On reading Fonts & Encodings

Abstract
Stated briefly: "Should I buy this book ?"

YES.

In fact I suppose you are reading this article because you are in a someway involved with TeX, or LaTeX, or ConTeXt. Maybe for fun, or for daily works, like me (well, I am bit lucky, for me it is fun *and* work).

If so, then you cannot disagree with these simple facts:

1. Unicode is becoming *the* standard for electronic text interchange, but others/old encodings are still present due to legacy systems;
2. today, and more than some years ago, one can choose his/her Operating System (OS), and, without make any tort to anyone, today we have Macintosh, Windows and Linux, a quite diffused playing field.
3. today we are using the WEB, or WEB-Applications (i.e. spreadsheets online, rich text editor online), not only to see correct texts but also to *cut-and-paste* text from the WEB into our own texts.

So we quite often must match (or fight with) text-OS-WEB, and occasionally we jump onto the encoding-font-mess (What is the encoding of this text? Do I have the right glyphs?).

This book covers these subjects in the ten chapters (from 1 to 10, but chapter 9 is dedicated to fonts in TeX which anyway fits well in between) and, of course, one can also find here the relations between Unicode and typography, especially in chapter 3 and chapter 4, a prelude to the rest of the book.

Even if useful, these first ten chapters are only an exercise, and maybe a bit difficult.

So, why not take a breath with something more relaxing and read a chapter about "The History and Classifications of Latin Typefaces" (chapter 11)?

And, after viewing some glyphs, maybe you want to draw something on your own, and hence go on with chapter 12, and chapter 13 and chapter 14, and maybe you will find that "Fonts, Encodings & Tools" is not really an inappropriate title.

Well, and now? What's next?
Nothing.
The book is over.
Really.
So if you want to stop here, no problem. You have read almost half a book, but it is complete.

If you do go on, be warned: it is technical material, as it must be. In the following 7 appendices (almost 600 pages, a bit less than half of total pages) you will read about fonts from bitmap to PostScript to TrueType to OpenType to MetaFont ending with Bézier curve, with no compromises to readability: editing/creating fonts is not for infants, expecially today.

But, having said that, I must admit that it is also a pleasure to read these appendices; and, in the end, the final surprise is a bibliography with 358 entries.

Of course, one cannot ignore that sometimes some notes are. . .well, funny, and some non-tecnichal opinions may be not so condivisible as they seems; also it seems that the book talks about a Fontforge from 2004 (a bit outdated), and, well, TTX is not so robust (I have found some OpenType fonts with OS/2 = 3 that break TTX). Instead, one should download last source from http://fonttools.sourceforge.net/cvs-snapshots/zip which appears to be more stable.

And nothing at all is said about pdfTeX or luaTeX (but there is a wiki, see http://luatex.bluwiki.com/go/Luatex).

But even so, I enjoyed reading this book.

Thank you very much, Mr. Yannis Haralambous.

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