



Sometimes Caring To Send the Very Best: Greeting Card Creation Slumping Among Home PC Users

Dan Ness, Principal Analyst, MetaFacts, December 15, 2004

The age-old tradition of the family gathering around the home PC printer during the holidays to create unique greeting cards appears to be slipping—the practice has been in decline for the last three years. However, families with young children appear to be clinging to the tradition more tightly than others. Meanwhile, the percentage of hard-core card senders—those households for whom card-creation is the main reason for having a PC printer—has remained about the same.

These and other insights about the convergence of home PCs, printers, and greeting cards were derived from 10,418 households who responded to questionnaires submitted by MetaFacts, Inc. concerning uses of their home PC printers. The results showed that in 2004 about a third of American households (32.6 percent) used their home computer to make greeting cards, down from 35.5 percent in 2003 and 39.2 percent in 2002. Perhaps the practice of making unique cards is now so time-tested that the results don't seem as novel any more.

Why is this important?

Self-made greeting cards reflect a creative, personal and high-involvement action on the part of the computer user. Even with the gentle and sometimes thorough assistance of some software and sites to design the card and compose the sentiment, it still involves communication with friends, family and other intimates. It forms a personal expression and statement. Therefore, it's a key indicator of how deeply involved home computers and printers are in the American lifestyle.

The presence of small children in the home appears to make it more likely that the family will devote more time to greeting card creation. For instance, 15.1 percent of households surveyed in 2004 said that greeting card creation was the main use of their printer, but that figure rose to 20.6 percent for households with PC users aged three to 12. (Yet, having teen-aged users didn't help, since the average for households with PCs users aged 13 to 19 was 14.9 percent—about average, in other words.)

Households with income less than \$50,000 were also more likely to make their own cards, with 17.3 percent listing it as the main use of their printers. Either they like to save money, or have practices favoring personal creativity over buying ready-made solutions.

Meanwhile, the percentage of hardcore card-makers has barely declined, even if the practice has slipped markedly among the general population. As stated above, 15.1 percent of households in 2004 listed card creation as the primary use for their printers. That's only a slight decrease from 15.9 percent in 2003 and 16.8 percent in 2002. This probably means we won't see a specialized greeting-card printer in the near future, as the market may be too small to justify it.

On the other hand, card-making has remained the second most common activity for which special paper is used—understandably, since the paper is an important factor in making a card unique. It also helps to have the paper pre-scored for easy and professional-looking folding. In 2004, 40.9 percent of PC-owning households report that card-creation was an activity that they used special paper for, second to photo

printing (68.1 percent). Letter writing was a distant third, at 18.4 percent. Here, too, prevalence has fallen during the last three years, since the rate of using special paper to create cards was 42.4 percent in 2003 and 46.7 percent in 2002. (However, it remained in second place during those years, between photo printer and letter writing.)

Here, too, the presence of small children among the users meant a higher rate of usage. While 40.9 percent of the general PC user population reported using special paper for cards, the rate rose to 47.2 percent for those with users aged three to 12 in the house. But in this case the highest rate was among those households with teenaged users, rising to 49.6 percent. Evidently, teenagers value uniqueness—and they do so consistently. The rate was 48.7 percent in 2003 and 49.8 percent in 2002.

In case you were wondering, the demographic least likely to create their own cards were the single adults. Only 10 percent of single-adults households said that card-making was the most common use of their printer in 2004. Here, too, the trend was downward, from 11.8 percent in 2003 and 13.8 percent in 2002.

Use of Home Printers for Greeting Cards (% of Home Printers)

	2002	2003	2004
Who Use Their PC Printer to Make Cards	39.2	35.5	32.6
Percent of Households Where Card-Making Is the Main Use of the Printer	16.8	15.9	15.1
Percent of Households That Use Special Paper to Make Cards	46.7	42.4	40.9

Source: MetaFacts, Inc. – Technology User Profile – 2004 Annual Edition

Background & Methodology

Factual, decision-making information like this is only found in one place, the Technology User Profile from MetaFacts. The Technology User Profile market research information service is based on extensive primary research selected and balanced to represent the American population - including technology users and non-technology users. Drawn from more than 30,000 surveys per year reporting on over 250 questions, it is the most comprehensive total market technology study available. TUPdates are brief summaries of information contained in the Technology User Profile.

Links to Source Data

Current Technology User Profile subscribers may be interested in the following links with related, more detailed or updated information:

[Leading Activities for PC Printing \(Printer Highlights\)](#)

- [TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
- [TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
- [TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
- [TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
- [TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
- [TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)

[Activities for which Printer is Used Most Often \(Home/Family\)](#)

- [TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
- [TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
- [TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
- [TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
- [TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
- [TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)

Activities for which Special Paper is Used (Home/Family)

[TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
[TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
[TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
[TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
[TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
[TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)

Links to TUP Online Store

If you are not a current Technology User Profile subscriber, and wish to obtain the source data or related information used in this TUPdate, please follow [this link to the TUP Online Store](#).

Other Resources

Current Technology User Profile subscribers may be interested in the following links with related, more detailed or updated information:

Activities for which PC is Regularly Used (Home/Family)

[TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
[TUP 2004 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
[TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
[TUP 2003 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)
[TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (Excel)
[TUP 2002 Annual Edition](#) (pdf)

Usage Guidelines

This TUPdate is provided as a service to subscribers of the MetaFacts Technology User Profile® service, technology marketers, the investment community and other interested parties. Current Technology User Profile subscribers may freely distribute this information within their firms. Further information about Technology User Profile can be obtained at the website www.technologyuser.com or by contacting MetaFacts at sales@metafacts.com. If you would like to unsubscribe, please complete the [unsubscribe form](#). If you were forwarded this TUPdate and wish to get on the list for future articles, please [complete a subscription request form](#).