

Conquer Variable Web Typography

86/60

Oliver Schöndorfer  glyphe

IT'S TIME FOR
variable web
TYPOGRAPHY

BY OLIVER SCHÖNDORFER

Variable fonts will shape the future of web typography as they offer plenty of possibilities for fine graded control over the display of type on screens. And that all at a relatively low file size. Time to say goodbye to endless debates about the number of font files you have

This page uses the typeface [Output Sans Variable](#) by David Jonathan Ross. It's a variable font that can be adjusted on two axes to change its *weight* and its *obliqueness*. So I only have to load **one single font file** of 57 KB to create the 18 different styles you can see on this site. It opens up new possibilities for designing with text on the web with a great number of typographic expressions for an incredibly small font file. So clearly, variable fonts are the new hot thing for every type nerd

Are so many different styles really necessary?

Let's take a step back and ask ourselves **why do we need different font styles at all?** Typography gives words meaning through design, which means good typography can support the content, bad (or inappropriate) typography weakens it. Different styles of the same typeface make sense when they are unique enough to **stand out**.

Concurrent they should be familiar enough by using the same design language. Compared to the regular weight, bold text emphasizes the meaning of something. It has to have a certain contrast to stand out, otherwise, it won't do its job. Maybe semi-bold would not be different enough. The same goes with italic. Semi-Italic (or semi slanted – true italics are another topic on their own) do not make much sense for long reading text.

“Typography gives words meaning through design.”

But this guidelines mainly apply to body text or typography for long reading texts. Having a variety of weights might be beneficial for certain kinds of content, like page titles, headings or blockquotes, as you can see on this page. In that cases the typography can be **more expressive** and finely nuanced because the text usually is not that

18

font files

632

for web fonts only

1

font file

56 KB

overall size

How to get started with variable fonts

1. What are variable fonts?
2. Using variable fonts on the web
3. Good times
4. Hard times
5. Getting started

What are variable fonts?

Aa

Light

Aa

Regular

Aa

Medium

Aa

Bold

Aa

X-Bold

Aa

Light

Aa

Regular

Aa

Medium

Aa

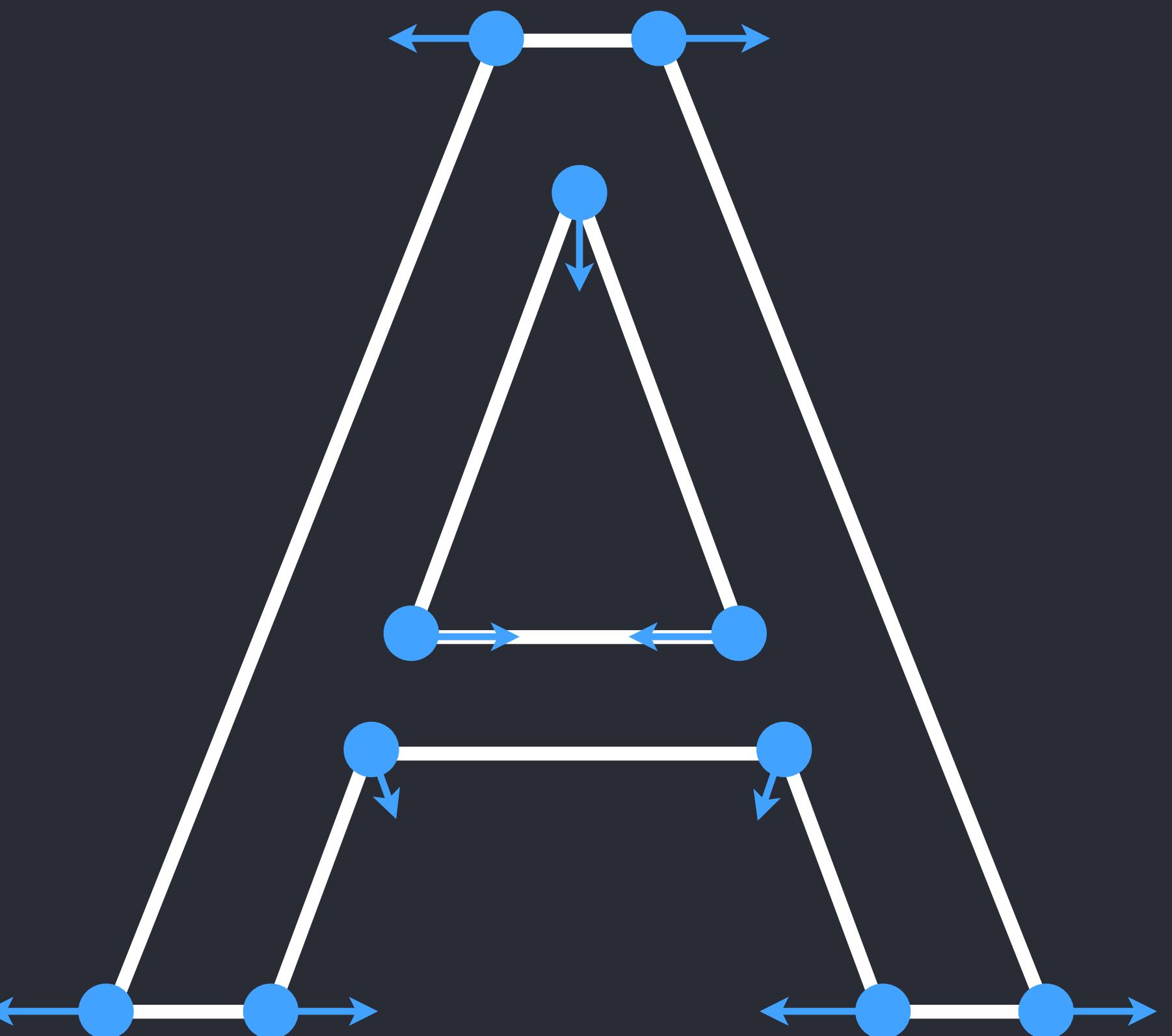
Bold

Aa

X-Bold

Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa

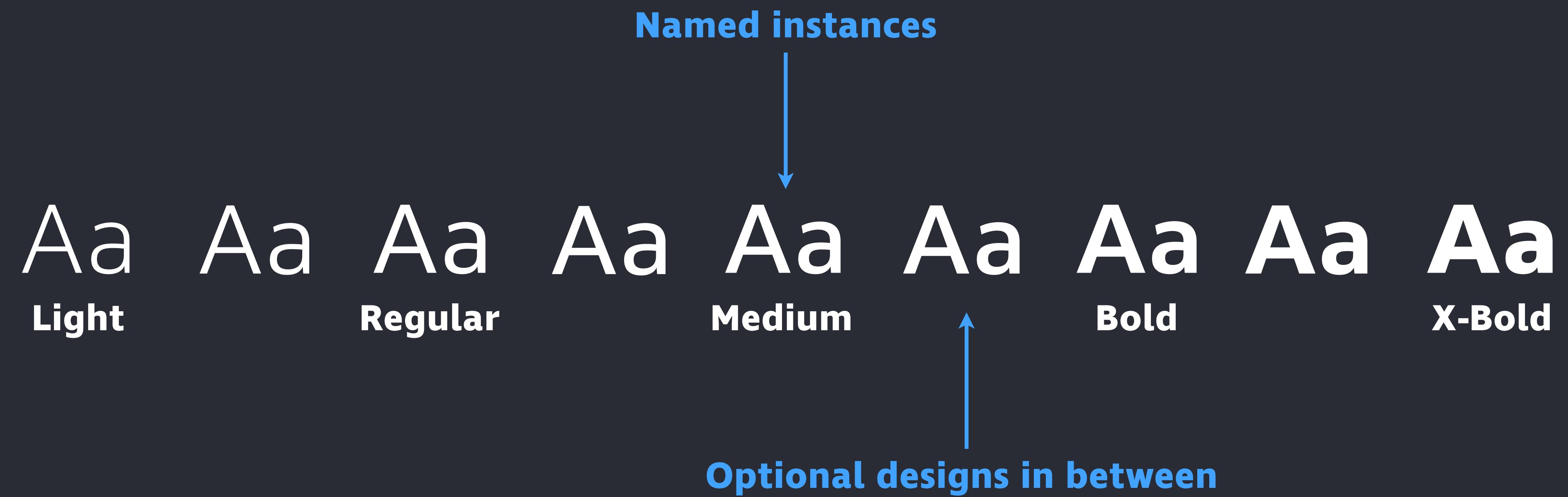
Variable font file





Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa

←———— **Interpolation** —————→



Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa

← **weight axis** →



Aa
Aa
Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa
Aa
Aa



Using variable fonts

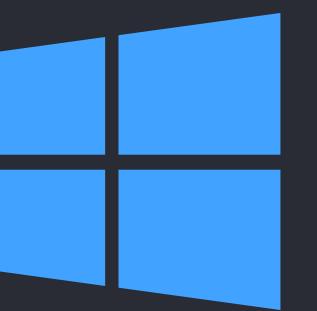
on the web

70 %

Global support



MacOS 10.13
iOS 11.2



Windows 10



Safari 11



Chrome 62



Edge 17



Firefox 62

Variable Fonts (beta)



A simple resource for finding and trying variable fonts

Angus Variable

Weight: 0 1000

A rounded sans that maintains consistent widths regardless of changes in weight.

Design: Elliott Amblard
Publisher: Black[Foundry]
Characters: Latin
Licensing: Paid/commercial
Info/fonts: black-foundry.com

Angus Variable

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghi
jklmnopqrstuvwxyz 0123456789

Angus Variable Italic

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ abcdefghi
jklmnopqrstuvwxyz 0123456789

Eckmannpsych Variable

Optical Size: 0 1000

A psychedelic interpretation of Otto Eckman's [Eckmann-Schrift](#), available with discounted pricing as a work-in-progress design. It comes with a bonus [DrawBot](#) script for making variable animations.

Design: James T. Edmondson
Publisher: OH no Type Co.
Characters: Latin
Licensing: Paid/commercial
Info/fonts: futurefonts.xyz

EBCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ
0123456789

Discover new variable fonts
try them out,
see where to get them

```
@font-face {  
    font-family: 'Venn';  
    src: url('Venn.woff2') format('woff2-variations'),  
         url('Venn.woff2') format('woff2');  
}
```

Will become the standard



Fallback for the others



[Introduction](#)[MY SPECIMENS](#)[Old Default](#)[SPECIMENS](#) [FounderType YouHei](#) [Gnomon](#) [Venn](#)[文鼎晶熙黑](#)[晶熙ゴシック体](#)[Amstelvar](#)[Avenir Next](#)[Bitcount](#)[Buffalo Gal](#)[Compressa](#)[Decovar](#)[DIN 2014](#)[Dunbar](#)[Fit](#)[Gingham](#)

Axis-Praxis is a website for playing with OpenType Variable Fonts

Discover 30+ variable fonts. Experiment with the right panel on this default layout, or choose a type column. Every textbox is fully editable: change font spacing as well as the variation sliders. And type your



Font makers can try out their own designs. Just drag any variable TTF to the current textbox gets set to that font, and its axes show up right away in the Font Variation section.

The Font Variation controls adapt according to the variation axes inside each font, one slider

TEXTBOX

Textbox

Font

Font size

FONT VARIATIONS

Instance

Width

Weight

Optical Size

1.**Select font or drop font file****2.****See available axes and ranges**



registered axes

wght

wdth

ital

slnt

opsz

Weight Axis

Source Serif Variable by Adobe



Weight Axis

font-weight: 327;

font-variation-settings: "wght" 327;

`font-weight: 327;`

High-level property

will become standard with CSS 4 Font Module

`font-variation-settings: "wght" 327;`

Low-level property

supported by all participating browsers now

Width Axis

Venn by Dalton Maag

 glyphé

Width Axis

font-stretch: 78%;

font-variation-settings: "wdth" 78;

Slant Axis

Output Sans by David Jonathan Ross



Slant Axis

font-style: oblique 10deg;

font-variation-settings: "slnt" 10;

Optical Sizing Axis

Aa Aa Aa Aa

**Low contrast
for small sizes**

Aa Aa Aa Aa

12px

**High contrast
for large sizes**

Aa Aa Aa Aa

72px

Aa Aa Aa Aa

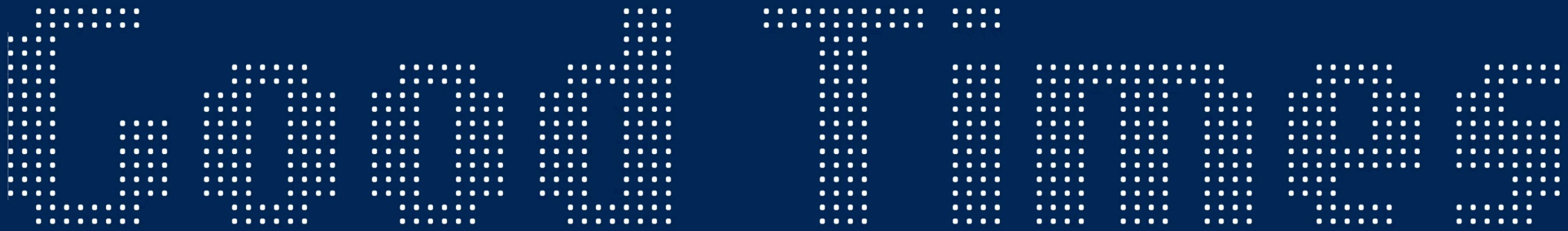
font-optical-sizing: auto;

font-variation-settings: "opsz" 72;

CUSTOM AXIS

CUSTOMAXIS

font-variation-settings: "TRMC" 1000,
"SKLA" 400,
"SKLB" 800, ...



ANZEIGE

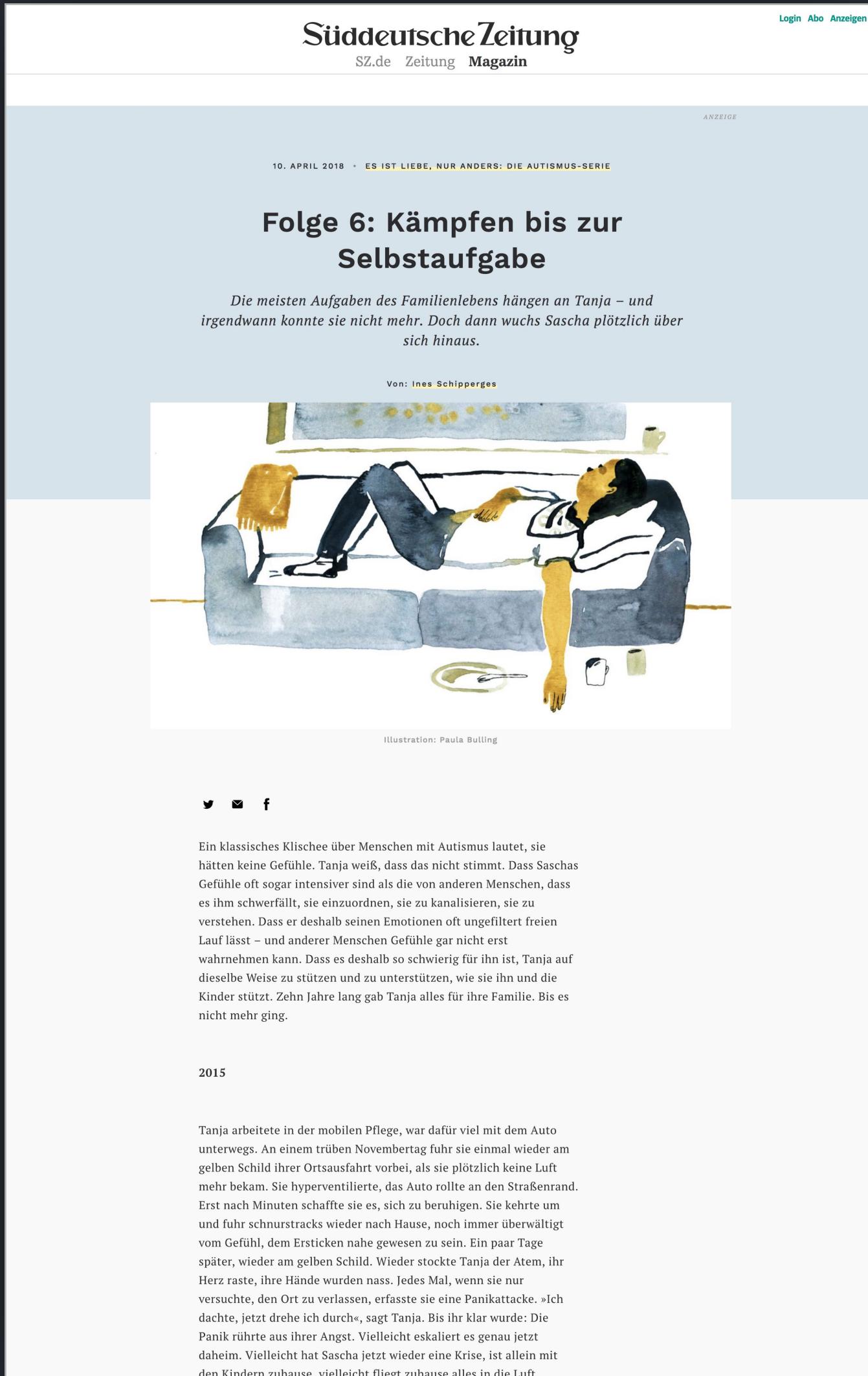
10. APRIL 2018 • ES IST LIEBE, NUR ANDERS: DIE AUTISMUS-SERIE

Folge 6: Kämpfen bis zur Selbstaufgabe

Die meisten Aufgaben des Familienlebens hängen an Tanja – und irgendwann konnte sie nicht mehr. Doch dann wuchs Sascha plötzlich über sich hinaus.

Von: Ines Schipperges





23 KB PT Serif Regular

23 KB PT Serif Bold

24 KB PT Serif Italic

36 KB Work Sans Regular

39 KB Work Sans Medium

39 KB Work Sans SemiBold

52 KB Work Sans Bold

166 KB

Süddeutsche Zeitung
SZ.de Zeitung Magazin

ANZEIGE

10. APRIL 2018 • ES IST LIEBE, NUR ANDERS: DIE AUTISMUS-SERIE

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Von: Ines Schipperges



Illustration: Paula Bulling

Ein klassisches Klischee über Menschen mit Autismus lautet, sie hätten keine Gefühle. Tanja weiß, dass das nicht stimmt. Dass Saschas Gefühle oft sogar intensiver sind als die von anderen Menschen, dass es ihm schwerfällt, sie einzurichten, sie zu kanalisieren, sie zu verstehen. Dass er deshalb seinen Emotionen oft ungefiltert freien Lauf lässt – und anderer Menschen Gefühle gar nicht erst wahrnehmen kann. Dass es deshalb so schwierig für ihn ist, Tanja auf dieselbe Weise zu stützen und zu unterstützen, wie sie ihn und die Kinder stützt. Zehn Jahre lang gab Tanja alles für ihre Familie. Bis es nicht mehr ging.

2015

Tanja arbeitete in der mobilen Pflege, war dafür viel mit dem Auto unterwegs. An einem trüben Novembertag fuhr sie einmal wieder am gelben Schild ihrer Ortsausfahrt vorbei, als sie plötzlich keine Luft mehr bekam. Sie hyperventilierte, das Auto rollte an den Straßenrand. Erst nach Minuten schaffte sie es, sich zu beruhigen. Sie kehrte um und fuhr schurstracks wieder nach Hause, noch immer überwältigt vom Gefühl, dem Erstickten nahe gewesen zu sein. Ein paar Tage später, wieder am gelben Schild. Wieder stockte Tanja der Atem, ihr Herz raste, ihre Hände wurden nass. Jedes Mal, wenn sie nur versuchte, den Ort zu verlassen, erfassste sie eine Panikattacke. »Ich dachte, jetzt drehe ich durch«, sagt Tanja. Bis ihr klar wurde: Die Panik rührte aus ihrer Angst. Vielleicht eskaliert es genau jetzt daheim. Vielleicht hat Sascha jetzt wieder eine Krise, ist allein mit den Kindern zuhause, vielleicht fliegt zuhause alles in die Luft.

Work Sans Regular

Work Sans Medium

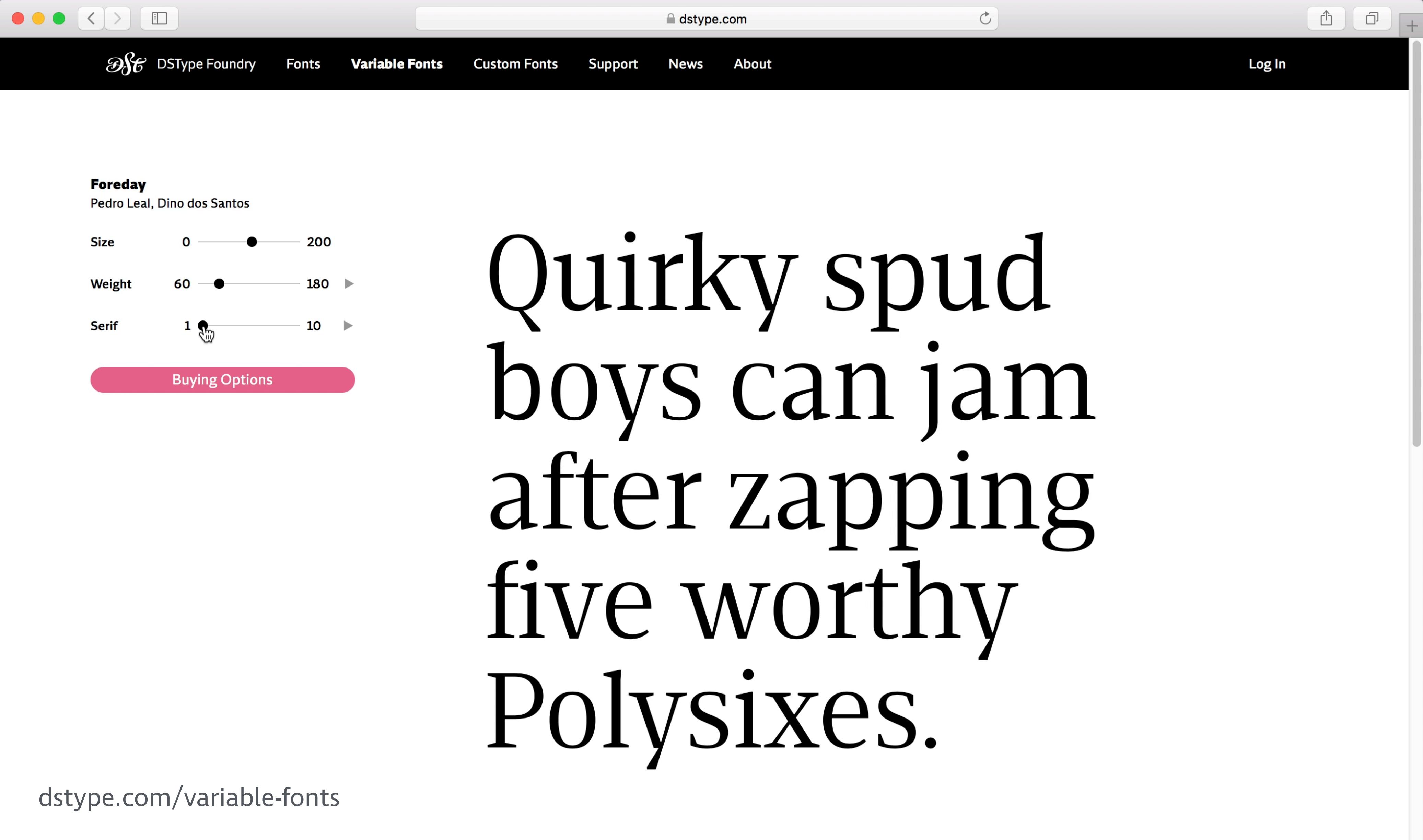
Work Sans SemiBold

Work Sans Bold

Work Sans Variabel?

166 KB

~80 KB

A screenshot of a web browser window displaying the DType Foundry website at dstype.com. The browser has a dark mode interface. The main content area shows a large sample of the 'Foreday' font in black serif letters, with the text:
Quirky spud
boys can jam
after zapping
five worthy
Polysixes.
To the left of the text, there is a sidebar with font preview controls:

- Size: A slider from 0 to 200, currently set to 100.
- Weight: A slider from 60 to 180, currently set to 100.
- Serif: A slider from 1 to 10, currently set to 1. The number '1' is highlighted with a pink circle and a hand cursor icon.

A pink button labeled 'Buying Options' is located below these controls.

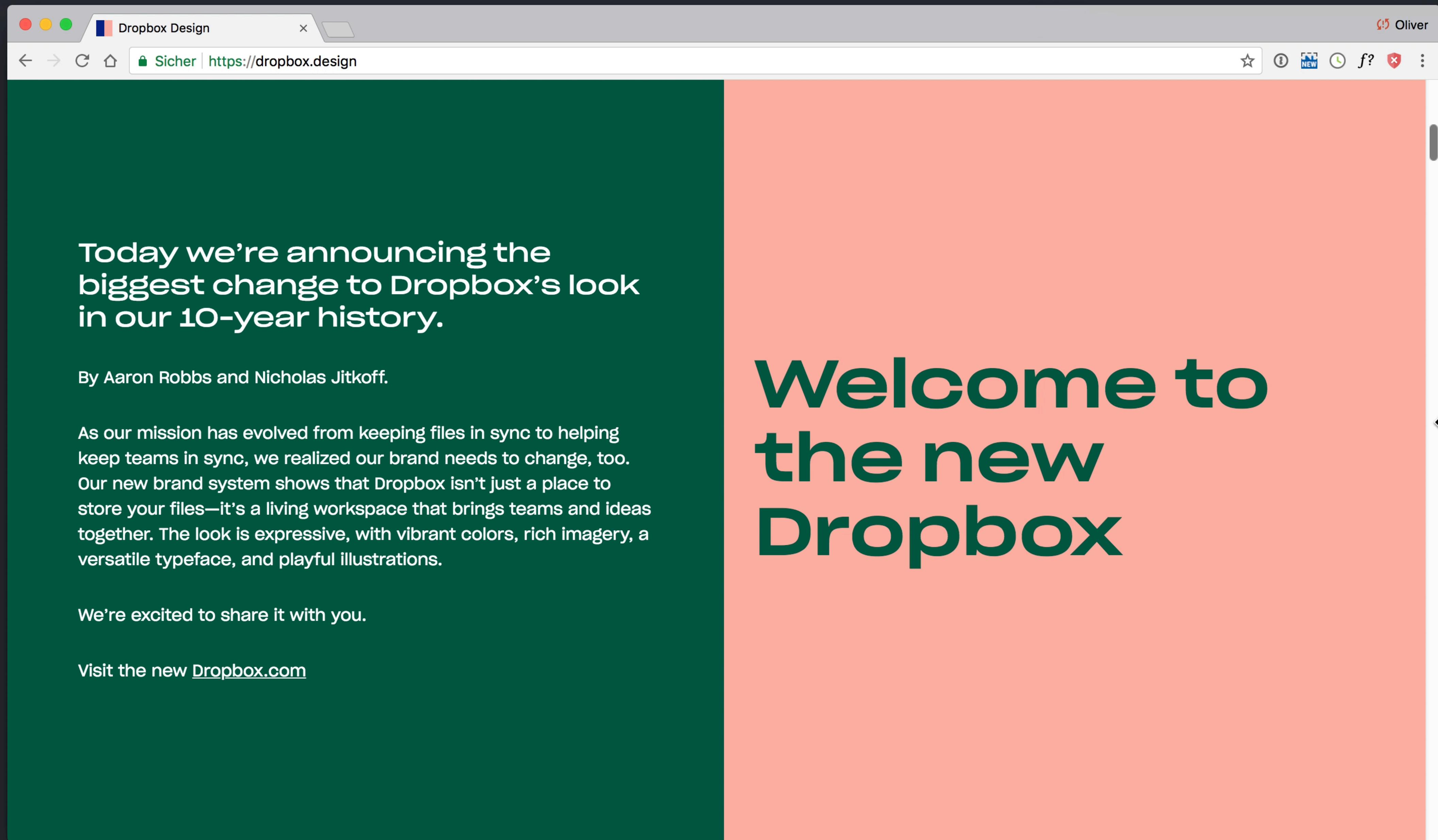
dstype.com/variable-fonts

The screenshot shows a web browser window for dstype.com. The page displays the **Foreday** font by Pedro Leal, Dino dos Santos. On the left, there are three sliders for **Size** (0 to 200), **Weight** (60 to 80, with 10 highlighted), and **Serif** (1 to 10, with 10 highlighted). Below the sliders is a pink button labeled **Buying Options**.

The main content area features a large, bold, black sans-serif font displaying the text:

Quirky spud
boys can jam
after zapping
five worthy
Polysixes.

dstype.com/variable-fonts

A screenshot of a web browser window titled "Dropbox Design". The address bar shows "Sicher | https://dropbox.design". The page content is split into two main sections. The left section has a dark green background and contains the following text:

Today we're announcing the biggest change to Dropbox's look in our 10-year history.

By Aaron Robbs and Nicholas Jitkoff.

As our mission has evolved from keeping files in sync to helping keep teams in sync, we realized our brand needs to change, too. Our new brand system shows that Dropbox isn't just a place to store your files—it's a living workspace that brings teams and ideas together. The look is expressive, with vibrant colors, rich imagery, a versatile typeface, and playful illustrations.

We're excited to share it with you.

Visit the new [Dropbox.com](#)

The right section has a light orange background and features large, bold, dark green text:

**Welcome to
the new
Dropbox**

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Dropbox Design". The address bar indicates a secure connection to "https://dropbox.design". The main content area is split into two vertical sections. The left section has a dark green background and contains the following text:

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By Aaron Robbs and Nicholas Jitkoff.

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We're excited to share it with

Welcome to the new Dropbox



A screenshot of a web browser window titled "Variable Typography". The page content is a single paragraph of text. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer note.

Variable Typography

Resize your browser window and see how the typeface on this page changes. This paragraph uses the beautiful typeface Venn by Dalton Maag. It's a variable font that can be adjusted on two axis and change its weight and width. This comes especially handy on narrow screens where the font can be condensed to fit more words into one line. On the other hand the font can be extended on wider screens. And now I'm repeating this text to have some more copy. Resize your browser window and see how the typeface on this page changes. This paragraph uses the beautiful typeface Venn by Dalton Maag. It's a variable font that can be adjusted on two axis and change its weight and width. This comes especially handy on narrow screens where the font can be condensed to fit more words into one line. On the other hand the font can be extended on wider screens.

Variable Font Demo by [Oliver Schöndorfer](#), Typeface: [Venn by Dalton Maag](#)



**On narrow screens condensed font
to fit more characters into one line**

Variable Typography

Sicher | https://zeichenschatz.net/demos/vf/width/ f? Oliver

Variable Typography

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On the other hand the font can be extended on wider screens.

Variable Font Demo by [Oliver Schöndorfer](#), Typeface: [Venn by Dalton Maag](#)

← **On wide screens
expanded font**

Variable Fonts Demo | Microsoft Edge Oliver

← → C ⌘ ⌘ Sicher https://developer.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-edge/testdrive/demos/variable-fonts/ ☆ ⓘ NEW ⏲ f? ✎ :

Contents ▾

WEB TYPOGRAPHY

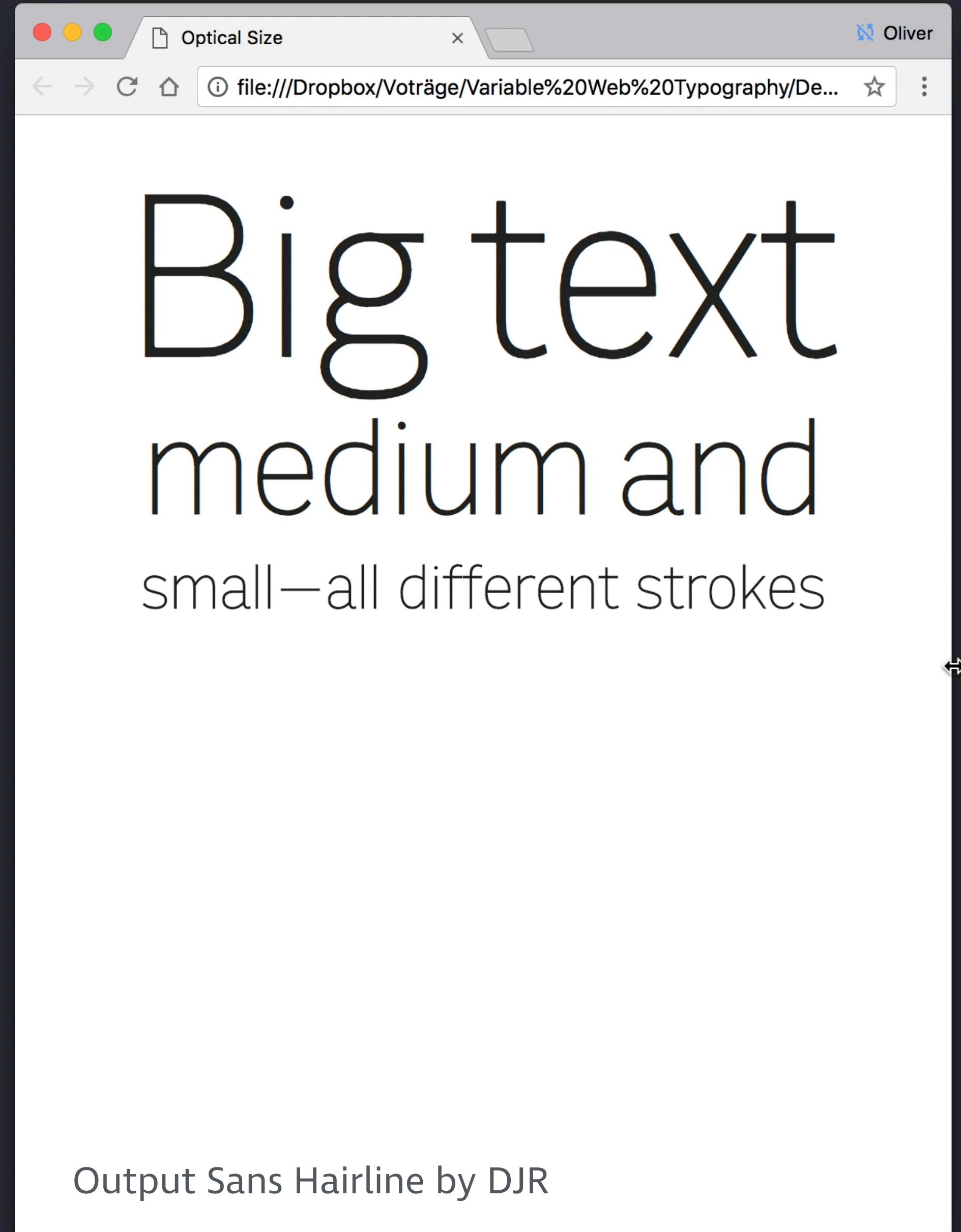
A brief history

Rich typography has for years been the envy of many web designers, who long for the typographic variety, texture, and precision available in print media.

The first huge stride in typographic detail on the web was the introduction of web fonts, which allowed designers and developers to use many other fonts besides the handful generally available on user's operating systems.

Why were web fonts so exciting for designers? Jason Pamental put it eloquently, "typography is communication" but currently the web is "all system, no soul." Web fonts teased the opportunity of bringing that "soul" to the web. Unfortunately for web fonts, to provide this soul, it comes at an Pause animations



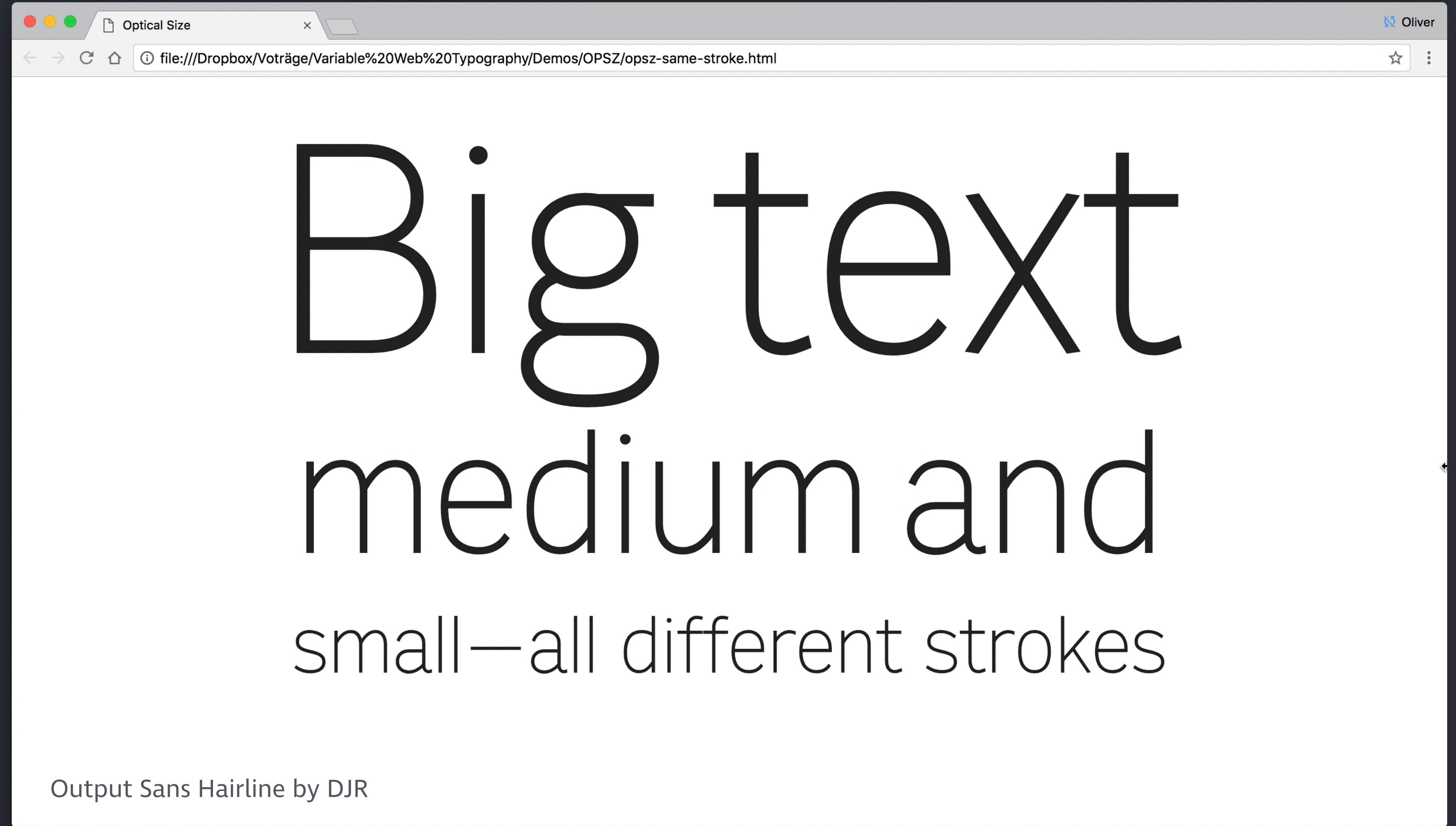


Chrome

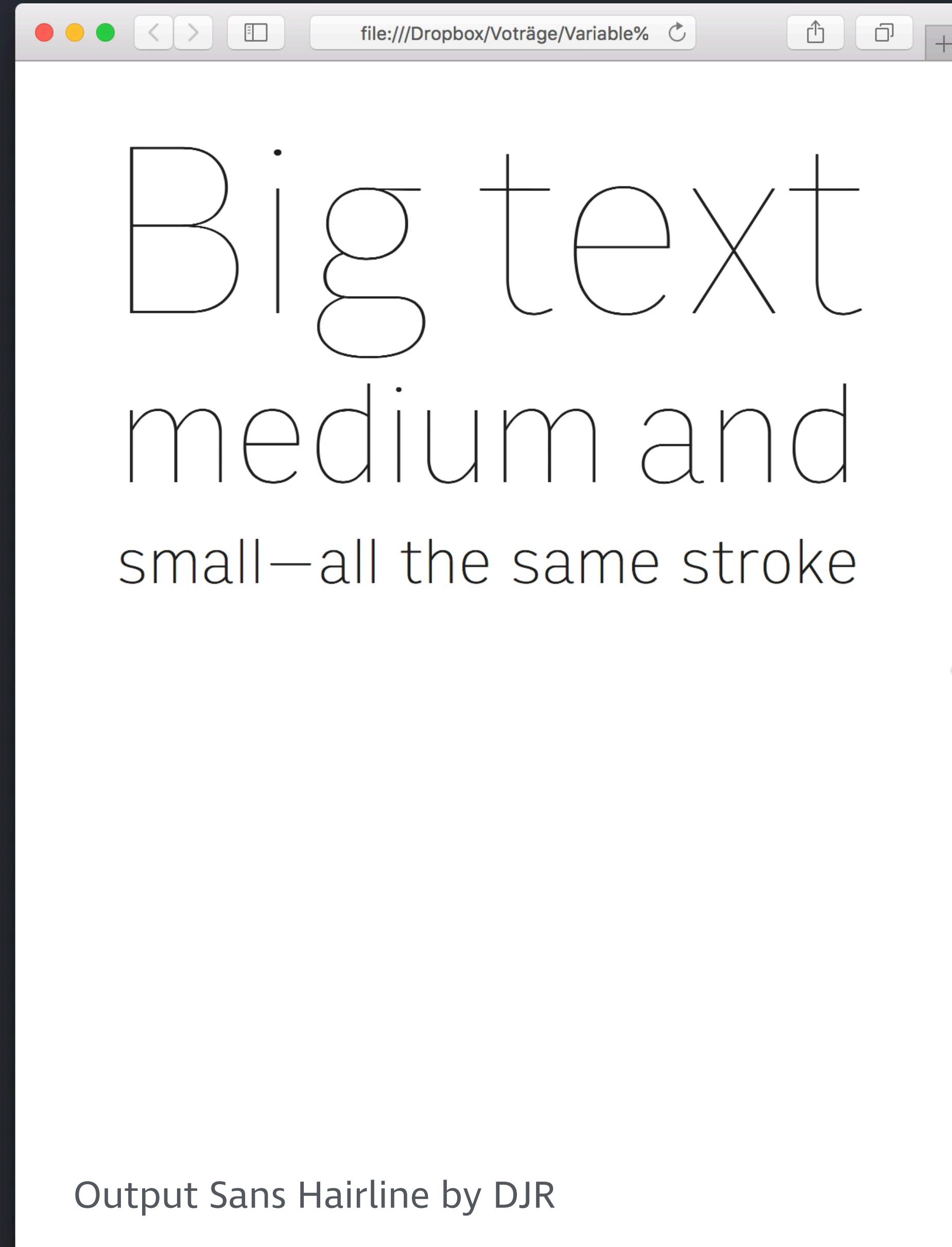
```
h1 { font-size: 20vmax; }
```

```
h2 { font-size: 11vmax; }
```

```
h3 { font-size: 5vmax; }
```

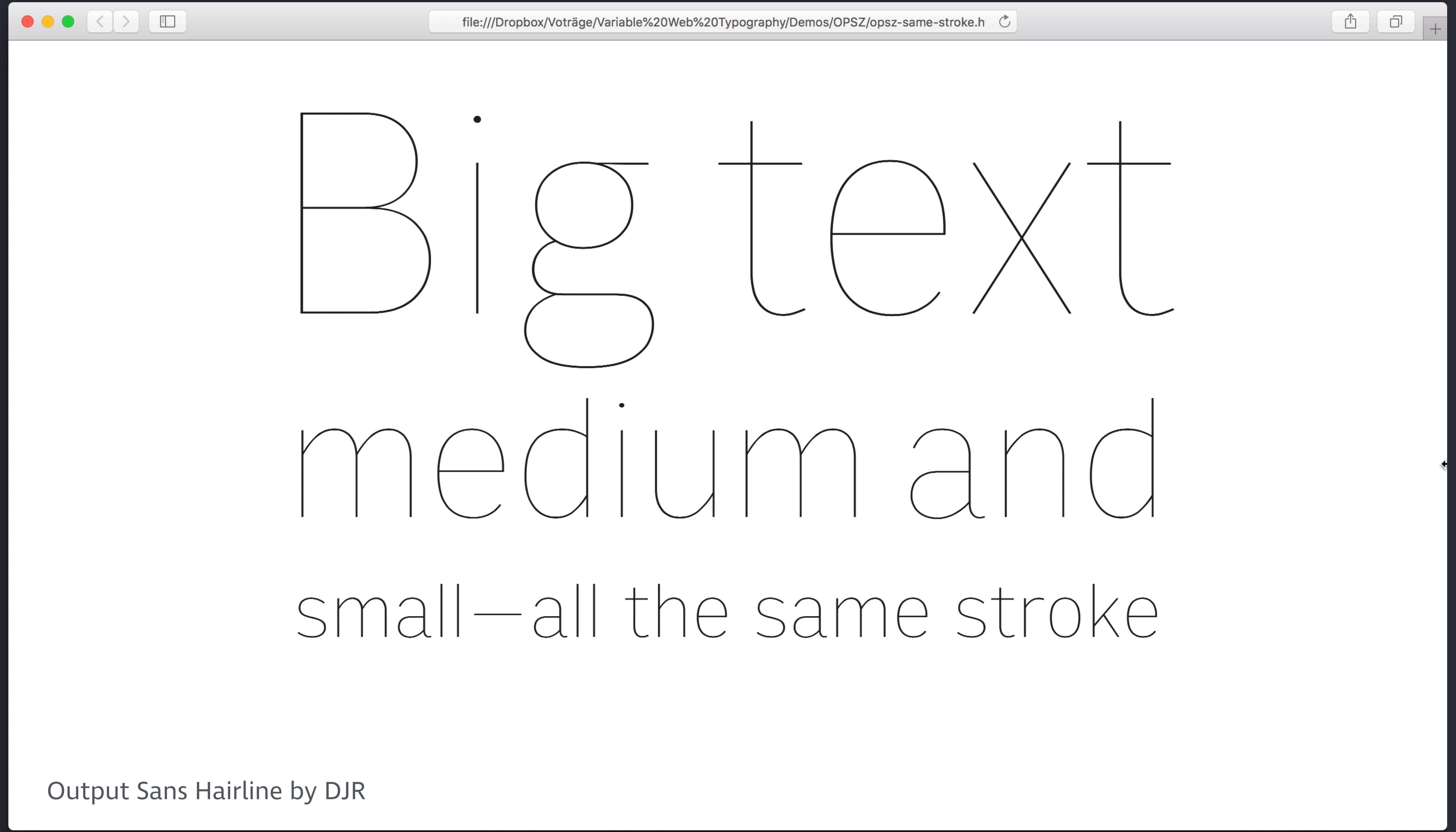


Output Sans Hairline by DJR



Safari

font-optical-sizing: auto;
supported by default



Output Sans Hairline by DJR

Kontrapunkt

In close collaboration with Nippon Design Center of Japan, we designed a sound sensitive typeface for Chinese audio tech company Goertek. Based on surrounding sounds, it changes appearance by vibrating in different frequencies and wave types.

The dynamic typeface is created for use on digital signage and wayfinding throughout Goertek's groundbreaking R&D hub in Qingdao, China.

VARIABLE TYPEFACE

VOLUME: 0%

GOERTEK

SOUND EFFECTS



Kontrapunkt

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VARIABLE TYPEFACE

VOLUME: 44%



SOUND EFFECTS

► MUSIC

► SOUND

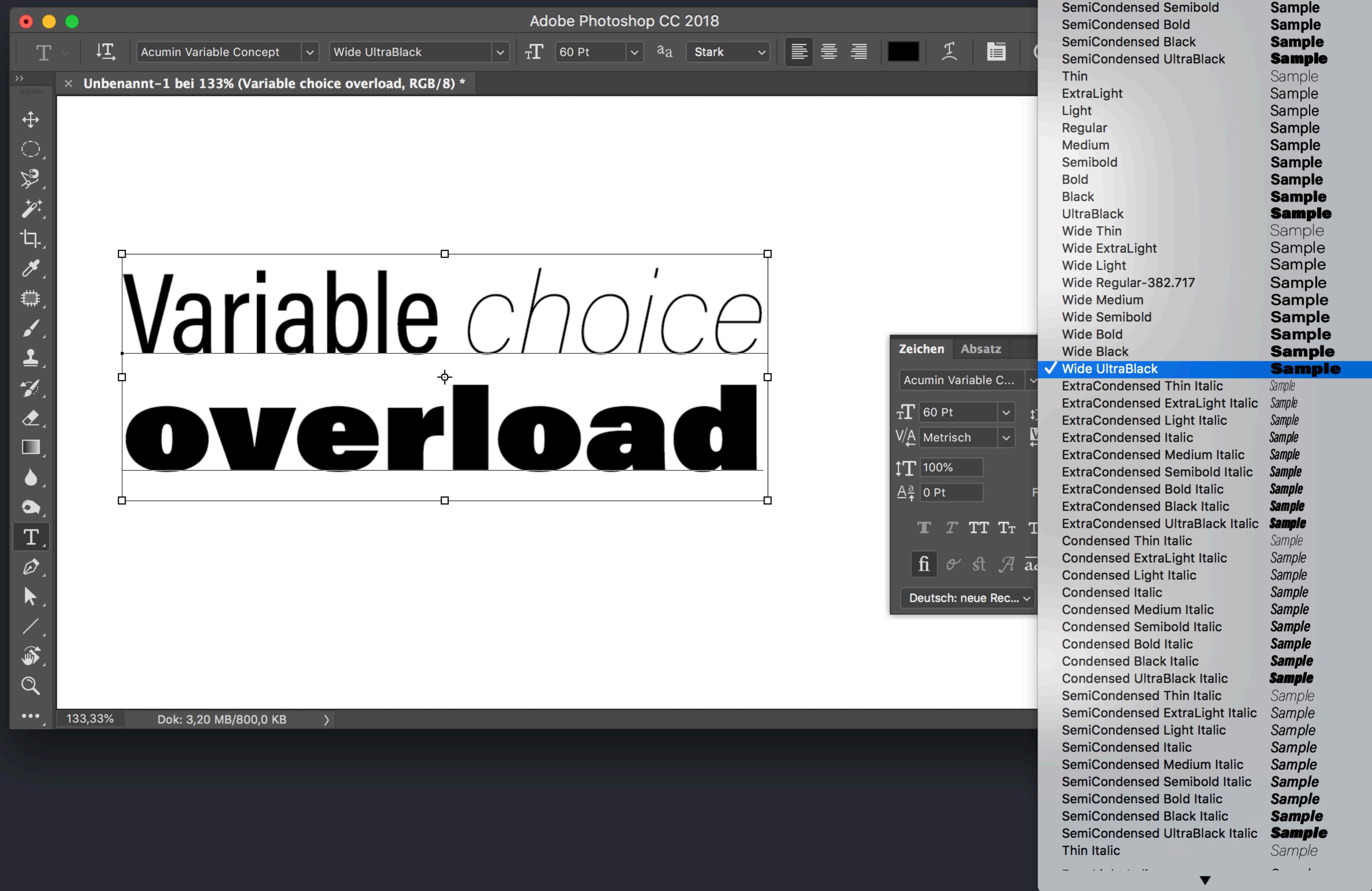
○ MICROPHONE



Hard times

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the **AXISPRAXIS** website at <https://www.axis-praxis.org/specimens/amstelvar>. The page features a large, bold title "Amstelvar" in a red font. Below it, a red box contains the text: "The OpenType Font Variations format includes a broad range of standard variables: weights from heavy to light, widths from wide to narrow, optical sizes from small to large, contrast, serif slope, and a few others which are currently on the drawing board. This demo variation font includes a Weight axis that lightens without change horizontally or vertically, to the white space, and darkens the same way, without decreasing the white space, just changing the black, and the widths of the glyphs." To the right of the text box is a sidebar titled "TEXTBOX" containing settings for "Font" (AmstelvarAlpha Default), "Font size", "Line-height", and "Alignment". Below this is a section titled "FONT VARIATIONS" with numerous sliders for "Weight", "Width", "Optical Size", and various "x" and "y" variations like "x opaque", "x transparent", and "y transparent". A cursor is visible over the "Grade" slider.

Overchoice
Many options
make it harder
and require
much more
knowledge



90 named instances
for Acumin Variable in Photoshop

Static Fonts



Variable Font



—

90 KB

—

110 KB

Static Fonts



Regular
30 KB



Italic
30 KB



Bold
30 KB

Variable Font



Roman
110 KB



Italic
110 KB



90 KB



220 KB

Single font



€ 30–60

Font family



€ 300–700

Single font



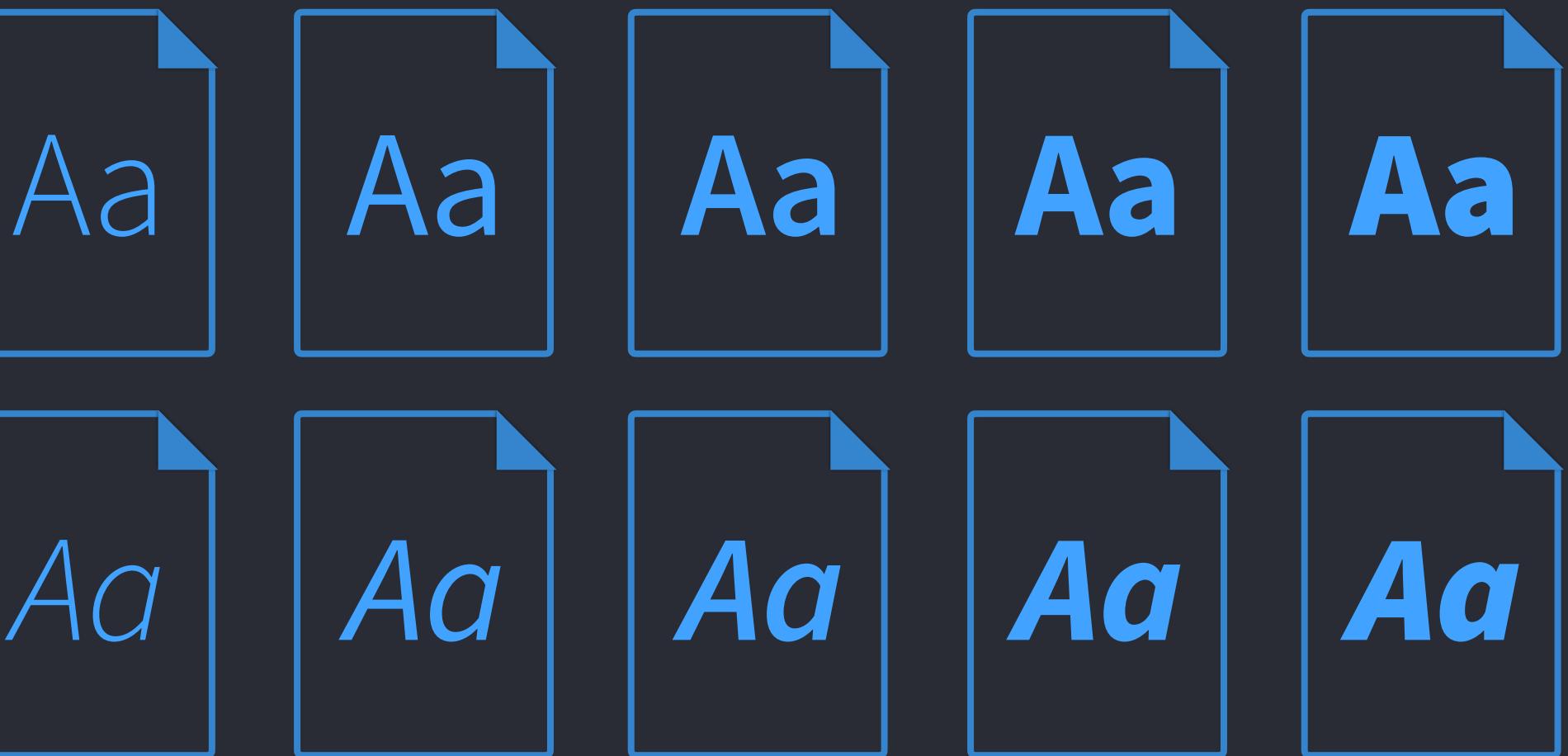
€ 30–60

Variable font



€ ?

Font family



€ 300–700

GET STARTED!

README.md

MutatorSans

MUTATOR
MUTATOR
MUTATOR
MUTATOR

This project consists of [UFO](#) source font data for a small 2 dimensional [designspace](#).

- Weight and width axes, 2 intermediates.
- Intended for testing all sorts of [variable](#) and [mutator math](#) and making it not look entirely stupid.
- Contains components.
- Cubic outlines.
- Working minimal Variable Font, however without STAT table, or complete charerset
- I may or may not add to the charerset.

Building in RoboFont

- [Install the Patch RoboFont extension](#)

github.com/LettError/mutatorSans

 [glyphe](#)

Open Source

TYPE+TECH®

SHOP

Buy 12 styles Get variable fonts

Black[Foundry] strives to stay on top of the latest advancements in font technology.

To help you get acquainted with the groundbreaking new font format, we offer you the Vesterbro variable fonts for free when you buy the full family.

Vesterbro



Drag slider to see how variable fonts work

FREE TRIAL

Buying options

CHOOSE LICENCE

- Desktop
- Webfont
- App

Up to 3 users

VESTERBRO FULL FAMILY

- 12 fonts + 2 Variables -20% 344€

VESTERBRO ROMANS

- 6 weights + Variable -20% 172€

VESTERBRO ITALICS

- 6 weights + Variable -20% 172€

INDIVIDUAL WEIGHTS

- Vesterbro-Light 35€
- Vesterbro-LightItalic 35€
- Vesterbro-Regular 35€
- Vesterbro-Italic 35€

Add on

Dunbar variable font

Example movie of what a single variable font can do with weight and x-height axes. Live demo.

Retail

Dunbar Series | ← Buy Var Font

Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Low|Low|Low|Low|Low|Text|Text|Text|Text

Dunbar Tall | ← Buy Var Font

Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|Tall|

Dunbar Low | ← Buy Var Font

Low|Low|Low|Low|Low|Low|

Dunbar Text | ← Buy Var Font



Variable font technology from Adobe

Adobe is deeply involved with the development of the technology behind variable fonts. This page is where we'll keep an ongoing record of our progress.

Our team is keeping track of the conversation on [TypeDrawers](#), and you can also keep an eye on us via [Twitter](#).

Articles & Interviews

[Introducing Variable Fonts](#)

Start here with our overview: What are variable fonts, and what's so different about the way they work?

[Adobe releases a prototype variable font](#)

Font developers will need to see how variable fonts work from the inside out, and we're making the tools openly available on [GitHub](#).

Subscription Model?

Font Playground -- Play with variabilities

Font Playground File Help Design Code About

Font Family Search by name, axis, designer...

EXTRAORDINAIRE Extraordinaire Ⓜ 1

EXTRAORDINAIRE SHADE Extraordinaire Shade Ⓜ 2

Fit Ⓜ 1

Gimlet Beta Gimlet Beta Ⓜ 3

Gimlet Italic Beta Gimlet Italic Beta Ⓜ 3

Gingham Gingham Ⓜ 2

Gnomon* Gnomon* Ⓜ 2

Input Mono Beta Input Mono Beta Ⓜ 3

FONT INFO

Designer Ingo Preuss

Publisher Ingo Preuss

License Paid/commercial, Trial

Link preusstype.com

Font Size 71

PRESET VARIATIONS

ExtraExp Heavy It **Ag**

ExtraExp Heavy **Ag**

Exp Heavy It **Ag**

VARIABLE OPTIONS

Weight 239.50

Width 85.29

Italic 0.00

The screenshot shows the Font Playground interface with the 'Design' tab selected. On the left, there's a sidebar with font families like 'EXTRAORDINAIRE', 'Gimlet Beta', and 'Gingham'. The main area displays two large text samples: 'Multiple axes with Compressa' and 'Dubar's x-height'. The first sample is surrounded by a light blue box and has several teal-colored control points and lines indicating variable axes. The second sample is also surrounded by a light blue box. To the right, there are sections for 'PRESET VARIATIONS' (listing 'ExtraExp Heavy It', 'ExtraExp Heavy', and 'Exp Heavy It' with bolded 'Ag' labels) and 'VARIABLE OPTIONS' (showing sliders for 'Weight' (239.50), 'Width' (85.29), and 'Italic' (0.00)). The top bar includes standard browser controls and a URL 'https://play.typedetail.com'.

Font Playground
at Type Detail

Font Playground -- Play with various fonts

Font Playground

Design Code About

Font Size: 112

PRESET VARIATIONS:

- Tall Ultra: Ag
- Tall Extra Bold: Ag
- Text Extra Bold: Aa

VARIABLE OPTIONS:

- Weight: 440.00
- xHeight: 502.45
- Optical Size: 36

FONTS:

- EXTRAORDINAIRE: Extraordinaire (0-1)
- EXTRAORDINAIRE SHADE: Extraordinaire Shade (0-2)
- Fit: Fit (0-1)
- Gimlet Beta: Gimlet Beta (0-3)
- Gimlet Italic Beta: Gimlet Italic Beta (0-3)
- Gingham: Gingham (0-2)
- Gnomon*: Gnomon* (0-2)
- Input Mono Beta: Input Mono Beta (0-3)

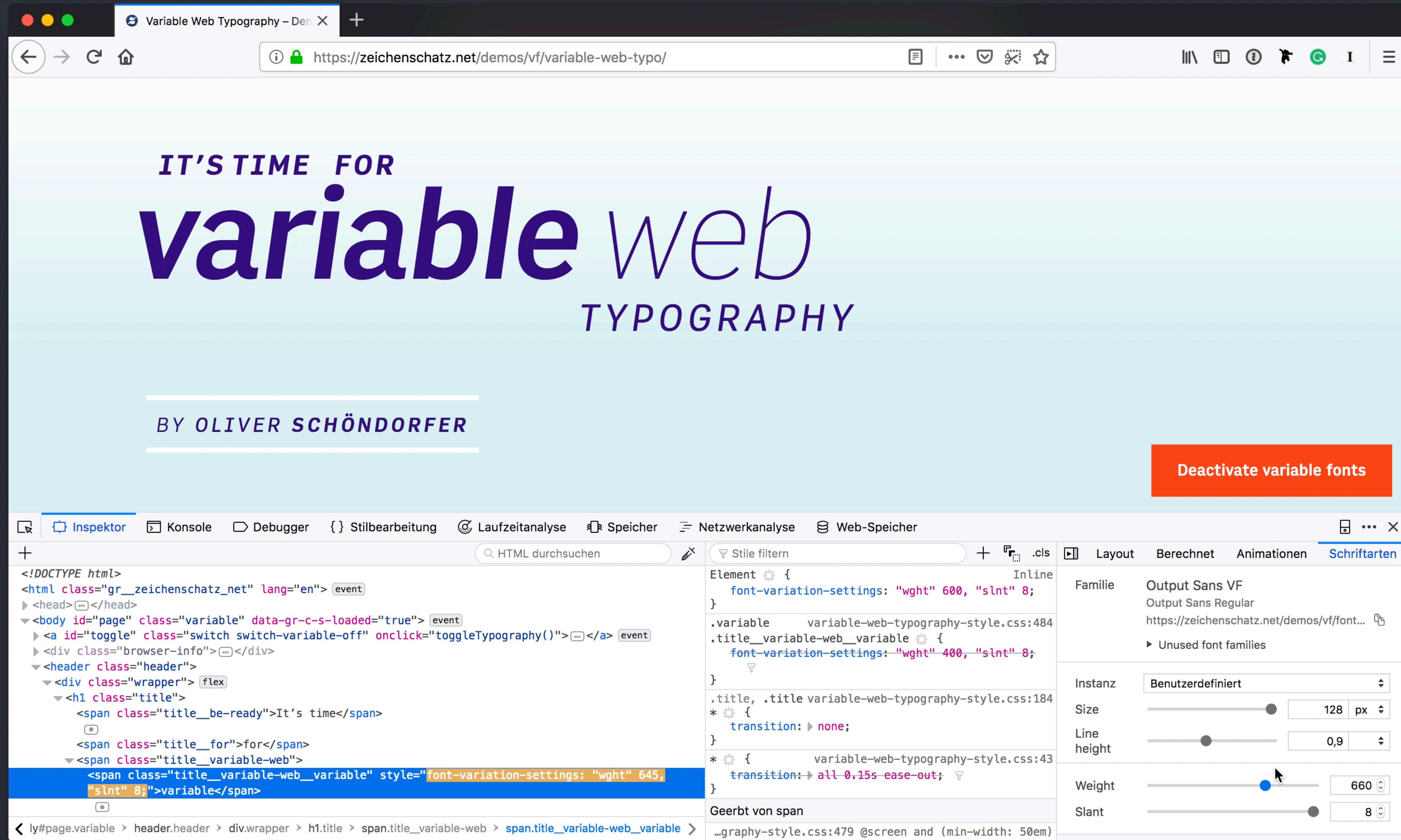
FONT INFO:

- Designer: CJ Dunn
- Publisher: CJ Type
- License: Paid/commercial
- Link: cjtype.com

Multiple axes with Compressa

Dubar's x-height

Font Playground
at Type Detail



Firefox Nightly DevTools



Summing up

- **One font file** with many possible styles
- **Fine graded influence** for better typography – when you know what you're doing
- **Improvements by default** with optical-sizing
- **Performance gain** under certain conditions

Resources

- **For new releases** v-fonts.com & twitter.com/variablefonts
- **Testing variable fonts** axis-praxis.org & play.typedetail.com
- **List of available variable Fonts** by Indra Kupferschmid: bit.ly/2MC8QV9
- **How to start with variable fonts on the web** by me: bit.ly/2NgHQId
- **Getting started with variable fonts** by Richard Rutter: bit.ly/2BwVViT
- **Use variable fonts in the real world** by Richard Rutter: bit.ly/2FLvtRc
- **TYPO Labs 2018** various talks: typotalks.com/labs

IT'S TIME FOR
variable web
TYPOGRAPHY

BY OLIVER SCHÖNDORFER

Variable fonts will shape the future of web typography as they offer plenty of possibilities for fine graded control over the display of type on screens. And that all at a relatively low file size. Time to say goodbye to endless debates about the number of font files you have

This page uses the typeface [Output Sans Variable](#) by David Jonathan Ross. It's a variable font that can be adjusted on two axes to change its *weight* and its *obliqueness*. So I only have to load **one single font file** of 57 KB to create the 18 different styles you can see on this site. It opens up new possibilities for designing with text on the web with a great number of typographic expressions for an incredibly file. So clearly, variable fonts are the new hot thing for every type nerd

[Deactivate variable fonts](#)

A screenshot of a web browser window displaying a blog post. The title 'It's time for variable web typography' is prominently featured in a large, dark blue serif font. Below the title, the author is listed as 'BY OLIVER SCHÖNDORFER'. The main text discusses the benefits of variable fonts, mentioning their ability to shape the future of web typography due to fine graded control over display on screens, all while maintaining a low file size. It also notes the creation of 18 different styles from a single 57 KB font file. A red button at the bottom right encourages users to 'Activate variable fonts'. The browser interface includes standard controls like back, forward, and search, along with a lock icon and the URL 'zeichenschatz.net'.

It's time for variable web typography

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Activate variable fonts

A quick introduction to variable fonts

18 font styles out of one font file at 57 KB only

One simple explanation I picked up during my research is, that variable fonts are **one font file that behaves like many**. Traditionally for every single font weight or style, e.g. *italic*, **bold** or *light expanded* you need to load a corresponding font file. With one OpenType variable font file, you can generate multiple individual font styles and that at a very granular level.

↑ Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa
Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa
Aa Aa Aa Aa Aa

Deactivate variable fonts

glyph

zeichenschatz.net

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font axis

Activate variable fonts

Be more variable

Slides on noti.st/glyphe

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