



Dear Search Committee,

I am writing to apply for the position of Tenure Track Assistant Professor in Typographic Theory in the Gutenberg School of Literary Arts. I am a PhD Candidate in Literary Studies with an accompanying certificate in Typography and Book Design at Typst University, with research and teaching experience spanning both literary criticism and the material cultures of the written page. As an interdisciplinary scholar trained in both textual analysis and typographic practice, I publish, teach, and collaborate with researchers across literary studies, design history, and media studies where possible. I aspire to integrate the best of both in my work through a commitment to rigorous close reading, an open ethos of collaborative making, and the acknowledgement that typographic systems are not neutral vessels for meaning, but constructed through aesthetic, economic, and political choices.

My dissertation and first book project, *The Syntax of Spacing: Typography, Temporality, and the Politics of the PDF*, argues that the Portable Document Format represents a crucial but undertheorized site for understanding how literature persists and transforms in the digital age. Rather than treating the PDF as a mere container for pre-existing texts, I demonstrate how the PDF's particular affordances—its fixity, its portability, its standardization—actively constitute literary meaning and shape reading practices in ways that warrant serious critical attention. The PDF emerges not as a neutral technology but as a material rhetoric with profound implications for how we theorize textuality, authorship, and the circulation of literary works in the twenty-first century. Drawing on media archaeology, book history, and close analysis of how literary texts are formatted, embedded, and remediated through PDF structures, I argue that typographic decisions made within this format are fundamentally aesthetic and political choices that deserve the same critical apparatus we bring to questions of literary form. If we are to understand literature in our present moment with any clarity—as I strongly believe we must—then we first need to attend seriously to the typographic and technological substrates through which literary texts reach us, and what these material conditions have to do with questions of access, preservation, and interpretive freedom.

My second book project builds on the theoretical framework of my dissertation to examine what I call the poetics of the PDF: the distinctive literary and aesthetic possibilities that emerge when authors, publishers, and readers engage deliberately and creatively with typographic and document systems. Drawing on experience as a Research Fellow in the Book Arts Initiative (2021–present), I analyze case studies where poets, artists, and experimental writers have exploited PDF's technical capacities—layering, interactivity, embedded media, variable fonts—to generate new forms of literary expression. These works demonstrate that typography is never merely decorative; it is a fundamental mode of literary thinking. To preserve and advance a vision of typography as intrinsically connected to literary practice—a vision that animated the modernist avant-gardes and persists in experimental literature today—we must reckon with how contemporary publishing economies often obscure or eliminate typographic choice, standardizing text into unmarked formats that appear natural rather than constructed. A sufficiently critical approach to typography and typeface design—where critical echoes the spirit of critical literary theory—cannot rely solely on surface characteristics such as readability, accessibility, or aesthetic appeal, though these matter. It must rather engage with the philosophical and historical questions embedded in typographic form: What labor is inscribed in each letterform? Whose voices are amplified or silenced by particular typographic hierarchies? How do fonts carry ideological weight and cultural memory?

I have presented my work in diverse and interdisciplinary venues such as the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing, the International Conference on the History of the Book, the Typography and Graphic Design Symposium at the Royal College of Art, the Digital Humanities Summer Institute, and the Book History and Print Culture Workshop at Oxford, among others. I have published essays in journals including *Literary Modernism Quarterly*, *Design and Culture*, and *The Journal of Electronic Publishing* examining the formal properties of digital textuality and the role of typographic systems in literary meaning-making. My curatorial work with the Book Arts Initiative

has resulted in exhibitions and digital collections featured at venues including the Grolier Club in New York, the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp, the British Library, and various university special collections across North America and Europe.

I would be thrilled to continue my academic career at the Gutenberg School of Literary Arts on account of its distinctive commitment to literary theory, textual studies, and the critical examination of media and form. Since my undergraduate degree in English Literature at Typst University, I have been drawn to research that situates literary texts squarely within their material and technological conditions, recognizing that typography is as much a matter of meaning-making as narrative or rhetoric. The work of scholars like Ellen Lupton, Matthew Kirschenbaum, and Miranda Mullin—who theorize design, textuality, and media critically—was formative for my intellectual development. Their insights have informed my role as Teaching Assistant and curriculum developer in advanced seminars on digital textuality, and have shaped how I think about literary pedagogy in relation to material practice. My work on typography, format, and literary form would greatly benefit from engagement with faculty working in book history and material culture studies, as well as conversations with colleagues in design history and media studies at the university.

I am especially committed to teaching literary studies in ways that attend to the material and technical substrates of textuality, which I consider an essential dimension of contemporary literary pedagogy. At Typst University I have taught two original seminars as Instructor of Record: *Typography and Literary Form* (taught in 2023 and 2024), and *The Politics of Editing: From Manuscript to PDF* (2024). Having served as Teaching Assistant in courses ranging from literary theory to digital humanities, I am equipped to design seminars that combine close reading and critical theory with hands-on engagement with typographic and publishing tools—an approach I believe is essential for students to understand how literary meaning is materially constituted. In addition to my teaching within the university, I organize a reading group on *Typography, Theory, and Literary History* that includes faculty and graduate students from universities across the region, as well as *Typeface Genealogies*, a public-facing project that traces the cultural and political histories embedded in font design and typographic systems.

I have enclosed the requested materials in this dossier, and additional information about my research and public scholarship can be found at [laurenztypesetter.edu](http://laurenztypesetter.edu). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laurenz Typesetter  
Ph.D. Candidate in Literary Studies  
Certificate in Typography and Book Design  
Typst University