
Editorial Comments

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T_EX users are certainly aware that their “favorite text processing system” is used to typeset documents in many languages. There are some problems, of course — fonts, hyphenation patterns, etc., etc. Nonetheless, with determination and help from other users these can usually be overcome.

Recent issues of *TUGboat* have presented information on ancient Latin hyphenation and the Croatian Glagolitic alphabet, and in this issue is an article on the *pinyin* representation of Chinese. There is also an almost constant stream of queries on the electronic discussion lists concerning fonts or hyphenation patterns for various languages. For many of these languages there are no easily accessible, or affordable, typesetting tools other than T_EX

Gaelic

While some of these languages are spoken by large numbers of people, some of them are spoken by only a dwindling few. I always find it encouraging to hear about successes with languages that not long ago seemed to be heading toward extinction.

One TUG member, captivated by what he saw and heard while he was in Cork a couple of years ago for the T_EX90 conference, spent much of last summer in Ireland learning Irish Gaelic. Irish has been taught in primary and secondary schools for some time, but only relatively recently have there been schools where instruction is completely in Gaelic; of all the Gaelic languages, Irish is now one of the least endangered. There is a discussion list for T_EXies interested in this area: ITALIC-L (for “Irish T_EX And L^AT_EX Interest Conference List”). Anyone interested in joining the discussion should send the message `Subscribe ITALIC-L your full name` to `listserv@irlearn.bitnet`.

The news has recently come to me that there may be a renaissance of Scottish Gaelic as well. This is even encouraged by the government through support of Gaelic television programming (news, a weekly soap opera, and an hour or two daily of other programs) and instruction in schools. There is a new college, “Sabhal Mor Ostaig” (“the big barn at Ostaig”), devoted to Scottish Gaelic and other topics central to Scottish traditional culture, such as piping and singing. Scottish Gaelic books are now set mainly in IPA (the International Phonetic Alphabet), but I understand that people involved in this area are watching the development of character set

standards to see how they might affect the ability to process the language effectively. I’d like to thank Phil Taylor for calling this to my attention.

Erratum: British hyphenation

It’s been pointed out (by Dominik Wujastyk; thank you very much) that a statement I made concerning British hyphenation (*TUGboat* 13, no. 4, p. 452), namely that “it’s considered bad style to hyphenate a word after only two letters” is somewhat extreme. As Dominik put it, “A glance at any of the hyphenation dictionaries for British English will immediately show hundreds of examples of *xx-* words.” The key, then, is to hyphenate according to etymology.

Anders Thulin, in a message to `comp.text.tex` (11 February 1993), presented some cogent comments on why syllabification is not necessarily an adequate guide:

It should probably be noted that most dictionaries show syllable division rather than hyphenation points. In many cases, they are the same, but many typographers, being more concerned with clarity than syllabification, won’t accept potentially misleading hyphenation points.

“anal-y-sis” is probably the most famous of these. *analy-sis* is the best hyphenation, since *anal-ysis* can lead the reader to assume some *anal-related* term is used.

[...] it would be only a minor confusion, and one that would be unlikely to remain. But if enough points of confusion are accumulated, the reader will probably stop reading altogether. The problem would not be with the text, but in the presentation of it: in the typography. And that kind of problem used to be avoided.

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