Welcome to Practical TEX 2004

Karl Berry
TEX Users Group
P. O. Box 2311
Portland, OR 97208-2311
USA
karl@freefriends.org
http://freefriends.org/~karl/

The theme of this conference is practical TEX, and indeed, TEX has always been superbly practical. Some might say *too* practical. When Donald E. Knuth devised TEX to typeset his monumental *Art of Computer Programming* volumes, he did not originally expect it to have such universal application — these days to almost any kind of document printed in virtually any language. As a result, some of his more ad hoc decisions, perfectly reasonable for his original purpose, have had ramifications of unfortunately long standing. For instance, the rather idiosyncratic input syntax and difficult extension language.

Nevertheless, TEX has remained a viable program for document production for over two decades, with no end in sight. I don't know of any other widespread application software that has had such a lifetime. In large part, this is because Knuth had the foresight to make TEX extensible in many ways. For example, the core TEX program knows nothing of graphics; yet it has been adapted to essentially all the new graphics programs and file formats as they have come along. A number of the papers here will focus on this.

With the advent of the World Wide Web, a new trend has arisen: the desire to reuse the same document source in multiple contexts: in print, for online display, as data for searches, and more. TEX documents, and especially LATEX and ConTEXt documents, have always had the capability to be logically structured, and thus have adapted well to our new Internet world.

In recent years, the emphasis on logical document markup and structure has grown ever stronger, and some of the typesetting processes invented for TEX have been formalized by the W3C and other standards bodies. These new initiatives suffice for many purposes, and the conference discussed them and their connections with TEX at length. Still, for achieving Knuth's goal of the very highest quality typographic output, to my knowledge TEX remains unsurpassed — a practical tool of the highest order.

A brief introduction to Peter Flynn, our keynote speaker, is in order. Peter has been involved with TEX for many years from his post at University College in Cork, Ireland. We recently devoted an entire issue of *TUGboat* to his excellent introduction to and discussion of LATEX, entitled *Formatting Information*. He has worked extensively with HTML, XML, SGML and many other markup languages, including integration with TEX. In addition to the paper presented in this volume, he taught a workshop at the conference on Practical TEX on the Web.

Lastly, some acknowledgements. On behalf of TUG and the conference, I first thank our corporate sponsors: Personal TEX for major support, and Apple for the loan of the computers. I also thank Addison-Wesley, Carleton Production Centre, Marratech, MacKichan Software, and River Valley Technologies for their important contributions.

On the personal side, my mom, who attended the conference opening, helped me extensively with this small debut as a public speaker ... among other things. Thanks Mom! Also thanks to Duane Bibby for the wonderful drawings, Wendy McKay for organizing the Mac OS X session, Robin Laakso for her extraordinary organizational efforts, as well as generally being such a pleasure to work with on all things TUG, all the members of the conference committee, and especially Lance Carnes, for much work on the local arrangements, and for dreaming up the idea in the first place.