DGDTY 100

Typography
Assessment 3
Design a logotype

Denby Serrao-Arnot
(A00177514)

An all-time classic — the blueprint of corporate tech identity. As a child of the '90s, growing up immersed in early computing culture, IBM's logo was everywhere. Its clean, structured form is synonymous with trust, innovation, and authority. The horizontal stripes not only symbolise speed and dynamism but also reflect the technological optimism of its era. "Big Blue" will never fade from public memory — it is tech.

I was drawn to this logo long before I understood the powerhouse behind it. As a child, it felt ornamental — almost floral. As an adult, knowing GE's influence under figures like Jack Welch, I see the irony: a soft, elegant monogram fronting one of the most aggressive, performance-driven companies in history. It's a wolf in sheep's clothing, and that tension between design and legacy fascinates me.
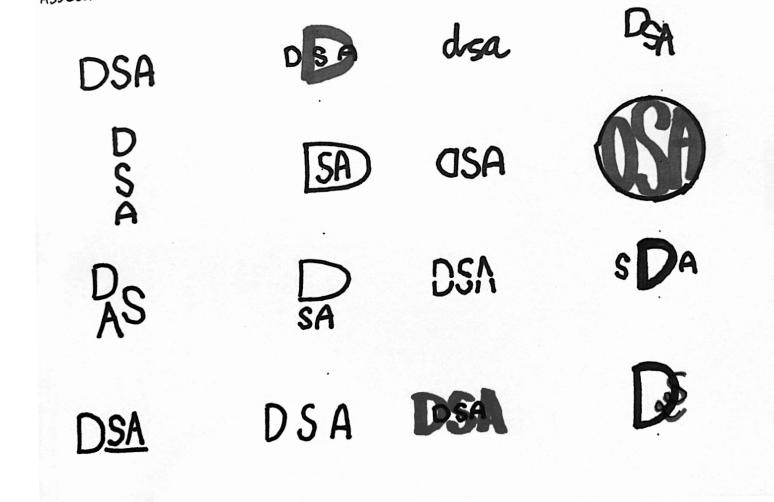
The moment I realised this logo uses negative space to form two B's — I was floored. It's clever, modern, and loaded with intention. For me, it captures everything BlackBerry once represented: slick innovation, dominance, and untapped potential. This brand was poised to shape the world, and even if the tech didn't survive, the logo holds up as a masterclass in subtlety and strength.

Thumbnail Sketches

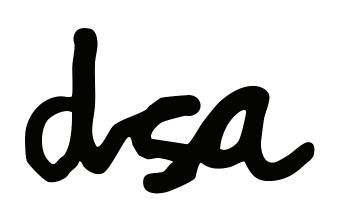**Black and white concepts (x3)**

Letter-mark concept 1

Letter-mark concept 2

Letter-mark concept 3

Explain what makes your letter-mark a successful piece of typographic-based design.

I infused Denby into the logo in two key ways. First, the foreground initials are taken from my own handwriting, allowing me to express something personal while challenging myself creatively. I had originally planned to combine a serif and sans serif for contrast, and while exploring digital versions, I realised that one of my serif-styled drafts sat close to the script — but not quite. By tracing my handwriting, I found a way to unify both concepts.

The second personal touch is the colour palette, inspired by a photo from a camping trip with friends back home in Gippsland. The petrol-teal hues of the bush against the deep blue sky felt like the perfect match for something grounded and personal.

Why did you choose this particular letter-mark?

The main area for improvement lies in the colour. When mocking up promotional items, I realised the logo struggles to stand out on dark blue surfaces too close in hue to my palette. To solve this, I developed high-contrast versions. Years ago, I saw a video on the Nickelodeon logo's design philosophy — how it could morph to suit any context. That idea stuck with me.

However, working on this project taught me that too much variation in colour can dilute brand recognition. While my original concept used a full gradient on the sans serif layer, it drew too much attention and overpowered the script. The final version is a careful balance — but still one I'd love to refine further.

How does your letter-mark reflect your personality?

"DSA" are my new initials after getting married, so I welcomed the challenge to visualise the change. I hadn't created a personal monogram in years, and adding a third letter felt creatively refreshing.

I wanted to combine personal expression with typographic rigour, blending a professionally designed sans serif with a custom handwritten serif. The final concept came from embracing the "rule of cool" — letting visual intrigue guide early drafts — and stumbling into the challenge of merging serif and sans serif. I'm proud of where the design exploration led me and how balanced the final mark feels.

Are there any areas of your letter-mark that could be improved?

This letter-mark works because it's got contrast, personality, and balance. The bold sans serif feels strong and grounded, while the handwritten serif adds something human — a personal touch that softens the edges without losing clarity. It plays with structure but doesn't feel stiff. The custom colour palette gives it a story, not just a look, and the high-contrast version helps it flex across different mediums. I wanted the two styles to exist in harmony, not fight for attention — and after a lot of back and forth, I think they found a rhythm that feels uniquely mine.

References

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Adobe. (n.d.). Richmond Display. https://fonts.adobe.com/fonts/richmond-display

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Colour palette derived from a personal photo taken at Crooked River, Gippsland, Victoria, Australia (2017).