2015/16 LETTERPRESS ANNUAL REPORT
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SHOP USE

This academic year Letterpress open studio hours were held on Tuesdays from 3-7pm, Thursdays from 2-6pm, and Fridays 10am-2pm in the fall and Tuesdays 3-7pm, Thursdays 2-6pm, and Fridays 10am-3pm in the spring. Our total attendance for the school year was 287 visitors. This number accounts for students and faculty who chose to utilize the sign-in sheets at the front door and does not include the advance and intermediate students who were given permission to use the letterpress shop outside of open studio hours.

Shop demonstrations were offered to classes outside of open studio hours.

- September 3rd - for Polish Exchange Students
- September 9th - for Koichi Yamamoto’s Intermediate Printmaking Class
- October 2nd – for Misty Anderson’s English 411 Class
- October 27th – for Diane Fox’s Design Class
- November 11th - for Keely Snook’s Relief Printmaking Class
- February 2nd - for Tatiana Pott’s 103 Foundations Class
- February 25th – for Beauvais Lyons’ Intermediate Printmaking Class
- March 17th - for Martin Lang and Anna Werwhein’s 103 Foundations Class
- April 7th - for Abigail Lucien’s 103 Foundations Class

This year we successfully promoted the Letterpress studio with posters, takeaways, and business cards. Visitors came from a variety of disciplines such as Graphic Design, Printmaking, 4D, Photography, Architecture, Sculpture, Computer Sciences, Spanish, Advertising, Engineering, Interior Design, as well and English. Multiple students also visited to learn how to design and print their own wedding invitations and business cards. They were assisted with typesetting, magnesium plate and polymer plate production and printing, as well as multiple color registration.

After receiving demonstration, Dr. Misty Anderson’s students came in to do their final project as a hand-typeset bound letterpress book. They were instructed on the
specifics of page registration and formatting for book layout. They also received assistance with logistical and technical concerns regarding the project.

Dr. Mary Campbell also came for assistance in printing promotional posters for her study abroad class in Paris. She received assistance with design layout and production printing.

In the spring, Professor Beauvais Lyons received assistance in magnesium plate production and color registration for a project as part of his Circus Orbis show at Fluorescent Gallery.

We also worked closely with the designers of Torchbearer Magazine to aid in design elements for the spring issue. Several letterpress forms were composed and printed. From these, one design was selected and photographed for the cover. Other illustrations from this process were used inside the magazine.

Koichi Yamamoto’s Intermediate Printmaking class received instruction on printing wood block engravings with letterpress typography as part of a class project.

Over sixty students in Foundations 103 classes taught by Abigail Lucien and Tatiana Potts in the spring semester incorporated letterpress printing into their linoleum block carving projects with great success.

While we feel that use of the shop from Foundations instructors is a great addition to the program, steps must be made to help students prioritize their time in the limited hours that they have to use the equipment. We’ve experienced issues with students waiting too long to start, regardless of giving them warnings. We recommend that instructors set stricter timelines on assignments and be willing to give extra assistance if they incorporate projects that involve use of letterpress type. This should be brought up in the foundations meeting at the beginning of the school year.

OTHER EVENTS

Design Open House – April 10, 2016

Dogwood Arts Open House Printing – April 16, 2016

TYPE

We have a large collection of the following lead typefaces: Bodoni, Universe, Cheltenham, Craw Clarendon, Wedding Text, Romany, Spartan, Bodoni, Stymie, Bernhard, Franklin Gothic, Nubian, Gothic Condensed and more. Wood type styles range from antiques to gothics, with various weights of gothic faces making up the
majority. Several type cases were resorted along with line spacing and thin copper and brass spacing for ease of use. The shop contains a wide selection of random image plates, dingbats, rules, cuts, and mechanical photo-image plates that visitors can add to their compositions.

Continued efforts have been made this year to consolidate type families together in ascending size, so that they may be more easily incorporated in hierarchical design layouts. Wood types have also been reorganized and proofed for reference files. New proofs were made for the exterior drawer labels. Many of the photographic and commercial plates were also proofed for reference. This has been done as part of the mission to help students make conscious aesthetic decisions going into a project.

We’ve done a fair amount of organization to drawers containing miscellaneous lead pieces. Wood type drawers have been resorted and organized, as general use causes them to become unorganized. We’ve also made a home location for spacing pieces to live in. A small labeled cabinet features all increments of spacing pieces from sizes 8pt-30pt. Spacing for sizes 36pt. and above live in the Bodoni cabinet and other drawers of corresponding sizes.

Many ornamental border systems and dingbats previously tucked away in unlabeled drawers have been put out on display to help students incorporate them more readily. Weighted bar rules in lead and brass have also been organized by size for students to access.

**PRESSES**

This year we acquired an Excelsior 5x8 tabletop platen press, a nice addition to the Kelsey 8x10 and a smaller 3x5 press received last year. They will be good resources in demos and mobile teaching events. The Vandercook and Challenge have regularly received maintenance with use. The Vandercook SP-15 would greatly benefit from having the roller cores refinished over the summer. It is a necessity at this point for printing mounted polymer plates with any degree of success. We have an extra pair of rollers that the fittings can be transferred over to, which will suffice while the current pair receives refinishing. The shop technician is aware of this issue and has a source for replacement. The new Excelsior 5x8 press could stand to have new rollers, but this may not be necessary until it receives more extensive use.

The issue with the Challenge press’ chain falling off has been fixed by drilling holes slightly in from the edge to create a new structurally sound spot for the stopping pin to rest. There are still issues with clutch engagement on the automatic inking system, but opportunities to use the automated inking on this press are very rare. Students can still manually ink forms for printing just fine. The SP-15 is an ideal press for students to use in small editions and proofing. In times when the shop is not busy, this is the preferred press to use.
The Vandercook occasionally needs to be leveled on the slightly uneven concrete floor. It also travels from its original resting place due to the force of the carriage moving forward. One proposed solution would be to affix leveled wooden blocks to the bolt locations under each leg, and bolt a wooden stopper to the floor at the end of the press bed, to prevent the press from traveling from its home position.

**EQUIPMENT**

The studio continues to use rubber based inks as well as a small selection of oil based inks. The shop has tools for cutting leading and a miter cutter, and continues to hold a floor unit corner-rounder that is not in working order. While we have benefited from the new paper cutter that was donated, we feel it would be helpful to have a few small cutting mats and extra X-acto knives.

There are significant trip hazards with the outlets that stick out from the floor, which need to be addressed. Setting stools, chairs, and other objects in front of them has helped, but they should ultimately be removed for greater ease of use in the shop.

The shop would benefit greatly from more precisely sized reglets and leading throughout the cabinet’s size ranges (leading 4P up to 32P, and Reglets 10P up to 51P). These can be purchased from NA Graphics, but will need to be cut down manually. A saw that measures in points and picas, like the Hammond Glider, would be an ideal addition to the shop. An alternative solution would be to take the leading and reglets to Striped Light or Pioneer House to be cut to exact size. Our current cases are fairly ragged on the edges, with delineation from the actual pica size. They were most likely trimmed by hand at one point or another, making them inaccurate.

Much the the equipment in the studio has been on long-term loan from Chris McAadoo. Beauvais met him recently, and proposed a visit to the studio this summer. It may be constructive to finalize the loan arrangements so that it can be treated as a gift.

**BUDGET**

All expenses for equipment maintenance, paper, inks and solvents are provided through the printmaking lab fees. Through a targeted one-time request from Beauvais Lyons, this spring we received a $700 commitment from the Department of English to supplement the printmaking budget. As more students in Foundations and Design use the facilities, it would be sustainable to have additional commitments of funds, especially in light of some of the equipment needs addressed above.
Details of our work with Torchbearer Magazine, March 2016