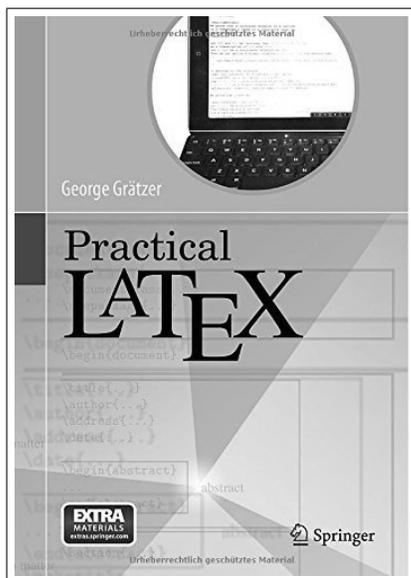


Book review: *Practical L^AT_EX*,
by George Grätzer

William Adams

George Grätzer, *Practical L^AT_EX*, [http://www.springer.com/new+%26+forthcoming+titles+\(default\)/book/978-3-319-06424-6](http://www.springer.com/new+%26+forthcoming+titles+(default)/book/978-3-319-06424-6). Paperback, 216 pp., Springer, 2014.



For those interested, Grätzer is also the author of *Math Into L^AT_EX*, *More Math Into L^AT_EX*, several other L^AT_EX books, and many non-L^AT_EX books also.

Practical L^AT_EX is a slim, well-named volume, since it is eminently practical. It is an excellent introductory text, covering contemporary markup, macros and packages, eschewing obsolete material. Covering the essentials of document production including niceties such as B^IB^T_EX and T_ik_Z, it is an excellent, up-to-date introduction which one can hand to any potential user with confidence that it will help them to rapidly achieve a basic proficiency allowing for the production of documents with an efficiency which would be the envy of other tools.

Nicely designed and typeset, it covers document elements including text, environments, formulas, illustrations, symbols and bibliographies as well as

presentations and the customization of L^AT_EX. The coverage of illustrations is especially nice, including both the basics of placing image files using the `graphicx` package and creating illustrations using the code-oriented tool T_ik_Z (this chapter is based on Jacques Crémer’s publicly available *A very minimal introduction to T_ik_Z*).

There is an excellent index as well as several very useful appendices for symbols and commands which also make the book a useful quick reference.

If the book has a flaw, it is the rather inexplicable appendix “L^AT_EX on the iPad” which unnecessarily limits itself to a specific platform and swerves into a political screed which at once complains that the GNU Public License (GPL) “stops you from having it used on the fastest growing platform of all time” while at the same time discussing several different L^AT_EX apps for the iPad which are capable of typesetting L^AT_EX documents.

As an historical footnote and commentary: Duncan P. Steele of Valletta Ventures had initially authored a blog post complaining of the L^AT_EX codebase and noting that the GPL licensing of the mainstream T_EX distributions made producing a T_EX editor for the iPad impossible due to the interactions of Apple’s licensing and the GPL, <http://vallettaventures.com/2011/12/10/messy-latex/>. However, after being informed of the existence of KerT_EX (<http://www.kergis.com/en/kertex.html>), which is available under a permissive license, and being convinced that T_EX itself was available in the public domain, Steele was able to produce a version of T_EXpad which runs on the iPad: <http://vallettaventures.com/2012/09/07/texpad-ipad-v1.1/>.

Highly recommended for beginners, in particular those who might wish to make use of L^AT_EX on their iPad, as well as the occasional user who needs a reference. An updated version which eschewed the political commentary and included coverage of at least one of the many L^AT_EX editors for Android tablets would be especially welcome.

◇ William Adams
608 Wayne Drive
Mechanicsburg, PA
willadams (at) aol dot com