Ab Epistulis

Steve Peter

Hello from the TEX world headquarters! I'm pleased to be able to share with you the following information from the TEX Users Group, my first as president. (And I'm pining for the days when Karl Berry wrote these messages.)

Group membership category

This year, TUG is offering a new membership category, called group membership. It includes up to four individual memberships for $200 (thus providing a discount), with electronic access for all four members and one physical copy of *TUGboat* and software, as well as an acknowledgment online. This is perfect for small departments or research groups. `http://tug.org/join.html` has all the info.

If you haven't joined TUG yet for this year, it's not too late. Individual memberships are just $95 and joining TUG helps to support and promote the use of TEX, LATEX, ConTEXt, METAFONT, META-POST, and related systems worldwide.

Software

No major changes in the software delivery are expected this year. Work toward the TEX Live 2012 release is well underway. We will begin trial builds soon and are aiming to freeze updates in May (a timeline is on `http://tug.org/texlive/`). The editors of the MacTEX, proTEXt, and CTAN components of the overall TEX Collection software are also preparing their respective releases.

Conferences

TUG 2012 will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, from July 16 through July 18 at the Omni Parker House. The deadline for presentation abstracts is May 1, 2012, and early bird registration is available through May 15. Registration includes breakfast, lunch, and coffee breaks as well as all the cutting edge TEX information that will fit in your brain. The discount code for our group's hotel reservations is available on the conference web site at `http://tug.org/tug2012/`.

Outside of North America, GUST is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a special BachoTEX from April 29 through May 3. For all the information, see the website at `http://www.gust.org.pl/bachotex/2012/`.

TEXperience 2012 (CSTUG) will be held August 23–26 in Morávka, Czech Republic. See the website at `http://katedry.osu.cz/kma/TeXperience2012` for all the details.

EuroTEX 2012 and the Sixth ConTEXt User Meeting will be October 8–12 in Breskens, The Netherlands. See `http://meeting.contextgarden.net/2012/`.

Book reviews

The TUG website has a section for book reviews, and you should definitely visit if you haven't yet had the chance. Recently, we've added reviews of David Kadavy's *Design for hackers: Reverse-engineering beauty* (reviewed by Boris Veytsman) and Jean-luc Doumont's *Trees, maps, and theorems* (by Pavneet Arora). These and other reviews are at `http://tug.org/books/#reviews`. Many thanks to Boris Veytsman for organizing the reviews.

And speaking of books, RIT Press/RIT Cary Graphic Arts Press is offering 10% off to TUG members for a limited time. The code may be used on one order and is valid through May 31, 2012. The exclusive members-only discount code is available in the members area at `https://www.tug.org/members`.

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Editorial comments

Barbara Beeton

Don Knuth, reprise

To cap off his publications so far, and leave his time free to work on *TAOCP*, Don has created one final volume, a *Companion* to his collected works, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

An addition to Don's online biographical entries now appears on the new Turing Award web site: `http://amturing.acm.org/award_winners/knuth_1013846.cfm`. The information was compiled and the entry written by Dave Walden, ringleader of the TUG Interview Corner.

An alternate view of CTAN

The "Automated Mercurial Repositories of CTAN" web site `http://ctanhg.scharrer-online.de` provides an archive of old versions of CTAN packages. As well as allowing (LA)TEX historians to follow the development of packages, it provides an emergency backup in case a package change prevents an old document from being processed properly.

Linotype: The Film

The Linotype, invented by Ottmar Mergenthaler in the late 1800s, was the machine that, for all practical

purposes, put hand compositors out of business. On it were composed uncounted books, magazines, job work, and newspapers through the mid-20th century. Then "cold type" and photocomposition came into existence, followed by digital print and the desktop revolution, and the world's Linotypes fell silent.

This fascinating machine has now been memorialized in a film. Released early this year, the film premiered in New York, and a screening followed soon after at the Rhode Island School of Design, which I was privileged to attend. It's an engaging story, told well with great empathy and appreciation.

More screenings will continue, and a DVD is expected in early summer. Visit the web site (`http://www.linotypefilm.com`), view the trailer, check the schedule, and see it if you can.

Barriers to effective communication: Jean-luc Doumont

As an extension to his presentation at TUG 2011, Jean-luc Doumont has prepared a booklet setting forth the many reasons that authors hesitate, even actively resist, enhancing the presentation of their work — "we can't do it this way," .... This tale of woe is followed by Jean-luc's reasons why it *can* be done, and how to persuade the powers that be to allow it to happen.

The booklet can be downloaded from `http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com/barriers`.

Kern it!

An interactive game, "KERNTYPE" (`http://type.method.ac`), instructs a visitor to "kern me", and invites one to drag letters around horizontally to see how well the results compare with a typographer's solution. It provides both amusement and good feedback in tuning one's sensitivity to this nicety.

On the other hand, overly sensitive attention to this detail can provide both puzzlement and frustration, as illustrated by this cartoon.[1]

IF YOU REALLY HATE SOMEONE, TEACH THEM TO RECOGNIZE BAD KERNING.

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[1] Source: `http://xkcd.com/1015/`; posted there under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 License, and used with thanks and hilarious appreciation.

An advertising circular caught my eye. In the headline was the first instance I can remember where the kerning of "AY" looked too tight. All caps, the phrase "DOLLAR DAYS" presents significant kerning problems.

Granted, it's not the most elegant font, but it's an ad, after all. At least it's possible to tell that it's two words...

One last word on the subject: `http://school.failblog.org/2012/03/27/` (but not the first word on the page...).

A wonderful use of old books

As much as I hate to see a book destroyed, evidence of inspired artistic license merits forgiveness. Throughout most of 2011, the "library phantom" made the rounds of Edinburgh libraries and similar venues, leaving behind the most enchanting paper sculptures — all anonymous — "... in support of libraries, books, words, ideas ...". Here is a report by Robert Krulwich on the National Public Radio web site: `http://www.npr.org/blogs/krulwich/2011/10/28/141795907`. Follow the links — *all* of them!

The Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp

The Plantin-Moretus Museum (a wonderful place! Both the city and the museum) now has an English language web site: `http://museum.antwerpen.be/plantin_moretus/index_eng.html`.

The oldest part of the buildings that now house the museum was established by Christoffel Plantin as a printing house in 1555. It remained in continuous operation, managed by the Moretus family (the first of whom was Plantin's son-in-law), until the 1820s. In 1876, after several unsuccessful attempts to revive the business, Edward Moretus sold the buildings and their entire contents to the city of Antwerp; in 1877 both the living quarters and the printing office were opened to the public as a museum. The collection includes publications from the earliest days of the firm, as well as two of the oldest printing presses in the world, and much of the original type, still used to develop authoritative digitized versions. Definitely worth a visit!

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