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## Short History of the **cb** Greek Fonts

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Claudio Beccari

*Dipartimento di Elettronica  
Politecnico di Torino  
Torino, Italia*

Γράμματα μὲν δὴ πρῶτος Ὀρφεὺς ἐξήνεγκε, παρὰ Μουσῶν μαθῶν, ὡς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῷ μνήματι αὐτοῦ δηλοῖ ἐπιγράμματα: «Μουσῶν πρότολον τῆδ' Ὀρφέα Θρηῆκες ἔθηκαν, ὃν κτάνεν ὑψιμέδων Ζεὺς πολόεντι βέλει, Οἰάγρου φίλον υἱόν, ὃς Ἡρακλῆ ἔξεδίδαξεν, εὐρῶν ἀνθρώποις γράμματα καὶ σοφίην».

I happen to be the author of the so called **cb** Greek fonts that are being used to typeset the Greek part of this newsletter.

I would like to tell the story of how I came to spend a lot of time for producing these fonts; since I have an elementary knowledge of classical Greek, and I am so ignorant about modern demotic Greek that I can hardly decrypt easy texts with the help of a dictionary, it is out of question the possibility that I use my fonts for writing Greek.

Well, you may believe it or not, but this is my small contribution for paying my debt of gratitude to the Greek culture, that permeates all the western civilization.

I was lucky enough to frequent my junior and high schools when classical subjects were praised by the whole educated society; I studied the whole (translated) Iliad and Odyssey in 7th and 8th grades respectively, and translated from Greek both works in 9th and 10th grades. Plato, Aristoteles were common readings in high school, and I eventually sat for the final examination at the end of the 13th grade with Αἱ Χορηφόροι τοῦ Αἰσχύλου; I knew that tragedy almost by hart and I could read it both as plain text and as prosodic poetry. My children, unfortunately, don't event understand what I am speaking about when I tell them these facts.

I ended up in the engineering school, I became an electronics engineer, eventually I became a professor of electronic circuit theory, and in the past

years I acted also as vice dean of the engineering faculty. This did not keep me away from the classics, though.

Some twelve years ago I started working with  $\text{\LaTeX}$ ; in 1991 I even wrote a book on it, that soon became obsolete because of the advent of  $\text{\LaTeX 2}_\epsilon$ . In that time I got my `METAFONT` book, but I had no time to really learn the language; then in 1996 a friend of mine, teacher of (classical) Greek in high school, triggered my interest in the possibility of writing classical Greek with  $\text{\LaTeX}$ . I explored the international archives, but, certainly due to my poor Internet “surfmanship”, I missed to find the recent contributions by several other Greek and non-Greek authors. I found only the fonts designed by Silvio Levy and their variations designed by Γιάννης Χαράλαμβους, that were only in 10 point size and both, substantially, reflected the classical Didot design.

The new  $\text{\LaTeX 2}_\epsilon$  had become available since a couple of years; it resorted to the New Font Selection Scheme, which in turn required the availability of at least three families, two series, and not less than four shapes; J. Knappen had also improved the `dc` Latin fonts by N. Schwarz, and produced the `ec` fonts by embedding a new idea, that is to code the design size into the font name, so as to produce, by means of `METAFONT` fonts that are not enlargements of smaller ones, but fonts designed to that very size.

Since Levy’s times also `METAFONT` had improved and contained more sophisticated means for describing character ligatures, that eventually proved essential with the dimorphism of the Greek letter ‘sigma’.

Therefore I started working with the idea of producing a complete collection of Greek fonts that could match the collection of the `ec` ones. I was lucky enough that through the Internet I came to know Απόστολος Συρόπουλος, who appreciated my preliminary work and encouraged me on going on; with his advice I ended up with the collection now known as `cb` fonts; thank you Απόστολε.

The `cb` collection includes six families: regular, sans-serif, typewriter type, outline, slides regular, slides typewriter type; two series: normal and bold (extended), the latter one applying only to a family subset; five shapes: normal, slanted, italic, upright italic, small caps (not all of them applying to all family/series combinations, though); there are a total of 65 main family/series/shape combinations that can be built at virtually every size within the range 5pt–99,99pt (the same as the `ec` fonts).

Although the fonts carry the version number 2.x, I suppose many corrections have still to be made; only you Greek users are likely to use all the families, series, shapes, sizes, pixel densities, etc. Only you can feed back the necessary information to improve them. I thank you in advance for your cooperation.