

History

Caslon is cited as the first original typeface of English origin. Caslon's earliest design dates to 1722. The Caslon legacy began in 1725 with the founding of the Caslon Type Foundry. In 1734, Caslon's first one-page specimen was produced, illustrating forty-seven of his typefaces, including Caslon. The founts cut by Caslon and his son, were close copies of the Dutch Old face cut by Van Dyck. These founts were rather fashionable at that time. The alternative founts they cut for text were a smaller, rather than a condensed letter.

The Caslon types were distributed throughout the British Empire, including British North America. Much of the decayed appearance of early American printing is thought to be due to oxidation caused by long exposure to seawater during transport from England to the Americas. Caslon's types were immediately successful and used in many historic documents, including the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the US constitution.

After William Caslon I's death, the use of his types diminished, but had a revival between 1840–80 as a part of the British Arts and Crafts movement. The Caslon design is still widely used today. For many years a common rule of thumb of printers and typesetters was When in doubt, use Caslon.

Characteristics

Caslon is a group of serif typefaces designed by William Caslon I (1692–1766), and various revivals thereof.

Caslon shares the irregularity characteristic of Dutch Baroque types. It is characterized by:

- short ascenders and descenders,
- bracketed serifs,
- moderately high contrast,
- robust texture
- moderate modulation of stroke.
- The A has a concave hollow at the apex
- the G is without a spur.
- Caslon's italics have a rhythmic calligraphic stroke.
- Characters A, V, and W have an acute slant.
- The italic p, Q, v, w, and z all have a suggestion of a swash.

Several revivals of Caslon do not include a bold weight. This is because it was unusual to use bold weights in typesetting during the 18th century, and Caslon never designed one. For emphasis, italics or a larger point size, and sometimes caps and small caps would be used instead.

It should be noted, that some revivals have little or nothing in common with the 18th century type cut by Caslon, besides the serifs and the name.

Revivals

With the rise of hot metal typesetting beginning at the close of the 19th century, existing foundry metal typefaces such as Caslon's had to be adapted to specific typesetting technology. This was true again with phototypesetting, mostly in the 1960s and 1970s, and then again with digital typesetting technology, mostly since the mid-1980s. As a result of that, and the lack of trademark on the name "Caslon" by itself, there are many typefaces called "Caslon" with some other distinguishing element, which reproduce the original designs in varying degrees of faithfulness.

In 1990 Carol Twombly used the specimen pages of the late Caslon to update the font as Adobe Caslon Pro.

Regular REGULAR REGULAR

Italic *ITALIC* *ITALIC*

Semibold SEMIBOLD SEMIBOLD

Semibold italic *SEMIBOLD ITALIC*
SEMIBOLD ITALIC

Bold BOLD BOLD

Bold Italic *BOLD ITALIC* *BOLD ITALIC*

A B C D E

F G H I J K

L M N O P

Q R S T U

V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

1234567890

20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

CHAPTER 1 A SHIFTING REEF

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