Impressions from PracTEX'05

Compiled by Peter Flom and Tristan Miller

The recent PracTEX 2005 conference in Chapel Hill, North Carolina was a great success, thanks to the presenters, the attendees, and the local organizer, Steve Grathwohl of Duke University Press.

Below are a few photos and comments from some of the attendees. More information and photos are on the conference web pages (`http://tug.org/practicaltex2005`).

Cheryl Ponchin, Heidi Sestrich, Kaveh Bazargan, Chris Swanepoel, Em Van Deventer, Trinette Jeanne Evert, Alistair Smith, and Rialine Cruywagen

John Burt (Brandeis University, USA)

What a wonderful conference that was! I found it incredibly informative, and incredibly fun. The papers were very exciting to me, particularly those that brought up aspects of TEX that were new to me, such as the papers on HA-prosper and Beamer, the paper on the graphical interface, and the paper on XeTEX. I enjoyed also the course on ConTEXt a great deal, and was persuaded by it to give it a whirl.

One of the best things about the conference was the social side of it — not just the delicious lunches and the even more delicious conversations, and the banquet, but the informal getting-together over dinner. I can't think of a conference I have enjoyed more!

Ron Fehd (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, USA)

I came to PracTEX for the first time in San Francisco in 2004 and thoroughly enjoyed it. This year at PracTEX in Chapel Hill, NC, I am pleased to re-

port that I got my money's worth each and every day. Let me restate that: I would have paid the full conference fee for the knowledge I gained on *any* of the four days!

I have been using SAS (Statistical Analysis System) for almost 20 years and for the past four years I have been using LATEX to write a book about my SAS programming expertise. As a result of attending PracTEX conferences I have learned new techniques that will make this a better book.

Based on my return on investment and continued use of LATEX: see you next year, for sure.

Peter Flom (National Development and Research Institutes, New York, USA)

I attended the recent PracTEX conference and had a great time. I gave a talk, "A LATEX fledgling struggles to take flight", which was well-received. I learned a lot from the LATEX class I took, the presentations I attended, and from conversations with various people. Despite my newbie status (I've been using LATEX for all of seven months), and despite the fact that many of the people had clearly known each other for years, people could not have been more welcoming. Several people made deliberate efforts to include me in conversations and extra-conference activities. I'm just sorry I had to leave early.

I encourage other beginning users of LATEX to attend future conferences; it's a great way to learn more about the program, to meet a good group of people, and to put faces to the names.

Lance Carnes and Cheryl Ponchin

Joe Hogg (Los Angeles, USA)

I've been using TEX for about a year for booklets, a couple of leaflets and business correspondence. It's been rewarding and many persons who have seen

these documents have liked them. Like many individuals using TeX, and probably most new users, I've worked alone using TeX resources in print and at various web sites.

The Practical TeX 2005 conference in Chapel Hill gave me a better sense of the variety of applications being created and the expertise of individuals using this software. The attendees ranged from computer scientists to end-users like me, individuals from private and university presses, academic typesetters, typesetting-system developers and a nice mix of electronic publishing practitioners involved with both web and print venues.

Besides its conviviality, I value the conference for the new areas it gave me to explore and how what I've learned will change the way I use TeX. Since returning home, I've been looking at ConTeXt and thinking about how I can integrate XML, the web and TeX for two projects I've wanted to tackle for months. I'll also read *TUGboat* and *The PracTeX Journal* with particular interest since I met many of the authors whose articles appear there. Very worthwhile conference.

Tristan Miller (German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence, Germany)

Though I have been using LaTeX for a number of years now, I joined TUG only last November, and Practical TeX 2005 was the first TeX-related conference I have ever attended. The thing that impressed me most about the conference was the sheer diversity of its attendees—there were computer scientists, mathematicians, statisticians, physicists, linguists, publishers, writers, programmers, and even a volunteer zoo worker! The consequence of this variety was that we were all pretty much on equal footing—though some of us had more TeX experience than others, we all seemed to have our own unique uses for it and therefore had something new and valuable to share with the others. I was also delighted to see how friendly and open everyone was with each other. Even though I was a newcomer and had never met the other participants before, I was received warmly and sensed a universal collegiality that is often lacking at larger academic conferences. Having been made to feel so welcome and having learned so much from the other participants, I am eagerly looking forward to attending the next Practical TeX and other TUG conferences.