

TeXConf 2018 in Japan

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On Saturday 10 November I attended the yearly conference of Japanese TeX users, TeXConf 2018,¹ which this year took place in Sapporo, Hokkaido.

TEXCONF 2018

SAPPORO 2018.11.10

Having attended several international TeX conferences, I am always surprised how many Japanese TeX users find their way to this yearly meeting. This year we were about 50 participants. We had five full talks and two lightning talks, followed by a very enjoyable dinner and after-party.

The first talk was by Takuto ASAKURA (朝倉卓人), ‘11mk — The light L^AT_EX Make’² (slides³). Takuto gave a short overview of the available TeX make alternatives and why he saw the need for a new tool, which is written in texlua. After some short examples of usage he mentioned a few advanced usage scenarios. He will write an article for *TUGboat* and plans to present 11mk at the TUG 2019 conference in the USA. As an old-school guy I prefer `make`, which is by far more powerful, but I welcome additions to make building TeX documents easier. My only wish would be a *no-markup-do-your-best* build system — guess I will start writing my own ;-).

Next up was my own talk on ‘Continuous integration testing for TeX Live’ (slides⁴), where I got into the nitty-gritty details of DevOps for TeX Live — mirroring the Subversion repos into git, and linking them to CI services, as well as using deployments to get binaries back. I hope to have an article about this ready for the next *TUGboat*.

After lunch, Takashi SUWA (諏訪 敬之) presented his work on a new typesetting system with a static type system, SATySFi.⁵ With his background in formal verification, Takashi took an interesting approach to typesetting. Due to the complete static typing of the input source, error messages can be much more informative — one of Takashi’s biggest complaints with current TeX, but it also makes the input format a bit bothersome in my opinion. For me one of DEK’s biggest achievements is the definition of a no-thrills, easy to read and write, input

format for mathematics. Takashi has also written a book documenting SATySFi, and I have urged him to make an English translation.

The next talk was by Keiichiro ISHINO (石野 恵一郎) on ‘Breaking paragraphs into lines with the AHFormatter’⁶ (slides⁷), a commercial typesetting program targeting businesses with XSL-FO, CSS, XML, ... formatting abilities. It was very interesting to see how commercial products deal with the very same problems we are facing.

Hironori KITAGAWA (北川弘典) reported on the state of `luatex-ja`⁸ (slides⁹), in particular his work on line adjustments in the presence of inline math formulas, as well as usage of the `luatex-fontspec` sub-package. I cannot repeat it often enough — I consider `luatex-ja` one of the most important packages and it is in daily use on my site.

The day closed with two lightning talks, the first by Keiichiro SHIKANO (鹿野桂一郎) on the usage of Encapsulated PostScript (`eps`) files in TeX (slides¹⁰). Unfortunately, he didn’t really rehearse his talk and his time was over before it got interesting ;-). Fortunately, we can read his slides online.

The last talk was by Hironobu YAMASHITA (山下弘展) on ‘How to become happy when typesetting Japanese with L^AT_EX’ (slides¹¹). A very funny and informative talk on the incredible work Hironobu is doing for the TeX community — development of *many* packages, support, and updates of the source code of several programs; the list is long.

I love to attend TeX meetings, and the Japanese TeXConf is in particular always interesting, in particular because TeXies here have a tendency to be rather tech-savvy, one could even say `\expandafter`-manic. This was in fact the biggest complaints during our walk to the dinner location — not enough mention of `\expandafter` in the talks.

It is now nearly ten years that I’ve been attending the Japanese TeX user meetings, and I think we have come a long way — from a rather separate group of TeX developers and users distributing their stuff on Japanese-only wikis and private pages to a group that is now strongly integrated into our global TeX community (let me just mention the TUG conference in Tokyo¹²) as well as contributing to many projects. Thanks a lot!

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¹ tug.org/1/4A0k8

² tug.org/1/9JuCN

³ tug.org/1/72koH

⁴ tug.org/1/5g6hV

⁵ tug.org/1/y7Nd1

⁶ tug.org/1/5WRrP

⁷ tug.org/1/7fLd4

⁸ tug.org/1/T7tVg

⁹ tug.org/1/PbYI5

¹⁰ tug.org/1/0M4yt

¹¹ tug.org/1/3DIur

¹² tug.org/1/Dq5GI