Letters

Letter to the Editor

Jonathan Fine

The good name of TeX

One of the many wonderful things about TeX is that its behaviour is essentially the same, no matter where it runs. TeX is a fixed point, identical on all machines. The same goes for METAFONT and the Computer Modern fonts.

The author of TeX, Donald Knuth, has made it perfectly clear that he does not object to anyone revising TeX (or METAFONT) just as long as the resulting program is called something else. However, he also says "nobody is allowed to call a system TeX or METAFONT unless that system conforms 100the TRIP and TRAP tests".

He also asks us "to help enforce these wishes, by putting severe pressure on any person or group who produces any incompatible system and calls it TeX or METAFONT or Computer Modern — no matter how slight the incompatibility might seem". (Both quotations are from *TUGboat*, 11(4), p489, reprinted in Knuth's *Collected Papers in Digital Typography*).

In a recent article in *TUGboat* (issue 19(4), p366–371), Petr Olsak describes encTeX, a not completely compatible revision to TeX. It seems to me that Olsak has not followed Knuth's wishes in a consistent manner.

Although he calls his new program encTeX, in his article he talks about TeX this and TeX that when he is referring not to Knuth's TeX, but to his own encTeX. For example, he describes the creation of encTeX the program as a "new compilation of the TeX binary" (p367), and throughout the article he talks of iniTeX when in fact he means iniencTeX. On page 369 he writes "the production version of TeX" when in fact he is referring to his encTeX program.

Olsak is tackling a real problem faced by TeX users in his own country, and he deserves credit for this. His solution requires an incompatible revision of TeX the program. If this has to be, it has to be. But more care is required in the documentation.

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Reply

Petr Olsak

Jonhatan Fine wrote a little response to my article about encTeX published in *TUGboat* 19(4). He is right in all his arguments. My article was written about an extension of TeX, not about TeX itself. This extension was called encTeX. The banner was changed. It was my mistake that in some sentences of my article I talk about TeX but I mean my encTeX extension. Please accept my apology for this. My sentences might add to the confusion about the "name of TeX" for some readers. Jonathan Fine is an example of one such reader. I am sorry.

The primary aim of my article was to show that the correct localisation of TeX in our country is possible only if some extension which is incompatible with the TRIP test is done. The non standard `xord/xchr/printability` settings are explicitly needed. No matter if these settings are implemented via encTeX, via TCP tables in emTeX, via TCX tables in web2cTeX, or constant settings are made in some sections of `tex.web/tex.ch` signed as "system dependent". The resulting program (usable for our localisation) is impossible to call TeX because the TRIP test explicitly specifies that codes higher than 127 are written in two-circumflex notation into `\write` files and logs.

This feature (incompatible with TRIP) is implemented into some widelly used "TeX" distributions: emTeX (with -8 parameter) or web2cTeX (if TCX tables are used or locales are installed and set). This described behavior of web2cTeX implies that it is impossible to call web2cTeX "TeX" if TCX tables are used or locales are installed; yet this distribution is widely known as a TeX distribution. The banner is unchanged. This program is distributed on CDs to all TUG members with the name TeX. This represents more of a problem of the "good name of TeX" than the name-confusion in my article.

In addition, there is the more incompatible extension of web2cTeX from Knuth's original TeX. I mean its sensitivity on first special line in the `.tex` source of the document. If the first line of the document starts with "%&" double, then the web2cTeX switches to behavior undocumented in Knuth's *Computers & Typesetting* (namely volume A and B). I mean, the web2cTeX is not TeX.

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