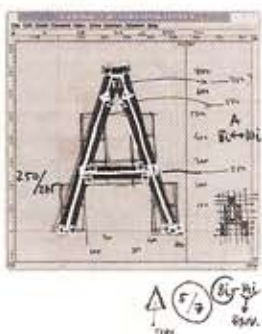


type for all types



Two years ago, the designer, curator, and critic Ellen Lupton shook up the ATypeI conference when she presented her Free Font Manifesto. Because well-made fonts are expensive and proprietary, two factors contributing to piracy, she reasoned that freely licensed fonts could promote broader awareness and serve linguistic communities with under-represented character sets. Lupton wasn't the only one thinking this way: George Williams, inventor of the open-source typeface editor FontForge, and Pedro Amado, creator of the website Typeforge (one of his early drafts of a clean A glyph, above), had begun defining a free font movement that was driven, as Lupton says, "by democratic ideals rather than crass commercial concerns."

At the time, this sort of suggestion had about as much popularity as Napster did with record labels earlier this decade. But record companies have started giving away free tracks as a smart business strategy, and font foundries may be moving in a similar direction. In April, digital foundry FontShop released FontStruct, an application that designers can use, free of charge, to construct TrueType fonts. (Read our review of FontStruct on p. 96.) The company's goal, says director Stephen Coles, was to go beyond just selling fonts by "nurturing creativity and providing tools for educating people." Later this summer, FontShop will add user profiles as well as social networking features—making it a kind of typographical MySpace. **JESSE ASHLOCK**