

History of letterforms and typography

James Mosley

These are the main topics covered by the course with suggested current reading and reference material
Important titles are in bold

General works

Letterforms

Ewan Clayton, *The golden thread: the story of writing*. London, 2013.

Nicolette Gray, *Lettering on buildings*. London, 1960.

Nicolette Gray, *A history of lettering*. London, 1986.

Stanley Morison, 'Notes on the development of Latin script from early to modern times', *Selected essays*. Cambridge, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 222–94.

Alfred Fairbank, *A book of scripts*. Harmondsworth, 1949. Revised ed. 1968.

Printing types

H. D. L. Vervliet, *The palaeotypography of the French Renaissance: selected papers on sixteenth-century typefaces*. Leiden & Boston, 2008.

D. B. Updike, *Printing types, their history, forms and use*. 2nd ed. Cambridge (Mass), 1937.

A. F. Johnson, *Type designs, their history and development*, 3rd ed. London, 1966.

Harry Carter, *A view of early typography up to about 1600*. Oxford, 1969 (reprint with notes and corrections London: Hyphen Press, 2002).

Stan Knight. *Historical types from Gutenberg to Ashendene*. New Castle, Delaware, Oak Knoll Press, 2012.

Rob Roy Kelly, *American wood types 1828-1900*, 1969.

Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick exercises on the whole art of printing 1683-4*, ed. Herbert Davis and Harry Carter, 2nd ed. 1962.

Fred Smeijers, *Counterpunch: making type in the sixteenth century, designing typefaces now*. London, 1996. New edition 2011.

Walter Tracy, *Letters of credit: a view of type design*, 1986.

Richard Southall, *Printer's type in the twentieth century: manufacturing and design methods*. New Castle, London, 2005.

Sebastian Carter, *Twentieth century type designers*, 2nd ed. 1995.

Lewis Blackwell, *Twentieth-century type: remix*. London, 1998.

History of printing

L. Febvre and H. J. Martin. *The coming of the book*. London, 1976.

Michael Twyman, *Printing 1770-1970*. London, 1970.

History of typography

Philip B. Meggs, *A history of graphic design*, 3rd ed. New York, 1998.

Robin Kinross, *Modern typography: an essay in critical history*, 2nd ed. London, 1992.

Herbert Spencer, *Pioneers of modern typography*, 2nd ed. London, 1982.

Early scripts and the Roman inscriptional letter

The origins of the alphabet. The main types of Roman inscriptional capitals: 'Republican' (to the first century BC), and 'Imperial' (from the first century AD). The functions and materials of Roman inscriptions. The influence of writing instruments.

D. Diringer, *Writing*, London, 1962. A good basic summary of early writing systems.

Joseph Naveh, *Origins of the alphabet*, London, 1975. Useful brief summary by an authoritative writer about the middle-eastern origins of specific Latin letters.

Hans Jensen, *Sign, symbol and script: an account of man's efforts to write*. 3rd ed. London, 1970. Comprehensive survey of world-wide writing systems.

Reading the past, London: British Museum, 1990. Collects together several short monographs on early Western writing systems, including cuneiform and Greek inscriptional lettering.

Edward Catich, *The origin of the serif*, Davenport (Iowa), 1968. Flawed but fundamentally important work on the calligraphic basis of Imperial Roman inscriptional capitals.

Emil Hübner, *Exempla scripturae epigraphicae Latinae*. Berlin, 1885. Contains some of the best line renderings of Roman inscriptions ever published. Text in Latin.

G. Susini, *The Roman stonecutter: an introduction to Latin epigraphy*. Oxford, 1973. The standard monograph on the making and purpose of Roman inscriptions.

Arthur E. Gordon, *Illustrated introduction to Latin epigraphy*. Berkeley, 1983. A handbook intended for specialists.

Manuscript letterforms 400 to 1500

The development of the minuscule. Roman cursive hands. Uncial and the Christian book-hands. 'Half-uncial' and the 'national' hands of the early middle ages. The Carolingian hand. Gothic hands of the high middle ages: formal hands (textura, rotunda), and less formal (bastarda, gothic cursive).

B. L. Ullman, *Ancient writing and its influence*. New York, 1932 (1969). Brief, readable.

E. M. Thompson, *Handbook of Greek and Latin palaeography*. London, 1893. Despite its date (or perhaps because of it) one of the best and clearest collections of examples of the mediaeval scripts.

Bernhard Bischoff, *Latin palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Cambridge, 1990. The most recent general handbook of palaeography, translated from the German edition of 1986.

M. B. Parkes, *English cursive book hands 1250-1500*. London, 1969. Good basic collection of English gothic cursive hands.

Stan Knight, *Historical scripts: a handbook for calligraphers*. London, 1984. Covers the major Latin scripts from

the late Roman empire to the Renaissance. Well planned and designed. Good bibliographical references.

Michelle Brown, *A guide to Western historical scripts from Antiquity to 1600*. London, 1990.

The invention of printing and typefounding

The basis of the invention: cultural and technical background. The technique of punchcutting and typefounding and their influence on type. Gothic types: *textura*, *rotunda*, *bastarda* (including German *Fraktur* and *Schwabacher*), *gothic cursives*.

Gutenberg

Victor Scholderer, *Johann Gutenberg*. London, 1963. Brief, slightly dated.

Janet Ing, *Johann Gutenberg and his Bible: a historical study*. New York, 1988. Clear, brief summary of the state of current scholarship.

Jean Bechtel, *Gutenberg et l'invention de l'imprimerie: une enquête*. Paris: Fayard, 1992. The fullest summary of the current state of knowledge. In French.

Blaise Agüera y Arcas, 'Temporary matrices and elemental punches in Gutenberg's DK type', in Kristian Jensen, ed., *Incunabula and their readers: printing, selling and reading in the Fifteenth Century*. London: British Library, 2003. pp. 1–12, 207. Prepared in collaboration with Paul Needham. Suggests a revised explanation for the means by which early types were made. The topic needs further exploration.

Type making

Harry Carter, *A view of early typography up to about 1600*. Oxford, 1969 (reprint with corrections, London, 2002), pp. 5–22.

H. D. L. Vervliet, *Sixteenth-century printing types of the Low Countries*. Amsterdam, 1967. (Introduction, pp. 1–19).

Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick exercises on the whole art of printing, 1683–4; edited by Herbert Davis and Harry Carter*. 2nd ed. London, 1962.

Gothic types

A. F. Johnson, *Type designs: their history and development*. 3rd ed. London, 1966. pp. 5–36

Harry Carter, *A view of early typography up to about 1600*. Oxford, 1969. pp. 23–67

Humanistic script

The Renaissance and the retrieval of classical texts. The 'littera antiqua' (revived Carolingian hand) and its purpose. The scribes: Poggio ('roman'), Niccoli ('italic').

B. L. Ullman, *The origin and development of humanistic script*. Rome, 1960. The first text to distinguish the contribution of Poggio and Niccoli.

A. C. De La Mare, *The handwriting of Italian humanists*. Oxford, 1973. Surveys the writing of several humanist scribes (Francesco Petrarca, Giovanni Boccaccio, Coluccio Salutati, Niccolò Niccoli, Poggio Bracciolini, etc).

A. C. De La Mare, *Batrolomeo Sanvito: the life & work of a Renaissance scribe*, by A. C. De La Mare & Laura Nuvoioni. Paris: Association nationale de bibliophilie, 2009.

James Wardrop, *The script of humanism*, Oxford, 1963. A general survey.

Early roman types: Jenson and Aldus

The development of 'humanist' types and their uses. Printing in Venice. Nicolas Jenson. Aldus Manutius and types made for him by Francesco Griffo. *De Aetna* (1495), *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), small-format classics in italic type (from 1501).

Harry Carter, *A view of early typography up to about 1600*, Oxford, 1969 (reprint with corrections London, 2002), (pp. 47–50 and 71ff).

Geoffrey D. Hargreaves, 'Florentine script, Paduan script, and Roman type', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 1992, pp. 15–34. Has extensive bibliographical references.

Chancery script

The humanist cursive as an official script for ecclesiastical and secular use. (A 'chancery' was an office for administration.) The first printed handbooks for calligraphers: Tagliente, Arrighi, Palatino. Cresci and the revolution in calligraphic technique.

A. S. Osley, *Luminario: an introduction to the Italian writing books of the 16th and 17th centuries*. Nieuwkoop, 1972. The fullest history of the Italian scribes of the 16th and 17th centuries.

A. S. Osley, *Extracts from the texts of 16th century manuals, in translation*, London, 1980.

James Wardrop, 'The Vatican scriptors: documents for Cresci and Ruano', *Signature*, new series, 5, 1948, pp. 3–28.

'Civis Romanus sum: Giovanbattista Palatino and his circle', *Signature*, new series, 14, 1952, pp. 3–39. Classic accounts of Palatino and Cresci and their rivalry.

James Wardrop, *The script of humanism*. Oxford, 1963.

The Renaissance inscriptional letter

Architecture of the Italian Renaissance and classical theories of proportion. The *littera antiqua* in Florence. Alberti, Mantegna, Feliciano. Printed treatises: Moyllus, Pacioli, Dürer, Tory. Cresci and the use of inscriptional capitals in Counter-Reformation Rome.

Nicolette Gray, *Sans serif and other experimental inscribed lettering of the early Renaissance*, edited by Paul Shaw. Seattle, 1997. First published in *Motif*, 5, 1960, pp. 66–76. An account of early Florentine work.

Giovanni Mardersteig, 'Leon Battista Alberti and the revival of the roman inscriptional letter in the fifteenth century', *Typography papers*, 6 (2005), pp. 49–65. First published 1959. An important essay which presents an alternative view to that of Meiss.

Millard Meiss, 'Toward a more comprehensive Renaissance palaeography', *Art bulletin*, v. 42 (1960), pp. 96–112. Gives chief credit for the revival to Donatello and Mantegna.

James Mosley, 'Giovan Francesco Cresci and the baroque letter in Rome', *Typography papers* 6 (2005), pp. 115–55. Updating of: 'Trajan revived', *Alphabet*, v. 1, 1964, pp. 17–48. On G. F. Cresci and his pupils and the programme of public lettering in Post-Reformation Rome.

Alphabets published in facsimile: Feliciano c. 1460, Moyllus c. 1480, Pacioli 1509, Dürer 1525, Tory 1529, Cresci 1568, Cresci 1570, Orfei 1586.

The 'Aldine' letter in France

The rise of independent punchcutters in 16th-century France and the 'classic' or 'Garamond' roman. The use of the *De Aetna* type of Aldus Manutius as a model (hence the term 'Aldine') c. 1530. Italic types. Augereau, Garamond, Haultin, Granjon. The private foundry of Plantin (Antwerp) and the commercial one of Berner (Frankfurt).

Vervliet, H. D. L. *The palaeotypography of the French Renaissance: selected papers on sixteenth-century typefaces*. Leiden and Boston, 2008.

Vervliet, H. D. L. *French Renaissance printing types: a conspectus*. London, 2010.

Harry Carter, *A view of early typography up to about 1600*, Oxford, 1969 (reprint with corrections London, 2002), pp. 93–116.

Specimens: *Type specimen facsimiles* 1 (Berner 1592), 16–18 (Plantin, Le Bé).

The Dutch taste

A 17th-century alternative to the French 'Aldine' model, with strong colour and high contrast, large x-height, compressed proportions. The influence of gothic types (textura, fraktur) and of the new Italian calligraphy, via engraved (intaglio) lettering. The rise of the Dutch republic and the commercial dominance of its book trade. Granjon ('gros cicero'), Van den Keere, Briot, Van Dijck, Kis, Walpergen, Caslon.

A. F. Johnson, 'The goût hollandois', *The Library*, 4th series, v. 20, 1939, pp. 180–96; (*Selected essays*, pp. 365–77).

The first published identification of the 'goût hollandois' or 'Dutch taste'.

György Haiman, *Nicholas Kis, a Hungarian punch-cutter and printer 1650–1702*, Budapest, San Francisco 1983.

Jan Middendorp, *Dutch type*. Rotterdam, 2004.

Specimens: *Type specimen facsimiles*, 1–15.

France from the Romain du roi to Fournier

Innovations in type design: the French rationalist approach. The Academy of Sciences and the making of the *romain du roi*. Fournier le jeune: new italics, rococo ornament, and a treatise on making type.

Romain du roi:

André Jammes, *La réforme de la typographie royale sous Louis XIV: le Grandjean*. Paris, 1961. Reprinted in reduced format as *La naissance d'un caractère: le Grand-*

jean, Paris, 1985. There is a partial English translation in *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, 1, 1965, pp. 71–95.

James Mosley, 'French academicians and modern typography: designing new types in the 1690s', *Typography papers*, 2 (1997), pp. 5–29.

Le romain du roi: la typographie au service de l'état. Lyon, Musée de l'imprimerie, 2002.

Fournier:

Manuel typographique (Paris, 1764–[8]). Facsimile edition, 3 volumes, Darmstadt, 1995. Includes a complete reprint of the English translation, *Fournier on typefounding*, with added notes (by J. M.) and bibliographies.

Fournier on typefounding: the text of the Manuel typographique (1764–1766) translated into English and edited with notes by Harry Carter. London, 1930.

Allen Hutt, *Fournier, the compleat typographer*. London, 1972.

Specimen: Fournier 1742 (facsimile 1965).

New calligraphy and the 'round hand'

The Italian hands from Cresci to Barbedor (Paris). English writing masters in the service of industry and international trade: the 'round hand' as a commercial script.

Alfred Fairbank, *A book of scripts*. Harmondsworth, 1949.

Stanley Morison, 'The development of English handwriting', introduction to Ambrose Heal, *The English writing-masters*, 1931.

Baskerville and British 'fine printing'

The introduction of new aesthetic standards in letterpress printing: innovative types related to 'round hand' calligraphy, wove paper, no ornament. The new taste belatedly adopted in the later 18th century by a generation of 'fine printers' using the new types and papers: Bell, Bensley, Bulmer.

D. B. Updike, *Printing types*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1937, (v. 2, pp. 107–20, 144–8).

Stanley Morison, *John Bell*. London, 1930. Monograph on John Bell, with specimens of types made for him by Richard Austin in the 1780s.

Peter Isaac, *William Bulmer: the fine printer in context, 1757–1830* (London, 1993).

Neo classicism in France and Italy: the Didots and Bodoni

The counterpart to English 'fine printing' in continental Europe. The contribution of members of the Didot family in France (the brothers François-Ambroise and Pierre-François Didot, and their sons Firmin, Pierre, Henri). Giambattista Bodoni, Parma: the fine printer as political show-piece for a small autocratic state.

D. B. Updike, *Printing types*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1937, v. 1, pp. 226–31; v. 2, pp. 163ff.

New display types, new ways of making type

Commercial pressures encouraged the development of types for posters and handbills, and improvements to the design of presses and the making of types enabled larger and more elaborate designs to be produced. The competition from rival processes, especially lithography, encouraged greater freedom of design.

Nicolette Gray, *19th century ornamented typefaces*. London, 1976. (Revised edition of: *19th century ornamented types and title pages*. London, 1938.)

Rob Roy Kelly, *American wood types 1828–1900*. New York, 1969.

Doug Clouse, *MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan, typographic tastemakers of the late nineteenth century*. New Castle DE, Oak Knoll Press, 2008.

William E. Loy, *Nineteenth-century American designers and engravers of type*, edited by Alastair M. Johnston and Stephen O. Saxe. New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2009.

Reaction 1: old-style printing

Towards the middle of the century in England and France a reaction set in against the new commercial and industrial style of typography. This is a movement comparable in its origins and mood with the Gothic Revival in architecture.

Chiswick Press: Geoffrey Keynes, *William Pickering*. 2nd ed. London, 1969.

Ruari McLean, *Modern book design, from William Morris to the present day*. London, 1958.

G. W. Ovink, 'Nineteenth-century reactions against the didone type model', *Quaerendo*, vol. 1 (1971), pp. 18–31, pp. 282–301; vol. 2 (1972), pp. 122–43.

Reaction 2: the private press movement

A development from 'old-style' printing but more radical in its reshaping of the book and its elements. Dominated by the figure of William Morris and guided by the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts Movement: reversion to historical models, respect for inherent qualities of materials.

There is a huge number of works relating to Morris and to individual presses.

Roderick Cave, *Private presses*, 2nd ed., London, 1983.

Colin Franklin, *The private presses*, 2nd ed., London, 1971.

On Morris and Kelmscott:

Jack Lindsay, *William Morris, his life and work*. London, 1975; Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris, a life for our time*. London, 1994. Perceptive biographies.

William Morris, *The ideal book: essays and lectures on the arts of the book*; edited by William S. Peterson. Berkeley, 1982. Collection of Morris's own essays.

William S. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: a history of William Morris's typographical adventure*. Oxford, 1991.

Art nouveau: lettering and typography 1890–1914

A movement contemporary with the English private presses and in many ways antithetical to the ethos of 'Arts & Crafts': innovative, non-historicist (eclectic in using historical motifs), welcoming new materials and processes and ingenious in exploiting them.

A. J. A. Symons, 'An unacknowledged movement in fine printing: the typography of the eighteen-nineties', *Fleuron*, 7, 1930, pp. 83–119.

John Russell Taylor, *The art nouveau book in Britain*. London, 1966.

Formal lettering and calligraphy: Johnston and Gill

The application of 'Arts & Crafts' principles to pen-formed and stone-cut letters. The reintroduction of the broad pen as the basis of writing (and, by implication, type design). The development of a related letterform for the chisel. The literature associated with Eric Gill is extensive but little of it is concerned with Gill's lettering and type design.

Johnston:

Edward Johnston, *Writing and illuminating and lettering*. London, 1906.

Edward Johnston, *Formal penmanship, and other papers*; edited by Heather Child. London, 1971.

Priscilla Johnston, *Edward Johnston*. London, 1959.

Gill:

Robert Harling, *The letter forms and type designs of Eric Gill*. 2nd ed. Westerham, 1978

Fiona McCarthy, *Eric Gill*, London, 1989

The 'new traditionalism':

Stanley Morison and English book typography 1920–40

Morison and his contemporaries Francis Meynell (Nonesuch Press) and Oliver Simon (Curwen Press) were English representatives of what Tschichold called the 'new traditionalism'. Their typography obeyed perceived canons of design from previous centuries, making use of 'revived' historical type designs, for the production of which Morison was to some extent responsible.

Stanley Morison, *A tally of types*. London, 1973. New edition (introduction by Mike Parker). Boston, 1999.

Nicolas Barker, *Stanley Morison*, London, 1972.

James Moran, *Stanley Morison, his typographic achievement*. London, 1971.

Oliver Simon, *Printer and playground*, London, 1956

Modernism: the New Typography

'Modern typography' or 'the new typography' had its roots in the new movements in art and social and political movements during the years before and after the First World War. It was aligned with the 'modernism' in architecture and industrial design. It was a rationalizing and anti-historicist movement, aimed at achieving new ends for typography, employing new technologies and materials.

Herbert Spencer, *Pioneers of modern typography*, London, 1969.

Jan Tschichold, *The new typography*. [Published as *Die neue Typographie*, 1928.] English translation by Ruari McLean. Introduction by Robin Kinross, Berkeley, 1995.