



# TYPO

## Introductory.



FEW words to set forth the objects and scope of our publication will not be out of place in our first number. It is our design to issue a journal representative of the printing, publishing, bookselling, stationery, and kindred interests, and to provide a recognized channel of communication between those engaged in these industries. The contents of the present issue will give a general idea of the field we intend to occupy; but in future numbers, as our exchanges and correspondence come in, certain departments will be more fully developed. Practical notes and suggestions, original and selected, will occupy a prominent place in our pages; and among the subjects engaging our

attention will be the laws relating to the press; new publications; new inventions and processes; and in general all matters affecting the trade. To publishers of works of general utility, our monthly will prove of advantage. Owing to the absence of any literary review or other organ appealing directly to the bookselling trade, some of the most useful publications in the colony have succeeded in obtaining little more than a local circulation. In regard to matters concerning the special interests of printers, publishers, and journalists, the ordinary newspaper press, for obvious reasons, is not the best place for their discussion. In taking up a position hitherto unoccupied in the colonial press, we look for the cordial support of the important industries to which we appeal. We will endeavor to make our paper as practically useful as possible, and trust to the co-operation of all our friends, north and south, to make it a thoroughly successful and representative trade journal.

Under the heading of «Design in Typography,» we purpose publishing from month to month a series of original articles of a practical character on the general principles of display work and ornamental composition. In some trade serials may be found a multiplicity of rules on this subject—in most cases excellent—sometimes otherwise. It will be our design to enter into details only as illustrative of principles. The intelligent and artistic compositor can, if required, give a valid reason for the selection and position of any particular line or ornament in his work. If limited to a single fount of type, he will still produce a satisfactory result. The workman who is deficient in artistic perception and training, will go astray when left to his own judgment, and the greater the typographic resources at his command, the more melancholy will be the result. We intend taking up the subject in a systematic manner, dealing in the first place with the broad principles of display, as applying equally to the plainest and the most ornamental work. These will include the general composition or form of the matter, and distribution of light and shade; and the two great leading styles of display—by harmony and by contrast. From this we proceed to the subject of decoration, with especial reference to the abundant material now at the disposal of the compositor, and the limitations inherent in the

nature of his work. The use and abuse of rules, corners, and ornaments will be dealt with, and some of the leading combination designs will be considered in detail. Practical articles of this kind are not uncommon in our German contemporaries, in whose pages the elaborate productions of the foundries are carefully analysed and illustrated; but so far as we know, no English trade organ has dealt with this subject except in the most general terms. We do not intend to dogmatize, and shall welcome criticism. We hold that the beautiful material now to be found in even the smallest job offices is worthy of careful study. It is however too often selected without system and used without judgment. The introductory article will appear in our February number.

We hope occasionally to present our readers with supplements showing choice examples of work, in black or colors, which will show that the printers of this colony are in no wise behind their fellow-craftsmen elsewhere. Friends who think it worth while to contribute would oblige by notifying us of their intention. It is no part of our design to make the paper itself a specimen of what is known as «sumptuous» printing. We have observed that trade journals published with this idea, under the most favorable circumstances, fail to appear with even approximate regularity.

We make it an invariable rule to give our authority for all extracted items. Will the exchanges who may have occasion to quote from our columns be kind enough to do the same?

The newspaper press, while assuming the position of universal critic, sometimes lays itself open to criticism. Some thoughtful and well-timed remarks were recently made by Mr Justice Richmond in Wellington, which deserve serious consideration. His Honor made special reference to the flippant manner in which the Hall poisoning case had been treated by a section of the press. The heading attached to the telegraphic reports in several newspapers—«The Timaru Sensation» his Honor characterized as «shocking.» If the press is to realize—as it should do—the poet's ideal:

The power which counsels and commands  
And shapes the social life of lands—  
A blessing pure and deep—

it must take some other ground in dealing with those crimes which shock society and threaten its very existence, than to treat them as mere journalistic stock-in-trade, and as materials to create what is vulgarly termed a «sensation.» Such a course is unworthy of any paper of higher standing than a «police news.»

For more than forty years there has been a Copyright Act on the New Zealand statute book. It is one of the two oldest survivors of our early legislation, never having been repealed or amended. It affords to English publishers an efficient protection against colonial or foreign piracy, and so far is of value. But it is not so effective as regards local rights, as anyone registering a local production may easily ascertain. It is not our object to show the precise points wherein the Act comes short; but we merely indicate that a serious defect exists. The publishing interest in this colony would do well to take some united action to obtain an amendment.

<sup>1</sup> While Robert Coupland Harding is believed to have never left New Zealand, *Typo* was distributed widely overseas, and particular articles were internationally syndicated via a network of global print trade publications. Here I'm interested in how—whether it was his immediate intention or not—Harding was able to use the publication as a vehicle around which to develop a much broader and more complex community of practice than what was immediately available to him at the time.

<sup>2</sup> Noel Waite, 'The Lay of the Case: Putting New Zealand Communication Design on the Map', *The National Grid* #1, March 2006.

<sup>3</sup> All reproductions of *Typo* here are from The Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena, University of Otago. Thanks especially to Mary Lewis for her assistance with this.

I was first introduced to *Typo* by Noel Waite about four or five years ago when I was in Dunedin installing an exhibition at the Hocken Library. I'd never heard of it before, or of its author, editor, printer and publisher—Robert Coupland Harding. During a break from setting things up in the gallery I was able to take a brief look at the copies available in the Hocken Library's collection, but was unable to engage with it in any sort of meaningful way in such a short amount of time. It needed to be read, obviously. I left Dunedin with a vague idea I'd be back again sometime soon with, somehow, more time on my hands. But it hasn't been until quite recently that I've been motivated to actually pack my bags and head to Dunedin with the particular intention to begin to get to know this publication, and something of the man who produced it.

Setting out, I'm interested in Harding as a Typographer who, disenchanted with the industry at hand, attempted to improve his situation through self-motivated critical writing and independent publishing. My own immediate engagement with this publication then, is not so much to do with its Victorian aesthetic, but rather with the 'spirit' of its author, and the strategies and tactics employed in its production and distribution.<sup>1</sup> And so naively perhaps, but with the best intentions, I've come to Harding's publication looking for a precedent for *The National Grid*, wanting to know more about *Typo*'s successes and failures within the framework of a particular national context (that is, in some respects, still very similar today).

More generally, and sort of off-to-the-side a bit, a broader question has emerged about New Zealand's design history—particularly 'graphic' design history, and its relative availability to practitioners. In an article Noel Waite wrote for our first issue he outlined a desire for a "functional design history that establishes local precedents and encourages designers to knowingly develop or subvert them."<sup>2</sup> Writing to Noel recently I complained that so much of this sort of knowledge seemed to exist only within a tight-knit community of academic bibliographical historians, and didn't seem to make the journey over/across into the surely-somehow-related area of contemporary graphic design practice. To which Noel replied: "It's not that it's hidden away in academic journals, rather, like *Typo*, it's still sitting in the museums, archives, private collections and people's heads. Designers AND academics need to get amongst it."

The 'article' that follows—selected reproductions<sup>3</sup> of Robert Coupland Harding's publication used to illustrate a brief biography written by the late Don McKenzie—probably does little to answer the explicit challenge laid down by Noel. It has though, for me at least, worked as an introduction to certain ways and means by which, as a designer, I might begin to engage with a local precedent that is, more often than not, hard to find, let alone "develop or subvert". It is my intention that these reproductions—to be both 'looked at' and read—should act as a beginning, a sort of 'part 1' of an ongoing project that can be played out in various ways (more speculative or poetic perhaps) in future issues of this publication.