The Canada1500 Typeface Version 1.101 2017-07-01

Introduction

I'm Raymond Larabie, the creator of the Canada1500 typeface. In November 2014, I created a free, eighty style typeface called Mesmerize. In 2015, Grant Johnson, the senior adviser for the Canada 150 Federal Secretariat contacted me about adapting some styles of Mesmerize to accompany the logo for Canada's sesquicentennial on July 1st 2017. I offered to create a customized font family based on Mesmerize at no charge and expanded language coverage to include all of Canada's indigenous languages. I intended to release the font to the public for free after Canada's 150th birthday celebrations. Up until July 2017, the Canada 150 typeface was only available from the Canada 150 Federal Secretariat website through an application process. In 2016, I was contacted by Constance Adams about adapting the Canada 150 typeface for a manned Mars mission. I named it Canada1500 and made alterations for use on spacecraft and Mars base signs and labels. I also expanded language coverage to include Vietnamese, Greek, more Cyrillic languages and most Latin based languages in current use.

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Updates

I'm not maintaining a repository for Canada1500. I don't intend to release any updates here. If you're working on a project with Canada1500, let me know and I'll can add a link to http://typodermicfonts.com/canada1500

Design

The design is a sort-of-geometric sans reminiscent of early twentieth century sans-serif type. It's not based on a specific historical model and no specific reference was used. It's supposed to be kind of a Futura, Metro Black, Bernhard Gothic, Kabel kind of idea where the circular elements deliberately imperfect. Some quirky elements were added to keep it looking friendly. In no way was this ever meant to be used for immersive reading. It was strictly meant for signs, labels, headlines and ad-copy sized chunks of text. And example of a quirky element is the wide lowercase s. A narrower latter would look more balanced but I think it adds flavour.

Since Canada 1500 is intended for display use, the character set is limited. The IPA symbols included are only ones that would be used for Canadian indigenous languages. Characters used for academic use only have been omitted. For example: in the UCAS section, there's a section of obsolete Cree characters (15C4-166C) that have been omitted. While you're free to modify this font, please keep in mind that this is a practical display typeface, never intended for textbook use.

I think the italics in this typeface should be kept as obliques, not classical italics. If you're thinking of adding localized Cyrillic variations for the italics, I strongly suggest that you don't.

OpenType Features

In OpenType savvy applications you can access some special features. At the time of this writing (2017) it's been over 20 years since OpenType was introduced and still, very few applications support OpenType features. If the application supports it you can use…

- Old Style numerals: for use in-line with lowercase text

- Tabular numerals and tabular old-style numerals: for times when you need columns of numerals to align. Some monetary and mathematical symbols will align with these.

- Superiors and inferior numerals. These are aligned with this typeface's numerators and denominators and can be used for both. In chemical names, the superior and inferior numerals align with the base line and cap line. It not be technically correct but makes for more attractive and compact signs and labels.

- Fractions: use *number slash number* to generate any fraction you like.

Contextual alternates

Contextual alternates are an OpenType feature that will automatically convert certain character combinations into other characters. Some of the character combinations used in British Columbia languages have no official Unicode designations so the contextual alternates feature is the only way they can be displayed. For example: g followed by a combining underbar (0331) will display a lowercase g with an underbar overlaid on it. Contextual alternates are also used to replace a capital I with a serif version when it's followed by a lowercase L. Contextual alternates are also used to allow the use of shortcodes for easy access to hard-to-access characters.

Space stuff

While a lot of the planetary symbols included in Canada 1500 may be familiar to you, I've also included symbols for moons, asteroid and plutoids. Many of these have no official symbols designated so I've included unofficial symbols because: fun! Many of these are based on the work of Denis Moskowitz. Some of the symbols have alternate versions—I chose the ones I preferred the look of. A few of the more common planetary symbols include astrological versions. I made up my own symbols for Earth gravity, Luna gravity, Mars gravity, microgravity, launch, land, orbit, orbit up, orbit down.

Shortcodes

Shortcodes are a system I've been using in my fonts for over a decade to make it easier to access characters that are hard to access on a keyboard. For example, in my Gargle typeface, I included shortcodes so comic book authors could easily access skulls, clouds and spirals. In Canada 1500, shortcodes are a backslash followed by lowercase letters and another backslash. These will only work in applications which support OpenType contextual alternates. At the time of this writing, very few applications support contextual alternates. Otherwise, to access special characters, you'll need a glyph palette, character map or similar application. Most of these symbols are in the 2600 range, the 14300 emoji range, the PUA around EA00 or scattered all across Unicode. The italics don't include the *fun* symbols.

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\ballotx\	\reverse\	\newmoon\	\deimos\	\rhea\
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\poweroff\	\fastforward\	\firstquarter\	\dysnomia\	\sedna\
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\skull\	\repeat\	\mars\	\europa\	\titania\
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\electric\	\reload\	\saturn\	\flora\	\typhon\
\radiation\	\revpause\	\uranus\	\fortuna\	\umbriel\
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Modification

There fonts were made in FontLab Studio 5.2.2 in Windows 10. To create multiple weights, I recommend drawing the light weight, altering "by hand" to create the heavy weight and using FontLab's *blend fonts* tool. There are no anchor points for accents; I placed them manually like a chump. Watch out for my kerning classes—make sure you have a look at them before you alter existing kerning. I used RMX Slanter for some of the oblique slants and RMX Harmonize constantly. Green indicates components which I use with FMX Select Same Color.

Unicode Private Use

Custom characters like some of the lesser known asteroid symbols are in the Unicode Private Use Area from EA00 to EA89 and a numeral block from E44F to E458. These are not official Unicode locations. Try to avoid using these; stick with the OpenType shortcodes, or numeral features if possible. Otherwise, if the font changes, those characters will be missing or incorrect. It considered bar practice to leave anything in the Private Use Area for distributed fonts but in 2017 we still have a lot of applications without even basic OpenType feature support.

The future!

I'm not much of a programmer so there's probably a lot that can be improved in the way of LOCL features. There's no accent linking. The Unified Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics section could use its own kerning and kerning groups, perhaps better spacing. You can probably knock out a lot of the Pan Nigerian letters. I couldn't find any evidence that these would ever be used for signage—it seems like it's strictly for academic use like IPA. I'm happy to give advice but please don't send me suggestions for things to change. If you have a project with a project leader and a repository, maybe I can help out. If I don't offer Canada1500 in UFO format on my site, it's because I haven't been able to do it yet. If you can do a conversion straight from the VFB source, please send them to me so I can add them to the site.

Ray Larabie

Nagoya, Japan

News Archive

Government of Canada's Canada 150 Typeface page

Government of Canada's interview with Ray Larabie

Ottawa Metro News: Ottawa man designs Canada 150 typeface

Canadian Art: Can One Font Represent All of Canada?

Global News: Canadian government under fire over font controversy

CBC Radio One Breakaway interview on the Canada 150 Typeface

Toronto Star: Designers fume over free font for Canada's 150th birthday

Quartz: Canada's new national font was designed to include aboriginal languages

CBC News Ottawa Radio Interview: New Canada 150 typeface supports English, French, indigenous languages

Desktop Magazine: Canada 150: the futuristic typeface that supports Aboriginal languages

[Hacker News discussion: Canada 150 Typeface](#)

[Gizmodo: Snooty Canadian Designers Are Pissed Off at Their Government](#)

[TypeDrawers typeface design forum: Typeface to accompany Canada 150 logo](#)

[Wired: Canada'S New Typeface Unifies the Country's Many Languages](#)

[Designedge Canada: Canada 150 typeface designer is okay with no pay](#)

[MacNN: Canadian government criticized by designers over free font usage](#)