Letter to the Editor
Jonathan Fine

The good name of \TeX

One of the many wonderful things about \TeX{} is that its behaviour is essentially the same, no matter where it runs. \TeX{} is a fixed point, identical on all machines. The same goes for \METAFONT{} and the Computer Modern fonts.

The author of \TeX{}, Donald Knuth, has made it perfectly clear that he does not object to anyone revising \TeX{} (or \METAFONT{}) just as long as the resulting program is called something else. However, he also says “nobody is allowed to call a system \TeX{} or \METAFONT{} unless that system conforms 100\% to the TRIP and TRAP tests”.

He also asks us “to help enforce these wishes, by putting severe pressure on any person or group who produces any incompatible system and calls it \TeX{} or \METAFONT{} or Computer Modern—no matter how slight the incompatibility might seem”.

(Both quotations are from \textit{TUGboat}, 11(4), p489, reprinted in Knuth’s \textit{Collected Papers in Digital Typography}).

In a recent article in \textit{TUGboat} (issue 19(4), p366–371), Petr Olsak describes enc\TeX{}, a not completely compatible revision to \TeX{}. It seems to me that Olsak has not followed Knuth’s wishes in a consistent manner.

Although he calls his new program enc\TeX{}, in his article he talks about \TeX{} this and \TeX{} that when he is referring to Knuth’s \TeX{}, but to his own enc\TeX{}. For example, he describes the creation of enc\TeX{} the program as a “new compilation of the \TeX{} binary” (p367), and throughout the article he talks of ini\TeX{} when in fact he means in enc\TeX{}.

On page 369 he writes “the production version of \TeX{}” when in fact he is referring to his enc\TeX{} program.

Olsak is tackling a real problem faced by \TeX{} users in his own country, and he deserves credit for this. His solution requires an incompatible revision of \TeX{} the program. If this has to be, it has to be. But more care is required in the documentation.

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Reply
Petr Olsak

Jonathan Fine wrote a little response to my article about enc\TeX{} published in \textit{TUGboat} 19(4). He is right in all his arguments. My article was written about an extension of \TeX{}, not about \TeX{} itself. This extension was called enc\TeX{}. The banner was changed. It was my mistake that in some sentences of my article I talk about \TeX{} but I mean my enc\TeX{} extension. Please accept my apology for this. My sentences might add to the confusion about the “name of \TeX{}” for some readers. Jonathan Fine is an example of one such reader. I am sorry.

The primary aim of my article was to show that the correct localisation of \TeX{} in our country is possible only if some extension which is incompatible with the TRIP test is done. The non standard \texttt{xord/xchr/printability} settings are explicitly needed. No matter if these settings are implemented via enc\TeX{}, via TCP tables in em\TeX{}, via TCX tables in web2c\TeX{}, or constant settings are made in some sections of \texttt{tex.web/tex.ch} signed as “system dependent”. The resulting program (usable for our localisation) is impossible to call \TeX{} because the TRIP test explicitly specifies that codes higher than 127 are written in two-circumflex notation into \texttt{write} files and logs.

This feature (incompatible with TRIP) is implemented into some widely used “\TeX{}” distributions: em\TeX{} (with -8 parameter) or web2c\TeX{} (if TCX tables are used or locales are installed and set). This described behavior of web2c\TeX{} implies that it is impossible to call web2c\TeX{} “\TeX{}” if TCX tables are used or locales are installed; yet this distribution is widely known as a \TeX{} distribution. The banner is unchanged. This program is distributed on CDs to all TUG members with the name \TeX{}. This represents more of a problem of the “good name of \TeX{}” than the name-confusion in my article.

In addition, there is the more incompatible extension of web2c\TeX{} from Knuth’s original \TeX{}. I mean its sensitivity on first special line in the \texttt{.tex} source of the document. If the first line of the document starts with “%%” double, then the web2c\TeX{} switches to behavior undocumented in Knuth’s \textit{Computers \& Typesetting} (namely volume A and B). I mean, the web2c\TeX{} is not \TeX{}.

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