
Computer Modern shape curiosities

Hans Hagen

a**z****ö** (upright)

*a**z**ö* (italic)

a**z****ö** (bold)

a***z******ö*** (bold italic)

When playing with some (upcoming) new font features in LuaMetaTeX, I overlaid regular and bold versions of Latin Modern characters. I took an ‘a’ with diaeresis as a test.

While staring at the overlays I noticed that the little hook of regular was not present in the bold variant. After displaying the whole upright alphabet, that was the only difference in shapes. In the italic shapes, the ‘z’ was a bit different. And when blown up the dots are somewhat larger in the bold. (Computer Modern is the same, naturally.)

So, the question is: how many users who can immediately recognize Computer Modern have noticed this difference in ‘a’? Another question is: did personal taste win over consistency?

We can also wonder if Latin Modern should have a few stylistic alternates, but maybe no one is willing to pay the prices in additional overhead. Of course most such details get hidden at a small 10 point size. When blown up enough, a few other interesting design details can be seen, but I leave noticing that to the reader. After all, these shapes were never meant to be seen that large.

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