The designer of today is solving complex problems. Among other skills, the literacy of other disciplines, the ability to be nimble in practice, engage in participatory design, and the capacity to interpret and synthesize research is imperative. For this study, we were intent on fostering a research-driven classroom, specifically in relation to typography. To expand student horizons, we’ve implemented the International Society of Typographic Designers briefs, providing a platform of research, innovation and conceptual thinking. Students typographically interpret a text, curating and authoring content. In implementing an inquiry-based learning methodology, research dictates form, rather than relying on typographic trends. Limiting the work to typography challenges students to demonstrate skill in constructing a personality and cohesive presence for audience engagement. The practice of typography transforms as a means of investigating content, dissecting and assessing. This level of initiative, and cultural understanding demonstrated, is critical. The projects foster an ability, difficult to teach yet invaluable to possess, separating a good designer from a great one. Emboldened by this synthesized knowledge, students are equipped with the skills and confidence to use typography as their instrument.

1 Introduction: Typographic research as a means to inform and educate
In advocating for the literacy of other disciplines, designer Michael Bierut argues educators need to ‘find a way to expose students to a meaningful range of culture’ (Bierut 2007); otherwise graduates will speak in languages fellow designers understand, leaving designers talking amongst themselves. AIGA, the professional association of design in the United States, recently released the Designer of 2025, a document outlining the shifting paradigm of the design field. Based on data, trends among other disciplines and consultations with leaders in the field, the document lists seven ‘trends and competencies’ of learning outcomes appropriate for university programs to respond to this changing landscape. Among them, complexity. "Problems are increasingly situated within larger systems that are characterized by interdependent relationships among elements or activities. Relationships are physical, psychological, social, cultural, technological, and economic in their effects, requiring interdisciplinary expertise" (AIGA 2017). Students should be addressing design problems across...
varying scales, identifying relationships between people, things, and activities within complex systems (Gosling 2017). As educators whose practice and research specialties lie within the realm of typography, we were interested in how we could incorporate cultural literacy and complexity into our classroom. Our goal was to change the way students perceived typography. Shifting the viewpoint from type as solely a vehicle of communicating content, to typography as a catalyst for research.

For this study, we were intent on fostering a research-driven classroom, specifically in relation to typography. Our curriculum mirrors many universities in regards to the instruction of typography, evolving from the trade-based history of the discipline. Typographic competencies are built through scaffolded assignments of ascending scale—from letter to word, paragraph to page, and lastly to document. Projects focus on hierarchy and the integration of type and image in the form of layouts and spreads. Research takes the form of gathering content, assessing typefaces—with the coursework primarily focused on the student’s ability to set type and convey content. The study of typography is rarely linked to investigations of language or changing demands on readers (AIGA 2017).

Since 2014, we have been executing running the International Society of Typographic Designers (ISTD) Student Briefs in our Advanced Typography curriculum as a vehicle means to challenge how students work with typography. The ISTD, is a professional body run by and for typographers, graphic designers and educators. ISTD establishes, maintains and promotes typographic standards through a forum of debate and design practice. Through its highly acclaimed Assessment scheme, the ISTD engages with universities and institutions across the globe to raise the profile of typography in design education (ISTD 2017). The projects operate by prompting research-through-making, as the students respond to open-ended contexts. Gathering content, creating a narrative structure, and letting these lead the choice and means of utilizing medium, students make decisions based on a strategic communication goal. Content informs their approach in typographically authoring messages.

With the incorporation of inquiry-based learning, research becomes the focal point guiding the students work. In adopting a research-driven approach to typography, the practice of typography transforms as a means of investigating content, dissecting and assessing. This level of initiative, and cultural understanding demonstrated, is paramount. The projects foster an ability, difficult to teach, yet invaluable to possess, separating a good designer from a great one. Emboldened by this synthesized knowledge, students are equipped with the skills and confidence to use typography as their instrument.

2 Inquiry-based Learning

Various studies conclude a need for research and teaching to be linked in the classroom (Smith and Walker 2010, Stappenbelt 2013, Jenkins, Healy & Zetter, 2007). Figure 1 presents the connection between curriculum design and the teaching-research nexus (Healy & Jenkins 2007). Citing numerous learning benefits for students, Walker (2010) suggests a need for universities to place greater emphasis on pedagogies which fall in the top half of Figure 1. In relation to the design discipline, Salama (2007), reports that research and critical inquiry should be the backbone of design pedagogy.
Inquiry-based learning is a teaching methodology centered around self-directed learning of the student as they take a research-based approach to education. When open-ended problems are utilized alongside inquiry-based learning, research is brought to the forefront as students pose questions and seek solutions. Studies have shown inquiry-based learning enhances student learning outcomes, specifically in regards to the development of higher order skills such as: analysis, evaluation, synthesis, and critical thinking. The role of the instructor shifts to one of a facilitator, teaching is coupled with research as both student and instructor become compatriots in the search for knowledge. Numerous researchers define the key fundamentals of inquiry-based learning as:

- learning that is stimulated by inquiry, i.e. driven by questions or problems;
- learning based on a process of constructing knowledge and new understanding;
- an ‘active’ approach to learning, involving learning by doing;
- a student-centered approach to teaching in which the role of the teacher is to act as a facilitator; and
- a move to self-directed learning with students taking increasing responsibility for their learning (Smith and Walker, 2010).

Inquiry-based learning can be organized into three categories according to how instructors utilize questioning. As its name implies, *structured inquiry*, is guided by the instructors as they provide a problem and outline for students. Through *guided inquiry*, the instructor provides questions to prompt investigation, yet students are self-directed in their exploration. Lastly, students take the lead using *open inquiry* as they pose questions and complete a full inquiry cycle. Smith and Walker analyzed these approaches and found that the teaching-research nexus is strongest when using open inquiry learning, allowing students to take the lead. Most importantly, they concluded if instructors are “co-learners in the inquiry, this helps facilitate an academic community of practice including both academics and students” (p 738).

As we aimed to integrate a higher-level of research in our classrooms, open inquiry was utilized. Students navigated various trajectories, defining their problem and posing questions. The subject matter of exploration was often beyond our expertise, shifting the teacher-student relationship to...
one of equal stakeholders, a critical component of the inquiry-based learning experience. Tyler Galloway, associate professor at the Kansas City Art Institute, deduced how design educators should think: “Become a facilitator of dialogue, not a disseminator of ideas, but don’t withhold knowledge and experience” (Gosling 2017).

A key trend from the Designer of 2025 is the Accountability for Predicting Outcomes of Design, calling for research that informs practice. Research needs to be ongoing throughout a project’s duration, not merely at the start. Going beyond the ‘see what we found’, a designer’s research methodology must adapt methods from other disciplines to design problems and create practical applications (AIGA 2017). In using typography as both a catalyst and a method of research, we integrated several key student competencies outlined in this section, while building upon them, including acquiring the ability to:

- Interpret, summarize, and apply relevant research findings from a variety of fields in design investigations;
- Recognize, respond to, and employ different theoretical perspectives in the research writing of others in design process and outcomes;
- Synthesize research in written and visual form, addressing the designed artefact and supporting materials in light of three discrete contexts:
  - audience and medium for dissemination (embodied)
  - design outcomes as a contribution to a field of research (practice-based research)
  - dissemination of design concepts (strategy and specifications)
- Utilize typographic design as a means of speculative research in itself or ‘critical making’ through typography

3 The Role of Typography

As we approached a teaching-research nexus in our typography courses, it became imperative to understand the practice of typography and how it has evolved throughout history. To start, a basic definition of typography is, the visual attributes of written, notably printed, language. Typography is uniquely positioned as it crosses the lines between verbal and graphic communication, the writer and the reader, creative writing and the production of the print (Waller 1987). In communicating a message, designers are often tasked with achieving a balance between the visual and the verbal. Verbal language, referring to the literal meaning of words, and visual language referring to the character and connotations created by the typography. With the ability to be quiet, loud, hesitant, among a range of emotions—the visual aspect of type has the ability to command the verbal. “The role of the designer in establishing a tone that adds meaning to the verbal message is a matter of regular debate” (Knight 2012). Additionally, the term visible language, is synonymous with typography, referring to handwritten, drawn or mechanically constructed letters and orthographic forms (Swann 1991).

In the essay, The Crystal Goblet (1932), Beatrice Warde states that typography is simply the vessel to convey information, advocating for transparent or invisible typography. According to Warde, typography that hinders the message is bad typography. Historically, printers and typographers shared the view that typography should be in harmony with the genre of the text. Designer Jan Tschichold states the function of modern typography is to offer the reader additional support “modern man must read quickly and exactly. Every effort must be directed to transferring the words smoothly to the reader.” (Waller 1987, p. 46). However, these stances belie their modern and modernist underpinnings respectively, representative of “the hegemony of invisibility” that permeated philosophies of typography at the time (Kinross 2004 p.78). Here, a scientific, universalist approach is applied to the needs of communication which ignores and subordinates the rhetorical aspects and potential of typographic form at both the macro and micro levels—ie. typographic behaviors as well as details of the appearance and combination of typefaces. It is important for students to engage with these concepts, which often align well with the teaching of foundations, where students utilize
typographic hierarchy to thematically organize content and guide an audience. However, too often this is where typographic education reaches a stopping point, neglecting the impactful value of typography as a tool for expanding and giving form to the expressive meaning of content. In contradiction to Warde, designers and artists have long sought ways to investigate the communicative potential of typography. Stéphane Mallarmé’s poem *A Throw of Dice Will Never Abolish Chance*, 1987, expressed the visual and semantic potential of typography and design. Mallarmé uses a variety of text sizes in carefully placed positions to add meaning to the poem. In these layouts, “space itself truly spoke, dreamed, and gave birth to temporal forms. Expectancy, doubt, concentration, all were visible things” (Andel, 24). Futurist artist Emilio Filippo Tommaso Marinetti coined the term “words-in-freedom” regarding free arrangements of words on a page. He saw space and meaning so intimately connected, as is expressed in his design for the cover of *Zang tumb tumb*, 1914. Marinetti called for “free orthography, which would freely deform and refresh words, cutting them short, stretching them out, reinforcing the center of the extremities, augmenting or diminishing the number of vowels or consonants” (Andel, 101). Other Futurists supported Marinetti’s vision and demonstrated an obsession with speed and movement in their work. Through elaborate typographical compositions Futurists transformed the linear format of the printed page.

### 3.1 Typography as a Communication Tool

In our course, students focused on the potential of typography to establish a visual language, creating meaningful relationships between the components of the typographic system and narrative structures developed within the piece. As students collected primary and secondary research, they began to summarize their findings through a blend of verbal (writing) and visual (typography). Hartmart Stockl examines this relationship with writing as he articulates the relationship between typography and semiotics.

> Writing can be called a connotative sign system as it uses content-form combinations of a primary sign system (language) as signifiers in a secondary system (typography). Typographic elements are complex signs which comprise various semiotic layers, each capable of independently conveying meaning (Stockl 2005, p 206).

Stockl further discusses three ways in which the semiotic nature of typography demonstrates the capacity of typography to be flexible as a communication tool.

Typography serves to encode language

> Typography and graphic elements display connotative meanings, “Typefaces may point to the nature of the document, carry emotional values or indicate the writers intended audience, and aspects of the layout may serve to reinforce the thematic structure of a given text and facilitate access to its information” (Stockl 2005, p. 206)

Typography can take on pictorial qualities as letters form visual shapes depicting objects.

### 3.2 Typography as a Catalyst for Research: Constructing identity and meaning through typography

Beyond a blend of the verbal and visual, we wanted our students to utilize typography in tandem with research. In the article, *Communication Theory and Typographic Research*, Harrison and Morris (1967) outline typographic research as: testing scientific hypotheses, artistic exploration, and in critical, historical, or analytic examination. As our students navigated the briefs they utilized one or a combination of those spheres of research as they defined their problem and developed artifacts. In encouraging students to use typography as a means of investigating content, students become authors and producers as they push the boundaries of working with type. In the essay, *The Designer as Producer*, designer and educator Ellen Lupton advocates for the role of *designer as producer* as an alternative to *designer as author*.
Whereas the term ‘author’ like ‘designer’ suggests the cerebral workings of the mind, production privileges the activity of the body. Production is rooted in the material world. It values things over ideas, making over imagining, practice over theory. The producer must consider the physical life of the work, asking where will the work be read? Who will read it? How will it be manufactured? What other texts and pictures will surround it? (Lupton 1998).

For these projects, students embody the dual roles of author and producer concurrently as they prepare their content while seizing the means of production, asking themselves the critical questions Lupton raises. In this approach, research dictates form, rather than relying on typographic trends. The subject matter and typographic treatments are linked, as they inform and enhance one another. Typography becomes a tool to tell stories, sharing the content in new and interesting ways—students learn to flex their typographic muscle, rather than finding it.

In order to set the scene for this approach to typography, and bridge the gap from the more prescriptive projects they may have become used to, in classes where they are learning the rules of typography and learning to integrate text and image within the constraints of an assigned artifact or context, we supplemented the self-directed learning reference material. The class curriculum builds to the ISTD briefs, and students are introduced to expressive typography and typography as a means of research incrementally from the start of the semester. They are given a brief historical context and design theory underpinnings and set to work on designing purely typographic posters, then a purely typographic identity system, and finally the ISTD prompts.

Open-ended briefs have allowed for students to pursue a myriad of topics. Subject matter has ranged from space exploration, to the Chernobyl disaster, mental health and the Iliad. When process and research dictate the end artifact, students tend to avoid developing rote solutions to format-specific goals. Instead, the outcomes are a natural outgrowth of the research, with formats and media chosen to best serve the communication goals, rather than as parameters within which the student is constrained. Unique results are achieved ranging from interactive experiences, exploratory books and cross-disciplinary collaborations. In shifting the focus away from the end artifact, open-ended problems encourage student initiative and ownership of the process. Students are free to explore a variety of trajectories as they define their field of study, posing unique queries, thus enhancing their research and working methodology. Students are less likely to default to a Google image search or Pinterest when designing due to the uniqueness of their topics. From a pedagogical perspective, this is immensely advantageous. When students pursue their interests and passions, integrating them into a problem, they are likely to be more motivated, thus increasing their creativity (Adams 2005).

At the start of the project, we explored critical making in relation to typography. Barness and McCarthy (2017) define critical making, a component of critical practice, as ‘an approach undertaken in order to explain or understand a theory, phenomenon, or technology. Knowledge is formed through process and product.’ Students completed visual research and typographic experiments as they adopted a critical practice (Figure 2). To initiate investigation and create a culture of making, various prompts were provided. Examples include encouraging students to: experiment with movement, experiment with shadow, investigate tactile explorations, work with collage, consult other disciplines, use geometric forms. Combined with their primary and secondary research, these visual investigations provided a starting point for students’ projects and integrated research through making. “Merging intellectual inquiry with designed ‘things’ is the key component to forming a scholarly agenda through critical practice” (Barness and McCarthy 2017).
Case Studies

The project briefs for this study were given to multiple student cohorts in our Advanced Typography course, totaling 35 students. The briefs consisted of five different projects, completed over the course of 7 weeks. The students were given free choice of which brief they wanted to pursue. The course investigates the communicative, structural and aesthetic aspects of typography. Projects build on students’ previous experiences, enhancing skills for shaping verbal messages utilizing type. The groups were comprised of undergraduate juniors and seniors alongside graduate students. A majority of the students enrolled were local to our region, however, there were several international students which provided additional viewpoints during critiques. Throughout the project’s duration students were required to keep a process book, which documented their research, ideation and refinements. The projects were assessed using the same categories as the ISTD student assessment which includes: research and development, strategy, typographic interpretation/skills, typographic detail, specifications and presentation (Appendix A).

Conclusions were drawn from the evaluation of the final artifacts, strategy and research. The ISTD rubric (Appendix A), used for the ISTD international student assessments, was used to determine student success. Projects were later submitted to the assessment. With the primary focus on typography, 60% of the rubric is devoted to typographic interpretation, skill and detail. Of secondary importance, research and development, which is displayed through process books, accounting for 20%.

4.1 Research & Development: Documented through Process Books

The ISTD assessment criteria require a strategy document and supporting research notebook. These ‘process books’ are telling, containing insight to the student’s research trajectory and showcasing the use of typography as a form of research in itself—a means to investigate in itself. Figure 3 shows a student beginning to pose questions (can cooking be craft? Art? Or both?), which led to additional research paths. As a pedagogical tool, we described and assigned the process book not just as documentation, but as part of an integrated, applied, typographic research approach. The books include, but are not limited to: contextual research, content generation and gathering, thumbnails, brainstorming lists, roughs, graphic experiments, notes and reflections and iterative refinements. Viewers of this document should be able to follow the students thought process from start to finish. Requiring a process book not only serves as an assessment tool for instructors, it also emphasizes the importance of process, ideation and revisions to students.
Figure 4 shows a detail from a student’s process book in which the student typographically (and graphically) responds to complex concepts in philosophy. Engaging with the theory of another discipline not just as content to be styled, but as a means of approaching a design project the student explored and processed the concepts through word lists, mind maps, and the sketching of relationships—visualization tactics familiar to a designer. Having understood the source through this process, the student developed an integrated visual language and typographic artifact to articulate the abstract concepts of the source material for an intended audience. This process engaged the student in the definition of a purpose, audience, and form for this content and required a practice of translation, curation, distillation and explanation of content all through the medium of typography.

In commenting on his work the student stated, “I don’t think there’s another single project in my whole time at Kent State University that taught me that research is important. I don’t think I’ll do a project the same way again; it changed my work ethic.” This truly exemplifies the amount of research involved, so much so that it shifted the students frame of mind towards research.

The nature of the unframed design problem combined with the requirement for authorship of content and reflection on process embedded in the ISTD briefs creates a richer learning experience than traditional, artifact oriented briefs. For the student, they prompt a set of tasks and activities which culminate in a way that exemplifies educational philosopher John Dewey’s definition of an experience as a consummation, rather than simply a cessation of activities. In this definition, separate experiences flow together and can be conceived of as a whole, labelled as a single act, and most importantly, constitute a pattern alternating between doing and undergoing (Dewey 1934). By using typography as a means of testing a communication strategy, and also as a means of investigating the content itself, the student acts and perceives in a cyclical and iterative fashion, immersing themselves in the content and moving through the project in a way that makes for a true culmination of endeavors, and an experience that can be labelled as having made a change in their way of thinking about research.
The following final artifacts exhibit students’ responses to the briefs, providing examples of how typography was utilized as a research tool.

4.1.1 ISTD Brief: Fickle Fads and Dedicated Followers of Fashion

A ‘fad’ or ‘trend’ or ‘craze’ is any form of collective behavior that develops within a culture, a generation or social group and which impulse is followed enthusiastically by a group of people for a finite period of time. Similar to habits or customs but less durable, fads often result from an activity or behavior being perceived as emotionally popular. You are asked to design a typographic work that explores the subject of ‘fads’. (ISTD)

Case Study 1: Student, Emily Thomas

In, Age of Anxiety (Figure 5), Thomas responded to the brief with an exploration of McCarthyism. Gathering content from a range of sources, she organized the piece into a series of booklets, each typographically representing the creeping infiltration of fear fueled by this sociopolitical mechanism through a range of typographic techniques, binding styles, color choices, and paper stocks. After compiling everything into a pocket that demonstrated the lock-and-key nature of the concept, Thomas invited readers to tear open the ‘book’.

Case Study 2: Student, Natalie Snodgrass

As the briefs are open-ended, it is interesting to see two drastically different student responses to the same brief. It is a testament to the research process informing the final outcome. This piece (Figure 6), examines the fad of the Mid-Atlantic accent, an acquired accent popular in the early 20th century. Through the interpretation of this fad, the student began a deep investigation of language. The final book, Learning to Speak, takes us on a journey of the complex structure of how we form words and sounds. Typographic phrases are graphically coded providing the viewer with an education into the various components of speech.
4.1.2 ISTD Brief: Banned Books

Choose a chapter from a banned book and visually interpret it as a digitally dynamic book. The chapter should resonate with you for some reason or encapsulates what you believe to be its insightful nature. Consider how audiences of the book would have reacted to it when it was initially released. What was or is the aspect of censorship at play? Look to use the potential of the digital form to interpret your text: consider movement, interaction, reader behavior and experience. (ISTD)

Case Study 3: Student, Alex Catanese Rather than selecting a banned book, this student decided to use the poem We Real Cool, written by African American poet, Gwendolyn Brooks in 1963. The interface (Figure 7) provides the viewer with multiple perspectives on the poem through the visual layering of content. Viewers can compare historical texts, images, videos and audio content as they navigate the site. The intentional disorganization of the frame is symbolic and represents the various interpretations of the poem itself, challenging the user’s comfort level as the composition becomes more disorganized with each new. Historical footage is included to provide a raw look into the contextual climate of the ban. As one interacts with this site, a story is revealed in the same way a person might verbally tell one, providing loose connections, and multi-modal forms such as audio, motion, video, or text (Catanese 2016).

With specific regard to the typography, this student did an exemplary job of utilizing type to add meaning and enrich the narrative. The student provides a glimpse into his decisions in his strategy, stating,

The typography serves an expressive yet functional use, acting as various “voices” of different authors, while also subtly symbolizing opinions and interpretations that the user must consider and listen to. The type also plays on the linguistic aspects of the spoken word and poetry typesetting approaches. In addition, other visual forms designed to aid interpretation were researched, such as cross references, footnotes, bibliographies, poetic annotations, hyperlinks, pop-up windows, and transparency. Each typeface was chosen to reflect various aspects of the story around “We Real Cool,” and also to provide distinctions between various voices involved. The humanistic aspects of speech are provided through Proza Libre; the historical character of typesetting in poetry publications is felt through Cormorant Garamond; the nature of raw typewritten source material, and the involvement of the government in the Kanawha County Textbook Trial is shown through Roboto Mono; and the historical posters and time period of the 1960s and 1970s are communicated through limited uses of Libre Franklin. (Catanese 2016, p 7)
4.1.3 ISTD Brief: Manifesto

You are tasked with writing your own Typographic Manifesto that captures what you believe are the building blocks of typographic practice today. Consider both what you say, and how you say it. Your ideas need to communicate clearly – being mindful of your design-literate audience (professionals and students), but you also need to remain true to your own typographic beliefs. Typographic integrity and control should be central to your proposal, but don’t try to second-guess what we are looking for. Most manifestos are intended to rattle a few cages, but the ones that have stood the test of time tend to be grounded in solid principles, insights & theory. Your submission should challenge and provoke, whilst being rooted in a clear understanding of our history. (ISTD)

Case Study 4: Student, Anna Richard To respond to the prompt, this student chose to reflect on an existing manifesto, that of Eric Gill’s New Typography, and examine it in light of a modern set of typographic contexts, constraints and challenges, in order to create her own manifesto. She focused on the application of the concepts involved on the web, and contrasted the didactic nature of the text with a reader-oriented experience. The audience is allowed to explode the book, which behaves as a series of pixel squares, that can be reordered and regrouped at will. Modern design critics and theorist’s viewpoints on the original text were included as pull-outs or pop-ups and the student chose to translate the interactivity of screen to a printed piece through nested ‘drop-down’s. The hyper-text nature of typography on the web is explored through highlighted words, and the mutable nature of the book format. Finally, the reader is asked to assemble the author’s own manifesto made from the previous text and its accompanying commentary. In this way, the book structure reflects not just a challenge to the text in the context of a new medium, but utilizes a traditional medium to convey the nature and features of a that digital medium in a way that sheds light on the principles espoused, helping us to critique them ourselves.
Case Study 5: Student, Brenan Stetzer In this response to the same brief, the student created a manifesto that reads in two directions, utilizing typography and format to convey the tension as he sees it, in the design discipline today. He harnesses historical stylistic precedents such as Dadaist chaos, and combines it with a strong grid system, to communicate the degradation of authority and perceived status quo. The layouts incrementally become more chaotic as the book progresses, and the structure of the binding allows the reader to see both a positive and negative view of the future of typography. The student researched manifestos such as the First Things First manifesto, the Futurist Manifesto, and others, to provide a context for the tone and style of language that would hark to the lineage of manifestos in design history, and crafted his own palindromic manifesto. In this sense, the typographic treatments were designed congruently with the writing of the content, and both emerged in synthesis.

![Figure 9 This or That, student project. Palindromic manifesto reads in two directions, offering a two-sided interpretation of the future of typographic practice, and engaging the reader in the act of authorship](image)

5 Discussion

The case studies shown display students' abilities in engaging with typography as research, as a means to investigate content, challenging the verbal and the visual while harnessing its potential as they crafted typographic artifacts. In this way, we consider open-ended typographic research as the next step in the evolutionary process of learning typography and utilizing it as a tool. Rather than discarding the concepts espoused by Warde and Tschichold, an opposition is highlighted and engaged with. Students consider the multifaceted capacities of typography to organize, separate and make clear in tandem with and in relation to, its ability to provide forms and layers of meaning which, to borrow from an information designer engages the ‘active eye’ of the viewer (Tufte 1990 p 33); where the designer may use a typographic palette and approach that aims to obfuscate or express and asks the audience to become a collaborator in co-authoring and reading the of the content.

For many, this was their first attempt in employing typography in this manner. Students struggled as they explored their topics while navigating how to work with type in constructing a narrative. Encouraging making and playful investigations, as displayed in their visual research (Figure 2), was helpful in shifting their perspective from using typography in the practice of typesetting content to typography as content generator.

In the case studies we can see the students engaging with content and theory from a variety of fields outside of design such as linguistics, philosophy, politics and literature. In this way, the briefs prompt the student to use typography in service of and in response to, broader cultural contexts. Also evidenced here is an engagement with the underpinning philosophies of design, particularly in
evidence in the projects resulting from the Manifesto brief, which show students engaging with critical design discourse, and authoring their own stance through and with typography. In each of the projects, the students showcase the capacity of typography to explain and illustrate, alongside considerations of legibility and reading comfort, and consider how typographic descriptions might be a form of authorship in themselves, with the visual arrangement of content on the page constituting a research outcome in itself. In order to communicate with an audience, students consider not just an intended audience for their artifact, but also the typographic community as a field of practice. In the consideration of medium—wherein the designer becomes the producer—the students consider how format, binding style and methods of interaction become meaningful decisions, which in themselves communicate and disseminate design ideas with the audience. This consideration of the audience prompts the student to consider not just the context of reading, but also the concept of reading itself, as an interaction between two active participants, each contributing to the meaning of the artifact. In the requirement for students to produce a strategy and specifications document to accompany their ISTD submission, the projects also ask the student to disseminate design concepts for a design literate audience, explaining their approach much as a scientist would document her method for the good of the scientific community. In this sense, these design outcomes constitute a culmination of a holistic learning experience, in which the student considers their personal responsibility as a designer to their own voice, their profession, and their wider community.

As this was an initial study focusing on the integration of research alongside typography, case studies showcasing the final outcomes were provided. In future research, the authors intend to examine the notion of typographic process itself, as a process of answering research questions independent of the goal of creating a designed artifact.

6 Conclusion
The design field is evolving and as it does the need for designers to go beyond the role of ‘form-givers’ is critical. This paper advocates for the pairing of a research-driven practice with regards to typography. The integration of briefs challenged how students utilized typography as the act of making was fused with the act of thinking. Research informed the content of the projects, driving the form. Typography became the tool to tell stories as students explored a broad range of topics. Our goal is to produce culturally literate designers who ask questions, investigating topics beyond their expertise.

7 References


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Appendix A

Assessment Criteria

The criteria we use for assessment reflect what we require as elements for submission. We see these as an expression of appropriate practice for student designers and part of our support for typographic education. All of the following criteria are used in the assessment of each project in both print and screen-based formats.

STRATEGY (20%)
- Each submission must be accompanied by a strategy of 250–500 words, succinctly describing the thought process underpinning your design proposals and how it implements typographic design to communicate with and influence the specified target market/audience.
- It should express what has driven your concept and its design development – not just a description of the various elements or a ‘tag’ of what you did.
- While the strategy will be read by assessors, you should write it to be understood by a client.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (20%)
- All submissions must be supported by relevant primary and secondary research.
- Your research and development work should show that a range of ideas have been explored before developing your selected concept. Ensure that you present this material in a way that allows us to follow your thought and design process.
- Design development on screen must be described through hard-copy evidence.
- The total amount of the aspect of your submission should not exceed the equivalent of one A3 layout pad. This may demand appropriate editing of your overall amount but is essential for efficient appraisal of your process.
- You must cite fully your bibliographic/web sources and, where relevant, credit images.

TYPOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION/SKILLS (20%)
- Typographic interpretation, creativity and control must be central to your proposals.
- Evidence of creative, strategic and innovative thinking in the outcomes is essential.
- Each project requires a sensitive use of type and, if appropriate, images. However, we suggest a subtle and sensitive approach to the inclusion of any illustrative context. Remember that your solution must be essentially typographic.
- The hierarchy of information in both print and screen formats must be clearly expressed through the inclusion and formatting of at least 500 words of text into your final submission.

TYPOGRAPHIC DETAIL
- It is essential that you demonstrate rigorous attention to typographic detail across all elements of your submission – ensure that you check: spelling and hyphenation; punctuation; capitalisation; quote marks; widows/orphans; hyphens/dashes; rags; justification/indents.
- Legibility, whether in print or on screen, must be considered – and resolved.
- Consideration should be given to the relationship between sound and movement in screen-based submissions.

SPECIFICATIONS (10%)
- Typographic, production/broadcast specifications must be included and must reflect your detailed treatment of text matter.
- Using your layout, present fully annotated typographic specifications and grid(s).
- Samples of paper stock and other materials used in print production should be attached.
- Refer to the Specifications Guides pages.

PRESENTATION (5%)
- Presentation is important but no substitute for a weak idea.
- Ensure that screen-based submissions have been tested for use. Occasionally we cannot open files – these proposals sadly fail.
- All submissions must include a non-returnable flash drive with PDF(s) of images that reflect – concept origin – design development – format usage – layout/grid system – media/material choices – typographic choice – typographic detailing – presentation images of the outcomes.
- When submitting, complete the PDF form label, which will be available online closer to the submission date. Ensure that you indicate your project choice, by number, your media choice (screen or print) and fit the label firmly to your portfolio.
- Finally, check that all of the requirements of your chosen brief are included and clearly identified.
- Submit work in one robust, clearly labeled, portfolio – no larger than A3.