

## **CBBAG - OTTAWA VALLEY**

### Minutes

January 8, 2020

**Theme:** The history of our alphabet, with Rick Draffin

#### **The Book Arts Show**

The show is being planned, and will take place on Saturday, May 16, at Carleton University's library. An email has gone out to vendors, and people are signing up for tables. The cost is \$50 per vendor and does not reflect the number of tables reserved. Any money collected, after expenses, will be donated to the Book Arts Lab. The space is quite large and the university will do the setup. There will be a speakers' program. If you have any ideas on topics, please let Patti or Spike know. Topics from some of the previous shows were mentioned.

Spike's goal is to make the vendors happier. Roxanne will put information on the page already on the website.

#### **Treasurer**

No money has been spent.

#### **Workshops**

Spike's workshop on rounded boxes went very well. Seven people attended. Some boxes were shaped like hexagons. The January workshop, limp vellum binding, with Bronwen, has been sold out.

Amy is not able to plan workshops right now, so Spike is doing this in the meantime. All the workshops for the rest of the year have been lined up.

February - marbling (we need to check with Nancy)

March - BBII, March 14 - Jacob's ladder boxes, with Tiffany

April - tool modification, with Tiffany and Paul

May - star book, with Barbara Helander

#### **Programs**

We don't have a topic yet for our February program. Ideas, anyone? One came up: sample endbands.

#### **Show & Tell**

Paul showed his book with Byzantine binding. Deidre had made a litho-print accordion-folded book of her family tree. Valerie had her book, also an accordion fold, of last year's swap challenge, maps. Hand-marbled paper was used for endpapers, and the front cover had the map of where she lives. For her daughter's wedding, she made a guest book, that featured leaf prints on the covers. Steve had the latest issue of the newsletter, *Letterpress Gazette*, with linocuts, which he produces quarterly for the Ottawa

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Press Gang.

## **Program**

Rick Draffin is a member of the Calligraphy Society of Ottawa, and he spoke about the history of our alphabet. Calligraphy is a relatively new term, coming from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. One cannot trace a direct line from historical beginnings to the present day. Scripts were in use, and so natural distortions occurred. The job of a scribe goes back thousands of years. He showed the hieroglyphic symbol for calligraphy, and the origin of our alphabet, which was used in the Sinai, then later the Phoenician, which became the basis of western script. The important thing was that these symbols represented sounds.

Slides of Greek texts showed the writing going back and forth, in Boustrophedon style. Then text layout evolved to what we have today, lettering from left to right. The value of the Rosetta stone was that it allowed people to figure out the meaning of the old texts. The Trajan Column, with carved Romans, was a high-level script, that was used only for very important things. Written letters were done with quills, so the letter shapes changed somewhat, leading to Rustica. The “new Roman cursive” was writing used during the Roman Empire, and it showed ascenders and descenders, no longer being written all in capitals. This script co-existed with uncials and half-uncials, from where the idea came for ascenders and descenders.

Insular refers to the UK, where the Lindisfarne Gospels and Book of Kells were written, the latter being written about 80 years after the former. These books show the calligrapher’s freedom, for example, in stacking letters at the ends of lines. Irish monks went to Europe to set up monasteries, and thus, influenced their scripts. Charlemagne authorized a hand known as Carolingian, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which is the basis of our minuscule alphabet. This, in turn, influenced Edward Johnston one thousand years later, who is regarded, with Rudolf Koch, as the father of modern calligraphy.

Compressed gothic lettering evolved, because of the cost of vellum. This was the first time that the “i” was dotted, so that it could be identified. Humanistic and cancellaresca became the basis of italic. The printing press was invented in Germany, however, Italy did not want to use the German forms, so they used italic. In France, batarde was used, and in England, secretary hand. The Flemish writing masters in 1621 were quite decorative in their work. This spread to France and then England. George Bickham called his style roundhand. Eventually books were printed using engraved plates, which is where copperplate originates. Spencerian, which bears the name of Platt Rogers Spencer, was based on commerce. Then came the Palmer method, which looks like our modern cursive. In 1905, Edward Johnston found a document in Carolingian, the Ramsey Psalter, that influenced his letters, which he called foundational, for modern lettering. Koch, in Germany, brought back the gothic script.

Modern calligraphy is becoming very artistic. Rick showed slides of work by Thomas Ingmire, Luca Barcelona, Yukimi Annand, Alice Young, Yves Leterme and Denis Brown. The work by Brown had 8 to 10 layers of glass, with letters etched on each layer with dental tools. In addition, Rick had a long sheet of paper, which showed the timeline of the development, starting in 900 BC.

## **Next Meeting**

February 12 program to be determined

18 in attendance

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