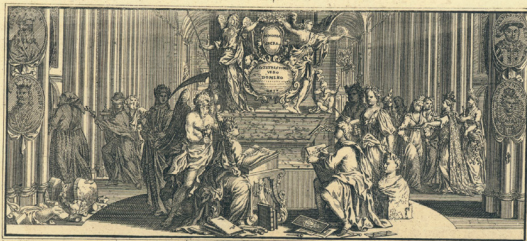


Ellen Lupton:
Enlarged Caps



A VIEW of the MONUMENTS.



In order to take this solemn Survey, it is necessary we should enter in at the Door of the South-Crofs, as being most convenient for the better disposing the Plates; where the first Tomb you come at is a rough one, of coarse Marble, and looks, by the Moisture and Injury of the Weather, and the Nature of the Stone, much older than it is. This, whose Form is here exhibited, together with its Inscription, was erected to the Memory of Mr. Edmond Spencer, a Man of great Learning, and such a luxuriant Fancy, that his

Works abound with as great Variety of Images (and curious, tho' small Paintings) as either our own or any Language can afford in any Author. He dy'd, as you see by the Inscription, in the Year 1596. By what Mr. Camden and others say of this Monument, the Original was in Latin; which take in Camden's Words, as follows:

Edmundus Spencer Londinensis Anglicorum poetarum, nostri saeculi facile Princeps, quod ejus poemata faventibus musis & victuro genio conscripta comprobant. Obiit immatura morte, anno salutis 1598. & prope Galfredum Chaucerum conditur, qui felicissime Poeta Anglicis literis primus illustravit, in quem haec scripta sunt Epitaphiam:

*Hic prope Chaucerum situs est Spenserius illi
Proximus ingenio, proximus & tumulo.
Hic prope Chaucerum Spensere poeta poetam,
Conderis & versu quam tumulo proprior,
Anglica te vivo, vixit plausique poesis,
Nunc moritura timet te moriente mori.*

In English thus:

“EDMUND SPENCER, born in London, and chief Poet of our Age; which his Works, written with a happy Spirit, and masterly Genius, testify. He died by a too early Death in the Year 1598, and lies buried near Chaucer, who was the first that successfully wrote Poetry in the English Language, over whom are written these Epitaphs:

Here

The University's Crisis of Purpose

This is the fifth in a series of essays exploring dominant themes and currents of thought in particular areas of American life. The next essay in the series, which will continue in this space over the coming months, is scheduled to appear Sept. 20. An archive can be found at nytimes.com/crossroads.



THE world economic crisis and the election of Barack Obama will change the future of higher education. Even as universities, both public and private, face unanticipated financial constraints, the president has called on them to assist in solving problems from health care delivery to climate change to economic recovery.

American universities have long struggled to meet almost irreconcilable demands: to be practical as well as transcendent; to assist immediate national needs and to pursue knowledge for its own sake; to both add value and question values. And in the past decade and a half, such conflicting and unbounded expectations have yielded a wave of criticism on issues ranging from the cost of college to universities' intellectual quality to their supposed decline into

unthinking political correctness. A steady stream of books — among them “Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk” (also a PBS special), edited by Richard H. Hersh and John Merrow; Anthony T. Kronman’s “Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life”; and Dinshah D’Souza’s “Liberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus” — have delineated what various authors have seen as the failings of higher education.

At the same time, American colleges and universities have remained the envy of the world. A 2005 international ranking included 17 American educational institutions in the top 20, and a recent survey of American citizens revealed that 93 percent of respondents considered our universities one of the country’s “most valuable resources.”

Such a widespread perception of the value of universities derives in no small part from very pragmatic realities: a college education yields significant rewards. The median earnings for individuals with a B.A. are 74 percent higher than for workers who possess only a high school diploma.

In some respects, this is not new. Education has been central to the American Dream since the time of the nation’s founding. But in the years since World War II, it was higher education, not just instruction at the elementary or high school levels, that emerged as necessary for a technologically skilled work force as well as fundamental to cherished values of opportunity. As late as the 1920s, enrollments in the United States stood below 5 percent of the college-age population. They rose to about 15 percent by 1949, in part as a result of the G.I. Bill. They have now reached nearly 60 percent. The United States has pioneered a new postwar era of mass college attendance that has become global in reach.

But today, for all its importance to individual and social prosperity, higher education threatens to become less broadly available. By the end of the 20th century, as Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz document in “The Race Between Education and Technology,” the rate of increase in educational attainment had significantly slowed, and the United States had fallen behind a number of other nations in the percentage of its youth attending college. Goldin and Katz demonstrate how this slowdown is creating a work force with inadequate technological abilities, as well as contributing to rising levels of American inequality.

Escalating college costs have played a significant role in this slowdown, even as universities have substantially expanded their programs of financial aid. So, too, have declining levels of government support.

After World War II, the country witnessed the establishment of a new partnership

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between Washington and the nation’s institutions of higher learning, with the federal government investing in universities as the primary locus for the nation’s scientific research. This model now faces significant challenges. Steep federal deficits will combine with diminished university resources to intensify what a 2007 report by the National Academies declared to be a “gathering storm,” one that threatened the future of scientific education and research in America. The Obama administration has set a goal of devoting more than 3 percent of gross domestic product to research. One hopes this highly ambitious aspiration can become a reality.

The economic downturn has had what is perhaps an even more worrisome impact. It has reinforced America’s deep-seated notion that a college degree serves largely instrumental purposes. The federal government’s first effort to support higher education, the Morrill Act of 1862, which established land grant colleges, was intended to advance the “practical education of the industrial classes.” A Department of Education report from 2006, “A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education,” concentrated on creating a competitive American work force and advancing “our collective prosperity.” But even as we as a nation have embraced education as critical to economic growth and opportunity, we should remember that colleges and universities are about a great deal more than measurable utility. Unlike perhaps any other institutions in the world, they embrace the long view and nurture the kind of critical perspectives that look far beyond the present.

Higher education is not about results in the next quarter but about discoveries that may take — and last — decades or even centuries. Neither the abiding questions of humanistic inquiry nor the winding path of scientific research that leads ultimately to innovation and discovery can be neatly fitted within a predictable budget and timetable.

In an assessment of the condition of higher education in the Anglo-American world, “Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy,” George Fallis, a former dean at York University in Toronto, deplors the growing dominance of economic justifications for universities. They conflict, he argues, “with other parts of the multiversity’s mission, with . . . narratives of liberal learning, disinterested scholarship and social citizenship.” University leaders, he observes, have embraced a market model of university purpose to justify themselves to the society that supports them with philanthropy and tax dollars. Higher education, Fallis insists, has the responsibility to serve not just as a source of economic growth, but as society’s critic and conscience.

Should universities have presented a firmer counterweight to economic irresponsibility?

Universities are meant to be producers not just of knowledge but also of often inconveniently doubt. They are creative and unruly places, homes to a polyphony of voices. But at this moment in our history, universities might well ask if they have in fact done enough to raise the deep and unsettling questions necessary to any society.

As the world indulged in a bubble of false prosperity and excessive materialism, should universities — in their research, teaching and writing — have made greater efforts to expose the patterns of risk and denial? Should universities have presented a firmer counterweight to economic irresponsibility? Have universities become too captive to the immediate and worldly purposes they serve? Has the market model become the fundamental and defining identity of higher education?

Since the 1970s there has been a steep decline in the percentage of students majoring in the liberal arts and sciences, and an accompanying increase in pre-professional undergraduate degrees. Business is now by far the most popular undergraduate major, with twice as many bachelor’s degrees awarded in this area than in any other field of study. In the era of economic constraint before us, the pressure toward vocational pursuits is likely only to intensify.

As a nation, we need to ask more than this from our universities. Higher learning can offer individuals and societies a depth and breadth of vision absent from the inevitably myopic present. Human beings need meaning, understanding and perspective as well as jobs. The question should not be whether we can afford to believe in such purposes in these times, but whether we can afford not to. □

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLEN LUPTON

THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW 19

A VIEW OF THE MONUMENTS. Book page, eighteenth century.

NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW. Newspaper page, 2009. Art director: Nicholas Blechman. Illustrator: Ellen Lupton.

Dropped capitals are a traditional page device, especially for opening chapters in a book.

ENLARGED CAPITALS

AN ENLARGED LETTER cut into the text block is called a *drop capital* or *drop cap*. This example was produced using the Drop Caps feature in a page layout program. The software automatically creates a space around one or more characters and drops them the requested number of lines. Adjusting the size and tracking of the capital allows it to match the surrounding text. Similar solutions can be implemented on the web in CSS. The space around the capital is rectangular, which can be visually awkward, as seen here with the sloping silhouette of the letter A.

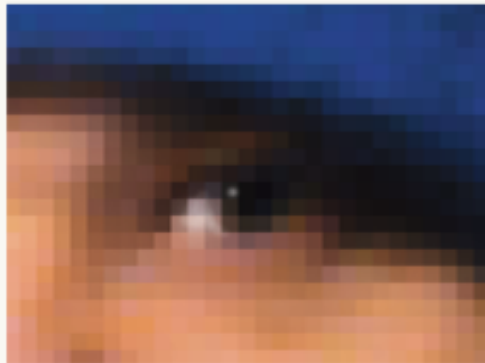
WAS IT THE BEST OF TIMES, the worst of times, or just Times New Roman? The drop capital used here (Thesis Serif Bold) was positioned by hand as a separate element. A text wrap was applied to an invisible box sitting behind the capital. Thus the text appears to flow around the intruding right prow of the W. Likewise, the left prow extends out into the margin, making the character feel firmly anchored in the text block. Hand-crafted solutions like this one can't be applied systematically.

GRAB YOUR
READER BY
THE CAHUNAS
AND NEVER
EVER LET GO

DESIGNERS SOMETIMES ADAPT the drop cap convention for other purposes. An illustration or icon can appear in place of a letterform. Purely typographic alternatives are also possible, such as inserting a title or subtitle into space carved from the primary text block. Such devices mobilize a familiar page structure for diverse and sometimes unexpected uses.

 23 Aug 2009 12 pm eastern

WHAT'S NEW IN DWWS 3E



The 3rd Edition of *Designing With Web Standards* is coming soon to a bookstore near you. Abetted mightily by our secret cabal of interns, co-author Ethan Marcotte, technical editor Aaron Gustafson, copyeditor Rose

Weisburd, editor Erin Kissane and I have worked hard to create what we hope is not merely an update, but a significant revision to the foundational web standards text.

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