



T

Typography: Practical Considerations And Design Patterns

Imprint

© 2014 Smashing Magazine GmbH, Freiburg, Germany

ISBN: 978-3-94454076-4 (PDF)

Cover Design: Veerle Pieters

eBook Strategy and Editing: Vitaly Friedman

Technical Editing: Cosima Mielke

Planning and Quality Control: Vitaly Friedman, Iris Lješnjanić

Tools: Elja Friedman

Idea & Concept: Smashing Magazine GmbH

Preface

Typography is a very powerful design element. Whenever we have a typographic system in place, we can use it to structure content, communicate ideas and even enhance meaning. However, employing it in a way that masters that delicate balance between being unobtrusive (catering for a pleasant reading experience) and engaging enough (keeping the reader's interest on a page) can be quite a challenge.

With the help of this eBook, you can learn how to train and sharpen your eyes to recognize specific typographic details which will be sure to guide you in your own projects and make it easier for you to make design decisions. After an initial stroll through type terminology and classification, this eBook reflects on the quality of fonts (including web font providers, of course) and explores typographic design patterns as well as current practices. These practical considerations and a plethora of real-world examples are bound to be a valuable companion throughout your adventures when designing with type.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Understanding The Difference Between Type And Lettering	4
Making Sense Of Type Classification (Part 1)	20
Making Sense Of Type Classification (Part 2).....	32
A Critical Approach To Typefaces	48
Taking A Second Look At Free Fonts.....	54
Dear Web Font Providers	69
Typographic Design Patterns And Current Practices (2013 Edition)	80
Creating Exciting And Unusual Visual Hierarchies.....	96
Type Makes A Difference: An Exploration Of Type-Focused Websites	113
About The Authors	139

Understanding The Difference Between Type And Lettering

BY JOSEPH ALESSIO 🍷

Coming out of the grunge, graffiti and David Carson era through the '90s, there has been a major resurgence of interest in typography. We have seen a number of designers and artists make their careers out of designing type or custom lettering, and it has become common to list typography among our skills and disciplines.

Unfortunately, as with any popularity surge, there have come with it a lot of misunderstandings of some of the terms and concepts that we use. This chapter will help you gain a clearer understanding of what typography is and isn't, and why.

One rather common example of this is the myriad of blog posts and showcases claiming to display “hand-lettered typography” — I’ve even heard university professors say it. Though the phrase seems to make sense, it’s actually a contradiction in terms — hand-lettering is not typography at all! Before you throw your pens and brushes at me in protest, please let me explain!



Even though lettering and typography share many of the same concepts, and a good eye and understanding of one will enable you in the

other as well, they are completely different disciplines. Let's begin by defining how we understand each term.

What Is “Typography”?

Typography is essentially the study of how letterforms interact on a surface, directly relating to how the type will be set when it eventually goes to press. One definition is stated as “the style, arrangement or appearance of typeset matter,” and is a product of the movable type printing system that much of the world has used for centuries. It is related to typesetting and can include type design. In our current digitally-driven design world, this means working with fonts on a daily basis for most of us.

Typography is actually a subset of lettering, because it is the study of letters applied to typefaces. Many designers have also taken up letterpress printing as a hobby or side interest, which also utilizes aspects of typography or typesetting, depending on the project.



Typeset book pages. (Image: [Tom Garnett](#)¹)

Gerrit Noordzij, professor of typeface design at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, Netherlands, from 1960 to 1990, [defines typography](#)² as “writing with prefabricated characters.” Peter Bil’ak, founder of Typotheque, [notes](#)³ that this “implies a complete distinction from letter-

1. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fatedenied/7335413942/>

2. <http://www.letterror.com/noordzij/meaning/index.html>

3. http://www.typotheque.com/articles/what_is_typography

ing, handwriting or graffiti, which are also concerned with creating letter-shapes, but don't offer a repeatable system of setting these letters."

It is quite common for people to refer to lettering as typography, but you should always avoid doing so when speaking with a client. Typography might be used in a logo, but so might custom lettering. Your client may not know the difference, but you do, and it's important to have an educated client. This requires that we speak to them using the right terms, and it makes things easier to understand for both you and your client.

In addition, as designers of any sort, we strive to maintain a high level of professionalism⁴, and using terminology correctly is an important part of showing pride in our line of work and being confident that we can do it, not simply to get the job done, but to produce excellent work.

What Is "Lettering"?

Lettering can be simply defined as "the art of drawing letters". A lot goes into making lettering look right, and that's an entirely different topic, but the concept is very simple: a specific combination of letterforms crafted for a single use and purpose as opposed to using previously designed letters as components, as with typography. Often lettering is hand-drawn, with pens, graphite or brushes, although some people start their work directly in Adobe Illustrator. Engraving and similar arts are related to lettering.



*New York script by Simon Ålander*⁵.

⁴. <http://designproacademy.org/>

⁵. <http://www.coffeemademedoit.com/>

Just as typography is not lettering, lettering is not typography. Widely respected lettering artist Jessica Hische⁶ gave a talk on the subject⁷ at the FRONTEND 2011 conference, for those who “don’t understand the difference between lettering and type,” getting into the pertinent information with some concise definitions at around $\frac{3}{4}$ the way through the video.

Typography does indeed have similarities to lettering — it is still dealing with letters, but within the context of typefaces and their proper use. Therefore, it’s not a good idea to refer to typography as lettering, since they have different connotations and you don’t want to confuse your client by swapping terms. Again, accuracy in terms is an important element in any profession and design is no different.

Similarities And Differences

The visual concepts that are behind typography and lettering are largely shared by both disciplines. Letterspacing, consistent weight and contrast, the rules that we go by for what works and what doesn’t work, still apply. However, often the terms used are different. For space between two lines of text that are typeset, we use the term “leading,” referring to the strip of lead that printers would set between the lines of type to give more space. The same concept applied to lettering would simply be called “line spacing.”



“Upper case” of type containing uppercase glyphs. (Image: Marcin Wichary⁸)

⁶. <http://jessicahische.is/>

⁷. <http://www.frontend2011.com/video/jessica-hische.html>

The space between letters is also an important concept, and lack of attention to it is responsible for much of the bad typography we see today. When working with type, we call adjusting the horizontal space between characters “kerning,” but this is a modernized understanding of the term. In typesetting, a kern is part of a glyph that extends beyond the type block on which the character is molded, e.g. the terminal of the “f” in the image below.



A kerned “f” type block. (Image: [Typefoundry](http://typefoundry.blogspot.com/)⁹)

In lettering, however, avoid referring to this as kerning. Rather than saying that the “A” and the “V” could be kerned, we could say that the space between them could be tightened up.

Typography is used for endless applications, from titles to body text, some of which present a myriad of typographic considerations that those concerned with lettering will not have to think about. Lettering is almost exclusively used as display text — imagine lettering a few paragraphs of text by hand! Calligraphy is a much more likely to be used in longer passages of text. While calligraphy and lettering are once again related, there is a fundamental difference between the two that I’d like to point out.

Calligraphy is based on penmanship; it’s essentially “writing letters.” Lettering, on the other hand, is based on draftsmanship, i.e. “drawing

⁸. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mwichary/2406522883/>

⁹. <http://typefoundry.blogspot.com/>

letters.” Persevering calligraphers and scribes have famously done books as long as the Bible, which are incredible works of art in their own right (e.g. the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Book of Kells), but those were a lifetime endeavor, and for practical purposes we now use type-faces. Whew!



Illuminated (lavishly decorated) lettering in the Lindisfarne Gospels, from the Gospel of Mark. This particular page showcases a lettered portion as opposed to a calligraphic passage, i.e. drawn rather than written. (Image: [manuscript_nerd](#)¹⁰)

The differences, in the modern digital age, are sometimes theoretical, but the practical differences are huge – nobody wants to hand-letter 500 pages!

Some tenacious calligraphers, however, have undertaken monumental projects, such as the St. John's Bible¹¹, a modern manuscript completely written and illuminated – a calligraphic term for embellishing – by hand. It took about 13 years, from commission to completion, using traditional techniques such as quill pens and manually-applied gold leaf, and cost an estimated \$8 million. The incredible proportions

¹⁰. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/83142434@N07/7807754206/>

¹¹. <http://www.saintjohnsbible.org/>

of this project are a testament to the beauty of traditional techniques, but also a reflection on how printing and typography have changed the world.

Historically Speaking

The arts of both lettering and calligraphy have been around since time immemorial. Spoken languages quickly developed writing systems, which were then used to communicate through a more enduring medium than speech. Lettering and calligraphy evolved alongside each other, along with other letter-related arts such as engraving. We can follow the progression, from the Rosetta Stone and ancient Roman inscriptions to the works of scribal art mentioned above and more. History has provided us with endless examples of lettering and calligraphy, by engraving, pen and brush.



Traditional Chinese calligraphy. (Image: [Terry Madeley](http://www.flickr.com/photos/terry/6839152872/)¹²)

Although very few people could read, and writing was relegated to monasterial and royal scribes through the Middle Ages in Europe, we have some awe-inspiring work from that period. Unfortunately, we often overlook the beautiful calligraphy and lettering that was being done in Asia and the Middle East, where an education in the arts was much more accessible. Both lettering and calligraphy have thrived in the eastern hemisphere and continue to be a source of inspiration today.

¹². <http://www.flickr.com/photos/terry/6839152872/>



Calligraphic art in the Hagia Sophia, Istanbul. (Image: [Simona Scolari](#)¹³)

When Johannes Gutenberg built his printing press around 1439, the concept of typography, which had been developing slowly, was revolutionized. The moveable type system, metal alloy and casting methods gave the world a practical solution to printing. This gave rise to the discipline of typography as we know it, with kerning, leading and the terms we still use today. Each letter had its own type block on which it sat, and typesetters would arrange the type character by character.



A Gutenberg Bible. Note the mixed use of blackletter typography and hand-lettered drop caps, mimicking the contemporary German calligraphic style. (Image: [jmwk](#)¹⁴)

13. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/13237923@N02/3458854590/>

Typography was, and has continued to be, primarily the skill of setting type. It was a very time-consuming process, and people were constantly trying to find ways to streamline it and increase production rates. Standardized methods for arranging the glyphs so their positions could be memorized and picked up by the typographer without having to look were developed. This gave us our terms for upper case and lower case characters, because an upper case, or drawer, typically contained the capitals and the lower type-case the minuscules, before the California Job Case, popular in the United States in the 19th century, combined both levels into one larger case.



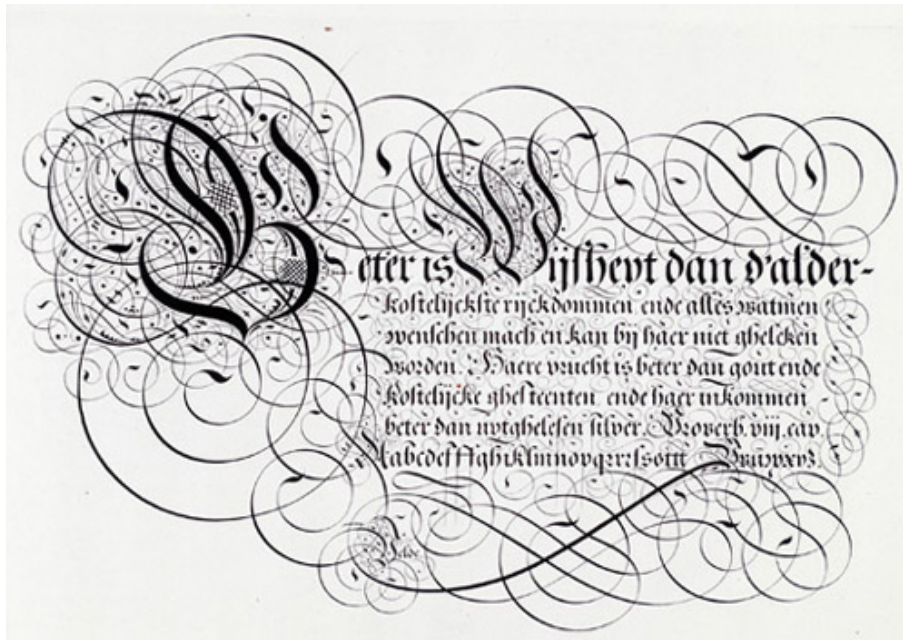
A chart displaying the layout of the California Job Case method for arranging type.

(Image: [Marcin Wichary](http://www.flickr.com/photos/jmwk/3517373312/)¹⁵)

Leaving typography at this point in its development, I'll follow the progression of lettering and calligraphy. During this period of experimentation with printing, calligraphy still played a huge role in communication, and the educated would write in a hand that amazes us today as to the beauty and accuracy of their manuscripts. Swashes, ascenders and descenders wove themselves into amazing patterns and borders, sometimes all but obscuring the text itself.

¹⁴. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jmwk/3517373312/>

¹⁵. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mwichary/2406369655/>



Ornate sample of penmanship by Jan van de Velde, Amsterdam, 1609.

(Image: [Design Observer¹⁶](http://observatory.designobserver.com/slideshow.html?view=507&entry=9767&slide=6#slide))

Lettering and calligraphy followed cultural trends, leaving the Rococo era and becoming more sober during the early 19th century, only to flower into ornament once again through the Victorian era and the florid shapes of Art Nouveau. The worlds of type and lettering constantly intermeshed. Many people, such as Oswald Cooper, achieved respect for their lettering and were hired by type foundries to design new typefaces.

Lettering figured strongly through Art Deco and Modernism, for posters and ads, logotypes and book covers. The relatively recent art of film titles also provides us with a wide range of illustrative lettering styles from the 20th century. Coming out of the Modern era and through the latter half of the 20th century lettering went through a variety of permutations – the organic styles of the 70's, the new modernism of the 80's, and the grungy 90's styles aforementioned – bringing us to our modern lettering scene, with a smorgasbord of visual references to every period of history imaginable. Designers such as Herb Lubalin and Doyald Young, the metaphorical giants of lettering, have left a huge legacy from this time period.

16. <http://observatory.designobserver.com/slideshow.html?view=507&entry=9767&slide=6#slide>



Title pages from German avant-garde publications “Dekorative Kunst” and “Pan”, examples of lettering during the Art Nouveau movement. (Image: Linotype¹⁷)



Lettering by Herb Lubalin displaying his studio address. (Image: Monowolf¹⁸)

¹⁷. <http://www.linotype.com/798-12626/briefboominelitistpublications.html>

¹⁸. <http://monowolf.com/2012/07/design-by-herb-lubalin/lubalin2/>

Here I will step back in time to pick the thread of typography back up. The development of techniques continued through the 19th century, and printing played an important role in world history, such as Benjamin Franklin's publications and Thomas Paine's printed materials — *The Rights Of Man*, *Age Of Reason*, et al — that were instrumental in the American Revolution.

Meanwhile, after many inventors had tried and failed to create a practical typesetting machine, Ottmar Mergenthaler succeeded in building the linotype machine in 1884, which revolutionized the newspaper industry. I won't say more about it here, but if you're interested in the history of typography, I would highly recommend taking a look at the documentary *Linotype: The Film*¹⁹. This is not a sponsored statement, I simply enjoyed the documentary immensely and you may want to check it out!



A look at a linotype machine. (Image: [Marcin Wichary](#)²⁰)

The linotype was just one of the machines used to expedite the typesetting and printing processes, and although some people still hand-set type, the industry as a whole was continuously changing to introduce faster and better techniques. Typography was explored in the various art movements, from Dada to Modernism and beyond, rethinking ways in which type could be used and given expression and meaning. As typography, experimental and traditional, progressed, the techniques

¹⁹. <http://www.linotypefilm.com/>

²⁰. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mwichary/2252094942/>

segued to phototypesetting and from thence to the digital age in which we find ourselves today. Typography as a discipline looks very different than it did 50 years ago. Instead of setting metal type and locking in forms, we use panels in Illustrator or InDesign to kern, add leading and align our type.

Lettering has also moved into the digital format in which we enact most of our design work. Many artists, however, stay true to analog media by hand-drawing lettering.



Lettering by [Tom Lane](http://gingermonkeydesign.com)²¹ for [Hook & Irons](http://hookandirons.com/)²².

The digital amalgamation has been largely responsible for the confusion of lettering and typography, since they are now often created using the same programs — the difference between the two is no longer the difference between a brush and a letterpress machine, or a drafting table and linotype matrices. However, lettering and typography are still different concepts, and understanding them and their similarities and differences will help us become better designers.

Getting Started On Your Own Hand-Lettering

For those looking to begin creating hand-lettering of their own, it can feel a bit daunting. The letterforms that we see so often prove very difficult to draw freehand. Thankfully, there are a lot of tips and tricks you can use to familiarize yourself with the process and learn how to create pleasing compositions.

²¹. <http://gingermonkeydesign.com>

²². <http://hookandirons.com/>

TRACING

Get some tracing paper, and print out samples of well-known typefaces. Trace them over a few times, letting your hand become used to the lines that type designers have carefully worked over and revised until they were perfect. Some good ones to start with are time-honored classics such as Garamond and Caslon, or exceptional recent works such as Okay Type's Harriet²³. Avoid using free fonts, since they are often poorly crafted and wouldn't provide a good model. This allows you to train your eye and hand using the work of masters.

READING

Read voraciously! I've listed a number of resources at the end of the chapter for you to check out — books, blogs and other resources. Knowledge is power, and understanding principles behind type design and letterforms help you develop your eye.

PHOTO SAFARI

If you live near a town with a historic district or old buildings, make a point to spend a few hours on a weekend just walking around and finding samples of good typography and lettering. You can find great examples in outdoor signage, whether lighted signs, painted or vinyl. Often there are huge letters painted on brick walls at old factories or restaurants. Then, use your photos as models to draw historic styles of lettering.

USE A GRID, BUT DON'T USE A GRID

When lettering, you'll find that perfect measurements often don't actually look "right." Draw lines to help yourself keep a consistent stress and even weight throughout your lettering, but trust your eye rather than the grid if something doesn't look quite correct. This is particularly true if you're doing something with a curved baseline. Remember, you're making this to be seen, not measured, so perception trumps geometric perfection.

Resources

Here are a few resources that I have found to be particularly helpful, concerning both lettering and typography.

²³. <http://okaytype.com/harriet/series>

BOOKS

- Dangerous Curves²⁴, *Doyald Young*
This volume showcases some of the best work over Young's illustrious lettering career, including rejected logotype options and in-process sketches.
- Scripts²⁵, *Steven Heller and Louise Fili*
From two of our contemporary design landscape's most respected proponents of lettering and type comes a "veritable festival of rare and unknown scripts."
- Typography Sketchbooks²⁶, *Steven Heller and Lita Talarico*
Heller teams up with Talarico to present a look inside the minds and processes of more than 100 esteemed letter-lovers.
- Designing Type²⁷, *Karen Cheng*
Cheng walks us through a semantic look at the rationale and aesthetics behind the typefaces we see and use regularly, replete with diagrams and illustrations.

WEBSITES

- Typeeverything²⁸
A tumblog of lettering and typography, curated by some of the most respected current lettering artists.
- I Love Typography²⁹
In-depth blog posts about type history and lettering, interviews with type designers, updates on upcoming type-related publications — ILT provides a good read for serious letter lovers.
- We Love Typography³⁰
Compiled by typographers and designers of all sorts, another showcase of type and lettering with styles for everyone.

24. <http://doyaldyoung.com/DC01.html>

25. <http://www.louisefili.com/books/?c=331&n=0>

26. http://www.thamesandhudson.com/Typography_Sketchbooks/9780500289686

27. <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=0300111509>

28. <http://typeeverything.com>

29. <http://ilovetypography.com/>

30. <http://welovetypography.com/>

- [Beautiful Type](#)³¹

This site isn't updated terribly often, but whatever and whenever they do post, it's inspiring!

PORTFOLIOS

Here are a few portfolios from great lettering artists that have inspired many:

- [Simon Walker](#)³²
- [Claire Coullon](#)³³
- [Dan Cassaro](#)³⁴
- [Jon Contino](#)³⁵

In Summary

Hopefully this dissertation on lettering and typography has enhanced your knowledge of design and will further equip you to improve your skills. Lettering and typography, so similar yet so diverse, are a huge part of design and thus deserve our full understanding. 🐼

^{31.} <http://beautifultype.net/>

^{32.} <http://simonwalkertype.com/>

^{33.} <http://coullon.com/>

^{34.} <http://youngjerks.com/>

^{35.} <http://joncontino.com/>

Making Sense Of Type Classification (Part 1)

BY JOSEPH ALESSIO 🍷

This chapter deals with terminology, probably more specifically than most designers are used to, and the title gets to the heart of what I'm communicating in this chapter.

Everyone knows their serifs and sans, slabs and scripts, but most classifications go much deeper than that. Type classification, while helpful, is often convoluted, confusing and even controversial. This chapter, distilling some of the complexities into a more understandable format, lands somewhere in the middle between the basics and genuine type nerdery — the perfect level for a practicing designer.



Why Classify Type?

There's a certain intellectual delight in knowledge, particularly knowledge about one's field of work and study. More importantly, perhaps, there is a way in which seemingly impractical knowledge of one's profession lends more credence to the designer. That being said, what you'll read here is by no means impractical. It really comes down to solid design choices.



Sets film in 1920's uses typeface from 1975.

A good grasp of type history will help you avoid typographic anachronisms, which, although often lost on the general public, do not escape the notice of many designers, as demonstrated in [Mark Simonson's article³⁶](#) on the 2012 Oscar winner for Best Picture, “The Artist,” and his other typographic scrutinies³⁷ of popular movies and media.

It's not exclusively about the history of type, however. Type classification is also helpful in pairing typefaces for projects, sometimes based on historical proximity but also by noting similar features that unify the typefaces, such as axis or x-height. In some cases, by finding enough disparity in the small features, very different typefaces become complementary.

Most importantly, perhaps, this article will not only familiarize you with general type history and commonly used terminology, but also help you learn to look for and recognize important characteristics of type and the inexhaustible minutiae that make typefaces unique, as well as arm you with useful descriptors of type styles.

Type Classification Systems

Over the past century, quite a few classification systems have been proposed. Most are generally believed to be subjective and incomplete, and many of them use the same terms for similar but slightly different classes. The impossibility of a truly complete classification system has led many people to dismiss any attempt to classify typefaces — there are

³⁶. <http://www.marksimonson.com/notebook/view/the-artist-vs-the-lettering-artist>

³⁷. <http://www.marksimonson.com/notebook/category/son-of-typecasting>

simply too many variables to make anything close to a practical, comprehensive system. Essentially, classification describes typefaces; it does not define them. It's not inflexible, and is more of an aid than a rule. However, for the reasons given above, I believe there is value to be found in it. Below are a few examples.

The primary “official” classification system currently is the Vox-ATypI system. Originally put together in 1954 by Maxmilien Vox, it was adopted in 1962 by the Association Typographique Internationale (ATypI), which made a minor change at the 2010 conference (appropriately, held in Dublin) to include Gaelic as an extra category. It classifies typefaces in 11 general categories, with some subdivision. Its Wikipedia article provides an excellent overview³⁸.

The British Standards Classification of Typefaces³⁹, adopted in 1967, is also based on Vox's original classification. It is slightly simplified and has remained essentially unchanged since its adoption.

Bringhurst, in his *Elements of Typographic Style*⁴⁰ — perhaps the standard in typographic textbooks today — categorizes typefaces loosely after periods of art history; for example, Baroque, Rococo, Romantic, etc. A book designer himself, Bringhurst focuses on text typefaces and practically ignores display type.

Others are much more general. An early system by French typographer Francis Thibaudeau⁴¹, which provided the base for Vox's later more thorough classification, includes four broad categories: Antiques (sans serifs), Égyptiennes (slab serifs), Didots and Elzéviirs (faces with triangular serifs).

Gerrit Noordzij, while at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in the Hague, held that typography was essentially an *extension of handwriting*⁴², teaching typography using loose categories of letters that might be written with a broad-nib or pointed-nib pen, as well as interrupted or uninterrupted strokes, with varieties of both serifs and sans falling into each category.

These are just a few of the ways people have classified type over the years. In this two-part chapter, I will condense the various methods slightly and present what is at the very least generally accepted as legitimate (as there will always be a few out there who refuse to give up a particularly unusual classification method, or who decry any method at all).

³⁸. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VOX-ATypI_classification

³⁹. <http://luc.devroye.org/britishstandards.html>

⁴⁰. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Elements_of_Typographic_Style

⁴¹. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thibaudeau_classification

⁴². http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrit_Noordzij#The_stroke_of_the_pen

Classifying Serif Typefaces

In part 1 here, we'll cover serif styles, following the natural progression of type history, and thus move into sans and other categories in part 2.

HUMANIST

Starting off, naturally, at the beginning of type history, we're in the middle 1400s, during the Renaissance. The movement, led by Italian cultural hubs such as Florence and Venice, was drawing Europe away from medieval practices, and typography was one part of that. Rather than using the blackletter, or Fraktur type, that Gutenberg used, printers began to create type mimicking the Latin writing hand of the philosophers and scribes of the time, beginning around 1465.

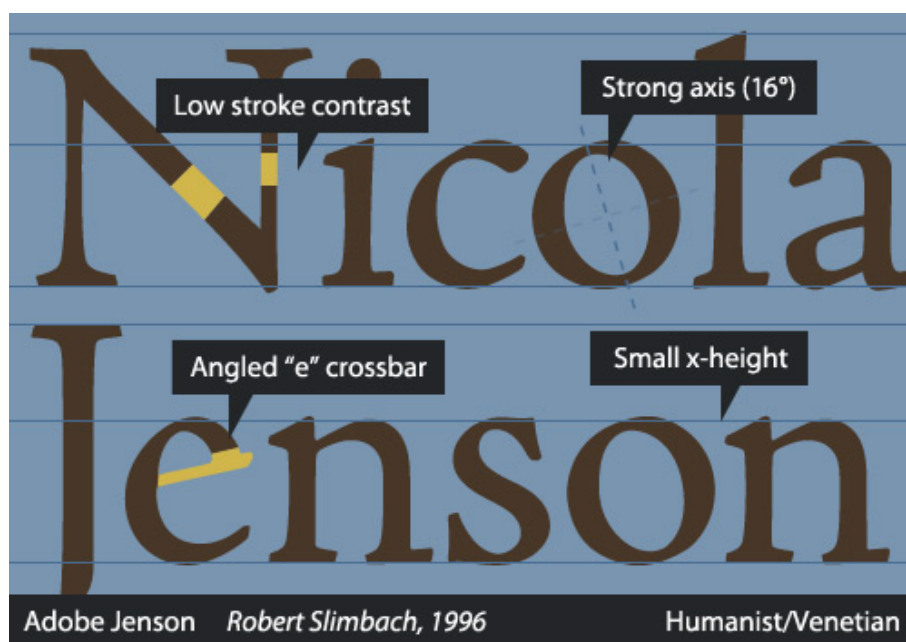


A 1905 textbook illustration of Renaissance printers.

These typefaces are variously called Humanist or Venetian due to the zeitgeist and geography of the Renaissance. A number of distinct characteristics define Humanist typefaces.

Primarily, Humanist faces were very calligraphic in nature, and one way this manifested itself was in the strong axis, most apparent in the bowls of characters and the lowercase “o,” a characteristic borrowed from the angle at which a right-handed writer holds a pen. Another interesting way this showed itself was in the notably angled crossbar on the lowercase “e.” Other calligraphic influences are clear, such as inconsistencies in stroke weight and the way serifs are formed.

Other defining characteristics include a small x-height and a lower contrast between thick and thin strokes.



Not all Humanist typefaces are from the Renaissance era, however; many Humanist revivals have been created in more recent years, such as Centaur (1914) and Adobe Jenson (1996). Adobe Jenson, used in the specimen above, is based on the work of Renaissance printer Nicolas Jenson, a prominent printer and type designer who moved from his native France to Venice and contributed significantly to print and design history. There are even Humanist sans faces, but we'll get to those in part 2. Although an influential period in type history, the Humanist era served primarily as a transition to newer styles of typefaces and was relatively brief.

Other examples of Humanist typefaces include Guardi, Arno, ITC Berkeley and Stempel Schneidler.

GARALDE

In the Old-Style faces, often called Garaldes, we see type really beginning to come into its own. I call them Garaldes here because the term “Old Style” is at times used to include Humanist, Garalde and Transitional typefaces; simply calling this group “Garalde” helps to retain its identity.

This period in type history lasts from the late-15th century all the way until the early 1700s, and the type created in this period has shown remarkable longevity. “Garalde” itself is a hybrid term borrowed from the names of two notable type designers of the era, French punchcutter Claude Garamont and the Venetian Aldus Manutius. The category is occasionally called “Aldine” after Manutius.



Aldus Manutius and Claude Garamont

There are many similarities to the Humanist faces, but things are moving in a particular direction, as we'll see with the consecutive categories of Transitional and Didone. You can see the type designers treating type as different from the written word, losing some of the idiosyncrasies of handwriting that the Humanist designers retained, while carrying over others. The axis of the stress straightens, and while it still has an angle, it is subtler. The serifs become more carefully formed, and characters are designed more proportionately. One of the most obvious differences is the crossbar of the lowercase "e," which, while remaining angled in the Humanist typefaces, drops to a horizontal position in the Garaldes. Also, the difference between heavy and light stroke weights increased, and everything became more precise, perhaps due to the progress in technical aspects of making type.

A huge amount of type was created in this era, and much of it is commonly used today, either digitized versions or new revivals. Common examples of the Garalde faces include Caslon, Sabon, Palatino, Galliard and Janson — not to be confused with Jenson, the Humanist typeface. In fact, Janson, named after Dutch punchcutter Anton Janson, is now thought to be the work of Miklós Kis, a Hungarian, produced during an apprenticeship in Amsterdam.



TRANSITIONAL

Work was begun on the first Transitional typeface in 1692, long before people had left behind making Garaldes. In fact, William Caslon was creating typefaces based on Old-Style Dutch type as late as the 1720s. Because this part of type history is also significant, many have asserted that “Transitional” is an inadequate name for it, and this category may also be termed Neoclassical or Realist.



Louis XIV and the Romain du Roi

In the late-17th century, Louis XIV, as part of a general renovation of France’s Imprimerie Royale (the governmental printing works), com-

missioned the French Academy of Sciences to create a new typeface. The Romain du Roi – literally the “King’s Roman” – was designed using a strict grid, and its development was an arduous process, involving a committee that included a mathematician and an engineer. Although commissioned in 1692, the entire family of 86 fonts was not completed until 1745.



John Baskerville (left) and Pierre Simon Fournier (right)

Two of the biggest names in type during this period were John Baskerville and Pierre Simon Fournier. Baskerville, an entrepreneur who dabbled in multiple businesses, developed quite an interest in printing and eventually designed his own type in order to improve on Caslon’s work. This did not please most of the printing world at the time, and Baskerville endured harsh criticism, despite having such luminaries as Benjamin Franklin as friends and advocates of his work. You may have read of the humorous encounter⁴³ in which Franklin outwitted a critic of Baskerville. Numerous revivals, both metal and digital type, that draw on Baskerville have been made.

Fournier was among the printers who praised Baskerville’s type, reserving particularly high compliments for his italics. Fournier was highly respected in his lifetime, and despite having consulted royalty both within France and internationally on type design and having established printing houses, Fournier is primarily remembered today for introducing the point system as a way to measure type sizes. Pierre

⁴³. <http://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/caslon-baskerville-and-franklin-revolutionary-types>

Fournier, uncannily sharing a name with an acclaimed 20th-century cellist, also had an interest in music and developed a new style of typography for musical notation.



In the Transitionals (or Neoclassicals), we see certain trends continuing. The axis is now nearly, if not completely, vertical. The weight difference between the thickest and thinnest points is now exaggerated. The serifs are less bracketed and flatten out. Details become very refined.

Eric Gill's Joanna, Melior, Clearface and Mrs. Eaves — a Baskerville revival named after Sarah Eaves, Baskerville's wife — all fall into this category.

DIDONE

As strange as it seems, what we call modern typefaces first appeared in the second half of the 1700s. Therefore, I will call them by their less absurd name — and who can argue that saying “Didone” is not more fun than saying simply “Modern”? Bringhurst terms them Romantics.

Through the 18th and 19th centuries, France witnessed a small printing dynasty in the Didot family. Over multiple generations, the family made major contributions to printing. One of the most remarkable members was Firmin Didot, who, with Giambattista Bodoni, ushered in and now acts as a namesake for this part of type history.



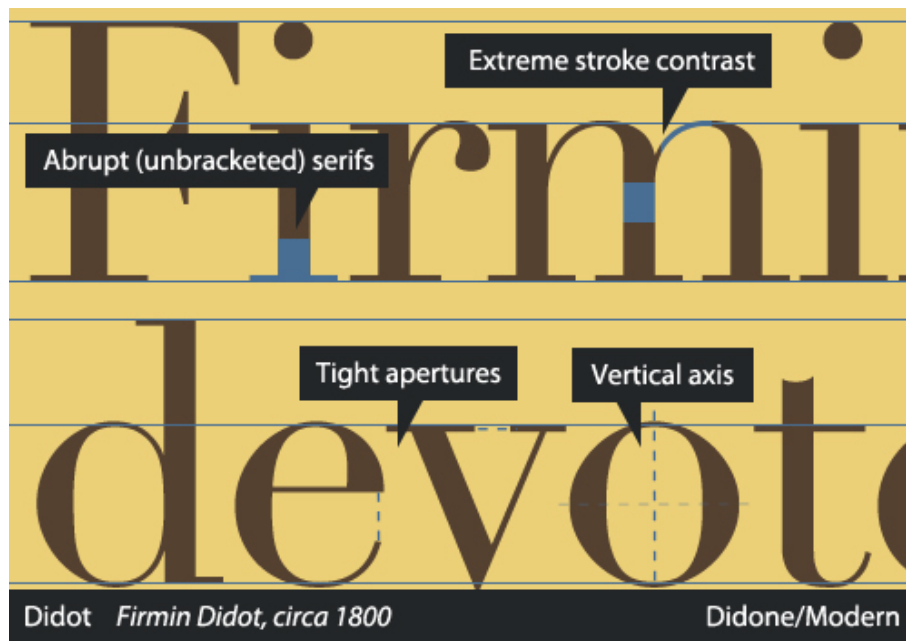
Firmin Didot (left) and Giambattista Bodoni (right)

In large part inspired by Baskerville, Didot and Bodoni pushed the limits of type design. They explored a similar style and were both meticulous craftsmen, consequently igniting a fierce rivalry. Bodoni (1740–1813) gave himself entirely to his craft. He was renowned for the beauty of his type specimens, and, a technically brilliant punchcutter himself, he designed some 298 typefaces. Didot (1764–1836), on the other hand, retired in 1827 to pursue political office and literature in his later years, writing tragedies and literary critiques.

If Baskerville's stroke contrast was exaggerated, then the Didones' are in the extreme. The heavy strokes are very heavy, and the light are a hairline. The stress is again completely vertical, and the apertures — places where the character opens — are generally very tight. Combined, these make for a very awkward visual rhythm, and Didones are always a poor choice for chunks of text. Rather, they work best at large sizes, as titling and display type, because the features emphasize the elegance of individual characters and do not blend well. Adobe's New Caledonia⁴⁴, which softens some extremes and thus works for longer bits of text, is a possible exception.

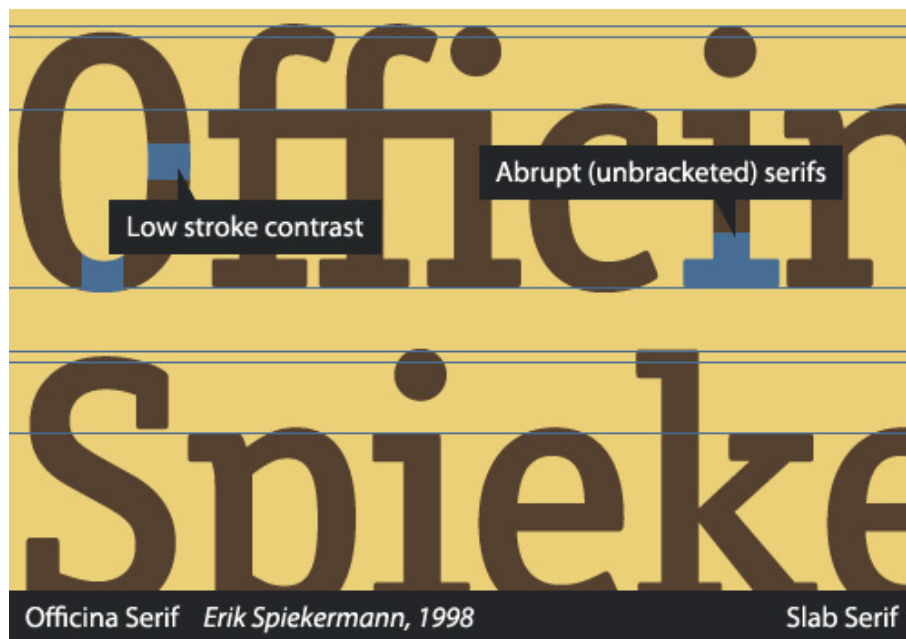
Aside from the obvious Bodoni and Didot faces, in their dozens of variants from nearly every foundry, Basilia, Aviano, Walbaum, Ambroise and Scotch Roman are exemplary moderns.

⁴⁴. <http://www.myfonts.com/fonts/adobe/new-caledonia/>



SLAB SERIF

This chapter wouldn't be complete without a mention of slab serifs. These are among the easiest to identify because of their very obvious appearance. Originally created for advertising, posters and other large media, slab serifs, alternatively called "Mechanicals" (in VOX-ATypI) and "Égyptiennes" (by Thibaudeau), were the first types expressly designed as display type. Vincent Figgins is credited with the first slab serifs, the earliest specimen dating to 1815, and his work inspired a diversity of critiques variously commending and lambasting the new style.



Abrupt serifs, usually in heavy weights, and a no-nonsense attitude are the trademarks of this style.



Clarendons, a notable offshoot of the original slab serifs, are a slightly tamed slab style, often in less extreme weights and using bracketed serifs. They have a lighter, friendlier character than the Neo-Grotesque slabs (i.e. those with unbracketed serifs and geometric construction).

H&FJ's *Sentinel* (2009) and David Berlow's *Belizio* (1998) are examples of recent Clarendons.

And That's It... For Now

If you have made it this far in the chapter, congratulations! You are now in possession of a solid basic understanding of type classification, at least as far as serif typefaces take you, and you are able to recognize the important distinguishing features that make typefaces unique. Following the line of type history, we're now in the middle of the 19th century, and we have the entirety of sans serifs and some discussion of display faces ahead of us. We're really only halfway through. 🐼

Making Sense Of Type Classification (Part 2)

BY JOSEPH ALESSIO 🍷

In the first installment of this two-part series on type classification, we covered the basics of type classification – the various methods people have used, why they are helpful, and a brief survey of type history, classifying and identifying typefaces along the way. Unfortunately, we only got as far as Roman (traditional serif) typefaces and the early-19th century. Now we're back for part 2!

Part 2 will primarily cover sans typefaces, with a nod to display typefaces and other less common categories, as well as address a few of the questions people have about whether type classification is helpful and necessary.



Review

TYPE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

Type has been classified in many ways over the years, both formal and informal – [Thibaudeau](#)⁴⁵, [Vox](#)⁴⁶, [British Standards](#)⁴⁷, etc. None of these

⁴⁵. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thibaudeau_classification

are complete or all-encompassing, but they're helpful as an aid to study as well as for learning to use type correctly and effectively. The material in this two-part series draws heavily from the Vox-ATypI system, which is the most "official" of the systems today, having been adopted by the Association Typographique Internationale⁴⁸ in 1962 and still the most commonly referenced system.

Is it perfect? No, but it provides a good overview of what is out there; and when you describe typefaces using the terms you'll learn in this series, anyone who is reasonably familiar with typography will know what you're talking about.

Here is a quick overview of the type categories we covered in part 1.

Humanist/Venetian

- Notable calligraphic influence, patterned after handwriting.
- Strongly angled axis or stress.
- Based on typefaces designed in Renaissance cultural hubs such as Venice.

Garalde

- Less calligraphic influence because type began to be viewed as separate from writing.
- Named after influential type designers Claude Garamont and Aldus Manutius.
- Still has a tilted axis but less obvious than in Humanist type.

Transitional/Neoclassical

- No calligraphic influence. Designed independently, sometimes on a grid.
- First appeared in the late-17th century.
- Virtually vertical axis and high contrast between heavy and thin strokes.

⁴⁶. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vox-ATypI_classification

⁴⁷. <http://luc.devroye.org/britishstandards.html>

⁴⁸. <http://atypi.org/>

Didone

- Extreme contrast between thick and thin. Rigidly vertical axis.
- Abrupt, or unbracketed, serifs. Very precisely designed.
- Named after Firmin Didot and Giambattista Bodoni.

Slab Serif

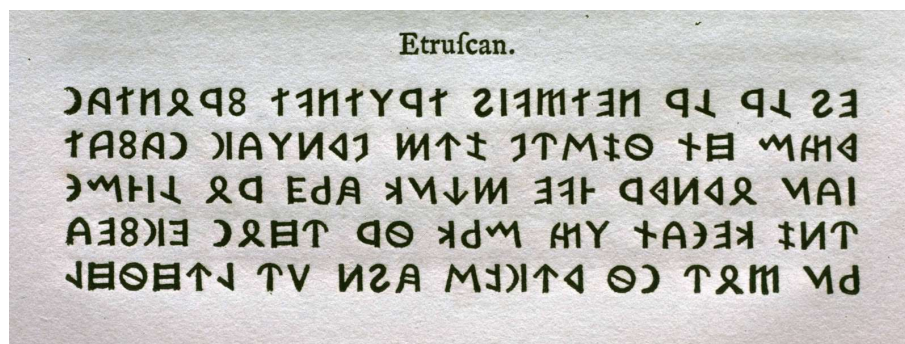
- Very heavy weight and low contrast between thick and thin.
- Unbracketed, prominent serifs.
- First typefaces created expressly for display purposes.

Sans Serifs

When we left off in part 1, it was circa 1815, with the first appearances of slab serifs, also called Mechanistics or Egyptiennes. By the time slab serifs were being popularized, early sans serifs had already been around for some time in a variety of forms. To follow the progression of sans serifs, we must step back in time a number of years.

HISTORY OF SANS SERIFS

The earliest sans-serif letterforms were, of course, not type, but inscriptions, dating back to as early as the 5th century BC, and enjoyed a resurgence⁴⁹ in engraving and inscriptions in the 18th century.



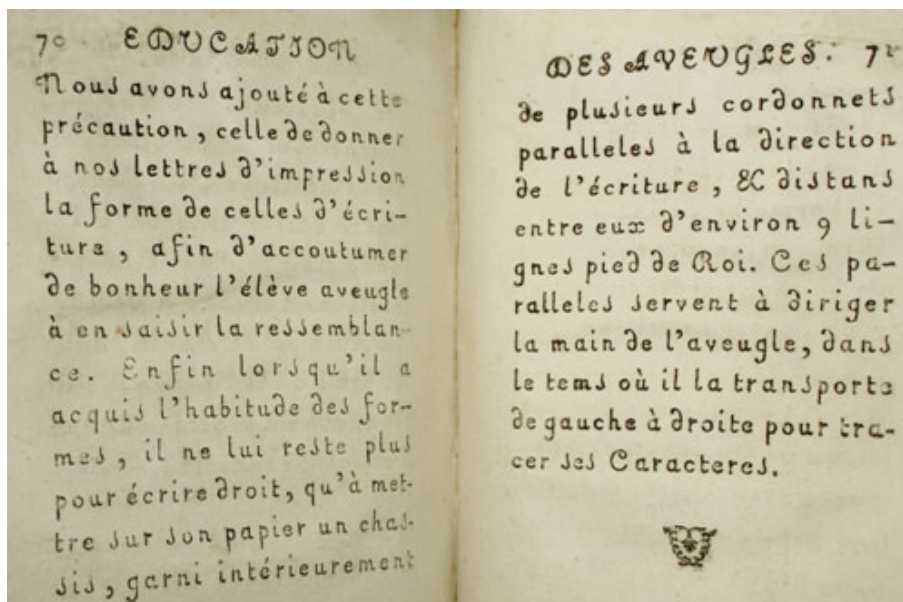
Caslon's Etruscan type, as seen in a 1766 specimen book. Larger view⁵⁰.

(Image source: Typefoundry⁵¹)

⁴⁹. <http://typefoundry.blogspot.com/2007/01/nymph-and-grot-update.html>

⁵⁰. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/9-Caslon-Etruscan-a_mini.jpg

Strangely enough, the first “sans serif” type was created not for the Latin alphabet, but for use in 18th-century academic works on Etruscan culture, which preceded the Roman Empire in the geographical area of modern-day Italy. Circa 1748, the foundry of William Caslon (with whom you should be familiar) cut the first known sans-serif Etruscan type for the Oxford University Press, although there are earlier usages of sans serifs in similar applications.



Haüy's type, created to emboss pages so as to be read by touch, was oddly ornate for its purpose. [Larger view](#)⁵². (Image source: [Camille Sourget](#)⁵³)

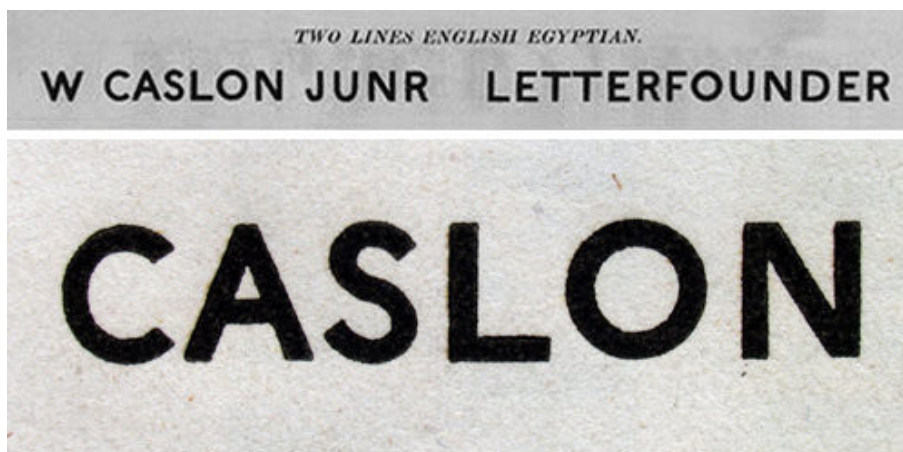
Another interesting typographic innovation was the work of Valentin Haüy, who founded a school for blind children in 1785. In 1784, a year of preparation during which he devoted himself to educating a single student, Haüy developed an embossing typeface with which to make tactile books. The typeface, which, along with his method, is called the Haüy System, is an early form of sans serif, but it reads more like an upright italic or a disconnected script.

It was first embossed and then often carefully inked over the top so that it could also be read visually, as in the photo above. It looks lovely, but was superseded in both practicality and readability by the system devised by Louis Braille, himself a student at the school Haüy founded.

⁵¹. <http://typefoundry.blogspot.com/>

⁵². http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/hauy_mini.jpg

⁵³. <http://camillesourget.com/en/livres-anciens-blind-aveugle-haui/>



William Caslon IV's sans serif was categorized as "Two Lines English Egyptian".

(Image source: [typophile](#)⁵⁴)

William Caslon IV – who inherited the type foundry, as well as his name, from four generations back – is credited with the first sans-serif printing type⁵⁵ for the Latin alphabet, appearing first in the 1816 Caslon specimen book. It featured only capitals and was marketed as "Two Lines English Egyptian," the "Two Lines" being a reference to the size of the set type. There was much confusion over this new style, being variously called Egyptian (despite early slab serifs also being marketed as Egyptians), Gothic, Grotesque and Antique, among others.

8 LINE PICA, SANS-SERIF.
MAINE
MAINE
V. FIGGINS.

A sans from an early Vincent Figgins type specimen. Larger view⁵⁶.

(Image source: [Typefoundry](#)⁵⁷)

⁵⁴. <http://www.typophile.com/node/51985>

⁵⁵. <http://www.100types.com/100types.com.11caslonsans.html>

⁵⁶. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Figgins-8P-Sans-Serif-bw_mini.jpg

Eventually Vincent Figgins⁵⁸ (whom you may remember as being credited with the first slab-serif type) called the new style “sans serif,” which became the widely accepted term, although you’ll see many of the old terms in use on some typefaces.

CLASSIFYING SANS SERIFS

At first glance, you might think that sans serifs can’t be classified the way that serifs can, since fewer variables are apparent in the ones we see most often. However, plenty of details can aid specificity when discussing, using and pairing typefaces, even within the broader category of sans serifs or, as Maxmilien Vox termed them, “linéales.” Subcategories were implemented by the British Standards classification, a permutation of Vox’s system, and they provide excellent means of discerning characteristics. I am presenting here a slight variation of those four, with a couple of minor differences for the sake of practicality.

GROTESQUE



(Image source: [MyFonts](http://www.myfonts.com/fonts/mti/grotesque-mt/)⁵⁹)

⁵⁷. <http://typefoundry.blogspot.de/2007/01/nymph-and-grot-update.html>

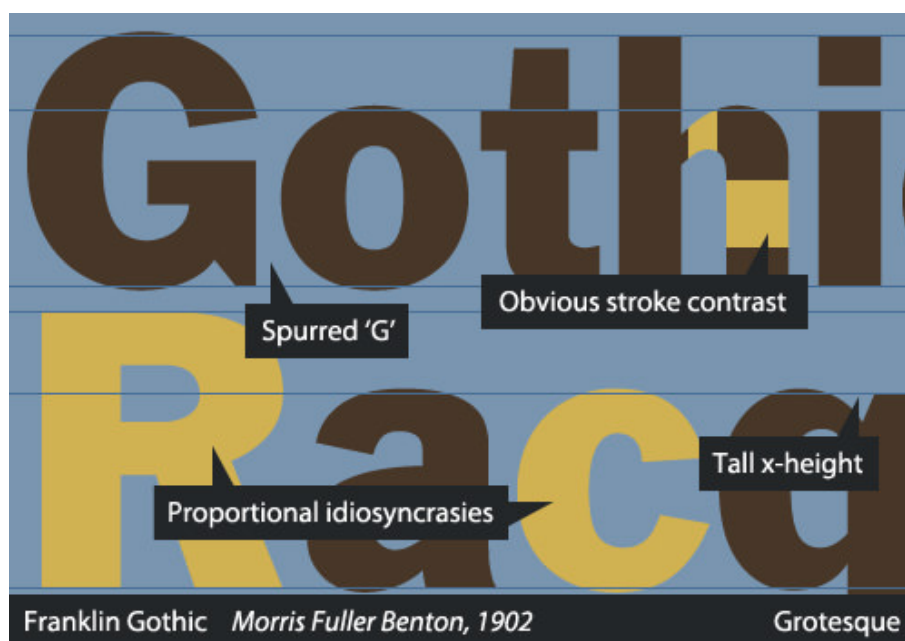
⁵⁸. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_Figgins

⁵⁹. <http://www.myfonts.com/fonts/mti/grotesque-mt/>

The Grotesque category covers the early sans serifs, specifically those designed in the 19th century and the first decade or two of the 20th. Many of these typefaces had only capitals or exist only in centuries-old specimen books, but a number of them are still quite commonly used. These typefaces tend to be very idiosyncratic, with awkward weight distribution around bowls of characters and irregular curves.

Monotype Grotesque (above, 1926), based on Berthold's much earlier Ideal Grotesque (1832), is an excellent example of the quirks commonly evident in Grotesques. Note the awkward "a" and "g," the squarish bowls, the odd curves and angles at the tips of strokes in the "J" and "S," and the overall irregularity.

The capital G in a Grotesque is usually spurred, and the British Standards specifies a curled leg on the capital R, although that is not apparent in many typefaces of the period. They tend to display some variation in the thickness of strokes, but the contrast does not show calligraphic influence or a logical pattern. The style became more sophisticated over the course of the 19th century. Perhaps the finest sample of this category appeared in the Berthold Type Foundry⁶⁰'s 1896 release of Akzidenz-Grotesk, which, along with Schelter Grotesk (1886), served as an archetype for many Neo-Grotesques, most notably Neue Haas Grotesk and Univers.



Interestingly enough, it has been postulated⁶¹ that Akzidenz-Grotesk was based on Walbaum or Didot. Despite looking extremely different

⁶⁰. <http://www.bertholdtypes.com/>

⁶¹. http://www.martinmajoor.com/6_my_philosophy.html

at first glance, a simple comparison of the basic forms shows that the metrics are very similar.

Examples of the Grotesque category include Franklin Gothic, Mono-type Grotesque and Schelter Grotesk.

NEO-GROTESQUE

The Neo-Grotesques, also called Transitionals or Realists, include many of the most commonly used sans. They are based on the later Grotesques and take the design of the sans-serif to a new level with their careful construction and aesthetics. They are much more refined than the Grotesques, during which period type designers were still feeling their way around the new style; thus, the Neo-Grotesques lose many of the awkward curves and idiosyncrasies that are common in earlier sans serifs. You'll see much less variation in line weight, and most often a single-story "g."



Created with an emphasis on neutrality and simplicity, they were extraordinarily popular among the Modernists and remain popular today. Despite many claims otherwise, simplicity does not directly translate into legibility: A tight vertical rhythm and pinched apertures keep many Neo-Grotesques (including Helvetica) from being good choices for body text. In fact, in the 2013 edition of the DIN 1450 (the German standards on legibility in typefaces, published by the Deutsches Institut für Normung), Helvetica is used as a negative standard.⁶² That's an entirely different topic, however.

⁶². <https://twitter.com/espiekermann/status/337239983901536257>

In 1957 — a big year for Neo-Grotesque sans serifs, as Frutiger’s Univers as well as Folio (originally thought to be a stronger competitor, although history has proved otherwise) were released — Haas Foundry released Max Miedinger’s Neue Haas Grotesk, which drew heavily on Schelter and Akzidenz Grotesks. In 1960, Haas, in an effort to market it more effectively, rebranded Neue Haas Grotesk to what we know as one of the most ubiquitous typefaces of all time — you guessed it — Helvetica.



Many people love Helvetica so much that they’ll hang prints of vintage Helvetica specimens as decoration. (Image source: [etsy](#)⁶³)

The quintessential members of this group are, of course, Univers and the immortal Helvetica, which has gone through quite a number of permutations over the years (as have all of these typefaces) and was recently revived by Christian Schwartz⁶⁴ as a rerelease of Neue Haas Grotesk. A nice informational minisite⁶⁵ was created by Indra Kupferschmid and Nick Sherman for the release. Other typefaces in this category include the DIN 1451 and its derivatives⁶⁶, and Bell Gothic and its successor Bell Centennial.

⁶³. <http://www.etsy.com/listing/87618950/11x14-inch-suisse-swiss-helvetica-type>

⁶⁴. <http://christianschwartz.com/bio.shtml>

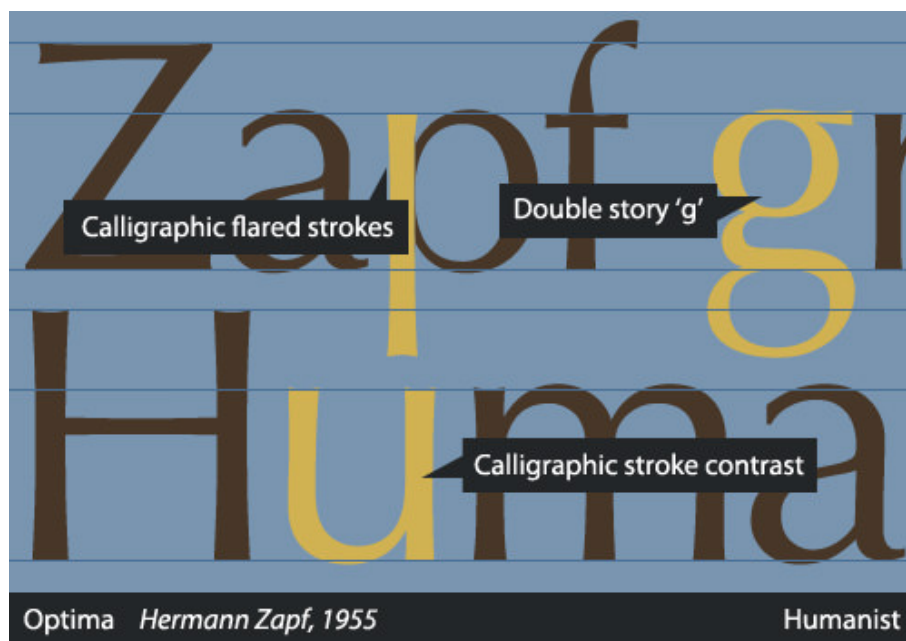
⁶⁵. <http://www.fontbureau.com/NHG/>

⁶⁶. <http://dinfont.com/>

HUMANIST

If you remember the most important quality of Humanist serif type, you'll be relieved to learn that the same quality carries over to the sans serifs! The primary characteristic of Humanist type, both serif and sans serif, is a strong calligraphic influence, basing its shapes and flow on forms that could originate from a pen or brush. This means a much higher stroke contrast, and some Humanist sans even feature some stress, whereas nearly all other sans serifs have a completely vertical axis.

Another interesting characteristic of Humanist sans serifs is that their proportions often derive largely from Roman inscriptions and early serif typefaces, rather than 19th-century sans serifs as the Neo-Grotesques did. Because of this design process involving older letterforms, the lowercase “a” and “g” are most often two-story in Humanist sans serifs. All of these characteristics combine to make most Humanists a more legible choice than other types of sans faces.



Hermann Zapf's Optima is one example that clearly shows the calligraphic heritage, with an unusually obvious difference between thick and thin strokes, while many others in this category have more subtle features. The Humanist sans group includes classics such as Gill Sans and Frutiger as well as more recent releases like Myriad (1991), Trebuchet (1996) and Calibri (2005).

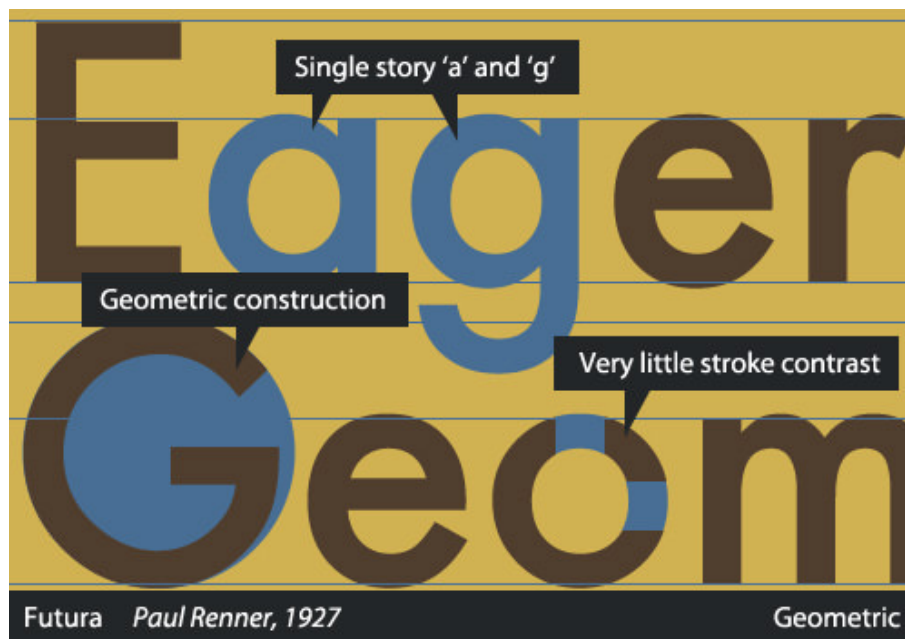
GEOMETRIC

Geometric sans serifs are exactly what their name suggests. Instead of being derived from early Grotesques, like a Neo-Grotesque, or from cal-

ligraphic and engraved forms like the Humanist sans, they are built on geometric shapes. The characters often have optically circular bowls and are otherwise typically very rectangular, sharing many components between the various glyphs.



Erbar's small x-height, among other factors, renders it difficult to read. [Larger view](http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Erbar-3_mini.jpg)⁶⁷.



Jakob Erbar, whose eponymous typeface is credited as being the first Geometric sans, reportedly based his construction on the circle. Released in the 1920s, Erbar-Grotesk was intended to be legible. Ironically, because of the awkward visual rhythm, resulting from strict adherence to geometric forms, Geometric lineals are among the least legible of

⁶⁷. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Erbar-3_mini.jpg

sans serifs and are usually suitable only for display type. Geometric sans serifs usually show little or no stroke contrast and usually feature a single-story lowercase “a.”

Paul Renner’s Futura, Koch’s Kabel and Lubalin’s Avant Garde are typical examples of the style. H&FJ’s Gotham is also a Geometric sans, although it is less strictly geometric than some and allows for more variation in the heavier weights.

The Rest Of The Story

That’s the basic classification for sans serifs! While the two parts of this series primarily deal with serif and sans type, there are many other styles to consider. The Vox-ATypI system also provides five subcategories of “calligraphics” (i.e. type that is derived from handmade letters), but as they are largely self-explanatory, I won’t dedicate much space in this already lengthy chapter to them. Here is a brief summary of each category.

SCRIPTS



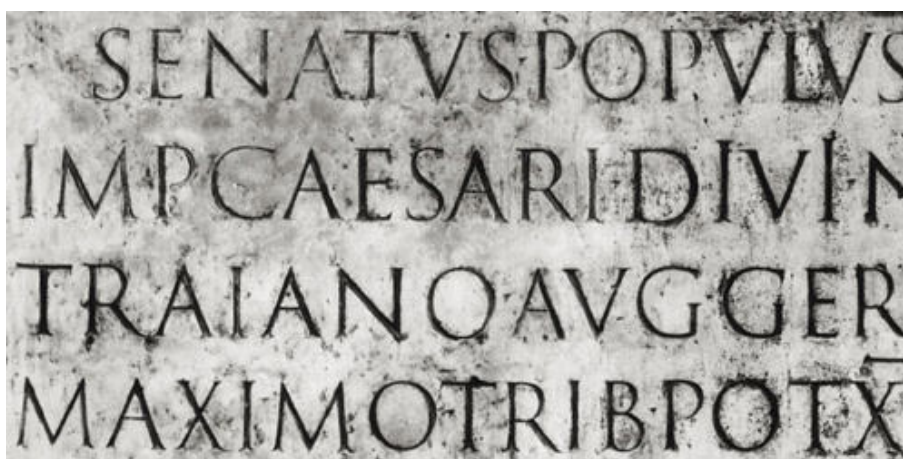
A case of script metal type. (Image source: [Etsy](#)⁶⁸)

Scripts are, of course, typefaces based on handwriting, particularly formal scripts. The letters often connect, but not necessarily so. They range from the very formal — Matthew Carter’s Snell Roundhand⁶⁹, named after the author of a 1694 booklet on penmanship, originally released in 1966 — to the very casual — Ashley Havinden’s eponymous Ashley Script⁷⁰, from 1955.

⁶⁸. <http://www.etsy.com/listing/109475601/vintage-metal-letterpress-script-type>

⁶⁹. <http://www.linotype.com/1487/snellroundhand-family.html>

GLYPHIC



Carol Twombly's Trajan was based on this inscription at the base of Trajan's Column⁷¹ in Rome.

Glyphic typefaces are those derived from engraved or chiseled letters. Many of these typefaces look like they could be classified as serifs but are based on the work of a chisel, rather than having gone through the traditional design process and referencing the stroke of a pen. As such, Glyphics, also called “incised” typefaces, sometimes contain only capitals, and the serifs tend to be small, as a natural detail of the chiseling process rather than as a design feature. Trajan and Friz Quadrata are excellent examples of this style.

GRAPHIC



Graphic wood type from the extensive Hamilton Wood Type⁷² collection.

70. <http://www.fonts.com/font/adobe/ashley-script/regular>

71. <http://codex99.com/typography/21.html>

Graphic is essentially a sort of catch-all label for display type that doesn't fit into any other category. It includes anything that would be drawn or designed, with a brush, pen or any sort of tool. If it's not exactly a sans, not exactly a serif, and you're not really sure what it is, it is most likely a Graphic typeface!

BLACKLETTER



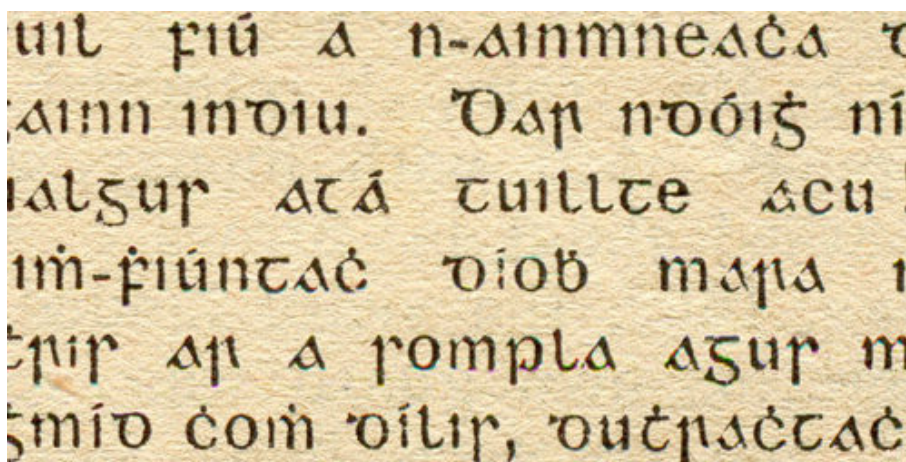
Gutenberg printed with type designed to mimic the late-medieval Fraktur style of handwriting. (Image credits: ⁷³)

Blackletter type began with Gutenberg and was used in printing, even printing body text, until the early- to mid-20th century in Germany. It is based on a medieval scribal hand, written with a broad-nib pen, and differs from graphic typefaces and scripts in that it has been used at length in body text. It has a very dense type style. When the traditional style that Gutenberg had used began to give way to the more readable early serifs (the Humanist/Venetian designs of Aldus Manutius and his colleagues), printers called the new style “Whiteletter,” in reference to the negative space-to-ink ratio on the page; thus, the old type was termed Blackletter, and we still use this term today.

⁷². <http://woodtype.org/>

⁷³. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jmwk/>

GAELIC



Gaelic type includes the Latin alphabet as well as some additional glyphs. [Larger view](#)⁷⁴.

(Image source: [mathewstaunton](#)⁷⁵)

Gaelic type is based on the insular script found in manuscripts throughout the UK. As with Blackletter, it has been used in printing body text in Ireland, from its earliest appearances in the 16th century all the way through to the mid-20th century, but is no longer popular as a text typeface. The Vox-ATypI system was amended to include the Gaelic category in 2010 at the ATypI annual conference, appropriately held in Dublin.

NON-LATIN TYPE

Beyond that, there is still another world of type to discover. The entirety of these two chapters on the subtleties of type (and, believe me, it can get much more complicated!) have discussed only the Latin alphabet, which, while quite commonly used, is merely one of many writing systems⁷⁶ used today. I encourage you to learn more about, and get involved in, the typography of other writing systems! Some are very widespread and used daily by hundreds of millions of people; others are used by mere thousands.

Regardless of how many people use it, each writing system needs quality typefaces. From the commonly used (check out Nadine Chahine's [interview on Arabic type](#)⁷⁷) to the rarely seen (in 2012 [Jean-Baptiste Levée](#)⁷⁸ gave a fascinating talk at [TypeCon](#)⁷⁹ on creating [Air](#)

⁷⁴. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Newman_mini.jpg

⁷⁵. <http://mathewstaunton.blogspot.de/2010/10/v-behaviorurldefaultvml-o.html>

⁷⁶. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_writing_systems

⁷⁷. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2013/04/26/arabic-type-design-interview-nadine-chahine/>

Inuit Sans⁸⁰, supporting Inuktitut glyphs), the typography of non-Latin writing systems promises an exciting future.

CLOSING REMARKS

We’ve barely scratched the surface of the fascinating subject of typography and type history in this two-part series “Making Sense of Type Classification.” Hopefully, it has piqued your interest in this intriguing field. Knowing your way around the typographic resources available to today’s designers is essential, and it is helpful to understand a little behind the characteristics, history, visual character and idiosyncrasies that make each typeface unique and that define how it communicates.

At one point in the history of Web design, an extensive knowledge of type history was unnecessary because a Web or interactive designer was limited to half a dozen typefaces, and those in limited weights and variants.

Today, however, the landscape of Web design is completely different, and the typographic possibilities are endless! Also, while this material is covered in many design schools, a significant portion of designers today haven’t had a formal design education, so now is the best time to catch up!

That being said, we also must remember that, while type classification is an important aid to studying type, it is not a hard and fast system that cannot be questioned. Many typefaces combine characteristics and could easily fit into multiple categories, and no classification system can cover all of the possibilities. In the end, type classification is an excellent means of learning to recognize common patterns and distinguishing characteristics of typefaces, and we get to learn some type history along the way.

With this short series, you’re now equipped with a strong knowledge of categories of type; you’ve learned to analyze typefaces and pick out unique aspects of letterforms; you’ve seen how type has evolved with culture; and, most importantly, you have a solid foundation for further study of typography and type history! It cannot be overstated how immensely important sound knowledge of typography is for anyone in the broad field of design, and the material we’ve covered here will serve you well in navigating the world of type. 🍷

78. <http://www.jbtl.co/v2/#>

79. <http://typecon.com>

80. <http://www.jbtl.co/v2/en/jbl/page/projects/industry-technology/air-inuit-sans65>

A Critical Approach To Typefaces

BY DAVID BŘEZINA 🐘

I've always wondered, "What is it that makes a typeface or any other design good?" However simplistic this question may seem to typographers, it is a legitimate question many of us are trying to answer.

After several years working as a professional type designer, teaching, and running a type foundry, I pretty much gave up my attempts to find a golden set of rules. The answer is not so simple. There is no established set of features which, when present, make a typeface good (and I do not mean just "looks good," but also works good). But there is a body of knowledge that can provide the necessary answers and also inform your inevitable personal view.



I will try to give you a condensed recipe on how to approach typefaces critically and perhaps even ruthlessly. In my humble opinion, this is the best way to get oriented in the field. Indeed, looking at typefaces this way is more generic and painful, and it does take longer, but it is a transferable skill and is totally worth it. Much better than any specific answer you can get.

In this article we will cover two steps:

1. Select your sources carefully,
2. Study materials from these sources closely and critically ("to study" means both to look and to read).

I tend to refer mainly to critical reading. Many young designers despise reading. Believe me, I hate those boring historical and theoretical trea-

tises as much as you do, but even though images are worth a thousand words, they alone cannot say everything.

1. Selecting Sources

There are a lot of designed and written materials available. Unfortunately, it's not always clear which ones are appropriate and trustworthy. So how do you find out?

Always try to be aware of the nature of the source. Are the materials educational or promotional? The difference might not always be clear. Promotional texts boast about all the positives and obscure any negatives. They are written for the benefit of the author or producer. Educational resources generally attempt a more balanced view and they are written for the benefit of the reader.

How can you find out whether the source is experienced or just well-known? Does not the first imply the second usually? Not always. Unlike celebrities who are primarily good at self-promotion and not necessarily at the job they do, authorities are those who actually have sound experience or knowledge, yet they might not be well-known. You would do better listening to the latter. It is hard, but try to disregard the PR noise and look at what they have done, if the quality of their work is consistent and respected and if they are conscious of what they are doing (e.g. they have a methodology). Note that length of the experience is a good signal, but not necessarily a solid proof of quality. There are old designers doing terrible work and young ones doing great too.

Keep some perspective: diversify your sources (never listen to just one), listen to what their competitors say about them and make sure you know the community they belong to – people tend not to criticize their own (at least not publicly).



People have different characters and different politics. Be aware of that when selecting sources. I would not completely trust anyone who has

never publicly admitted a mistake. For such a person, perfect public image is more important than the validity of the discourse.

You certainly do not have to read everything. For some, it is better to stick with a few examples and study them deeply; others prefer a broader perspective with less depth. But read you must.

2. Critical Study

Here is the painful bit. You have gathered materials to read and look at, and now you must study and question what you're reading. Here are a few simple tests to start with:

INFORMED EXPERIENCE

Are the authors' actual experiences relevant to what they are talking about? Example: if a brilliant designer is explaining politics in South Korea, should you listen? Even if the designer has been to South Korea, does it constitute an informed experience? Perhaps not.

CONTEXT

Is the statement generally valid or is there a context to it? A great example is the discussion about the use of small caps where Joe Clark disputes their utility in academic writings⁸¹. One of the common rules in Anglo-Saxon typography is to typeset abbreviations in small caps to make them less pronounced. According to Clark, this actually hinders the reading and skimming of academic texts. Change the context and the validity of the whole statement changes. The article is amusingly rude and critical, but remember to read the reactions, too.



81. <http://blog.fawny.org/2010/01/11/goreschoice/>

EVIDENCE QUALITY

Is the statement supported by any evidence? Is the evidence relevant to the point being made, and does it illustrate the problem? Example: type designers will often mention how much time they spent developing their new type family, but is it really that important to know? Does a longer (or shorter) production time make their type family any better or worse? This information does make you think about the value and effort put into the project, but it is not actual evidence of quality.

EVIDENCE COMPLETENESS

Does the evidence cover the broad picture or is it just a narrow snapshot? Are the conclusions made with a broad or narrow perspective? Example: if I were to design a generic book typeface and conduct preliminary research, should I analyze book typefaces from just five books from a few different countries? Is that a representative sample? Perhaps not.

REALITY CHECK

If someone writes about originality or critical discourse, does it mean that person is actually original or critical? Articles are often written to denote the discussed quality in the author. Example: feel free to apply right now.

TESTABILITY

Does the typeface have features that are testable? Run the tests and see for yourself. Example: check a cross-platform web font in browsers your visitors use. Does it provide a consistent reading experience across a wide array of browsers, or is the appearance highly inconsistent or even erratic? If it's the latter, then perhaps the web font is not so cross-platform.

MOTIVES CHECK

What are the author's motives? If an author appears biased, check their reasoning twice. Motives are good, but supported claims are better. Example: look at someone commenting on their competitor's work. Naturally, disagreement is in their job description, but do they have valid basis for what they say? No? Then ignore their comments! You do not want to be used for someone's propaganda against their competitors.



POST-MODERN CHECK

Do not give up your aspirations for objective knowledge too soon. Not everything is a matter of personal taste. Isn't it better to have a slightly imperfect or incomplete objective statement, rather than a bunch of subjective feelings (depending on the subject of discussion)? Example: six pixel type is not readable, but that's hardly a matter of personal taste. If someone says so, then maybe they do not have any opinion at all. (It is nearly impossible to fit readable Latin lowercase within six pixels.)

And Then...

Read, see and listen. Discuss. Think. Repeat. (Preferably in that order.)

Optionally, you might also share and test what you have learned and write something. It is good for everyone in the field (especially for those who are criticized; talk to them, but stay civil) to keep the critical discourse rolling, and it helps to strengthen your reasoning. There are plenty of opportunities on social networks (btw. Twitter has a pretty lively community of type designers) and blogs. Talking to your friends and colleagues works pretty well, too.

Playing with these and other questions ignites the curiosity which is necessary for close inspection of other people's designs. Why else would you look at it for so long?

There is a very simple rule: the more questions you ask, the more insights you will get. And to ensure the answers are useful, you need to remain critical. Once you gather enough you will know how to recognize a good typeface.

FURTHER READING

So far I carefully avoided being specific in this chapter, but I must admit that providing actual starting points seems worth betraying any

sort of attempt for objectivity. In the following list I tried to avoid the most known books and show what enthusiastic typographers would read and what I also deem easy to digest. Please, do consider this selection biased and limited:

- Inside Paragraphs: Typographic Fundamentals⁸², *Cyrus Highsmith*
This new and short book is an introduction to the merits of type spacing for design students. It expands on a chapter on spacing hierarchy from Gerrit Noordzij's book *LetterLetter*. What I recommend about it most is the nice common-sense analytic style.
- Counterpunch: making type in the sixteenth century; designing type-faces now⁸³, *Fred Smeijers*
Long-awaited second edition was finally published last year. While it may seem very historical at first, this book is worth re-reading every three years as it explains, not just presents. It is a fine example of research and reasoning in typography.
- Letters of credit: a view of type design⁸⁴, *Walter Tracy*
There are two parts of this book. One is on printing and typefounding and illustrates how technology defines type design. The other is a set of in-depth typeface reviews. Reviews by an experienced type person, that is.
- While You're Reading⁸⁵, *Gerard Unger*
Very enjoyable read, a summary of Unger's thoughts on what I would call "human-centered type design".
- MA Typeface Design at the University of Reading⁸⁶
The website does not contain only the type specimens, but in many cases there are also essays about the development (look under the mysterious abbreviation 'RoP' which stands for 'Reflection on practise') some of which are very worth reading. If you like some typeface, you might as well read the essay too.

*Illustrations created and designed by Anna Giedrys*⁸⁷. 🐼

⁸². <http://insideparagraphs.com/>

⁸³. <https://hyphenpress.co.uk/products/books/978-0-907259-42-8>

⁸⁴. http://books.google.cz/books/about/Letters_of_Credit.html?id=y8NssjbqNcsC&redir_esc=y

⁸⁵. <http://markbattypublisher.com/books/while-youre-reading/>

⁸⁶. <http://typefacedesign.org>

⁸⁷. <http://ancymonic.com/>

Taking A Second Look At Free Fonts

BY JEREMIAH SHOAF 🐾

Once thought of as amateurish by professional designers, free and open-source fonts have gone through something of a renaissance in just the last few years. The quality of available free fonts has increased dramatically. To be frank, free fonts don't have a good reputation, and often they are knock-offs of thoroughly crafted, already established typefaces. So is it time for professional designers to take a second look?

First, A Story

Early in my design career, around 2003, I wanted to purchase the font DIN⁸⁸ for a project at work. My manager promptly dismissed the idea of paying for a font and instead handed me a CD that had “5,000 free fonts” on it, saying “This CD has every font a designer could possibly need. No need to waste money buying fonts!”

I popped the CD in my computer and found a collection of the most horrendous fonts you could imagine. Novelty and “retro” fonts. Spooky Halloween fonts. “Techno” fonts. Fonts with letterforms made up of cats posing in crazy positions. Fonts with terrible kerning, missing glyphs and wonky rendering. Fonts available only in single weights with no italics.

Nowhere to be found was DIN or, for that matter, any font that a professional designer would actually use. Feeling dejected, I ended up just using Helvetica because we actually owned that one.

Fast-forward to 2014. When I hear the words “free fonts,” I still can't help but picture that horrible CD. But things have completely changed since then, and I find myself actually using free fonts quite often in my projects.

Where Do Free Fonts Come From?

In the past, free fonts typically came from one of two places: amateur designers who created fonts for fun or as a learning experience, and professional type designers who released a single variant of a font fam-

⁸⁸. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/din>

ily for free as a form of marketing, the idea being that people would come back to purchase the full family once they realized the limited usefulness of a font without multiple weights and italics.

Why Is Having Multiple Weights With Italics So Important?

To set body copy properly, a font family requires four variants: normal, italic, bold and bold italic. A font used on the Web that doesn't include these four basic variants will inevitably get the dreaded faux bold and faux italic⁸⁹ treatment generated by the browser, which should be avoided at all costs — in fact, there are⁹⁰ ways⁹¹ to avoid them for good. Other weights, such as light and extra bold, are helpful for creating typographic contrast between elements.

Free Fonts Are Not What They Used To Be

Recently, large companies such as Adobe and Google have been commissioning fonts for open-source projects and releasing them for free on the Web. Professional typeface designers have been getting involved in open source as well, sharing complete font families on Google Fonts⁹².

Thanks to the open-source community, there are now free fonts available that even typography snobs would be happy to use. The following fonts all have multiple weights with matching italics. They are suitable for headlines as well as body copy, and they render well on screen and at small sizes.

ALEGREYA

Alegreya⁹³ is an award-winning serif typeface, chosen by ATypI as one of 53 “Fonts of the Decade” in its Letter.2 competition⁹⁴. It is available for free on Google Fonts, but, sadly, most designers don't seem to know about it. I hardly see Alegreya used anywhere online, which is a shame

⁸⁹. <http://alistapart.com/article/say-no-to-faux-bold>

⁹⁰. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2012/07/11/avoiding-faux-weights-styles-google-web-fonts/>

⁹¹. <http://coding.smashingmagazine.com/2013/02/14/setting-weights-and-styles-at-font-face-declaration/>

⁹². <http://www.google.com/fonts>

⁹³. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Alegreya>

⁹⁴. <http://letter2.org>

because this is a truly great font. Alegreya was designed with printed text in mind, but it is excellent to read on screen as well.

The designer, Juan Pablo del Peral, claims that just as much care and attention to detail was spent on designing the italic as the roman and it definitely shows – the italic style is especially beautiful. I hope more designers become aware of this excellent typeface and that we'll see it used more widely on the Web in 2014.



Beef⁹⁵ uses Alegreya for the body copy on their website, giving it a stately appearance, which contrasts nicely with the use of Avenir⁹⁶ for headings.

- Websites using Alegreya⁹⁷

SOURCE SANS PRO

Released by Adobe in August 2012, Source Sans Pro⁹⁸ is Adobe's first open-source font. Its designer, Paul D. Hunt, was inspired by early-20th-century gothics such as Franklin Gothic and News Gothic. To my eyes, Source Sans Pro feels much more modern, a little reminiscent of FF Meta. Its intended use is for user interfaces so it renders very well at small sizes. The font is available in an impressive 6 weights, making it extremely versatile.

⁹⁵. <http://www.wearebeef.co.uk>

⁹⁶. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/avenir>

⁹⁷. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/alegreya>

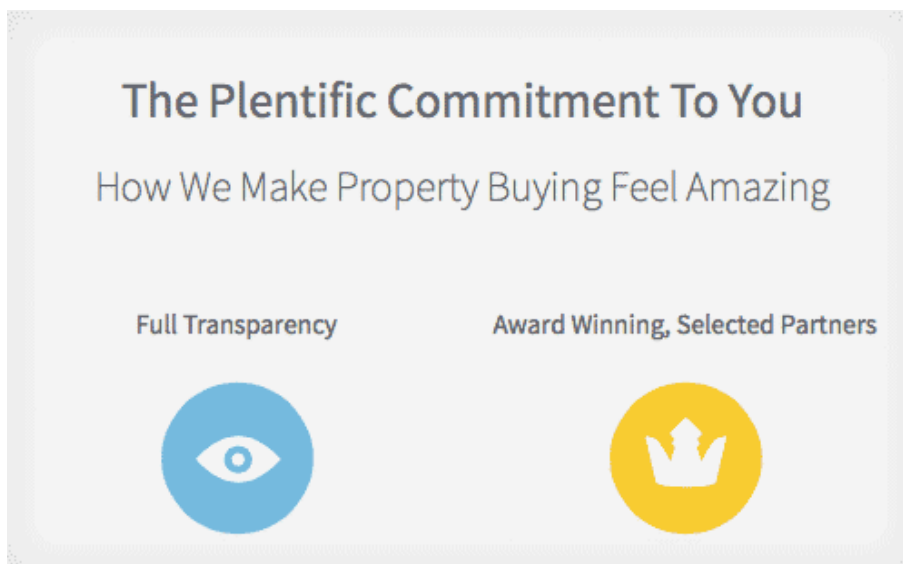
⁹⁸. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Source+Sans+Pro>

ABOUT CAST83

CAST83 is a Baltimore based, two and videography team.

We strive to make our clients comfortable. Our work has the warmth it does, because every smile and laugh we capture is authentic. We're always looking for a new creative venture, and thrive on collaboration and partnership with our clients. We're

CAST83⁹⁹ uses Source Sans Pro throughout its website, showing off the diversity of the family; large headlines are set in the lighter weights, while the heavier weights are used at smaller sizes and set in uppercase, creating excellent typographic contrast.



Plentific¹⁰⁰ uses the extra-light and normal weights of Source Sans Pro to create contrast between different levels of headings.

- Websites using Source Sans Pro¹⁰¹

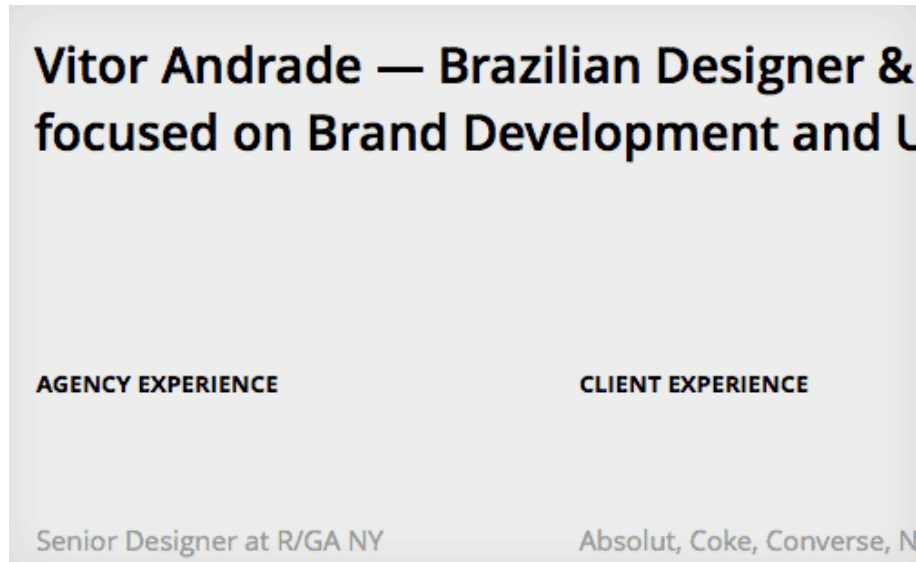
⁹⁹. <http://www.cast83.com>

¹⁰⁰. <http://plentific.com>

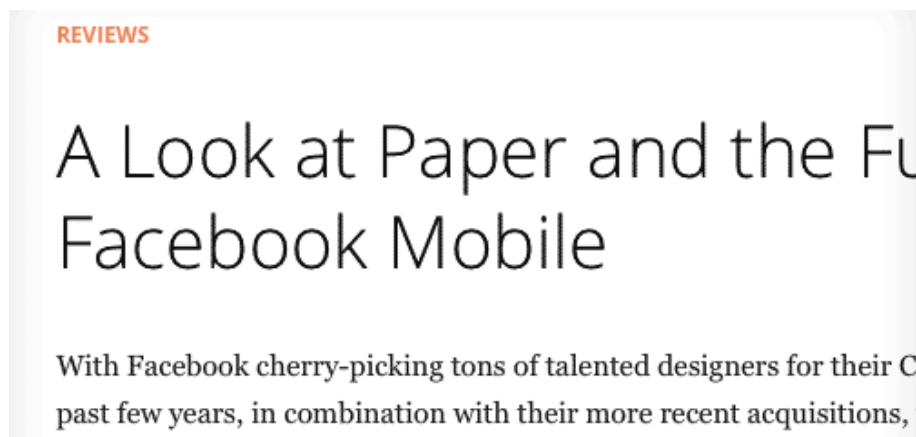
¹⁰¹. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/source-sans-pro>

OPEN SANS

Designed by well-known type designer Steve Matteson and commissioned by Google, Open Sans¹⁰² is one of the most widely used open-source fonts on the Web. It is the default font for Zurb's new Foundation 5¹⁰³ framework and is used on many of Google's redesigned pages¹⁰⁴. I've even heard Open Sans described as the "flat design" font. The five weights with matching italics make this humanist sans-serif useful for a wide variety of situations



Vitor Andrade's website¹⁰⁵ uses Open Sans in a very understated way; the minimal, type-driven design doesn't draw attention to itself, appearing very neutral and lending focus to the excellent work being featured on the website.



The light weight of Open Sans is used for the article titles on The Industry's website¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰². <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Open+Sans>

¹⁰³. <http://foundation.zurb.com>

¹⁰⁴. <http://www.google.com/analytics/>

¹⁰⁵. <http://vitorandrade.co>

- [Websites using Open Sans](#)¹⁰⁷

ANONYMOUS PRO

[Anonymous Pro](#)¹⁰⁸ is a monospaced font that I'm surprised so few designers know about, considering it was designed by [Mark Simonson](#)¹⁰⁹, the type designer behind [Proxima Nova](#)¹¹⁰. Monospaced fonts seem to be popular with designers at the moment, and Anonymous Pro is an excellent option.

[Inconsolata](#)¹¹¹ is a much more widely used monospaced font, also available on Google Fonts, but doesn't include italics, as Anonymous Pro does. Setting body copy in a monospaced font isn't always a good idea, but in the right context it can give a design a very clean and refreshingly sparse feel.



[Per Sandström](#)¹¹² uses Anonymous Pro at a large size for the body copy on his website, where it works surprisingly well paired with [Futura](#)¹¹³ for headings.

^{106.} <http://theindustry.cc>

^{107.} <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/open-sans>

^{108.} <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Anonymous+Pro>

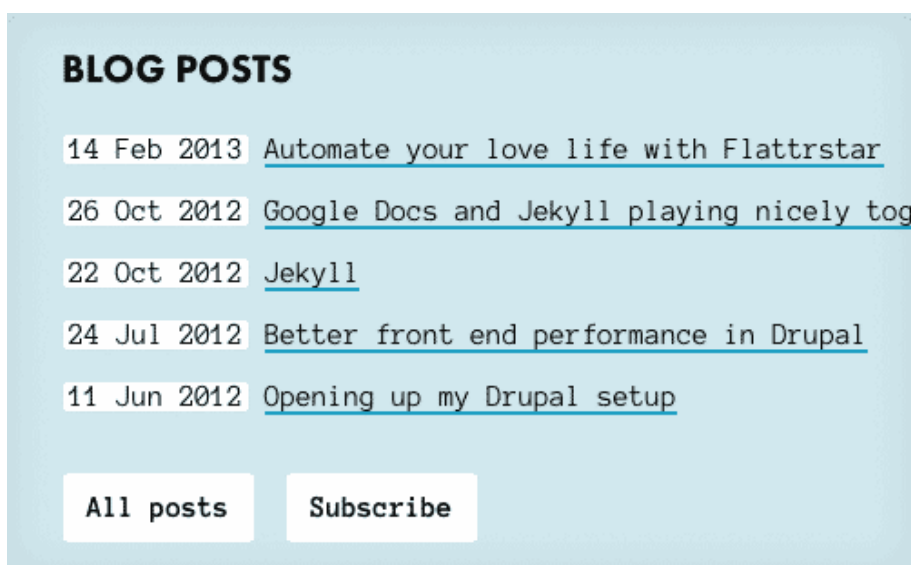
^{109.} <http://www.marksimonson.com>

^{110.} <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/proxima-nova>

^{111.} <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/inconsolata>

^{112.} <http://www.helloper.com>

^{113.} <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/futura>



The bold weight of Anonymous Pro is used for the buttons on Per's website.

- [Websites using Anonymous Pro](#)¹¹⁴

PLAYFAIR DISPLAY

Playfair Display¹¹⁵ is a high-contrast serif designed by Claus Eggers Sørensen. Reminiscent of [Baskerville](#)¹¹⁶, it takes its cues from the typeface designs of the late-18th century. Although designed primarily for titles and headings, the three weights with matching italics make it suitable for short stretches of body copy as well. For longer stretches of body copy, Playfair Display pairs very well with Georgia.



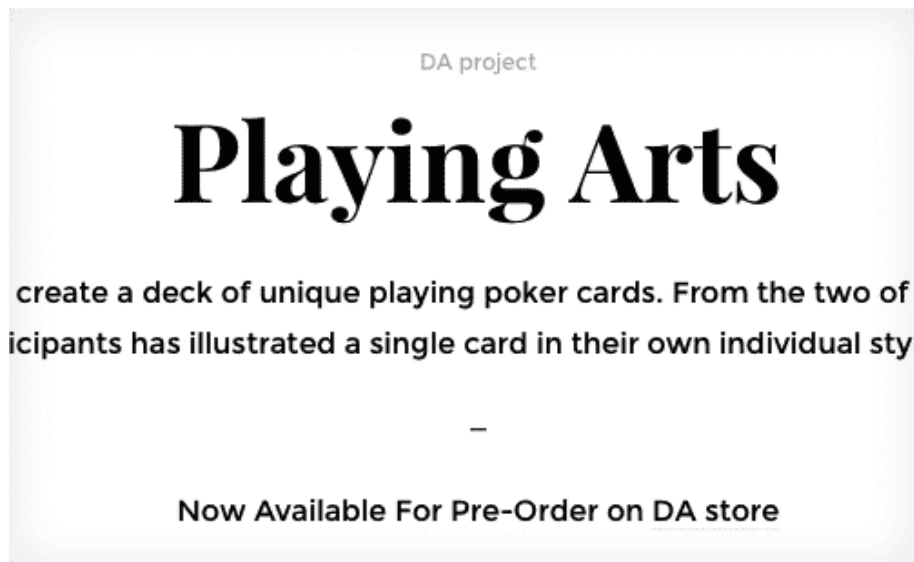
Playfair Display features a beautiful italic variant, seen in the headings on [Boompa Records' website](#)¹¹⁷.

¹¹⁴. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/anonymous-pro>

¹¹⁵. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Playfair+Display>

¹¹⁶. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/baskerville>

¹¹⁷. <http://www.boompa.ca>



The bold weight of Playfair Display is used on the headings of Digital Abstracts' website¹¹⁸.

- Websites using Playfair Display¹¹⁹

ROBOTO

Roboto¹²⁰ has been accused of being a “Frankenfont¹²¹” — a mashup of Helvetica, DIN and Myriad. I understand where the criticisms come from, but I quite like Roboto. Updates and improvements¹²² have been made to Roboto since that “Frankenfont” article, and I think the font works great on screen at different sizes and device resolutions, which is its purpose.

The font feels familiar, yet still possesses unique character the more you look at it. The Roboto family also includes a very nice slab version¹²³ as well as a condensed version¹²⁴.

¹¹⁸. <http://digitalabstracts.com/playing-arts-project/>

¹¹⁹. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/playfair-display>

¹²⁰. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Roboto>

¹²¹. <http://typographica.org/on-typography/roboto-typeface-is-a-four-headed-frankenstein/>

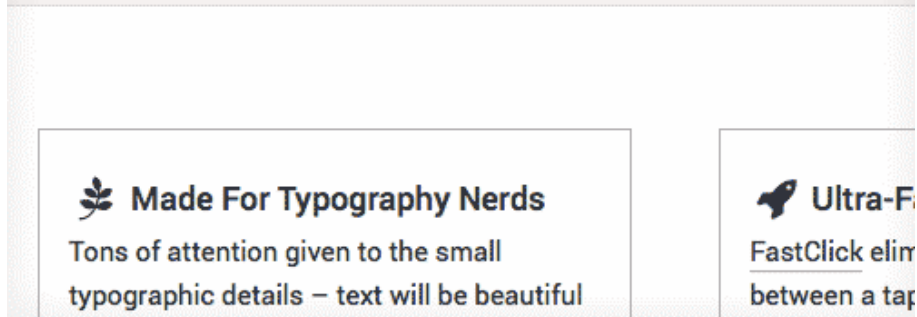
¹²². <http://www.androidpolice.com/2013/06/29/typeface-teardown-roboto-gets-a-facelift-in-android-4-3/>

¹²³. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Roboto+Slab>

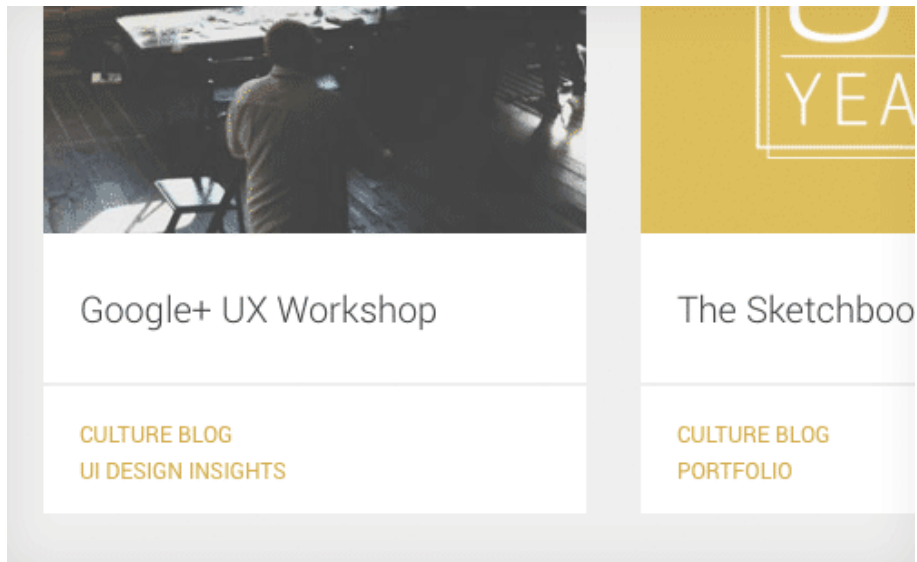
¹²⁴. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Roboto+Condensed>

2. Willamette Template

Willamette is a marketing site template used by this site. [Change the theme](#)



I use Roboto on my [Type & Grids](#)¹²⁵ side project, and the font renders beautifully on high-density displays at small sizes.



[Paone Creative](#)¹²⁶ uses the light weight of Roboto on their blog section.

- [Websites using Roboto](#)¹²⁷

LATO

Lato¹²⁸ is Polish for “summer,” and the name perfectly fits this warm-feeling sans-serif. The designer, Łukasz Dziedzic, originally designed Lato as a corporate font for a large client. After the client decided to go

¹²⁵. <http://www.typeandgrids.com>

¹²⁶. <http://paonecreative.com/category/culture-blog/>

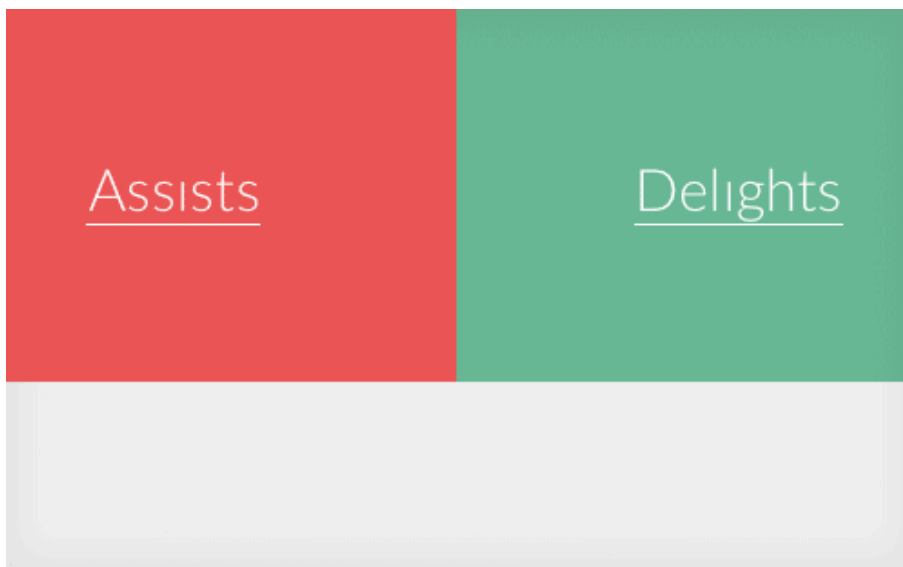
¹²⁷. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/roboto>

¹²⁸. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Lato>

in a different design direction, Łukasz released the font for public use. Lato feels very modest and unassuming when set at small sizes in body copy, but the italic variant is distinctive and easily recognizable. Lato is used in WordPress' latest default theme, Twenty Fourteen¹²⁹, so its popularity on the Web is sure to increase.



Frank Chimero makes elegant use of the hairline weight in his article “What Screens Want”¹³⁰, setting it in uppercase at a large size, which is needed for such a thin, delicate weight.



On AIGA's “100 Years of Design” website¹³¹, a customized “dotless i” version of Lato is used.

¹²⁹. <http://theme.wordpress.com/themes/twentyfourteen/>

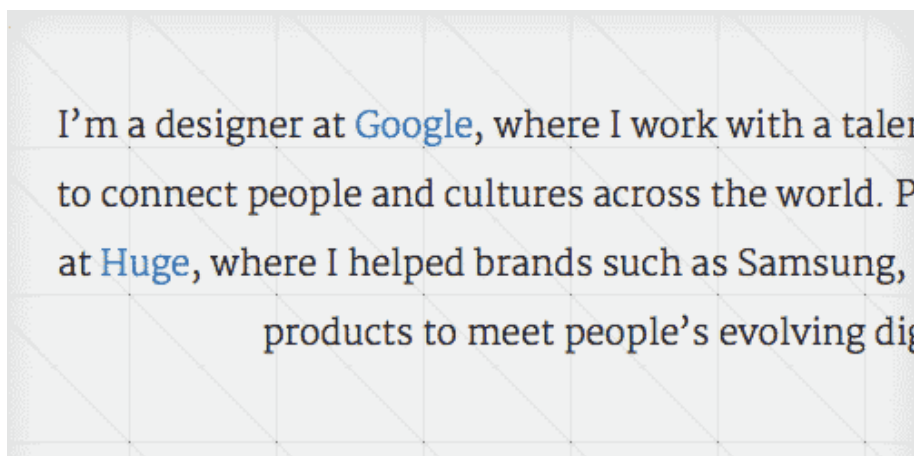
¹³⁰. <http://frankchimero.com/what-screens-want/>

¹³¹. <http://celebratedesign.org>

- [Websites using Lato](#)¹³²

MERRIWEATHER

Designed by [Eben Sorkin](#)¹³³, [Merriweather](#)¹³⁴ is a serif font created for on-screen reading. Its tall x-height and hefty serifs give it excellent legibility. Merriweather is under active development, and improvements are constantly being made. There is also a [sans-serif version](#)¹³⁵ of Merriweather available that makes an excellent companion.



[Dickson Fong](#)¹³⁶ uses the light weight of Merriweather, which gives his design an elegant look.



[Vtcreative](#)¹³⁷ show off the light italic style of Merriweather in their footer.

¹³². <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/lato>

¹³³. <http://sorkintype.com>

¹³⁴. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Merriweather>

¹³⁵. <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Merriweather+Sans>

¹³⁶. <http://dicksonfong.com>

- [Websites using Merriweather](#)¹³⁸

KARLA

Karla¹³⁹ is a grotesque sans-serif designed by Jonathan Pinhorn that is full of character and quirks. Something about it reminds me of the trendy [Apercu](#)¹⁴⁰ font. The tracking might be set a little wide for body copy, and some of the kerning can be a little wonky, but something about this font makes me overlook those downsides. This is a perfect font to add a touch of personality to your design.



[Borsch, Vodka & Tears](#)¹⁴¹ use Karla for the short bursts of body copy on its website, and it works really well.



[Kalyn Nakano](#)¹⁴² shows off the normal and bold weights of Karla on her portfolio site.

^{137.} <http://www.vtcreative.fr>

^{138.} <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/merriweather>

^{139.} <http://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Karla>

^{140.} <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/apercu>

^{141.} <http://borschvodkaandtears.com>

^{142.} <http://kalynnakano.com>

- [Websites using Karla](#)¹⁴³

CLEAR SANS

Clear Sans¹⁴⁴ is Intel's recent contribution to the open-source font community. Designed with on-screen legibility in mind, Clear Sans prides itself on its unambiguous character design. For example, the uppercase "I" has serifs added to distinguish itself from the lowercase "l". This makes it an excellent choice for UI design work where clarity is key. Clear Sans is currently not available through Google Fonts, so designers looking to use this font will need to host it themselves.



The delicate, light weight of Clear Sans is used for the body copy on the [Clear Sans web-site](#)¹⁴⁵.

FIRA SANS

Designed for the Firefox Operating System, Fira Sans¹⁴⁶ was recently released as a free font available for public use. The font shares many similarities to FF Meta, which makes sense as Erik Spiekermann is the designer of both. It's rare to find a free font created by such a renowned typeface designer. Fira Sans also includes a monospaced version called Fira Mono. Interestingly, the web font used on the official Fira Sans page is Open Sans, not Fira Sans. You'd think Mozilla would want to show off their new font on their site.

¹⁴³. <http://www.typewolf.com/site-of-the-day/fonts/karla>

¹⁴⁴. <https://01.org/clear-sans>

¹⁴⁵. <https://01.org/clear-sans>

¹⁴⁶. <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/styleguide/products/firefox-os/typeface/>

Fira Sans Medium

The quick brown Firefox j
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890? , ; , : * @ # € \$ % &

Other Free Fonts Worth Checking Out

- [Exo](#)¹⁴⁷
- [Signika](#)¹⁴⁸
- [Arimo](#)¹⁴⁹
- [Raleway](#)¹⁵⁰
- [Montserrat](#)¹⁵¹
- [Muli](#)¹⁵²
- [Domine](#)¹⁵³
- [Lora](#)¹⁵⁴

Don't Rely On Free Fonts For Every Project

As nice as the fonts above are, designers shouldn't rely entirely on free fonts. Free fonts will never match the quality of the fonts offered by top type design foundries. Budget for professional fonts in every project

^{147.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Exo>

^{148.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Signika>

^{149.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Arimo>

^{150.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Raleway>

^{151.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Montserrat>

^{152.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Muli>

^{153.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Domine>

^{154.} <https://www.google.com/fonts/specimen/Lora>

when possible. Type foundries need the support of the design community to continue innovating and producing excellent fonts.

That being said, if a project requires free fonts, whether due to budget constraints or other reasons, then rest easy knowing that an ever-growing selection of professional-quality fonts are available at your disposal. I continually update a curated list of open-source Web fonts¹⁵⁵ in my side project, Typewolf¹⁵⁶. You can also follow me @typewolf¹⁵⁷ and check out my other side project, Type & Grids¹⁵⁸, which uses many of the fonts featured in this chapter.

Designing a typeface requires a lot of time, patience and very hard work, and type designers should be rewarded for their work. So if you decide to use a free font, please always make sure to support type designers by purchasing the other fonts that they created or donating to support their efforts. 🐾

¹⁵⁵. <http://www.typewolf.com/open-source-web-fonts>

¹⁵⁶. <http://www.typewolf.com>

¹⁵⁷. <http://twitter.com/typewolf>

¹⁵⁸. <http://www.typeandgrids.com>

Dear Web Font Providers

BY LAURA FRANZ 🍷

When you buy something, I bet you want it to work. Heck, even if you use something for free — maybe borrowed from a friend — I bet you want it to work. No one *prefers* hiking boots that are too tight (or too loose), a car that shimmies when you drive faster than 40 miles an hour, or a kitchen knife that can't cut a tomato. And Web designers don't *prefer* fonts that don't fit a project, fall apart in different browsers or can't be used in a mock-up.

We also don't like wading through all of the fonts that *won't* work for us in order to find the ones that *will*. It takes precious time away from other tasks and responsibilities.

You've Come A Long Way, Baby!

Six years ago, A List Apart published “CSS @ Ten: The Next Big Thing¹⁵⁹,” in which Håkon Wium Lie describes the `@font-face` declaration and announces:

Two things must happen before Web fonts can take web design to the next level... First, we must ensure the validity of the approach.... Second, we must convince browser makers to add support for web fonts.

YOU HELPED MAKE IT HAPPEN: VALIDITY AND BROWSER SUPPORT

Today, browsers support Web fonts, and we've got the valid CSS to make the fonts work. Of course, as old browsers changed and new browsers (and extended font families) emerged, valid CSS became an ever-moving target.

On the DIY side, a big “Thank you!” to Paul Irish, who gave us the “Bulletproof Syntax” to fool Internet Explorer (IE) into loading the correct font file (remember using a smiley face for the local font name?); to Richard Fink, who gave us “Mo' Bulletproof Syntax” to fix a font-loading problem in Android; and to Ethan Dunham, who gave us the “Fontspring `@font-face` Syntax,” which even works in IE 9. You all thoroughly explained why your syntax works, which enabled each to pick up where the other left off. On top of that, Dunham, your `@font-face`

¹⁵⁹. <http://alistapart.com/article/cssatten>

generator¹⁶⁰ brought valid syntax to those of us who (please, I beg of you) just want our fonts to work.

Web font hosts such as Typekit and Fontdeck deserve a shout out, too. You worked to support multiple weights and styles of a font family cross-browser. Your variation-specific font-family names¹⁶¹ (which is a shorter and sweeter way of saying, “Hey everyone, you need to use a unique font-family name for each weight and style of a family”) require longer CSS, but they are valid and allow more than four weights and styles to load in IE 7 and 8. Those of us who can’t live without light, regular, bold, extra bold, and black weights are in Web font heaven!

YOU WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND: RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF TYPE DESIGNERS

One aspect that Lie missed in his article was the need for more Web fonts — how could we take Web design to the next level if we didn’t have a lot of fonts to use? This, of course, meant that you had to gain the trust of the type design community.

You had to protect the fonts.

Remember when type designers wouldn’t design or provide Web fonts without the guarantee that their files were secure? Typekit, your article “Serving and Protecting Fonts on the Web¹⁶²” (2009) laid out how you set up hurdles to “discourage casual misuse” and created a reasonably secure system for serving fonts.

Thanks to everyone’s tenacity, at some point in the last four years, “reasonably secure” was enough for type designers to take a chance. And now they’re hooked. In a recent interview¹⁶³, Jonathan Hoefler and Tobias Frere-Jones of H&FJ said: “We’re requiring that every new project have a way to thrive not only on paper, but on desktop and mobile screens.” How freaking awesome is that?

So, in the span of only six years, you’ve come a long way, baby. Web font syntax is valid and supported by most browsers (our fonts load!); we have thousands of Web fonts to work with; we have multiple options to deliver Web fonts (DIY or through a service provider; and free, monthly, yearly or a one-time purchase); and you are constantly improving your services, so Web fonts are easier to implement and they (usually) load seamlessly!

¹⁶⁰. <http://www.fontsquirrel.com/tools/webfont-generator>

¹⁶¹. <http://blog.typekit.com/2011/06/27/new-from-typekit-variation-specific-font-family-names-in-ie-6-8/>

¹⁶². <http://blog.typekit.com/2009/07/21/serving-and-protecting-fonts-on-the-web/>

¹⁶³. <http://gigaom.com/2013/07/18/meet-the-designer-behind-some-of-the-webs-newest-killer-fonts/>

What else could a Web designer need from you?
I am so glad you asked.

“What About Us?”: What Web Designers Need

Web designers — especially those of us who care about type and are trying to be thoughtful about the fonts we use — need more than access to thousands of Web fonts. Frankly, we need access to high-quality, appropriate Web fonts. And we need to be able to find them.

We’ve visited your websites. Some of you have thousands of fonts for us to use. But you know what? More isn’t always better. Sometimes more becomes more-stuff-to-wade-through-to-find-what-I-want. In 2010, a New York Times article, “Too Many Choices: A Problem That Can Paralyze”¹⁶⁴, reported on the debilitating effect of too many choices. Too many choices make it harder to choose. How do we know our choice is the best one? How do we know it’ll fit when we go for a hike? And if it does fit, how do we know another one won’t fit better?

Benjamin Scheibehenne, a research scientist at the University of Basel in Switzerland, suggests in the article that debilitation comes not only from too many choices, but also from a “lack of information or any prior understanding about the options.” Hmm. While we’re at it, how do we know it won’t shimmy on the highway?

You’ve given us thousands of Web fonts. Now give us useful information about the options. Help us understand them. Help us ascertain which ones will work best for us. Which ones will work for a particular project. Which ones hold up cross-browser. Which ones will integrate seamlessly in our workflow.

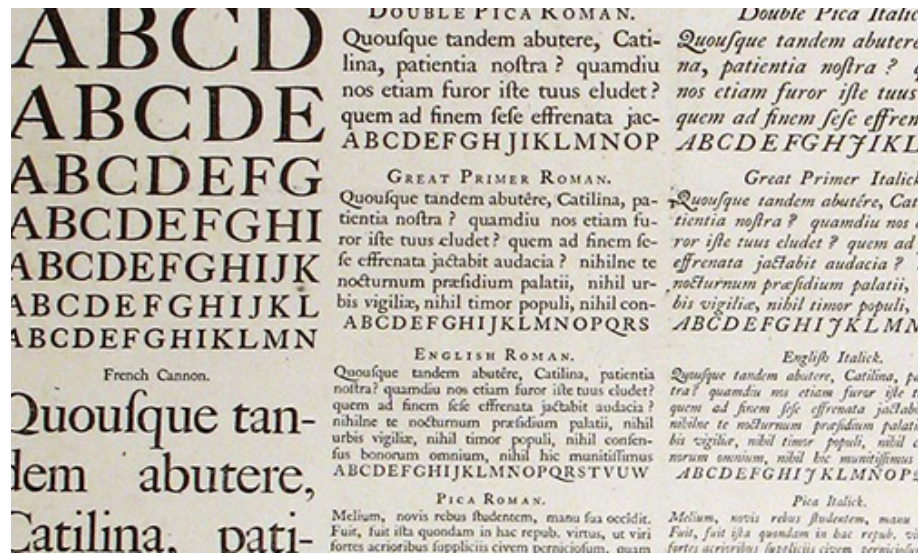
SHOW US YOUR WEB FONTS IN CONTEXT

Most of you show us how your fonts will *sort of* look in context. You give us just enough to see whether a font might be appropriate to use (“Hmm, this one is a slab serif, so it might work.”), and you help us to eliminate those that definitely won’t work (“Nope, I don’t want such a round-looking font.”). OK, that’s a start. But that’s not enough.

Take a page from history. Before type went digital, printers and type designers sold their typefaces to clients by showing how they looked in context. They’d provide broadsides or books, often setting each typeface in paragraphs at various sizes. They’d show available weights and styles of each family. And because the specimen sheets and books were

¹⁶⁴. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/27/your-money/27shortcuts.html>

printed, publishers and designers could see how the typefaces held up when the ink hit the paper.



A specimen sheet by William Caslon, 1728. The typeface is shown in paragraphs of various sizes in both roman and italic. A larger digital image¹⁶⁵ shows other fonts available in the family. If I were in the market for a typeface back in 1728, I'd know exactly what to expect from Caslon.

Not to name names, but Fontdeck¹⁶⁶, Fontspring¹⁶⁷, Font Squirrel¹⁶⁸ and MyFonts¹⁶⁹, you guys only offer the opportunity to test-drive Web fonts in a sentence. The problem with a sentence is that it doesn't show how the font looks in body copy. Body copy has visual texture, and texture can be pleasing (lively but not intrusive, promoting horizontal movement of the eye) or jarring (with uneven spaces or a strong vertical pull, hindering horizontal movement of the eye). Texture affects readability.

Texture also affects the look of a Web page, and Web designers need to know whether they are picking a font with the texture they need. A sentence doesn't help us to make a good choice. If you don't believe me, take a look at the images below. Two fonts that look really similar when set in a sentence look different when set in paragraphs of text.

¹⁶⁵. <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fe/Caslon-schriftmusterblatt.jpeg>

¹⁶⁶. <http://fontdeck.com/>

¹⁶⁷. <http://www.fontspring.com/>

¹⁶⁸. <http://www.fontsquirrel.com/>

¹⁶⁹. <http://www.myfonts.com/>

36 The five boxing wizards jump q
30 The five boxing wizards jump quickly.
24 The five boxing wizards jump quickly.
21 The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

36 The five boxing wizards jump q
30 The five boxing wizards jump quickly.
24 The five boxing wizards jump quickly.
21 The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Cascading sentences from Typekit. Top: Kepler Standard by Adobe. Bottom: Utopia Standard by Adobe. Both are serif fonts with a slightly oval bowl (look at the shape of the “o”) and a high contrast between thick and thin strokes. They look pretty similar to the casual eye. Heck, they even look pretty similar to the trained eye!

18 Is not the best kind of originality that which comes after
a sound apprenticeship? That which shall prove to be the
blending of a firm conception of, “useful precedent”...

16 Is not the best kind of originality that which comes after a sound
apprenticeship? That which shall prove to be the blending of a
firm conception of, “useful precedent” and the progressive...

18 Is not the best kind of originality that which comes
after a sound apprenticeship? That which shall prove to
be the blending of a firm conception of, “useful
precedent”...

16 Is not the best kind of originality that which comes after a
sound apprenticeship? That which shall prove to be the
blending of a firm conception of, “useful precedent” and the
progressive...

The same fonts set as text in paragraphs from Typekit. When shown in paragraph format, we can see the difference. Top: Kepler Standard by Adobe. Kepler has a rounder, “bubblier” feel and looks slightly smaller when set at body-copy sizes. Bottom: Utopia Standard by Adobe. Utopia feels more structured, less round. And, of course, it looks bigger when set at body-copy sizes. Neither of these fonts is “wrong” when set in text. But they look different in paragraphs, and each might be appropriate for different projects.

Now, for the rest of you, [Google Fonts](#)¹⁷⁰, [Fonts.com](#)¹⁷¹, [Webtype](#)¹⁷² and [Hoefler & Frere-Jones](#)¹⁷³, you show your fonts in paragraphs. Thank you. But just so you know, not all of the paragraphs are as helpful as they could be.

Grumpy wizards make toxic brew for the evil Queen and Jack. One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin. He lay on his armour-like back, and if he lifted his head a little he could see his brown belly, slightly domed and divided by arches into stiff sections.

Is not the best kind of originality that which comes after a sound apprenticeship? That which shall prove to be the blending of a firm conception of, “useful precedent” and the progressive...

Which font would you choose? How paragraphs are set makes a difference. Top: Google Fonts paragraphs have a tight line height. Open Sans looks clunky and hard to read, making it hard to tell whether the font would look good in body copy. Bottom: Open Sans on Typekit. A looser line height helps us to see that the same font is actually a pleasure to read.

Google Fonts, your text has too tight a line height, so your fonts all look clunky (see the image below). Fonts.com, you don’t offer enough text sizes; if a font looks too small at 14 pixels and too big at 18 pixels, we can’t tell what it would look like at 16 pixels (just so you know, 16 pixels is a really popular type size for Web text). Webtype, you use a string of capitalized words, so there are too many capital letters, and your fonts look clunky; if you want to show us what your fonts really look like, just use plain text. Hoefler & Frere-Jones, your paragraphs are limited

¹⁷⁰. <http://www.google.com/fonts/>

¹⁷¹. <http://www.fonts.com/>

¹⁷². <http://www.webtype.com/>

¹⁷³. <http://www.typography.com/>

to three lines, with a super-long 725-pixel line length; these paragraphs aren't delightful to read, and they undermine the quality of your fonts.

[Typekit](https://typekit.com/)¹⁷⁴ and [Typotheque](https://www.typotheque.com/)¹⁷⁵, of all the Web font services I've visited or used, you provide the best on-site examples of how your fonts look in body copy. You both provide multiple paragraphs at various sizes, with a good line length and a good line height. [WebINK](http://www.webink.com/)¹⁷⁶, your off-site solution is also pretty good. Using the [FontDropper 1000](http://www.webink.com/fontdropper)¹⁷⁷ bookmarklet, I can drop any of your fonts onto an existing Web page and see how it looks in context. One problem I noticed, though: Your bookmarklet doesn't drop in an entire font family, so we can't see a font's true bold and italic.

Which brings us to font families. I'm sure you've noticed that bold and italic versions of a font are sometimes too similar to the regular font, which undermines hierarchy. Other times, the bold is too heavy or the italic too squished, and one or both are hard to read. These are all reasons why we might not want to use a particular font. Plus, sometimes a bold or italic has letterforms that a client simply doesn't like.

So, to *really* see how a font works in context, we would need to see how the entire family of weights and styles works together. Unfortunately, none of you do this yet.

SHOW US WHAT YOUR FONTS LOOK LIKE ON OTHER SYSTEMS AND BROWSERS

I've been talking a lot about context. Context is not just a font's texture in a paragraph or how the font family works together. Context is also where a font "lives."

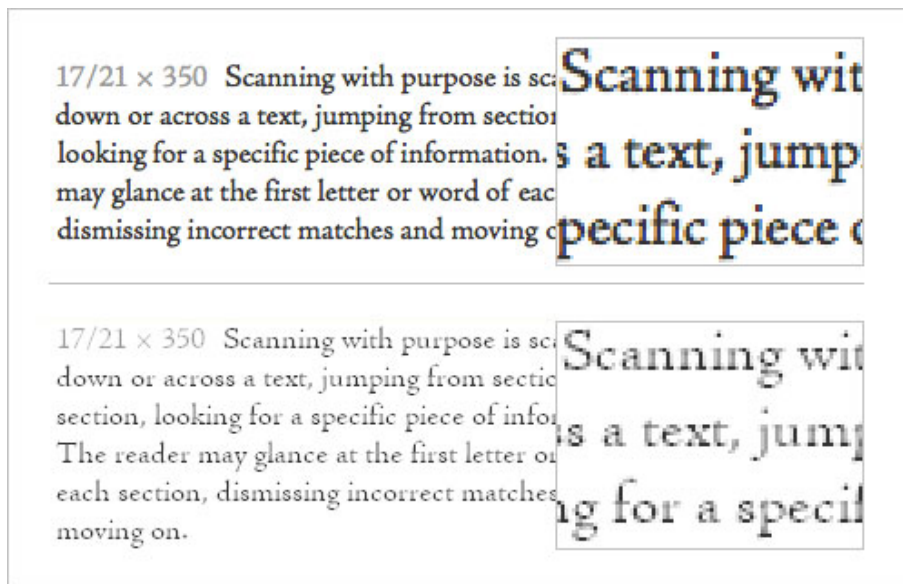
As Web designers, we know that our designs are ephemeral, constantly changing based on operating system, browser and screen size. For example, we know that fonts behave differently cross-browser — if they aren't hinted correctly, then letter shapes, strokes and letter spacing will change in unexpected ways.

¹⁷⁴. <https://typekit.com/>

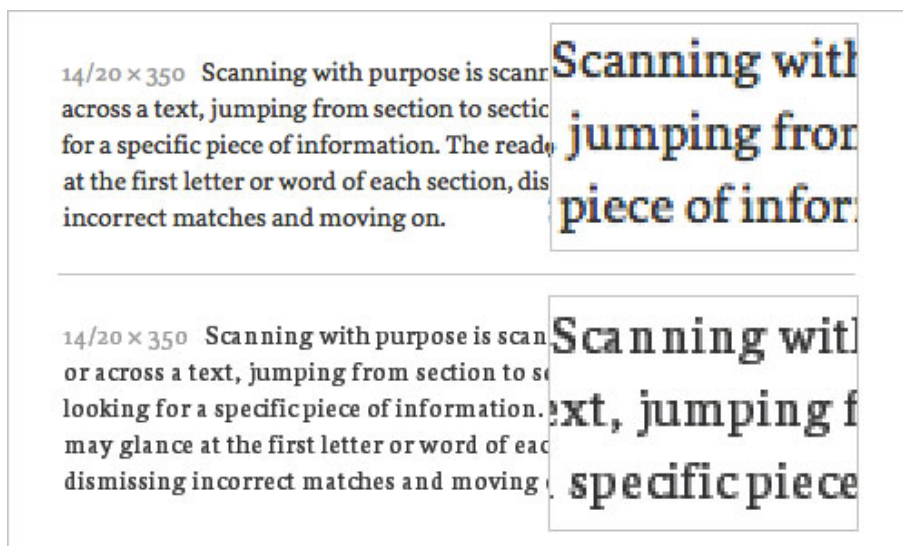
¹⁷⁵. <https://www.typotheque.com/>

¹⁷⁶. <http://www.webink.com/>

¹⁷⁷. <http://www.webink.com/fontdropper>



If fonts aren't hinted well, their strokes can change significantly from browser to browser. This font looked great on my Mac (top). When I tested it cross-browser, I ran into problems (bottom). The font is too light to read easily.



If fonts aren't hinted well, then spacing (both inside and between letters) can change significantly from browser to browser. This font looked great on my Mac (top). When I tested it cross-browser, I ran into problems (bottom). The font gets narrower, and the spacing between letters is erratic.

The only way to know whether a font will work cross-browser is to test it. And let me tell you, testing Web fonts is mind-numbing and time-consuming. (I once cleaned out my garage to avoid testing fonts for a project.)

Thank you Fonts.com, MyFonts and Typekit for providing screenshots of your fonts in different browsers. You present only cascading sentences, but even that helps. Much like Caslon's printed specimen

sheet showed what his typeface looked like in print, you three give Web designers a glimpse of what your fonts look like in use. You show us which fonts to reject and which to consider for further testing.

Hoefler & Frere-Jones, you claim that your new Cloud.typography service creates multiple font files (each hinted and built for a specific browser and platform) and supplies each browser with its unique font file. If this is true, then your fonts should look great across all browsers. If this is true, I might just have to bake you some cookies. But I sure wish you'd provide screenshots to back up your claims. Some things I need to see for myself.

LET US USE YOUR FONTS IN MOCK-UPS

Some Web designers comfortably go from a pencil-and-paper wire-frame to building a partial-website-as-mock-up. Others prefer (or are required) to include an intermediate step and mock up pages with a tool such as Photoshop, Illustrator or InDesign.

I know — now it's your turn to tell me to take a page from history.

Before type went digital, designers didn't mock up projects using real fonts. Clients certainly couldn't expect to see such a thing — comps were fine. But since the late 1980s, mock-ups have been expected to “look like the real thing.” And if we want (or need) to show a realistic mock-up to a client, we need access to the Web fonts.

Fonts.com, Font Squirrel, Google Fonts and WebINK, you all supplement Web fonts with free access to desktop (or “mock-up”) fonts for subscribers. Thank you.

Again, unfortunately, none of your solutions are perfect. Fonts.com, you allow access to mock-up fonts for only one day, to “kick off the design process.” I don't know how it works in your office, but I can't get anything done in one day. Font Squirrel and Google Fonts, you specialize in free fonts. While I (and my students) love having free fonts to use, access to good-quality body fonts is sort of limited. WebINK, your plugin for Photoshop is a great solution — unless a Web designer prefers to use Illustrator, InDesign or another tool.

Fontspring, MyFonts, Typotheque and Hoefler & Frere-Jones, I know you all offer bundles or discounts for purchasing both Web and desktop fonts, and bundling does take some of the pressure off a Web designer's wallet. But if you're a small company or an independent designer, like me, shelling out the extra money just to mock up an idea is hard.

The most promising approach for mock-up fonts might be just around the corner. Typekit, I know you're working with Adobe Creative Cloud to bring us desktop font sync¹⁷⁸. I've tested it out, and I'm happy to report that it works like a charm. (OK, my old Mac laptop runs more

like a tortoise than a hare when I'm running Creative Cloud — but, hey, I can turn it off when I'm not using it.)

I was cynical (who me?) about font synching actually working. I use CS6 out of the box and the free Creative Cloud membership level. But you promised me that it would work with a paid Typekit membership (which I have), and it did! The fonts even stay synced when I'm working offline. This has exciting possibilities.

In Conclusion

I know you guys are busy, so I'll wrap this up.

One more thing needs to happen before Web fonts can truly take Web design to the next level, and only you can do it. You need to meet the needs of the people who actually choose and use the Web fonts (ahem, Web designers).

Sure, we can all work around these issues. Personally, I've got a font specimen page that I use to test the fonts I'm interested in. After I narrow down the options, I can test fonts cross-browser myself. Hours later, if one of the fonts I like actually works, I can go straight to HTML and CSS from my pencil sketch and avoid the need for mock-up fonts.

But here's the question:

"Why should we have to work around these issues?"

(All Web designers who love to use new fonts, repeat after me, "Why should we have to work around these issues?")

If it's important that fonts load in every browser, why isn't it important to identify which fonts actually look good in every browser?

If it's important to woo font designers so that you have a lot of fonts to offer, why not show us how those fonts actually work in copy?

Look, Web fonts aren't just font files that need to be secure and easy to implement. They affect the overall look and usability of a website. They need to be chosen with care. And thanks for the thousands of fonts, but quantity is not as important as quality. A hundred knives that can't cut a tomato won't meet my needs when I'm making my kid a BLT.

So, make our lives a little easier. Make our work a little better. Help us find the Web fonts we want to use.

I dare say, you'll win some affection from every Web designer who has ever looked at the thousands of Web font options and said, "Oh shit. Which one should I use?"

178. <http://help.typekit.com/customer/portal/articles/1189216>

Sincerely yours,

A Type-Loving Web Designer

P.S. In case you're interested, I've summarized how you're all doing¹⁷⁹ (PDF) so far. Web designers who love to use new fonts, I hope you find it useful.

P.P.S. Below you'll find the official bibliography of the articles quoted above. Otherwise, my students would be very disappointed by my lack of scholarly detail.

- "CSS @ Ten: The Next Big Thing¹⁸⁰," Håkon Wium Lie, A List Apart
- "Serving and Protecting Fonts on the Web¹⁸¹," Typekit by Adobe
- "Too Many Choices: A Problem That Can Paralyze¹⁸²," Alina Tugend, The New York Times ♥

¹⁷⁹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/who_provides.pdf

¹⁸⁰. <http://alistapart.com/article/cssatten>

¹⁸¹. <http://blog.typekit.com/2009/07/21/serving-and-protecting-fonts-on-the-web/>

¹⁸². <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/27/your-money/27shortcuts.html>

Typographic Design Patterns And Current Practices (2013 Edition)

BY JAN CONSTANTIN 

Good typography has always been a defining aspect of effective Web design, and this holds true especially for websites in which the emphasis is on presenting a large amount of content — specifically, articles, news and stories. Whether for a magazine or international newspaper, the designer of any website that distributes a lot of content has always had to consider typographic details as seriously and thoroughly as a print designer would.

In 2009, we conducted a survey of then current typographic practices¹⁸³. Since then, responsive design techniques have clearly gained momentum and established their place in the landscape of CSS layout. With the advent of mobile, new modes of browsing websites and reading text have emerged.

Online publications have had to reevaluate how their content is presented on mobile devices. Web typography is as rich, versatile and accessible as ever before. Yet new opportunities introduce new complexity; and with new implementation challenges, we are all spurred to reconsider our practices.

Now, three years later, we've reviewed the original study and explored how Web typography has changed over these years. We spent countless hours collecting new data and exploring common developments and trends in Web typography.

HOW DID WE CONDUCT THE STUDY?

We have compiled relevant data from over 50 well-respected websites to address these questions. For this study, we selected a wide variety of international newspapers, magazines and blogs, all of whose typographic choices should have been carefully and thoroughly weighed. We chose publications and organizations that have a very large readership (such as The Boston Globe and The Financial Times) as well as spe-

¹⁸³. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/08/20/typographic-design-survey-best-practices-from-the-best-blogs/>

cialized magazines with smaller yet often more demanding readerships (such as A List Apart and UX Booth).

These websites focus primarily on text-based content rather than on generic environments such as Instapaper¹⁸⁴ and Readability¹⁸⁵. As such, they need to be highly legible in order to ensure that users continue visiting and reading on their websites. Because readability of content is (or rather should be) the main design goal of these publications, the techniques they follow could be considered good practices. However, the results presented in this study should be taken with a grain of salt.

ISSUES WE WERE INTERESTED IN

The questions asked in our first study nearly four years ago remain relevant but need to be complemented by questions about the challenges of mobile devices. How widely has responsive design been adopted by publications, if at all? Has there been any change in the typographic choices of big and small publications? How many weights of a large font family should we deliver to mobile devices? How large should the font size of body copy be? How should the font size change on a responsive website? Optimizing readability could require changing the font's style, size and spacing according to the viewport's width *and* height.

Note: For the sake of continuity, we have stayed close to the format of the original study from 2009. This chapter is meant to update the data, and hopefully detect new trends and reach new conclusions.

Typography In Online Publications

After carefully analyzing the style sheets in the publications in this study, we compiled a comprehensive spreadsheet of typographic points and collected the relevant data. You can view a spreadsheet of the raw data¹⁸⁶, which contains more data than was pertinent to this chapter.

Not limiting ourselves to the questions in the original study, we will broach issues that have arisen since then as a result of responsive design techniques, and we'll examine whether such techniques are being applied at all. This led us to the following questions:

1. How popular are serif and sans-serif typefaces in body copy and headlines?

¹⁸⁴. <http://www.instapaper.com/>

¹⁸⁵. <http://www.readability.com/>

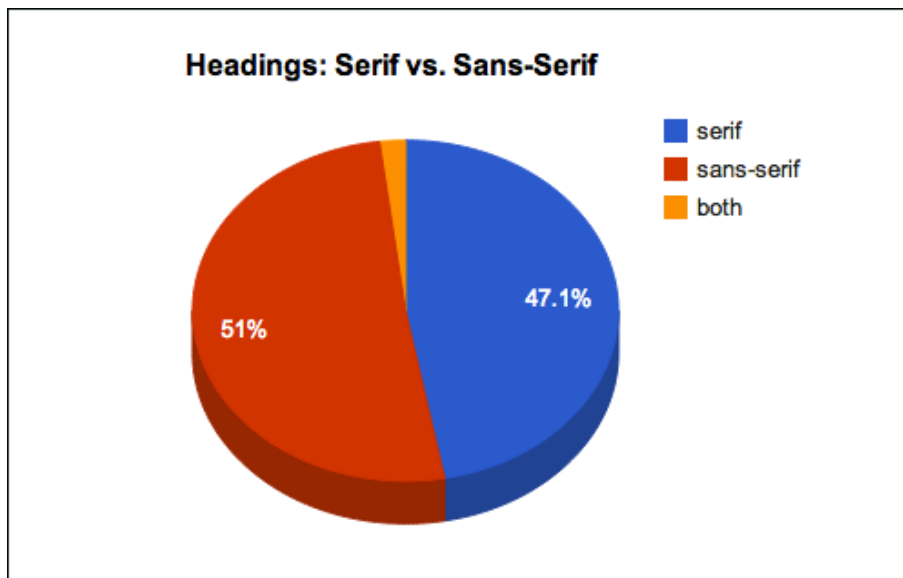
¹⁸⁶. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/ccc?key=oAtqua-tBbLCAdHVstG1i-azU4aXZWS1j6OE5hYUJvNEE>

2. Which fonts are used most frequently?
3. What is the average font size (on narrow, mid-sized and large screens)?
4. What is the average ratio of the font sizes of headlines to the font sizes of body copy?
5. What is the average line height of body copy?
6. What is the average ratio of line height to font size in body copy?
7. What is the average ratio of line height to line length in body copy?
8. What is the average amount of space between paragraphs?
9. What is the average ratio of paragraph spacing to line height in body copy?
10. How are links styled?
11. How many characters per line are common in body copy?
12. How often are links underlined?
13. How often are font fallbacks used?
14. How often are responsive design techniques implemented?
15. Which ratios of display sizes are discernible?
16. How do websites deal with the performance of Web fonts?

To answer these questions, we collected more than 40 data points, all of which can be found in the aforementioned spreadsheet. We can extract several rules of thumb from this data. We wouldn't recommend acting on the data from this study blindly; the statistical data, however, will no doubt yield useful insights.

Popular Serif And Sans-Serif Fonts

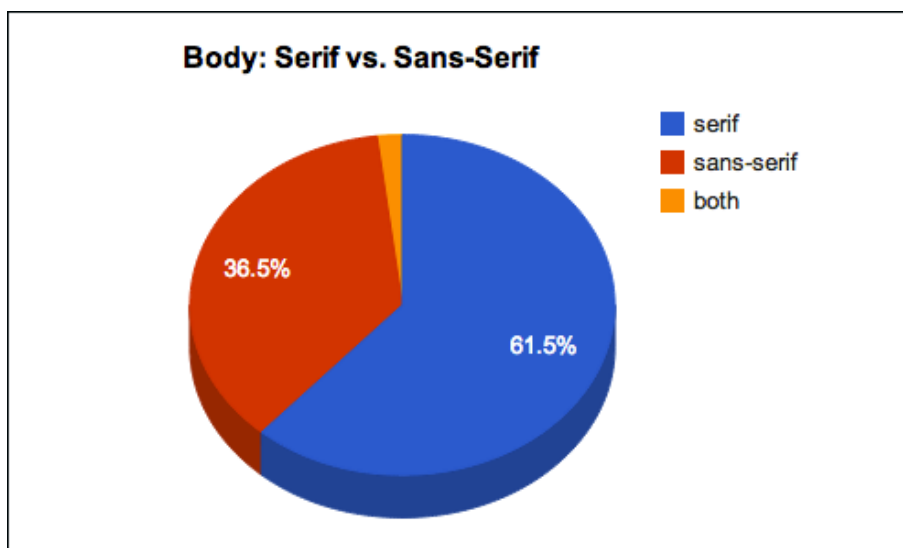
"Which typeface to use?" Obviously, this is one of the most important questions a designer has to answer when considering Web typography. The typeface will set the tone for the entire website, and a poor choice could send the wrong message or thwart the intended atmosphere. The argument for either serif or sans-serif hasn't been won yet. Interestingly, looking back to the results of the 2009 study, sans-serif typefaces seemed to be more popular in body copy and headlines. The last four years have seen a tiny shift away from that.



Serif and sans-serif are almost equally popular in headlines.

The motivations of designers likely haven't changed much. Serif fonts apparently stand out in headlines, but arguments have been made for serifs' ability to guide the reader and for its readable structure in body copy as well. Still, contrasting a serif body with a sans-serif headline or vice versa can improve the overall visual appeal and readability of a website.

The data suggests that serifs have gained in popularity in recent years, leading almost to a reversal in common usage in the last four years, at least where body copy is concerned.

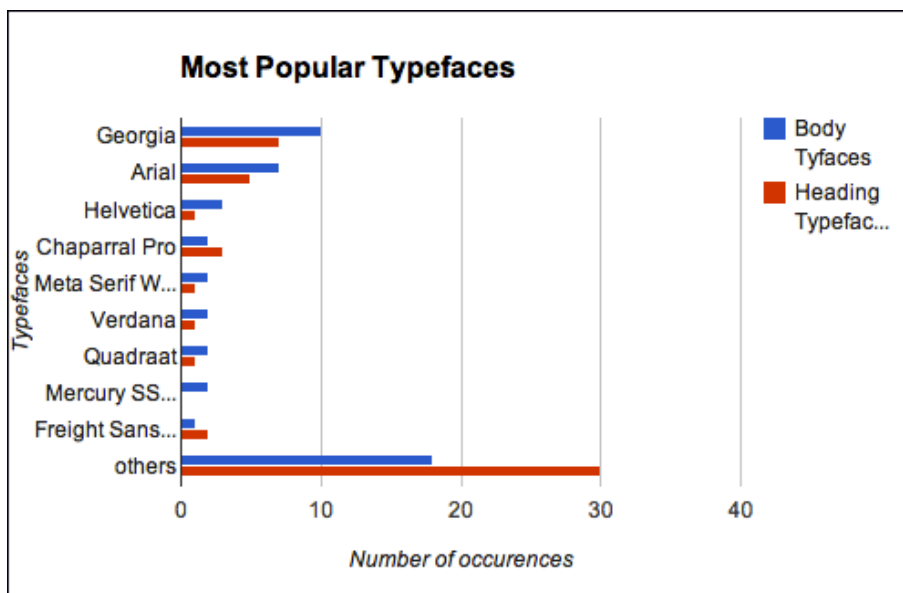


Serifs have strongly gained in popularity in body copy.

- Half of the websites analyzed use serifs in their headlines, the other half sans-serifs. The two most popular typefaces are Georgia — used on

such websites as The Guardian¹⁸⁷ and the Financial Times¹⁸⁸ – and Arial – found on Zeit.de¹⁸⁹ and the BBC¹⁹⁰'s website.

- Only 37% use a sans-serif typeface for body copy.
- The most popular serif typefaces for headlines are Georgia (14%) and Chaparral Pro (6%).
- The most popular serif typefaces for body copy are Georgia (20%) and Chaparral Pro (4%).
- The most popular sans-serif typefaces for headlines are Arial (10%) and Freight Sans Pro (4%).
- The most popular sans-serif typefaces for body copy are Arial (14%) and Helvetica (6%).
- However, 66% of headline typefaces and 39% of body copy typefaces are found in only one instance.



A majority of websites use non-standard fonts as their primary typeface.

So, in summary we can state that nearly two thirds of the websites analyzed use serifs for body copy, and Georgia and Arial are still the most common primary typefaces. However, our most surprising find is that a majority of websites use non-standard fonts as their primary typeface – 39% of body copy and 66% of headlines. This development is truly

¹⁸⁷. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

¹⁸⁸. <http://www.ft.com/home/uk>

¹⁸⁹. <http://www.zeit.de/>

¹⁹⁰. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

interesting, because it shows that typography has become an important element in establishing brand identity and character. These numbers indicate growing typographic diversity on the Web – which we should probably expect anyway.

The growth of “bulletproof” font-delivery services such as Typekit and Fontdeck likely explains the increasing variety of primary typefaces. Fallback typefaces are predominantly standard core Web fonts. Times, Times New Roman, Georgia, Helvetica and Arial are most often used in CSS font stacks. Mobile platform fonts such as Droid Sans, Palatino and Cambria are almost never used.

Ironically, a consequence of the resurgence in serif typefaces is that Times and Times New Roman, which had almost been written off as too old-fashioned in the last study, have made kind of a comeback as the two most popular fallbacks. Roughly 11% of headline and body copy fallbacks have Times, and another 11% have Times New Roman.

There is much literature on typography in Web design, most of which discusses the applications of serif or sans-serif typefaces. Increasingly, the argument for better readability combined with artistic value supports a judicious use of both styles. Douglas Bonneville discusses the benefits and best practices of combining serifs and sans-serifs¹⁹¹, and Simon Pascal Klein discusses the intricacies of font families and makes further typographic considerations in his article “Achieving Good Legibility and Readability on the Web¹⁹².”

ABOUT SARAH

Sarah Parmenter is a web designer, speaker, and founder of [You Know Who](#), a small design studio that specializes in User Interface Design for the Web, iPhone, and iPad. She began dabbling in the web at age 14 and decided to pursue web design full-time at the age of 19. Sarah considers herself lucky to have worked with great colleagues and peers over the years and even luckier to call some of them great friends. She regularly makes contributions to design related websites, has written features for various magazines, and speaks at web design conferences around the world. Sarah makes her home in Essex, about 40 minutes outside London, with her husband and little dog, Alfie.

[sazzy.co.uk](#)
[youknowwhodesigns.com](#)
[@sazzy](#)

Interview date: December 1, 2012

SPONSORED BY

INTRODUCTION


As 2012 comes to a close, we're honored to round out the year with Sarah's interview. After our conversation with her, it's easy to see why she is so well-loved and respected by her colleagues and peers. Smart, charming, and ever so candid, Sarah told us about her path to becoming a designer, the folks who have encouraged her along the way, and what she's learned through challenges in work and life. After an especially difficult year, Sarah recalled how much the web community has embraced her, what that has meant to her, and how, in return, she hopes to give back as much as she has received. For those of us working in the web community, it's true—we really are lucky to be surrounded by such amazing human beings, including you, Sarah.

Describe your path to becoming a designer.

It's actually a funny one. My mom and dad said that from the time I was aware of my surroundings, one of the only things that made me happy was sitting down and drawing on paper with pens and crayons. I mostly drew on the old-fashioned paper with perforated edges—my dad bought me so many boxes of that paper.

As far as what I do now, it all came from having that inner creativity, which sounds a bit cliché in some ways. People say you're born that way or you're not and I think I was because at three or four years old, I don't think I made a conscious decision about what made me happy. My path stemmed from loving to draw and it was a natural progression from there. It also helped that we had a computer at home. We had one

“...from the time I was aware of my surroundings, one of the only things that made me happy was sitting down and drawing...”



From her writing days, a photo of Sarah performing

The Great Discontent¹⁹³ combines both the Stratum and Meta Serif Web Pro fonts to generate a dynamic yet respectable feel.

191. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/11/04/best-practices-of-combining-typefaces/>

192. <http://klepas.org/achieving-good-legibility-and-readability-on-the-web/>

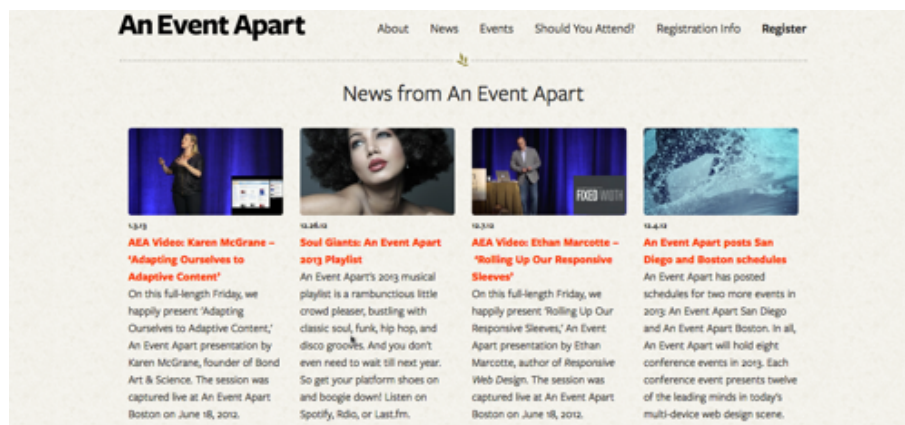
193. <http://thegreatdiscontent.com/sarah-parmenter>

Compared to the previous study's results, Verdana and Lucida Grande are the big losers. Verdana is used only twice as a primary font, and neither is used more than once as a fallback font. Chaparral Pro and Helvetica have risen in prominence. The increasing diversity and individuality in design is due to both the increased use of font foundries and the wider range of Web fonts.

One discovery of the previous study, that “alternative” fonts are more common among headline typefaces, is still proving accurate. No doubt, the general belief that experimentation is best applied to small details still stands. The look and feel of a page can be adjusted just enough by changes to the font family of headings, rather than by drastic changes to body copy. However, the overall use of alternative fonts for body copy has increased dramatically, creating a much richer and more diverse typographic landscape on the Web.

Light Or Dark Background?

The previous study concluded that a large majority of websites favored dark on light color schemes. Not much has changed, although the websites surveyed this time are more varied in their light background tones.



An Event Apart¹⁹⁴ demonstrates the readability of a subdued color scheme.

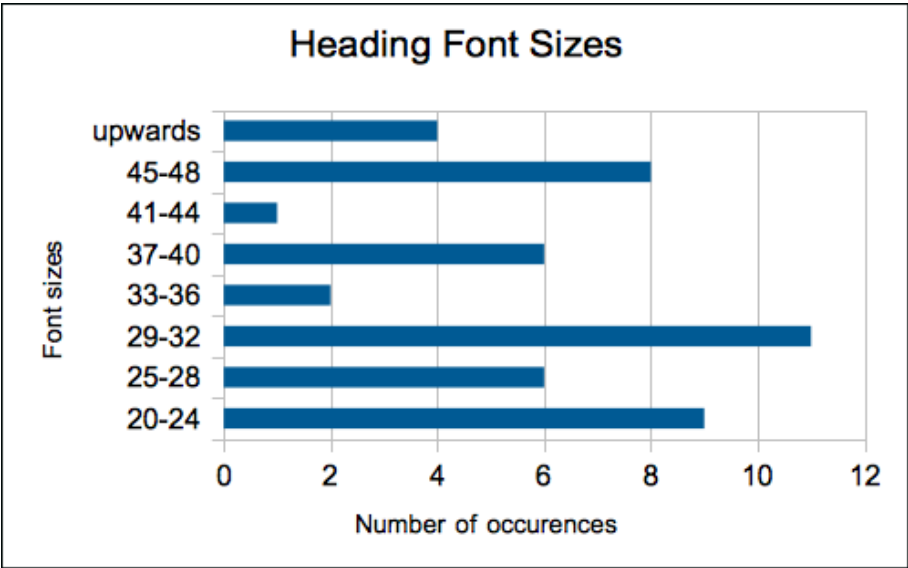
Several websites have a less aggressive contrast of an off-white or even beige background with dark-gray text. The off-white is often chosen to lower contrast. The designers in this case have clearly opted for a comfortable, lengthy reading experience.

¹⁹⁴. <http://aneventapart.com/news/post/aea-2012-relaunch>

Black text on a white background is a common pattern for body copy. The contrast is easy on the eyes and is, at least among these websites, the status quo.

Average Font Size For Headlines

Generally, the font size of headlines is chosen according to the typeface of the body copy. Still, it's interesting to see what common ranges designers prefer for body copy and headlines. In this study, the headlines for large display sizes average at roughly 38 pixels. Of course, we made sure that the text always displayed at the actual size, without any zoom.



The most popular sizes range from 20 to 32 pixels.

You can easily notice the increase in font size since the last study. Not only did the average increase by more than 10 pixels (!), but the range of headline sizes starts further up, at 20 pixels, and tops out at an impressive 212 pixels in the case of The Great Discontent¹⁹⁵. This publication is an exception, with its magazine-like headlines and smaller font sizes for headings.

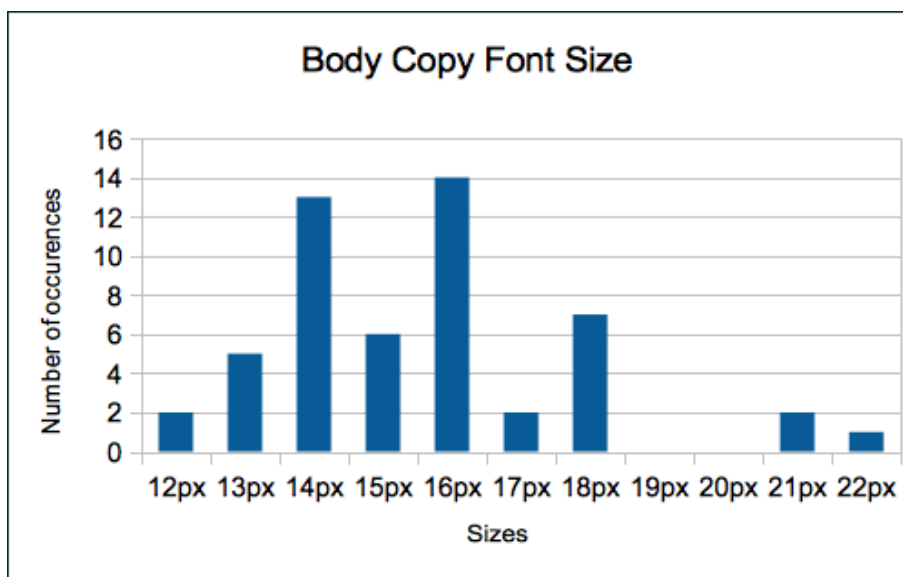
¹⁹⁵. <http://thegreatdiscontent.com/ike-eedeani>



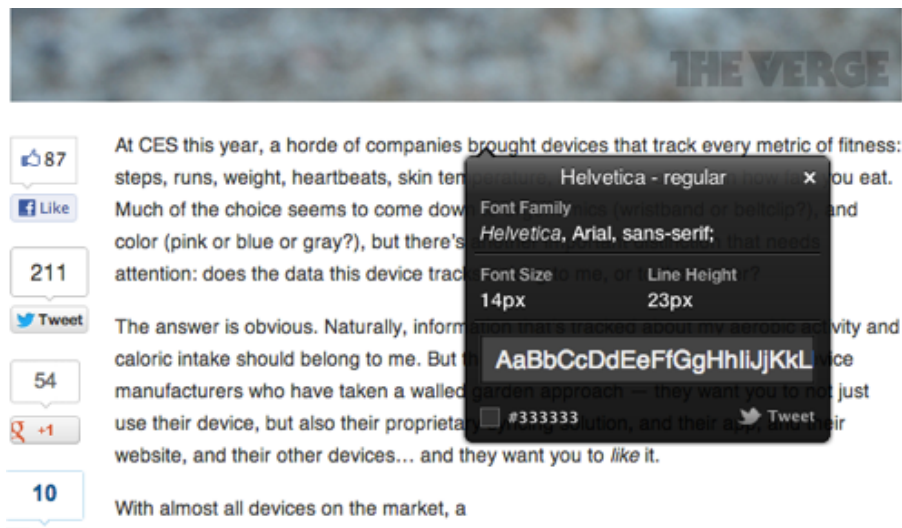
We're going further up. *The Great Discontent*¹⁹⁶ shows an impressive 212 pixels font size.

Average Font Size For Body Copy

With readability as the determining criterion, the average pixel size of body copy has increased in four years as well. Back then, most of the websites were between 12 and 14 pixels in font size. Now, 14 pixels is as popular as 16 pixels; each is used on 13 websites.



¹⁹⁶. <http://thegreatdiscontent.com/ike-edeani>



14 pixels is also *The Verge's*¹⁹⁷ font size. While some websites offset the first paragraph of an article with a larger font size, many, like *The Verge*, follow a uniform size.

Ratio Of Headline to Body Font Size

We've updated our rule of thumb based on the current average ratio between headline and body font size. Don't follow this rule blindly; rather, just keep it in mind as you make decisions in your projects.

HEADLINE ÷ BODY COPY = 2.5

According to our study, on average, the ratio between the headline and the body copy is around 2.5. The traditional scale (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 21, 24, 36, 48, 60, 72) and the Fibonacci sequence (16, 24, 40, 64, 104) are still relevant, of course, and represent a more naturalistic approach. The golden ratio (1.618) might also yield an organic effect, too.

Optimal Line Height For Body Copy

Leading (or **line-height** in CSS) will always depend on your font size and measure (or line length). But in general, the longer the measure, the longer the leading should be. Therefore, presenting a chart of the most popular leading values in pixel units wouldn't make sense here. More appropriate for you would be to use a relative unit, such as an em or percentage value, that determines the ratio between leading and measure and between leading and font size.

This latest study reveals the following:

¹⁹⁷. <http://www.theverge.com/>

- **line height (pixels) ÷ body copy font size (pixels) = 1.46**

Classic typography books recommend 1.5, a value backed up by this and our last study. Very few websites use anything less than that. The number of websites that go above 1.48 decreases as you get further from this value.

- **line length (pixels) ÷ line height (pixels) = 24.9**

The average line length (570 pixels, excluding margins and padding) has grown comparatively less than font size and line height have since 2009 (the latter averaging 22.9 pixels). The average line lengthened by approximately 5% (from 538,64 pixels in 2009), while the average line height has increased from 12 pixels in 2009 to 13 pixels in 2013.

- **space between paragraphs (pixels) ÷ line height (pixels) = 1.39**

In the first study, it turned out that paragraph spacing (i.e. the space between the last line of one paragraph and the first line of the next) rarely equaled the leading (which would be the main characteristic of a perfect vertical rhythm). According to our results, paragraph spacing is around $1.39 \times$ the paragraph leading. Paragraphs are more clearly delineated with this increased ratio, thus increasing readability.

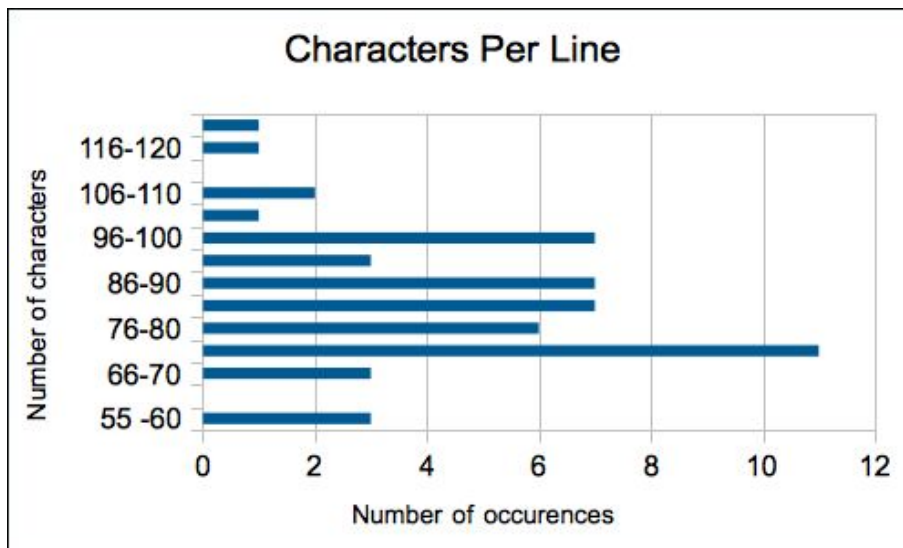
Multiplying the value of your body's font size by 1.46 would give you the optimal line height, which you could then adapt to your font style. Multiplying this new value by 24.9 should give you the optimal line length. Note that the layout would also need gutters, margins and padding to let the body copy breathe.

Characters Per Line

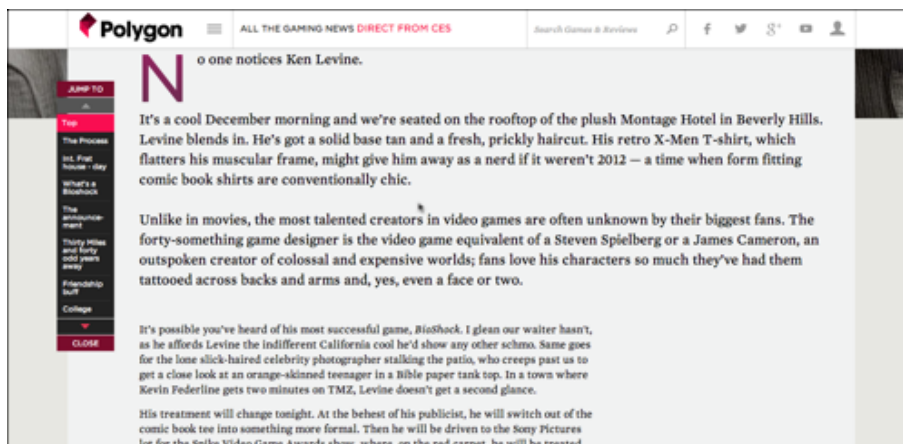
As explained by Robert Bringhurst, the classic rules of Web typography dictate that the optimal number of characters per line is 55 to 75. Our data shows that at their actual size (i.e. with no zoom and at the default font size), most websites average 83.9 characters per line at a widescreen resolution (in our case, a browser width of 1100 pixels).

While this average fluctuates quite significantly when the browser is at various other widths – between 83 and 86 characters per line at display widths of 700, 950 and 1600 pixels – only in smaller views of 500 pixels this average comes close to the classic rule. At that width, the average lies around 77 characters per line.

This is most likely the result of an attempt among designers to balance the font size with the amount of text displayed on narrow screens. With more characters displayed per line, the font size would have to become small, making the reading experience a bit more difficult on the eyes.



The highest number is, of course, much higher, but in general most designers stay in the range of 75 to 90 characters. In the most extreme cases, [SB Nation](http://www.sbnation.com/)¹⁹⁸ has 55 characters per line, and [Polygon](http://www.polygon.com/)¹⁹⁹ averages 118 for the introductory paragraph. A more exact average could be derived by averaging several lines. But such an in-depth analysis probably would not vary greatly from the average that we calculated here. Still, the discrepancy between the number of characters at different widths is peculiar.



[Polygon](http://www.polygon.com/)²⁰⁰ displays more characters per line in the introductory paragraph than in the rest of the article. However, the font size of that paragraph is larger as well.

¹⁹⁸. <http://www.sbnation.com/>

¹⁹⁹. <http://www.polygon.com/>

²⁰⁰. <http://www.polygon.com/>

Web Typography And Responsive Design

A burning issue we wanted to explore was the impact of responsive design in Web typography today. The results were surprising: 22 out of 52 (i.e. 42%) of the websites we analyzed show (minor or major) changes when the browser size changes. Considering that responsive design has been around for two years, that number is quite impressive. We calculated the number of characters per line, the body font size and the headline font size at five browser widths (and experimented with the height as well): 500, 700, 950, 1100 and 1600 pixels. The font sizes for those three metrics do not differ greatly across the screen sizes – except at the 500-pixel view.

Unexpected, though, were the visual changes that occurred as we resized the browser. Changes in layout, image scaling, content and font size were evident to varying degrees on 22 websites. The changes are as minimal as images being scaled down to suit the display width. In some cases, however, the websites display other minor and expected changes. At the 500-pixel view, for example, the menu is often replaced by an icon; design components are moved from a multi-column layout to a single column; and both images and fonts are scaled.

No sign of responsive design was evident on 30 websites, including major publications such as *The Financial Times*²⁰¹ and *The Economist*²⁰². At least some, if not all, of these websites seem to opt for a separate mobile website or application. The Financial Times immediately invites mobile visitors to use its FT app. At the moment, large online publications seem to prefer to invest in an app than in responsive design. If this trend continues, then the question becomes, how much will users be annoyed by being prompted to download an app for every single publication they're interested in.

Despite this, we were happy to find that the layouts of the large majority of websites do not break when being zoomed in.

SOME NUMBERS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESPONSIVE DESIGN

42% of websites implement responsive design changes, including for layout, image scale, content and font size.

At a display width of 500 pixels:

- Average line height: 28 pixels

^{201.} <http://www.ft.com/home/uk>

^{202.} <http://www.economist.com/>

- Average font size of body: 15 pixels
- Average number of characters per line: 77

At a display width of 700 pixels:

- Average font size of headlines: 36 pixels
- Average font size of body: 15.6 pixels
- Average number of characters per line: 82.7

At a display width of 950 pixels:

- Average font size of headlines: 37.9 pixels
- Average font size of body: 16.1 pixels
- Average number of characters per line: 84.8

At a display width of 1600 pixels:

- Average font size of headlines: 40.7 pixels
- Average font size of body: 16.2 pixels
- Average number of characters per line: 86.8

These averages might be somewhat skewed because of the mixture of responsive and non-responsive websites. But they show how little the body font size and characters per line change over varying widths. The only exception is the 500-pixel width, which have a lower number of characters per line.

Performance Considerations

While embedded fonts are slowly becoming a de facto standard in Web design, they also introduce overhead in performance because, well, they have to be loaded. Chris Coyier recently discussed the idea of loading Web fonts only on large screens²⁰³ to avoid the performance hit. You could also load Web fonts into AppCache or LocalStorage first and show them on subsequent page loads.

Moreover, you could use Google's WebFont Loader²⁰⁴ to ensure that the content is displayed in fallback fonts even before the Web fonts

²⁰³. <http://css-tricks.com/preventing-the-performance-hit-from-custom-fonts/>

²⁰⁴. https://developers.google.com/fonts/docs/webfont_loader

have loaded, and then switch to the Web fonts once they have completely loaded.

Our study shows that Web fonts are indeed a heavy bottleneck in performance, with 5.7 font files being loaded on average, totalling an average of 133.5 KB of extra bandwidth. In cases such as a page being loaded on a slow mobile connection, the user would initially see no text other than the underlining of links (apparently due to the use of the `border-bottom` property). Only once the fonts have loaded would the text be visible — and even then, elements would appear one by one (headings, then subheadings, then body copy). We can avoid this sub-optimal experience by properly adjusting the CSS font stack, as Richard Rutter explains in his talk “Responsive Web Fonts²⁰⁵” (slidedeck).

Other Findings

- 45% of websites underline the links in body copy. The others do so only on hover or not at all.
- 71% of websites highlight links with color. The rest do not or only on hover.
- 99% of websites left-align text.
- No website uses hyphenation.
- 84% of websites use the same fonts in the print and standard style sheets.
- The loading weight of home pages averages around 1.346 MB. Article pages are marginally less, at around 1.146 MB.
- The websites average 119 HTTP requests!

Conclusion

This study has revealed a set of common practices in Web typography. These results should not be interpreted as law. They should not be interpreted as “best” practices; rather, just as rough guidelines that we encountered in current Web design.

For example, the performance hit introduced by Web fonts and the (huge) number of HTTP requests should be reduced as far as it’s possible, while the content-out approach in responsive design would dictate

²⁰⁵. <http://webtypography.net/talks/rdo13/>

how the font size would need to adjust depending on the settings in which it's used. These findings are no doubt just a snapshot of current trends and may very well be outdated in a year's time.

- Serif fonts are more popular than sans-serifs for both headlines and body copy. There is, however, a trend to mix sans-serifs and serifs to contrasting effect.
- The most common fonts for headlines are Georgia, Arial and Chaparral Pro. But the majority of websites are individualized and use less common fonts.
- The most common fonts for body copy are Georgia, Arial and Helvetica. But, again, the majority of websites are individualized and use less common fonts.
- The most popular font size for headlines is between 29 and 32 pixels.
- The most popular font size for body copy is between 14 and 16 pixels.
- $\text{headline font size} \div \text{body copy font size} = 2.4$
- $\text{line height (pixels)} \div \text{body copy font size (pixels)} = 1.47$
- $\text{line length (pixels)} \div \text{line height (pixels)} = 24.8$
- $\text{space between paragraphs (pixels)} \div \text{line height (pixels)} = 1.43$
- The optimal number of characters per line is between 55 and 75, but 75 to 90 is more popular.
- Body text is left-aligned. Hyphenation is not used at line endings. And links are underlined and/or highlighted with bold or color, sometimes only on hover.
- Mobile devices are mostly adapted to via responsive design, although some publications opt for a dedicated app.

The decision of whether to modify any typographic element always lies with the designer. Most of the results shown in these websites are likely the outcome of much trial and error. When designing a new website, you might want to stay close to these parameters, but with adjustments to suit your layout. Feel free to review the study's [spreadsheet](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0Atqua-tBbLCAdHVstG1i-azU4aXZWS1j6OE5hYUJvNEE)²⁰⁶ for the raw data. 🐼

²⁰⁶. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0Atqua-tBbLCAdHVstG1i-azU4aXZWS1j6OE5hYUJvNEE>

Creating Exciting And Unusual Visual Hierarchies

BY JESSICA GLASER & CAROLYN KNIGHT 🍷

Layout, for both print and screen, is one of the most important aspects of graphic design. Designs that extend across multiple pages or screens, whether containing large or small amounts of type, must be carefully controlled in a way that is enticing and is easy for all to access. Careful control of visual hierarchy is a key aspect of the design decisions we have to consider.

In this chapter, we will look at how frequently type needs to be broken down into different levels, such as topic, importance and tone of voice. We will explore how this can be achieved visually by relying on several things: texture and tone, seeing the designer as reader, combining typefaces, using color, employing multiple types and, of course, using the grid. Seeing the complexities that can be expressed through typography is fascinating – not to say that images cannot help to order content, but simply that the most significant elements are expressed typographically.

The Designer As Reader

Letterforms make words, and words have meaning. While scale, tone, texture and composition will always be relevant, people's recognition of the meanings of actual words has to be considered when designing with type. Reading through and trying to understand the copy used in a project is vital to deciding the order and relative importance of information. It is also valuable for the designer to identify highly topical subject matter, words and letters that make intriguing connections, challenging language and even shocking statements that are likely to attract attention.

In order to improve the target audience's understanding of the design and facilitate their interaction with it, the designer needs to step into their shoes and interpret the hierarchy that they're given, perhaps augmenting it or suggesting alternatives.



Rebecca Foster's²⁰⁷ poster for the Young Vic theatre in the UK demonstrates a dramatic use of language, with a clever double meaning.



²⁰⁷ <http://www.rebeccafosterdesign.co.uk/105026/843773/work/young-vic-3>



The Anthony Nolan Trust²⁰⁸ was set up in the UK in the 1970s to find bone marrow matches to help in the fight against leukemia. This poster and Web page, designed by Johnson Banks, reflect these matches by connecting the same letter in two different words.

Being able to interpret the connotations of different typefaces is valuable. For example, large, bold full-caps sans-serif typefaces are highly visible, but they are frequently used to warn of danger, and they dramatically increase the significance of certain words within the overall design.

²⁰⁸ <http://johnsonbanks.co.uk/identity-and-branding/charity/anthony-nolan/>

More decorative typefaces can be attractive but might be more difficult to read, causing the reader to move on to simpler letterforms and words in the layout. Choosing typeface will inevitably affect the visual hierarchy but not necessarily in a straightforward way; all of the visual implications of a typeface need to be considered.



Little Miracles²⁰⁹ has an unusual design, featuring a strong, condensed sans-serif typeface, which is not often used to convey the delicate flavors and health-giving properties of an organic energy drink.

Another example: In Alison Carmichael's design²¹⁰, the beautiful large white script set against pink is a deliberate challenge to read, causing you to quickly move on to the amusing crux of the message, typeset in a condensed, bold sans serif.

Texture And Tone

Hierarchy based on type is usually shaped by relationships of visual texture and tone; that is, letterforms, words and lines of type come together to form different tonal values and varying characteristics of patterns or texture. Depending on these tonal values and the scale and texture, the viewer will be attracted to a greater or lesser degree. Typeface, point size, tint, weight, letter spacing, line spacing and general spatial distribution are also important because they affect the density of type and, therefore, the lightness and darkness and the texture and tone.

²⁰⁹. <http://drinklittlemiracles.com/>

²¹⁰. <http://alisoncarmichael.com/ct/>

These combinations similarly affect the kind of “pattern” or texture that is created. Logical, perhaps even mathematical, enlargements and reductions are a good place to start, but ultimately, as is so frequently the case when designing with type, visual judgment often brings the best results.

FRANKENSTEIN A WORLD PREMIERE FROM
NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE

*“I followed nature into her lair, and stripped
her of her secrets! I brought torrents of light to
a darkening world! Is that wrong?”*

*Slowly I learnt the ways of humans: how
to ruin, how to hate, how to debase, how
to humiliate.*

AND AT THE FEET OF MY MASTER I LEARNT
THE HIGHEST OF HUMAN SKILLS, THE SKILL
NO OTHER CREATURE OWNS: I FINALLY
LEARNT HOW TO LIE.

17 March: Benedict Cumberbatch
(Creature), Jonny Lee Miller (Victor)
24 March: Jonny Lee Miller (Creature),
Benedict Cumberbatch (Victor)

Childlike in his innocence but grotesque in form,
Frankenstein’s bewildered creature is cast out into a
hostile universe by his horror-struck maker. Meeting with
cruelty wherever he goes, the friendless Creature,
increasingly desperate and vengeful, determines to track
down his creator and strike a terrifying deal.

“All I ask is the possibility of love!”

Urgent concerns of scientific responsibility, parental
neglect, cognitive development and the nature of good
and evil are embedded within this thrilling and deeply
disturbing classic gothic tale.

Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein is adapted for the stage by
Nick Dear and realised by Danny Boyle in his return to
the theatre after winning the Academy Award for best
director for Slumdog Millionaire.

For the first time ever, National Theatre Live will
broadcast two separate performances of a production.
*Throughout the run of Frankenstein at the National
Theatre, Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller are
alternating the roles of Victor Frankenstein and the
Creature. Audiences in cinemas will have the chance to
see both combinations, with two broadcasts a week
apart.

A NEW PLAY BY NICK DEAR BASED ON THE
NOVEL BY MARY SHELLEY

Texture and tone control the order in which the user reads the text. Although the main quote and the text in the gray box are not at the top of the page, they will be seen first, and consumption of the remaining type will be governed by nuances of tone, texture and positioning. Larger view²¹¹. (Design: Bright Pink)

Position and orientation in a layout can have far less of an impact than depth of tone or typographic texture. A piece of type can be arresting wherever it is positioned, providing it has sufficient visual strength. If the information that follows is given lower tonal values, then a visual hierarchy will have been established, regardless of positioning.

We cannot ignore the Western convention of reading from left to right and top to bottom and, in particular, the Western viewer’s instinctive response to return to the left edge; these can be extremely valuable tendencies. However, carefully selected textures and tones should be the overriding influences on hierarchy.

Of course, all typographic textures and tones are relative to each other and to other elements on the page. Some of the most powerful uses of layout stem from choices of scale and composition. A lot of surrounding space can really make type stand out.

²¹¹. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/texture-and-tone-control-1000.jpg>



Above are three treatments of two words, “sports” and “badminton.” (Images: Bright Pink).

In the first image, despite “sports” being set in large black condensed all caps, “badminton” is prominent because it is surrounded by white

space. The second image continues the same principles, but by making “badminton” white and setting it against a black bar, it becomes even more noticeable. However, by adding emphasis to “badminton,” a little confusion could be created. Where is the reader drawn first? Keeping the intended hierarchy clear is vital. In the third image, the drawing almost swallow up “sport,” leaving it hardly visible and giving “badminton” clear prominence.

Combining Typefaces To Create Hierarchy

In this section, we’ll discuss the value of combining typefaces to generate interest and excitement, to reinforce identity and to support hierarchy. The key to creating hierarchy is contrast, which can come from simple changes in weight, scale, positioning, color, tone or font. Although this might sound easy, it can be complex. For example, altering line spacing or inter-character spacing can certainly add character, but it could also increase or decrease the tone of the type.

So, despite using what seems to be a completely different typeface, you might not be having the effect you imagine. As with many other situations when working with type, visual judgment is crucial.

<p>Urgent concerns of scientific responsibility, parental neglect, cognitive development and the nature of good and evil are embedded within this thrilling and deeply disturbing classic gothic tale. Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein is adapted for the stage by Nick Dear and realised by Danny Boyle in his return to the theatre after winning the Academy Award for best director for Slumdog Millionaire.</p>	<p><small>Slowly I learnt the ways of humans: how to ruin, how to hate, how to debase, how to humiliate. And at the feet of my master I learnt the highest of human skills, the skill no other creature owns: I finally learnt how to lie.</small></p> <p>THIS PERFORMANCE IS A WORLD PREMIERE FROM NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE</p> <p><small>For the first time ever, National Theatre Live will broadcast two separate performances of a production. *Throughout the run of Frankenstein at the National Theatre, Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller are alternating the roles of Victor Frankenstein and the Creature. Audiences in cinemas will have the chance to see both combinations, with two broadcasts a week apart. 17 March: Benedict Cumberbatch (Creature), Jonny Lee Miller (Victor)* 24 March: Jonny Lee Miller (Creature), Benedict Cumberbatch (Victor)*</small></p> <p>BASED ON THE NOVEL BY MARY SHELLEY</p> <p><small>“I FOLLOWED NATURE INTO HER LAIR, AND STRIPPED HER OF HER SECRETS! I BROUGHT TORRENTS OF LIGHT TO A DARKENING WORLD! IS THAT WRONG?”</small></p> <p><small>Childlike in his innocence but grotesque in form, Frankenstein’s bewildered creature is cast out into a hostile universe by his horror-struck maker. Meeting with cruelty wherever he goes, the friendless Creature, increasingly desperate and vengeful, determines to track down his creator and strike a terrifying deal.</small></p> <p><small>“ALL I ASK IS THE POSSIBILITY OF LOVE!”</small></p>
---	--

Two contrasting typefaces, Baskerville and Futura, have been combined. [Larger view](#)²¹².
(Design: Bright Pink)

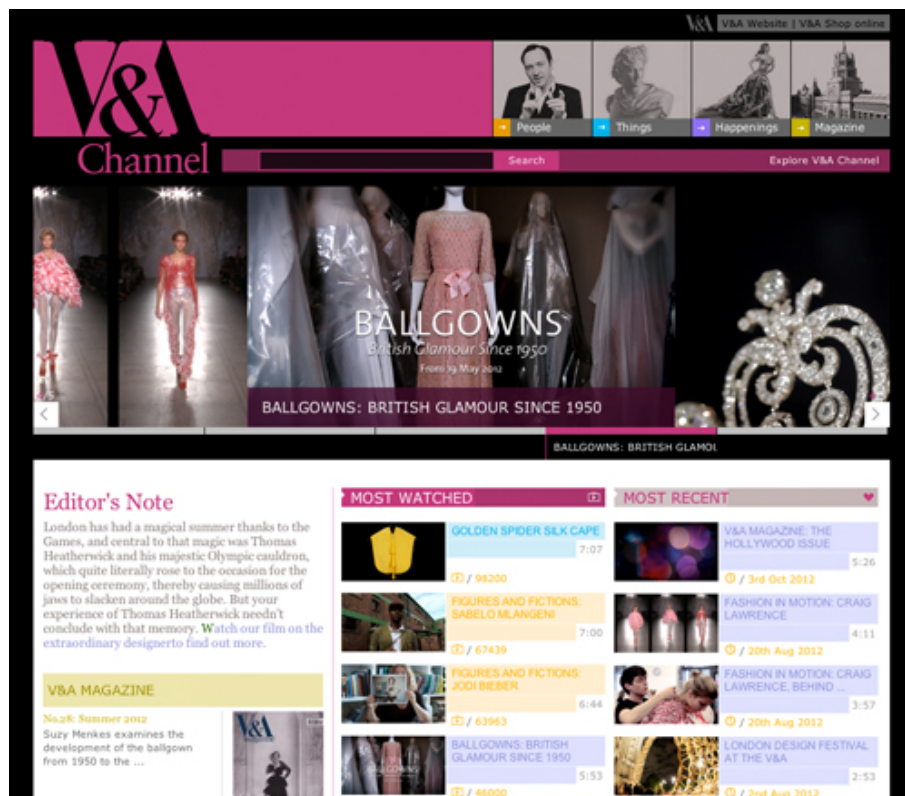
²¹². <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/As-with-many-other-situations-1000.jpg>

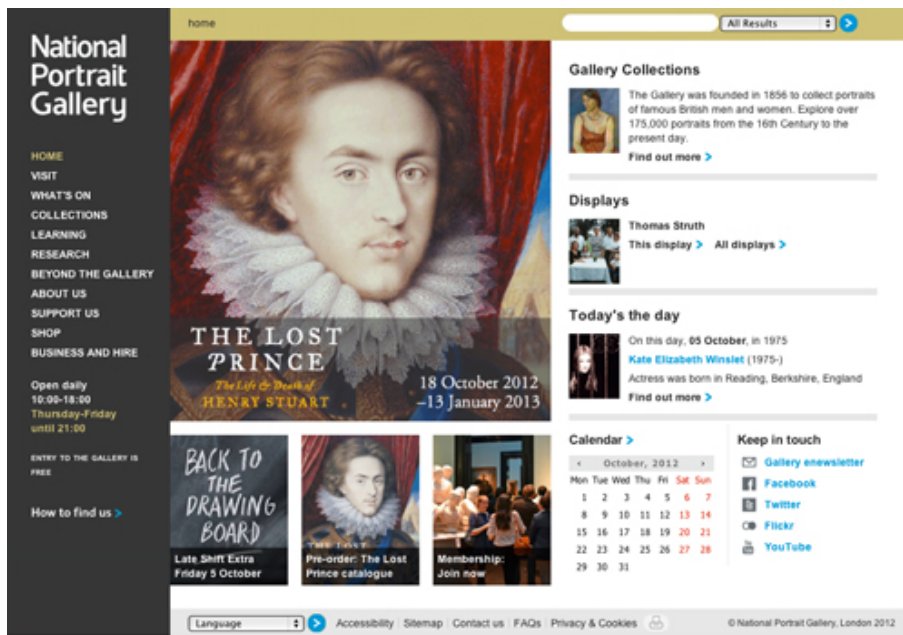
In the above image, changes to line and inter-character spacing have reduced the contrast. The larger and seemingly more impactful type is very similar in tone to many of the other levels of information in the design, and so figuring out which element has greater importance becomes more difficult.

A simple and very general starting point for creating contrast is to combine one serif font with a sans-serif partner. Fonts with multiple weights prove to be the most useful. Faces from the same family also sit well together. Pairing two serif or two sans-serif fonts together would not be impossible, but would be much more demanding and time-consuming to pull off.

There are no shortcuts to combining fonts, and at the risk of sounding repetitive, visual judgement of texture and tone is key. If two different fonts need to have the same prominence, again, visual judgement is the best guide. Look carefully at the size of type, because simply using the same size can be problematic when x-heights and ascenders and descenders vary.

Museum and gallery websites are excellent demonstrations of complex hierarchy. Typefaces are combined to reinforce an institution's visual identity, and different fonts are often adopted as part of the identity of special exhibitions. These websites also have complex grids and structures, making careful typographic choices even more important.





The websites for the Victoria and Albert Museum²¹³ and the National Portrait Gallery²¹⁴ (both in London) and the Guggenheim²¹⁵ (in New York) are all hierarchically complex, and all use typefaces carefully to create order, structure and appeal.

Colorful Type

Color has numerous roles to play in creating hierarchy, adding a dimension to the order of information. Bright and vibrant colors tend to attract us, while softer paler colors can be used to subdue detail. Certain colors have different associations in different cultures. You'll need to carefully select not only the hue, but also the tone of a color.

An excellent way to test prominence and priority created by combinations of color is to view a design in grayscale. Inevitably, if the background's tone is dark, it will merge with darker shades and throw out lighter colors, and vice versa.



Frost Design²¹⁶ uses color to dramatic, contrasting effect in this ad for General Pants Co. With "Paint it black" written in bright pink and red, color is used both ironically and to attract.

^{213.} <http://www.vam.ac.uk/channel/>

^{214.} <http://www.npg.org.uk/>

^{215.} <http://www.guggenheim.org/>

^{216.} <http://www.frostdesign.com.au/frostnews/frost-news-issue-2.html#numbertwo>



In this second ad from Frost Design, red is cleverly used for certain letterforms, guiding the viewer to read them first and extract a second level of meaning from the phrase.

Quantity Of Type

So far, we have looked at relatively few words and letterforms. Exciting hierarchies and visual interest, order and aesthetics can be created, regardless of context, when text is considerably less limited, including even multiple paragraphs, headings, captions and quotes. Again, the “designer as reader” comes to the fore, because selecting the appropriate order and hierarchy for the task in hand is essential.

The designer may not be particularly interested in the subject matter of a design, but they still have to ensure that the audience is attracted to it, sticks with it, enjoys the interaction and progresses in the intended manner. The reader needs to be tempted by digestible amounts of information, treated in a variety of considered styles, and put together from a coherent palette.

It could be argued that the design below has five or six levels of typographic hierarchy, but all are coordinated and serve to attract and guide the reader enthusiastically through the information, without making the process too complex.



Larger view²¹⁷. (Design: Bright Pink)

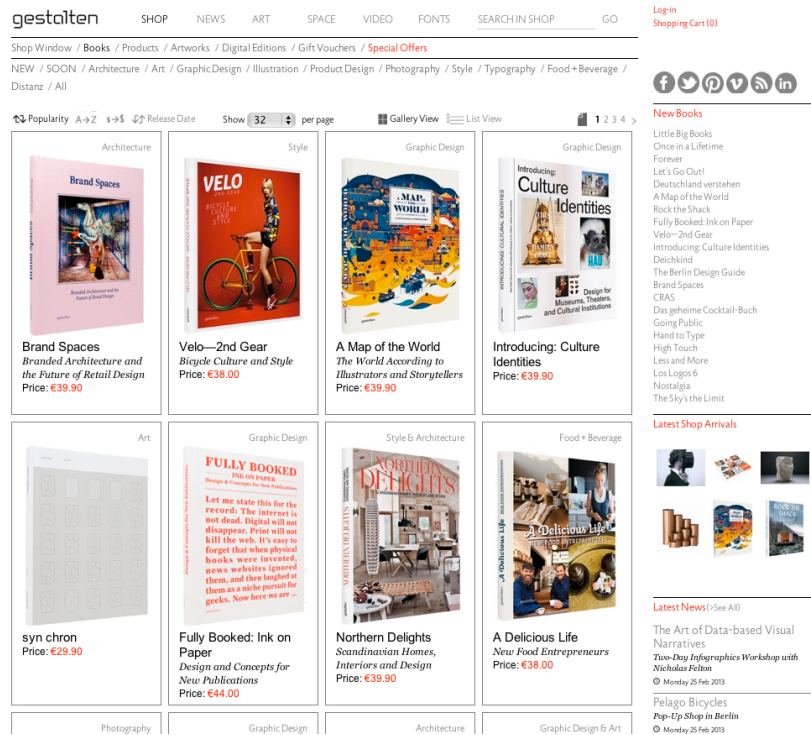
Why Grids Are So Practical

Grids play a useful role in almost every area of graphic design. And in layout, a grid is an essential organizational tool. The grid provides a framework and structure for the combination of type and images. Across multiple pages, a consistent grid enhances communication, brings cohesion and improves legibility. We asked numerous designers to describe their approach to grid design.

One interesting result of these inquiries is that a surprisingly large number of professionals noted their preference for working with grids that have an uneven number of columns, which, they say, establishes a more intriguing dynamism and asymmetry.

Designing a grid with flexibility is important. We should seldom settle for a two-column structure, but should rather consider systems with a greater number of columns, providing plenty of scope for exciting groupings.

²¹⁷. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/The-reader-needs-to-be-tempted-1000.jpg>



A grid with flexibility. Larger view ²¹⁸.

This page from the publisher Gestalten²¹⁹ has plenty of columns. Five are used with great flexibility, with text and images extending across them, and the varying widths set priorities among the topics. Also, the different weights, faces, colors, cases and scales lead the user through different elements of the website in a particularly enjoyable flow.



²¹⁸. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/GESTALTEN.jpg>

²¹⁹. <http://www.gestalten.com/>



Pages of the art magazine MAP. (Images source: [Map Magazine, Issue 1 & 12-20](http://www.mattwilley.co.uk/Map-Magazine-Issue-1-12-20)²²⁰)

MAP is a quarterly international arts magazine, designed by Studio 8. The lively 10-column grid has varying numbers of columns, even on the same page, making for exciting spaces. The dynamism is established primarily by the enticing composition, rather than by any typographic changes. Color is also introduced to guide the reader.

Most of the designs we have seen so far accommodate a fair amount of text. We haven't really discussed pages with limited information. In these cases, type can be used almost as an image, and principles of com-

²²⁰ <http://www.mattwilley.co.uk/Map-Magazine-Issue-1-12-20>

position can be used to produce contrasting scale, resulting in dynamic layouts. We might imagine that a small amount of type in a large amount of space is an ideal situation, but making the type, images and space work well together without seeming forced is rather hard. As with an odd number of columns, an asymmetric balance is likely more powerful, while a center-positioned design might appear static and less dynamic.





*The Business of Design*²²¹ by London based design studio *Cartlidge Levene*²²².

Design company Cartlidge Levene designed the publication *The Business of Design* for the UK Arts Council. The book's many spreads have little text and minimal images. The designers have cleverly positioned the type to lead readers to important details within the expanse of space. The arresting use of red adds to the dynamic.

Visual hierarchy is undoubtedly the key to memorability, persuasiveness and communication. As demonstrated by the designs we've looked at, regardless of context, comprehension is certainly enhanced by breaking text down into different levels. Structuring a design to reflect priority, emphasis and possibly tone of voice is the starting point in creating an exciting and unique hierarchy with type. Working in this way makes for a visually interesting form of communication and can be used very effectively to express and simplify information, not only enhancing understanding, but making the process of reading intensely enjoyable.

USEFUL LINKS

- "The Anthony Nolan Trust²²³," Johnson Banks

²²¹. <http://cartlidglevene.co.uk/work/books-and-publications/design-council-the-business-of-design>

²²². <http://cartlidglevene.co.uk/category/recent>

²²³. <http://johnsonbanks.co.uk/identity-and-branding/charity/anthony-nolan/>

- Alison Carmichael²²⁴
- Rebecca Foster Design²²⁵
- Frost Design²²⁶
- Gestalten²²⁷
- Map (By Matt Willey, previously of studio 8)²²⁸
- Cartlidge Levene²²⁹
- Little Miracles²³⁰
- Victoria and Albert Museum²³¹, London
- National Portrait Gallery²³², London
- Guggenheim²³³
- Create Impact With Type, Image and Color²³⁴, Jessica Glaser and Carolyn Knight (RotoVision)
- The Graphic Design Exercise Book²³⁵, Jessica Glaser and Carolyn Knight (RotoVision) 20

²²⁴. <http://www.alisoncarmichael.com/>

²²⁵. <http://www.rebeccafosterdesign.co.uk/>

²²⁶. <http://www.frostdesign.com.au/>

²²⁷. <http://www.gestalten.com/>

²²⁸. <http://www.mattwilley.co.uk/Map-Magazine-Issue-1-12-20>

²²⁹. <http://cartlidgelevene.co.uk>

²³⁰. <http://drinklittlemiracles.com/>

²³¹. <http://www.vam.ac.uk>

²³². <http://www.npg.org.uk>

²³³. <http://www.guggenheim.org>

²³⁴. <http://www.amazon.com/Create-Impact-Type-Image-Color/dp/2940361770>

²³⁵. <http://www.rotovision.com/book/the-graphic-design-exercise-book/>

Type Makes A Difference: An Exploration Of Type-Focused Websites

BY JESSICA GLASER 🍷

In this chapter, we'll take you on a thought-provoking journey through carefully selected Web designs. Certainly, these websites have some captivating interactivity; however, the selection of type and the typographic styling and spacing are the reasons why we chose them for this piece. In the context of typography, considering composition and grid structure is also important.

Why Grid Structure And Composition Are Crucial To Typography

Composition and grid structure are vital factors in effective communication with type. In *Thinking with Type*²³⁶, Ellen Lupton comprehensively explains the benefits of working with a grid. She addresses the flexibility of grids, what grids offer in integrating type and image, and how they can organize a complex hierarchy.

There is an inextricable link between typeface, type size and measure (i.e. line length). While a design's appearance can vary from screen to screen, good designers are experts at creating enticing, digestible amounts of information, carefully composed to hold our interest. However, losing the connection with the audience is all too easy. For example, text set small on long lines can make for daunting reading, and text set large on short lines is equally problematic, though for different reasons.

In the latter case, the line breaks could overwhelm the punctuation, demanding the reader to refocus their attention every few words. In both situations, the extra long or extra short lines could lose the reader's interest all on their own.

²³⁶. <http://www.thinkingwithtype.com/>



Sections with different levels of importance require different levels of prominence to guide the user through the website and hold their atten-

- 114

tion. A consistent measure in sections of relatively equal importance is a helpful and reassuring guide. Inconsistency is confusing.



When text of the same priority extends across multiple columns, a sudden change in measure for no apparent reason would be confusing. (Design by Bright Pink)

(Larger view²³⁹)

Grid Structure

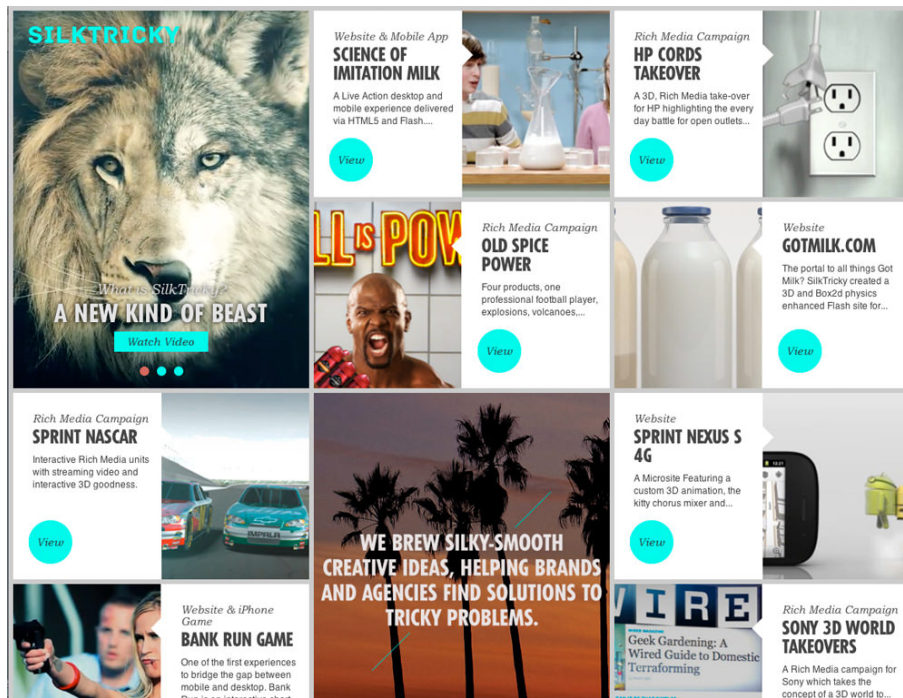
In this section, the websites we've highlighted show how a grid can affect typography, creating appeal, accessibility and structure and supporting the hierarchy.

SILKTRICKY

The grid structure of [SilkTricky²⁴⁰](http://www.silktricky.com/#/home) has six columns to break down information into enticing segments. The consistent typographic system for headings contrasts the lighter tones of Bookman Light Italic (for category descriptions) with the very different visual rhythm of Futura Condensed Bold.

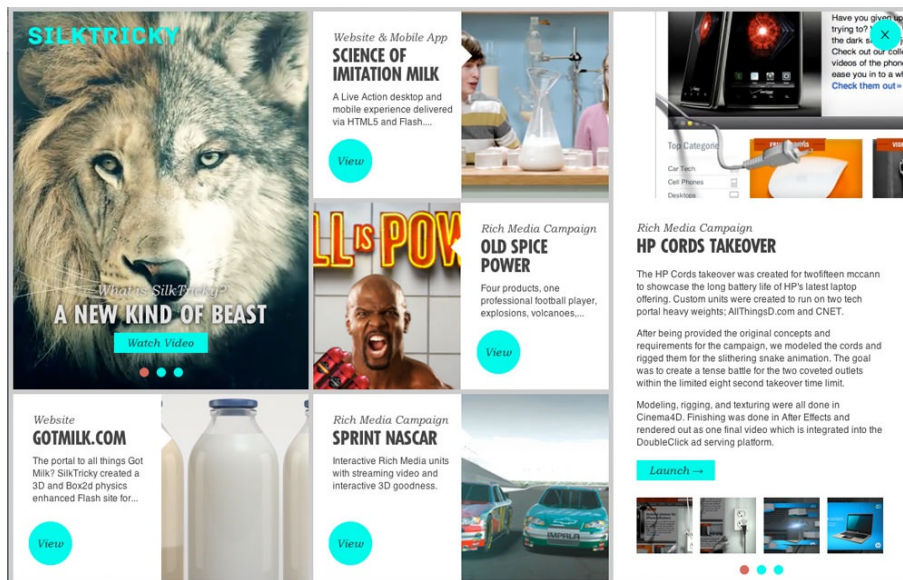
²³⁹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/uneven-columns-1000_mini.jpg

²⁴⁰. <http://www.silktricky.com/#/home>



(Larger view²⁴¹)

These typefaces complement each other well, creating a dramatic change in scale, case, texture and weight. The contrast tempts you to look further, drawing you to each segment's few lines of descriptive sans-serif text.



(Larger view²⁴²)

²⁴¹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Silktricky-A-1000_mini.jpg

²⁴². http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Silktricky-B1000_mini.jpg

At the click of a button, the copy smoothly expands to a few paragraphs and across two columns, just enough to get you hooked while still adhering to the grid. This longer descriptive copy creates another level of typographic texture and tone that contrasts effectively with the headings, providing a welcome change of pace and visual rhythm.

PERCUSSION LAB

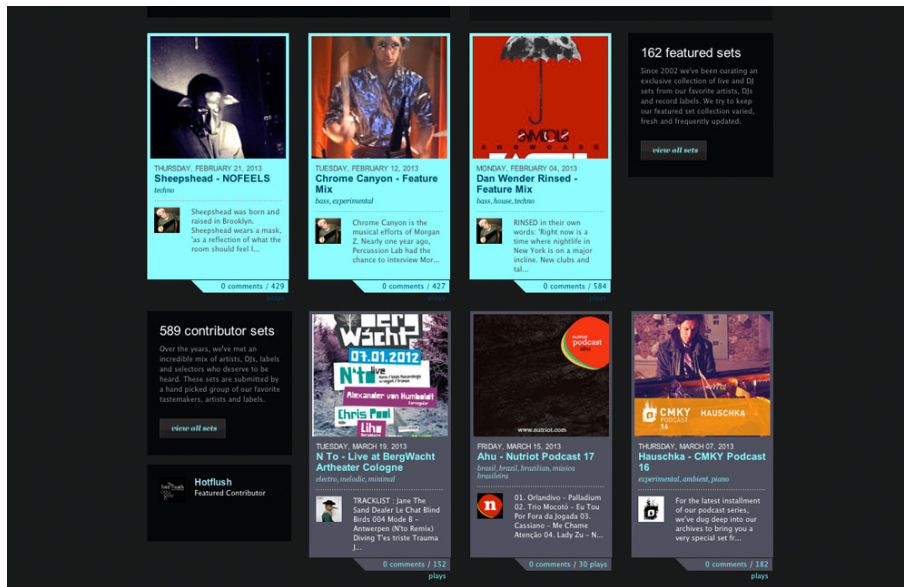
Percussion Lab²⁴³ also makes effective use of the grid, flexibly using four columns to feature a detailed mix of sets from contributing artists. Each featured item fits into the column structure and overall hierarchy, including details on the date, artist, set name and genre. The highlights expand to fill two columns and feature a track listing and helpful details.



(Larger view²⁴⁴)

²⁴³. <http://www.percussionlab.com>

²⁴⁴. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Percussion-lab-A-1000_mini.jpg



(Larger view²⁴⁵)

The fonts, a blend of serif and sans serif, feature changes in weight, case, orientation and spacing to reinforce the hierarchy. Typographic detail and the grid structure also establish and maintain interest and trust.

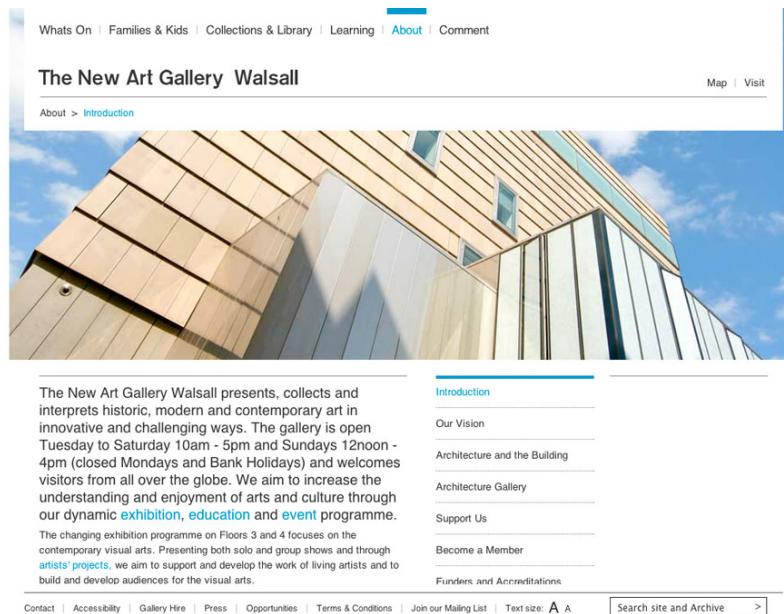
THE NEW ART GALLERY WALSALL

The website for The New Art Gallery Walsall²⁴⁶ in the UK uses sans-serif letterforms clearly and appealingly, but the changes in scale and the pleasing grid are what make this website truly memorable. The main body of text extends down the left side, with other aspects, such as links and highlighted details taking up columns to the right.

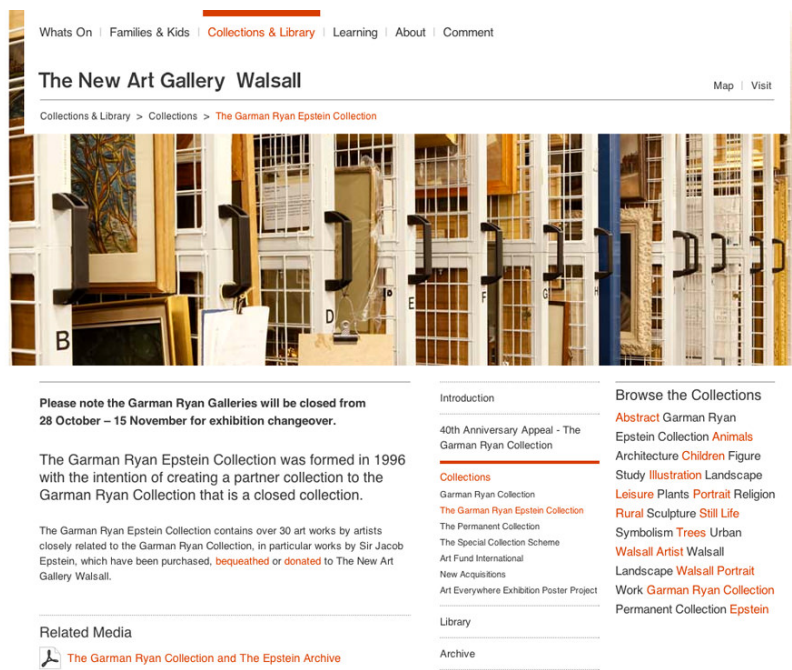
The open uncluttered typography and generous space reflect the gallery's own architecture, its important collections and its commitment to making art both accessible and enjoyable.

²⁴⁵. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Percussion-labB-1000_mini.jpg

²⁴⁶. <http://www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk/>



(Larger view²⁴⁷)



(Larger view²⁴⁸)

247. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Walsall-A-1000_mini.jpg
248. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Walsall-B-1000_mini.jpg

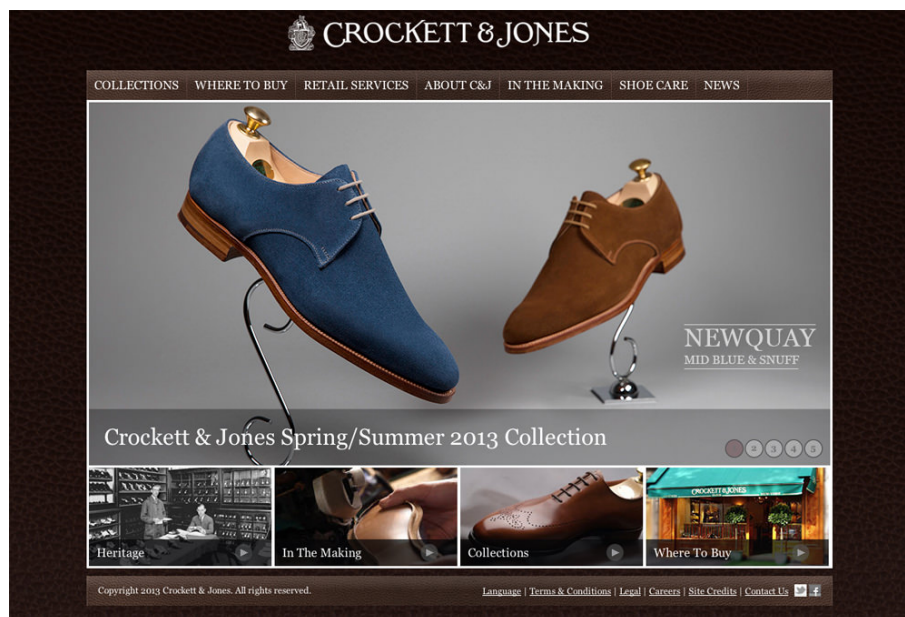
Type That Attracts Users

Is the substance of the text what matters most? Undoubtedly, this can be true, especially if the language is stimulating or addresses the user's personal interest. Text that makes us laugh or that is risqué or controversial can be a great draw, too.

However, there is more to drawing interest: the type's style, texture and tone²⁴⁹, general appearance and layout play a great part in whether users take an interest. Type can also enhance the subject matter of an article, reinforcing the emotional weight, the aesthetic, or the exclusivity of the product.

CROCKETT & JONES

The website of Crockett and Jones²⁵⁰ is one such example. The English company has been handcrafting fine shoes since 1876, and its website undoubtedly reflects this wonderful heritage through both its imagery and type. The name style appears on each page, and the individual letterforms echo the decorative style of Victorian design. Microsoft Georgia is used sensitively for body text to complement the name style and to reinforce the sense of heritage, quality, style and attention to detail.

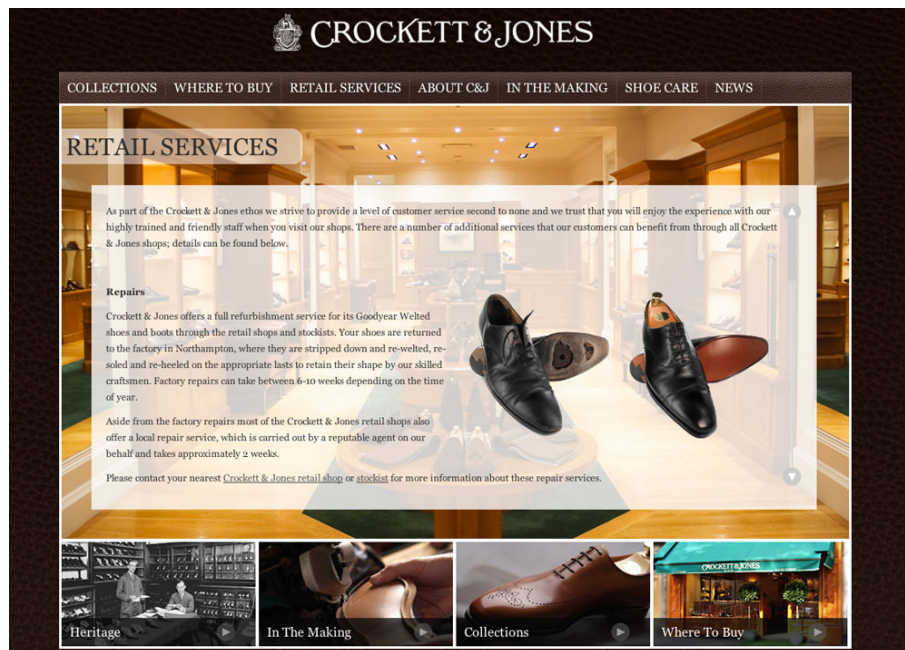


(Larger view²⁵¹)

²⁴⁹. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2012/09/07/drawing-mark-making-creative-way-maximize-design-ideas-type/>

²⁵⁰. <http://www.crockettandjones.com/>

²⁵¹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Crockett-and-JonesA1000_mini.jpg



(Larger view²⁵²)

In writing this piece, I found myself thinking of Beatrice Warde's well-known article from 1932 on printing and type, "The Crystal Goblet," in which she argues that "printing should be invisible." She specifically addresses type, using the metaphor of wine in a glass to explain that the printed word shouldn't in any way hinder the meaning of text. Warde reasons that type should complement and enhance meaning and increase our understanding and appreciation.

This connects well with what Marko Dugonjic²⁵³ says in "Designing for the Reading Experience²⁵⁴": "Seamlessly digesting written matter is possible only when the typography is well thought out and legibility is facilitated by a considered reading experience." Obviously Warde's article predates the Web, but the principles it espouses are relevant today.

Combinations Of Typefaces

Selecting and combining typefaces to reinforce a theme is always a challenge. It demands patience to try out alternatives and visual acuity to assess effectiveness. The websites in this section mix pleasing and well-chosen faces and type styles to emphasize subject matter, to boost appeal and sometimes to surprise.

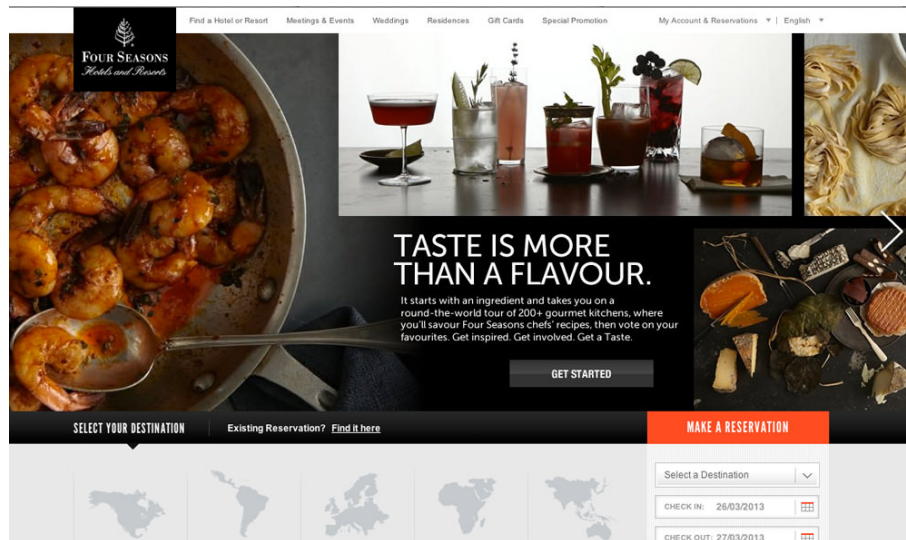
²⁵². http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/crocketandjones-B1000_mini.jpg

²⁵³. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/author/marko-dugonjic/?rel=author>

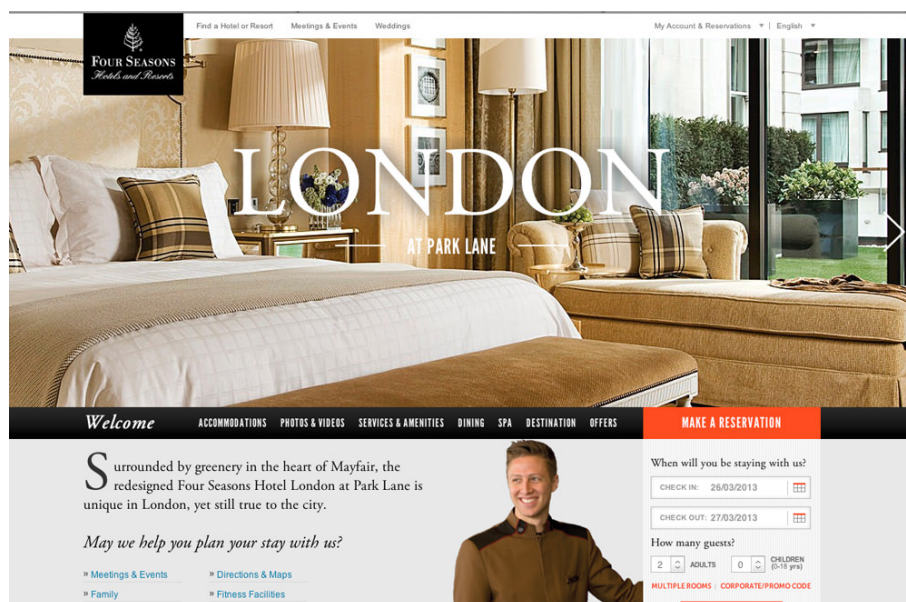
²⁵⁴. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2013/02/18/designing-reading-experience/>

FOUR SEASONS

Dramatic contrast in texture and tone is achieved with type on Four Seasons²⁵⁵ website, which brings together different styles and weights of Garamond with some of the many variations of Helvetica. The visual rhythms of uppercase and lowercase Garamond Italic sit side by side with the strong vertical strokes and very different pace and texture of uppercase Helvetica Condensed.



(Larger view²⁵⁶)



(Larger view²⁵⁷)

²⁵⁵. <http://www.fourseasons.com/>

²⁵⁶. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/FourseasonsA1000_mini.jpg

Delve into the website to experience this dramatic contrast reinforcing the hierarchy and the style, quality and reputation of the Four Seasons brand. Both Garamond and Helvetica are available in numerous weights and styles, making them both very useful for complex hierarchies.

NOWNESS

With the headings on [Nowness](#)²⁵⁸, CreateThe Group has elegantly mixed uppercase and lowercase Garamond Italic with uppercase P22 Underground Titling. This combination exudes class; the graceful strokes of Garamond Italic have a pleasing textural contrast with the sophisticated lines of P22.



(Larger view²⁵⁹)

Create The Group has paid careful attention to intercharacter spacing and changes in scale, carefully controlling the tone and hierarchy and reinforcing the stylish subject matter of the website.

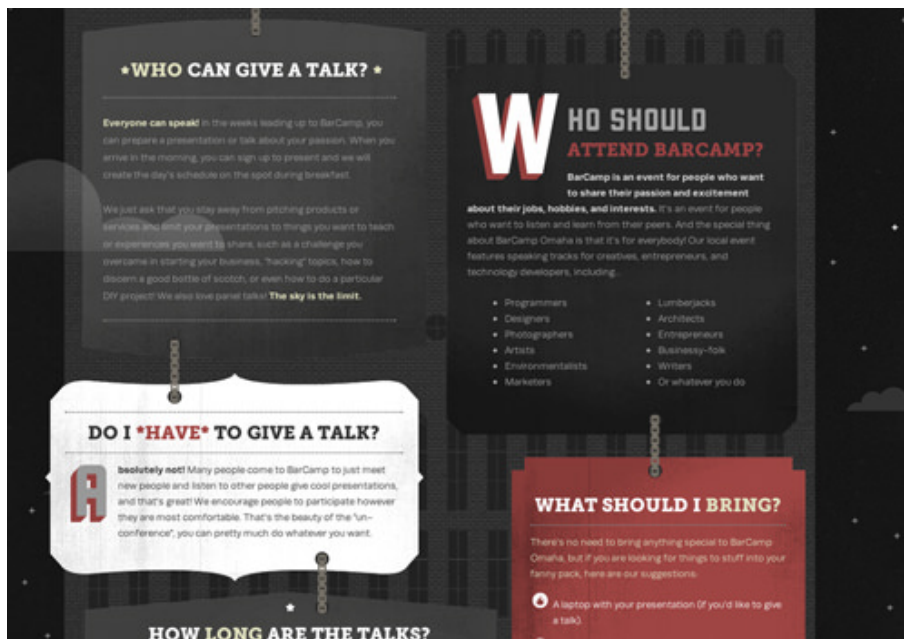
²⁵⁷. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Fourseasons-B1000_mini.jpg

²⁵⁸. http://www.nowness.com/?icid=overlay_home

²⁵⁹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Nowness-1000_mini.jpg

BARCAMP OMAHA

Barcamp Omaha²⁶⁰'s website, designed by Grain and Mortar, promotes what is described as an “unconference,” an informal occasion to listen to and meet others and network. With a considerable amount of illustration, the website brings together three well-chosen, contrasting fonts, two of which have obviously been selected for their potential as heading fonts.

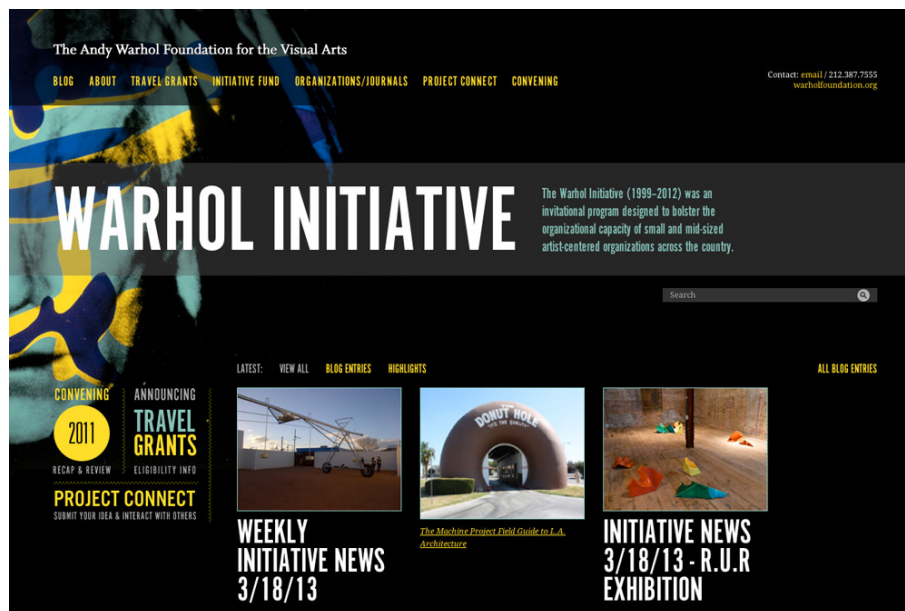


260. <http://2012.barcampomaha.org/>

These two — one a bold, slightly condensed uppercase sans serif, and the other a companion all-cap slab serif — have a slightly retro feel that is often associated with an American college aesthetic. The text is enclosed within multiple small panels; however, the change in font and the variation in weight and color are the things here that prioritize detail and reinforce hierarchy.

WARHOL INITIATIVE

The website for the Warhol Initiative²⁶¹, by Toky, shows typographic audacity. Condensed typefaces can be a challenge to read; strong vertical strokes of letterforms combined with compact characters can, on occasion, hinder legibility. Here, Toky brings together a serif font with a dramatically contrasting condensed face, showing great skill and bravery.



(Larger view²⁶²)

The careful intercharacter spacing and measured type sizing help to ensure ease of reading. The pace and texture of type are well supported by the condensed font, speeding the user through the condensed headings to the details that follow. This condensed typeface has been well selected to complement Warhol's style and era.

²⁶¹. <http://warholinitiative.org>

²⁶². http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Warhol1000_mini.jpg

COMBADI

Combadi²⁶³, designed by Radial, could easily appear in a number of the sections in this chapter. Its grid structure is based on 12 columns and can be seen in various configurations as you progress through the pages. However, the combination of typefaces is the really arresting aspect of this design. Brandon Grotesque and Museo Slab combine with great sensitivity and finesse to reinforce the hierarchy.



(Larger view²⁶⁴)



(Larger view²⁶⁵)

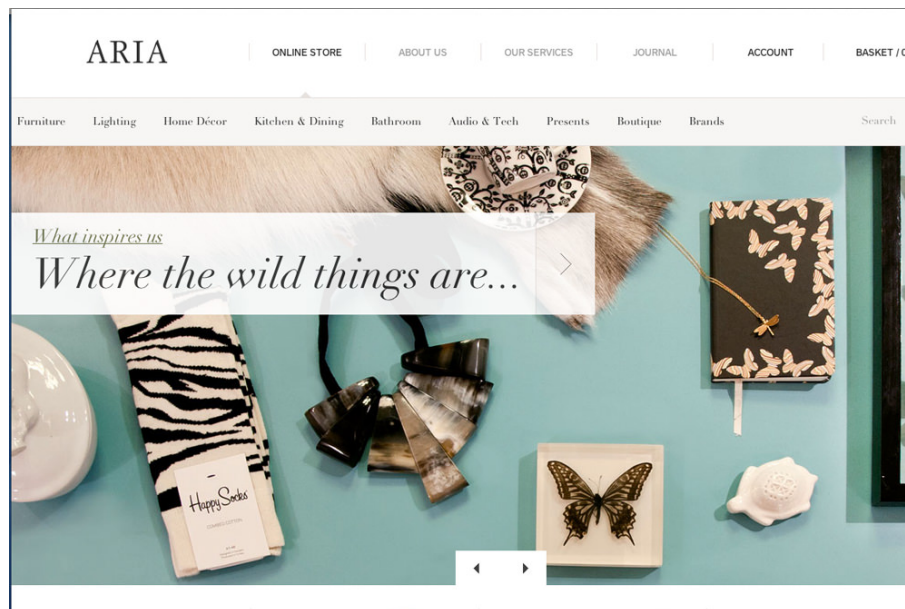
²⁶³. <http://combadi.com>

²⁶⁴. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Combadi-A1000_mini.jpg

Museo Slab is used for the body text, and the generous x-height, short ascenders and descenders and wide letter spacing make for easy reading. Changes in color are also applied to instances of Museo Slab, adding emphasis and reinforcing Combadi's brand and color palette. Brandon Grotesque is complementary and contrasting, mostly restricted here to secondary headings, navigation and Combadi's name style.

ARIA

Designed by Un.titled, Aria²⁶⁶'s online shop has elegant high-contrast serif letterforms. Headings in italic feature particularly unusual forms of lowercase v's and w's, reinforcing the exclusivity of Aria's designs. Contributing to the distinctive typographic character are the limited tonal changes within the text. To adequately capture hierarchical differences with considerable subtlety, Aria has varied the scale and adopted italic type.

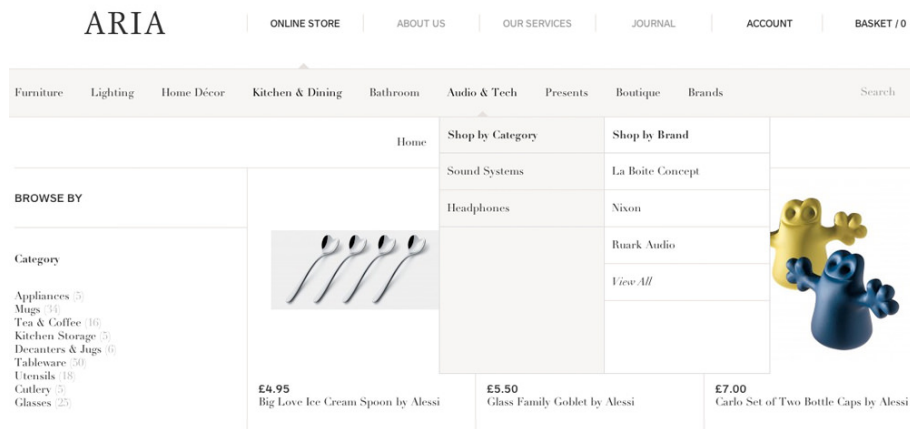
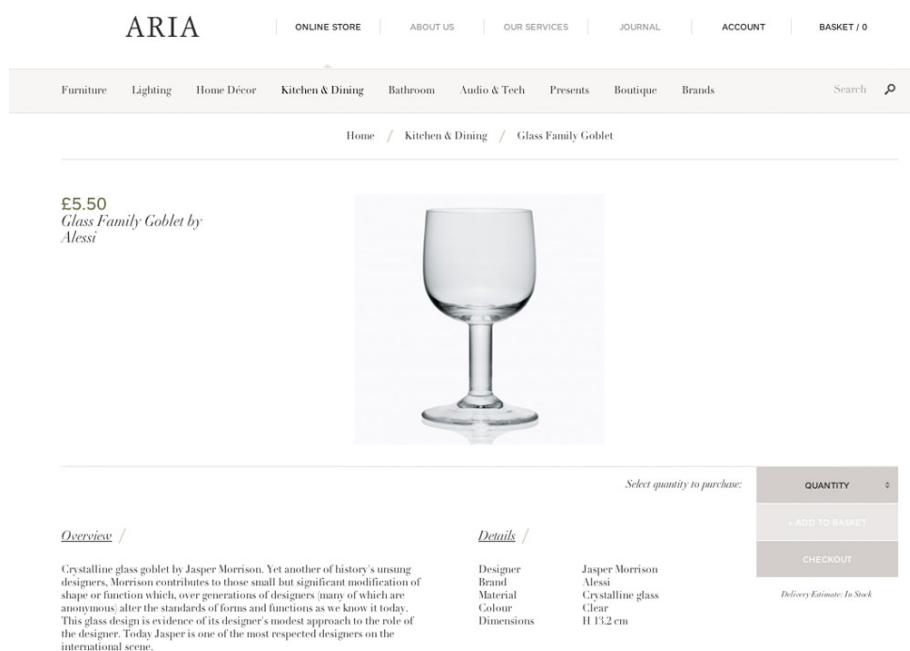


(Larger view²⁶⁷)

²⁶⁵. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CombadiB1000_mini.jpg

²⁶⁶. <http://www.ariashop.co.uk/>

²⁶⁷. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AriaA1000_mini.jpg

(Larger view²⁶⁸)(Larger view²⁶⁹)

Spacing, Leading And Intercharacter Spacing

Spacing within and around type is crucial to making the text appealing and legible. Even if you've selected the ideal typefaces, the design's ultimate success could fall by the wayside if spacing is not satisfactorily addressed. On the websites in this section, spacing around and between letterforms has been carefully considered, not only making the designs more appealing, but helping the user to read the copy comfortably.

²⁶⁸. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AriaB1000_mini.jpg

²⁶⁹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AriaC1000_mini.jpg

STL DESIGNWEEK

The design for STL DesignWeek²⁷⁰ is unusually angled and highlights what can be achieved by subtle line and letter spacing. The sans-serif face has been selected for its proportionally large, open, rounded x-height and slightly wide letter spacing. Line spacing is broad, too, reinforcing the airy feel and guiding the reader from line to line, making for a pleasant experience.



(Larger view²⁷¹)



(Larger view²⁷²)

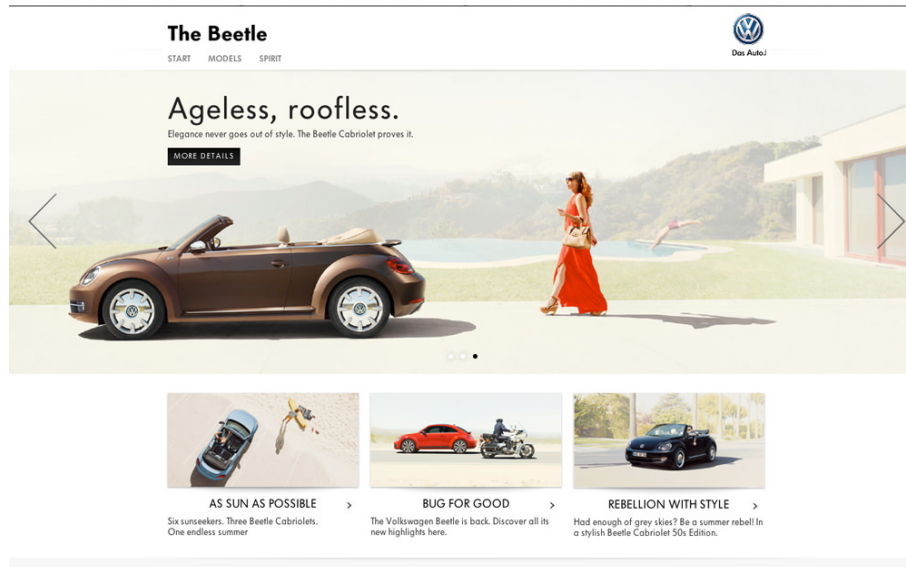
²⁷⁰. <http://stldesignweek.com>

²⁷¹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/STL-A-1000_mini.jpg

²⁷². http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/STL-B-1000_mini.jpg

THE BEETLE

DDB Tribal²⁷³ designed The Beetle²⁷⁴'s website, which focuses on the spirit and heritage of the Volkswagen Beetle. The character of the car – a reliable, hardworking vehicle for all – is admirably captured in the type. Typographically, the website is simple, with letterforms limited to two weights of Futura.



(Larger view²⁷⁵)



(Larger view²⁷⁶)

²⁷³. <http://www.ddb-tribal.com/>

²⁷⁴. <http://www.beetle.com/int/en/home>

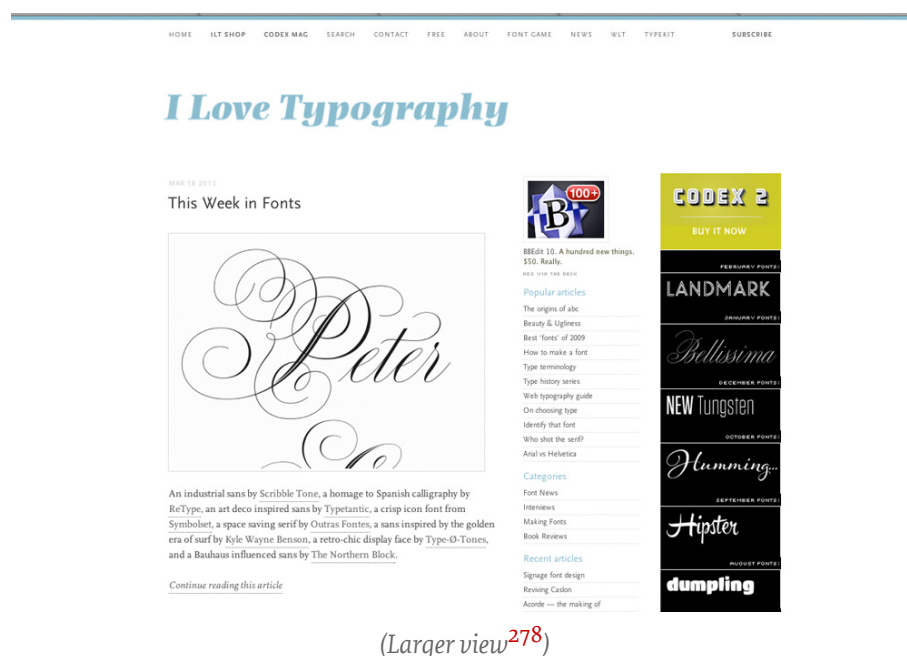
²⁷⁵. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BeetleA1000_mini.jpg

²⁷⁶. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BeetleB1000_mini.jpg

The clarity of the type is evident, with careful letter and line spacing that reinforce the simplicity of the Beetle's story. Headings are given extra letter spacing, as if to slightly enhance its tonal difference from the rest of the copy and to reinforce the character of this iconic brand. Generous, broad leading draws the user comfortably along each line of text, making the Beetle's story an enjoyable read.

I LOVE TYPOGRAPHY

If you are not familiar with [I Love Typography](http://ilovetypography.com/)²⁷⁷, do take a look; anyone with a passion for type will find so much of interest. Some beautiful selections of typefaces appear throughout the website, and as you progress from article to article, you are helpfully told the names of the fonts used, which include FF Basic Gothic Web Pro, Le Monde Journal STD and Le Monde Sans STD.



²⁷⁷ <http://ilovetypography.com/>

²⁷⁸ http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ilovetypographyA1000_mini.jpg



(Larger view²⁷⁹)

The typefaces and combinations are elegant, but the leading and inter-character spacing also reinforce the sophisticated and refined feel. The title for each article is set in a lightweight, relatively large-scale upper-case and lowercase sans serif, with intercharacter and word spacing that also show a delicate touch. The link between the space within the counterforms of the letters and the letterforms themselves is pleasing. This delicate touch complements well the type that follows.

I Love Typography takes a careful approach to the spacing in the opening text for articles. It strikes the right balance between just enough space to draw the eye along each line, guiding it to the next, and leaving just enough space for links, with their generously spaced, dotted underlines. The underlines are frequent and are centered below the base line and above the x-height; they have been positioned to avoid any clash with ascenders or descenders. The space throughout all levels of text creates a contrast that reinforces hierarchy, aids reading and helps to captivate.

Changes In Scale

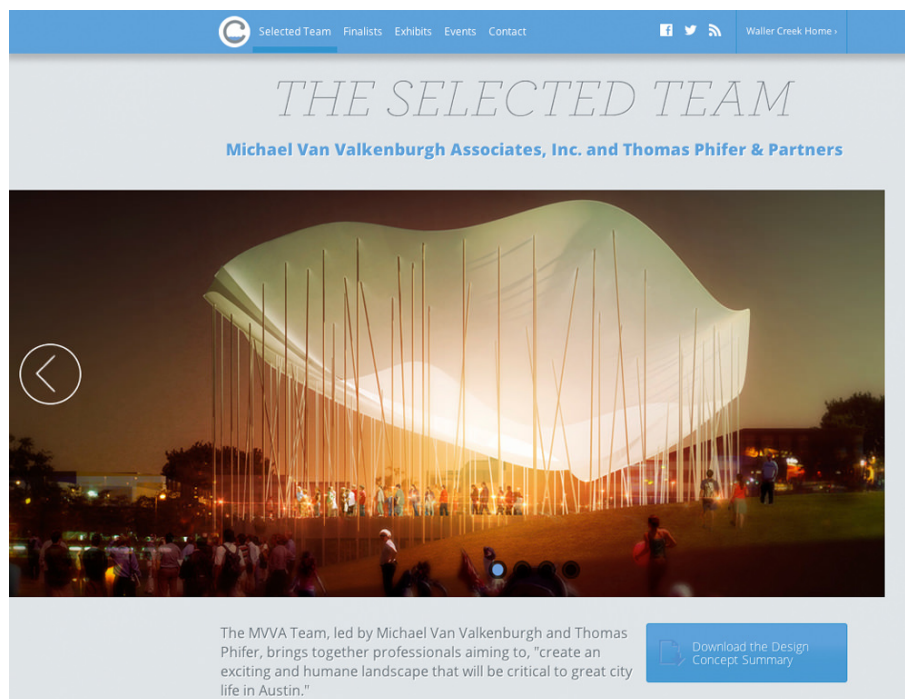
Changes in the scale of type are frequently done to indicate prioritization and hierarchy. One of the most common approaches is to set head-

²⁷⁹ http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/lovetype-B1000_mini.jpg

ings in large bold type and body text in smaller, lighter type. The examples in this section show much more ambition.

DESIGN WALLER CREEK: THE FINAL FOUR

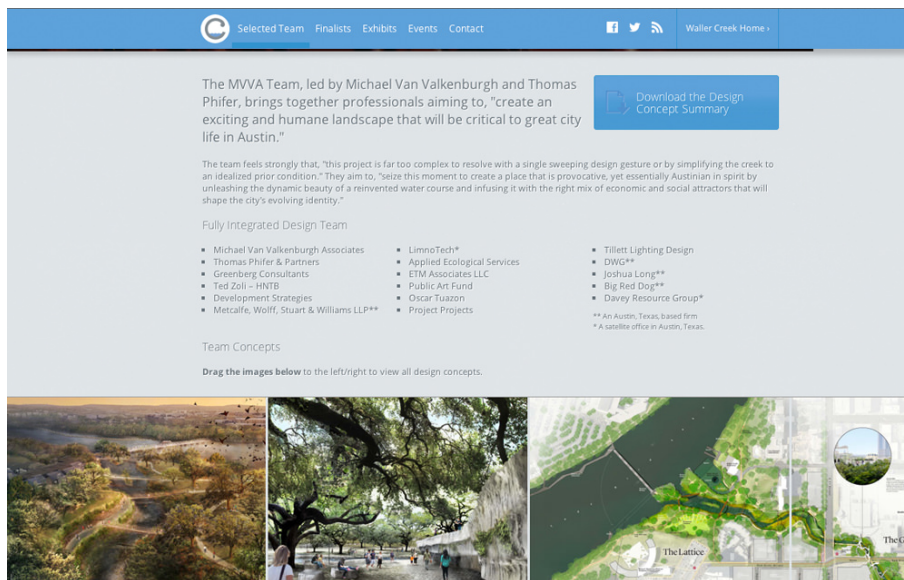
Changes in scale are an excellent way to create structure and assign priority, and they can be one of the few solutions available if the selected font has few weights and styles. The “Final Four” section of Design Waller Creek²⁸⁰’s competition page changes scale to reinforce hierarchy. Four lines of the largest type form an introductory statement, followed by a section of considerably smaller copy set in the same face. For the heading that follows, the text returns to the size of the introductory copy, possibly in a slightly lighter weight, before reverting to the smaller size for the bullet points.



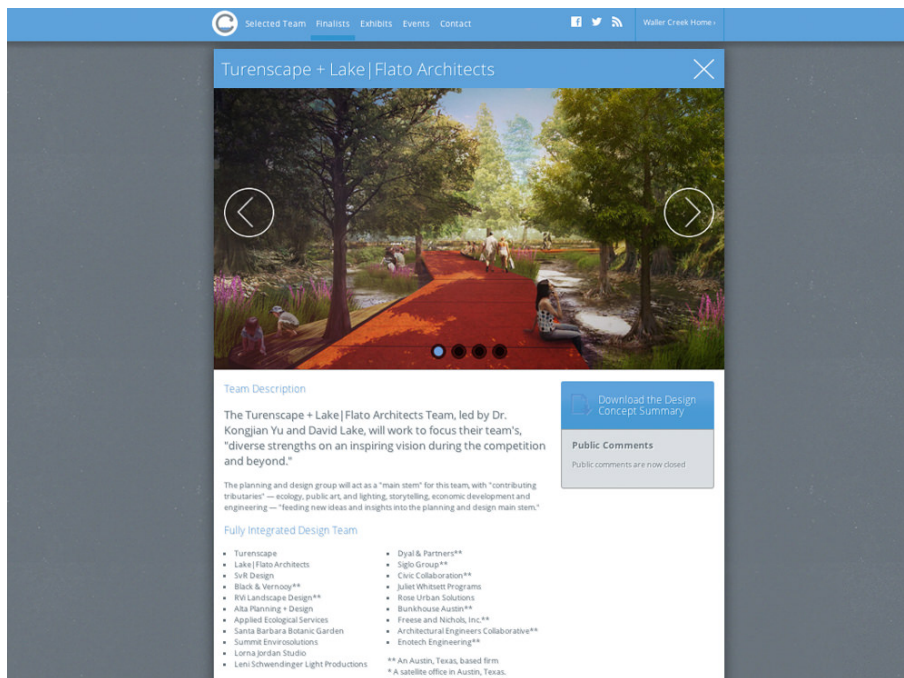
(Larger view²⁸¹)

²⁸⁰. <http://wallercreek.org/finalfour/>

²⁸¹. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/WallerCreekA1000_mini.jpg



(Larger view²⁸²)



(Larger view²⁸³)

The tone here is noteworthy, too; copy is predominantly set in gray, but the much larger, lightweight slab-serif headings that serve as section indicators are tonally very similar to the smaller text on the website.

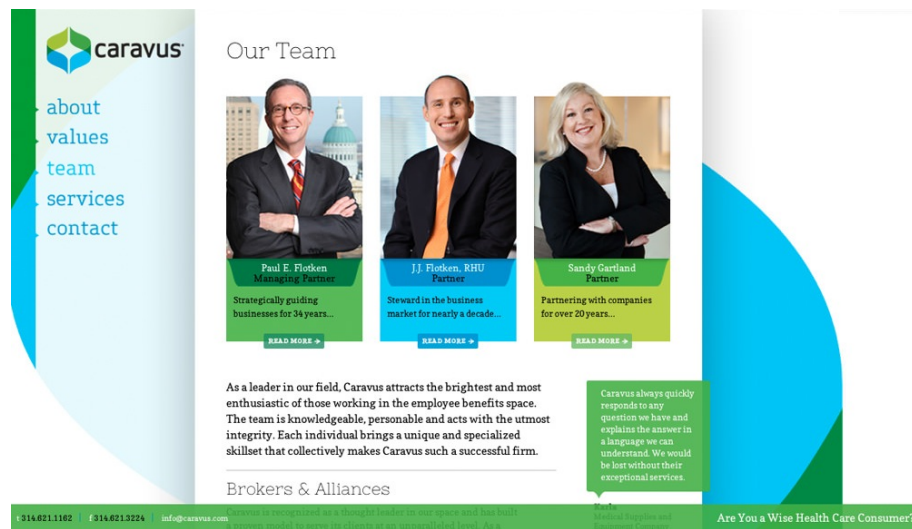
²⁸². http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/wallcreek-B1000_mini.jpg

²⁸³. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/wallcreekC1000_mini.jpg

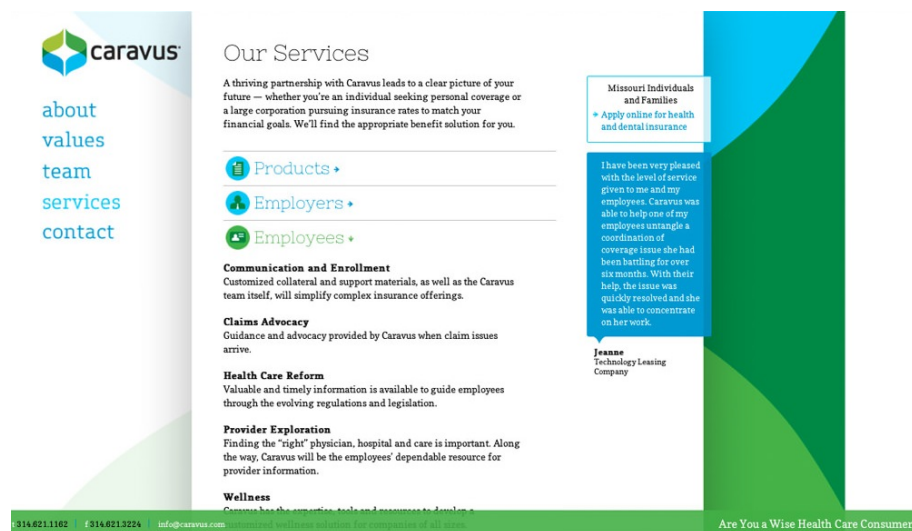
This comes down to the hairline weight of the slab-serif font, which echoes the weight of the smaller letterforms.

CARAVUS

There are many pleasing aspects to the typography in Caravus²⁸⁴, by Toky, but the changes in scale merit particular attention here. The text has a varied hierarchy, setting the stage for changes in weight and dramatic changes in scale. Large lightweight slab-serif letterforms are used for headings, contrasting with the much smaller, darker body copy.



(Larger view²⁸⁵)



(Larger view²⁸⁶)

²⁸⁴. <http://caravus.com>

²⁸⁵. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/caravusA1000_mini.jpg



(Larger view²⁸⁷)

This is a departure from a typical hierarchy, with large bold type for headings and smaller lighter type for the body. Throughout the website, quotes, statistics and other high-impact information are accentuated by changes in scale, often in combination with bright color. You could describe this as “type as image,” playfully attracting attention, while reinforcing the hierarchy in a memorable way.

As in most cases, visual judgement is key, and the hierarchy here is well supported by the textural and tonal contrast arising from the changes in scale and color.

Conclusion

All of the designers we’ve showcased use type sensitively, making careful typographic choices that reinforce their message and brand values. The design decisions establish hierarchy and stimulate appeal, and the combination of images, color and typography make for highly memorable visuals.

We’ve focused on typography and on how engaging it can be; hopefully, it has broadened your view and drawn your attention to some of the minutiae involved in effective typography. Perhaps this piece will move you to continue on your own thought-provoking journey through the typographic details of other websites. Since the time of Beatrice Warde, new technologies have enabled us to more easily experiment

²⁸⁶. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Caravus-B1000_mini.jpg

²⁸⁷. http://www.smashingmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/caravusC1000_mini.jpg

with typographic alternatives and new letterforms to speedily communicate content while maintaining appeal.

Useful Links

ARTICLES

- “[The Creative Way to Maximize Design Ideas With Type](#)²⁸⁸,” Carolyn Knight and Jessica Glaser
- “[The Crystal Goblet \(Or Print Should Be Invisible\)](#)²⁸⁹,” Beatrice Ward, 1932
- “[Designing for the Reading Experience](#)²⁹⁰,” Marko Dugonjic

WEBSITE DESIGNS

- [Crockett & Jones](#)²⁹¹
- [SilkTricky](#)²⁹²
- [Percussion Lab](#)²⁹³
- [Black Estate](#)²⁹⁴
- [Four Seasons](#)²⁹⁵
- [Nowness](#)²⁹⁶, designed by [CreateThe GROUP](#)²⁹⁷
- [Barcamp Omaha](#)²⁹⁸, designed by [Grain & Mortar](#)²⁹⁹
- [Warhol Initiative](#)³⁰⁰, designed by [Toky](#)³⁰¹

²⁸⁸. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2012/09/07/drawing-mark-making-creative-way-maximize-design-ideas-type/>

²⁸⁹. http://www.nicoledreher.com/dreher_goblet_site/index.html

²⁹⁰. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2013/02/18/designing-reading-experience/>

²⁹¹. <http://www.crockettandjones.com>

²⁹². <http://www.silktricky.com/#/home>

²⁹³. <http://www.percussionlab.com>

²⁹⁴. <http://www.blackestate.co.nz/>

²⁹⁵. <http://www.fourseasons.com/>

²⁹⁶. <http://www.nowness.com/>

²⁹⁷. <http://www.createthegroup.com/>

²⁹⁸. <http://barcampomaha.org>

²⁹⁹. <http://grainandmortar.com>

³⁰⁰. <http://warholinitiative.org>

³⁰¹. <http://toky.com>

- [Combadi](#)³⁰², designed by [Radial](#)³⁰³
- [Aria Shop](#)³⁰⁴, designed by [Un.titled](#)³⁰⁵
- [STL DesignWeek](#)³⁰⁶
- [The Beetle](#)³⁰⁷, designed by [DDB Tribal](#)³⁰⁸
- [I Love Typography](#)³⁰⁹
- [Design Waller Creek: The Final Four](#)³¹⁰
- [Caravus](#)³¹¹, designed by [Toky](#)³¹² 🐞

^{302.} <http://combadi.com>

^{303.} <http://radial.gr>

^{304.} <http://www.ariashop.co.uk/>

^{305.} <http://un.titled.co.uk/>

^{306.} <http://stldesignweek.com>

^{307.} <http://www.beetle.com/int/en/home>

^{308.} <http://www.ddb-tribal.com/>

^{309.} <http://ilovetypography.com/>

^{310.} <http://waller creek.org/finalfour/>

^{311.} <http://caravus.com>

^{312.} <http://toky.com>

About The Authors

David Březina

David Březina is a type designer and typographer, writer and lecturer, director of [Rosetta typefoundry](http://rosettatype.com)³¹³, and the impresario of the TypeTalks conference. You may know him as a designer of the award-winning type family [Skolar](http://rosettatype.com/skolar)³¹⁴. So far, he has designed typefaces for Cyrillic, Greek, Gujarati, Devanagari, and various extensions of Latin. Twitter: [@MrBřezina](http://www.twitter.com/MrBřezina)³¹⁵.

Jan Constantin

Jan Constantin works at Smashing Events and loves to spend his spare time writing for Smashing Magazine. He is one of the main contributors to the [Smashing Media](http://www.smashing-media.com/)³¹⁶ corporate website. Twitter: [@Smash_Scribe](http://www.twitter.com/@Smash_Scribe)³¹⁷.

Jeremiah Shoaf

Jeremiah Shoaf is a [freelance designer](http://www.jeremiahshoaf.com)³¹⁸ from Colorado. He is the curator of [Typewolf](http://www.typewolf.com)³¹⁹ and creates flat-file CMS themes for his other side project, [Type & Grids](http://www.typeandgrids.com)³²⁰. He also continually updates a curated list of open-source free fonts³²¹. You can follow Jeremiah on Twitter [@typewolf](http://www.twitter.com/typewolf)³²² and find him on [Google+](https://plus.google.com/111512303363226430627?rel=author?rel=author)³²³.

Jessica Glaser

Jessica Glaser is an academic from the University of Wolverhampton in the UK. She is a practicing graphic designer and prolific design writer. Her numerous books, many written in partnership with Carolyn Knight, focus on topics including the use of space in graphic design,

³¹³. <http://rosettatype.com>

³¹⁴. <http://rosettatype.com/skolar>

³¹⁵. <http://www.twitter.com/MrBřezina>

³¹⁶. <http://www.smashing-media.com/>

³¹⁷. http://www.twitter.com/@Smash_Scribe

³¹⁸. <http://www.jeremiahshoaf.com>

³¹⁹. <http://www.typewolf.com>

³²⁰. <http://www.typeandgrids.com>

³²¹. <http://www.typewolf.com/open-source-web-fonts>

³²². <http://www.twitter.com/typewolf>

³²³. <https://plus.google.com/111512303363226430627?rel=author?rel=author>

mnemonics and memory devices and the understanding and creation of visual hierarchy. Her company Bright Pink Communication Design works in areas including healthcare, construction, education, financial services and the public sector.

Joseph Alessio

Joseph Alessio is a lettering artist and designer from the Detroit area. He has worked with companies such as Patagonia, Reach Records, Monotype and the Art Director's Club. When not working, he plays 7 musical instruments and reads classic literature. You can keep up with some of what he's doing on his Dribbble profile³²⁴, and he often talks about life, design and current events in 140 characters³²⁵.

Laura Franz

Laura Franz is a Professor at UMass Dartmouth, where she teaches a wide range of type classes – including a Web Typography class in The Graduate Certificate In Web and Interaction Design. Inspired by the intersection of tradition and technology, Laura shares her web font recommendations on goodwebfonts.com³²⁶ and her typography knowledge via “Typographic Web Design: How to Think Like a Typographer in HTML and CSS³²⁷” (Wiley), “Typography for Web Designers³²⁸” (lynda.com), and “Choosing and Using Web Fonts³²⁹” (lynda.com).

³²⁴. <http://dribbble.com/Alessio>

³²⁵. http://twitter.com/alessio_joseph

³²⁶. <http://www.goodwebfonts.com>

³²⁷. <http://www.amazon.com/Typographic-Web-Design-Think-Typographer/dp/1119976871/>

³²⁸. <http://www.lynda.com/Web-Fonts-tutorials/Typography-for-Web-Designers/79411-2.html>

³²⁹. <http://www.lynda.com/course-tutorials/Choosing-Using-Web-Fonts/97715-2.html>

About Smashing Magazine

Smashing Magazine³³⁰ is an online magazine dedicated to Web designers and developers worldwide. Its rigorous quality control and thorough editorial work has gathered a devoted community exceeding half a million subscribers, followers and fans. Each and every published article is carefully prepared, edited, reviewed and curated according to the high quality standards set in Smashing Magazine's own publishing policy³³¹.

Smashing Magazine publishes articles on a daily basis with topics ranging from business, visual design, typography, front-end as well as back-end development, all the way to usability and user experience design. The magazine is—and always has been—a professional and independent online publication neither controlled nor influenced by any third parties, delivering content in the best interest of its readers. These guidelines are continually revised and updated to assure that the quality of the published content is never compromised. Since its emergence back in 2006 Smashing Magazine has proven to be a trustworthy online source.

³³⁰. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com>

³³¹. <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/publishing-policy/>