The International Society for Typographic Designers

Roots
The Origin of Species, The King James Bible, The Qur'an, The Communist Manifesto and The Republic are noted as the five most influential texts of all time. In addition, many expressions of historic documents (Gutenberg’s 42-line bible as an example) form a key part of the foundation of our practice as typographers.

Whilst the original manuscripts remain as prized artifacts of historical significance, the modern-day equivalents (and their ideas) can often disappear underneath the wealth of available texts and philosophies, and whilst being the best selling books of all time, their widespread cultural significance has clearly changed since their introduction.

There are, however, several examples of ‘new interpretations’ of texts such as these. The ‘Pocket Canons’ feature individual books of the bible with (sometimes provocative) introductions by various well-known authors and public figures. The Message translation, created by Eugene H. Peterson, is a modern-day re-write of the King James version and uses playful (and occasionally controversial) idioms. Both make the original text more accessible, but still rely largely on traditional typographic forms in their visual expression. Other expressions of the ‘top five’ exist in literature, film, and music, as individuals have dug beneath the surface to get at the substance beneath.

Brief
You are asked to re-consider a key historical text of your choice from a typographer’s perspective. Designing for a visually articulate audience (and with a reverent respect for the international significance of the texts), how do you regain something of the power of the original ideas in today’s visually and ideologically saturated environment?
Be ambitious with your thinking, Explore print, screen or a combination of both in your development, and present outcomes that will surprise, inspire and engage a new audience. As a minimum, use a chapter from your text to demonstrate your ideas, although additional chapters (and possibly other texts) may help demonstrate your thinking further. Specific audience, format and medium/s to be defined by you as appropriate.

Research & Development
We expect deep sketchbook research with evidence of your personal responses to the information that you uncover. We would like to see lots of potential directions explored in order to get a sense of your thinking processes and understand how you come to decisions regarding the final outcome. Sketchbooks should be a reflection of your design thinking. They should be colourful, vibrant and organic – full of visual references; notations; sketches; exploration of materials and ideas. They should not be scrapbooks or dissertations and they should not be ‘retrospective’ i.e. ‘Now I’ve finished the piece – time to fill the sketchbooks with photocopies.

Target Market
Identify your market, and how you will target it, in your Strategy.