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MTONEGUZZI@CALGARYHERALD.COM | HERALD

Executives to share vision for changing print industry

A group of international executives will gather in Banff this week to discuss the future — and fate — of the print media industry.

And despite the rapid advances of technology impacting the industry, the talk will be about opportunity, not doom and gloom.

"Print is an integral part of how we communicate," says Josh Ramsbottom, principal of NorQuest College's Centre for Excellence in Print Media based in Edmonton.

"It may not have the place of honour, I guess, in how we pass information on anymore. That's been taken over by the Internet.

"But print is a vital way for us to communicate information and pass information onto other people."

The printing industry is the fourth-largest employer in the North American manufacturing sector, with Canada-wide printing accounting for more than \$9 billion in sales in 2009.

"The biggest problem that we have as an industry is that we keep thinking about the past and the place that print had in the past," said Ramsbottom.

"What we really have to start doing is thinking about how print augments information in the future.

"The biggest thing is that people don't think about the printing industry in terms of careers or its contribution to the economy."

According to the Canadian Printing Industries Association, more than 65,000 people work in the printing and graphic communications industry in Canada as of 2010. There were 7,230 identified print firms in Canada as of last year. Nearly half the existing workers in the industry are approaching retirement.

The academy is co-hosting the Executive Forum conference with NorQuest.

"Print was supposed to die when radio and TV came out," said Ramsbottom.

"Radio was supposed to die when TV came out. Theatres were supposed to die when TV came out.



"Yet . . . each one of these mediums have morphed themselves into a place that supplements each other. And that's what print needs to do."

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