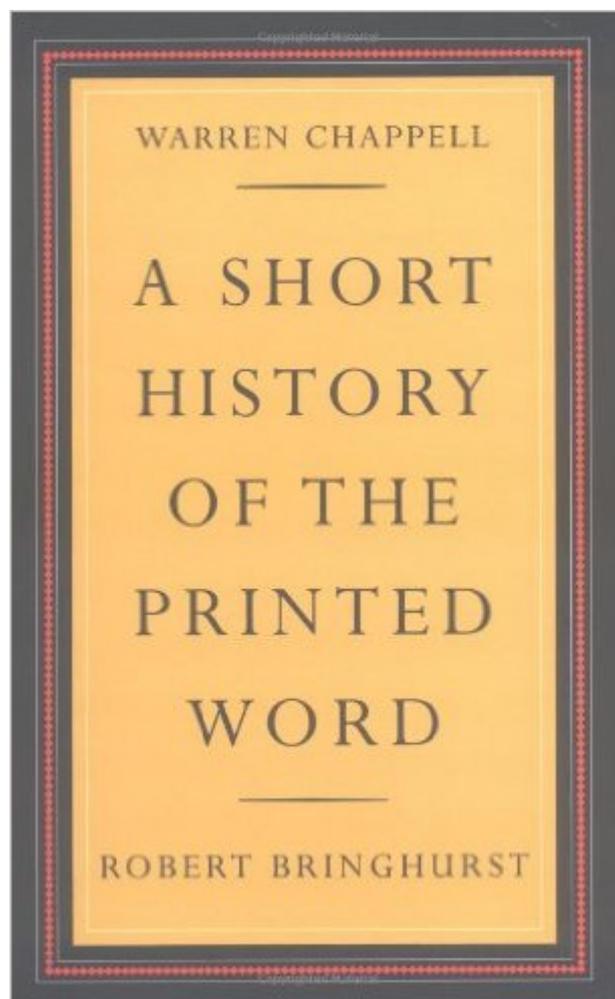


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# A Short History Of The Printed Word



## Synopsis

This work makes plain the evolution, impact and development of the printed word as we know it. Covering the earliest forms of the letters of the alphabet, to graphic technology today, this revised edition should appeal to designers, students and typophiles.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (9 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #882,898 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #271 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Graphic Design > Commercial > Book Design](#) #371 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Graphic Design > Typography](#) #416 in [Books > Computers & Technology > Graphics & Design > Desktop Publishing](#)

## Customer Reviews

A thoroughly enjoyable read on the people, places, and things that make up the history of type and publishing. Warren Chappell's book was revised and appended by noted author Robert Bringhurst and this book is the perfect complement to Bringhurst's own "Elements of Typographic Style". The content is alive with names, significant facts, technological contributions, and lots of good illustrations. This is an amazing book that is well-written and historically significant, and the authors fill in all of the gaps on the history of type and printing. The short history they describe is concise and thorough. The only disappointment is Bringhurst's final chapter on "The Digital Evolution and the Close of the Twentieth Century", where he completely overlooks the significant contributions of the people and technologies in the digital age and opts instead to explore the work of a few small private presses. Also, how can one brief summary chapter hope to describe the accomplishments of the last thirty years? Sadly, Bringhurst missed a real opportunity to provide a keen insight on the digital revolution and its impact on the printed word. All the same, this is a "must have" book for typographers, type designers, and typophiles.

Chappell and Bringhurst have put together an informative, enjoyable book on printed text. It starts with a brief history of writing in general, then of the Roman alphabet now used for most European languages. Along the way, we see a few hints about the history of page layout and other typographic concerns. The book devotes a few pages to the skilled craft of punch-cutting, of carving the steel stamps that represented the master copies from which metal type was replicated. That just sets the stage, though. The next 250 pages or so cover the history of printed text in Europe and the New World. It's an amazing journey, filled with rich characters. Gutenberg was only one of those characters, and his bankruptcy played a surprising role in the spread of printing. Chappell followed through, era by era, until the start of photocomposition, somewhat after WWII. Bringhurst added the section on computer typesetting and all-electronic fonts, bringing the story quite up to date. Bringhurst has done an elegant, seamless job of updating Chappell's original work. This is a posthumous collaboration that actually works, to my happy surprise. The book tells a coherent story in a very readable way, without bogging down in pedantic detail. The history of print can't really be told in just 300 pages, but this is an outstanding summary. It provides the framework and structure for the full story. Interested readers will look elsewhere to furnish the framework with detail, but will keep coming back to give context to those finer points. With Bringhurst as collaborating author, you know that this book has to be a joy to read, both in its prose and in the structure of the physical book itself. I suggest it to anyone interested in typography, printing, or history in general. //wiredweird

The book is a great source of information. The 4 (not 5) stars is given cause the book is filled with postscript errors (missing letters, ligatures replaced by spaces, accented glyphs...). Disappointing for a book about typography.

I have the 1999 second edition paperback version of the book. I found the first 100 or so pages of this book very engaging, But starting at the fifth magazine all the ligatures and many punctuation marks are missing - printed as spaces - or, in a few cases replaced with slashed capital o. Trying to read this book through all the typographical errors is like trying to read on a bumpy bus driving in circles around a construction site. I wish I could finish this book but it's too aggravating. On the plus side, I have a new-found appreciation for how important ligatures are.

Among graphic designers, one of the finest, most popular books in recent years is Robert Bringhurst's *The Elements of Typographic Style* (Hartley & Marks, 1992). In this book, Bringhurst revisits a classic history of typography, publication design and printing techniques that was originally

produced in 1970 by Chappell (1904-1991), a book designer, illustrator and author who had studied with Rudolf Koch. Of eleven highly readable chapters, all were written by Chappell, with the exception of the last on "The Digital Revolution and the Close of the Twentieth Century." Why reissue Chappell's book? As Bringhurst explains in the preface, "He knew some of the things that historians know, but mostly he knew what historians don't know. I wanted the names and dates set straight, insofar as possible, and yet to hear the story told as Chappell told it, from a workbench rather than a keyboard, with silences in place of self-advertisements, and graver marks and acid stains in place of any footnotes." (Review copyright 2000 by Roy R. Behrens from *Ballast Quarterly Review* 15, No. 4, Summer.)

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