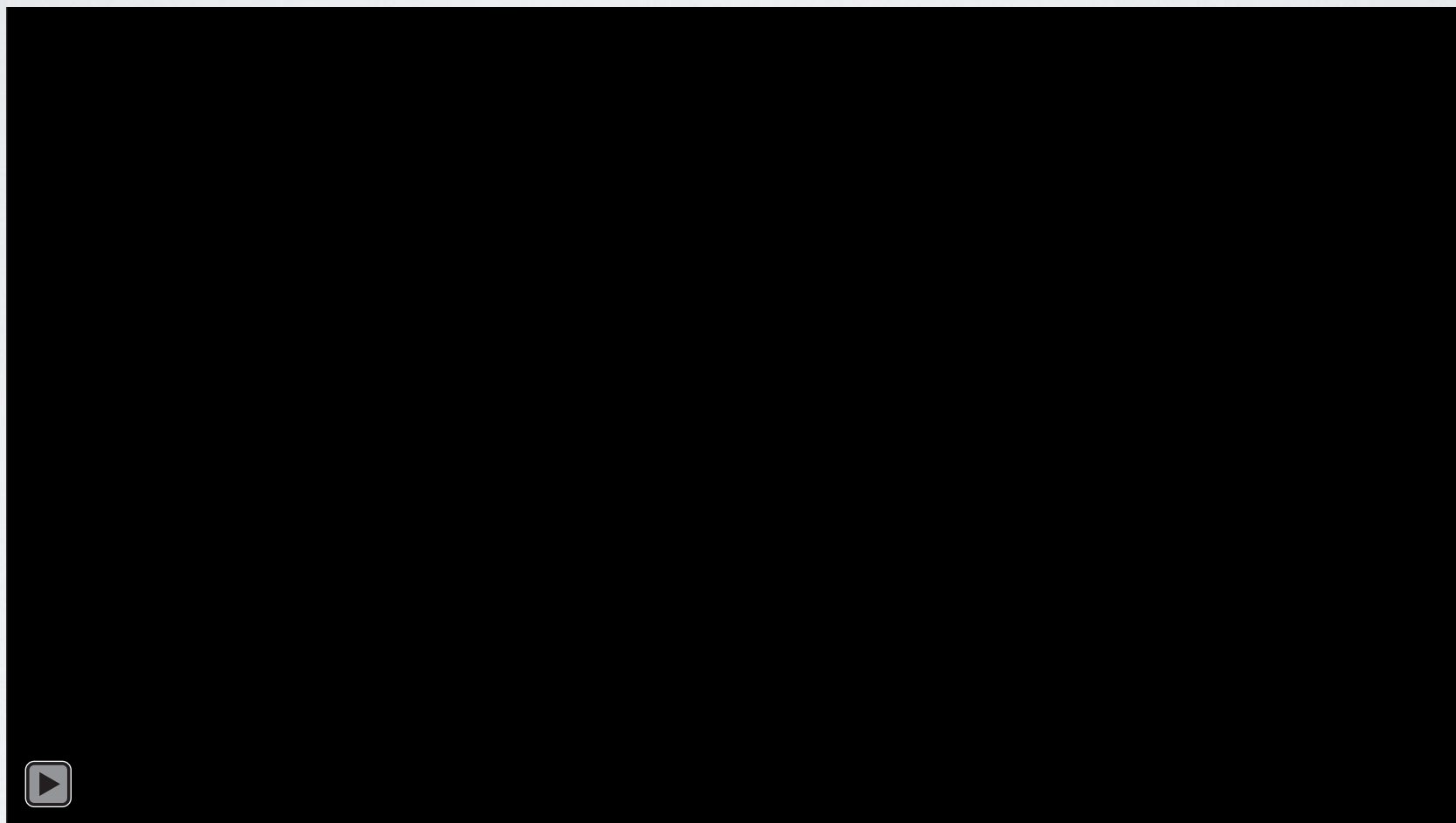


# TYPOGRAPHIC TEST FORM:

INVESTIGATING THE PERFORMANCE OF FREE FONTS

BY: NATALIA LUMBY

"LETTERS ARE THINGS, NOT PICTURES OF THINGS - THEY ARE MEANT TO BE READ AND NOT JUST LOOKED AT" (CARTER, 1982).





# BACKGROUND

- “Don’t use free fonts!!”
- The internet and design
- Digitization of typography
- Changes in copyright and general approach
- Font performance from a technical perspective

<b>abpfoe</b>	<i>abpfoe</i>	abpfoe
<i>abpfoe</i>	abpfoe	abpfoe
<b>abpfoe</b>	<b>ABPFOE</b>	<b>ABPFOE</b>
<b>abpfoe</b>	abpfoe	ABPFOE
abpfoe	<i>abpfoe</i>	<b>abpfoe</b>
<b>abpfoe</b>	<b>ABPFOE</b>	abpfoe
<i>abpfoe</i>	abpfoe	ABPFOE
ABPFOE	<b>abpfoe</b>	abpfoe
<i>abpfoe</i>	abpfoe	<i>abpfoe</i>
<b>abpfoe</b>	ABPFOE	abpfoe

# METHODS

- Content analysis to establish whether free fonts are meeting market demands
- Custom test form meant to aid in font selection
  - Test form was output as a soft and hard proof for inspection
    - Adobe Acrobat for soft proof
    - Epson 7900 via Esko Automation Engine 14.0 for hard proof
    - Esko “compare” ticket was utilized

Font name: xx  
Date tested: mm/dd/yy  
PDF presets used: xx

## SIZING \*CREATE OUTLINES

8 Hamburgefonts  
\* Hamburgefonts  
12 Hamburgefonts  
14 Hamburgefonts

24 Hamburgefonts

48 Hamburgefonts

Hamburgefonts

72 Hamburgefonts

144 Hamburgef

## LIGATURES

Th fb ff fb fh fi fj fl fm fn fo fh fi fj  
fk fl ft Th fb fh fi fk fl ft fm fl Th

## SYMBOLS

!@#\$%^&\*(),./\[]?{}<>|-  
=\_+;':©£¢¥½«»°²@

## SMALL CAPS

ABCDEFGHIJKLM  
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

## ACCENTS

áâãäå äåäåä çç éèë êëë ìíî  
îíî ññ óôõö òôõö ùúû  
úûü ÿ

## WEIGHTS

Regular *Italic*  
Bold *Bold Italic*

DISPLAY TEXT	BODY TEXT
Some symbols & numbers	Lowercase & uppercase
Performs at large sizes	Accents
Kerning	All symbols
Some ligatures	All ligatures
Numbers	Leading, word spacing
	Performs at small sizes
	Variety of weights & styles
	Numbers

## LEADING, WORD SPACING (10 PT)

Soluptatent quidest parumquia nam que et quo dolor aute nobitibusam is quo conse  
nimaximus, quae. El Idaci odit es autas que quo te niscis as porernatur?  
Ut quiessem aut aboriatem a voluta num faci voluptati alicil millanditis esequasse  
nusania simpeut ut volorem facero evendaerchit aut quo illupta ssectorestis exerum  
volum dit aut volorectur serum verum que velendel maionse latesen ihillore de pori  
quate non repe lateam raeribus, quo iumque elesitit quis am fugiam acesciam, quae  
ausandam evenis archil ipsunt experi officat usandebitiae odit est, ate dolupti aspera  
ipicipiet etur?

## KERNING (METRIC)

HOOOHHHOHHOOO

## KERNING (OPTICAL)

HOOOHHHOHHOOO

## UPPERCASE LETTERS

ABCDEFGHIJKLM  
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

## LOWERCASE LETTERS

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

## NUMBERS

1234567890



# METHODS

Measure	Details
Completeness of glyphs	The typeface includes,: uppercase characters, lowercase characters, numbers, accents, symbols, ligatures
Size performance	The typeface is legible at both small and large sizes
Spacing	The typeface is legible when leading is unadjusted (set to auto) The word spacing promotes identifying separate words comfortably Words with all capitals as well as mixed letters are well kerned metrically
Variety	The typeface includes a variety of weight and style alternates
Structure	The number of anchor points used to create the letterform is limited to those necessary (evaluated digitally)



## RESULTS - TRENDS



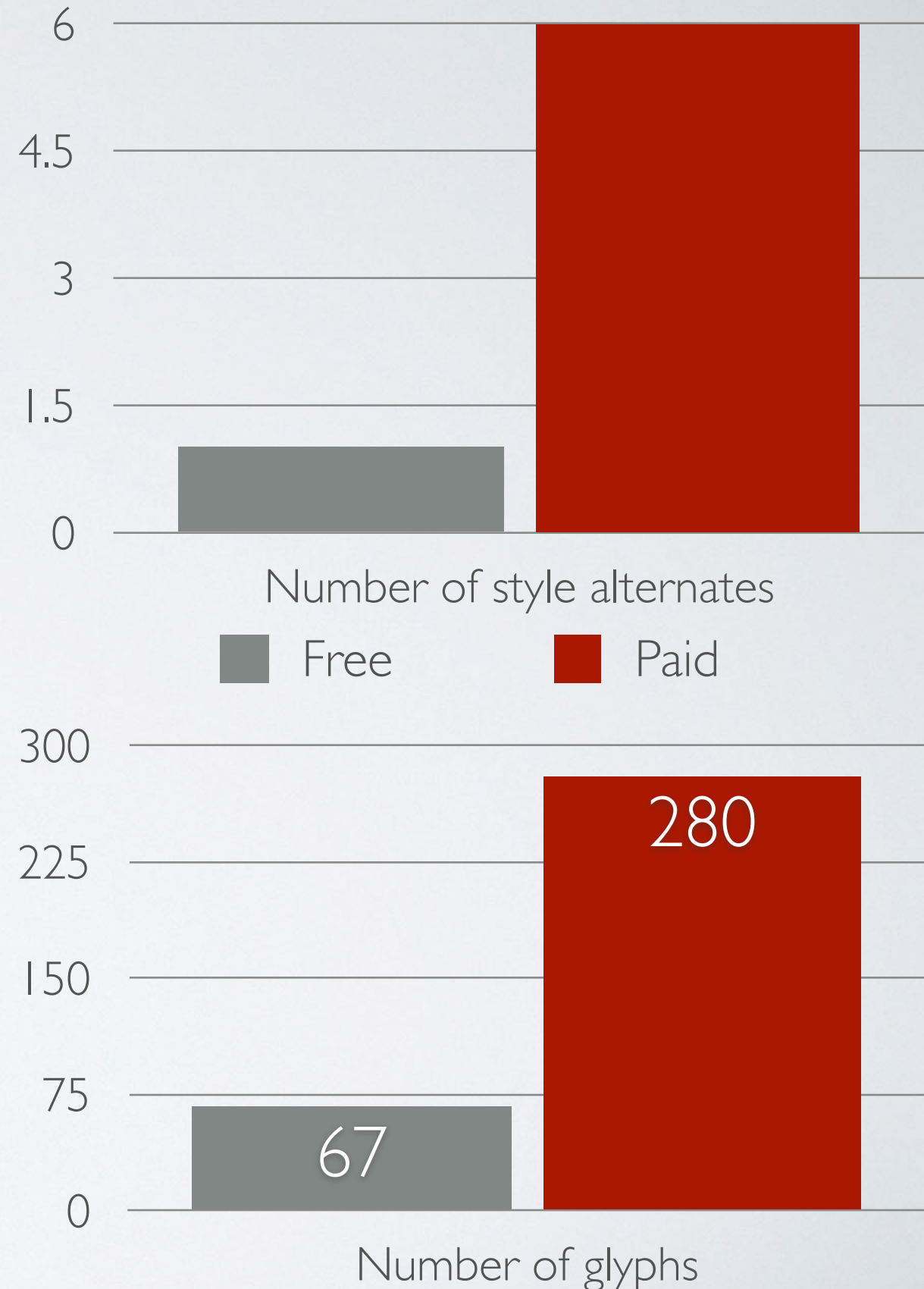
Paid



Free

# RESULTS - GLYPHS & STYLES

- You get what you “pay” for
- Less flexibility
  - Especially in glyphs and styles
- Free is improving



# RESULTS - KERNING AND LEADING

- Emphasis on Optical kerning
- Word spacing and leading issues primarily seen among display typefaces
  - Body typefaces performed well in default word spacing and leading
  - Not necessarily an indicator of poor quality since display type should not be used to set paragraphs

## KERNING (METRIC)

H O O O H H H O H H O O O

## KERNING (OPTICAL)

H O O O H H H O H H O O O

## LEADING, WORD SPACING (10 PT)

*Voluptatem quidem parumque namque et quo dolor autem nobilitatem  
is quo conse nuntiamus, quae. Et iduci odit es autas quo te niscus as  
perematur  
Ut quiaestem aut aboritam a voluta nym facj voluptati alicil mit  
landitis esequasse nusanua simped ut volorem facpro evendaerckit aut  
quo illupta ssectorestis exerum polum dit aut volorectur serum verum que  
velendel maiorse latesen ikillgre de pori quate non repe latem raeribus,  
quo umque elessitia quis am fugiam acesciam, quae susandam evenis*



## RESULTS - STRUCTURE

- Free font outlines used many more anchors
  - Means that they did not perform well at extreme sizes
  - Letters began to fill in with small sizes
  - Sloppiness of vectors were evident in large sizes

A pixelated, blue-outlined version of the text "The quick" in a serif font. The outlines are thick and blocky, characteristic of a low-resolution vector font.A pixelated, blue-outlined version of the text "The quick" in a serif font, similar to the one above but with slightly different rendering or scaling.A close-up of a handwritten signature in black ink. Three blue circles are drawn around specific loops and curves in the script, highlighting areas of complexity or potential vectorization difficulty.

# DISCUSSION

**FONT SQUIRREL**  
100% Free For Commercial Use.

HOME FIND FONTS HOT RECENT ALMOST FREE WEBFONT GENERATOR

**BEBAS NEUE**

Museo™ by exljbris ★ Top Webfont  
Available for Desktop, Web, App, Epub and Server

↓ DOWNLOAD OTF (OFFSITE)

10 font styles from \$16.50 - some free

**Penultimate**

**TYPOGRAPHY LOVE MUSEO**  
Hambúrgefontivs  
100 300 500 700 900  
Museo — I remember the day. It all started with my love for U.

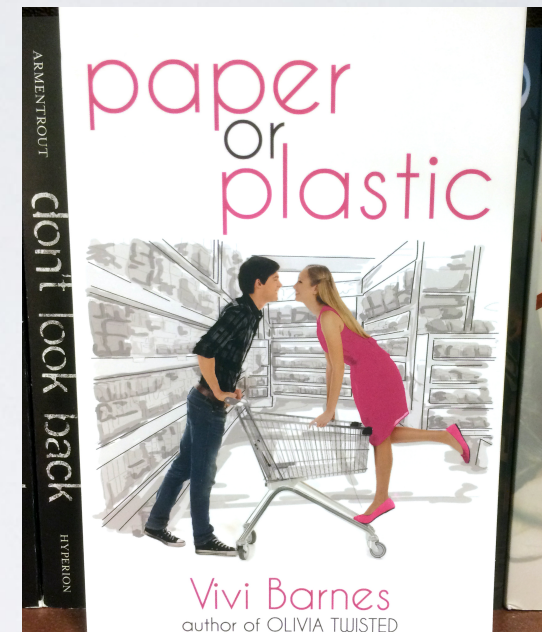
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# DISCUSSION

- Free is bad?
- Designers are creators
- Coming to commercial work near you!
  - Template driven novice world
- What about digital?



Caviar Dreams on a book cover, and Bebas in a corporate brochure template (designed by TypoEdition)



# CONCLUSIONS

- Brands require flexibility which is limited for free typefaces
- The presence and availability of free fonts cannot be ignored
  - Free fonts tested in this study have cumulatively been downloaded over **10 million times**
  - When considering the price of each comparator typeface in this study averages \$8, that is a cost savings of **\$8 million**
- Short term free fonts will be predominantly used for titling and display works
- As the quality of free fonts continues to improve, it is likely we will see a greater mix of free and paid typefaces used together in design work

# QUESTIONS?

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