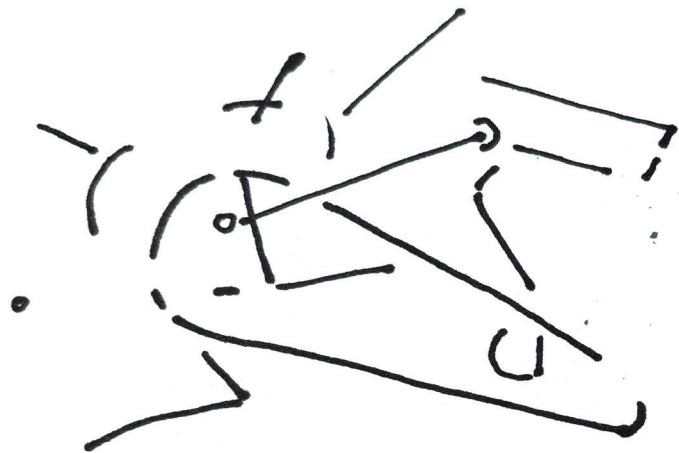


INTERVIEW WITH LOIS HARADA  
NOTHING IS REPLACEABLE



WHO IS LOIS

**Can you provide a little intro  
of who you are and what you  
define your profession?**

My name is Lois Harada. I'm an artist and printmaker. I work at DWRI Letterpress, which is a commercial letterpress print shop located in Providence.

I've worked here for about 14 years. When I started, I was a part-time press operator. I transitioned pretty quickly into sales design and client management. So my job is primarily on the computer which is less glamorous feeling than printing!

**So you start the relationships with the press first, and then gradually drift more into a designer role.**

Exactly.

When I started working for Dan it was in a much smaller space than it is now. I was working part-time and Dan did all the admin and the client management. We've really grown over the last 10 years. Now we have three employees, plus Dan. Hope is our First Press Operator and has been at the shop for around 11 years and Tom is our Production Coordinator and the 'new guy' though he started here about 7 years ago.

**What's your relationship with "printing"?**

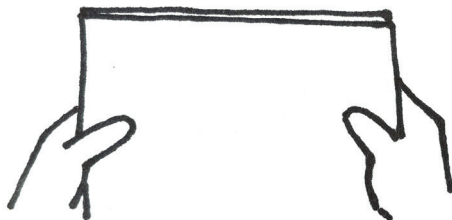
I studied printmaking at RISD, and I graduated in 2010. So for me, print is the way that I express myself and is a medium I always go back to. Commercial printing is more appealing to me because you can make a lot of things very quickly, whereas traditional printmaking is super precious. For instance, I have some new intaglio prints right and each print is \$500 while a letterpress print could be free, or it could be \$10, \$20, \$50. To me, the economy of commercial printing is appealing.

I think print is just how my brain works at this point. So I always think, okay, even if I design something or have an idea what will it look like when it's out? I think of design as a tool, rather than the driver of the process. I start with a concept or the idea first, and then I use design to get to the press. Now I probably don't spend as much time as I should in design, because at this point I know what's gonna work and what won't work on press.



## ABOUT DWRI

### How did DWRI start?

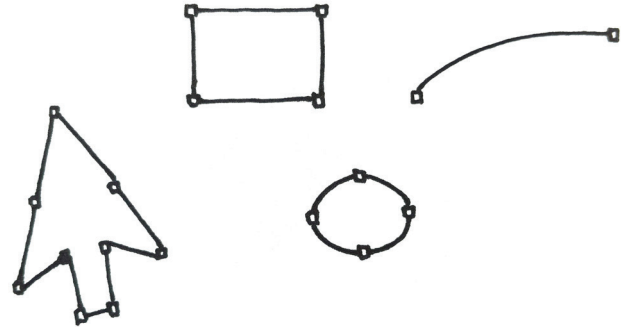


Dan started DWRI 20 or 21 years ago. His first introduction to commercial printing after studying traditional printmaking was offset printing. He worked at a bunch of different presses in DC and in Rhode Island including Meridian as a paper feeder (his job was to put the paper into the presses).

He started to transition to letterpress printing by taking jobs for friends like bar mitzvahs and wedding invitations, and then it gradually grew into DWRI as we know it now.

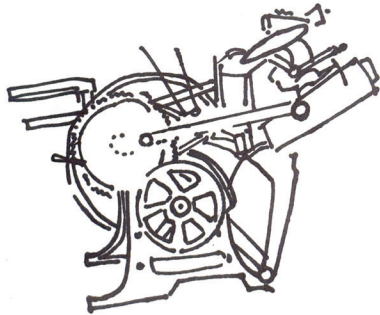
### What is the workflow for the current press?

Ideally files from clients are set up in a way that we can use (vector based text or outlined type or packaged files). We spend a lot of time going back and forth as part of the pre-press process. We keep getting files from Canva now too which is not the best. We figured out a few workarounds for Canva, but it's still not an ideal process. Sometimes designers too are used to just working in digital formats too so making the jump to print can be new. Once files are in, they head to Tom to create printing plates and order in supplies and then off to the presses.



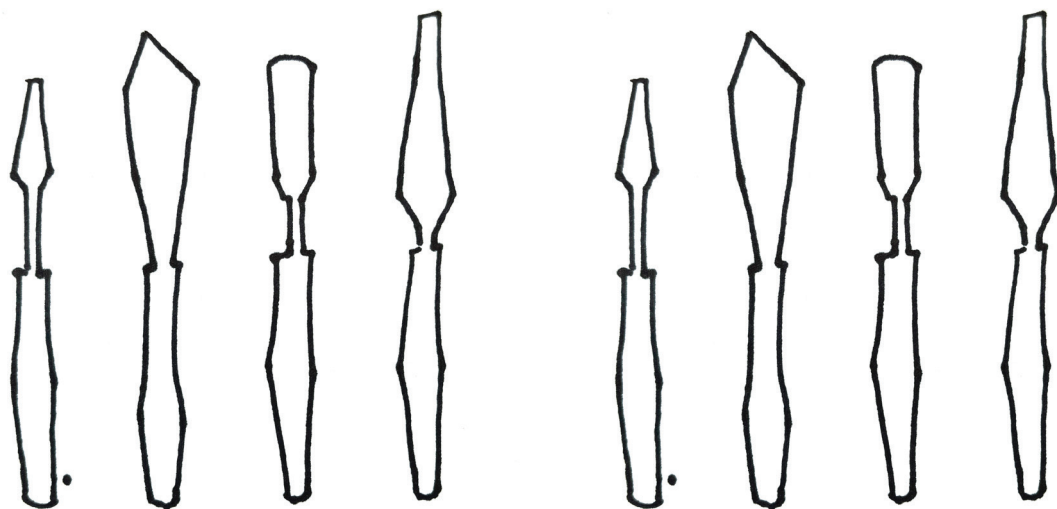
## THE LETTERPRESS VS THE DIGITAL WORLD

**Why do you think people  
choose letterpress instead of  
digital prints?**



Part of the charm of letterpress printing is that it is essentially a mechanized form of relief printing. So you can feel the surface of the sheet and you can feel that print. Something is actually pushed into the surface of the sheet, meaning I can also use super thick papers that you can't run through a digital printer.

The other thing is that it's a really accurate color process. If you give me these three spot colors, I can nail those pretty consistently. It is handmade, and it's more of a bespoke process.





**I do notice a lot of DWRI clients are using letterpress for important personal events too, and I assume the physical touch gives that intimacy.**

Yes, but sometimes we will swap in digital printing for some elements due to the budget limits, and honestly, digital printing has gotten a lot better in the last couple years. For instance, we work with a women owned shop in Massachusetts that has an indigo press that creates really nice work.

Here is an example of the mix of digital and letterpress. Most of the color is printed by indigo so it's not shiny like laser, and the black is letterpress. There is the deboss on the digital layer so you can feel it.

One challenging part mixing with digital is that it is always gonna wobble a little bit, while letterpress will never move. Our registration is really good.

By working here so long, I now design in a way that will hopefully be easy to print, even though it looks complicated. We're not doing anything revolutionary, but our trademark is simple and elegant—which is what Dan likes to say. So we always try to design things in such a way where they'll print well.

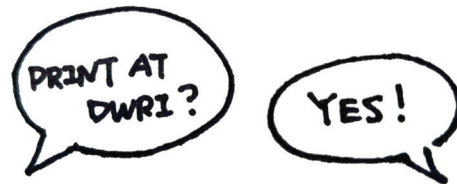
Every job is a challenge, which is good. People also don't want to wait for anything anymore! They need everything tomorrow and our lead time is about three weeks depending on the job.

## ABOUT THE FUTURE

How do DWRI promote itself?  
How do the press make sure  
the machine keeps running?

So right now we don't do any advertising. We are just word of mouth and we're busy. We've been trying to think about advertising forever, but it's just hard. We don't even send a newsletter.

We do Instagram occasionally. That's somewhere we could start to think about advertising, because we can start to shift our client base. For instance, we do a lot of printing for colleges. We would like to do more printing for colleges because Williams College, for instance, sends out a really nice acceptance letter to its new students, which is so nice. Nothing too crazy, two or three colors, letterpress printed, and you can imagine how students are going to be excited when they open the package.



**Do you think one day letterpress is going to be obsolete? What do you think the future print is going to be when there is so much anxiety of rapidly developing technology like AI.**

I'm not worried that letterpress printing is going to go away.

There's always going to be, I think, a demand for invitations and stationery if you are a paper person. You want to send a nice note card. I think those people are still going to be around. I see people are rejecting more screen stuff now, and we might be able to see a swing back towards hand processes and print.

In terms of the anxiety to the rapid changing technology and AI, I think that's why some people do come to us as a resistance to that very homogenous approach to print. Again, Canva makes everything look the same, and AI is doing similar things. For us, because we are a slower process, and you get to talk to a real person which is really appealing to folks. We are pretty concierge in terms of the services. You could come in and one of us will spend an hour with you talking over your project. We'll send you samples for free or a small amount of money, which you don't really get at a lot of other shops.

We've talked about that in the past, but for us it's way more beneficial for you to look at all the sample books and find out things you really like about. I want you to look and I want you to feel the surface of the sheet.

We're not too worried about the new tech, partly because as we look around the shop, there's nothing that can really be replaced. We can capture really small type, we can capture really small details and it's going to be just the perfect color. You can customize it as much as you want. It's just not the same.

I will say too, it's interesting now that people have more access to "design" through that AI model and how that has changed tastes.

