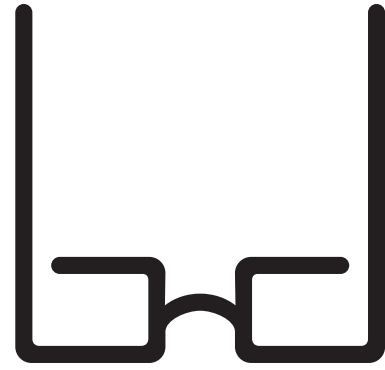


big



ROLLCAST
energy




Typography serves as the foundation for the corporate identity
A3 Design creates: from the BIG Council's ligature to type as image
solutions in Goody's Paint and Bryant and Duffey optometry.

COMPOSITION

Words with Amanda Altman / A3 Design

All of our projects begin with the typography.



Q. How important is typography for A3?

Extremely important. Our job is visual communication. Design interprets how viewers react and respond to a message. The right font helps to communicate that message. A very elementary example is using a display font in body copy. You cannot read it. Or using an illustrative, gory, dripping font to typeset “Have a nice day”—it’s a contradiction. Designers have to understand typography to effectively communicate with it. How the letterforms relate to each other, how the typography relates to the rest of the design, and how the target market reads the message are all extremely important.

Q. What default typefaces do you use?

We tend to be drawn to classic sans serif fonts: Helvetica, Univers, Trade Gothic, and Franklin Gothic. They are all very different, but similar in that they are easy to read and have huge families to allow for variation in weight, helping with hierarchy. And because of their ambiguity and lack of *style*, they’re chameleon fonts in that they take on the style, meaning, and message of the piece. We have come to find that it takes years to master the use of any singular font. We were also fortunate enough to be educated in typography by professors who adopted and taught the Swiss design school of thought: Paul Bowers and Jan Conradi.

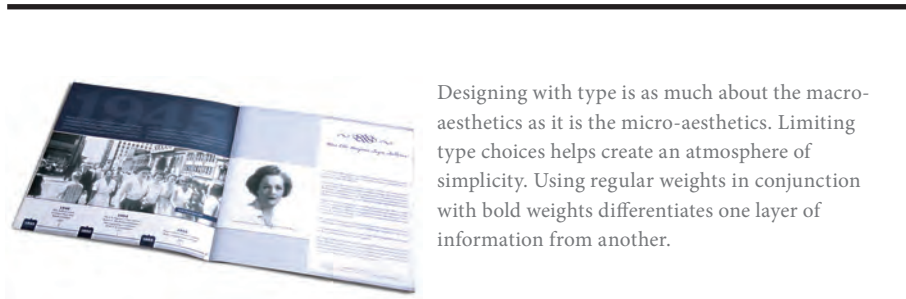
Q. How much time do you spend educating clients about typographic fundamentals?

The majority of people couldn’t care less about Helvetica or Univers, but I think the majority of my job is educating the client on design in general, and typography on a more detailed level.

A great example is the BIG (Business Innovation and Growth) logo we created. Their previous logo was B-I-G all in one, horribly executed, unbalanced, and illegible form. The client and I talked about the goals for the entrepreneurial group, which included terms such as *growth*, *approachability*, *professionalism*, and *innovation*. After our initial design presentation, I heard comments to the effect of: “It just feels right. I like it, but I don’t know why. It makes me smile.” So what was it that made the president of this entrepreneurial organization like what she saw? As I explained to her, “It says what you want it to say, without saying it.” That’s well-executed typography. Everything from the citrus green color palette expressing the dual personality of an entrepreneur, to the approachability of the lowercase, serif font used, to the top of the *g* growing into the dot on the *i*, it all appeals to the market with an instant visual message.



The visitor information center uses the simplicity of an *i* embedded in a thought balloon to help passersby find answers to their tourism questions. In contrast, the information-dense Walk Charlotte map shows people where they are and where they can go by layering typographic street names into a mapping system.



Designing with type is as much about the macro-aesthetics as it is the micro-aesthetics. Limiting type choices helps create an atmosphere of simplicity. Using regular weights in conjunction with bold weights differentiates one layer of information from another.



The wood type inherent in the Muzak *Screen Door* promotional calls to mind folksy, small-town music performances.

Q. Do you start by tinkering with imagery or crafting the message with typography?

All of our projects begin with the typography. We read the content, choose fonts, and then establish hierarchy.

United Way's 75th Anniversary program had a ton of copy. Older serif font choices were made to support the concept and for legibility. Then the content was designed into its hierarchal position. We pondered every element and created numerous design options before generating the final product. There are also cases where the font was the inspiration and became the image, such as the *Screen Door* album artwork and the AIGA Communication Arts poster.



By layering type over image, the Armando Bellmas promotion does double-duty, calling attention to the artist's name without stealing attention from his photography portfolio.

Q. What significance do you place on the grid for your layout/composition?

A heavy one. Our Swiss school of thought has drilled it into our heads that you must establish your grid first. We even start business cards by establishing a grid structure. It helps to easily organize and establish that hierarchy of information. It provides a structure for us to create within and grounds our elements to imaginary anchors so they don't drift off the page. Two books which are a must-have for *any* designer include *Making and Breaking the Grid* by Timothy Samara and *Typographic Design: Form and Communication* by Philip B. Meggs and Rob Carter.

Q. What is the biggest design challenge you face in this new digital environment?

The biggest challenge is educating our clients on the different expertise that is needed to successfully communicate in this environment. We help our clients understand the value in both the design side and programming side, that both sides are different and complicated, and that partnering with specialists in each field will help you to reach your business goals quicker and create lasting equity for your company's name.

Media will keep changing. We will have to learn how new media renders the letterforms, but typography fundamentals will always stay the same.

Q. Given technological shifts with more emphasis being placed on digital text, how do you foresee typography changing?

I like the idea of people being more aware of typography. More people will identify themselves with fonts: taking on a font as part of their online personality or worn as an accessory to their electronic communication. Like any accessory, it could be trashy and gaudy or possibly very elegant and classic. That is cool.

Text

LEADING. The space between lines of typography has been called leading since the days when typesetters and printers inserted thick strips of lead in between sentence lines during hot metal typesetting. Designers and copywriters denote font size and leading in what looks similar to a fraction: 12/16 means 12-point type size with 16-point leading.

Today, software enables instantaneous and precise adjustment of leading by toggling points and pixels up or down, to the most precise fraction, such as 11.01 points. Most software sets type with approximately 120 percent of leading, making a 12-point font have 14.4 points of leading. But that is not always the ideal calculation; so don't settle for the default. For improved readability, a general rule of thumb is to set the typography in the necessary size, measure the space between each word, and add that measurement (or more) to the type size for your leading.

A designer's job will become more challenging as the quantity of messages, information, and noise increases. The designer who possesses a sharp typographic understanding will best meet that challenge, especially during a time period when the common user knows the difference between Times and Arial, Comic Sans and Hobo. And if they're not certain, they can scan it using "What the Font" on their iPhone.

12/14.4 Setting Didot in 12 point will default to 14.4-point leading in software such as Adobe Illustrator. This is rather tight.

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12/16 Didot set in 12 point will have approximately 4 points of space between each word so that the leading would be set to 16 points (12-point font size + 4 points of word space = 16).

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12/18 Using the word-space formula as a starting point from which to expand upward demonstrates that more leading can be a good thing. The 18 points of leading creates a lighter shade of gray overall.

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12/12 Solid leading happens when a type size is the same as its leading, which in this case, places lines far too close together. Notice how the descender of the *y* touches the *i* in *iPhone*.

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12/11 Although the effects are somewhat fascinating, negative leading causes the lines to interrupt one another with one line's descenders hitting another's ascenders to make for a difficult read.

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12/18 The word space plus font size equation is a general rule of thumb, but it is no prescription for success. Trade Gothic Bold in 12 points may have 4 points of inter-word spacing, yielding 16-point leading, but it could benefit from more air between each line. Here, Trade Gothic Bold gets 18 points of leading instead of the measured 16 (12+4) points to let each line breathe.

Tall x-heights in fonts such as Frutiger will make large text bodies seem darker at the default leading because there is less white space from the median line to the ascent and capline. Adding a point or two of additional leading will make paragraphs appear lighter, and in effect, easier for readers to digest. Helvetica, Times, Bookman, and Trade Gothic also share this need.

Futura, on the other hand, has a short x-height, and ascenders that appear taller than other sans serif fonts. Futura at 9 point will look dainty and delicate compared to Frutiger, so it will require a larger point size in order to be more readable for those with poorer vision. Its leading does not have to be as open as those fonts with large x-heights. Bernhard Modern and Bembo will also benefit from larger sizes and less leading.

TYPOGRAPHIC ALIGNMENT. Western cultures using Romantic languages, have been known to align typography using a flush left—also called ranged left or ragged right—setting because it lets readers, who move from left to right, find the next line in a text measure without much trouble. This is not the norm in languages that have alternate reading directions, such as Arabic, Hebrew, and Japanese. At one time, the Greeks had text settings that began with left to right reading, and forced the reader to continue on the next line down in the opposite direction, from right to left.

Some conventions require designers to lay out text in flush left, flush right, or centered settings. Many wedding invitations use center alignment to place the names of the couple and their designated families in the middle of the format, making it easy to find out who's who. It has been said that this format also mimics the approach the bride takes when walking up the center aisle to meet the groom, and the path they take together when leaving as husband and wife. But not every wedding invitation must have center-aligned text.

Exuberant and decorative fonts may prove readable for small copy areas, but anything overly dramatic (or something just plain old “inappropriate”), will either discourage the reader or tire their eyes out. If you or the reader consider the typeface more than the content they are reading, then chances are you need another typeface that is less gaudy.

Flush Left / Ranged Left / Ragged Right.

Notice how the quotation mark has been aligned with the text in this default flush left setting.

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Flush Right / Ranged Right / Ragged Left.

This alignment forces the reader to find each new line of text along a ragged edge.

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This **Flush Left** example uses hanging punctuation (also called optical alignment or Roman hanging punctuation) to align all of the text, and provides a cleaner edge.

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Justified. All of the type aligned on the left and right sides, and in this case, aligns the last line flush to the left. Notice the rivers created beneath the word *tire*.

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Centered. Aligning text to the central axis can produce harmonious and symmetrical layouts.

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Another example of **Center** aligned text, but here, the final statement gets a longer line, instead of the previous example with its shorter four-word measure *that is less gaudy*.

Is it a widow or an orphan?

Definitions vary, but one thing is certain: Making any of these mistakes is unsightly.

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When a font calls attention to itself,

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If designing with another font becomes impossible—for whatever reason—the designer should consider what can be done in order to reduce the amount of noise, attention, and distraction that the given font creates. Text type is a good place to start when considering fonts for large copy areas. But when a font in printed matter calls attention to itself, stealing attention from the author’s words, do the author and the reader a

stealing attention from the author’s words, do the author and the reader a favor: pick another font. If designing with another font becomes impossible—for whatever reason—the designer should consider what can be done in order to reduce the amount of noise, attention, and distraction that the given font creates. Text type is a good place to start when considering fonts for large copy areas in print or on screen.

When a font calls attention to itself, stealing attention from the author’s words, do the author and the reader a favor: pick another font.

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When a font calls attention to itself, stealing attention from the author’s words, do the author and the reader a favor: pick another font.

If designing with another font becomes impossible—for whatever reason—the designer should consider what can be done in order to reduce the amount of noise, attention, and distraction that the given font creates. It is your responsibility.

As a lonely first sentence at the end of a column, an **orphan** has become separated from the words in the paragraph it belongs to. *When a font calls attention to itself* has been cut off and isolated.

Another definition of **orphan**—as in the case of *distracting*—is when a single word remains on its own line at the end of a paragraph.

The **widow favor: pick another font** is the last line of a paragraph appearing as the first line in a column. It has been separated from the related paragraph and floats by itself.

Hyphenation comes in handy, especially when trying to create aesthetically clean ragged edges or neatly justified texts, but in this case, it breaks the word *responsibility* apart. The lost *sibility* is known neither as an orphan nor a widow, but a **hypho**.

PARAGRAPH DIVISION. The word *paragraph* has its roots in the Greek word *paragraphe*: a break in sense or a change of speakers. Differentiating one paragraph from another helps readers distinguish between one idea and another when they are reading over a large body of text. Paragraph designators denote these differences through breaks, indentations, markers, or a combination thereof. New paragraphs can happen through a direct and abrupt separation between paragraphs with two hard returns. Tabs are another convention that is both recognizable and acceptable. When it comes to standard book texts, the *Chicago Manual of Style* specifies that a 0.5-inch (1.3 cm) indent be used for paragraphs or hanging indents. It's a good model to follow when required, but any visual marker denoting a new paragraph will work in the right context.

In some cases, designers incorporate a literal paragraph mark, also known as a pilcrow—a reversed *P* with a vertical line drawn through it—to specify a new paragraph. Whatever method is incorporated, designers should apply it as a system throughout the project.



For illustrated texts or annual reports, rules help separate content the same way that different paragraphs do. **Bright Yellow Jacket, U.S.A.**

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When a font calls attention to itself, instead of the author's words, do the author and the reader a favor: pick another font.

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Two hard returns at the end of a paragraph will separate the bodies of text and create a blank slot of leading between each paragraph.

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A tab separates the paragraphs, which all have the same amount of leading between them.

next



2

{ interview }

Her success in period pieces of all types cannot be chalked up simply to knowing how to wear a bodice. It is because, as a selective actress willing to stretch, Winona Ryder, at twenty-five, transcends her time: She's thoroughly modern (ambitious yet arty, thoughtful, even self-preservationist) and royal old Hollywood.

Then she can follow that up with her most provocative, and sexual, role yet: oddley enough, that of a Seventeenth-Century teenage siren. This , from a young woman who made sure in the late Eighties that "Heathers" would enter the contemporary lexicon as a name for cliquy teenage queens from outside the clique, that is. Her success in period pieces of all types cannot be chalked up simply to knowing how to wear a bodice. It is because, as a selective actress willing to stretch, Winona Ryder, at twenty-five, transcends her time: She's thoroughly modern (ambitious yet arty, thoughtful, even self-preservationist) and royal old Hollywood. Then she can follow that up with her most provocative, and sexual, role yet: oddley enough, that of a Seventeenth-Century teenage siren. This , from a young woman who made sure in the late Eighties that "Heathers" would enter the contemporary lexicon as a name for cliquy teenage queens from outside the clique, that is. Her success in period pieces of all types cannot be chalked up simply to knowing how to wear a bodice. It is because, as a selective actress willing to stretch, Winona Ryder, at twenty-five, transcends her time.

The large drop cap *H* draws the reader into the text, and an indent separates the paragraphs. **Little Fury, U.S.A.**

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An exdenting or a hanging indent, where the first sentence is longer and is hanging outside the subsequent ones.

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A bullet as a paragraph marker adds a subtle touch.

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The pilcrow (paragraph marker) placed within the text body to maintain the overall flow. Notice how much shorter the body text is compared to the others.