

GUTenberg Meeting Report

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(EARN: UCIR001 at FRORS31)

A meeting of the Group of French Users of \TeX (named of course GUTenberg—Groupe francophone des Utilisateurs de \TeX) was held in Paris April 26, at IRESKO.*

First, let me recall a few historical facts:

GUTenberg, for those of you who are not familiar with it, was born in 1984. His christening was a "secret ceremony" attended by less than ten persons. In spite of his very young age, his fame grew rapidly among scientific research communities: he graduated in humanities last year. A great feast was organized in his honor with almost 160 guests. He obtained a Master of Arts in Typography a few months ago and agreed to give his name to a group of publishers and scientific authors. This talented child is now very anxious to get married . . . !

But let us turn to more serious matters:

When I decided, early in February, to organize a meeting for \TeX users, I wrote to Ray Goucher asking for TUG support. My request was transmitted to the TUG executive board who unanimously agreed 'in principle', but felt that a request for support had to be submitted at least 6 months in advance! I answered that, although such a delay may consolidate the position of well established organizations, it would hardly encourage small, informal, and recently created groups (like GUTenberg) to expand and acquire financing.

In spite of this, THE meeting was held in April as originally announced. I wish to express my acknowledgements to all the people who contributed to the success of this little congress, and particularly to J. André, P.O. Flavigny, L. Carnes, D. Collin, and their respective companies/organizations: IRISA, IRESKO-LASMAS, Personal \TeX Inc., and TRÉMA. The congress room was full with more than 120 invited persons.

Quite a number of lectures were on the agenda and some time was to be devoted to further debate, especially concerning GUTenberg's future.

I opened the meeting by explaining the goals which had been set for the day: exchange experiences, inquire about the future of \TeX , and find volunteers who agree to dedicate a little of their time to GUTenberg.

The day started with a talk by Michael Ferguson about multilingual $\text{ML}\text{\TeX}$ and $\text{INRS}\text{\TeX}$ used

* Institut de REcherche du CNRS sur les Sociétés COntemporaines

in a bilingual environment. Other people confirmed later on that $\text{ML}\text{\TeX}$ is a very interesting tool for typesetting French. (Personally, I wish to add that we do highly appreciate the multilingual topics in TUGboat.**)

André Lannes, a consultant in a new company he helped to create, explained how \TeX can be used with conviviality on a PC when one assembles a good text editor with many programmed keys, a little syntax preprocessor and a good previewer. At this point, F. Chahuneau expressed his own opinion, which is that displaying pre-formatted macros at the screen with some fields to be filled in should not be described as "friendly" to the many publishers in the audience who may just have discovered \TeX .

Very interesting lectures were delivered by Nicolas Brouard, Daniel Taupin, and Philippe Louarn on how to publish specialized magazine, book, or annual scientific reports. Specific difficulties were dealt with by Daniel Taupin: diverse overflow problems of \TeX and/or driver implementations on PC and CIRCÉ*** mainframes.

Marion Seltz-Laurière (who has created a " \TeX for beginners" course together with Denis Corroyer) spoke about her successful experience. She added that she lacked support to organize another course.

The afternoon started with speeches about Mac and PC related software. Laurent Siebenmann, developer of Sweet- \TeX , made a comparison between \TeX tures and $\text{Mac}\text{\TeX}$ and added a few words on preprocessors. Lance Carnes made an inventory of all products distributed by Personal \TeX Inc. with their different versions and release status.

Professional publishers then explained their opinion about \TeX . Daniel Collin, who two years ago created the first French composition company based on \TeX (which also distributes Personal \TeX Inc. products), showed us many outstandingly beautiful examples of his production and explained—with great modesty—how they had been created and input. His company works mostly for publishers and has acquired much experience in the fields of education and science.

François Chahuneau, who recently joined a large publisher (Berger Levrault) explained very precisely the pros and cons of \TeX . He said why he thinks \TeX barely has any future at all among private business organizations: as it belongs to the public domain, no famous company may support and maintain \TeX officially.

** Editor's note: We continue to invite articles on such subjects from users of \TeX in all languages.

*** National computing center of CNRS.

Members of the first French T_EX printing company (Louis-Jean) attended the meeting and M. Laugier gave us the reasons why he uses T_EX: reduced cost, typographic quality, and ability to produce new fonts with METAFONT. He insisted on the fact that T_EX should be used exclusively for what it was designed: mathematical and literary books. Other styles he called "fancies" should be produced by other technical and traditional means.

Victor Ostromoukhov, who has implemented METAFONT and other tools on Mac and contributed to the start of T_EX printing at Louis-Jean, told us about his developments. A discussion took place about printing resolutions. Three ideas were expressed: according to one member of the audience, 1200dpi is not necessary, another said he was able to distinguish two dots at 600, and the last explained that laser printing can not be fully satisfactory at any resolution, laser impact not being clean enough.

A great deal of the time supposedly devoted to the debate on G_UTenberg's future had unfortunately already fled by and we only decided that all people who are interested in regular meetings, willing to contribute to number 1 of "Cahiers G_UTenberg" (number 0 was handed out at the congress) or eager to exchange macros and T_EXniques would get in touch via the above electronic mail address.

The congress ended with a cocktail offered by Personal T_EX, Inc.

After all the encouraging contacts I had during the meeting, I feel entitled to say that G_UTenberg is growing steadily and should soon become an "adult".

Late-Breaking News

Knuth Scholarship Winner

The third annual Knuth Scholarship has been awarded to Larry Sharlow, a Technical Writer at Orban Associates Inc. of San Francisco. Orban Associates designs and manufactures audio processing equipment for broadcast, recording, and sound reinforcement. This year's scholarship is sponsored by ArborText, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and will enable Larry to attend the Annual Meeting in Montreal and a two-day T_EX short course.

Sharlow's responsibilities include researching, editing, and writing technical manuals, bulletins, and instruction sheets. In addition to implementing the software used to produce these materials, he coordinates their review and production. Over a period of a year and a half, he developed his own macropackage, ORBT_EX, to facilitate typesetting at Orban Associates.

The judges were impressed with the simplicity, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the macros, as well as the completeness of documentation. Special attention was taken to place these macros in context not only with T_EX but with the total working environment, which included various hardware and software. Larry's work is a good example of the independent mastery of T_EX. This is one important function of the T_EX Users Group—to foster the communication between people working independently with T_EX.