



# 2010 Type Reader Survey

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For those who value type and respect its communicative power, there is good news in the results of our **2010 Type Survey for Designers.**

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First, more than nine-in-ten graphic design professionals have purchasing influence over type in their firms, agencies or departments. Second, the leading reason designers choose a typeface is its ability to communicate the message of the project or client for which it is purchased. Third, creatives have a deeply-rooted sense of type's importance in graphic communications and send a ringing message that type still matters in a most transcendent way. And, fourth, our readers reject the cheap and easy fix of "free" fonts, affirming the adage that quality matters and "you get what you pay for."

FIVE COMMENTS NICELY CAPTURE THE SPIRIT.

Type is the medium that makes or breaks communication. Master type and you are a communicator of the highest order. Assign to it any priority other than communication, and your message goes nowhere.

– DALI BAHAT, MASTER DESIGN, LOS ANGELES CA

Typography is essential; utilizing well-appointed typography is a craft that will separate you from the amateurs.

– KATHRYN CRAIG, CREATIVEINSTIGATOR, ST. JOSEPH MI

As a teacher I tell my students that a typeface is like a human being. There are many variations, but for each individual, the parts are proportionate. Treat typefaces with respect, use them kindly and do not torture them.

– ROSANNE GIBEL, ROSANNE GIBEL GRAPHIC DESIGN, FORT LAUDERDALE FL

There are four places where I spend a premium: my bartender, my accountant, my lawyer, and my type foundry. If a font is well-crafted, it is dynamic and has uses that will earn back your investment.

– PATRICK KING, IMAGINEDESIGN, MANASSAS VA

ALL THE REST IS BUT A FOOTNOTE.

## 91% Have Purchasing Influence Over Type

More than 1,000 art directors and designers responded to the survey, which was sent out online and in print in late April. Of these, 91% of respondents this year report being actively involved in the specifying and purchasing of fonts and font collections. This is above the running average of 86.5% in our recent past surveys. These readers are predominantly Mac users, though a surprisingly robust one-in-four use Windows for their design work. The results show that the vast majority design for both print and online — over 75% in fact. Moreover, although control over the type decision, and interest in that decision, runs high, our respondents are not immune to the Great Recession; budgets for type have stayed the same for two-thirds of them, but of the rest there is more decrease than growth.

### DO YOU BUY, SPECIFY OR RECOMMEND TYPE FOR YOURSELF OR YOUR COMPANY?

YES . . . . . 91%  
NO . . . . . 9%

### WHAT OPERATING SYSTEM DO YOU USE?

MAC . . . . . 76%  
WINDOWS . . . . . 24%

### DO YOU DESIGN FOR . . . ?

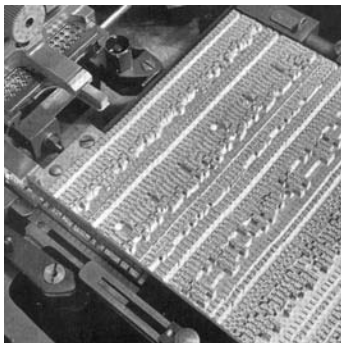
PRINT . . . . . 96%  
ONLINE . . . . . 76%  
BOTH . . . . . 72%

# 2010 TYPE READER SURVEY



## Type Is No Place To Skimp

In an era where the popular narrative is that the graphic arts are being turned into a commodity business, perhaps the most striking result of this survey is that the respondents overwhelmingly reject free fonts. As the many comments reported later indicate, there is a consensus view that type is too important to cut corners and no place to skimp, that an investment in quality type pays off, and that free fonts are plagued with ugly surprises and notable shortcomings.



**COMPARED TO PAST  
GENERATIONS, DO  
YOU THINK TODAY'S  
DESIGNERS USE TYPE?**

BETTER . . . 22%  
WORSE . . . . 51%  
SAME . . . . . 27%

**FOR WHAT KINDS OF PROJECTS  
DO YOU DESIGN? TOP 10**

1. LOGOS/IDENTITY
2. ADVERTISING
3. CARDS/INVITES
4. DIRECT MAIL
5. PUBLICATIONS/PERIODICALS
6. WEBSITES
7. POP & SIGNS
8. PACKAGING
9. ANNUAL/CORPORATE REPORTS
10. CATALOGS

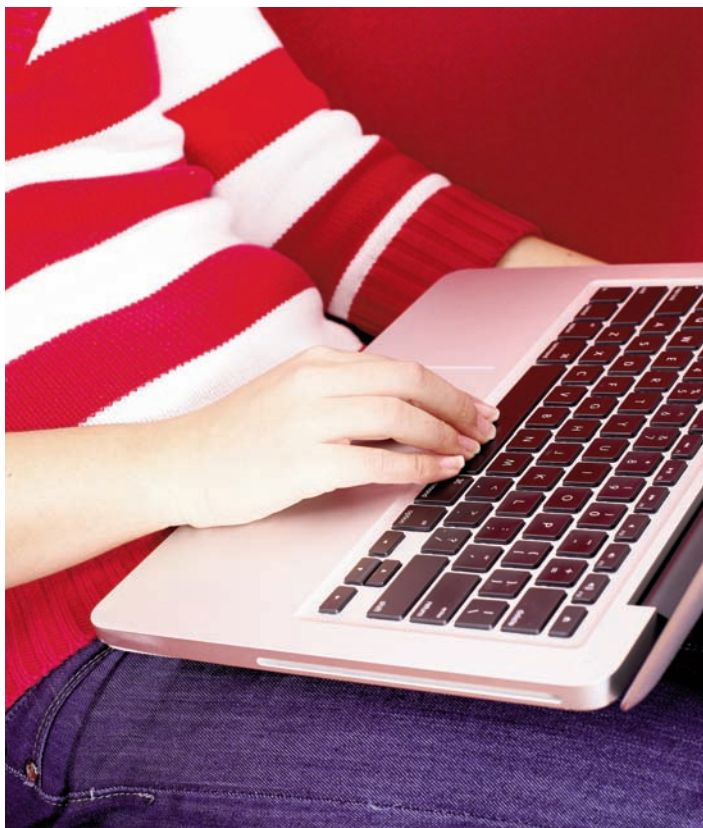
**WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT  
FACTORS IN YOUR TYPE PURCHASING  
DECISION? TOP 10**

1. COMMUNICATING THE MESSAGE
2. QUALITY
3. ABILITY TO PREVIEW
4. PRICE
5. DESIRE TO EXPERIMENT
6. CROSS-PLATFORM COMPATIBLE
7. EASY TO USE WEBSITE
8. TYPE FOUNDRY
9. TYPE DESIGNER
10. SPECIAL PROMOTIONS

## Concern That Newer Generation Is Not Getting It

In past GDUSA surveys, readers have expressed fear that a new generation of designers, divorced from the traditional craft of graphic design, is not learning the basics of typographic excellence. Computerization, so the argument goes, sacrifices craftsmanship for speed and ease. In this survey, the concern continues: more than half of respondents say that today's designers are worse at integrating type into their design work. At the same time, the angry edge to this intergenerational argument is abating: the recorded comments have lost the "world is going to hell in a hand-basket" attitude. This could mean that the traditionalists are retiring (or worse) or that designers and design schools are returning to type fundamentals. In any event, when we asked designers what advice they would give today's graphic design students, the message is learn history, master fundamentals, exercise restraint, emphasize readability and communication.

## 2010 TYPE READER SURVEY



### Web Design Means Keeping It Simple

If there is a common feeling among typophiles, it is that web design is limiting, sometimes frustrating. The challenge in designing for the web is clear: keep the fonts simple, clean, web safe, cross-browser compatible, and fairly common. Sans serifs are considered a basic go-to style, but not always. Among the most popular families for web design: Verdana, Helvetica, Arial, Garamond, Georgia, Futura, Gill Sans, Geneva, Times, Frutiger. A handful of designers is experimenting with web font innovations (e.g. CSS and TypeKit) and find them promising, but the technology has not yet permeated into the general graphic design marketplace.

## Brush Script is satan's spawn!

– MIKE TYER, PARTNER & CREATIVE  
DIRECTOR, COHESIVE CREATIVE & CODE

### Comic Sans Is Most Overused Typeface

We also asked readers which typefaces are the most abused or overused by the design community. Not surprisingly, people have intense feelings about such things. (“Brush Script is satan's spawn,” wrote Mike Tyer, Partner & Creative Director, at Cohesive Creative & Code.) The winner (or is it loser?) for the most overused typeface? Comic Sans. This was followed by Papyrus, Zapfino and Helvetica. Other top/bottom scorers: Trajan, Times Roman or Times New Roman, Futura, Arial, Myriad, Gotham, and all Grunge fonts.

#### WHAT ARE THE MOST OVERUSED TYPEFACES?

1. COMIC SANS
2. PAPYRUS
3. ZAPFINO
4. HELVETICA
5. TRAJAN
6. TIMES NEW ROMAN
7. FUTURA
8. ARIAL
9. MYRIAD
10. GOTHAM



HERE IS A SELECTION OF COMMENTS ON SOME OF THE KEY SURVEY QUESTIONS:

## WHAT WOULD YOU TELL A GRAPHIC DESIGN CLASS ABOUT TYPE?

Type is your friend! It will save you when you think you could not possibly have another creative thing to say.

— MEGHAN CORREIA, THE PAPER POMEGRANATE

Great typography can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Learn to use it strongly to tell your story.

— CARL H. BRADFORD III, STUDIOB3

Good typography is essential in graphic design. Use of typography is important to communicate a message, but it also can be a graphic element. Saying that, it has to be readable as well.

— MARY RICHINICK, MARY RICHINICK GRAPHIC DESIGN

Learn more about type and its history. Do some handlettering. Most of all, appreciate that legibility and communication are the reason for design. When design obscures the message, you have failed.

— BOB SEVERN, SEVERN ASSOCIATES

As with all else in design, use type with purpose and intent. It's better to know and use a few typefaces well than many with little or no authority.

— NATASHA DANKOVICH, WISE GROUP

Don't choose an underused or obscure font just for the sake of being different. Have a rationale for its use.

— BRIAN CAPSTICK, VI-JON, INC.

Type should support your design, not be the extent of your design. It needs to communicate a message — otherwise it is art, not an ad.

— ANNE OWSINEK, ANNE INK ADVERTISING

If your message is sacrificed because of font choice, then you do no service to your client. Try and strike a balance between form and function.

— JEANNETTE D'ONOFRIO, VIRGODESIGN

Type should never interfere with conveying the message; it should always add to the pleasing aesthetics of the project.

— CAROLE MAYER, SJI ASSOCIATES

Type is equal to, if not more important than every other element in the design process. It is often the difference maker.

— ADAM BANK, THINKHOUSE.COM

Learn to hand render type to really understand how letterforms are constructed, and how beautiful they can be when used correctly.

— DARRELL STEVENS, DARRELL STEVENS GRAPHIC DESIGN

Take the time to understand the importance of the type for its character, style, function, legibility, message and much more on any given design project you work on . . . that is paramount! Nothing less!

— BOB GREEN, GREEN GRAPHICS DESIGN

Type can rule a design but type can also be the subtle part of a layout. Learning how to make it do either is key.

— SARAH HICKEY, JANGLE ADVERTISING

Study the old school masters, know the fonts intimately, and why they were made the way they were. Then you can be free to experiment.

— COLLEEN NEUTRA, NEUTRA DESIGN

Learn and understand kerning, swashes, how to identify a typeface, the mechanics of type design, the differences in families and why they were created. Before you can ignore what is, you need to know why it exists.

— DIANE ASTLE BAGLEY, SILVER SLANT STUDIO

Typography is used all around us: on the streets, online, in the store ... and the list goes on and on. See the importance of using type to convey a specific message and be inspired. The possibilities are endless.

— SONYA MILLER, SM DESIGNS

Type is the soul of your design project. Treat it well.

— DON STAYNER, DSDSTUDIO

Type is as important an element as any graphic, picture or illustration in any layout, print or otherwise. The use of type is an integral part of a brand as it conveys messages and emotions.

— ANDREA LEON-GROSSMANN, DOUG MOCKETT & COMPANY

Type matters! Type is more than just what it happens to spell out. Type can become your graphic and project an image, a feeling or an emotion. It alone can communicate a message both literally and aesthetically.

— MARENA FRITZLER, CORN BELT POWER COOPERATIVE

## HOW DOES THE ADAGE 'YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR' APPLY TO TYPE?

Unique design is well-worth the cost. Value does cost. People today know the cost of everything but the value of nothing.

— STEVE COBB, SCG DESIGN

Purchased fonts are universally better quality in all ways.

— JANE BOBEL, JANE BOBEL GRAPHIC DESIGN

The higher priced typefaces are generally better designed and have quality features and construction. Free often have less glyphs and poor letterspacing.

— RITA ZIMMERMAN, RITA ZIMMERMAN DESIGN

We actually try to limit the number of fonts in use to avoid problems in prepress and to protect our brand integrity. I'd rather pay for quality type to begin with than to deal with font and platform problems.

— MARY LOU EGAN, ADVERTISING PROMOTIONS

There seems to be enough free fonts for me to choose from to not spend any money — or I have accumulated enough over my 35 year career to make do for my needs.

— DENNUS HARKEY, DENNIS HARKEY DESIGN

Lower type means lower design quality. Higher type costs means high quality design.

— BENSE GARZA, GARZA ART AND DESIGN

Attention to the detail of letterforms and the flexibility of well-designed sets offers us a broader palette of options on-the-fly! Great typefaces make our job easier. Period.

— FRED CASERTA, CASERTA DESIGN COMPANY

For a workhouse font to be used for body text, that adage often applies. For creative or unique fonts for headlines or logos, price doesn't always matter. I've used cheap fonts with great results.

— KRISTEN YNGVE, VAXA CREATIVE

Free or cheap type will typically have 'surprise' inconsistencies.

— CHRISTIAN SABYAN, CNN INTERNATIONAL

I know where to go for quality typefaces, and steer clear of the sites that have thousands of subpar fonts. It is not worth the time it takes to sort through them to consider for use.

— J.M. WRIGHT, AMOS AGENCY

No-name or cheap type doesn't perform properly nor does it always translate correctly when sent to PDF or service bureaus. I stick to tried and true companies.

— REBECCA LINDAHL, SNOHOMISH COUNTY (WA) PUBLIC WORKS

It's especially true for multifamily traditional fonts; anything we use for body copy better be from a quality foundry.

— JERRY UNDERWOOD, WOODMEN INSURANCE

Buying a quality typeface as a family is always a much better option than a free single junk font off of the internet. If you are a true designer, you want those families of fonts to give depth and dimension without having to use too many fonts in a single design.

— ANGELA LAWRENCE, ANGELA LAWRENCE GRAPHIC DESIGN

While I appreciate the effort taken to create the type, I don't always feel that the cost is offset by the design.

— DIANA HUSTEDT, LUXOTTICA

I have more than 1,400 fonts, and some of the best were some of the least expensive. Genius isn't necessarily pricey.

— SUE-SIMONE HENNEN,  
WEST POINT ADMISSIONS MARKETING

Words are what we say, and type is how we say it.

Since 'I'm a cheap knockoff of the real thing' is rarely the message your clients wish to convey, make sure your type doesn't convey that.

— NATHAN ADAMS, STUDIO OPOLIS

It's best to invest in a quality face from a reputable firm in order to get full character sets and good kerning pairs.

— CAIRRIL MILLS, CAIRRIL.COM DESIGN & MARKETING

A classic font set is priceless. You can use it for 50 years. In that circumstance 'you get what you pay for' is a positive.

— STEVEN JACARUSO, ART DIRECTOR, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

You have to keep an open mind. Free doesn't necessarily mean cheap and amateur ... could mean budget-saver and cool.

— KARL SIMONSON, METRO PARKS, SERVING SUMMIT COUNTY

Free fonts are usually worth every penny. Sometimes less.

— MIKE LAWSON, HEAVY IMPRESSION

## HOW IS WEB DESIGN AFFECTING TYPE DECISIONS AND ARE WEBFONT INNOVATIONS OF HELP?

In web design you want to use a clear and-easy-to read type face. This allows the viewer to take in the information with ease. When conveying an important piece of information, bold is the way to go. Bold and bright will catch readers' eyes every time.

— JILLIAN CAMARATA, COOPER-ATKINS CORPORATION

Unless I'm creating a custom graphic with type, I stick with the standard user-friendly faces. I want to make sure the pages are similar cross platform and with a variety of browsers.

— ROBYN BROOKS, BROOKS DESIGN

Pixels can be cruel and distort elaborate fonts. I go for the easiest-to-read fonts so that the message is communicated clearly.

— PATRICK KING, IMAGINEDESIGN

For live text cross-platform use, I use Verdana for the body copy, and usually text that has to be linked. It's universal and nicely designed. For everything else it varies from Gill Sans (varying weights), Myriad Pro and similar.

— RAQUEL SALTSMAN, UNISPEC

For HTML, we use Arial and Georgia. They are 'basic guaranteed to have no problems within any browser or platform' fonts, kind of like Garamond and Helvetica are for print. Until font compatibility is a thing of the past, I see us continuing to rely on solid fonts to support our design directions.

— BRUCE HOLLY, MEANS ADVERTISING

I generally use the fonts that will load and preview easily on multiple platforms. Arial is the go-to font for me. It's easy to read and has multiple weights to work with. Anything fancy is made into art and placed as a jpg or gif to make sure the end user gets the look and feel I'm putting out there.

— MONA JOHNS, MONA LISA GRAPHIC DESIGN

I use the standard web sets for the guts of the pages to aid in load time and browser functionality, but do not limit myself in 'A-spot' visuals or Flash elements.

— JOSEPH QUINN, JOSEPH QUINN CREATIVE

Clean and or basic Helvetica, Arial, Times, what-have-you, so virtually everyone can view the site the way I created it. If I use a type that looks great but in the end only 10% of the people viewing it get that full effect, it wasn't worth it.

— DYLAN CODY, DYLAN CODY ADVERTISING AND DESIGN

Keeping the selection simple helps my clients to maintain their sites with ease when using CMS. Clients also typically have these fonts so there is no added expense of buying a new font.

— LAURA LLOYD-HENRY, DESIGN25 GRAPHICS

Web fonts are opening the doors to new and exciting ideas for me to create a unique experience for the users.

— CONRAD BORBA, CONRADSDSIGN.COM

I have only started to scratch the surface, but I do feel web fonts are opening more design possibilities.

— KRISTEN YNGVE, VAXA CREATIVE

I am optimistic and very excited about web fonts, but still a little skeptical. Everyone needs to have updated browsing software for this to work, and lets be honest, most people are ignorant when it comes to this sort of thing. I guess it will just take time for a majority of internet users to become current.

— BAILEY KEEFE, STRIKE HOLDINGS

I haven't tried web fonts. These innovations still require time. In a deadline driven world, these extra steps are what I expect from my designers: I expect knowledge, self-research and industry acumen, to keep them current.

— JERRETT LEE DORNBUSCH, SOUTHERN PATIO