

INDESIGN magazine

**SUPER
GUIDE!**

TYPE VOL.

2

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- ▶ **Google Fonts**
- ▶ **Type Posters**
- ▶ **Sci-Fi Fonts**
- ▶ **Essential Typography Books**

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FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF



Type is one of those bottomless topics that you can just keep diving deeper and deeper into.

Over the history of

InDesign Magazine, we've published hundreds of type-related articles, and yet there's always so much more to explore—from the history of type to cutting edge techniques, and everything inbetween. We've covered it type from every angle, and now we're back with a second volume of all-things type in this amazing SuperGuide.

We begin with a very fundamental skill: identifying the fonts you see, as Steve Werner shares his favorite resources for [identifying mystery fonts](#) in PDFs and on the web.

Then, we quickly shift into high (and low) gear as Andrea Lekszen explores eye-catching [high-contrast fonts](#) that combine thick and thin strokes.

And since you can never, ever have too many fonts, Keith Gilbert shows how to find, install, and use great [free fonts from Google](#). They're

not just for the web—you can use these for professional print projects too!

Over the course of her career, Ilene Strizver has had a hand in developing hundreds of typefaces, so I daresay there's simply no one better to compile [a list of typography books to inspire and inform you](#). Better start making room on your bookshelves now.

Then Andrea Lekszen teams up with Charles Fadem with a fascinating exploration of the realm of [sci-fi type](#).

Next, Ilene Strizver is back, recounting the stories of the remarkable [women behind some of your favorite fonts](#).

And to finish things off, we have a pair of irresistible typographic projects for you to undertake, as I show [how to make a creative poster from the text of an entire book](#) and Nigel French shows [how to make a hometown \(or any town, really\) alphabet](#).

Enjoy!



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► PUBLISHER

David Blatner

► EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief

Mike Rankin, mike@indesignmag.com

Editorial Advisor

Anne-Marie Concepción

Managing Editor

Wendy Katz

Contributing Writers

Steve Werner, Andrea Lekszen, Keith Gilbert, Ilene Strizver, Charles Fadem, Nigel French

► DESIGN

Art Direction and Production

Pamela Sparks

► BUSINESS

Contact Information

<http://indesignsecrets.com/contact>

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WHAT'S THAT FONT?!



BY Steve Werner

New artificial intelligence software (and some good old-fashioned human knowledge) can help you identify a mystery font

IT'S AN OLD PROBLEM IN graphic arts: You or your client see a typeface you would like to use for your project... it's on a website, or in a magazine or book... but you haven't the faintest idea of what font was used by the original designer! How do you identify the font?

In the pre-Internet days, you had to rely on tedious and

time-consuming methods, such as poring over thick and expensive catalogs, like [Rookledge's International Typefinder](#), trying to match the font by its visual characteristics. Then, starting in the 1990s, you might find an online bulletin board or forum where type experts could try to identify it for you from a picture. But

today, I want to tell you about some of the many options at your fingertips for identifying the fonts around you.

Step-by-Step Identification

Beginning about a decade ago, websites started to use categorization software to help you identify a font. One of the earliest was called [WhatTheFont](#) at [MyFonts.com](#). This site let you upload an image of your font, and the software would try to identify it, showing you multiple possible font matches. Similarly, the site [Identifont.com](#) attempts to match a font after you answer a series of questions about the appearance of the font—like what the letter “j” looks like (FIGURE 1).

The software used by these earlier websites is fairly intolerant of less than perfect images: The type has to be very high

contrast on a clean background. If the type is light on a darker image, you may have to use Photoshop to invert the image, as well as to resample, straighten,

and crop it tightly around the type. The letters can't touch. You may have to manually confirm the identification of each individual letter.

FIGURE 1. On the Identifont website you can answer a series of questions about a font's appearance to try to identify it.

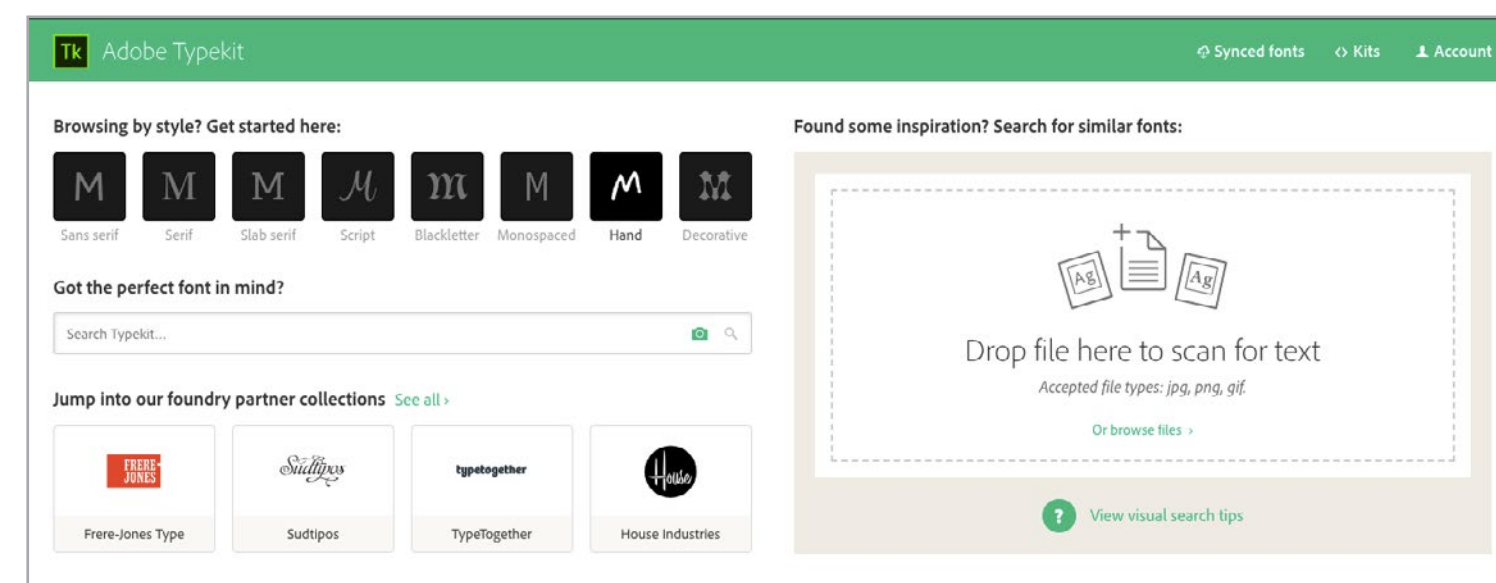


FIGURE 2. The landing page of Typekit.com prominently features an area where you can drag and drop images of type for the purpose of identifying fonts in them.

New Tech to the Rescue

These older “field guide” methods are still around, but in the past year or so, new AI (artificial intelligence or machine learning) techniques have been developed by several developers, greatly increasing accuracy and speed of font identification.

In October 2016, at its MAX event, Adobe showed prototypes of new AI technology it called [Adobe Sensei](#) to make it easier to edit and manipulate images and help with some other graphics tasks. Then, at the next MAX in October 2017, Adobe showed off more concrete examples which it had begun integrating into various applications. One of these was the ability to identify fonts, which it had integrated into its mobile [Adobe Capture CC](#) software and the Typekit website (FIGURE 2).

Another company working with AI technology is [Monotype](#). They are the owners of the WhatTheFont website and developers of an early iPhone app used to identify fonts. In the fall of 2017, using this new technology, they updated the WhatTheFont app to version 2.0 and released it for both iOS and Android devices. It is now powered by machine learning technology to make identifying fonts faster and more accurate.

Both of these companies are using AI and machine learning in the graphics field as a behind-the-scenes helper. In [an article](#) on their website, Monotype claims WhatTheFont is “capable of recognizing over 133,000 fonts, and has learned to do so only after being fed vast amounts of data... [The] team had to take into account that WhatTheFont wouldn't always be fed crisp,

clean images of fonts, but blurry photographs taken from different angles and rotations, and often with the interference of overlays, background images, or minor modifications made by the designer.”

Identifying Fonts Using Phone or Tablet Apps

There are two ways you can use the new machine learning technology to identify fonts—using an app on your phone or tablet or uploading a picture of type to a website using your computer.

Using a mobile device is probably the easiest way for most people because you always have your phone or a tablet with you to take a picture. The software developed a decade ago was slower and didn't tolerate less than optimum images. These days, the combination of much faster processors on

modern phones and tablets and AI technology often makes this approach the best.

There are two primary competitors in this category—the current versions of WhatTheFont from MyFonts.com (Monotype) and Adobe Capture CC.

WhatTheFont app

WhatTheFont is available for download for [iOS](#) from the App Store, or for [Android](#) devices from Google Play. The interface is simple and easy to use. Here are the steps you would use to identify a font:

1. When you open the app, you're immediately taken to the camera in your device, so you can take a picture. Alternatively, a button gives you access to your Camera Roll to select an image you've already taken. When you click the shutter button,

the image is immediately analyzed to find words ([FIGURE 3](#)).

2. A tap of a button at the bottom of the screen takes you to a interface where you can rotate or tweak the angle of the image so the type

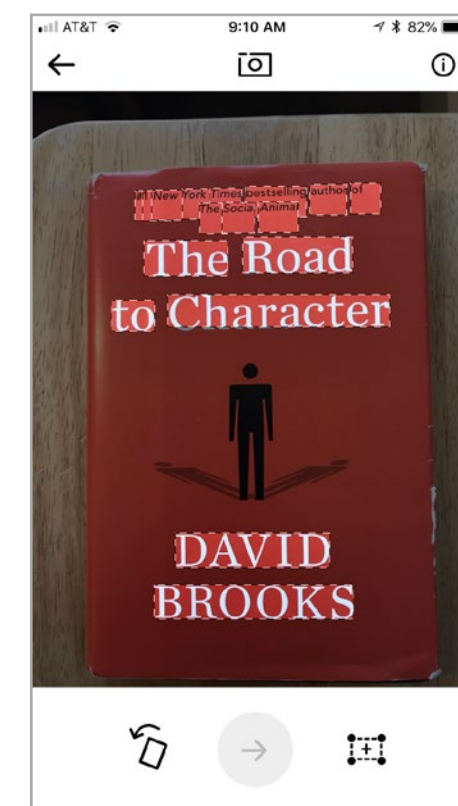


FIGURE 3. The WhatTheFont mobile app is smart enough to recognize all the fonts on this book cover.

will be straighter. A second button gives you cropping handles to surround the line of type you would like to be recognized (**FIGURE 4**). Click the arrow at the bottom and the app analyzes the image to try to find matching fonts.

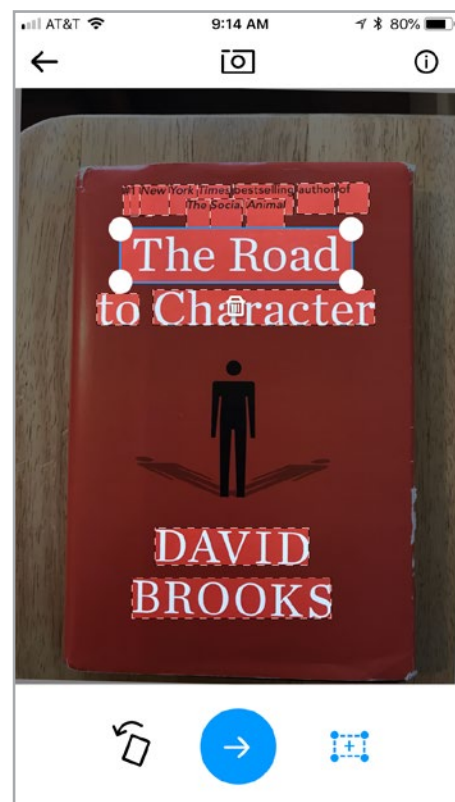


FIGURE 4. WhatTheFont provides tools for straightening the type and cropping the words you want to identify.

3. Several font matches are shown (**FIGURE 5**). A display of each font and its name is listed.
4. When you select one of the matches, you can click the editing pencil and enter new text to display.
5. The app offers links to the MyFonts.com website so you can purchase the font.

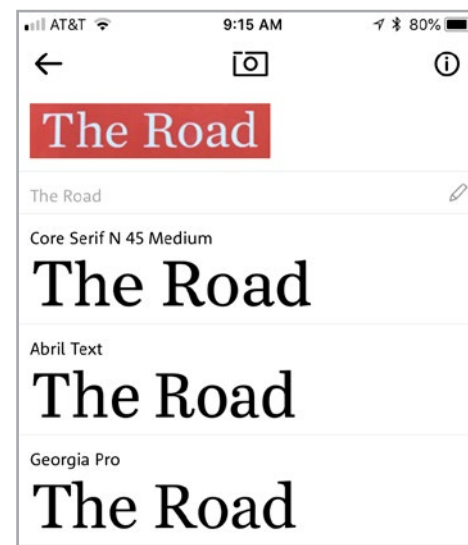


FIGURE 5. After cropping the type, WhatTheFont provides a list of font matches.

This app is very fast and quite accurate. It could find good matches for all the fonts I tried, although the results were not necessarily perfect.

MyFonts.com gives you access to a large library of available fonts. It assumes you're willing to spend money to buy a font, and not just use a more limited library like an Adobe Typekit subscription offers.

The fact that WhatTheFont is not tied into the Adobe Creative Cloud infrastructure is both good news and bad news. The good news is that you can license the fonts for use perpetually, and don't need to maintain a subscription. When you click "Buy it at MyFonts," you're taken to the MyFonts.com website where you're given a variety of licensing options, including family packs.

The (slight) bad news is that you need to go through a standard manual font installation process on your computer before you can use the fonts.

Adobe Capture CC app

Adobe Capture CC started life as several separate iPhone apps—such as Adobe Shape and Adobe Color—which used images to capture colors, shapes, and other design assets. As the software evolved, Adobe combined these apps into Capture CC and added the ability to identify type. It has modules that capture, edit, and store not only type, but also shapes, colors, materials, patterns, and brushes. However, unlike the WhatTheFont app, Capture requires access to a Typekit subscription to pick matching fonts.

Adobe Capture CC can be downloaded from the App store

for iPhones or iPads, or from Google Play for [Android devices](#).

The font-matching feature in Capture CC is as easy to use as WhatTheFont. Here are steps you would use:

1. Open the Capture CC app and click Type.
2. Click the + button at the bottom of the screen to start a new type capture.
3. Click the camera button to take a picture using your device's camera, or choose an existing image from your Camera Roll, Adobe Stock image, Creative Cloud Files image, or (new in version 4.0) your Lightroom images. If you're using the camera, you'll be prompted to align text above a line. Click the shutter.

4. Capture CC identifies the type it can see in the image ([FIGURE 6](#)).
5. Click on the selected type, and adjustable crop handles will appear. For best results, tightly crop the type on all

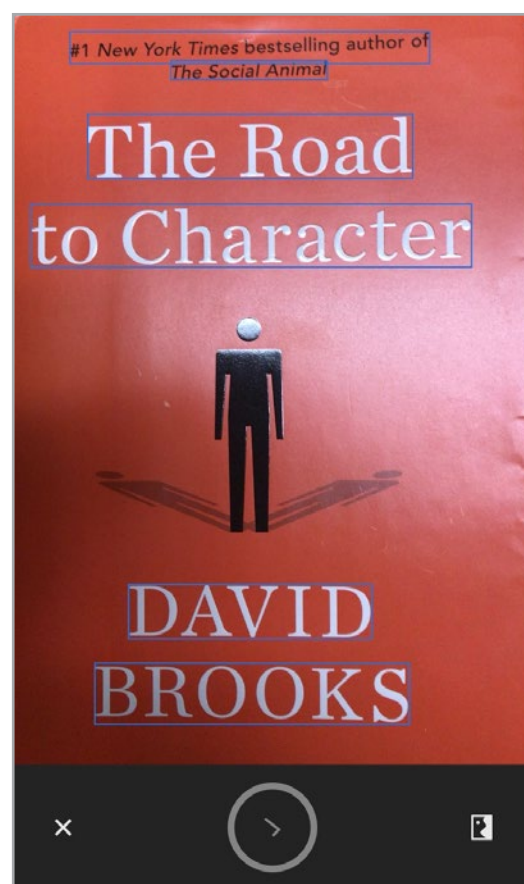


FIGURE 6. Like the WhatTheFont mobile app, Capture CC is smart enough to identify the fonts in the image.

sides and then click the check box at the bottom of the screen ([FIGURE 7](#)).

6. Several matches are shown from the Typekit library ([FIGURE 8](#)). Scroll to find the one you want.

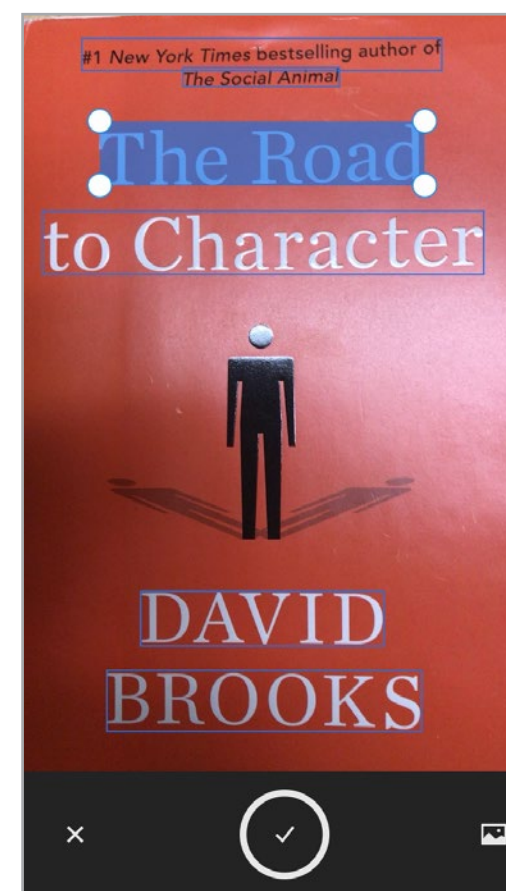


FIGURE 7. Adobe Capture CC offers cropping handles to select the type to be identified.

7. You have an option to edit the text, and modify the style, size, leading and tracking values before you save it.
8. The information is stored in a character style in one of your

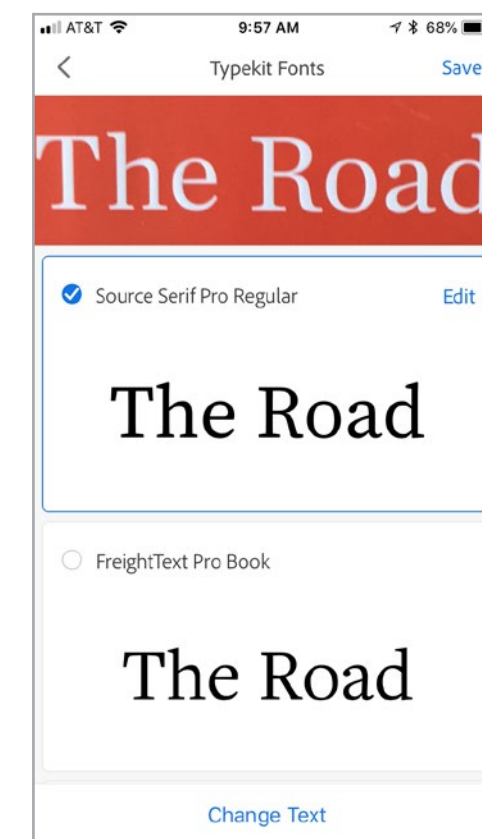


FIGURE 8. When Adobe Capture CC identifies matches to a font, it picks the closest it can find in the Typekit font library.

CC Libraries. You can edit the style name, pick a library and then save it. It's immediately available for you to use in InDesign CC or other applications

Because you're picking from the Typekit library (which [Keith Gilbert estimated](#) to currently includes about 1500 fonts), the range of fonts it will pick from is necessarily smaller. However, you won't have to purchase the font because you already have access to it through your Creative Cloud subscription.

This workflow is also more integrated with the Creative Cloud applications. You can immediately sync a font from Typekit and use it in InDesign CC, Illustrator CC, Photoshop CC, or XD CC. Of course, there are limits on the number of fonts you can have synced at any given time (100

fonts with a standard Creative Cloud subscription) and you will lose access to the fonts if you ever cancel your Creative Cloud subscription.

I found that Typekit gave me reasonably close matches to the fonts I was looking for. But if you need an exact match to a font not found in the Typekit library, I would recommend using the WhatTheFont app and purchasing the font.

Identifying Fonts Using Your Computer

Although using an app on your mobile device is pretty simple and fast, some of you may still wish to use your computer for any number of reasons: For example, you've received an image of the font you're identifying from a client, and it needs to be cleaned up using Photoshop. Or, you prefer

GETTING THE BEST RESULTS

Although the machine learning technology is a lot easier to use than the finicky process on the older font identification websites, not all type images work equally well. Here are some tips for getting the best results:

- ▶ You'll get the best results with one line of type. Crop the type tightly and include the entire shape of each glyph. However, you don't need to use Photoshop; in most cases, the software provides handles in the app to do the cropping.
- ▶ Use alphabetic characters (Aa-Zz) rather than numbers and symbols to enhance identification.
- ▶ Use the software's method of aligning the type. It will have a hard time if the type is skewed.
- ▶ Get as high a contrast as possible when taking a picture. It makes it easier to detect character shapes.
- ▶ If possible, the color of both the type and the background should be uniform. Type on an image or pattern, or type with varying colors will be harder to recognize.
- ▶ Zoom in. Text height should be at least 100 pixels.

storing your type images on your computer with the rest of the project. No problem, the machine learning technology can be used by uploading images to a website.

The older websites for identifying fonts are still around. For example, the [Linotype Font Identifier](#) uses the same method as [Identifont.com](#), described above. [Font Squirrel](#) uses Fontspring's Matcherator service, which uses the older technology when an image is uploaded. But you'll often get better results using browser-based tools from the same two companies I mentioned above—Monotype and Adobe.

WhatTheFont website

The [WhatTheFont](#) page at MyFonts.com gives you the chance to upload PNG, GIF or JPEG images up to 2 MB in size.

I found it not quite as easy as using the mobile version of WhatTheFont. You'll have to do more work ahead of time: I had to resample and crop the image I received to get it to process the file. For this sample, I chose a magazine headline from a designer friend, so I knew the font she had used—a Type 1 Adobe font called Weiss Std (FIGURE 9).

After uploading the sample, I was prompted to confirm the identities of each glyph in the headline, then click Continue. It correctly identified the font (FIGURE 10).

The MyFonts.com website is not only accurate, but it has an ace up its sleeve: If you're not satisfied with the identification, you can also "submit your image to the WhatTheFont Forum to have your image viewed by font geeks the world over."

FIGURE 9. I used this magazine headline in Adobe Weiss to test the WhatTheFont and Typekit website font identifiers.

FIGURE 10. The WhatTheFont page correctly identified the Weiss font when an image was uploaded.

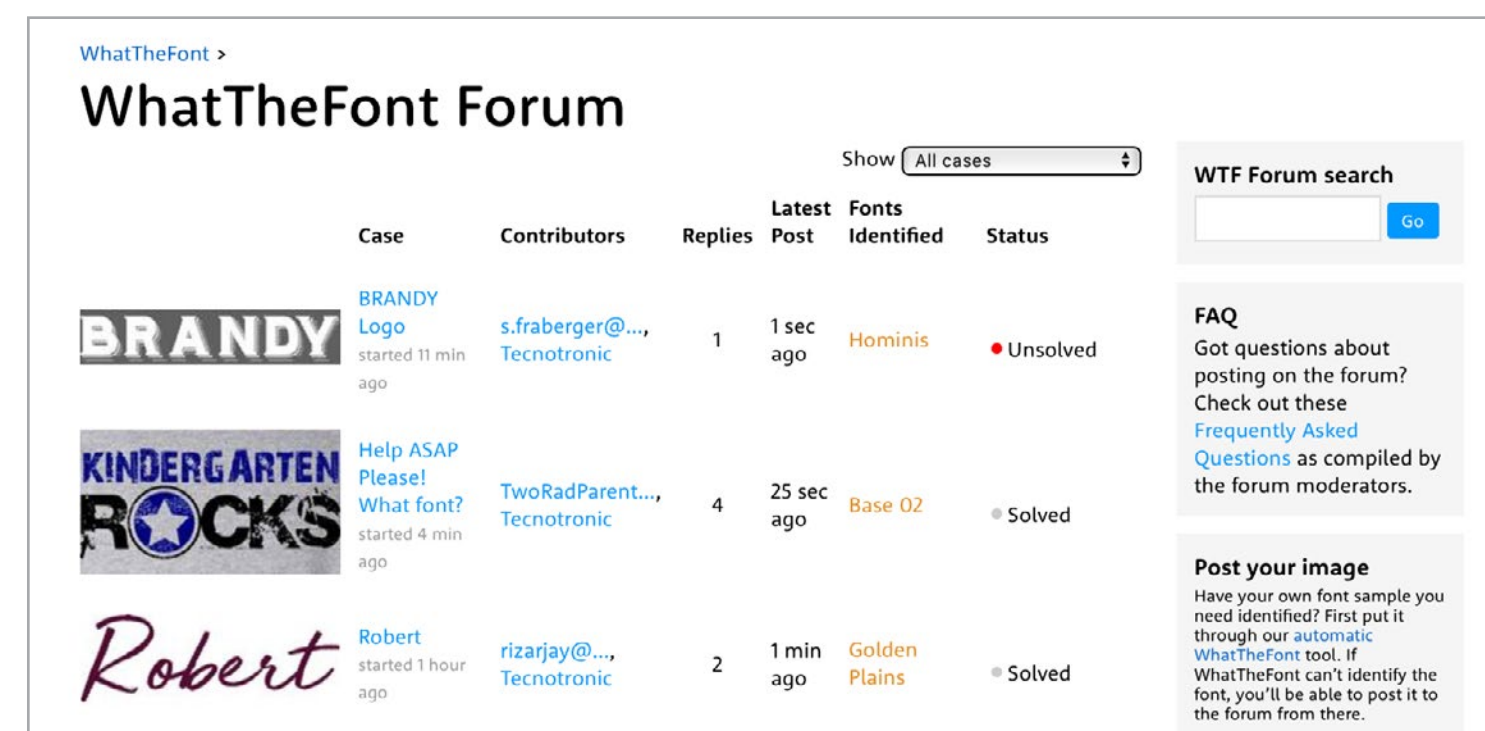


FIGURE 11. The WhatTheFont Forum claims a high rate of solutions by its font geek contributors.

This seems to be a very busy forum indeed, as shown by the Forum landing page (**FIGURE 11, PREVIOUS PAGE**). On the day I'm writing this, 134 cases have been solved today, and it claims 433,759 solved to date!

Similar services are offered at the [FontID](#) website and the [What's This Font? Facebook group](#) (**FIGURE 12**). Clearly, humans are still sometimes better than machine learning at this task.

Typekit website

The [Typekit website](#) uses the same technology as the Adobe Capture CC app. It accepts the same three file types as WhatTheFont—JPEG, PNG, and GIF—

but seemed to be more tolerant of images which were not well prepared ahead of time.

After scanning the image, it lets you pick a cropping area on screen, a service not currently offered by WhatTheFont website (**FIGURE 13**). You then click Next Step. It then confirms that the text it's interpreted is correct.

However, in my test it didn't pick the exact font (Weiss) because it was not included in the Typekit library. Instead, Typekit offered up several similar serif fonts found in its collection (**FIGURE 14**).

The Typekit site offers two kinds of type choices: First, it includes the fonts that you can sync in Adobe Capture (which includes the fonts in your Creative Cloud subscription). But it also shows additional fonts that you can purchase, just like MyFonts.com. Ironically,



FIGURE 12. The What's This Font Facebook group has thousands of members who can help you identify a font.

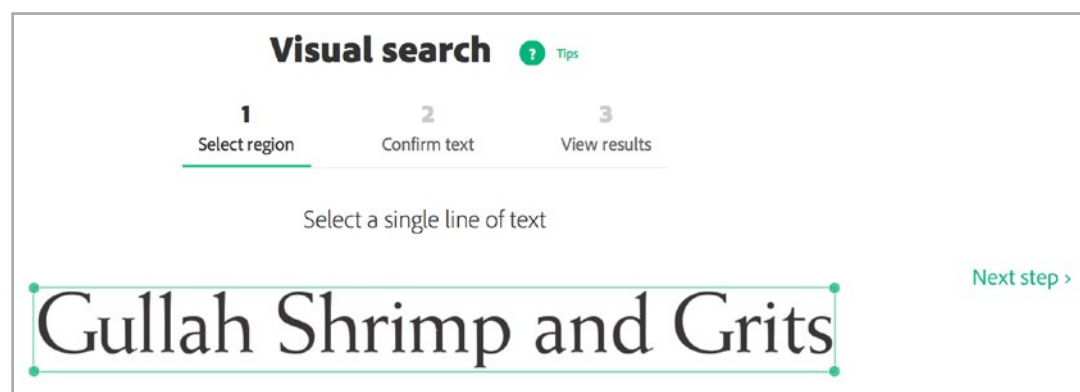


FIGURE 13. Unlike the WhatTheFont site, Typekit lets you crop the type image.



FIGURE 14. The Typekit site didn't identify the Weiss font, but offered up other choices in its collection.

they don't include all the fonts in the Adobe library—including Weiss! But for those that are in the Typekit library, immediate syncing to your computer is available.

The PDF Method

If you have received a PDF file containing font(s) you want to identify, you can use Acrobat Pro (any version) to identify the font.

Acrobat gives you two tools for this purpose. The first one is the Fonts section of Document Prop-

erties. Choose **File > Properties** (Command/Ctrl+D). Click on the Fonts tab of the Document Properties dialog box, and all the embedded fonts in the PDF will be listed. If you have a lot of fonts in the document, you may be confused as to which one is the one you want to identify (**FIGURE 15**)

A more accurate method is to open Output Preview in the Print Production tools. In Acrobat Pro DC, use the search field at the top of the list of tools

on the right side of the screen, and search for “Output Preview”. When it's opened, in the Preview menu, choose Object Inspector. Move your cursor over the font you want to identify, and the Object Inspector will list the attributes of the type, including the font name, size, and font type (**FIGURE 16**).

Browser Extensions to Identify Web Fonts

If you need to identify fonts you see on a website, there are

several browser extensions and bookmarklets that can help you. (A bookmarklet contains JavaScript which is stored in a browser bookmark to perform some function within a web page.)

The most impressive browser extension that I found was [FontFace Ninja](#). It is available for free download and installation on Chrome, Safari, and Firefox browsers. In Safari, where I tested it, it installs a button at the top of the browser window. Clicking it allows you to inspect

FIGURE 15. Adobe Acrobat Pro can identify any font embedded in a PDF file in the Document Properties dialog box.

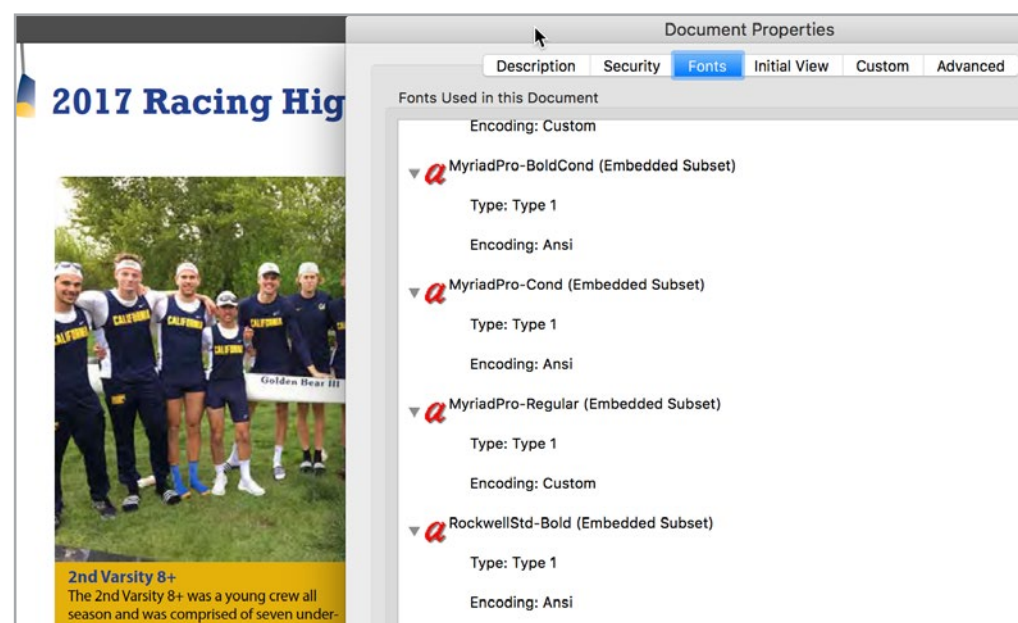
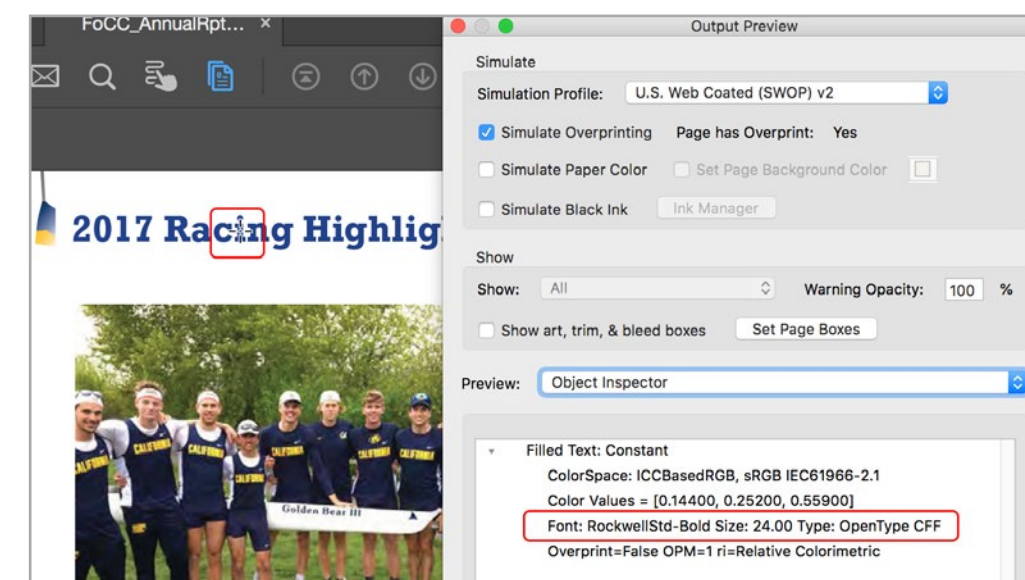


FIGURE 16. The most accurate way to identify a font with Acrobat is to use the Object Inspector in the Output Preview tool.



the font on any open web page. It will identify the font name by hovering over it, as well as font size, letterspacing, line height and color of the font. Most of the other extensions do this as well.

But what makes FontFace Ninja special is that when you click the font, you also get a separate window (still in the current web page) where you can type sample text, change its size and letterspacing, and generate a pangram which displays all the letters of the alphabet. If it's a free web font, it may provide a link to download it ([FIGURE 17](#)).

If it's a font that you need to purchase, FontFace Ninja will display the price and a link to [MyFonts.com](#) to purchase it.

Here are some other free browser extensions and bookmarklets for identifying fonts:

- ▶ [Fount](#) provides bookmarklets which can be dragged onto a bookmarks bar in Safari, Chrome, Firefox and Internet Explorer 8+. It identifies font name, size, weight, and style.
- ▶ [Whatfont Tool](#) installs an extension for Safari or Chrome, or a bookmarklet. Click the bookmarklet and it shows font name and style.
- ▶ [Font Finder](#) provides extensions for Chrome, Firefox and Opera browsers. It allows a user to analyze

the font information of any element on a page, copy any piece(s) of that information to the clipboard, and perform in-line replacements to test new layouts.

- ▶ [What Font Is](#) works a little differently. Its website lets you upload an image of a font which it tries to identify (as described earlier in the article). Alternatively, you can download Chrome or Firefox extensions that speed the image uploading process.

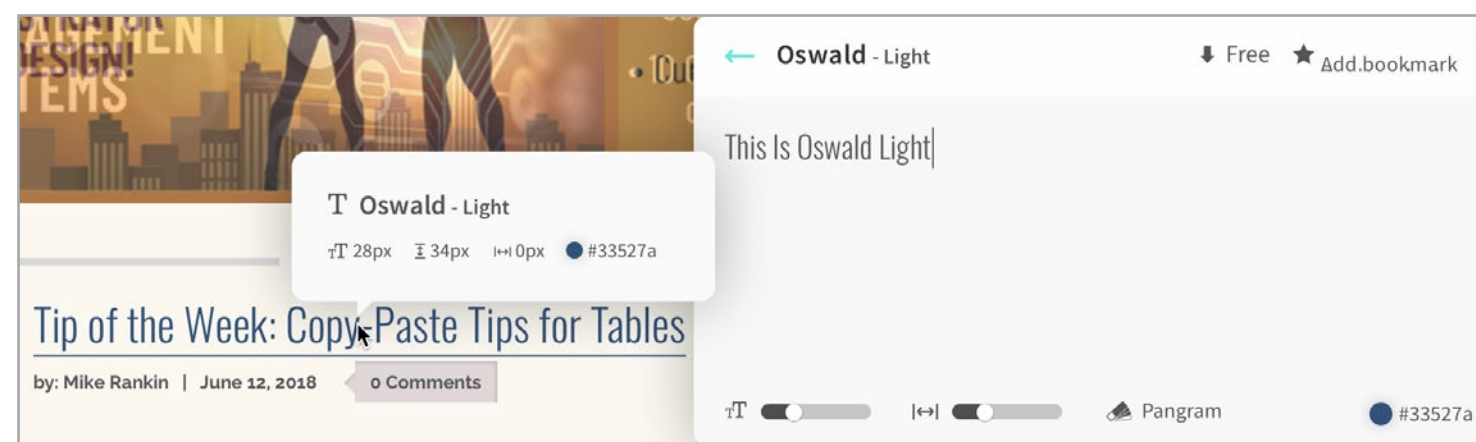


FIGURE 17. FontFace Ninja is the most complete web browser extension for identifying fonts. Here it also lets you type your own text and provides a download link.

Choosing Your Method

The method you choose to identify a font depends on whether you prefer to work with mobile devices, or a computer, what your expectations are about spending money on fonts for your project, and how exact a match you're expecting to your font sample. In any case, the assistance of artificial intelligence which is being applied by Monotype and Adobe software to font identification will produce much faster and more reliable results than what has been available in the past. And when all else fails, it's good to know there are still many friendly font geeks out there willing to lend a hand.

Steve Werner is a San Francisco-based trainer and publishing consultant.



Typographic Drama

Exploring the Craze of High-Contrast Fonts



BY Andrea Leksen



FIGURE 1. Alejandro Paul's recent font release, Speakeasy.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I love a gorgeous, dramatic, over-the-top, high contrast font for large titles in magazines, on posters, or on a tattoo! There's something about homing in on that meticulously designed letterform—each curve connecting a thin stroke to a ridiculously thick stroke—that creates drama and intensity (**FIGURE 1**). Is it a quick transition or slow? Does the terminal connect back into other letterforms or is it drawn out into an ornate

swash that ends like a stunning symphony finale?

Just thinking about it gives me goosebumps.

The Modern Beauty of Didone Fonts

Fonts with strong, heavy vertical strokes surrounded by highly-contrasting thin horizontal strokes and serifs are called *Didone* fonts. The name refers to Didot and Bodoni, two eighteenth-century font designers well known for their beautifully well-designed modern fonts.

These designers were inspired by the modern fonts created by the English printer John Baskerville, who set the stage for the next chapter of serif type in the 18th century, bridging the gap between oldstyle and modern serifs. Baskerville achieved crisp printing of these thin modern strokes through his experimentation with printing technology, crafting new processes to create darker inks and using brighter paper (FIGURE 2). Through this, Baskerville printed crisp, legible type in spite of the new printing challenges of these extreme stroke weights.¹

The modern serif continued to evolve through Giambattista Bodoni's experimental typography in Italy. "The king of printers and the printer of kings," Bodoni created innovative type designs and also had the reputation of being a meticulous

printer.² Bodoni's letterforms evolved from traditional roman letterforms, not only extending the contrast of stroke weight but also by designing more condensed letterforms with hairline serifs. These characteristics reflected the machine age

of the time—precision, perfection, and simplicity of design—replacing the frills of the rococo style.³ The friendly typographic competition between Bodoni and the Didot family kept evolving the modern serif further and raised the standard of precision

in the printing world of the early nineteenth century (FIGURE 3).

While this Didone movement is over two centuries old, these fonts often still feel modern to us! But of course, typography never stands still, and designers have taken high contrast fonts to even greater extremes.

Extreme Fonts in Fashion Design

If you were to describe a Didone font, you might use adjectives like "sophisticated," "dramatic," or "classy," due to its precision and extreme contrast of stroke weight. In many fashion lines, the goal is to create clothing that describes similar qualities—or at least make you feel like you will fit that description. So naturally, it makes sense that these fonts might be paired with these types of brands. For example, the Couture mission is

FIGURE 2. Baskerville's first print, Virgil, 1757

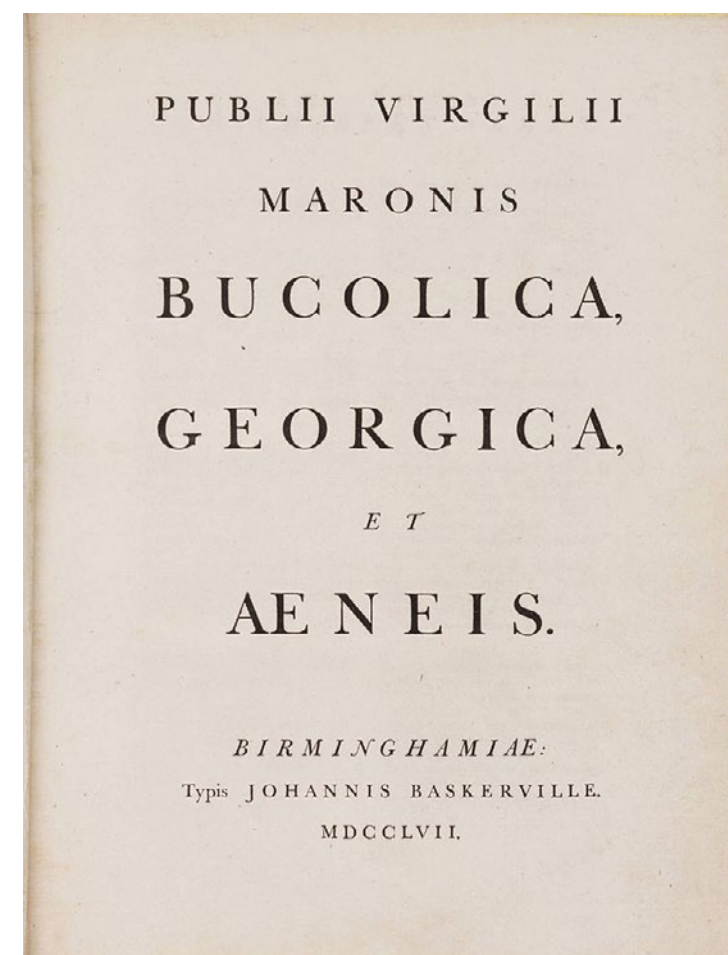
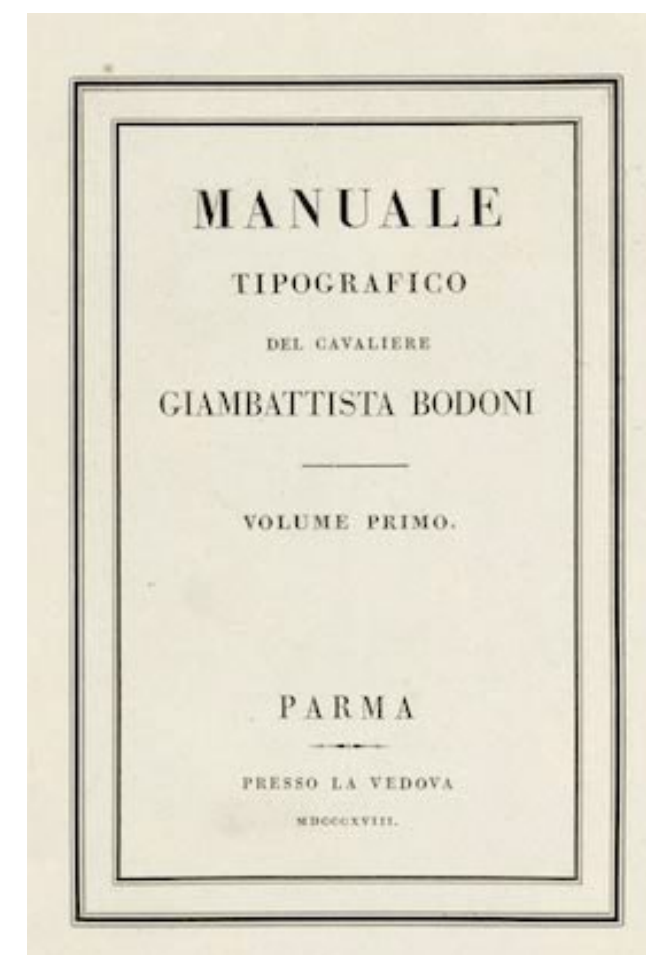


FIGURE 3. Il Manuale tipografico, 1813



to create clothing of the highest quality with incredible attention to detail. That sounds a lot like Bodoni's style to me!⁴

Commercial Type's Le Jeune font, designed for the 2013 refresh of *Vanity Fair*, was based on the Didot typeface and named after the French punchcutter Joseph Molé Le Jeune (FIGURE 4). It even includes a stencil version, playing with the extremes of disconnection to offer even more excitement in the strokes (FIGURE 5).

As in all design, typography and images work together to tell a cohesive, compelling story. In "Type in Couture," Elizabeth Carey Smith states: "Typography informs and expresses but it's mostly literal, while fashion is more nebulous. Fashion communicates lifestyles or the aspirations of life visually. Fashion is about self-invention and



FIGURE 4. Le Jeune's debut on *Vanity Fair*, 2013

self-expression. The secure and insecure ways that we reflect ourselves to ourselves and others."



FIGURE 5. Le Jeune Stencil, *Vanity Fair Italia*

Art Director Alexey Brodovitch brought the iconic *Didone Bazaar* masthead to life during his years at Harper's *Bazaar*. This cover from 1955 (FIGURE 6) shows a clever correlation between type and image and is just one example of a persuasive visual story from his 24 years reforming editorial design.⁵

While these fonts have screamed "modern" for so long, some designers have wondered if the trend is overused.



FIGURE 6. *Bazaar* cover, November 1955

The Science of Contrast

However, it's clear that so many of us are drawn to these high contrast fonts. But why? Bruno Maag of the type design foundry Dalton Maag states, "Extreme fonts, whether that be contrast,

weight, width, or any other thing that a type designer can think of, are very expressive. They shout for attention and elicit an emotional response, and that makes them useful and popular.” Whether it’s seen in design, fashion, or typography, contrast is one of the essentials that creates dynamic design.

Of course, what we define as beauty is determined by many things, including culture, history, and nature. Last month I was discussing this issue with neurologist Alessia Nicotra, who has recently been educating the typography world on the neuroscience of typography. She said that “Cultural preference depends on emotional choices that have become history on the background of a script. High contrast typography applies only to certain scripts, like Latin, for example (and not Chinese). The

use of high contrast typography has been passed from one user to another on an emotional basis, hence very much involving the ‘emotional brain.’” It would be a fascinating study to see how people’s brains respond to contrast in a variety of cultures!

Nietzsche suggests that “all pleasure depends on proportion” and that one of our innate desires is to find pattern and symmetry. It is also suggested that the significance of the aesthetic response correlates to the relationship of the parts to the whole. So perhaps we could find a link to contrast in these aesthetic responses as our eye compares the difference in the thin stroke to the thick stroke of a high contrast letterform. The greater the disparity between stroke weights, the more our brain reacts aesthetically to the stimulus.⁶

How Should I Use High Contrast Fonts?

High contrast fonts have a clear, resonant voice that demands to be heard. If these fonts reflect the personality of your project, use them at large sizes and show off those beautiful curves! High contrast fonts are best used for display and big headings. At smaller text sizes, hairlines will disappear and no longer be legible. So have fun with these

FIGURE 7. Matthew Carter’s Miller Banner font family

Blueflag Crawfish
Informal Review
 CIB PARTNERS
Quizlers & Blake
 Local 123 Patio

flamboyant, dramatic fonts in headlines and subtitles, and keep body type to legible text fonts that are designed for paragraph settings.

Here are a few fun high-contrast fonts you should know about:

- ▶ Matthew Carter’s [Miller](#) font includes all the weights you need, from text to display, including Miller Banner, Miller Display, Miller Headline, and Miller Text. Carter has a beautiful way of integrating personality into his letterforms while still keeping the consistency necessary for a successful typeface ([FIGURE 7](#)). Check out that italic lowercase z and uppercase Q! (swoon)
- ▶ Argentinian type designer Maximiliano Sproviero’s [Erotica](#) font is a calligraphic script that oozes sensuality through the dramatic stroke contrast

and with terminals ending in elaborate swashes (FIGURE 8). He includes multiple alternates to create your own ending—a designer’s dream!

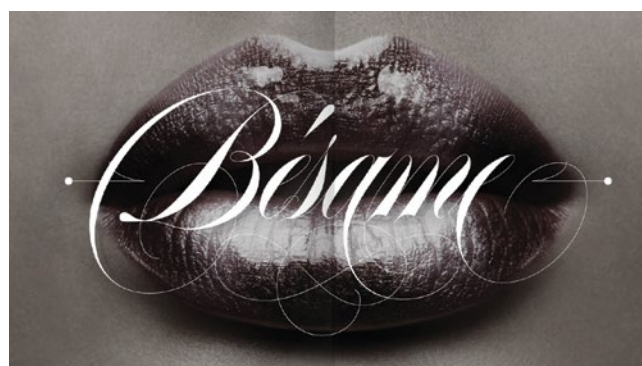


FIGURE 8. Maximiliano Sproviero’s Erotica font

- A few years ago I was drooling over the display font in Food & Wine magazine and wrote to ask what font it featured. It turns out it’s Dino Dos Santos’ Acta Display, so gorgeous in Black Italic (FIGURE 9).

FIGURE 9.
Acta Display



Am I a little biased when it comes to this category of type? Perhaps. I do have a knack for finding passion, whether it’s in an expressive dance step on the tango floor, playing a Rachmaninoff rhapsody on my grand piano, or drawing an over-the-top curve in a letterform. So when the Font Bureau offered me a generous mentorship opportunity a few years ago, I used my time to concoct a typeface with some of my favorite display attributes—low x-height and high contrast, with oodles of ligatures to explore beauty in the connection between letterforms. This typeface, Mr Gabe (FIGURE 10), will be making its debut in the near future, and I can only hope that it would have made the founders of the modern serif era proud.



FIGURE 10. Andrea Leksén’s soon-to-be-released Mr Gabe typeface

High Expression Fonts

Perhaps now that we understand the history, emotion, and meticulous creation of high contrast fonts a little better, we can appreciate them even more as we see them in use. Our clients may not know the history of Didone fonts when we use them in specific projects, but they (the clients!) will feel the connection between the emotion and the story we’re attempting to portray as designers. So continue the craze, push the limits, and see where it leads you!

Andrea Leksén is a type designer, graphic designer, and educator with a Master of Design degree from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design in Scotland. Currently a Design Instructor at Western Washington University and Associate Professor of Design at Cornish College of the Arts, Leksén specializes in typography, type design, brand, and traditional print design. She has worked in-house for corporations and design firms and serves a diverse client base in her business, Leksén Design. She is an avid participant in the local and international typographic community and in her spare time immerses herself in music, art, dance, pasta-making, parenting, and traveling.

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EXPAND YOUR FONT HORIZONS WITH GOOGLE FONTS

How to Find, Install, and Use
Google Fonts in InDesign



BY **Keith Gilbert**

IF YOU'RE A CREATIVE CLOUD member, you have access to Adobe Fonts, which features thousands of type families for desktop use. But if, like me, you believe that you can never have enough fonts, [Google Fonts](#) is another large type library you can access... and it's free!

The primary purpose of Google Fonts is to serve up fonts to websites. But, like Adobe Fonts, Google Fonts can be used for

projects destined for print, PDF, or EPUB output as well.

Choices, Choices, Choices

Google Fonts is an interesting and often useful collection of over 800 fonts. The fonts cross a broad spectrum of categories and intended usage (see sidebar “Selections from Google Fonts”). Some are specifically designed to look great on small screens. Some are from independent designers and small obscure type foundries, while others are from more established firms such as ParaType, Production Type, and Dalton Maag.

Editor's note: The heading font used by InDesign Magazine (Barlow Condensed) is a Google Font. You can learn more about our decision to use Barlow in the article “[Redesigning a Magazine](#)” in [Issue #106](#).

You'll find some overlap between the font selections at Google Fonts and Adobe Fonts. For example, all 18 weights of *Raleway* are in both collections, but Google Fonts features a "sister font" (*Raleway Dots*) that isn't in the Adobe Fonts library. On the other hand, while *Pacifico* appears in both libraries, you get only a single weight in Google Fonts, and three weights in Adobe Fonts. And you'll find *PT Sans*, *PT Serif*, and *PT Mono* are available on both services, but with Adobe Fonts, you can use them only for the web. So it's good to have access to both of these great resources.

Find the Perfect Font

The more type choices you have, the likelier it is you'll spend hours trying to find the perfect fonts that project the perfect voice for

SELECTIONS FROM GOOGLE FONTS

Google Fonts range from odd, unusual, and fun display faces...

FRIJOLE CREEPSTER CAESAR DRESSING

Jolly Lodger **METAL MANIA EATER**

BARRIO Stalin One *WANALEI*

...to quirky scripts and large families of body text faces.

Atma Light, Regular, Medium, Semibold, Bold

BioRhyme Extra Light, Light, Regular, Bold, Extra Bold

*BUNCEE HAIRLINE, **INLINE**, OUTLINE, SHADE*

CODYSTAR LIGHT, REGULAR

Encode Sans Thin, Light, Regular, Medium, SemiBold, Bold, Black

IBM Plex Mono, IBM Plex Sans, IBM Plex Serif (55 styles)

IM Fell Great Primer Regular, Italic

Libre Barcode: 

Euphoria Script, SIX CAPS

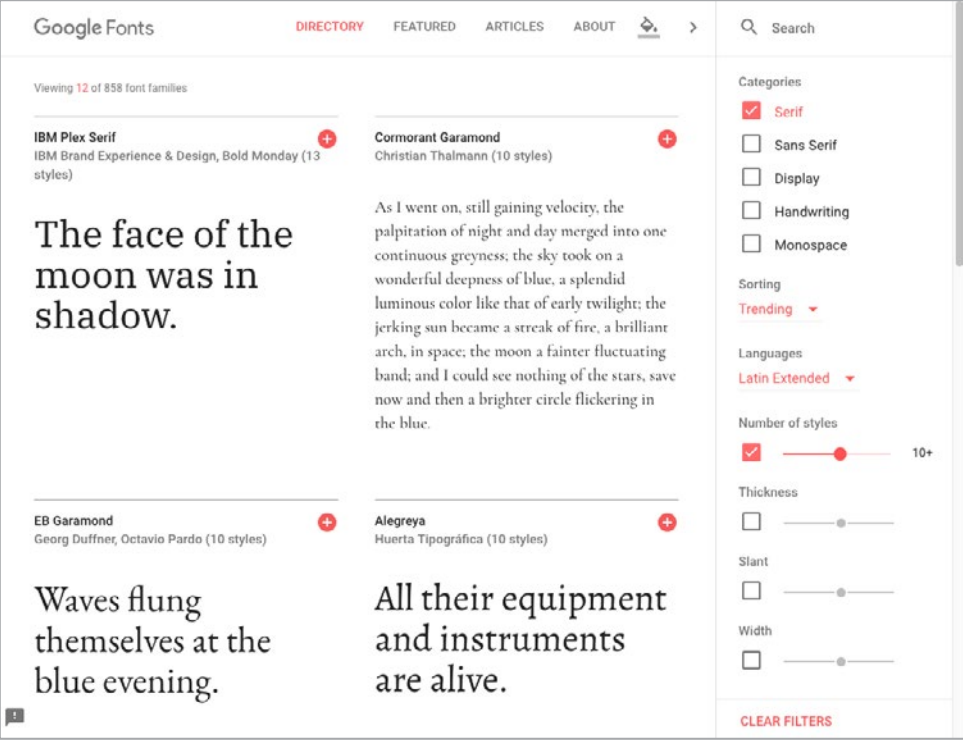
your design masterpiece. Thankfully, Google Fonts has some unique features that can help. The sidebar on the right side of the Google Fonts Directory page lets you sort and filter the font list a number of ways (FIGURE 1).

The directory listing itself can be customized to suit your needs (FIGURE 2).

Since the primary use of Google Fonts is to serve fonts to websites, Google has all kinds of analytics data on how often each font has been viewed on a website. You can see some of this data [here](#). This data can give you a sense of how popular a typeface is for web use. This popularity may or may not transfer to other usage of the font, however.

Google has made the Google Fonts API available to developers so they can create tools

FIGURE 1. The right-hand sidebar helps you filter and sort fonts. Here, I've requested serif fonts that use the Latin Extended character set and have ten or more styles in the family. This results in twelve listed fonts.



that let you “slice and dice” the font library in a variety of deep and geeky ways.

► Anatomy of Typefaces includes advanced filters that let you drag over histograms representing the attributes of Google Fonts so you can easily zero in on exactly the kind of font you’re looking for (FIGURE 3).

FIGURE 2. The Directory page at fonts.google.com can be customized to show a stock paragraph or sentence, or you can type your own sample text. You also can choose the type weight and size, or click through to view a full specimen page.

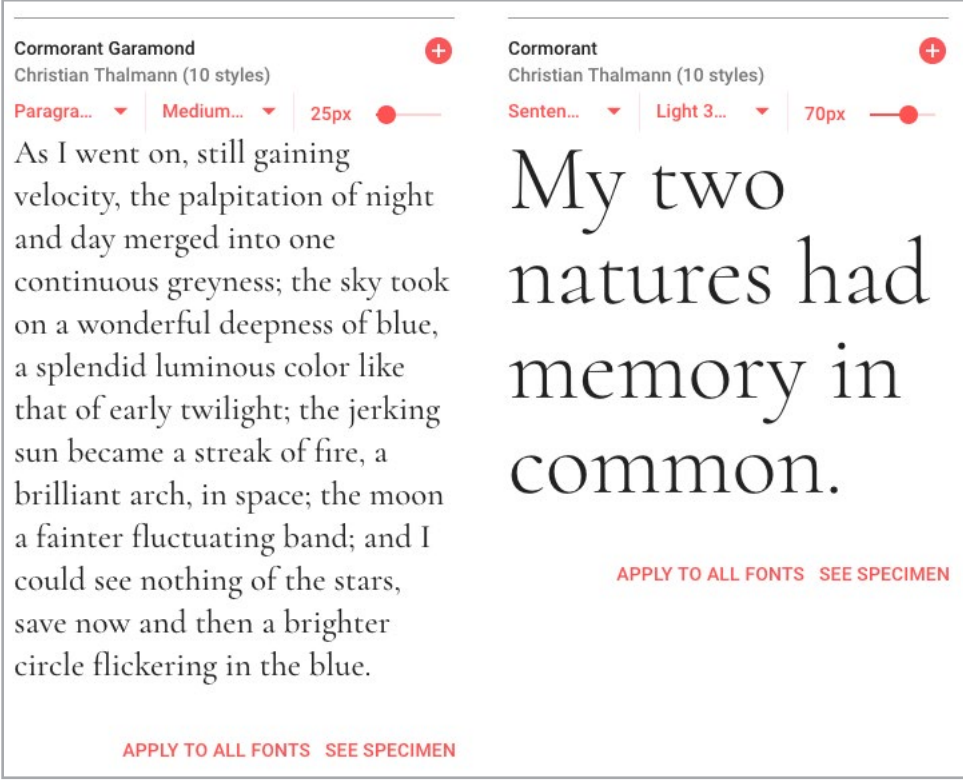


FIGURE 3. Anatomy of Typefaces



- ▶ A Better Font Finder offers a unique and fun set of controls for filtering the display of Google Fonts (FIGURE 4).
- ▶ FontCDN gives you many options for viewing and choosing Google Fonts, including a nifty scrolling display of sample text (FIGURE 5).
- ▶ Font Library offers the ability to sort and display Google Fonts by category, language support, variant support, and date (FIGURE 6).
- ▶ Better Google Fonts lets you view the larger type families in Google fonts, and see at a glance how many weights and styles are in a particular family (FIGURE 7).

If you prefer a type specimen book that you can print, ID Extras offers a [PDF catalog](#) that displays all the Google Fonts for \$4.95 USD.

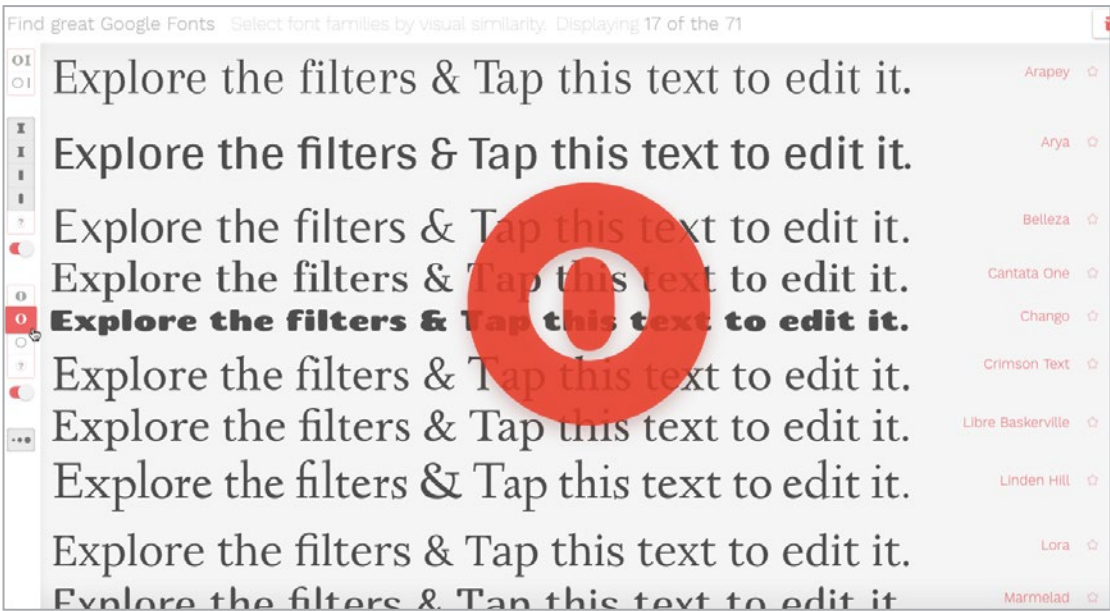


FIGURE 4. A Better Font Finder

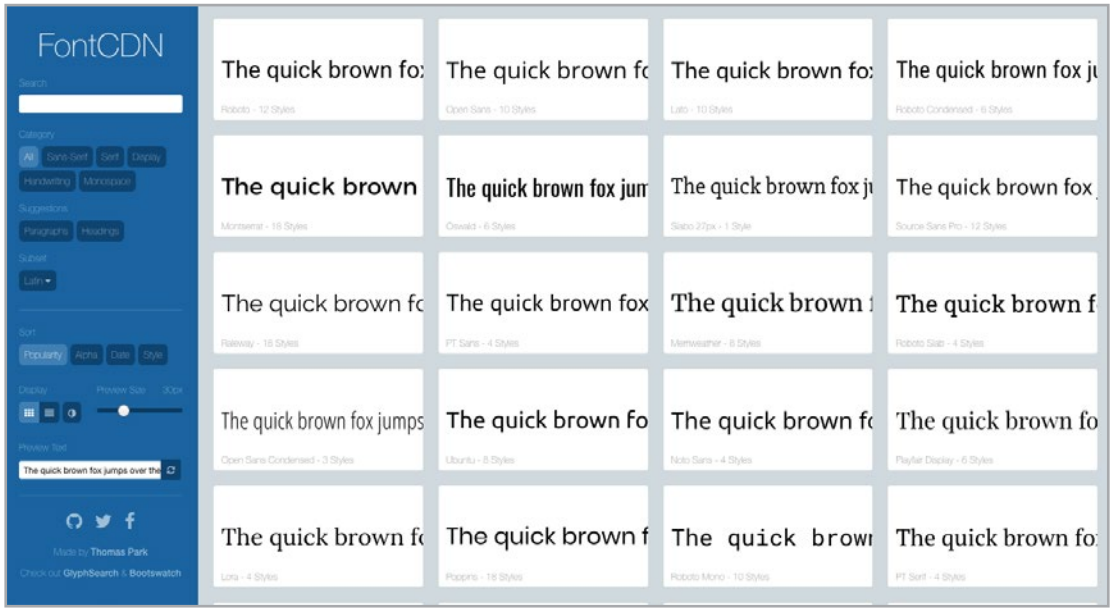


FIGURE 5. FontCDN

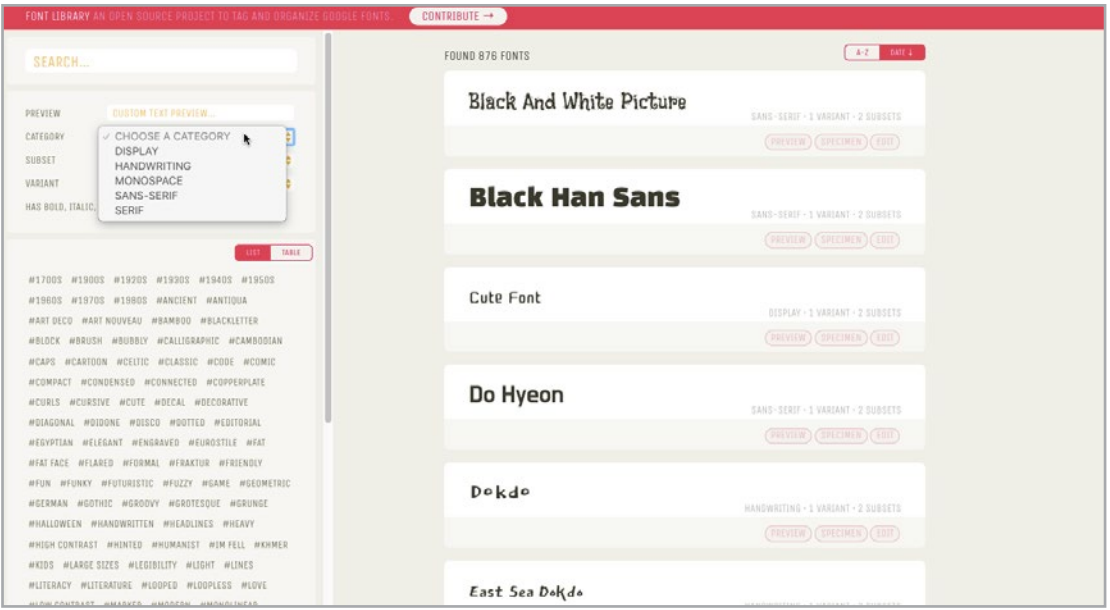


FIGURE 6. Font Library

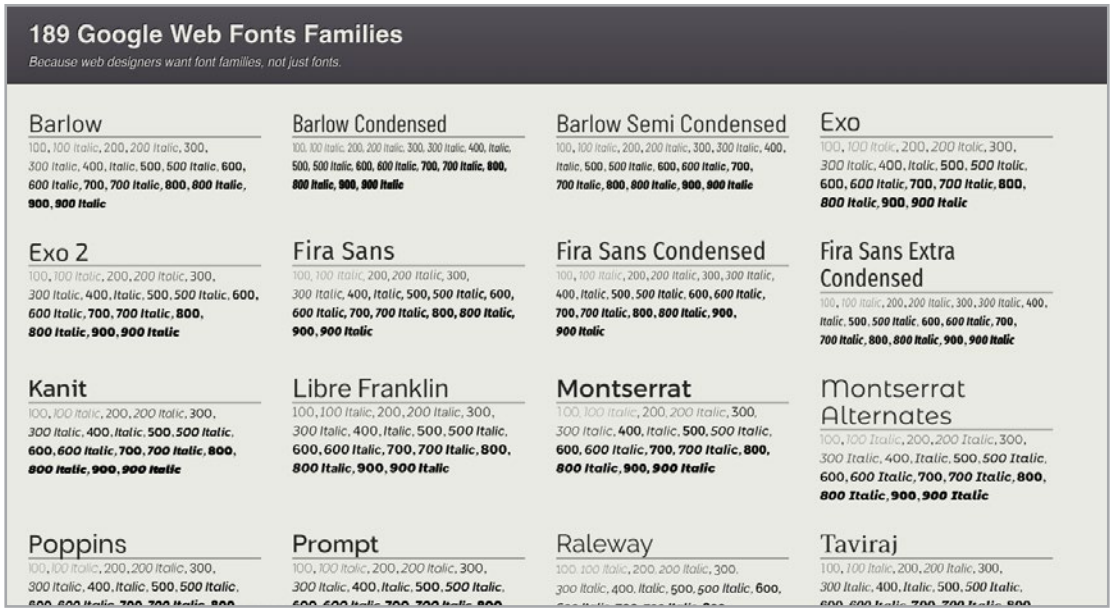
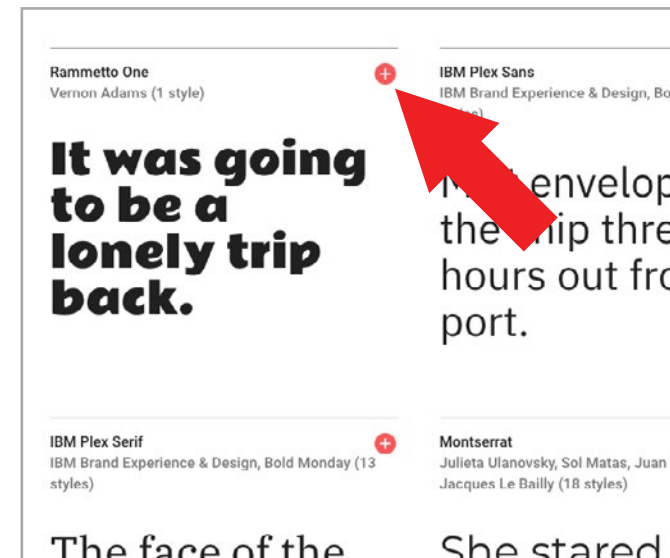


FIGURE 7. Better Google Fonts

How to Get the Fonts

Once you've found a Google font you want to use, the simplest way to use it in InDesign is to download and install the free [Skyfonts](#) utility. This will sync Google Fonts to your computer, much like Adobe Fonts syncs fonts from the Adobe Fonts library. This same utility works with the Fonts.com, Linotype, Monotype, and MyFonts websites that all offer subscription access to their libraries, much like Adobe Fonts.

However, if you are already proficient at installing and managing large font libraries on your computer, and have a font manager such as Suitcase installed, you'll probably want to download the fonts to your hard drive and install them like any other font. In fact, with Suitcase Fusion you can enable a feature



to automatically download and sync all of the current Google Fonts to your machine.

To download a single font or just a few fonts from Google Fonts, click the red plus sign next to the font you want. The font will be added to your list of selected fonts, and a black bar will appear at the bottom of the screen. Click this bar to reveal your list of selected fonts, and then click the download icon to download a single ZIP file containing all your selected fonts ([FIGURE 8](#)).

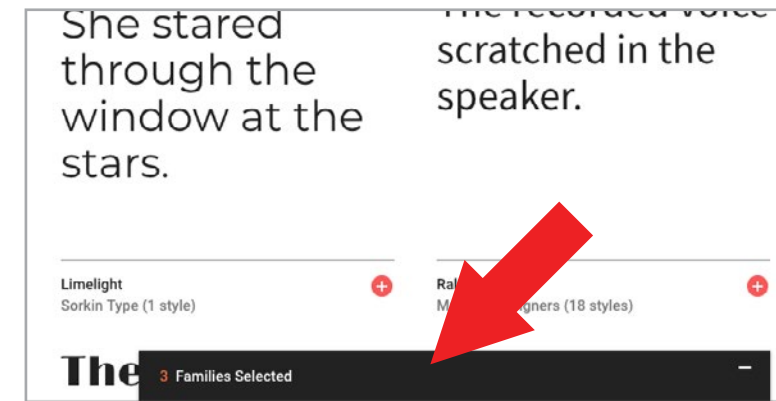


FIGURE 8. Here's how to download fonts from Google Fonts to your computer. First, click the plus icon next to the fonts you want. Then click the black bar at the bottom of the screen. Finally, click the download icon.

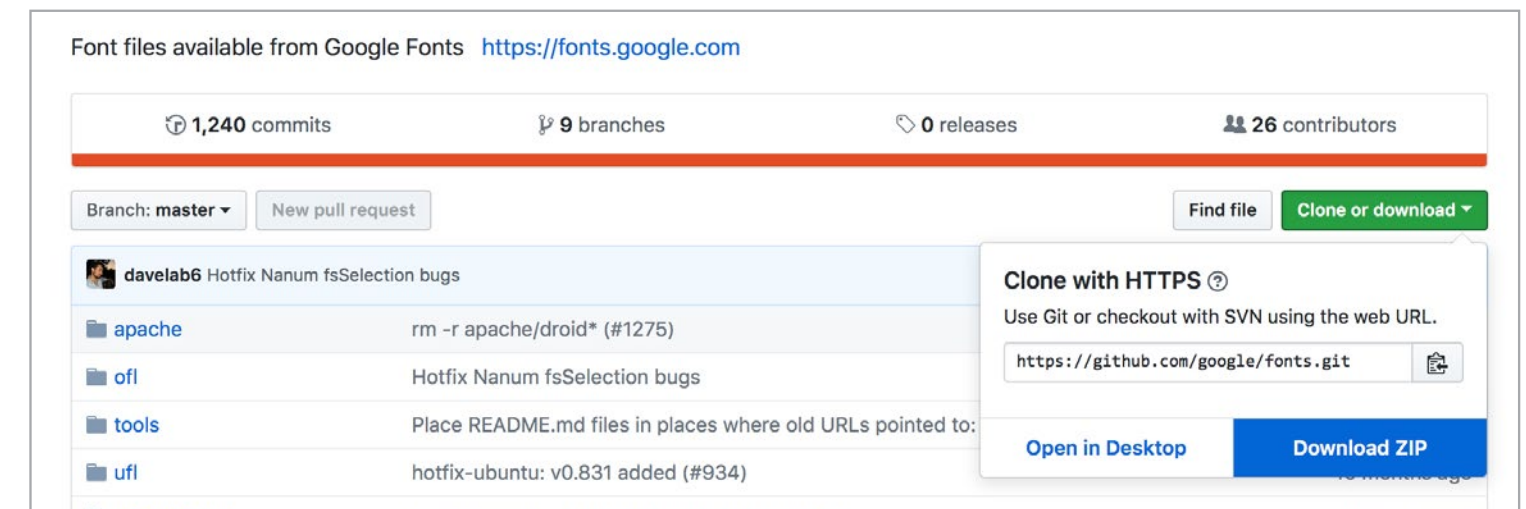
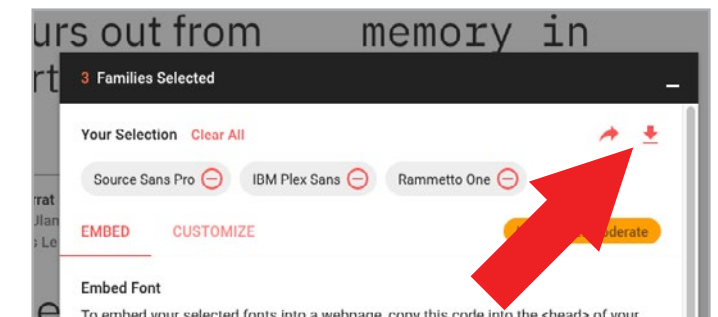


FIGURE 9. Visit github.com/google/fonts, and click the "Clone or download" button and then the Download ZIP button to receive the entire Google Font library in a single download.

If you want to go nuts, you can also download the entire Google Fonts library in one download ([FIGURE 9](#)). Of course, the Google

Fonts library is always growing, so you should still check out new releases in the future.

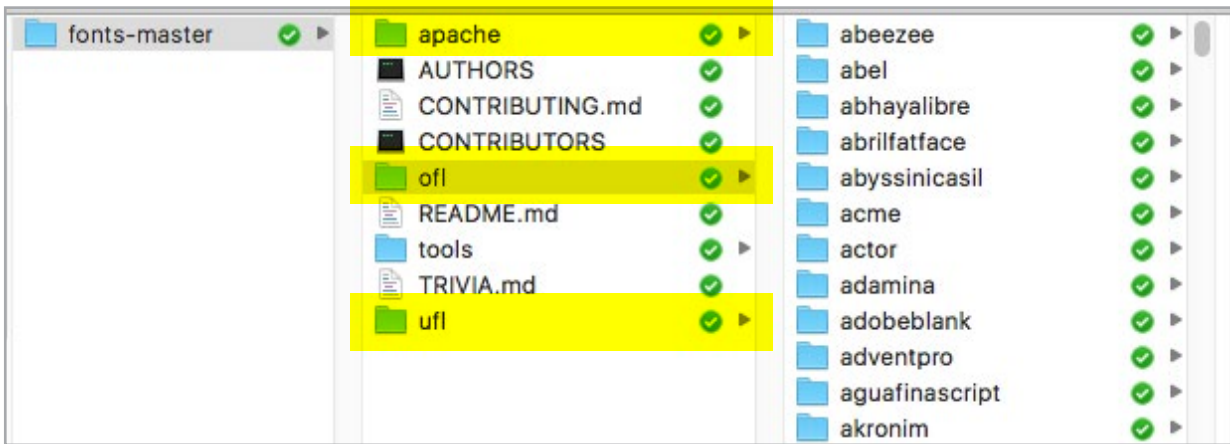
When you unzip the downloaded file, you'll find the fonts organized into three subfolders (FIGURE 10).

You can then install the fonts on your system using your font manager of choice. (I use FontExplorer Pro, but Extensis Suitcase or Insider Software's FontAgentPro are also popular choices.) See Mike Rankin's article, "Font Management," in [Issue #87](#) for an in-depth look at your options for wrangling fonts. I simply left the folder structure as is after unzipping, and dragged the entire top-level folder into FontExplorer to create a font set (FIGURE 11).

OpenType Features

All the Google Fonts filenames have the .TTF extension, so you might assume that they are

FIGURE 10. When you download the entire Google Fonts library, each font family will be organized into its own folder. But the families will be spread across three separate folders, depending on the open source license used.



TrueType fonts. Actually, most of the large type families and the newest fonts are saved in the OpenType TrueType format.¹ You can distinguish between OpenType TrueType fonts and old-fashioned TrueType fonts by looking at the icons in InDesign's font list. (FIGURE 12).

Regardless of format, all of the fonts work seamlessly across Macintosh and Windows computers, and can be embedded in PDF and EPUB

FIGURE 11. The Google Fonts font set as it appears after I installed it as a FontExplorer font set.

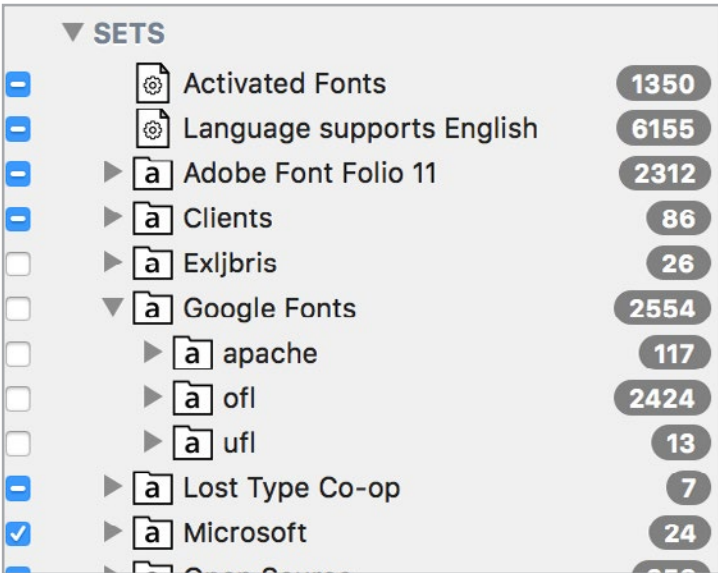
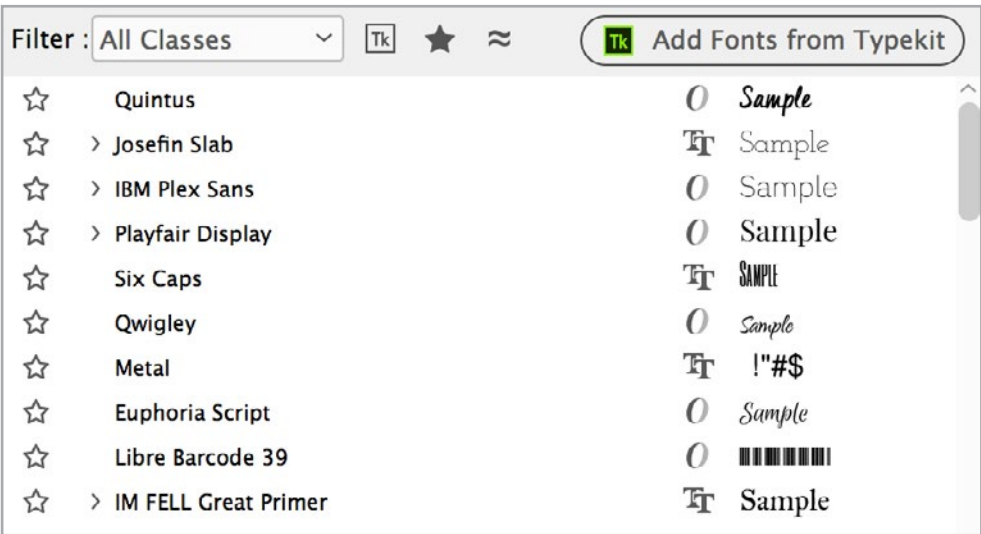


FIGURE 12. The "O" icon in InDesign's font list indicates an OpenType font, while a "TT" icon indicates a TrueType font.



¹ OpenType fonts use either PostScript or TrueType technology to draw the shapes of the glyphs. OpenType fonts based on PostScript have the .OTF extension, those based on TrueType have the .TTF extension.

files. As you might expect, many of the OpenType fonts contain advanced features such as support for fractions, alternate swash characters, additional

ligatures, and more, but the TrueType fonts don't.
Unfortunately, on the Google Fonts web page there doesn't seem to be a way to view which

advanced OpenType features are supported by which font. Suppose you're looking for a serif typeface that supports both oldstyle and lining numerals as

well as true fractions. I'm happy to report that there's an interactive tool that can help with this (FIGURE 13, NEXT PAGE).

GOOGLE FONTS VS. TYPEKIT FONTS

Google Fonts	Typekit Fonts
Over 800 fonts for desktop use	Over 1500 fonts for desktop use
Completely free	Creative Cloud membership or other payment plan required
Open source	Some restrictions on use
Font files visible on your system so they can be backed up, converted to other formats, etc.	Font files hidden by your operating system so you can't (easily) get at them
A mix of TrueType and OpenType formats	All fonts in OpenType format
Classified into 5 categories (serif, sans serif, display, handwriting, monospace)	Classified into 8 categories (serif, sans serif, slab serif, script, blackletter, mono, hand, decorative)
Can be copied when using the Package command	Not copied when using the Package command

Font Licensing

All of the fonts in the Google Fonts library are free and open source, so the license (included in the folder with each font) specifically states that you can use, change, and distribute these fonts to anyone and for any

purpose. Most fonts use either the [SIL Open Font License \(OFL\)](#) or the [Apache License](#), while a few use the [Ubuntu Font License](#). You can see a detailed list of the copyright and font license info for each and every font in the Google Fonts library [here](#).

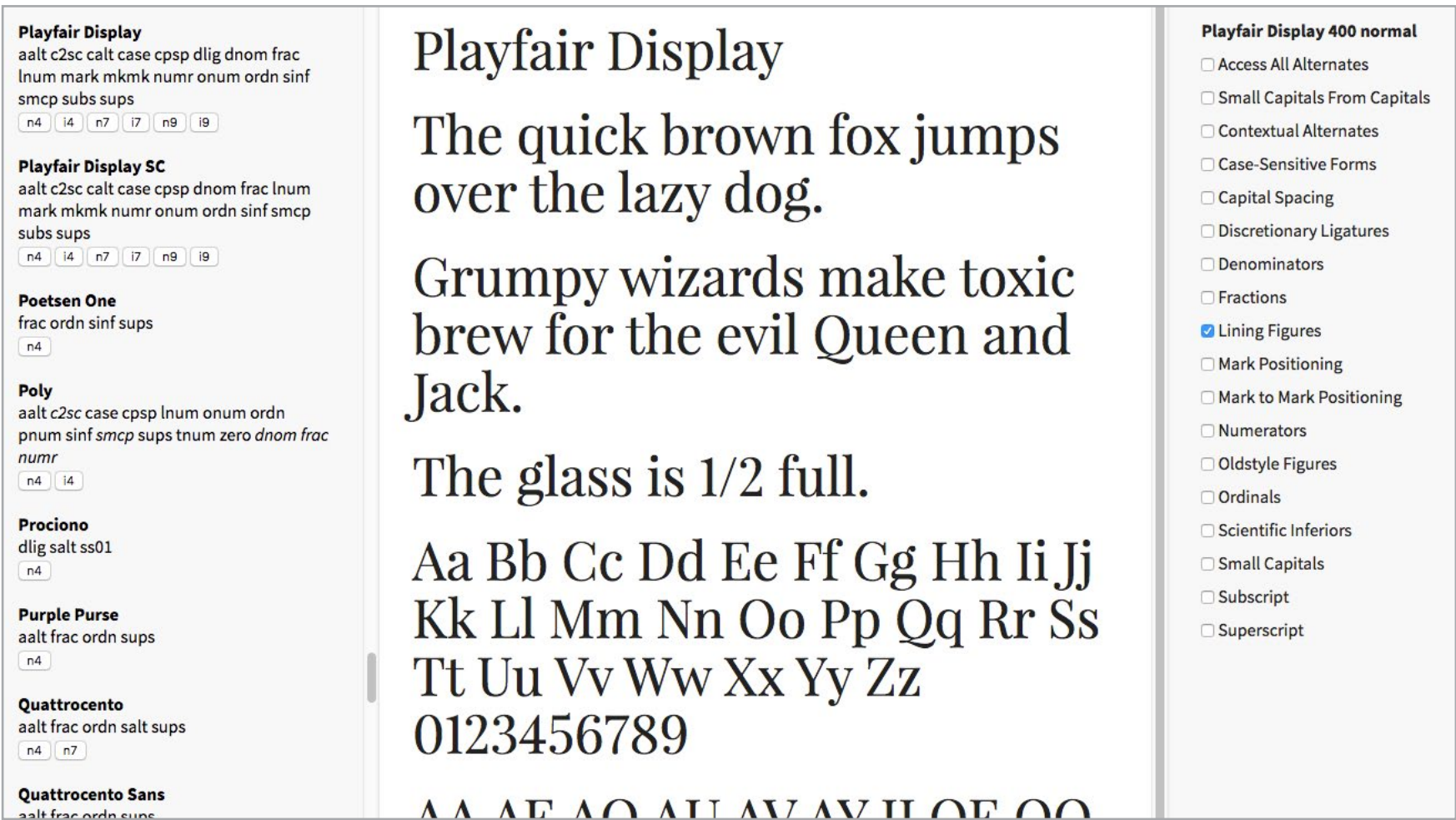
A Font for Every Season...

Fonts reflect a voice or an intention. Sticking with your tried-and-true font choices is fine, but by expanding your font options you also expand your ability to fine-tune your message and express yourself. It's worth

taking some time to explore this enormous cache of free fonts that type designers have made available through Google.

Keith Gilbert is a Minnesota-based consultant specializing in InDesign and mobile and multi-channel publishing. He is also the author of several popular titles at [Lynda.com/LinkedIn Learning](#).

FIGURE 13. Visit [code.thisarmy.com/fontsinfo/](#) to explore the OpenType features of various Google Fonts. Click on one of the rectangles below a font on the left side (each rectangle is a specific font weight and style), and a list of supported OpenType features appears on the right along with a font sample.





Ten Essential Books on Typography & Design

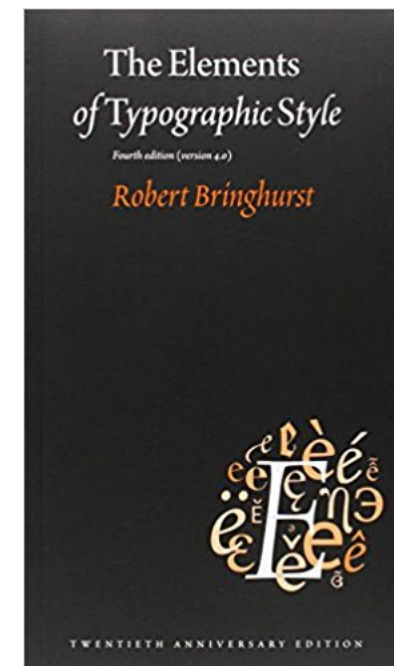


BY Ilene Strizver



I AM FREQUENTLY ASKED BY students and professionals alike to recommend a book to fill in their knowledge of type and design and to act as a reference. These days, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of books on the graphic arts to choose from, but I have focused on those tried-and-true books that are respected by many professionals in the field. These books serve to provide and support the building of a strong foundation in typography, act as creative inspiration, and emphasize the importance of excellence in every aspect of the design process.

Here is my selection of books that I believe every designer should have close at hand.

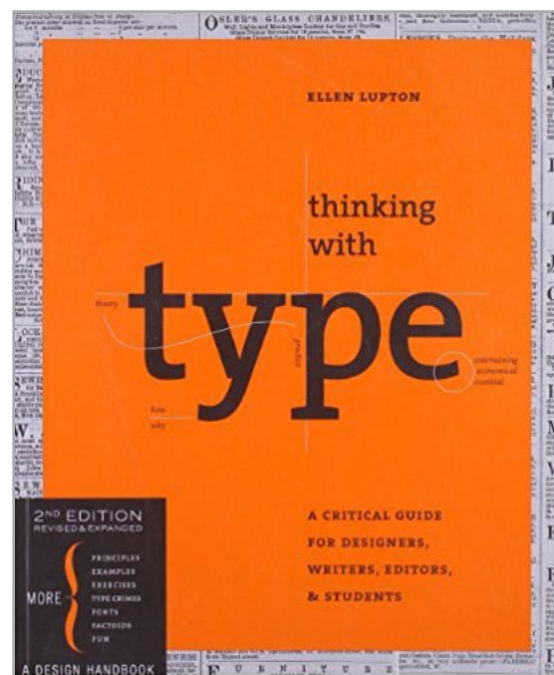


The Elements of Typographic Style, 4th edition, by Robert Bringhurst, Hartley & Marks Publishers, 2013.

This important book by renowned Canadian typographer and poet Robert Bringhurst is a classic of this genre. Bringhurst brings clarity to the art of typography within its slim and simple pages, in an elegant, to-the-point manner. *The Elements of Typographic Style* is more than a style guide. It is also a brief history of typographic art, a compact encyclopedia of typographic symbols, concepts, and traditions, and an informative and also entertaining reference of both the old and the new.

Combining the practical, theoretical, and historical, this 4th

edition is completely updated with a thorough exploration of the newest innovations in intelligent font technology, and is a must-have for graphic artists, editors, or anyone working with the printed or digital page.



***Thinking with Type*, 2nd revised and expanded edition: A Critical Guide for Designers, Writers, Editors, & Students, by Ellen Lupton, Princeton Architectural Press, 2010.**

Thinking with Type is a small gem of a book that is a beautifully designed, concise guide to using typography, from the printed page to the computer screen. Ellen Lupton, a leading design author and educator, has created a truly stunning format chock full of helpful illustrations and images to accompany the text.

This revised edition includes information on the use of lining and non-lining numerals, small caps and enlarged capitals, ornaments and captions, style sheets for print and the web, as well as information on captions, font licensing, mixing typefaces, and hand lettering. *Thinking with Type* is a type book for everyone: designers, writers, editors, students, and anyone else who works with words. The popular [online companion](#) to *Thinking with Type* has been revised to

reflect the new material in the second edition.



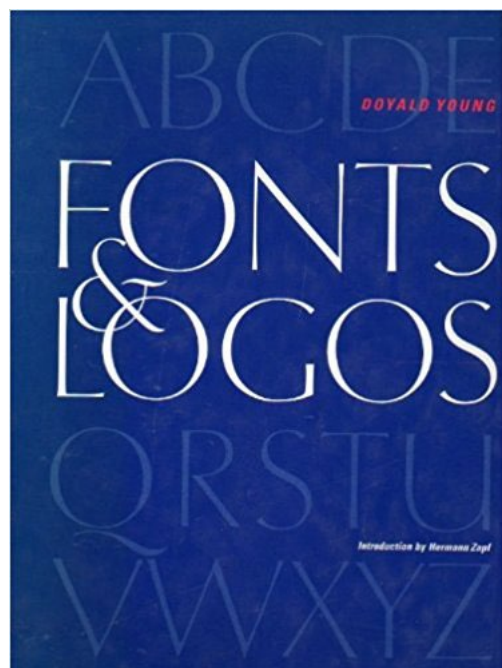
***Stop Stealing Sheep & Find Out How Type Works*, 3rd edition, by Erik Spiekermann, Adobe Press, 2013.**

After two decades as one of the world's best-selling books on designing with type (including editions in Korean, German, Russian, Portuguese, and Polish) *Stop Stealing Sheep & Find Out How Type*

Works continues to educate, entertain, and enlighten design students and type lovers around the globe. In this third edition, acclaimed type designer Erik Spiekermann brings his type classic fully up to date on mobile and web typography. He also includes scores of new visual examples on how to effectively communicate with type, and a full selection of new typefaces that are used and referenced throughout the book.

If you use type—and these days, almost everyone does—Spiekermann's engaging, common-sense style will help you understand how to look at type, work with type, choose the best typeface for your message, and express yourself more effectively through design. Compact, yet rich with anecdotes and visual examples, the handbook's multilayered design not only makes for a

fun, fast read; it also invites exploration, ensuring you learn something new each and every time you open it up.

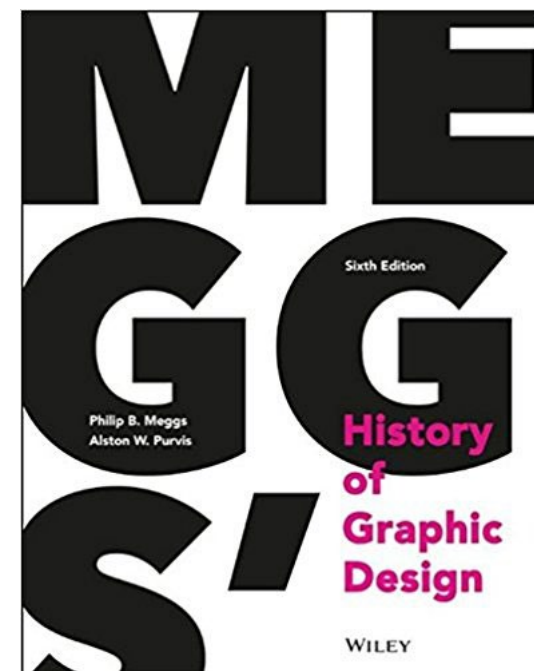


Fonts & Logos: Font Analysis, Logotype Design, Typography, Type Comparison, 1st edition, by Doyald Young, Delphi Publishers, 1999.

Fonts & Logos is a comprehensive book on basic typography by the highly respected (and much beloved) teacher and master of

the letterform, Doyald Young. It provides an overview of typography as well as a technical guide that covers legibility, font design, the compatibility of type styles, and the function of type within logos. A total of 377 fonts are shown and discussed, and 91 pages are devoted to the analysis of the serif letter. Nearly 40 pages are devoted to one case study, and the “How I Work” chapter details the author’s process step by step.

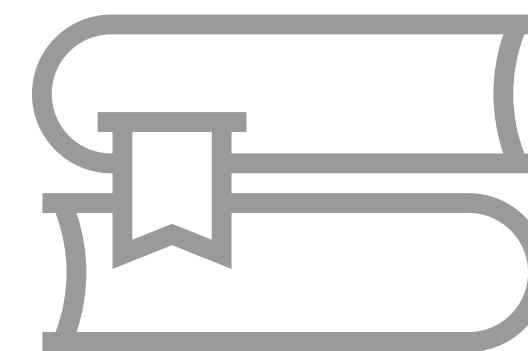
Three categories form the backbone of the book: Serifs, Sans Serifs, and Scripts. You will find detailed discussions of logos of the same type style. The “Font Sampler” chapter looks at 37 fonts: classic, work-horses, favorites, and more. This book is an essential text for both students and professionals involved with typography and logotype design.



Meggs' History of Graphic Design, 6th edition, by Philip B. Meggs and Alston Purvis, Wiley, 2016.

Meggs' History of Graphic Design is the industry’s unparalleled, award-winning reference. With over 1,400 high-quality images, this visually stunning text guides you through a saga of artistic innovators, breakthrough technologies, and ground-breaking developments that define the graphic design field.

Meggs presents compelling, comprehensive information enclosed in an exquisite visual format. The text includes classic topics such as the invention of writing and alphabets, the origins of printing and typography, and the advent of post-modern design. This new sixth edition has been updated to include key developments in the digital era, emerging design trends and technologies, and a lot more. For professionals, students, and everyone who works with or loves the world of graphic design, this landmark text is an invaluable guide that deserves a place in every creative’s library.

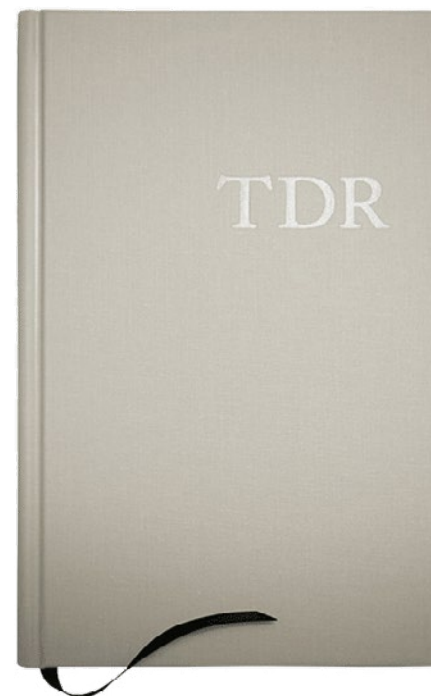




Typographie: A Manual of Design Hardcover, 7th revised edition, by Emil Ruder, Verlag Niggli AG, 2001.

Emil Ruder's *Typographie* is the timeless textbook from which generations of typographers and graphic designers have learned their fundamentals. Ruder, one of the great twentieth-century typographers, was a pioneer who abandoned the conventional rules of his discipline and replaced them with new

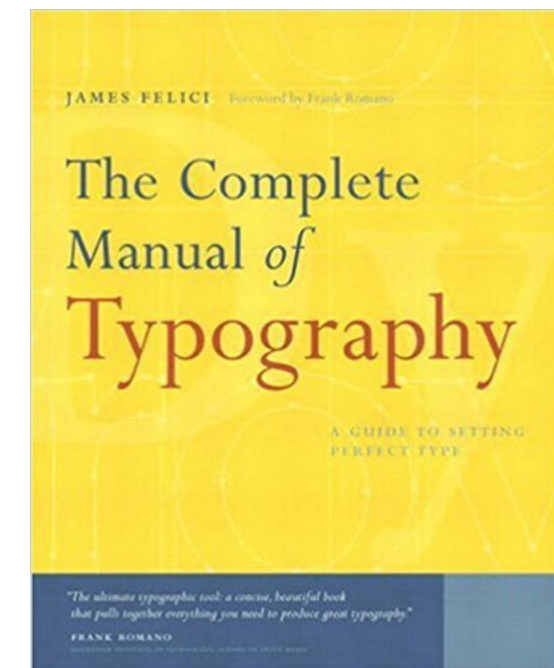
rules that satisfied the requirements of his new typography. Ruder discusses his philosophy, including the power of white space, grids, and other foundations of good typography. Now in its seventh printing, this book has a hallowed place on the bookshelves of both students and accomplished designers.



The Typographic Desk Reference: TDR, 2nd edition, by Theodore Rosendorf, Oak Knoll Press, 2016.

The Typographic Desk Reference (TDR) is an encyclopedic reference guide of typographic terms and classification with definitions of form and usage for Latin-based writing systems. The second edition has doubled in size, the specimens have been reclassified to modern standards, and the index (now one-sixth of the book) has been deeply cross referenced, allowing the reader to—among other things—find glyphs required for a particular language.

The book includes the following four main sections: Terms, Glyphs, Anatomy & Form, and Classification & Specimens. Designed for quick consultation, entries are concise and factual, making the book handy for desktop use. I have referred to the *TDR* many times, as there is no better typographic dictionary.



The Complete Manual of Typography: A Guide to Setting Perfect Type, 2nd edition, by James Felici, Peachpit Press, 2011.

This richly illustrated book is about how type should look, and how to make it look that way; in other words, how to set type like a professional. It explains in practical terms how to use today's digital tools to achieve the secret of good design: well-set type. An essential reference for anyone who works with type: designers,



Futuristic Fonts

Where no typeface has gone before



BY Andrea Leksen



AND Charles Fadem

SCIENCE FICTION, BY ITS VERY nature, intrigues creatives. It asks exciting questions about what the future may hold for us in technology, style, and exploration. And combining science fiction and movies can be even more exciting. Since the first sci-fi movie in 1902 (*Le Voyage Dans La Lune* by Gorges Milieu), the genre has redefined narrative and aesthetic expectations many times over. Every good sci-fi movie poster lets viewers know they can expect an adventure

into the unknown. The poster is the first marker on the journey, and the typeface that inhabits it is, in a way, the first character in these fantastical, often futuristic stories.

We all know that fonts have personalities and evoke feelings. But what is it about a font that could make it feel futuristic?

The Evolution of Type

To see how type has evolved over the centuries, let's look at futuristic type and the role that fonts have played in the science

fiction genre by turning to the past.

The first movable type was derived from the handwritten letterforms of the day—blackletter (FIGURE 1). It didn't take long after the advent of Gutenberg's

Beispiel Alte Schwabacher: Victor jagt zwölf Boxkämpfer quer über den Sylter Deich.

FIGURE 1. Blackletter, the opposite of "futuristic"



press for printers to start experimenting with more legible type than the high contrast of thin and thick strokes and ornate serifs that makes blackletter so easily recognized (but not so readable) as text type. The first upright roman letterforms that were cast in metal type were old-style serif typefaces that housed natural, rounded serifs with some definite humanist characteristics referencing handwritten letterforms. As printers explored methods to improve legibility on the letterpress, the serif became more refined, with square perpendicular serifs, longer brackets, and flat edges along the baseline. The modern serif carries even more extremes of the transitional serif, with higher contrast, no brackets, and thinner, perfected serifs (FIGURE 2).

The sans serif font made its official entrance in 1816, when

FIGURE 2. What passed for “modern” in the good old days



FIGURE 3. The humble introduction of the sans serif font



William Caslon IV published *Two Lines English Egyptia* in a type specimen book (FIGURE 3). However, it wasn't until 1927 that Futura was released. And Univers and Helvetica were both released in 1957 (FIGURE 4), but it still took years for its peak in popularity to hit. Since then, type designers have continued to

push the limits of simplicity and abstraction while maintaining legibility.

Enter Sci-fi

It is evident that the science fiction world gravitated toward the sans serif and ran with it—which makes sense from both an aesthetic and historical perspective. If you were to decide what the future of fonts might look like, it makes sense that you might start with the most modern approach and experiment with what might extend beyond current day, into the next generation.

Science fiction has been in the pop culture lexicon since Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in 1927 (FIGURE 5). While the title type in this film is a bit unique to the rest of the genre, it certainly mimics elements of the futurism movement through use of

FIGURE 4. Increasing simplicity and abstraction of characters created a modern feel.



FIGURE 5. No warm, fuzzy nostalgia here; the jagged, dis-eased *Metropolis* image still packs an eerie punch.



geometry and industry. The lengthy descenders (not to mention the imagery!) show a direct link to the booming horror film industry of the time.

The genre failed to distinguish itself in aesthetics until the 1960s, when *Star Trek* debuted on national television with its bold, colorful, mid-century take on the future, and jump-started the evolution of “futuristic” typefaces. Even today, in its current iterations, *Star Trek* typefaces evolve along with what we might call the aesthetics of the future. These aesthetics can be organized into three main science fiction subgenres:

- ▶ Space & Exploration
- ▶ Technology & Dystopia
- ▶ Sci-fi Horror & Aliens

Each of these subgenres has its own style and principles, and understanding the quirks of each

is key to understanding “futuristic” typeface aesthetics.

Space & Exploration

Due to the popularity of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, the Space & Exploration genre is probably the most widely recognizable. This is a big part of the reason why, when someone just says the word “sci-fi,” images of spaceships and starfields come to mind. The aesthetic of the title type often reference cold war “space race” propaganda and certainly captivates the imagination of its audience.

Star Trek

While the original *Star Trek* logo references Russian Constructivist typography, it uses oblique type that points to the future. The right-leaning letterforms aid our left-to-right reading movement. Were they to lean to

the left, it would feel as though someone put the brakes on! Not only do the letterforms lean forward, but the midline strokes slant as well, which adds even more momentum to the text (**FIGURE 6**). The future—at least in the *Star Trek* universe—is fast. Fast spacecraft, fast-forward thinking, looking into a new future which naturally needs fast letters that can keep up with the plot. The *Star Trek* movie titles have evolved with each new release, with the 2016 film directly referencing both the original television series logo and the original motion picture from 1979 (**FIGURE 7**).

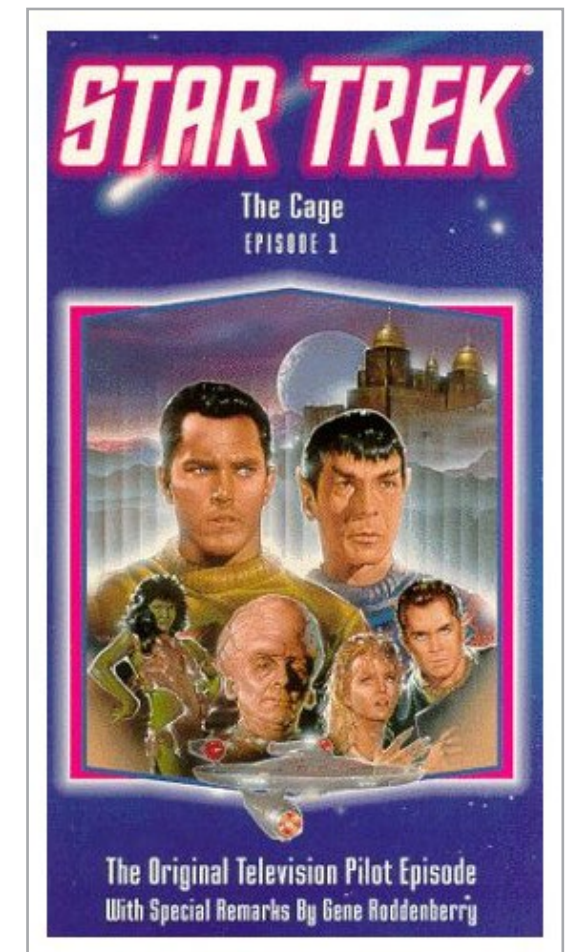


FIGURE 6.
Star Trek
original
episode



FIGURE 7.
Star Trek 2016 release (left)
and original motion picture (right)

Star Wars

The *Star Wars* logo kicks off the film series with awkward comic type that connects some of its letters clumsily (**FIGURE 8A**). The updated logo in the 1980 release takes cues from the original logotype and gives a more forward-feeling spin on it (**FIGURE 8B**). The 1980 setting

FIGURE 8A. *Star Wars* 1977 release

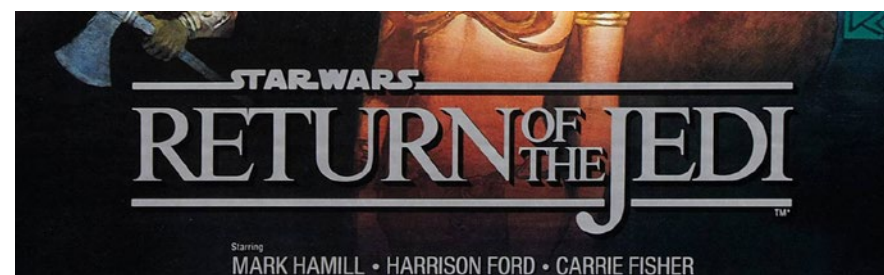


connects the first and last letters in each word and, while it keeps a similar type treatment in future releases, the remaining versions clearly don't successfully transfer the same connectedness, leaving letter extensions hanging (**FIGURE 8C**). See Yves Peters' [article](#) to dig deeper into *Star Wars* typography.

FIGURE 8B. *Star Wars* 1980 release



FIGURE 8C. *Star Wars* 1983 release



Technology & Dystopia

This subgenre is typically pessimistic, depicting the future gone wrong. It's brimming with tales of the breakdown of society—often seen in plots where our own technological creations turn against us. It carries an aesthetic similar to pulp novels, with comic-like typography and various elements of speed. *Blade Runner* sports the oblique

flair that generates a fast-forward movement into the future, not to mention the horizontal break through the letterforms that also gives an illusion of speed and intrigue (**FIGURE 9**). In the newer version released in 2017, the horizontal space is thinner (**FIGURE 10**), which feels a little quicker and



FIGURE 9. *Blade Runner* original release

FIGURE 10. *Blade Runner* 2017 release



more sophisticated compared to the more comic look of the 1982 release.

X-Files' take on similar, isolated type reflects government paranoia and the danger of the unknown beyond that is prevalent in its storylines. The swirling X provides mystery, intrigue, and ambiguity to the otherwise isolated, clean type (FIGURE 11). This is an example of a "futuristic" typeface being used to represent a story told about the present day.

Oblivion is a beautiful film directed and designed by Joseph

Kosinski, who was trained as an architect and graphic designer. Like in many science fiction titles, part of the strokes are missing throughout the title typeface. In this film, these gaps could reference elements of society broken down over time (a common element in dystopian sci-fi) or pieces of the character's memory that are missing (FIGURE 12) It also leaves space for our imagination to wonder what the future might look like and fill in the gaps on our own.

FIGURE 11. X-Files



FIGURE 12. Broken... not broken... what's (not) in there, or out there?



Sci-fi Horror & Aliens

The Sci-fi Horror & Alien genre does a splendid job of giving me the typographic willies! What is it about this type that gives you the creeps before even starting the movie? In a way, this subgenre is the reverse of the Space & Exploration subgenre. Instead of heroic explorers in epic, intergalactic conflicts, it focuses on the hostile, silent, and black isolation of space, and the monstrous beings that wait for us there. There's no better example than Ridley Scott's *Alien*, set in a bold, caps sans serif with a slight glow behind the E (FIGURE 13). They

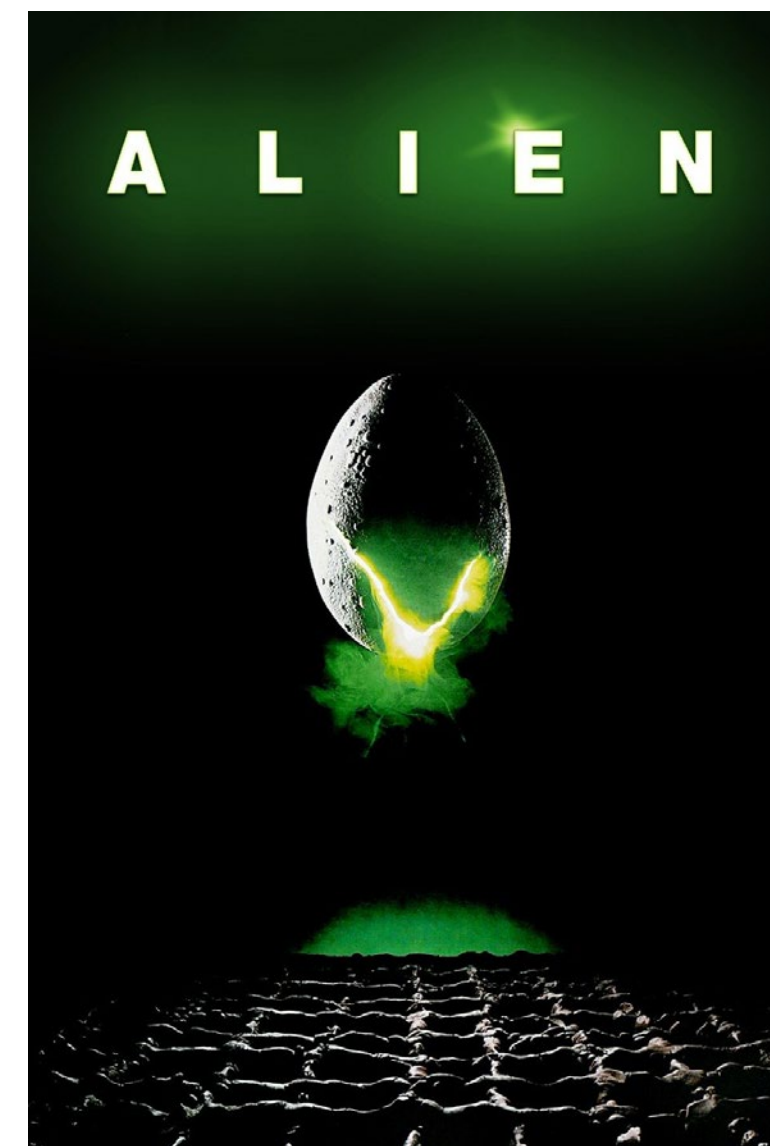


FIGURE 13. Alien

stepped it up a notch with *Aliens*, where the letters (particularly the I) has an eerie glow behind condensed, widely spaced letterforms (FIGURE 14, NEXT PAGE). The

glow certainly gives a nod to the future! There is something industrial and mysterious about it. And the widely spaced capital letterforms are a common sci-fi type setting. Setting the letters wide—particularly when they’re condensed—gives a sense of being very alone. Separated and

isolated. It’s typographically creepy.

Species uses all caps spaced out as well, but with a more organic, gory approach (FIGURE 15). The type ties in well with the image and still allows the letters to feel isolated in that feeling of the unknown.

FIGURE 14. *Aliens*



FIGURE 15. *Species*



So What's Next?

We’ve seen how type can support and augment a visual story. Oblique, sturdy text veers into the future and feels fast and forward-thinking. Widely set letterforms feel isolated and alone. Squared type feels technological and industrial, referencing our technology boom that is imminently evolving. And altering the letterforms to create spaces leads to a sense of both alienation and potential.

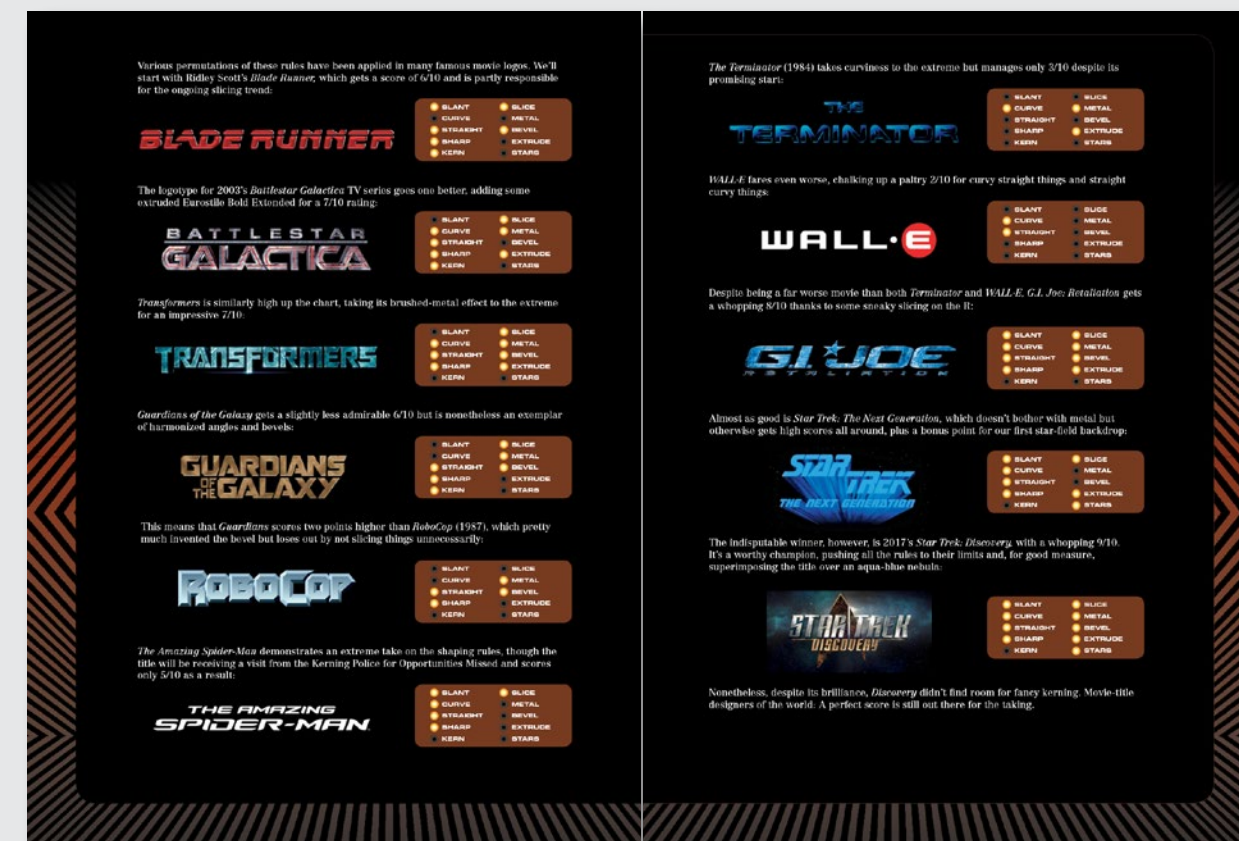
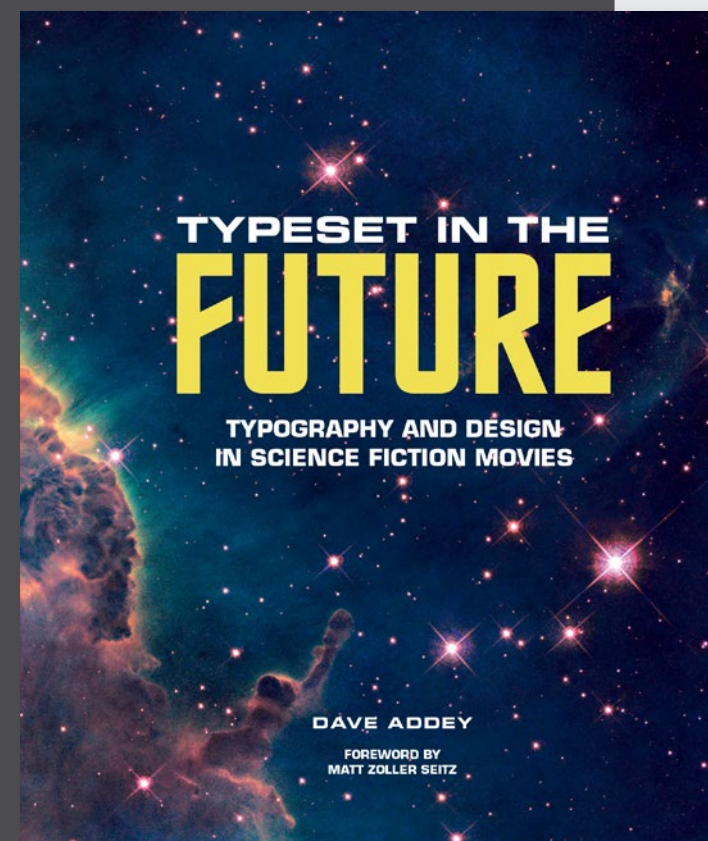
The more abstract the type, the greater space left for us to imagine that there’s still something left to discover in the future. How far can we push the mystery and intrigue in typography while still maintaining legibility? The future will tell us.

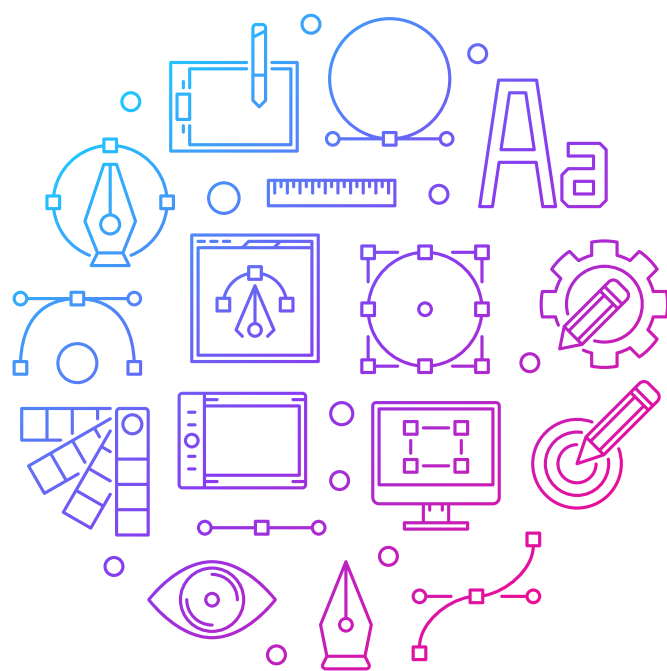
Charles Fadem is an architect living in Seattle, WA with his giant dog, Shiloh. When he’s not hosting an episode of his podcast *Design Goggles*, sketching, or writing fiction, he’s watching *Star Trek* reruns, drooling over classic cars and creating spaces for people that reflect who they are and how they live, work, and play.

Andrea Leksén is a type designer, graphic designer, and educator. She specializes in typography, type design, brand, and traditional print design. She has worked in-house for corporations and design firms and serves a diverse client base in her business, [Leksén Design](#).

...TO BOLDY GO WHERE NO BOOK HAS GONE BEFORE

If this article has whet your appetite for more information on sci-fi type, definitely check out [Typeset in the Future](#) by designer and blogger Dave Addey. Hot off the presses, it's a 264-page extravaganza on typography in classic science fiction movies like *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *WALL-E*, and more. The book also includes interviews with sci-fi, typography, and design experts as well as other fun features. And while you're waiting for the book to arrive, check out the blog that inspired the book, [typesetinthefuture.com](#).





Women Type Designers

How women emerged from the shadows of the past and left their mark in the world of type



BY Ilene Strizver

WOMEN HAVE BEEN A PART OF the world of printing and typography in one way or another for eons, but often in roles that have gone unnoticed and unacknowledged. Thankfully, this has changed over time, and especially the digital age, where the “democratization” of typeface design has included its becoming become faster, cheaper, and easier (although some might argue this point). This, in turn, has led to the art and craft of typeface design attracting more and more women.

In general, I dislike categorizing typeface designers (or any other category) by gender, but I am making an exception for this article, as I think it can educate, encourage, inspire, and empower not just women, but anyone who loves and uses type to get more involved. At the very least, I hope it will help you to appreciate the process of designing a typeface.

Historical Figures

Very few of the typeface designers of the past (think

19th and 20th centuries) were women. This probably had most to do with the unspoken rules of society at that time, which attempted to keep women in the home, and men doing the “real” work. But even so, there were exceptions to this rule, as there were a few women who *were* involved in type one way or another.

While they might not have been designing many original typefaces, women filled important roles of the design and production process. For instance,

according to Allan Haley, former Director of Words & Letters at Monotype, “Monotype (in the UK) used women in its Letter Drawing Office. They weren’t necessarily designing their own original designs, but they were creating production drawings for fonts and adding new characters to existing families. It was thought that women had a better sense of detail than men.”

The most notable of women associated with type design was Bertha Goudy (1869–1935) (**FIGURE 1A**), an American typographer, fine press printer, and co-proprietor with husband Frederic Goudy of the Village Press. Often referred to as “the first lady of printing,” Bertha was an important



FIGURE 1A

partner in the Village Press. She cut type, set type, and bound books. She also coauthored books with her husband. Fred Goudy’s designs include Copperplate Gothic, Deepdene, Remington Typewriter, Californian, and Bulmer, and it is very likely that she assisted him with some or all of these (**FIGURE 1B**).

Other women from the past who have been credited with typeface design include Hildegard Henning, who

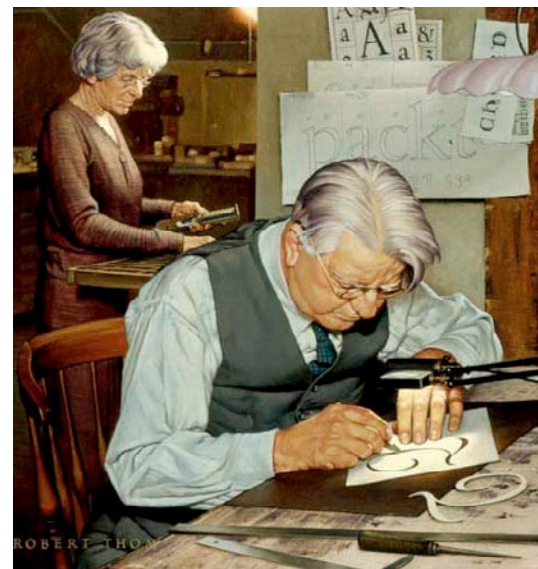


FIGURE 1B

designed Belladonna in 1912; Elizabeth Colwell, who designed Colwell Handletter in 1916; Maria Ballé, who designed Ballé Initials and Bauersche Gießerei, dates unknown; and Elizabeth Friedländer, who designed Elizabeth and Bauer in the 1930s.

Contemporary Figures

Once the design and production of type became digitized (and the software became affordable), virtually anyone who had an interest and the talent could jump on board. This led to many more women getting involved in the typeface design process. Here are a few of the more notable of figures.

Carol Twombly

Carol Twombly is an American typeface designer who worked for Adobe from 1988 to 1999, designing some of the most

important historic/revival and original typefaces. Her type design career might have been brief before she left to pursue other interests, but was extremely productive. In over 11 years with Adobe, Twombly designed a number of very popular text and display typefaces. Designs such as Trajan, Charlemagne, Lithos, and Adobe Caslon are inspired by classic letterforms of the past, from early Greek inscriptions, circa 400 B.C., to William Caslon’s typefaces of the 1700s. Designs like Viva and Nueva explore new territory while maintaining traditional roots (**FIGURE 2, NEXT PAGE**).

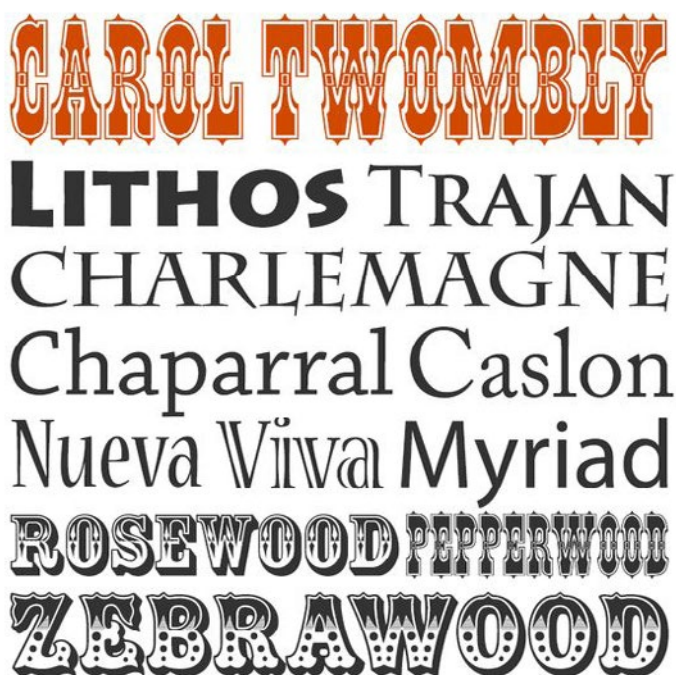
In 1994, Twombly received the Charles Peignot award from the Association Typographique Internationale (ATypI) for outstanding contributions to type design. She was the first

woman and only the second American to receive this prestigious honor.

Zuzana Licko

Zuzana Licko is a name that is very familiar to those who were working the world of type and design in the '80s. Licko, born in Czechoslovakia and having emigrated to the U.S. in 1968, graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1984.

FIGURE 2



Together with her husband, Rudy VanderLans, Licko started the design company Emigre Graphics in 1984, which then became world renowned for its self-published magazine and type foundry which were greatly inspired by the new technical possibilities offered by the introduction of the Macintosh computer.

Licko and VanderLans became early adopters of the new technology, used the computer to experiment, and created some of the very first typeface designs and digital page layouts, causing great consternation within the realm of graphic design. Eventually, exposure of the typefaces in Emigre magazine resulted in demand for the fonts, which lead to the creation of the Emigre Type foundry. Among the numerous typefaces Licko designed, the most well-known

are Citizen, Fairplex, Filosofia, Matrix, Modula, Mrs. Eaves, Tarzana, Triplex, and Variex. In 2011, five digital typefaces from the Emigre Type Library were acquired by MoMA New York for their design and architecture collection (FIGURE 3).

FIGURE 3



Laura Worthington

[Laura Worthington](#) is a typeface designer from Washington State. After training and working as a graphic designer since the mid-'90s, she turned her lifelong fascination with lettering and

typography into a business, publishing her first typeface in 2010. She has since published more than 80 typefaces, including Adorn, Beloved, Ed's Market, Fairwater, Hummingbird, and Mandevilla, as well as having designed custom faces for Fortune 500 companies.

Laura's designs are based on her own handlettering and calligraphy, a practice she continues to hone daily.

Though her designs are often infused with the sense of a milieu or era, her type designs are not historical revivals, but updated interpretations with a

modern sensibility. Laura was a pioneer in the practice of producing families of different display styles that work together to evoke a particular aesthetic—such as Charcuterie, which features ten distinctive faces inspired by artisanal French food packaging. Her typefaces

are primarily for display, and often include a broad variety of ornaments, contextual alternates, and swash forms. She handles every aspect of a font's creation, from concept and hand lettering to digitization (FIGURE 4).

Veronika Burian

Veronika Burian is a type designer and the co-founder with José Scaglione of the independent type foundry TypeTogether. She studied Industrial Design in Munich and worked in that capacity in Vienna and Milan over a few years. Discovering her true passion for type, she graduated with distinction from the MA in Typeface Design in Reading, UK, after which her career took off. Her typeface Maiola received the TDC Certificate of Excellence in Type Design 2004, and was selected in the Type Design competition



FIGURE 4

from Creative Review 2005. Although Maiola and Crete are Veronika's only solo efforts, she collaborated on many other designs, including Adelle and Adelle Sans, Abril, Tablet Gothic, and Maiola (**FIGURE 5**).

FIGURE 5



Kris Holmes

Kris Holmes is a contemporary American type designer, educator, and President of Bigelow & Holmes alongside Charles Bigelow. Her studies included time with noted calligraphers Lloyd Reynolds and Robert Paladino as well as type designers Ed Benguiat and Hermann Zapf. In 1976 she founded the Bigelow & Holmes company with Charles

Bigelow. The pair co-designed the Lucida font family, targeted at low resolution, and the pi font Wingdings. Kris Holmes herself (**FIGURE 6A**) has had a hand in the design of over 90 typefaces, including the “city” fonts (Chicago, Geneva, Monaco, New York) for Apple; Leviathan; Shannon (with Janice Prescott); Baskerville (Revival, 1982); Caslon (Revival, 1982); ITC Isadora; Sierra; Lucida (with

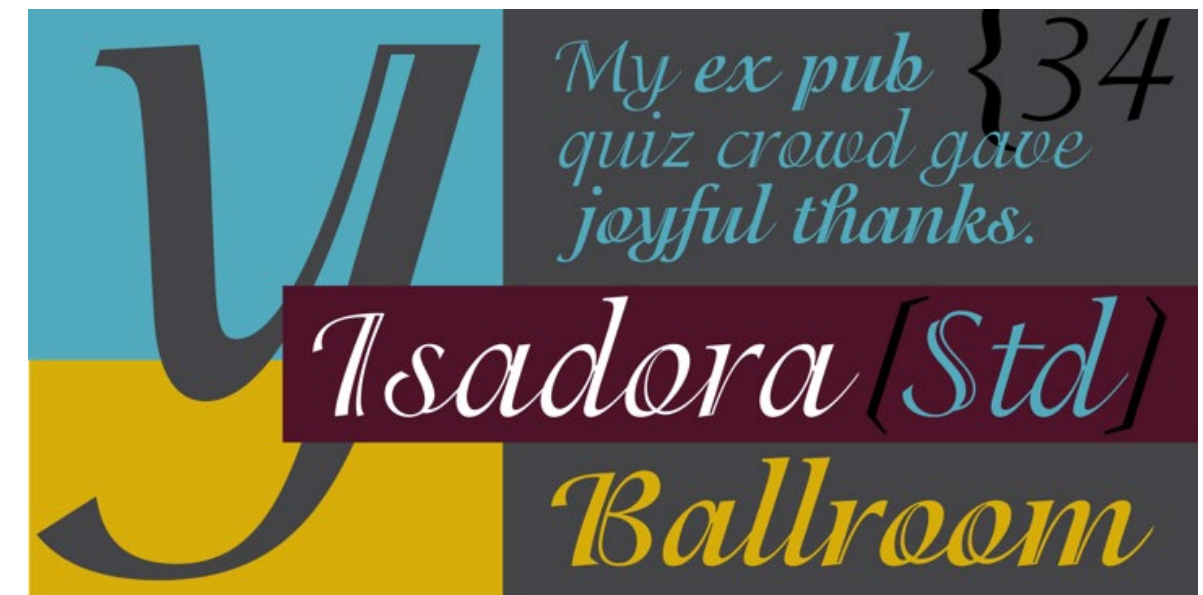
Charles Bigelow; Galileo; Apple New York; Apple Monaco; Apple Chancery; and Kolibri (**FIGURE 6B**).

Holmes clearly is a highly trained professional who made her mark on typography before the digital age, after which she kept abreast of new technology, and continued to design relevant and highly popular typefaces. Her work is included in the permanent

FIGURE 6A



FIGURE 6B



collection of the Klingspor Museum in Germany and the Cary Graphic Arts Collection at the Rochester Institute of Technology. Holmes received the 2012 RIT Frederic W. Goudy Award for excellence in typography.

Freda Sack

Freda Sack has a passion for letterforms and enjoys “making things happen” typographically. She studied typography at Maidstone College of Art, School of Printing, and then went on to do type design at Letraset Type Studio, and later at URW, Hamburg where she was involved in first groundbreaking font software applications. Her commercial fonts include those she designed solo (Ignatius, Orlando, Vermont, Paddington,

FIGURE 7

Goshawk
SEYMOUR ZOOEY FRANNY
SALINGER
my hard nose, glass jaw, and soft heart
1847 1965 & 2003
Type Quiz Mocks Faux Oblique

and Proteus) as well as others she co-designed (Victorian, Jenson Old Style, University, Gillies Gothic, and Stratford), most being designed in the '70s and '80s.

In 1990 she and David Quay set up The Foundry to design and produce their own typefaces. From 2001–2013 she managed The Foundry library, and continued with custom font design. Sack currently lives and works in central London as a design consultant and education advisor. She lectures and

gives workshops to students and professionals internationally, as well as developing more fonts for The Foundry (FIGURE 7).

Fiona Ross

Fiona Ross is the queen of non-Latin type design. Her interest in non-Latin type design and typography arose from her post-graduate studies in Sanskrit and Indian paleography. Ross has a background in languages and from 1978 to 1989 worked for Linotype Limited

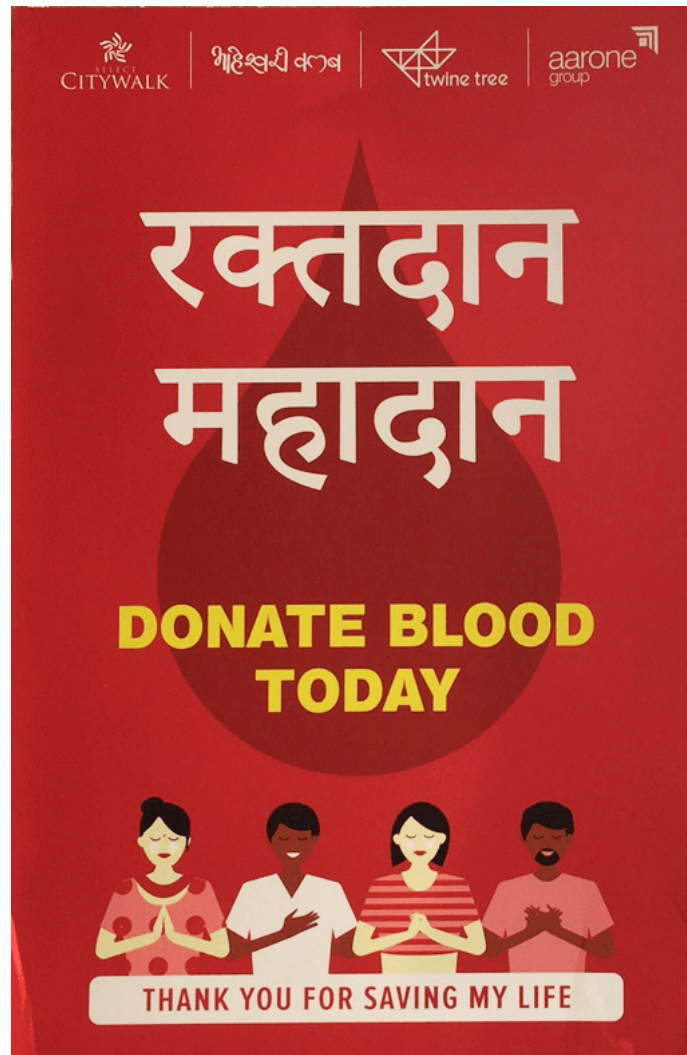


FIONA ROSS

(UK) where she was responsible for the design of Linotype's non-Latin fonts. Since 1989 she has worked as a consultant, type designer, art director, and lecturer, and in 2003 joined the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading.

Her recent work as a type designer has been in collaboration with Tim Holloway and John Hudson (as Associate Designer of Tiro Typeworks), notably on Adobe Arabic, Adobe Thai, Vodafone Hindi, Adobe Devanagari, Nirmala UI Devanagari, Aldhabi, and Sarkar (Bengali script). More recently, in 2015, with co-designer John Hudson, Sanskrit Text (for Windows 10), and Murty Gurmukhi, Murty Hindi, and Murty Telugu for Harvard University Press for the Murty Classical Library of India (FIGURE 8, NEXT PAGE).

FIGURE 8

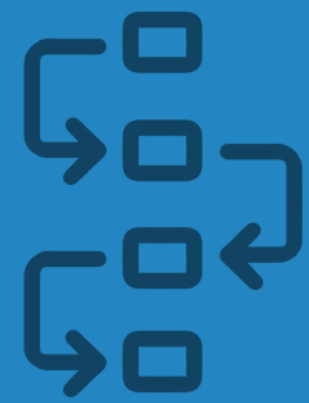


The Takeaway

Although the art and craft of typeface design was previously considered “a man’s job,” the digital age, coupled with a new social awareness, has allowed and empowered women to rise up and join this somewhat elite group, eventually becoming important contributors. The typography we see every day, as well as some of the type trends that have changed the face of design, would not exist if not for the increasing number of women who now contribute to and enrich this important, and very visible, discipline.

Ilene Strizver, founder of *The Type Studio*, is a typographic consultant, designer, writer, and educator specializing in all aspects of visual communication, from the aesthetic to the technical.



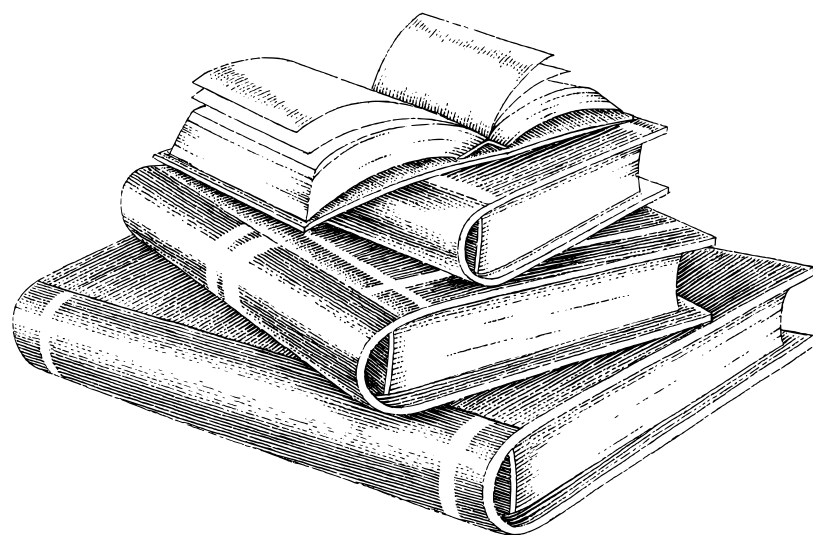


Tiny Type Posters

Amazing things happen when you cram an entire book onto a single page.



BY Mike Rankin



THE DEEPER WE GET INTO THIS age of digital marvels, the more I notice a certain nostalgia bordering on reverence for the classics. Something inside us longs for the days when an apple was just something you ate, the Amazon was a river, and googol was a really big number known only to math nerds (10^{100}). Or maybe I'm getting old. But it's not just me. Vinyl records sell at premium prices. Hollywood is obsessed with remakes and reboots. And independent book-

stores are thriving again with shelves stuffed with titles right off the Lit 101 syllabus.

If you happen to browse through such a bookstore, you'll also see countless items seeking to borrow a little cultural cache from the classics. An Alice in Wonderland "Drink Me" coffee mug. "2B or not 2B" pencils in the Shakespeare section. If you look hard enough, you can probably find Holden Caulfield's red hat and Gatsby's cocktail shaker.

But you know what would be even cooler? How about something made from the actual text of a classic book? Something like a poster that you can hang on your wall or give as a gift. That's what we're going to create in this tutorial.

FIGURE 1, NEXT PAGE, shows a few different examples to whet your appetite. Admittedly, it's impossible to get the full effect onscreen in such a reduced size, but you get the idea: the entire text of the book is visible in one

to choose them based on the length of the book you plan to use and where you'll get the poster printed. Start by shopping around so you know what your options are. Big companies like [Vistaprint](#) offer sizes ranging from 11" × 17" (for something small, like *The Old Man and the Sea*) to 35" × 48" (think *Moby Dick*). There are many other sites that offer poster printing, so poke around to find the best combination of quality and price. Costco offers a 20" × 30" poster for about \$10. Mail order, you can get a 24" × 36" poster for about \$20 plus shipping.

Create the InDesign document

In the New Document dialog box, set up the dimensions, orientation, and margins that you want. In this example, I'll make my poster 24" × 36". If you think you'll be making several

posters (you will; they are addictive!), you might as well save a preset so you don't have to keep entering in the same values each time ([FIGURE 2](#)).

Get the text

There are various online sources for the full text of classic books. None are better than the venerable [Project Gutenberg](#). With over 58,000 free ebooks to download, you can find plenty of poster fodder there by searching and/or browsing. When you've found the book you want, right-click on the plain text version, and save it to your computer. Then place the text in InDesign in a frame that stretches to the margins ([FIGURE 3, NEXT PAGE](#)).

Choose your font(s)

Classic literature deserves to be displayed in a good typeface, preferably one that's appropriate for the time period when the

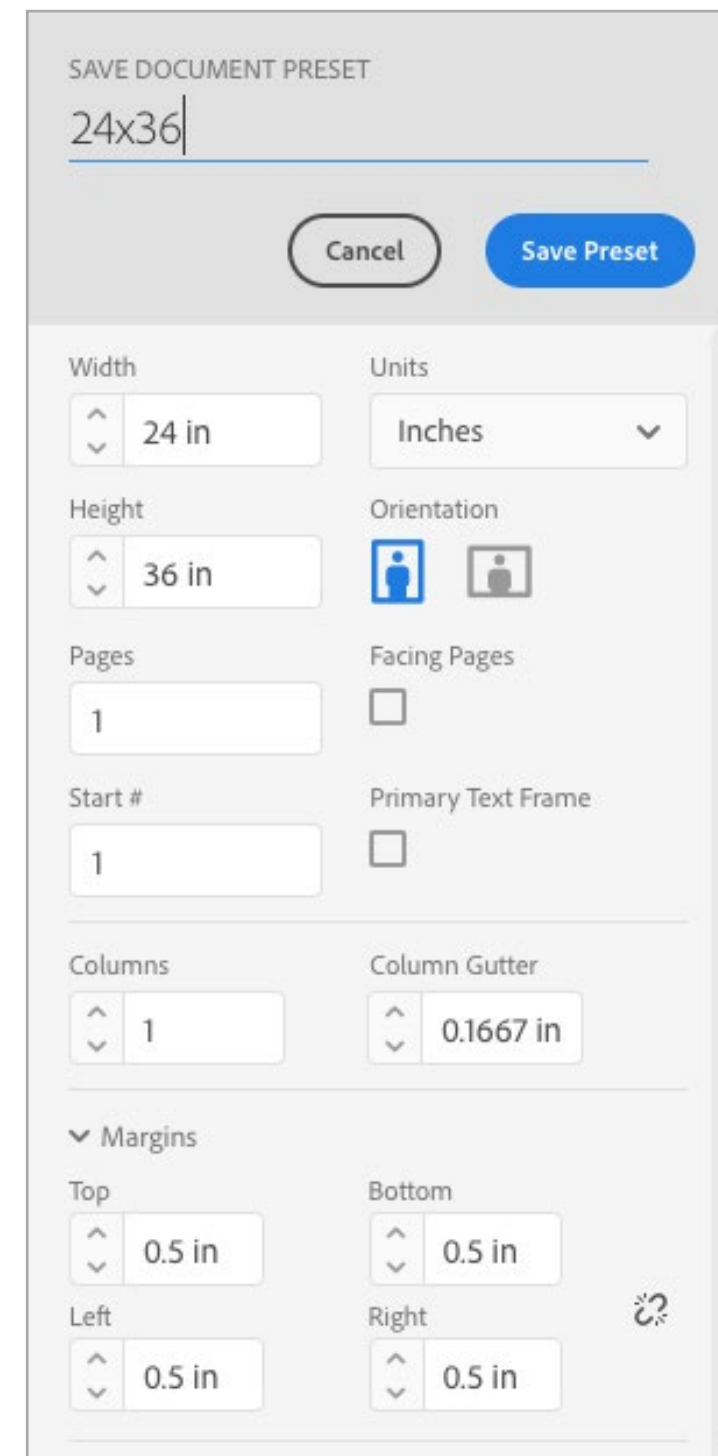


FIGURE 2

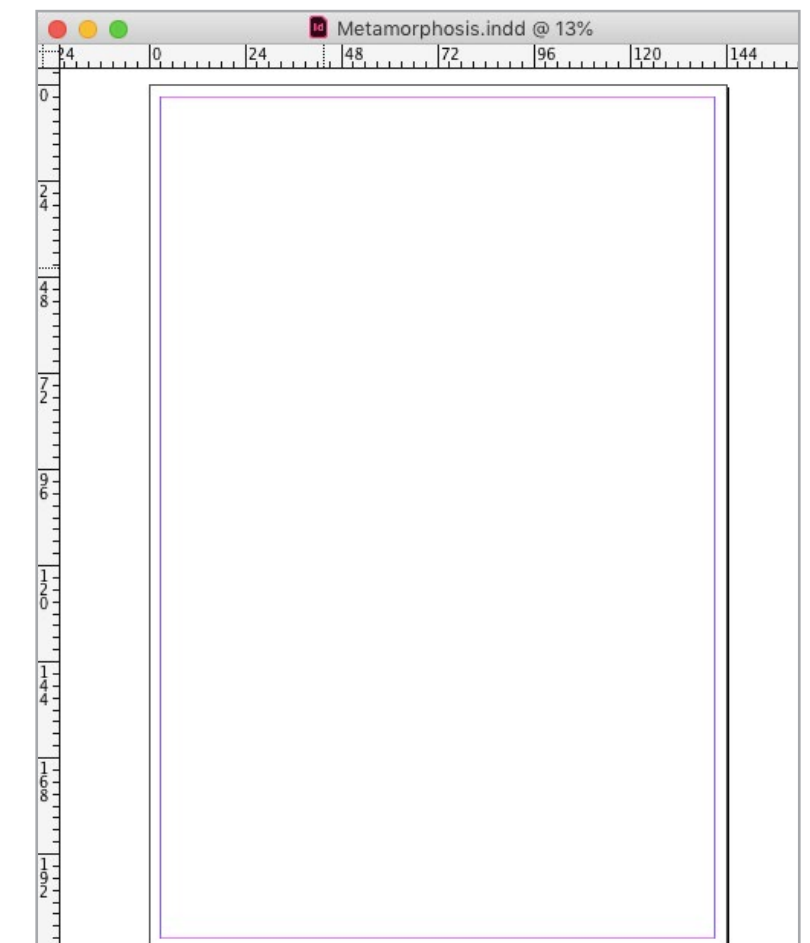
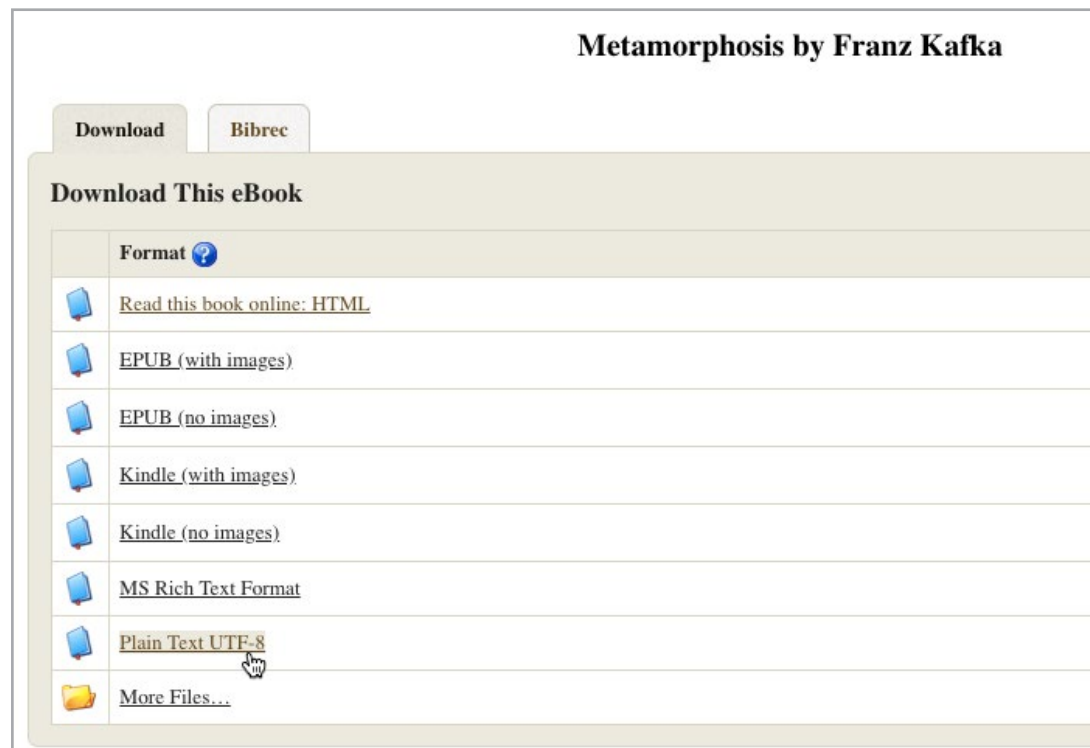
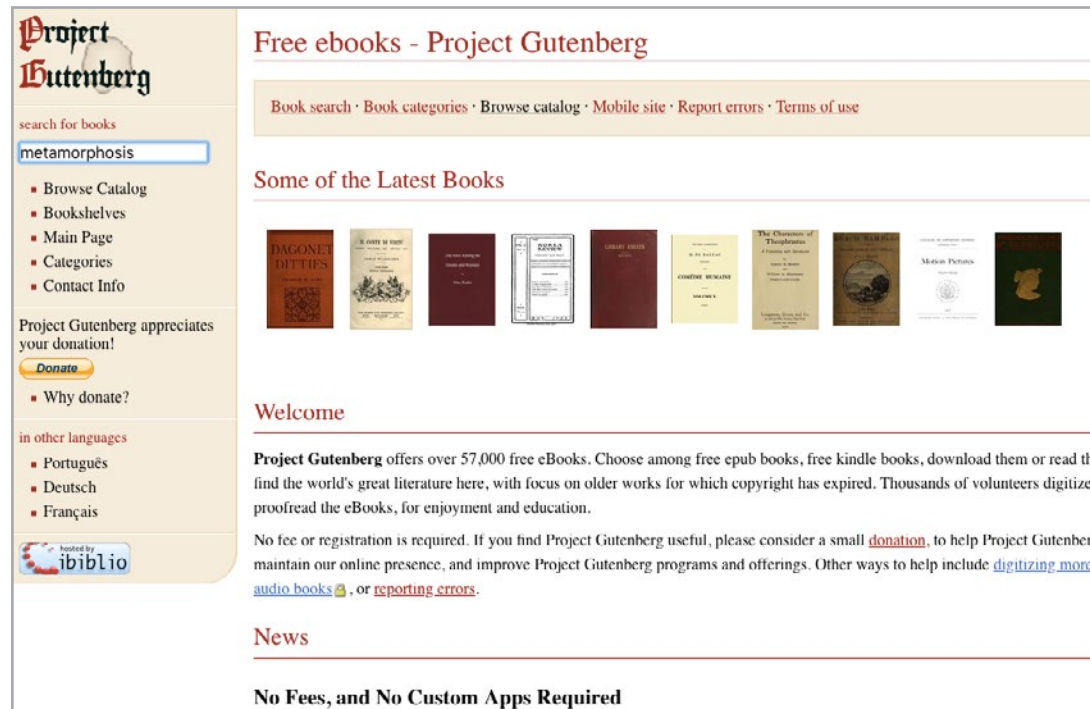
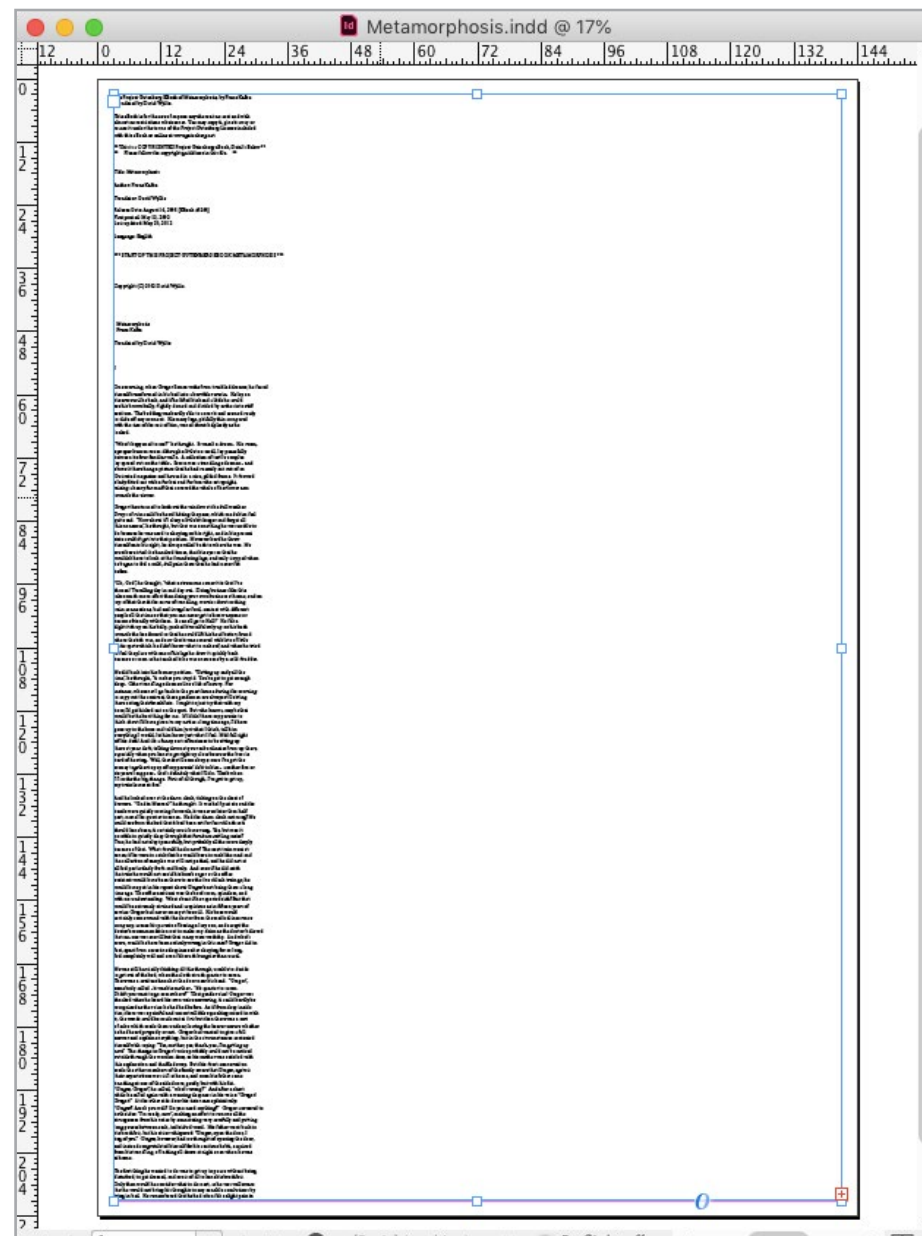


FIGURE 3

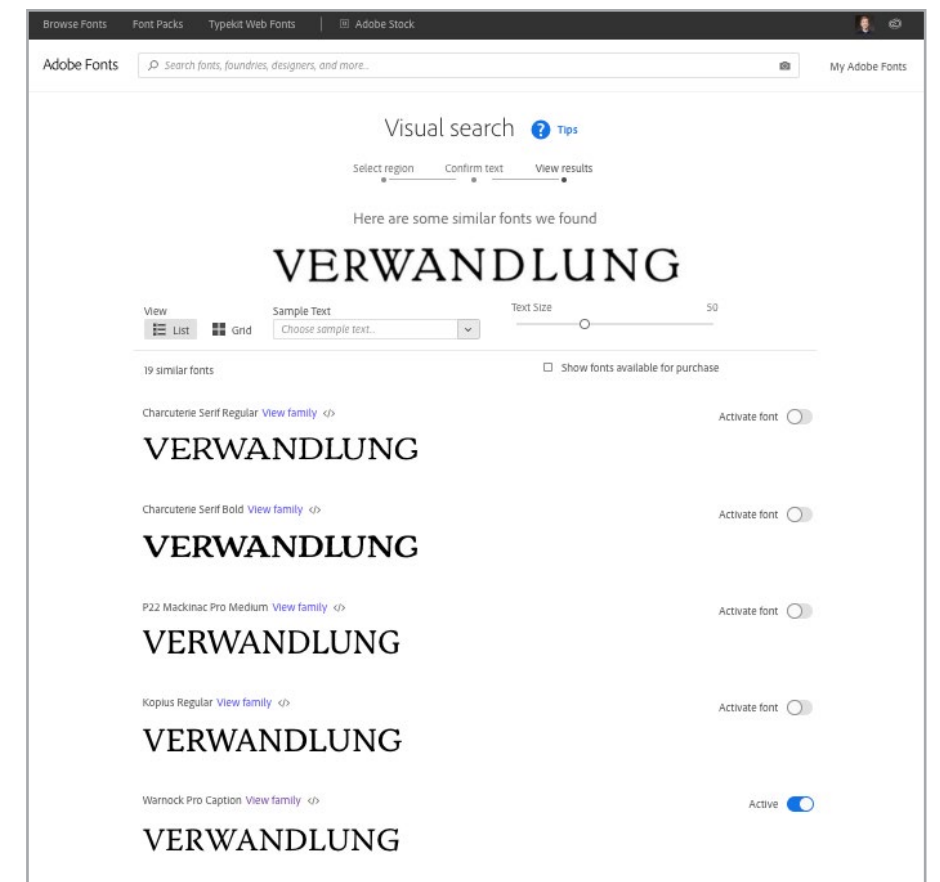


book was published. In my example, I'm using Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, which was first published in 1915. So setting the type in something modern, such as Helvetica or Gotham,



is not going to do. Instead, I searched for images of the first edition of *Metamorphosis* to see what the original type looked like. I found an image of the original German title (*Verwandlung*) and uploaded it to Adobe Fonts (the new name for Typekit) to find the closest matches in the library of fonts available to me (FIGURE 4). I ended up choosing

FIGURE 4



Warnock Pro for my project. For more details on matching a particular font, see Steve Werner's article "What's That Font?!" in [Issue #111](#).

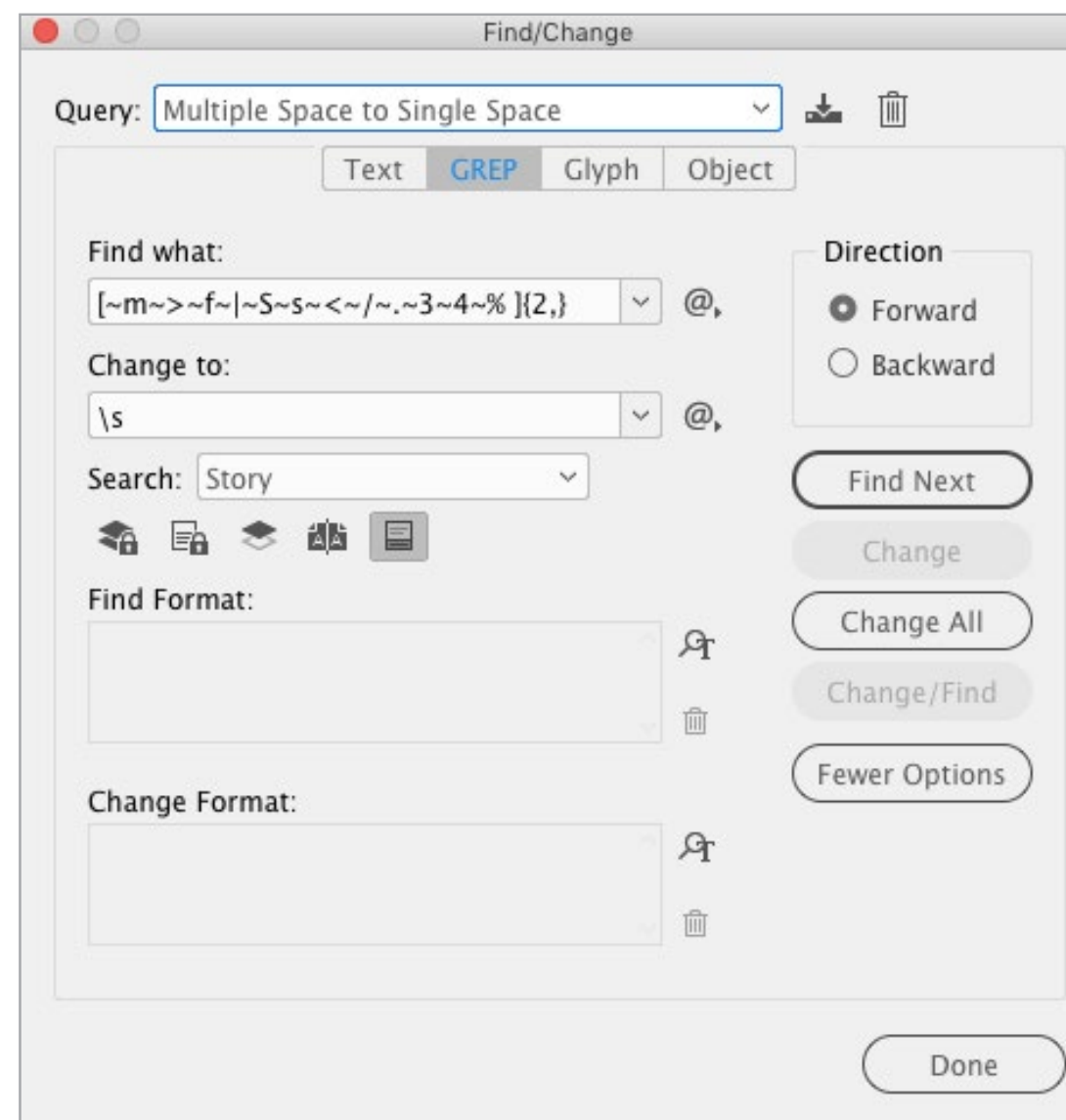
Clean up the text

Book text from Project Gutenberg comes with a bunch of legalese and metadata added to the beginning and end. Select all extraneous text and delete it. You'll probably also need to use Find/Change to remove things like double spaces after sentences, replace double hyphens with em dashes, and so on. Use the query presets that come with InDesign to speed up the process ([FIGURE 5](#)). But don't remove consecutive paragraph returns. We'll deal with them next.

Create the big text block

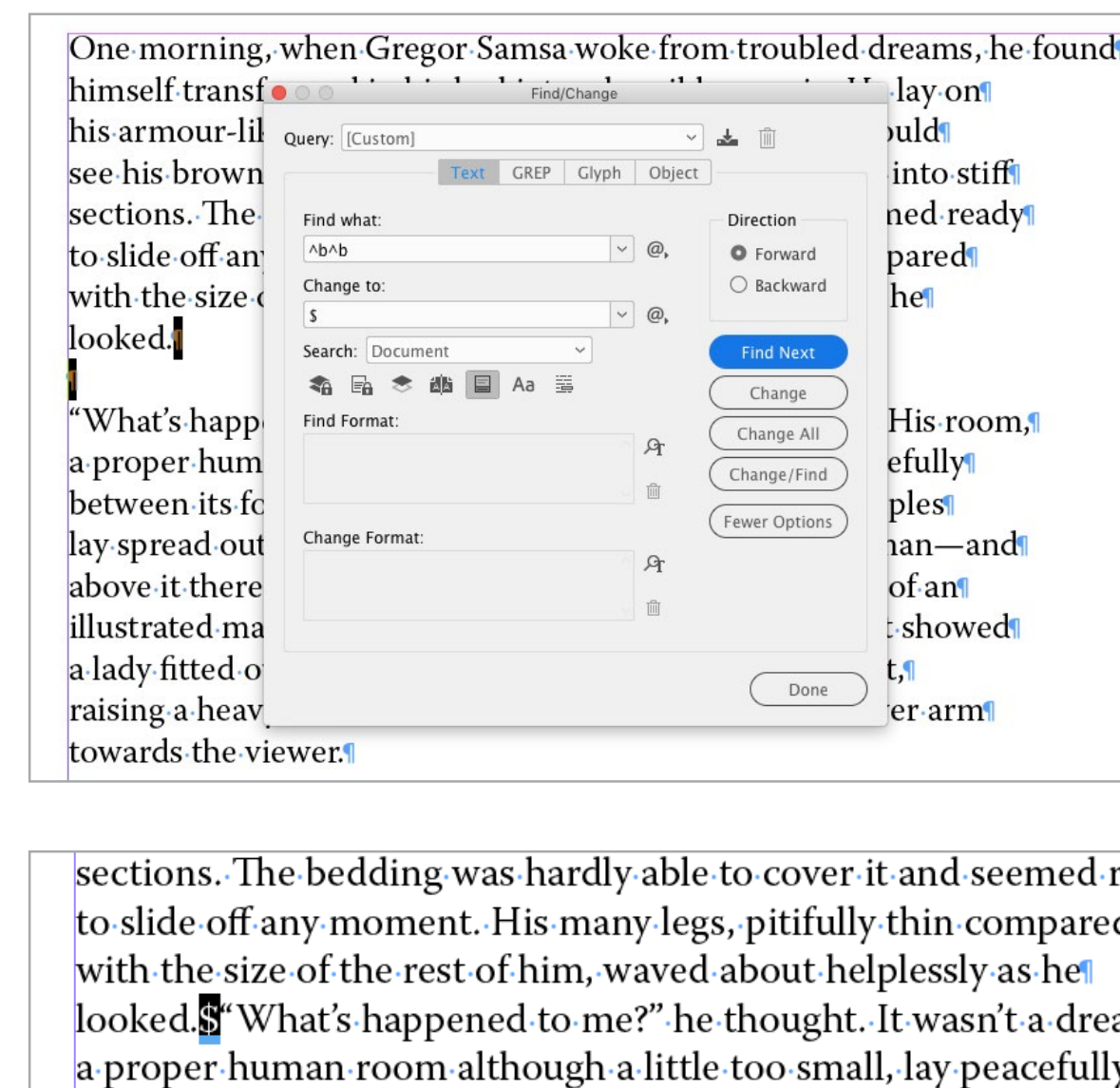
Now it's time to combine all those paragraphs into one big

FIGURE 5



chunk of text. Again, Find/Change is your friend. Create and run a query in the Text tab that will find consecutive paragraph returns. Either `^b^b`

FIGURE 6



(two end of paragraphs) or `^p^p` (two standard carriage returns) will work. Replace them with a glyph that's not found anywhere in the story. In my example, I

used a dollar sign ([FIGURE 6](#)). Then switch to the Glyph tab, and make another query to replace the glyph you inserted in the last step with something fun.

This mark will show where the paragraph breaks used to be once you've combined all the text.

A pilcrow (¶) is a natural choice, but don't be afraid to choose something out of the ordinary. Warnock Pro has a cool/creepy eyeball that perfectly matches the tone of *Metamorphosis*, so I went with that (FIGURE 7). Then go back to the Text tab, and run another Find/Change to replace all paragraph returns with spaces so you end up with one enormous paragraph (FIGURE 8).

Lastly, justify the text, and turn off hyphenation so you get a nice even block (**FIGURE 9, NEXT PAGE**). Don't worry if some lines seem bolder when you're zoomed out; it's just a screen artifact.

Make it fit

You'll probably have overset text at this point, so you'll need to reduce the point size and leading

FIGURE 7

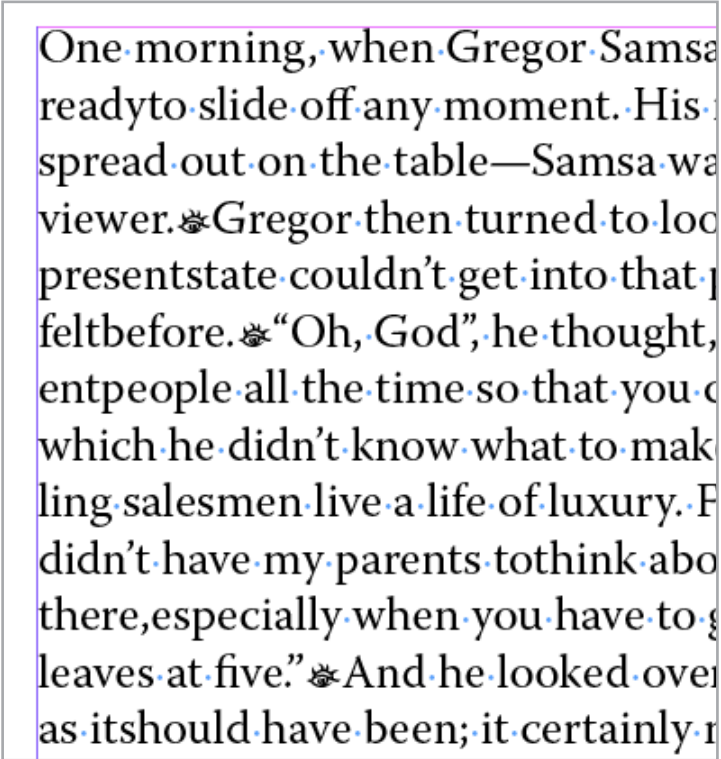
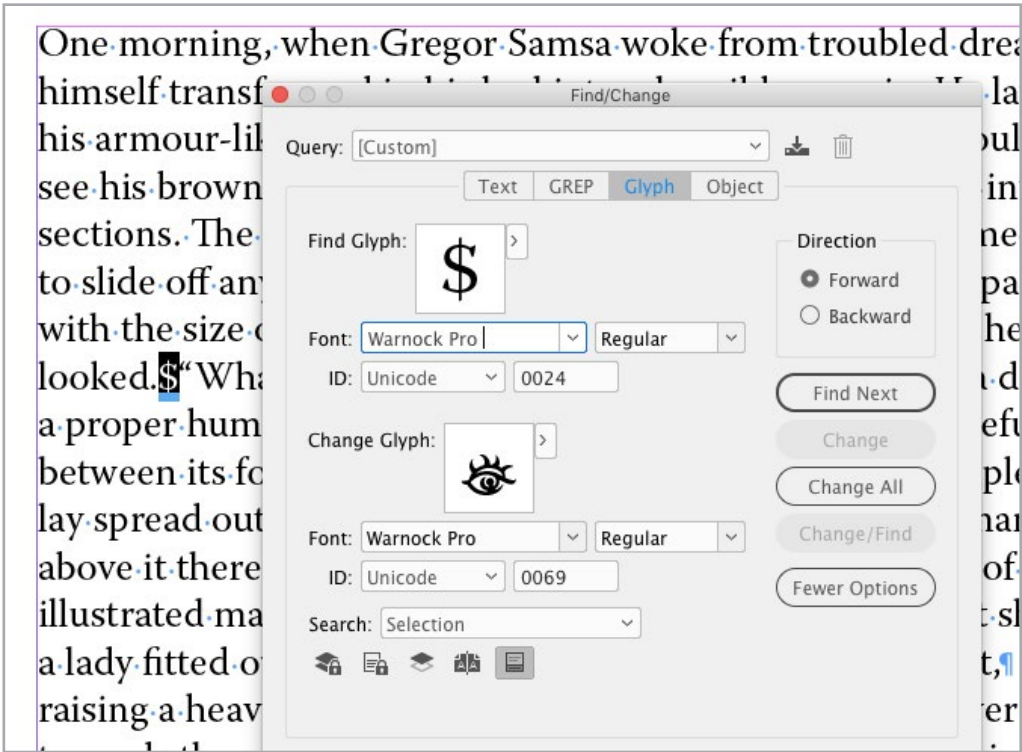
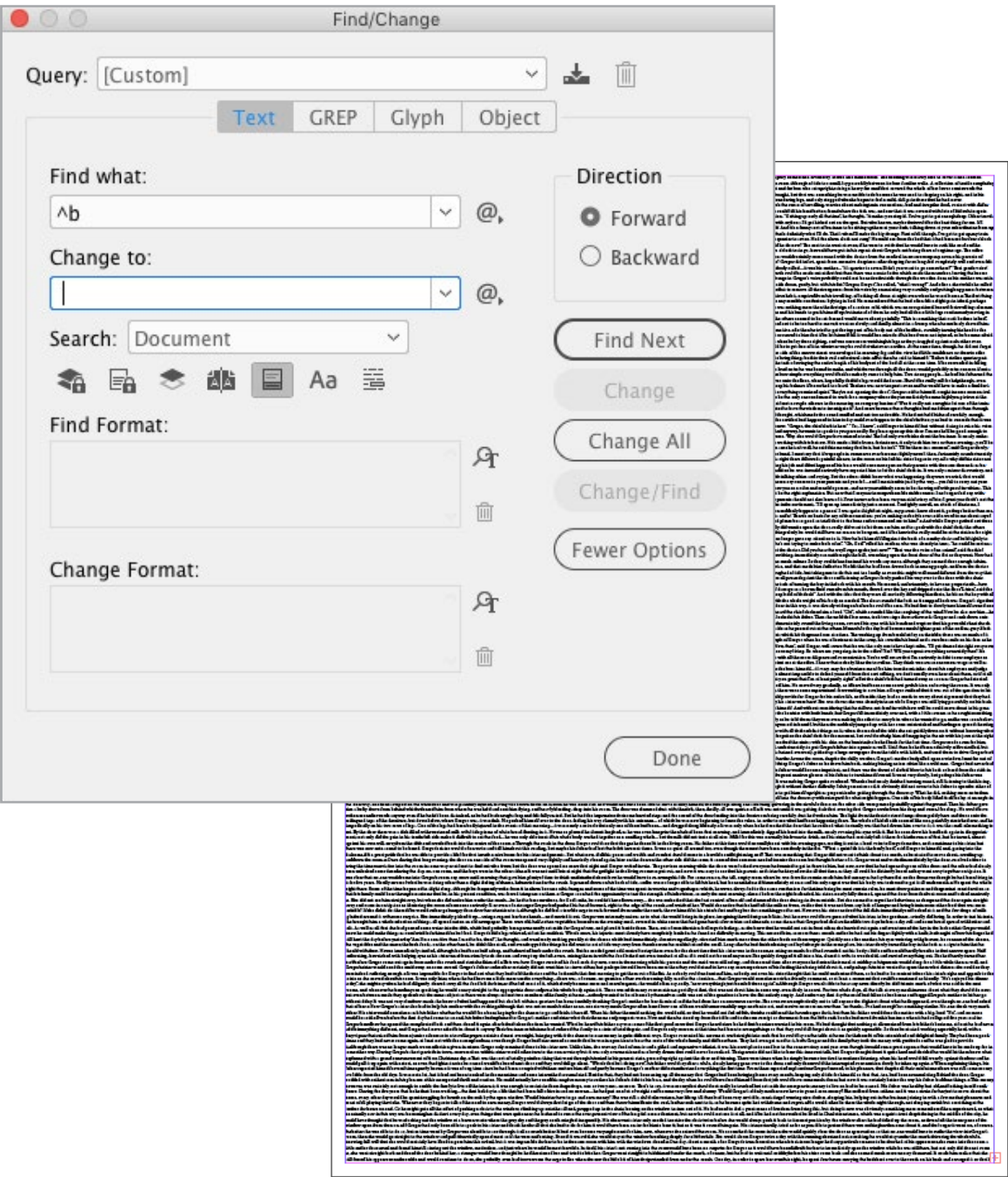


FIGURE 8

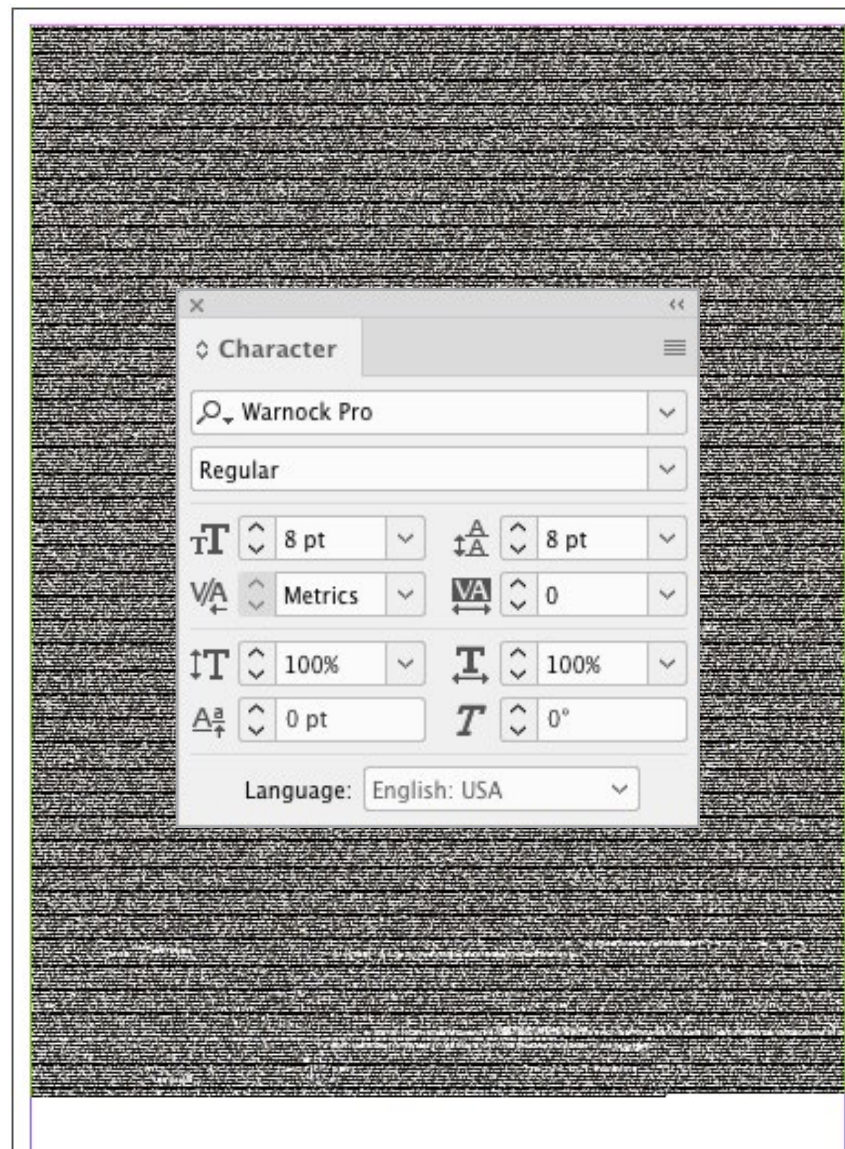


to make it fit (FIGURE 10). Be careful not to go too small, or you might end up with type that's not printable, especially if you plan to use process colors other than black (see sidebar “OK, But Will It Print?”). If you really have your heart set on something like *War and Peace*, you're either going to have to settle for a single chapter or use the entire room as your canvas by printing on wallpaper.

FIGURE 9



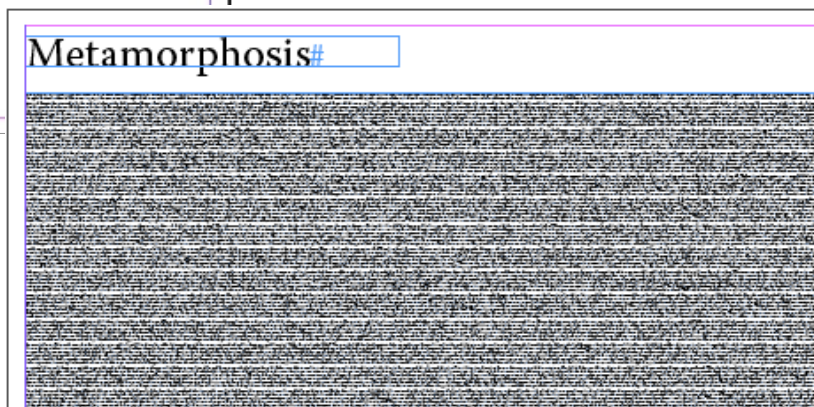
FIGURE 10



Add a title

Close up the text frame to make room for the book title. Put the title in its own frame wherever you want: top, bottom, or sides (FIGURE 11).

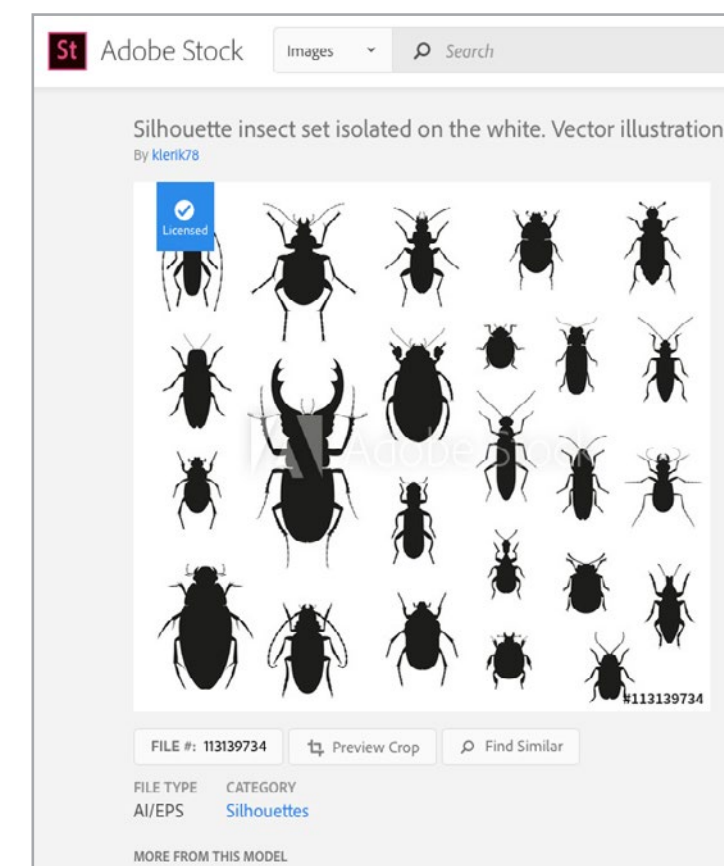
FIGURE 11



Add a silhouette

Now it's time to find the perfect shape to punch out of the text. You need a vector object for this job, so you can create your own using Illustrator or find one online from a site like Adobe Stock (FIGURE 12).

FIGURE 12



OK, BUT WILL IT PRINT?

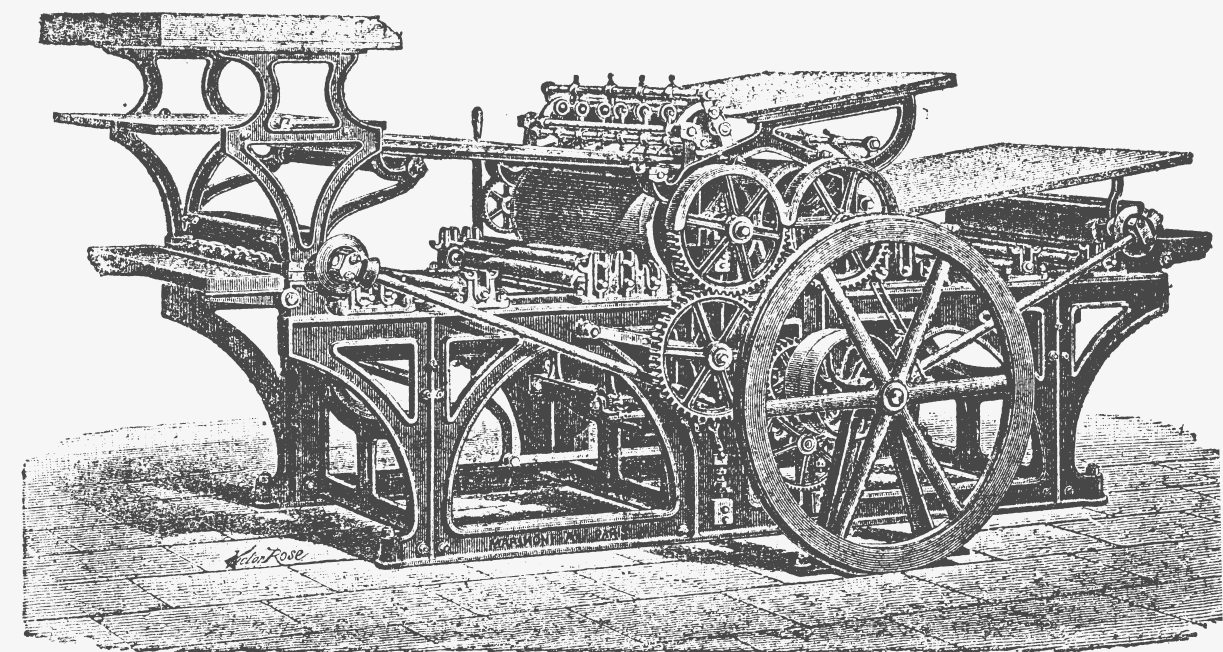
Making these tiny type posters is a lot of fun, but the whole point of the exercise is to end up with something that looks great on the wall, not onscreen. So you have to be aware of a few issues that could trip you up.

The first is the ability of your print service provider to simply process the file. Naturally, something with over 100,000 words on a single page is a complex bit of code. But today's modern RIPs (raster image processors) are more than capable of handling such a beast. Still, if you're going to a mom-and-pop shop with "vintage" equipment and practices, your mileage may vary.

Secondly, even if the file rips, the printed piece may not look great if the type is so small that the glyphs start breaking up. So it's best to choose a medium typeface with low contrast (the variation between the thick and thin parts of the glyphs) and modest (stubby) serifs. Sorry, Bodoni. This isn't your gig.

Finally, be especially conscious of using process colors, either to fill your type or to provide a background for knockout type. If you're not using plain black, you need to use a larger type size to avoid getting a case of the "fuzzies." Always check with your print service provider if in doubt. They may give you a funny look when you tell them you put a whole book on one page, but it's better than ending up with a crummy-looking poster.

Special thanks to James Wamser and Claudia McCue for lending their expertise here.



Copy the vector shape from Illustrator, and paste it into InDesign (FIGURE 13). Position and scale as desired (FIGURE 14). Apply no stroke, no fill, and a text wrap that's based on the object shape (FIGURE 15).

Tidy up

Zoom in to take a close look at the way the text wraps around the vector object. If necessary, tweak the justification settings (found in the Control panel menu when you have your

cursor in the paragraph), and be sure that Single Word Justification is set to Align Left (FIGURE 16, NEXT PAGE).

If you have overset text again, reduce the type size. To make the text fill the entire space within

the margins (FIGURE 17, NEXT PAGE), set the text to vertically justify (**Object > Text Frame Options**). Be careful to prevent ascenders and descenders from crashing into each other. Tweak the text wrap and/or position of the vector

FIGURE 13

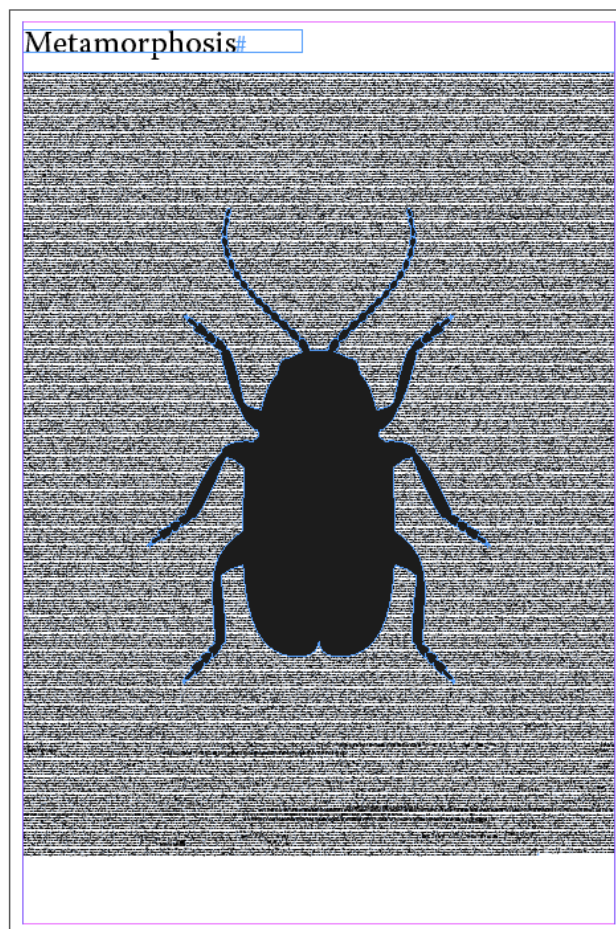


FIGURE 14

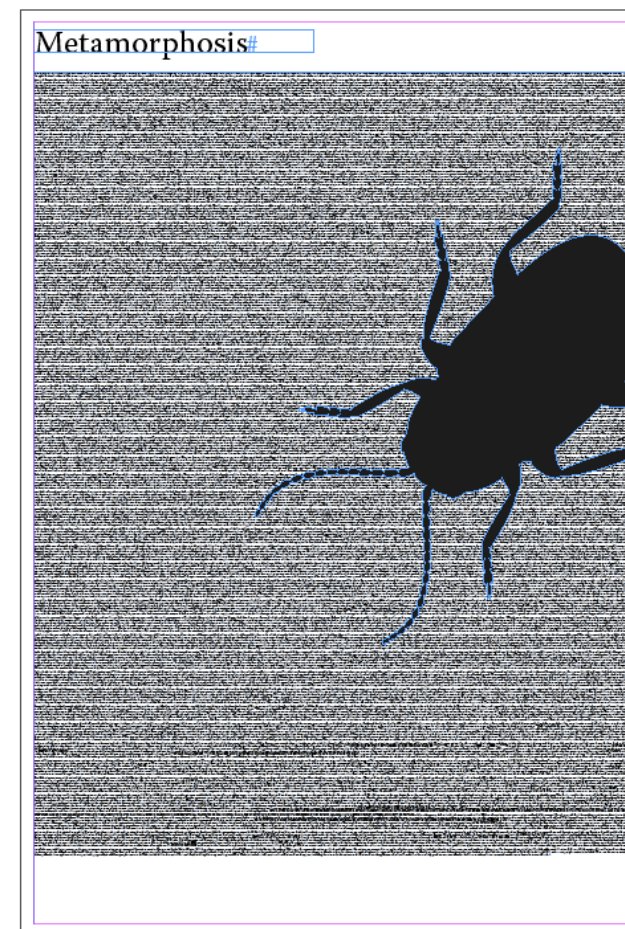


FIGURE 15

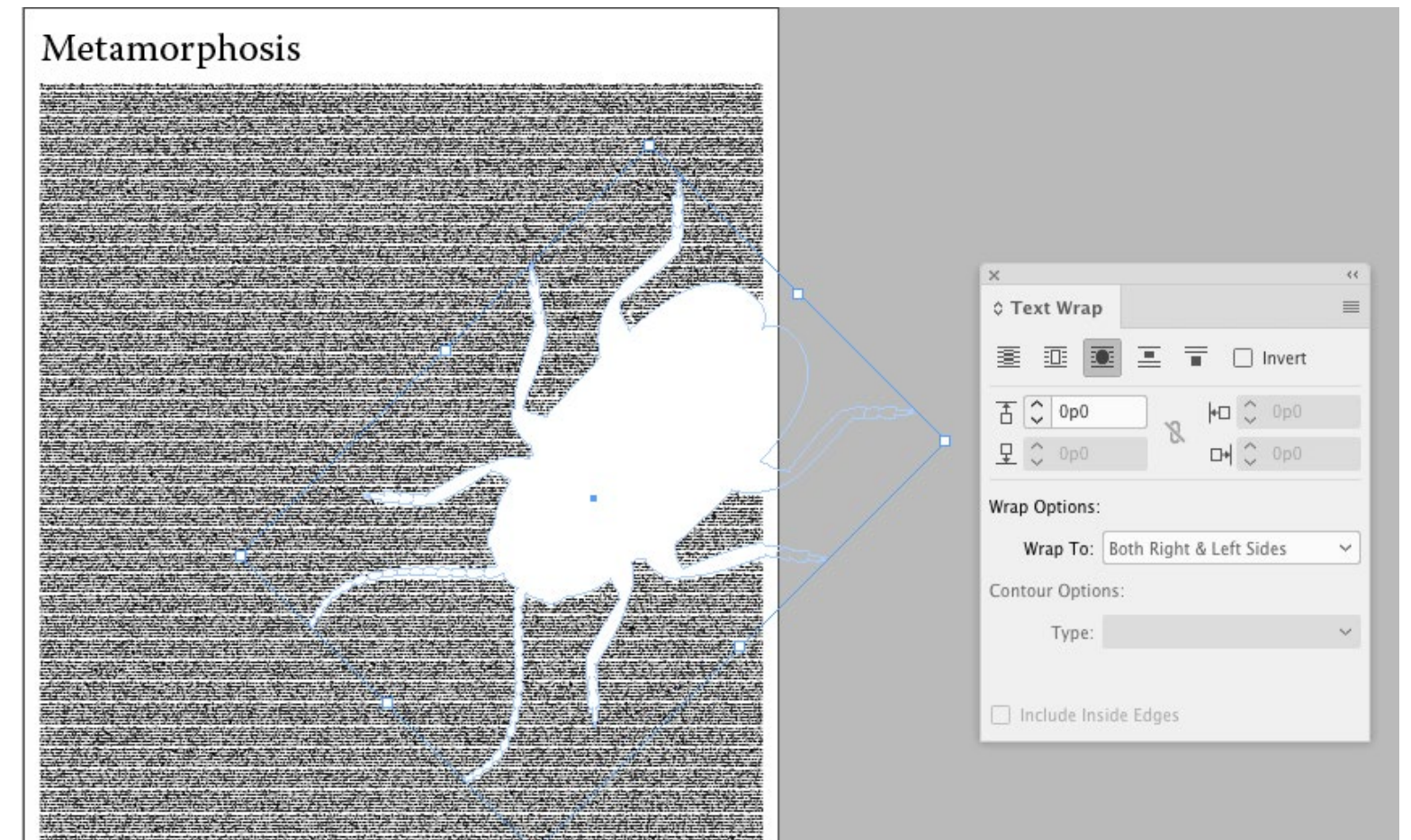


FIGURE 16

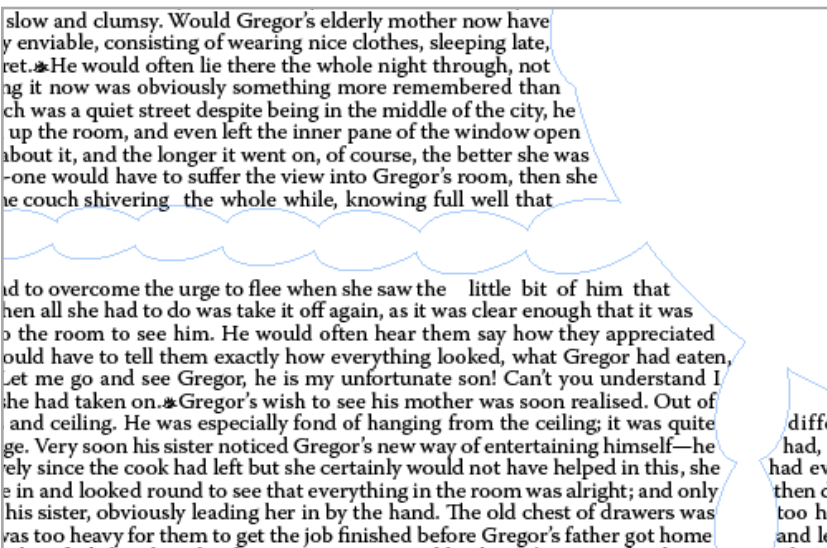
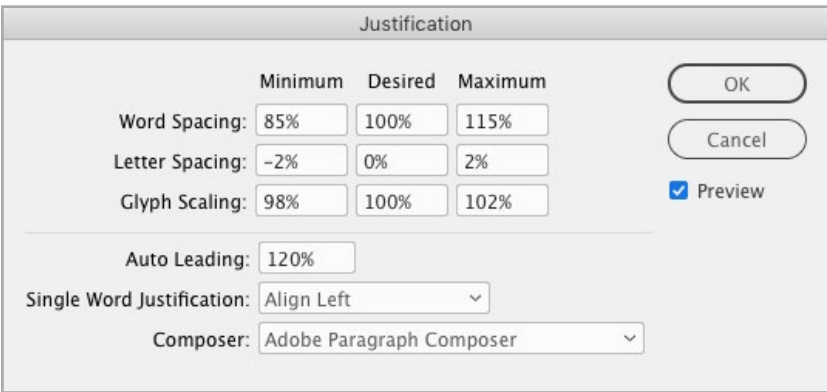
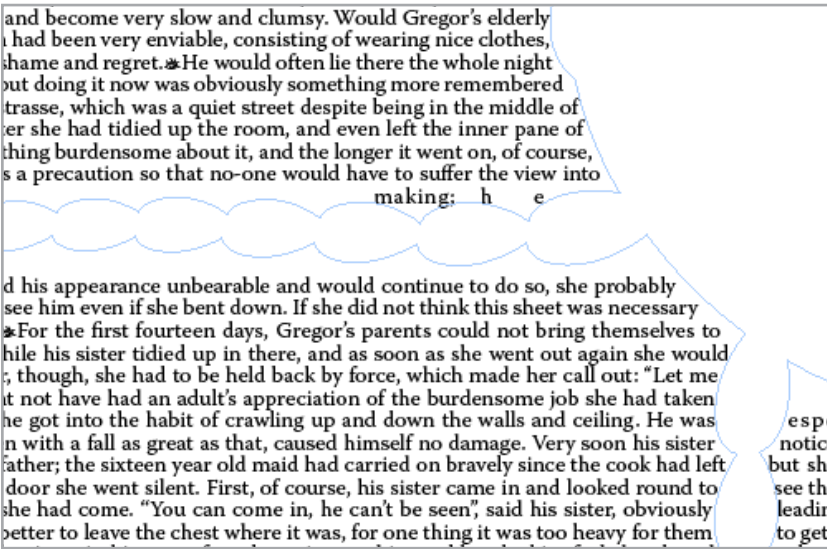
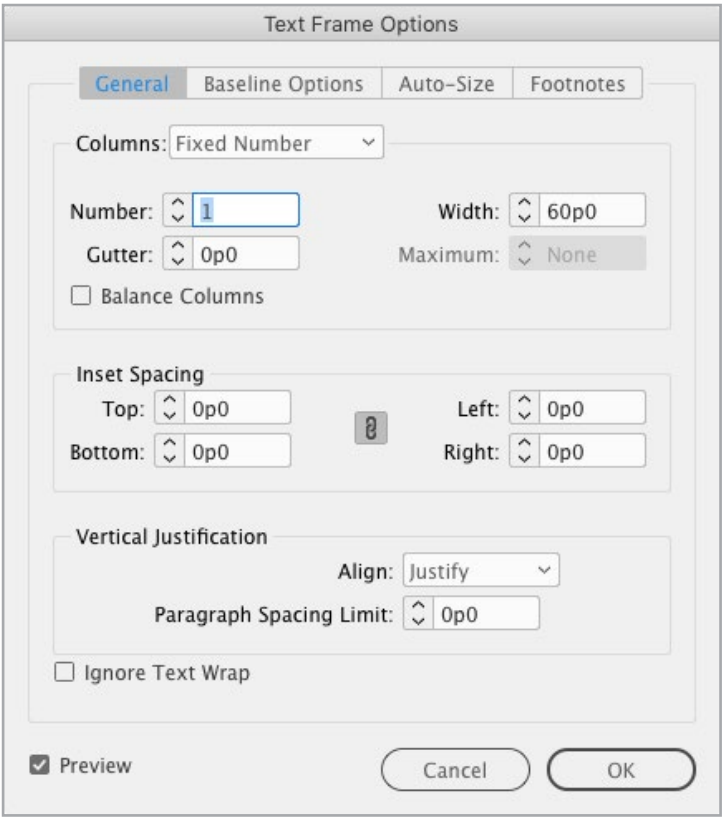


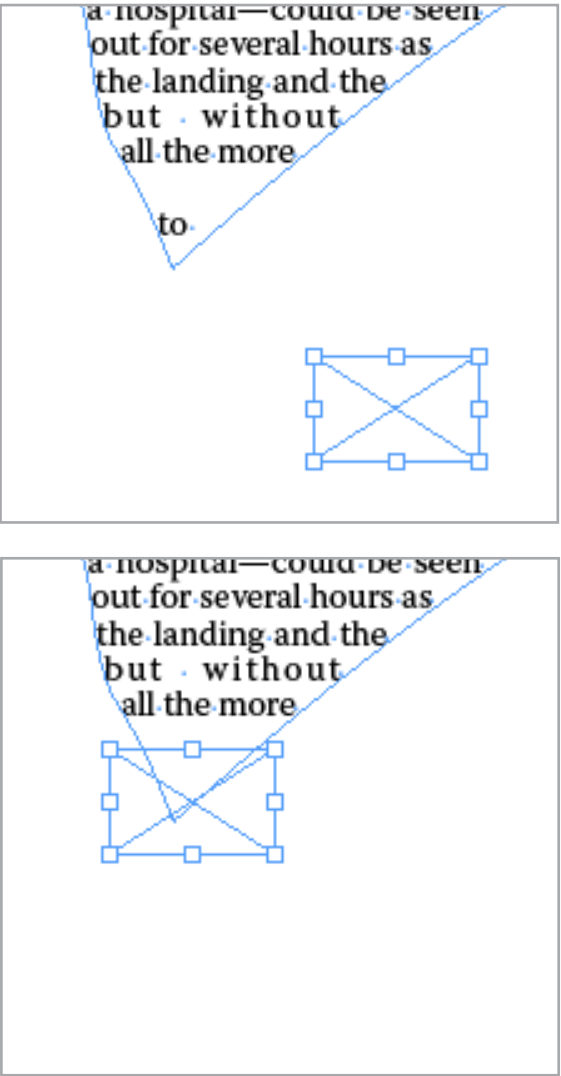
FIGURE 17



object to avoid major justification problems. In some cases, the easiest fix is to cheat by adding a small frame with text wrap and no stroke and no fill (FIGURE 18).

FIGURE 19 shows the final result (remember you can download the PDF for a better look).

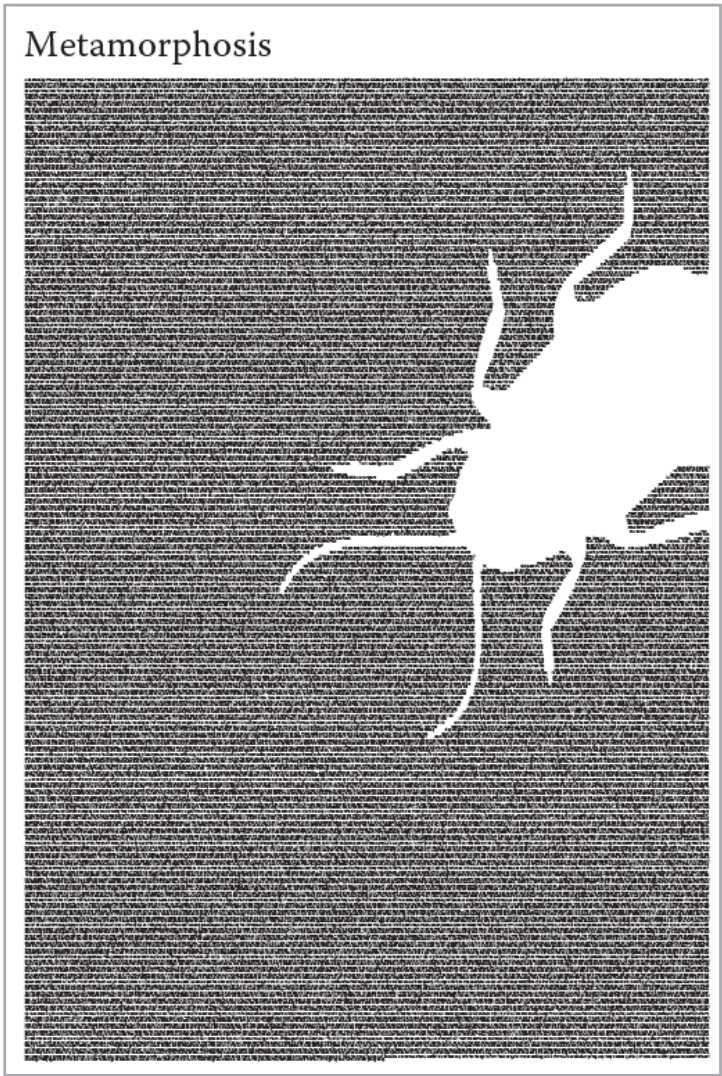
FIGURE 18



Alternative Method: Creating Multi-colored Text with Paste Into

The simple silhouette method is great for making a striking

FIGURE 19



design out of one shape and a whole lot of text. But when you're ready to try something with even more sizzle, you can fill the silhouette with text and achieve a multi-colored effect.

To do this, follow all the steps of the simple silhouette method to the point where you position and size the vector object. But this time, but don't apply any text wrap. Instead, you're going to use the vector object as a mask for a copy of the text frame. With the text frame selected, copy it, and choose **Edit > Paste in Place**. Select the text in the duplicate frame, and change its fill color (you could also add a fill color to the text frame itself). Then select the text frame again. Cut it, and paste into the vector object (**Edit > Paste Into**).

You can achieve all kinds of cool effects by playing with fill colors for the text frame or even applying gradients to the text. To apply a gradient fill to text, select the text frame with the Selection tool. Then go to the Swatches panel, and click the Formatting Affects Text button (or use the

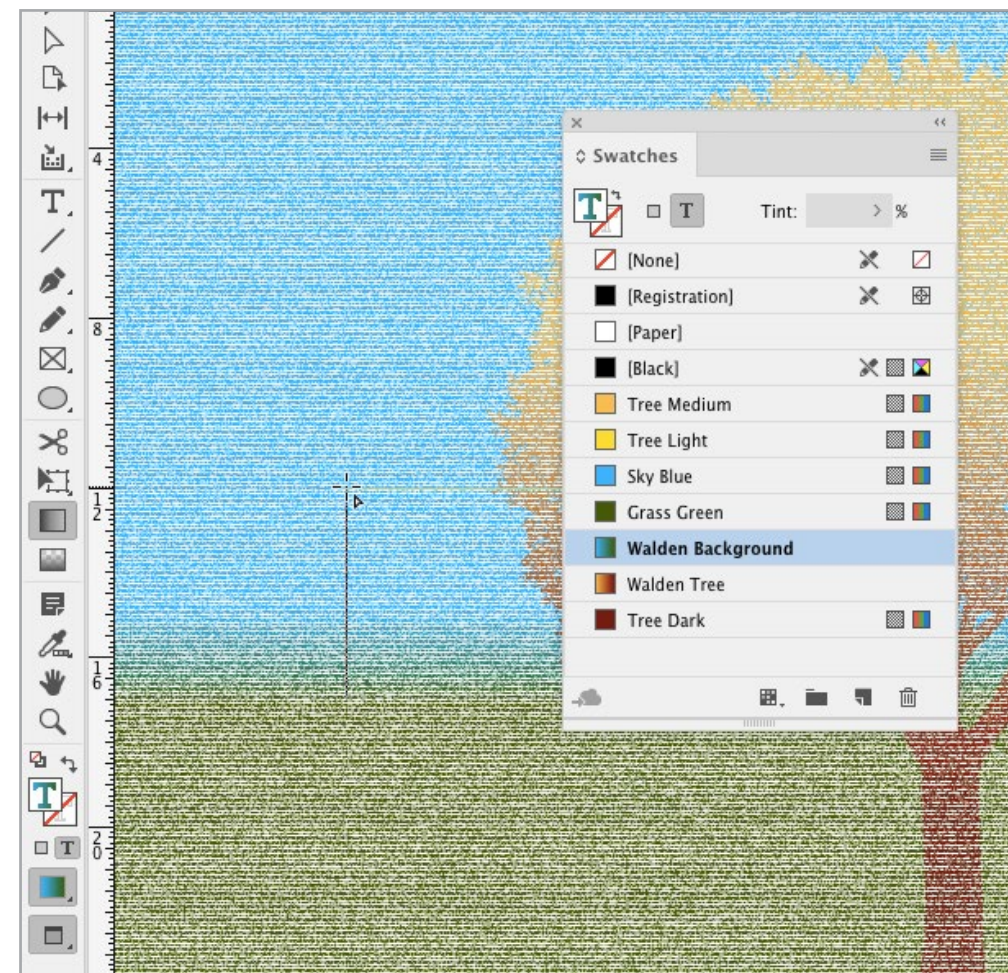


FIGURE 20

keyboard shortcut J). Click a gradient swatch to apply it. Then drag with the Gradient tool on the text to reposition the starting and end points of the gradient (FIGURE 20).

To adjust the color of the text after you've pasted the text

frame into the vector object, you'll need to select the vector object first, and then click the Select Content button in the Control panel to grab the text frame (FIGURE 21). At this point, you can go to the Swatches panel to target the text to change its color.

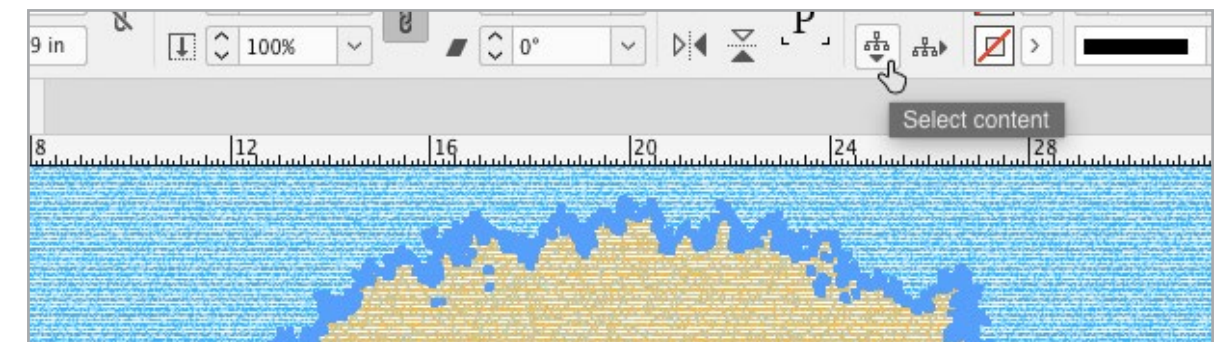


FIGURE 21

Well-read Walls

Making tiny type posters is a great project for so many reasons. It's a fun creative exercise. You get to play with the text of your favorite great books. You get to show off your design chops *and* your fine taste in literature at the same time. And you can actually use InDesign to decorate your house! If you try it, I bet you'll find it's impossible to stop at just one. And who knows? Your next career could be InteriorDesign.

Mike Rankin is the Editor in Chief of InDesign Magazine, InDesignSecrets, and CreativePro.



Capture a moment in type



Victoria & Albert Museum • Borough Market • Congestion Zone • London Dungeon • Evening Standard • Foyles • Covent Garden • Harrods • Nelson's Column
Royal Courts of Justice • Kew Gardens • British Library • Madame Tassauds • Natural History Museum • Oyster Card • St Pancras Station • Queen Elizabeth II
Royal Festival Hall • Selfridges • Tate Modern • Underground • Savoy Hotel • Tower Bridge • oXo Tower • New Scotland Yard • ZSL London Zoo • Blue Plaques

My odyssey with hometown alphabets began back in the

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

who had formerly worn glazed expressions when suffering my explanations of kerning and baseline grids became enthused at the prospect of making their own alphabet—one memorable submission was constructed from Star Wars action figures.

This was around the time when I was leaving San Francisco, the city I'd called home for more than a decade. Partly as a way of providing an example to my students, and partly as a way of saying goodbye to my neighborhood, I made my first alphabet—of the Mission district (**FIGURE 1**).

It included the laundrette where I had my shirts ironed, the unprepossessing corner store where I bought my beer and other sundries, the hole-in-the-wall takeout where they made a never-to-be-equalled falafel, as well as local institutions like the Roxie Cinema. To say that it

tapped into the zeitgeist would be an overstatement, but it got positive feedback and several friends requested copies, which I regarded as a measure of success. People enjoyed identifying the letters without resorting to the

small key I'd provided to their source. Anyone who knew the area had seen them before. They were, to appropriate a quote from typographer Lars Muller about Helvetica, “the perfume of the city.” These familiar letters—

some flamboyant, some prosaic—were friends and acquaintances, even if you sometimes had to wrack your brain to remember their names.

What I hadn't anticipated was how, more than a decade on, the poster of that alphabet became a snapshot in time. As more and more expensive restaurants and stores moved into the neighborhood, the old signs and letters disappeared. Like so many of my friends, the likes of Anna's Danish Cookies and Yum Yum House couldn't afford the spiraling rents of San Francisco.

If my San Francisco alphabet was a parting gift, then my Brighton alphabet (**FIGURE 2**) was a welcoming gift. I'd lived in Brighton as a student 20 years before, but the place had been transformed since then. The picturesquely shabby seaside town I remembered had become

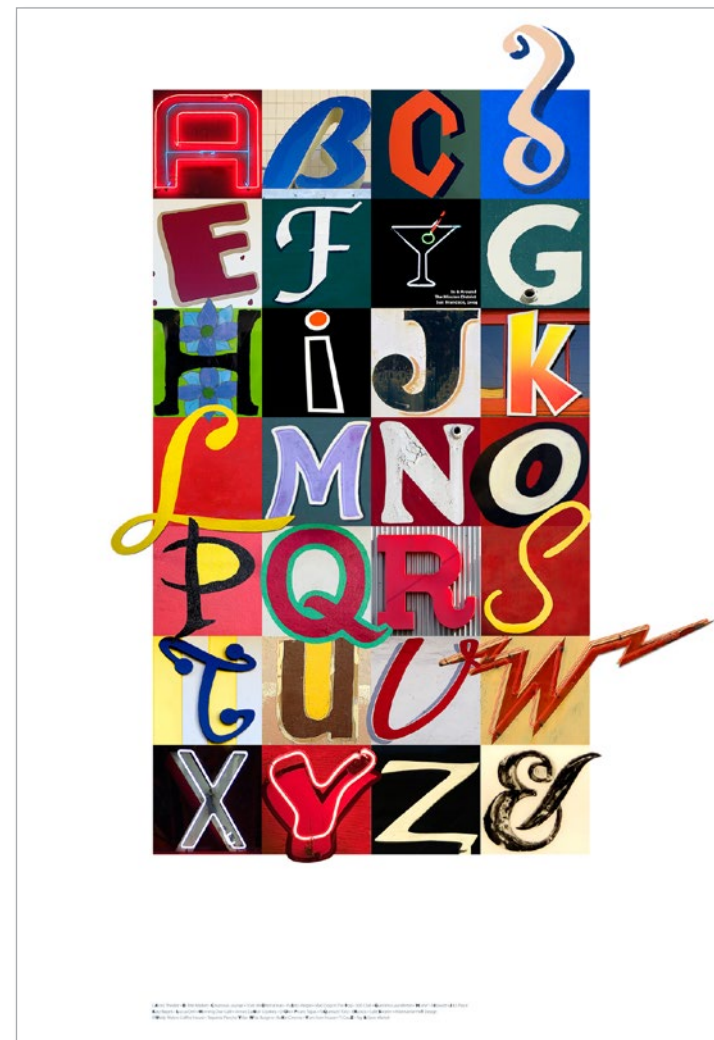


FIGURE 1. Mission District alphabet

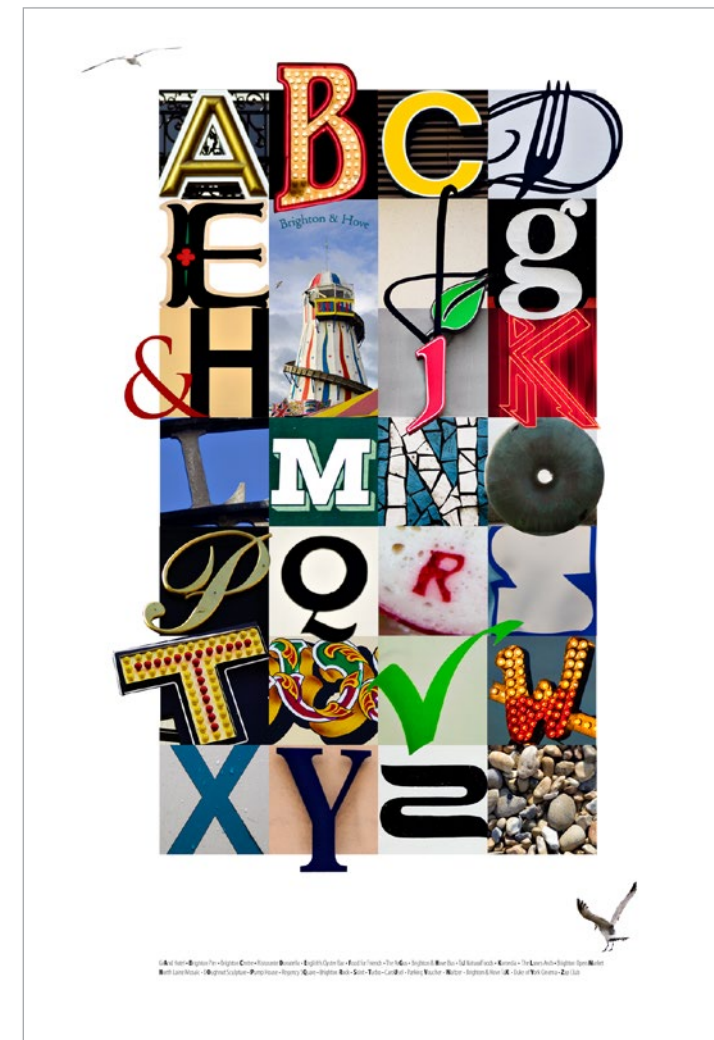


FIGURE 2. Brighton alphabet (2006)

a cosmopolitan, year-round destination. To get to know my new old town, I took my camera and photographed its letters. My scope this time was broader: rather than try to capture just my own slice of Brighton, I aimed to make the alphabet appeal to anyone who knew the city, either as resident or visitor.

Making (and breaking) the Rules

With such an open-ended goal, I need some guidelines.

First: no chain stores. It's not that I wear hair shirts and eschew all chain stores, it's just that chains don't convey local identity: they could be anywhere. The homogenization of our Main Streets and High Streets really cuts down on our options for unique type and signage, and there are times when the rules need to be relaxed. For example,

my Lewes alphabet (**FIGURE 3**) wouldn't have been complete without the B for Bill's—a now popular restaurant chain (with fantastic hand-lettered signage and a beautifully designed menu) of more than 80 branches

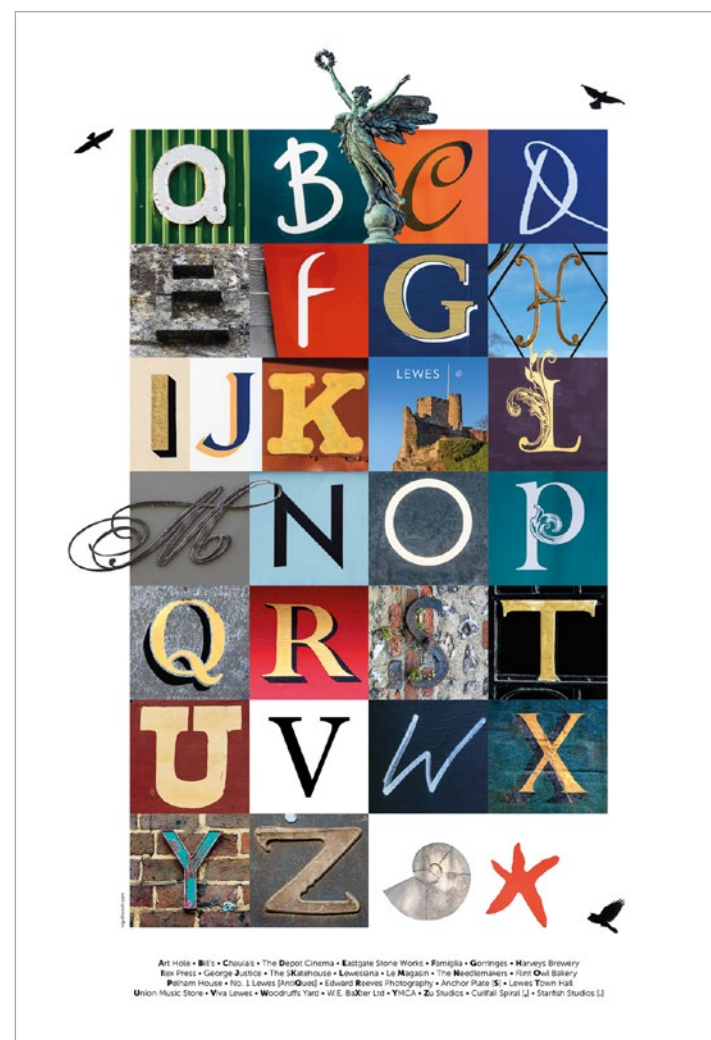


FIGURE 3. Lewes alphabet

nationwide. My loophole: Lewes came first—it was the birthplace of Bill's.

Secondly, I wanted the alphabet to be personal, so the lettering had to be sourced from places that I liked or had a connection with, however tenuous. Since I'm not much of a shopper, this at times meant, say, somewhere that I might like to shop in another lifetime. For example, the W of the Lewes alphabet is for a plant nursery. My interest in potted plants is undetectable on any scale, but I included the letter because the owner had gained some local fame from a funny sign he posted in the wake of the 2015 general election—a sign that made me laugh when I wanted to cry.

Thirdly, and obviously, the lettering had to be attractive—and play nicely with the letters

around it. This can cause a few compromises. I want the alphabets to be personal, but it's an inconvenient truth that some of the places you love have crappy signage. At the end of the day, the alphabet needs to look good.

Ideally I wanted to use the first letter that appears on each sign. After all, A is for apple, even though the P may be more attractive. Inevitably, some letters prove harder to find than others—obviously Xs are a challenge—but thankfully you can usually find something X-shaped, like the crossing lines of a train track or the sails of a windmill (**FIGURE 4, NEXT PAGE**). Strangely, Js proved particularly elusive in Las Vegas.

My last rule was to have fun—use shapes or pictures to substitute for letters where appropriate (a rebus), add decorative pictures



FIGURE 4. Where necessary, you can substitute images for letters.

around the outside, and don't forget the "punctuation." Working with a 4×7 grid, there are 28 slots to fill, leaving two for interesting commas, ampersands, and full stops (**FIGURE 5**).

Type Safari

Going out in search of letters to photograph becomes a treasure hunt. The better you know the area, the more effective you'll be, as you can plan your route

according to your shot list and not have to rely upon serendipity. No matter how efficient your planning, be prepared to make several trips before you have all the letters you need.

I capture the images with a zoom lens so I can crop in tight enough, and in Camera RAW format for editing flexibility. Note that if you're shooting JPGs you can still edit the images with the Camera RAW plug-in; you just won't have as much data to work with.

Processing the images

I use Lightroom to organize my photos, but Bridge works equally well. Before I begin editing, I arrange the images in alphabetical order, rate them, and create stacks from similar frames (**FIGURE 6**).

It helps if the images are shot in similar lighting conditions,



FIGURE 5. Jimi Hendrix was the first rock musician to be honored by English Heritage with a blue plaque: what better full stop for a London alphabet?

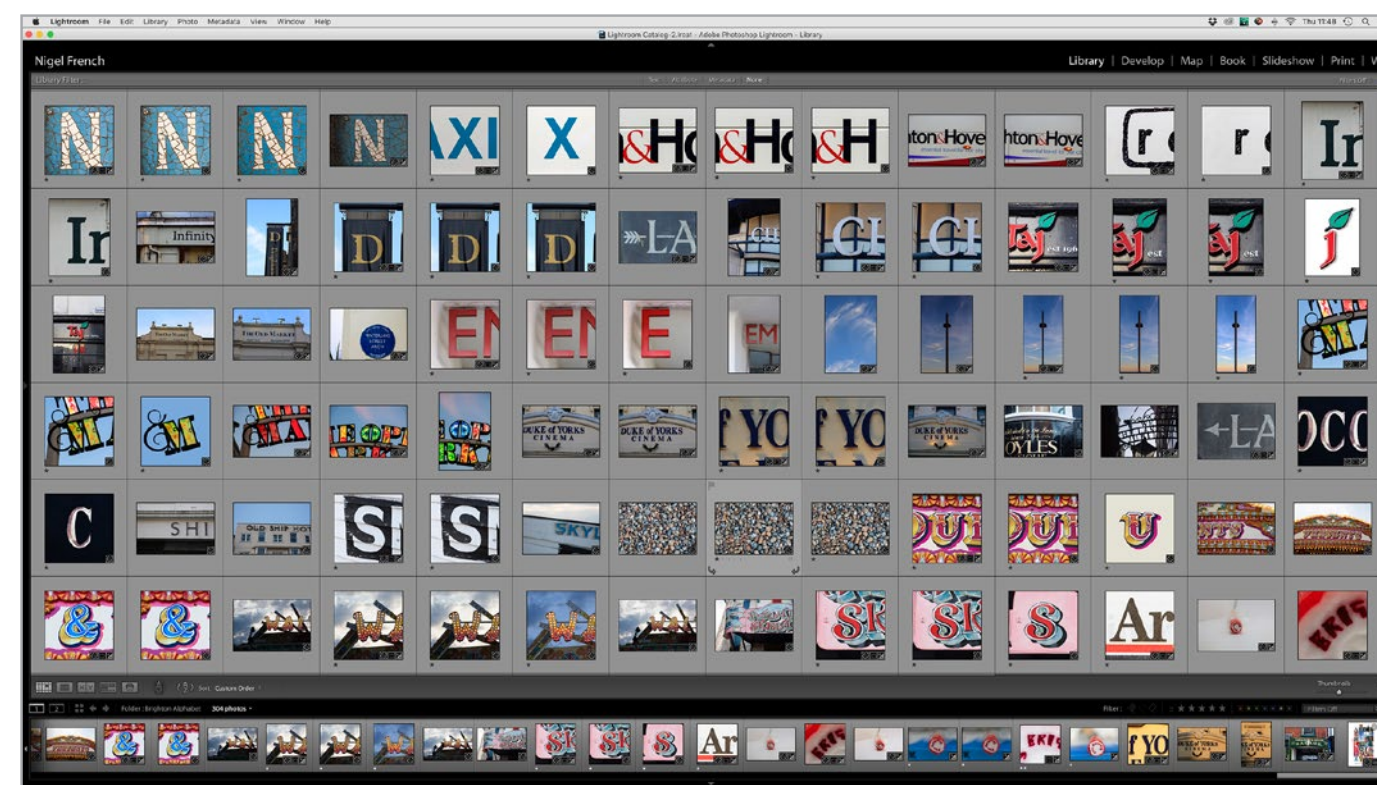


FIGURE 6. Evaluating the images in Lightroom

but this isn't always possible, so I may need to adjust exposure and contrast to give the impression of consistent lighting across the range of letters.

For most images of signage, the camera lens will be tilted, which, unless you have fancy tilt-shift lens, will result in some distortion. I straighten

the images so that they appear to have been taking face-on using the Upright controls in Lightroom or the Camera RAW plug-in (FIGURE 7). Photoshop's Perspective Crop tool can also be useful for squaring the image, and if you still need to fix distortions, there's also Free Transform (Command/Ctrl+T).

How much retouching you apply is a matter of personal choice. As well as any distracting

elements like litter or electric cables, I also remove any adjacent letters. Using layers, I can retouch any unwanted elements in a nondestructive way with a combination of the Content Aware Patch and Clone Stamp tools (FIGURE 8).

Once I've edited the short list, I export the images as full resolution, high quality JPGs. It's now time to move to InDesign!



FIGURE 7. Applying Upright correction before (left) and after.

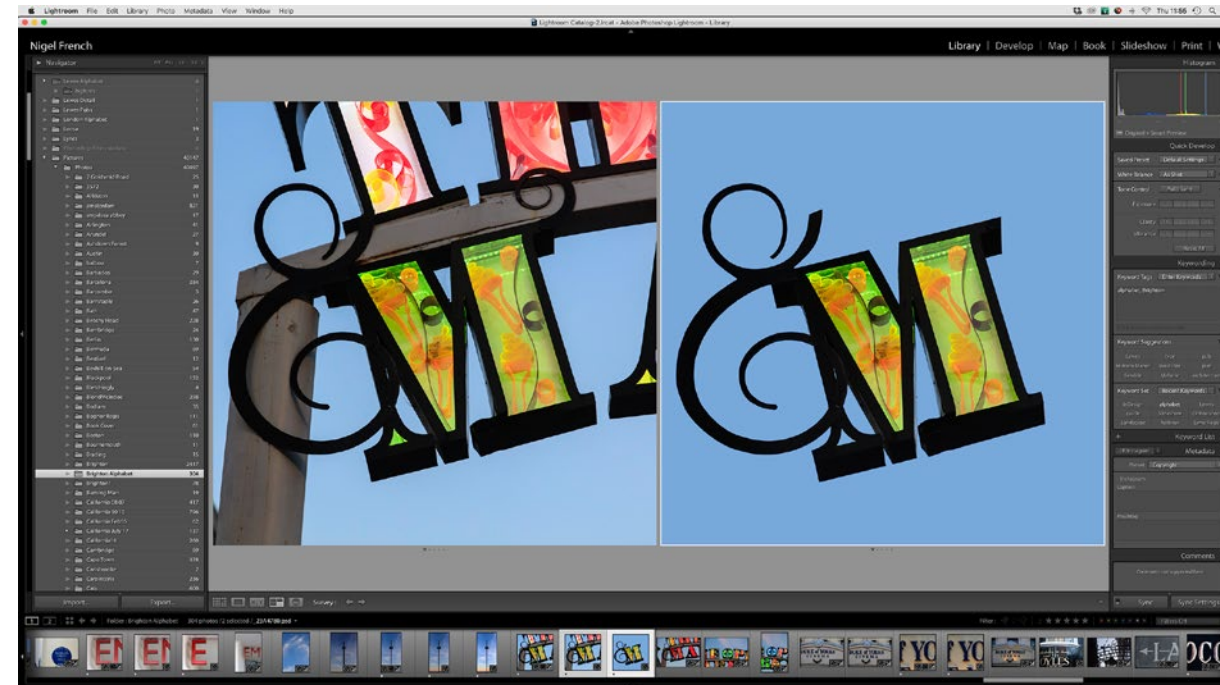
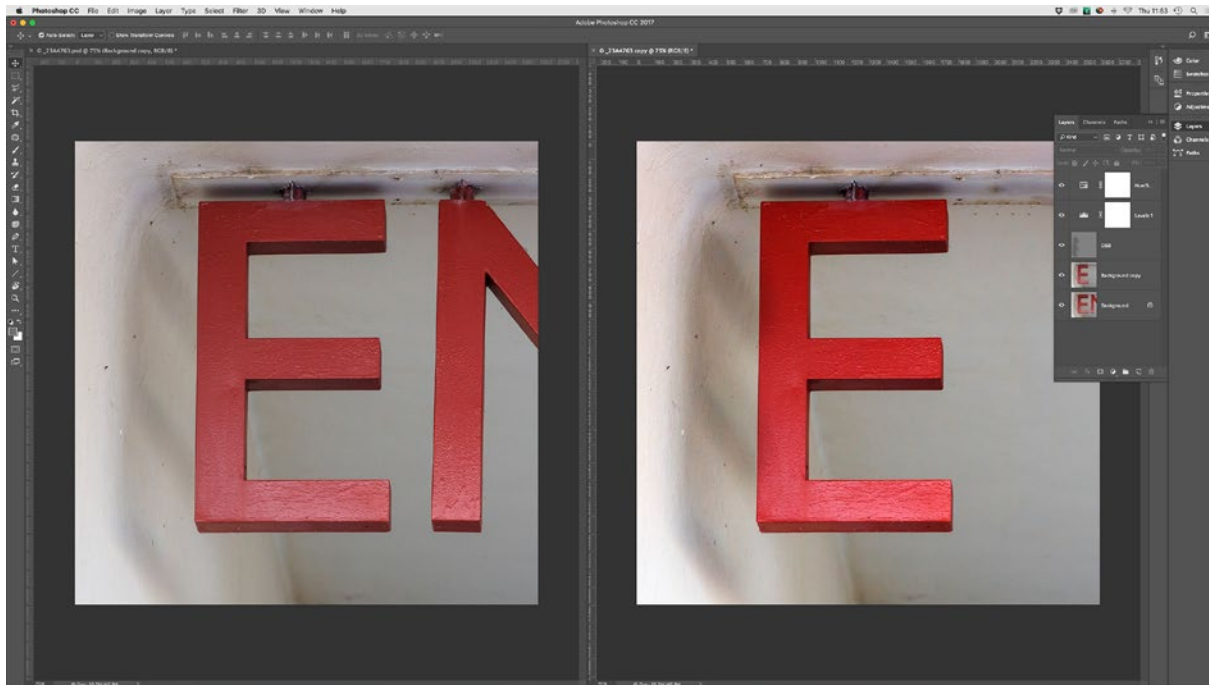
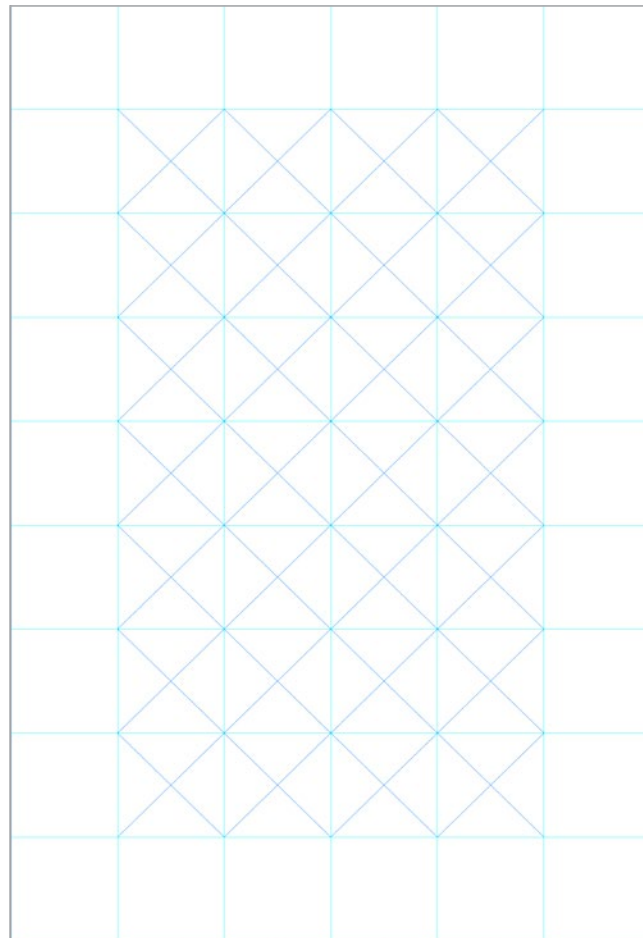


FIGURE 8. Examples of retouching, before (left) and after.

Setting up the InDesign page

My preferred page size is A3+ (13 × 19 inches), sometimes known as Fillmore poster size. I divide the page into a 6 × 9 grid, with the outside grid fields serving as the margin. Within this margin, I draw a frame and use the



Gridify feature to divide it into four columns and seven rows. This makes each letter's square slightly bigger than 2 inches (FIGURE 9).

To these empty frames I'll apply an Object Style that has the Frame Fitting Options set to Fill Frame Proportionally, and then choose **File > Place** to

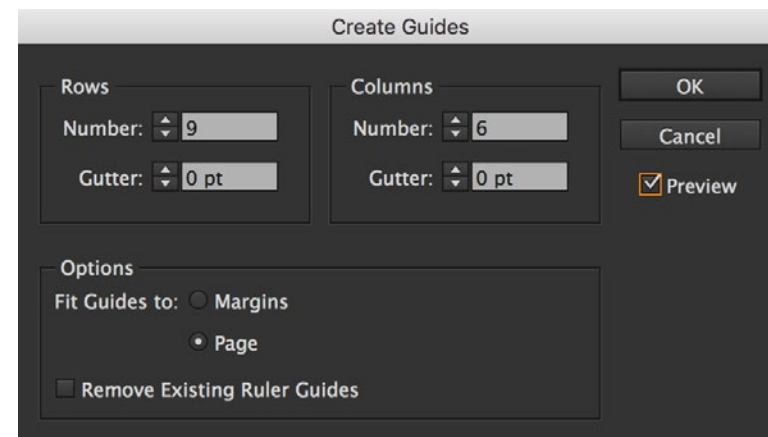


FIGURE 9. To use the Gridify feature, take the Rectangle Frame tool, hold the mouse button down, and tap the right arrow to add columns and the up arrow to add rows. To remove the space between columns, press Cmd/Ctrl+Left Arrow. To remove the space between rows, press Cmd/Ctrl+Down Arrow. The end result is a grid of frames to hold your letters (left). To create a set of evenly spaced guides, choose Layout > Create Guides and enter the desired number of rows and columns (above).

place the images into the frames (FIGURE 10).

So that I can experiment with different letters, I'll create additional layers to accommodate my second, third, and fourth choices. It's not until you see the letters in context with their neighbors that you know if they are going to work or not (FIGURE 11).

With so many different lettering styles, there's the possibility of the poster looking like a

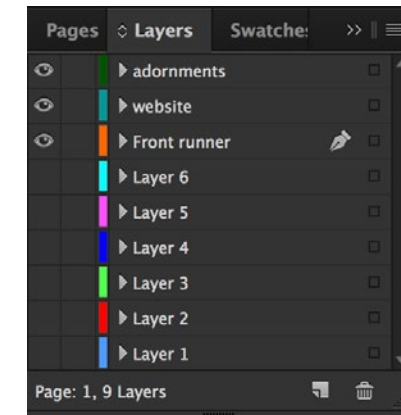


FIGURE 11. Keep your options open: add alternate choices on separate layers.

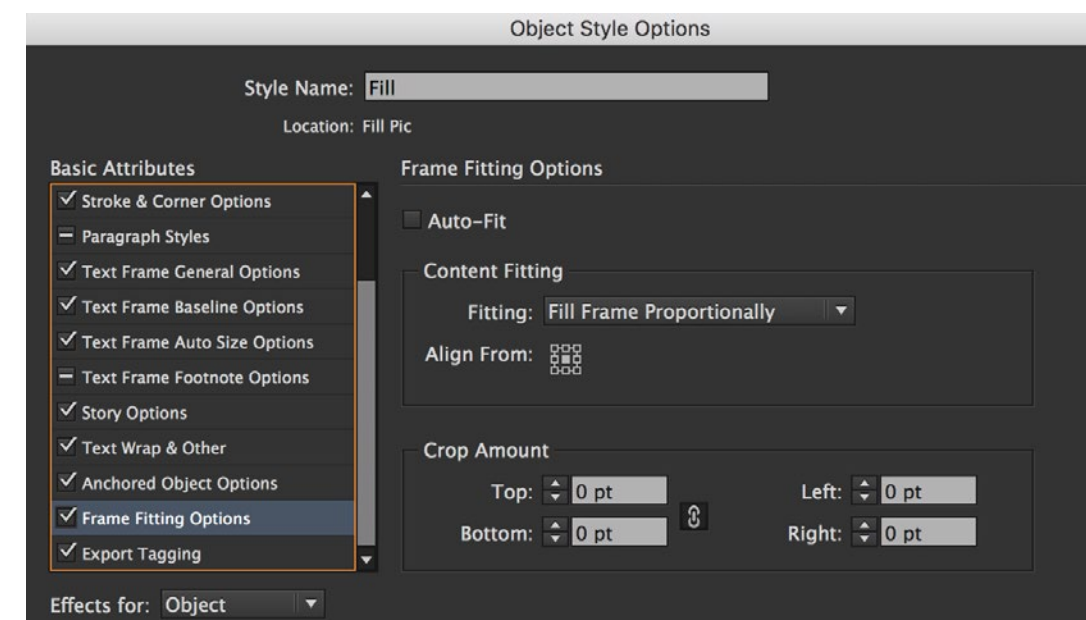


FIGURE 10. Controlling the picture fitting with an Object Style is a huge time saver.

hodgepodge of unrelated images. To mitigate this, you can both scale the letters within their frames to be visually proportional with each other and create interactions by allowing selected ascenders and descenders to break out of their frames.

Start by scaling up the image within the frame so that the ascender/descender is cropped by the frame boundary. Option/Alt-click the image frame to open the image in Photoshop. Use the Pen tool to make a pen path around the portion of the letter that you want to isolate. Save the pen path, and then save the file. For this stage I prefer to use pen paths rather than layer masks for a smoother workflow. Pen paths can be saved in the JPG file format, whereas layer masks require saving as a .TIF or .PSD, which would then require me to relink the file in InDesign.

Back in InDesign, select the frame, and choose **Edit > Copy** and then **Edit > Paste in Place**. This will put a duplicate on top of the original.

Now choose **Object > Clipping Path > Photoshop Path**. Return to the frame, and increase its size to reveal the protruding portions of the letters (**FIGURE 12**).

To personalize the poster, consider adding images of local landmarks and icons around the edges (**FIGURE 13**). Not only does this add visual appeal and context, it also helps break up the inherent boxiness of the grid. The result is less stiff, more organic, and more fun. I also like to provide a discreet key to the images identifying their source.

Learning Your A-B-Cs

Making your own alphabet is a great way to get to know a place better and makes a great

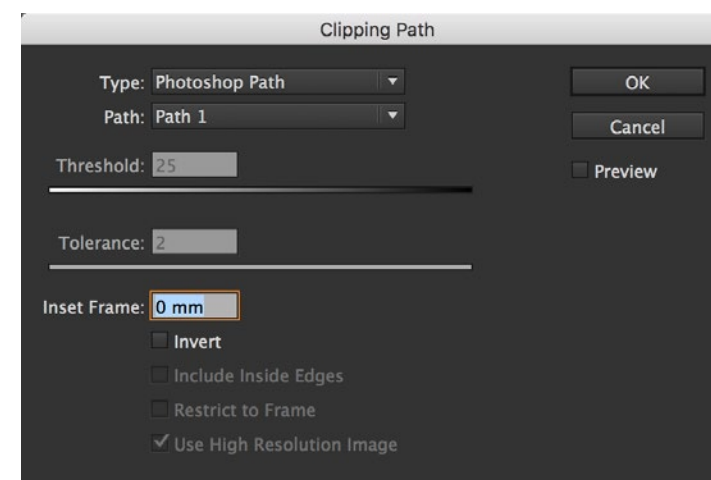


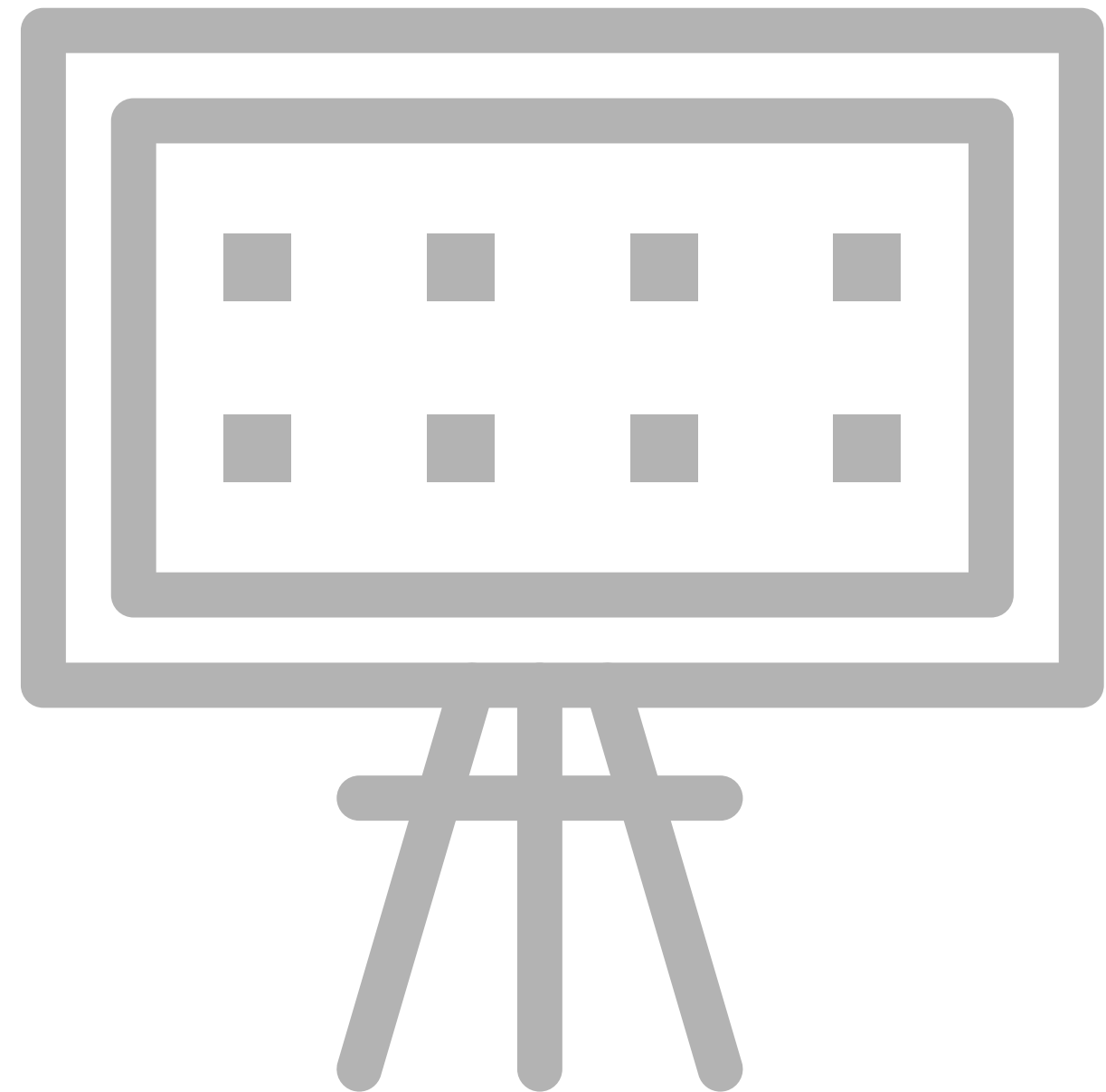
FIGURE 12. Use clipping paths to allow some letters to break out of their frames.



FIGURE 13. Add seasoning by including pictures of local landmarks.

memento of a place you love. It might also be a rewarding shared project for a family or group of friends. But don't try to rush it—your alphabet will turn out better on a slow simmer than a fast boil—and stay flexible in your approach. Make rules to give you direction, but ditch those rules if they become too limiting. If you're tempted to try, please send me a link to the result. I'd love to see what you come up with—no matter where you live.

Nigel French is a graphic designer, photographer, author, and teacher living in Lewes, UK. He is the author of [InDesign Type](#) (Adobe Press) and more than 50 titles in the [lynda.com](#) online training library, including [InDesign Typography](#).



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