

A HISTORY OF TYPOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

Typography is an art form that has been around for hundreds of years. Words and texts are all around us every day in almost everything we do. Writing is one of the most fundamental forms of communication, and it traces its roots back to hieroglyphs or pictograms. Used by ancient civilisations of the world to represent ideas, these images soon evolved into alphabets and phonographic writing, which led to the development of various typographic systems. Around 5000 years ago, prior to the printed letters we typically think of that constitute typography today; the ancient Chinese, Sumerian, and Egyptian civilisations were communicating with each other using pictographs; a simplified set of images used to communicate messages to one another. The first transitional typeface was called Romain du Roi and the same was designed by Jacques Jaugeon in France for Louis XIV to be used in the Imprimerie Royale in 1692. "Modern" is the term used to categorise fonts created at that time or in the style of that time.

Key words: Hieroglyphs, phonographic and pictographs.

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INTRODUCTION

Type is everywhere. It is in street signs, magazines, web etc. Every typeface you see around you has been painstakingly and carefully planned out, and each has its own personality and vibe. While any layperson with a computer can set type, the art of typography is the technique of formatting type to be readable, legible, and attractive. This can include spacing, selecting typefaces, the length of lines, and the space between individual letters and words. While some typesetters create their own typefaces, many do not. They, instead, focus on arranging.

Typography is an art form that has been around for hundreds of years. Words and texts are all around us every day in almost everything we do. In every piece of type you see, somebody has considered how the letters, sentences and paragraphs will look in order for it to be read by us or make us feel a certain way when we look at it.

DEFINITION

It refers to the study of the design of typefaces and the way in which the type is laid out on a page to best achieve the desired visual effect and to best convey the meaning of the reading matter.

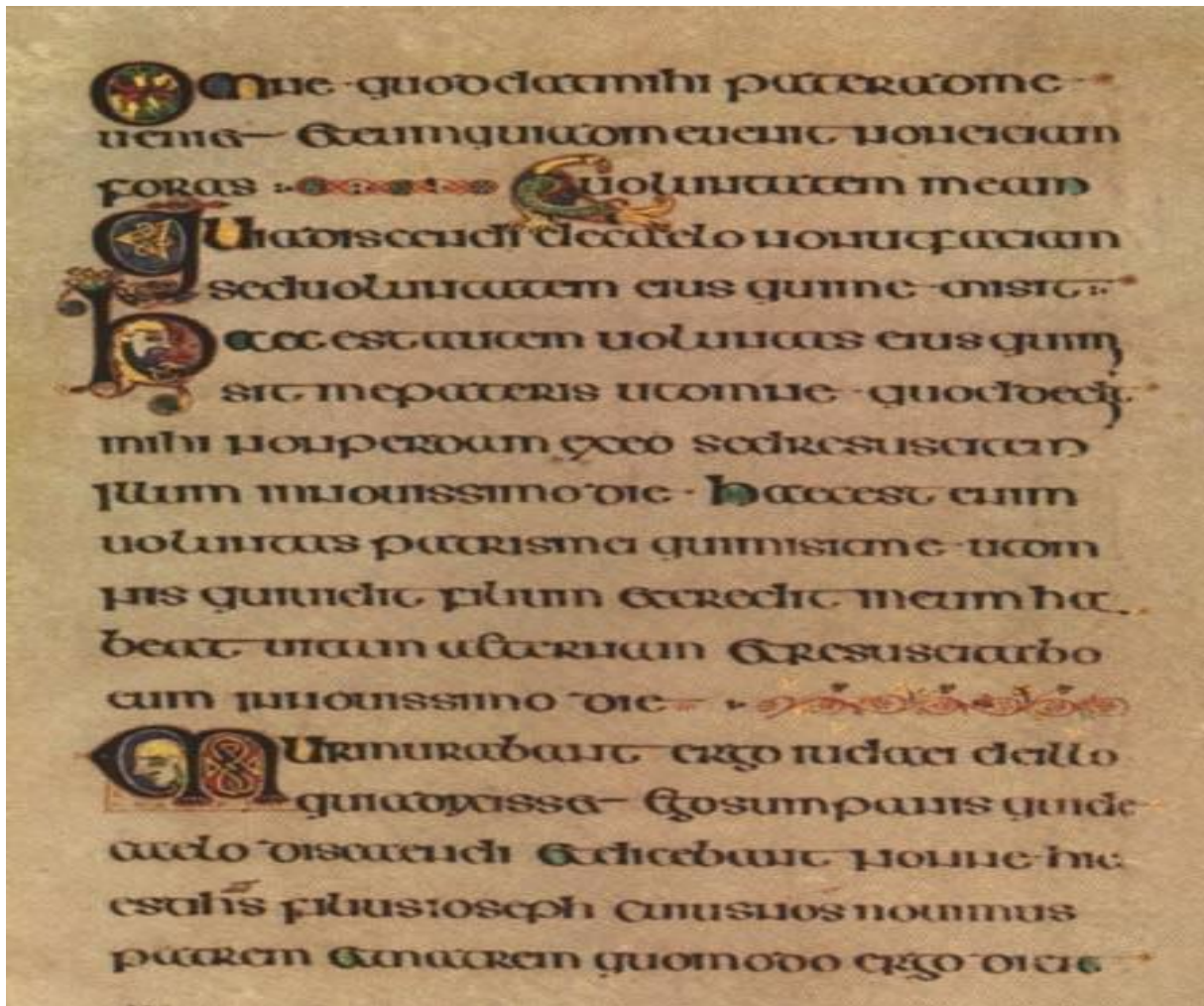
TYPOGRAPHY IN ANCIENT ERA

Typography got its start in ancient times when artisans created dies and punches which were used to create currency and seals for documents. It is often speculated by historians that typography was likely first used to create complete text via movable print in Greece, sometime between 1850 and 1600 B.C. with the creation of the Phaistos Disc, which is a clay disc that was imprinted with any number of ancient letters and symbols and then fired in a kiln, producing a reusable die for text.

Around 5000 years ago, prior to the printed letters we typically think of that constitute typography today; the ancient Chinese, Sumerian, and Egyptian civilizations were communicating with each other using pictographs; a simplified set of images used to communicate messages to one another. This progressed into ideographs, which used more abstract versions of pictures and symbols respectively to describe objects and happenings. Eventually this progressed to hieroglyphics, which were developed by the ancient Egyptians and utilised drawings to represent objects, events and even sounds.

MIDDLE AGES

Transitional (Neoclassical) typefaces appeared later in the 18th century, a period that is called "The Enlightenment". It was the time of revolution in France, North America and others when arts, sciences, literature and other areas took on a different train of thought. The first Transitional typeface was called Romain du Roi and was designed by Jacques Jaugeon in France for Louis XIV to be used in the Imprimerie Royale in 1692. This was the start to a new period in typographic history that was characterised by more structured and solid letterforms and less of a fluid handwriting style. They have a more vertical stress, not present in Old Style typefaces where it is more diagonal (this is visible in the letter O), there is greater contrast between the thick and thins, serifs are still present and a bit more horizontal



GUTENBERG AND MODERN TYPOGRAPHY

As we all learned in history class, the development of moveable type and the printing press in the 15th century by Johannes Gutenberg was a turning point for the modern world and of course, for modern typography. During this time, both practical and decorative typefaces appeared en masse, along with a lighter, more ordered page layout with subtle illustrations.

By the Industrial Revolution, typography was all about communicating with the masses. Through signs, posters, newspapers, periodicals and advertisements, typefaces became larger and catchier, with bolder lettering and shading—as well as experimental serif and sans serif typefaces. Ornamental typography was another major highlight in this era. In the 1800s, medieval art and hand crafted individual art had become commonplace and international artistic styles developed considerably.

Gutenberg began his experiments around 1440 and was ready to put his method to commercial use by 1450. In that year, facing the need (not unknown to later printers) for financing, he borrowed from Johann Fust. About 1452 he borrowed once more from Fust, who at that time became his partner. The only extant printing, known for certain to be Gutenberg's, is the so-called Forty-two-Line (the number of lines in each column) Bible, completed in 1456, the year after Fust had foreclosed on his partner and turned the business over to his own future son-in-law, Peter Schöffer. Experts generally agreed that the Bible displays a technical efficiency that was not substantially bettered

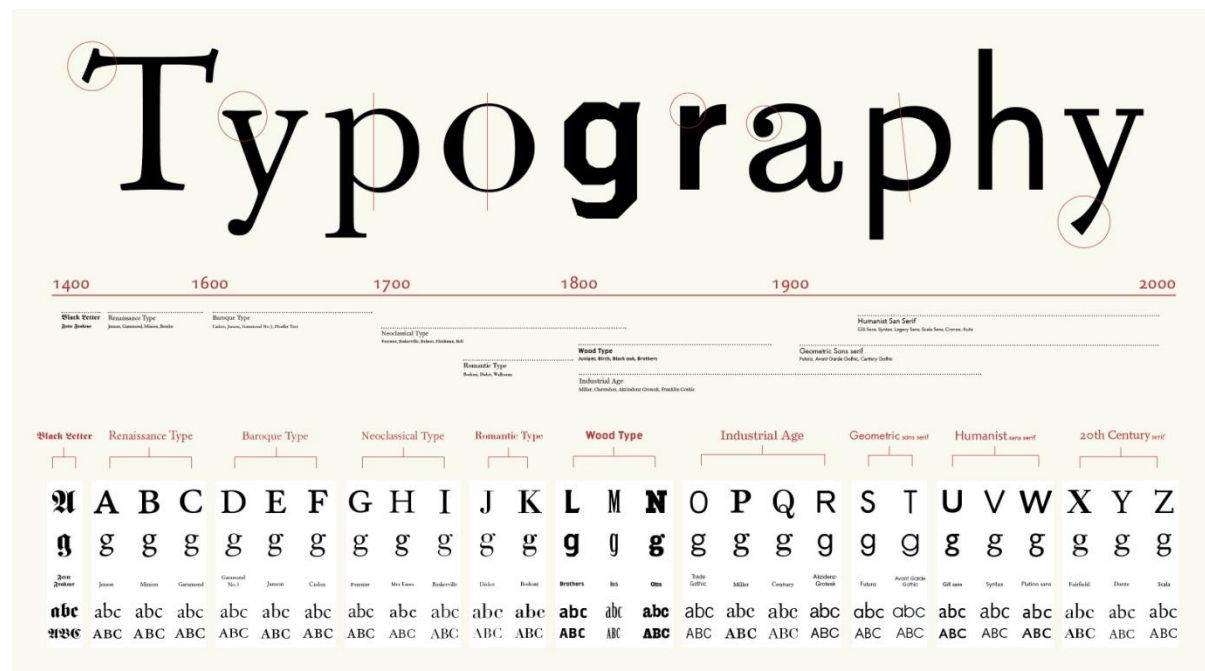
before the 19th century. The Gothic type is majestic in appearance, medieval in feeling, and slightly less compressed and less pointed than other examples to appear shortly.

MODERN TYPOGRAPHY

Despite its name, the “Modern” Typeface, also known as Didone, is not new. In the eighteenth century improvements in paper quality combined with more advanced printing methods brought about changes in how typefaces were created.

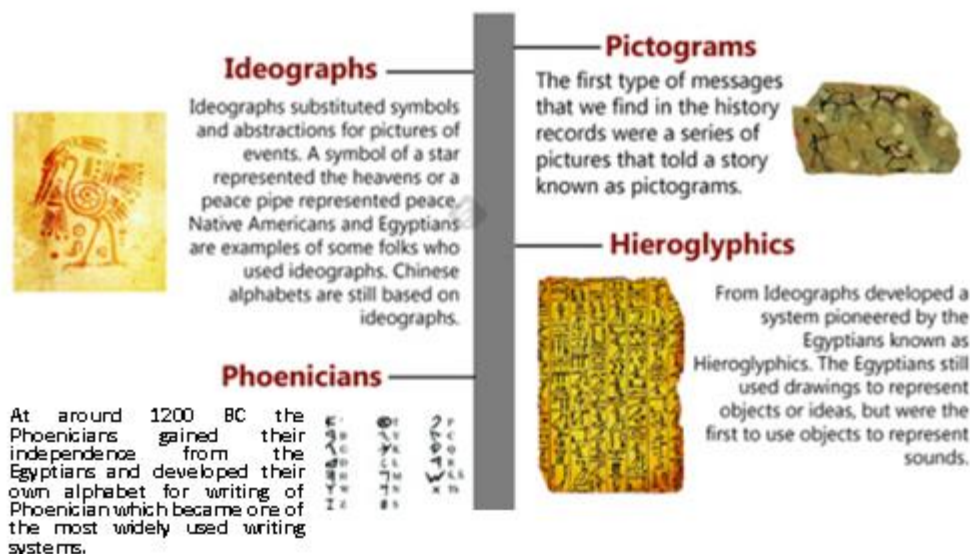
Modern is the term used to categorise fonts created at that time or in the style of that time.

Modern fonts are recognizable by their thin, long horizontal serifs, and clear-cut thick/ thin transitions in the strokes. The stress is vertical, i.e. there is no slant on the letters.



A History of Typography

For as long as the written word has existed, typefaces and typography have been apart. From its roots in the midst of times and origins of communication to the million pound industry it is today, very little has done as much to influence the graphical world we see.



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