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Working Group 1: Education

State of affairs

Groningen

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Abstract

An impression of what has been done by members of the WG, ànd others, is given.
Members: C.G. van der Laan (coord.), T. Biegstraaten, G. Haayer, J.R. Luyten, P. Tutelaers.
Known — through december 1989 — courseware and TeX-related (Dutch) courses are mentioned in appendices.

1 Just what happened

The WG started with an inheritance of LaTeX courseware, [1]. From there the idea was to work on TeX courseware along the same lines. Members of the WG could not agree upon this approach. Soon Niek Cox left the group because he could not invest sufficient time on the issue. A little later Abdy Jooya also left the group because of a change of the Open University's policy with respect to Electronic Publishing. Piet Tutelaers decided to develop a set of transparencies for the LaTeX beginners course, [13]. In the mean time Geert Haaijer, Jan Luyten, and Kees van der Laan did some work on the (ambitious) goal: 'Macrowriting in TeX *or* LaTeX *understood*'. The work was intervened by postponed dates and other activities.

In December a 'meeting' by phone was organized (Kees, Ton and Piet participated). We considered it useful to continue the LaTeX transparencies work by Piet and his colleague Ron, and to continue adapting tools (SLITeX by Ton and TRSPAR by Kees) for making and maintaining more easily course transparencies. At that 'meeting' we also discussed the critics upon the *Teaching TeX* proposal from Bart Childs, and agreed on main issues. We decided to wait for Bart's comment. We felt it appropriate to pospone developing courseware because of Bart's guarded discussion and because of the changes of TeX (these are mainly inside ones; upwards compatability) and of LaTeX. With respect to LaTeX we even don't know the precise plans (To be unfolded in TUGboat 11 # ?).

We also discussed the TeX-related courses to be organized along the 'NTG-days'. We thought it wise to stay as close to Childs' proposal as possible, because of the possibility to 'borrow' teachers from elsewhere and because of the possibilty to take over, or use, elsewhere developed courseware. A side effect of adopting the international module approach is that one can take a course 'here' — NTG-days — and continue with the next module 'there' — TUGmeeting (TeXas, Cork, . . .), or any 'national' meeting (GUTenberg, DANTE, . . .).

Furthermore, we considered it useful to maintain a list of available courses and courseware.

1.1 Intervening activities

One such activity was developing an SGML course on 'request' of TUG, [8].
Another activity was preparing a one-day hands-on introduction to LaTeX, for the NTG days. From these courses, held along the first NTG days, two results appeared: [11][1], and by Nico Popplier, [12].

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[1] Similar work has been done by Hope Hamilton for TeX, [4].

Yet another needed activity was to answer the question of how to choose from the available tools when preparing transparencies, i.e., when is what tool appropriate, see [5]. This work entailed with respect to LaTeX the development of `TRSPAR.STY`, [9]. A prerelease has been sent to the TeX-NL network for comments. The prerelease earned some critics, especially the question why SliTeX was not used. Although possibly not suited for this report it is of general interest to comment on that, because, indeed, it is estimated that reinventing the wheel in rewriting programs is the rule rather than the exception, 90% or so! As explained in the mini-documentation in the first comment lines of `TRSPAR.STY` important design issues were:

- the form of the input must be independent of the style used,
- background and context information should have to be typed only once and appear outside of the transparency contents, in a generalized header and footer (Van Oostrum's fancyheader does something like this, as does Hendrickson's macroTeX. Independently Ton modified SliTeX with this in mind.)
- a set of a few hundred transparencies is the issue with automatically generated toc etc., which also have to be *maintained* for a period of 5 to 10 years, by different persons!

Separately, Ton adapted SLITeX so that it is possible to supply background information. In literature, e.g., in Einführung in TeX by N. Schwarz, similar tools are treated ('Vorlesungsscript', in (plain) TeX).

2   The world outside

2.1   Gentle introduction . . .

From the outside world we became aware of Michael Doob's Gentle introduction to TeX, [3], which has also been made available in hardcopy form. (The source can be obtained from members of the WG, from the TeX-ED list (*tell listserv at uicvm get gentle introtex*, should give the file), or, of course, directly from Michael: MDOOB@UOFMCC.)

2.2   Teaching for personnel

Of yet no special attention has been paid to teaching personnel. Interesting activities are, [6] and [7]. T. Jurriens, astronomy department RUG, organized some training camps for personnel of mathematics and astronomy departments. In Utrecht and Nijmegen personnel do use TeX in production, supported by respectively Piet van Oostrum and Victor Eijkhout.

2.3   TUGboat.sty

An interesting collection especially for teaching about TeX etc. are the sty-files for TUGboat. They have a fancy facility to include a file verbatim and also to write to it; data-integrity! There is also LTUGboat.sty, which uses as much as posible from a common file. Making of simple lists is also supported with simple facilities, tags, for numbering and the like. See [14].

2.4   Childs' Teaching TeX discussion

Bart Childs entamated a discussion in TUGboat, [2], and lively during the EuroTeX89 meeting, about the total of TeX related courses and the relationship of the various modules. Kees pondered about it and also, on instigation of Bart, joined the discussion, in order to strive after European, or even Worldwide TUG courses. The idea is that the contents of the courses have to be agreed upon. What to do next is not clear. Of course, we can express our ideas. So there you go. Should we consider developing courseware by an (international) team? What about the English language for the 'mother' courseware? (Translations can be made by national/language-oriented user groups. This is an order of magnitude less laboursome than developing courseware yourself!) This discussion definitely postponed the development of TeX

courseware by the WG. Kees prepared a contribution to the discussion, especially with non-TEXnicalities in mind, see [10]. The reaction is received by Bart and he promised to come back to it soon.

2.5 TEX–ED list

We became aware of the list TEX–ED@UICVM.bitnet. As a result of the subscription we received an enquiry form. Because of the possibly general interest the form was redistributed on TEX-NL. Yin Kan has informed us of the availability of 'Essential LATEX Documents' written by John Warbrick. (There exists at the server the TeX-ED README file with instructions for getting files from listserv and ftp (Not yet tried out).

Conclusion

Although we are a WG much activity has been done on a personal basis. A set of transparencies for the LATEX beginners course is in development. Adapted tools to create and maintain such a collection are underway. We joined the international activity — direct contact with Bart Childs (TUG 'coordinator' courses) — and decided to adhere to the TUG courses scheme, although still in discussion. We discussed to cooperate internationally, not in the least with respect to developing courseware.

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B Courses

Of course there are the (TUG) Exeter courses by Malcolm and Cathy. No survey is available though. Neither do we have a survey of the German courses. However, we know of LATEX courses by Joachim Lammarsch and Rainer Rupprecht, as well as the advanced TEX course of Joachim Schrod. Besides that, we think that the authors Von Bechtolsheim, Appelt, and Schwarz, and the LATEXnicians, Rainer Schöpf and Frank Mittelbach teach, or could do so.

In TEXHaX the USA TUG TEX course are regularly mentioned; e.g., the March 1990 schedule is published in TEXHaX 90#1. We expect the list of courses will be heavily influenced by the results of Childs' discussion.

Furthermore, we have this year the set-up of courses along the SGML–TEX meeting in August at Groningen. We estimate that these courses will have a function in creating more teachers.

LaTeX

Site	Teacher	Title	Course length	When
RC-RUG	J.R. Luyten	Publiceren met LaTeX	4 days	spring and autumn
RC-RUG	J.R. Luyten	Introductie LaTeX	1 day	on demand
KUN	V. Eijkhout	LaTeX documentstijl	?days	on demand
	J. van Gent	LaTeX	3 afternoons	jan 90
ESP	N.A.F.M. Poppelier	LaTeX sty files	2 days*	NTG days
TUE	R. Helwig	LaTeX introduction	4 ($\frac{1}{2}$)days	jan 90

* Possibly restricted because of needed ESP permission.

TeX

Site	Teacher	Title	Course length	When
KUN	V Eijkhout	Intermediate TeX	? days	on demand
KUN	V Eijkhout	Advanced TeX	? days	on demand
KUN	V Eijkhout	Expert TeX	? days	on demand

Metafont

Site	Teacher	Title	Course length	When

3   Courseware

We expect this list to grow as a result of Anita Hoover's enquiry and Child's discussion. Especially of interest will be the (standard) TUG courseware, yet to come.
TeX: [3] LaTeX: [1], [11], [12], [13]

References

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[11] Laan, C.G. van der, J.R. Luyten (1989): Letter and article templates. RC-RUG rapport 27.

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