

Introduction: Using This Book

THE MAIN PURPOSE of this book is to help scholars and teachers, particularly those who work in a variety of languages, accomplish their work as easily and as effectively as possible. It will be most useful to scholars and students in classics, biblical studies, medieval studies, linguistics, and similar fields. In addition to this primary goal, there are two other objectives.

Audience and objectives.

The second objective is to provide a good understanding (without getting too technical) of Unicode and OpenType. Chapters 1 and 2, which cover these topics, may be the most important ones in the book, since many people nowadays use Unicode-based software but do not understand why things work as they do. Smart font technologies such as OpenType are even newer than Unicode itself and so I have devoted particular attention to explaining the advantages (and occasional pitfalls) of this very important development. Be sure to read Chapters 1 and 2, since without this background some information in later chapters may not be clear.

The third objective concerns publishing technology and design issues. Scholars today need to be more conversant with these things than in the past; for instance, publishers now usually require that manuscripts be submitted electronically, and people are publishing their own work on the Internet in HTML, XML, or PDF form. But useful information can be hard to come by. Many articles about Unicode, fonts, and similar issues are written for programmers and are quite technical, while others are intended for graphics professionals. This book is designed to give scholars the information they need in an accessible form, while also providing some information in greater depth for those who want it.

Designers and typesetters who are asked to work in ancient languages they may not know well (or at all) may also find some of the material helpful. Finally, it may be useful to those experienced with font editing if they are asked to customize fonts for scholars.

Organization

The following bullet points will help you find your way around this book:

- Part I provides information about fonts, Unicode, keyboards, text entry and other material of that is applicable to many languages and fields of study.
- Part II focuses on the needs of scholars in various disciplines. You will probably be most interested in the chapter(s) that deal with the fields in which you normally work. Taking time to read some other chapters, however, will give you a broader perspective on the issues involved with languages and fonts; this is one of the strengths of the book.
- Marginal notes highlight essential points, clarify the organization, and provide cross-references.
- Sidebars, Tech Notes, Historical Notes and Design Notes offer additional information to those who are interested, but the main text can always be understood without studying them. They are typographically distinct from the main text (set in a sans-serif font on a shaded background).
- Further Reading sections at the end of chapters help those who want to explore a topic in greater depth.
- The glossary at the very end provides a convenient way to look up terms when needed.

When there is more than one way to accomplish a task, I have included all the methods with which I am familiar, since people will prefer different ones. I, for instance, don't care for autocorrect entries as a way to enter characters not on a keyboard. But some people regularly use this method, so it's here.

Getting The Information You Need

My intention is to make the material in this book as understandable as possible, especially for those who may not always feel comfortable with the inner workings of computers and software. For this reason I have separated out the more technical material into sidebars, Tech Notes, and the appendices, which you may skip if desired. The main text should be accessible to any careful reader; if you find portions that are not, please send me an email so that I can improve future editions of the book. See my website, given below, for the current address.

Be sure to read this section if you don't consider yourself a "technie!"

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce some fundamental concepts. I suggest reading them first, and highly linear thinkers will be happiest doing so. Others may prefer to go immediately to a chapter of particular interest — e.g., the chapter on Greek for classicists. As you read that chapter, you will come to understand the importance of the concepts presented in Chapters 1 and 2 and may find it easier to go back and work through that material. There are many cross-references throughout the book; these, along with the detailed Table of Contents, should enable you to find your way around even if you read the chapters out of order.

Order of reading; finding your way around the book.

And, finally, a word of encouragement. If you work in a field that requires a variety of languages, particularly less common ones, you really need to know much of the material in this book. I understand that some people prefer to spend their time on things other than the inner workings of computers. I wrote this book to make things as painless as possible, but there is no avoiding a certain amount of technical knowledge these days if you are to get your work done efficiently. Even if you are in the enviable position of having someone to take care of software issues or do typesetting for you, you will be able to communicate more effectively with that person after reading this book.

Reading on Paper and on Screen

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Getting the best display on screen.

If you are reading on screen, you can enlarge the text using your PDF viewer's controls to make things easier. You may also find it worthwhile to experiment with different PDF viewers. On my system, PDF-XChange produces a noticeably crisper display than does Adobe Reader, while Sumatra PDF is in between. (I am not sure whether this is due to something about my computer system or to the actual PDF file for this book.) See page 98 for information on how to get these PDF viewers.

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Note About Hyperlinks

The one advantage to reading the PDF on screen is that you can click on any of the web addresses, on the entries in the Table of Contents, and on cross-references to other pages — they are all live links. In the PDF version, links within the book are in blue and external URLs are in green. The pointer in your PDF viewer will probably change to a pointing hand when you pass it over a clickable link. In the printed color edition, however, cross-references and URLs are in black.

Conventions Used In This Book

SMALL CAPITALS are used for names of keys on the keyboard, such as ALT or OPTION, and for the names of Unicode characters when printed in running text, such as LATIN SMALL LETTER A. Sidebars appear in sans-serif type, as do the names of L^AT_EX packages. Code snippets (what you would actually type into a file) are printed as monospaced text on a shaded background.

Sidebars generally are printed in the margins, but a few long ones appear as full-width textblocks. These are printed on a shaded background to distinguish them clearly from the regular text.

The symbol ► is used to indicate menus: so ‘Format ► Font’ means open the Format menu, then choose the Font submenu.

See page 47 for explanation of serified and sans-serif fonts.

Updates and Improvements

To keep this book up to date, my web site has a page devoted to new developments, corrections, and ordering information for this book:

<http://scholarsfonts.net/docproc>

If you have experience with a font, piece of software, or other things that would be useful to readers of this book, please send them along. I will post them on the web site, with appropriate acknowledgment (unless the sender wishes to remain anonymous), and incorporate them into future editions. This is important since it’s not possible for me to try everything.

Acknowledgments

The following people read portions of the book and made helpful suggestions: Deborah Anderson, Michael Mari, and Donald H. Mills. I of course am responsible for any errors that remain.

I have learned a great deal from the various electronic discussion groups and mailing lists to which I subscribe, and in many cases people there have helped me solve difficult problems. They are too many to list individually, but I am very grateful to them all.

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