2022-2023 Letterpress Annual Report

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Staffing

During the 2022-2023 academic year Gaby Hurtado-Ramos and Noah Lagle worked for the full year with logistical and administrative support provided by Elysia Mann. The letterpress studio was staffed for 18 hours weekly throughout the academic calendar, and was also opened up for numerous special events detailed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letterpress Open Studio Hours (open 18 hours/week)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday-Thursday: 9:00am - 1:30pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday-Thursday: 8:00am-12:30pm</td>
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Shop Use

There were 254 visitors to the letterpress shop this year, more than twice the number from last year’s report (102). This growth in attendance is likely due to a combination of factors, which include: more campus postering, more partnerships with professors in multiple departments that make use of the facilities for a range of classroom activities and projects, and more robust programming that makes use of the shop (detailed in the Events section), and post-COVID engagement.

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.

For the fall semester, a hand-made poster was printed and displayed throughout the art building and other high traffic areas of campus. In the spring, a digital flier was printed out in order to reallocate the labor of hand-made posters to two editions made by Gaby, one for the promotion of the visit by Amos Paul Kennedy Jr. and one quoting the poetry of Audre Lorde in celebration of Black History Month. These eye-catching posters were cited by multiple visitors as the
impetus for their interest in the letterpress shop. Select prints from these runs of posters have been saved in our archive. These promotional materials were used alongside 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/

### Fall 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graphic Design Project- (20 Students, Professor: Carry Staples)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each student came in having chosen the name of a fruit with which they had been experimenting with typographically in both digital and analog media. Each student was tasked with setting their fruit in type in order to contribute to one tray of type that would be printed together as a “fruit salad.”</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Project (26 Students, Professor: Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students came for one class period for an introduction to the shop and then students came in for multiple sessions outside of class throughout the semester to each finish a run of posters that included a Jane Austen quote of their choice. The posters were then put up around UT campus and the greater Knoxville area.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Print and Book Project (12 Students, Professor: Heather Hirshfield)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students visited as a class to learn letterpress basics with a demonstration and printed booklet covers. Later in the semester Gaby visited the class for a bookbinding workshop using the covers printed in the first class visit.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Advanced Sculpture Project (Professor: John Powers)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students made CNC routed MDF block prints and visited the letterpress studio to print their posters separately. Students also made 3D printed type high blocks and printed them in the studio.</td>
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### Spring 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romantic Poetry Project (23 Students, Professor: Gerard Cohen-Vrignaud)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students visited as a class for an introduction to the shop and then students came in for multiple sessions outside of class throughout the semester to each finish a run of posters that included a poetry quote of their choice. The posters were then put up around UT campus and the greater Knoxville area.</td>
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<th>Demonstration and Lecture (Professor: Dr. Hilary Havens)</th>
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<td>Students visited as a class for an introduction to the shop with a focus on the evolution of printing technology and its impact on the culture around literature and the reading public. Dr. Havens visited the week before to set the type that students were then allowed to print.</td>
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Events

High School Art Academy:
This year the studio participated in the High School Art Academy and the School of Art Community Welcome-Back Screening held in August 2022. For the screening we made postcards with the Kelsey press on site. For the High School Art Academy a group of six highschool students participated in an all-day workshop led by Noah and Gaby. Students made their own letterpress prints and received a pamphlet stitch bookbinding demonstration.

Visiting Artist, Amos Paul Kennedy Jr.:
In the spring the printmaking department hosted visiting letterpress printer Amos Paul Kennedy Jr. and a series of print events. Noah and Gaby assisted with preparation for the week's events including setting type for a print collaboration with poets at UT. The letterpress studio's sign press was used for Prints and Poets, an event held in Hodges Library, as well as a demonstration at Austin East High School. The letterpress studio's type was put to good use during the Print Party as well, a public event that week in the printmaking lab in collaboration with The Bottom's Black Creative Meet-up.

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 wooden type that includes the following fonts in assorted sizes: Gothic, Futura Gothic, French Clarendon, Cheltenham, and Antique.

Last spring we received a donation of large wooden 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 sorted into drawers (one serif and the other sans serif), alongside the largest wood type we already had, in a new type cabinet which was acquired from the downsizing Yee-Haw print shop in Knoxville. The cabinet has been painted and cleaned and would benefit from some custom cut separators that can be inserted into the drawers to keep the type from moving around.

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 sorted. 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).
We are continuing the prohibition of 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 should be used. This year, we switched from Lithotine to Gamsol in order to reduce fumes in the poorly ventilated space.

**Presses**

**Sign Press:**
In preparation for an anticipated need for more presses surrounding the visit of Amos Paul Kennedy Jr., shop technician Elysia Mann built a rolling table surface for a sign press we had in storage. This press has been a great option for printing poster sized pieces of paper when the shop is in high demand. The press was taken to the Hodges Library for the Prints and Poets even detailed above, and the mobility presents a great opportunity for future outreach events.

**Potter Proof Press:**
UTK alum Dianna Osickey donated a Potter proof press. The press is currently installed in the printmaking lab on the second floor. It is manually inked and prints a similar poster size as the SP-15. The press has a much smaller footprint than the SP-15 and is a great learning press. In addition to the press we also received donations of packing paper that can be cut down for the kelsey platen presses and additional furniture for typesetting.

**Vandercook SP-15:**
This press 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.

**Challenge Press:**
This press has been out of order for a year, 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. For example, freeing up the space currently taken up
by the challenge could make room for a more permanent and integrated installation of the platen presses and sign press that are currently held in reserve in the entrance hallway.

*Platen Presses:*
2 of our 3 platen presses are in working order, though we continue to mainly use the one that has its own platform built for it. One of them was damaged over winter break. We never figured out how it was dislodged from its platform, but the cast metal platen broke off when it fell. Without a designated workspace for these presses, there will rarely be an opportunity to incorporate them into the working operation of the shop, though their portability has been a great way to bring them to events with the hopes of spreading the word about letterpress printing. 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 and prevent them from being damaged in the highly trafficked hallway.

**Equipment**

We purchased a large type cabinet from the downsizing Yee Haw print shop this fall in order to house our new acquisition of large wooden type that didn’t fit into any of our previously owned cabinets. It has been painted and filled with our new type. There are still some empty drawers on the bottom to fill with new type acquisitions.

The wooden type cabinet that had been in a state of disrepair for the past few years has been stripped of its drawers and removed from the shop. 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 selecting the ones in the best condition for continued use.

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.

**Ink Inventory**

We continue to use rubber based inks. We replenished the white rubber based inks as well. 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. We switched from using Lithotite to using Gamsol to clean in the shop as it is just as effective for shop use and has lower toxicity levels.
Rubber based inks:  
6 assorted reds  
3 yellow  
2 green  
2 process blue  
2 reflex blue  
2 violet  
2 black  
1 silver  
1 gold  
1 brown  
2 white  
2 tint base

Oil based inks:  
2 reds

Various:  
1 titanium white, dry  
1 setswell compound

Dayglo litho inks:  
1 aurora pink  
1 corona magenta  
1 signal green  
(need more satin yellow)

Big ink cans, oil based (½ gallon?):  
1 Yellow  
1 Tan  
1 Neutral Black  
1 Process Magenta  
1 Cyan  
1 Perfector Black  
1 Cool Gray  
1 Blue  
1 Red

**Paper Inventory** (approximate counts)

~250 11x26" Mohawk White Cover  
~100 12.5x19" SpeckleTone Madero Beach Cover  
~100 12.5x19" Kraft-tone Packing Chip  
~80 12.5x19" Pop-Tone Lemon Drop  
~160 12.5x19" Pop-Tone Sno Cone  
~15 12.5x19" Speckleton Starch Rain  
~200 12.5x19" Pop-Tone Grape Jelly  
~180 12.5x19" Pop-Tone Bubble Gum  
~50 12.5x19" Kraftone Index Off White  
~600 9x6" Various colors (from Amos Kennedy events)  
~100 19x25" Parchtone Gunmetal  
~100 19x25" Kraftone Index Off White  
~50 19x25" Construction Cement Green  
~50 19x25" Construction Fuse Green  
~50 19x25" Speckleton Starch Rain

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**

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

2. 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.

3. Consider moving the Potter proof press into the letterpress studio.
4. Replace breaking wooden drying rack with wall mounted metal ones
5. Build a new table in the shop for the Kelsey presses that are currently in the entryway with additional shelving underneath. This needs to be checked against fire code regulations.
6. Increased support from 2D Technician would be helpful in maintaining studio efficiency and safety.
7. Rip down wood that will fit into the slatted sides of the open type drawers in order to build customizable dividers.
8. Acquire packing that is the correct size for the Vandercook.