

The revival of a revival:
from Baskerville to Baskerville to Baskerville

A collective revival based on Claude Jacob's typeface
dans le genre de Baskerville.

Workshop with Alexis Faudot, Rémi Forte, Morgane Pierson,
Rafael Ribas, Tanguy Vanlæys & Rosalie Wagner (ANRT 2017),
led by Thomas Huot-Marchand, Charles Mazé, Jérôme Knebusch,
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Atelier National de Recherche typographique, Nancy
(Oct. 12, 12 – Oct. 20, 2017).

Font production: Rosalie Wagner (2017-2019)

In 1779, Sarah Eaves manages to sell Baskerville's punches and supplies to Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais. Beaumarchais places his new printing house—Société Littéraire Typographique—in Kehl, Germany (6 kilometers away from Strasbourg) and gives Jean François Letellier the post of director. Letellier is in charge of supervising the negotiations of the sale and the transfer of the material from Birmingham to Kehl.

Given the complexity of this work, Letellier hires a former Baskerville employee, presumably John Handy who had work with Baskerville for a long time, «to check, inspect, and put right if necessary all the punches used by Baskerville».

But this employee being too old to leave England, Letellier decides to send an employee of Société Littéraire Typographique, named Claude Jacob, to Birmingham to carry out this work.

1784. Soon after his return from Birmingham, Jacob has an argument with his employer (probably Letellier) and leaves Kehl with another employee of the Société Littéraire Typographique, Henri Rolland, to settle in Strasbourg. Together they make a request to the Magistrat of Strasbourg for the creation of a typefoundry, called Société Typographique de Strasbourg.

At this time, there is no other type foundry in Strasbourg.

1784-85. A first type specimen is printed: *Épreuves des caracteres de la société typographique de Strasbourg; Par Jacob élève de Baskerville.* It is the first appearance of Jacob's typeface based on Baskerville's design, in 3 sizes. Jacob & Rolland are not totally honest here stating that Jacob had been «a pupil of Baskerville» (Jacob went to Birmingham 7 years after the death of Baskerville).

1786. Rolland & Jacob want to diversify their activity, and are given the permission to print, in addition to the engraving activity. Apparently, printing in Strasbourg at the time was not something easy, as 5 other printers were already in business, protecting their territory. Rolland went to Paris to present their typefaces to the King, and they obtained the title of “imprimeur du Roi” in 1789. It was apparently too much for the other printers in Strasbourg, and they started a lawsuit against Rolland & Jacob.

1788-89. Despite these complications, a new type specimen is printed: *Épreuves des caractères de Rolland et Jacob, à Strasbourg*, including Jacob's typeface now available in 6 sizes (Great Primer ou Gros Romain, English ou Saint-Augustin, Small-Pica ou Cicero, Long Primer ou Petit Romain, Parangon Petit œil, Gros-Texte Petit œil) all in roman and italic, among a few other typefaces, Vignettes and Filets.

In 1789 however, Rolland & Jacob are ending their collaboration after a “disagreement”. In 1790, one of the five printers of Strasbourg, François-Xavier Levrault, took the opportunity to create a new partnership with Claude Jacob and a lawyer named Michel Thomassin, in order to continue to produce typefaces.

A contract signed in January 12th and February 9th 1790 by Thomassin, Jacob, and Nicolas Levrault—the eldest of the Levrault family—states that the association would last 12 years, that Jacob would work for nobody else but the foundry, and that he would create all kind of typefaces with a minimum of one font per year. The new punches and matrices would belong to the association, and the association would go by the name of Société typographique Levrault.

The story of the printers Levrault is also a very long one, beginning as early as 1676. In fact, Levrault’s printing activities have now stopped but the group still exists today as Berger- Levrault. They now produce softwares.

Back in 1790, the new Société typographique operated as an annex of the Levrault printing house. Its publications indicated that the text was typesetted “Avec les caractères de Jacob”. Jacob had to produce these so-called “caractères de Jacob” on behalf of Levrault, but also to be sold to other printers in Strasbourg, in Alsace, in Lorraine, in Avignon, but also in Belgium, Switzerland and Germany. Levrault might have shut down the Société typographique between 1795 and 1800, and definitively integrated the type foundry to his printing facility.

1800. A new type specimen is printed: *Épreuves des caractères de la fonderie des Frères Levrault, in Strasbourg, and showing the “Caractères dans le genre de Baskerville”*. Jacob must have stopped working for Levrault earlier than in 1802—he signed a 12-years contract in 1790—, as his name disappears.

But the original source of his typeface, Baskerville, finally reappears, although spelled with a w instead of a v.

We lose track of Claude Jacob at this point, but his design is preserved by Levrault.

1815. The last known specimen printed by Levrault, *Épreuves de la fonderie de François Georges Levrault, à Strasbourg, 1815* is still selling Jacob’s «Caractères dans le genre de Baskerville».

In 1871, after the end of the Franco-Prussian War, Strasbourg is part of Imperial Germany and the Levrault decide to move to Nancy. Five years later, in 1876, a fire destroys the printing facility, and they have to build a new one from scratch. But despite all these difficulties, Jacob’s typeface survived and one finally finds it again in 1878, in a publication telling the long story of the Levrault, entitled *Notice historique de l’Imprimerie Berger-Levrault & Cie*, typesetted in «caractères genre Baskerville (propriété de la Maison)», as mentioned in the imprint.

The particularity of Jacob’s Baskerville is that the roman is very close to Baskerville’s typefaces while the italic is closer to Didot’s typefaces. The design of the letter w is unusual: it is twice a v, and marks the particular identity of Jacob’s font. Jacob’s Baskerville itself is a strange double of Baskerville’s typefaces. Baskerville (with a double-v) is a revival of Jacob lost typefaces, designed collectively by the students of ANRT in October 2017, after studying Berger-Levrault archives in Nancy and Strasbourg. Baskerville Baskerville is open-source and available on Google Fonts since 2019.

CARACTÈRES

DANS LE GENRE

DE BASKERWILLE.

Doppel-Pica ou Gros-Parangon.

Nous arrivons tout nouveaux aux divers âges de la vie, et nous y manquons souvent d'expérience, malgré le nombre des années.

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Épreuves des caractères de la fonderie des frères Levrault, Strasbourg, 1800.

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Baskerville, ANRT, 2018.

ACHEVÉ D'IMPRIMER

PAR BERGER-LEVRAULT ET C^e, A NANCY

Le 5 Juin 1878

Caractère genre Baskerville (propriété de la Maison).
Presse mécanique Marinoni.
Papier de MM. P. Bichelberger, E. Champon et C^e.
Encre de M. Lorilleux fils aîné.
Dessin et gravure des vignettes, têtes de chapitres, culs-de-lampes et cadre par les artistes de la Maison (le dessin par M. Th. Nouvian, la gravure sur bois par M. Lévy, la gravure sur pierre par M. Richard).

L'imprimerie Berger-Levrault et Cie, Notice historique..., Berger-Levrault et Cie Imprimeurs-éditeurs, Nancy et Paris, 1878.

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Baskerville, ANRT, 2018.

Uppercases

À Á Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ ß à á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ ß

Lowercases

á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ ß
fi fl fb ff ffb ffh ffi ffj ffk ffl fh fj fk

Small Caps

À Á Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö × Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ ß
à á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ ß

Ordinals

N^a N^o

Superiors

N^ae^hmⁿo^rs^t

Old style figures

0123456789

Lining Figures

0123456789

Superiors
inferiors

N⁰¹²³⁴⁵⁶⁷⁸⁹ N₀₁₂₃₄₅₆₇₈₉

Numerator,
denominators
fractions

0123456789/0123456789 1/2 1/4 3/4

Punctuation

Ha;:,*
¡Ho! ¿Hi? #/\ [(Hh)]
n-n-n-n_n
„“ah” ,‘ah’ «ah» (ah) o3'o8"

Case sensitive

N:N;N-N-N-N
[(HAHO)]
”“AH” ,‘AH’ «AH» (AH) O3'O8"
„“AH” ,‘AH’ «AH» (AH)

Symbols

¢ \$ € £ ¥ + - × ÷ = ≠ > < ≥ ≤ ± ≈ ~ ¬ ^ ∞ ∅ % ‰
◊ ◇ @ & ¶ § © ® ™ ° † ‡

