

Typography from Paper to Screen

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Abstract

Typography is one of the oldest art forms in the world and has remained important even through the transition from print to the digital age. It is imperative to learn all the terminologies regarding typography (tracking, leading, kerning) and font classifications, and then examine concepts like how fonts impact a message, and how fonts are used in different media like advertising, web, print, logos, and so on. Finally, it is essential to cover the essentials of digital publishing before concluding. The understanding of typography i.e., both theoretical and a literal is required, from how it is used to where it used to why it is used, and of course you'll gain a solid groundwork in the practical uses of typography too.

Whether one is a brand designer, UI designer or dedicated typography designer, having the knowledge of typography and the classification of typefaces is beneficial to all, enabling them to improve their craft and create far superior projects. With the exception of color, the typeface styles used in a design have a greater impact on the way a user perceives that design than any other individual design element. The use of great and correct typography can elevate a design from “good” to “amazing”. While poor typography (or worse — illegible type) can make the best designs unusable. The study below attempts to capture the distinction associated with each of the typefaces. Understand typography fundamentals and apply typography principles to digital and print media. Create outstanding text-based logos and designs and learn how typography is perceived by audiences/customers.

This study helps passionate typographer, print designers, graphic and web designers, animators, sign writers, and many more.

Introduction

In mid-15th century Europe, at the junction of the medieval era and the Renaissance, the world was introduced to movable type of printing. Handwritten letterforms of the mid-15th century embodied 3000 years of evolved letter design. And they served as the natural models for letterforms in systematized typography. On the other hand, the script known as texture or textuality,

produced by the strong gothic spirit of blackletter from the hands of German area scribes, served as the model for the first text types. Johannes Gutenberg employed the scribe Peter Schöffer to help design and cut the letter-punches for the first typeface—the D-K type.

It was this 202-character typeface that was used to print the first printed books in Europe. A second typeface of about 300 characters designed for the 42-line Bible c. 1455 was probably cut by the goldsmith Hans Dunne with the help of two others—Götze von Shlettstadt and Hans von Speyer

Before the age of computers, typographers trained over many years, following very strict rules that limited their opportunities for experimentation within typography. But the innovation of the personal computer in the 1980s and particularly with the development of the WYSIWYG (What you see is what you get) graphic user interface (GUI), brought about significant and dramatic change.

With the coming of the internet, the art of typography exploded into thousand different directions. Never before has there been such an abundance of visual diversity, with font creators selling and sharing their work online and designers having countless fonts to choose from.

Typefaces have continued to evolve in response to technology and the demands of new media. But with such an unlimited choice of typefaces, it is not easy for designers to know which one is best. To develop this ability, it is important to have the understanding and knowledge of basic typography and the many ‘rules’ of typography that originated during the rather inflexible days of metal type. And it is equally important to develop an artistic eye over time. Empowered with this knowledge, today’s art directors are encouraged to take risks, challenge pre-conceptions and simply experiment and have fun with the type in order to communicate the desired message in the most unique yet effective way.

Typography Basics

There are five basic classifications of typefaces: Serif, Sans Serif, Script, Monospaced, and Display. As a

general rule, serif and sans serif typefaces are used for either body copy or headlines (including titles, logos, etc.), while script and display typefaces are used only for headlines. Monospaced typefaces were originally used on typewriters. Today, they are generally used for displaying code, though they can also be used for body and headline copy. Not all serif and sans serif typefaces are equally suitable for both body and headline copy. Different typefaces are more legible than others at small sizes, while others are more suitable for larger type. (This kind of information can generally be found in the commercial descriptions of the various fonts.)

History of Typeface Styles

The oldest typefaces were called blackletter, and date back to the 1400s. These early typefaces were reminiscent of handwritten calligraphy. The New York Times logo is a classic, ubiquitous example of blackletter type, as are many other popular newspaper titles. After blackletter came the first serif typefaces. Serif typefaces include slight projections that finish off the strokes of their letterforms (called serifs, where the style gets its name). Emerging in the 1500s, the first serifs were Old Style serifs. These included Garamond and Goudy Old Style. The successors to the Old-Style serifs were called Transitional serifs, which made their first appearance in the 1700s. These typefaces had high stroke contrast and were more upright than their Old-Style predecessors.

The natural evolution of the trends set in Transitional serif typefaces became known as the Modern serifs during the 1800s. These Modern serifs include fonts like Didot and Bodoni. They have extreme contrast between strokes and no brackets on their serifs.

Slab serifs are the final evolution of the serif style. With the advent of mechanization (e.g. the Steam Press, 1814), and other important innovations in printing technology, as well as a new wave in advertising with advertisers reaching for a bold type that really asserted its presence, they were designed in part to withstand much more industrial printing processes. They have little contrast between strokes, and most are unbracketed. Slab serif typefaces include Rockwell and Clarendon, among others. They are sometimes thought of as typewriter fonts but were used much more extensively throughout the 20th century.

While serifs were the first typefaces to evolve after the original blackletters, sans serif typefaces largely came on to the design scene in the early 20th century. These early sans serif typefaces were called grotesque or gothic fonts and included typefaces like Franklin Gothic. They were called “grotesque” due to their rejection of the more “elegant” serif design elements.

Later in the 1900s, after the Grotesques came to the Neo-Grotesque sans serif typefaces. These typefaces were designed to be more legible than their earlier counterparts and generally have much plainer designs. Helvetica and Arial are both examples of Neo-Grotesque sans serifs. Rounding out the sans serif typefaces are the Geometric and Humanistic styles – with Futura being the most notable. Geometric sans serifs, like the Modern serifs, took the style to the edge.

They have letterforms based on simple geometric shapes most notably the circular ‘O’ shapes and are very modern. Their ultra-modern shapes do sacrifice legibility at smaller sizes, however. Futura has become heavily associated with films by renowned Hollywood director Wes Anderson.

Humanistic sans serifs sought to retain some of the influence that natural handwriting had on the letterforms of earlier typefaces. The letterforms are made more approachable through features like variable stroke widths. Gill Sans is one of the more popular sans serif typefaces. Other typeface styles script and display are harder to classify along a timeline. Blackletter is technically a script typeface, while new scripts are being developed all the time. The same goes for display fonts: they’ve been around almost as long as movable type itself.

And the time periods in which they were designed can go a long way toward helping to identify different typefaces. Since different styles can evoke different feelings in a project (formal or casual, traditional or modern, etc.), knowing the specific characteristics that set these styles apart from one another is valuable knowledge for a designer.

Distinguished graphic designers & typographers:

Name : **Max Miedinger**

Nationality: Swiss, Era: Mid-20th Century

Education: Kunstgewerbeschule

Famous Fonts: Helvetica (with Eduard Hoffmann)

Other Skills: Typesetter

Name : **John Baskerville**

Nationality: British, Era: 18th Century

Famous Fonts: Baskerville

Other Skills: Printing, paper, and ink production, lacquer work and papier-maché

Name : **Tobias Frere-Jones**

Nationality: American, Era: Contemporary

Education: Rhode Island School of Design

Foundry: Frere-Jones Type

Famous Fonts: Gotham, Interstate, Archer (with Jonathan Hoefler)

Designed for: The Boston Globe, The New York Times, Cooper-Hewitt, National Design

Name : **Adrian Frutiger**

Nationality: Swiss, Era: Late 20th century

Education: Kunstgewerbeschule

Foundry: Deberny&Peignot

Famous Fonts: Univers, Frutiger, Avenir

Fonts used for: London-street signage, Paris Metro, Deutsche Bank, GE, Apple

Name : **Erik Spiekermann**

Nationality: German, Era: Contemporary

Education: Berlin's Free University

Design Firm: Edenspiekermann

Famous Fonts: Berliner Grotesk, FF Meta, ITC Officina Sans

Designed for: Berlin Transit, Audi, Volkswagen, Nokia

Other Skills: Graphic design, Letterpress

Name : **Claude Garamond**

Nationality: French, Era: 16th Century

Education: Apprenticed with Antoine Augereau

Famous Fonts: Garamond Designed for: King François

Name : **Stanley Morison**

Nationality: British, Era: Early 20th Century

Education: Self-taught

Foundry: Consulted for the Monotype Corporation

Famous Fonts: Times New Roman (with Victor Lardent), revival of Baskerville. Other Skills: Print Historian

Name : **Carol Twombly**

Nationality: American, Era: Contemporary

Education: Rhode Island School of Design, Stanford University

Famous Fonts: Trajan, Myriad, Adobe Caslon, Chaparral

Designed for: Adobe

Name : **Jonathan Hoefler**

Nationality: American, Era: Contemporary

Education: Rhode Island School of Design

Foundry: Hoefler Type Foundry

Famous Fonts: Hoefler Text, Requiem, Archer (with Frere-Jones)

Designed for: Guggenheim Museum, Rolling Stone.

Name : **Paul Renner**

Nationality: German, Era: Early 20th Century

Education: Several Universities Famous Fonts: Futura
Other Skills: Author, Painter

Find Out More: Paul Renner Biography

Clear Communication & Good Design

First impressions are hard to alter, and the choice of typeface always creates the first impression, deciding the fate of your design. Examining a brand's logo can provide vital clues as to what direction the typography should take. The chosen typeface should reflect the nature of the brand, product, or service, while also having a sympathetic tone of voice for the communication in the ad to stand out. If the tone is ill-judged, then the headline will likely lose some of its impact and meaning.

It is observed that many art directors often work with a very limited selection of typefaces – usually their favorites, which have worked well for them in the past. However, typefaces are designed and revised on regular basis, so the awareness of the latest developments and styles is useful. If an advertisement contains a headline, body and a strapline copy, then the use of multiple different typefaces should be avoided as it may create visual confusion. An alternative method is to assign different weights to the same font family.

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Being traditional and often downright boring when planning the typography of a campaign can be easy, especially when carefully considered types need to fit in with the existing values of the client. But this does not mean that conventions cannot be changed. If the campaign has a number of prominent words, then it might be appropriate to replace one or two of the characters in the words with an image of object that represents that character. Perhaps the typography becomes the image integrating words and pictures into an illustration.

Whatever your approach, text should be kept short. Simply cutting down the number of words used in a campaign can have a far greater impact. Simultaneously, clarity and simplicity also add in making a message more powerful and allow the type that is used to be much more effective.

Examples of how typography can change the world

• As a Messenger of Peace

During the 1960s, while radical social changes were taking place and people wanted freedom and peace, it was the psychedelic font which made the letters become more dynamic and appeared as if they are melting away from the prints. Typography was used as a means of communicating ideas around the ongoing social changes, protests and ways of adopting a new lifestyle. One of the styles used was the concept of vibrating colours - created by taking colours from the opposite end of the colour wheel, with equal value and intensity. Today, this typography style has become a symbol of change. A typeface can save millions of dollars

As a school science project, a young Indian origin boy named Suvir was trying to learn new ways to make printing more efficient. After much research on typography and printing he was able to conclude that using Garamond font could reduce ink consumption tremendously!

Conclusion

The vision behind conducting this research was to document the various facets of typography, including useful information such as historical background and typographical details. These details help set the context and associated usefulness of each of the different typefaces. The information gained from the research was enlightening and will be beneficial for future designers.

Exploring the various phases of development of typefaces provides a firm insight into how the typefaces have been used historically. We have traced the evolution of typefaces from the Blackletter, which was influenced by handwritten calligraphy, to serifs demonstrating stylistic changes like extensions to letterforms, contrast in strokes and more upright lettering. The advent of technology revolutionized typography, with the bolder fonts like Clarendon and Rockwell. We have seen how the Grotesques rejected the more elegant brush strokes, only to be replaced by the more human centric typefaces. Thus, typography continues to evolve, keeping pace with the rapidly changing trends and advancements in technology.

Any changes to the spacing, shape and size of typefaces can drastically alter the emotional response

garnered by the typeface. The impact of typography on historical incidents have been documented in this report, and only serves to highlight how the choices of typeface can serve as one of the core elements for any communication strategy. Be it for an individual or a large organization, the research documented in this report, would be impactful in understanding how to streamline communication. We can say that this project will help inform designers around the best approach to choose effective fonts.

Some Typo art examples



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