



Launch of WordPress Namibia

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By Gwen Lister

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1. Today we gather here to **CELEBRATE** our new printing press.
2. "A printing press?", many have asked me with **SHOCK AND HORROR**. "But print is dead. What on earth are you doing starting a printing press?"
3. True, there's a lot of **DOOM AND GLOOM** about the publishing industry, newspapers in particular. And yes, there've been some **MAJOR PRINT CLOSURES** over the past years around the world. But that doesn't mean that print is dead.
4. The **IMPACT OF THE INTERNET** and digital media is a real and great development, especially because it gives people a choice of medium to access their information and also because it gives a voice to citizens where more static print media was unable to do so to such an extent in the past.
5. But print and digital is not an **EITHER/OR** situation. For media the future is mostly about integrating these multi-media platforms so as to give people the choice as to how they want to consume their news or access their information. Newspapers now mostly have their own online editions; and on the other hand, digital and online media, even **GOOGLE**, for example, are choosing to go into print.
6. So **DIGITAL IS NOT A THREAT**, but in fact a **CHALLENGE** to traditional newspapers to up their game, get back to core mission and values, elevate standards of journalism and empower citizens by providing them with professional news and information so necessary for them to make informed decisions about their lives.
7. This is not the place or time to go into the **HISTORY** of what the invention of the printing press has done for mankind. But print has and will continue to **UNLOCK LITERACY** and have major impact on human societies and knowledge here in Africa and further afield. And so to answer the question posed to me by shocked critics: **PRINT IS NOT DEAD**, but alive and well and still living in Africa.
8. Personally I search a lot of information **ONLINE**, particularly those news publications

not available here in hard copy in Namibia, to inform myself about what's happening around the world. But not everyone likes to read a newspaper on a tablet, smartphone or computer screen. For me there is nothing like **READING** the print version. The touch and smell of the newsprint, the ability to page backwards and forwards, choosing what to read and what not, looking at layout and presentation, photographs and graphics; but most importantly, accessing local news and feeling the pulse of the community we live in. I think there are still others like me out there.

9. Wendell Phillips once said "what **GUNPOWDER** did for war, the printing press has done for the mind". I am certain Wordpress will not only contribute to the promotion of a **READING CULTURE**, but ultimately to the development of a **KNOWLEDGE** based society and a consolidation of the ethos of **PRESS FREEDOM**.

10. As Chair of the Trust, whose mission is the promotion of free speech and independent press as well as the enhancement of standards of ethics and professionalism in journalism, I'm proud that we are part of a joint venture with Wolfram Jauss which will play its role in giving effect these ideals. Also, through development of staff, WordPress will make a strong contribution to skills empowerment and advanced printing expertise in Namibia.

11. Finally, big thanks to my fellow trustees, Theo Frank, Luckson Chipare and Norman Tjombe, the Board of the Free Press of Namibia (Pty) Ltd, Tangeni Amupadhi, Ulla von Holtz and the team at The Namibian for driving this initiative; the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN), and all the experts from near and far who have helped us realise this goal. Finally thanks goes to our partner in this project who's had the lion's share of the working, Wolfram, and his long-suffering but very supportive wife and family.

12. With honesty, passion and hard work, businesses can go far, and we need more examples of these good practices in our country today. May WordPress achieve all the above mentioned goals and more.