

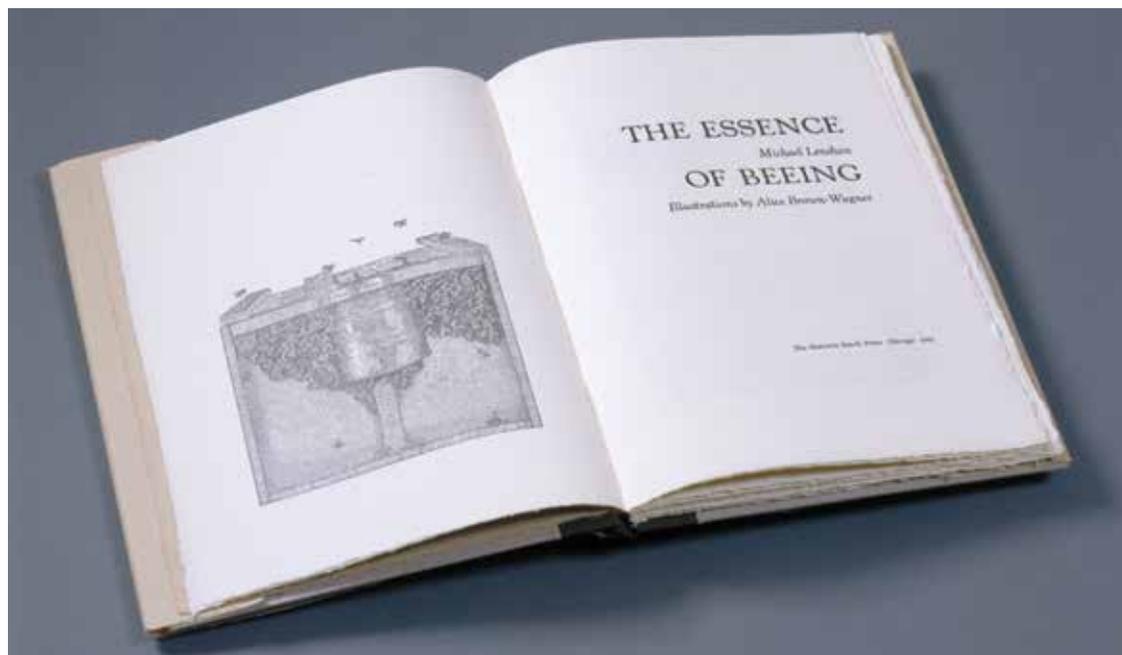
(Top) The Petrarch Press, *Thoughts from the Letters of Petrarch*. Set in Dante with Goudy Lombardic Caps. Printed on sheepskin parchment on an Albion press under the direction of William Bentley. Designed by Peter Cohen. 2004. (7 7/8" x 5 1/2" x 1".) Photograph by Keith Walley.



(Center) Robert H. Middleton, *Alphabet in progress*. Wood engraving. 1985. (9 5/8" x 7 1/4".)



(Bottom) *The Essence of Beeing*, written by Michael Lenehan. Printed by The Sherwin Beach Press. Illustrations by Alice Brown-Wagner. Ornaments by Albert Richardson. Printed on Fabriano Roma in Cooper Oldstyle. Designed by Robert McCamant. Bound by Ann Repp. 1992. (12" x 9 1/4" x 1/2".) Photograph by Jack Kraig.



Project assignments also strive to instill knowledge of and respect for printing history. For many years now, each semester students are asked to create a double-sided, digitally printed card about an event, invention, or individual associated with printing history. The card is to be designed "in the spirit of the times," with the date prominently displayed on the front, resources cited on the back. Each card is then chronologically filed in an elegant box (handmade by a former teaching assistant), which serves as an archival timeline both significant and commonplace. Examples from our registry include the first use of the manicule in 1101¹⁸ to "sea presses" that came over to the New World aboard ships in 1564,¹⁹ and the first commercially produced heavy metal typewriter (1873)²⁰ to the invention of the Pantone Color Matching System in 1963.²¹ The Archive is available in the Shop for students to peruse, and we are planning an installation exhibition of it, cards posted in a timeline format stretching around the walls of a gallery space.

A student's first semester in letterpress will include a project introducing them to two major historical design aesthetics: the classical and the modernist page layout. By setting and printing paired words, students learn to compose both centered and asymmetric layouts, understand the respective Roman and sans serif font use, and strive to relate the definition of each word to its appropriate format presentation. At critique, they are often awed by the powerful eloquence of a single word printed on a page. It serves as an excellent means of conveying the expressiveness of negative space, and the necessity to evaluate exactly what needs to be printed, and what doesn't. From this single sheet foundation, students carry these lessons on to their bookmaking projects throughout the remainder of the semester.

By extending learning outside the studio and viewing the abundant letterpress resources that the Chicago Public Library/Harold Washington Center and The Newberry Library have in their collections, students see original printed examples. These artifacts are able to imbue the viewer with insights about historical context, technical proficiency and design aesthetics in a manner more impressive than any PowerPoint presentation might do. With gloved hands they touch a page from the Gutenberg Bible, and peering sideways can discern the superlative imposition of that first piece of Incunabula.

The Arts and Crafts movement's emphasis on the handmade nature of the entire book object takes on utter clarity when a student holds William Morris' 1895 little gem *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair*. Here they can measure its intimate proportions with the palm of their hand; hear the crackle of the deckled handmade sheet as they turn a page; see the printed blackness of the hand-

"No other single typeface, before or since, has made quite the impression on the graphic design community as Cooper Black. Cooper's hand lettering and advertising design became the very visible cornerstone of what was to become the Midwest design style of the 1920s and 1930s."

—Allan Haley²²

Middleton was dedicated to improving the industry in which he worked. He co-founded the Society of Typography Arts in Chicago in 1927, and was involved in establishing the Institute of Design (the New Bauhaus) in Chicago in 1937. He was also a member of the 27 Chicago designers, organized in 1934, and he was a member of the Caxton Club for 40 years.²³ Middleton was among the first American members of the Association Typographique Internationale (ATypI) founded in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1957, which was one of the first proponents of typeface design protection.²⁴

(Top right) *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair*. Printed by William Morris. 1895. Courtesy of Chicago Public Library, Special Collections.

(Bottom right) Fedir Shulga of Officina Daubmanni, *Indulgence in the Name of Gutenberg*. Hand set with Literaturmaya, Obyknovennaya, and No. 3 metal fonts. Calligraphy by Anton Mizinov. Editing by Mykola Kovalchuk. Thanks to Ivan Gulkov. Printed in Kyiv on a Chandler and Price press. Based on a 31-line Letter of Indulgence from 1454, revised as an absolution of typographical sins given to any practitioner of the black arts. 2011. (8" x 8 1/4") Photograph by Irina Kouyan.

cast type and the beauty of the Golden Section spanning an open spread. How more apparent and evocative can these typographic and design attributes become? What greater incentive might there be to research William Morris than to physically encounter one of his sensual printed artifacts?

The current living generation of printing luminaries is part of the legacy we strive to honor and learn from as well. Muriel Underwood, an individual with the foresight to help establish a letterpress workshop in 1952 for the membership of the Society of Typographic Arts, continues to visit and print with the equipment that became our current shop's seminal donation.²⁵ The wealth of stories she has shared with our students, and the behavior she models—still setting type and printing at 89 years of age—is inspirational. If the United States had a similar tradition as Japan's designation of deserving elders as "national living treasures," Muriel would earn our vote.

Camaraderie and generosity are hallmarks of letterpress printers. Individuals who have been printers most of their lives have such an affection for the media, they often will quote an inexpensive price (or free!) for their used equipment just to see that it goes into the hands of a younger generation, willing to continue the practice. This is an excellent means by which serious students can begin acquiring equipment to set up their own shops. Schools that teach letterpress are grateful recipients of donations. Equipment or type that comes our way is listed by donor in our inventory of faces, and marked with a hand-printed label announcing its provenance.

Movable type, by definition, was a "recycling" innovation vastly more efficient than the earlier wood block-books.²⁶ Previously owned movable type confers another dimension upon that recycling concept. Young printers of today are re-using type from yesterday, creating books for the future. Libraries that have Special Collections are recognizing this and are adding both fine press and innovative artist's books to their holdings. Among the more than 4,000 artists' books, periodicals and multiples in the Joan Flasch Artists' Book Collection in the SAIC Flaxman Library, is a nascent collection of SAIC student work.

Awareness of the past informs the present. Appreciation of the past confers a responsibility upon the present to ensure this media's longevity into the future. With the accelerated momentum of digital printing technology, the continued vitality of letterpress relies upon an acknowledgement and utilization of the distinct characteristics of each. Preliminary font choices, tentative layouts, and color trials are frequently done on laptops, side by side with Vandercooks and Chandler & Price presses in the Type Shop. Students consult search engines as their book concepts multiply, and research is



(Top) Muriel Underwood next to her Sigwalt press.



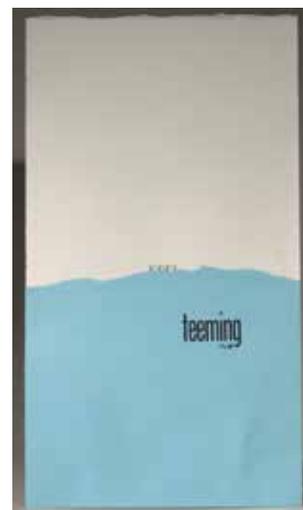
(Center left) Muriel Underwood, *On Dining* (cover). From an article in *Inland Printer* 1911. Letterpress printed on Mohawk Superfine using a Sigwalt tabletop press. Set in 10 pt. Centaur. Bound in red and white checked dress cloth. 2002. (3" x 2 3/4".)

(Center right) Muriel Underwood, *On Dining* (spread).

(Bottom left) Rebecca Workman, *Pineapple*. 2012. (6" x 9".)



(Bottom right) Emma Weber, *Keel/Teeming*, Baskerville and Phenix on Arches and Canford paper. *Keel/Teeming* is an exploration into the relationship that two words can have together. A keel is an ancient fishing boat that rides very low in the water. Teeming, in this context, is meant to be the abundance of fish below the keel. An additional squiggly ornament suggests movement of sea life and water. 2012. (11" x 6".)



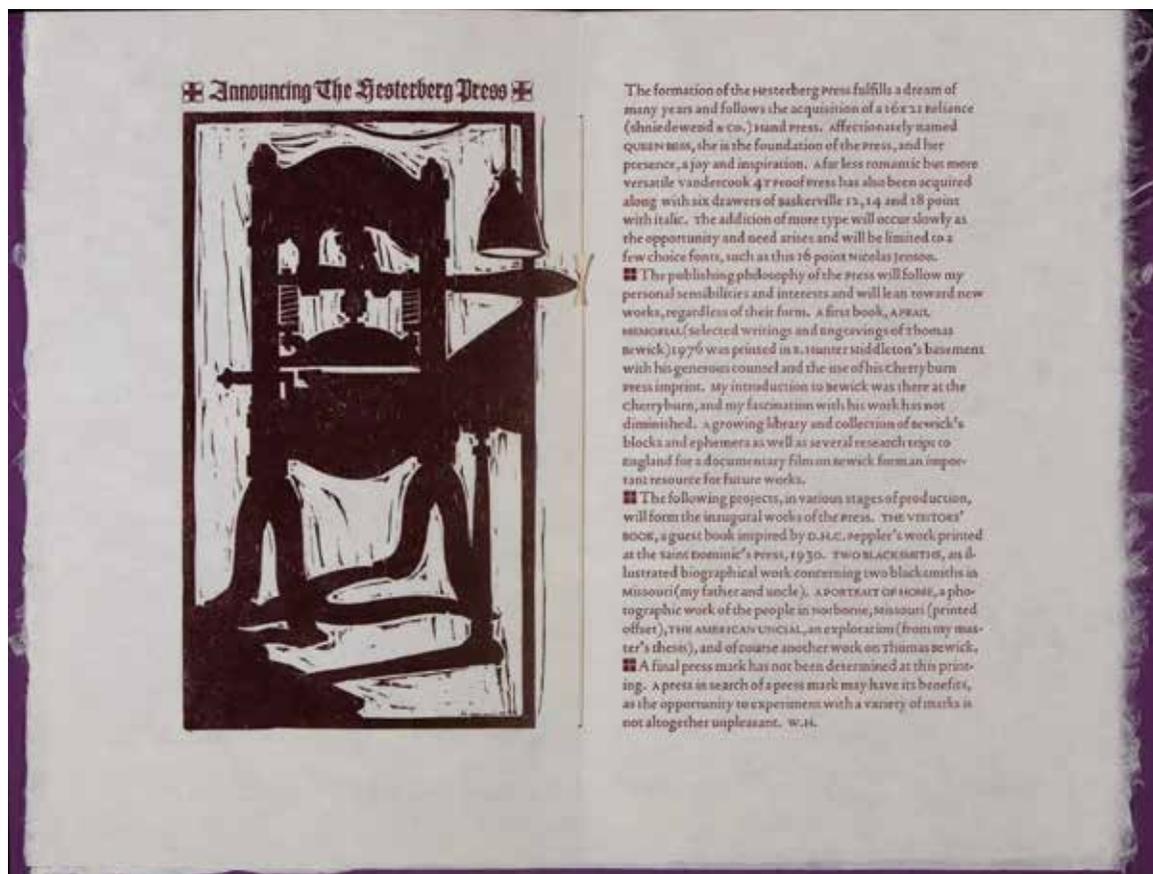
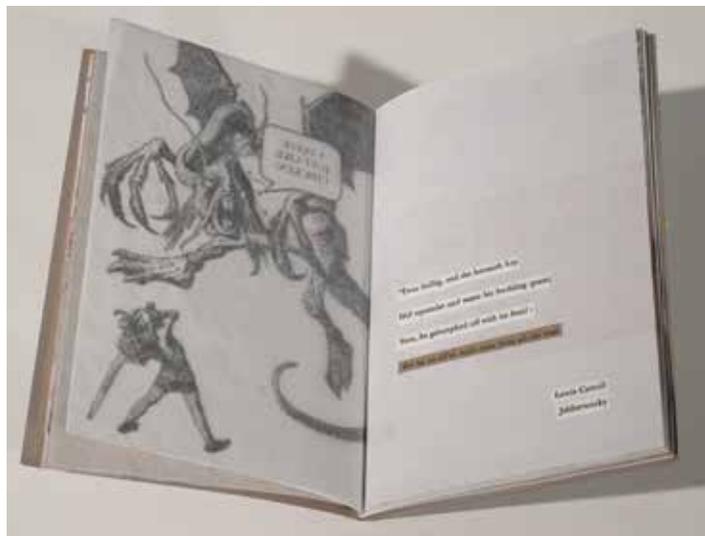
done immediately, without breaking stride to walk to the library. Adobe Illustrator is at home here as is the old-fashioned method of bending leading to shape a curved type form. Running out of type to set a page? Budget conscious solution: print, distribute, and set again. Time at a premium? Set it digitally and have a plate made. Or even faster, send your digital file to the laser cutter and make a relief matrix yourself. Color choice for ink? You will get a better lesson in color theory by opening ink cans and making draw downs than clicking on a drop-down color menu. How does Hosho paper respond to the pressure of letterpress? Proof on a swatch of it. Or look in the drawer of student work for an example "in real time," and "actual size," close up and in detail. Complicated lock-up? Snap a picture of it with your smart phone, or draw a quick diagram, strengthening your skills at furniture and reglet recognition.

Co-existence is letterpress's best hope for the future. By emphasizing the attributes of both digital and analog printing technologies, one can make an informed choice as to which best complements their intended concept. Connecting the present generation of novice letterpress students with the elder generation of practitioners will help ensure its longevity into the future. Knowledge about the historical significance of this major invention which "ignited the explosion of art, literature, and scientific research that accelerated the Renaissance and led directly to the Modern Age,"²⁷ will help create citizens cognizant of the communicative potential of the printed word.

Fifteen years ago we accepted a donation from the daughter of a printer who had passed away. It is a beautiful collection of vintage type, carefully and obviously lovingly documented with the name of each typeface, foundry, and even purchase price. I kept these records and two years ago, a young woman walked into the Type Shop and introduced herself as that printer's granddaughter. She remembered working with him in his basement shop as a child and wanted to see where his equipment had gone. I could show her everything. Interestingly, she is a professional designer herself. She emailed her entire family with pride: she had seen how Grandpa's type is still alive, in the hands of a new generation of student printers.

Notes

- 1 Later renamed The Camelot Press. David Consuegra, *Classic Typefaces: American Type and Type Designers* (New York: Allworth Press, 2011), 141.
- 2 Proprietor of Wayside Press, poster artist, book, magazine and typeface designer. Consuegra, *Classic Typefaces: American Type and Type Designers*, 96.
- 3 Designer of Parsons typeface, which he named for I.R. Parsons, an advertising manager for Carson's Department Store, and used in all of Carson's ads for many years. It was also among the most frequently used faces in motion picture titles and captions. James M. Wells, *Will Ransom in Heritage of the Graphic Arts*, ed. Chandler B. Grannis (New York & London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1972), 109.
- 4 One of the first private presses in America and a popular meeting place for many important figures in the Chicago art world at that time. Neil Macmillan, *An A-Z of Type Designers* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006). 154.
- 5 Macmillan. *An A-Z of Type Designers*, 92.
- 6 Consuegra, *Classic Typefaces: American Type and Type Designers*, 116.
- 7 Opened in Chicago in 1873 as the Great Western Type Foundry, it became BB&S in 1883. www.myfonts.com/foundry/Barnhart_Brothers_and_Spindler



- 8 Consuegra, *Classic Typefaces: American Type and Type Designers*, 116.
- 9 Allan Haley, *Typographic Milestones*. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992), 82.
- 10 Consuegra, *Classic Typefaces: American Type and Type Designers*, 116.
- 11 Haley, *Typographic Milestones*, 83.
- 12 www.linotype.com/351/oswaldcooper.html
- 13 Consuegra, *Classic Typefaces: American Type and Type Designers*, 194.
- 14 Haley, *Typographic Milestones*, 122.
- 15 Macmillan, *An A-Z of Type Designers*, 135.
- 16 Andrew R. Boone, "Type by Goudy". *Popular Science*, April 1942, 119.
- 17 Andrew R. Boone, "Type by Goudy". *Popular Science*, April 1942, 114.
- 18 William H. Sherman. "Toward a History of the Manicure." March 2005. Available at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_\(typography\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_(typography))
- 19 www.heartsandanchors.com
- 20 <http://staff.xu.edu/polt/typewriters/tw-history.html>
- 21 www.pantone.com
- 22 Allan Haley, *Typographic Milestones*. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992), 78.
- 23 Consuegra, *Classic Typefaces: American Type and Type Designers*, 194.
- 24 Haley, *Typographic Milestones*, 122.
- 25 *The Caxtonian*. vol 5, #5, May 1997.
- 26 Geoffrey Dowding, *An Introduction to the History of Printing Types* (London, UK & DE, USA: The British Library & Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 3.
- 27 John Man, *Gutenberg: How One Man Remade the World with Words* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), book jacket.

(Top far left) Kelly Harris, *Recycled Wisdom* (cover). Collage book. Hand set in Bulmer. Printed on Rives BFK. "In literature, seldom is anything truly original. Writers take material from everywhere, recycling stories and reconstructing them to create something new and authentic... writing has much in common with environmental conservation; good narrative, ... is composed of elements old and new, meshed together to form a cohesive piece." 2011. (8 1/2" x 5 1/2".)

(Top left) Kelly Harris, *Recycled Wisdom* (spread). 2011. (8 1/2" x 5 1/2".)

(Bottom left) William Hesterberg, *Announcing The Hesterberg Press*. Printed on Okawara paper with hand-set Jensen and Wilhelm Klingspor Schrift types. Wood block illustration. 1982. (11 1/2" x 7 1/2"). Photograph by John Sundlof.

(Right) Nicolas Jakob. *Atelier Eröffnung Bleilais* (Letterpress studio opening invitation). Translated into English, the name of my letterpress studio means "type lice". Printed on recyclable paper. Hand set in Commercial, with linoleum cut. 2011. (12 1/2" x 19 1/2"). Photograph by Nicolas Jakob.

