TUG 2018 Annual General Meeting notes

Notes recorded by Joseph Wright

The TUG annual meeting took place in conjunction with the TUG'18 conference in Rio de Janeiro on 22 July 2018. The meeting was conducted by the TUG president, Boris Veytsman.

A letter from Jonathan Fine was read verbatim, per his request, by Boris, and the two questions it contained were answered as follows:

Q: First, please report on any Board actions and discussions relating to the TUG website. And what intentions does the Board have regarding the TUG website?
A: There is general agreement on making `tug.org` more mobile-friendly, and some discussion has been directed to that end.

Q: Second, is there any potential conflict between the personal interests of any Board member and the interests of TUG? And if so, what action has the Board taken to protect both sides from this potential conflict of interest?
A: There are no conflicts that we are aware of.

Question regarding *TUGboat* open access

The question was posed: should *TUGboat* be open access? Boris laid out the idea and background.

Joseph Wright said that (a) articles are often available anyway from authors, and (b) people would still join: members join for other reasons.

Tom Hejda also agreed that people would still join, and good articles could be linked on, e.g., Facebook which would then link back to TUG.

Mico Loretan agreed with the previous points, and in particular the marketing possibilities that this would make possible.

Will Robertson pointed out that open access makes our lives easier, however, the counter argument is that there is a push for joining from *wanting* articles that currently cannot be accessed unless one is a member.

Frank Mittelbach suggested that there are few such people today. He suggested that *TUGboat* is partly a research journal in document engineering: it is referenced by other researchers in this field. It also carries a number of articles focused on engine and macro development, and these may be important for other developers in the TeX community. The current embargo may slow down work in both areas.

Paulo Ney de Souza pointed out that a print journal may be picked up by (e.g.) libraries.

Frank felt that most people who join electronic-only are most likely mainly doing so for "supporting TUG". Mico takes the electronic-only option and agreed that he looks at the membership fee in just this way.

Membership drive

Boris outlined the issue: membership has been falling (though not this year). There are lots of TeX *users*: see the scale of, e.g., Overleaf.

Boris posed the question of how to convert those *users* to TUG members. Frank suggested, "Maybe you can't". TUG arguably missed the opportunity for development of "cloud" services offered, which was picked up by Overleaf (and others). The cloud services, and so ultimately the users, rely on TUG for the "back end" part of their business.

Boris asked the question: Our work is important, and the TeX community needs us, but do other people see this?

The nature of TUG

Tom asked, are we now the "TeX Developers Group"?

Frank: "Yes, to a large extent". Others agreed with this as reflecting the current reality.

Paulo Cereda: The nature of TUG meetings has changed: a few "power" users attend, mainly for developer discussion.

Frank: Why does one join? To support the "mission" as a user. Perhaps *TUGboat* is an exception in print (per library comment from Paulo) but "supporting the mission" is what drives the size of the group; this is not linked to the size of the user base.

Joseph: This seems to be the case for UK-TUG too.

Ross Moore: Some form of shareware approach might highlight the need for developer support.

Tom: SageMath has gone this route; they could not operate without income. Similarly for MatLab. Other examples were given. Open question: What were their original license/copyright situations?

Boris: The legal/moral right could be problematic, as TUG doesn't own the tools.

Suggestion: Post a "Support us" link on downloading, similar to Ubuntu.

Paulo C.: Current members tend to expect others to join for the same reasons ("support"), i.e., the need to provide help particularly to new users, e.g., through workshops.

Tom: There are two types of members, people and institutions. Among the latter, there are 10 universities, one publisher, four commercial entities. Is this a possibility to raise money?

Boris has explored this, with very little response. Persuasion works best as an employee.

Other business: None.