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Typographic Reports

A message to Linotype field forces everywhere from the Typographic Development Division at Brooklyn, stating the underlying philosophy of the production of type faces and related matrix equipment, with salient reasons why brevity is *not* a virtue in reporting typographic problems

How and Why to Report

IF THE "Why to Report" is understood, the "How" becomes routine.

The need for this information can be best shown by an analysis of the function of the Division of Typographic Development.

The name itself indicates that the work accomplished is developed to meet specifications rather than being abstract creative design with a possible sales potential.

In short, type faces are created to supply a need. Type face designs do not spring full-blown from the pen of a designer in a creative mood. None of the type faces on the extensive list of this company was bought from finished drawings. In no case was a designer given a free hand merely to design a type face which he thought would be attractive.

It is the function of this department to determine the needs of the trade, interpret these needs in terms of type faces and to oversee the manufacture of the matrices which will make these type faces available in the needed sizes and combinations for the machines on which they will be the most useful.

A Long Range Procedure

THE DEVELOPMENT, design, and manufacture of a new type family requires a minimum of three years. Single sizes of an existing face may be produced in six months, but a start from scratch requires no less than three years and sometimes more if the new type face is a contemporary design rather than a re-creation or derivation of an historical source.

An interpretation of trade need therefore must of necessity be long range. It is inconceivable that we can cater to whims of the moment or lightning changes. Happily, however, trends in the graphic arts are evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

We Are Remote From the Reader

THE MANUFACTURE of type faces is twice removed from the end user of his product. We sell matrices to newspapers, to type composition houses, to ad composition shops, to book manufacturers, and to printers. These customers of ours provide the type faces *their* customers require in order to satisfy the demands of their readers and sales prospects who are, in the final analysis, the people we have in mind when we develop the type face.

We are distressingly far away from the reader. We can analyze books, magazines, and newspapers, and tabulate the type faces used in text and advertising. We know quite well from surveys the most-used type faces in these classifications. The great bulk of printing, however, is beyond our reach. The job work which provides a great part of the graphic arts activity comes to us only as it comes to any typical individual.

Beyond all this visible evidence of type use lies a realm of conjecture. We know that "X" advertiser used "Y" type in a newspaper ad, but what we do not know is: Was it exactly the type face he wanted in order to generate the urge-to-buy in the readers of the newspaper, or was it the best available substitute?

This is where the Typographic Report can be helpful. It can bring us closer to the individual whose taste dictates what we manufacture.

What Is an Ideal Report?

SPECIFICALLY the ideal typographic report should give information in bits and snatches which, pieced together, collected, weighed, and analyzed from a number of reports, would reveal a pattern. These bits can be requests for new type faces and revivals of older faces which have become obsolete. Pertinent information is, for example, evidence of novel combinations of type faces

such as the now well-established school which combines script and sans serif faces.

In too many cases, however, the Typographic Report is a repeated effort to gain approval of a pet typographic project. Specific requests for additional sizes or combinations of existing type faces are carefully checked and filed for constant reference, and in every single instance should be forwarded to this office, but it is within the power of each representative to provide more than this in his Typographic Report.

We want to know:

What faces in the shops you service are out of magazines because they are no longer used?

What faces are the "work horses" of your customers? Does the printer force these faces on his customers or do they select them from his specimen book?

Do your customers make a conscious effort to design printing, or do they merely set type? Do they make an effort to keep up with the demands of their customers?

Do your customers relay requests for information about foreign or competitors' types from their clients to you?

Some of your customers are "type conscious." Do you discuss the relative merits of type faces with them? (This implies aesthetic considerations as well as technical performance.)

Do you recognize that the function of a Linotype machine is comparable to that of a phonograph, and that the end result is not the slug but the impression of that slug on paper? As a phonograph is judged by the music it brings forth, so the value of the line-casting machine is determined by the aesthetics of the letter forms it produces.

How the Trade Reacts to New Faces

THERE are roughly three usual reactions to a new type face:

Customer "A" buys it sight unseen at the first request he has for it and charges the customer the whole cost of the font on the first job.

Customer "B" raves and rants to the effect that we are ruining him by each additional face we offer. He will have to buy it and will only use it for this one customer who has seen it and we would be better off to look out for his already heavy investment in matrices and stop making new faces.

Customer "C" appraises a specimen, recognizes the position of the face in regard to his customers, his existing stock of faces, and his need for additional material.

Whether or not he buys a font is a reasonably considered judgment.

We want all these reactions forwarded to us. We want to know who specifies the types which are ordered. Is it in the front or the back office that the decisions are made? At whom should we be aiming our shots?

Sales Aid in Typography

IN THE IDEAL sales relationship with a Linotype user he will look to us for direct advice and assistance in solving his typographic problems, routine or unusual. Thus questions may arise which cannot readily be answered by thumbing through the specimen books. Intricate price lists, reference books, textbooks, dictionaries, Bibles—such projects for composition sometimes involve not merely a new dress of matrices in unusual combinations but perhaps a new machine equipment as well.

When any such problem occurs, involving exceptional composition techniques or combinations of faces, the Typographic Development Division should be consulted. Their library includes many selected examples of Linotype composition in many languages and varieties. Their experience will often prove invaluable in meeting the customer's need. And their knowledge of the existence and availability of characters previously specially manufactured often saves further manufacture of unusual items.

Let's Have the Whole Picture

HERE AGAIN the Typographic Report becomes the key to the ultimate action. The customer's satisfaction depends upon the thoroughness with which the report conveys the whole picture. It must be both a detailed specification of the requirements to be met and a full analysis of all "the angles"—with competition sometimes a factor. Full and well elaborated detail becomes a virtue in these reports—and brevity is truly dangerous.

The same need for details applies to all Typographic Reports. It's not enough to write that "John Smith likes ATF's new Amphiloola Bold." Such a brief message merely adds a vote to the record of a possible trend—but we need to know John Smith's standing in his field of typesetting, the general nature of his work, the variety of his type-face equipment, the numbers and kinds of machines in his plant, and the processes for which he sets type.

In conclusion let it be emphasized that, while the body of the Division of Typographic Development is of necessity in Brooklyn, the senses, the eyes and ears, must be the entire field force, sensitive to every scrap of intelligence that may be added to our knowledge and be reflected in our product.