

Jan Tschichold 1902 – 1974

Task 3 – Part B

“There can be neither a genuinely new, nor a 'reactionary' typography, but only good or bad typography.”

“Books are needlessly large, needlessly wide, and needlessly heavy.”

Tschichold is said never to have worked with custom fonts or handmade papers, instead availing himself of off the shelf technology.



Tschichold – 1920

This is true to character as Tschichold consistently used existing ideas, rather than innovate:

- His most enduring font, Sabon (see page 2) (1967), for example is an old style font based heavily on Garamond
- His primary interest lay in antiquarian lettering
- He became a militant modernist after attending an exhibition on the subject
- He later totally rejected modernism for Classicism
- His most noted books set the rules for modern typography but in themselves, contained little that was new.
- There is no school of thought called Tschicholdism.

Despite consistently using established ideas regarding typesetting, Tschichold was not consistent in his beliefs regarding typography.

The Teaching of Tschichold

What sets Tschichold apart from other typographers is that he was

trained in calligraphy and his father was a sign writer. Most other designers of type came from architectural or fine arts backgrounds. This shows that Tschichold knew what he was doing when it came to the display and formation of text.

Due to his provincial origins, it was expected Tschichold would follow in his father's footsteps. This did not happen and he went on to become a teacher, graphic artist and art director.

Tschichold quite happily followed the existing rules regarding typography until in 1923, he attended the first Bauhaus exhibition where he became enamored with the modernist design principle and he became a leading advocate. This contrasts with his primary interest of antiquarian lettering which he rejected during the period where according to him, the only good font was a sans serif font.

Tschichold's Teachings

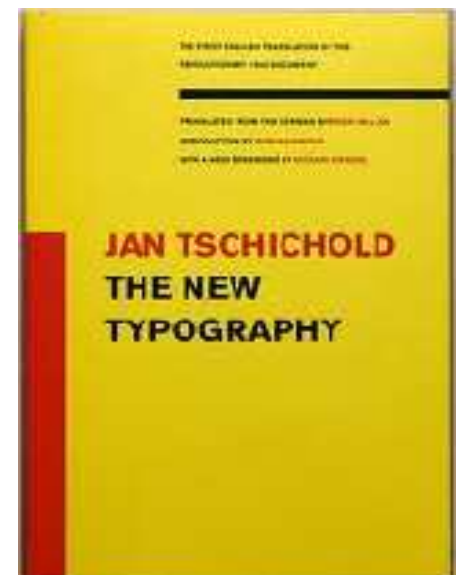
Tschichold is the most famous publisher and practitioner of “the new typography” developed during WWI and WWII. Rather than develop novel ideas, he collected what he considered the best of existing knowledge and published this in his two most enduring works, *Die neue Typographie*, (The New Typography) 1928 and *Typografische Gestaltung* (Typographic Design) 1932.

His first book stated many of the modern design rules, such as standard paper sizes, and how to effectively use different weights and sizes of fonts so information could be quickly and easily transmitted. Though one could imply he determined the system for the sizing of modern paper such as the A, B and C series, this was introduced in 1922 as DIN 476 (later adopted into ISO 216) and first described in 1786 by a German scientist by the name of Lichtenberg.

how to capture attention and convey ideas using font weights and sizes no doubt came from his initial schooling in his father's sign writing trade.

Tschichold also produced a set of how to manuals which widely influenced printers and ordinary workers in Germany. “His” rules detailed how to compose text, indent paragraphs (but not the first paragraph after a title or chapter change) apply punctuation marks, CAPS, SMALL CAPITALS and italics, display figures, references and footnotes, show folios, how to print plays and poetry and how a book was to be made up. These rules greatly influenced modern thinking on typesetting and typography.

Before his move to Switzerland in 1933, he taught typography at Paul Renner's Master Classes for Book Printers in Munich. After his move, he taught at the School for Applied Arts while also working for a number of publishers. These roles doubtless greatly assisted his giving rise to the Penguin Composition Rules (based heavily on his earlier “how to” manuals), such as indented paragraph openings, and the removal of spaces between paragraphs. These rules gave the



Tschichold's seminal work—1928

Penguin books a unified look and much of the typographic practices today are based on these composition rules.

Tschichold authored many other books on the topic of typography and design.

Tschichold's Travels

Influenced by the Bauhaus movement, Jan Tschichold changed his name for a time to Ivan and this had not some small part in the Nazis labeling him a Bolshevik and interfering him. Designing a universal alphabet between 1926-29 to clean up the German alphabet did not help either, as the Nazis labeled this as "unGerman". Rather than suffer any further persecution at the hand of the Government of the day, he and his family moved to Switzerland in 1933 with the help of a local policeman who secured them passage. After that, he rarely left his new country, besides a few trips to Britain (one of which lasted 2 years – 1947-9).



Tetchy Tschichold

Die nue Typographie decried all fonts but sans serif. He was not much of a fan of centered text. By 1932, he did an about face and stated this work was a tad ex-

treme and Modernist design was too structured, even Fascist (which in itself is a pretty extreme view to hold about a design movement). Perhaps the modern fonts he designed did not receive acclaim, so he reverted to what he knew best.

He likely held pretty strong views about the superiority of Classicism too.

Most interestingly, he never featured in the Swiss Modernist design movement to which his two most notable books gave much momentum to. This movement's momentum began after it fell from Tschichold's favor.

Tschichold's Typefaces

Tschichold designed a number of fonts with names such as Classical Garamond, Iwan, Sabon, Transit, Saskia and Zeus. The most enduring of these is Sabon. Most of the others sank into obscurity.

Sabon was designed to give the same appearance on monotype and linotype systems.

Where traditional old style typefaces have different typeset widths for different weights of text (italics, bold, roman), Sabon's weights all occupy the same width.



This meant that a single set of copy fitting data was needed by typesetter, rather than the usual three. This saved typesetters some work if they used Sabon as a typeface.

Sabon has notably been used in a number of religious texts:

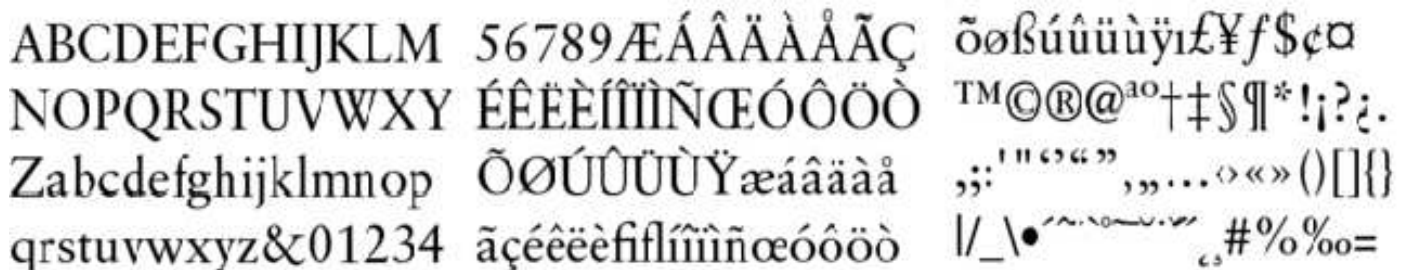
- Washburn College Bible (1973)
- The Episcopal Church's texts from 1979

Sabon is also the font used for Stanford University's official logo. Linotype (who he jointly designed Sabon with) later released a variant called Sabon Next. This updated font is virtually indistinguishable from the original.

For 12 years after his return to Switzerland, he worked as a design consultant for the Hoffmann-La Roche pharmaceutical company, presumably designing packaging and the look of the products.

Terminal Tschichold

Though Tschichold brought little that was new to typography and the display of type, his greatest achievement was to was to collate all the existing data, thoughts and views on Modern Typography into a single volume which has influenced the modern movement ever since.



The Sabon typeface—1967

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