Editorial comments

Barbara Beeton

Physical *TUGboat* issue mailing

As members are no doubt aware, mailing costs continue to rise, especially to international addresses. TUG remains committed to sending physical copies of *TUGboat* to anyone who wants one. Currently, about 60% of our membership still requests physical mailing, so demand clearly remains.

As of the previous issue, *TUGboat* 46:2, we have started to prepay customs fees wherever possible, through the USPS's so-called "Delcon" service. In practice, this includes most European countries but (unfortunately) few elsewhere. This incurs a small increase in cost for *TUGboat*, but a large increase in convenience and reliability for our members. If you are still asked to pay customs fees, we are willing to refund them on request; please email the TUG office at `office@tug.org`.

Also, we are now able to track delivery to destination for most members, so if you haven't received the issue in a reasonable length of time (at least a month) after mailing, please let us know. It's not likely that we'll be able to actually do anything about a lost or stopped delivery, but at least this will let us know what happened. We can resend missed issues as needed.

When each issue is published, we will update the new web page `tug.org/TUGboat/mailing.html` with its mailing date, and any other news and information of note.

Finally, we thank our longtime *TUGboat* printer and mailing coordinator, Intellicor, for their willingness to provide options to improve mail delivery, especially internationally, as effectively as possible.

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Why TEX was created; correcting a misunderstanding

A misstatement regarding Knuth's motivation in creating TEX has come to my attention, and even though this may not reach its author, it's worth correcting. The article by Andrew Booth,

> Review of Latex: a document preparation system
> `www.computingreviews.com/review/review_review.cfm?review_id=123336`

ascribes the creation of TEX thus: "It was devised at the instigation of the American Mathematical Society." Not true. In Knuth's Gibbs Lecture,

> Mathematical Typography
> `www.ams.org/journals/bull/1979-01-02/S0273-0979-1979-14598-1/S0273-0979-1979-14598-1.pdf`

Don describes his motivation as being

> [. . .] increased by the degradation of quality I had been observing in technical journals; and furthermore the publishers of my books on computer programming had tried valiantly but unsuccessfully to produce the second edition of volume 2 in the style of the first edition without using the rapidly-disappearing hot lead process.

(This reasoning doesn't appear in the article until the bottom of page 350, page 14 of 36.) So, although the public announcement of TEX appeared in an AMS venue, AMS was not the instigator.

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GUTenberg online adventures

In June 2023, GUTenberg, the French-speaking TEX users group, began a series of online video conferences on various topics, current and classic. Now well established, the twenty-second instance took place on October 9. For most presentations, the slides are posted as PDF files. Also, many talks are recorded, and made available after the fact via YouTube. Of course they are in French, but much of the material on the slides should be meaningful to a TEX-aware reader. See `gutenberg-asso.fr/-Exposes-mensuels-` for a list of all presentations. For future events, the schedule is posted a month or two in advance; information for past events is linked, by event, from the main page.

GUTenberg has also produced two print publications and a FAQ.

- *La Lettre GUTenberg*, since 2010; latest issue no. 54. *La Lettre* is now published online only.
- *Cahiers GUTenberg*, since 1988, with a gap from 2012–2020; latest issue no. 59 (2025). Issues through no. 57 are available online from `www.numdam.org/journals/CG/`; most issues starting with no. 35/36 (2000) are also available on paper by subscription.[1]

The GUTenberg web pages are designed with a panel on the left with links to various topics. The video presentations can be accessed via "Manifestations" and the publications via "Publications".

[1] `gutenberg-asso.fr/Commander-en-ligne-d-anciens-Cahiers`

doi.org/10.47397/tb/46-3/tb144beet

Some Web postings worth a look

Face/Interface It has taken some time to edit the videos from the Face/Interface conference that took place at Stanford earlier this year, but most of the presentations are now posted and can be viewed at `silicon.stanford.edu/face-interface/fi25/`. Material from earlier years can be found one level up: `silicon.stanford.edu/face-interface/`.

Typesetting abstracts We know that a number of technical publishers have adopted TEX in some form for production of books and journals. A particularly specialized use is the preparation of abstracting journals. For math, both *Math. Reviews* (published by AMS, now MathSciNet, online) and *Zentralblatt für Mathematik* (now zbMATH) are completely TEX-based. In 2019, an article, "Four Decades of TEX at zbMATH" was published by the European Mathematical Society. Read it at `ems.press/content/serial-article-files/10968`. (And take note of the appearance of the TEX logos. They weren't entirely under control.)

Math notation in print The raison d'être for TEX's existence is the ability to produce documents containing mathematical notation with quality as good as that found in books professionally typeset by an experienced Monotype operator. This topic is addressed in "From boiling lead and black art: An essay on the history of mathematical typography"; read it online at `www.practicallyefficient.com/2017/10/13/from-boiling-lead-and-black-art.html`. This essay ranges from the early days of movable type as introduced to the Western world by Gutenberg, through the mechanization of typesetting with Linotype and Monotype machines, the use of typewriters in the 1960s for publications not "worth the cost of sending to a printing press", progressing through phototypesetting, and culminating with "a new matrix filled with ones and zeros" — Knuth's TEX. While not entirely up-to-date (it is dated Oct 13, 2017), it contains in one place an overview of most of the TEX features we enjoy today. (A pointer to the example of how the first paragraph of *Moby Dick* is set by three different composition programs is dead, but the information can be found in the post at `www.rtznet.nl/zink/latex.php`.)

Bookbinding Two items here.

The first is a video showing how books are (or were) bound: "Adam Savage Learns How Old Books Were Made!", `www.youtube.com/watch?v=uauXBgeImFc`.

The second is an exhibition of artistic bookbinding, mounted at the Estonian History Museum in Tallinn, Estonia, to celebrate the 90th birthday of the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Participating artists have created unique bindings for the Arvo Pärt Centre's publication *In Principio. The Word in Arvo Pärt's Music!*. See the museum's announcement, with several images, at `meer.com/en/99248-exhibition-of-artistic-bookbinding`.

Why let a library burn down? Libraries have, through the ages, been considered permanent repositories of human knowledge. The materials on which this knowledge is recorded have changed over time, and have included animal skins, paper, and (most recently) electrons. All of these are fragile, perishable through various accidents — fire, flood, burial under the debris from a volcanic eruption, a mistyped computer instruction, ... (With the replacement of many printed documents by computer files, my own opinion is that the most recent preference for library retention is potentially the most fragile, and the discontinuation of library card catalogs has already seen the loss of handwritten notes added to individual items as the cards were destroyed after the basic information has been recorded in a digital index.) But one "written" medium persists: clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform messages.

Watch this video for a humorous guessing game to determine why one would *not* want to extinguish a fire in a library: `www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUD4fsS_xD0`.

Inscriptions on stone would also probably survive a fire, but stone carvings, while present in libraries largely as decorative elements, are not typically the predominant holding of such archives. I've learned, though, that TEX has been used to prepare templates for carving (or, more usually, sandblasting) such inscriptions, and hope to encourage a contribution on the subject for future publication.

What you intend may not be what you get

This article, published in the proceedings of a 2024 ACM conference,

> Inconsistencies in TEX-Produced Documents
> `dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3650212.3680370`

is a report on the (quite low) probability that a LATEX input file will produce exactly the same output when processed with a different TEX engine (pdfTEX vs. XETEX vs. LuaTEX) or a different "generation" (2020 vs. 2024). (The president's column in this issue discusses the situation in great detail.)

A second article, posted on arXiv, identifies potential susceptibility to security risks for arXiv items posted with source:

> You Have Been LaTeXpOsEd: A Systematic Analysis of Information Leakage in Preprint Archives Using Large Language Models
> arxiv.org/abs/2510.03761

Among the risks identified are visibility of "confidential author communications, internal disagreements, and conference submission credentials, exposing information that poses serious reputational risks to both researchers and institutions." Thanks to samcarter for bringing this to wider attention on a chat forum.

The history of letterforms: Lectures by James Mosley

The University of Reading, in the U.K., is noted for the excellence of its Department of Typography & Graphic Communication. Professor James Mosley, a member of the faculty who died in 2025, was a specialist in the history of printing, type and lettering.

With the agreement of the Mosley estate, the sequence of lectures given by Prof. Mosley over the course of the 2020–21 academic year has been made generally available in the form of presentation slides with voice-over.

The collection, comprising 21 lectures, can be accessed at youtube.com/playlist?list=PLh8Q6TpPxtgxSG6DEuOrH9iKx9bh6Pr7G.

Knowing of Chuck Bigelow's interest in the history of type, we forwarded to him the news that the lectures are available online, and were rewarded with a chronicle of Professor Mosley's activities outside of his teaching. The result follows this column. Chuck also provided a link to a notice of his passing, at Eye magazine (www.eyemagazine.com/blog/post/james-mosley-1935-2025). Thanks, Chuck.

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James Mosley, type historian (1935–2025)

Charles Bigelow

During the past six decades, James Mosley was one of the world's top scholars of type and print, and in his more than 40 years as Librarian at the St Bride Printing Library in London, he was unstintingly generous with his time and knowledge. He was often consulted by type designers, type directors, type scholars, type students and others keen to know more about type and print. His numerous essays (including on the history of English typography and vernacular lettering, and on international typographic topics as well) offered intriguing information hardly obtainable elsewhere. Along with the facts, he offered his original insights, thoughts, cautions, critiques, and corrections, brightly illuminating his subjects.

His essay, "The Nymph and the Grot", first published as a paper in 1965 and then expanded into a 1999 book [1], is a perfect example. It explores the history of sanserif (Mosley's spelling) inscriptions and lettering in England before "grotesque" sans serif types were first cast by English typefounders in the 19th century. But that's not all: In the same volume he cogently comments on traditional and modernist typographic aesthetics and ideologies in the 20th century, all the while guiding the reader on a fascinating tour along the winding path of the sans serif form and its odd name through the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

A very different example is his history of the now ubiquitous @-sign in type. He begins by quoting but doubting a statement by eminent palaeographer Berthold Louis Ullman, who claimed @ was an abbreviation of Latin uncial 'ad'. After a few more side comments, Mosley examines 19th century English commercial handwriting and typefounding, then ventures back to 16th century Italian writing manuals by Giovanni Francesco Cresci and other matters. He wraps up by citing studies and a lecture (in French with url) by present-day palaeographer Marc Smith on the written origins of the @-sign. Mosley ends by "hoping that further researchers into business records will help fill in the many gaps of our knowledge about the @-sign."

Although this @-sign chapter from his "Typefoundry" blog (typefoundry.blogspot.com) was published in the journal *Visible Language* in 2016 [2], what we are hoping is that this and the dozens of other intriguing essays on the blog will someday be published together as a tribute to his life dedicated to the scholarship of printed letters. How great that would be.

References

[1] James Mosley. *The Nymph and the Grot*, London: Friends of St Bride Printing Library, 1999. stbridelibrary.bigcartel.com/product/the-nymph-and-the-grot

[2] James Mosley, Commercial at @, *Visible Language*, **50**:2 (2016), 52–63. journals.uc.edu/index.php/vl/article/view/5924/4788

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