Canadian Graphic Design in the 1950s and 1960s:
The Shaping of a Profession

by

Cheryl Dipede

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This paper explores the growth of a professional design community in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s by focusing on two collaborations among graphic designers in the postwar period: the Canadian Typography exhibitions (1958-1964) and the international typographic exhibition Typomundus 20 (1963-1966). These exhibitions helped to produce and publicize a new discourse that allowed Canadian typographers and communication designers to think of themselves as belonging to a unified, distinct community of “graphic designers”. Specifically, the exhibitions encouraged professional cohesion by promoting reflection on the status and role of graphic design with respect to high art, mass communication, and society at large, by advancing a set of professional standards through expert judging and education, and by facilitating an exchange of ideas between Canadian professionals and the international graphic design community. Finally, this paper clarifies the important role played by Marshall McLuhan’s ideas in these developments.
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INTRODUCTION

The 1950s and 1960s were pivotal decades in the forging of graphic design as a self-standing profession. They were also crucial years for the emergence of a Canadian national identity and for the rise of a mass global culture. This paper explores the growth of a professional design community in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s within the context of these larger changes. My paper seeks to establish how a sense of identity—both national and professional—emerged among Canadian graphic designers in this period, and how this identity was linked to the above-mentioned cultural and social developments.

Specifically, I explore two case studies of collaboration among graphic designers in the postwar period that help illuminate the ways in which graphic design was both shaped by and participated in larger social and cultural developments in Canada and internationally during this same period. My focus will be on the Canadian aspect of these collaborations, particularly the conditions surrounding the organization of a series of national and international typographic exhibitions. I will present these exhibitions as two important case studies that reveal key issues and debates at an important moment in the professionalization and disciplinary self-representation of design in Canada. Through an examination of the artifacts and discourse surrounding these exhibitions, my analysis will clarify the social, cultural, and technological changes affecting the Canadian design profession at the midpoint of the twentieth century.

CANADIAN VISUAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

During the 1950s and 1960s the Canadian graphic design community was in a unique position that enabled it to contribute to the shaping of a national identity. Canadian designers of the period were engaged in an increasing number of projects,
whether governmentally-funded or led by crown corporations, that pursued distinctly Canadian forms of visual expression and would prove pivotal to the nation’s visual identity. Among these projects were individual design works such as a new logo for the Canadian National Railway designed by Allan Fleming in 1959, and an Air Canada logo designed by Hans Kleefeld in the 1960s. As primary national symbols, the design of the Canadian flag in 1964, and Jim Donoahue’s design of the Canada Wordmark in 1965, contributed directly towards the building of a national identity. Larger cultural events, such as the International and Universal Exposition (Expo 67) and celebrations of the Canadian centenary in 1967, had strong graphic design components, with a wide range of work by Canadian designers imprinting itself on the Canadian consciousness. Included among the many design projects for Expo 67 were printed materials and brand marks such as the Expo logo, designed by Julien Hébert (Figure 1). Works commissioned for the Canadian centenary included the Canadian centennial maple leaf symbol, designed by Stuart Ash (Figure 2), and Carl Dair’s typeface design Cartier. In the wake of these celebrations, another large-scale design project—the Federal Identity Program (FIP)—was initiated as the 1960s drew to a close. Conceived in 1968 by then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the FIP sought a standardized graphic representation for the Canadian federal government across all levels of communication and identifying visual marks (Large 1991, 32). The FIP was motivated by the government’s desire to “increase public awareness of the role of a central government” (Ibid, 34) in the face of the growing French separatist movement in Quebec. These and other design projects were instrumental in attempts by

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1 The new design was inaugurated and adopted for use as the first Canadian national flag in 1965.
2 Commissioned by the Canadian government and named after Jacques Cartier, the French explorer of Canada, Dair’s typeface – designed in roman and italic versions – Cartier is considered the first Latin typeface designed in Canada.
the Canadian government to establish symbols of Canadian sovereignty in the postwar period that were distinct from the previously dominant influence of Britain, and which would—the government hoped—help to unify the nation.

FORMING OF THE CANADIAN GRAPHIC DESIGN PROFESSION

As contemporary design historian Denise Whitehouse notes, the “postwar expansion of popular culture and mass consumerism was pivotal to the institutionalization of design as a professional practice” (54). The postwar economic boom had a correspondingly positive effect on the growth of the graphic design profession in Canada. The rise of the mass market and new mass communication technologies provided increased opportunities for designers during this period. Economic prosperity extended to those fields supporting commerce, including design for corporate logos, packaging, marketing, and advertisements. By supporting and actively propagating an increased desire for commercial goods, the design profession proved integral to this zone of economic growth. Design was supported in this by new methods of production in the printing industries, which facilitated higher rates of production at cheaper costs to support greater demands for an ever-increasing number of goods and services.

These technological changes were themselves a cohesive force in the growth of the Canadian profession during the 1950s and 1960s. Efforts to define a new role as a single profession—“graphic design,” encompassing aspects of the previously separate professions of commercial artist, typographer, and creative director—were affected by changing technologies. Advances in production methods, from hot metal to
photographic\textsuperscript{3} typesetting, accelerated these processes through the forced obsolescence of the professional letterpress typographer. While commercial artists, for example, may have previously worked with typesetters, they did so in separate premises and direct collaborations were infrequent. Compositors and pressmen worked directly at the printing presses, whereas commercial artists worked in the studio under the supervision of a creative director. With the advance of accessible photographic typesetting, the boundaries between the professions began to fade. Commercial artists and art directors were increasingly able to lay out their own typographic designs independently of traditional typesetters, who in turn had to learn a new set of skills that were no longer distinct from those practiced in commercial art studios.

More than a redistribution of work was required for the new role of the graphic designer to replace the former disciplinary divides. Changing attitudes among commercial artists and typographers towards the status of their professions led to the formation of societies and clubs in which those attitudes were shared and debated. Organizations such as the Society of Typographic Designers of Canada (TDC), the Art Director’s Clubs of Toronto and Montreal, and the Société des Graphistes du Quebec provided a forum for discussion of professional interests, including debates concerning the title of the new profession. I discuss the formation of the TDC and the adoption of the term “graphic designer” in further detail below.

The development of the design profession in Canada during the 1950s was eventually rewarded by recognition from Canada’s governmental funding agencies. This is perhaps best illustrated by the shift in federal funding policy between the early 1950s and

\textsuperscript{3} The transition to offset lithography, accompanied by an increase in photographic composition, would itself be supplanted by electronic and digital data handling in the 1970s and 1980s (Dewalt, 119).
the early 1960s. Released in 1951, the report from the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters & Sciences (commonly referred to as the Massey Report), advocated governmental support for the cultural sector to counteract British, and especially American, hegemony. Support for cultural industries was thus seen as a step towards encouraging Canadian national unity and sovereignty. Though the Massey Report resulted in significant financial support for the fine arts, literature, broadcasting, and theatre sectors, design was ignored. Ten years would elapse before the design field received similar governmental support. With the creation of the National Design Council in 1961 (on the recommendation of the TDC⁴), the government acknowledged the professional status of the design field in Canada and implicitly recognized the growth of the profession over the intervening years since the Massey Report.

INTERNATIONALISM AND THE FORMATION OF DISCIPLINARY IDENTITY

In addition to national and professional considerations, a number of internationalist trends can be seen to have been influential among Canadian designers during the postwar period. Ideas of increased cooperation among nations gained popularity across many fields during this time, and design was no exception. The cold-war era saw the creation of international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, which were concerned with the political, economic, and social wellbeing of nations in addition to international security. The formation of international design organizations such as the International Center for the Typographic Arts (ICTA) in New York, and the International Council of

Graphic Design Associations (Icograda) in London, in 1960 and 1963 respectively, provides evidence for the impact of such discourse on the design field. In addition to pursuing international cooperation and design standards and promoting professional growth, these organizations fostered ideas of design as a socially responsible cultural agent.

The rise of humanist ideals during the postwar period can be seen, in part, as a response to the destruction and human suffering inflicted during the Second World War. Visionaries such as Marshall McLuhan and C. Wright Mills fed the postwar social consciousness on ideas of future societies that included both a “global village”, and an alternative form of democracy with widespread individual freedom achieved through a rational, utopian liberalism. In this environment, design communities were energized by a belief in the power of designers and cultural institutions to promote global harmony and understanding. Large-scale exhibitions presented during the 1950s at important cultural institutions such as New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) reinforced such notions by stressing international humanist ideals. Exhibitions such as the *Family of Man* photographic exhibition, which included the work of 273 photographers from 68 countries, and the *Good Design* series of exhibitions highlighting works of industrial and product design, were staged during an era in which discussion of internationalism, the designer, social responsibility, and the power of the “cultural apparatus” (Mills 1967) were in the air. Postwar designers were thus embedded in a cultural atmosphere that encouraged them to strive for more socially progressive ideals, and to view their own work as partially serving such ideals.

An additional factor linking the Canadian design community to international trends was the post-war immigration of Europe-trained designers to Canada. This
migration of émigré designers resulted in professional organizations, and a Canadian
design community itself, that was international in composition. The presence of these
designers from diverse countries played an important role in the organization of the
Canadian Typography exhibitions during the 1950s and 1960s, which I will now discuss
in detail.

**CANADIAN TYPOGRAPHY SHOWS**

**STORY OF THE NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS**

The Canadian *Typography* exhibitions were a series of national shows that took
place between 1958 and 1964. The Toronto-based national design organization, the TDC,
organized the six, juried exhibitions in conjunction with the Rolland Paper Company. The
shows’ stated mandate was to “gather and evaluate examples of Canadian typographic
design...reward those of outstanding merit...[and] display the best examples” from the
preceding one- or two-year period (Society... 1957). The *Typography* exhibitions allowed
the TDC to pursue its larger aims to build a professional status for designers by
“encouraging higher standards” in printed communication, and “stimulating public
appreciation” for the profession (Ibid).

The inaugural exhibition, *Typography 58*, was succeeded by four annual shows
held between 1959 and 1962, and one further exhibition in 1964 that included works
created over a two–year period (June 1962 – June 1964). A seventh exhibition planned for
1966 released a call for entries, but was ultimately aborted when major sponsor Rolland
Paper withdrew their financial support and the TDC failed to secure another sponsor. In

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5 The Typographic Designers of Canada (TDC) would rename itself the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC) in 1968, becoming legally incorporated by national charter in 1976.
addition to an international travelling exhibition, each *Typography* show produced its own printed catalogue and other ephemera, including calls for submissions, invitations, and printed menus to accompany formal awards dinners (Figure 3). The printed catalogues in particular were intended as “a source of inspiration and guidance” for designers working in the related fields of commercial art, advertising, printing and publishing. These catalogues and their content, as I argue below, would ultimately play a larger role in unifying these sister professions under the umbrella of “graphic designer” (Society… 1957).

Calls for participation in these exhibitions resulted in hundreds of submissions from across Canada, which were subsequently judged in categories such as book design and commercial printing by a panel of judges selected from the TDC’s membership. As the Canadian design community grew and developed over the period of the exhibitions, so too the number of submissions increased and the categorical divisions developed to reflect the expansion of the profession. The initial *Typography 58* show, for example, attracted 1250 submissions of work completed between January 1st, 1957 and June 30th, 1958, from which a total of 266 works were selected for inclusion in the catalogue and travelling exhibition (Anon., 63). By 1961 the number of submissions had risen to 1660 (Donnelly 1997, 61) and in its final year *Typography 64* received 2272 submissions from which 218 winning designs were selected for exhibition and inclusion in the catalogue (Ibid, 80).

The increase in submissions reflected a diversification of categories, which allowed craftsmen working in the previously distinct roles of typographer, typesetter, book designer, art director, layout artist, commercial artist, and even students to think of their
work as falling under the unified classification of *typographic design*. Typography 58 began with just three competitive categories for works of “Canadian book design”, “Canadian business printing”, and “Canadian magazine design”. In its final year the *Typography* exhibition had expanded to include additional divisions such as a category for experimental design and a student awards category. The addition of these new categories expressed a trend towards forms of production with less direct ties to the market, and an interest in fostering future growth in the profession through education.

In addition to images and attributions for the award-winning entries, each *Typography* catalogue included written commentary from both members of the TDC and contemporary designers who were not directly involved in the exhibition’s organization. Introductory essays, statements from the judges, and closing messages from the current president of the TDC all addressed the state of the profession and promoted reflection on various aspects of the social, professional, and artistic role of the designer. I suggest that these articles, and the ideologies they promoted, made the *Typography* exhibitions significant internal sites of disciplinary definition and change at a key moment in the profession.

**EXHIBITIONS AS MECHANISM AND CATALYST FOR ARTICULATION OF IDENTITY**

In his book on the British postwar periodical *Typographica*, design historian Rick Poynor notes the magazine’s primary function as a means of internal address and commentary for the design community (Poynor, 10). In a similar manner, the products of the Canadian *Typography* exhibitions functioned to promote professionalization by

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6 The As discussed further below, the label ‘typographic designer’ eventually morphed into the designation of ‘graphic designer’.
supporting the discipline from within. Whereas businesses, governments, and consumers were the primary audience for works of graphic design in the pre- and immediate postwar decades, with the *Typography* exhibitions and their supporting printed matter, the audience for the exhibited works shifted towards the design community and designers themselves. The *Typography* exhibitions communicated associations of aesthetic value and quality to the selected works and ascribed a status above ephemera to the selections. In this and in other respects, the *Typography* exhibitions thus fulfilled the TDC’s mandate to “establish and maintain a professional status for typographic designers” (Society... 1956, 1), both by promoting consensus around standards among designers, and by “stimul[ating] public appreciation for [design] throughout Canada” (Society... 1957).

As this second quote shows, the pursuit and maintenance of a professional status for designers was inextricably linked to aims of obtaining wide public recognition of the new profession by *Typography* organizers. Situating works of graphic design within high-cultural contexts including museums, libraries, art galleries, and universities allowed show organizers to achieve this goal, while lending something of the associated cultural capital of these institutions to the works. Award–winning entries from the fourth annual competition, *Typography* 61, for example, hung for two weeks at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, and spent a further four weeks on display at the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal, among other destinations. In other years *Typography*’s exhibition venues included The Ontario Architectural Association, the Canadian National Exhibition, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and a number of universities and public libraries across the country.
Through their recontextualization within these venues, the exhibited design works acquired new value in their role as exemplars of professional standards. In the gallery setting, the design works additionally profited from associations with the fine art traditionally exhibited in the spaces. The aura of the artwork and its associations with formal “purity” and disinterested autonomy elevated these works of design by distancing them from their original commercial settings and associations with the marketplace. Moreover, the Canadian graphic design profession itself benefitted from the association with high culture through these exhibitions. Designers and the public alike were encouraged to associate an increased status with works of Canadian design, and the profession of the graphic designer.

**UPHOLDING THE VALUE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN EDUCATION**

The organizers of the *Typography* shows were not only concerned with the advancement of the profession at the time, but also with the future of the nascent Canadian design community. Exhibition organizers sought a sense of continuity within the design community by attempting to ensure that future designers were equipped to uphold the professional standards embodied by the awards. The exhibitions pursued this goal by stressing the need for increased professional design, and by promoting the need to adequately educate the next generation of Canadian designers. For instance, in his essay at the end of the 1959 catalogue, Canadian designer Allan Fleming commented on the state of design education in Canada at the time, and argued for educational subsidies and better training for students of typography (Society... 1959, 57). Frank Davies echoed the call for better design education in the following year’s catalogue, concluding his essay “Why All
This Fuss About Typographic Design?” with an appeal for better training for designers, so as to enable consistently rising standards of work (Society… 1960, 58).

This advocacy for design education reflects a recognition among the Typography organizers of the importance of design pedagogy to the future development of Canadian design, and may have inspired the inclusion of the first “Student Entries” category in Typography 60. In his introduction to the new category the following year, Carl Dair noted apparent progress in the incorporation of design training by Canadian art schools (Society… 1961, 69). Dair commented on typographic design as a newcomer to the curricula of art and technical schools, while lauding the high quality of the work submitted to the competition by students from the Vancouver School of Art in particular, dubbing the school a success in producing “[art] students who are competent designers” (Ibid). Noting the importance of continuing to develop student work, Pieter Brattinga praised the Canadian Typography exhibitions for “select[ing] and print[ing] student work together with the work of professionals” in his introduction to the Typography 62 catalogue (Society… 1962, 7). Brattinga goes on to remark “it is the future generation that will establish the real Canadian face of design” (Ibid).

The new category continued to attract submissions and comment until the final Typography show in 1964, which particularly praised student entries from the Ontario College of Art. By expressing a desire to include these future (post-school) designers within the umbrella of professionalism projected by the TDC through these exhibitions, the show organizers sought to unite the Canadian design community around common social and pedagogic goals. The development of the student category under the umbrella of the
Typography exhibitions serves as an example of the professionalization operating at the heart of the Canadian postwar design community.

**AN EXPANDED SOCIAL ROLE FOR GRAPHIC DESIGNERS**

As a professional forum, the Typography exhibitions played a part in the growing awareness and prestige of the graphic design profession and the role of the designer over the years of the exhibitions. Debates among professionals attending the exhibitions, as documented in articles published in trade periodicals of the day, prompted reflection on the social role for the designer as one that included new responsibilities to larger human values and ideals. The Typography exhibitions and their surrounding discourse served to bring these various debates into focus within the Canadian community of designers. In an article published in a 1964 issue of Print magazine, Canadian designer (and Typography juror) Carl Dair expressed the necessity for a broader social role for the typographer that would serve utopian social aims in the cold war period (1964, 85).

Noting that “the typographer cannot escape involvement in the social problems of his epoch,” Dair supported his idea of the socially responsible designer with a discussion of the importance of communication and the communication designer to the well-being of all nations in modern society (Ibid). In the same article, he further advocated communication design as a panacea that would bridge “barriers of race, religion, language, politics, and economics…and give the human race a common basis of communication, and from this, understanding and tolerance” (Ibid). Faced with the cold war and the possibility of a dystopian future, Dair called upon his own colleagues in the design community to
construct a path to this imagined utopia. As an organizing member and judge of the *Typography* exhibitions from the beginning, Dair’s optimism towards the designer’s agency to effect positive social change was influential.

Direct evidence of Dair’s desire to influence other designers can be seen in his correspondence with Allan Fleming. In a letter written in June of 1957, Dair encouraged Fleming to take a more influential role in the community himself by supporting the newly founded TDC (Donnelly 1995, 57). Dair continued to advocate for an expanded social role for the designer in reports and addresses including his introduction to *Typography* 61’s student category. In his address on the opening of the *Typography* 62 exhibition in Toronto in January of 1963, Dair noted the power of good typographic design to impact society at large, and “greatly enrich our lives...in our relations with our fellow inhabitants of this planet” (Dair 1963a). As part of the textual apparatus of the *Typography* exhibitions – as an evident aim of the organizers – such reflection encouraged Canadian designers to contemplate their shared responsibilities to larger human values. By promoting reflection on the social role of the designer, the *Typography* exhibitions strengthened the Canadian design community’s sense of itself as connected to an international design community and its aims, in addition to the local goals of professionalization and development of Canadian design standards.

**CANADIAN LINKS TO INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMMUNITY**

“Typographic design is now thoroughly international”, declared Frank Davies in an essay included in the *Typography* 60 catalogue (Society... 1960, 57). A central

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7 Dair’s call echoes other examples of utopian-inspired initiatives from the same period, such as those proposed by Rudolf Modley and Margaret Mead. See Bresnahan (2011) for discussion.
contribution to professional cohesion among Canadian graphic designers of the period was their ability to imagine themselves as members of a larger community. The essays and commentary included in the *Typography* catalogues, which became a forum for both Canadian and international designers to discuss issues of concern to the design profession, facilitated this. Much of the commentary included in the catalogues focused on international design trends, with extensive discussion focused on the International Style and its impact on notions of a national style in the later years of the exhibitions. Designers additionally debated the changing role of the profession in an age of increased international communication. Essays written by Canadian designers emphasized links to an international design community, including Frank Davies’ essay “Why All This Fuss About Typographic Design?” as quoted above.

Written contributions to the exhibition catalogues by American and European designers further connected the Canadian design community to international debates by offering a global perspective on the state of the profession. The catalogue for *Typography* 61 featured an introductory article on the state of modern typography written by the American designer (and director of the International Centre for the Typographic Arts (ICTA) in New York) Aaron Burns. In the article Burns discussed typographic developments taking place around the world in places such as Czechoslovakia, Japan and Holland—and North American designers’ excitement in discovering these “new cultures with different forms of communication that truly present new and challenging problems to the designer” (Society… 1961, 7). Burns went on to claim that due to the ease of modern travel “the world [was]...becoming ever smaller” which in turn lead to new demands being placed on communication design (Ibid).
The catalogue accompanying *Typography 62* also opened with an article written by a non-Canadian designer: Dutch-American Pieter Brattinga—designer, professor, and Chairman of the Department of Advertising Design and Visual Communication at New York’s Pratt Institute. In “An Appreciation,” Brattinga commented on the influence of new and future communications media on local design and design education, noting that “designs which are executed today in a far corner of the world will be known to us in a few weeks” (Society… 1962, 7). The *Typography* catalogues containing these statements themselves participated in the developments they describe, bringing information and opinions from the wider world to the Canadian design community and bringing Canadian design to the attention of both national and international audiences.

Further evidence of a connection between the postwar Canadian design community and a developing international community of designers can be found in the multi-lingual nature of the *Typography* exhibition catalogues. Though the catalogue accompanying the initial *Typography 58* exhibition was published in English only, catalogues for each subsequent exhibition featured either bi-lingual or tri-lingual catalogue text. Catalogues for the years 1961-1964 included both English and French articles, while 1959 and 1960 included additional German language translations. This multilingualism was not only an appeal to Canada’s historical roots in both French and English colonies, but reflected the much more recent influx of postwar immigrants to Canada.

Between 1951 and 1965 Toronto and Montreal benefitted from a wave of immigration by designers from England, Germany, Switzerland and other European countries. Designers from these countries, including German émigrés such as: Rolf Harder (1952), Hans Kleefeld (1952), Peter Dorn (1953), Ernst Barendscher (1958), Gerhard
Doerrie (1961), and others, brought training and ideas from their native countries to their new Canadian communities. The participation of these designers with distinct educational and cultural backgrounds, in the growth of the Canadian design profession reinforced that community’s self-image as *thoroughly international*. With its globally diverse constitution, participants in the Toronto group were intrinsically tied to an international design community that saw itself reflected in the *Typography* exhibitions and the membership of the TDC itself. All four founding members of the TDC were recent immigrants to Canada who had trained in Great Britain. Frank Davies, John Gibson, Sam Smart and Frank Newfeld\(^8\) came to Canada from England between 1951 and 1954, and held the first meeting of the new society of designers at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto in 1956 (Donnelly 1997, 57). The Society of Typographic Designers of Canada was born out of that first meeting, identifying those eligible for membership as “any practicing typographic designer resident in Canada” (Society… circa 1960).

As the organizing body of the *Typography* shows, with exhibition jurors drawn from its membership, the TDC extended the representation of a culturally diverse Canadian design community through the exhibitions themselves. In this way the *Typography* exhibitions drew the developing design community together by cultivating the image of Canadian designers as both bound to a larger international community, and also as constituent representatives of it.

\(^8\) Unlike Davies, Gibson, and Smart who were British Nationals, Newfeld was born in Czechoslovakia and immigrated to England with his family as a child (Newfeld 2008, 9).
DEVELOPING AESTHETIC CRITERIA

INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STYLE ON CANADIAN TYPOGRAPHIC STYLE

Concomitant with their reflection on their societal and cultural roles, Canadian graphic designers of this period hotly debated the stylistic principles governing their work. A key topic of interest to the Canadian postwar graphic design community was the increasing popularity of the Swiss International Typographic Style of design (hereafter the International Style), and the meaning of this trend for Canadian designers. Indeed, Brian Donnelly notes the International Style as the “single great reference point for the description of postwar design” among Canadian designers of the period (2006b, 292). The International Style was a formal system for combining images and text that promoted objectivity, rationality and standardization through means such as san-serif typography, clean lines and grids, and the use of photography over illustration.

Design historian Philip Meggs notes that the International Style was particularly effective in countries where bilingual or trilingual communication was necessary, such as Switzerland and Canada (Meggs, 373). This program of visual standardization, which espoused legibility over ornament, also fit well with the goal of intercultural communication envisioned by designers like Dair. In Canada, interest in the potential of the International Style developed among graphic designers as intrinsically connected to both a postwar rise of humanist notions of social progress and an increasing sense of the importance of the role of the designer in a mass society (I discuss these tendencies in more detail below).

Much evidence of the increasing influence of the International Style on the Canadian design community can be found in the debates and products of the Typography
exhibitions. Catalogues and articles written over the period of the exhibitions illustrate a progressive adoption of design methods associated with the Style, and a concurrent sense of professional development. Reviewers of the period noted that Canadian design transformed from “dull and old fashioned” (Smart 872) prior to Typography 58, to progressively more experimental, innovative, and finally rational and “the best of the Typography shows that has ever been mounted” on the Typography 64 exhibition (Ibid 873). While earlier exhibitions featured works drawn from a variety of influences, Typography 64 showed a greater number of works in the International Style among both its award-winning entries and in the design of its catalogue. Prior to 1964, the Typography catalogue exteriors reflected a range of design styles, featuring serifed fonts and an eclectic use of space and colour (Figure 4). By contrast, the cover of the Typography 64 catalogue employed the newly designed sans-serif font Helvetica⁹, and further deviated from its predecessors by virtue of its square shape and grid-based asymmetrical layout (Figure 5).

While the catalogue exterior delighted in the International Style, debates within the catalogue show that Canadian designers did not universally embrace the new style. Influential Canadian designer and TDC member Allan Fleming lamented the prevalence of the International Style throughout the exhibition in his article opening the 1964 catalogue. Fleming complained of overreliance on the “safely anonymous” International Style in the submitted works, and expressed concern at the loss of diversity and experimentation attendant upon the popularity of the new style (Society…1964, 7). Despite noting the high quality of many of the submissions, including some Swiss-inspired designs, and

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⁹ Originally released in 1957 as ‘Neue Haas Grotesk’ and named after the Swiss foundry employing its designer Max Miedinger, the name of the typeface was changed to ‘Helvetica’, a traditional Latin name for Switzerland, in 1961 (Easton 118).
commenting positively on the development and maturity of Canadian design over the course of the exhibitions, Fleming cautioned against the standardization inherent in a truly international design style (Ibid).

Fleming’s concern hinted at the seemingly intrinsic conflict between international diversity and local identity. In touching upon the desire to form a distinctly Canadian design community, a key aim of the national Typography exhibitions, Fleming and other Canadian designers acknowledged the local community’s progressive interest in the new style over the period of the exhibitions. In their desire to see the development of a distinctly Canadian style, however, Canadian design professionals could only call for caution when faced with the popularity of the International style.

FORM AND FUNCTION

The Typography exhibitions promoted reflection on distinctions between art and craft, form and function, and the nature of experiment versus communication in typographic design. In so doing, they focused the attention of the design community on the shifting role of the typographer, to that of **typographic designer**, and eventually **graphic designer**. Two technological changes were transforming the typographic profession at the time: the systematic automation of hot metal typography, and later the transition to photographic methods of reproduction. These changes had a polarizing effect on the historical profession of the typographer. Some typographers became specialized machine operators, and abandoned the creative aspect of their profession almost completely. Others increasingly specialized in the creative aspect of typesetting and eventually left the press altogether to take up work in studios. At the same time, commercial designers were increasingly able to exercise greater control over typographic layout, thanks to the
accessibility of typographic design in the photographic medium. It is these two latter
groups, the creative typographers and the commercial designers-cum-typographers, which
become first typographic designers, and eventually adopt the designation graphic designers.
These professionals, now completely dedicated to the creative aspects of typography, were
free to contemplate the aesthetic qualities of their work.

Many Canadian postwar designers saw beauty and form as instrumental to
communication in the craft of typographic design. In an address given on the occasion of
the opening of the Typography 62 exhibition in January of 1963, Dair noted the designer’s
connection to the formal artistic concerns of his craft: “The typographer[^10] is concerned
with the form of the letter…[it] is an object of aesthetic satisfaction, and the weaving of a
page of type an exercise in artistic skill” (1963a, 291). While he expressed a delight with
letterforms as an aesthetic experience, Dair ultimately defined the role of these beautiful
forms as being in the service of their communicative function. By promoting reflection on
the aesthetic value of typography, Dair was implicitly encouraging typographers to think
of themselves as designers rather than craftsmen. Typographers now had the freedom to
choose whether and how much they valued functionality, and the appropriate limits of this
newly found freedom had to be settled through discussion and debate.

Other Canadian designers weighed in on the debate concerning design’s
commitment to functionality. In his foreword to the “Advertisements” category in
Typography 61, Canadian designer and TDC founding member Leslie Smart noted that he
was “disappointed that the catalogues had a tendency to…glamorize rather than be a
functional reference, which, after all, is what they should be” (1968, 873). Such

[^10]: In my reading of Dair, the word ‘typographer’ is best understood in its new and broader meaning.
discussions of beauty, form, and function around the *Typography* exhibitions were fundamental to the expansion of the typographic profession beyond a mere craft in which functionality reigned supreme by default.

An exchange between Dair and French Canadian journalist (and poet) Gilles Hénault that took place against the backdrop of *Typography 62* illustrates the two competing positions, and the importance of the discussion of form and function to the expanding design field. In his address on the opening of *Typography 62*, Dair placed typographic design in the service of communication, remarking that beauty that fails in interpretation, fails overall. While he expressed a delight with letterforms as an aesthetic experience, Dair ultimately defined the role of these beautiful forms as being in the service of function (1963a, 291). In “Reflections on Seeing Typography 62,” published in *Canadian Art* magazine in 1963, Hénault responded critically to Dair’s claims to a functional essence at the heart of the typographic craft. Reacting to what he classified as the functionalist position expressed by Dair in statements such as “the function of typography is communication” (1963a, 291), Hénault’s message was that the pursuit of beauty itself was a vital process of communication, beyond instrumental considerations. Hénault likened Dair’s position to Le Corbusier’s *house as a machine for living in*, employing both ideas as counter-examples to current architectural trends against functionalist dictates (Hénault, 289). Hénault pressed his point further, commenting, “Communication embraces an aesthetic element that Mr. Dair seems to want to exclude” (Ibid). Hénault identified imagination, taste, and a sense of values as important characteristics of communication in the larger sense of the word, stating, “The solution of a mere communication problem is not the end of the road” (Ibid, my emphasis).
Hénault’s argument against Dair’s functionalist position was also implicitly an argument against typographer Beatrice Warde’s well-known 1956 essay “The Crystal Goblet”, which bound the value of typography to its function. In her essay, Warde claimed that typography should strive to be an invisible vessel supporting the communicated message, created to “reveal rather than to hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain” (Warde, 18). Hénault’s definition of beauty, on the other hand, appears to be adopted from the legacy of Kantian aesthetic discourse, wherein beauty offers access to the sublime or to universal truths that are essentially divided from the realm of use and function. Although Dair praised the need for aesthetic beauty, he was not concerned with typographic beauty as a spiritual or ontological experience. Instead, Dair was interested in the knowable and concrete aspects of typographic beauty and the measures of its formal construction including: proportion, subtlety of line, good form, and discriminating taste (1963a, 291).

These debates, concerning an essential divide between art and craft played out in the pages of the Typography catalogues, as others in the Canadian design community discussed where typographic design fell between the two categories. Allan Fleming decisively located typography on the applied end of the art-craft spectrum, referring to it as a craft or trade in his essay for the 1959 Typography catalogue (Society... 1959, 57). Expressing the opposite position in the following year, Frank Davies suggested that letterforms could be made to convey supplemental meaning to the text in the hands of a skilled typographer (Society... 1960, 55). Referring to “graphic design” (Ibid, 51) Davies likened this successful approach to artistry that was “at its purest, a form of poetry” (Ibid,
Hence Davies used the term graphic design as a rhetorical tool to explicitly distance typography from craft. The following year, in the 1961 catalogue TDC President William Toye stated that, unlike pictures in an art gallery, “typographic design is a craft not an art” (Society... 1961, 3). Aaron Burns, however, called attention to the indeterminate status of the shifting professional field and the role of the typographer in the same catalogue. In his essay “Where Are We Going?” Burns noted that typographers themselves were still uncertain as to the limits of their field, but that “typography is more than it was before” (Society... 1961, 8). In a later paragraph, Burns elaborated on the changes to the profession, referring to new responsibilities for the “communicator–designer–typographer” (Ibid).

In texts from three years later, the profession still struggled to define its boundaries. While the foreword to Typography 64 boldly proclaimed typographic design to be an art, TDC president Gerry Moses continued to refer to typographic design as a craft in the catalogue’s concluding message (Society... 1964, 75). There was clearly a lack of consensus among these designers on the definition of typographic design, and the role of the designer, in relation to the art/craft distinction. At stake for the profession was the loss of its relationship to its traditional roots in the craft of letterpress typography. This association with art also caused concern among those who saw a danger in losing what was unique about design—its functional aspects—in gaining cultural status. Despite these differences of opinion, the Typography exhibitions nevertheless played an important role in promoting self-definition and establishing boundaries for these debates among Canadian designers.
EXPERIMENT VERSUS LINKS TO COMMERCE

Design of an experimental, rather than functional, nature was encouraged with the introduction of the “Experimental Typography” category in 1961. With the creation of this category the Typography exhibitions sought to encourage an association with the “free” status of high art, with an emphasis on the aesthetic rather than the communication value of the works. By providing a forum for graphic design less driven by commerce, the Typography organizers endorsed an expanded definition of design that included work freed from subordination to market demands, while additionally encouraging individual creativity within the design community.

The reality of the experimental work submitted by the Canadian design community rarely satisfied the ambitions of Typography organizers, however. Though praising student work for its colourful patterns and textures, the Typography judges were disappointed with the majority of work submitted by professional designers in this category. In his introduction to the “Experimental Design” section in the 1961 catalogue, judge Harold Kurschenska disappointedly noted: “the professional designer is not experimenting” (Society… 1961, 63). Kurschenska feared where this lack of experiment would lead, saying, “eventually all designs will look alike” (Ibid). Part of Kurschenska’s concern can be seen as a reaction to the growing influence of the International Style, as noted above. Fear of the Style’s homogenizing effects can be seen as a paradoxical result of Canadian designers’ desire to establish professional standards and participate in international trends while simultaneously seeking to form a distinct professional community. Kurschenska’s concerns were echoed the following year by category judge Gerry Moses. While extolling the virtues of experiment as “the symbol of challenge and curiosity in man,” and equating
experiment with creativity, Moses noted sadly that he found only “a thin shaft of hope” for experiment among that year’s submissions (Society... 1962, 63). Moses voiced a more specific fear of the International Style; that imitation of a universal design style would render the designer a mere craftsperson, without agency. Was design simply a tool of communication, and ultimately commerce, or could a skilled designer successfully evoke excitement and the intangible?

On the whole, the Typography exhibitions’ focus on aesthetic–based judging rewarded the formal, artistic qualities of the works, while disregarding the works’ success as communication intended to extend commodity production and consumption. By recontextualizing commercial artifacts as aesthetic objects, the exhibitions succeeded in expanding the definition and value of works of design and promoting an expanded definition of the profession among the national design community and to a broader public. Despite this success, the majority of works exhibited under the Typography banner remained inextricably linked to commercial interests by virtue of content tied to their clients’ products. Additionally, the sought-for distancing of design’s relationship from commerce ironically clashed with the fate of the shows themselves. The Typography exhibitions retained and indeed relied upon their connection to industry through the supporting role played by sponsor Rolland Paper, until eventually the exhibitions came to an end with the withdrawal of this sponsorship.

Though the exhibitions were only staged a few times over a short number of years, the discussions of national and international community, ideological divisions between art and design, and debates concerning form and function that surrounded them participated in an important shift in the nature of the graphic design profession in the postwar period.
Ideas of the day concerning a greater artistic autonomy and an expanded social role for the designer, which surfaced in debates surrounding the *Typography* exhibitions, promoted a new and cohesive identity for the graphic designer as a figure who would henceforth be responsible to society at large, and not simply to the commercial interests of clients.

**TYPOMUNDUS**

The international typographic exhibition *Typomundus 20* (henceforth *Typomundus*) that spanned the years 1963–1966, provides the opportunity for a similar analysis to that performed on the Canadian *Typography* exhibitions in the previous section. While *Typomundus* operated at a larger scale than the Canadian *Typography* exhibitions in terms of both the quantity of submissions and geographical reach, there was an additional important difference between the way the national and international shows worked to achieve cohesion: *Typomundus* achieved professional cohesion mainly through exclusion and by limiting the variety of possible typographic styles. In *Typomundus* a particular kind of aesthetic, defined by the International Style, became institutionalized as a positive standard, whereas the value of the International Style was still being debated in the Canadian *Typography* exhibitions. A combination of exclusionary practices at play in *Typomundus* increased the homogeneity of its selected works, effectively promoting a narrow set of professional standards within the emerging field of graphic design. These exclusionary practices played in favour of Canadian designers, many of whom conformed to the International Style in their work, and allowed Canada to position itself as a leading contributor to the emerging profession.
Typomundus was an international travelling exhibition of juried typographic design works that sought to represent a collected world of typography as art. Conceived under the auspices of ICTA (the International Center for the Typographic Arts in New York), Typomundus drew approximately 10,000 submissions from countries around the world from its initial call for entries in 1963. The exhibition notice, distributed among art industry periodicals including Art Education, announced the show’s aim of being “the first worldwide exhibition of the most significant typography of the 20th century” (National..., vii). Initial submissions were sent to Toronto, where an international jury of “design experts” (Ibid) made up of Swiss, Swedish, Dutch, German, French, Japanese, Slovakian, Canadian, and American judges, spent a week in October of 1964 selecting 612 individual works for inclusion in the show. Typomundus’ mandate also included the creation of a permanent archive at ICTA’s offices in New York both to house the selected entries and to serve as “a research centre for designers, educators, and students” (International..., vii). 

Typomundus thus represented the ambitions of an international organizing body to not merely display but to gather, preserve, and document a global history of typographic design for the first sixty years of the twentieth century.

A bound, book-length catalogue of the exhibition published in 1966, included brief introductory essays written by each of Typomundus’ twelve international judges and three of its organizers\textsuperscript{11}, alongside its black-and-white reproductions of the selected works. Preceding the winning entries in the catalogue were brief biographies of each judge, a

\textsuperscript{11} Judges: Max Caflisch (Switzerland), Carl Dair (Canada), Lou Dorfsman (U.S.A.), Olle Eksell (Sweden), Roger Excoffon (France), Hiromu Hara (Japan), Oldrich Hlavsa (Czechoslovakia), Hans Neuburg (Switzerland), Anton Stankowski (Germany), Horst Erich Wolter (Germany), Hermann Zapf (Germany), and Piet Zwart (Netherlands). Organizers: Paul Rand, Honorary Chairman (U.S.A.), Aaron Burns, Director of the International Centre for the Typographic Arts (U.S.A.), and Marilyn Hoffner, Publicity Committee (U.S.A.).
group photo, and two pages of smaller photos of the members of the international jury.

The essays and biographies were followed by a collection of design work from each judge that “typifies his design attitudes” (International..., iii). Those works selected for inclusion in Typomundus were grouped under familiar divisions in the catalogue, such as: Book Jackets, Posters, Reports, and Printing for Commerce, and other categories expressing more radical forms of production—Experimental, Miscellaneous Typography, Lettering and Calligraphy, and Typography in Architecture—for a total of 17 categories in all.

The organizers of Typomundus were both ambitious in their scope and elaborate in their praise of the project. Future exhibitions were planned to follow the initial Typomundus exhibition every three years (International..., x), and from the first exhibition it was hoped “a level of excellence for the whole world to emulate” would result (Ibid). German Typomundus juror Hermann Zapf used his introductory catalogue text to orient visitors to the exhibition toward the “masterpieces” of graphic and typographic design, (International..., xxvi). A second German juror, Anton Stankowski, took the opportunity of his written introduction to acclaim his fellow jurors as “well–known” and “instilled with a spirit of idealistic realism toward graphic design” (International..., xxix). Typomundus’ jury was indeed comprised of eminent members of various national design communities, including in addition to the Germans Zapf and Stankowski, Dutch typographer Piet Zwart, American Lou Dorfsman, and France’s Roger Excoffon, et al., with the well-known American designer Paul Rand serving as honorary Chairman. In addition to the specimens of work from each Typomundus juror in the front matter pronouncing the high professional standing of the judges, the catalogue also

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12 These plans ultimately remained unrealized.
documents the inclusion of multiple works by *Typomundus* jurors and organizers for display in the final exhibition.

Carl Dair, who had been the force behind various national *Typography* exhibitions, also served as a judge and organizer for *Typomundus*. Dair’s role in *Typomundus* became pivotal for the organization when American authorities refused to grant entry visas to *Typomundus* judges from Eastern European countries in the wake of the Cold-War (Donnelly 1995, 61). Originally slated to take place in New York, the evaluation of submissions by the international jury was relocated to Toronto due to Dair’s efforts. Though resulting in a larger role for Canada, this late stage relocation also meant a delay in the judging proceedings and an extended submission deadline (Figure 6). This delay and the move to a Canadian location resulted in organizing roles for other members of the TDC. The majority of *Typomundus* jurors acknowledged the efforts of the Canadian organizers and the TDC in their catalogue credits or introductory essays.

Max Caflisch of Switzerland, referred to the Canadian organizers as “superb,” touting their virtues of “calmness, determination, and fairness” (International..., xvi), while Stankowski praised the Canadians for their role in “meticulously classifying and preparing the entries” (Ibid, xxix). Through both its inclusion of a Canadian jury member and its selection of winning entries by Canadian designers, *Typomundus* allowed Canadian designers to associate the concerns of their local community with those of an international community of professional designers. By seeing their work and that of their countrymen reflected in the exhibition and catalogue, it further enabled these designers to literally visualize themselves as part of an international group of contemporary designers, and to imagine themselves as effective participants in that larger forum. That the prominent role
of Canada in this international showcase was due to the US entry restrictions for Eastern European judges exemplifies the tension between the organizers’ utopian notions of international cooperation and the reality of Cold-War politics.

UTOPIAN IDEALS OF GLOBAL COOPERATION

*Typomundus* endeavoured to exemplify many of the same ideals of international cooperation and inclusiveness that had earlier been articulated by Dair in conjunction with the *Typography* exhibitions. The very name *Typomundus*, a Latin phrase that translates as *type of the world*, reveals the exhibition’s global aspirations. Embossed in gold on the exhibition catalogue cover, the epithet was illustrated to represent this idea symbolically: the letter *o* in *typo* has been replaced by an image of a globe, representing a map of the world (Figure 7). Underscoring this inclusiveness, the catalogue text appears in three languages: English, French, and German.

Additionally, *Typomundus* included designers from outside of Europe and North America on both its jury and in its selected works, strengthening (albeit weakly) the exhibition’s claim to global inclusiveness. Japanese designer Hiromu Hara served as the single *Typomundus* jury member from Asia. Hara, along with the other jurors, helped select a number of works by Japanese designers for inclusion in the exhibition and catalogue. Czechoslovakian juror Oldrich Hlavsa underscored the exhibition’s inclusive aims in his introduction, calling for the exhibition to mark “the beginning of a bond among the typographic designers of the world” (International..., xviii). Hara expressed similar inclusive aspirations for the exhibition while commenting implicitly on the Cold-War politics responsible for the shift in venue, noting, “it is desirable for all of us to cooperate on the international scale regardless of differences in ideologies or political
beliefs” (Ibid, xxvii). In the exhibition catalogue, the work of Japanese designers appeared alongside the works of designers from South Africa, Australia, Czechoslovakia, and those of other nations—including Canada (Figure 8).

The prominent emphasis on the social role of typography as a means of international communication and cooperation in Typomundus and its attendant discourse reflected another Canadian contribution to design debates at this time, namely the influential theories of University of Toronto professor and media theorist Marshall McLuhan.

Interest in McLuhan’s ideas was part of a larger shift in understanding the importance both of communication technologies and the role of the communicator in a mass society. In particular, McLuhan’s theories of the global village, where “the vernacular…affords a glimpse of social unity” (1962, 217) were influential among the jurors and designers involved with Typomundus. A number of Typomundus jurors referred to the importance of typography’s value as communication in their introductions to the catalogue, and American judge Lou Dorfsman went further. In his introductory essay on the primacy of typography to the historical development of civilization from Gutenberg’s invention of movable type, Dorfsman referred directly to McLuhan’s ideas on typographic man, devoting a whole paragraph to a direct quotation from McLuhan’s newly-published book The Gutenberg Galaxy (International… xx). In Dorfsman’s case, debates on the communicative value of typography resonated with contemporary debates that would raise the status of communication technologies, and thus the status of the designer, to new heights of historical and social importance.
UNIVERSAL STANDARDIZATION AND IDENTITY

PROMOTION OF SWISS INTERNATIONAL STYLE

In light of the high percentage of Europeans sitting on its international jury, it is not surprising to find that Typomundus promoted the International Style both implicitly and explicitly. Europeans accounted for nine of twelve Typomundus jurors on a panel comprised of three Germans, two Swiss judges, and one judge each from the Netherlands, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and France, alongside two North American judges and one Asian judge. Although in some respects the judges’ choices during the selection process reflected both individual and national preferences, the overwhelming stylistic framework was that of the International Style, which had emerged from Switzerland and Germany beginning in the 1950s.

This new style, based on ideals of objectivity, analytic structure, and order, and characterized by geometric, grid-based divisions of space, was given an international voice with the quarterly publication in Zurich of the design journal Neue Grafik/New Graphic Design/Graphisme actuel, starting in 1959. Contributors to the journal, including Swiss designer Josef Müller-Brockmann, pursued an “absolute and universal form of graphic expression” that replaced the subjectivity of individual designers with objective forms of communication (Meggs, 364). While the journal was influential in promoting the International Style to designers from German, Swiss, and European nations, it also took on a more direct relevance to Typomundus; one of the journal’s founding editors, Swiss designer Hans Neuberg, also served on Typomundus’ jury. Neuberg’s designs, displayed in the judges’ pages at the beginning of the Typomundus catalogue, reveal a strong influence of the International Style (Figure 9), as do his three works selected for inclusion in the
exhibition (International..., xxxix). Neuberg’s written entry to the catalogue also expressed leanings in favour of this style. Noting the dominance of both European and American graphic design works among the Typomundus selections, Neuberg registered surprise at the unanimity of the international jury in the selection process in his introduction to the catalogue (Ibid, xxiv). Neuberg’s further comment on the “mercantile” and “rather decorative” attributes of American design appears decidedly dismissive when compared to his description of Swiss typography as “cool and documentary” in the same paragraph (Ibid, xxiv).

Nor was Neuberg the sole Typomundus juror responsible for promoting the International Style in their work and catalogue text. German judge Anton Stankowski could be speaking of attributes belonging to the International Style directly when he claims “Functional and clean typography” as one sought-after factor in the judging in his catalogue introduction (International..., xxix). Piet Zwart also alluded to the International Style in his introduction. Optimistically referring to a new style arising in the typographic field, Zwart noted the “graphic potential of this industrialized technology of our time” (Ibid, xxiii). By stacking the jury with practitioners—and indeed originators—of the International Style, the organizers of Typomundus implicitly ensured that the project would illustrate and support this international design trend to a high degree.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

While the vision of the international design community represented by Typomundus promoted cohesiveness through consensus around professional standards, it is questionable whether their aspirations for global inclusion were fully realized. Typomundus instead revealed a tension between the competing goals of inclusion and
standardization. As a collective exhibition with international participants, *Typomundus* explored the possibility of introducing a universal design standard into a diverse community of nations. But in its intrinsic support for the International Style, with its standardization of design forms, *Typomundus* effectively decreased the visible diversity of national styles.

The exhibition illustrated the difficulty of representing the diversity of an international mass culture while implementing uniform aesthetic criteria. As its catalogue demonstrates, works from North America and a few European countries dominated *Typomundus*. Inclusive goals gave way to exclusivity, as shown in the page spread illustrating articles 178-184 (Figure 10). This example is one of a number of pages comprised completely of works from American designers. The “World of Typography” that *Typomundus* claimed to represent included only a single work from Africa, and was completely absent of work from South America, China, India, or any Middle–Eastern country with the exception of Israel.13

Some of the difficulty lay in the different typographic character sets used in many languages and the diverse printing histories in those countries. In his introductory text, Hiromu Hara expressed regret over the fact that Japan was the only Asian nation represented in the exhibition. Despite his lament for the lack of geographical diversity, Hara also voiced a desire for commonality in communication design through the global influence of a modernist aesthetic, claiming “The new typography originated by the Bauhaus in Germany has had a strong influence on Japanese designers” (International…, xxvii). Hara went on to lament the limited availability of ‘European’ typefaces in Asian

13 It should be noted that there is no evidence of submissions from any of these areas or countries (other than Israel), nor is there evidence that the call for submissions was published or distributed in these areas.
countries, and voiced the hope that Japanese designers would better compete in the future based on an increased use of typography with European letters (Ibid). For Hara, it seems, standardization and a common language and character set was seen as a way forward, despite his seemingly contrary desire to see a greater national diversity among exhibition contributors.

Hara was not the only Typomundus juror to express the desire for a common language of communication. The notion of typography as a universal form of communication expressed in judge Roger Excoffon’s extolling of the universality of typography that “goes beyond convention and various disciplines” (International…, xxxi) ignored the significant differences in language and alphabetic character that existed at the time of the exhibition, not to mention the socio-economic differences that existed among nations. Dair was the only Typomundus jury member to use his written introduction to address this socio-economic inequality and its effect upon participation in Typomundus.

Describing the example of a submission by a designer from “one of the newly independent African states” alongside the “lavish commercial productions of designers in the affluent societies” Dair noted that the work of the former suffered by the comparison (Ibid, xxv). Supporting his point by quoting László Moholy-Nagy, Dair claimed it was the creation of common standards, and not individual achievement, that was the driving force behind both Typomundus and the ideal growth of the profession (Ibid). Such evidence of a clash between the goals of inclusion and standardization plagued Typomundus and resulted in the exhibition’s failure to fully realize one of its key idealistic motives, that of a truly international expression of the global diversity of design. In practice, a gap existed between Typomundus’ inclusive rhetoric and the exhibition’s geographical and historical
exclusions. This gap resulted, however, in a particular type of cohesion, which I discuss in greater detail below.

**PROFESSIONALIZATION THROUGH SHARED HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

*Typomundus* sought different means of elevating the profile of graphic design and promoting professional standards than those employed by the Canadian *Typography* exhibitions. Unlike the Canadian *Typography* exhibitions, which represented the best works from a single year, *Typomundus* promoted itself as encompassing the best work from the first 65 years of the twentieth century. In their aim to promote professional standards in the design field, the twelve *Typomundus* jurors succeeded in elevating works of graphic design from the past, such as Piet Zwart’s cover for a film series monograph from 1933 (Figure 11), Alvin Lustig’s New Directions book jacket from 1947 (Figure 12), or Paul Renner’s 1924 sketches for the Futura typeface (Figure 13), into a ‘global’, if partial, history of typographic design in the twentieth century. In so doing, the identity *Typomundus* sought to create for international designers, despite claims to expansiveness and historical objectivity, was both partial and limited, based on a selective history of twentieth century design as embodied in a limited repertoire of exemplary works.

Despite the attempt at an objective sampling of the whole of twentieth-century design to that point, the vast majority of work selected for inclusion in *Typomundus* was drawn from the period immediately preceding the exhibition. As the catalogue demonstrates, over three-quarters of the work selected for inclusion was created in the five years from 1960 to 1964. Further, fully ninety-two percent of the final works included in the *Typomundus* catalogue originated between 1950 and 1964. Instead of the “cross-
section of the typography of the twentieth century” that Max Caflisch and the other jurors claimed, *Typomundus* effectively rendered itself an arbiter of styles of its time (International… xvi). Indeed, the jury included only a single work to represent the first twenty years of the twentieth century, an unidentified newspaper spread attributed to the designer L.C. Hughes, from Canada (Figure 14). In light of this imbalanced periodic representation, Hermann Zapf’s comment that “works which show timeless quality will be good yesterday, today, and in the future” (International…, xxvi) further illustrates the forward-looking aims of the international community but also its blindness to its own historical bias. While purporting to represent an inclusive history of a global community, the organizers of *Typomundus* instead succeeded in consolidating an international design community around a particular vision of typographic excellence drawn from their own ranks and time span.

The jury’s aim to select “the most significant typography of the twentieth century” was limited to works that had been submitted (rather than systematically researched), and was furthermore peppered with works from jury members themselves (International…, viii). Zapf noted with particular regret that “the work of some outstanding typographic designers [was] missing” as examples of their work had not been submitted for judging, but made no comment on the inclusion of his own work and that of fellow jurors in the exhibition (International…, xxvi). Among the final selections for the *Typomundus* exhibition are three works by Paul Rand, one work each from the Swiss and Canadian jurors, and fully 26 works by American juror Lou Dorfsman, excluding the exemplary works displayed in the front of the catalogue. The exhibition also included twelve pieces by Oldrich Hlavsa, and seven pieces by Piet Zwart, in addition to multiple works from the
remainder of the jury. The disproportional inclusion of jury members’ own work attests to the partial nature of their judgment, and to the insularity of the design community that allowed it to present its own standards as universal.

In conjunction with the fact that Typomundus largely excludes of the work of women, the exhibition must again be seen to de facto depart from one of its key organizational principles. Unlike the Typography exhibitions, where debate around the ascendancy of the International Style included dissenting voices, Typomundus elevated those designers whose work conformed to the International Style, and engaged in only a subdued debate on the style’s merits. The particular mode of cohesion achieved by Typomundus was derived through exclusion, and by an institutionalization of the International Style. Instead of representing commonality in heterogeneity, Typomundus distilled a limited, selective variety of styles into a single, authoritative cultural voice. Ironically, it is by diverting from its stated ideology and systematically excluding alternative voices that the exhibition achieved cohesion by default among those designers whose works were accepted.

AESTHETICS AND THE ART/DESIGN DIVIDE

Like the Canadian Typography shows, Typomundus promoted reflection on distinctions between design’s experimental and communicative roles, and between high and mass culture, adopting practices from the realm of fine art that favoured aesthetics over functionality. At the same time, discussions in Typomundus focused more on typography’s expanded role as a communications medium, rather than the debates on art and craft prevalent in the Canadian Typography shows. Indeed, the premise underlying Typomundus was that typographic work was to be judged primarily on aesthetic grounds,
a view that may be attributed to a change in the cultural status of the profession from the 1950s to the mid-1960s. The challenge was no longer to distinguish design from craft, but to reconcile the artistic aspirations of designers with the functionalist demands of the International Style.

*Typomundus* adopted standards of aesthetic judgment as both method and organizing principle in its efforts to expand the cultural scope for graphic design. This association with high art practices was an attempt to bridge distinctions between the fine and applied arts, and to increase the cultural value of graphic design, in the promotion of the design profession. *Typomundus* president Aaron Burns, for example, encouraged jurors to evaluate the exhibition’s submissions according to aesthetic standards such as “form, beauty, appeal, and excellence of typographic artistry” (International..., viii). By rewarding the formal, artistic qualities of the works, while ignoring the works’ success as communication intended to extend commodity production and consumption, Burns created a framework for the exhibition that not only distanced the individual works from their original commercial context, but also sought to impart an authoritative, artistic standard upon the selected works of design (Ibid).

In a response to this dictum, Dutch typographer Piet Zwart discussed the value of aesthetics as an organizing principle in his introduction to the *Typomundus* catalogue. Commenting that aesthetic considerations were “undefinable, intuitable, and purely subjective,” and that they “escape all concrete rules and regulations,” Zwart questioned the use of such stylistic criteria by the *Typomundus* jury in selecting works for the exhibition (Ibid, xxxii). Here, Zwart’s association with the International Style and its tenets again shows itself. With its emphasis on objectivity and rationality, proponents of
the International Style were opposed to decoration and the expression of the subjective experience of individual designers. The judging of its works according to aesthetic standards was not Typomundus’ only allusion to fine art. Not only did Typomundus seek a higher status for design by such direct charges, the jury also selected works by at least one practicing artist for inclusion in the exhibition. Two works by Fluxus artist George Maciunas (articles 219 and 458) were exhibited as part of Typomundus and included in the catalogue (Figure 15). Maciunas work is here evaluated solely according to aesthetic considerations, with at least one of his works lacking any connection to design as a functional/commercial art. Thus Typomundus sought an elevated status for design not only by association with artistic practices, but with artists themselves.

In a further effort to elevate the status of the graphic design profession, Typomundus included a number of categorical divisions that promoted experimental and artistic works of design. The exhibition did not seek to disavow design’s links to commerce and the marketplace, but sought to enhance and expand the perceived scope for graphic design among both designers and the general public. As already mentioned, in addition to categories with a direct connection to commerce including “Packaging” and “Advertisement” categories, Typomundus’ jury created categorical divisions including “Experimental”, “Signs and Symbols”, “Miscellaneous” typography, and “Lettering and Calligraphy” for the selected design works. These categories included expressive individual works—such as items 450-454, resembling concrete poetry (Figure 16)—which were never destined for design’s traditional communicative role in the marketplace. Works of design such as articles 455-459 (Figure 17) self-referentially draw attention to their formal
qualities—the letters, photography, and reproduced imagery—that are the designer’s paint and canvas, while exhibiting little value as advertising vehicles.

Commentary by *Typomundus* jurors on typography’s artistic nature served to reinforce this phenomenon. Statements made by Lou Dorfsman in his introduction to the exhibition suggest that debates over the relative precedence of form or function were not limited to the Canadian design community. Dorfsman appears to weigh in on the side of functionality, referring to typography as one of only two “practical arts, the other being architecture” (International…, xx). Debates concerning the relationship of form to function were therefore not quelled, but rather intensified, by the increasing prominence of artistic standards and experimental work. These debates supported the continued reflection and scholarship by practitioners on problems of special interest to design.

Many of the mechanisms of social and professional cohesion at play in the Canadian Typography exhibitions were still operative in *Typomundus*. Debates surrounding the aesthetic judging and reflection on the social role of the designer were common to both. And yet, the form of cohesion articulated in *Typomundus* resulted above all from its mechanisms of exclusion, and its promotion of the International Style. Three different but complementary mechanisms of exclusion functioned in *Typomundus*: geographical, historical, and personal. Geographically, countries where the International Style was less prevalent were underrepresented in the show. For example, England, despite its rich typographic history, was reduced to a mere twelve entries selected for the final catalogue showing.15 *Typomundus* also excluded the majority of work prior to 1950, creating a

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15 By contrast, 33 works from Canadian designers were included in the *Typomundus* catalogue, excluding Dair’s exemplary pieces. It is also interesting to note that England was without a representative on the international jury.
history of twentieth-century typography that excluded historical representations. The personal exclusion refers to the disproportional representation of the juror’s own works in the final selection for *Typomundus*.

*Typomundus* exhibits a gap between its rhetoric of diversity and its exclusionary practices. And yet the rhetoric of diversity was no less essential to professional cohesion than were the practices of exclusion. The standardization of style was aided by *Typomundus*’ inclusionary rhetoric, as explicit exclusion would presumably have encountered resistance from potential contributors. The rhetoric of diversity and inclusion, in other words, allowed the organizers to present the works selected for the show as a genuine cross-section of the typography of the twentieth century, while promoting their own vision of design standards as universal. Despite this departure in practice from the organizer’s stated aims for the exhibition, these exclusionary methods nonetheless succeeded in promoting the idea of consensus around professional standards in the design field at this point in history, and *ipso facto* in the sphere of Canadian design.

**MARSHALL MCLUHAN AND THE DISCOURSE OF GRAPHIC DESIGN**

**COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND MASS SOCIETY**

Ideas concerning communication and its expanded role in the mass consumer society of the postwar period exerted their influence on the design communities of the day. In the cases of the *Typography* and *Typomundus* exhibitions, these ideas allowed the exhibitions to fulfill their role in promoting cohesion and helping to define the design profession. The most influential of these ideas were those expressed in the work of the Toronto-based theorist Marshall McLuhan, whose writings formed the pre-eminent model
for thinking about communications media in this period. Specifically, McLuhan’s 1962 book *The Gutenberg Galaxy* was of particular interest to the design communities of the day. Three key ideas from *The Gutenberg Galaxy* caught the attention of the postwar design community: his pursuit of typography as a unifying cultural force; the importance of print culture as a central organizer of social thought; and the idea that individual societies would assemble into a *global village* under the effects of new electronic media (McLuhan 1962).

McLuhan’s idea that typography played a unifying historical role as a force for consolidating vernaculars into a mass media, was attractive to the typographic community for obvious reasons. Noting that typography functioned to shape shared discourse into packaged information, creating a portable commodity (1962, 164), McLuhan locates the historical importance of print culture since Gutenberg as going beyond the “separation of senses and functions” and the portability of the printed word (1962, 277). McLuhan claims, in addition, “by print a people sees itself for the first time” (1962, 217). This allusion to the way in which print culture shapes the way individuals (and thus societies) see themselves, leads to a second point of interest for designers in McLuhan’s text.

The shift from the typographical and mechanical age of man to an age of electronic communication, and the consequences of this shift for the typographic design profession, were widely discussed topics among postwar designers. McLuhan noted the increased importance of the printed word to the cultural realm of society in the new electronic era (1962, 45). Stressing the continuing importance of print to culture, McLuhan referred to print as “a transforming and metamorphosing drug that has the power of imposing its assumptions on every level of consciousness” (1962, 260). It is not primarily the power of
the printed word to “increase knowledge and extend literacy” (1962, 158) that concerns McLuhan here, but rather the way in which print “induces the reader to order his external life and actions with visual property and rigour” (1962, 157).

McLuhan’s classification of the effects of print culture is far from utopian, however. A statement by McLuhan on print’s role in creating “the uniform, centralizing forces of modern nationalism” (1962, 199), and his accompanying claim that “[print] is also the very mode of projection of subjective doubt,” (1962, 158) shed light on the complexities of print culture and its legacies. McLuhan went on to classify such unforeseen consequences of a specific media culture as problematic, but not morally so (Ibid). Whether the overall effects of print culture were negative or positive, ideas such as these nonetheless argued for typography’s importance to the ordering of society at the deepest levels, and thus were important to designers at this moment both in articulating their own goals and social significance, and as culturally pervasive ideas that aided their claims to increased status among the literate public.

Contemporary design communities were equally interested in McLuhan’s theories on a society ordered by the new electronic media, as they witnessed the professional transition from a mechanical, typographic past to a future as communication designers engaged in a variety of media from photographic and computerized16 typesetting to television. According to McLuhan, the new electronic media would transform the individual living in society, which in turn would irrevocably shift print media’s power in society: “if men decided to modify this visual technology by an electronic technology,

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16 Transitional technologies such as electric composers and computers applied to conventional hot-metal typesetting systems were already in use in the printing industry (albeit in a limited capacity) beginning in the early 1960s (Dewalt, 126).
individualism will also be modified” (1962, 158). Thus, a shift in the technological landscape from the typographic to the electronic would entail a modification of individuals themselves, toward a collective consciousness.

This idea of a collective society, or *global village* implicitly motivated development within both Canadian and international design communities. McLuhan described the effect of the electronic media on society as being such that “the human family now exists under conditions of a ‘global village’” (1962, 31). He further stated that this collective society would allow modern man to live “pluralistically, in many worlds and cultures simultaneously” (Ibid). Statements such as these are in line with the stated goals underlying the organization of *Typomundus*, as a multi-cultural, international endeavour, and further lent credence to the organizer’s emphasis on typographic communication as a means to achieve international cooperation and understanding.

**McLuhan’s Influence on the Design Community**

The organizers of *Typomundus* and the Canadian *Typography* exhibitions adopted and absorbed much of McLuhan’s theories, which were already influencing the discourse of design communities of the day, and helping to shape the professional identity of those selfsame design communities. A number of examples illustrate the direct and indirect influence of McLuhan’s ideas on the Canadian and international design communities via the *Typomundus* and *Typography* exhibitions.

Locally, McLuhan’s ideas on the importance of communication in the global village were of great interest to the design community in Toronto, and to Carl Dair in particular. Dair conveyed this interest in McLuhan’s ideas to the Canadian graphic design community at large in an article published in the TDC’s own *Format* magazine, ca. 1963. Dair was
enthusiastic about McLuhan’s ideas on the “influence of the phonetic alphabet on modern man,” claiming that “Professor Marshall McLuhan’s work *The Gutenberg Galaxy* will have profound influences on typography once its ideas have been grasped” (Dair 1963b).

Indeed, McLuhan’s influence on the Canadian design community through the *Typography* exhibitions took a more direct route. In 1960 McLuhan was invited to address the typographic community in Toronto as keynote speaker at the awards luncheon for *Typography 60* (Donnelly 1995, 62). According to a *Globe and Mail* article from the time, McLuhan used the opportunity of this speech to address “the way in which the once technical skills of typographers were being developed as part of a wider communications revolution” (Ibid). The message to the design community in Toronto was that the changing nature of communication in society offered opportunities to transform the role of the designer beyond its traditional roots in craft (Ibid). As mentioned previously, the shifting role of the designer was a key theme in the debates taking place in the *Typography* catalogues concerning the nature of design as craft versus communication. For example, Frank Davies’ comments on graphic design’s importance as a medium of mass-communication in his *Typography 60* catalogue essay appeared in the same year as McLuhan’s keynote speech (Society... 1960, 58).

*Typomundus* too hinted at the influence of McLuhan’s ideas, both directly and indirectly. As previously mentioned, Lou Dorfsman’s introductory text was concerned with print culture’s historical and developmental importance, and referred directly to McLuhan’s ideas on typographic man before devoting an entire paragraph to a quote from *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (International... xx). Even when not quoting McLuhan directly, discussions of design’s role as communication throughout the jury members’ commentary
point to the relevance of his ideas on society’s shift toward new electronic technologies of communication. Several *Typomundus* jurors stressed the continued importance of the printed word in the age of electronic communication, and the increased importance of the designer as communicator in a mass society in their introductory texts. In referring to the products of the typographer as “mediators among mankind”, Horst Erich Wolter expressed a utopian view of communication design’s social role (International..., xxi).

Echoing McLuhan’s claim that alphabet and printing dominate over “the entire range of social and political life” (McLuhan 1962, 43), *Typomundus* jurors Olle Eksell and Roger Excoffon both attribute political and economic power to works of design in the larger society. Eksell touts typography as “important in the world of economics,” referring to the mass society in “forming an aesthetic-economic policy in corporations and government” (International... xxiii), while Excoffon directly states his belief in “the universality of typography and the influence of type in the field of economics” (International..., xxxi).

The adoption and dissemination of McLuhan’s ideas through these typographic exhibitions supported the creation of a common discourse by which graphic designers were able to communicate the value of their work and reflect on their larger goals. McLuhan’s ideas gave graphic designers the theoretical tools that allowed them to think of themselves as cultural agents instead of mere craftsmen, and to situate their work within a larger historical narrative. This in turn allowed graphic design to emerge as a discipline with its own distinct history. The seemingly disparate professions of typographer and communication designer were bridged by a narrative that connected the age of mechanical
media and that of electronic media, allowing graphic designers to see themselves as agents of cultural change and progress.

As McLuhan’s ideas entered the professional discourse through the typographic exhibitions, they informed the position of design in culture and the very language by which designers talked about their work. Not incidentally, the term graphic designer began to predominate around the same time. Designers who had previously considered themselves typographic designers eventually dropped the typo as the term came to reflect the expanded role of the professional designer in the media revolution underway in society at large. Indeed, in 1967 then-TDC president John Gibson solicited members’ opinions on the state of the design profession (Donnelly 1997, 63), following which the Society of Typographic Designers of Canada (TDC) subsequently renamed itself the Society of Graphic Designers of Canada (GDC) in 1968 to reflect the change in professional identity and the status of designers encompassing “all aspects of visual communication” in the minds of its membership (Kramer, 115)17. For the Canadian design community, the ability to borrow from these theories in the larger cultural sphere enhanced the discourse surrounding the exhibitions, and helped shape the professional identity of the graphic designer in Canada.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have argued that the Typomundus and Typography exhibitions contributed to the growth of the graphic design profession in Canada by furthering professional cohesiveness among Canadian designers. Cohesiveness was achieved through several mechanisms: by bringing professionals from across Canada together and exposing

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17 As quoted in Donnelly 1995, page 64.
them to the international graphic design community; by advancing a set of professional standards and ensuring its dissemination through expert judging and education; and by promoting reflection on the status and role of graphic design with respect to high art, mass communication, and society at large. The process of cohesion was aided by Canada’s unique circumstances in the 1950s and 1960s. With its diverse group of émigré design professionals, its relatively peaceful diplomacy, and McLuhan’s increasingly influential scholarship, Canada was ideally situated to play a leading role in shaping the identity of the emerging profession. Canadian graphic designers, motivated in part by utopian ideals of universal cooperation, formed their professional identity around the desire to contribute to universal communication and global culture. These desires were reflected in the exhibitions and in the debates that surrounded them. Held during a key period for the graphic design profession, the exhibitions produced more than a mere body of works accompanied by commentaries. They also helped to produce and publicize a new discourse and historical narrative that allowed Canadian typographers and communication designers to think of themselves as belonging to a unified, distinct community.
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APPENDIX A: FIGURES

FIGURE 1.
EXPO 67 Logo.

FIGURE 2.
Centennial Maple Leaf
http://www.canadiandesignresource.ca
FIGURE 3.
Various Printed Ephemera.
(clockwise from bottom left) Typography 58 Call for Submissions, Typography 62 Awards Dinner Menu, Typography 62 Extended Call for Submissions
SOURCE: All three items from the personal archive of Brian Donnelly, photographed February 2012.

FIGURE 4.
Selected Typography Catalogue Covers.
(from left) Typography 58, Leslie Smart designer; Typography 59, Frank Newfeld designer; Typography 60, Frank Davies designer; Typography 61 (front and back) Jack Birdsall designer.
SOURCES: 58 from the author’s personal collection, 59 & 60 from the personal archive of David Michaelides, photographed November 2009, 61 from the personal archive of Brian Donnelly, photographed February 2012.
FIGURE 5.
Typography 64 Catalogue and Envelope.
(from left) Typography 64 Catalogue Cover, Typography 64 Catalogue Envelope designed by Tony Mann.
Envelope from the personal archive of Brian Donnelly, photographed February 2012.

FIGURE 6.
Extended Submissions Deadline Notice for Typomundus.
Circa 1963.
SOURCE: From the author’s personal collection.
FIGURE 7.
Typomundus 20 Catalogue Cover
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.

FIGURE 8.
Articles 302-309
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.
FIGURE 9.
Hans Neuberg Designs
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.

FIGURE 10.
Articles 178-184
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.
FIGURE 11.
Article 109, 1933 - Piet Zwart designer
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.

FIGURE 12.
Article 115, 1947 - Alvin Lustig designer
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.
FIGURE 13.
Article 534, 1924 - Paul Renner designer
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.

FIGURE 14.
Article 231, 1900 - L.C. Hughes designer
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.
FIGURE 15.  
Articles 219, 458, 1963 & 1964 - George Maciunas  
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.  

FIGURE 16.  
Articles 450-454  
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.  
FIGURE 17. Articles 455-459
From: International Centre for the Typographic Arts. Typomundus 20.