

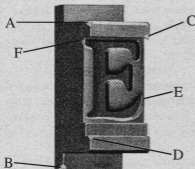
# The LUDLOW Quarterly™

A Newsletter For Ludlow Typograph Operators and Enthusiasts

## The Best Dressed Mats

Thousands of Ludlow fonts in display sizes get used only once a year and one can fiddle with particular mats to get a line right, but any font can be tuned up for optimum performance. The procedure is called "dressing" the mats.

The Spring issue of the LQ will deal with fast typesetting of Ludlow mats in text work. Speedsetting works, however, only with mats that are in great shape. This does not mean new mats, but clean mats that do not leave hairlines between letters and that have been made to slide easily against each other. The hour or two per font that mat dressing requires is most efficient for fonts used daily or for text work, but troublesome mats of display sizes can be "repaired" using the same techniques.



Dressing removes accumulated fingerprints, dirt, and typemetal on the mats. High spots, "dings", at the corners of the mats (A and B) caused by dropping onto a hard surface are removed and the character's sidewalls are repaired as necessary.

Before getting into procedures, let me caution that buffing wheels kill mats. Never use a buffer to

polish mats as it unevenly removes too much material and rounds off the very thin and critical sidewalls (see F and E) between letters. The really shiny mats will then leave great big hairlines.

### Step 1 ( the tops )

To see the letters and gauge lines on the top of the mats, clamp them into a stick and run only the tops against a very fine wire wheel. Better yet, use a handbrush of fine wire or hand rub them with steel wool. For very corroded or dirty mats use a very coarse grade, like #3 or #4, (with gloves) but for average mats try #0 grade and just polish them up slightly.

**Caution!** Wear a mask and have good airflow when dressing or wire brushing mats. Brass is an alloy of copper, and its dust and corrosion products, oxides and sulfates, are relatively hazardous. You don't need this stuff in your lungs. They are harmful in typemetal too, so clean the mats very well of dust before casting them again.

There are chemical treatments, such as acids and liquid polishing products like BRASSO that make brass shine like new. Don't use them! They can pit the brass, making it rough on a microscopic level, and any that gets onto the casting surfaces can cause typemetal to adhere to the faces of the mats. You may never get a good cast again.

### Step 2 ( the sidewalls )

The sidewalls (see E and F) of the casting faces separate the letters so they don't run together when printed. They are sometimes only a few thousandths of an inch thick and with mishandling they crush inwards, leaving a space that metal fills, which leaves raised lead "hairlines" in the printing. The caved-in walls (see F) can be "picked out" by

holding the mat in one hand and using small picks to pull them back to near normal position. This is a difficult and time consuming step and should only be done on the few mats in a font that are leaving hairlines. If the mat works well, leave it alone.

### Step 3 ( the sides )

Ludlow made mat dressing tools, which are quite rare today. One is a cast iron jig that holds a mill file at exactly 90° to the table. The idea here is to run the side of a mat against the file, just once or twice, while keeping the base of the mat firm against the table. The result is that dinged corners and dirty fingerprints are planed off and the mats fit closer together. There is also a special stick that tightly holds a group of mats so that a very fine file held in a jig can file off dings on the inside corners (see C and D) of the casting well. Examine the sides of your slug where it pulled out of the mats. A shiny streak at the edge of letters indicates an overhang that the slug must pull past, causing resistance. If severe, the pinching effect of the dings can pull the type off the slug as the mold drops, leaving the mats filled with metal, or break safety keys. Use a very fine file very carefully to take off the pinch points only as needed. Don't just file away routinely.

My tool for dressing the sides is a dead flat 8", 1500 grit, diamond wheel made for lapidary work. I lay the dry disk flat on a bench, lay a mat on its side on the disk, and with very light pressure carefully "sand" the sides by making one or two small, 3", circles. Do not sand until the whole side is "bright" brass or you will have removed too much material, ruining the character spacing and especially the sidewalls of the letters. Just work it gently until the dirt, fingerprints, and typemetal are gone and the corrosion has turned a lighter shade. If there was a ding at a corner, that spot will now be bright brass. Now "polish" the sides for a few seconds by rubbing the mat in circles on a sheet of paper taped onto a sheet of glass.

Assuming you don't have a diamond disk, you should use a sheet of wet/dry sandpaper, the black emery stuff, of about 1200 to 1500 grit. These grits

are easy to find at an automotive paint store, and almost nowhere else. Tape it down to a sheet of glass to keep everything dead flat. The fine paper quickly loads with material but rinse it out with a brush under a stream of water and keep using it.

Properly dressed mats will slide one at a time from a stack in the case with a very light finger touch. If two mats are lifted when you try to pull one, their sides are not clean or smooth enough. Typos and the dropping of mats increase, and speed decreases. Polish the sides of the offending mats with a circle or two on some paper taped to a sheet of glass. This should take less than two seconds. A full mat dressing procedure probably only needs to be done once in the life of a font.

### Step 4 ( casting faces )

Only work on the letter faces if the mat does not cast well enough to use. This is rare unless the mats were stored upside down on galleys for years. Even then, repeated casting can often eventually clear things out. Try detergents with a toothbrush. On truly corroded mats that are difficult to break apart from one another, you have nothing to lose. Try a toothbrush or toothpicks with toothpaste or fine polishing compound, try BRASSO with a brush. I have tried low power sandblasting with walnut shells (sand would destroy the mats) to some effect. Generally, leave the faces alone.

### Step 5 ( cleaning )

Clean any dust or residues off the mats with water, acetone, brushes, compressed air, - whatever works. It is important not to contaminate the typemetal with any copper products.

When Ludlow mats are optimized and proper setting techniques are used, you can set circles around those who compose hand-set type. See the Spring 1996 issue for details.

Remember, it is generally better to do less than more. If you are in doubt as to the amount of dressing that needs to be done, send a few of the worst corroded and dinged up mats you have to the Ludlow Quarterly address, with return postage, and I will dress them and return them as samples.



## Business Profile

**The PRINTER** is a monthly newspaper that everyone with a Ludlow should know about. The paper is dedicated to all phases of letterpress and has a strong focus on hot lead casting machines and operations.

They have been in operation for ten years using the traditions they support. Their typesetting is almost entirely Intertype and Ludlow, composed on a dozen 12"x18" galleys, with some small paste-ins of ads and proofs of rare fonts. In the beginning they printed the paper themselves on a Miehle vertical, but with over 1000 subscribers the economy of scale came into play and they now have it printed offset on a daily newspaper's web press in 15 minutes.

The paper is \$25.00 per year for 12 issues, with 25 cents per word classified ads. Michael and Sally Phillips do a great job with the paper and promoting letterpress. People requesting a copy often get his "Letterpress Kit" which includes flyers of suppliers and other publications that might be useful. Copies of the LQ are sometimes included. An amazing amount of useful information can be found in every issue and I highly recommend the paper.

**The PRINTER**, 337 Wilson Street, Findlay, Ohio, 45840. Phone 419-422-4958, Fax 419-423-2472.



## What's NEW!

Dave Seat, of Dave Seat Hot Metal Services, has moved hot lead onto the information highway. He now has an E-Mail address to be more accessible for customers. You can get questions answered or send orders to him at:

[70254.1575@compuserve.com](mailto:70254.1575@compuserve.com)

For the benefit of his international customers Dave has a page on the World Wide Web. The address for that is:

[http://machinerynet.com/printers\\_marketplace/hotmetalservices](http://machinerynet.com/printers_marketplace/hotmetalservices)

## New Grease!

The crucible cam roller needle bearings are one of the toughest things on a Ludlow to keep lubricated. The pot heat simply melts out the grease in a few weeks and they run dry because there is no zirk. Dave Seat of DSHMS now has a grease that will stay. Experiments he performed have shown that bearings repacked with this grease are still lubricated months later. It costs a few bucks for a jar that will pack the bearings several times.

## P•I•P•E Donations

Our Thanks to these contributors to the Postage-Ink-Paper-Equipment fund: Hugh Woodruff- Phoenix, AZ., and The Front Rubber Stamp Co. of Boston, Mass.

## Tip

If you have a Ludlow with the traditional belt driven pump, do not switch to antifreeze and water cooling solution. The pump requires the oil/water mixture to lubricate the packing. It will fail very fast without the oil. The best thing to do with the oil/water coolant is to keep it clean and change it at least twice a year. Old oil oxidizes and precipitates out, clogging the mold and the tank filter. Make sure that you use a half pint of soluble oil per 5 gallons. You can, however, save some money. Many machine shops still buy soluble oil in drums, and might sell you a gallon of it for the same price as you normally pay for the regular pint can.

## Humor

I regret to report there was nothing funny this quarter, and now eggnog season is over.

## Health Note

If you see any yellow powder in the crucible, get your machine serviced. The powder is a water soluble, and very hazardous lead compound. It forms only when the pot heater is running wild and the pot stays much hotter than the 550 degrees. It may mean that some helpful person turned the heat way up to compensate for mouthpiece heaters or throat heaters that are burned out.

## *Congratulations!*

*Mr. Ralph Staples, longtime sales and service representative for the Ludlow Typograph Company, announced his retirement just recently. He Started with Ludlow in 1954, and for the last 15 years independently did service work and sold rebuilt machines in six Northeastern States and parts of Canada. He also ran a print shop and now intends to keep his hand in, doing letterpress invitations, cards, and rubber stamps on a part-time basis.*

## Stuff

You probably have our stuff in the back of your shop, but we don't know about it yet. Subscription renewals get a bonus of 15 words of classified advertising, so let us know about your stuff when you renew!

## New Schematics

If you ever lookinto the manual and noticed that your wiring doesn't look anything like what is in the book, you are not alone. There were more wiring schemes than manuals. Dave Seat is compiling all the possible variants and will soon be able to fax a correct copy to those having trouble. The schematics are being drawn to assist those of you who need to change the old style relay with the silver points to the modern style. The new style is very much cheaper, and much quieter.

## Classified Ads

Still only 15 cents per word. You must subscribe to advertise. Deadline for next issue is March 15th.

## Free

To help preserve letterpress equipment, ads offering free items will be run without charge.

## Wanted

**Wanted:** A Ludlow Slug nipper. It takes the tops off of slugs and looks like this picture. B. Simon, 3115 W. Cavedale Dr., Phx, AZ, 85027, or 602-581-1748.



**Wanted:** Left and right single saddle shafts for the lower ink roller on an 8" x 12" C&P new series press. C&P part number is #40 L, #40 R. Also looking for one or two type cabinets made of oak. Prefer a double cabinet with oak top and standard California cases but will consider others. Don Walker, 4979 CR 250, Durango, CO 81301., or call 970-247-1713.

**Wanted:** Ludlow mats. A series of 10, 12, 14 point of a roman serif face font. Something for book and text work, like Eusebius, True cut Caslon, etc. Call Gene at 501-474-5134. (AR)

**Wanted:** Ludlow mats. Smaller sizes suitable for text work, ornaments, and script faces. I have Linotype mats, Ludlow mats, and some letterpress equipment to trade, but will also buy entire font collections. Don't be concerned with the difficulty of packing things up, I send shipping crates to you. B. Simon, 3115 W. Cavedale Dr., Phx., AZ 85027, (602) 581-1748.

## For Sale

**For Sale:** More than 7,000 Ludlow fonts, in 188 different styles with 1,411 different fonts. List, proofs and prices on request. Thousands of Linotype fonts. Parts and accessories for both machines. Don Black, 120 Midwest Road - Unit 5, Scarborough, Ontario M1P 3B2, Canada. Our phone number is (416)751-5944, or Fax (416)751-5413.

**For Sale:** Quoins, furniture, automated perfect binding machine, gold foil stampers, new ATF type, galley cabinets, or any in trade for Ludlow mats. Bill Simon, (602) 581-1748.

**For Sale:** Typemetal in 20 lb ingots, two Miehle V50's in nice condition, and a beautiful side-arm tabletop 10" x 12" letterpress. Printing Equipment Locators, pager number is 602-229-9709, will return your call. Phoenix, AZ.

**For Sale:** Two Ludlows, one is a model M, 20 cabinets of mats, centering sticks, etc. Call, fax, or write for listing. The Front Rubber Stamp Co., Inc. 960 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA 02118. Phone 1-800-666-7600, Fax 1-800-666-7605.

**For Sale:** More than 7,000 Ludlow fonts, in 188 different styles with 1,411 different fonts. List, proofs and prices on request. Thousands of Linotype fonts. Parts and accessories for both machines. Don Black, 120 Midwest Road - Unit 5, Scarborough, Ontario M1P 3B2, Canada. Our phone number is (416)751-5944, or Fax (416)751-5413.

**For Sale:** New! "Ludlow Field Service Notes" and Ludlow mat gauges with reference charts are now available from the author of "The Ludlow Trouble-Shooting Guide". Jim Parrish, P.O. Box 1108, Maracopa, AZ 85239, (520)568-3367.

**For Sale:** Ludlow Mats! So far in our Ludlow Mat Sell-Out, we have sold 400 fonts. We are sorry to upset the price structure others get for their fonts, but I'd rather have your money than this beautiful collection of brass. The price still holds at \$35.00 per font, plus handling. We still have hundreds of fine fonts available. This is an opportunity to fill in missing faces and to buy fonts you couldn't afford before. Send for list. I doubt if prices will ever get this low again. Michael Carbone, Inc., 2041 Federal Street, Camden, NJ 08105. (609) 964-4112 or Fax (609) 963-8860.

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## Trade Services

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**LUDLOW REPAIRS** and Machine Rebuilding. Frequent service tours throughout the country. Jim Parrish, P.O. Box 1108, Maracopa, AZ 85239, or call (520) 568-3367.

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**DAVE SEAT - HOT METAL SERVICES**  
The USA's most complete source for Ludlow, Linotype, and Intertype parts and supplies. Most orders shipped same day. In plant machine service and maintenance in 50 states and Canada. Rebuilt Ludlow machines. Large selection of new and used mats. 206 Whitnel Drive, P.O. Box 1160, Mt. Juliet, TN 37122. Phone (800) 542-2508, or 24 hour FAX is (800) 468-6382. E-Mail:70254.1575@compuserve.com

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**EXPERT LUDLOW REPAIRS** - Books, sticks, parts, etc. Machinery appraisals and equipment moving. Complete machine package deals available. P.J. BURNS, Mercersburg, PA, telephone (717) 328-3092.

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**MARLBORO MATS INC.** has served hot metal typesetters with mats, supplies, and parts for 65 years! 13,000 fonts of Ludlow, Linotype and Intertype mats in stock. Free lists. Phone (208) 443-2715, Fax (208) 443-3060, or write to; P.O. Box 188, Coolin, ID 83821.

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### THE LUDLOW QUARTERLY

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Bill Simon, Editor/Publisher at 3115 W. Cavedale Dr, Phoenix, AZ. 85027-7637. Phone (602) 581-1748. \$ 6.00 per 4 issues US, \$8.00 Canada, \$12.00 other countries. 15 cents per word for classified advertising. Copy deadline for issue #5 is March 15th, 1996, provided that space is still available. Only subscribers may advertise. We welcome letters to the editor, questions, tips suggestions, experiences, and articles. Reprints of past issues of the Ludlow Quarterly are available at \$2.50 each.

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