

References

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Book review: *Making T_EX Work*, by Norman Walsh

Victor Eijkhout

Norman Walsh, *Making T_EX Work*. O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., 1994, 483 pages, ISBN 1-56592-051-1.

Most T_EX books limit themselves to the T_EX language proper, and when the subject of actually printing something comes up, mumble something about a mythical object called the *Local Guide*. Not so *Making T_EX Work*. Arguing that the T_EX environment is mature and stable enough to warrant a 'global guide', this book sets out to be such a document. It lists many macro collections, utilities, and matters related to fonts.

The book is divided into three parts and a couple of appendices. Part 1, 'An Introduction to T_EX', has chapters on T_EX itself, editing, running T_EX, and macro packages. Part 2, 'Elements of a Complex Document', is the most interesting. Its chapters concern themselves with fonts, pictures and figures, international considerations, printing, previewing, on-line documentation, Metafont, and Bibliographies, Indexes, and Glossaries. Part 3, 'A Tools Overview', concerns itself with commercial and non-commercial T_EX environments, T_EX on the Macintosh, and T_EX utilities. The appendices are on filename exten-

sions, font samples, resources, and longer examples (mostly shell scripts).

Some of the topics discussed in this book are by definition system-dependent. Therefore this book will be of most use to you if your platform is Unix, MSDOS, OS/2, or the Apple Macintosh. Otherwise, the chapters on editing or previewing will not be particularly relevant in your case. On the other hand, if you have Gnu Emacs, emT_EX, or a PostScript printer, you will find a lot of detailed information here. There is a slight bias in the book towards these common tools, but not to an extent that it would be de facto an MSDOS book or a Unix book.

This book is concerned largely with those aspects of T_EX that are system-dependent, with the exception of a chapter on macro packages and a token chapter on the workings of T_EX. Thus, there is no mention of the various L^AT_EX styles written by third parties, and the list of literature does not mention books such as the *L^AT_EX Companion* which does mention these, nor any books (other than *The T_EXbook*) that discuss T_EX programming.

On the other hand, there is extensive discussion of drawing packages, B_IB_T_EX and related utilities, editors, previewers, and matters pertaining to fonts. In particular, this last topic is treated in great detail, covering such aspects as encoding vectors which I have never seen discussed before.

The amount of detail in which resources are discussed varies. Several pages are devoted to emT_EX and how to install it, while simple B_IB_T_EX-related utilities are given just a few lines. While this is justified, I find that some of the shorter entries are too short: often nothing is mentioned on what platform they run, or in what scripting language they are written. I suspect a Unix bias.

The discussion of various T_EX implementations can be of use to someone just piecing together a T_EX system, but I think the main value of the book is to alert existing T_EX users to various utilities and tools that can make life easier. From this point of view the book contains a mass of information on things you may never have suspected existed.

One of the reasons a book like this can exist is that many T_EX resources are reachable by a large segment of the T_EX users community: there are well-established archive sites, in particular those of the Comprehensive T_EX Archive Network, and many people can ftp to them directly, or use ftp-mail (the book contains an explanation of ftp and ftp-mail, as well as, several hundred pages later, a brief mention of the World Wide Web). Still, not everyone is electronically connected, and I consider it an omission that the book does not mention the archives that

are available on CD-Rom, or user groups that can be of assistance in obtaining materials.

Finally, it is customary to mention briefly the layout and design of any book about \TeX . Although the author and publisher consider this book an 'excellent example' of a beautiful book typeset with \TeX , I do not entirely agree. With the many white spaces around illustrations and headings, it is a less than felicitous idea to separate paragraphs by white space, instead of simply indenting them. Also, the only distinction between levels of headings is through font sizes. Any real size difference, however, is dwarfed by the difference between headings in all lowercase such as **xv**, and ones in the same font size but mostly uppercase such as **PBMPlus**.

In conclusion I can safely state that this book stands alone among \TeX books. It contains much that is not in print anywhere else, and its usefulness spans all types of \TeX users. Victor sez check it out.

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However... I disagree with the publishers: I do not understand why they have published this book. I mean, why so late, or why they have not waited for Goossens and Mittelbach's *L^AT_EX Companion* translation? This book doesn't have exactly the same audience (Rolland's is more directed to beginners, not low level ones but rather, let us say, regular users, while the *Companion* is instead for advanced L^AT_EXers). No, the problem is that Rolland's book is rather old: nothing about multicolumns, nothing (or almost) about NFSS, nothing about the use of PostScript files (through psfig, pstricks, etc.). Not one Frequently Asked Question is answered here. The author is a beginner and he wrote the book he would have liked to have when learning L^AT_EX. On the other hand, the publisher should have asked (for example to the French TUG: Association GUTenberg) for opinions on this book. It would have been said that chapters should have been added (L^AT_EX in 1994 is not the same as in 1986...). At least, let us hope that a French translation of *The Companion* will be published as soon as possible.

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Book review: *L^AT_EX guide pratique*

Jacques André

Christian ROLLAND, *L^AT_EX guide pratique*. Éditions Addison-Wesley-France, Paris, 1993, 280 pages; ISBN 2-87908-025-8; in French.

Up to now, only two books have been available in French on \TeX or L^AT_EX: the famous *Petit livre de \TeX* by Seroul, and a translation, by Éric Cornelis, of Michael Urban's *An introduction to L^AT_EX* published as *Premier pas en L^AT_EX* by Cahiers GUTenberg. The gap between these two books is now filled.

Although it follows more or less the same road as Lamport's *L^AT_EX user's guide*, this French guide is not just a translation of it. It contains a lot of useful macros, examples, tables, index, etc. Furthermore, this book contains details on extensions that are not described in Lamport's book (such as on Makeindex, B^IB^TE_X, Picture, and, an important point, french.sty, etc.).

I used to have Lamport's book near my station. Now, as a French speaker, I have Rolland's: this is a good book!

Typesetting on Personal Computers

Next \TeX : \TeX plus the NextStep Operating System

Alan Hoenig

I recently upgraded my computer system and now use the NextStep operating system on a 486 Intel box. I can't imagine using any other operating system. One of the many pleasures of this computer environment is the implementation of \TeX (plus METAFONT plus all other \TeX - and METAFONTware) developed by Tom Rokicki of Radical Eye Software for NextStep. The purpose of this article is to describe the unique features of *TEXView*, the name for this system. I will not spend much time on the standard features common to all implementations. As far as I have so far been able to determine,