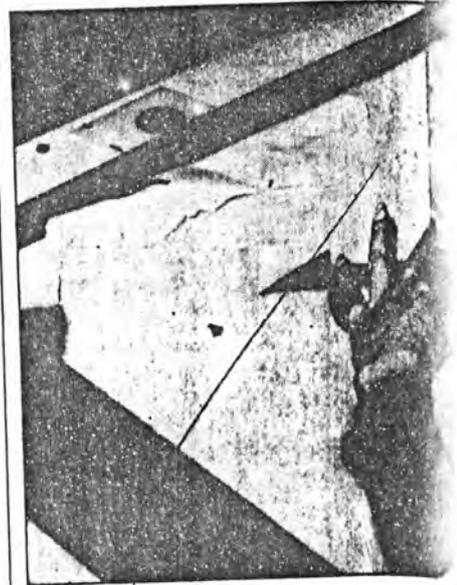


LETRASET- The inside story



adding new typefaces and point sizes to meet the fast increasing demand. This is still an on-going process.

Typefaces are usually derived from one of three sources - existing typefounders, professional graphic designers or professional type designers within the company.

Letraset carries out a constant review of all new and existing typefaces with major type manufacturing companies such as Stephenson Blake and ITC and maintains close contact with professional designers and members of the academic world. Leading photosetting companies in Europe and America are also consulted.

Specialised typefaces such as new weights in Cyrillic or Arabic are generally commissioned outside. When a new typeface is selected as suitable for dry transfer lettering, licensing and royalty arrangements are made with the typefounder or designer.

Letraset was introduced in Britain as a typeface subscription in 1970. It was created in answer to the increasing demand for original and exciting design concepts which evolved in the '60's. Submissions

SINCE its development dry transfer lettering has become as much a part of the studio's standard graphic equipment as brush, paint, pen or marker.

Letraset International Ltd, which markets graphics products in 96 countries, has been instrumental in the development of dry transfer lettering as a viable studio technique. The benefits of this system for the commercial artist are that the letters have a clarity and density rivalling that achieved by mechanical means; every designer can

now be a lettering artist also; dry transfer is cheaper and faster than using outside artists; straightforward lettering jobs can be performed by relatively inexperienced studio staff; overheads and materials are cheaper than for typesetting. In addition, the fast deadlines and high productivity required in litho printing and its use of photographic origination, have assured that Instant Lettering is here to stay.

During the 1960's Letraset developed an international distribution network,





Pamela
Knightsbridge
Tango L'Auriol
Italia Medium
LAYBOY ONLINE
Americana
Commercial Script
SERIF GOTHIC

manager, who is a designer, will liaise with each group to discuss the submissions and wider questions of marketing policy on a yearly basis. Issues will be made

practicability of the designs. While Letraset are striving for exclusivity, most inclusions in the range are justified by being usable in a wide variety of headline settings. Consequently, the emphasis is on less ephemeral designs. The wildly creative period of the last decade resulted in as much eccentricity and exaggeration in typefaces as in other areas of design. Since the last four or five issues of the new, commercially orientated Letragraphica, Letraset state that both the quality and the sales of the range have improved substantially.

Generally, the aim is to include between 60 and 80 per cent new concepts in each Letragraphica issue but existing typefaces which may have achieved sudden popularity are also featured. The company must remain keenly aware of the nature and progression of demand in each market. Feedback from end users normally flows through the Letraset subsidiaries who are able closely to monitor demand in their own areas. If the same pattern is seen to emerge in several markets, Letraset's design team is quickly able to engineer the production of new material. Styles which may have been favoured in the UK, for instance, may assume equal popularity in Scandinavia two or three years later. And the same

about three times a year. In the past, new issues of Letragraphica have been produced in an

A to Z format. Letraset now plan to promote

each typeface in word sets also, demonstrating the correct use of the typeface so that it becomes part of the message, being communicated. Submissions for Letragraphica are made by graphic designers, lettering artists, typeface marketing companies and Letraset designers. Judgement is made on the basis of professional instinct and the

for Letragraphica were examined annually by a team of top designers who chose them on the basis of design standards, existing or potential popularity and unique style. Issues were made three or four times a

year. Now Letraset are in the process of establishing a new system for selection. Four or five designers in each of the key markets - UK, North America, Germany and the rest of Europe - will act as consultants. Letraset's type development

Souvenir
COMPACTA
 Century Schoolbook
Berling Italic **PUMP**
 Optima Times
 Helvetica
 Cheltenham Medium
 Goudy Univers
 MICROGRAMMA
Bookman

product may require different treatment in different countries. For example, British TV, which uses the 625 line, is the largest user of White Instant Lettering in the UK; American TV, using the 405 line, is more limited because of the poorer quality of reproduction and requires a more selective use of White typefaces. Letraset is at present revising this range in response to users' experience.

The production of a typeface starts with founder's references or original drawings. Some design modification may be necessary if the initial references are not of sufficiently high visual standard. Once this has been done, an artist cuts each letter from

masking film. These stencil cuts are six inches high and measured in thousandths of an inch. A minimum of 80 cuts for a complete upper and lower case fount (taking about three weeks) is necessary to complete an alphabet. The letters are photographically sized and reproduced in the correct frequency for the sheets. A finished diapositive is then produced by the contact process. This process is also used for all subsequent steps, ensuring that the quality of the stencil cutting is matched by the dry transfer sheet. A stencil is made from the diapositive. Sensitised gelatine is squeezed onto a substrate and exposed to ultra-violet light. The stencil is then adhered to nylon mesh, re-touched and finally in-

spected. The stencil department has a controlled atmosphere to maintain clinical standards of precision and cleanliness.

After chocking, the stencil proceeds to web printing machines, developed and built by Letraset engineers. These machines print and apply adhesive in separate operations. The base polythene is printed in two impressions (254mm x 381mm) sheets. It is then coated with adhesive and wound onto a reel with a protective backing paper. Both the machine operator and quality control staff are able to monitor print quality during printing through illuminated boxes on the machine. Inks and adhesives from each batch are tested to

ensure they are up to standard. Special ranges and smaller runs such as the architectural range are produced by the hand-bench method.

The versatility of the dry transfer principle has generated a constant flow of fresh developments. As a natural complement to the standard and Letragraphica ranges, Letraset also produces coloured lettering, line drawings, solid colour and black patterned sheets as well as symbols and lettering drawn to customers' own specifications. The association of Letraset and Pantone Inc, creators of the Pantone Matching System, has opened up yet further areas of colour design in graphics and printing.