

# absolute whits

## of letterpress

*PLUS RAD MEASUREMENT FACTS*



Contents are packed in a solid mass,

AMANDA WYATT VISCONTI & SHANE LIN

# ABSOLUTE UNITS OF LETTERPRESS PLUS RAD MEASUREMENT FACTS

*Bakeshop #5, v3*

[ZineBakery.com/Bakeshop/AbsoluteUnits](http://ZineBakery.com/Bakeshop/AbsoluteUnits)

Authors:

- Amanda Wyatt Visconti: *image collection* & *zine design*
- Shane Lin: *measurement fact mini-essays*

and

- With permission from Ryan Cordell, his “Very Good Hog” print photos are included on page 5.



Bodies of all shapes & sizes are beautiful.

Check out free body-positive zines by other authors:

[ZineBakery.com/subsets/body-positive](http://ZineBakery.com/subsets/body-positive)



## CITE THIS ZINE!

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[ZineBakery.com/Bakeshop/AbsoluteUnits](http://ZineBakery.com/Bakeshop/AbsoluteUnits)



## IMAGE CREDITS

All images (other than Ryan Cordell's work, pg. 5; and a screenshot of a offline\_letterpress Instagram post, pg. 13) are screenshots of items for sale on Ebay (without an original block artist listed). They're usually digitally horizontally-flipped for legibility.

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## "ABSOLUTE UNIT":

An entity exceedingly pleasing to the eye & soul by virtue of unusual-for-its-kind square or stocky dimensions.



Absolute Units are exemplars of: **STABILITY! SOLIDITY! ABUNDANCE! CONFIDENCE!** A model for insisting we deserve **AT-HOMENESS** in our world. A righteous & unbothered **CERTAINTY** & a **RESISTANCE** to being pushed about by others.



BIG!   
WOOD!  
 TYPE!

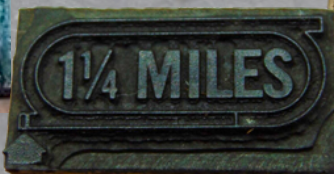




## MEASUREMENT FACT #1:

Bematists were specialists who measured distances traveled using their paces. They were associated with the military campaigns of Alexander the Great, who used bematists and chorographers to coordinate logistics and communications, and to survey conquered lands.

(<https://cartography.web.auth.gr/E+TATM/Bematists.pdf>)





from  
CHARLOTTESVILLE, \*  
VIRGINIA

Letterpress \*

to  
URBANA,  
ILLINOIS

# UNIT SPOTTED! SKEUOMORPHIC SOLIDITY

*(DON'T) STOP THE PRESSES  
FOR THIS ABSOLUTE LEGEND*



**PRINT BY RYAN  
CORDELL**

Skeuomorph Press,  
[skeuomorph.ischool.  
illinois.edu](http://skeuomorph.ischool.illinois.edu)

**HOT OFF THE  
PRESSES HOG**



Thank you to printer Ryan Cordell for allowing us to reshare his letterpress work (all photos on this page), a \*solid\* civil service to the readers of this periodical!







## MEASUREMENT FACT #2

The advent of water-powered paper mills and widespread adoption of printing presses led to the standardization of paper. The Bologna Stone, a marble slab inscribed with the rectangular outlines of four different paper sizes dates to the late 14th century. The aspect ratio of these are very close to the  $1:\sqrt{2}$  ratio of modern ISO 216 sizes.

(<https://commons.princeton.edu/rbwg/wp-content/uploads/sites/141/2019/09/Bologna-Stone.pdf>)





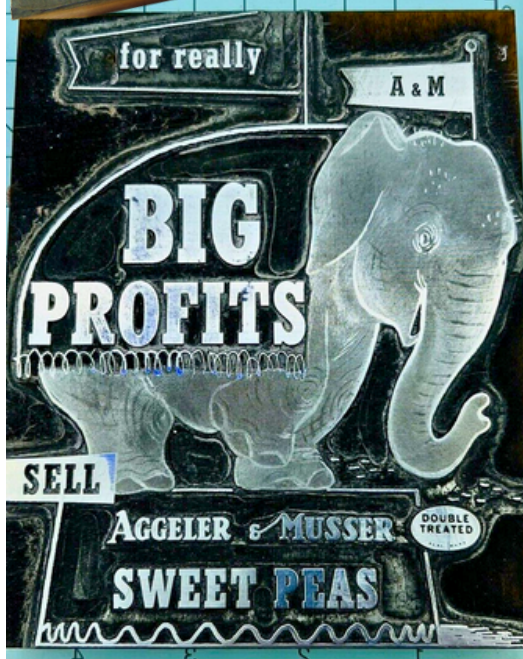
## MEASUREMENT FACT #3

People have used the position of the sun to mark time for thousands of years, but the actual time of solar noon, when the sun is at its highest point, wanders throughout the year due to the Earth's axial tilt and orbital eccentricity. Relative to a steady clock set to the mean solar time (tracking the average of noons across the year), solar noon occurs more than 16 minutes earlier in November and 14 minutes slower in February. This difference is called the Equation of Time.





The widespread adoption of accurate mechanical clocks in 18th century America made this discrepancy evident and caused minor moral panics about machines overthrowing the perfect design of God. (*Keeping Watch*, O'Malley)





# MEASUREMENT FACT

## #4

GPS satellites must take into account both general and special relativity to accurately measure location. Each satellite in the constellation travels at a speed of about 4 kilometers a second at an altitude of 20,000 kilometers. General relativity indicates that gravity affects time and since satellites are farther away from the main local source of gravity (Earth), time for them is also affected less. Special relativity suggests that time slows down for objects moving at faster speeds. Without correcting for these two factors, GPS would drift by about 11 kilometers a day.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Error\\_analysis\\_for\\_the\\_Global\\_Positioning\\_System#Relativity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Error_analysis_for_the_Global_Positioning_System#Relativity); <https://books.google.com/books?id=NuS9BAAAQBAJ>)



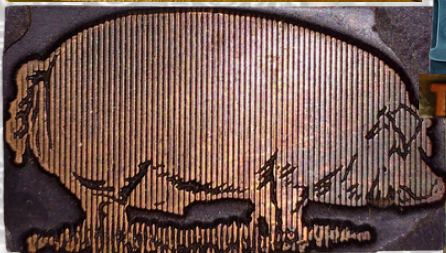
LETTERPRESS PRINTING WOOD TYPE 1ST  
62 DIGITS OF PI. SEE NOTES  
Pre-Owned



Let's Discuss

# PROUD! PORCINES

THE BIG VALUE PACK





# MEASUREMENT FACT

## #5:

Over the course of many centuries and possibly many millennia, there was (probably) a Chinese invention called the South-Pointing Chariot, a two-wheeled cart connected to a doll on top connected through a series of gears. The doll was manually aligned so that it pointed toward the south at the beginning of a journey and would be rotated to keep pointing southward by the difference in the rotational speeds of the two wheels.



A press so wide,  
the press bed is square  
*(Harrild & Sons  
relief press. Ah!)*

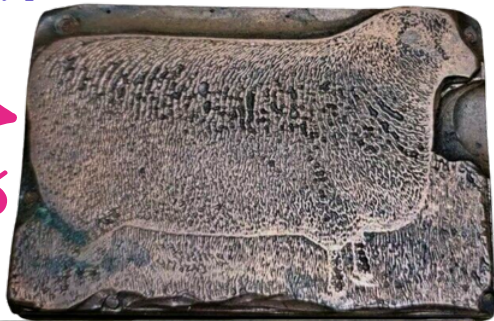


It's not clear how this worked or when it was actually first created since the long and turbulent course of Chinese history caused it to be (ostensibly) destroyed and reinvented many times. This is surprising in part because the better-documented south-pointing chariots of the 3rd century AD postdate the Chinese invention of the compass, which was originally only used for geomancy and divination. Some modern scholars theorize that it used differential gearing, which was later invented (or re-invented) by 18th century horologists to account for the equation of time (see page X).

(Joseph Needham. *Science and Civilization in China: Volume 4, Part 2*, pg. 287;

<https://watchesbysjx.com/2024/11/equation-of-time-history-part-2.html>).

IDEAL



# MEASUREMENT FACT

## #6

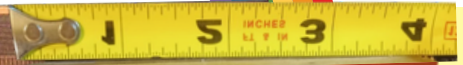
A "cup of coffee" is a bewildering and infuriating cacophony of measurements. To start off, "one cup" might mean a:

- US customary cup (1/16 gallon or 236.6 ml)
- US legal cup (240ml)
- metric cup (250 ml)
- traditional British cup (6 imperial ounces, 170ml)
- imperial UK cup (10 imp oz, 284ml)
- traditional Canadian cup or UK breakfast cup (8 imp oz, 227ml)
- various Latin American *tazas* (ranging from 200-250ml)
- the America's Cup (a sailing competition)





- Chinese Republican (Beiyang Government) standard cup (103.5ml)
- traditional Japanese cup (180.4ml)
- modern Japanese cup (200ml)
- occupied Korean cup (same as the traditional Japanese cup, now banned in South Korea but still used in the North)
- traditional Russian cup (123ml, typically reserved for alcoholic drinks [*not a joke*])
- modern Russian cup (100ml)
- traditional Dutch cup (150ml)





A "cup of coffee" only adds to this confusion as it can mean any of the above measures, but both as the water used to brew the coffee or the coffee that results (some water is absorbed into the coffee grounds). We additionally have coffee-specific measures: a UK coffee cup (70ml), a Turkish coffee cup (75ml), and a French *tasse à café* (a word that comes from Arabic by way of Farsi, 120ml).



Mr. Coffee popularized automatic drip coffee brewing in the 1970s and established the 5 (customary US) fluid ounce (147.9ml) standard for a cup of coffee 15



that persists in its products and others' to this day. But this refers to the amount of input water, so sometimes a concomitant 4 fl oz (118.3ml) cup of output coffee is used alongside.



Sometimes coffeemaker-makers will use the 5 fl oz standard for the amount of coffee produced and other times they'll cheat a bit and reduce the size of everything so that it's not quite 4 or 5 fl oz to a cup. Coffeemakers will also sometimes use cup sizes that are not internally consistent. A 3-cup Bialetti Moka Express, the workhorse of European home coffee brewing, holds 200ml of water (a 66.7ml cup).



This is a larger cup measure than used by their 1-cup (60ml) & the 6-cup (300ml, for a 50ml cup) coffee brewers from the

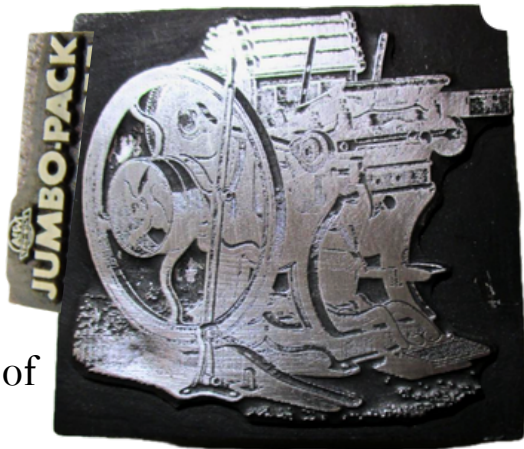
same li

e.



If you enjoyed this zine, you might also like [“Look!! Here’s your unusual letterpress blocks invitation to joy: a collage mini-zine”](#), which gathers some of the funnier & more inexplicable letterpress blocks I’ve found while trawling letterpress Ebay. (Visit [ZineBakery.com/homemade-zines/hand-pie-1-weirdletterpress blocks.](#))

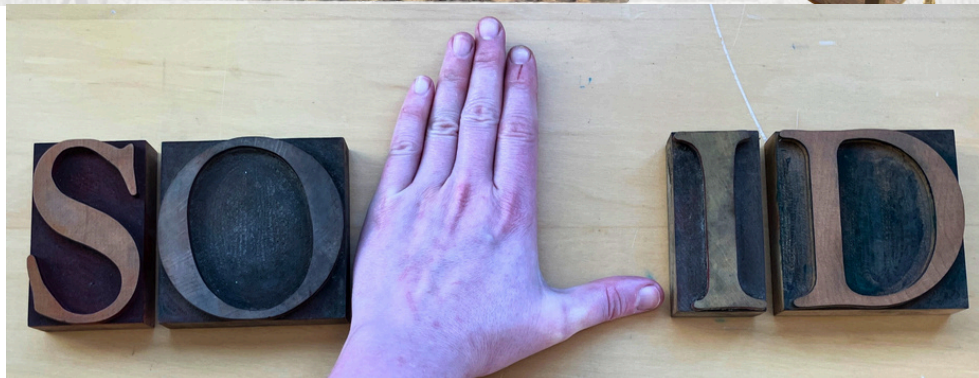
-Amanda



See [ZineBakery.com/homemade/letterpress4all](#) for free letterpress tutorial zines!







# ABSOLUTE UNITS of Letterpress

PLUS RAD MEASUREMENT FACTS

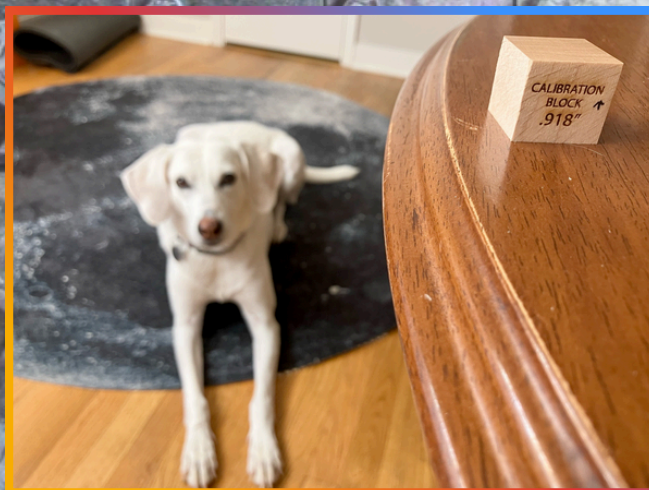
Image collection,  
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Measurement  
facts mini-essays:  
**Shane Lin**



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*Right: type-high  
maple block from  
Provisional Press*

*Left: non-type-high  
Maple (good dog),  
for scale*

[ZineBakery.com/Bakeshop/AbsoluteUnits](http://ZineBakery.com/Bakeshop/AbsoluteUnits)