

## Sustainable Content: How to Measure and Mitigate the Carbon Footprint of Digital Data

**Alisa Bonsignore**

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*Sustainable Content is an excellent, informative guide to applying long-term sustainability practices at the organizational level.*

Content professional Alisa Bonsignore's *Sustainable Content* is an insightful, practical guide to mitigating digital data's long-term ecological impacts.

To address increasing amounts of digital data and data storage needs, the book illuminates the increasing environmental impact of recurrent data transfer as it relates to greenhouse gas emissions. Advocating for change at the organizational level where data moves at scale and addressing forms including videos, images, web page data, and podcasts, it models effective content strategy and design with the aim of lowering a company's carbon footprint.

Pragmatic but optimistic in tone, the book makes use of industry resources like the US Environmental Protection Agency's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies calculator to illustrate a company's digital impact with clarity. For example, a 50 percent reduction in the weight of one client's web page with nearly two million hits each year is shown to result in less energy consumed through downloaded data, correlating to over three tons of emissions avoided (noted as the equivalent of over three hundred gallons of gasoline in a year). Further aiding in its accessibility, the book balances its text, graphics, and storytelling well to ensure foundational understanding, as where it covers a company's number of web pages or videos and its resulting kilowatts of energy and then reiterates the energy impact in separate graphics. Portions of its message reflect the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, the European Union's Green Deal Industrial Plan, and the 2016 Paris Agreement.

The chapters are organized by topic and include specific suggestions for how content professionals can implement the proposed changes. Encouragements such as to reduce a company's digital footprint by replacing electronic devices less often and closing open and idle web browser tabs that continue to transfer data are actionable. And to further model effective sustainability strategies, the book points to companies like Patagonia, whose programs resulted in financial growth and greater employee retention. In contrast, Kodak's inability to address its environmental impact in its Rochester, New York, community is shown to have contributed to its bankruptcy.

Indeed, the book's discussions of the value and return on investment (ROI) of sustainability initiatives bolsters its persuasiveness considerably. Its examples reach across nations and industries—including the healthcare, retail, software, and sports industries—to reflect the broad applicability of its message, as well as the global and interconnected nature of digital data and climate impact.

*Sustainable Content* is an excellent guide to managing digital content and applying long-term sustainability practices at the organizational level.

KATY KEFFER (December 6, 2024)

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