Web Typography

The Web Isn't Print...

It's not obvious *which* traditions of print typography we should attempt to bring to the web, and which we should leave behind. Some differences the between media:

Print

- Static, reflective pages
- Printed at 300–1200 dpi.
- Easy to adjust viewing distance and angle with your hands
- Typesetting benefits from careful consideration of rags, justification, hyphenation, tracking, and kerning
- Variety of fonts to choose from

Web

- Scrolling/dynamic and light-emitting screens
- Displayed at 80-100 dpi, depending on viewer's screen size and resolution settings
- Difficult to adjust viewing distance and angle; adjusting type size with browser leads to inconsistent results (if you know how)
- No hyphenation (yet). Justification is therefore hard to pull off well.
- Limited selection of fonts

… But We Can Learn From It.

Let's look at principles we *can* borrow from print design.

The Measure Matters

- Don't make lines too long or too short: 45-75 characters is the optimal length.

- Longer lines need more leading (line-height).

Be Decisive

- Use a few clear and intentional differences in your typography, especially in type size. Too many size differences makes a page look weak and indecisive.

- Stylesheets make consistency easy to achieve: set up the rules and let them play out rather than adjusting each block of text to fill available space.

http://37signals.com

http://boston.com

http://www.subtraction.com/2011/01/25/this-could-be-googles-design-moment

White Space

- White space can be a better method for visually grouping things than borders, color changes, or subheadings.

So, even though the conclusions are less strong for ads than for apps, the bottom line is the same: parallel design generates better outcomes.
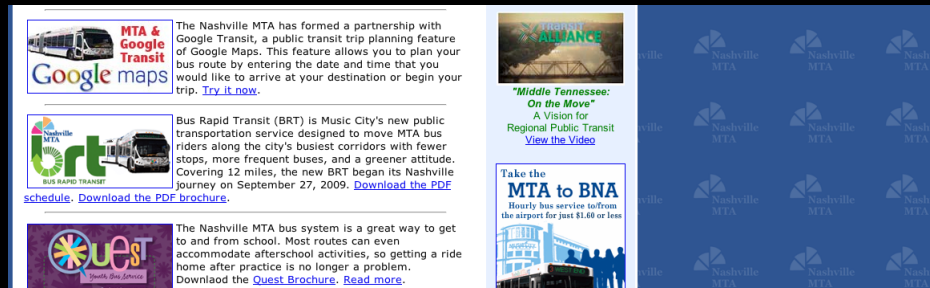
Competitive Testing

In a competitive usability study, you **test your own design and 3–4 other companies' designs**. The process model **looks the same as for parallel design**, except that the original design alternatives are pre-existing sites or apps as opposed to wireframes you create specifically for the study.
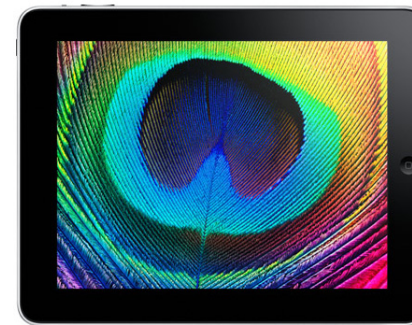
The benefit of competitive testing is also the same as for parallel design: you gain insight into user behaviors with a broad range of design options before you commit to a design that you'll refine through iterative design.

Competitive testing is also advantageous in that you don't spend resources creating early design

http://www.useit.com/alertbox/design-diversity-process.html

The Nashville MTA has formed a partnership with Google Transit, a public transit trip planning feature of Google Maps. This feature allows you to plan your bus route by entering the date and time that you would like to arrive at your destination or begin your trip. Try it now.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is Music City's new public transportation service designed to move MTA bus riders along the city's busiest corridors with fewer stops, more frequent buses, and a greener attitude. Covering 12 miles, the new BRT began its Nashville journey on September 27, 2009. Download the PDF schedule. Download the PDF brochure.

The Nashville MTA bus system is a great way to get to and from school. Most routes can even accommodate afterschool activities, so getting a ride home after practice is no longer a problem. Downlaod the Quest Brochure. Read more.

"Middle Tennessee: On the Move" A Vision for Regional Public Transit View the Video

Take the **MTA to BNA** Hourly bus service to/from the airport for just $1.60 or less

LED-Backlit IPS Display

The high-resolution, 9.7-inch LED-backlit IPS display on iPad is remarkably crisp and vivid. Which makes it perfect for web browsing, watching movies, or viewing photos. With iPad, there is no up or down. It's designed to show off your content in portrait or landscape orientation with every turn. And because it uses a display technology called IPS (in-plane switching), it has a wide, 178° viewing angle. So you can hold it almost any way you want and still get a brilliant picture, with excellent color and contrast.

Multi-Touch

The Multi-Touch screen on iPad is based on the same revolutionary technology on iPhone. But the technology has been completely reengineered for the larger iPad surface, making it extremely precise and responsive. So whether you're zooming in on a map, flicking through your photos, or deleting an email, iPad responds with incredible accuracy. And it does just what you want it to.

Alignments Create Order

- Don't center large blocks of body copy.

- For lists, consider hanging the bullets and numbers in the margin.

- Consider hanging initial quotation marks (use `<span class="dquo">` and assign a negative margin).
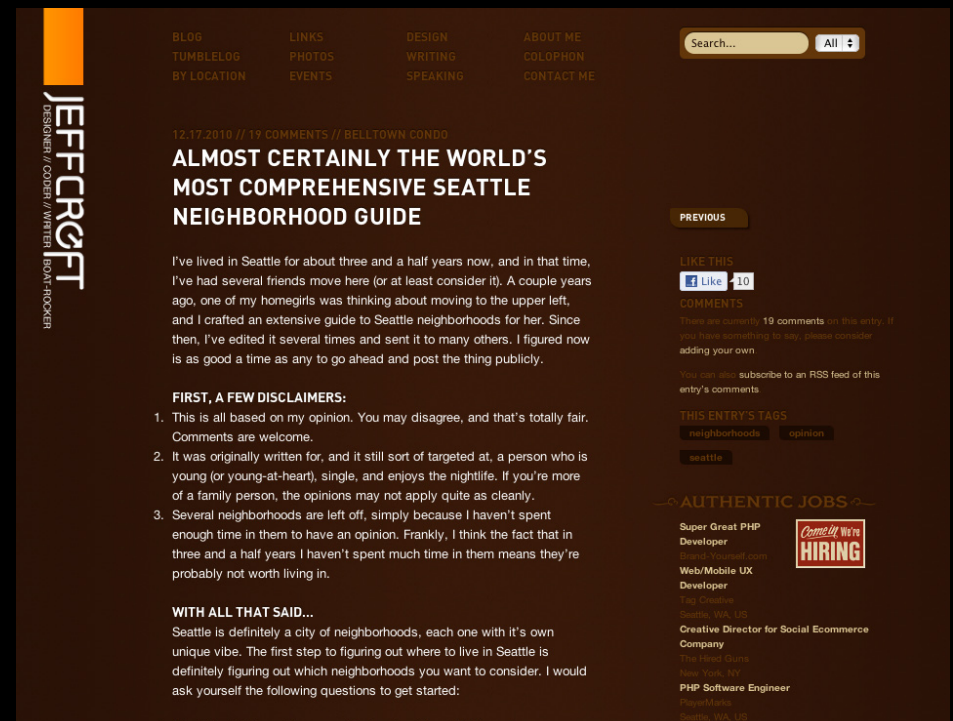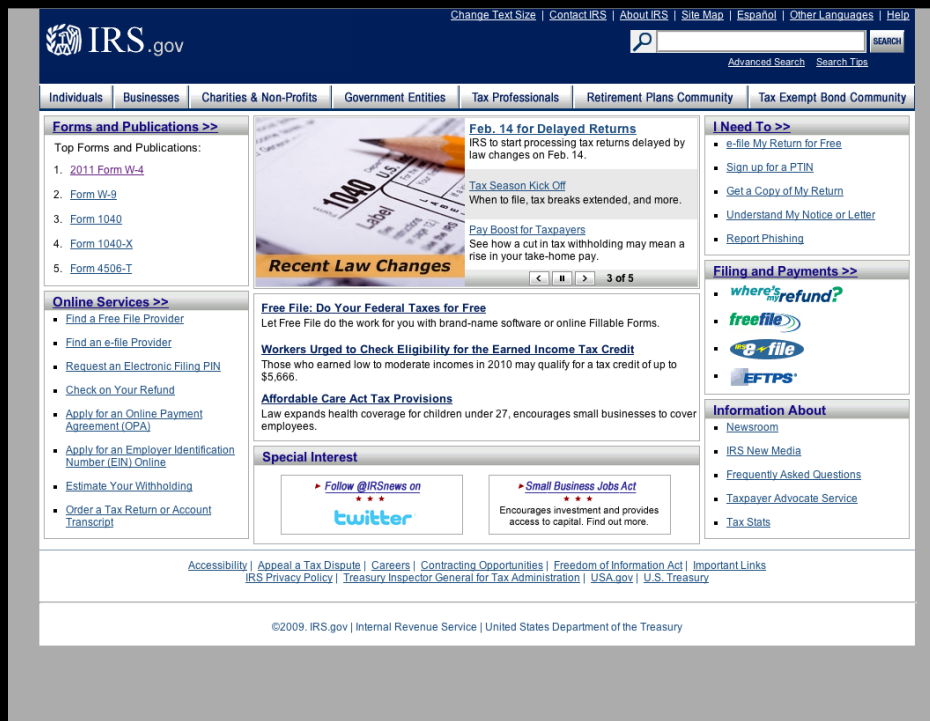
Finer Points

- Use correct HTML entities for straight apostrophes and quotation marks, choose the "best available ampersand," and – where relevant – use small caps (and letter-space them).

- When indenting paragraphs, don't indent the first paragraph of a block of type (or a paragraph that follows a left-aligned sub-heading).

Choosing a Text Font

- There are many reasons for choosing a font. Aping a specific historical use is tricky and not always the most interesting choice.

But Wait, There's More

Let's look at *web-specific* typographic lessons, ones that designers have developed and refined over the past fifteen years of web design.

Not All Fonts are Created Equal

- Use screen-optimized fonts, especially at small sizes. Verdana, Georgia are two of the best. Try Lucida Grande (no italic though) and perhaps Calibri, Candara, and Cambria, which come installed with recent versions of Microsoft Office.

- Thin serif fonts, like Baskerville and Bodoni, don't translate to the low resolution of computer screens.
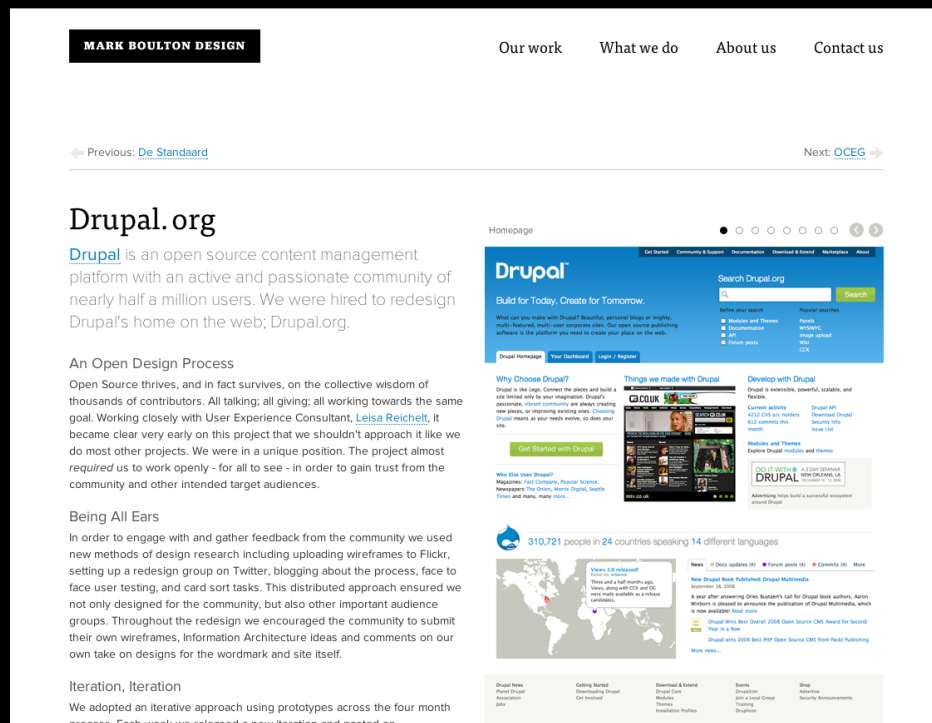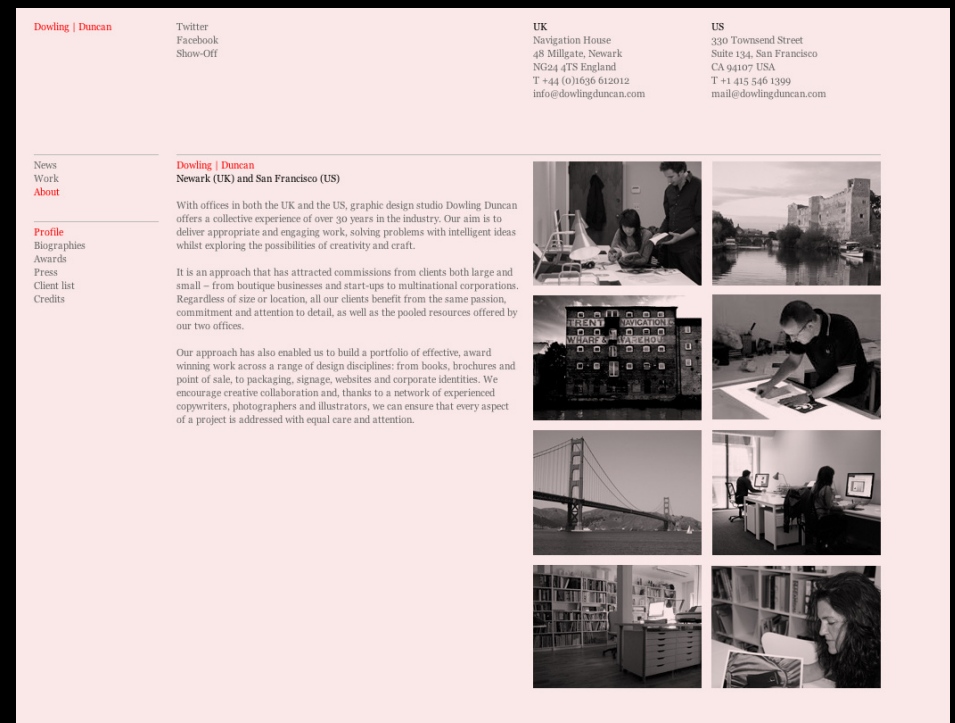
Paragraph Distinctions

- It's more common to break paragraphs with some vertical space rather than first-line indents on the web, since it helps the reader keep track of their location when scrolling.

- A full line-break is often too much. Start by setting a `margin-bottom` on your paragraphs equal to half their leading.

Underlining Text

- Print historically doesn't have much use for underlined text — in the typewriter age it was often used as a substitute for italics (or to indicate italics to a typesetter).

- On the web, underlines are usually reserved for links — consider using `border-bottom` instead of `text-decoration`, and remember that borders can be `dotted` and `dashed` in addition to `solid`.

- Watch out for borders cutting through descenders in an ugly way.

couldn't/wouldn't stop singing along when he played; and finally, the mature Gould, who at age of thirty-two told the concert music establishment in essence to go fuck itself, and happily never performed in public again. His reasons to stop were many and varied, but you can't help but admire this sort of clear-headed defiance toward being forced to create on someone else's terms; like how Artie Shaw – another musician whose talent and hard work earned him the right to lead a bullshit-free career – used to revel in taking unannounced sabbaticals for years at a time at the height of his fame, just to spite those making money off of his work.

It's that last act – the eighteen years leading up to Gould's death – where academics and critics do most of their forensic work, and rightly so: having been set free from ownership by promoters, executives and the really rather bizarre celebrity system of concert music, he dabbled to great result in writing and broadcasting, the very best of the latter is found in three radio documentaries for the CBC which came to be known as *The Solitude Trilogy* (an excerpt from the first, *The Idea of North,* is available here). For the former, look no further than Tim Page's excellent volume *The Glenn Gould Reader.*

Probably the most famous piece in that book is a quick ditty Gould wrote for *High Fidelity* magazine in 1974, 'Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould about Glenn Gould'. While very funny and verbally

kottke.org ...is a weblog about the liberal arts 2.0 edited by Jason Kottke since March 1998 (archives). You can read about you've got questions, concerns, or interesting links, send them along.

MoMA acquires digital typefaces; what does that mean?

As you might have heard, MoMA recently acquired 23 typefaces for its Architecture and Design collection. I was curious about how such an acquisition works, so I sent a quick email to Jonathan Hoefler, one of the principals at Hoefler & Frere-Jones, a New York City type foundry that contributed four typefaces to the MoMA.

Kottke: Three of the four H&FJ typefaces acquired by MoMA are available for purchase on your web site. Did they just put in their credit card info and voila? Or was there a little more to it?

Hoefler: MoMA's adopting the fonts for their collection was much more complex than buying a copy online (and not only because Retina, one of our four, isn't available online.) I should start by stating that you can never actually "buy fonts" online: what one can buy are licenses, and the End-User License that surrounds a typeface does not extend the kinds of rights that are necessary to enshrine a typeface in a museum's permanent collection. The good news is that H&FJ has become as good at crafting licenses as we have at creating typefaces, an unavoidable reality in a world where fonts can be deployed in unimaginable ways. This was a fun project for our legal department.

It was actually a fascinating conversation with MoMA, as we each worked to imagine how this bequest could be useful to the museum for eternity. What might it mean when the last computer capable of recognizing OpenType is

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