

News from Around

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Hello there!

This new section is about news from other user groups, news about T_EX, and anything else that seems ‘new’.

This first column is modelled on the old “News from Around”, which appeared in *TTN (T_EX and TUG News)*, a TUG newsletter (hardcopy) which circulated from 1991 till 1995. I was its editor at that time, collecting not only news items but also gathering all the other bits and pieces, and then typesetting it all. This time ‘round, Lance gets to do the editor thing, and I can just play in the News department. Much nicer for me ... less so for him ; -))

But I don’t think this column should be confined to user group news; information on T_EX products is also welcome, as are announcements about books (not just in English). At a certain point, ‘news’ begins to have several sub-categories; in time, some may evolve into their own columns. But right now, let’s say that this is the grab-bag ; -))

Now, let’s get on with the news, shall we?

1 User Group News

Around the beginning of March (2005) I sent queries to all the user groups I could reach (not all addresses seemed to work, though), using the info at the TUG website (<http://www.tug.org/usergroups.html>, which comes from the ‘Electronic LUG Database’ hosted by the NTG). And I was very much surprised to see that there are now 26 user groups! That’s just amazing. In *TTN* 2,1 (Feb. 1993), I compiled a list of groups in existence at that time — there were 11, including TUG. That’s now more than doubled! The page includes some nice quick links to such information as:

- The T_EX calendar (month view, year view) for user group activities. [Courtesy of Dante, this one is *really* neat! –Ch.]
- The TUG Calendar for general T_EX and other typographic activities.
- The list of user group publications and journals.

So, if you want info fast about upcoming meetings, where you may be travelling, this is your one-stop info source.

In this edition, we have reports from the groups in Greece (a report on last year’s TUG meeting, TUG’s 25th meeting), Iceland (formed in Oct. 2003, their first newsletter came out in Dec. 2004), and Poland (details about the upcoming Ba-choT_EX meeting — their 13th). A nice range in “ages”.

1.1 News from Greece and TUG’04, by Apostolos Syropoulos

The 25th annual meeting of the T_EX Users Group took place in Xanthi, Greece at the end of August 2004. The sessions took place in the new amphitheater of the Democritus University of Thrace near the village of Kimeria (2km east of Xanthi).

This year’s theme was “T_EX in the era of XML and Unicode”, with many presentations and discussion groups (note that 20 papers are included in the published proceedings). The intent was to focus on the use of T_EX in the preparation of multilingual, complex documents for various output devices in combination with XML and Unicode. And in the end, a good number of presentations addressed the use of XML in the preparation of bibliographies, the automatic generation of MathML content and other relevant topics.

It was a very interesting event as the attenders had the opportunity to discuss many matters of interest not only to the T_EX community but also to the general community of digital typography. Unfortunately, attendance was not as high as expected, for various reasons and so one did not see the many “familiar” faces one expects to see at every T_EX-related event. But in spite of it all, the meeting was more than successful. First of all, it’s been a long time since the proceedings were available on time. Second, the proceedings appeared as volume 3130 of the prestigious *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* series, published by Springer Verlag. Some were not happy with this decision, but others attended the event precisely because the proceedings *were* published in the LNCS series. And finally, the event

was quite successful because of the discussion about the future of T_EX, which took place on the last day of the conference.

The conference opened with many words of welcome! Basil Papadopoulos of the host university spoke first, followed by Barbara Beeton, on behalf of the T_EX Users Group, and then I myself welcomed everyone to the conference, organized by the Greek T_EX Friends. Even the deputy mayor said a few words!

After the break, we enjoyed a plenary lecture entitled ‘Digital Typography in the New Millenium’, before lunch. From then on, presentations on specific topics were given: Software and Tools, Fonts and Graphics, Electronic Documents, Omega, Critical Editions and Philology. There were also a couple of tutorials, and an unscheduled presentation by Stratos Doumanis about our joint effort to design and implement a font containing the symbols of the Disk of Phaistos.

In the last day’s discussion about T_EX’s future, a number of people argued about the necessity of giving a precise definition to digital typography and an informal specification to the notion of “electronic document”. Many people tend to believe that “digital typography” is about T_EX and its applications, while this is not true. Digital typography is a branch of computer science that deals with electronic documents and their “rendering”. As such, T_EX and its applications indeed fall within the scope of “digital typography”. Naturally, this made a number of people unhappy. Clearly, when someone has invested 10 or even 20 years of his or her life to T_EX programming, then such a statement sounds heretical, at the very least. However, the truth is that we are living in an ever-changing environment and we should adapt.

The other aspect to a successful conference is what one can offer the attendees, who come from far and near and perhaps view a conference as also being a bit of a holiday.

Each year during the last days of summer, the local authorities organize a so-called “Old Town Festival”: another reason we opted to organize the conference during the last days of August. The participants had the opportunity to enjoy the various happenings that took place in Xanthi. Indeed, every evening, groups of participants spent their time in tavernas, enjoying traditional Greek food and a lot of retsina!

The banquet was organized in a nice restaurant, about 2km west of Xanthi. A number of participants won books, generously donated by Addison-Wesley, to whom the organizers are really grateful. In addition, the organizers wish to

express their gratitude to the municipality of Xanthi, which actually paid all expenses for this lovely evening.

The round-table discussion planned for Friday took place sooner, on Wednesday evening, which left Friday free. So we took this opportunity to visit some interesting spots. First of all, we went to the archeological museum of Avdera, home of Democritus, the founder of atomic theory. Next, we went to the site of the ancient town of Avdera itself. There, my son Demetrios-Georgios and George Williams, one of the attendees, attempted to explore the whole area! But, since it was too hot they soon quit! From there, we went to the little monastery of Agios Nikolaos (Santa Klaus!). The little shop there had many interesting offers and some people bought souvenirs. From there we went to Porto-Lagos, a little village by the sea, where people had a chance to taste frappe coffee — the traditional Greek coffee shaken with ice cubes.

On Sunday, the conference was officially over and most delegates left Xanthi for their home countries. However, a number of people stayed and all together we had a beautiful evening in a nice restaurant. Our company included two newcomers: Nelson Beebe's wife and daughter.

For more on the conference:

<http://obelix.ee.duth.gr/tug2004/>

and for pictures:

<http://obelix.ee.duth.gr/tug2004/TUG2004-Images/>

1.2 News from ÍST_EX, by Árni Magnusson

This news came from Árni Magnusson, the founder of ÍST_EX, the infant user group in Iceland (<http://hi.is/pub/istex/>). Árni's very kindly translated the main headings at that page:

- Fréttir ('News'): 18 Oct 2003 ÍST_EX founded
- Hugbúna[eth]ur ('Software'): Icelanders require babel, fontenc, and cm-super
- Félagatal ('Members'): 77
- *SamanT_EX*t ('Newsletter'): first issue published in Dec 2004
- Árnasafn ('PDF catacombs'): 218 T_EX-related articles and manuals

As mentioned, ÍsT_EX have just published their first newsletter, *SamanT_EXt*, and Arni's translated the table of contents:

- ÍsT_EX's first birthday
- Introduction to L^AT_EX for students
- Distilling, Icelandic style
- Writing in SGML
- *The L^AT_EX Companion*, 2nd edition

1.3 News from GUST, by Jolanta Szelatynska

The 13th Annual Meeting of GUST, the Polish T_EX Users Group, BachoT_EX 2005, will be held from April 30 to May 3, 2005, in Bachotek (the Brodnica Lake District), Poland. As usual, the meeting will be held at the Nicolaus Copernicus University (<http://www.uni.torun.pl/en>) Bachotek lake resort.

T_EX users from all around the world are invited to join and contribute. The languages of the meeting are Polish and English. The webpage for the meeting is:

<http://www.gust.org.pl/BachoTeX/2005/en>

This year's conference aims to serve as a reminder that the strength and longevity of T_EX stems from its high quality. This quality should be mirrored in the traditional and electronic publications made with T_EX, hence the title of the conference: "The Art of T_EX Programming".

The main thread of the conference should thus be artful techniques leading to the utmost exploitation of T_EX's and accompanying software's high quality.

The idea is to create a forum for exchanging experience gained from creating high-quality publications as well as providing opportunities for new users of T_EX to find out how such quality might be achieved.

A previously very successful informal crash course of the Polish language for non-Polish speakers will be held for volunteers.

Simultaneous peer-to-peer translations during presentations given in Polish will be organized at request.

A very brief list of presentations already scheduled includes:

- Piotr Bolek: IPC w \TeX -u (IPC in \TeX)
- Taco Hoekwater: Automatic conversion of “allrunes” metafont sources to MetaType1
- Bogusław Jackowski i Janusz M. Nowacki: Mniej czyli więcej czyli co w LM-ach piszczy (Less is more or what’s up with LM’s)
- Wojciech Myszka: \LaTeX a logotyp Politechniki Wrocławskiej (\LaTeX and the Wrocław University of Technology logotype)
- Andrzej Tomaszewski: Sto pociech i dwieście utrapień z realizacją pomysłów redaktora (Implementing editor’s ideas—lots of joy, sometimes even more trouble)
- Birds of a Feather: Wojciech Myszka: FAQ GUST

The deadline for registration is April 15th, 2005. The conference proceedings will be published as a special issue of the GUST bulletin.

1.4 News from TUG,¹ by Robin Laakso

1.4.1 Presidential election underway

There are two candidates for TUG President: Karl Berry and Lance Carnes. Paper ballots were mailed to TUG members 6 April, 2005. If you would like to participate in the election, you can do so by joining TUG (<http://www.tug.org//join.html>) or by renewing your TUG membership as soon as possible. Ballots must be post-marked by 17 May, 2005, and received by 31 May, 2005. For more details about the election, please see <http://tug.org/election/>.

1.4.2 Two TUG conferences slated for 2005

Practical \TeX 2005 will take place in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, June 14–17, 2005. The keynote speaker will be Nelson Beebe, and many other excellent speakers are planning to attend. Please see the website for information and registration

¹[*Note from the Ed.*: The TUG home page <http://www.tug.org/> has a News section which provides updates on *TUGboat* mailings, and, currently, the election for president, along with links to find out about upcoming and recent events.]

details: <http://tug.org/practicaltex2005/>. The four-day conference focuses on practical techniques for document production using L^AT_EX, T_EX, ConT_EXt, MetaPost, and friends. It includes one day of classes and tutorials, followed by three days of presentations and workshops. We hope to see you there!

TUG 2005 will take place in Wuhan, China, August 20–25, 2005, sponsored by TUG and CTUG (the Chinese T_EX User Group). Wai Wong with Hong Kong Baptist University is the scheduled keynote speaker. TUG2005 is the T_EX Users Group 26th annual conference, and our first ever in mainland China! Please see the website for information and registration details: <http://tug.org/tug2005/>. We hope to see you in China, too!

1.4.3 New at the TUG website

The Interview Corner (<http://tug.org/interviews/>) on the TUG website continues to grow, thanks to Dave Walden, coordinator (and new TUG board member). There are now interviews with Lance Carnes, Robin Fairbairns, Klaus Hoeppe, Dan Luecking, Victor Eijkhout and Christina Thiele, with more to come. I encourage you to take a moment to check out this new feature on the TUG website. It's always interesting to learn how people came upon T_EX!

1.4.4 TUG Heritage Project, from Wendy McKay

There is a project underway to make a history of the T_EX Users Group. We would like to contact as many people as possible who have been involved with TUG since its founding in 1980. We're looking for details, anecdotes, reminiscences, etc. Photos from the early meetings would be especially welcome.

If you were/are an early TUG member, have a knack for history, or would just like to participate in this project, contact us at pracjourn@tug.org, subject "TUG Heritage Project".

1.5 News from UKTUG

Important Notice: At present (mid-April), the long-standing UKTUG addresses ending in @tex.ac.uk are not functioning. They will be back in operation by the time the next issue of TPJ comes out.

The website address is `uk.tug.org`. For now, enquiries regarding the group should be sent directly to the Chair, Jay Hammond:

`uktug@homemade.free-online.co.uk`

2 T_EX News

2.1 Y&Y now gone

The Y&Y company, in business since 1991, has now ceased operations. Y&YT_EX users can still find support at the `yandytex` list, graciously hosted by Peter Flynn at University College Cork:

`http://lists.ucc.ie/lists/archives/yandytex.html`

The archives go back to Feb. 2003, when a user-based support list was first established.

2.2 L^AT_EX3 News

Here's the latest from the project website (`http://www.latex-project.org`):

2.2.1 L^AT_EX3 development code available through the web (February 22, 2005)

A page dedicated to the development code of L^AT_EX3 has been added. It has pointers to the web interface to the CVS repository and the packages of the experimental L^AT_EX3 code.

2.2.2 Minor changes to LPPL (October 11, 2004)

The L^AT_EX project public license, version 1.3a, has been released. It includes a correction in the warranty section (the phrase “unless required by applicable law” got lost at some point) and clarification on the difference between “maintained” and “author-maintained”.

2.2.3 Contributed documentation (October 8, 2004)

A section on contributed documentation has been started in the documentation area. The first pointer it contains is to Andrew Roberts' collection of L^AT_EX tutorials.

2.3 Accessing CTAN holdings more easily

To keep up with what's being posted to CTAN — our favourite place to rummage around in — you can subscribe (and very easily, I might add) to the `ctan-ann` list. Go to

`http://www.tug.org/ctan.html`

and look for the “CTAN Updates” section. Otherwise, just poke your head into `http://ctan.loria.fr/ctan-ann/` and see all the latest package postings listed for the last 3 months.

Oh, while you're there, look at `http://ctan.loria.fr/`, which is the ‘CTAN Navigator’. It's in French, but the meanings are pretty obvious (*miroir* ‘mirror’, *les interfaces* ...). Well, you get the idea — it's not Greek!² Anyways, another nice way to find things on CTAN.

²Just so no-one gets offended: in English, when something's incomprehensible, we often say “it's Greek to me!”; the French, on the other hand, complain that “C'est du chinois!”; and so on and so forth. An interesting avenue to explore some day ...