
Editorial Comments

Barbara Beeton

Fonts are ruled copyrightable in the U.S.

For many years, the status of legal protection for typefaces has been different in the U.S. than in the rest of the world; under U.S. law, fonts were considered to be utilitarian devices, and did not meet the copyright guidelines — after all, no one “owns” the alphabet. This situation was discussed at some length by Chuck Bigelow in “Notes on typeface protection”, *TUGboat* 7:3 (October 1986), pp. 146–151.

Things are about to change.

A case brought by Adobe Systems against a company which admitted using the data from over 1000 fonts from Adobe to create ‘knock-off’ fonts questioned whether a font file is a formula defining a typeface or a software program. In a decision issued on 5 February 1988, U.S. District Judge Ronald Whyte of San Jose, California, wrote “The fact that a computer program produces unprotectable typefaces does not make the computer program itself unprotectable.” Font designers “make creative choices as to what points to select based on the image in front of them on the computer screen.” By this decision, Judge Whyte blocked the defense that fonts have not previously been protected by referring to the “creativity in designing the font software programs.”

Although the defendant will probably appeal the decision, type designers and type houses are celebrating. Type users should be pleased as well. This decision means that designers might have some assurance that their efforts will be rewarded by recognition and remuneration.

Details can be found in a news release from the Internet Type Foundry Index, at <http://www.typeindex.com/judge.html>.

MathML becomes a W3C Proposed Recommendation

On February 24, the World Wide Web Consortium announced the release of Mathematical Markup Language (MathML) as a W3C Proposed Recommendation. MathML, a markup language that is intended to facilitate the communication of mathematics on the Web, is defined as an XML application. Some early versions of tools already exist, and others are under development.

The W3C press release can be found at <http://www.w3.org/Press/1998/MathML-PR>.

The specification itself is at <http://www.w3.org/TR/PR-math/>.

“whois” service for TUG members

TUG members can now find out the current address for other members via a mail service created and maintained by Nelson Beebe and Art Ogawa. Submit the command (for example)

```
echo "whois Barbara Beeton" |
mail tuglib@math.utah.edu
```

on a Unix system (this should be on a single line), or simply send e-mail to that address with the `whois` request in the body of the message.

The origin of italics — An exhibit catalog

During the Fall quarter of 1997, the UCLA Library Department of Special Collections mounted an exhibit entitled *Legibility & migration: Italic & cursive letters in 16th century Italy*, consisting of items selected from the Ahmanson-Murphy Collections.

The Web site, at <http://www2.library.ucla.edu/libraries/special/scweb/italalex.htm>, contains notes and quotes from various authorities. Although no graphics are shown, there is abundant historical information and a list of selected sources.

(Thanks to Karyn Popham and the TYPO-L list for this pointer.)

The improbability of typographical errors

One of my favorite magazines, the *Annals of Improbable Research (AIR)* has just announced a “massive new undertaking, *Project Typographical Erros*” [*sic.*] To quote from the announcement:

The formal name is: “A History of Typographical Erros Occurring in Books and Articles About Typographical Errors.” This project is self-explanatory. We request that all editors and proofreaders of relevant publications and e-lists disseminate word to the masses.

Please direct all data and inquiries to project director Wendy Mattson <posh@sirius.com>

A monthly supplement to *AIR* can be had by subscription; send a brief e-mail message to

```
listproc@air.harvard.edu
```

The body of the message should contain *only* the words `SUBSCRIBE MINI-AIR MARIE CURIE` (You may substitute your own name for that of Madame Curie.)

Enjoy!

◇ Barbara Beeton
American Mathematical Society
P. O. Box 6248
Providence, RI 02940 USA
bnb@ams.org