

TYPOGRAPHY  
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FASHION > FORWARD  
1920s EDITION

**Edition: 1920s**

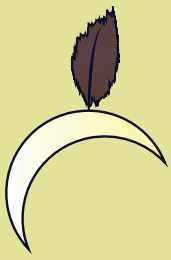
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# 1920S TYPOGRAPHY

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## Textura

Johannes Gutenberg based his type on blackletter calligraphy (Chapman, n.d.). This type of handwriting had heavy and angular lettershapes; Gutenberg chose to base his design on ones with condensed counters and more spacing to have more characters per page (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.). One of his inspirations was Textura (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.).

## Jenson

Jenson: Nicolas Jenson drew inspiration from the blackletter and Italian humanist styles but chose a simpler design in order to fit more letterforms on a page, creating the first Roman typeface (Chapman, n.d.). He also wished to increase legibility blackletter lacked (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.).

## Caslon

Caslon Old Style: William Caslon added more contrast between strokes than previous typefaces had (Chapman, n.d.).

To cover the trends in typography during the 1920s it is first necessary to briefly cover the history of typography relating to the 1920s; typography did not invent itself overnight.

Typography is technically any letter or symbol written by humans, which means that to do a complete history, we would need to cover thousands of years in the span of a few paragraphs (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.).

For the purposes of this article, the history will start at the Industrial Revolution.

Up until the Industrial Revolution, typefaces continually increased their stroke contrast (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.). As mechanized printing processes became abundant and a wish to have headlines catch people's attention grew, typefaces lost the contrast they had gained and

featured thick and square slab serifs (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.). However, the second half of the 19th century had consisted of satisfaction through reusing older styles ("Art Nouveau", n.d.).

William Morris was a major factor in the Art Nouveau movement, which lasted from about 1895 to 1905; he disliked the mass production and saw machines as the enemy to society ("Art Nouveau", n.d.). The movement had two main goals: reestablishing a unity of art and handicrafts, and giving up elements from the history of typography ("Art Nouveau", n.d.). It is known for having organic curves (White, n.d.), connecting art and life in society again like Morris wished ("Art Nouveau", n.d.). It was this movement which provided the foundation for the



for the modern styles to come ("Art Nouveau", n.d.).

After the first world war, typography grew and experienced a good deal of experimentation (Chapman, n.d.). Sans-serifs flourished as attention-grabbers in the 20th century (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.). Linotype and Monotype typesetters were both limited to a maximum of 60 points as a type size and a 60 pica line length (White, n.d.).

Linotype additionally compromised shape and space with its requirement that bold and italics have the same width as roman type (White, n.d.).

Many people set out to reduce these limitations by the 1920s, producing typefaces that kept up with new manufacturing techniques and mechanical typesetting (White, n.d.).

Lazar (El) Lissitzky realized that because printed words are seen and ideas are

told through letters, these ideas needed to have the best optical economy they can and the lay-out has to reflect the rhythm of these ideas (White, n.d.). Planning to expand on this idea, Walter Gropius helped to found the Bauhaus school in 1919 and wished to reduce the sacrifices machines caused (White, n.d.). He also wished to create a better relationship between the industry and the artist (White, n.d.).

In the mid 1920s magazines became important in advancing design as limited edition magazines experimented with relating type to images and the covers were believed to be the most influencing to readers (White, n.d.).

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, who partially led the Bauhaus School in Germany, wanted typography to be like a moving image, so he added contrast and colour to his typefaces (White, n.d.). Bauhaus

## Baskerville

Baskerville: When John Baskerville made his typeface at the beginning of the Transitional movement it was considered a failure, but it gained popularity in the 20th century (Chapman, n.d.).

## Didot & Bodini

Didot & Bodini: Right around the same time as Baskerville, Firmin Didot and Giambattista Bodini created modern serifs, using high quality metal-casting to get thinner strokes and more contrast (Chapman, n.d.). They could achieve this through the new copperplate engraving techniques (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.).

## Goudy Old Style

Frederic Goudy claims the title as the first full-time type designer, and he created this typeface, along with Copperplate Gothic, based on Jenson's Old Style typefaces (Chapman, n.d.).

## Centaur

Centaur: Bruce Rogers, a very influential man in American typography, used Jenson's Eusebias to make Centaur for the Metropolitan Museum Press (White, n.d.).

# Futura

Paul Renner created this popular geometric typeface (Challand, 2009a).

# Gill Sans

Eric Gill was commissioned to create a font family to compete with sans-serif type being made by German foundries and made popular by Futura (Challand, 2009b). Gill had originally set out to make a perfectly legible typeface (Challand, 2009b).

# Bernhard Gothic

Made for American Type Founders, Lucian Bernhard also created this typeface to contend with Futura (White, n.d.).

# BIFUR

The first Art Deco typeface A.M. Cassandre created (Penney, 2016).

typography has had a major impact on design because the School approved of, and even preferred, sans-serifs and simple geometrics over the standard in Germany, ornate Blackletter (Moriarty, 2016). The style may have been simplistic, but could convey a message well (Moriarty, 2016). Developed in Germany in the 1920s was the International Typographic Style, eventually also known as the Swiss Style, holding true to being clean and minimal, and an emphasis on readability (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.). Geometric Sans also came from Germany at the same time, specifically characterized by its smooth shapes and having geometric forms, such as near-perfect counters and an efficient appearance (Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.).

Paul Renner was not in the Bauhaus School but had the same views, making Futura sometime between 1924-1926,

and releasing it in 1927 (Challand, 2009a). Renner used only necessary elements in simple geometric proportions and shapes, creating a clean form and a sense of efficiency, inspiring more geometric sans-serif typefaces (Challand, 2009a; Kirilov & Petroussenko, n.d.). Futura became so popular that it also made the sans-serif typefaces made by German foundries popular (Challand, 2009b). Eric Gill, who had worked on the Johnston Sans with Edward Johnston, wanted to make the typeface more legible, and was commissioned to make an entire font family to contend with Futura (Challand, 2009b). The American Type Founders also wanted a typeface to compete with Futura and hired Lucian Bernhard to do it, resulting in the release of Bernhard Gothic (White, n.d.).

By this point, the Art Nouveau style had become

geometric and took on the name Art Deco (White, n.d.). It was named for the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts (White, n.d.). Art Deco was mostly spearheaded by one man: A.M. Cassandre, who painted, created posters, and designed typefaces (Penney, 2016).

Cassandre created many unique

typefaces, like Bifur, and continued his work into the 1930s (Penney, 2016). Art Deco inspired typography features decorative vertical lines, elongated letters, and shapes that are rounded and geometric (Penney, 2016).

This concludes the trends in typography of the 1920s. To

summarize, it was an era of breaking away from the past and creating simplicity (Moriarty, 2016). However, we cannot completely escape our history. There was a recent jump in popularity for Art Deco typography (Penney, 2016).

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