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## Editorial Comments

Barbara Beeton

### We're late . . .

This issue, nominally dated March/June 2001, is a year late. There are many causes, but one of the principal reasons is the difficulty of obtaining material and bringing it together to make up the issue.

There has for a long time been a decrease in the number of articles submitted for publication. Requests for new material, as for volunteers, have gone for the most part unanswered. It is hard not to reach the conclusion that most people using  $\text{\TeX}$  in their daily work feel that what they are doing isn't "news", or that their experience wouldn't really be of interest to other  $\text{\TeX}$ ies.

Another factor in our delay is the increase of the duties associated with the "real jobs" of the members of the production team, to the point where they find it difficult to find time to beat the bushes for new material, or even to review the publications of other  $\text{\TeX}$  groups for material they think would be interesting to the wider TUG audience.

The decision to designate this as a double issue was a difficult one, especially without the quantity of material that designation would ordinarily imply. The overriding consideration was our desire to try to get the publication back on schedule.

We've been considering some alternatives to the present format, to adjust to a smaller amount of material. One possibility is a smaller trim size, perhaps  $6 \times 9$  or  $7 \times 10$  inches, both common sizes for scholarly journals. However, this could preclude publication of items such as Hàn Thế Thành's dissertation (21:4) or the proposed new  $\text{\LaTeX}$  algorithm for handling floats (21:3, pages 278-290); these require the large page size. It would also be very difficult to prepare articles based on the  $\text{\LaTeX}$  doc format, which depends on a wide left margin to display macro and environment names. Another possibility is to reduce the number of issues from four to three per year; however, this would result in the loss of our periodical mailing permit, which requires four issues per year. The jury is still out; your opinions are welcome — send them to us at [TUGboat@tug.org](mailto:TUGboat@tug.org).

As mentioned by Mimi Jett in her president's message, a new position has been created, that of Managing Editor. This function has been added to the duties of TUG's office manager, Robin Laakso. Robin has been diligent in trying to create a schedule we can meet, and in her nagging of the editor and production team, and she is eager to receive new material from prospective authors that she can add to the production queue.

We hope that you will be understanding of our predicament, and that you will make suggestions — and submit articles — to help bring *TUGboat* back to its former standing.

### CTAN and "The Treasure Chest"

In 1998, Christina Thiele was inspired to create "The Treasure Chest", a regular column summarizing the activity on CTAN — new postings, updates to existing material, and sometimes the adoption of an orphaned package by another maintainer.

This issue marks the transition of "The Treasure Chest" from Christina's tender care to the hands of William Adams, a longtime  $\text{\TeX}$  user.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Christina, who has worn so many hats on TUG's behalf, not only for her work on this and other *TUGboat* efforts, but also for her friendship and good will over many years. We haven't heard the last from Christina (she remains on the *TUGboat* production team).

To prepare for the switchover, I compiled a collection of CTAN announcements for William. Looking back on these messages, it struck me how many people have dedicated themselves to the care and feeding of this fine archive over the years. This seems a fine time to express thanks to them as well: Rainer Schöpf and Reinhard Zierke in Germany, Robin Fairbairns in the U.K., and Jim Hefferon in the U.S. are the current maintenance crew. Great job, guys, well done!

`ctan-ann`, the mailing list for CTAN announcements, has moved to the Dante server; if you want to subscribe, send a message to

`majordomo@dante.de`

containing one line:

`subscribe ctan-ann`

### $\text{\TeX}$ Mexico User Group

A new  $\text{\TeX}$  group was announced near the end of 2000:  $\text{\TeX}$  México — El Grupo de Usuarios  $\text{\TeX}$  México.

The  $\text{\TeX}$  México User Group is committed to promote the use of the digital typesetting system  $\text{\TeX}$  and METAFONT created by Donald Knuth, adapt the  $\text{\TeX}$  family to the development and enhancement of new tools to help writing and typesetting antique texts of New Spain, and the use of the system for glyph creation of ancient mesoamerican languages for their use, study and preservation in the digital era.

Visit the web site at <http://ciencia.dcc.umich.mx/tex/>.

### Goodbye to Father Larguier

Father Everett Larguier, s.j., possibly the oldest member of TUG, died peacefully on September 22, 2000, in Mobile, Alabama. According to a brief article in *TUGboat* **20**:2 (pages 89–90), he was born in 1910, and started using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X in the mid-1980s as a way “to keep old man Alzheimer from my door”, and to work on a book on topology. He was still using L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X on a Linux box up to August 2000, writing books.

Mimi Burbank corresponded with Fr. Larguier for several years, and provided his T<sub>E</sub>X support. She reports that she will miss his gentle and cheerful exchanges.

### Some places to learn more about books and printing

Rare Book School at the University of Virginia is an independent institute supporting the study of the history of books and printing and related subjects. Week-long courses are offered throughout the year, as are public lectures. The Book Arts Press is the publishing arm of Rare Book School. The catalog contains a number of publications about book and manuscript history, bookselling, and bibliography, including many issues of the last six years of *Fine Print*. Of special interest are several videotapes about type and books. The prices are quite reasonable; many of these items, if available elsewhere, are priced much higher.

Curiously, the Rare Book School mascot, like that of T<sub>E</sub>X, is a lion. He is seen throughout the RBS web site engaged in various activities. Visit the site if only to make his acquaintance:

<http://www.virginia.edu/oldbooks>

The San Francisco Center for the Book is dedicated to exploring the arts of the book and the visible word. A busy schedule of letterpress and other classes is posted on their web site; you don't even have to live in the San Francisco area — some classes last for just one day or a weekend. The web site also lists their ongoing exhibition program. Visit <http://www.sfcb.org/> to see what's available.

### 5000 years of the written word

An item from the BBC News announced an international conference hosted by Iraq “to mark the 5000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the written word.” According to the organizers, writing was born in the ancient city of Uruk, now in southern Iraq, in the third millennium BC.

Although a precise date and location are difficult to pin down at this distance, there is abundant

archaeological evidence for believing that the culture of the Tigris-Euphrates delta “formed the basis for what is almost certainly the world's oldest literary culture.”

The article can be viewed in its entirety at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle\\_east/newsid\\_1230000/1230835.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_1230000/1230835.stm).

### The Gutenberg Bible online

Scanned images of several different copies of the Gutenberg Bible have been posted online. The availability of different copies makes it possible to compare both the printed text and the decorations, which were added later. Two copies, one printed on vellum and the other on paper, are in the collection of the British Library (<http://portico.bl.uk/>), and one copy, the original on vellum, is from the Göttingen State and University Library (<http://www.gutenbergdigital.de/gudi/eframes/>). Both sites contain other items of interest as well.

An article describing the British Library project can be found at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk/newsid\\_1035000/1035014.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/uk/newsid_1035000/1035014.stm).

### Xy-pic home moved to TUG

The home site for the Xy-pic package (by Kristoffer Rose and Ross Moore) has moved to the TUG web site. It can be found from a link on the page <http://tug.org/applications/>.

The page also points to TUG home pages for a growing number of other major packages.

### Legibility study online

It's not always easy to find documented studies concerning the legibility or readability of fonts, so every online reference is useful.

An addition to this corpus is “Legibility and Readability of Small Print: Effects of Font, Observer Age and Spatial Vision” by G. Kevin Connolly. This paper is a thesis submitted in 1998 toward an M.S. degree from the Department of Psychology of the University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada: <http://www.psych.ucalgary.ca/PACE/VA-Lab/gkconnol/Thesis.html>

In addition to statistical analysis of the study results, the paper contains an extensive bibliography; unfortunately, none of the references have online links.

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