Vincent Lozano – *Tout ce que vous avez troujours voulu savoir sur LaTeX sans jamais oser le demander*[1], Editions In Libro Veritas, Pontoise (France), 2008, ISBN: 978-2-35209-149-3, XII + 313 pp.

Writing a new (text)book in an area like LaTeX is quite a challenge, because this field has already been covered by many excellent textbooks and reference books for readers of all levels. Naturally, there is a fair number of LaTeX books in French, as well. I hope I will able to argue in the following that this book is, nevertheless, a valuable addition to the literature.

The first part of the book, "everything" about LaTeX, is a fairly standard introduction to LaTeX basics. It contains just about everything a beginner would need to begin working with LaTeX: typesetting text, mathematics, basic environments, floating bodies, references, a little bit of programing (new commands, counters, boxes, spaces, a.o.), the inclusion of graphics in LaTeX documents (using the `graphics` bundle), the main document classes, and some of the characteristic things related to French typography, as well a discussion of some of the sources of documentation available in French.

Several things have to be mentioned regarding this part of the book:

1. First of all, the book (the entire book, not just the first part) doesn't look at all like the "standard" LaTeX-typeset book. The author really did his best to produce a typographical masterpiece, paying special attention to all parts of the book and the page layout, so that we feel the "human touch" at each step. This is, unfortunately, quite rare. The master of us all, Donald Knuth, invented TeX to produce beautiful documents and he succeeded. So did Leslie Lamport, creating LaTeX. Unfortunately, today it is taken for granted that LaTeX produces beautiful documents, although most of them look very much alike. One hundred beautiful (but identical, as far the formatting is concerned) documents are enough to ruin the concept. Imagine a painter producing hundreds of copies of Mona Lisa and pretending to be acknowledged as a great artist! The message of the author of this book (both implicit and explicit) is that if you typeset your own books (with LaTeX, in our case), your creativity should be involved not only in the content of the book, but also in the format of the book. And, by the way, I don't think mathematical books should be dull, either, from this point of view (although most of them

1. Everything you always wanted to know about LaTeX but where afraid to ask (French)

are!).

2. Secondly, the author discusses topics (mostly Unix related) which are not, usually, included in this kind of book, such as the use of the `make` utility, the conversion between different graphic formats, or the use of `psfrag`.
3. There are described, also, some of the packages which are skipped in most introductory texts (such as `subfigure` or `wrapfigure`).

The second part, "everything" about "everything" about LaTeX, is the real gem of the book. Here the author, actually, explains the design of the page and the book as a whole. Subsequently, he gives a lot of hints on how the reader might be able to modify the standard document classes or to create his/her own packages. The reader will not find here a systematic course on classes and packages. Rather, the author choses the "hacking" way and he simply indicates where to look and what and how to modify something.

While this part is, definitely, a lot more technical, it is not very difficult to read and it does teach a lot of material that is hard to find elsewhere. In particular, the author discusses here some of the low level commands (`\catcode`, for instance, or the commands starting with `@`), boolean operators, the `if then else` construction, lists and their control, boxes, a.o. All these are supplied in a chapter ("Cosmetics") where the reader is taught how to control the aspect of different units (page, section, chapter, index, bibliography, ...). The author also discusses here some specific packages, like `geometry`, `fancyhdr` or `fancyverb`. This part of the book ends with a chapter on "new toys," discussing things like: how to produce a glossary, or a summary — in the French books, including this one, sometimes you have both a table of contents and a summary, which is, essentially, also a table of contents, but with a smaller depth, and appears, as a rule, at the end of the book).

There is, after the two parts already described, an appendix including a discussion of the generation of pdf files, a list of symbols, and some production notes. These notes are related to another nice feature of this book: the electronic version of the book is free (both the pdf file and the source) and can be downloaded from the address http://www.framabook.org/latex.html These production notes explain how to produce the pdf file starting from the sources — trust me, this is not at all trivial.

What I would like to mention also about this book, besides the very interesting

content, is the colloquial style in which it is written and which makes it so easy to read. I'm sure it will be really helpful for all French (and other) fans of LaTeX.

Paul Blaga