In memoriam Bernard Gaulle

Maurice Laugier

The past president and founder of GUTenberg¹ passed away on 2nd August. Here I would like to pay a tribute to him. As our association was unable to be represented at his funeral, we sent a telegram.

Bernard Gaulle was quite discreet, even secret about himself; it has been difficult for us to reconstruct his career. First he was a computer scientist at the Blaise Pascal Institute, part of the CNRS,² grouping scientific and management applications at the end of the 1960s. Then, as soon as the national centre of scientific computer engineering (CIRCE³) was created at Orsay in 1969, he entered it as a system engineer specialised in operating systems like MFT,⁴ ASP, MVS⁵-JESS,⁶ on the IBM⁷ mainframe. He became the head of the user assistance group and stayed on at this position until 1993. In particular, he was in charge of publications (users’ documentation, course manuals, newsletters) and was interested in the rise of DTP⁸ tools. In 1983–84, ‘a researcher turned up in my office, carrying a magnetic tape that came from Stanford,’ he narrated in No. 0 of the GUTenberg Letter, dated February 1993. The history of the beginning of the GUTenberg association can also be found in this issue. That was how he discovered \TeX, was persuaded, and spent his life to promote it not only for scientists—which was quite easy—but also the general public.

About 1984, he set up the SAPRISTI⁹ system at CIRCE. He conceived it out of \TeX, developed it, and got his secretaries to use it. At this time, that was very innovative and ... audacious!¹⁰

In June 1984, he met Jacques André and together they launched a project for a French-speaking \TeX Users Group. Four years were needed in order for this association to be set up. However, Bernard Gaulle was already organising manifestations and represented French-speaking people at the first Euro\TeX conference at Como, Italy. The GUTenberg association was created 23rd September 1988, and Bernard Gaulle was elected President.

He was actively involved in the association and was re-elected President. In this way, he participated in TUG’s board of directors as Vice-President for GUTenberg, then as Special Director for GUTenberg. He regularly published editorials and notes concerning his ideas about \TeX and the association. To get more involved in his own work and his programs outside \TeX, he resigned his position as President in 1992 and passed the office to Alain Cousquer.

Another turning point in his career happened in 1993: CIRCE was replaced by IDRIS.¹¹ Bernard was a chargé de mission by IDRIS’ Director for the distributed systems for scientific computer engineering.

Bernard Gaulle devoted his efforts to the maintenance and diffusion of his \TeX package since 1993. His numerous articles in the Cahiers GUTenberg and GUTenberg Letter informed the French-speaking \TeX community.

At the same time, he was also interested in French legal problems regarding software put on the Internet (he presented a survey about that in Cahiers GUTenberg, No. 25). This led him to create the Litiel¹² association. He became President of this association and was involved in it until his passing, although he had already left IDRIS in May 2005 for health reasons: a cancer he faced bravely.

Bernard did much for both GUTenberg and \TeX in general. He left not only two major works (GUTenberg and \TeXe) but also a recollection of a kind president, pleasant, and devoted. He was very active, resolute in his developments, even pugnacious.

We wish to express our pain and sympathy to his wife, Catherine Gaulle—who participated in preparing GUTenberg and Euro\TeX meetings—and their daughters.

(English translation: Jean-Michel Hufflen. The original appeared in La lettre GUTenberg, numéro 34, octobre 2007.)

¹ Current president of GUTenberg.
² Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. French governmental organisation of scientific research.
³ Centre InterRégional de Calcul Électronique, interregional centre for electronic computation.
⁴ Multiprogramming with a Fixed Number of Tasks.
⁵ Multiple Virtual Storage.
⁶ International Business Machines.
⁷ DeskTop Publishing.
⁸ Système Assisti de PRoduction Intégrant Simplement Textes et Images, literally: ‘assisted production system integrating texts and images easily.
⁹ Bernard Gaulle narrated this part of his life and his problems at this time in two articles of the French group’s journal (Cahiers GUTenberg): the first is included in No. 0 (1988), the second in Nos. 15 and 17 (1993).
¹⁰ Institut du Développement et des Ressources en Informatique Scientifique. Institute of development and resources for scientific computer engineering.
¹¹ From ‘logiciel’, French for ‘software’.
¹² From ‘logiciel’, French for ‘software’.