

J W T

Frank Rose

EMBRACING
ANALOG:
WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

March 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Embracing Analog: Why Physical Is Hot	4
Drivers	4
Manifestations	9
What It Means.....	15

This is a report from JWTIntelligence. Go to JWTIntelligence.com to download this and other trend research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we spend ever more time in the digital world, what's becoming increasingly valued is the time we do not spend in front of a screen—the time we spend with real people and real things. As we observed in *Objectifying Objects*, one of our 10 Trends for 2012, “People are fetishizing the physical and the tactile.” It's not that we're abandoning digital—far from it. But as we buy more apps, e-books and downloads, and as digital screens become our default interface with the world, we seem to increasingly seek out physical objects and experiences.

Embracing Analog and, more specifically, *Objectifying Objects* are digital-era countertrends, responses to the evaporation of so many physical things into intangible formats. For consumers, these responses coexist with their embrace of tech-centric lifestyles; indeed, the stronger that embrace, the stronger the urge to experience the polar opposite.

This report examines the increasing embrace of analog, what's driving it, the ways in which it's manifesting and what it means for marketers.

Methodology

JWT's trend reports are the result of quantitative, qualitative and desk research conducted by JWTIntelligence throughout the year. For this report, JWTIntelligence partnered with Frank Rose, author of *The Art of Immersion* and correspondent for *Wired*, to design and conduct a survey in the U.S. and U.K. using SONAR™, JWT's proprietary online tool. The survey polled 1,200 adults aged 18-plus from Feb. 1-4. In addition, we interviewed Rose and Paul Woolmington, leading authority on marketing and co-founder of the disruptive communications management consultancy Naked Communications Americas. See their bios below:



FRANK ROSE, author of *The Art of Immersion* and correspondent for *Wired*

Rose is the author of *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way We Tell Stories*. He speaks frequently about the impact of technology on entertainment, advertising and society, which he covered for more than a decade as a contributing editor at *Wired* and a contributing writer at *Fortune*. His work has also appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Magazine*, *New York*, *Esquire*, *Vanity Fair* and *Rolling Stone*. Among his other books are *The Agency: William Morris and the Hidden History of Show Business* and the national best-seller *West of Eden: The End of Innocence at Apple Computer*, now available in an updated edition. His books have been translated into Dutch, French, German, Japanese, Korean and Italian.



PAUL WOOLMINGTON, leading authority on marketing and co-founder of the disruptive communications management consultancy Naked Communications Americas

Woolmington is an entrepreneur in media, advertising, marketing and communications who has held leadership positions at companies including IPG, Y&R, WPP and MDC Partners. He co-founded Naked Communications Americas, a first-of-its-kind objective communications management company that was heralded by *The Wall Street Journal* as a top five agency “to watch,” by *The Financial Times* as “marketing's most creative business” and by *The Washington Post* as “the agency of the future.” He was also recognized by *Fast Company* in 2010 as one of the 10 most creative people in marketing services.

Woolmington is currently devoting his energy to a portfolio of angel investments and advisory roles in a number of dynamic businesses, as well as select high-impact work for government and social cause organizations. Throughout his career, he has advised charitable, arts, media, digital, social, event, content, technology and insight/research concerns, and served on a broad array of industry bodies. Championing innovative and disruptive thinking, he has been extensively published across all media and has served on a diverse array of creative, marketing, media, digital, effectiveness, strategy and integration gatherings, festivals, conferences and award juries.

EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

As we spend ever more time in the digital world, what's becoming increasingly valued is the time we do not spend in front of a screen—the time we spend with real people and real things. As we observed in our Objectifying Objects trend in our 2012 forecast, “people are fetishizing the physical and the tactile.” It's not that we're abandoning digital—far from it. But as we buy more apps, e-books and downloads, and as digital screens become our default interface with the world, we seem to increasingly seek out physical objects and experiences.



The simple fact is, we're physical creatures. We're hardwired to respond to cues in the physical environment. That's not going to change—unless of course Ray Kurzweil is right and we all get swept up into the singularity and trade our brains for silicon. Which could happen, but I sort of doubt it.”
—FRANK ROSE, author of *The Art of Immersion* and correspondent for *Wired*



As life becomes more hyperconnected and convenient, our worlds are being tilted toward the rational IQ sides of our brains. This leaves an increasing gap in the emotional EQ side, which leads us to yearn for and seek out analog objects and physical experiences.”

—PAUL WOOLMINGTON, leading authority on marketing and co-founder of the disruptive communications management consultancy Naked Communications Americas

DRIVERS

The digitization of the physical world: A multitude of physical things have gotten digitized in the past decade or so, including CDs, photos and their albums, correspondence, books, newspapers and other print media. And with the advent of the cloud and streaming services for music and movies, digital media is “unshackled from the bonds of physicality, hard format or even a home computer,” as the *Chicago Tribune's* Christopher Borrelli puts it. Soon even cash will likely fade away as we come to rely on smartphones-turned-digital wallets.

Consumer behavior is starting to reflect this shift. According to a survey we conducted in February, majorities of American adults did more of the following activities online than offline over the past 12 months: researching products before buying them, playing games, paying bills, showing someone pictures, buying music, buying books, reading news and listening to music. The younger generations (Millennials, followed by Gen Xers) tended to lean toward digital in greater numbers across more activities than the older cohorts (Boomers and Silents), as did our male respondents. (See Figure 1A; for generational and gender breakdowns, see Appendix, Figures 1F-G; for U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 1H-J.)

The ease with which we can access anything at any time and the intangible format tend to make digital things feel less valuable and special than their physical counterparts. The cloud has “given me the gift of instant gratification and endless access, but inadvertently reminded me that appreciation [for what you have] and availability are closely joined at the hip,” observes Borrelli.

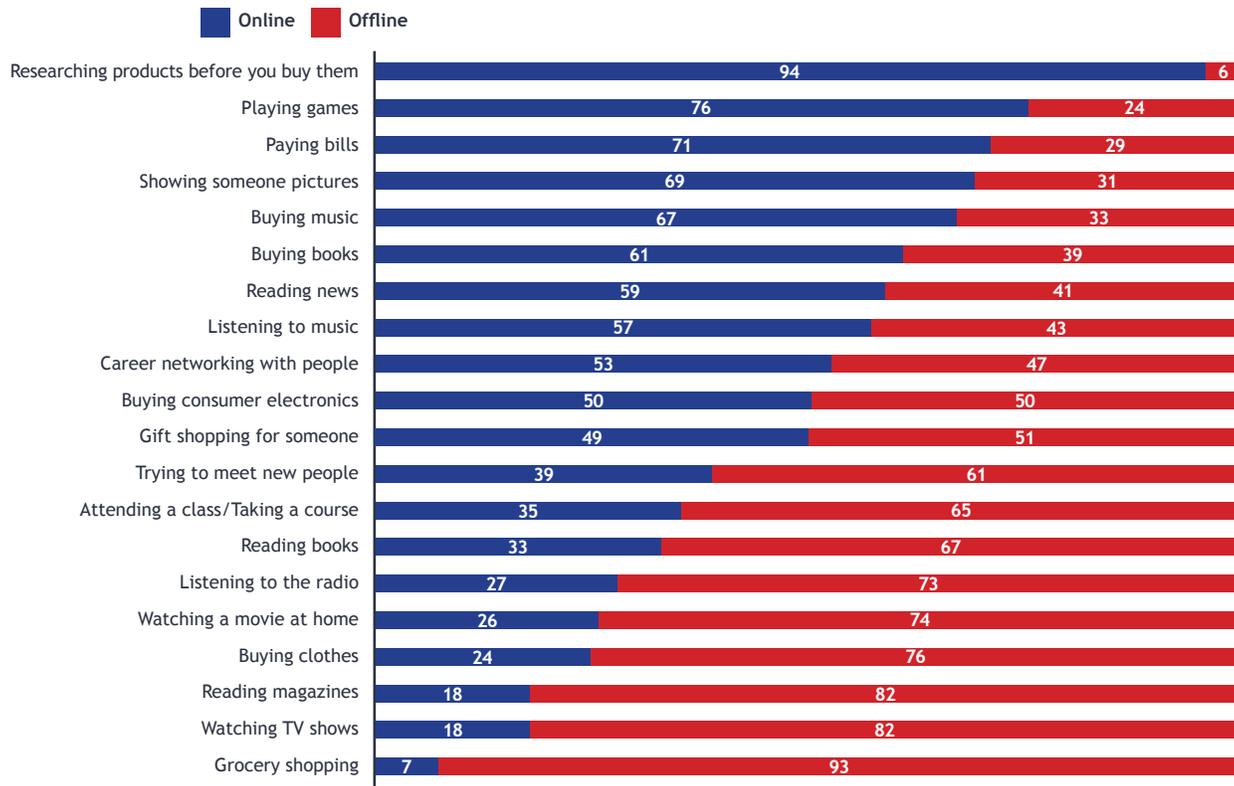
EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

DRIVERS (cont'd.)

FIGURE 1A:

Online vs. offline

Percentage of American adults who tend to do the following activities more online or offline*



*Base: Performed activity—either online or offline—in past 12 months.

The “emotional void” in digital: When choosing reasons why they tend to buy music, read news and do other activities more online than offline, our survey respondents cited ease, speed, convenience and cost. (For U.S. and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 1K-L.)

That pragmatism was reflected throughout our research, with nearly 8 in 10 respondents saying that they love being able to keep a lot more music, books or photos digitally than they ever could physically, and 7 in 10 saying that these electronic files help them keep their homes uncluttered. More Millennials and Gen Xers expressed these sentiments compared to their elders; they also showed a greater preference for downloading books, movies and music because it’s faster than taking a trip to the store. (See Figure 1B; for gender breakdowns and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 1M-O.)

Compare that with the rationale for doing things offline rather than online. Aside from habit (“It’s how I’ve always done it”), our survey respondents cited the better experience and comfort found in the physical world. Our research also showed that American adults across generations tend to romanticize the physical, ascribing more meaning to giving and receiving physical objects versus digital versions of the same things. (See Figure 1C; for gender breakdowns and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 1P-R.)

While digital has its benefits, the more we embrace the format, the more we’ll miss the emotional qualities that it has a hard time replicating.

EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

DRIVERS (cont'd.)

FIGURE 1B:

Digital pragmatism

Percentage of American adults who agree

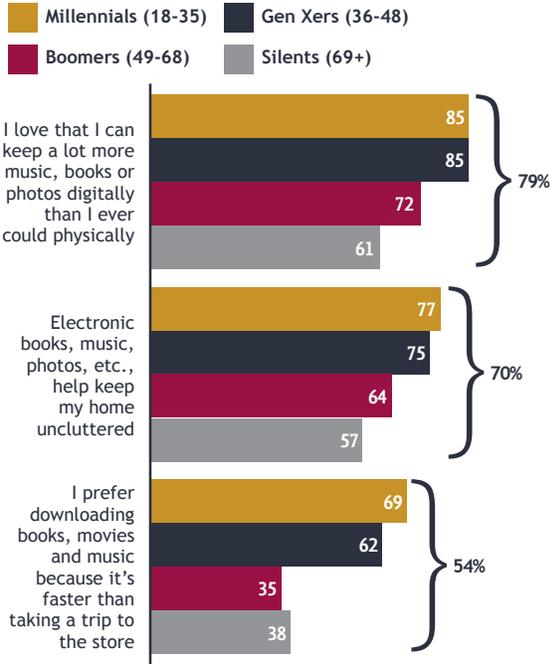
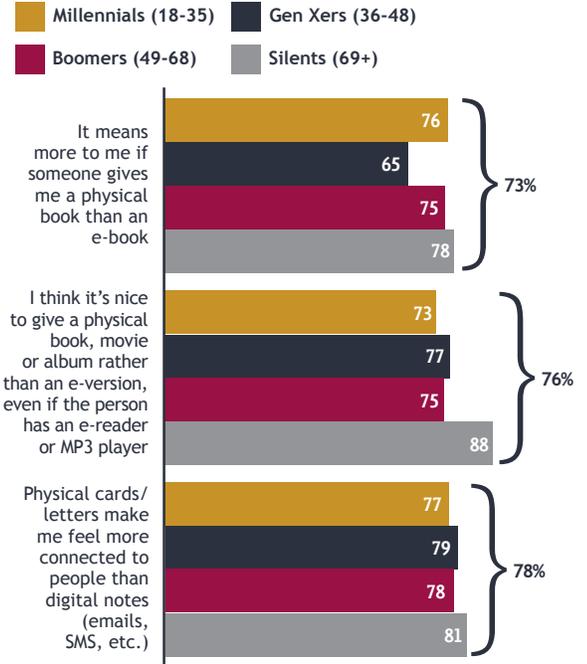


FIGURE 1C:

Romanticizing the physical

Percentage of American adults who agree



Imperfection: Consumers have been seeking “authenticity” from products and services, and increasingly it’s the “imperfect” that feels especially authentic—a counter to the standardized, mass-produced or otherwise polished offerings that prevail today and the smooth, shiny surfaces of our digital devices. Imperfections on physical objects, such as scratches or scuffs, give them personality, according to 59% of our respondents, with Millennials (67%) and Gen Xers (60%) leading the way.



As human beings we need our emotional being satisfied, and obviously that need isn't being met by our digital experiences. Therefore, in order to balance that, we're seeking the analog more than ever. We're looking for more meaningful emotional experiences and connections. We're seeking to rebalance our IQ and EQ states.”

—PAUL WOOLMINGTON, leading authority on marketing and co-founder of the disruptive communications management consultancy Naked Communications Americas



EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

DRIVERS (cont'd.)

Nostalgia: People have always had a fondness for things that speak to older ways of living, but today, objects that harken back to different times strike an especially strong chord among digital natives. Some have embraced the “heritage” movement, a “nostalgia-tinged societal turn toward objects that last, smolder with individuality and are well-made,” as *The Wall Street Journal* puts it.



Indeed, our survey found that 67% of American adults sometimes feel nostalgic for things from the past, like vinyl records and photo albums, and 61% have a greater appreciation for things that aren't used as much as they used to be, like record players and film cameras. (See Figure 1D; for gender breakdowns and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 1S-U.)

These objects represent a counterpoint to our always-on, real-time world of bits and bytes. They appeal to our urge to De-Tech (one of our 10 Trends for 2011), as they follow a different pace (e.g., snail mail) and are manually made or operated.



Nostalgia is a consequence of the loss of emotional connections and the anxiety that produces. In our new digitally driven world that's moving at an ever faster pace, nostalgia takes on a deeper context: the sentimental yearning for things past that felt safe and secure and represent happier, less complex times.”

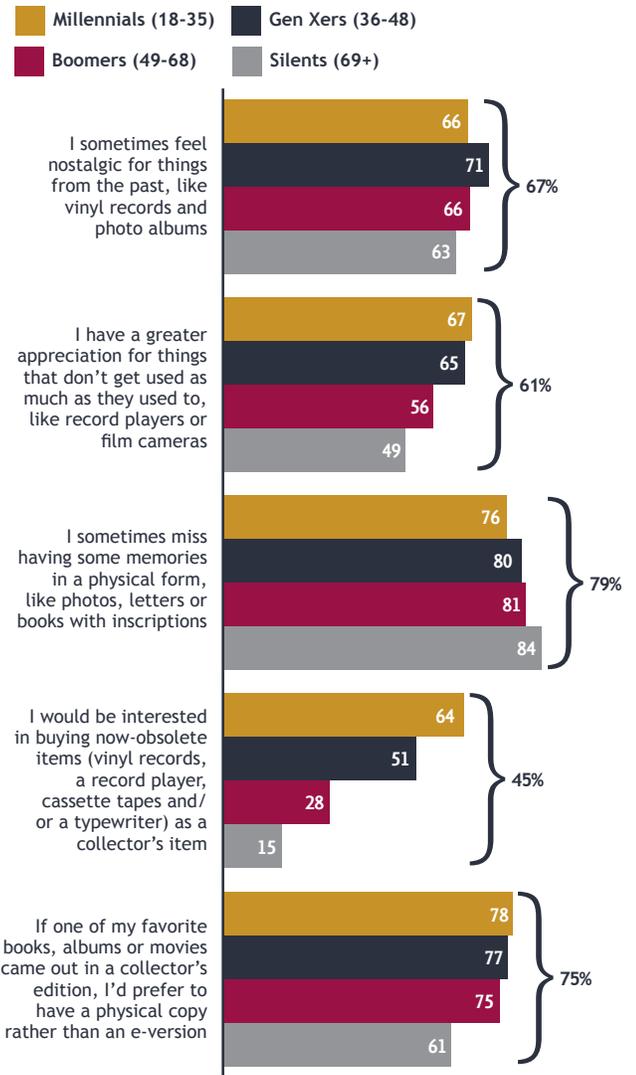
—PAUL WOOLMINGTON, leading authority on marketing and co-founder of the disruptive communications management consultancy Naked Communications Americas

The quest for originality: Adopting items that people no longer have a true need for (wristwatches, stationery) conveys some originality and quirkiness in the owner. This is especially true of the younger generations. According to our survey, 64% of Millennials said they'd be interested in buying now-obsolete goods as collector's items, followed by 51% of Gen Xers; 75% of American respondents agreed that if one of their favorite books, albums or movies came out in a collector's edition, they'd prefer to have a physical copy rather than an e-version. (See Figure 1D; for gender breakdowns and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 1S-U.)

FIGURE 1D:

Nostalgia and the quest for originality

Percentage of American adults who agree



EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

DRIVERS (cont'd.)

To have and to hold: Physical artifacts can be keepsakes, identity markers and status symbols. They can be limited-edition, rare or one-of-a-kind. They can be collected, shared, framed, proudly displayed, nicely wrapped. We can touch and smell them—an attribute that many people appreciate: 72% of our U.S. survey respondents said that they like the smell and feel of books; 56% said the same of magazines. Physical objects also have a longevity that digital objects lack; 76% of our survey population said as much. (See Figure 1E; for gender breakdowns and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 1V-X.)

As Joy Division and New Order bass player Peter Hook observed in *The Independent* in November 2011: “It was a wonderful thing when you were younger just to walk around with an LP under your arm, showing off how rare your record was. You can’t do that with a CD, and you certainly can’t do it with an MP3. I loved the sense of longing and anticipation before you got the album: examining how the sleeve looked and felt, then taking the record out of the sleeve—then, of course, the music! Putting it on the turntable, the delivery is so much more satisfying than a CD or MP3 has ever been, or ever will be.”



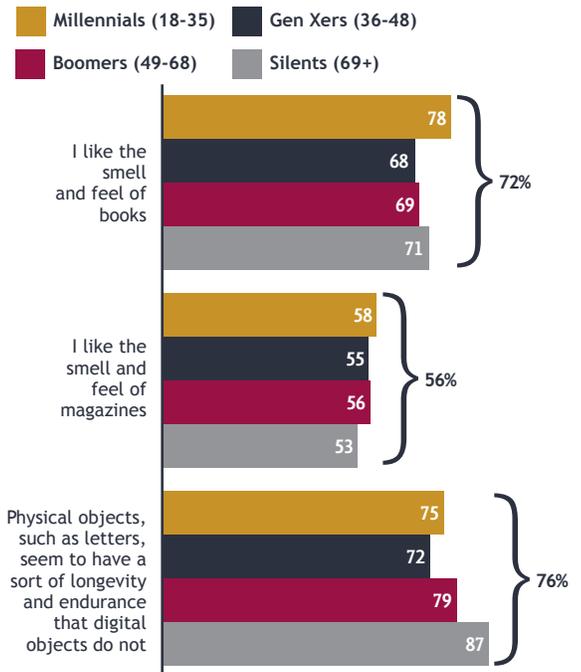
As we spend more and more of our time in virtual environments—which are still evolving and increasingly immersive—it’s only natural to want to have something to grab onto. And if you’re going to grab onto something, it had better be tangible.”

—FRANK ROSE, author of *The Art of Immersion* and correspondent for *Wired*

FIGURE 1E:

To have and to hold

Percentage of American adults who agree



EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

MANIFESTATIONS

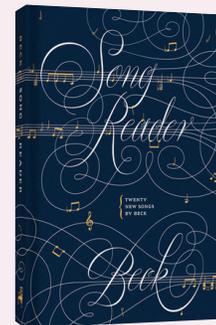


Vinyl revival: Vinyl has been on the upswing for a while, only growing in popularity as digital becomes more pervasive. It's not just indie bands releasing vinyl albums now, but major acts like Florence + the Machine, Taylor Swift and Justin Timberlake (whose *20/20 Experience* is coming soon), with some records including digital download. While vinyl sales account for a small percentage of overall albums sold, U.S. vinyl sales tracked by Nielsen SoundScan and *Billboard* showed the fifth consecutive year of growth for the format in 2012, with a 19% year-over-year increase. U.K. sales experienced a similar rise.

U.K. department store John Lewis added a lineup of 20 vinyl records for the 2011 holidays, along with “Play & Display” frames from a company called Art Vinyl (pointing to the fact that in some cases, albums are more décor than media format). More than a year later, John Lewis continues to sell the Art Vinyl range, with music available exclusively on vinyl. And HMV in the U.K. is finding that younger shoppers are buying vinyl even if they don't actually own a record player, because they think it's “cool”; “The fans want to associate with it, almost as a badge of honor,” a spokesman told *The Independent*. The same holds true stateside: “Half the kids are buying [vinyl records] to listen to; half are buying them as artifacts,” Terry Stewart, CEO of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum, told *The New York Times*.



And while deluxe box sets and limited-edition special releases are nothing new, these are increasingly over-the-top in their “objectification”; for example, a deluxe edition of Okkervil River's 2011 album *I Am Very Far* included two LPs with embossed packaging and laser-etched vinyl, a CD with a sizable booklet, a laser-cut replica of the album's paper-cut cover art, a hardcover book of lyrics, a poster and a signed letter from the band's front man—all packaged in a wood box branded with the album title. In 2012, The Avett Brothers released a deluxe box set, in a pine box adorned with a burned-in design, containing 13 calendar and lyric prints, seven high-quality photo prints, an exclusive six-song CD demo, a digital download of the album and either a 180-gram double vinyl gatefold package or a limited-edition die-cut package CD. **Rihanna's** latest album, *Unapologetic*, also comes in a substantial deluxe edition, containing a deluxe version CD, collectible vinyl records, a handwritten personal note from Rihanna, a USB flash drive, posters, handwritten tour notes, a concert DVD, a T-shirt, photos, lithographs and stickers.



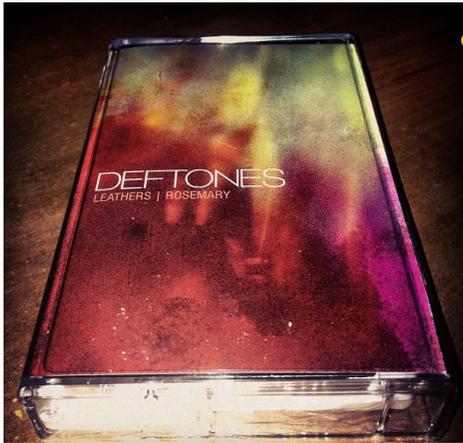
Beck's Song Reader: As its description reads, “Beck's latest album comes in an almost-forgotten form—twenty songs existing only as individual pieces of sheet music, never before released or recorded.

Complete with full-color, heyday-of-home-play-inspired art for each song and a lavishly produced hardcover carrying case, *Song Reader* is an experiment in what an album can be ... an alternative that enlists the listener in the tone of every track, and that's as visually absorbing as a dozen gatefold LPs put together.” Bringing the songs to life is up to the user, but the project's publisher, McSweeney's, is posting renditions by readers and select musicians on its website.

Lauding Beck's ability to connect to “generational moments in his music,” *New York* magazine wrote that *Song Reader* is tapping into an “Americana backlash, a nostalgia for things simpler and crafted—DIY homesteading, preserving jams, music released on sheets of paper.”

EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)



The niche for cassettes: Cassettes have found a place in the underground music scene and as bonus items. For example, last fall the **Deftones** made a cassette single available to the first 50 people who preordered the band's new album at the merchandise table during each show on their North American tour. In November 2011, Dinosaur Jr.—popular during the heyday of cassettes—released a limited-edition box set with three albums on tape. As Stan Schroeder wrote on Mashable at the time of the release, “When everything is digital and immediately available, one starts to yearn for the physical medium and all the little quirks that go with playing a record on a gramophone or playing a tape in the old cassette recorder.”

Motivational objects for music: Physical items that represent digital music can make a download feel more tangible and satisfying and fans feel that they're purchasing a keepsake. “We know people need something to hold in their hands,” explained the lead singer of Hungarian band The Kolin, which is selling two singles in the form of special 3D glasses and a novelty pen (the songs can be downloaded for free with purchase). Other examples:

- In 2011, the Norwegian band **Datarock** released a \$50 red vinyl “diamond” accompanied by a USB drive containing their latest single along with scores of bonus tracks, photos, music videos and a concert film. Other bands have also used the USB format to pack in the extras, including heavy hitters such as Lady Gaga, Kiss and Queen.
- **Playbutton**, which launched in 2011, sells albums packaged in what looks like a novelty button featuring album artwork. A tiny memory card contains the tracks, three buttons allow playback, and there's a headphone outlet. Artists including Florence + the Machine, Belle and Sebastian and Justin Bieber have used the format.
- Philadelphia startup **Data Garden** makes “seed paper” albums: Instead of a CD, buyers get a download code on a card screen-printed with water-based ink that can be planted to sprout flowers. The founders call the idea “trans-digital.”



- Last fall, French producer and DJ **Breakbot** sold pieces of chocolate that were playable records as part of the promotional package for his single “By Your Side.” The chocolate records cost \$21 a pop and included a link to a video that showed the making of the limited-edition edible records.



- Pushing the envelope even further, former White Stripes member Jack White, in partnership with Butthole Surfers' Gibby Haynes, plans to release a 7-inch collectible single printed on X-ray sheets at this year's SXSW Music Festival.



EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

Wristwatch revival: Watches tap into the heritage trend's love of self-consciously retro and finely made items, says *The New York Times*, and carry an “analog chic,” especially watches that show the gears of the timekeeping mechanism. Even digital watches have some appeal, with American Apparel now selling everything from vintage Casios to old Swatches and Seikos. Swiss watch exports rose 11% year-over-year in January to \$1.6 billion. And Fossil's watch division reported double-digit growth in 2012.

Stationery's revival: Paper is experiencing a renaissance, with digital natives embracing the notion of hand-writing notes to send through the mail. Stationery was on our list of 100 Things to Watch in 2012, and sales remain robust: The global stationery and card market is expected to reach \$111.8 billion by 2016, a 25% increase since 2011, according to an August 2012 report from MarketLine.

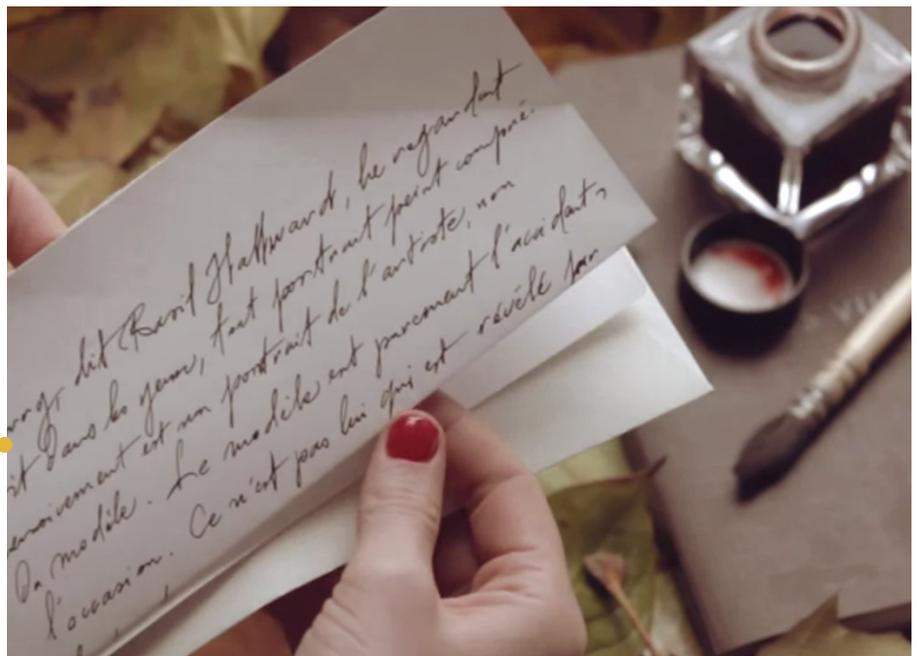
Louis Vuitton recently launched a stationery line, showcased in a new Cabinet d'écriture in one of its Paris boutiques. Etsy is packed with stationery products, and despite its name, Paperless Post—the company that pioneered high-end e-vites—is now offering physical as well as e-cards.

Minted, similar to a Threadless for stationery products, raised \$5.5 million in a second round of funding in November 2011. Visitors to Minted can vote on artist and designer submissions, with the winning designs turned into calendars, cards, invitations and other paper goods, using “fine paper stock, rich inks, and crisp printing methods.”

The further from email the better, with letterpress-printed cards and embossed papers especially popular. For instance, fountain pen sales have soared: On Amazon, year-over-year sales doubled between January and May 2012 compared to the same period in 2011, while U.K. stationery store Ryman also said sales have risen.

“With digital things, everything happens invisibly. The owner of a mechanical clock or watch can see how it works. Clocks still tell time 100 or 200 years after they were built. That is incredible in a digital age where things can be out of date in a year and unusable in five.”

—DAVID SOKOSH, watchmaker and owner of analog-timepiece line Brooklyn Watches, “Old Souls,” *New York*, July 3, 2011



EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

Converting digital into physical: Many a website can turn digital photos or designs into calendars, cards, mugs and so on, but increasingly we're seeing tools that bridge the digital and physical worlds in more interesting and novel ways. These new platforms address a growing consumer desire, with 73% of our U.S. survey population saying they sometimes find themselves wanting to turn their digital memories into physical keepsakes, so they have a tangible record of them.

- **Digital-into-physical cards:** Various services turn digital content into physical cards that get mailed out for the sender, one of our 100 Things to Watch in 2012. Tools like Sincerely's **Postagram** app, Shutterfly's Treat app and Postcard on the Run ("Technology delivered the old-fashioned way") enable vacationers and others to create physical postcards from mobile snapshots. Similarly, Sincerely's Ink Cards, Apple's Cards (for deluxe letterpress-printed cards) and the like let people send greeting cards using a mobile device; Paperless Post can print and deliver physical invitations in addition to e-vites.

Postal services in Sweden, Austria and Poland also offer digital-into-physical cards. The U.S. Postal Service does so by working with third-party sites such as AmazingMail, Cardstore.com and Click2Mail.

Last August, Facebook started testing a tool that lets members mail physical photos to social connections.

- **Giving social media output a physical presence:** A range of new services allow people to come to grips—literally—with their social media output, turning tweets and posts into real-world items.

MOO Inc., for instance, offers business cards created from Facebook users' Timeline images and data, using the same fonts and layout; it includes the person's Facebook URL. As a default, the back of the card features a quote from the customer's Favorite Quotations field. Apparently intended for the most prolific tweeters, the Twitter Poster re-creates the customer's profile picture using his or her own tweets (an interesting modern-day interpretation of the portrait).

Instagram users can decorate their homes with their creations using **Stitchtagram**, a service that crafts handmade pillows using fabric printed with Instagram shots. Also designed for Instagram users, Instaprint produces Polaroids for the digital age. Its wall-mounted devices print photographs taken with Instagram and tagged with an event's location or hashtag. The rentable devices are marketed toward the event market, providing a fun way to generate party souvenirs.



Likewise, the **Polaroid Cacher** is a graduate student concept that allows users to make instant photos of digital experiences, such as milestones posted to a Facebook timeline. Users install a browser plugin that lets them select a portion of the screen and capture a picture of it. The image is then sent to a Bluetooth-enabled vintage Polaroid camera for instant developing. The designer says the project "captures digital media in a traditional analog format, as [a] means to create tangible, durable mementos of our digital life."



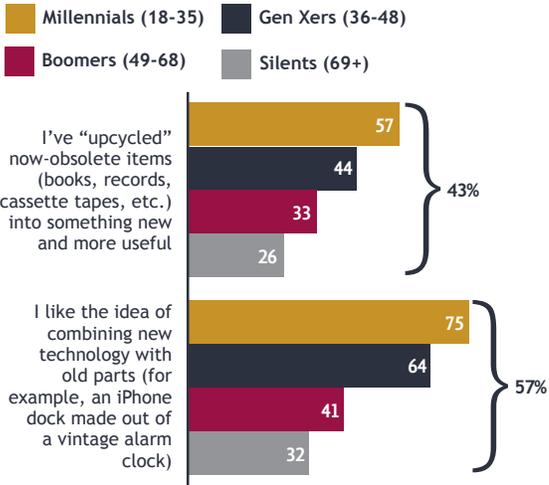
EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

FIGURE 2A:

New uses for old things

Percentage of American adults who agree



Finding new uses for old things: People are increasingly repurposing things, with 57% of our Millennial and 44% of our Gen X survey respondents in the U.S. telling us that they've "upcycled" obsolete items into something new and more useful. (See Figure 2A; for gender breakdowns and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 2C-E.)

Physical books, for instance, are being turned into decorative items, artfully piled or color-coordinated on shelves in retail spaces and homes. Noted *The New York Times* in January 2011, "The printed, bound book has been given a stay of execution by an unlikely source: the design community." There's also the single deluxe book whose role is at least partly decorative: Pottery Barn, for instance, has sold limited-edition leather-bound books on "the artistry of mixing drinks" and single malt Scotch. In late 2012, Random House of Canada introduced the series



"**Books Are Beautiful**," 30 re-released titles assembled with interior design in mind. The year before, Vintage Books in the U.K. released a similar book series in celebration of its 21st anniversary. Also in the U.K., department store Selfridges has a section of "beautiful books" in its bookshop.

Artists have been turning books into works of art for some time now. For instance, paper artist **Jodi Harvey-Brown** creates pop-up paper art that depicts famous scenes from the books' content. A work made from a copy of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, for example, shows two boys floating away on a raft that's encased within the pages of the hardcover novel.

Meanwhile, three-quarters of Millennials and nearly two-thirds of Gen Xers say they like the idea of combining new technology with old parts. Manufacturers are responding, releasing items such as an iPod docking station made with Victrola parts.

Chicago-based **Fotio** has created a portable digital "photo booth without the booth" that combines the looks of a vintage camera with an iMac digital display, which is available to rent for events. Users can take their photos and view them on the screen before the images are sent to a private or open online gallery. Users can access the private gallery only via a password provided by tickets that are stored alongside the camera.



EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

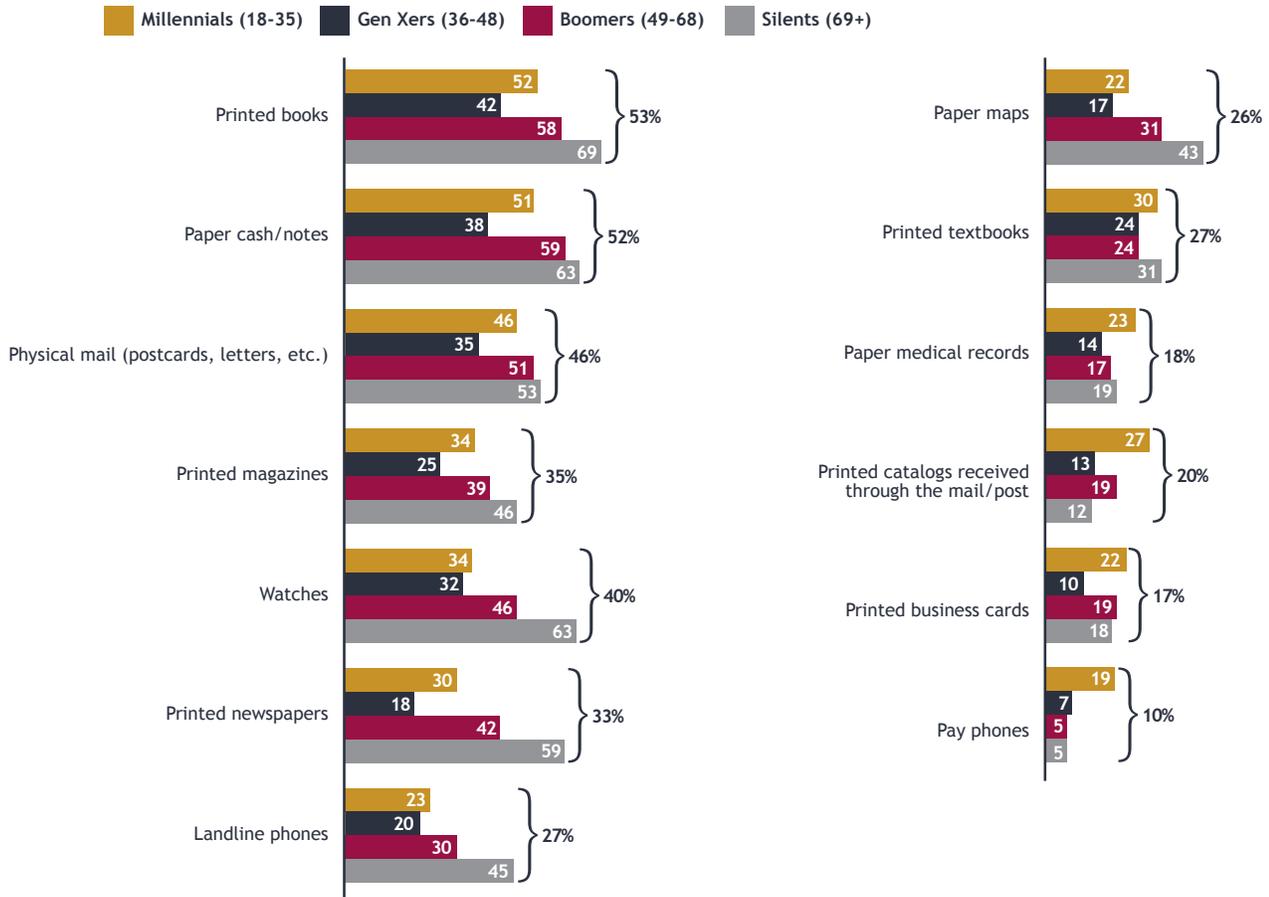
MANIFESTATIONS (cont'd.)

Missing physical things: In the near future, advances in technology will render many physical items obsolete. When asked which items they would “miss a lot” if they were to go away, our survey respondents cited books, cash and mail as the top three. (See Figure 2B; for gender breakdowns and U.K. results, see Appendix, Figures 2F-H.)

FIGURE 2B:

How much people would miss things

Percentage of American adults who would miss the following things a lot if they went away



EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

WHAT IT MEANS

Embracing Analog and, more specifically, Objectifying Objects are digital-era countertrends, responses to the evaporation of so many physical things into intangible formats. For consumers, these trends coexist with their embrace of tech-centric lifestyles; indeed, the stronger that embrace is, the stronger the urge to experience the polar opposite, as we're seeing with Millennials sending handwritten notes and buying vinyl.

Amplify qualities unique to physical goods: Immersion in the digital world makes us more keenly aware of what's unique about physical objects—things that can be carried, held, opened, displayed and given. We may no longer have a real use for some of these objects, but for certain consumers, that makes them even more appealing: They become statements and in some cases imbued with more significance than they had when they were used for more functional ends. Brands can amp up the tactile, enduring, imperfect qualities of their objects, creating premium offerings that serve as unique gifts or collectibles. Digital brands, meanwhile, can find clever ways to imbue their offerings with these qualities. Instagram, for instance, lets users take perfect digital images, then use filters to “age” them, make image quality look poorer or add discoloration.



“Millennials are more attuned to things digital than any other adults. As alluring as the digital world may be, we’re beginning to realize its limits—and Millennials are in a better position to do so than anyone. If you’re looking at digital from the outside, as way too many older people still are, all you see is that everything looks wrong—but that’s because you’re looking at it through the wrong lens. When you’ve embraced it on its own terms, you’re in a position to criticize it intelligently.”

—FRANK ROSE, author of *The Art of Immersion* and correspondent for *Wired*

Avoid the “emotional void” in digital: As Paul Woolmington observes, “To better serve consumers and create more powerful immersive relationships, brands need to address the relationship between the rational and emotional states (IQ and EQ) across digital and analog platforms, channels and experiences. The opportunity for marketers is to understand how citizens and society can not just do things more cheaply, easily and quickly but also connect emotionally in deeper ways across the digital-analog divide.”



Use physical objects to increase the perceived value of digital offerings:

We'll see more brands that live in the digital space creating so-called motivational objects, an emerging phenomenon in the music category. If the offering isn't tangible, they'll simply create an object that represents the digital property. This not only satisfies the need for tangibility but increases perception of value, since digitization raises questions about the fair price of intellectual property (i.e., consumers used to feel they were paying in part for the record or the printing costs).

Bridge the digital and the physical: Digital brands can also enable people to use technology to create physical objects, like postcards that are sent through the mail. They can offer novel services that transform our virtual information into real-world stuff. For Valentine's Day last year, for instance, eHarmony Australia developed an easy way to create a keepsake. For those who “liked” the online dating site's Facebook page and filled in the relevant details, eHarmony's “Calligraphy Cupids” crafted a handwritten love letter and delivered it. Brands can also use technology to make items on demand, thanks to the advent of 3D printing.

EMBRACING ANALOG: WHY PHYSICAL IS HOT

WHAT IT MEANS (cont'd.)

Revive older, meaningful traditions that are fading with the transition to digital: People are nostalgic about what's getting lost in our rush to progress, as we're still working out where slow communication and the tactile fit into this new way of living. Brands can find ways to position themselves as counterpoints to the proliferation of digital goods in consumers' lives without being anti-technology. **From a Birdie**, for example, enables people to create an Album of Letters for friends or family, asking others to contribute a thoughtfully composed note to mark a birthday or other occasion; the recipient gets a website composed of these missives but can also receive a hard- or soft-cover printed edition. "We are trying to create a medium that encourages carefulness, deep communication, privacy, and permanence," says the site.



Allow people to repurpose old goods: The rapid changeover from physical to digital goods has quickly rendered many objects obsolete. Millennials, who are among the most nostalgic for our analog past, also have a hacker mindset. They've grown up in a world where established systems have been upended, and remix culture has given them a feeling of ownership over goods and content. Hacking or repurposing obsolete items allows this cohort to create something truly personal and unique, as well as eco-friendly. Brands can embrace this ethos by facilitating the repurposing of old goods into something totally new.

Leverage the trend carefully: As Frank Rose notes, "The important thing is this: People are no more going to abandon digital than they're going to abandon electricity. It's just that people are realizing that digital isn't everything. If you keep in mind that digital is for efficiency and convenience and physical is for feelings of permanence, substance and roundedness—for feelings generally—you can't go too far wrong."

THOUGHT STARTERS

- What products or services can you offer that are self-consciously analog, satisfying the need for tangible goods? How can you amplify qualities that are unique in physical objects, making them more satisfying to touch, hold or admire?
- How can you position your brand as a counterpoint to the proliferation of digital goods in consumers' lives without being anti-technology?
- If you're a technology brand, how can you help people connect to things and behaviors that harken back to our analog past? Can you create physical things that represent digital property?
- How can your brand help users turn obsolete objects into something new?
- How can your brand conjure up the sensation of physical imperfections in the digital realm?
- If you're a digital content brand, how can you encourage consumers to purchase by catering to their desire for physical goods?
- If you produce physical goods, how can your brand help bridge the analog-digital divide?

THANK YOU

JWT: JWT is the world's best-known marketing communications brand. Headquartered in New York, JWT is a true global network with more than 200 offices in over 90 countries employing nearly 10,000 marketing professionals. JWT consistently ranks among the top agency networks in the world and continues a dominant presence in the industry by staying on the leading edge—from producing the first-ever TV commercial in 1939 to today, developing award-winning branded content. JWT embraces a WORLDMADE philosophy, making things inspired by the world through blending technological innovation with international imagination. JWT has forged deep relationships with clients including Bayer, Bloomberg, Brand USA, Diageo, Ford, HSBC, Johnson & Johnson, Kellogg's, Kimberly-Clark, Kraft, Macy's, Mondelez, Nestlé, Nokia, Rolex, Royal Caribbean, Schick, Shell, Unilever, Vodafone, Vonage and many others. JWT's parent company is WPP (NASDAQ: WPPGY). For more information, please visit www.jwt.com and follow us @JWT_Worldwide.

JWTIntelligence: JWTIntelligence is a center for provocative thinking that is a part of JWT. We make sense of the chaos in a world of hyper-abundant information and constant innovation—finding quality amid the quantity.

We focus on identifying changes in the global zeitgeist so as to convert shifts into compelling opportunities for brands. We have done this on behalf of multinational clients across several categories including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food, and home and personal care.

J W T

466 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10017

www.jwt.com | [@JWT_Worldwide](https://twitter.com/JWT_Worldwide)

www.jwtintelligence.com | [@JWTIntelligence](https://twitter.com/JWTIntelligence)

www.anxietyindex.com | [@AnxietyIndex](https://twitter.com/AnxietyIndex)

SONAR

Frank Rose

Embracing Analog: Why Physical Is Hot

Director of trendspotting	Ann M. Mack
Editors	Marian Berelowitz Ann Abel
Senior trends strategist	Jessica Vaughn
Trends associate	Nicholas Ayala
SONAR™	Mark Truss Karen Montecuolo
Design	Peter Mullaney

CONTACT:

Ann M. Mack
212-210-7378
ann.mack@jwt.com
[@annmmack](https://twitter.com/annmmack)

Jessica Vaughn
212-210-7225
jessica.vaughn@jwt.com
[@jess_vaughn](https://twitter.com/jess_vaughn)

© 2013 J. Walter Thompson Company.
All Rights Reserved.

J W T

Frank Rose