
Editorial comments

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Updike prize for student type design

An annual prize for student type designers has been announced by the Daniel Berkeley Updike Collection at the Providence Public Library. The basis of the Collection is the archives of the eponymous 20th century printer and proprietor of the Merrymount Press in Boston.

The prize requires that the student make at least one visit to the Updike Collection within 18 months of their application, and must be enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program during the time of their visit.

The first prize includes \$250 and complimentary admission to the 2015 TypeCon, organized by SOTA, the Society of Typographic Aficionados.

Additional information, and the application form, can be obtained from this web site: <http://www.provlib.org/updikeprize>

Talk by Matthew Carter

An exhibition celebrating the 200th anniversary of the death of typographer Giambattista Bodoni, and the launch of the Updike Prize was held on February 27. The speaker was Matthew Carter; his subject was “Genuine Imitations: A Type Designer’s View of Revivals”.

Carter took three of his typeface designs as the material for his talk: Snell Roundhand, Mantinia, and the design he created for Yale University.

The first two designs were based on non-typographic sources; the first was inspired by the work of an English writing master, Charles Snell, and the second, by stone carving in a more-or-less traditional Roman style.

In 1965, when Linotype was converting its fonts from metal to images on film, Carter was invited to design a new script font. It’s possible to do many things with film that can’t be done with metal. For example, character widths aren’t limited to what can fit in a rather narrow rectangle cast as part of a unitary “line of type”. (That process doesn’t even permit the kerns that can be carved into the corners of hand-set type.)

Charles Snell, a 17th century English writing master, published manuals that included detailed diagrams and instructions for writing script with a quill pen. The flowing *fs* and the tails on the *g* and *y* are representative of the style. An image of Snell’s lowercase script can be seen at <http://www.paulshawletterdesign.com/wp-content/uploads/>

2011/05/Charles-Snell-1714.jpg, and Carter’s re-imagined version at <http://luc.devroye.org/MatthewCarter-RoundhandBT-afterCharlesSnell.gif>.

Andrea Mantegna, a 15th century Italian artist and student of Roman archaeology, was the inspiration for the Mantinia font. The foundation post of Mantegna’s house in Mantua (shown in one of Carter’s slides) prominently displays the carved name “Mantinia” (the Latin form of Mantegna) as well as other inscriptions in the style typical of Roman monuments and gravestones. All the letters are uppercase. Whether to save space, balance the shape of the inscriptional lines, or for some other reason, two or three adjacent letters are sometimes combined in unusual ways. Some smaller letters occur as well — inscriptional “small caps” — but, rather than being aligned at the baseline with the larger letters, they are aligned at the top.

A more recent use of this style of carving can be found on the panels above the windows of the Boston Public Library (see Fig. 1). These variations gave Carter a model on which to base the many unusual and playful ligatures and top-aligned “low-er-case” found in the finished Mantinia font.

The third font was the one designed for Yale University. Inspired by Bembo, this font serves all



Figure 1: A panel from the Boston Public Library showing the names of noted astronomers.

Photo by Jascin L. Finger, curator of the Maria Mitchell House on Nantucket; used with permission. Maria Mitchell was an American astronomer, only the second woman to be recognized as the discoverer of a comet; the first was Caroline Herschel, sister of William Herschel (discoverer of Uranus).

typographic functions of the University, from letterhead to cast bronze letters on building façades to signage on recycling and rubbish baskets on the campus. Images of the Yale font and notes on its history and development can be seen at <http://www.yale.edu/printer/typeface/typeface.html>.

R.I.P. Mike Parker (1929–2014)

Just a few days before Matthew Carter’s talk, Mike Parker died. Parker, as director of type development at Linotype, invited Carter to design the script font that became Snell Roundhand, persuaded Carter to join Linotype as chief designer, and later, in 1981, left Linotype with Carter to found Bitstream.

Parker was largely responsible for bringing font production from the world of metal to film, and from film to digital formats. He was an enthusiastic and influential proponent of Helvetica, and put forth the proposition that Times New Roman had in fact been designed by Starling Burgess, not by Stanley Morison.

A sympathetic obituary appeared in the March 8th edition of *The Economist*, and can be accessed on the web.

Turing Award for Leslie Lamport

The Association for Computing Machinery will present the 2013 A.M. Turing Award to Leslie Lamport for “advances in reliability and consistency of computing systems”. The Turing Award is given for major contributions of lasting importance to computing. The citation can be read here:

<http://techpolicy.acm.org/blog/?p=3641>.

Not a single word recognizes his creation of L^AT_EX, the accomplishment for which this community knows him best. With this award, Leslie joins Don Knuth, who received the 1974 Turing Award. And all for achievements not related to T_EX.

TAOCP volume 1 issued as an ebook

The InformIT arm of Pearson Education (parent of the group that includes Addison-Wesley) has announced that *The Art of Computer Programming* Volume 1 ebook is now available for sale. Their news release further states that

Only InformIT provides this eBook in three formats — EPUB, MOBI, & PDF — together for one price. So you can buy it once and get it on any device including your PC or eReader of choice.

We will be releasing the other volume eBooks throughout the year and currently hope to have Vol. 2 for you in just a couple of months.

Although Don’s web page (<http://www-cs-faculty.stanford.edu/~uno/abcde.html>) explains that the “spiffy new versions” of the *C&T* volumes were “produced entirely with technology that can be expected to last for many generations”, there is no hint that they might sometime be available in electronic form.

Other items worth a look

As a follow-up to last year’s interview of Chuck Bigelow, here is an essay in which he shares some earlier history, written for the centennial of Reed College: “Rescued from a Life of Crime” (http://www.reed.edu/reed_magazine/september2011/articles/features/bigelow/bigelow.html). Who knew?

The Hamilton Wood Type Museum has been mentioned before in this column. Evicted from its original site, it is now open in a new location in Two Rivers, Wisconsin: <http://woodtype.org>. A documentary, “Typeface”, telling the story of this museum, was presented on the Sundance channel in the U.S.; information about the video can be found at <http://typeface.kartemquin.com/about>.

The debate about whether or not there should be a wider space after a period goes on: “Space Invaders, Why you should never, ever use two spaces after a period.” in *Slate* (slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2011/01/space_invaders.html). Actually, this isn’t new, but it’s just been called to my attention. As a T_EX user, I’m spoiled: I can type two spaces after the periods that end sentences in my (monospace) emacs window, and T_EX will do my bidding, whether using the default U.S. style or `\frenchspacing` to treat all spaces alike. Using a monospace font while editing makes sense, since it makes a file easier to read (at least for these old eyes), and permits an author to align or indent to illuminate structure. As I see it, there *are* times when the wider spaces are valuable typographically. Maybe not after every sentence, but if your text says “. . .etc. W. H. Auden says . . .”, where is the end of that sentence? The *real* culprit (which the author of this screed doesn’t even mention) is software that sets multiple spaces *in text* as multiple spaces, not singles. Software is supposed to make life easier for the user, not harder, but some things seem to be going backwards these days.

To end this installment, here’s an oldie, but a real goodie: setting 24pt type in an ogee curve (flickr.com/photos/sos222/12391791743/). The old guys really did know what they were doing.

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