

General Delivery

Editor's note: The reassignment of the Proceedings of the 1991 Annual Meeting to the final two issues last year excluded the outgoing President's farewell comments from their expected forum. Thus we begin this new year with remarks from two Presidents.

Prez sez

Living in interesting times

Malcolm Clark

Optimism is a necessary prerequisite for Board membership; a double dose is useful for the TUG President. It will not have escaped your notice that there is currently a world-wide recession, which shows no immediate sign of passing, despite the pronouncements of various election-sensitive politicians. TUG has not escaped the fallout of economic pressures: a number of effects have been experienced by us all. The most visible were the increase in dues; the restructuring of *TUGboat* 12 numbers 3 and 4 to be the proceedings issues; the cancelling of one issue of *TTN*; less visible has been the reduction in staff at the Providence office to only four, two of whom are working reduced hours.

Let's look on the bright side: *TUGboat* still managed to run to almost 600 pages; the Resource Directory was published; the final balance sheet will probably show that TUG just about broke even; *TUGboat* and *TTN* seem to be close to their production targets; the shortage of staff is making us look far more seriously at how best to use the vast pool of volunteers always lurking below the surface. I am also greatly encouraged by the cohesion shown at the recent Board meeting. The high degree of consensus and unanimity, directed towards common goals and objectives should help us all move towards a TUG which gives far more emphasis towards membership needs.

But of course, TUG is not the sole proprietor of $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ and the other $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ paraphernalia. A quick glance at the bits and pieces in the electronic archives, or the various digests and bulletin boards indicates that there is a vast, active, $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ -aware population out there. You might reasonably ask why they aren't all TUG members, but remember that $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ and its tools are not an end in themselves; they are merely software tools to aid document produc-

tion. It might even be that the perceived missionary fervour dissuades many! But there is another key area where it is evident that $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ is becoming yet more respectable: there is now a large number of books, in several languages, on some aspects of $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$. Oddly, there are far fewer on $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ (oddly, since $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ is far more widely used — maybe it's intuitive). Publishers have clearly taken to heart the fact that the $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ and $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ books have sold over 150,000 copies, and are seeking to exploit the demand.

Some thanks are due: a major debt of gratitude is due to Pierre MacKay and Tiina Modisett for the years of effort they put into *texhax*. The *texhax* electronic digest originated at Stanford University under the guidance of David Fuchs and was moderated for a time by Malcolm Brown. (I have much to thank Malcolm for: since Clark and Brown are apparently indistinguishable as surnames, I was able to bask in his glory for many years.) Then it was taken over by Pierre at the University of Washington. Peter Abbott (Aston electronic archive host, and currently chairman of the UK $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ users group) offered to administer the digest, using the tools developed by the similar (and monotonously regular) *uktex* digest, at nominal cost to TUG. This offer was gratefully accepted by the board. Users of the digest should notice no ill-effects. There have been some suggestions that a digest is no longer necessary, especially with the availability of *info-tex* and *comp.text.tex*. This is to misunderstand the function of these very different media. Those happily plugged into the electronic net sometimes overlook others' working patterns — I know that I find it far more convenient to find time to read a digest than to browse through an electronic conference or bulletin board.

I also have to express my thanks to those who are no longer on the TUG Board — Nelson Beebe, Lance Carnes, Bart Childs, John Crawford, Allen Dyer, David Fuchs, Regina Girouard, Dean Guenther, Hope Hamilton, Patrick Ion, David Kratzer, Pierre MacKay and Craig Platt (among them three past-Presidents). It is through the efforts of people like these that TUG has come as far as it has. They have provided the foundations on which we now stand.

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