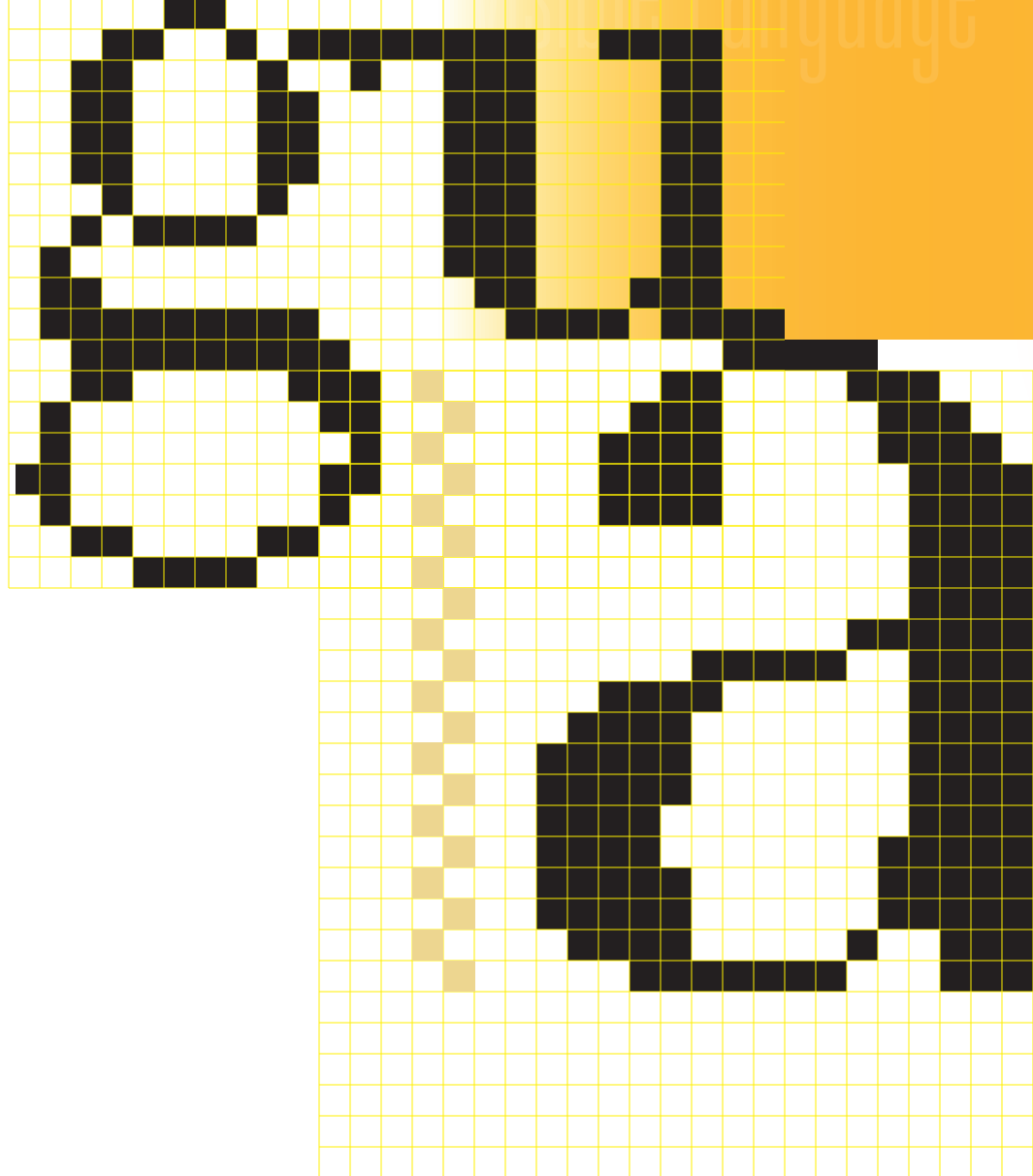


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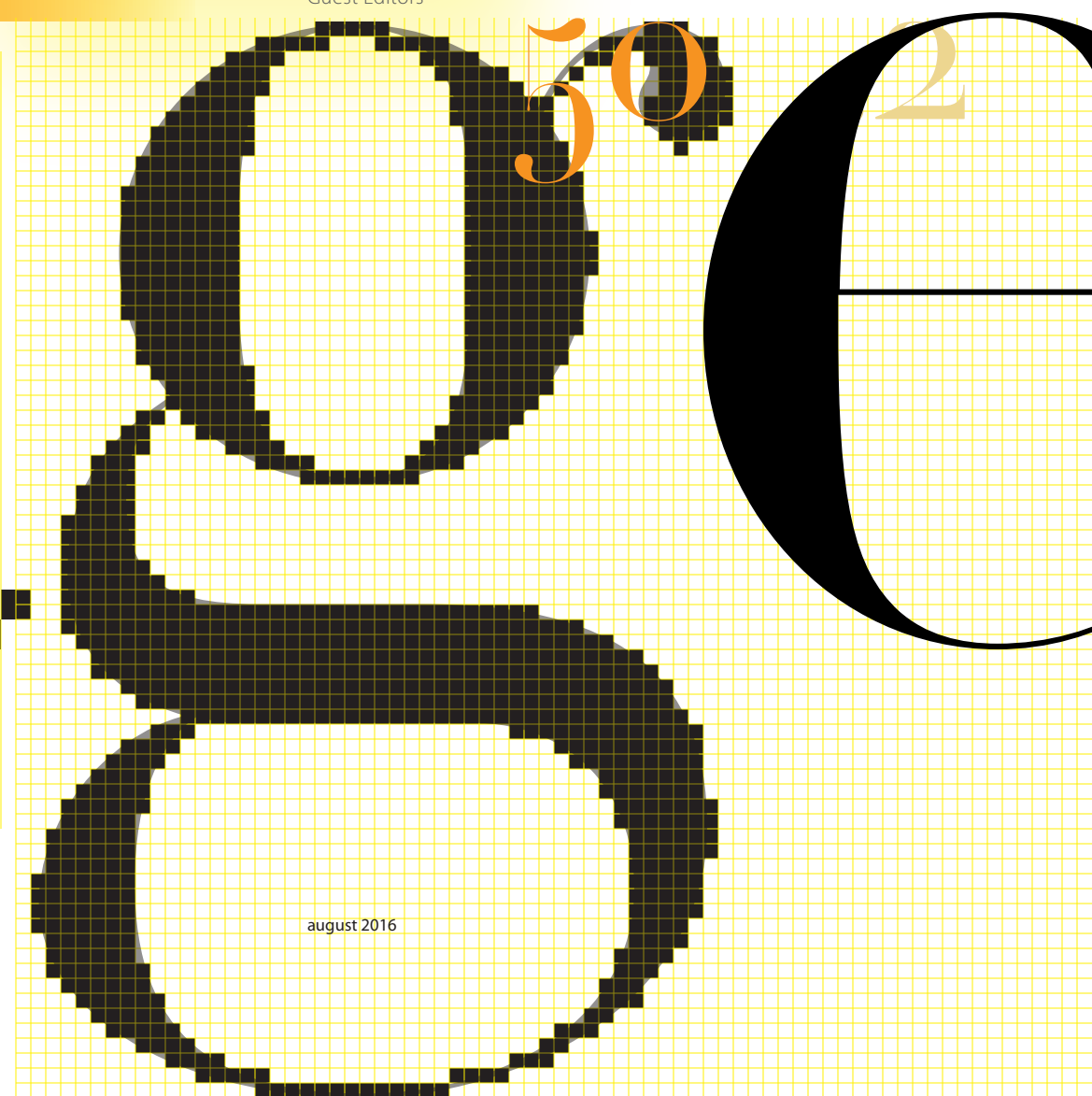
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reflecting of 50 years of Typography**

Charles Bigelow and Kevin Larson
Guest Editors

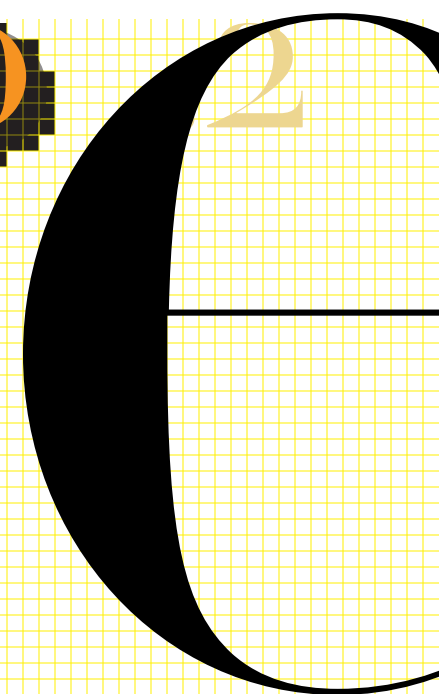
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50.2

Reflecting on 50 years of typography

Charles Bigelow and Kevin Larson,
Guest Editors

This year we are celebrating 50 years since *Visible Language* began. Typography has always been a major focus of the journal — its original name was *The Journal of Typographic Research*. The field of typography has radically changed since the journal's debut in 1967:

- Digital technologies have supplanted analog;
- Electronic media have disrupted print;
- e-books compete with paper books;
- Hot-metal type foundries have disappeared along with manufacturers of hot-metal composing machines;
- Digital type foundries have merged into conglomerates;
- Small firms have sprung up to offer new typefaces and typographic designs for new forms of literate media — web sites, apps, e-books, displayed on computers, phones, watches.

Everyday readers who would not have thought about fonts a half-century ago, are now aware of and passionate about fonts and typography. Yet, for all those changes, more people are reading, and perhaps reading more than ever, with the same human eyes as before, so studies of legibility and reading have gained new prominence and importance. For this special issue we are happy to focus on some advances in typographic research during the past 50 years.

Over the history of the journal, scientific research of typography has always been a popular topic. Two issues in 1981, guest edited by psychologist Keith Rayner, are filled with classic scientific papers. The most cited paper in *Visible Language's* history is a 1971 paper by Philip Gough titled "One Second of Reading", which proposed a model of the steps that a reader must accomplish during a single second of reading. One of this issue's guest editors (Larson) was lucky enough to have studied under Gough. This special issue continues in this tradition with articles on scientific studies of reading by Sofie Beier, Jonathan Grainger, and Gordon Legge.

The other guest editor (Bigelow), has a long history with *Visible Language*. He was a student of the journal's original designer, Jack Stauffacher, when it began, and was a guest editor in 1985 for a special issue of

"Computer and The Hand in Type Design," proceedings of a 1983 seminar at Stanford University. A second issue of those proceedings was cancelled, but two of the unpublished papers were retrieved with the generous assistance of the Cary Graphic Arts Collection of Rochester Institute of Technology, and are at last published here. These papers are fascinating archaeological digs into the early history of digital type: the first all-digital type foundry, by Matthew Carter; the invention of a spline and bitmap font editing program on early personal workstations, by Patrick Baudelaire.

Typography is a diverse field, and while we wish we could have included more topics in this issue, we are proud of those that appear here: Barbara Beeton and Richard Palais write about the TeX typesetting system for mathematics; Ryan Lee and Jeanne-Louise Moys analyze English versus Chinese layout in Hong Kong newspapers; James Mosley investigates the history of the now ubiquitous commercial @ sign.

There are also three special features in this issue. The first is a celebration of the lives of some of the typographic luminaries who helped bring this journal to prominence: Fernand Baudin, Edward Catich, John Dreyfus, Adrian Frutiger, Jean Larcher, Alexander Lawson, Robert Middleton, G. Willem Ovink, John W. Seybold, Miles Tinker, Merald Wrolstad, and Hermann Zapf. The second special feature is the result of a survey conducted of the top 50 typography books written in the last 50 years. And, in another instance of typographic time travel, we publish a recent letter to the *Visible Language* editor from type designer Steve Matteson, writing in reply to a 1968 letter to *The Journal of Typographic Research* from Hans Schmoller, renowned Penguin book designer.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

We appreciate the generosity of the Cary Collection for giving us access to the Baudelaire and Carter materials, and for their scanning of the texts and images, for which they waived fees. Personally, we wish to thank Amelia Hugill-Fontanel, the Associate Curator, and Steven Galbraith, the Curator.

"The Rochester Institute of Technology's Cary Graphic Arts Collection is one of the country's premier libraries on graphic communication history and practice. The collection's holdings include primary and secondary resources on the development of the alphabet and writing systems, early book formats and manuscripts, calligraphy, the development of typefaces and their manufacturing technologies, the history and practice of papermaking, typography and book design, printing and illustration processes, bookbinding, posters, and artists' books."

We also wish to thank Stan Nelson for permission to use his photograph of the French type mould of his own manufacture on the title spread of Matthew Carter's article.

Before there was reading there was seeing. *Visible Language* has been concerned with ideas that help define the unique role and properties of visual communication. A basic premise of the journal has been that created visual form is an autonomous system of expression that must be defined and explored on its own terms. Today more than ever people navigate the world and probe life's meaning through visual language. This journal is devoted to enhancing people's experience through the advancement of research and practice of visual communication.

If you are involved in creating or understanding visual communication in any field, we invite your participation in *Visible Language*. While our scope is broad, our disciplinary application is primarily design. Because sensory experience is foundational in design, research in design is often research in the experience of visual form: how it is made, why it is beautiful, how it functions to help people form meaning. Research from many disciplines sheds light on this experience: neuroscience, cognition, perception, psychology, education, communication, informatics, computer science, library science, linguistics. We welcome articles from these disciplines and more.

Published continuously since 1967, *Visible Language* maintains its policy of having no formal editorial affiliation with any professional organization — this requires the continuing, active cooperation of key investigators and practitioners in all of the disciplines that impinge on the journal's mission as stated above.

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