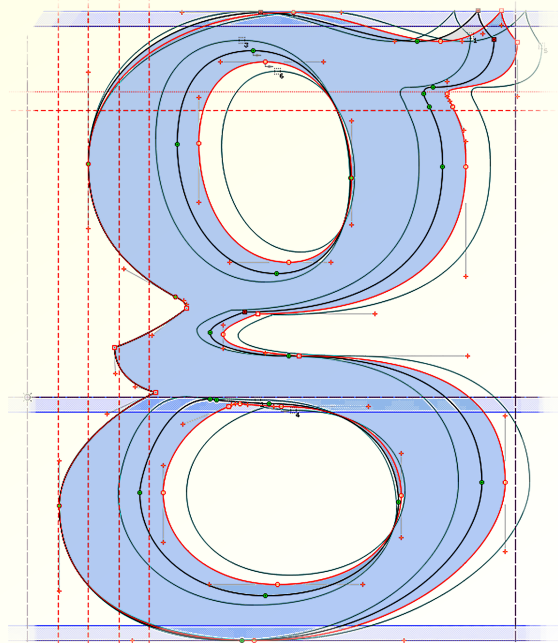


# Practical Font Design With FontLab 5



DAVID BERGSLAND

## The Librum Specimen Book

- Amazon
- The IBookstore [ePUB2 and ePUB FXL]
- Kobo [ePUB2 only, ePUB FXL coming]
- Barnes & Noble [maybe, who knows what they are doing?]
- Scribd [PDF and subscription ePUB]
- Plus the rest distributed by Draft2Digital

Now that FontLab 6 is available in beta form, FontLab 5 has probably reached the end of its development. It's a powerful software application for font design.

David's focus in the book is to share his final, most efficient, font production techniques. In the process of writing the book over the past year, these 15 fonts were developed for demonstration purposes—providing many of the screen captures in the new book.

The fonts were used to  
format the new book

They worked as expected—maybe a little better than expected. They are an extension of the beautiful [Contenu/Buddy book publishing package](#) developed for the *Third Edition of Practical Font Design*.

The larger x-height and more conservative character shapes make these fonts even better at what book design fonts are supposed to do—become invisible to the reader. They are easily and comfortably readable—providing excellent structure to the content of a book.

They are available at *The Skilled Workman*   
<http://bergsland.org>

Plus [myfonts.com](https://myfonts.com), [fonts.com](https://fonts.com)  
And [fontspring.com](https://fontspring.com)

# What is a book font family?

This is from an article I wrote for Fred Showker's graphic design Website in the Fall of 2008. I thought it would give you the overview of my preconceptions as we get started with the designs for this book.

Many (if not most) of you are probably thinking that this is a simple question with an easy and obvious answer mentioned earlier. A book font is a little lighter than medium, a little darker than light, a little compressed, and usually very elegant—or at least the most elegant weight in a font family.


For that answer you probably got a silver star in your beginning typography class. However, the question “Why?” was not asked or answered in most cases. If the question why was asked, the answer was usually something like this,


*“...because you can fit more copy in a given space and use narrower column widths.”*


However, that is not what the subhead asked. The question is, *What is a book font family?* Reworded a little the question becomes:


## What do you need in a font family to make it exceptional for designing books?


That is what I want to talk about here. Some of you may know that my original impetus to begin designing fonts was to deal with the problem I had in the early 1990s – namely I was constantly looking for a font family which was truly useful for graphically intensive book design. I found nothing that even came close to what I was looking for in a font family. I had a long list of needs.


 **Readability:** Body copy set with the font had to be exceptionally easy and comfortable to read. Reading comfort is imperative when the competition is producing textbooks which are so dry you need your pencil to simply prop open your eyes.


 **True small caps:** Proportionally reduced capital letters make unacceptable body copy. They look non-professional in headers also because the caps that attend the small caps are obviously much darker.


 **Extremely smooth type color:** That smooth, medium gray type color generated by the body copy is the background that you must have to easily use to contrast the headers—to make heads & subheads pop off the page, as it were.


 **Legibility:** The fonts need to be quickly absorbed when being used for captions, pull quotes, and the like.

 **Oldstyle figures:** It would probably help if we called them what they are: lowercase numbers. They are essential for good type color—where lining figures are shouting in that instance just as all caps are shouting in an email.

 **Small cap figures:** In copy set in small caps, small cap figures are obviously essential for the same reason I just mentioned and oldstyle figures simply look silly in small cap copy.

 **Variety of weights:** I formerly thought I really needed light, regular, bold, & black weights. In watching my use, I really only use book and Bold. Many of the fonts that were available had bold versions that were just barely bold and therefore were very irritating because of the lack of impact. Bold means you need impact. **You are trying to get attention.**

 **True, but readable, italics:** Obliques simply look wrong to an educated reader. Many italics are closer to a script with all of the attendant readability issues.

 **Discretionary ligatures:** This is probably simply a personal desire. But I really wanted those miniscule ornamentations to help keep the easy reading from being too boring.

*Thank you,*

David



The  
Librum/Librum E  
Bream/Librum Sans  
families meet my  
needs very well.  
They are powerful,  
versatile, and elegant  
fonts with which to  
design complex and  
bigger books.



# Librum

Librum is a 4-font text family specifically constructed for its use in book design. Its wider letterspacing works best in body copy sizes from 8-point to 15-point. It is slightly condensed and has several graphics in various rarely used ASCII slots.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ↑≈  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzryggfjbbffyr  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZURME☎☒☞☞  
01234567890 0123456789 01234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ↑≈  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzryggfjbbffyr  
01234567890 0123456789 ☎☒☞☞

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
ryggfjbbffyr01234567890 0123456789

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ↑≈  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
ryggfjbbffyr01234567890 0123456789

To reword things, I would call the art of using letters calligraphy—the craft of using letters is typography. But even that is over simplistic. My focus in this discussion is that craft we call font design used for typesetting on a professional level.

















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Special dingbats and characters in the fonts

	The section symbol is replaced with an open ballot box
	A radical is now a check mark. You can kern it into the checkbox as needed.  See?
	The mu character is replaced by a heifer >Grin<
	The logicalnot character is a hand pointing right
	The Florin is replaced by a hand pointing up
	The daggerdbl becomes a Jerusalem cross, and the dagger is a normal cross †
	The pi is an email symbol
	The partialdiff is now an ewe
	The lozenge becomes a special bullet
	The Delta turns into a candle
	A summation is shown by a crown of thorns
	Approxequal is now a special bullet
	Product is an RSS symbol. Why? Why not?
	Integral turns into an old telephone
	The Apple is chewed up a bit

This is all whimsy. I hope you find them useful. Just use the Glyph panel in InDesign to access them or type the appropriate ASCII shortcut



# Librum E

Librum is a 5-font text family specifically constructed for its use in ePUB design. It has the same spacing as Librum. But it only has the 256 ASCII slots. It has only oldstyle figures. Librum E Sm Caps has lining figures and small cap figures.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ   
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzryggfjbbffyy   
   01234567890  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ   
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZRYGGFJBBFFY   
0123456789 01234567890  
*ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ *  
*abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzryggfjbbffyy*  
*01234567890   *  
**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ**  
**abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzryggfjbbffyy01234567890**  
*ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ *  
*abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz*  
*ryggfjbbffyy01234567890*

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**To reword things, I would call the art of using letters calligraphy—the craft of using letters is typography. But even that is over simplistic.**

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- ❧ The need for a companion sans is rarely talked about: But have you ever looked for a serif/sans serif pair where the vertical metrics were close enough to handle run-in heads and **inline formatting** with ease and style?
- ❧ These font family pairs are very rare: I once spent almost a whole day [5 or 6 hours] trying to find something satisfactory. I eventually gave up in disgust.
- ❧ The Librum Book Design Group does this effortlessly: For the complex non-fiction book with complex lists, run-in heads, and the need for special emphasis of several different types, this companionship of font families will change your designs for the better.
- ❧ **Yes!** It's a big deal: Everything in this short list was simply typed in, with shortcuts to add the character styles *in the rest of the copy*. No muss, no fuss.



# Librum Sans

Librum Sans is a 4-font family specifically constructed for its use in book design. Its vertical metrics are identical to Librum, Bream, and Librum E. So, it works well for run-in heads, nested styles, and so forth.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ryggfjbbff  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890 0123456789 01234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ryggfjbbff  
01234567890 0123456789 0123456789

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
ryggfjbbff01234567890 0123456789

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1234567890  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
01234567890 0123456789

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# Bream

Bream is a 2-font Display family specifically constructed for its use in book design. Its tighter letterspacing works best at 18-point and larger. It is slightly condensed and has several graphics in various rarely used ASCII slots.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1 2 3 4  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz r y g g f j b b f f y 1 2 3 4  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ R M E 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0  
01234567890 0123456789 01234567890

*ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 1 2 3 4*  
*abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz r y g g f j b b f f y*  
*01234567890 0123456789 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0*

# Spacing usage

You need to understand the letterspacing of these fonts. Some are spaced for text and some are spaced for display.

Librum is spaced for text—except for *Librum Italic* which is spaced as a display font. So, you may need to adjust the tracking on Librum Italic. [I added plus 50 tracking to the character style seen in this paragraph.]

Librum E is spaced for text, AS IS LIBRUM E SmCap. There is no kerning as ePUB and KF8 don't currently support it.

Librum Sans is spaced for display.

So, character styles to be used as run-in or inline sans within body copy might need some positive tracking to space it out.

Bream is spaced for display  
*as is the italic version*

Some verbiage  
from the  
new book.

**Solid, Consistent,  
Fonts designed  
to work together  
in book design &  
production**

To be released in  
February 2016

Written & designed by  
David Bergsland

A production of



## New procedure

First of all, you need a simple starting procedure to begin your new font. It is easy to work on pieces of a font yet never arrive at a coherent plan. Without a plan, you can waste months or years of design time

If your font goes outside the limitations of typographic normality too far, readers will ignore your work. On the other hand, if you do not push the envelope to design something new, why bother? This book will give you a production procedure to produce the fonts you design. The designs are your problem.

I have developed solutions to many of the issues which will help you design efficiently◇◇◇◇

One of the most important is a special glyph to enable you to keep your the characters and glyphs of your font consistent effortlessly. But there are many more tips and techniques offered. The main thing to remember is that a standard operating procedure will give you a framework which enables efficiency, consistency, and excellence.

## What are biggest problems when starting to build a font?

- ❧ It has little to do with the actual shapes of the characters and glyphs: It's much more practical than that. You need a place to work.
- ❧ ***What is important?*** This question is rarely asked and never answered except in this book.
- ❧ Is there a specific design order when producing a font? Actually, there is—but you need to develop your own.
- ❧ You need a structure upon which to build: You must develop a standard workflow to get your new font named, arranged, and set up with good font metrics. You really shouldn't do anything before this.

My goal is to give you a framework to work within as you get up to speed using this very complex piece of software. People are always surprised how complex a font is.