The Spread of \TeX in India

The Role of Outsourced Typesetting

Ajit Ranade
ABN AMRO Bank, India
ajit.ranade@abnamro.com
10 January 2003

Abstract Unlike many other countries, the spread of \TeX in India was strongly catalysed by the increasing outsourcing of typesetting, especially by publishers of scientific journals and books. Users from Indian academic institutions played a marginal role in the initial push of \TeX in India. Indeed the Indian \TeX Users Group, which is now five years old was the result of the initiative of a commercial typesetting outfit. The outsourcing momentum continues to be strong, fuelled by newer standards and technologies such as XML, and the demand for documents that can be disseminated across different media, such as e-books and internet. There is now a critical mass of \TeX users across different vendors, who depend on \TeX for their livelihood. But there are significant challenges to harness this critical mass for \TeX becoming more wide-spread. Skills spillover outside of typesetting vendors seems to be inhibited by commercial considerations. Training remains an underdeveloped area, especially since the user base in academic institutions is still small. However the exciting development of Indic \TeX with a simultaneous increase in literacy and readership of vernacular press offers an opportunity for a much bigger scope for \TeX in India, given the low cost that \TeX implies for publishing. In this paper we analyse these trends, and identify the challenges and opportunities for the greater deployment of \TeX in India.