

Typewriter Evolution: From Life-changing Tech to Semantic Icon

Exhibit Scope & Purpose

This story ranges from the late 1800s to present day. These pages will eventually be part of a one-frame display exhibit to include postal history covers and letters, post cards, stamps and ephemera such as typed governmental documents to illustrate the typewriter's invention and growth of purpose. Ultimately, it will highlight how this technology has come to represent more than a tool for putting words on paper. Consider this abbreviated display a tantalizing *amuse bouche* for a larger exhibit to come.

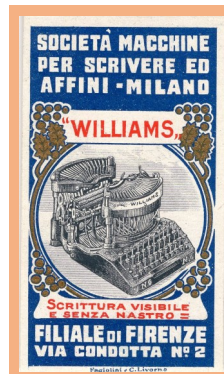


Austrian 2017 sheet celebrating second of 5 schreibmaschine prototypes by Tyrolean carpenter/inventor Peter Mitterhofer from 1864. Typewriters displayed in the sheet's margins soon appeared on the commercial scene jockeying for position in a burgeoning industry. Unlike countries championing the technology, Mitterhofer's homeland failed to grasp the commercial significance of his invention, which was never mass produced. Mitterhofer moved on to other creations.

Submitted by: Michele M. Bresso, PhD

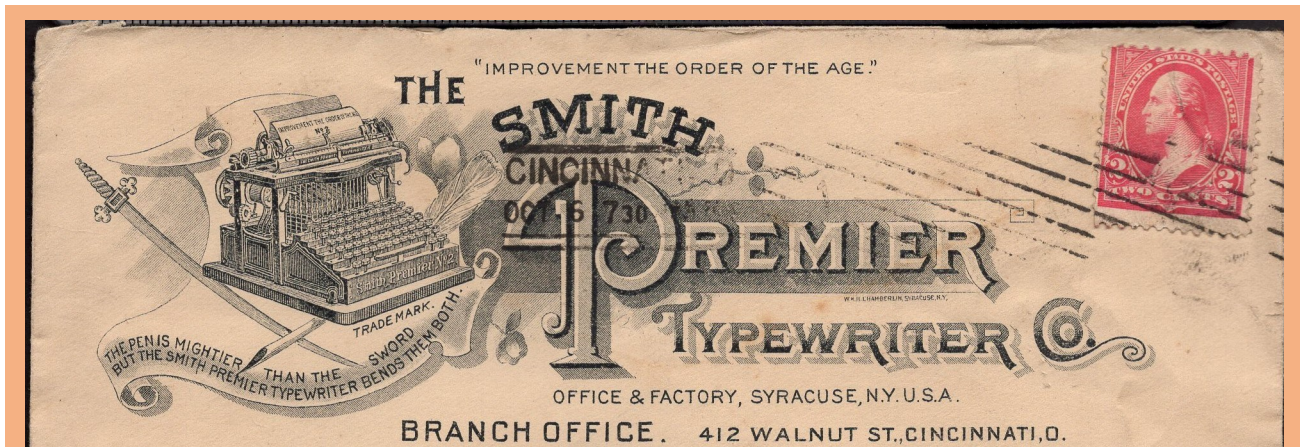
The Plan

- 1/ Introduction of the Commercial Typewriter
- 2/ The Typewriter at War & Home
- 3/ Social Movements, Writers & Icons

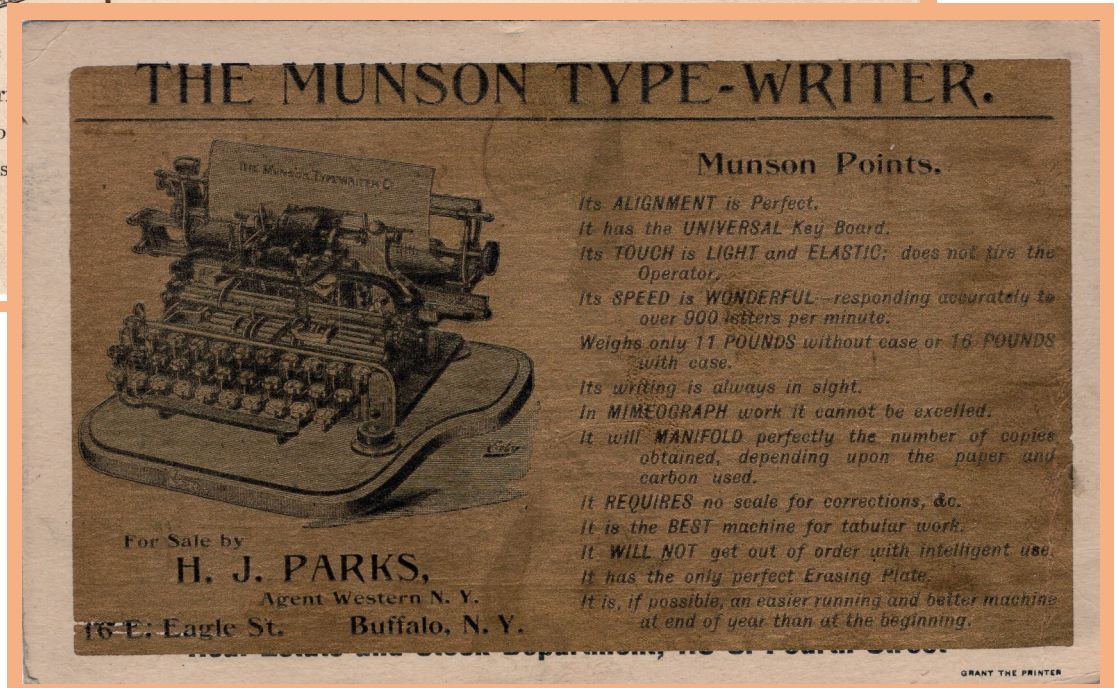


Dozens of poster stamps featuring typewriters, like this one from Italy, appeared in the early 1900s. Germany, which proliferated the market-oriented cinderella stamp, dubbed them "reklamemarken," meaning advertising stamps. Their purpose was clear: entice people to buy a typewriter.

1. Introduction of the Commercial Typewriter



Advertising covers include Smith Premier Typewriter Company (1896 back cancel, top), and Monarch Typewriter Company, 1906; Munson Type-Writer advertising post card, 1893 (right); cinderella/seal offers a variation of the Standard Remington Type-writer brand trademark that was registered October 11, 1887 (above)

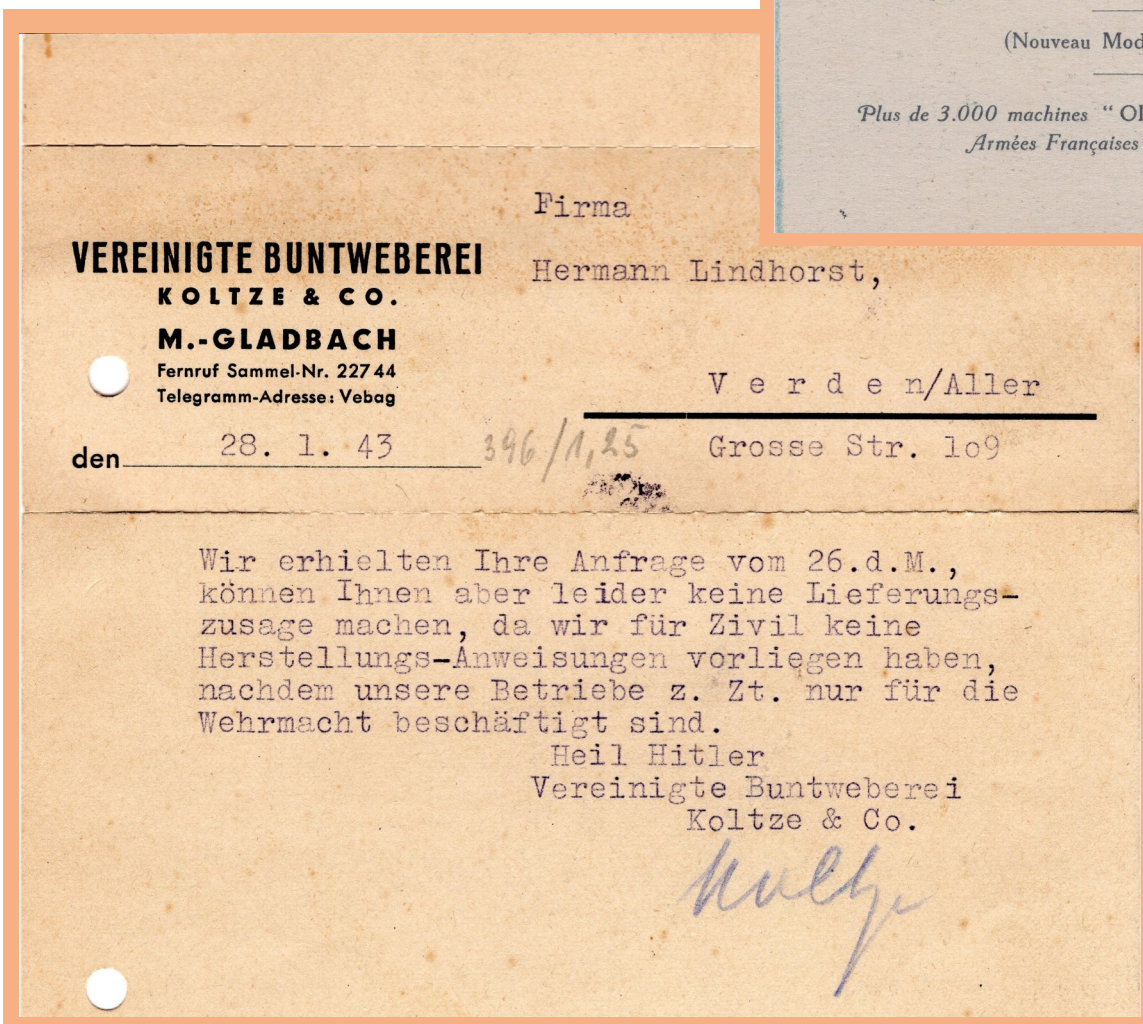
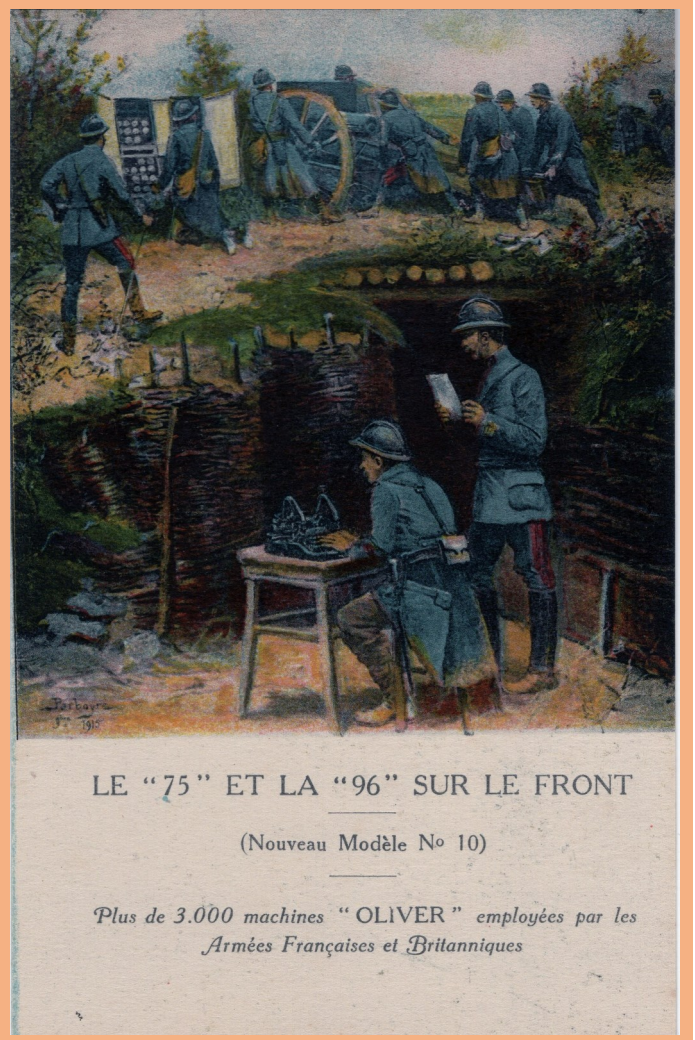


Debut of the modern commercial typewriter in 1874, manufactured by gunmakers E. Remington & Sons of Ilion, New York, catapulted workplaces into the 20th century with cutting-edge technology. Business communication boomed with the advent of the “type-writing machine.” New typewriters appeared, including the Smith Premier and the Munson Type-Writer in 1889, and the Monarch Visible Typewriter in 1904. Innovations in later models featured upper and lowercase letters, shift and tab keys, a carriage return, and dual-colored ribbon that allowed the typist to choose black or red type.

2. The Typewriter at War & Home

Typewriters fueled war work in theaters of battle by providing a convenient means of creating essential communiqués. Portability of typewriters could help establish a field office on the front lines in WWI. War-related manufacturing companies utilized typewriters to process work supporting military efforts thanks to the innovative Folded Typewriter Postcard made of thin paper that would roll onto a typewriter's platen so a message could be typed, folded, sealed and sent. On the home front, US legislators' staffers typed missives to constituents about the Korean War. Soldiers stationed far from home typed letters to Mom.

Right: French postcard produced by the Oliver Typewriter Company demonstrates the versatility of its Model 10 typewriter. Oliver launched Model 10 in August 1915, less than one year after France entered WWI.



Typewriter postcard from German Koltze & Co. United Colored Weaving to a customer in the middle of WWII with bad news about his prospective order. Translation: "We received your request on May 26th, but unfortunately we cannot promise you a delivery, as we have no manufacturing instructions for civilians. We are currently only employed for the Wehrmacht. Heil Hitler."

2. The Typewriter at War & Home

MILLARD E. TYDINGS, MD., CHAIRMAN
RICHARD B. RUSSELL, GA.
HARRY FLOOD BYRD, VA.
VIRGIL M. CHAPMAN, KY.
LYNDON B. JOHNSON, TEX.
ESTES KEFAUVER, TENN.
LESTER C. HUNT, WYO.
J. NELSON TRIBBY, CLERK

STYLES BRIDGES, N. H.
CHAN GURNEY, S. DAK.
LEVERETT SALTONSTALL, MASS.
WAYNE MORSE, OREG.
WILLIAM F. KNOWLAND, CALIF.
HARRY P. CAIN, WASH.

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

January 23, 1951

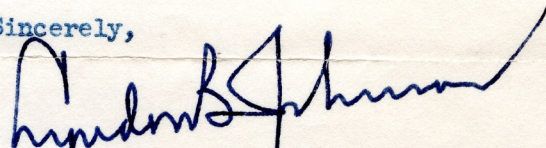
My dear Friend:

Thank you very much for giving me your views in regard to the induction of 18 year olds into the armed services. I appreciate and value your opinion.

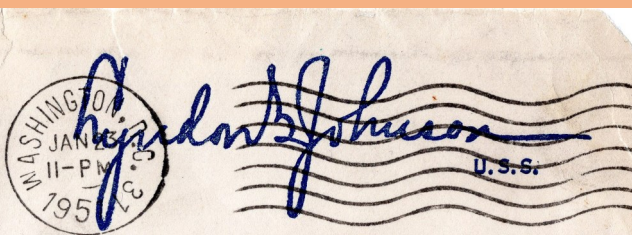
The age for induction of young men into the armed services cannot be lowered without specific action by Congress. The Preparedness Subcommittee, of which I am Chairman, is at the present time conducting hearings on the subject of manpower legislation. The problem of the induction of 18 year olds is being given particularly careful consideration in these proceedings. I can assure you that no change will be made in the present Selective Service Law unless and until the evidence presented in these hearings shows such a change to be in the interests of our national security.

I greatly appreciate your concern in this. Your viewpoint will be given careful consideration.

Sincerely,



Lyndon B. Johnson, Chairman
Preparedness Subcommittee



Typed letter from then-Senator, later President, Lyndon B. Johnson allays a constituent's fears regarding induction age for the Korean War. Inset: In lieu of postage, LBJ signed the letter's #10 window envelope in the upper right corner. His signature received postal cancellation per the free franking privilege available to Congress for official business. Payment to USPS for franked mail is provided by annual appropriations for the legislative branch.

2. The Typewriter at War & Home



Linz A/D, Austria.
13 August 1945.
Monday.

Dear Mom:

Inclosed is a small photo of me that I had taken in Linz on August first about three in the afternoon. I hope you like it. It aint so very good, but then it aint so bad either. I had to wait for thirteen days to get this picture because the photographer was so rushed by the soldiers of this division. Well it is something anyway. Let me know how you like it. I sent one to Caroline also, same kind.

There is a hot rumor going around here that we are going to be relieved by the 26th division soon and I guess we might be on our way home soon, I hope. I'll let you know more about it later.

Now I want to put in another request for a package. Lets call this one GERONIMO and we will number it 30 and the letter will be L as in Lilac. Now you can send me some more anchovies and some more tea balls and some small cans of milk, but dont send me any more sardines. They were good and I ate them last night. There were five large sardines in the can. I would rather have anchovies. Well you know how to make up a package so send it over.

I guess this will be all for this letter. Look for a letter soon withna postal money order check in it .

so long for now,

Chet

Letters home were a proud staple of typewriter duty in wartime. Typing a request to his mother, Anna Keisling of Burlington, New Jersey, for his favorite foods in the next care package, Chester A. Keisling reported even more important news. Chet shared unit scuttlebutt that he might soon be heading home. He was right. The letter's postmark, August 14, 1945, became known as WWII's unofficial end.



Photos sent to moms and sweethearts, requests for favorites to be mailed, and the latest news: typewritten letters were part and parcel of life for military personnel and their information-hungry loved ones.

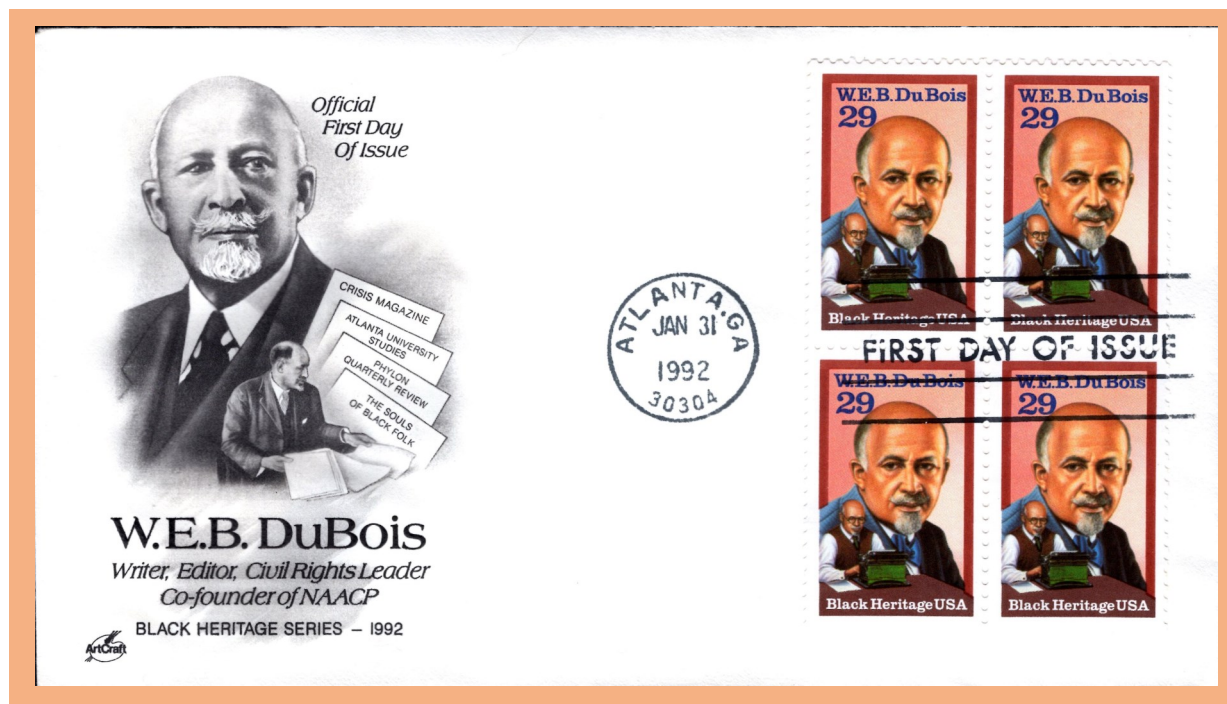
3. Social Movements, Writers & Icons

Typewriters debuted on postage stamps in 1935, jumping right into the midst of the women's suffrage movement that spoke to women around the world. Typewriters eventually featured as illustrations of social change in women's empowerment, racial equality, literacy, conditions of the disabled and more.



Above l-r: Turkey 1935 — The first time a typewriter appears on a stamp celebrates the Twelfth International Suffragist Conference; Seychelles 1990 — a stylized typewriter features prominently in this International Literacy Year commemorative; Brunei 1998 — Asian & Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons; Cuba 2007 — highlights the 45th anniversary of the creation of special education.

Right: 1984 Spanish lottery ticket benefitting ONCE, the Organizacion Nacional de Ciegos Espanoles (National Organization of Spanish Blind People). Proceeds provide services for the blind and sight-impaired. The ticket depicts a blind person using the typewriter.



US 1992 FDC — Typewriter as a leadership tool to address social issues is suggested by the W.E.B. DuBois stamp, one of the US stamp program's Black Heritage issues. DuBois was a writer, editor, civil rights leader and co-founder of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People.

3. Social Movements, Writers & Icons

Typewriters on philately came to represent authors and journalists who would write about social movements and call our attention to the needs of others through gripping prose. Today, although newer technology has rendered typewriters obsolete, they remain lionized on stamps as an emerging icon of self-expression. The 2020 Colombia COVID-19 stamp issue expresses this concept best. The stamp features an early typewriter whose keystrokes come alive, spelling out its admonition to us all: Rewrite your story!



Left: US 1940 — Samuel L. Clemens, AKA Mark Twain, is recognized by scholars as the first writer to submit a typed manuscript when he delivered his 1883 book “Life on the Mississippi” to his publisher. Above l-r: Vanuatu 2007 — One of four stamps in a set honoring “Tales of the South Pacific” author James A. Michener’s birth centenary, including this stamp that depicts the novelist at the keys; Slovenia 2009 — The country celebrates native daughter and travel writer Alma M. Karlin, one of the first European women who circled the globe alone; Malasia 2002 — Writer and linguist Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad modernized the Malay language with the publication of a series of grammar books.



Typewriters = Self-expression

Cover: Japan 1959 — An FDC for International Letter Writing Week features a whimsical typewriter keyboard in the cachet; Left: Finland 2017 & Belgium 2007 — typewriters as a form of personal expression; Above: Colombia 2020 — Floating type creates a circular message to envision a future of our making.