TUG '93

July 26th–30th, Aston, Birmingham UK

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Highlights

- Announcement LaTeX2.9e; LaTeX companion book will be available in the fall, which contains among other items, the NFSS2 documentation
- NTS: organizational and technical issues were surveyed
- GUTenberg's PD PC set looks very promising
- Y&Y's scalable outline fonts
- Adobe's Acrobat, and PDF (portable document format), demoed by Doug Henderson (Blue Sky Research, and Adobe β-tester)
- Tutorials: What is LaTeX?, Flavours of TeX, Virtual fonts, all for free
- Greenwade's CTAN: Comprehensive TeX Archive Network, released
- The *TUGly Telegraph* spread the news (really nice this mini conference newspaper)

This report contains the main issues as perceived by the author. The idea is to get the flavor and my view of the good items across, at the expense of completeness.

1 Introduction

The meeting of the organized TeX Users of the year was TUG '93 at Aston. It attracted some 165 participants, with a few from financially diasadvantaged countries, thanks to the bursary fund. Aston campus is pleasantly located near the centre of Birmingham, Brum for short. A rich variety of courses was offered before and after the conference. In general the program offered nice presentations, workshops, panels and the like, with the vendor booths fewer in number than usual, with Blue Sky Research sadly absent, because of being informed too late. Despite this, to attend the conference was a real thrill. Much attention was paid to details, for example every badge contained a nice proverb, and not to forget the superb logo. In general all was done by creative and playful minds. Great, neat![1] Next to the lecture room there was a discussion lounge—with among others some computers with e-mail and FTP fa-

cilities, such that participants could read their e-mail and exchange files—and a vendor booth, alias lounge, for display of materials brought along by TUG and the various LUGs.[2]

2 Conference

For the most it was a one-stream schedule. Along with the program we obtained a copy of the pre-proceedings,[3] a compact BTA booklet about and around in Brum, a map with bus-lines. A sufficient and modest delegate pack. Well-done! And then we had our presents: those big black binders with the gold-coloured logo! The 'mug mats,' neat! Also thoughtful was that thick pad of paper, for taking notes. Superb!

Prior to the conference there were the free tutorials: What is LaTeX all about? Flavours of TeX, and Virtual fonts. During the conference we had the workshops about MakeIndex, BibTeX, and virtual fonts. And there were the ample course offerings before and after conference!

In the next section attention is paid to the highlights neglecting the day-to-day sequence of events as well as the session titles.

2.1 Keynotes

The keynotes were: Jackowski and Ryćko—detailing what happens at the beginning and at the end of a paragraph[4]—Christina Thiele—about the future of TeX and TUG–and Joachim Lammarsch—presenting his view on the historical and organisational issues related to NTS, the New Typesetting System. Later Phil Taylor—the technical director of the project—aptly complemented this with the technical aspects. A nice example of international cooperation.

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[1] And alas we all forget now and then some things, but the issue is how we cope with that, if not for improving the checklist about 'How to run a TeX conference.' In my opinion we should *not* fall hard on these things, we should *not* say 'Oh, I can do better!' No, we should contribute, support, and when we do it ourselves, all we can say is that we certainly will put some different accents here and there. Not to compete. Life is too short to bother about that. Look for the quality and the fun in there!

[2] NTG displayed its recent MAPS 93.1, and the MAPS specials: Salomon's courseware, and the PR set. During this conference Jon Radel and Yannis Haralambous joined NTG! CyrTUG showed quite a lot, if only I could read Russian, sigh. . .

[3] The proceedings will be in TUGboat 14.3.

[4] Bound to be incorporated within MAPS.

2.2 Presentations

- Michael Doob's paper about the practical use of virtual fonts was very illuminating, and bound to be reproduced within MAPS.[5]

- It was rumoured that John Plaice's Ω-TEX is a nice extension of TEX. It is difficult to overlook its virtues or its impact. New it is for sure.

- Derick Wood's theoretical model of tables was very intriguing. The burning question in here is whether we can develop something like normal specification and transformation to the most clearest formatted representation (semi)automatically.

- Daniel Taupin surprised us all with a new aspect of his TEX work: TEX and Metafont working together to produce maps. Later, and separately, he also reported about new developments in MusicTEX. As well, he amply contributed to the discussions. Nice to have him around.

- Martin Bryan's Guide to DSSSL was a bit too theoretical. Upon request he assured us that this extension is there mainly to handle so-called active documents.

- Michel Lavaud preceded his AsTEX lecture by some analogies of the TEX language with natural language—both ambiguous and 'dangerous'—and with the FORTRAN language—both stable, but deficient. The latter has gained a firm place within the scientific work desk, despite its deficiences and other imperfections.

- Siebenmann in one of his papers proposed a new method for handling the spacing around in-line math. He also contributed much to the discussions. Nice again to have him around.

- Roger Hunter emphasized that the future of TEX has all to do with better user interfaces.[6]

- Włodek Bzyl lectured about the use of literate programming tools to build upon other work—TUGBoat styles customization via change files—pretty printing of TEX code, along with providing an index. By this approach the styles of the GUST bulletin make use of the experience embodied in the TUGboat sty files, with GUST's mods easily added.

This approach can handle automatically the modifications on top of the basic sty files as provided and maintained by TUG. Really a sensible approach and worthy of being studied and followed by the editorial team of MAPS.

- Berthold Horn dwelled upon the paucity of math fonts ready for use with TEX, and a checklist to counteract this phenomenon. A very lucid and scholarly paper.

- George Greenwade made his CTAN—Comprehensive TEX Archive Network—go public. A quantum leap!

- At the macro writing level we had Jonathan Fine's Finite State Automata in TEX and my Syntactic Sugar, and Sorting within TEX. The syntactic sugar paper also touches upon the software engineering aspects of TEX macro writing.

- Very intriguing was Mary Dison's paper about teaching typography,[7] as a spin-off of the DIDOT project. It has all to do with getting your priorities right; don't sub-optimize! In essence the issues relevant to Electronic Publishing were presented in the right order.[8]

- Richard Southall elaborated on his 'buses and weirdness' effects when using TEX, naively.[9] I'm happy that this paper will finally be in print, and hopefully reproduced within MAPS.

3 LUGs

Only CyrTUG and Ukraine TUG[10] talked in public about their history and revealed their plans. Both will have a fall meeting, open for the TEX community at large to attend.[11]

4 Future of TEX and lxiii

Quite some attention was paid to these issues. Plans abound at the files server however. Remember that most if not all has to be done by volunteers! LATEX2.9e[12] will be released in the fall, along with the LATEX companion book. The revenues from the latter will be devoted

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[5] Related to this is the work of Allan Jeffrey for manipulating *vpl* files.

[6] It is fun to list all the various items people have prophesied to be essential for the future of TEX. At the user as well as the language level. Allan Reese commented that TEX allows for education as opposed to WYSIWYG click-on systems. The point Allan really made was that Scientific Word and similar systems go for the first gains along with average quality. But for real high-quality computer-assisted typography we need a craftsman-like tool—TEX, I don't know of a better one, and it will serve a life-time, so it is worth the investment—which one has to learn, to master, to handle at best. The counter-argument with driving a car and being a mechanic, is a false analogy: driving a car has nothing to do with high-quality computer-assisted typography. This does not say that WYSIWYG user interfaces don't have their place in the spectrum of EP tools.

A hot item, there are workshops on Teaching Electronic Publishing, for example in Darmstadt, next spring.

[7] See also her The curriculum as a hypertext, EP-ODD, 1992, 5, 63–72.

[8] Relevant to this are also the two book reviews which appeared in the conference *TUGly Telegraph*: Highman, N.J (1993): *Handbook on writing for the Mathematical Sciences*, SIAM (reviewed and recommended by Malcolm Clark), and Woodwark, J (1992): *How to run a paper mill—writing technical papers and getting them published*. ISBN 1-874728-00-3 xv + 111p (reviewed and recommended by Allan Reese).

[9] Earlier at SGML-TEX conference, 1990 Groningen.

[10] Officially to be founded in the fall.

[11] The CIS—Commonwealth of Independent States—is the growth market for organized TEX users for the near future!

[12] It will contain NFSS2, multicol, array, theorem, verbatim. Vital parts of any modern (La)TEX user's arsenal.

mostly to the lxiii project. So, if you are dying for lxiii to come out, buy this book.

5 Upcoming, or go where the action is

For next year the working idea is to have EuroTEX '94 organized by GUST. TUG '94 will be in Santa Barbara, TUG '95 in Florida, and TUG '96 in Europe again. And in the meantime the fall is crowded with meetings: Ukraine TUG,[13] CyrTuG (early October), the Nordic and NTG's November meetings,[14] next to DANTE's regular and cosy Stammtisch, ..., and GUST in the spring, watch out for the calendar in TUGboat.

6 Breakfast talk, and Brum's canals

During the very tasty and ample English breakfasts there is enough room for talking, meeting the people. One day I happened to join Norman Naugle from TEXas A&M. A very nice and kind fellow, and TEX-hobbyist from the beginning. He talked among other things, about his childhood and that his bad eyes went unnoticed for too long, so that he learned to memorize everthing which was spoken aloud and written on the blackboard. As such this is one of the nice chats in the morning, of how things go.

Later on while wandering along Brum's canals I pondered about the other side. How are things with extremely gifted children? Do they try to hide their talents in order not to be excluded from the group? Are we able nevertheless to recognize the gifted children?

> Fleetstreet bridge where am I? Ah, the science museum, nice area! What was I thinking about? Oh, yes back again, hmmmm.

What does this have to do with me, now? Aha, got it. The BoD is trapped similarly: we don't look innocently and positively to what each can contribute. We are too anxious about being taken over, people playing games. In thinking this way the child is thrown out with the bath water. The big challenge is to find out what each and every one can contribute, perhaps we even should awake and develop that. Accept it, be happy with it, even if you don't foresee completely the consequences. That is life! Needless to say I enjoyed my walkabout along the canals.

7 And further...

A contest for a robust approach for typesetting the A in LATEX..., (submission date has been extended to 31 December 1993)

No mug this year but the beer mat to put one of your previous mugs onto.

Belated T-shirts..., but they will come for sure.

I was told that the Poles will write their macros in Web, not in LATEX, nor in plain. They envision that not only can it be more generally used in this way, but will also be more easily maintained, with a log of the history of changes all there. Definitely something to ponder about...if not to adopt, because of its fundamental approach.

The Thursday *TUGly Telegraph* contained a nice overview of the Technical Council and Special Interest Working Groups written by the chair Michael Ferguson. A nice survey to be reproduced within MAPS.

Looking more closely at the list of participants I found that I knew more than half personally. It is a small world we live in!

8 Conclusion

I hope that the authors of the various papers will take notice of the comments made and enrich their proceeding versions with these useful thoughts and suggestions. Meeting the people and stimulating each other—that is what conferences are for. This one was a particularly good one.

> Thanks to you all![15]

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[13] At the moment of writing this report we heard about their leader Yuri has passed away, due to a heart attack.

[14] In the air is Doug Henderson coming over to enrich both meetings, if not for a demo of Acrobat, or a course about logo design. A nice cooperation effort in sharing the costs and getting the best out of it. Next to that info about Kinch's materials—CD ROM with all of the (Aston) Archive, and more—will be available as well as what Y&Y has to offer.

[15] And Christina Thiele in particular for improving my trip report, and suggesting en-passent better ways of cooperating with TUG people.