

NTUG '94

May 16th, Oslo, Norway

Kees van der Laan

METApost Knuth says

1 Introduction

The week before Knuth passed by on his way to St. Petersburg where he was invited for another honorary degree¹ At Oslo he lectured about his graphbase work. My host, Dag Langmyhr, asked him what he used himself nowadays. Knuth answered: $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, CWEB , METApost , and another one which I forgot. Dahl—yes, the one from $\text{SIMUALA}'67$ —a personal friend of Knuth still works at the University of Oslo, the meeting place of NTUG '94. I left Garnwerd on Saturday and enjoyed a very natural and hospitable stay at Dag's place.

2 The meeting

Sober it was. Not that many attendees, a dozen or so. In circulating the meeting place over Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, those interested to attend have to spend quite some money. Therefore it is understandable that not that many did show up, alas. Even from within Norway some did come by plane.

Lars Thorensen started with reporting about his experience in 'Creating hyphenation patterns for Norwegian.'² He mentioned a succes rate of $\approx 90\%$, with Liang's pattern technique.

Next, Dag himself lectured about 'How to create your own documentstyle?' A very clear and concise survey of what you are likely to modify when customizing $\text{L}_{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$'s report style. He considers adapting his lecture towards $\text{L}_{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}2\epsilon$, and to submit this for $\text{EuroT}_{\text{E}}\text{X}'94$. Definitely worthwhile. It occurred to me that the NTUG is $\text{L}_{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ biased.

Rolf Lindgren, a psychology student, had worked on 'Explorations in typesetting Russian-Icelandic and Russian-Norwegian dictionaries.' His results suffered from ample 'buses-and-weirdness'-effects and Roswitha suggested to use a wider inter-column space next to the use of `\raggedright`. Sensible.

After lunch the floor was mine, and I presented TUGboat BLUEs for the very first time, stressing the insights aspects by questioning various items and contrasting the solutions with alternatives. The discussion inspired me towards what to submit to $\text{EuroT}_{\text{E}}\text{X}'94$. It will be BLUE's format, not only a user's guide to manmac, but also to my tug.ppt proposal, and to macros in general provided by the $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$

community at large. Flexible with respect to the inner markup of math, tables and the like. The basic idea is to distinguish two markup levels

- the outer level which accounts for the title, (sub)sections, appendices etc., and
- the inner level which accounts for document elements like math and tables to be positioned within the context.

The important aspect is that the inner level allows for generic markup, meaning that it should be independent of the used outer level, be it plain, $\text{L}_{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, $\mathcal{A}\mathcal{M}\mathcal{S}\text{-T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, or you name it. The audience for this work is the $\approx 90\%$ unorganized $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ users, who don't care so much about all those varieties of $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ markup, and just use plain $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ with some add-ons, to get their work out. BLUE's format aims at being such an add-on, and flexible with respect to incorporating any suitable macro written in plain.

Then there was the annual meeting where the status of NTUG was discussed.

After the meeting we had a very cosy informal dinner in one of Oslo's ample harbour restaurants.

3 The day after

May in Norway is special, not in the least because of the 17th, when the Norwegians celebrate the emerge of their constitution. A very peaceful happening where children's parades dominate the scene. The Norwegians love their children, and are aware that they have the future. Very natural and peaceful. This social program was really something. I enjoyed it very much.

Jan-Michael, Dag and I discussed among others ways to guarantee that lines in facing pages or in neighbouring columns line up. Dag suggested the very elegant solution to allow for some kind of discrete glue, to allow glue to be inserted such that the position to start a new line equals an integral number of line distances since the beginning of the page, independent of what has been inserted. The only problem is that $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ is frozen.

Another aspect which struck me was that for communication KTH considers radio links instead of telephone-modem connections.³

Nordic $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ Users thank you for having invited me, to provide the opportunity to discuss things. Dag and Anne-Bret thank you for your kind hospitality. It was a great pleasure!

¹Irina Makhovaya reported that it was a thrill to have Knuth over in Russia, and to discuss things with him.

²Those not familiar with the history of the Nordic countries, please note that in Norway they have two languages, and that the common language for the NTUG is English.

³KTH stands for the Royal Institute of Technology for Sweden, and is the place which employs Roswitha and Jan-Michael.