PREPARATIONS for INSTRUCTION in LETTERING

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Johannes H. von Gumppenberg
PREPARATIONS
for INSTRUCTION
in LETTERING

Johannes H. von Gumppenberg
1971

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by Johannes H. von Gumppenberg
John Howard Benson  
the Artist, the Scholar and the Teacher, 1901-1956  

(Introduction and Conclusion to a Lecture, Jamestown, R.I. Public Library)

In my student days I knew John Benson only as a scholar and a teacher of Philosophy of Design at RISD – the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. He had grown too ill to continue as Instructor of Lettering, though The Elements of Lettering, the book he wrote with Arthur Graham Carey, still came with our freshman supplies kits. It was not used, however, in our Lettering assignments during 1951-52, which aimed at commercial use, not calligraphy.

The lecture series on the Philosophy of Design and The Elements of Lettering shaped signally my outlook and inquiry in Visual Art. My talk tonight hopes to show you this. Now let me tell you briefly where it all began.

In 18th century Newport Stone Carved Lettering was carried out for three generations by the John Stevens Shop – founded in 1705. In 1927 John Benson re-opened the shop at its 18th century site on 29 Thames St. Lettering in the form of Stone-Carved Inscriptions is the art by which John Benson won his main renown. In this occupation Benson reached chiefly the patrons who commissioned carved inscriptions. Yet he influenced more widely – indeed, made himself available to us all – as a Writing Master and Preceptor who taught “Handwriting Reform.”

Though machines replace much writing by the “living hand,” we still pen letter shapes. These are our servants John Benson commends to our care. We ought to make them “good ones,” so that they will serve us well.

To carry this mission into execution, Benson in 1954 published his translation of The Little Work – La Operina, the first and to this day most serviceable manual of the Running Hand called “Chancery.” The Renaissance original was put to press by Ludovico degli Arrighi, surnamed “Vicentino,” in Rome, “in the Year of our Salvation 1522.” Benson’s mastery of the Renaissance Italian, his Calligraphic Facsimile Pages and clarifying annotations show to us the depths of Benson’s scholarship, of his Writing Master’s art, and his passion to teach others.

While John Benson was alive, he was never my instructor in the discipline of Writing. Instead I made myself an earnest student of the books he left behind for our use – both yours and mine. Now let me share with you some of what John Benson
taught this student – what this student learned. In part the student had to learn that an admired and great teacher is never a soft pillow for us to sleep upon. He is rather like a bow that launches arrows which must each seek its mark on its own account. Thus let me make it plain: the merits of my showing are John Benson’s. The faults will likely be my own.

This Student’s Gain

I opened with The Operina, to improve and train my running hand, then studied The Elements of Lettering to prepare a college course – one quarter of an academic year – for instruction in Calligraphy. The samples by my hand tell you I remained an amateur. My place is chiefly in a different space of action. Yet to learn good letter forms brought me satisfaction and utility, though I cannot work so excellently and so easily as the true expert can – as John Benson always could.

My lettering course at Kalamazoo College included The Operina as required reading. The Elements of Lettering was then already out of print. At the time the students were much reminded by me in class of John Benson’s influence on what they learned.

Theses pages are simply elaborate lesson preparations – elaborate, because I endeavored to learn myself as much as I could master at the time. As a whole, they record my struggle to keep a lesson or two ahead of each class. Thus neither John Benson nor others appear here as sources in the hand-written pages. During that time I just plowed ahead at my best speed to get the job done. Once completed, I felt if only I had time to re-do the work, I could have made it all much better.

I advanced with Benson’s help through several Alphabets – both Capital and Small. Thereby I discovered that I had traversed, from the pen-form variants of the Classical, Stone-Carved Roman Capital to the Small Letter Scripts of our time, very nearly the essential practical contents of the last 2000 years of the History of Writing. It was done in giant strides. Some few considerations merit therefore to enlarge upon that sparse recording, to assemble with good clarity the panorama I hope to unfold for you tonight.

(The body of the illustrated lecture took place at this point.)
Closing Remarks

As readily as the student can learn the practical essentials of the History of Writing, so is he – as a Calligrapher – held captive within that history. You surely may letter Alphabets of your own creation and design, and even ought to do so, as I have attempted perhaps twice. But if you stray far from the historical development of letters, you will write illegibly, and that we do each time our hand degenerates into an indecipherable scrawl for which exist no models the reader can recall.

There may be a more golden-handed virtuoso of the Writing Art even than John Benson, but nowhere near a better Artist. For his achievement was not of the hand alone. It demanded – joined to his skill and visual sensibility – a Historical Perspective and Analytical Precision we find scarcely ever all united in a single human being. For the great Writing Master does not hold superior letter shapes in his pen or brush. They are the possession of his head and brain.

Eventually John Benson learned his calling most insightfully and most thoroughly by his passion for the Art of Teaching – the most profoundly excellent and efficient way to learn in any occupation. So what has John Benson taught himself and learned in his three-fold action as an Artist and a Scholar and Preceptor? Let me reply concisely – within his task-field and his time, to be the best in the world.

Jamestown, R.I., September 27, 2007

Johannes von Gumppenberg
Johannes H. von Gumppenberg

Johannes von Gumppenberg was born in Germany in 1931 and came to the U.S. in the winter of 1949-50. He studied Illustration at Rhode Island School of Design and Painting in Munich and at Yale – MFA, 1962.

He taught at University of Illinois, several years as head of Basic Design, and as department chairman at Kalamazoo College, MI.

The range of his work is not unusual for an artist; but the rational emphasis on volume and space perception through a sizeable body of pen and ink drawings is probably uncommon. A summer research fellowship during the Illinois years at the Center for Cognitive Studies at Harvard may serve as indication of the bent of that creative effort.
This course in calligraphy was prepared entirely for the use of Kalamazoo students and was begun here as a new course in the fall of 1971.

J. v. G.
THE TOOLS & MATERIALS

The Writing Instruments. Type-C Speedball pens chisel-edged for italic writing from fine C-6 to very bold in the lower numbers or fountain penholders such as Osmiroid, Esterbrook etc. which come with a set of italic nibs are the basic writing instrument for the beginner. For lefthand writers there is a chisel-edged point with a downward slant to the left, and for certain non-italic alphabets there is a pen with a righthand skew. When these are not available in sufficient variety at the store they can usually be ordered or cut from slender bamboo sticks and reeds. Type-B speedball of the flesker variety for easy cleaning, marked FB, might be obtained in two sizes, the fine FB-6 and its slightly bolder neighbor FB-5. A small assortment of pointed pens should be included besides a regular drawing nib, the so-called bowl pointed pen and a crow quill strength nib enlarged to the blunt end to fit a normal penholder. This is available through two sources, Joseph Gillotti’s Artist’s Pen No. 1950 and William Mitchell’s Universal Lithographic No. 0620.

To care for the nibs paper towels or rags together with a toothbrush and a small plastic dish for water as well as a magnifying glass to examine the point for defects will prove helpful.

Chisel-edged water color brushes from ½” to 1” or wider can be used for brush lettering. Similar oil painting brushes whose most common sizes range from No. 2 to No. 12 but can be found heavier in good stores as a matter of course as well as commercial painters brushes of good quality for very large letters may turn out to be helpful. A small or medium pointed watercolor brush, perhaps a No. 2 or a No. 6 in order to correct small imperfections in built up or brush written letters, is useful.

A small collection of five pencils, 2H, HB, F-firm, F-firm, & B, to serve the purpose of marking out guidelines and formally written manuscript letters as well as pre-drawing built ups is necessary because papers of different quality require a different grade of pencil to yield markings of equal blackness under the same amount of pressure.

Inks & Pigments. Waterproof India ink can be used with speedball and pointed nibs that are
inserted in penholders although frequent cleaning may be necessary, but fountain pens would be hopelessly clogged. Higgins Engrossing, a waterproof writing ink and Skrip permanent jet black (not waterproof) can be used in all pens. A permanent black ink produced by Parker under the name, Super Quink, will cleanse the fountain pen as it runs through (manufacturer's claim). To clean Higgins Engrossing Ink from a fountain pen tepid water with dish lotion works well while water soluble inks can be cleaned with cold water alone. If brands other than India are used with ordinary Speedball nibs, the stopper of an empty India Ink bottle should be saved for filling the ink reservoir. Already bowl-pointed nibs are too wide for dipping when careful writing is desired, because dipping without ink retainer causes too rapid a flow in the beginning and then too soon the depletion of the ink supply thus yielding very uneven strokes. For the bowl-pointed pen a reservoir can be made by removing the head of a paper fastener and using as much of the remainder as is needed to fit in the holder opposite the pen and bending it to touch the pen a little beneath the oblong opening at the start of the split. The space in between must not be too wide or the ink will run too fast when the writing surface is level or only moderately inclined for the Chancery Hand. At a steep inclination of the page the pen may have a larger reservoir because the flow can be controlled by varying the tilt of the pen holder from nearly horizontal to a slightly steeper slope: Only sharp points like the Hunt drawing nib No. 66 should be dipped. This point has still enough width to be used for chancery writing. Any pen of some width however, should be fitted with a reservoir and loaded with a filler if the thicks and thins of a stroke sequence are to retain their character.

For pen or brush colored inks can be used to supply pigment, but being transparent they will not cover solidly so that paints are sometimes desirable. If pigments came absolutely pure the three primaries plus white would suffice; for mixtures of red, yellow, and blue can yield not only all kinds of ochre and brown but also grey and even black besides orange, green, and purple, although black might be added to the assortment because it is difficult to mix and can become with white a source of grey at the same time. The requirement for more colors, however, is due to the fact that the chemicals and minerals from which pigments are made are not provided
by nature to be employed visually and for the sole purpose of being looked at. Thus red can break either toward orange or purple, blue toward purple or green, and yellow at times toward green or orange. To find pigments capable of mixing a clean orange, green, or purple it may be necessary, with the exception of yellow which can be obtained at sufficient purity, to buy two colors of each primary type. These should, regardless of their technical names, have about the properties of vermilion and crimson among the reds and of turquosia and ultramarine among the blues. For the purpose of this study the paints should all be capable of being thinned with water and can of course only be used with the brush not the pen. Either acrilics or the less expensive temperas can be used. Poster paint is the cheapest and least durable but suffices for study and experimentation though not for display over long periods of time.

Writing Paper & Supporting Surfaces. For practical purposes the beginner should not use paper much smaller than 100 sq.in. or much larger than 300 sq.in. The surface should be fairly smooth and of good quality. Beneath the writing surface a sheet of cardboard perhaps one inch larger all around than the page helps in the control of the pen, for naked wood beneath the page is too harsh and at times causes the pen to slip. To mount the page drafting, not masking tape, should be used. The cardboard should not be mounted but can be moved freely in a vertical direction and from left to right in order to maintain the position of the writing level and not extend it laterally beyond a controllable range if the formate is large. However, it is poor discipline and makes for uneven work to change the tilt of the page once it has been decided whether it should be canted upward to the right, the opposite for lefthanded writers, or remain straight.

Formal manuscript lettering is done on a board of very steep slope about 60°. Such formal alphabets will only be introduced here so far as they are either designed or can be modified for writing with a single angle of the pen. Formal alphabets which require turning of the pen are not entirely suitable for beginners; and the arrangement of a very steep board for them is not absolutely essential to achieve the aims of this particular study. On such a board the supporting surface is
mounted with drafting tape while the page slides freely beneath an elastic band near the top that holds it in place under a sheet of paper also taped to the board which extends upward almost to the writing level for the purpose of protecting the page from being soiled by physical contact with the hand. During the writing the protective sheet and the page are pushed against the support with some implement that can be made of wood with smooth round corners and an upward curve at the end. You could do worse than use a cooking spoon, especially a flat Japanese one made of bamboo. This is needed because the hand cannot hold the paper flat as it does in normal or italic writing on a flat or only gently tilted surface.

Actually a slight inclination for Chancery writing is desirable because the upper portion of the page can thus be moved closer to the writer while ink bottle and water bowl are on a lower level and so rendered harmless when spilled. A sheet of quarter inch plywood perhaps 20” x 30” in size can be elevated on the far side by a simple wooden structure consisting of two triangular pieces of plywood whose upper corners are rounded and a board no more than one inch thick to the ends of which the two triangles can be fastened by means of ordinary wood screws. This prop can be moved forward or backward to supply slight variations in the slope of the board.

Other Tools & Materials. Scissors primarily for letter compositions best studied in college; a mat knife for cutting cardboard, and a heavy duty x-acto knife with cylindrical aluminum handle and No. 25 blades having a curved cutting edge with a sharp point in the shape of a hunting knife for scraping very fine corrections and for patching comprise the necessary cutting instruments.

Very neat patching is necessary when lettering is done for display and not for reproduction because white paint contrasts with nearly all paper surfaces causing them to look ugly and blemished. Patches are made by taping a clean piece of paper of the same type and preferably in the same fibre alignment as the written page on a fairly heavy cardboard. The page to be corrected is then taped on top. Thus when the bad spot is cut away with the x-acto knife a clean patch will be cut simultaneously which is inserted in the opening and backed by a slightly lar-
ger patch of rather thin paper to hold it in place. The glue to be used for this can be white glue; but mat acrlicic medium is better because it will not shrink the paper when it dries and might be gotten anyway if acrlicic paints are part of the equipment kit.

Marking a line of writing with pencil requires corrections now and then for which the ordinary pink eraser has the best qualities; some light green and white ones seem to be so nearly of the same substance that they can be readily substituted. Such erasers in pencil form constitute some very precise instruments for fine corrective work; and it should be mentioned that construction guides should be cleaned away gently and almost without touching the writing itself, which would soon lose its crisp blackness under the abrasion of a clumsily applied eraser.

A ruler, preferably two feet in length to mark the writing lines and a protractor to examine the tilt of italic script. A triangle is handier than a ruler if used together with a T-square to draw the oblique construction guides for the analysis of slanted letters. A T-square is especially desirable if the lines for a body of lettering are to be ruled over a very large sheet. Actually very large studies in lettering composition may be done on an easel since there is a tendency to do such work standing and to move away from it to view it with better critical scrutiny.

As an afterthought it should be mentioned that with the posterpaints or acrlicics a mixing tray should be purchased; and with acrlicics a palette might also prove helpful or simply a piece of plywood or masonite which should be painted or varnished as a substitute because the implement will be put on a table so that the big thumbhole would probably be superfluous.

Incidentally it is possible to make rough commercial pens run more smoothly by making at hardly any pressure circular and other writing motions with it over a very fine grind stone and then do the same on a carborundum cloth. In the process the corners should be blunted just enough to prevent the pen from catching but not so much that it will not make a clean heavy stroke. While writing one should not only squarely, but the elbow should be close to one's side and the writing area just off center, sufficiently displaced toward the right to be convenient for righthanded lettering without too much weight on the forearm and hand.
THE FORMING & SPACING OF LETTERS

Letters underwent many stages of development before they became as we know them today. One of these stages still lingers as a primitive root to our notion of the alphabet and reappears from time to time, namely, a completely geometric concept of letters by which all their shapes are derived from elements of the square, the circle, and an isosceles triangle whose base is the side of a square whose perimeter intersects with the point. Without any sort of visual correction such letters appear as follows:

ADHMORS

These letters are so dissimilar in the width of their shapes that we no longer react to them merely in terms of distinguishing characteristics that express different phonetic meanings but are also distracted by the slowness of the triangle in the top of A, the narrowness of D and R as well as that of the spaces on either side of the V in M, the width of H and the tilt in S. In other words these letters show with great emphasis many features the writer can have no wish to talk about.

As opposed to the purely geometric shapes of the unmodified alphabet visual corrections of them are not easily measurable, and purely schematic attempts to make them so can yield curious results. If we decide all letters must have the same width and be separated by exactly the same space between the endpoint of one character and the start of the next we should obtain a product that is even more in need of visual improvement than the geometric letter forms that are conceptually logical and sound and are lacking only in a certain aesthetic refinement. A word written in this manner would be thus:

LATECOMER

In this word L and E are unnaturally extended, A and especially M greatly compressed while the amount of white between L and A is disturbingly large and that between O and M and particularly between M and E is absurdly small. All the characters here are allotted three-quarters of a square with one-quarter between them, but it is far better to give letters the width their shaping demands and
to assign them a plane value that can be related to the square but is based more nearly on the amount of space they actually occupy. Thus $Ł$ should at the bottom have a width of only one half the side of a square and the base of A the full width instead of three quarters. If the end of the bottom stroke of $Ł$ is connected to the beginning at the top the resulting triangle occupies one quarter of a square while that of the $Ą$ is one half with a quarter square left blank on each side of the point. In order to explain spacing it is desirable to deal with the maximum that letters require by virtue of their shapes. The white space between two As is at least one half and so is that between $Ł$ and $Ą$ in LATECOMER. Because combinations of double-$Ą$ & $łĄ$ touch it is desirable to reduce the width of the characters by a very small measure. These reductions, however should be so slight that they do not carry optically. In addition it is necessary to relieve that $Ą$ extending on both sides and L to the right beyond the width of their plane value the one quarter measure of these extensions must be added at the beginning and end of a line in which such letters happen to occupy the appropriate end positions.

Thus the scheme we are about to develop cannot be used without actual attention to the appearance of the shape arrangement that results from it. But if we bear in mind that a good cook never follows a recipe without tasting his product then we should be able to use these methods as a general guide, because they will do justice to the overall length of a line of lettering though not to every detail of its development. To show the stages of consideration in LATECOMER the word is first shown in terms of the plane areas its letters occupy with the value of one half square between them. After that the linear structure is shown which supplied the preliminary markings for the final example written with a chisel-edged point.
In writing over the initial layout the pen straddles the penciled line so that it is always kept in touch with the split in the pen unless the letters and spacing are to be improved as the writing goes on. Actually in LATECOMER the last version is worse than the one preceding it because it was not followed as exactly as necessary in certain places and not sufficiently corrected perhaps in others.

Now it is necessary to demonstrate the entire alphabet and offer its plane values. Before this is done, however, it should be pointed out that letters can have more than one acceptable plane value; because their shapes are visually modified to suit individual scribes as well as special situations. Certain differences do not affect plane values such as raising the middle-bars of H and E or that of merely shortening that of E. The intersections of R and X also leave plane-values unaffected when they occur above the middle since the decreased width at the top is compensated by an exactly equal increase at the bottom. However, will increase slightly when the intersection of the two Vs is raised or the elements of the letter must be compressed by a small amount. But, like the two K's shown here, letters can have different plane-values due to different altitudes toward their characteristic properties. The enlargement of the loop in P to distinguish it from R would be another example. The following line of lettering is written as though it were a single word with two versions for BDGKR S and three versions of CFJP. These examples do by no means exhaust the variation we can expect to find in good alphabets. It should be remarked that the intersection of the second K is exactly like the first; the bars intersect at a right angle. Only in the second instance this intersection has been moved to the right by about a quarter-space as shown in the diagram above. Naturally a letter that can occupy one-half or three-quarter spaces could also be two thirds. The kind of latitude this expresses can be most
helpful in arranging a line of lettering because, as we can see, the different sizes of the letters cause very little disturbance in the regularity of the line. The following alphabet, however, offers the letters only in terms of plane values that range from 1/4 to 1, omitting fractions of thirds and eighths. As mentioned before, the markings of these basic shapes are straddled by the pen in writing. Only horizontal strokes at top and bottom are an exception. These are drawn to coincide with the guide line just covering its pencilled marking but little else. Thus the tips of A and V as well as the curves of C and O etc. will project a little which is necessary in order to give even appearance to a written line. Since one quarter, one half, three quarters and the full measure of a square are easy to distinguish the plane value of the letters is shown in this way and can be readily discerned.

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ABCD EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ\n\n? & VWXYZ & !
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1234567890
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For the small letters of the alphabet the concept of unmodified geometric shapes does not exist. Small letters developed from capitals until they reached almost the form they have now in the 9th century. They hence represent from the very beginning corrections of the capital shapes for the purpose
of greater writing ease. Any plane values we assign to these letters can be ascribed only to their bodies in the middle space but by-passes the ascenders and descenders. For the C which has the same shape large or small the option of making it one-half is exercised because the amount of white on its inside proved too great for a three-quarter allotment. Thus the C should change little in size on account of its one half value but be instead surrounded by less white space.

Grammarians will tell us not to start a sentence with numerals, presumably because they have not learned to distinguish between small and capital. But below you have seen the capitals, whereby in either instance the upper portions of 4 and 9 and the lower portions of 5 and 6 are two thirds of the whole or the height of a small a. In plane value small numerals like small letters are only measured in the middle space; their ascenders and descenders however, are only one half the height of the body. In fractions the numerals 1, 2, and 0 are not greatly diminished in height, just enough to make room for the little horizontal stroke and to make an optional reduction in the plane value of 2 to a quarter space. The larger numbers, however, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 have to be substantially smaller in order to render them as short as 1, 2, and 0.

The space allotment for punctuation is generally a letter space after the phrase to which it
belongs and a word space removed from the one ahead. In the case of a sentence beginning this space might be borrowed from the capital alphabet to distinguish it from gaps of intra-sentence punctuation. Because the portions of the squares which have been used match the height of the small alphabet the spaces between them reveal the length of the intervals or rather their plane values. However, in the sentence below only sentence punctuation and intervals have the little rectangles. The plus sign, hyphen and question mark have a plane values but most other punctuation does not unless we wish to count the half square distance between the two strokes of a quotation mark. In \((a+b)^2\) the 2 is equal to the numeral two used in the fraction \(\frac{1}{4}\) and therefore assessed at one quarter value. The sentence begun in the same row continues in the next with a spacing of one half between the letters and three quarters per word interval. One half is the demonstrable minimum because the letter combination \(rv\) has exactly the same character as \(LA\) in the capitals. It remains to be said that the line-space between rows of capitals is generally two thirds their height and exactly equal to that of a small \(a\). Three times the height of a must be allowed for small letters whose ascenders and descenders can generally be made to clear each other, especially in chancery writing, without a separate space allotment to keep them out of each other's way. Thus capitals in rows of small letters would be 1½ spaces or the equal of their own height above one another. There are many more signs and markings and possible combinations than have been

\[(a+b)^2\]

He said, “I am by-passing the crossing”.

rv
shown. For most of them the letterer must make his own rules preferably by writing out the relationships he wishes to express in terms most appealing to his senses and then investigating what measure most nearly fits this result.

It should be mentioned that this variant of a measuring three quarters of its height and was simply forgotten when the other letters were written; it can replace the a that is shown in the same way that the second g can be substituted for the first.

When such letters as these, whether capital or small, are slanted certain modifications occur by which all of them appear latterally compressed and extended in an upward and downward direction and the curved ones among them will show the elliptical character of slow and quick bending.

The basic unit of the square measure becomes a parallelogram constructed between lines of the same interval as before and a top and baseline of the same length; but now the top line is moved a little to the right so that the connecting strokes between top and bottom are no longer vertical and have become extended as well as tilted. Thus the former square is now a parallelogram whose sides are longer and measured across the shortest way closer together than those of a square.
Excepting for the righthand portion with the letters MOWEHRK the demonstration above is offered at a greater slant than is normal for the chancery hand, namely 15° instead of the usual five to ten degrees off vertical. The projection drawing shows why the slanted O appears to lean farther to the right than the degree of slope indicated by the other letters. The quick curve on the inside of the acute angle and the slow one on inside of the obtuse angle give this O in the line MOW a good deal of appeal and character the straight O perhaps does not have.

Either the 75° slant or the vertical 90° are used by engineers in labeling their drawings whereby generally only these letter skeletons are used with the one qualification that ascenders and descenders have only one half the height of the body so that in the upper space they come equal to the level of the capitals only.

**Lettering for Engineers**

MOWEHRK have the proper 80° slant for Chancery letters and are except for the W proper italic skeletons. The parallelograms beneath these letters express their plane values of $\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{5}, \frac{1}{6}$ just as clearly as did formerly the squares. The W makes clear that for a cursive hand other modifications than slanting are required so that the script for engineers which is often written with the same detailed stroke sequence as uprights does not furnish the correct model for a running hand.

Eee Fff f Z=z 0o

The line of lettering above shows the tendency of the hand to omit and curve parts—triple E, to extend verticals triple F, to wave horizontal strokes—double Z and to compress letter forms besides giving their round parts the extra amount slant already demonstrated as a geometric principle—double O. Thus the distinction between italic O and zero tends to blur. The italic shapes on the next page show only vertical extension and the geometric result of their slope but no extra compression or curves etc.
cept where the structural concept of the letter is itself affected by the task of preparing its shape for a rapid running hand. As the corrected skeletons are an adaptation of geometric letter shapes for the benefit of the eye, so is italic script once more an adaptation of just these very corrections for the convenience of the hand. Thus Chancery Cursive represents a compromise between the requirements of the eye and the rapidly writing hand.
The second q as well as the y and k in the bottom row are among the most serviceable of italics and have all a three-quarter plane value. However a and g are too complicated to be of use when we write at speed. The r and the LA upside down (N) in the last row of skeletons are simply attempts to explain again why a plane value of one half is required as the minimum white space between the characters. In this demonstration of the chancery alphabet a slope of only 5° off the vertical was attempted throughout.

ABCDFGHJKLMN
OPQRSTUVWXYZ
UJ234567890 &
abcdefghijklmnpqrstuvwxyz
12345America67890

Straight pen alphabets like the one above are best written with a nib that is skewed to the right. Thus the word straight pen does not apply to the shape of the nib but its position of zero degrees against the writing line. The alphabet above was, however, written with a square out pen at an extremely steep cant, and the table
flat rather than at the recommended considerable inclination. While the plane values are basically the same as those for the standard Roman Alphabet, the flourishes which relieve the severity of the pen strokes require an additional one-quarter space. This addition, however, increases only seldom when both instead of only one of a pair of adjoining letters feature the flourish, because flourishes can easily be kept large or small in length or omitted altogether. In all alphabets the plane value of the space between a capital and subsequent small letters is governed by the measure pertaining to the small letters. Hence the flourished righthand inclination of the A in America is separated from the m by a three-quarter space; the height of the small letters whose intervals have also largely increased to a three-quarter plane value, that is to say wherever flourished ligatures or the pulled curves of c, e, and t occur, hence only ½ between i and c.

America

The small letters of this alphabet can easily be converted into a contemporary version of medieval Half Uncials by the simple expedient of diminishing ascenders and descendents to a length one-half the body height of these letters. (Contemporary Minuscules)

tw w am erika x y z

Short ascenders & descendents can turn cursive capitals into a Majuscule Alphabet of modem Uncials.
The stroke sequences indicated by the arrows are not the only possible arrangements, but they proceed nearly always from left to right as the writing itself and serve the purpose of all such schemes of allowing the letterer to concentrate on one element at a time and so achieve better letters as a result of more perfect parts. Below the combination VW was avoided because spaces are only $\frac{3}{8}$ of a square.

He said, “I am by-passing the crossing.”
Travels

For Gothic Black letters skeletons are not so useful as for Roman characters because they owe their appearance almost exclusively to the strokes of the chisel edged pen. This simplified version is also designed for the broad nib but should be more suitable for beginners because it lacks the decorative details which in some historical models require changes in pen slant and even the use of a pointed nib. Plane values are an asset in this alphabet with 1/2 the width of a square as the smallest basic unit for capitals and capital numbers of which most have a value of 2 units or 1/2 of a square and all are separated by intervals of 1/2.

The exceptions among the letters are 4 units for M and W, 3 for D, G, Q, E, T, 1 unit for F, the numeral 7, and as well as X in the second row; zero for 0 and the numeral 1, while the word Germany has intervals only 1/2 unit wide. The distance between strokes in each quotation mark is one fifth. Both are separated from characters they enclose by a measure of 1/2. It would probably not be too difficult to find a similar rule for punctuation on the basis of the small letters which follow.

Travels
The small numerals and x next to them as well as their intervals are generally $\frac{1}{2}$ the width of a square with 2 and 7 being $\frac{1}{4}$ of that or $\frac{1}{4}$ the width of a square and I sero. The word, Travels, is written by this scheme with r and v having $\frac{1}{4}$ an l no plane value. It seems that this spacing will only work for numbers because of the overall size of numerals larger than body height, but the characters in the word, Travels, are too broad and openly spaced for medieval writing. Therefore the completed small alphabet is denser. Plane values and intervals have been reduced to a basic measure $\frac{2}{3}$ of a square with m and w twice; c, e, f, r, t, one half and i, j, l, s, no fraction of this value. Writing as dense as this can be found in historical examples, but for practical purposes the following alphabet written at a basic plane value of $\frac{2}{3}$ of a square is more legible and hence perhaps a better operational choice. The example of the small alphabet below has been written without pre-drawn skeletons, but the plane value of each letter was marked out in preparation.

$\&\alpha\beta\gamma\delta\epsilon\zeta\eta\theta\iota\kappa\lambda\mu\nu\xi\omicron\pi\rho\sigma\tau\upsilon\phi\chi\psi\omega$

WISSEN & WOLLEN

Der Verstand verschafft mir Einsicht
In die Wirklichkeit der Dinge;
Der starke Wille zwingt die Dinge
Des Verstandes Einsicht zu erfüllen.
Gott machte die schlechten Menschen etwas besser und die guten etwas netter.
TO THE MEMORY OF
FRANK BAUSCH

Reason was ready like a pocket knife
To cut pretension down to a true fit?
The blade caught light—a sudden gaiety,
Precision, wit. Affection sharpened it.
This course in calligraphy was prepared entirely for the use of Kalamazoo students and was begun here as a new course in the fall of 1971.

J. v. G.