Can Fine Typography Exist in the '90s?

The question is not easily answered. From different perspectives the response can be a resounding *yes* or a qualified *no*. Electronic typesetting and type designed for a computer and on a computer have made some type lovers anxious. Yet other fastidious and committed type users have found working with type in this electronic age a compelling challenge.

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Fine typography is alive and well in the '90s. In fact, fine typography is healthier than ever before. That's because more high quality type is available to more people than ever before. What we've seen is the democratization of type. Office workers around the world are familiar with the names of Bodoni and Garamond. Who would ever have dreamed of such a thing?

Computers have dramatically reduced the cost of developing a new typeface. Lower development costs have led to more type and inevitably to more good type. Now anyone with a personal computer has an opportunity to design a typeface. This new democracy of type, the easy access, and a wide range of possibilities have created a tremendous vitality in typography.

Still, fine typography depends on more than well-drawn type. Fine typography is related to what happens when you put type down on a page. For designers the crucial question is how to effectively and appropriately use this type—how to structure and organize a message. For people new to design who do not have any experience using type, the study of typography is essential. I believe that typography should be taught in schools, even in high schools. Learning to use type is as important as learning to write. It is a part of being literate.

While computers have changed the way we use type, they are far from perfect. The computer industry is continuing to improve software, and it can be much better. We need to bring more designers into the process. But "layout" programs are just a beginning. Imagine more intelligent programs devised by designers and typographers—smart programs that offer suggestions. Imagine a smart program for office use that takes raw text and offers various design options, suggests type sizes, positions—Structures based on an understanding of the content of the text. Such programs would give designers new tools and roles creating systems for software and corporate identity.

We must also look beyond paper. More and more we will look at type on monitors as finished design—not just a step on the way to printing. We will receive more information directly on screen. This is an enormous new market for designers and typographers. We cannot ignore the computer itself as an exciting and dynamic medium for fine typography. The future of type is brighter than ever.