



POINT SYSTEM

Matthew Boulton College

THE POINT SYSTEM

1440

Johann Gutenberg invented printing using movable type. For the greater part of three and half centuries type founders cast type to sizes such as minion, paragon, nonpareil etc., which bore little or no relation to one another. Each type founder had their own measurements so type could not be used by another printer.

1737

The first attempt at a uniform system of measurement for the printing industry was made by the Parisian typefounder **Pierre Simon Fournier**. He devised a method of casting all his type to multiples of a fixed unit measuring 0.0137 inches and called it a *typographic point*.

1784

Francois Didot introduced a typographic point measuring 0.0148 inches (0.376mm), with the multiple of 12 points becoming the Cicero em. The Didot point system was adopted in 1879 as the standard typographic unit for the continent of Europe.

1871

The **Great Fire of Chicago** laid waste the type foundry of Marder, Luse & Co. From this disaster it was decided to standardise the point system.

1886

The **United States Type Founders' Association** recommended the adoption of a new typographic point measuring 0.0138 inches (0.351), with multiple of 12 points becoming the Pica em measuring 0.166 inches (4.217)

1898

English typefounders adopted the American point system as the standard of measurement for the printing industry, rather than the European Didot point system.

BS 4786: 1972

METRIC TYPOGRAPHIC MEASUREMENT

Range of preferred type sizes measured in millimetres

Millimetres	Points
1.75	4.98
2	5.69
2.25	6.40
2.5	7.12
2.75	7.83
3	8.54
3.25	9.25
3.5	9.97
4	11.39
4.5	12.82
5	14.24
6	17.09
7	19.94
8	22.79
9	25.64
10	28.49
12	34.18
14	39.88
16	45.58
18	51.28
22	62.67
26	74.07

Line length to be expressed in millimetres instead of pica ems.

Interlinear spacing (leading) to be expressed in multiples of 0.25mm

Most of this information is not used today except for points which is used to measure typefaces.

TRADITIONAL TYPE SIZES

Brilliant	4pt
Pearl	5pt
Nonpareil	6pt
Minion	7pt
Brevier	8pt
Bourgeois	9pt
Long Primer	10pt
Small Pica	11pt
Pica	12pt
English	14pt
Great Primer	18pt
Paragon	20pt
Two-Line Small Pica	22pt
Two-Line English	28pt
Two-Line Great Primer	36pt
Two-Line Paragon	40pt
Two-Line Double	44pt
Canon (or Four-Line-Pica)	48pt
Five-Line Pica	60pt
Six-Line Pica	72pt

POINT SYSTEMS AND MILLIMETRES

Anglo-American	mm	Didot
1	0.351	
	0.376	1
2	0.703	
	0.752	2
3	1.054	
	1.128	3
4	1.405	
	1.504	4
5	1.757	
	1.880	5
6	2.108	
	2.256	6
7	2.460	
	2.632	7
8	2.811	
	3.008	8
9	3.163	
	3.384	9
10	3.514	
	3.760	10
11	3.866	
	4.136	11
PICA EM 12	4.217	
	4.512	CICERO EM
14	4.920	
	5.263	14
18	6.325	
	6.767	18
24	8.434	
	9.023	24
30	10.542	
	11.278	30
36	12.651	
	13.534	36
42	14.759	
	15.790	42
48	16.867	
	18.046	48
54	18.975	
	20.302	54
60	21.084	
	22.556	60
72	25.301	
	27.068	72

TERMINOLOGY USED IN TYPESETTING

Point

1 point = 0.351mm

Measures: type sizes, interlinear spacing (leading) and rule thicknesses.

Pica Em

12 points = 1 pica em

6 pica ems = 1 inch or 25.4 millimetres

Measures: line lengths and page depth.

EM

It is generally recognised that the lowercase 'm' was the widest character and equalled the **square** of the type being used:

6pt ems, 8pt ems, 10pt ems, 12pt ems, 24 ems 30pt ems etc.

Millimetres

The standard unit of measurement for paper sizes.

Can be used to measure line length and page depth.

QUESTIONS ON POINT SYSTEM

- (1) Who invented printing from movable type and in what year ?
- (2) Who introduced the typographic point measuring 0.376mm ?
- (3) When was the Great Fire of Chicago ?
- (4) What year did the United States Type Founders' Association recommend the adoption of a new typographic point ?
- (5) Which point system did the English type founders adopt and in what year ?
- (6) Name the 2 point systems in operation today and state their measurements in millimetres ?
- (7) In 1972 the British Standards issued new guidelines for measuring type. Give an example of the point size and the new dimensions ?
- (8) Before the adoption of the point system in this country in 1898, the different point sizes were given names, give an example of this system ?
- (9) Name 3 items on a page that are measured in points ?
- (10) What item on a page maybe measured in picas ?
- (11) Millimetres measure paper sizes, what items on a page can be measured using this unit ?
- (12) Give 2 definitions of the word 'EM' ?