

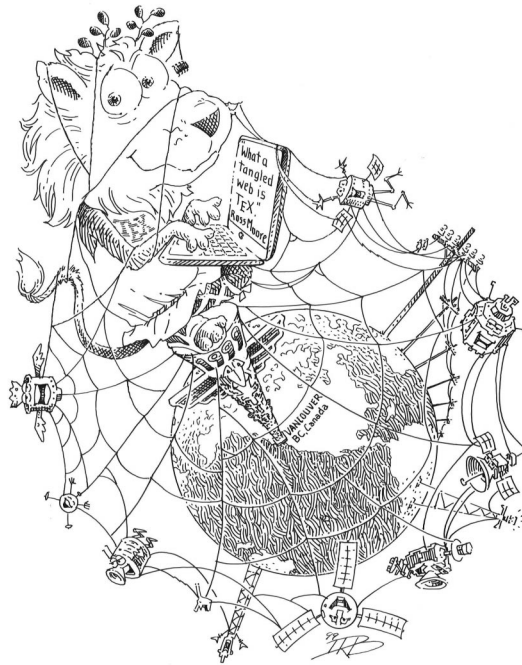
TUG '99: Poetry Reading in the Rose Garden.

edited by
Ross Moore, Wendy McKay, and Sebastian Rahtz



Discover your **wit**, **wisdom**, and **way** with words
in verse on the TUG'99 theme

TeX Online: Untangling the Web and TeX



from the quotation

“Oh, what a tangled web is $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ ”

—ROSS MOORE
(with apologies to SIR WALTER SCOTT [1771-1832],
“Oh, what a tangled web we weave . . . ”
Marmion, canto vi, stanza 17)

The WWW Illustrated Version of
TUG '99 Poetry Reading in the Rose Garden
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<http://www.tug.org/tug99/bulletin/poems/>

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1 Introduction

I suppose it happens to all of us. Most days we just go through our drab lives, writing LaTeX code, running dvips, staring at laser-printer output, arguing about XML; but then something cracks, our brain spins, and we pretend for whole moments at a time that we are, after all, the rightful poetic heirs to Shakespeare and Goethe. Luckily, we do not often get our masterpieces onto paper, but at the TUG'99 conference delegates were treated to a rare display of collective insane poetasting.

Ross Moore and Wendy McKay started it all, by setting up a poetry competition before the meeting, but they had the idea that people would take it *seriously*, and compose 'masterpieces of the poetic art'. When it came to the line, though, entries were thin on the ground, so what to do? Appeal to people's worst instincts, of course, by reading doggerel to them between talks! This was proving amusing enough by the Wednesday of the conference that we had the idea of a public reading in the Rose Garden of the University Campus, overlooking the sea. It seemed an innocent enough idea.

TeX people are, however, nothing if not perfectionists. No, not just a reading, it had to be a proper party; no, we could not just read poetry, we had to dress up in bardic uniform; no, not just any uniform, but like that wretched lion in The Book; yes, with the laurel twigs.*sigh*, as they say on the Internet. Worst of all, people brought cameras!

The results, poetic and photographic, follow. Great art it ain't, mostly, but we hope you'll be a little amused by it all. Myself, I think the beer (illegal in a public place in Canada) helped; about the local mango cider, I am less sure. I wonder what the bemused passers-by made of it all?

Prizes? Yes, we had some winners. For unadulterated audacious stealing, [Fred Bartlett's](#) Hamlet bore away a token; for pure cool *style*, [Michael Downes'](#) haiku gained the wreath; for poetic talent, [Pierre MacKay](#) probably came as near art as anyone; and for his out-and-out politically incorrect (but hideously funny) 'goodness gracious me' readings, [Kaveh Bazargan](#) surely got the most applause.

—Sebastian Rahtz

2 ‘Borrowings’

2.1 The Rape of the Package

WHAT dire options from am’rous macros springs,
What mighty errors rise from a Trivial `\special`,
I sing—This Verse to Don Knuth, Muse! is due;
This, ev’n **Carlisle** may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the markup, but not so the PDF,
If Frank inspire, and Chris approve my docstrip.
Say what strange catcodes, Fine! cou’d compel
A well-bred **hacker** t’assault a gentle **LaTeX**?
Oh say what stranger keyword value, yet unprogramm’d,
Cou’d make **CTAN** reject a **non-free** package ?
And dwells such power in active characters then?
And do XML and XSL excite so much?

—stolen by Sebastian Rahtz

2.2 The Journey of the `TeX`s

“A cold coding we had of it,
Just the worst package from `TeXLive`
For a document, and such a long document:
The macros long and the braces many,
The very pits of `TeX`.”
And the tables hard, badly aligned, refractory,
Misplaced `omit` in every `\multicolumn`.
There were times we regretted
The dependence on `longtable`, the use of `pdfmark`,
And the `hyperref` macros breaking our `\cite s`.
Then the authors cursing and grumbling
And using Macintoshes, and wanting their Framemaker and Word,
And the editor crashing, and the graphics corrupted,
And the `setup.exe` hostile and CTAN unfriendly
And the usergroups dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to work in XML,
Validating as we went,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.
Then at `</tei.2>` we came to the end of the process,
valid, with all elements ended, all IDREFs satisfied,
With an XSL stylesheet, and even a version for IE5
And three HTML versions already on the Web.
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.

—stolen by Sebastian Rahtz

2.3 To T_EX or not to T_EX

To T_EX, or not to T_EX: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler on the page to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous software,
Or to write code against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? Use Word? Use Quark?
No more! For such as they could never end
The heartache and the thousand unnatural shocks
That type is heir to.

LaT_EXe*?

Devoutly to be wish'd! Or Quark to T_EX?
To T_EX? Now there's a dream. And here's the rub:
From that disguisèd T_EX the dream may come
That T_EX should shuffle off this mortal coil,
So should we pause? There's no respect
For T_EX in all of its long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of Frame,
WordPerfect's wrong, Microsoft's contumely,
The pangs of despis'd T_EX, Incontext's delay,
The insolence of Active T_EX and the spurns
That patient Wizards of th' WYSIWYGers take,
When he himself might his quietus make
In a plain T_EX style? Who would authors bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after T_EX,
The undiscover'd standard from ISO
And W3C, puzzles the will
And makes us rather love the type we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
T_EX's enterprise of great pith and moment
With XML its currents join anon,
And gain the funds of moguls.

—stolen by Fred Bartlett

2.4 Purple haze

Purple haze is in my BRAIN
MathML is such a PAIN
Give me T_EX, and DVI
'Scuse me while I kiss Blue Sky.

—stolen by Don Deland

3 Doggerel

3.1 The Young Lady of Stanford

There was a young lady from Stanford
who delighted to play with Mac Word
she met a Don Knuth
who told her the truth
and now what she enjoys is absurd.

—Sebastian Rahtz and Patrick Ion

4 Haikus

4.1 A T_EX Haiku

```
\expandafter\def
\csname def\endcsname
{\message{farewell}}\bye
```

—Sebastian Rahtz

4.2 A T_EXnician's Haiku

This haiku for T_EXnicians consists entirely of T_EX control sequences; furthermore, it forms a valid T_EX assignment statement—provided that a certain control sequence that is normally undefined is defined in an obvious way.

Can you identify the control sequence in question^a

```
\catcode\csname
\romannumeral\parshape
\endcsname\month
```

—Michael Downes

^aAnswer is on page 11

5 **T_EX musings**

5.1 **Musings from the Bard**

Oh, what a tangled web is T_EX,
or so it seems at the outset;
for highest quality, the best to look,
Oh why did I choose to typeset my own book!

.....

For Macintosh users the skies are quite blue,
with Barry to help you and Ben Salzburg too.
With Art, Ross, and Uwe ready to assist,
just send a short email to Gary Gray's (Textures) list.

.....

If shareware-type software is more to your taste,
your super-fast Power-Mac need not go to waste.
There's CMac- and Direct-T_EX to lessen the sorrow,
and that great program OzT_EX, by Andrew Trevorrow.

.....

For Unix-like platforms the software's all free,
with a teT_EX installation from the T_EX-Live CD,
which collects all the pieces and orders all parts,
Thanks to Thomas Esser, Kaja, and Sebastian Rahtz.

.....

Leslie Lamport created LaT_EX nearly fifteen years ago.
It evolved into 2-epsilon by a process rather slow.
Improvements are numerous; results you can see.
Thanks to Carlisle, Mittelbach and Rowley,
It'll be even better with release LaT_EX3.

.....

For PostScript Type1 fonts exquisitely drawn,
The expert is Berthold, whose surname is Horn.
Where the yin meets the yang in the great cosmic goo,
Don't get this name mixed up with Louis Vosloo.

—Ross Moore

5.2 **T_EX-cess**

Oh, what a tangled web is T_EX,
what you need to reach success.
To make sure you don't get a reject,
why not get some help from T_EX.

—Peggy Kempker

5.3 The Hidden Passions of Mathematicians

Step into the garden of conjectures and see
my Julia sets are uniformly perfect.
Forget your nilpotence and steenrod algebras,
my theta divisor is very ample.
In this land of lemmata,
you'll glide with the smoothness of Kelley
while I, I'll gather the perverse sheaves
and quivers, and we'll dance
'til our zeta functions converge.
Sipping modular moonshine, we'll reach
the highest eigenvalue without effort.
In this holomorphic vector field
with totally degenerate zeroes,
we may even discover the essence of chaos.

—Debra Kaufman ^a

^aI don't have a T_EX-themed poem, alas, but I do have one appropriate to another T_EX theme this year- -mathematics and publishing. Here's my tribute to the unsung sexy heroes of mathematics. All phrases are bona fide mathematics terms of art. Really!

5.4 Sonnet from the ill-at-ease.

Oh what a tangled web we get
when first we practice to typeset.
And so we read T_EX master Knuth
Hoping to Obtain some truth.
Or else we read through the book of Spivak
but end up simply crying Alack!
And then we go and **join** the **TUG**
trying to make our process chug.
Beginners know why the rhyme for T_EX
is often the frustrated Blecchh.
I can't even get a .dvi file,
and you think T_EX to HTML will make me smile?

And yet I know if I abandon the Lion,
With any other package I'll surely be cryin'.
—Joseph Haubrich

5.5 A T_EX Thesis

Breathes there the man with the eye so blind
Who never for himself can find
The $\$cos\$sine$, ‘c’ times ‘o’ times ‘s’
The `\acronym` run on to the rest
The sentence ending at *et al.*
Although no verb shall yet befall
Until a phrase two lines below
The endquotes where the quotes should go?

If such there be, away go he
To Delaware for a Ph.D.!
The thesis clerk no more shall check;
The only folks to judge his T_EX
Are senior faculty, by norm
Concerned with content, not with form
His approval page they’ll surely sign;
The publisher, with wit sublime,
His words in XML encases;
And, should he be obscure in places,
With sentence structure ill-prepared,
His authorship will now be shared:

Credit will to the copy editor belong
Grammatically correct, but scientifically wrong.
—Stephen Fulling

6 Conference reflections

6.1 Ode to a `\special`

Oh what a tangled web we get
When first we find `\def` and `\futurelet`.
We turn to e \TeX , we turn to Omega,
They both look good, we start to get eager.
But no, what's this, a misplaced `\omit`?
Did we miss a brace, does `\vbox` still not fit?
Help me fix my macros, bracket heroes all!
But Pierre's font is calling, Lamport's left the hall
Barbara says use `\downcase`, Downes just strokes his beard.
Erik sells me 4 \TeX , pretends he never heard.
David's hacking tables, Frank is fixing floats,
Ogawa's talking slowly, Kacvinsky wants his oats.
Will Kaveh help me out? No, his dhoti's dirty,
Nelson's feeding awks, Mimi's feeling flirty.
Flynn says use a rubber, Wendy needs a hug,
Kath has got the answer, no it's just another mug.
Young Ross is such a hoot, he says use `xypic`
Why not turn to Sojka, he's sure to know the trick.
Anita, a Hoover, what use to me's a dam?
Send me out with Kiren, we'll both go on the lam.
Irina claims 'for us in Mir is no problem',
TRIUMF uses `\mathcode` but `\hspace`s just one em.
True \TeX does it both ways, and you can trust the Blue Sky
but `hyperref` the backend, oh why oh why oh why?

Active \TeX , Passive \TeX , what a great to-do,
Can there be yet some way through?
MathML has pointies, XSL can claim its templates
ExerQuiz is **so** cute—so screw you, Billy Gates.

—Sebastian Rahtz

6.2 TUG '99 musings

Mr. Fine, with the eye of the sleuth
has discovered why \TeX is uncouth,
that its catcodes are many
when there shouldn't be any
Has anyone told Donald Knuth?

Mr. Flynn is now running on La-
 \TeX , and finds, when the tread starts to fray,
he can patch up the rules
with his vulcanize tools,
pump them up, and be back on his way.

Though some of you authors may fret
about how every page should be set
and think what you see
and what it must be
Mr. Bazargan says what you get.

—Pierre MacKay

6.3 (untitled)

I thought I would never see
poetry, written by Chimpanzee
But given T_EX and infinite time
I'll steal it and call it mine.

—Donald Arseneau

A TEXnicians Haiku

```
\catcode\csname
\romannumeral\parshape
\endcsname\month
```

—Michael Downes

Answer:

The control sequence is that uniquely weird one known as `\csname\endcsname`, the no-name control sequence. What I meant by "defined in an obvious way" was that `\csname\endcsname` should be defined to have an integer value in the proper range for the first argument of a catcode statement—an <8-bit number> in the syntax rules of TeXbook Chapter 24. This could be accomplished in many different ways, but here are some of the more likely ones:

```
\expandafter \def\csname\endcsname{0}
\expandafter \let\csname\endcsname=\day
\expandafter \chardef\csname\endcsname=' \*
\expandafter \newcount\csname\endcsname
```

An example of a valid but non-obvious definition would be

```
\expandafter\def\csname\endcsname#1{#1#1}
```

Then in September the haiku statement would change the category of the tab character to 'ignore' while in October it would change the category of `^J` to 'space'. By the way, it seems to be a minor deficiency of plain TeX that is not initialized with the same definition as for `^M`, because if you try to enter ' \ ' (control-space) at the end of an error-recovery insertion, the final space gets silently discarded following TeX's normal practice of discarding whitespace at the end of a line, and the unsuspecting user gets an error message:

```
! Undefined control sequence.
1.1 Foo car \TeX
           and then
? i\TeX\
```

[In the above line I entered ' \ ' as the last thing on the line.]

```
! Undefined control sequence.
  \TeX\
1.1 Foo car \TeX
           and then
?
```

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TUG'99

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