



3 ■ Business Advisor Series

From Arial to Zapf Dingbats

How font licensing is critical to your communications

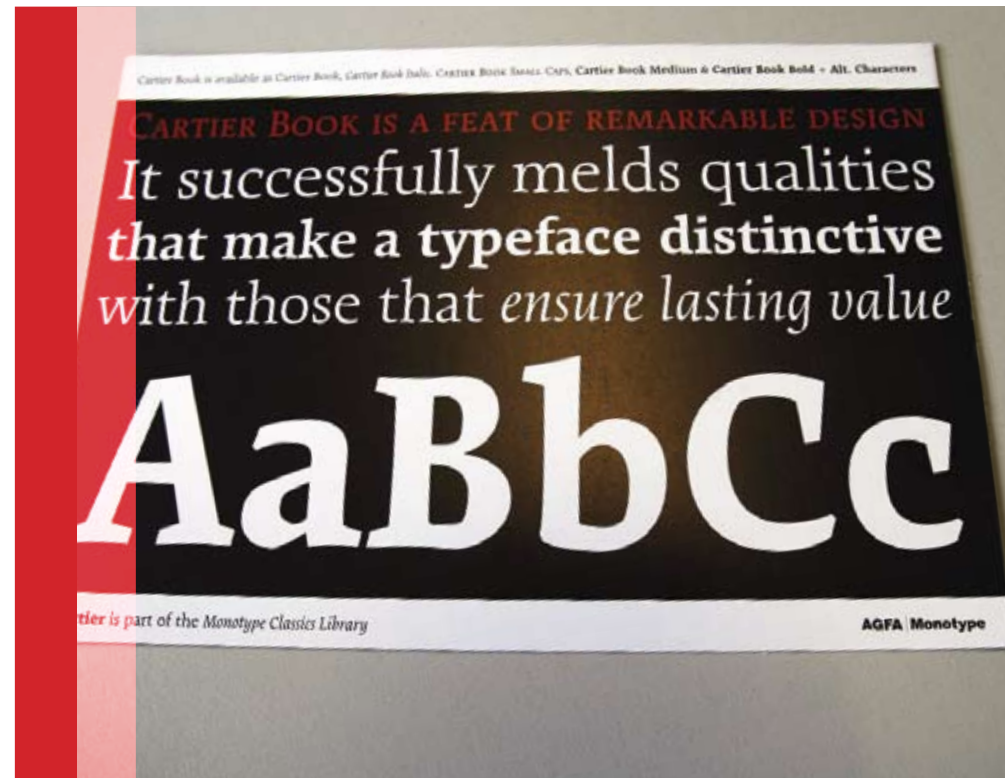
How font licensing is critical to your communications

The written word – as a collection of symbols understood to represent something when placed in sequence – has been around for over 6,000 years. But the desire to communicate visually with others has been a human trait for far longer, with cave paintings first appearing around 30,000 years ago. It is this basic human drive to communicate visually that is at the heart of our fascination with fonts today.

Here we look at how you can protect and extract the maximum value from your font software libraries.

“I always think typescript lends some sort of certainty: at least, if the things are bad then, they appear to be bad with conviction.”

Dylan Thomas, poet and author of ‘Under Milk Wood’
Letter to Vernon Watkins, March 1938



Introduction

The word 'font' has its origins in the Middle Ages when the French term 'fonte' – meaning melting or casting molten metal – was used to refer to the metal print blocks moulded to form particular characters. Today, a font is the software used to create type, and is an often overlooked yet vital element in the way we communicate. Without fonts the explosion in digital media would not have been possible; email, word-processing, websites, electronic documents (e-tickets, flyers, reports, eDMs, spreadsheets), mobile texting, instant messaging, all are text – and thus font – based.

Anyone who uses a computer will be familiar with fonts such as 'Arial', 'Helvetica' and 'Times New Roman' but there are now over 100,000 fonts to choose from! Each is distinguished by a distinctive design which can be employed in order to deliver the most appropriate, efficient and beautiful communication possible.

Font - the physical form of a typeface, such as the print blocks, film negative or the software that enables the use or production (in design and printing/production) of the typeface. The font software describes the letterforms and glyphs in a typeface.

Typeface - a complete collection of characters (letters, numerals, punctuation marks, symbols) that have a distinct design and repeating characteristics in common that form a visually harmonious design. Typefaces are the essence of communication as they are the basis of all text (writing). Without them you would not be able to read this whitepaper.

It's not what you say but how you say it – what does your typeface say about your business?

Did you know that Santa Claus used to be more commonly dressed in green? The change of garb was the result of an early Coca-Cola advertising campaign, which featured the Christmas saint dressed in their corporate colour – red.

The style of lettering a business uses can be just as influential in determining a company's brand identity, which perhaps explains why Coca-Cola hasn't changed the instantly recognised Spencerian font it uses for its logo since the 1880's. The Coca-Cola typeface was a suggestion offered by Coca-Cola inventor John Pemberton's book-keeper Frank Robinson. It was Frank who first scripted "Coca-Cola" using the handwriting style first developed by Platt Rogers Spencer (hence the name). Spencer was driven to design the style by the belief that America needed a form of handwriting that was fast, legible, and attractive for use in business.

Or consider the use of just one letter – 'S' – and the impact the wrong typeface could have had for the Superman franchise. Imagine if the logo emblazoned on Superman's chest was closer to the style of lettering used in the well known Kelloggs' logo, and it's clear how much typeface can effect our subconscious reaction and perception. Instead of a bold, confident, strong super hero, the impression is of a romantic, creative and softer style (or indeed a chicken!).



Similarly, a detailed, complex corporate document outlining the company's vision and goals requires presentation in a font that supports the professional, business communication so the reader feels confident and trusting of the company's intention.

Typefaces are the most influential yet subtle instruments in visual communication, and the desire to present a business in a certain light yet differentiate it from the competition has in part fuelled the explosion in new typefaces. And it's not just for logos and branding; different typefaces lend themselves to different media, different tones of voice and expression.

A change from paper to digital media has led to new challenges and opportunities in typeface development, since specialist fonts are needed for digital media. The selection now available can prove overwhelming even to the experienced eye.

Typeface design has to take many things into account; the faithfulness of a traditional or new design as well as its application to different resolutions and media.

A highly skilled profession, typeface designers do not only examine the shape of each letter and symbol, but also key usage elements (such as the space around each character and how the letters connect with each other for readability; the width of strokes that form the letter and how those change for italic and bold typefaces etc.) that impact on where, how and for what purpose a typeface is most appropriate.

Creating just one new typeface can take many years of effort and requires very specific skills and expertise in both design and technology.

From cave paintings to printing press: A brief history

The letterforms we see today began as pictograms, symbols that closely resembled what they represented. Over time early symbols became increasingly stylised and simplified. Adopted by the ancient Greeks, symbols created by the Phoenicians were then further adapted and adopted by the Romans, at which point we can begin to recognise the letters we know today as the Western Roman alphabet. Hebrew, Russian, Greek and Aramaic alphabets are also believed to come from the Phoenician forms but developed over time separately.

Initially letters (and words) were inscribed in stone, and this medium dictated style and letter form. It is from these inscriptions that we get the Roman Monumental style of lettering with its distinctive 'serifs' (lines or shapes that denote the end of a stroke). With the development of new writing tools – notably parchment around one and half thousand years ago – Carolinian Miniscule, based on the monumental style but more appropriate to the requirements of the writers, also became a de facto style.

In the late 14th century the humanist movement sought to revive antique classicist (Greek and Roman) learning and developed more comprehensible styles of lettering in order to reflect classical ideals and the requirements of their audience. Wood block printing, developed by the Chinese, was mostly used for reproducing images rather than words, but with the arrival of the printing press in 1450, text could be reproduced far more quickly and cheaply than before.



With knowledge made fashionable by the humanists, and reproductions brought into the reach of a wider audience thanks to reduced costs, it is estimated that over nine million books had been printed by 1500. The books people owned both in terms of subject and style equally came to represent their respectability. As the market grew printers, copyists and illustrators all vied for custom – and the development of more ornate or legible scripts was in part a by-product of this competition.

What we would consider as conventional typefaces began to appear, and in the early 1800's the first major design development occurred when William Caslon IV introduced the first sans serif (without lines or shapes that denote the end of a stroke) print type. Since then the number of typefaces available has exploded and styles are available for every occasion – from the surreal to the sensible, the understated to the indescribable.

Where as the Greeks wanted longevity and legibility, and the Renaissance Princes wanted style and panache; today what font you use is a decision that needs to be made with your overall business objectives in mind.

How can you stand out from the crowd without appearing unprofessional? How can you illustrate your heritage and experience without seeming dated and tired? As the media used to communicate explodes, so does the choice of fonts at your disposal.



Looking after your font libraries – protect your company's assets (and identity)

The typeface is the design of lettering, but the font is the physical medium that enables you to use that design (i.e. software). Like other forms of software, usage of fonts is determined by licences that establish the number of desktops and other devices that the font can be installed onto. This model ensures that designers are fairly rewarded for their skill and time, and supports further investment into typeface design to ensure that they work seamlessly with software applications and new technology.

As new media usage grows apace, investment into typefaces that work with new media – on websites or mobile devices for example – is in demand. If this process is not being supported by those who use and benefit from the typefaces available, ultimately it will impact on the development of the creative sector as a whole.

Fonts are acquired in the same way today as other software products, and are an important business asset. Successful companies recognise that their font libraries are an invaluable resource and invest in building and protecting them as a result. If the library becomes contaminated by rogue, unlicensed fonts from unknown or unapproved sources, it can affect the quality of the work produced, prevent documents from opening and text from displaying reliably, impacting the professional image of your documents and materials. Ultimately your entire font library could be corrupted through damage or file corruption.



Today, fonts ship with computers and many software applications so there is already a varied range of fonts for everyday communication requirements. However, with businesses recognising the brand benefits a distinct corporate font can bring and the need to service client and partner typeface requirements, many are investing in an expanded library allowing more flexibility and an even more creative expression of their business. Protecting those fonts should be regarded as much of a priority as protecting the company logo.

Given the importance of the typeface to a businesses identity and the message they wish to convey in corporate, marketing and sales materials – every business should consider how it acquires and manages the fonts it holds.

As fonts are software they are protected by the same copyright legislation as other software, meaning not only are you protecting one of your business investments through careful management of your fonts, but preventing the business from breaching copyright legislation.



Robin Nicholas, co-designer of the Arial font

Business Best Practice Guidelines: 10 Tips for Font Management

1

Recognise that fonts are software and are licensed and retain licensing documentation in a safe place. A licence permits you to use a font within certain parameters as outlined in the licence agreement documents. The font and typeface remains the intellectual property of the type designer or font software publisher that supplies it. Bear in mind that your company will be liable if you lend or give font software to others to use without a licence in place that enables you to do so.

2

If you are not sure whether a font will work or not in a given context, or that a client will like the font you have chosen – you can use 'Type Specimens'. Many font foundries offer specimens that you can use to review a font before buying the licence to use it.

3

A licence is granted in the form of an End User Licence Agreement (EULA), usually according to the number of computers and devices the font software is installed on. Licensing terms vary depending on the font software publisher, so check carefully.

4

Do not make copies of, or distribute, font software to another organisation or individual who does not have their own licence to use it unless specifically allowed by the licensing agreement. In principle, anyone using font software must have a licence for it.

5

Most font publishers allow users to embed font software into documents, but only for previewing and printing. This means you can send a document for feedback or approval but the person at the other end cannot use, edit, access or retain the font software for other purposes.



6

Font software is protected by copyright and therefore modifying fonts without prior consent is an infringement of copyright and in some cases, an infringement of Trademark.

7

Have an unambiguous company policy dictating the usage and installation of fonts and ensure it is clearly stated in your employees' contracts, hand books and codes of conduct. Make it clear that the policy will be enforced, what the penalties are and why you have a policy in place.

8

For more information or to resolve any doubts about your company's licensing position, contact your font supplier or publisher.

9

Conduct an audit of the fonts installed on your servers, desktops and printing devices. You need to scan your entire computer for this as fonts need a licence if they are resident anywhere on a machine. A network font software discovery tool is the easiest way to find all your fonts accurately.

Once you have found all the fonts, you need to reconcile the fonts installed against the licences you hold. Your vendor will be able to help you do this as it can be complicated if you have a lot of fonts from different publishers where terms vary. In the course of this process you will discover how many users need the fonts and this will help you ensure you are correctly licensed. It will also help you reduce future costs by ensuring your company does not over-license in the future.

10

Organise your font libraries to avoid over or under licensing issues: There are at least three standard formats and some fonts may be available in each format, so ensure that your libraries are organised in a logical way to ensure you have the right licence for each font and that you are able to make the right decision not only about which font is best – but in which format.

Some suggested methods of organisation are by:

Alphabetical order – organise fonts in alphabetical groups which enables fast search and navigation.

Project name – a collection of fonts that you plan to use for a particular project, so you see only the fonts you need.

Client – as clients may require a specific set of fonts for all of their projects.

Further information

For further information on typefaces and fonts, how to manage your font libraries and select which fonts to use, please visit:

<http://www.adobe.com/type>

http://www.apple.com/downloads/macosx/imaging_3d/fontpilot.html

<http://www.bsa.org>

<http://www.fonts.com>

<http://www.fontwise.com>

<http://www.itcfonts.com>

<http://www.linotype.com>

<http://www.microsoft.com/typography>

<http://www.microsoft.com/typography/FontValidator.msp>

<http://www.monotypeimaging.com>





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