

Letters

Transatlantic T_EX

To the Editor:

On the morning of May 9 I found a message on my terminal from Uriel Frisch at the Observatoire de Nice overlooking the Riviera. The note said that if I received the message, we were connected through ARPANET, and if I replied he would send a T_EX version of our joint paper. By noon I had a copy in my file space on the VAX at GA. They use a VAX at the observatory. After lunch, Phil Andrews did a little editing, and by 3pm we had a beautiful laser printed copy in our hands. It all worked the first time, and in one day.

The required editing was straightforward. The people in Nice changed the characters {, }, ^, and # to \1, \2, \3, and \4, respectively, to guard against errors in transmission. In addition, we found that all the tildes had been changed to carets.

The world is getting smaller all the time.

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Author vs. proofreader

To the Editor:

As told in the book "Les meilleurs amis du monde", by Raymond Castans, published by J.-C. Lattès :

In a novel by Jacques Audiberti, a woman was saying to her lover:

"Je t'aime, donc je te dirai 'tu'. 'Tu' est beau."
(I love thee, so I shall call thee 'thou'. 'Thou' is beautiful.)

In the second sentence, "tu" is mentioned, not used; that is why the verb is "est" instead of "es"; to say "Thou art beautiful" in French, one says: "tu es beau" : the "t" makes all the difference.

Well, that was too subtle for the proof-readers. They changed the verb to "es". The author was prepared for that, so he changed it back to "est" on the proofs. Second proof-reading: same result, same reaction from the author. Sixth proof-reading: same result, same reaction.

Finally, printing time came. The author went to the place where the book was being printed to make sure things would be done properly. The "t" was there, so he left satisfied.

When he got his first copy of his book, the first thing he checked was that. To his horror, the "t" was gone! As he learned later, during the printing a proof-reader passed by, picked up a torn proof page from the ground, and ordered the machines stopped so that the "t" could be removed...

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