

and print. His numerous essays (including on the history of English typography and vernacular lettering, and on international typographic topics as well) offered intriguing information hardly obtainable elsewhere. Along with the facts, he offered his original insights, thoughts, cautions, critiques, and corrections, brightly illuminating his subjects.

His essay, “The Nymph and the Grot”, first published as a paper in 1965 and then expanded into a 1999 book [1], is a perfect example. It explores the history of sanserif (Mosley’s spelling) inscriptions and lettering in England before “grotesque” sans serif types were first cast by English typefounders in the 19th century. But that’s not all: In the same volume he cogently comments on traditional and modernist typographic aesthetics and ideologies in the 20th century, all the while guiding the reader on a fascinating tour along the winding path of the sans serif form and its odd name through the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

A very different example is his history of the now ubiquitous @-sign in type. He begins by quoting but doubting a statement by eminent palaeographer Berthold Louis Ullman, who claimed @ was an abbreviation of Latin uncial ‘ad’. After a few more side comments, Mosley examines 19th century English commercial handwriting and typefounding, then ventures back to 16th century Italian writing manuals by Giovanni Francesco Cresci and other matters. He wraps up by citing studies and a lecture (in French with url) by present-day palaeographer Marc Smith on the written origins of the @-sign. Mosley ends by “hoping that further researchers into business records will help fill in the many gaps of our knowledge about the @-sign.”

Although this @-sign chapter from his “Typefoundry” blog (typefoundry.blogspot.com) was published in the journal *Visible Language* in 2016 [2], what we are hoping is that this and the dozens of other intriguing essays on the blog will someday be published together as a tribute to his life dedicated to the scholarship of printed letters. How great that would be.

James Mosley, type historian (1935–2025)

Charles Bigelow

During the past six decades, James Mosley was one of the world’s top scholars of type and print, and in his more than 40 years as Librarian at the St Bride Printing Library in London, he was unstintingly generous with his time and knowledge. He was often consulted by type designers, type directors, type scholars, type students and others keen to know more about type

References

- [1] James Mosley. *The Nymph and the Grot*, London: Friends of St Bride Printing Library, 1999. stbridelibrary.bigcartel.com/product/the-nymph-and-the-grot
- [2] James Mosley, Commercial at @, *Visible Language*, 50:2 (2016), 52–63. journals.uc.edu/index.php/v1/article/view/5924/4788

◇ Charles Bigelow
Rochester, New York

James Mosley, type historian (1935–2025)