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. Expert Font Sets
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. Your Next Step in Typography

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. I recently read that there are more people setting type on computers today than could read six hundred years ago when movable type came into being. This fact seems staggering until one realizes that the revolution in digital page composition includes many people who believe they are "typesetting" their memos and correspondence simply because they have access to actual typefaces and styles. For the most part, these individuals bring little more typographic awareness to the job than their earlier counterparts working on a typewriter. Many have just learned the difference between serif and sans serif faces, and they are beginning to recognize the need for curly quote marks.

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. For professionals in the field—and for those who want to learn how to elevate their work to professional levels—there are many more principles to learn: kerning, tracking, word spacing, em and en dashes, and ligatures, to name a few.

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. One area that has received very little attention is expert sets: those typefaces which come with additional characters that can both add character and solve visual problems.

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. What are expert sets?
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. Although different vendors might have somewhat different ideas about what constitutes an expert set, we'll define it this way: an expert set includes a significantly larger character set than a "normal" set. This might include small caps, old-style figures, and swash characters, as well as other alternate letterforms that can give the designer/typesetter more control over the appearance of type. An expert set does not necessarily include many different styles (such as bold, italic, etc.), although many of these extended families do. What we're talking about here is additional characters. Let's take a closer look at some of these components.

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. ... FIGURE 1 HERE-FONT MENU-TIMES ...
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. Small Caps: In this style, the lower case characters are replaced with capital letters which are about 75% of the size of the true upper case letters. There are a number of page layout programs and word processors that provide a pseudo-small caps style, but it is accomplished by simply substituting upper case characters of a smaller type size. This is not a very satisfactory solution, since the weights of the scaled characters do not fit very well with the normal upper case characters—the stems are too light. A true small caps style has been designed so that all of the characters look right together.

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. Why use this style? Small caps are especially useful for keeping acronyms (such as SMUG or NASA) from interrupting the flow of words. They can also add emphasis to a few words within a paragraph without competing with the capital letters that mark the beginnings of sentences, or by adding the bulk and darkness of a bold style. Note that some families do not include a bold small caps face.

. ... FIGURE 2 HERE-HANGING VS. LINING ...
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. Old-Style Figures are those which appear to have ascenders and descenders. They are preferred by some designers because they flow better within a body of text. Normal ("lining") figures are all the same height as the upper case characters, and can impede the flow of the text just the same as a word or phrase of all-capital letters. Old-style figures are sometimes called "hanging" figures, since some of the characters hang below the baseline, just like normal lower case text.

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. ... FIGURE 3 HERE-SWASHES & QUAINTS ...
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. Swash and Alternate Characters: This category includes various extra characters that are not found in a standard character set. It typically includes a fancy set of upper case characters, but it might also include lower case letters that provide some extra bit of flair. Some fonts also offer such characters as extra fractions and ligature combinations.

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. Who's Got What?
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. Now that we understand what is involved in the topic of expert and extended sets, let's take a look at what is available.

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. Expert sets are offered by many vendors, both large and small: Adobe, Agfa, Linotype-Hell, and Monotype all have twenty or more expert sets in their catalogs. Surprisingly, Bitstream has none. (A spokesperson from Bitstream stated that the company did not see a large enough market for expert sets at the present time, despite the addition of more and more expert sets by other companies.) Among the medium to small foundries, we find expert sets offered by such companies as Giampa, Emigre, Letter Perfect, and others.

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. Several of the larger vendors provide extended sets for many popular faces such as Times and Palatino. These faces are completely compatible with the faces that came with your laser printer, so this would be an excellent way to expand your typographic library.

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. Care and Feeding
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. Probably the biggest question about expert sets is how to use them, and this is largely determined by the vendor. Even though a particular face might be offered by several different vendors, both the characters included and the keyboard layout are likely to be quite different.

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. The standard method is to provide a separate font for each variation. If you've ever looked at an expert set in an Adobe catalog, you'll see that the "normal" set (often containing plain, bold, italic, and bold-italic faces) can be augmented by the purchase of the expert set, which typically contains separate fonts for each variation: small caps (perhaps in several weights), swash characters, etc. The small caps face will contain only the small caps—no capital letters. This face, then, is useless on its own—it can only be used in combination with the "normal" face. Otherwise, all of the capital letters would simply be blank.

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. The use of a face in this format is an exercise in patience. The user must carefully go through his text, selecting only the lower case characters and choosing the small caps face from the Font menu. Of course, if he wants to set a range of type in small caps which has already been entered as all caps, he must first go back and retype the upper case characters in lower case, and then change them to the small caps font. This would be made easier if the software had the ability to change case, but DesignStudio (now ReadySetGo) is the only page layout software with this feature. If you use QuarkXPress or PageMaker, you must either do the job manually or create a QuicKey macro that can copy the text to the Clipboard, open Vantage, select the desired case change, copy the text again, and finally paste it back into the original program. Of course, you'll need a separate macro for each transformation you want: caps to lower, lower to caps, word caps to all caps, etc. Not exactly a handy solution.

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. If there are only a few specific acronyms, like IBM or FBI, that you wish to convert to small caps, you can use your software's Find and Replace functions. Search for "IBM" in the particular typeface you've used, and replace it with "ibm" in the small caps face. (Of course, to accomplish this, your software must have the capability to perform a search based on type attributes.)

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. The Monotype/XPress Solution
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. If you happen to use both QuarkXPress and Monotype expert sets, the job is a little easier. Although Monotype continues to use the old Adobe-style keyboard layout, the company does provide an XTension for XPress that will make the substitutions for you, more or less automatically. The copy that we received (free) with our Monotype font would only work on Monotype fonts. This XTension also halts the loading of XPress; you must click an OK button for program loading to continue. After use, the document screen does not automatically update. Despite these shortcomings, the Monotype XTension performs a needed job.

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. A Better Way

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. Several companies have now adopted a new method for using expert sets. The most popular of these is called scosf (small caps, old style figures). In this scheme, the small caps and old style figures are included in a complete typeface; the small caps figures occupy the positions normally used by the lower case characters, but the shifted character positions contain normal upper case characters.

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. This simple change means a giant step forward for expert set users. Under this method, a range of text can be selected and the small caps face chosen. There will be no missing characters in the upper case positions. It also means no more laborious searching through text, selecting only the lower case characters.

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. Of course, acronyms must still be converted, either manually or by some macro, into lower case characters.

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. Several companies have adopted this new scosf keyboard layout, notably Linotype and Giampa. Apparently in the process of switching to the new layout, Adobe stated its intention to convert all of its expert sets to the new layout by the beginning of 1992, but as of this writing (mid-year), few of the new versions have appeared. We tested currently shipping versions of Adobe's Berthold Walbaum Set (new format) and Adobe Caslon (old format). We found no indication on the box to indicate which keyboard layout was provided. If you're considering purchasing an expert set from Adobe, we suggest that you contact the company for specific information.

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. Note: Linotype provides its faces in two screen formats: separate named fonts and a style-linked family. With the style-linked faces, the user chooses the main face and then picks the style (bold, italic, etc.) from the Style menu. Most designers will probably opt for the non-linked versions combined with Adobe Type Reunion or WYSIWYG Menus. In this situation, the user chooses the exact typeface and style directly from the Font menu. This strategy ensures that “false styles” are avoided.

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. Giampa/Lanston Foundry, located in Vancouver, uses a mix of the old and the new that gives both maximum flexibility and relative ease-of-use. The main components of Giampa's faces (normal, italic, small caps, and old-style figures) are complete faces. Some of the extra, seldom-used characters, such as unusual ligatures and quaint figures are contained in smaller, incomplete faces.

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. One thing that takes getting used to, though, is Giampa's unusual naming convention. You'll have to remember somewhat cryptic codes: SC stands for small caps; H stands for hanging (old-style) figures; L is for lining figures; W is for swash characters; and Q is for quaints. And there are combinations, such as H SC or H W. While this system is hardly intuitive, on balance it represents a good compromise between sophistication and sanity. (See sidebar; A Tale of Three Caslons.)

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. For Those Special Occasions
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. Swash and alternate characters can present yet another problem, especially when there is less than a full character set available. The Adobe Garamond Expert collection consists of nine additional faces, but none of them contains a complete set of characters. The Alternate Regular face, for instance, only contains ten alphabetic characters—several “plain” swash characters, including two capital Qs, and one extra ligature. The Alternate Italic face, on the other hand, contains a complete upper case swash set, one alternate lower case v, a couple of additional ligatures, and some dingbats. The fact that italic and roman faces contain radically different character sets may cause confusion, even among dedicated professional designers.

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. Letter Perfect, a small foundry in Gig Harbor, WA, has taken a different approach to swash characters. Several of its faces are supplied with a full set of alternate or swash characters. To switch to the swash character, the user simply chooses the italic style—there is no additional face listed in the style menu. While this “style-linked” method might not be intuitive, it is certainly easy to use. And, of course, the swash characters can be called up from the keyboard, simply by pressing the command key equivalent for the italic style.

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. Expert Opinions

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. Expert sets needn't be only for experts. Their use can add character, flair, and clarity to anyone's typographic endeavors, even that old resumé you're dusting off. First, think about how you might take advantage of the extra characters. Then take a look at the available faces. You might want to add an expert set to a face you already own, or you might rather have an entirely new face. By all means, check into the keyboard layout used by different companies. Finally, go ahead—be an expert!

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. by Jim Alley
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. ... ILLUSTRATION 6 HERE-FAIRFIELD MENU ...

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. Boss Sets

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. Among the most complete and easy to use set we've tried is Fairfield, an original face from Linotype-Hell. Fairfield was originally designed in the 1940s by Rudolph Ruzicka.

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. The complete set contains twenty individual faces: Four weights (light, medium, bold, and heavy), plus a Caption style and a Swash style. Each style has small caps and/or old-style figures, and—most importantly—each face is a complete set; no surprises when switching from one style to another!

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. ... ILLUSTRATION 7-LATIENNE ...
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. Another extensive but easy-to-use face is Latienne, shown below, a Font Haus exclusive which consists of twelve different faces. Again, each face contains a complete character set, making it very “user friendly.”
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. ... FIGURE 8 HERE-MATRIX ...
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. Emigre is a small company known for an original collection of unique faces. Most Emigre sets come with both lining and old-style figures. Several faces also have an extended set of small caps and fractions. Many standard fractions are provided, and there is also a set of superior and inferior numerals which may be used to construct unlimited custom fractions.

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. ... ILLUSTRATION 9 HERE-GARAMOND FONY MENU ...
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. One big problem with some expert sets shows up when you try to use them with software that shows actual typefaces in the font menu. This illustration shows the problem with both Adobe Garamond and Monotype Centaur. Compare this with the menu for Fairfield or Latienne (opposite page), fonts which use the new layout.

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. A Tale of Three Caslons
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. A Caslon is a Caslon is a Caslon, but there are differences in how you use them. Caslon 337 is an elegant typeface that is offered by several companies, but each company's package handles differently.
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. Adobe Caslon consists of twenty-two (22!) separate faces, but most of these are incomplete character sets. Several consist of only ten or so alternate characters. The small caps version contains no upper case characters, and the Swash italic contains no lower case characters. You can build some sophisticated type passages, but you probably won't have much fun doing it.

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. ... ILLUSTRATION 11 HERE-CASLON (TFC) ...
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. At the other extreme, The Font Company's version contains only four faces: plain and small caps, each with a normal and an italic version. Although this version does not contain all of the swash characters, alternates, ligatures, fractions, and other special characters, it is much easier to use—and it costs a lot less.

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. Giampa's version of Caslon 337, like Adobe's, is an extremely complete set, consisting of 17 faces, including a unique "short descender" version that allows for tighter leading than would be practical with the normal ("long descender") set. Giampa's character sets offer several extra typographic niceties, such as extra ligatures and several sizes of space characters.

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. Despite this complexity, most of the Giampa faces contain complete character sets, allowing Giampa's fonts to be used easily. Only the swash and quaint faces are incomplete, and these are rarely used.

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