

# BASIC PRINT STUDIO KNOW-HOW

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## VANDERCOOK

### *characteristics*

- There are two Vandercooks: the Universal and the SP15.
  - Each has its own packing and tympan (topsheets) sheets for the cylinder, stored in the press's cabinet.
  - Each has its own metal shims.
  - Each has its own dead bar and "pressure" bar.
- BOTH presses are set up for printing type directly on the press bed and standard linoleum blocks with the metal shims provided. NEVER print type with a shim in the bed!
- The Universal automatically shifts into PRINT mode when you step on the pedal to raise the grip-per-buttons. The SP15 does not.
- Both presses shift into trip only when you've brought the cylinder carriage all the way to the end of the bed.
- The Universal is slightly wider than the SP15. It is approx. 95 picas wide.
- The "bed width furniture" fits the 90 pica width of the SP15.
- Tools for the presses are kept in the cigar box or in the drawer beneath the furniture.
- BOTH presses have mechanized roller systems that should only be used by confident printers or with the close assistance of a lab aide. Always have a lab aide check your press after cleaning the rollers. When not in use, the rollers should be stored DISENGAGED. Failure to disengage rollers between uses can ruin them.
- Rollers should be disengaged when printing hand-inked linoleum or wood blocks.

## PRINTING

### *tips*

- Use only relief inks
- Rubber based ink is stored in the vandercooks and is intended for use on metal type. Oil based relief inks are in the back hall and are labeled with a "R."
- You do not need to soak your paper
- Vandercook tools are kept in the cigar box by the furniture cases or in the drawer beneath the furniture
- We have three different kinds of quoin, each requiring a different key
- Use the "pressure" bar for locking in linoleum and woodblocks.
- For type, use the pressure bar only to create a dead stop closer to the top of the bed. Lock in the pressure bar, then use a quoin on two sides of your form.
- Clean your type while it is still locked up. DO NOT use squeezie or veggie oil to clean type. USE Simple Green.

## PRINTING TYPE

### *troubleshooting*

*Rather than work from problem to diagnosis, it is easiest to discuss printing problems in terms of the diagnoses themselves and their solutions, not the problematic prints that they produce.*

- **PRESSURE:** pressure varies a great deal between the cylinder and your type based on the amount of packing under the tympan (different for each press) and the thickness of your paper. In addition, some type in the shop may be so old and used that it has worn down below type high. If you desire high pressure on type, an emboss, or are working with especially thick paper, build up pressure gradually to avoid the risk of crushing type. Add a sheet of tympan at a time. To experiment, you may add slips of thin paper directly under your proof sheets to get a “preview” of what adding packing might accomplish (Keep in mind that to get accurate indications your proof sheets must be the same or similar to your actual paper).

- **LOCK UP:** a solid and immobile lock up is necessary for a good consistent print. If your lock up is not working, you may have one or more of the following problems:

- varying line lengths: adjust spacing or reset!

- crud under your form: clean the bed!

- wonky furniture: replace!

- wonky spacing: reset!

- form is lifting off bed: probably too much pressure on quoins or an odd piece of furniture...

- **PLACEMENT:** if you are leading a deckled or torn edge of paper, the variations of the paper may cause variations in the prints. Notice also where you are placing your paper in relation to the gripper buttons and the etched lines across the gripper assembly. Paper

can also flip at angles or flow around as you send it through the carriage to print. Guiding the paper with your hand or in extreme cases taping it (gently) to the tympan will take care of this problem. (taping also takes care of the little smudge at the bottom of your paper!)

- **PACKING:** Packing has to provide even pressure to ensure an even print. If someone has printed something a number of times or with great pressure, they may have sufficiently dented the packing so as to make your prints fail. Replace the damaged packing or flip it around so that the area in which you are printing is smooth.

- **INKING:** an uneven print can result from improper inking, which can happen in a few different ways. Too much ink or too little is easy to correct. Add ink gradually to metal rollers and turn on press to let it work in; subtract it by removing portions of ink from a metal roller. When subtracting, be careful not to leave any cleaning substances on the roller when you turn on the press. Also be wary of getting fluff from your rags in your ink.

Alternately, your type form may not be receiving ink properly. Clean your type and try to judge this by eye first. If you see clear inconsistencies after a trip, adjust roller height using knobs at ends of rollers. Adjust height gradually. You can also check roller height by pulling the carriage to an empty area of the press bed, engaging the rollers, and sliding the “lollipop” tool under both sides of each roller. After each contact with a roller, check the ink mark left behind on the lolly. A stripe the width of a nickel is usually about right.

## PRESS CLEAN UP

*digest*

*when using the roller assembly:*

1. spread approx. a Tablespoon of **crisco** (substitute veggie oil) on the large metal roller. Engage rollers and turn on motor. Let the crisco work into the ink.
2. Beginning with a **semi-dirty** rag from the back hall, wipe off all rollers.
3. Next, using a semi-clean rag, wipe the rollers down again using simple green or **squeezie**.
4. Use extreme caution when cleaning the motorized roller. The safest method is to never have your hands near the roller while it is spinning. Instead, wipe off the reachable area, flip the motor on and off; wait until the roller has stopped spinning and reveals a inky area. Wipe away.
5. Continue wiping each roller with sorta-clean rags. Pay special attention to the ends of the rubber rollers, which are often missed. Keep in mind that the rubber on these rollers can be damaged easily by a fingernail, jewelry, and mishandling.
6. Clean rollers with clean rags until nothing more comes off when wiped.
7. Clean off press surfaces. Commonly, the carriage handle, press bed, quoins, furniture, locking bars, feed board, and other parts of the press get streaks and smears of ink on them. With clean hands and a clean rag, wipe down the press.

## TABLE CLEAN UP

*digest*

1. Scrape up as much ink as possible with your palette knife. Wipe globs onto phone book paper and discard. Ink cannot be returned to ink cans, but you may save it in wax paper or jars for your own future use.
2. Squirt veggie oil onto plexi. Wipe with paper towel or sorta-dirty rag to “work it in.”
3. Wipe table, brayer, and palette knife with sort-dirty rags.
4. Continue with sorta-clean rags, using simple green or squeezie to clean tools and plexi.
5. Once everything seems clean, wipe with clean rags until nothing more comes off.
6. Pay special attention to the plexi table. Spray and wipe down entire table. Your ink color should not be apparent on the table or in the unfortunate cuts in the table. Wipe it once more.
7. Return tools to their proper places in the back hall and letterpress area.
8. Sort rags into the proper bins in the back hall.
9. Return cleaners to shelf above sink in the etching press area.
10. Return all spacing material, furniture, and letterpress tools to their proper places.