced the computer and accepted it for its many powers which can be used for business, education, research and warfare. The time has now turned to impart and adapt computer literacy and to become familiar and comfortable with the computer, because in the future we will be becoming virtually a paperless society and many daily activities will be linked to the computer. Mail delivery to the home and business will be almost entirely phased out and e-mail will replace it. Bills will come via the computer and paid the same way. Pay checks will be electronically deposited to bank accounts; shopping malls will become cyber malls. On special occasions like birthdays, marriages, greeting cards will be sent from the computers. Our homes will be run by computers. Computers will adjust the temperature. Home appliances will be linked to the computer. Window covering will be adjusted to allow the correct amount of sunlight in. Light fixtures will automatically adjust to the right level of light in our home **(StudyMode, 1999a, b**). The way of business conducted is entirely changed. Instead of long distance business trips, business will be conducted via interactive tele and video conferences. Documents and files will be stored on computer hard drives. We are witnessing such aspects today, but in the future it will expand as we become a technology savvy and a paperless society.
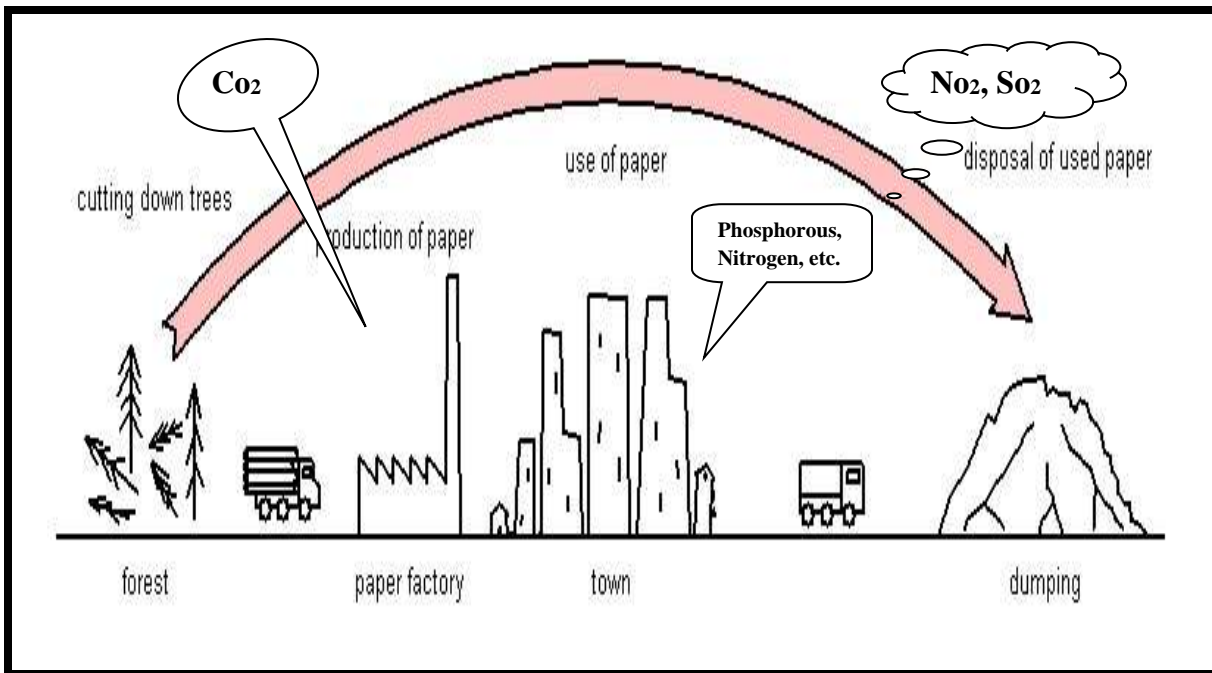
We have been talking about the society giving up paper for decades but it has never been practical. We are getting closer to the dream. In the coming years, we will essentially be a paperless society **(James Wharris, 2012)**. Just as the proponents for a paperless society predicted the demise of paper, many opponents to this concept are now claiming a victory for paper. The reality will certainly fall somewhere in between. Paper is not going away unless its

replacement has those same features which the paper possesses. Within a particular organization, moving documents electronically has already been established where computers and program standards are controlled. It is easy to send a report created in Microsoft Word to fellow workers via network. In the next 20 years, this will move toward consumers as more people gain access to e-mail, the Internet and high-speed networks, new standards will continue to pave the way, and we will be hearing the buzzword electronic bill presentment and it will eventually become practical **(Heath Cajandig, 2006)**. There will be perhaps a society which will be completely dependent on digital technology and electronic gadgets and all our day to day activities will be executed by electronic devices in the same way as we are today for the printed and paper related works. And the terms going green or paperless may perceive the desired end and may be more valid than that of today.

2. Myth or truth about paperless society

There are both the proponents and opponents of paper and paper work in offices. Each group is having different dimensions of thinking about paper and its corresponding inclination with the digital technology. While the former category is theorizing the importance and ease of using the papers and consider the issues and challenging of migration/transformation to digital technology as mute and risky. They say that today's computer savvy individuals have shown unwillingness to give up the convenience and low cost of paper for more cumbersome and costly digital display devices. Until digital display devices transfer data from computer to medium as simply as printers do with paper, the paperless office may never be a reality. But, the latter on the other hand, are visualizing the dynamic inevitability of computers and digital gadgets as a blessing and consider the environmental issues of papers as more drastic and harmful than that of digital technology. They are of the consideration that the paper manufacturing contributes significantly to deforestation and man-made climate change and also produces greenhouse gases. According to the American Forest & Paper Association, paper manufacturing is the third largest user of fossil fuels worldwide. Although measures such as recycling and using tree-free paper can help reduce the environmental impact of paper, but most of the paper still ends up in landfills. The paper production also leads to air pollution, as paper manufacturing releases nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and carbon dioxide (CO_2). Nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide are major contributors to acid rain, whereas CO_2 is a greenhouse gas responsible for climate change **(Wikipedia, 2013)**. The waste water discharged from pulp

and paper mills contains solids, nutrients, and dissolved organic matter that are classified as pollutants. Nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus can cause or intensify eutrophication of fresh water bodies. Printing inks and toners are very expensive and use environment-damaging volatile organic compounds, heavy metals and non-renewable oils. They too lead to the environmental disorders and cause acidification of water bodies.

CO_2

NO_2, SO_2

cutting down trees

use of paper

disposal of used paper

production of paper

Phosphorous, Nitrogen, etc.

forest   paper factory   town   dumping

The way the society is heading towards digital world seems as if there will not be paper or paper work in the coming future, but it will certainly take time. A business completely and utterly devoid of paper is not going to happen any time soon. We have too much of a paper tradition, and there are still times when paper is a more appropriate medium in which to record and transmit information. However, we can, and should, begin to explore and plan for ways in which we can substitute digital information in place of paper. The goal is thus a less paper office, not a paperless office. Indeed, our offices have already begun to use less paper as we incorporate e-mail and digital document storage into the way we work. However, much of the way we use digital information in our practices has occurred in a mess fashion with no coherent plan. Using less paper in an office is highly dependent on a unified way of keeping track of the digital data **(Nancy Duhon, 2009)**. We all feel comfortable using paper because we know what to do with it and also offices have a set filing system for this. However, many institutes don't have a coherent

digital filing system, and so become disheartened with trying to reduce their paper usage and paper work.

With the implementation of a well thought-out naming and storage process, going paperless can dramatically decrease the amount of time spent locating and retrieving documents, both current and archived. The actual use of documents is also improved. Documents are instantly accessible and can be simultaneously accessed by more than one person. The cumulative effect of these benefits is increased productivity and efficiency for all members. More and more people are choosing to work away from the office. A paperless office allows staff to remotely access the files and work effectively and productively off-site. Besides, paperlessness can help in the reduction of the firm's environmental impact i.e., the amount of paper saved is tremendous. Similarly, valuable real estate is not needed for the storage of physical documents **(Donna Neff, 2009)**. We are seeing more and more digitized data creep into our everyday lives; eventually paper will be a scarce resource and digital information transfer will be the norm. Each incoming generation will become more and more used to digitized data, so much so that eventually the line that separates screen and paper will vanish as digitized information display mediums become more and more like their older brother.

Large Junk can be stored in few of the computers

There are in fact a number of studies which have shown that people are able to retain 30% more information if it is shown to them on paper than if they see it on a computer. These statistics, however, are sure to drop as society becomes increasingly cognizant of the computer as an information transfer medium. Additionally, technology is advancing to make display devices more like papers and web pages are radically and continuously replacing paper products (**Mathieu., et.al., n.d**). But still we all are using paper to some degree despite the advancements in technology, so how can we go completely paperless? Well, the truth is, there will likely always be some form of paper, but the problem doesn't lie in using paper itself, but instead having awareness for the amount used and methods of which it is being used for. All in all, despite the paperless tips that are presented to you in this article, ultimately it is up to you to make it happen. It is always on the shoulders of the society and its members to make the things happen and to think for the sustainability of the environment they live in.

3. Visualizations and approaches of Going Paperless

The feelings of guilt and concern are on the rise about the use of paper and its alleged impact on the fate of trees and the environment. F.W. Lancaster, a visionary leader in the field of library and information science, coined the phrase "paperless society" in 1978. Since then, however, the consumption of paper has increased. Nonetheless, we can adopt strategies to make the promise of a paperless society (or at least less paper society) come true and save our environment. What needs to be done is the mental and operational transitions from paper cultures to the digital portfolios. The use of web-based tools makes it a cloud computing activity, hence it is favoured by many for its low-energy costs. In the early years of the internet age, the idea of building a paperless society seemed like an obscure possibility, but the evolution of computer technologies from personal computers to tablet PCs, has provided computer users tremendous access not only to information, but also to services, products and all the tools that the Internet could offer. Now we are hearing of paperless meetings which are slowly took shape and form, since people from all walks of life and affiliations are connected to the internet to conduct most of their day-to day activities. This was initially started as a sophisticated method and less of a cost-cutting initiative but it was for high-level face-to-face office meetings or handouts, if any were shared and transferred through the computer's networking system and connecting to the local area network (LAN) as the means for viewing the presentations. However, the advent of

globalization and telecommuting jobs likewise spurred the necessity of developing software for connecting remote participants to these meetings by way of external networking systems (**Cantoria, 2011**). The innovation slowly gained momentum, since it eliminates travel time, minimizes vehicle use, and reduces overhead expenses. Communication, documentation, meetings and presentations are facilitated electronically at low energy consumption costs.
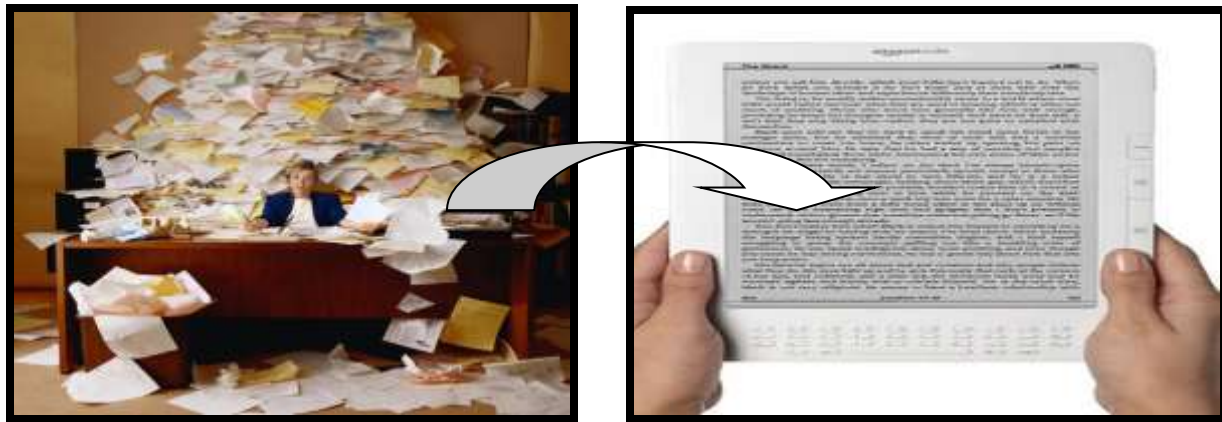
Lancaster and others envisioned a paperless society in which electronic publishing would eventually replace use of the printed word. Data are now available that confirm this trend. Using the total volume of words in broadcasting, publishing, the mails, and telecommunications, it has found that the use of electronic and digital media has grown rapidly, whereas the supply of words in print has leveled off or even declined. The publication of scholarly information-namely digital publications leads to paperless society. It is as simplistic to say that all print will be replaced by digital texts as it is to say that library buildings will disappear anytime soon. To support this, many authors predicted that in fifty years almost all information will be in cyberspace including all knowledge and creative works. All information about physical objects including humans, buildings, processes, and organizations will be online. This trend is both desirable and inevitable (**as cited in Parveen Babbar & Seema Chandhok, 2008**).

3.1 Cost savings

A study estimates the costs of paper consumption on an average basis. The average office worker in the U.S. uses 10,000 sheets of paper a year, which is equivalent to two cartons holding a total of 20 reams. At a cost of about $35 for carton, it's $70 per year. Another study estimates that the costs associated with paper, such as storage, copying, printing, postage, disposal, and

recycling, can be 13 to 31 times the purchasing cost. A price tag of $70 for two cartons can actually represent as much as $2,170 in total costs per employee.

There are some other facts about paper consumption which are:

- The average worker prints 10,000 pages per year and wastes 1,410 pages.
- The average cost of a wasted page is $0.06.
- A company with 500 employees spends $42,000 on wasted prints each year.
- On an average only 49% of office workers say they recycle at work.

The figures (1, 2, 3) below shows the 'Paper and Paperboard Production – Global Market', 'Indian Writing Paper Demand' and 'Forecasted paper and Paperbound Production Trend' respectively.
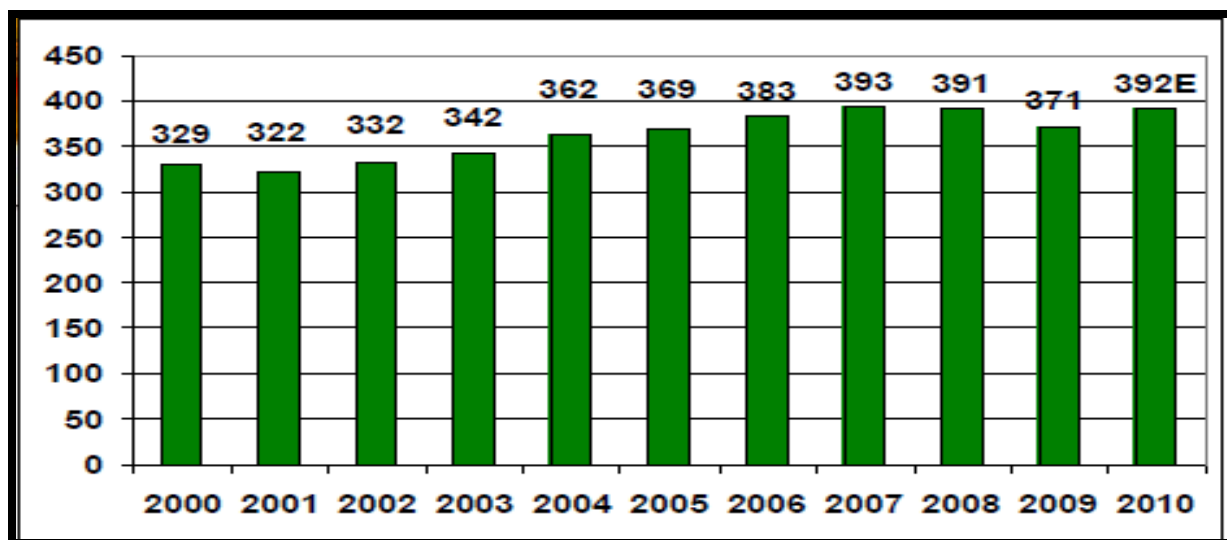
Paper and Paperboard Production –Global Market

Fig-1 Figures in Million Tons
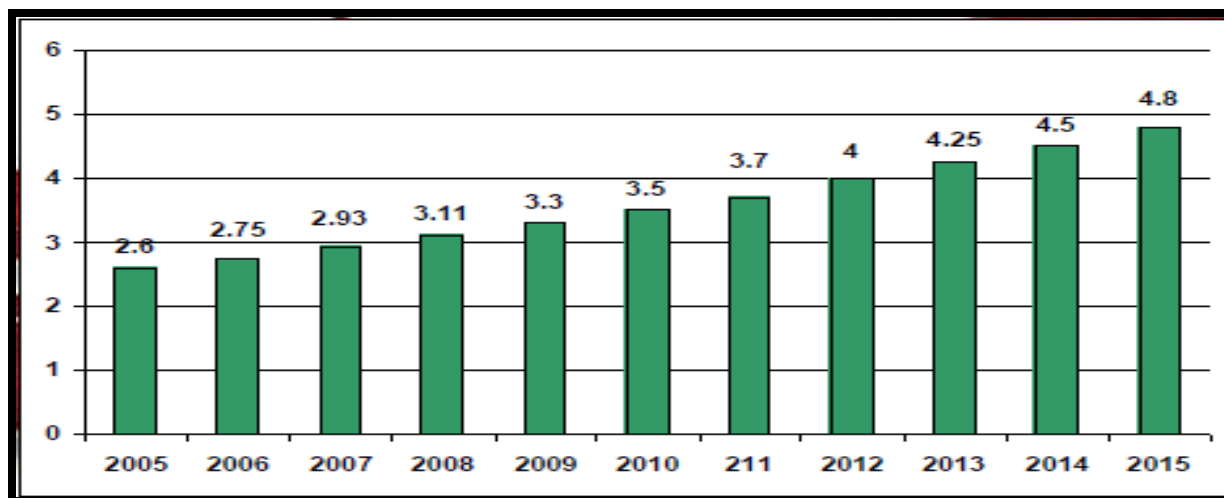
Source= RISI

Indian Writing Paper Demand

Fig-2 Figures in Million Metric Tons

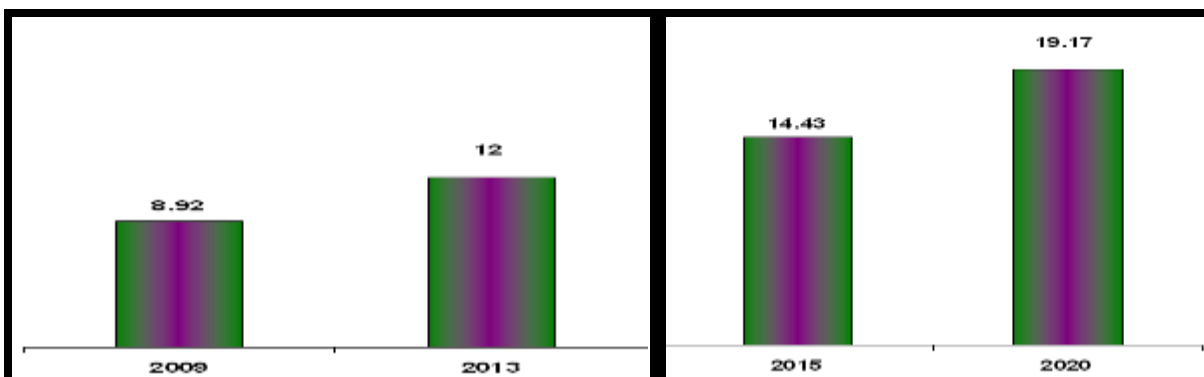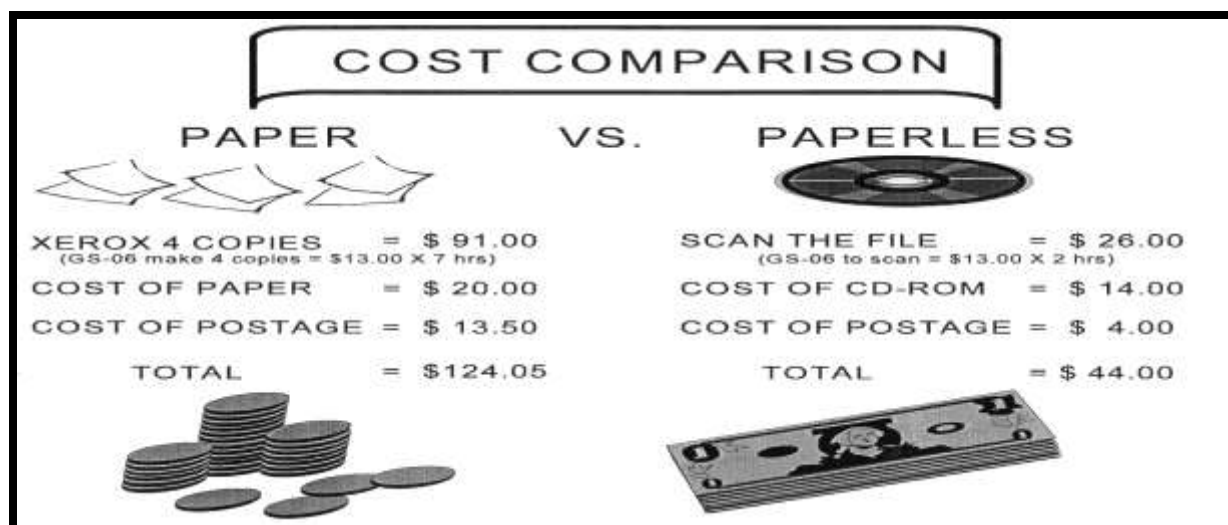**Forecasted paper and Paperbound Production Trend**

Fig-3 Figures in Million Metric Tons

Clearly, going paperless reduces costs, allowing companies to use those significant savings in support of other valuable business opportunities. The following can be analysed in support of this perception.

COST COMPARISON

PAPER VS. PAPERLESS

| XEROX 4 COPIES = $ 91.00 | SCAN THE FILE = $ 26.00 |
(GS-06 make 4 copies = $13.00 X 7 hrs)	(GS-06 to scan = $13.00 X 2 hrs)
COST OF PAPER = $ 20.00	COST OF CD-ROM = $ 14.00
COST OF POSTAGE = $ 13.50	COST OF POSTAGE = $ 4.00
TOTAL = $124.05	TOTAL = $ 44.00

On these sidelines, we have to adapt different strategies by way of which there is less usage of papers and paper work in our day to day chaos of life. According to **Barbara Weltman (2011),** the simplest ways to go paperless can be mentioned as:

1. Sending invoices electronically.
2. Using direct deposits for employee checks.
3. Subscribing to online publications rather than getting them in print.
4. Making bank deposits via smart phones or terminals.
5. Paying bills electronically.
6. Paying taxes online.
7. Filing tax returns electronically.
8. Using duplex printing.
9. Faxing by computer.
10. Replacing business cards with apps.
11. Using shredded paper for packing material.
12. Reformatting documents to widen margins.
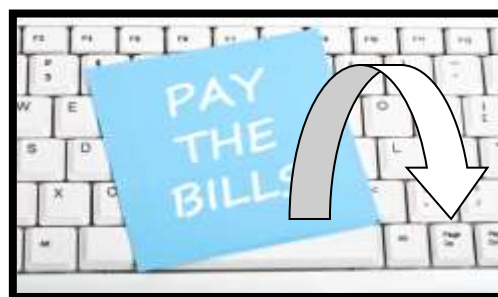
There is no doubt that the printing can be beneficial, because sometimes it is nice to have the document in hand and sometimes it is necessary tool. When that is the case, it is important to know how to keep the printing costs as low as possible. However, often we just click print without thinking twice. We never think of the
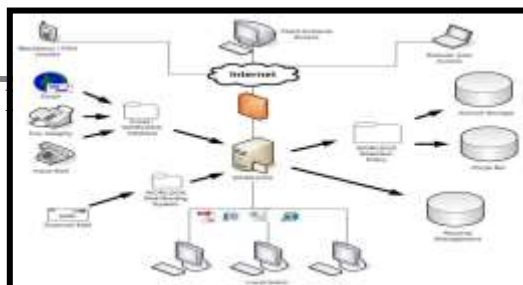
environment impacts of these printing pages and other related paper work. We should always consider the alternatives helping in environmental building. **Aaron Couch (2012)** gives some of the alternatives to printing & paper notes as:

1. Electronically signing documents
2. Using smartphone for notes
3. Clipping webpages instead of printing them
4. Getting bank statements via email
5. Filling out forms online
6. Emailing invoices (for businesses)
7. Getting news & information online
8. Unsubscribing from mailing lists
9. Paying bills online
10. Scanning existing & new documents
11. Using a file organizer, preferably with OCR
12. Synchronizing documents across all devices
13. Making sure not to overprint.
14. Lastly, needing backup.

In some instances, we can just stop the paper from coming to our location. And in case of others, we may choose an electronic storage system rather than paper. The ideas for going paperless shared by **Sabrina (2011)** are outlined as below:

1. Making sure the electronic system is solid
2. Making sure of backing it up
3. Deciding what to let go of and what to keep in physical form
4. Contacting the bank for paperless statement
5. Contacting credit card companies and utility companies for paperless statements
6. Eliminating paper piles by not printing emails
7. Making sure of not receiving things we never read

In actuality, the truth is that paperless means less paper and not 'no' paper. There will always be clients who do not want to be billed electronically plus we still have the past to contend with.

But, it is the willingness of the organization just to scan in all those file cabinets full of past paper and then to refer to all their services to digital and electronic environment. The **Barbara Rogoff (2006)** gives the five top ways to go paperless as:

1. 'Use act' of having one place to look for everything
2. Switching to an e-fax system.
3. Using your web site to your advantage.
4. Using virtual mailing systems
5. Backing it up, backing it up, backing it up.

4. Stand of Libraries and Information Centers

The library is the only centralized location where new and emerging information technologies can be combined with traditional knowledge resources in a user-focused, service-rich environment that supports today's social and educational patterns of learning, teaching, and research. The library environment is currently undergoing a rapid and dynamic revolution leading to new generation of libraries with the emphasis on e-resources. The libraries took a step towards a paperless society very rapidly and most of libraries particularly university & special libraries, began allocating separate funds for electronic resources. The libraries are perceiving the paper usage and related issues of paper work as: 'Once computer data is printed on paper, it becomes out-of-sync with computer database updates. Paper is difficult to search and arrange in multiple sort arrangements, and similar paper data stored in multiple locations is often difficult and costly to track and update. A paperless office would have a single-source collection point for distributed database updates and a publish - subscribe system. Modern computer screens make reading less exhausting as a laptop computer can be used on a couch or in bed. With tablet computers and smartphones, and with many other low-cost value-added features like video animation, video clips, and full-length movies, many argue that paper is now obsolete to all but not for those who are resistant to technological change. E-Books are often free or low cost compared to hard-copy books.'
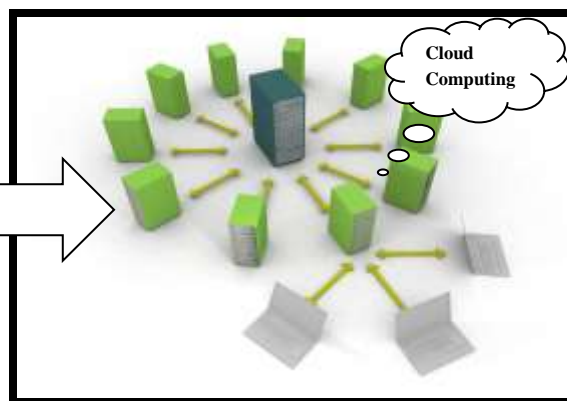
With the ever-growing electronic availability of information on both national and global networks, many libraries have turned their attention to providing access rather than building local collections. In seeking to enable patrons to locate material (increasingly full-text) where they require it most - in dormitories, in offices, in classrooms, or at home, librarians are stressing the need to provide resources to faculty and students at locations other than the library building. What the current user desires is "a seamless system that will integrate all types of information, whether accessible on site or deliverable from some distant location. They just want to retrieve the information." With the advancement of the technological revolution, librarians will play a major role in meeting this expectation, continuing to be in the forefront of helping faculty, students, and others gain access to the vast multitudes of information whether digitized, print, or multimedia.

Regardless of the promise of the 'virtual library' the commitment to providing optimal customer service still remains the primary goal of libraries. More specifically, librarians still seek to further students' ability to conduct research and to improve their critical thinking and evaluative competencies and writing skills to support faculty research and teaching, and to continually evaluate, augment, and generally enhance the libraries' collections, which are increasingly diverse in both subject matter as well as in format **(Rapple, 1997)**.

Libraries are said to be the mirror images of the user's information seeking behaviour and the trends of information availability. The current bent of the users towards the digital information and its electronic availability puts pressure on libraries to orient their services to this desired direction. So, there is a need for paperless libraries or the libraries with less usage of papers. And the way our users are becoming technology savvies are forcing the whole library screen to go for the digital and computer technologies and adapt the drive in heaps and bounds. Now, mostly the need for paper is eliminated by using online systems, such as replacing index cards and file cabinets with databases, typed letters and faxes with email, and reference books with the internet. The automation of the paper-based processes is another way to eliminate paper that rely on forms, applications and surveys to capture and share data. This method is referred to as 'electronic forms' or e-forms and is typically accomplished by using existing print-perfect documents in electronic format to allow for pre-filling of existing data, capturing data manually entered online by end-users, providing secure methods to submit form data to processing systems, and digitally signing the electronic documents without printing. Although, libraries encounter technological difficulties such as file format compatibility, longevity of digital documents, system stability, and library staff and clients not having appropriate technological skills, but the push to digital transition is more than its difficulties. The technologies that libraries are currently using in this direction are:

- Automation of Housekeeping operations - to self sufficient the all processing work in libraries with ease and an a reduced time intervals
- Digitizing paper-based documents - to shift towards the digital objects rather than paper based items
- Portable Document Format (PDF) - to create, display and interact with electronic documents and forms

- E-form (electronic form) management software - to create, integrate and route forms and form data with processing systems
- E-books- to have online and electronic accessibility of digital books
- E-journals- to have an electronic versions of the printed journals
- Forums/ discussion lists - to have a discussion platform for our users
- Bulletin boards - to notify and share the new and nascent information to the users of the library
- Databases - to capture data for pre-filling and processing documents
- Subject Gateways- to give access to the relevant and authoritative content
- Cloud Computing – to put all its servers and services on cloud
- Workflow platforms - to route information, documents and direct process flow
- Resource Sharing/Consortia/Networking - to go for sharing the resources and Inter library loan services with other libraries
- OPACs- to access the resources of the library

- Audio-videoconferencing - to interact and learn in a electronically developed environment from different geographical locations
- Digital signature solutions - to digitally sign documents used by end-users
- Portals/Vortals - to have an organised single

interface for large volume of electronic resources in a coherent way

- Web servers - to host the process, receive submitted data, store documents and manage document rights.

And many more aspects of electronic and digital technologies at the fingertips of the users in an efficient and effective ways. But all these transitions require a competent edge on part of the seekers of the information. They must have proper skills to orient and use such transitory gadgets with its fulliest. Here is a call for information literacy skills of the users of the library to search, identify and locate the pertinent information among the vast reservoirs of knowledge in this contemporary era. The new screen needs new skills to visualize and search for the unsearched.

5. Conclusion

The importance of the paper in scholarly communication cannot be unseen, but the way it is associated with various hazards and exploitation of natural resources is alarming and needs first to be strategically understood and then cured properly in a balanced way. The way papers are being used, needs an approach to change its orientation and the same has been incurred by the digital and electronic world and that leads the paper related works to be changed dramatically in recent years. Paper work need to be reduced and the seepage to other alternative to be carved out to save the nature's most valuable resources in the form of tress and so the mother environment, and to stop various poisonous pollutants coming from the paper and its related activities. From amongst the alternatives, the new digital and electronic media has not only added value to this topic but make the information seeking perception more interactive, powerful and develop new means of accessing information to support teaching, learning and research. The various flexibility options of the digital technology in disseminating the information and in using the wide resources to communicate the way papers used to be communicating. Now we are using online resources in such a way as if we are in a physical environment and the electronic documents are substituting the printed documents. It is not surprising that the libraries have witnessed more technological change over the past decade than perhaps any other sector of information communication. Innovations in hardware, software, and the very infrastructure of the institution have constituted only part of that change. An even greater revolution has occurred in

the library culture, day-to-day housekeeping operations, job responsibilities, overall outlook, etc. The libraries are one of the main agencies which deal directly or indirectly with the paper and paper related work in the form of vast printed resources, but paradigm shifting to the digital and electronic world makes them more valid and sustains their very essence and existence in the contemporary ICT environment. Besides, the libraries are providing number of programs for the users to inculcate the skills demanded by the time and to be technology savvy in this new environment. It calls upon the various information literacy activities for users to search, identify and to locate the pertinent and relevant content in the wide oceans of knowledge.

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