DESIGN EDUCATORS CONFERENCE WITH THE RGD (THE HUB FOR GRAPHIC DESIGN)
YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO, CANADA
NOVEMBER 6–7, 2013

CONTACT
http://www.rgd.ca/events-and-programs/designthinkers.php#designthinkers-2013

ACCEPTANCE PROCESS
Blind Peer Review Acceptance Process

CONFERENCE LEVEL
International

DISCIPLINE
Design Education

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW
This first annual conference coincided with DesignThinkers 2013, the annual gathering of professional design influencers. The conference seeks to examine the symbiotic relationship between pedagogy and professional practice through the lens of the student experience. Categories of submission were teaching, learning and doing.

NAME OF PRESENTATION AND ABSTRACT
Crossroads: Merging Traditional Typography with Digital Technologies

Professional expectations for entry-level graphic designers are higher than ever before; requiring a solid grasp of visual communication strategies, superior design skills, comprehensive problem-solving skills and a high degree of technical proficiency. At this exciting juncture in the design profession, technology is an integral component of design thinking and strategy that can no longer be considered an addendum or option in university design programs. The professional environment requires students to be equally proficient with all methods and means of unique problem-solving while connecting and communicating through a wide range of mediums. Providing this education is a challenge for design educators that must be satisfied in order for our students to become successful professionals now and in the years to come.

Like many university programs, the faculty at our university has been actively engaged in examining, streamlining and enhancing the curriculum to better suit the needs of our students. Our university's impending conversion from the quarter system to semesters provided a catalyst to make significant changes to the curriculum reflecting current trends and realities in the profession. After analyzing our program's strengths and weaknesses, expertise and resources, we began the process of integrating the best of what was already offered with new learning methodologies and strategies. The objective in all of the newly designed courses is to fully integrate design fundamentals and technological content into a seamless whole; more closely reflecting the professional design environment. In order to meet this objective, it has been necessary to address the issue of faculty preparedness to teach the constantly changing technical information. A collaborative teaching model has been created to ensure that our students receive a comprehensive, holistic graphic design education that will prepare them for employment in the profession. This can be achieved in a variety of ways; by faculty of diverse expertise co-teaching, or with the assistance of guest lecturers providing demonstrations and critiques.

This presentation highlights a project from a pilot introductory Typography course as a case study to show how this new curriculum model works. The project begins with a comprehensive brief outlining objectives and parameters for students to research a typeface; they must know the designer, the time period and technology of the typeface and its intended use or purpose.

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Students then closely examine and analyze unique form and structural characteristics of the miniscules and use this
as the foundation to create their own system of five or six letters that are related by structure or form. (Such as n, h, m, r and u)
Beginning with a strong theme or concept and considerable quantities of hand sketches, students move to digital renderings
and continue to refine their letter groupings to be consistent and systematic in approach within their stated conceptual direction.
These letter groupings may be literal interpretations of their previous counterparts or highly abstracted and experimental.
The final deliverable of the project is either a printed book or a screen/motion presentation.

The co-instructors for this course both teach and work with students throughout the semester, with each taking the lead with
different aspects of the projects to maximize their contributions and expertise. As students begin drawing letters by hand,
one instructor with calligraphy expertise uses calligraphy as a foundation and guides students in learning the letter families
and proportional relationships. The other instructor's mastery of software is highlighted as students move from hand-drawn
models to Adobe Illustrator and other software. The process is seamless and direct. Students and faculty benefit from different
problem-solving strategies and approaches that add considerable dimension and depth to the course.

TYPE OF PRESENTATION
Paper Presentation with Carol Fillip