

PRINT MATTERS

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Typeface film draws fans worldwide

A 63-minute documentary about a wood type museum in Wisconsin has become a phenomenon that has taken a life of its own.

Typeface, produced by Kartemquin Films, conveys a message about an era of American history, the plight of a small town hoping to reinvent itself, and about the artistry and relevance of letter type.

Since its release in 2009, *Typeface* has become the focal point of grassroots events throughout the United States and overseas. *Typeface* recently completed a screening in Poland and has appeared in England, Sweden, Norway and Argentina.

“When the film came out there was a movement building, a desire for people to get back to the homemade crafts we’re losing these days to the digital age,” said Ian Kibbe, outreach coordinator for Kartemquin Films. “People appreciated the fact there was a film related to what interests them.”



Fans have chosen to build events around *Typeface* screenings, including lectures, typesetting workshops and festival-type activities. Many of the organizers have created their own posters to promote the event using letter type. Other fans have volunteered to translate the film into other languages. “I think people around the world have found something to connect with in this film,” Kibbe said.

A hidden treasure

The focus of *Typeface* — the Hamilton Wood Type Museum in Two Rivers, Wis. — is a 30,000 square-foot facility devoted to the preservation, study, production and printing of wood type.

“It’s a working museum with the largest collection of wood type in the world,” said Jim Moran, a print shop owner who appears in the documentary and now directs the museum. His brother Bill Moran, a third generation letterpress printer who also appears in the film, serves as the museum’s artistic director.

In addition to providing guests a hands-on look at its extensive collection, the museum



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shares a collection of advertising cuts from the 1930s through the 1970s, along with the equipment to make wood type and print with it, as well as equipment for the production of metal type and catalogs.

Its collection is from Two Rivers' Hamilton Manufacturing Co., which at one time was the largest wood type producer in the U.S. Most U.S. print material, up to the 1970s, was created using wood type, Jim Moran said.

"Printing history is American history," he said. "When you look at broad size posters or newspapers, advertisements for auctions and county fairs — those headlines were printed in wood type."

Typeface director and producer Justine Nagan said she fell in love with the Hamilton museum at first sight.

"While I've always had an interest in design and preservation, my introduction to the museum was fairly random, and serendipitous," said Nagan, who's based in Chicago. "My husband and I were coming back from a wedding in Door County, Wisconsin, and saw the sign for Two Rivers' famous ice cream sundaes. We stopped and stumbled on the museum.

"Once inside the cavernous building, we were blown away by the collection

and the space and I thought, "This should be documented." After spending time in the town, Nagan's vision for a film project came into focus.

"I became fascinated with exploring the evolving importance of analog technologies in our digital age. There is this theory that we as a society sit and compute all day, so in the off hours, tactile and sensual experiences become all the more important. People crave things with texture that they can hold in their hands — from crocheting to playing guitar. Then there's the whole nostalgia factor: LPs vs. iPod, film vs. video, letterpress vs. inkjet."

Hands on

People do seem to connect with the hands-on nature of the museum. "I find it interesting to watch the film and see people run their fingers over the wooden type, but I do it all of the time myself," Moran said.

Not only can people touch the type, but it offers them a measure of control. In the era of the letterpress, printers made a point of ensuring an even coverage of ink as they worked. Today, some choose to embrace the little imperfections that can appear in letterpress products. "It shows that grain of wood, the touch of the hand; it represents a more human touch.

"When people print with wood and metal type, they see themselves."

The documentary was frank about the museum's struggles. While the facility enthralled those who came there, it underwent long stretches with no visitors at all. Its future was uncertain. Since the documentary's release, interest has ramped up dramatically.

Kibbe says he wouldn't attribute the



museum's successes to the documentary — the museum has flourished under the guidance of the Moran brothers and their supporters. But there has been an increase in interest and visits to the museum. And in fall 2011, Target released a national clothing line inspired by the museum.

"We get people coming in here all of the time now saying, 'I saw the film, and I had to come see this place,'" Moran said.

The museum is still fragile, he says, but was able to hire an assistant director. It has increased its letterpress workshops, which have attracted participants ranging from high school students to professional graphic designers and architects.

While Moran isn't sure what form it will take, he's cautiously optimistic about the future of letterpress. "We still have that need to look at the homemade process and the artistry and beauty behind it."

Moran likes to compare the numerous fonts that shape typefaces to notes of music. "You can take a given font and use it many different ways. You have a very versatile instrument here."

Nagan says she believes more than ever in the museum's work. "Wood type is a beautiful reminder to slow down, focus on what you're doing and create something magical," she said. "We can all use those types of reminders."

To learn more on this topic, visit <http://typeface.kartemquin.com>. 



One on one

JPA profile: Sue Casner, Postal Advisor
Number of years with JPA: 35 ½



Bill and Sue Casner

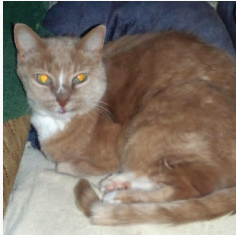
Why she loves JPA: “The job I’m doing now is very challenging, with lots of re-search, which keeps me busy. And there are a lot of people here I consider friends.” Casner’s responsibilities include processing mailing labels, keeping up with postal regulations and managing postal account balances for clients. She started her career

with JPA making galley corrections after graduating from high school.

Family life: Casner and her husband, Bill, have been married for more than 27 years. “We got married on the Fourth of July, so he can’t forget when our anniversary is,” Casner said. “I’m always off work that day, and we always have fire-works.” Casner considers the family pets part of the family. They include four cats — Zena, Lucy, Precious and Emmy — along with Chase, the yellow lab. Chase gets along quite well with the kitties in the house. “If he bothers them, they let him know,” Casner said. Casner loves playing with the cats using turkey feathers attached to a long pole. “They go crazy; they love it.”



Lucy



Precious



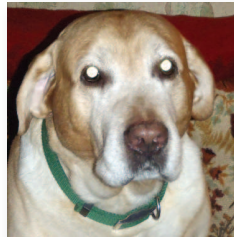
Emmy




Zena

Hobbies: Casner and her husband share a love for archery. They’ve attended a number of 3D shoots, a form of target archery, and also go archery deer hunting. The hobby started with Bill after he joined a friend on a 3D shoot. “He really liked it and thought it was something we could do together,” Casner said. She had tried archery years ago and agreed to work on rebuilding her skills, beginning with a youth bow. As Casner improved, Bill gave her a challenge. If she showed she could outshoot him, he would get her a new bow. “That new bow cost him a pretty penny.”

One cool fact: Part of Casner’s job entails attending postal semi-



Chase

nars. During an event in 2011, she won the door prize. She now is the proud owner of a display case holding a Women of America U.S. stamp collection. The stamp images include Helen Keller, Emily Dickinson, Harriet Tubman, Grace Kelly, Eleanor Roosevelt and Amelia Earhart, among others. “The woman who gave it away was tickled it went to another woman,” Casner said. 

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