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## Editorial Comments

Barbara Beeton

### On being a fossil

It was with considerable surprise that I read the kind words from several TUG presidents, past and present, in the last issue, recognizing my survival in TUG for 20 years.

The proceedings issue of *TUGboat* is put together by the Proceedings Editor (Christina Thiele, on this occasion), with the ever-present support of Mimi Burbank, the Production Manager; I get to relax a bit, although I do try to help out with copyediting and proofreading. The proceedings team does keep their Editor informed about what is being included, the page count, and other important matters. But this time they snuck this little piece — three whole pages — right past me.

It has been a truly satisfying experience to watch TUG develop through the years, and the most satisfying part has been to meet and work with so many fine people. To the authors of the tributes — Pierre MacKay, Nelson Beebe, Christina Thiele, Michel Goossens and Mimi Jett — I can only say a heartfelt “thank you”, and I’m pleased and proud to be able to count them among my friends.

To the perpetrators of this act, I will say “thank you” as well, and you guys need a good proofreader... (Cincinnati has only one “t”, you know).

### Erratum: Mimi Jett’s term of office

In the above-mentioned article, Mimi Jett’s term of office was given as 1997–2003 (pp. 313 and 315). Not quite; the term extends only through the annual meeting in 2001.

The term of the President, unlike the four-year Board terms, is only two years. Mimi’s first term was 1997–1999, and she chose to seek a second term, through 2001. There is no limit placed by the Bylaws on the number of terms any officer may hold, so if Mimi is not completely worn out by the summer of 2001, it *is* possible to extend that date, but we won’t force her into it.

### Gutenberg: the man of the millennium

As a year ends, the pundits consult their accumulated wisdom and name the “Man of the Year”. As the final digit of the year turns to zero, we are given the “Man of the Decade”, or of the century. At this year end, a greater span is upon us, and the designated “Man of the Millennium” has special meaning for us descendants of ink-stained

wretches — Johannes Gutenberg, purported inventor of movable type, has been ranked first among the men and women who shaped the past thousand years.

The use of movable type and the printing press to make books and other printed material accessible to ordinary people, not just the rich and high-born, wrought a basic change in the way knowledge was communicated and preserved. It can even be claimed that all later forms of communication have evolved from this development. Victor Hugo wrote, in 1831, “The invention of printing is the greatest event in history. It is the mother of all revolutions. . . . Thoughts, once printed, are indelible, liberated, impregnable and indestructible. They soar like a flock of birds, disperse to the four winds, and are everywhere at the same time.”

For more information on Gutenberg and his invention, see the Web page at <http://www.germanembassyottawa.org/news/whatsnew/bulletins/1999-07-09.0001.html>.

The University of Göttingen is preparing a CD-ROM, “Gutenberg digital”, containing a scanned reproduction of the Bible along with other related material. For a preview, visit <http://www.gutenbergdigital/vorversion/>.

This is quite a special treat.

### Sebastian Rahtz leaves the *TUGboat* production team

For five long years, Sebastian Rahtz has been an active and valued worker on the *TUGboat* production team. It is with real sadness that we see him go. He will not disappear from the TUG and T<sub>E</sub>X scene — his current projects are compilation of T<sub>E</sub>X Live 5 (he has also been the driving force behind the first four editions) and TUG 2000 in Oxford.

Sebastian, thank you, thank you, thank you! Your competence and good sense will be sorely missed.

### International news: Greek, Russian and Vietnamese groups

The third issue of “Eutupon”, the newsletter of the Greek T<sub>E</sub>X Friends Group, is available to be downloaded from their Web site: <http://obelix.ee.duth.gr/eft/english/eutupon.html>. Several articles are in English, for those who don’t read Greek; but even if you don’t, the design of the newsletter is well worth a look.

CyrTUG, the Russian-speaking group, has inaugurated a T<sub>E</sub>X discussion list to be carried on in Russian. To join the list, send e-mail to [cyr tug-subscribe@vsu.ru](mailto:cyr tug-subscribe@vsu.ru).

A new T<sub>E</sub>X group for Vietnamese users has been formed. Visit their home page at <http://iris.ltas.ulg.ac.be/viettug>.

All the T<sub>E</sub>X groups we know about are listed on the TUG page [www.tug.org/lugs.html](http://www.tug.org/lugs.html). The president or a convenient contact is listed for each, along with a link to the group's home page, if one exists. If you learn of any new group that hasn't yet been listed, please do let us know; send a message to [webmaster@tug.org](mailto:webmaster@tug.org) and to [office@tug.org](mailto:office@tug.org) with an address of someone to contact for more information.

### Clarification of the CTAN “nonfree” classification

The June issue of *TUGboat* carried a note by Bernard Gaulle entitled “The french package on and off CTAN” (pp. 91–92); this was accompanied by editorial commentary regarding the purpose of the distinction between “free” and “nonfree”. There seems to have been some misunderstanding of precisely what is meant.

The categorization “nonfree” in CTAN terms means nothing more or less than that the license accompanying a package *limits redistribution or use* of the package.

It is the desire of the compilers of the T<sub>E</sub>X Live CD-ROM to include only files that can be redistributed without any restrictions, so that the mechanics of distribution do not create any undue administrative burden. (For T<sub>E</sub>X Live 4, this was evidenced in the TUG office by the necessity of telling some prospective purchasers that it was not permitted to distribute multiple copies, even for such worthwhile purposes as distributing them free to a computer science class.) The CTAN management have chosen to assist in this effort by making clear, by location in the archive, the status of all relevant material. Thus T<sub>E</sub>X Live 5, which will accompany the first 2000 issue of *TUGboat*, will be free of any restrictions, and can be supplied to anyone wanting a copy, unlike T<sub>E</sub>X Live 4, which could be distributed only to members of T<sub>E</sub>X user groups.

### The origin of the @ sign

A delightful, well-researched and -written article on the origin of the @ sign, by Michael J. McCarthy, appeared on the front page of the November 16 issue of the *Wall Street Journal*.

I thought the subject matter would be of interest to *TUGboat* readers, so I tried to obtain permission to republish it. This has turned out to be not a simple task, and ultimately it has proved impossible. The *Journal* requires payment for any republication; the fee requested was \$250. In the commercial world, that would be a mere token, but it is beyond *TUGboat*'s (nonexistent) budget for such items.

Robin Laakso at the TUG office tried her best to get the fee reduced, but to no avail. Thanks to her for a gallant attempt.

If you *can* find a copy of the November 16 *Journal*, do read the article. You will certainly enjoy it.

### Communication by flags

There are several flag codes still in use in nautical circles. One is described in this issue in an article on the semaphore flag code. Another system, the international flag code, contains a flag for each letter of the Latin alphabet and for each digit, with a few additional flags for good measure. These flags are brightly colored, with easily recognizable patterns; in addition to its meaning as a letter or digit, each flag is also assigned a meaning of a specific word or phrase.

One of these flags, the one representing the letter Z, has particular significance to our group; the extended meaning of this flag is “require a tug”. A drawing by Duane Bibby was commissioned by the 1999 TUG annual meeting committee to denote a “T<sub>E</sub>X Friendly Zone”.

The drawing, with the flag in gorgeous color, can be downloaded from the TUG Web site: [http://www.tug.org/publicity/tfz\\_master/](http://www.tug.org/publicity/tfz_master/).

Retrieve a copy, print it out, and hang it over your desk to proclaim that *you* inhabit a

T<sub>E</sub>X Friendly Zone.

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