

Chair and acting Secretary's report — UK TUG 2008

22 November 2008

I have served two years as Chair of UK TUG, and being elected unopposed this year will serve for another two. This then is a good opportunity not only to review this year's activities but also to take a longer view. I thank you for allowing me to serve the T_EX community in this way.

When I rejoined the committee in 2005 UK was a largely inactive organisation. As a result largely of the efforts of myself, Jonathan Underwood and Charles Goldie, with help from the London Mathematical Society, we organised in 2006 a very successful one-day L^AT_EX training workshop in London. In 2007 we held a fairly successful meeting on Mathematics and electronic publishing at the Open University (my employer) in Milton Keynes.

This year's meeting arises out of the international TUG conference in Cork earlier this year. I organised a table at lunch for the people from the UK to eat together and get to know each other, and encouraged those present to give talks at this year's AGM. I think we'll have a good meeting, and I thank particularly the speakers Edd Barrett, Dave Crossland, Jelle Huisman, Joseph Wright (and myself).

Our major other activity during the last two years was distributing EuroT_EX proceedings and T_EX Live DVDs, and formulating a draft new Constitution.

You have now voted on (in large numbers) on the Constitution and I'm confident that it will be approved by a large majority. This helps us clean some of the confusion that has existed in the past, and gives us a clear basis for making the society more electronic and on-line. In case you didn't know, even though we are not a charity we took the Charities Commission model constitution and adapted it to our needs. David Saunders, besides handling our finances in a quiet and efficient way, also provided much of the energy for this process.

I'd like to thank Jay Hammond, my predecessor as Chair and at the start of this year Membership Secretary, for the work he's put in over the years. He won't be standing for re-election to the Committee this year, and he deserves the break. Dave Crossland, amidst a busy year studying and earning a living, has continued as webmaster and is now the Membership Secretary. Thank you Dave.

Jonathan Underwood has applied his technical expertise and energy to our programme of funding T_EX-related projects that benefit our members. Jonathan has been very good at soliciting your comments on how our funds should be applied, and this has been a tremendous help.

John Trapp, my colleague at the Open University but based in Cambridge, has with help from our society run L^AT_EX training for his students, and sends his apologies for this year's AGM because he's doing it again today. He's sent us a full report on his previous session. Thank you John.

Simon Dales was co-opted after last year's AGM and although he's not been as active as others this year, his presence on the committee has helped to heal some of the rifts and conflicts we have sadly had in the past.

Alastair Ward joined the Committee at last year's AGM and encouraged us to do more to help new users. This was very helpful, particularly as most committee members have long forgotten the difficulties they had when starting out. To my regret, he resigned during the year.

I thank all the Committee members, and look forward to working with many of them next year. At this point, here is my report as acting Secretary.

The 2007–8 Committee consisted of

- Dave Crossland
- Simon Dales (coopted)

- Jonathan Fine (chair)
- Charles Goldie
- Jay Hammond (coopted)
- David Saunders (treasurer)
- John Trapp
- Jonathan Underwood
- Alastair Ward (since resigned)
- Joseph Wright (coopted)

Our constitution requires two-thirds of our committee to stand down, starting with the coopted members. This year Dave Crossland was chosen by lot to stand down, and as he was the only valid nomination he is re-elected unopposed. Joseph Wright, who joined only a few weeks ago, wishes to continue but due to travel was unable to get the form in on time. I'm sure we'll co-opt him.

So many thanks to our retiring members — Simon, Jay and Alastair, and best wishes for those who are continuing. This is the end of my report as acting Secretary and, I hope, my assumption of this duty.

There are tremendous needs and opportunities for T_EX in the UK, many related to the continuing rise of the web, but also in our core activity of helping people writing beautiful books, papers and theses, particularly those containing mathematics. The liason and guidance we have from Charles Goldie, who is also General Secretary of the LMS, is very valuable here.

Looking forward to the next two years, I would like us to start a recruitment drive based on UK TUG being a organisation helpful to people who provide T_EX support. Most universities in the UK have a least one person who is a T_EX expert, and I'd like us to know who they are and find out how UK TUG can help them. This is something the LMS may help us with.

Along with this recruitment drive I'd like us to consider ending the subscription holiday, while you can still remember where your cheque book is.

I'd also like us, in a steady and modest way, to develop our online activities. We now have blog, and we've made a start at social bookmarking of T_EX resources in the UK.

Niall Mansfield, who I met at TUG Cork this year, is Council member of the UK Unix Users Group and he suggests that next year's AGM might be a day-long track in their conference in autumn 2009. Another possibility is the EuroPython meeting in Birmingham in June 2009.

There are many T_EX users in the UK, who are grateful for this wonderful typesetting system. Our task over the next two years is to help them get to know each other and to develop the sense of community.

Looking further ahead, in 2010 my term of office as Chair comes to an end. I think 4 years is enough, and I very much hope that when the time comes a successor will emerge. This person could be someone not yet known to us. I look forward to two more years of service and to then have, like Jay Hammond, a well-deserved rest.

Jonathan Fine

Chair, UK TeX Users Group