

Neufville Typefoundry (1885–1995): notes for an oral history

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1 Introduction. State of the question and background

1997. Fundición Tipográfica Bauer and UB
(Facultat de Belles Arts).
Contract (commodatum),
typographic material,
research purposes.
(Punches, matrices, movable type /
Accounting books, production documents /
Specimens and promotional documents / etc.)
(Fundición Tipográfica Neufville, FTN)

1998–2004. Funded research projects:
inventory and classification,
type-as-process.

> [www.ub.edu/cursusductus/
OM/fonsTipograficBauerNeufville.html](http://www.ub.edu/cursusductus/OM/fonsTipograficBauerNeufville.html)



(Type-as-process)

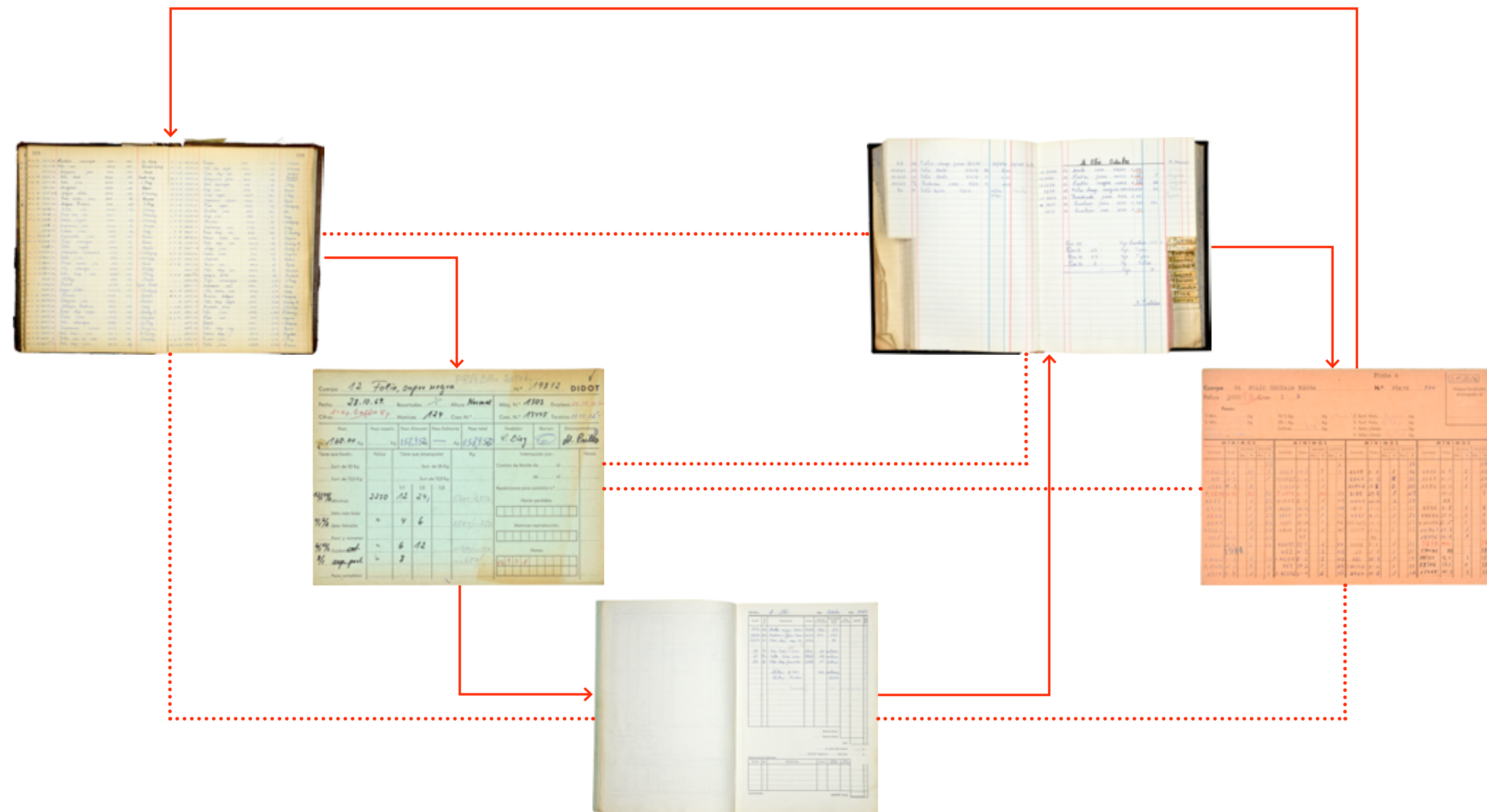
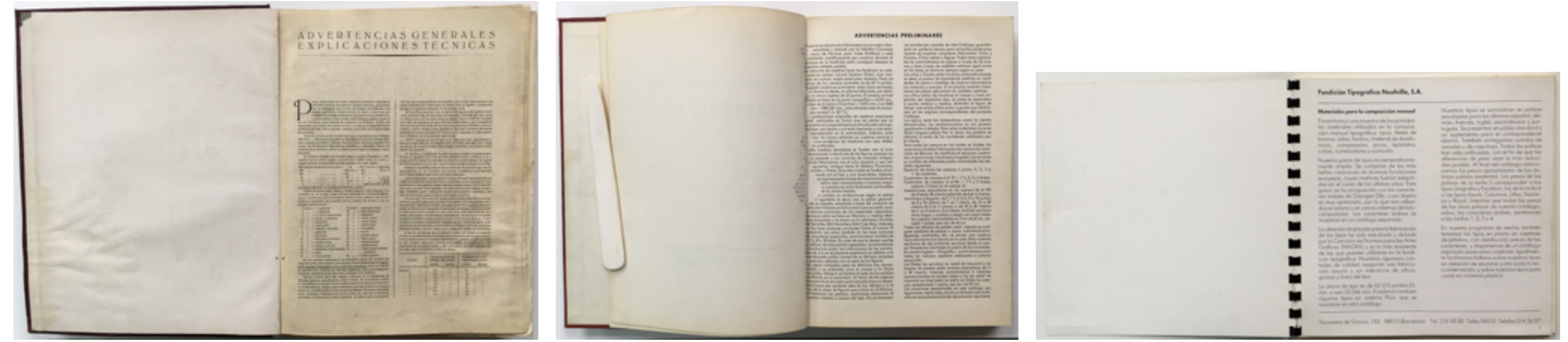
2019–2022–
Marginal proposals, new project/s

Trades in Fundición Tipográfica Neufville (1885–1995):
documents, voices, memory (FTBN06)
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- to understand the trade documents from a disciplinary perspective
- to recover and record the oral history of the typographic crafts
- to trace the particular history of FTN

> Work in progress (2024–2028)

[Making Faces: Metal Type in the 21st Century (2011) // Hamilton Stories: An Oral History (2015) // Women in Type (2018–2021) // Rainer Gerstenberg – Interview with one of the Last Type Casters (2021) // The Monotype Collection: a Brief History (2024)...]



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2 Methodology

Main methodological structure of the project
Case study
(fieldwork not thoroughly addressed from this viewpoint).

Object of study
Neufville Typefoundry,
from documents housed in our UB archive.

Descriptive and documentary research
to order, condense and code the archive documents and
complement them with primary oral sources;
to allow for a holistic and global interpretation of reality.

Humanistic approach
Aim of the study
historical reconstruction of the functioning of FTN,
discipline-learning from processes and synergies.

Qualitative analysis and observation techniques
to learn about the different realities of the company
to establish, through documents and interviews,
the various existing relationships
and describe the crafts undertaken at FTN.

Cross-reference
Primary sources: documentary (documents in the archive),
and oral (narratives of former company employees based
on documents).
Secondary sources: complementary information
(contextual bibliography, databases and archives,
previous studies, etc.).

Oral memory
Semi-structured in-depth interviews,
recorded on video for subsequent qualitative analysis,
editing and dissemination.



3 Neufville Typefoundry (1885–1995): historical notice

1885. Kramer and Fuchs, Bauersche Gießerei (BG, Frankfurt) purchase the typefoundry of Narcís Ramírez (Barcelona); Jacob de Neufville appointed manager.
> Fundición Tipográfica Neufville (FTN).

1898. Georg Hartmann buys BG and FTN.
FTN, branch of BG. (Successors, Georg's son and grandson: Carlos, 1922; Wolfgang, 1963.)

1971–1988. FTN absorbes:

1971, Fundición Tipográfica Nacional;

1972, Bauersche Gießerei;

1974, Fonderie Typographique Française;

1984, Lettergieterij Amsterdam /

Bührmann-Tetterode;

1985, Ludwig + Mayer;

1988, Fonderies Réunies de Caractères du Liban.

1995. FTN shuts down.

(> Fundición Tipográfica Bauer > Bauer Types)



4 FTN documents and voices: interviews

1 Introductory part:
employee's emotional connection with the project;
personal history before and after their time at FTN;
firsthand insights into the different human relationships
that existed at the typefoundry.

2 Specific part:
professional practice carried out by the interviewee;
materials, instruments, processes and routines
associated with the different professional profiles
of the typefoundry.

Selection of documents housed in our archive.

1, the same for all interviewees;
2, specific to the professional activity of the interviewee.

Interviews around a table, where the documents are laid
out for examination.



4.1 Employee's folder, employees lists

186 folders, Personnel Department (1985–1994): files (full name, date of birth, professional activity / category, date of entry, work department, etc.) and papers related to their working life.

Employee lists:

- entire workforce;
- department in which the interviewee worked.

- > to activate the interviewee's emotional connection with the research topic
- > to identify the situation and availability of former colleagues, in anticipation of being able to interview them in the future

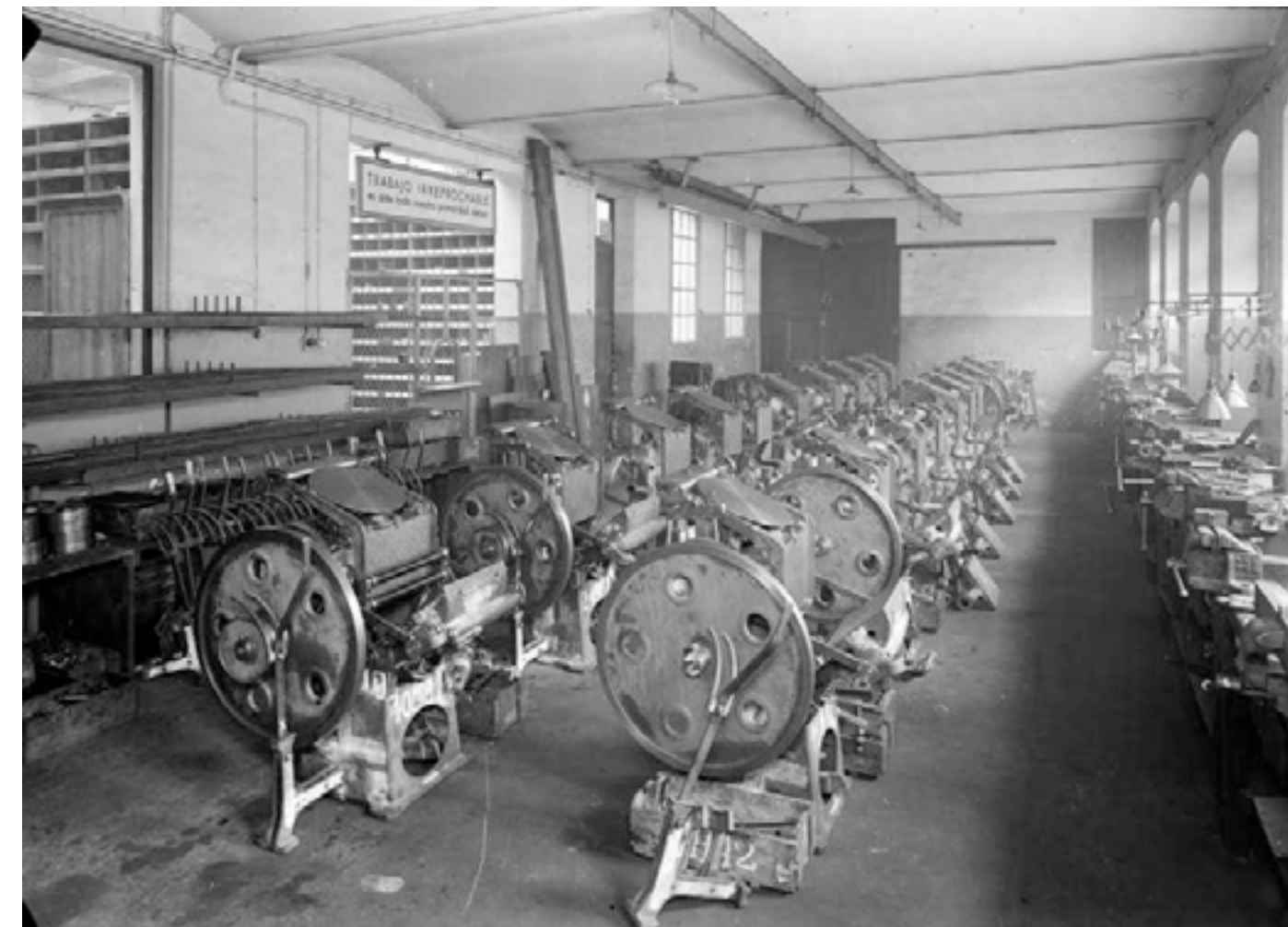
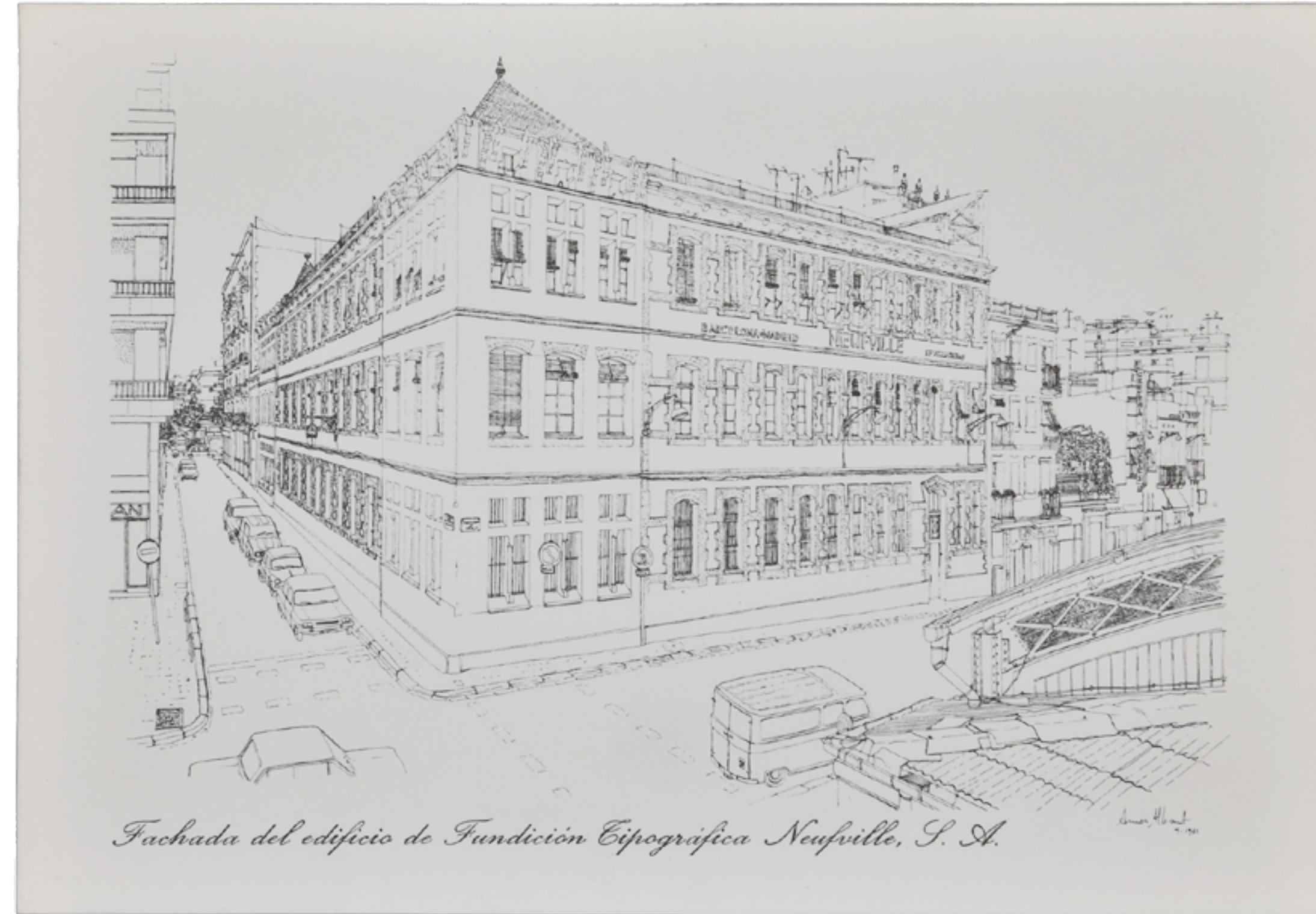
COGNOME I NOME	DEPARTAMENT	ACTIVITAT
1. Acosta Canito Rando	261 - Fabricación líquidos	
2. Adserri Martínez Juan	450 - Viajante-Ventas	
3. Aladrén Espósito Sonia	- Proceso de datos	Teclista ordenador
4. Alberich Pons Luis	461 - Codificación de datos	Codificación
5. Alonso Marín Luis		
6. Alonso Palomares Ignacio	601 - Compras	Jefe compras
7. Álvarez Posa Ignacio	- Director Madrid	
8. Álvarez Sotos Rafael	450 - Servicio exterior general	Viajante
9. Alvar González Ramos María Pilar	- Rodillos Offset	
10. Amela Alern Andreu	325 - Proceso de datos	Programador de informática
11. Amill Gual Ramiro	- Viajante maquinaria	
12. Arroci Ribas Eduardo	114 - Fundición tipos	
13. Badia Montada Valentín	- Maquinaria	
14. Barea Sarr María Luisa		(Venta Publicidad y Diseño)
15. Baltasar Ballón Josefina	194 - Enfilación-Envasado	Empaquetadora
16. Belli Cortés Jaime	402 - Contabilidad	
17. Benjoochea Bassetas Jorge	133 - Expedición	
18. Benjoochea Bassetas Luis	450 - Ventas	Viajante
19. Benjoochea Ferrera Clemente		
20. Benites Gedeón Felipe		(Fundidor)
21. Berlanga Izquierdo Ángel		
22. Blanco Beltrán Antonio	116 - Materias primas	
23. Blanco Rodríguez José Luis	251 - Fabricación de rodillos	
24. Borobad Simón Euliano	523 - Servicio exterior general	(Administrativo / Viajante)
25. Cabestany Herráiz Lydia	451 - Servicio exterior maquinaria	Viajante
26. Calatayud Miralles Enrique	324 - Comercio exterior	secretaría
27. Calvo Hernán Miri Carmen	- Delegación Madrid	(Viajante)
28. Cañonero Gómez Montserrat		
29. Cañonero Xanxo Antonio	- Viajante	
30. Carreras Lea Ramon	150 - Filtrado de bronce	
31. Carrera Gómez de Mercado Teresa	325 - Proceso de datos	Teclista
32. Carrillo Samir José María	131 - Imprenta	Encargado imprenta
33. Casanovas López Juan	421 - Tipos - Utensilios	
34. Casallago Rodríguez Amparo	450 - Ventas	Viajante
35. Castellanos Marco Luis	- Comercio-Exterior	
36. Castaño Fernández Arturo		
37. Ciprés Pérez Francisco Javier	- Logística	
38. Cuevas Dublas Violete	191 - Fundición de metal y blancos	Fundidor (+Productos offset y planchas)

4.2 Drawing of the building

Drawing (1981) by Aurora Altisent of the main building of the typefoundry, used by FTN in 1984 to notify clients that the offices at Carrer de Puigmartí were moving to the building at Travessera de Gràcia. (Symbolic charge: workplace, and 'milestone' in the urban landscape of the neighbourhood.)

A few photographs of interior and exterior views of the typefoundry.

> to provide some initial approaches to the location and spatial distribution of the company's departments



4.3 Group photograph

Celebration of FTN's 100th anniversary July 1985.
A 'family' photograph featuring workers and relatives
– about 200 people in total.

(Complement to the file and list of employees.)

> to identify themselves in the photograph (if they are there) and to point out those people they knew.



5 Voices of FTN: oral history



Arturo Castaño (82)
Typefounder

23/03/2023, 28/03/2023



Wolfgang Hartmann (88)
Owner and manager

16/10/2024



Enric Mercadal (86)
Salesman

28/10/2024

5.1 Before Neufville

Early years: the war and post-war period (and migration)



WH (1936) was born in Frankfurt, where the family had moved fleeing the Civil War; they returned to Barcelona once it was over.



EM (1938) was born in Mallorca (Balearic Islands); the family emigrated to France, returned to Mallorca and, after a forced journey (the father was imprisoned in several camps), settled in Barcelona.



AC (1943) is originally from Asturias (north-west Spain), but he left for Barcelona in the early 1970s: “So, that’s why I came here. There were factories here; in Asturias, the few that there were, they were disappearing”.

Different conditions in succeeding, formative years

WH is able to study (not completed) Law in Geneva and Economics in Munich, and then settles for a while with his Frankfurt family (owner of BG), where his uncle (Vischer) trains him in the typefoundry business – he returns to Barcelona in 1963 and takes over the management of FTN.

EM starts out as a printer’s apprentice at the age of 14; after military service, he works at a couple of printing shops and eventually sets up his own. He moves into sales at the typefoundries Richard Gans (1 year) and Iranzo (4–5 years) – he joins FTN as a salesman in 1977.

AC starts out in construction, doing “delicate work”; he then emigrated to Barcelona, joining FTN in 1972 as an unskilled worker (type-dresser) – with the guidance of an in-house typefounder specializing in script type, he is promoted to typefounder (1st-level officer) within two years.

The three stories converge in the typefoundry, in the (still) industrial Barcelona of the 1960s and 1970s.

5.2 The building

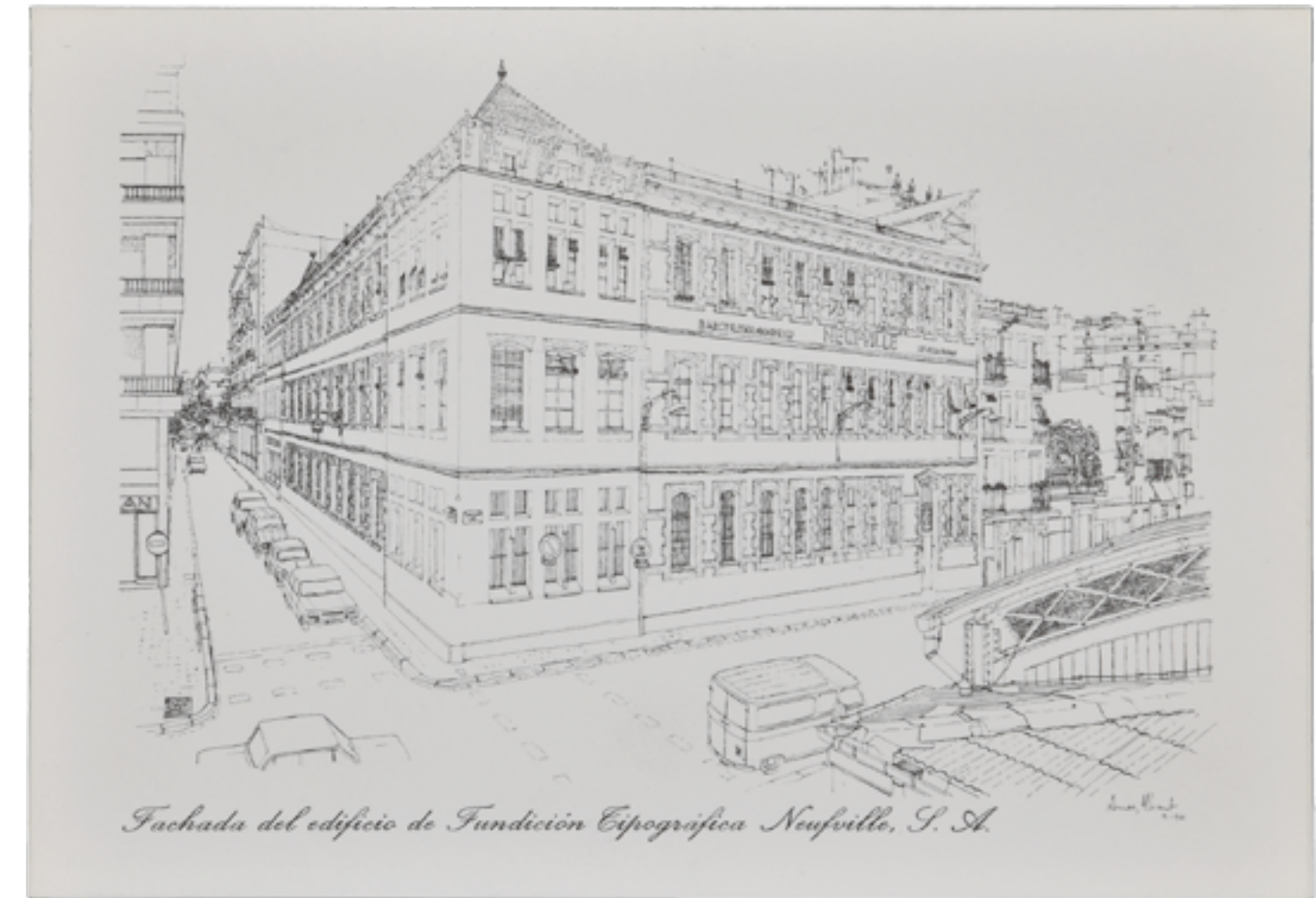


“We would walk in through Carrer de la Mare de Déu dels Desemparats. Cars would use the entrance on Travessera de Gràcia, leading to the courtyard. [...] The ground floor, type was stored there. Up on the first floor, the typesetting workshop. On the second floor, offices” (AC).

“Of course there was a chimney, because we had a furnace down there” (AC).



None of the interviewees remember the Siracusa warehouse. And, at first, only EM remembered the offices in Puigmartí, “a very small flat”, and he celebrated their transfer, in 1984, to Travessera, where they would be given a larger space for their team meetings. The move, of course, was not equally well-received by everyone: AC did not understand why the offices had to be moved to the factory building (quite plausibly it was due to economic reasons, but he took issue with it all the same).



5.3 Relationships



“The office is one thing and the foundry is another. In the office they can work 20 hours if they want, [...] they put a fan and that’s it, but we can’t do anything” (AC).



“The salespeople, in all the companies, seemed to eat separately [...] We had meetings with the owner and the head of the financial department, [...] we were somewhat independent, we were the bad guys of the company, so to speak” (EM).

“I didn’t want to turn up much there, at the foundry, because I knew they didn’t like it” (EM).

“The atmosphere in the company was quite strict, because, like good Germans, [...] whoever does something, devotes himself to doing this and nothing else. [...] We are different, here, [...] but, yes, [...] that went like clockwork, they did have that” (EM).

“At Neufville they were very special, [...] not just anyone could get in there. [...] If there was someone who wanted to leave and he [WH] appreciated him, it hurt him deeply. He always struggled to have the Neufville family remain there” (EM).

5.4 The end of the story

FTN, 1985: “number 1 in the world”.

(“Today the Neufville Type Foundry is the first typefoundry in the world, and occupies a leading position in Spain, France, Federal Germany and the Benelux”.)

In 1991, FTN went into receivership.

1995, final shutdown of FTN.

“All the compensations were paid” (WH).

In 1998, the (rented) building at Travessera de Gràcia was demolished.



WH would maintain the legacy and continue the activity of FTN with Fundición Tipográfica Bauer, much more modestly, with only two typefounders. When they reached retirement age, FTB closed down definitively.

The business has subsequently been ‘reinvented’ as Bauer Types – an exclusively digital typefoundry that remains in operation.



AC: “Digital killed everything”. Until 1997, he continued to work sporadically for FTB, through another company; from then on, at 54, he worked in sales for a couple of businesses until he was able to retire.



EM (57 in 1995): “I spent two years selling computers, but that wasn’t my thing, I didn’t really understand it”.

6 Conclusions

Qualitative interviews with former FTN workers, selected documents as co-protagonists: a unique reading of reality.

Combination of personal approaches: a richer and more comprehensive narrative – inaccuracies and contradictions – of the history and activities of FTN in the period studied.

Methodological proposal > more faithful result.

Contents: partial conclusions. (FTN's foundation and historical trajectory is far more complex.)

A first stage in retelling (or simply telling) the stories and history of FTN.

Future development of the research: complementing / completing the narrative with other protagonists and other professional profiles of the typefoundry.

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