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◇ Nelson H.F. Beebe
Center for Scientific Computing
Department of Mathematics
220 South Physics Building
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT 84112
USA
Tel: (801) 581-5254
FAX: (801) 581-4148
Internet: `Beebe@science.utah.edu`

Editorial Comments

Barbara Beeton

This year's "meeting season"

We have come to the end of the TeX summer meeting season, and it was a busy one. I attended the TUG annual meeting in College Station, Texas, TeX90 in Cork (the 5th TeX meeting in Europe, and the first co-sponsored by TUG), and the NTG SGML-TeX Conference in Groningen. As always, one of the best parts of these conferences was the chance to greet in person all sorts of people who I'd already "met" by e-mail. Meetings in Europe are a bit less hurried than those in the U.S. — there is often time to linger over coffee before returning to the next session. But I was sorry at the Dutch meeting to miss several talks that I would like to have attended; there were two tracks, and one had to make choices.

What were the highlights? This is at least partly subjective, but I think there were some features that really stood out.

For those on the TUG Board of Directors, it was novel and welcome to be able to mingle with everyone else at lunch time at the annual meeting, and I felt that the networking lunches (an innovation this year) were a success and should become a permanent part of the meeting planning.

In both Texas and Ireland, one of the most active discussion topics was, whither TeX? We have an answer from Don Knuth concerning the software that goes by the *name* TeX (see his article on page 489, and Nelson Beebe's comments, page 490). However, I don't assume that means there can be no growth, only that it should be well-planned, concentrated in the areas of pre- and post-processing, and we should start thinking of good names.

TUG's eleventh annual meeting. The meeting at Texas A & M University wasn't attended by as many people as the Tenth at Stanford, but there was a good program for those who did come. Several papers stood out for me:

• Frank Mittelbach on what's still missing from TeX. His paper in the *Proceedings* not only explains but also illustrates the points he made.

• Helen Gibson on how an in-house system for producing high-quality exhibition catalogs and research publications with "problem scripts" (Sanskrit and South Asian) was built without alienating either the researchers or the secretaries.

• Mimi Lafrenz on running a small company that provides TEX services to publishers. Her message was that sharing information is essential to producing a quality product. She's also a dynamite speaker.

And there was a lot more; you can read it in the *Proceedings*.

The *Proceedings*, published as *TUGboat* 11, no. 3, were ready in time to be handed out in Cork. That issue had its own editor, Lincoln Durst; the timeliness and consistency of the published work is due, more than I can say, to his energetic oversight. I was permitted to relax and observe from a distance. To Lincoln and everyone else who contributed to its success, good job!

NTG's SGML & TEX Conference. The Dutch SGML Users' Group co-sponsored this conference, and with the exception of two talks on more general topics, the program proceeded along two tracks, one mainly SGML and the other mainly TEX. This would seem to have been the ideal opportunity to indulge in some cross-fertilization, but I thought that most attendees stayed with the track that was most familiar. I attended the meeting in Groningen because Kees van der Laan invited me to give a talk on the production history of *TUGboat*. Here are my impressions of some of the talks.

• Joop van Gent described the "two faces of text": the logical content of a scientific document, and the ancillary things that it is "about" — the author, the state of knowledge when the work was written, etc. He then presented some TEXniques for processing documents to make them available in a form suitable for advanced document retrieval systems.

• Malcolm Clark took a look at the problem of exchanging (TEX) documents through electronic mail. The present networks don't support 8-bit transmission, and even 7-bit is shaky at times. So what is needed is another piece for the toolkit — a filter for 8 → 7bit transmission, to give us "safe TEX".

• Sake Hogeveen's paper on aspects of scientific publishing was on the SGML track, but it managed to include two introductory courses, "TEX in five minutes" and "LATEX in six minutes", that got the idea across quite well to anyone who had never heard those names. The main points of this talk were that an "ordinary" author needs all the help he can get to make manuscript preparation simpler, and that good typography supports the structure of a document, so that a reader understands the structure better because of the typography.

• Victor Eijkhout considered the need for a metaformat which would permit the document style designer to specify attributes in a non-TEX syntax. This is important because document markup that identifies common structural elements can permit a common input view but different outputs, and the common input view permits a good typist to go at top speed. The challenge: to implement a programming language suitable for the designer's specifications.

• Johannes Braams gave an overview of the work of NTG Working Group 13, which has developed various LATEX styles appropriate for Dutch documents, and of his own work on Babel, a style for support of multilingual variation (an article describing this work will appear in *TUGboat* 12, no. 2).

Unfortunately, there will be no formal proceedings of this conference. I hope that the ideas discussed there will find their way into print in other ways, and not remain inaccessible.

TEX90 in Cork. Peter Flynn made sure that everyone felt welcome at the same institution which had been home to George Boole — University College Cork. The meeting was attended by about 175 TEXies from 23 different countries — a larger and more varied group than in Texas. Again, just a few highlights:

• Christine Detig on hypertext. I want it! I need it to organize the *TUGboat* archives!

• Malcolm Clark on why anyone who wants to edit and produce the proceedings of a TEX conference (or any similar collection) should think twice.

• Yannis Haralambous on typesetting Old German. He proposed that there is more enjoyment in reading old texts when the typefaces are appropriate, and to illustrate his point he has created METAFONT fonts for Fraktur, Schwabacher, Gotisch, and a beautiful set of ornamented capitals. This paper was deservedly awarded the prize for best presentation. (See also Yannis' paper on Arabic, page 520 in this issue.)

• Nico Poppelier on the use of SGML as a common coding system for organizing and re-using texts and data by a publisher who employs not only TEX but several other typesetting systems.

• Angela Barden on how to write a useful book on TEX. (Actually, I missed the presentation, but

have heard such good things about this paper that I can hardly wait for the *Proceedings*.)

• Konrad Neuwirth on why it *isn't* suitable to teach TₑX in schools. Though still a student, Konrad admits to being "not typical", and his arguments were well thought out and to the point.

The *Proceedings* will constitute *TUGboat* 12, no. 1, which will appear early next year.

TUGboat news

With this issue, there is a new Associate Editor for Macros, Victor Eijkhout. Until recently an inhabitant of Nijmegen in The Netherlands where he contributed to NTG Working Group 13 and, via the networks, to discussions on TₑXhax, UKTₑX, etc., Victor is now working in the Center for Supercomputing Research and Development at the University of Illinois in Urbana. We intend to keep him busy.

Two issues of *Proceedings* will be published in 1991. It has already been mentioned that the *Proceedings* of TₑX90, Cork, will be *TUGboat* 12, no. 1. This issue will be on a schedule separate from that of the regular issues, as will the *Proceedings* of TUG91, which will appear as 12, no. 3.

There will be a total of four issues in 1991, the same as in 1990. Issues 2 and 4 will be regular issues. See below for a discussion of this decision.

To accommodate the expected volume of technical articles, we are prepared to increase the size of the two regular issues as much as necessary or possible, subject to financial considerations. News items, reports, and the calendar will be published in all issues. The deadline for such items for *TUGboat* 12, no. 1 will be past by the time you read this; deadlines for later issues will appear in the calendar.

The first *regular* issue will be moved to May 1991, and the editorial deadline adjusted. Now that there is a Macro Editor, we intend to pay more attention to details. We are also attempting to have technical articles refereed, to try to assure an even, high level of quality. For this, we need more time. Therefore, for regular issues there will now be two deadlines: one for technical articles, and one for news items and reports. For *TUGboat* 12, no. 2, the deadline for technical articles will be February 19, and for news items and reports, March 19.

We would like to recognize the fine work of our printer, Waverly Press, whose expeditious service in 1990 has drastically shortened the time between deadline and publication. The availability of the Texas *Proceedings* in Cork could not have happened without their cooperation.

The dues increase and number of issues

You will notice on the inside front cover and on your renewal notices that the membership dues will be $45 next year. There will be no discount for early renewal, and no postal supplements for members outside the U.S. The increase from the 1990 rates is intended to help alleviate TUG's present financial difficulties.

The TUG Board voted (at a meeting in Cork) to rescind the postal surcharge. TUG was not meant to be a U.S.-only organization, and the required (rather than optional) supplement added to the perception of members outside the U.S. that they were being treated as "second class citizens". The other problem for members outside North America, that of slow delivery (in spite of higher charges to provide air mail service) is being attacked separately, with the help of our printer; an investigation into the possibility of printing part of the edition in Europe has been deferred until there is experience with the new mailing strategy.

After discussion of whether there should be four or five issues, we have decided on the smaller number for the following reasons: (1) To add a fifth issue would have necessitated an increase in dues larger than the one approved. (2) TUG's financial situation hasn't been good for the past two years, and we're trying to attack the problem from both ends: increased revenue (membership dues) and decreased costs (holding the line at four issues, even though only two of those will be regular issues). (3) The postal permit requires that the Post Office be notified in advance of changes in the number of issues scheduled; changes are possible, but (as it has already been announced that GUTenberg will publish the TₑX91 *Proceedings*; see page 667) a reversing change would be likely next year.

Regardless of these changes, we intend to do our best to continue to produce a *TUGboat* that we can be proud of, and that you will find interesting and useful.