

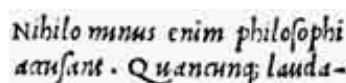
**Renaissance.
The Italian humanistic type.**



Nicholas Jenson. 1470



Aldus Manutius, Aldine press.



First italic style cut by Francesco Griffo for Aldus, 1501.

O spectaculo di incredibile acerbitate, & dita & ifolente calamitate, scena daspectare rabile, di sentire formidolosa & spaueteuol & fugienda. O metrista me, & mechina de

De Aetna by Cardinal Pietro Bembo, Cut by Francesco Griffo, 1519.



Operina, Ludovico degli Arrighi, 1522.

In 1465, at Subiaco's Abby near Rome, Sweynheym and Pannartz produced a curious hybrid type which possessed a mixture of black letter and Roman features. Meanwhile in 1469 in Venice John and Wendelin da Spira, cut a Roman type, which was rounded and more even. Then in 1470, Nicholas Jenson a French type-cutter and printer who lived in Venice, produced a type that surpassed all the earlier Roman type cut in Italy.

The italic typeface of Aldus, designed and cut by Francesco Griffo in imitation of handwriting, saw its first extensive use in Aldus's edition of the Roman poet Virgil published in April 1501. This was the very first italic typeface, and although initially Aldus had a monopoly on it in Venetian territory it was immediately copied or used as a model for derivative fonts by printers elsewhere. According to some scholars, both the typeface and Aldus's idea of using it to print a series of small "pocket books" in uniform format were inspired by manuscripts copied by the Paduan calligrapher Bartolomeo Sanvito (1435-1511). The peculiarity of using upright capital letters in conjunction with italic lowercase is not the result of oversight or lack of the correct type to use. In fact, this was done on purpose out of an artistic sensibility inspired by the forms of letters found in manuscripts.

The calligrapher Ludovico Arrighi, in his handbook on calligraphy entitled La Operina published in 1522, says, "Note, my gracious reader, which your capital letters should be written upright, because otherwise, as it seems to me, they will have no grace at all." The letters were drawn directly from the original printing, preserving all the details and imperfections typical of printing in the 16th century, with the aim of reproducing in realms other than the printed book-video and film, for example-the same elusive effect which characterizes the pages printed on Aldus's printing press in Venice. Because the paper used by Aldus was slightly porous and never perfectly smooth or of even thickness, the results always display subtle irregularities of appearance, register and spacing Looking through my books and facsimiles of medieval manuscripts I was able to reconstruct my sequence of ideas and find the source of my inspiration, which I include, not simply to provide an intellectual justification for my work but to point out again (as though I really needed to) the distance that divides the large, freely written letters used in the colored headings found in manuscripts of the 11th or 12th century from a modern digital font, even one created with free use of the hand and eye.

Humanistic minuscule it has already been mentioned that Italy was one important Western European area that failed to accept the final stages of the Gothic development. Italy was slowly evolving what is now known as the Renaissance, and revived many of the principles of antique cultures. Writing was also influenced, initially by their fresh interest in the Roman incised alphabet, then by the replacement of the Gothic hands by with the ancient Carolingian scripts. This to them seemed a logical step as most of the early manuscripts were written in this hand. They probably did not know of the early rewriting of the manuscripts as decreed by Carl the Great in AD 789. The Carolingian hand was initially copied almost exactly; one of the major changes was the development of a uniform majuscule and minuscule hand. Up to now manuscripts were written in duel hands (i.e. Roman capitals and Carolingian minuscules). The humanists were to develop the pen drawn capitals by taking the basic Roman capitals and adding serifs and finishing strokes to suit them to the minuscule.

Humanistic current cursive as with all writing a current variety was being used. The most striking characteristic of the informal hand of the time were, the slant and narrowing of the letters, the oval round letters, all letters written closely together, often connected and the ascenders being very tall. Towards the end of the 15th century "cursive humanistic" became increasingly important as a book hand. By far its greatest importance is its position as the basis for cursive or italic styles.

The italic hand was first developed as a type face from the current cursive hands which had become so popular. Ludovico Arrighi's italic design was a better design than most, but was neglected by all the printers. It is this design (which he used while working as a scribe in the Vatican chancellery), that we now know as the italic hand.