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# Chapter One

## THE FIRST CENTURY OF PRINTING

1450-1550

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### I. THE INCUNABULA PERIOD

ALL historical periods are makeshift expedients: people did not go to bed in the Middle Ages and wake up in modern times. Few of these arbitrary breaks, however, can have been more detrimental to a real understanding of an important section of human progress than the restriction of the term *incunabula* to the time from Gutenberg's first production to 31 December 1500. This date cuts right across the most fertile period of the new art, halving the lives of some of its greatest practitioners such as Anton Koberger (1445-1513), Aldus Manutius (1450-1515), Anthoine Vérard (d. 1512), Johannes Froben (1460-1527), Henri Estienne (1460-1520), and Geofroy Tory (1480-1533).

The word *incunabula* was first used

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### 2. GUTENBERG

THE available evidence about the invention of printing with movable types cast from matrices is unfortunately less conclusive than might be wished; but the following facts may be considered well established.

Johann Gensfleisch zum Gutenberg (born between 1394 and 1399), a Mainz goldsmith of a patrician family, began experimenting with printing work towards 1440 when he was a political exile at Strasbourg.\*

\* S.H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 2nd ed., 1961.

## CHAPTER II

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### *The Alphabet*

THE LETTERFORMS WE USE stem in large part from *lapidary* Roman capitals – letters incised into stone with a chisel – that came into full flower early in the Christian era. One classic model is the inscription on the column erected in Rome about AD 114 by the Emperor Trajan.\*

\*

The swelled rule in this example comes from the font **Florea** by Séamas Ó Brógáin. The rule is in two parts mapped to ‘1’ and ‘2’. The Linux Libertine font has swelled rules as single glyphs.

I got the swelled rule to the width of the measure by comparing it with a `\hrule` and fiddling with the point size and with the X<sub>Y</sub>TeX `extend` feature. I centered it on `height` and `depth` by comparing it with a TeX fraction and using `\lower`:



You could go the opposite way to the rule above by using a small value for `extend` and a large point size to produce rules that are short and thick and almost diamond shaped:



The dropcap macro is customized for the ‘T’; the letter is `\kerned` out into the margin so that the stem is aligned with the edge of the text block.

\* Warren Chappell, Robert Bringhurst, *A Short History of the Printed Word*, 1999, p. 22.

## *Type and composition*

ALPHABETS, by which all the sounds of speech can be represented in combinations of fewer than thirty letters, can be traced back to the Sinai desert some four thousand years ago. Paper – more durable, portable, plentiful and inexpensive than other writing materials – was first made in China, a century or so before the birth of Christ. In the mid-fifteenth century Johann Gutenberg, a goldsmith of Mainz, began to make separate metal casts or *types* of each letter of the alphabet, to arrange these types into words, lines, and pages, and to print ink from them on to paper. That was the beginning of the age of the alphabetically printed book.

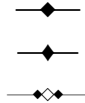
For more than four centuries, various alphabets, paper, and images printed from composed type have been looking much as they do today.\*

\* Hugh Williamson, *Methods of Book Design*, 3rd ed. 1983, p. 27.

## Various dividers

Swelled rules from Linux Libertine:

Diamond rules, made from em dashes and characters from FreeSerif:



Asterisks:



Or just one:



Thickthin line:



From Junicode:



From Florea:



From FreeSerif (Zapf Dingbats):



Opposite: a border for a title page done with [Gothic Extras](#) ↪

# A Page Border

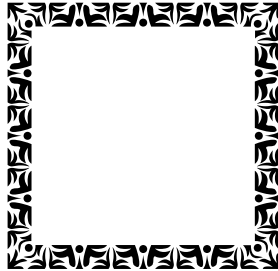
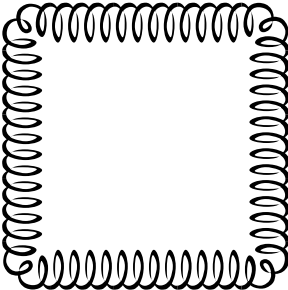
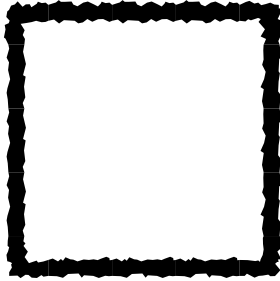
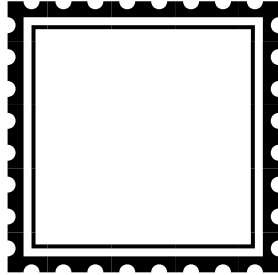
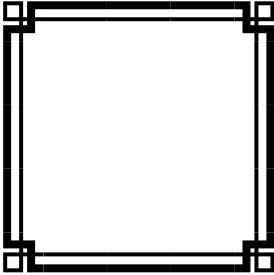


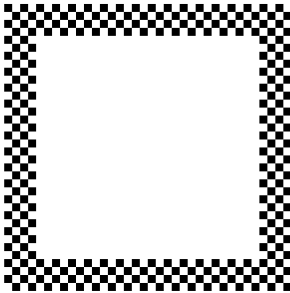
Made with Gothic Extras C

You may have noticed that the NE, SW, and SE corners of the page border on the previous page don't exactly align. I can't seem to do it no matter which settings I use.

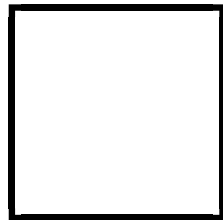
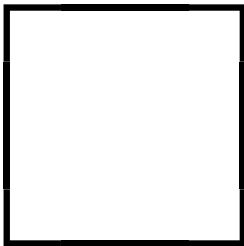
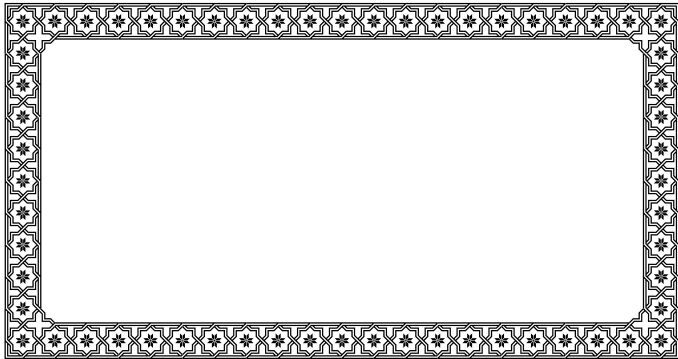
I found some fonts which make creating boxes a little bit easier.

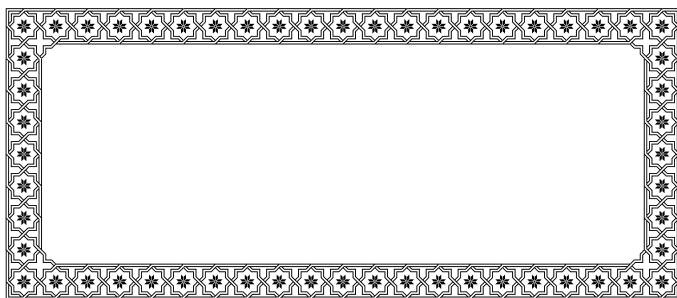
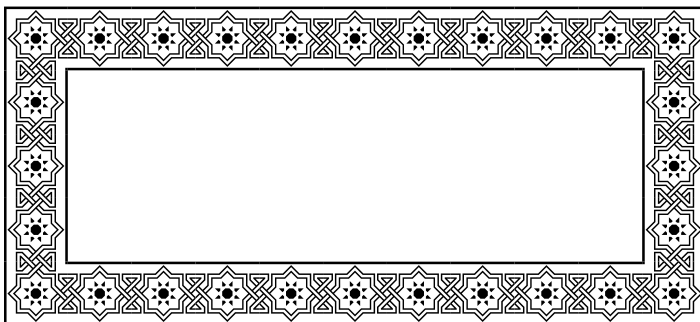
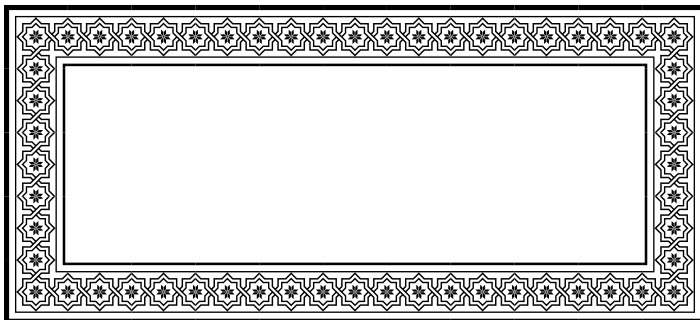
**EZborder:**





And *Byzantium*:





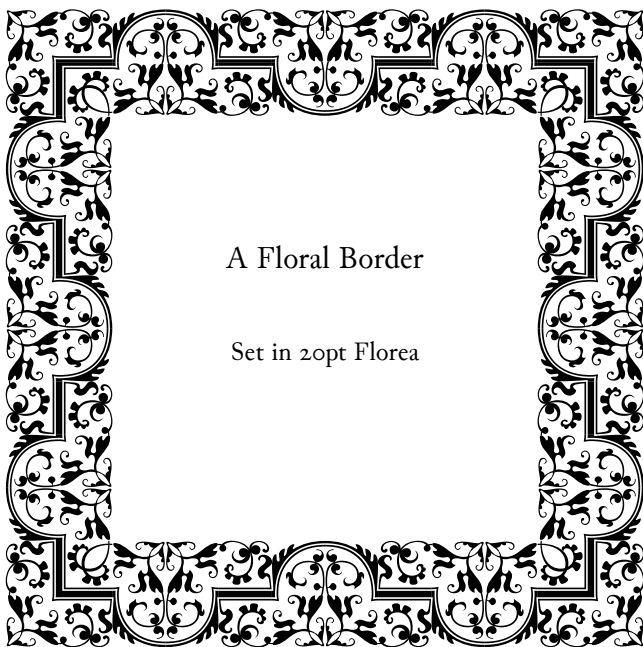
These fonts both have four different glyphs for the corner pieces, so I didn't have to mess about with `\rotate` and `\kern` to make a full box. Opposite: a title page border.



# A Page Border

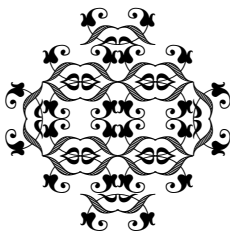


Made with EZBorder



A Floral Border

Set in 20pt Florea





# A Page Border

MADE WITH

IM Fell Flowers

## More Fell Flowers



## More Gothic Extras

