

The Devonish typeface

The DEVON typeface is quite old and originally produced in Britain by the engraving company of George M. Whiley in the 19th century. The designer is unknown. It is a light, open, clear san-serif face but has been superseded by more modern 20th and 21st century designs. Nevertheless a large number of DEVON font sets are in use by bookbinders and they are still available new from engravers like P&S Engraving in Sussex, England. Unfortunately there hasn't been a digital version of the typeface available until now. A digital version allows the bookbinder to experiment with designs on-screen as well as getting approval for a design from a client electronically. It also allows dies to be made for designs where, for example, there is a constant element and a variable element so that a die can be used for a logo & author's name while individual characters are used for the volume title or number in matching typeface.

The original aim of the computer-based typeface was to reproduce the characters available in the brass letters found in the bindery but even if the bindery's set is complete there are still characters that would be useful for modern work that have not been reproduced in brass type, so a few characters have been added from the Unicode set that might be useful for those working in English. The form of these glyphs has had to be guessed as they were not in the 19th century design.

Both hand and machine-engraved fonts can vary, especially over more than a century of production so it is likely that this digital version of DEVON will be an approximation to the brass type found in different binderies. A facsimile from an old catalogue was used to generate the digital version and it has been compared to 3 brass fonts from a bindery. This showed that a little extra kerning is required, with the space between capital letters benefiting from 0.1pt to 0.5pt of extra spacing between letters to match the brass font. You will need to test this against individual sets for optimum results. Since the digital version is an approximation to the original and the typeface name "Devon" has now been taken for a completely different style, the digital DEVON has been called "Devonish" since it is DEVON-ish rather than exactly DEVON.

Credit must be given to the folks at Indian Type Foundry for their typeface Hind, which was the starting point for Devonish. Hind is available under the SIL Open Font Licence, and I am happy to release Devonish under the same licence.

Malcolm Raggett, 2015. <http://www.mraggett.co.uk>

22pt, 16pt and 12pt fonts with 0.5pt expanded character spacing:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ1234567890&

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ1234567890&

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ1234567890&

All the characters available in Devonish:

ABC DEF GHI JKL MNO PQRS TUV WXYZ

abc def ghi jkl mno pqr stu vwx yz

! " # \$ % & '()*+,-./0123456789:;<=>?@

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— ‘ ’ “ ” † ‡ • … ? / €

Table of Devonish glyphs with their Unicode decimal and hexadecimal (preceded by U+) codes

