

## TYPO Labs 2017 discusses variable fonts

Font technology conference established as annual industry review. Complete font families in a single font file and new tools for font production. Google Chrome: first browser to support variable fonts.

**Berlin, 11. April 2017.** – The highlight of the three-day font developer conference, [TYPO Labs](#) in Berlin, was the final lecture, where Google manager, Dominik Röttsches, who is responsible for layout and text on Chrome, announced the release of a developer version of the browser (Canary) which supports the new variable font format OT 1.8 on all platforms. It allows the combination of font features, such as weight, width or optical size, to be stored in a single font file.

During the prior two days, type engineers and developers, including representatives from Adobe, FontBureau, Microsoft, Monotype, Glyphs, URW and Fontlab, presented dozens of experiments and product ideas based on the new format. All agreed that variable fonts would primarily boost digital communication, rather than printing or PDFs. Examples were shown in which text responded to the viewer's facial gestures or to music. They also invisioned e-book readers, whose text rendering responds not only to light or dark, but to reading distance, reading speed or the user's attention.

The founders of the Dutch type foundry, Underware, were initially struggling with the immense number of 64,000 axes variations that an OpenType font can cover in the future, while a mere dozen axes would be enough to cover the typographic bandwidth of 500 years in printing, before being suddenly gripped by the pleasure of experimenting. Akiem Helmling and Bas Jacobs developed supersliders and sub-spaces until their entire fonts library was stacked in a single multidimensional font file. "Basically, this font space contains all the typefaces we want to make in the near future," joked Bas Jacobs on the TYPO Labs stage.

Those were just some of the funny moments that were expected at an event headlined by engineers and nerds. As Jürgen Siebert, program director behind TYPO Labs explains, "TYPO Labs connects two industrial groups, font developers and the graphics industry, whose exchange, until now, happened only sporadically. It took nearly 10 years for Webfonts to appear in the wild. This should not happen again with variable fonts and their fascinating opportunities." This position is supported by Google's Chrome announcement at TYPO Labs. "As the other industries are doing with their annual trade fairs, we want to be the annual metronome of our industry. Therefore, we are sure that in April 2018, at the 3rd installment of TYPO Labs, the first variable font applications will be seen on stage," concluded Siebert.

For more information, follow TYPO Labs on Twitter ([@TYPO\\_Labs](#)) or subscribe to our [Newsletter](#).

**Pictures and press materials are available for download here:**

<http://www.typtalks.com/labs/2017/press/>

**Click here to see all videos:**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLec3NyaPgImzEi11tVWbbgRogfVNOKcjV>

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