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Hole-filled 'Ecofont' saves on ink

A Dutch company says its free font cuts ink usage by about 15 percent



Holy font! The Swiss-cheese design (pictured here on the company Web site) came about after failures with earlier experiments using thin letters and partial letters — like the stripes of a zebra.

By Toby Sterling
 AP Associated Press
 updated 12:55 p.m. ET Dec. 22, 2008

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands - A Dutch company looking for ways to reduce the environmental costs of printing has developed a new font that it says cuts ink usage by about 15 percent.

In essence, the "Ecofont" has little holes in the letters.

Spranq, the Utrecht-based marketing and communications company that designed the font, struck on a Swiss-cheese design after failures with earlier experiments using thin letters and partial letters — like the stripes of a zebra.

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"It turns out that it's necessary to preserve the size and outline of letters to keep them readable," company co-founder Gerjon Zomer says.

He concedes the font isn't beautiful, but says it could be adequate for personal use or for internal use at a company.

Spranq offers the font free on its Web site. Zomer says his site saw a spike in traffic last week as word of the Ecofont began to spread. Much of the international traffic came from the United States.

He says that was kind of gratifying because "when you put something online you never know what to expect."

The company is inviting developers to improve the Ecofont further under a free, open-source model, and Zomer says Arabic and Hebrew versions are already under development.

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