

Introductory L^AT_EX workshop en français

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We have greatly enjoyed organizing the first French workshop about L^AT_EX for the TUG 2022 conference. It can be viewed online at youtube.com/watch?v=1UssT1N1cfU; the duration is about three hours.

It was a course for beginners, and we felt that we had to offer a different presentation than those found online or in books, tutorials, etc. All of those are very well made, and it did not seem useful to copy them. For this reason, we decided to begin with a historical and philosophical presentation of writing, to explain, rather than the qualities and easiness of L^AT_EX, the invention of Donald Knuth in a wide frame — from Euclid and Aristotle through to Frutiger and digital writing.

Why? Generally, people who write a lot, or who edit books or reviews, split between Word, InDesign or L^AT_EX users, and often debate endlessly about the qualities of their preferred tool. But writing is more complicated than what we think. And it seemed interesting to remind viewers that (for instance before the invention of computers and of Word) it is a *technology of the intellect*, as Jack Goody described it (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Goody).

Goody showed that writing is a technology without which we cannot think in a sophisticated way (no Hilbert spaces without writing) and which sometimes formats our thoughts and representations (e.g., law, religions) and of course which is essential in the notion of culture (from our aesthetic tastes till our analysis of Greek philosophers, which we know through written commentaries of the analysts of their analysts).

Astonishingly, this understanding of the link between matter and spirit (technology and thought) is very recent, compared to the 5300 years of history of writing. This fact may explain why we have so many difficulties to understand the contribution of Donald Knuth, who had the same analysis as Goody.

After this presentation, we began to introduce L^AT_EX, focusing mostly on beginners in social sciences and humanities. Here is the summary of our presentations:

1. Thinking L^AT_EX, thinking with L^AT_EX, by E. Guichard.
After a short story of writing, concepts and advantages of T_EX and L^AT_EX.
2. L^AT_EX, first steps for beginners, by E. Guichard.
How to put a first document into action with L^AT_EX; interactive show with simple examples.
3. Questions of typography, by J.-M. Huffle.

We did not attempt to be exhaustive about the points specific to French typography, but just showed that most are now well-handled, by packages such as `babel` and `polyglossia`. We also separated the points which should be addressed last — e.g., improperly hyphenated words — and the precautions we should get used to adopting systematically — e.g., signalling unbreakable space characters.

4. L^AT_EX in humanities contexts (writers, designers, publishers), by E. Guichard.

Standards, easiness for reading, dialogues with publishers, design, communication with other typesetting systems.

5. Bibliographies, by J.-M. Huffle.

First we show that generating ‘References’ sections manually is error-prone and leads to bibliographies that are difficult to reuse, because there are far too many possible layouts. Then we explain why several passes are needed when a bibliography processor is used in conjunction with L^AT_EX. This demonstration uses BIB_TE_X but is suitable for any other bibliography processor. After an example of *cross-references* among bibliographical entries, additional demonstrations aim to illustrate the expressive power of advanced bibliography styles used in conjunction with L^AT_EX packages such as `natbib` and `jurabib`. This part ends with an introduction to the `biblatex` package and the `biber` bibliography processor.

Rappel du programme en français

1. Penser L^AT_EX, penser avec L^AT_EX (EG) — Thèmes : histoire de l’écriture, concepts et apports de T_EX et L^AT_EX.
2. L^AT_EX, premiers pas (EG) — Thèmes : réaliser un premier document en L^AT_EX; présentation illustrée d’exemples simples.
3. Points de typographie (JMH) — Thèmes : généralités, coupures, polices, langues.
4. L^AT_EX en milieu littéraire (EG) — Thèmes : normes, confort de lecture, *design*, dialogue avec les éditeurs, communication avec d’autres systèmes éditoriaux.
5. Bibliographies (JMH) — Thèmes : processeurs de bibliographies, styles de base, exemples.

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