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## PRESS & TELEVISION

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### *Cleaner News*

"Flexo on a Roll at Newspapers" by Rosalind C. Truitt, in *Presstime* (Dec. 1986), 11600 Sunrise Valley Dr., Reston, Va. 22091.

Printing technology, commonly traced to Johannes Gutenberg's 15th-century wooden press, actually had Chinese roots. The 11th-century alchemist Pi Sheng made moveable type from clay and glue. Formed into characters, the mix was melted on a plate coated with resin, wax, and paper ash, then solidified by cooling, and reheated to be detached.

Obviously, techniques improved, especially for newspapers. But few major advances were made after presses were electrified 80 years ago.

The last big change came during the 1960s. Then, newspapers began moving from letterpress technology, in which manually prepared plates print paper directly, to offset systems. In these, photographically prepared plates transfer ink to cylinders that print paper on both sides, more clearly than letterpress. The next advance, predicts Truitt: flexography.

While flexography has been used for 60 years to print packages and such, it is new to news. With "flexo," rollers engraved with thousands of "printing dots" transfer ink to flexible plastic plates that, in turn, print the paper. Compared with offset, flexo equipment needs less operator care and wastes less paper. Because it prints with a "light kiss," flexo produces sharper images than letterpress, and can use thinner paper than offset. Unlike offset, which uses oil-based inks that never dry completely—and thus soil readers' hands—flexo employs water-based inks that dry fully. Oily ink makes newspapers look gray; flexo produces a "whiter" page.

Five Italian papers use flexography exclusively, and others in Switzerland, West Germany, and Australia are studying it. So far, only a few U.S. dailies, among them the *Providence Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Miami Herald*, have gone totally or partially flexo. Since doing so costs \$1 million per press, the changeover will be gradual.

### *Nuclear Winter?*

"In from the Cold: 'Nuclear Winter' Melts Down" by Russell Seitz, in *The National Interest* (Fall 1986), 1627 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

"Nuclear Winter" theorists say that the atomic explosions of a nuclear war would release clouds of smoke and debris dense enough to turn warm, sunny days into bleak arctic nights. To Seitz, a visiting scholar at Harvard's Center for International Affairs, the theory shows how both science and the media can be clouded by politics.

In 1982, relates Seitz, some U.S. disarmament activists wondered if that year's "eloquent call to lay down [nuclear] arms," Jonathan Schell's book *The Fate of the Earth*, could be "transformed into a scientific imperative." The activists, among them Cornell astronomer Carl Sagan and leaders of advocacy groups such as the Audubon Society, were inspired by an