
Editorial comments

Barbara Beeton

This is the year for T_EX bug reports

As noted on Don Knuth's T_EX web pages, www-cs-faculty.stanford.edu/~knuth/abcde.html, he "intend[s] to check on purported bugs again in the years 2013, 2020, 2028, 2037, etc." I expect to be asked for the accumulation in late autumn. So, fair warning, if you have any questions, please submit them soon — they have to be vetted before they can be sent to Don, and that takes time.

If you are submitting a report, please provide minimal, but thorough, documentation, using only plain T_EX for your examples.

Anything that can be documented as "not a bug" will be excluded from what is sent on; the bug checkers are very thorough and trustworthy, and if there's any question, they will ask for more evidence. But as already pointed out, this takes time. Since the next review isn't scheduled until 2020, you don't want to miss this one.

Don Knuth in the news (again)

In a list of the "20 most influential scientists alive today" (www.superscholar.org/features/20-most-influential-scientists-alive-today/), Don appears as number eight. It's not a surprise to find him in such good company, but the photo that accompanies the entry *is* surprising to anyone familiar with his T_EX pronouncements. The background image is the logo from his "T_EX of the future" talk presented at the San Francisco TUG meeting in 2010. For anyone who missed the talk, see *TUGboat* **32**:2, pages 121–124, or watch the video at river-valley.tv/tug-2010/an-earthshaking-announcement.

A new T_EX calendar

Marc van Dongen has created a 2013 calendar with images that are mostly pictures drawn by T_ikZ, and dates for T_EX and other typesetting-related events (as listed in the *TUGboat* calendar). A downloadable PDF file (A4 size) can be found at csweb.ucc.ie/~dongen/TeX-SX/12-13/TUGCalendar.pdf

A letter-size version is also available, as TUGCalendar-Letter.pdf

Marc (dongen@cs.ucc.ie) says, "I'm happy to update the calendar when people send me birthdays of T_EX celebrities and dates of major T_EX events. I also welcome emails about typos and suggestions for improvements." (Please keep the descriptions short — space is limited.) He is also open

to suggestions for images to be used next year; he suggests a showcase of L^AT_EX typography, utilizing different languages and typefaces.

Compulsive Bodoni / the Parmigiano Typographic System

Go to www.compulsivebodoni.com/ for a look at a new font project, undertaken in honor of Giambattista Bodoni (1740–1813), the noted printer and amazingly prolific punchcutter, and timed to mark the 200th anniversary of his death.

The name of the project, the Parmigiano Typographic System, derives from the city, Parma, where Bodoni spent most of his life. The project aims to create "the most extended family of fonts ever to have been inspired by the greatest Italian punchcutter."

The site opens with an excerpt from a short play highlighting some aspects of Bodoni's personality. One doesn't have to understand Italian to appreciate the fire and forceful presence expressed by the performer. One click takes you to a visual index of the site. Clicking on the element in the middle brings up a page of attractive posters advertising the project. Other pages highlight different fonts in the family, which includes (in addition to the familiar western alphabets) Armenian, Devanagari, Thai, and others. This is a rather large site, well structured, and fun to explore — an expedition which (for me) will have to be delayed until after this issue goes to press.

A more textual introduction to the project, with a good historical overview, can be found at ilovetypography.com/2013/03/14/a-compulsive-tribute-to-giambattista-bodoni/

And to continue with the Bodoni theme, an unrelated project: www.typographyserved.com/gallery/Bodoni-in-red/3789729

Printing technology, old and new

An Encyclopedia Britannica film from 1947, "Making Books", has been recirculated as a video by *The Atlantic*, at www.theatlantic.com/video/index/267036/. This is how books *used* to be made (and how films used to explain technology). Both have come a long way! But don't stop there — the "more" link will take you to a page with another video that profiles a contemporary inventor (or hacker) who merges antique typewriters with computers and tablets "to create functioning writing machines". The result is a hybrid that your parents certainly wouldn't recognize.

Another current video shows how printing ink is made (www.broadsheet.ie/2013/03/10/how-ink-is-made/). This process matches Pantone colors for

use on modern presses; although highly automated, it still requires considerable intervention by skilled craftsmen to ensure a uniform and reproducible product.

Interactive and collaborative on-line L^AT_EX

There are quite a few reasons why one would want to have access to an up-to-date L^AT_EX compiler besides one on their own computer. For one thing, it doesn't need to be carried around; for another, it can be used to collaborate with co-authors, assuring use of the same versions of required packages.

The number of on-line resources is increasing rapidly. Here's a list of the ones I've learned about. No recommendations are implied; you should check them out for yourself to see if they're suitable for your needs.

- Collaborative L^AT_EX editor with preview in your web browser: it.slashdot.org/story/13/02/14/1814217/
- latex-lab, Web based L^AT_EX editor for Google Docs: code.google.com/p/latex-lab/
- ScribT_EX, “Create, share and compile your L^AT_EX documents from anywhere”: www.scribtex.com
- ShareLaTeX, an online L^AT_EX editor: www.sharelatex.com
- SpanDeX, “a collaborative solution for L^AT_EX authors”: spandex.io
- VerbTeX, “a free, collaborative LaTeX Editor for your Android device”: play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=verbosus.verbtex
- writeL^AT_EX: www.writelatex.com
- The Common L^AT_EX Service Interface: github.com/scribtex/clsi. Somewhat different from the others, this is an API that attempts to provide a standard interface for multiple services.

A posting on the TeX.stackexchange forum discusses the features that should be included in a good on-line service: meta.tex.stackexchange.com/questions/3164/

Mapping math and scientific symbols to their meanings

In the TeX.stackexchange forum, a question has been posed regarding whether there exist any lists that provide mappings between math and scientific symbols and their meanings (tex.stackexchange.com/questions/101805).

Specifically, many (sub)fields have established notation, but there seems to be no by-field reference that can be accessed by potential users, symbol font designers, package writers, and others. Scott

Pakin's *Comprehensive symbol list* and the on-line tool Detexify are very helpful resources, but the first is often too broad, and the second, not yet “complete”.

I've seen this request numerous times, but when I inquired whether such lists existed, or if this was something that might be sponsored by the AMS, the answer to the first question was no, and the suggestion to provide one was rejected as “not practical” or “not needed”.

There are indeed some difficulties in creating such a resource; let's look at mathematics, the area with which I'm most familiar.

- Many common symbols have different meanings in different areas.
- Established mathematicians will already know the notation in common use in the target field.
- A mathematician is free to define the notation to be used in a paper, and if there's not already a well established symbol for a concept, a new one will often be selected based on its physical shape relative to that of symbols already used for related concepts, regardless of the new symbol's meaning in other areas.
- An established mathematician will have little interest in making the effort to create such a list, and a graduate student will most likely be too busy with research on a dissertation to take the time to create a resource whose existence will garner nothing more than appreciation, when what is really important to the student is the degree.

The answer posted for the TeX.SX question describes how the STIX symbols collection was compiled—from pre-existing “needs” lists with no identification of why or relevance to any particular topic. But surely this knowledge does exist. If there's interest in pursuing the creation of topical symbol lists, two possible places to start a discussion are TeX.sx or the mailing list forum math-font-discuss@tug.org.

Footnote: Detexify will be superseded by Sketch-A-Char (sketch-a-char.kirelabs.org/). This is a work in progress, and at the moment, recognizes only some greek letters, although when it's complete, it's intended to identify all symbols in Unicode. To follow its progress, check out the blog at detexify.posterous.com/update-on-detexify.

◇ Barbara Beeton
<http://tug.org/TUGboat>
 tugboat (at) tug dot org