

conference report

Report on T_EX-Tagung Dante'99 in Dortmund

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abstract

A report on Dante's 20th meeting which took place in Dortmund. The future of the NTS project and the ε -T_EX project were hot issues that were discussed during this meeting.

keywords

report, Dante, NTS, ε -T_EX

Introduction

From February 24 to 26 the German T_EX users group Dante held its 20th meeting in Dortmund. The NTG was represented at this meeting by Hans Hagen, Taco Hoekwater, Wietse Dol, Siep Kroonenberg and Erik Frambach. There were several reasons for this large delegation. This year Dante is celebrating its 10th birthday. The meeting was also an opportunity to get the NTS team and the ε -T_EX team together to discuss the future of these projects.

Arriving in Dortmund

In Dortmund Dante had kindly arranged for rooms in a hotel. When we arrived there around 22:30 the hotel personnel told us that the rooms were no longer available because we should have arrived before 18:00. Naturally we complained about this because no such conditions were written on their confirmation fax that we showed them. So, the hotel personnel reluctantly gave us the rooms anyway. No excuses. The rooms were fine, though, and the breakfast excellent.

February 24

Registration started at 9:00 and there was a cute surprise for all participants. We all got a little T_EX lion that can be attached to a shirt or a tie. After registering the meeting began. Dante's president Thomas Koch spoke a few words to welcome everyone, and then parallel tutorials on different subjects started. Below we will give an impression of the program.

Axel Reichert spoke about *Typographie – Gestaltung einer Beispielklasse*. He explained what the essential pa-

rameters are of a well-designed document from a typographer's point of view. Then he showed us which currently available L^AT_EX packages can be used to implement these ideas. A nice overview.

David Kastrup spoke about *De Ore Leonis – Makroexpansion für Virtuosen*. His explanations of precisely how and when T_EX input expansion actually takes place were so clear that we have asked him to provide a few pages for the next MAPS issue.

In the afternoon Thomas Feuerstock gave an *Einführung in PDF_TE_X*. He showed what extras PDF_TE_X offers and how it differs from 'normal' T_EX e.g. with respect to graphics inclusion. In parallel Bernd Raichle and Thomas Koch presented *L^AT_EX für Puristen – oder: Wie sauberes Markup dein Leben erleichtert*.

Heiko Overdiek elaborated on the *Gestaltung der Lesezeichen und Informationseinträge in PDF-Dateien mit dem Paket 'hyperref'*. No less than 70 sheets were presented. Some of the gory details were clearly too much for the audience, and unfortunately the lecture was based on a rather outdated version of pdf_TE_X. In parallel an *Einführung in L^AT_EX 2_ε* was given by Arnulf Liebing and Günter Partosch.

In the late afternoon there was an excursion to the *westfälischen Industriemuseum*, followed by a nice diner in town.

During the day and evening the NTS team and the ε -T_EX team gathered to discuss and exchange information on the current state of affairs.

On the subject of ε -T_EX, an agreement has been reached to discontinue the current ε -T_EX team within the NTS working group. ε -T_EX does not need funding in its current state anyway, and the removal of formal ties with NTS gives Peter Breitenlohner (the 'new' head of ε -T_EX) the possibility to concentrate on real programming issues. Peter announced that he has a desire to maintain having the current group of people connected to ε -T_EX and these people all agreed to cooperate on extending ε -T_EX, so the continuity of the project is still guaranteed.

The NTS project seems to be doing well, but it appears that there have been communication problems in the past. During the discussion, most of these problems were sorted out. NTS now consists of *only* the Java NTS group, thereby simplifying the organizational structure of the project considerably. It was agreed upon that an independent report should be written on NTS progress to clear the air. Our own Hans Hagen volunteered to do this.

Karel Skoupy presented a demonstration of the NTS work done so far: almost all of the mode-independent processing is now finished, as well as the reading of TFM files and writing of DVI files. In the next four months, the typesetting portions will be inserted into this framework. At EuroT_EX '99 in Heidelberg, the NTS implementation of T_EX'82 should be finished. After that has been done, Karel can start adding in some of the extensions that are now available in for instance ϵ -T_EX and pdfT_EX.

On the subject of pdf(e)T_EX, Peter remarked that while pdfT_EX has his blessing as a valid implementation of ϵ -T_EX, he himself will not spend time on developing it because of the fact that pdfT_EX is completely non-portable web2c-only software. This implies that while the current code for pdfT_EX is unusable by either ϵ -T_EX or NTS, both groups *are* interested in the added functionality. This is a comforting thought for the future.

February 25

The day started with a word of welcome from the rector of the University of Dortmund, Prof.Dr.Dr. Klein. Next Prof.Dr. Reusch explained the history and organization of the university. Then Thomas Koch, president of Dante, welcomed us once more, and chaired the *Mitgliederversammlung*.

In the afternoon Gerhard Friesland-Köpke gave a lecture on *T_EX82 – Rückblick und Wirkungen*. Georg Lachenmayr discussed *Scriptum ür eine technische Vorlesung – eine ganz normale Anwendung für \mathcal{E} T_EX?!*, while in parallel Werner Lemberg showed *TrueType-fonts mit T_EX nutzen – das TTF2PK-Paket*.

Hans Hagen repeated the 'Hermann Zapf' experiment that was conducted previously at the NTG meeting in Leuven in 1998. This experiment tests the performance of an optimization of character widths. The optimization routine was changed since last time, which explains why the results were completely different. At the GUST Bachotek meeting in May a similar experiment will be conducted, and of course a report on the results will appear in MAPS.

Taco Hoekwater discussed *T_EX at Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht. –Now and in the future–*, while in parallel Axel Reichert discussed the *Satz von Tabellen*.

Then the second part of the *Einführung in \mathcal{E} T_EX 2 _{ϵ}* by Arnulf Liebing and Günter Partosch was presented, while in parallel Klaus Höppner discussed *Die fpT_EX-Distribution für Windows 9x/NT*.

The last lecture of the day was by Wolfgang Kühn who presented *iTe, der Interaktive T_EX Editor*.

For the evening Dante had arranged tickets for the *Varieté Luna*, which was attended by many people. The foreigners (also from the Czech Republic and from Great Britain) decided to go into town instead to have diner and ponder over the future of documents and information systems.

February 26

The day started with Matthias Eckermann's lecture on *Von Kamelen und anderem Getier – Das „Kommentierte Vorlesungsverzeichnis“ der Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät München*. In parallel Hans Hagen talked about *Context: what it is and how it works, an introduction*. As we have come to expect, his talk sent a wave of Ohh's and Ahh's through the audience.

Werner Lemberg introduced us to *Sprachen jenseits von Babel – das CJK-Paket*, while in parallel Taco Hoekwater talked about *Extending T_EX for XML processing*. This talk presented eetex, which has it's own article elsewhere in this MAPS issue.

The last lecture of the meeting was again by Hans Hagen who gave us a feeling of 'Alice in Wonderland', as one of the participants expressed it: *Going beyond traditional paper documents*. Many, many examples showed us possible new way to handle documents on screen using technologies like pdfT_EX and Javascript working together with T_EX and MetaPost.

Thomas Koch then officially closed the meeting, thanking all the participants and the organizing committee for their excellent work.

Conclusion

The meeting was interesting and well organized. Surprising to us was the fact the Dante's 10th anniversary was mentioned only briefly. There was no celebration of any kind.

In general it's always interesting to see how our sibling user groups arrange meetings and manage their affairs. There are lots of things we can learn from each other. We hope further mutual visits will make the bonds between user groups even stronger. It's good to have friends everywhere; we expect to see some of our german friends attending the next NTG meeting.