2021-2022 Letterpress Annual Report

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Staffing

During the 2021-2022 academic year Muriel Condon and Noah Lagle worked for the full year with logistical and administrative support provided by Elysia Mann. The poster Noah and Muriel printed was bright and eye-catching, potentially linked to the influx of traffic. Elysia Mann also has been an invaluable resource for guidance in oiling the machines, general LP questions, and tips on using acetate in place of tympan paper.

Letterpress Open Studio Hours (open 17 hours/week)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2021</th>
<th>Spring 2022</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues/Thurs: 9:30 - 11:30am , 3:00 - 7:30pm</td>
<td>Mon/Wed: 9:00am - 2:00pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed: 2:30 - 5:30pm</td>
<td>Thurs: 1:00 - 3:00pm</td>
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Shop Use - 102 visitors this year, more than twice the number from last year’s report. This growth in attendance was made possible as we were able to manage the COVID pandemic better.

Fall 2021
A special topics Graduate English course, “Affect Theory” taught by Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud used the studio for a project. Each student printed a poster meant to elicit an emotion by the reader through language. They then posted the broadside throughout campus.
Both Haley Takahashi and Noah Lagle’s Art Foundations 101 classes used the studio for an assignment combining mounted lino relief and type. Nuveen Barwari, a painting graduate student, set and printed a poster to support her political art practice.

We continued the practice of promoting the Letterpress studio with posters, both saved in the archive drawer, and an electronic notice that was posted regularly in email messages to the School of Art and was shared with the College of Architecture and Design as well as the Department of English. The studio website is: [https://art.utk.edu/printmaking/letterpress/](https://art.utk.edu/printmaking/letterpress/)

Spring 2022
In the spring, the classes that utilized the shop were in the Foundations, Printmaking, and English departments. In Muriel Condon’s Foundations 101 class the students used a single wood type letter printed multiple times to make a composition on the page, while slowly adjusting the tone and value by adding ink to the rollers with each pass. The honor’s section of Introduction to Poetry (Eng 251 Honors) used the space to print lines from poems they have responded to.
The two print classes that use the studio were Danqi Cai’s Book Arts class and Althea Murphy-Price’s Adv/Intermediate Print. The Book Arts class assigned a pressure printing project, using the flat printing block in the shop. The advanced intermediate used both the third floor studio and the proofing press in the print lab to make varied multiples of short bold words made from the new large wood type.

The Highschool Art Academy on March 5th hosted students in the space to learn how to set type and carve relief blocks.

Throughout the semester multiple personal projects of students majoring in the Art, Design and Architecture were created, which included band posters, thank you cards, posters and business cards.

Events

This year the studio participated in the High School Art Academy and the School of Art Community Welcome-Back Screening held on Friday August 20, 2021. For the screening we made bookmarks with the Kelsey press on site and gave out pins made from letterpress prints, thanks to Zoe-Brester Pennings for providing a pin-making machine.

Type

We have a large collection of the following lead typefaces in assorted sizes: Craw Clarendon, Stymie, Gothic, Bodoni, Gothic Franklin, Univers 55, Spartan, Cheltenham, Bernhard, Modern, Typo, Romany, Onyx, Nubian, and Tower.

We also have a collection of wood type that includes the following fonts in assorted sizes: Gothic, Futura Gothic, French Clarendon, Cheltenham, and Antique.

This spring we received a donation of large wood type from the UT Libraries. The type came to us from an unknown donation to the McClung Museum, who passed it along to Chris Caldwell in the Library’s Special Collections, who reached out to Elysia to offer the type for student use. The donation includes six boxes totaling approximately 600 pieces of wood type in excellent condition. Two distinct typefaces have been detected, one serif and the other sans serif, both approximately 18-line in size (3 inches). As of the end of the 21/22 fiscal year, the boxes await further research, identification, inventory and storage.

Through regular attention, the “Hellbox” of mis-sorted type has been sifted through and is now full of various types of spacing. The smaller bits of type have been collected for use in an ongoing project by Noah Lagle, but the larger ones are being resorted. Many of the drawers are currently being reorganized, as many of the drawers have become mixed over time. This is an ongoing project that will need to be continued when there is little traffic in the shop (special attention should be given to condensed and bold versions of the same sized font, as they often get confused for one another).

We are keeping up the practice of banned vegetable oil in the shop everywhere except the palette. As the oil dries it congeals and glues the type together, causing damage to the letters when students tend to throw them against the table to break them apart. Instead, a solvent based press wash (such as odorless mineral spirits) or Lithotine should be used.
Presses

The Vandercook SP-15 is working well and has been serviced regularly throughout the academic year. The machine runs nicely, but has an inconsistent skipping of a few teeth on the gears. This presents itself most as misregistration on multilayer relief prints; it doesn't affect most type based projects. To remedy this will likely involve a disassembly and recalibration of the printing assembly to make sure that all of the gears are lined up correctly and that weight is being distributed evenly. At this point, most of the sticky residue that resulted from the use of vegetable oil as a solvent has been scraped away. If there comes a point when the Kelsey and Challenge presses can meet the production needs of the shop, there are some areas on the Vandercook that could be disassembled for a deep clean.

After the replacement of one of the rollers last year, the Challenge press was operational for use during periods of high traffic during the fall semester while the Foundations classes were conducting their letterpress projects. This expansion in the capacity of the shop was helpful in reducing the bottleneck effect that was quite pronounced when multiple students wanted to work together. However, the press is currently out of order, as one of the three chains that together serve to guide and support the press bed is now firmly wedged between the pressbed assembly and a retention pin that sits at the end of the chain's track. This pin has become intermittently dislodged throughout the operation of this press, and there is evidence of damage sustained to this area of the press, that is likely from past attempts to remedy this exact issue. At this point, a repair would likely require a full disassembly of the upper mechanics just to dislodge the chain to prevent further damage.

Due to the machine’s perpetual state of disrepair, the inconvenience of use, and the amount of floor space taken up by the Challenge Press in our small shop, it is the recommendation of the current stewards that the machine be disposed of in order to make room for a more efficient use of the space. The Printmaking Technician, Elysia, supports this assessment and recommends immediate removal and replacement with a reliable, space-efficient machine.

The 3 platen presses are all in working order, though we only used the one that has its own platform built for it. Without a designated workspace for these presses, there will rarely be an opportunity to incorporate them into the working operation of the shop. This coming year, in the space freed up by disposing of the Challenge Press, we hope to build a table on which they can be mounted in order to incorporate them into the regular workings of the shop.

Equipment

The wooden type cabinet that has been in a state of disrepair for the past few years has been stripped of its drawers. Many of them were already empty and the type that was in this cabinet has been redistributed to other cabinets. We now have more California Job Cases than we need and we should be looking to acquire a new cabinet along with drawers that do not have dividers in order to house our new collection of wood type.

Our drying rack is an old model made out of wood that lacks any springs. The wooden slats are starting to break down under its own weight, the design is unwieldy for visitors with little printmaking experience, and it takes up a lot of floor space. As part of an overall initiative to more efficiently use the small amount of space we have in the shop, we are recommending an acquisition of metal wall mounted
drying racks alongside new shelving. Furthermore, we hope to incorporate the current flat file into the building of the table space intended as a station for our platen presses.

**Inks**

We continue to use rubber based inks and have replenished our white supply with litho ink. As the rubber-based inks are depleted, they should be replaced with soy or oil-based alternatives, as they have lower VOCs. Since the shop does not have any presses with automated inking, there is no benefit received from the longer open-times of rubber based inks.

7 assorted reds
3 yellow
2 green
4 blue
2 violet
4 black
3 tint base
1 gold
1 brown
1 white

**Paper Inventory** (approximate counts)

~75 19x25" Kraft Tone Index Off White Kraft
~100 12.5x19" Kraft Tone Index Off White Kraft
~40 12.5x19" Kraft Tone Ledger Green Kraft
~50 12.5x19" Construction Fuse Green
~100 12.5x19 Durotone Off White
~100 12.5x19 SpeckleTone Madero Beach
~50 12.5x19 SpeckleTone Kraft

We consolidated and organized the off cuts of red, white, and black paper, the useful sizes, now kept as overstock in the printmaking studio.

**Recommendations**

The main focus moving forward should be the optimization of the space as described in the “Presses” and “Equipment” sections.

1. Evaluate the need to keep the Challenge Press, which was formally gifted last year from Chris McAdoo in honor of his great grandfather. Concern is that the current damage is structural, and therefore unlikely to be resolved. If it is determined to be removed, the Challenge Press should go to surplus.
2. Acquire cylinder proofing press to replace Challenge. Vandercook 4, SP20, or similar flatbed cylinder proofing press would be better suited for instructional use.
3. Replace broken drying racks
4. Rearrange space: If possible, switch Kelsey presses (currently in entryway) with type cabinets to make both more accessible. This needs to be checked against fire code regulations.
5. Increased support from 2D Technician would be helpful in maintaining studio efficiency and safety.