



## MOBILE TEXT WITH STYLE

**When you create** a new Word document, you have several dozen unique fonts to choose from. But when you turn on your phone, chances are you'll have just one. Perhaps if you're using a particularly fancy smartphone, you might have a bold version of that font.

Needless to say, very little attention has been paid to the quality and diversity of fonts on the mobile phone. Phones have become industrial design wonders as of late, touted for their form and style, but most of them have depended on the same or a single font despite typography being a critical design tool. Now one of the oldest companies in typology is seeking to change that. Monotype Imaging is attempting to infuse a little creativity into the world of cell phone text, and it used the BREW 2006 conference last week in San Diego to unveil it.

Monotype Imaging is introducing a scalable font engine that will now be a standard component in the BREW software developers' kit, allowing application programmers to incorporate new typefaces into applications, WAP browsers and clients. The company is also releasing a palate of common fonts it hopes will become standard on BREW phones.

"Every day, people are reading more and more on their mobile phones," said Satoshi Asari, product marketing manager for Monotype Imaging. "It's a big challenge to ensure that text is both legible and interesting."

Most mobile phones not only support one font today, but they also only have a bitmapped version of that font, meaning it can only be rendered in one size.

"The font handset-makers load into the phone is used for all applications," Asari said. "A lot of it has to do with memory—the more fonts, the more memory they take up. But mainly, handset-makers are more

concerned about the functionality of the phone rather than the fonts available to other applications."

This presents a problem for application developers and even content providers building mobile Web pages.

Although a developer could choose to embed its own fonts into a downloaded application or to ship text as a pre-rendered image, WAP page-builders have no recourse but to use the font of the handset, making it very difficult to distinguish one mobile Web page from another.

Monotype Imaging's scalable engine supports true-type fonts that can be scaled impossibly big or minutely small. Powered by what Monotype Imaging calls a rasterizing engine, Monotype Imaging's iType technology contains a description of each character, which the engine uses to generate each letter, depending on its size and usage in each context. The engine not only supports fonts in Roman alphabets but also foreign language fonts using different alphabets and ideographs.

"The idea of choosing specific fonts as an integral part of written communications has been around for hundreds of years," Asari said.

Although the content of the text may convey its meaning, the typeface often conveys tone and style, something graphic designers have used to their advantage since typography was born. According to Monotype Imaging, it's time those tools were brought to the handset. —**Kevin Fitchard**

