

2026 Educational Series
[**VIRTUAL EVENT**]



Font Reality Check: What Printing Organizations Must Do Now to Reduce Licensing Risk

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Font Reality Check: What Printing Organizations Must Do Now to Reduce Licensing Risk

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Today's Roadmap

Five moves that take the conversation from anxiety to action

1 Why this issue is surfacing now

2 Where printers are actually exposed

3 Why paying the invoice misses the point

4 The mitigation path from census to governance

5 What leaders and associations should do next

Goal: Practical risk reduction without disrupting production

Font licensing has moved to the front burner

Across commercial print, labels, packaging, direct mail, publishing, and in-plant operations

- Audit notices are increasing
- Long-used fonts are being challenged
- Old habits are colliding with modern licensing expectations

ABCDEFGHI;
JKLMNOPQ%
RSTUVWXYZ!

Font licensing is no longer a background issue.

It is a material business risk.

What the audience is feeling

Confusion. Surprise. Pressure. Most organizations are not trying to do anything wrong; they are discovering that the rules around them have hardened.

What changed

Three forces are behind the recent spike in pressure

Active enforcement

Audit activity, challenges, and renegotiation requests are becoming more common. The issue is being surfaced intentionally rather than left in the background.

Foundry consolidation

Over time, historic type libraries have been acquired by fewer rights holders. That concentrates ownership and changes how legacy assets are managed.

License reinterpretation

Legacy licenses, bundled software fonts, and informal practices are being read through modern enterprise licensing models.

*This is usually not a story of sudden bad behavior ;
it is a story of changed ownership and changed interpretation.*

What hasn't changed

Printers still own responsibility for fonts in their own environment

Servers

Fonts stored in shared locations remain part of your environment.

Workstations

Installed fonts on operator machines can create exposure.

Workflows

Embedded fonts inside automated production paths still count.

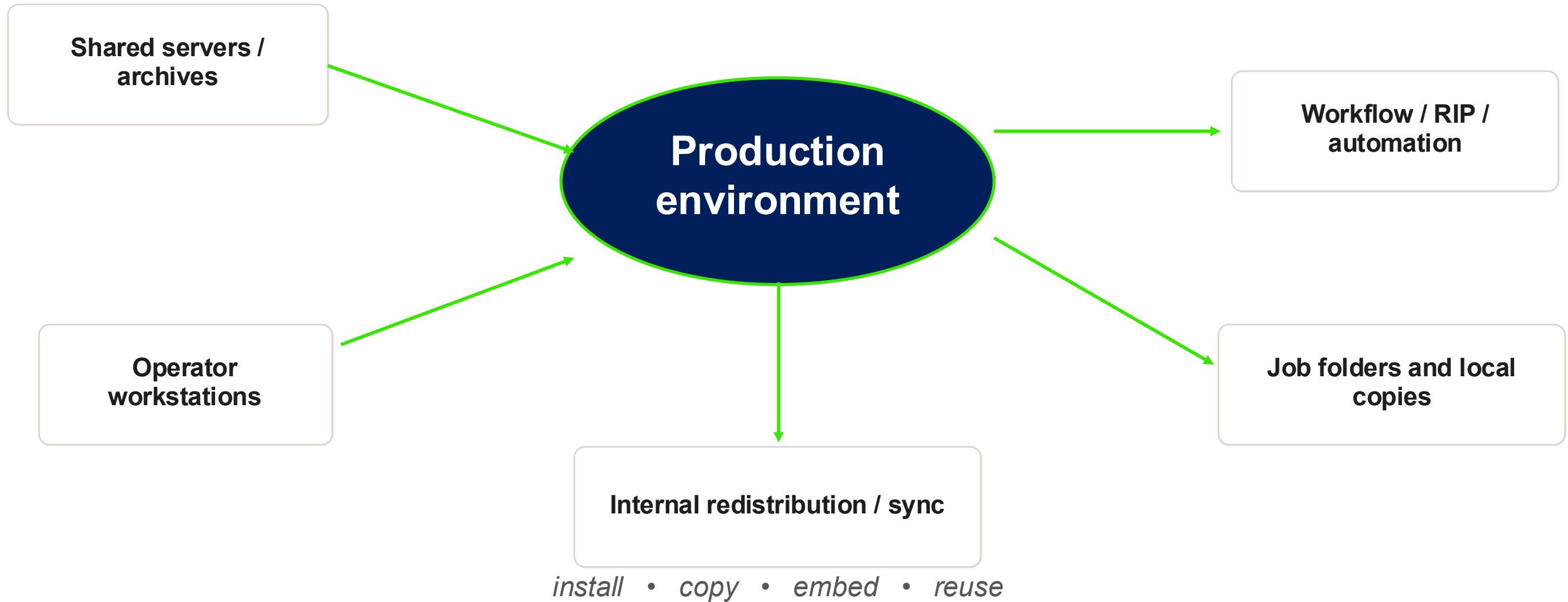
Redistribution

Internal copying and syncing can extend the footprint.

Origin does not erase obligation. If fonts exist or are accessed inside your operation, they belong in your licensing conversation.

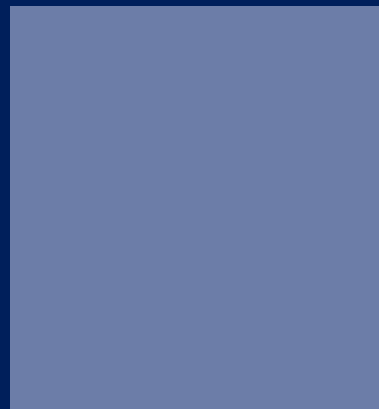
Where exposure actually lives

Any place fonts are stored, installed, copied, embedded, or reused can become part of the conversation



The hidden risk is font sprawl

Professional assessments often reveal far more files than the organization expects



40,000–60,000

What many shops believe they have



100,000+

What a full census may reveal

What makes up the sprawl

- Duplicate files
- Near-duplicates
- Legacy versions
- Unknown origin
- Installed but unused assets

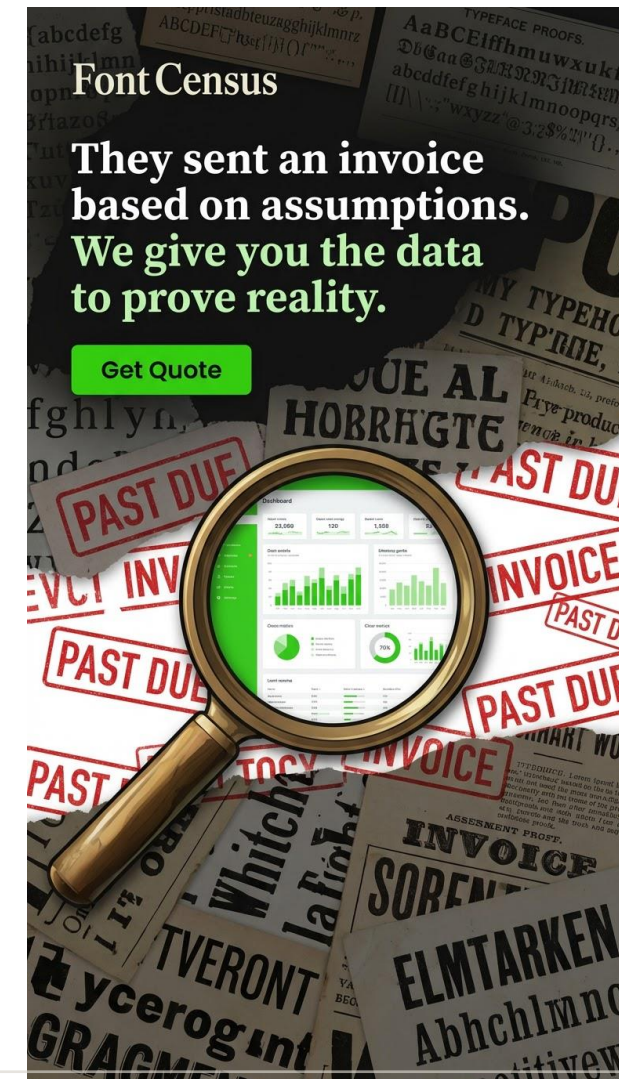
Visibility changes the conversation.

Invoices often start from assumptions

Without a verified census, the conversation begins with estimates instead of evidence

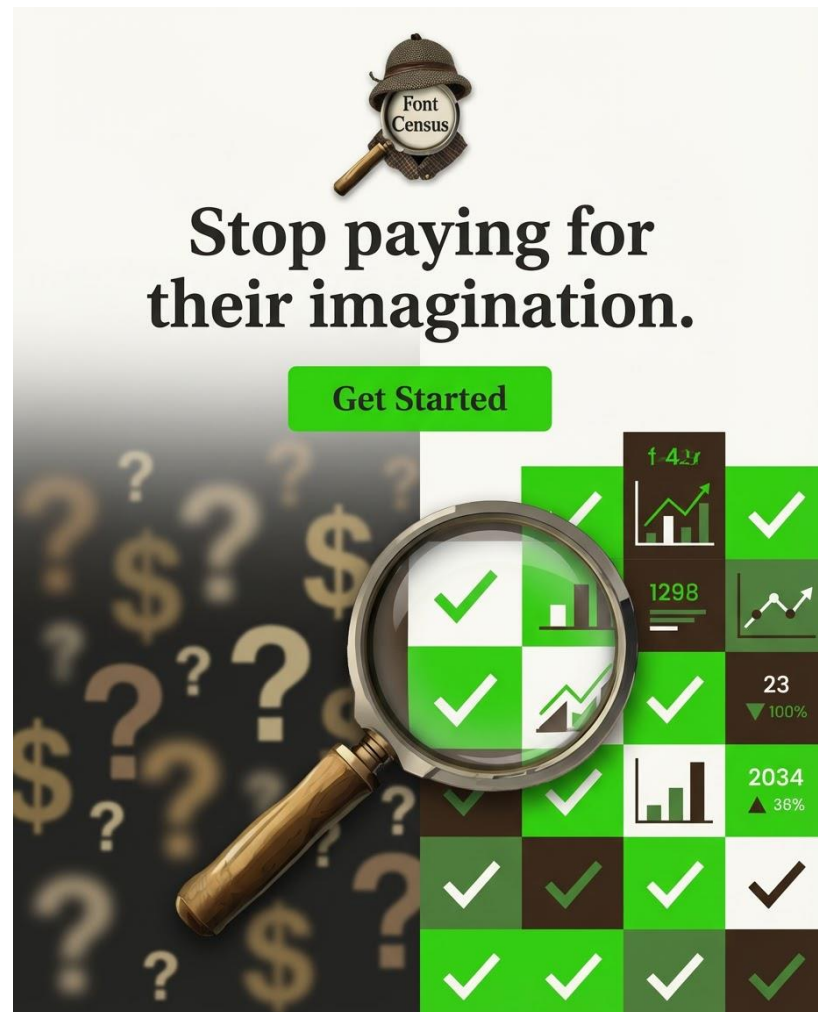
- No verified inventory means no shared set of facts
- Historical purchases do not automatically describe today's environment
- Installed files do not tell you which fonts are actually required for production

Evidence beats estimation.



Why “just paying the invoice” is not a strategy

Cost without control is not risk reduction



- It can lock in long-term cost
- It leaves duplicates and unused files in place
- It does not solve underlying governance problems
- It can preserve exposure while making it more expensive

The smarter question

Which fonts are actually needed, which can be removed, and which can be replaced without breaking production?

The goal is mitigation, not disruption

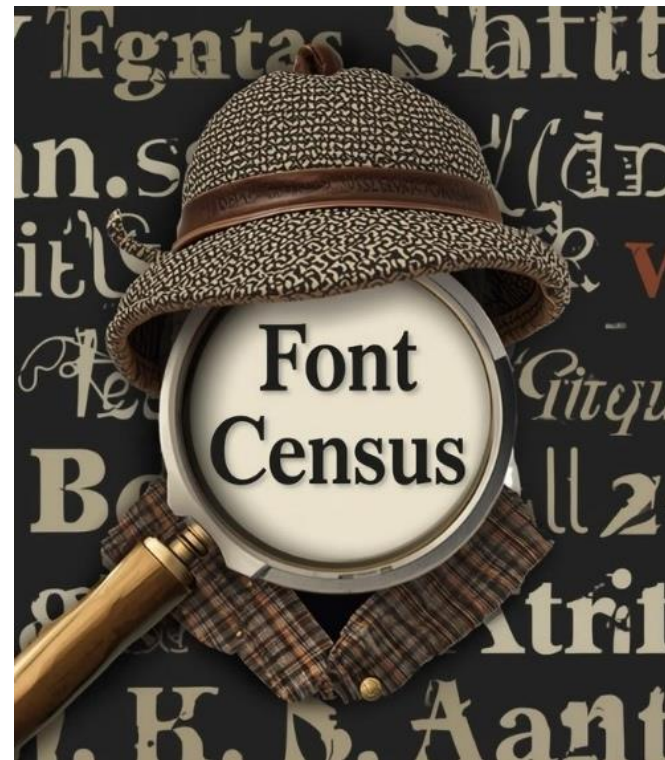
Reduce risk while maintaining production stability through census, deduplication, canonicalization, substitution, and governance.

Census
Deduplicate
Canonicalize
Substitute
Govern

This is the path from reactive defense to managed control.

Step 1 — Census the environment

Before you can negotiate intelligently, you have to know what is really there



What exists

Count the files. Identify the families. Separate noise from the real inventory.

Where it lives

Map servers, workstations, workflow systems, archives, and shared locations.

What is used

Understand which fonts are truly needed for active production and customer commitments.

Without a census, every decision is a guess.

Step 2 — Deduplicate and canonicalize

Shrink the environment before you try to price or govern it

All discovered files

Remove duplicates and near-duplicates

Normalize versions and establish canonical files

Approved, manageable set

Why this matters

A deduplicated, canonical environment is easier to analyze, easier to govern, and less expensive to defend. It also exposes which files are genuinely important versus simply inherited clutter.

Step 3 — Retain, replace, or remove

Not every font deserves the same answer

Retain

Keep fonts that are licensed, business-critical, and actively required for production or committed customer output.

Replace

Substitute where output can be protected through testing and where the business case improves by simplifying the environment.

Remove

Retire duplicates, legacy versions, unused assets, and files whose origin or necessity cannot be supported.

Substitution is a production decision, not just a legal one.

Step 4 — Govern what comes next

Without controls, the environment will grow back into sprawl

Acquisition policy

Define how new fonts are evaluated and approved.

Installation rights

Limit who can add fonts and under what conditions.

Version control

Keep a single source of truth for approved files.

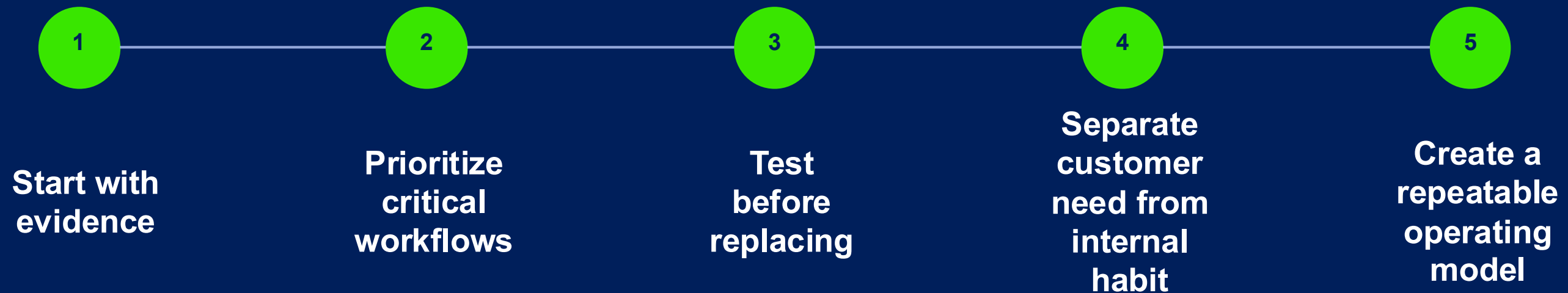
Ownership & audit trail

Know who is accountable and what evidence can be produced.

Governance prevents re-growth.

Protect production while reducing risk

Mitigation should stabilize operations, not unsettle them



Responsible mitigation is about control, not chaos.

What associations can do for members

Associations can lower anxiety by turning a legal-seeming issue into an operationally manageable one

Educate

Explain what has changed, what has not, and why font licensing now deserves executive attention.

Encourage assessment

Normalize proactive census and mitigation work before members receive an enforcement notice.

Share best practices

Promote sound approaches to deduplication, substitution, governance, and audit readiness.

**cXm Professional do not need panic.
You need clarity, confidence, and a path.**

A practical 30 / 60 / 90 day plan

Progress beats perfection when you are moving from uncertainty to control

30 days

Gather stakeholders
Launch a font census
Freeze unnecessary new installs



60 days

Deduplicate
Identify critical fonts
Prioritize the highest-risk areas



90 days

Test substitutions
Establish governance
Document an audit response path

Questions leaders should ask right now

Do we know what fonts are actually in our environment?

Where are fonts stored, installed, embedded, or redistributed?

Which fonts are truly required for production?

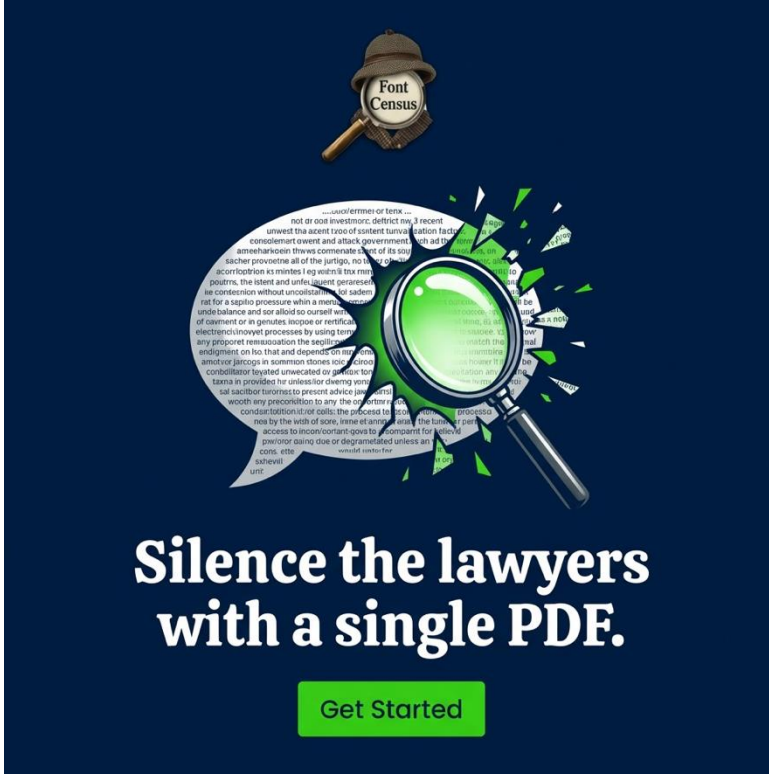
Who owns approval, policy, and audit response?

How would we prove reality if challenged tomorrow?

CLOSE

Fonts are licensed tools, not incidental assets.

Organizations that take control now — by understanding their environments and governing fonts responsibly — will be better positioned than those who wait for enforcement notices.

The graphic features a dark blue background. At the top center is a small icon of a magnifying glass with a brown handle and a circular lens, with the words "Font Census" written inside the lens. Below this, a large, stylized magnifying glass with a green lens and a black handle is positioned over a cluster of green, jagged, paper-like shapes. These shapes appear to be torn pieces of paper or documents, some of which have faint, illegible text visible. The overall composition suggests a search or investigation into fonts.

**Silence the lawyers
with a single PDF.**

[Get Started](#)

Questions & next step

Pat McGrew

McGrewGroup has the tools and expertise to help.

- Font Census | Assessment in a Box
- Use a census to prove reality before you pay for assumptions
- Mention CXMP2026 for special pricing

Questions?

