The incredible tale of the author who didn't want to do the publisher's job, but eventually had to because the publisher didn't have a clue about typesetting, although to be honest, the author did some stupid things as well, but fortunately, everything is all right now, however this is an experience the author wouldn't wish upon anyone, but is still going to narrate it for your greatest enjoyment, and will do so both crying and laughing (yes, that was the title)

Didier Verna

Abstract

In this article, I relate a recent experience of mine: writing a book chapter for a publisher who doesn't have a clue about typesetting. I confess my futile attempt at using TeX for writing the chapter in question. I describe the hell that descended upon me for daring to do that. I however admit that the hell in question would have been even greater, had I not done so. This article is both a nervous breakdown and a peal of laughter, and I am seeking for the reader's comfort.

1 Prologue

The story began on May 07, 2011, when I received an invitation to author a chapter for a particular Computer Science book. Here is an excerpt from the email I received:

> *The objective of the book is to provide original academic work about current research ... a comprehensive overview ... comprehensive material ... provide new results and answers to some open problems ... indispensable for researchers, professionals and practitioners as well as for educators who would like to have a comprehensive ..., useful resource for graduate and undergraduate level courses.*

Well, a book containing practically everything, and targeted at practically everyone. That sounded like quite a challenge, and I decided to accept it. I sent a proposal on June 14.

On July 20, I received an email informing me of the acceptance of my proposal. The message contained a URL pointing to a chapter template, and two attachments with some "chapter organization and formatting guidelines" and some "details to keep in mind". All of this sounded fine, but my ears were already starting to tickle me: why a chapter template, why guidelines, why in two different attachments? Don't they provide a style or a class file?

I looked more closely, and that is when I discovered that the provided chapter template was in fact a Word document, and that the two attachments were in `docx` format.

Then, I started to worry.

On top of that, I had several questions that were not answered in the documents I received, so I asked them by email to the editor (my only contact then) on July 21. What about copyright assignment? Do I get a contract of some sort? How is the book going to be published: online, on paper? Will it be available for sale or for free? With an open source license? Do I get royalties on the sales ... *etc.* The next day, I got the following response.

> *My responsibility is out of scope of publishing. At this point I don't have the answers to your questions. I need to contact the publisher.*

Well, thank you very much, because you see, these are important issues nevertheless ...

2 Submission

After thinking about it for some (very short) time, I decided to be clever. I sent my initial submission on October 4, in PDF format. I explained to the editor that I had written the chapter in LaTeX because there was no way I could work with Word. I also promised that I would convert it to Word for the final version, in order to comply with the publisher's requirements.

The editor had no problem with that, and then followed a reviewing period (contents only!) until the final acceptance of the chapter (contents only!) on March 10, 2012.

Let's be clever? Not so much ... In terms of PDF to Word conversion, I had spotted at least a dozen websites offering this service for free before, so I thought it was going to be easy. That's why, in all my self-sufficiency, I waited until the last minute before taking care of that. First, I had some minor adjustments to do.

Unnumbered sections No, the publisher doesn't want section numbers. Don't ask. Easy enough to do in LaTeX, though. One just needs to use starred sectioning commands. Oh, but on second thought, what happens to all those nicely `varioref`-formatted section references? Gone is the answer, I think. So I had to get rid of those, and find a textual workaround to point the reader to other parts of the chapter, without numbers. Very convenient indeed. Dammit.

No figures (go figure) Yes, the publisher wants the figures in a separate zip file, not in the chapter itself. Don't ask. Surely, they have implemented

Calcagno, C., Taha, W., Huang, L., **and** Leroy, X. (2003).
Calcagno, C., Taha, W., Huang, L., **&** Leroy, X. (2003).

Manipulation (PEPM), **pages 95-99**. ACM SGPLAN.
Manipulation (PEPM) **(pp. 95-99)**. ACM SGPLAN.

Symbolic Computation, 13(1-2)**:**51-55.
Symbolic Computation, 13(1-2)**,** 51-55.

Figure 1: Bibliographic format divergences

`unzip` and TEX's float placement algorithm with Word macros. Anyway, easy to do in my LATEX source file, but then again, I had to rewrite all the figure references manually.

So I eventually recompiled my PDF with those adjustments, and started using a PDF to Word conversion service. At the last minute (did I say so, already?).

At that moment, all hell descended upon me.

Big mistake #1   The conversion didn't work very well, and that is a euphemism. Basically, the font size was ok, and everything else was lost: font families, shapes, verbatim and code formatting. Everything. And because I did that at the last minute (did I say so, already?), I decided that it would be safer for me to spend the last night restoring all that was lost *by hand* directly in Word, rather than trying to look for yet another half-baked service in the naïve hope that it would work better. So I took my little mouse with me and went through all 30 pages, clicking like crazy. Welcome to the world of WYSIWYG.

Here, I must confess that in the heat of the moment, another simpler and totally obvious alternative didn't even occur to me. Months later (in fact, when I was preparing the slides for TUG 2013), I realized that I could have opened the PDF file resulting from the LATEX compilation, selected the whole contents, and just cut and pasted it into Word. I tried that and it actually went *better* than any of the online conversion services I tried. Shame on me …

Big mistake #2   The second big mistake I made was to *not* use the exact bibliographic style the publisher wanted. More precisely, the author instructions mentioned "strict APA" conformance, and I simply used `apalike`. In the end, there were subtle differences in the formatted bibliographic output, some of them illustrated in figure 1. I also had some errors in the `.bib` files which led to incorrect sorting and other oddities.

Here, the obvious choice would have been to go fix the `.bst` file in order to produce the desired out-

put, and regenerate the PDF. But do you remember that I had already spent hours fixing *Big mistake #1* in Word? I simply couldn't bear the very idea of having done so for nothing, so I decided to go fix all those details *by hand*, in the Word document.

3   Interlude

I am a Boduka. I practice martial techniques in order to reach ultimate self-control, peace and harmony with the Universe. Let's breathe. Deeply. Okay.

In the meantime, I had my first contact with people from the publishing company (remember that until now, my only contact was with the book editor). On August 28, I received an email from the publisher, part of which is transcribed below.

From: marketeer #1
Greetings! …personally thank you for your excellent contribution! [lots of marketing crap] Your development editor, marketeer #2, very much enjoyed working with you, and now as your marketing representative, I look forward to assisting you with your promotional efforts.

First of all, I am delighted to learn that *marketeer #2* "very much enjoyed working with me", although I feel the urge to mention that I had never heard of this person before. Next, let me see if I understand this correctly: I am writing a book chapter for which I am most likely *not* going to be paid, and in their infinite generosity, the publisher is kindly offering to assist *me* in promoting the book that *they* are going to sell?

But wait. There's more.

I have also created an Exclusive Discount Offer form. This form allows you to order one or more copies with our exclusive author discount.

So, I am writing a book chapter *for free*. I have to do the promotion of the book *myself*, and in their infinite generosity, the publisher is kindly offering a discount for me to actually *buy* the book I'm contributing to write??

But wait. There's more.

You will hear from us again regarding how to access a complimentary PDF copy of your individual chapter in the book.

Wow wow wow. Hold it right there. I am writing a book chapter *for free*. I have to do the promotion of the book *myself*. I will have to *buy* the book I'm contributing to write, and in their infinite generosity,

the publisher is kindly offering me a "complimentary" PDF of *my own chapter*, which I wrote *myself*, and for which, obviously, I already have a PDF, and what's more, of a much better quality since it has been generated with `pdflatex`???

In fact, the situation was not so bad as it seemed in the first place. 3 clauses in the copyright assignment form I eventually received contained implicit answers to some of my original questions.

> *2. Author(s) understand that no royalties or remuneration will be paid by the Publisher to the author for the above named submitted manuscript. Further, Author(s) acknowledge the manuscript is being provided on a volunteer basis for the professional recognition obtained by the publication.*

Read: I work for the glory.

> *5. The Publisher will have the right to edit the work for the original edition and for any revision, provided that the meaning of the text is not materially altered.*

We will see later on how a publisher who doesn't have a clue about typesetting can actually alter the meaning of the text without even realizing it . . .

> *6. The Publisher will furnish 1 copy of the book to the lead Author of each chapter without charge. The coauthor(s) of the manuscript will receive a copy of the manuscript along with a copy of the title page of the book. Copies of the book for the author's/co-author's use may be purchased at a 40% discount from the list price.*

So after all, I *will* get a free copy of the book. And thank God I wrote my chapter alone, because I would have hated to have to explain to my co-authors that they had earned the right to *buy* the book . . .

4   Proofreading

After all this agitation, I honestly thought that the worst was finally behind me. Little did I know . . .

On September 11 (notice the date?) I got a new message from yet another person at the publisher's, inviting me to proofread the book (or at least, my own chapter):

> *From: yet@another.guy*
> *I am very pleased to send you the proof of the book. Please copy and paste this link into your browser: http://. . ./EditorProof.pdf*

I haven't mentioned yet the apparent publisher's concern for security, requesting digitally signed copyright assignments as well as paper copies and so on. All of this for putting the editor-proof version of the book

Before:

```
(defclass face ()
  ((name :initarg :name)
   (bold :initarg :bold)))
```

After:

```
(defclass face ()
  ((name:initarg:name)
   (bold:initarg:bold)))
```

Figure 2: Removing spaces between identifiers

online and sending the url in the clear by email . . . Anyway. The deadline for proofreading was 6 days later only, there was a list of items to specifically check for, and there was also the following comment in the message.

> *Please do not be concerned with house style layout application, such as font type / size; title and subtitle styles; spacing and formatting*

For some reason, this smelled very bad to me, and I decided to pay a very special attention to those points. I was quite right (but that, you guessed)!

On September 17, I finished proofreading my chapter, and sent the following message.

> *To: yet@another.guy*
> *There are many things that have gone wrong in my chapter. Some of them may belong to your "do not be concerned with house style" category, but they are so worrying that I need to mention them anyway.*

Then, I started enumerating, by decreasing DEF-CON level, all the things that had gone wrong in my chapter, between my Word version and their PDF.

Figures swapped   My chapter contained exactly two figures. They managed to swap them. Figure 1 was referencing figure 2 and vice-versa. That's what you get when you don't let your typesetting software automate the referencing (let alone the placement).

Code excerpts   Originally, I had a nice layout for my code examples, automated with `lstlisting`. They completely messed up all of them. Worse: probably by editing the code *manually*.

First, they "conveniently" removed all spaces appearing before colons, as shown in figure 2, hereby concatenating all consecutive tokens of code. Remember clause #5 in the copyright assignment?

> *The Publisher will have the right to edit the work [. . .] provided that the meaning of the text is not materially altered.*

Well, there you go!

The incredible tale of the author who didn't want to do the publisher's job, *etc.*

INTRODUCTION

Domain-specific language (DSL) design and implementation is inherently a transverse activity (Ghosh, 2010; Fowler, 2010). It usually requires from the product team knowledge and expertise in

Figure 3: Fancy spacing

Next, they "prettified" the double quote string delimiter character: `(show-keys :key2 "test")` became `(show-keys:key2 ''test'')`. Cute, but not a string anymore.

Pretty much all code excerpts also had their indentation completely messed up, and I'm not even mentioning hyphenation (hint: what happens when you hyphenate a variable name, in a language which allows dashes in identifiers?).

Again, all of this is what happens when someone clueless about what a programming language actually is, starts editing code excerpts *by hand.*

Inline quotes　The formatting of inline quotes, originally achieved with the `quote` or `quotation` environments was gone. Basically, all quotations were turned into mere paragraphs, and therefore indistinguishable from the surrounding text.

Float positions and references　Along with the two figures I mentioned earlier, my code excerpts were all floats, placed automatically and referenced with `varioref`. All placements and references were destroyed, again, probably by manual editing. Here are just two examples of what I got:

> *Blah blah blah . . . is given below in Box 10.*

Hint: the box below is Box 9.

> *Which we can use like this as shown in Box 4:*

That sentence, which is not even a correct one (note the trailing colon), was standing alone as a whole paragraph in the middle of a page. The box was not even there.

Spacing　Finally, there were spacing problems in almost every page of the chapter. Figure 3 illustrates this. I particularly enjoy the "readability" of the 4th line, and I guess this is what you get from a typesetting system which is clueless about aesthetics.

5　Epilogue

Facing all this mess, and without the ability to fix things myself, I ended up wasting countless hours carefully reviewing every single page, locating all the problems and noting them down for email reporting, which I eventually did. On September 21, I received the following message (note the sender).

> *From: no-reply*
> *I would like to take this opportunity to express our many thanks for your excellent contribution . . .*
>
> *At the following link you will be able to access a printable copy of your final typeset chapter in PDF format . . .*

Unsurprisingly, many of the problems I had reported before were still unfixed, and new problems had appeared. I performed yet another careful review of the chapter, and boldly worked around the *no-reply* individual, sending my new report to *all* of my previous contacts at the publisher's. I didn't get any response, but by the looks of the actual book I received, most of the remaining problems were indeed fixed.

Several months later, when the book was printed, I received this final message (note the sender again).

> *From: no-reply*
> *Again, thank you for your outstanding contribution, and we look forward to working with you on another project.*

Well, maybe not! ☺

6　Acknowledgment

As far as I could see in the editor-proof version of the book, most problems I encountered with my chapter (in code formatting notably) also affected the other ones, which, I guess, is not really surprising.

In all this marvelous adventure, I wish to express my gratitude to the *editor* of the book, who invited me to write a chapter for it in the first place, and who contributed greatly to the holly hunt for typos and formatting mistakes, not in one chapter, but in the whole book.

⋄ Didier Verna
　EPITA / LRDE
　14-16 rue Voltaire
　94276 Le Kremlin-Bicêtre Cedex
　France
　didier (at) lrde dot epita dot fr
　http://www.lrde.epita.fr/~didier