



Objective

This project intends to solve whether or not a viewer's background can influence their font preference. For this project's purposes, subject's background will be categorized in two different ways; major/field of study and culture/ethnicity. This influence may (or may not) lie in preconceived associations formed from interactions with certain fonts within their major or culture. For example, does an engineering student from America prefer a different font than a design student from Europe? Why or why not?

These findings could provide useful demographic information for designers and marketers working for or in relation to RIT's target audience in type treatment across all digital platforms.

Methodology

Focus Group Testing

A group of approximately thirty students will be asked to review six fonts

Font Choices

Fonts will be chosen to create a pool of three serifs and three sans serifs, consisting of an even amount of effective type classifications that ensure legibility in lengthy body copy. Each sample will set the type according to characters per line with a leading ratio of 25% for serif fonts and 40% for sans serif fonts to ensure visual consistency (as most sans serifs have greater x-height and require more leading to achieve the same legibility as serif fonts). The fonts that will be used are Garamond (Old Style), Times New Roman (Transitional), Century Schoolbook (Old Style), Helvetica (Neo-Grotesque), Avenir Book (Geometric), and Candara (Humanist).

Comparisons

Comparisons will pair each of the six fonts in every possible combination, achieving pairs of serifs and serifs, sans serifs and sans serifs, and serifs and sans serifs.

Questionnaire

Each subject will answer a questionnaire to determine their background and discuss their most frequent interactions with digital text, with emphasis on device and length. The majors offered by RIT will determine the category regarding major, and the category regarding ethnicity will pull from the large American, European, and Asian populations at RIT, and ask subjects to self-identify with one. They will be allowed to refer to the test samples if one or more samples evokes an indirect or direct association with a certain medium, context, or feeling.

The Poaceae or Gramineae are the large and nearly ubiquitous family of monocotyledonous flowering plants known as grasses. The Poaceae include the cereal grasses, bamboos and the grasses of natural grassland and cultivated lawns (turf) and pasture. Grasses have stems that are hollow except at the nodes and narrow alternate leaves borne in two ranks. The lower part of each leaf encloses the stem, forming a leaf-sheath. With around 12,000 species, the Poaceae are the fifth-largest plant family, following the Asteraceae, Orchidaceae, Fabaceae and Rubiaceae.

Grasslands such as savannah and prairie where grasses are dominant are estimated to constitute 20% of the vegetation cover of the Earth. Grasses are also an important part of the vegetation in many other habitats, including wetlands, forests and tundra. The Poaceae are the most economically important plant family, providing staple foods from domesticated cereal crops such as maize (corn), wheat, rice, barley, and millet as well as forage, building materials (bamboo, thatch, straw) and fuel (ethanol).

Though commonly called "grasses", seagrasses, rushes, and sedges fall outside this family. The rushes and sedges are related to the Poaceae, being members of the order Poales, but the seagrasses are members of order Alismatales.

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Comparison 1, Set 1

Comparison 1, Set 2

Results

I reviewed my results in two different ways. First, I looked at the general preferences among all of the subjects as a whole. I found that Candara was the least preferred typeface, never taking the majority vote in all of its comparisons. Similarly, the strongest results (which, for the sake of this study, are quantified as 10-8 subjects out of 12) were those in opposition of Candara. Additionally, I found that Garamond was the generally preferred serif, and Avenir was the preferred sans serif, both having taken the majority vote in each comparison within their own font type (serif vs. sans serif).

I also found that Asian and European students' preferences matched up more than twice as often as they did with American preferences. The strongest results between Americans and Europeans were those that preferred Avenir and Times over Candara, while the strongest results between Americans and Asians were those that preferred Helvetica over Candara.

Discussion

Given the timing and resources of my study, I was not able to gather as many subjects as I had hoped. My focus group consisted of 10 American students, 1 Asian student, and 1 European student. Thus, most of my findings would require more testing to hold true. If able to revise my study, or explore this question further, I would either a) redefine my demographics with more emphasis on major and age or b) schedule subject testing farther in advance