You bet! In 2014, print publishers printed on paper towels and bananas, embedded digital devices and coffee cups.
The imaginations of creative magazine media people never cease to amaze. Last year we had magazine pages you could:

- Eat to taste a new soda flavour
- Plant to grow wild flowers
- Use to recharge your mobile phone
- Connect to as an internet router
- Use to dial an advertiser’s phone number
- Watch videos, and
- Wash if they got dirty

In earlier editions of this report, we have covered magazines printed on cereal boxes, Frisbees, T-shirts, tin cans, and toilet paper. We have found covers that became video games, or smelled like chocolate or Brazilian barbecue.

We discovered the world’s tallest magazine (Visionaire at two meters tall), and the world’s most expensive magazine (Kohl’s out of the UAE with a cover coated in 91 grams of gold and encrusted with 622 diamonds at a price of US$10,000).

In 2014, the creative geniuses didn’t let up. While there were no gold-and-diamonds covers, there were pages you could:

- Read on banana skins
- Use to track the whereabouts of your child
- Get on restroom paper towels
- Smell a world-famous artist’s body scent
- Use to pop-out two coffee cups complete with instant coffee grounds

Magazine media in 2014 also created pop-up radio stations and pop-up stores selling goods recommended by their celebrity editors.
An advertisement as a radar device?
The global skin and body-care brand Nivea reprised its beach-focused service. In 2013 Nivea created a print ad with a wafer-thin solar panel and phone charger to boost your mobile's batteries without having to leave the beach.

In 2014, the company returned with an ad in Brazil’s Veja Rio magazine that included a tear-off, water-resistant armband parents could place on their children to track their whereabouts and sound an alarm if the kiddie wandered past a pre-set distance. Parents downloaded the “Sun Band” app, activated its distance limits, and sat back to read their favourite magazine in peace.

A cup of coffee from a print advertisement
Another advertiser making clever use of print was Nescafé France. The campaign was designed to bring people together for conversations, and what better way than over a cup of delicious hot coffee?

However, coffee might not be readily available when you need it, so Nescafé France came to the rescue. In a print advertisement, the coffee company embedded two pop-out coffee cups complete with coffee powder. All you needed was hot water! And, as one witty observer noted, if you didn’t have a friend around, that meant two cups for you!

Bricks and mortar promotion
Taking a page from the magazine media experience, a store in Manhattan changes its themes every four to eight weeks. One of the store's recent themes was Wellness and featured the recommendations of Yahoo's columnists and editors from its key titles, including the health, food, travel, beauty, parenting, style, and tech sections.

The store, called Story, set out display tables with each author’s picks for Valentine’s gifts along with a card explaining the columnist’s reasoning for choosing each gift. For example, Yahoo Beauty’s editor in chief Bobbi Brown’s card read:

- “Bobbi’s ABCs to Being Beautiful:
  • “A for Advice: Makeup should boost your confidence
• “B for Best Bet: ALOHA’s 15-pack of Daily Greens; it’s the easiest way to get your vitamin A, B, and Cs
• “C for Can’t Live Well Without: Beauty superfoods that give you incredible skin, brighter eyes, and a health glow”

“A magazine tells stories between pictures and written words, and we do it through merchandising and events,” store owner Rachel Shechtman told The New York Times.

A pop-up magazine radio station
An Australian celebrity news and entertainment magazine launched a pop-up radio station in an effort to promote its special ‘WHO’s Sexiest People’ issue. Partnering with the Australian Radio Network (ARN), WHO created the ‘WHO Sexiest People Party’ station, a four-week-long celebration of the WHO Sexiest People launch party including tracks from the event in addition to song rotations by international and local artists.

“The multi-platform campaign will span more consumer touch points than ever before,” said WHO editor Nicky Briger.

The paper-towel publication
Going a bit more offbeat, how could a publication reach almost every consumer in a market? Well, there’s really only one place that almost everyone in office buildings, restaurants, movie theatres, and stores go: the public restroom.

Mexican free newspaper Mas Por Mas built paper towel dispensers equipped with water-proof ink printers and connected via wifi to the paper’s content feed. Every time a visitor reached for a paper towel, the printer would deliver “minute-by-minute” breaking news plus a QR code readers could use to access the paper’s website for more details.

It worked. Beyond the buzz created in some of the highest-end Mexico City business and entertainment districts, traffic to the publication’s website increased almost 40 per cent in just two weeks.

“We wanted to drive consumers to our site,” a Mas Por Mas spokesman said. “How? With a fresh, simple and unexpected idea.”
Printing on... banana skins?

Speaking of fresh, things don’t get any fresher than fresh fruit. And that’s exactly what one “print” campaign used as its “medium”.

Global importer and distributor of tropical produce, Fyffes, partnered with Bonnier’s Carlsen Comics to create a healthy eating campaign focused on eating fewer sweets and more fresh fruit, in particular bananas.

Bonnier’s Carlsen team created a new comic character, “Fyfe”, a typical boy who turned into a super hero simply by eating bananas. Every day for a week, Fyfe’s adventures were printed using an innovative laser-printing technique on thousands of bananas donated by Fyffes and distributed to 11,000 kindergarteners and elementary school children in nine countries around the world.

An unusual perfume fold-out

Getting even more offbeat and bizarre, Harper’s Bazaar used a tried-and-true format – a perfume foldout – to promote Eau de M, the scent of a world-famous artist’s body odour. That’s right: BO.

New York-based mixed media artist Martynka Wawrzyniak paid for what she later admitted was a “fake ad”.

The foldout showed Wawrzyniak naked on her stomach in a bathtub looking seductively over her shoulder with an image of her eponymous perfume in the lower right corner.

However, the perfume is not available in stores anywhere. The foldout and the embedded scent was, in Wawrzyniak’s eyes, an art installation.

“The ad becomes a vehicle for spreading my essence nationwide,” Wawrzyniak told The Fragrance Foundation. “[The public] is unaware of the fact that they are holding art, they are experiencing art. At the same time, they are unaware of the fact that they are inhaling sweat, which they are normally afraid of. It is a very primal delivery of the concept to them. And [there is] this whole dimension of them probably assuming that it must be something amazing because it’s this beautiful ad in a fashion magazine.”

The gift of cheery periodicals

Let’s end this year’s wrap-up of offbeat publishing initiatives by highlighting a real fan of magazines who converted her love of our industry into an industry of her own.

Co-founder Mary Martha Parisher’s uncle was undergoing chemotherapy in 2011 and Mary Martha thought she could cheer him up, not with flowers and candy, but with a gift of his favourite fishing magazines. No dice, said the hospital; they didn’t carry fishing magazines and wouldn’t deliver them to her uncle’s room if they did.

That got Mary Martha’s goat...
and fired her imagination. Figuring that other patients in hospitals around the country would also enjoy their favourite magazines to take their minds off their hospitalisation, she started “Cheeriodicals” (“Cheery” and “Periodicals”).

For between US$44 and US$100, Cheeriodicals will deliver one of dozens of themed packages containing four relevant magazines plus tasty treats. For example, for women, they offer 21 choices including the Culinary Delight, Home Decor, Health Nut, Beauty packages with magazines ranging from Cosmopolitan, Allure, and Vogue to Condé Nast Traveler, Good Housekeeping, Cooking Light, Women’s Health, Money, and Runner’s World.

For men, there are 14 packages including Hunting & Fishing, Man Cave, Business, Golf, Health Nut, and Handyman. The titles in the packages include: Field & Stream, Food & Wine, Money, Men’s Fitness, Golf, Travel & Leisure, Wired, indy’s College Sports, Handyman, etc.

The treats for the women include: white chocolate key lime cookies, kettle popcorn, butter popcorn, and gourmet butter toffee peanuts. The men get: buffalo-flavoured pretzel crisps, habanero-flavoured red diamond almonds, butter popcorn and white cheddar cheese popcorn.

The Cheeriodicals home page sums up Martha’s philosophy, and ours as well: “We believe magazines make the best gifts. They awaken our imaginations, ignite our passions, and engage our minds. They have a mass appeal, a personal touch, and a remarkable ability to please the hard-to-please. Magazines make our plane rides shorter, our Sunday afternoons lazier, and our sick days brighter. Here’s to gifts that make things better. Better for the giver. Better for the receiver.”
Amen.