
Editorial comments

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R.I.P. Sebastian Rahtz, 1955–2016

SPQR — Sebastian Patrick Quintus Rahtz — succumbed to a long illness on 15 March 2016. He came by the memorable initials honestly, as the fifth child of a professor in archaeology.

Sebastian was involved in more signal T_EX projects than one can imagine — T_EX Live, two L^AT_EX Companions (Graphics and the Web), `hyperref` and many other packages,¹ as well as numerous *TUGboat* articles.² He gave a good account of himself in a 2009 interview.³

Professionally, he started out to follow the family tradition in archaeology, and was involved in typesetting books on classical subjects, but became fascinated by the capabilities of T_EX when it became available in the early 1980s. His efforts to make T_EX available to others led him to work on the UK T_EX Archive, and on CTAN when that succeeded the UK Archive. From this emerged the T_EX Live distribution, which he created, named, and edited until 2004. (The full T_EX Live Guides for the 3rd and 4th editions⁴ were published in *TUGboat*.) As a key contributor to the architecture of the T_EX Directory Structure,⁵ his legacy remains important to T_EX users to this day.

I first met Sebastian at a T_EX meeting in the UK sometime during the 1980s. His enthusiasm and dedication were obvious, as were his sharp intelligence and dry wit. By the 1990s, he was active in the organized user groups, joining the TUG board from 1994–1997, becoming secretary in 1995 and chair of the technical council in 1996, relinquishing both positions at the end of his board tenure.

He was a prime instigator in arranging for the first TUG meeting in Kerala, India, in 2002, and for the formation of TUG India.

TUG 2000 took place at Wadham College, Oxford University, where by then Sebastian was on the computing support staff, having been brought there to “work on bringing documentation into a common format using XML”.³ Unlike T_EX, XML can be validated (i.e., forced to conform to a predefined

¹ <http://ctan.org/author/rahtz>

² <http://tug.org/TUGboat/Contents/listauthor.html#Rahtz,Sebastian>

³ <http://tug.org/interviews/rahtz.html>

⁴ <ftp://tug.org/historic/systems/texlive/1998/tldoc/live.pdf>

The early Guides included an exhaustive annotated listing of the contents, a feature no longer needed now that on-line documentation is so readily available.

⁵ <http://tug.org/TUGboat/tb16-4/tb49tds.pdf>



structure); for scholarly publications especially in the humanities, this is not as restricting as it is for mathematics, and even for math, a number of publishers have adopted its use. The XML bug bit Sebastian quite as effectively as the T_EX bug had earlier, and with less time to devote to T_EX, he threw himself fully into the effort to develop and encourage the use of TEI (the Text Encoding Initiative) among academics.

Sebastian will be greatly missed both by the T_EX and TEI communities and by his former colleagues.

George Greenwade, 1956–2003

Very belatedly, we learned of the death of George Greenwade, a former board member (1994–1997) and treasurer of TUG (1994–1995). He died unexpectedly on 2 August 2003.

George was an economist, on the faculty of Sam Houston State University, in Huntsville, Texas. He had, for the early 1990s, an unusually strong interest in the possibilities of the World Wide Web for economics, and established a website that quickly became recognized as an important resource both by the economics community and by *PC Magazine*, which featured it on a map of outstanding internet sites in 1994.

Along with interest in the Web came an interest in effective communication and publication, hence George’s interest in T_EX. The rationale for and realization of CTAN were a product of these interests, introduced by George at the 1993 annual meeting and published in the proceedings.⁶ At first, CTAN was based on the FTP protocol, and the site <ftp.shsu.edu> quickly became a familiar target for exploration. Even now, George’s paper makes for interesting reading, identifying the participants in the archive effort (including the part played by Sebastian Rahtz).

George’s participation as an active member of the TUG board was cut short by responsibilities of his primary field; we were sorry to lose his energy and

⁶ <http://tug.org/TUGboat/tb14-3/tb40green.pdf>

expertise, but his legacy remains in an irreplaceable resource for the \TeX community.

Peter Breitenlohner, 1940–2015

Peter’s legacy to DANTE and his German friends is honored elsewhere in this issue by Joachim and Marion Lammarsch. Here we can reveal one of Peter’s activities that was purposely kept “under wraps”.

Don Knuth has, since the creation of \TeX , offered a reward to the first finder of a bug in the code. Peter was the recipient of a number of such checks, including one of the last “big ones”; this is mentioned in Knuth’s *Digital Typography*, on page 658 of “The final errors of \TeX ”.

Behind the recognition of errors is a corps of knowledgeable volunteers, individuals whose understanding of \TeX internals is thorough enough that Don trusts them to vet reports and provide explanations that will demonstrate to the submitters of non-bugs that their finding does not pass muster. For many years, Peter was one of these “go-to” volunteers. His analysis of bug reports was thorough, accurate, and understandable by even a non-programmer. That was my principal area of interaction with Peter, and it made the task of “ \TeX entomologist” much easier and more enjoyable. Thank you, Peter.

biblatex — Request for feedback

The biblatex team are looking for feedback on what *real* users are doing, particularly in terms of what back-ends they are using. A *very* short survey is posted at <https://surveymonkey.com/r/X2FWPNR>. If you are a biblatex user, your participation would be most welcome, per Joseph Wright. (And spread the word, please.)

No “drop dead” date was given, but it may be assumed that feedback should be registered no later than 1 July 2016.

\LaTeX courses for credit

It seems rare enough that formal courses in (\LaTeX) \TeX are offered in convenient locations, but the idea that such a course might be offered for credit is even more surprising — although it would certainly be a useful study topic for someone pursuing a degree in math or physics, for example. It has come to light that there are in fact such courses in a few places.

A course at the University of Verona offers two credits, and is well attended; 66 students were counted at the first lecture and an additional 20 were expected for the second (scheduling conflicts precluded their attendance the first week). At Cedarville University (Cedarville, Ohio), a course in Technical Writing using \LaTeX earns one semester hour of credit;

the current professor is “second generation”, having been taught by the former professor who taught the class for 18 years before his retirement. In some other places, although no credit is given, the material is presented as a “soft skill” course which is required to graduate.

If anyone reading this knows of other places where such courses are offered, please send feedback. We will try to compile a list and make it available for reference.

Cooper Type

While checking Don Knuth’s “news” page to get more information about an “All Questions Answered” session in Stockholm, I noticed that he will be giving a public lecture on Tuesday, May 17, at the San Francisco Public Library on “32 Years of METAFONT”. This is part of the Type@CooperWest program organized by Sumner Stone.

CooperWest is the west coast branch of the Cooper Union postgraduate certificate program in typeface design. The “main office”, so to speak, is the Continuing Education department of The Cooper Union in New York City, where a parallel lecture program sponsored by the Herb Lubalin Study Center takes place. Many of the New York-based lectures have been filmed and are made available on line. The listing of topics is wide-ranging, and can be explored at <http://coopertype.org/lectures/nyc>. (The first one I viewed is entitled “How Aldus Manutius Saved Western Civilization”, a lecture by G. Scott Clemons. A good place to start.)

There’s no indication that the west coast lectures are also being recorded, but we can hope.

More typography videos

Listed below are a few videos on type-related topics that I’ve stumbled upon recently or were recommended by friends. Such pointers will be collected on a page on the TUG website for easy reference, at <http://tug.org/video>. I’ll go back and include relevant items that have been mentioned in previous columns.

- “Teaching to See”, by Inge Druckrey, is posted on Edward Tufte’s website. <http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/>
- David Brailsford tells the story of the “jailbreak” of the Linotron 202. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVxeuwlvf8w> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdModNEK_1U
- The trailer for a movie “Carl Dair at Enschedé, The last days of metal type”. (The full movie will be shown as part of the program at TUG 2016.)

<https://www.sheridancollege.ca/news-and-events/typeforming.aspx>

- A TED talk, “Pace matters”, by stone-carver Nick Benson. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8IeEYwVQSA>
- Casting type: Five videos by Stan Nelson showing how punches are made and how type produced using them. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD1C918AD04AF88E0>

If you come across other videos along these lines, please let us know!

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Peter Breitenlohner, 1940–2015

Joachim Lammarsch, Marion Lammarsch

With deep regret and heavy sadness I learned that our DANTE member Peter Breitenlohner unexpectedly passed away in October. Peter wasn't only a member, but a helper whenever there was a need.

Peter's \TeX nical story started before the time when the DANTE e.V. association was founded. He was involved in \TeX when it was published. He found several errors in the software, thus one of the people who got several checks from Donald E. Knuth (DEK). He developed a program to manipulate DVI files and also a special \TeX version which was able to write from right to left. Once DEK commented that probably Peter knew the \TeX code better than he himself.

When I got the Public \TeX software from Klaus Thull and was looking for people who were willing to help me to revise the software and to distribute it to our members, he joined immediately. His overriding interest was to make the \TeX system better. He developed a improved \TeX version called ϵ - \TeX which was able to act like the original \TeX , but contained a number of \TeX nical innovations to improve and to make it better.

Furthermore, when we started to design NTS, Peter joined immediately to help. In 1994, during the TUG conference in Santa Barbara, California, when I organized an appointment with DEK, for him it wasn't any problem to drive quickly 300 miles to Stanford. Together with other colleagues they discussed the idea of NTS with DEK, and after that

he drove back to UCSB. He was a very active member of the NTS team.

It would be easy to tell you a lot more from Peter. During the time when I was the president of DANTE e.V. he was always available. He was absolutely modest, as we learned when we tried to get official money for the NTS project from the European Union. There were some professors in different countries who were willing to support the project, but unfortunately none from Germany. So we were sitting in the ZOO restaurant considering what to do. Until Peter unexpectedly asked us: why don't you ask me. And so after several years we found out that Peter was a professor.

Peter had his very special humor and everyone who knew him a little bit better, knew about the special history about Professor Kabelschacht. What exists behind that story one can read on the Internet or ask at one of the next DANTE meetings. [Ed. note: Prof. Kabelschacht also published once in *TUGboat*: vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 184–185, tug.org/TUGboat/tb08-2/tb18kabel.pdf.] At DANTE meetings we always enjoyed these stories from Peter.

Here also we will miss him as a special individual as well as active member in the \TeX world. For myself and for many other people in our association a man passed away who we monumentally appreciated. But just as much for many of us he was more than a good colleague: he was a very good friend.

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