

Why print?

A new design, a new publishing schedule, and a deep commitment to a very old technology

From the Editors in the [September 2022](#) issue



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This is the first issue of the newly redesigned *Century*, now a monthly publication. We intend for the magazine that many subscribers hold in their hands to bring deep engagement, critical insight, and great pleasure in turning each page. People often ask us if we have plans to shift toward publishing exclusively in the digital realm. The answer is no—not for the foreseeable future.

We're investing more than ever in our website, podcasts, email newsletters, and social media presence. But we remain enthusiastically committed to our print edition. Why, at a time when so much media energy and innovation are focused elsewhere? Because while online reading has its place, we are deeply aware of print's value in the reading life.

Print, at its best, is an immersive, aesthetic experience. In contrast to the infinite scroll that defines the web, a print magazine is discrete and finite—enabling both the aesthetic pleasure of perceiving it as a beautiful object and the readerly pleasure of finishing it. It's the ideal format for what has long been the *Century's* strength: articles that prioritize deep reflection over quick response. Many people find such articles easier to read—and to remember—in print. Print lovers also appreciate the feel of the pages and smelling the paper and ink.

That's because an encounter with print is a physical, embodied encounter. Web designers have come up with dynamic ways to curate and display content, but none truly re-creates the serendipitous experience of flipping through a magazine and finding things you didn't know you wanted to read. A reader's shelves—of books, old magazine issues, and more—can offer a sort of personal history in tattered covers, dog-eared pages, and marginalia. And when you read print, ink sometimes rubs off on your skin. It's an intimate encounter—even a holy one—that changes you. Sharing an article with someone else is also more intimate in print; it generally involves looking them in the eye, not just clicking “share.”

Print also plays a critical role in our troubled media ecosystem. It is, after all, permanent. It cannot be easily manipulated or changed. While an individual copy can be destroyed, it's very difficult to scrub an entire print run from the public record. That's an important quality in times of political uncertainty and instability.

Print no longer leads in providing timely, informative reading material; that lane's been taken by the web. But in recent years print has made a small comeback by emphasizing the particular strengths and pleasures it offers that the web cannot. It's far from clear that print journalism has a long, bright future. But we're cautiously bullish—and deeply motivated to create each issue of the *Century* with great care, attentive to the power of words on a page.