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# FONTS OF MY FAMILY: THE FLEETING CRAFT OF CURSIVE WRITING

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## **Fonts of My Family: The Fleeting Craft of Cursive Writing**

### **Synopsis:**

Cursive writing as a means to communicate is a fleeting practice. Students in grade schools are now being taught words per minute on a keyboard versus the craft of cursive writing, making this art form close to extinction. This research project centers on resurrecting the past through typographic design. Technology can encapsulate, document and archive one's handwriting from the past, thus creating digital typefaces for today from the handwritings of the deceased.

**Fonts of My Family: The Fleeting Craft of Cursive Writing**

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## ABSTRACT

Cursive writing as a means to communicate is a fleeting practice. Students in grade schools are now being taught words per minute on a keyboard versus the craft of cursive writing, making this art form close to extinction. As reported by the *Huffington Post* in 2011, Hawaii was one of the first of many states to adopt the retraction of teaching cursive writing from mandatory grade school curriculum (para. 1). This is due to the Common Core State Standards, released in 2010, and since that time 45 states have followed suit. Noted as an “obsolete skill” this shift to an emphasis on keyboarding skills forced many districts nationwide to “limit or drop handwriting instruction”; thus restraining or removing cursive writing as a core competency (Pawlowski, 2015, para. 5).

Prompted by this dilemma, and a fascination for collecting handwritten personal notes and postcards of the past, the idea of utilizing the past for the present—and future—began to unfold. This creative research project centers on resurrecting the past through typographic design. With the intent that technology can encapsulate, document and archive one’s handwriting from the past, the goal is to create digital typefaces for today from the handwritings of the deceased.

The topic for typographic documentation and exploration began with my grandmother’s handwriting. A created typeface specimen and design, *Fonts of My Family: Ethel*, is currently in the beginning phases of being converted into a digital typeface, thus recreating the heritage and essence of one’s *character* into typographic, digital *characters* on screen. This paper presentation will discuss the statement of the problem, introductory research and process of design that has shaped the current phase of this digital typeface creation, along with future plans for implementation, application and deployment conversion in creating digital typefaces from the

deceased. In comparison to the many digital typefaces of handwritten letterforms that are readily available today, this research will open the dialogue of what is authentic and what is to be known as unauthentic depictions of reality. Individuality, as well as craft, is being substituted for speed, immediacy, and in return—hollowness and vagueness in typographic designs *appropriated* to imitate reality.

As cursive craft begins to rapidly decline, technology will continue to rise. How will society respond, as authors of contemporary communication in the Conceptual Age? At what point does being *human*, from a foundational level of authenticity and originality, reach beyond convenience, speed and automation? This research will open the dialogue of the larger issue at hand, as well as discuss the process and future development involved with this typeface specimen, *Fonts of My Family: Ethel*, and typeface design in the visual arts, technology and communication design sectors.

**Bibliography:**

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