Microsoft Windows Vista

Initially mentioned in Footnote 04, Jeremy Tankard was commissioned in 2003 to design a sans serif typeface for use in the new Microsoft Windows operating system and Office applications. Released on 30 January 2007, Windows Vista and Office 2007 bring to many computer users a set of typefaces called the ClearType Font Collection. These fonts have been designed to look exceptional on screen and offer a rich level of typographic detailing, they include six Western typefaces and one Japanese.

ClearType technology

The ClearType technology developed at Microsoft essentially increases the screen resolution through software. This is achieved by what is described as subpixel positioning. An overview of the technology can be seen at www. microsoft.com/typography/ClearTypeInfo.mspx. The image of the font rasterised on the screen is aliased through the vertically aligned RGB channels. As the size of the font image increase, brightness (grey-scale aliasing) is incorporated horizontally.

Corbel typeface

The typeface designed by Jeremy Tankard is named Corbel and consists of Regular, Italic, Bold and Bold Italic. The typeface is included with the Windows Vista operating system, and for the first time Microsoft have made the ClearType fonts available for licencing. The character set includes extended Latin as well as Greek and Cyrillic and a host of additions such as small caps, fractions and a variety of figure styles. See the following Wikipedia entry, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corbel_(typeface).

The type designers chosen to provide designs for the ClearType Western fonts were, Jelle Bosma (with Steve Matteson and Robin Nicholas at Agfa Monotype) and independent designers: John Hudson (Tiro Typeworks, Canada), Luc(as) de Groot (Font Fabrik, Germany), Jeremy Tankard (Jeremy Tankard Typography, UK) and Gary Munch (Munchfonts, USA).
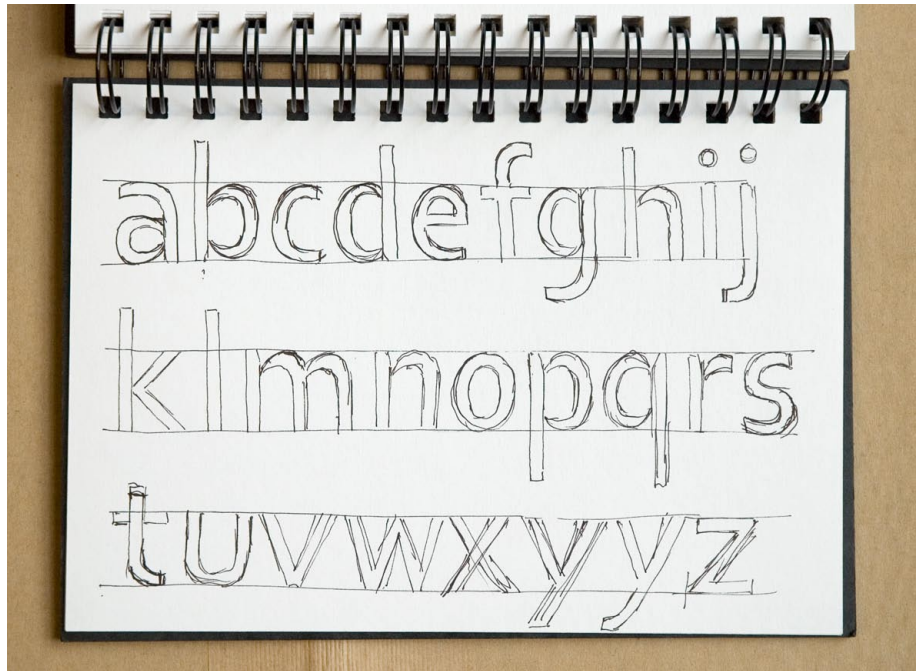
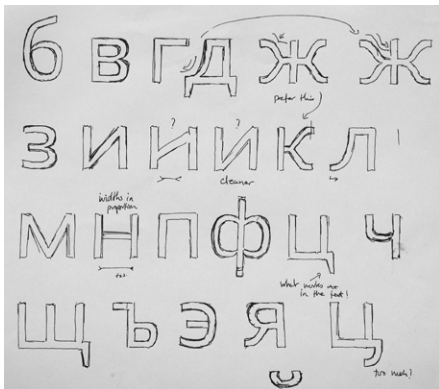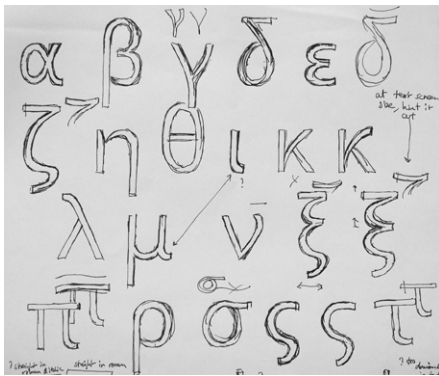An early sketch for the Latin lowercase of Corbel Regular
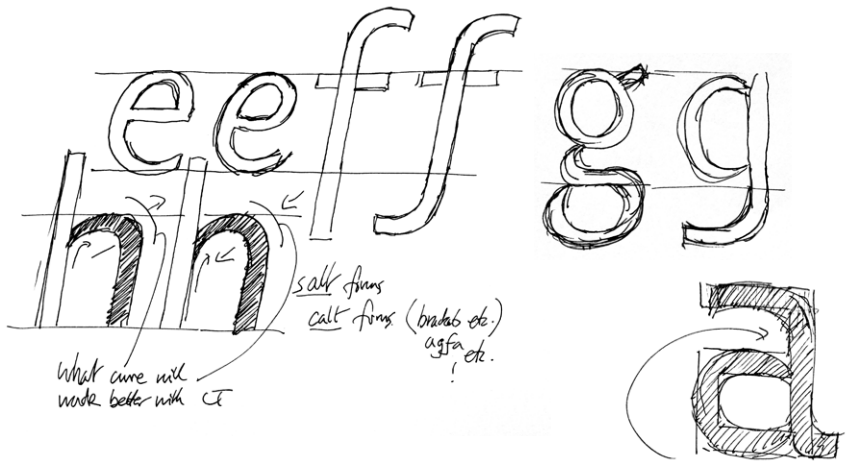
Sketches for various forms

The designers were asked to meet at Microsoft's headquarters in Seattle, USA in January 2003. Also present at the briefing were Gerry Leonidas and Maxim Zhukov (typographic consultants for Greek and Cyrillic respectively). Within Microsoft, the project was managed by Geraldine Wade, with technical support by Mike Duggan. At the briefing we were shown the potential of the ClearType technology and discussed the scope of the project and its requirements.

The character set for the Western fonts was agreed before work began and all three scripts could be approached at the same time allowing

Jeremy Tankard, John Hudson and Maxim Zhukov at the project start meeting held at Microsoft in January 2003

dramatically the circumstances in which type was being used. Although it ha
typographic high ground left vacant by the demise of the old guard, it soon
traditional type firms have been reduced to venerable labels attached to sta
Monotype Corporation (1) (a wholly owned subsidiary of the Agfa Corporati
form that bears little resemblance to its former self. Where once Monotype
operating systems manufacturers to supply core fonts: the means to deskto

THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG
the quick 23 fox jumps 87 over the 1234567890 dog

Corbel set at 8 point on the Windows OS with ClearType in operation. The second image below is a 300% enlargement showing the subpixel positioning in RGB. To view the above image correctly set your Acrobat Reader preferences to Page Display / resolution at 72 pixels/inch and turn Smooth images off. Then view at Actual size = 100%

Initial sketches for Corbel Greek and Cyrillic

for greater harmony across the designs. To explain this further, Latin has an even mixture of hard and soft characters, its italic can be made more soft through the use of cursive forms for a, e, f, g. Greek has a soft character set, almost all of its lowercase have round elements, its italic is basically the same as its roman form. However, Greek does have alternate forms for beta, theta and phi (β θ φ – ϐ ϑ φ). These alternate forms exist in both roman and italic, it was logical to swap their usage in the two styles allowing the italic to gain a more cursive feel. Cyrillic roman has a hard feel, its lowercase contains many straight lines and its forms are very similar to its capitals. This can give the appearance of reading text set in small capitals. The Cyrillic italic is much softer and contains very different forms to its roman. To balance the level of softness in the three scripts of Corbel, the Latin italic has visually different forms for the b, d, k, l, y. To try and move the Greek roman and italic further apart, the gamma and lambda (γ λ) have different structures in the italic.

During the early stages of development it became apparrant that the size of the small capitals could cause a legibility problem, as the Cyrillic lowercase forms are very similar to the capital forms. There had to be enough of a visual difference between the lowercase and the small capitals to make them legible.

Image produced by Microsoft available in their XPS format from http://www.microsoft.com/typography/ClearTypeFonts.mspx

The final delivery date was set for the end of 2003, this gave a year to develop nearly 1000 characters in 4 styles. The year was split into delivery stages to keep the project on schedule. The early stage breaks allowed the Greek and Cyrillic development to be reviewed and feedback given. As the year progressed the fonts developed to include the figures, accented characters and sorts. Finally the fonts were fitted and kerned.

Designed using the FontLab application on an Apple Mac using PostScript technology, the final outlines had to be converted to TrueType technology and manually corrected before delivery to Microsoft. Corbel was hinted by Ross Mills at Tiro Typeworks. The ClearType Font Collection was first publicly shown at the ATypI conference in Prague, September 2004. The Cyrillic of Corbel has won an award at TypeArt'05. A PDF about the award can be found at www.typography.net/info/Corbel_award.pdf.

The following page shows a character example of the Corbel typeface.

Corbel · Κορμπέλ · Корбел

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΛΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ

αββγδεζηθικλμνξοπρσςτυφφχψω

АБВГДЕЖЅЗИЙКЛМНОПРСТУФХЦЧШЩЪЫЬЭЮЯ

абвгдежѕзийклмнопрстуфхцчшщъыьэюя

0123456789о 0123456789

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΛΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΦΧΨΩ

αββγδεζηθικλμνξοπρσςτυφφχψω

АБВГДЕЖЅЗИЙКЛМНОПРСТУФХЦЧШЩЪЫЬЭЮЯ

абвгдежѕзийклмнопрстуфхцчшщъыьэюя

0123456789о 0123456789