The cistercian package

A package to display Cistercian numerals

samcarter

https://github.com/samcarter/cistercian
https://ctan.org/pkg/cistercian

Version v0.5 - 2025/04/29

Note

Users, for whom compilation speed is important and who do not need the possibility to modify the appearance of the numerals via TikZ options, should have a look at the amazingly fast and very versatile xistercian package instead.

The two packages are not meant to be combined.

1 Introduction

The cistercian package is meant for displaying Cistercian numerals in IATEX. It was inspired by the Numberphile video "The Forgotten Number System". Many thanks to Paulo Cereda for bringing this video to my attention!

This package is work in progress, therefore I would be happy to hear your feedback and ideas how to improve the package. The development version of the source code can be found at https://github.com/samcarter/cistercian, including an issue tracker. A more stable version of the package can be found on CTAN (https://ctan.org/pkg/cistercian) and is included in both TEXLive and MiKTEX as cistercian. If you seek any other assistance (not bug reports/feature requests), I suggest asking at https://topanswers.xyz/tex.

Copyright © samcarter. Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this software under the terms of the LaTeX project public licence, version 1.3c or later https://www.latex-project.org/lppl.txt.

2 Cistercian numerals

Cistercian numerals are a nearly forgotten number system which was invented in the late Middle Ages by Cistercian monks who were, at that time, one of the most influential congregations with monasteries spreading over most of Europe.

Cistercian numerals are a base-10 system for natural numbers up to 9999. They are formed by a vertical stem for zero 1. Onto this stem, additional markings are added to denote individual

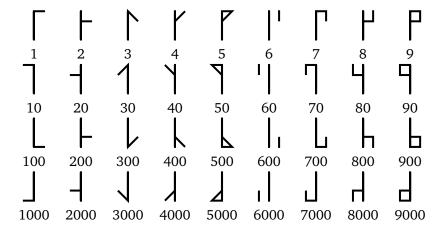
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p55Qgt7Ciw

digits, e.g. 1 is Γ , 2 is Γ , etc. The markings for ones are added at the top right, the ones for tens are mirrored to the top left (e.g. 10 is Γ), hundreds at the bottom right (e.g. 100 is Γ) and thousands at the bottom left (e.g. Γ). To form the complete number, the digits are superimposed on top of each other, e.g. 1111 is Γ .

While arithmetic calculations are hard with such a numeral system, it provides a compact and uniform way to denote natural numbers, making it well suited for year numbers or sequences like page numbers and footnotes.

Several variants were in use, in this package we are adopting the glyph shapes as shown in https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cistercian_digits_(vertical).svg.

3 Overview numerals



4 Basic usage

The cistercian package provides the macro \cistercian{<number>} to show a given number as Cistercian numeral.

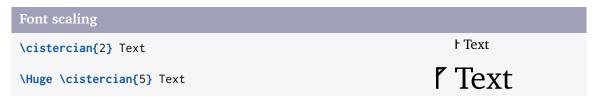


To change the page numbering of a document to Cistercian numerals, the following macro can be used:

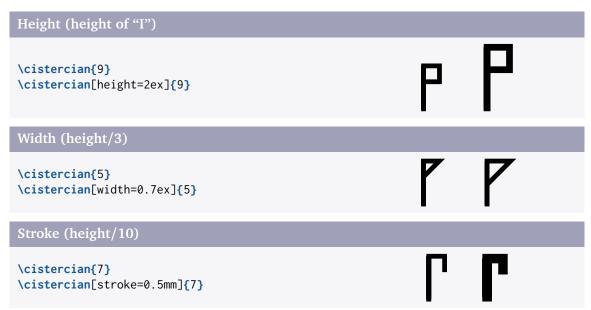
Page numbering
\pagenumbering{cistercian}

5 Options

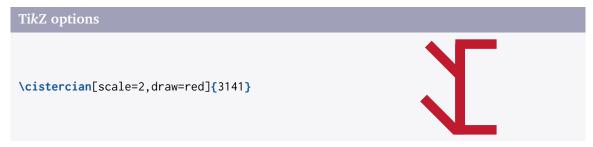
By default, the Cistercian numerals will scale with the surrounding font:



However the height, width and stroke can also be controlled individually (values in parenthesis denote the default value):



Internally the package uses a tikzpicture to draw the numeral and also accepts all options, which can normally be passed to the tikzpicture environment, in its optional argument. This can for example be used to change the colour or scale the numeral:



Another TikZ option which might be useful for the Cistercian numerals is line join, which changes how the lines connect to each other. This alters the appearance of the numbers quite a bit and can help to blend them in with the surrounding font.

Line join (miter)	
<pre>\cistercian[line join=round]{53} \cistercian[line join=bevel]{53} \cistercian[line join=miter]{53}</pre>	777

Besides using these option as optional argument, they can also be set globally using the macro \cistercianset:

```
Global options

\cistercianset{%
  height=1cm,
  width=0.2cm,
  stroke=0.1cm,
  draw=red,
}
```

These global options can be reset:

Reset global options

\cistercianreset