

A font fit for a founder

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You know [Ian Brignell's work](#), even if you don't know Ian Brignell.

During the course of a nearly three-decade career, the Toronto-based lettering and logo designer has worked with some of the biggest names in the corporate world – Bell and Boston Pizza, Dove and Duracell, Coke and Captain Morgan. He has tinkered with Scope's sans serif, given Secret its script and tweaked the serifs on everything from Harvey's to Hellmann's to Harvard.

"They come to me to try to express the attributes of their product with typography," said the Sheridan College grad. "And that's what I try to do."

Today, Western joins that list as the university eyes its future – and honours its founder – with an original creation from this craftsman's pen.

Illustration of Ian Brignell by Scott Woods

The Hellmuth font, named in honour of Western's founder Bishop Isaac Hellmuth, will be treated as an elite font in the university's branding. From a limited family with only one style (e.g. no Hellmuth Bold, no Hellmuth Italics), the font's use will be limited to the university's name and appropriate other areas (e.g. faculties, libraries, research, etc.) in their primary logos.

"We feel this will be a nice way to further differentiate our brand," said Terry Rice, Western's director of marketing and creative services.

Hahn Smith Design recruited Brignell into the Western rebranding project. He started work on redrawing the Western crest, but the 'Western' wordmark was soon presented to him for solutions.

Revealed for the first time today is an original creation he believes captures the personality and essence of Western. "It's quite stately, very sturdy, solid and refined," Brignell said. "That's how it feels to me."

Inspired by Walbaum, a German modern-face font created by Justus Erich Walbaum (1768-1846), Brignell began to tinker with different letters, starting with the six different ones in Western and then expanding to other letters and symbols.

He began with the bulb on the end of the 'r', a trait reoccurring on other letters throughout the font. "That's one of those things you can point to that is quite distinct. It'll change the feel of it," he said.

As the font will not be used as a body copy, Brignell felt free to refine the details that would be lost on a bulkier body copy. He started to add little details to standard letters – for instance, an upturn on the serif on the lower case 's', 'r' and 'n.'

"Just little details that would sharpen it up and make it distinct," he said.

In total, he would create 40 original characters, more than enough to fill Western's needs.

Brignell sees true beauty in Hellmuth, especially in its ampersand and numeral two, which are personal favourite characters.

“You want to make it as beautiful as you can, make it as usable as possible. Whether a brand manager, school or shop, they want to project themselves in a certain way,” he said. “The job is to listen to how they want to project themselves and express that as much as you can.

“(Hellmuth), I feel, does just that.”