Editorial comments

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Status of CTAN at Cambridge

As of mid-February, the Cambridge CTAN node developed problems, and has been downgraded; at least for the time being, it should not be used.

This is a good opportunity to remind anyone who is accessing CTAN to enter the network via the established mirroring system. To search for a package, go to `http://www.ctan.org/search` and on selecting an item, a suitable mirror will be chosen to deliver it. Also, the top-level host name `http://mirror.ctan.org` will automatically redirect to such a suitable mirror.

Before his retirement from the Cambridge Computer Lab last fall, Robin Fairbairns was the on-site gatekeeper (for decades) for the Cambridge CTAN node. With his departure, management of the node is less certain, hence the reduction in its status.

But let us take this opportunity to thank Robin for his long years of devoted service to CTAN and to the UK TeX FAQ, and wish him a long, healthy and fulfilling retirement. Robin intends to continue with the FAQ, for which he has reported a sizeable backlog. It's in excellent hands.

RIP Brian Housley

Brian Housley's widow, Zora, has informed the TUG office that Brian passed away on 26 January 2015, and she requested that the news be communicated to the TeX community.

Brian was a resident of Switzerland, an emeritus professor from the Universität Bern. He had been a member of TUG since 1988, and attended several annual TUG conferences, accompanied by his wife.

Brian was the author of the `hletter` package, on CTAN and in TeX Live. He also wrote an article about `hletter` in *TUGboat* 32:3, 302–308 (`http://tug.org/TUGboat/tb32-3/tb102housley.pdf`), based on his presentation at TUG 2011 in India.

We extend our condolences to Brian's widow.

Oh, zero! — Lucida news

Chuck Bigelow's article "Oh, oh, zero!" (*TUGboat* **34**:2 (2013), 168–181) elicited a reaction from Don Knuth (*TUGboat* **35**:3 (2014), 232–234), which has in turn elicited a further reaction from Chuck, in the form of reshaped capital 'O' and 'Q'. The reshaping takes a super-elliptical form, reminiscent of Piet Hein's superegg. Chuck has installed these as variant letters in Lucida Grande Mono, which is equivalent in design and proportions to Lucida Sans

Typewriter. Don's actual request was to place the squarish shapes in Lucida Console; this was more involved, as it also required shortening the capitals to the Console height, but has now also been accomplished. This special "DEK edition" will also have a zero-slash as an alternate, the better for clarity in reading code in a typewriter font.

The Lucida Grande Mono and Lucida Console fonts with the new glyphs will eventually be made available only from TUG. (The non-enhanced versions will continue to be offered, only in TrueType format, from the Lucida Store, `http://lucidafonts.com`.) Stay tuned.

In a related development, Chuck and his partner, Kris Holmes, have posted on their blog (`http://bigelowandholmes.typepad.com`) a detailed essay, "How and Why We Designed Lucida", celebrating the 30th anniversary of these types, "the first family of original, digital typefaces for laser printing and screen displays". The salient characteristics of this family are presented in detail, along with a clear explanation of how these choices make Lucida different from other types, especially those meant originally for printing directly on paper. Many choices were guided by the results of research into the human visual system, and the rich background in calligraphy that Chuck and Kris share is also a strong influence.

Their blog in general is a veritable history lesson in all aspects of typography and vision research, and if it were less readily available, we would have co-opted several items from there for publication in these pages. Expected soon is an article about "Women's Literation" (yes, that's "t", not "b"); be prepared for a surprise conclusion.

Another occasional feature of the `lucidafonts` site is the "Flash Sale", which appears irregularly for specific font families, and may similarly disappear without warning. The sales *are* announced on Twitter (`https://twitter.com/LucidaFonts`), and anyone who downloads a free font from the site gets an option to be put on a list for email announcements. A recent offering was Lucida Handwriting: 15 weights, $15. There's no telling what might be featured next.

And if that is not enough, `lucidafonts.com` contains many more features that are not yet easily accessible (probably, Chuck says, because the site navigation is not yet fully developed). For instance, on the `fonts/` page is a matrix of the letter "a" for every font in the store, showing weight and style variations. And on the `pages/facts` and `pages/faq` pages of the site are more interesting bits of technical and historical information. Explore!

First Annual Updike Prize

Last spring, the Daniel Berkeley Updike Collection at the Providence Public Library (PPL) was host to the inauguration of a new prize for student type designers (*TUGboat* **35**:1, page 3), with a talk by Matthew Carter. The first of the annual prizes were awarded this year on February 19; the ceremony also featured a talk by Tobias Frere-Jones.

From the Updike Prize web page (`http://www. provlib.org/updike-prize-finalists`):

> The annual Updike Prize rewards undergraduate and graduate type designers whose work has been influenced by materials in the Updike Collection at the Providence Public Library. Whether students choose to revive a historic typeface or to create a new typeface inspired by an earlier design, applications are judged on the quality of the specimen, the quality of the typeface submitted and how creatively and thoughtfully it interprets a historical model.

The finalists and their typefaces/type families:

- Sandra Carrera, *Pícara* (*ECAL*) First Prize
- Chae Hun Kim, *Hodoo*
- Prin Limphongpand, *Rizvele* (Runner-Up)
- Yeon Hak Ryoo, *Tranche*

Carrera's family, *Picara*, was influenced by a type specimen published in the 1770s by Antonio Espinosa. The entire book can be viewed on the PPL web site, at `https://pplspc.org/espinosa`.

The name of Prin's typeface, *Rizvele*, is an anagram of the source used, a book from the venerable Elzevir publishing house.

The first prize trophy, a fully functional composing stick, is pictured on the PPL's "Notes for Bibliophiles" blog, `https://pplspcoll.wordpress.com`, as part of the offering for February 26, 2015. First Prize also includes $250 and admission to the Type-Con 2015 conference (compliments of the Society of Typographic Aficionados).

Information about next year's Updike Prize competition will appear on the PPL blog in due time, but the rules are not likely to change significantly. It's not too early to get started.

Talk by Tobias Frere-Jones

The talk, on the occasion of the awarding of the Updike Prize, was titled "How I Got Here". It was also an occasion for Frere-Jones to revisit the scene of his formal typographic education, the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).

Frere-Jones came by his interest in print naturally. His great-grandfather, Edgar Wallace, was a writer of books, including mysteries. (The slides included images of their jackets, from the time when books routinely wore jackets.) His father was a copywriter for an advertising agency.

At an early age, Frere-Jones became interested in art. He named two principal influences — Kazimir Malevich, a creator of geometric abstract art, and Kurt Schwitters, who made collages from found scraps of printed material. Another influence was mathematics, in particular algebra and geometry. Analyzing shapes — squares, circles and triangles — was the only way he could make sense of Roman inscriptional letters. He also found inspiration (and examples for practice) in a book on drawing letterforms by David Gates. After entering RISD, he augmented what was being covered in classes with Updike's classic *Printing Types*.

One early experiment, intended as a Christmas present (to be used in ads for his brother's band), involved drawing his preliminary sketches on napkins while at a local pub. The first draft included only letters, and when he realized that he also needed digits, he had to go back to the bar to get more napkins to establish the proper conditions for matching the shapes.

After graduation from RISD, he joined the Font Bureau, where he benefited from the experience of David Berlow, whose good lessons included how to say when a project is finished, and assignments where he could be effective.

Among the many typefaces created by Frere-Jones are Interstate and Retina (both well known, even ubiquitous). He also adapted for digital use a lesser-known face named Epitaph, originally created at the close of the nineteenth century and based on letterforms found on contemporary gravestones; it was this typeface, he said, that caused him to realize that lettershapes (in metal) were different in different sizes. He described his adaptations as taking parts of letters from different sizes, swapping features from one letter to another, for example, adding serifs on "T", transplanting a curve from "N" to "K". In the process, he produced two variants of almost every letter, based on features already present in the different sizes of the original. Although his slides showing the details aren't available, a good example is posted at `http://www.fontbureau.com/ fonts/Epitaph`. Look for the subtle variations in the lettershapes of the two alternate alphabets. In this context, Frere-Jones also noted that a client may take him in a direction that he'd never have gone on his own.

The talk was followed by a few questions from the audience. Asked what is his favorite letter, he answered "R": it exhibits features from all the shapes he identified earlier — square, circle, and triangle. What annoys him most? The degree of impatience

shown by current students; things are too easy now, compared to cutting letters in metal — that takes time, and inspires reflection. He noted that Matthew Carter said that he never regretted putting something in a drawer and ignoring it for a year. And is he still having fun? Yes! Especially when he is able to just sit and draw.

Much more can be discovered on Frere-Jones' blog at `http://www.frerejones.com`.

Monotype Recorder online

For about 70 years, from 1902, the Monotype Corporation published a trade magazine, *The Monotype Recorder*. It covered topics of great variety concerning font specimens, "best practices" and typographic conventions for various purposes and in various locales, reviews of well known printing establishments (who were Monotype customers), a wealth of material about a skilled trade.

A large (and growing) collection of issues of the *Recorder* have now been scanned and posted as PDF files, available for download, on the Metal Type web site in the UK, at `http://www.metaltype.co.uk/monotype_recorder.shtml`.

One particular issue (Vol. 40, No. 4, Winter 1956) is devoted to the topic "Setting Mathematics", by Arthur Phillips, the acknowledged expert on the subject. This was apparently unknown to Knuth when he designed TeX, as it does not appear in any of his early bibliographies. But it sets forth the principles by which math compositors produced much of the material that Knuth examined in his design exploration.

Truly a trove worth treasuring!

Doves Press type recovered

This news has been reported in several places now, but it's no less amazing on a repeat reading: "A century after being cast into the River Thames, a celebrated typeface reemerges" (`http://hyperallergic.com/181625`).

Thomas Cobden-Sanderson and Emery Walker together produced stunning works of the printer's art at their Doves Press, using a type created for its exclusive use. After a falling out between the partners, the press closed in 1909, but its effects remained jointly owned. But before his death in 1917, Cobden-Sanderson, who could not bear the thought that his precious type might be used for anything less worthy than the work for which it had been created, spirited the entire collection to the edge of the Thames, and threw it in.

In 2010, type designer Robert Green decided to undertake a digital revival of the Doves Press type. Working from original examples and archival material, he produced a version that was released in 2013. The original type was still missing, but there were enough clues to locate its watery resting place under the Hammersmith Bridge. Searching on the bank at low tide, Green found several pieces of type in the mud, and from there, with the assistance of a salvage team from the Port of London Authority, 150 pieces of type were recovered.

That small sample of type is not enough to print a book, but it was enough to provide a few new details about the design, and validate the accuracy of the digital revival. An updated version of the facsimile was released in December 2014, and a very readable story, with copious illustrations, appears on the cited Hyperallergic web page.

Another account of the adventure can be found online at `http://trov.es/1zwdjHM`, "The Gorgeous Typeface That Drove Men Mad and Sparked a 100-Year Mystery".

Textures resurfaces

With Barry Smith's death in 2012 (*TUGboat* **34**:2, pages 111, 112), BlueSky Research folded its tents and work on upgrading *Textures* to run natively under Mac OS X came to a halt. Now, a group of dedicated academic users has banded together to support the completion of a Cocoa-based implementation of *Textures*, left unfinished at Barry's death, and to this end has made the existing Carbon-based implementation available for evaluation at no cost.

Preliminary details of this project have been posted at `http://blueskytex.com`, with a further announcement planned for July.

LaTeX vs. Word in academic publications

A question on the TeX.stackexchange forum, "Does LaTeX really perform worse than Word?" (`http://tex.stackexchange.com/q/219576/`), led me to a study published in a recent issue of *PLoS One* that concludes "that even novice MS Word users perform better than expert LaTeX users in document creation."

The article, written by Markus Knauff and Jelica Nejasmic, entitled "An Efficiency Comparison of Document Preparation Systems Used in Academic Research and Development" (`http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.011506`), not surprisingly, raised a number of questions, not to mention a furore, in a number of web discussions. These are only a few:

- comments on the *PLoS* site (click on the "Reader comments" button on the article page);
- the TeX.sx chat: `http://chat.stackexchange.com/rooms/19762`;

- *Nature*: "Word-processing war flares up on social media" (`http://www.nature.com/news/word-processing-war-flares-up-on-social-media-1.16669`).

Admittedly, readers of *TUGboat* may be predisposed in favor of LaTeX. Nonetheless, my main gripe with the article is the "conclusion". While admitting that the use of LaTeX may be justified when documents contain a large amount of math, the final statement is this:

> In all other cases, we think that scholarly journals should request authors to submit their documents in Word or PDF format. [...] preventing researchers from producing documents in LaTeX would save time and money to maximize the benefit of research and development for both the research team and the public.

"Preventing" — so much for academic freedom. (This may have been peer reviewed, but my opinion of the quality of that review isn't favorable.)

Miscellanea

Here are a few more things I found interesting.

Most of the presentations at last year's BachoTeX have slides linked from the program: `http://www.gust.org.pl/bachotex/2014/program`. This one definitely lives up to its title, "Absolutely non-computer and completely not programmable new book forms", by Andrzej Tomaszewski (`http://www.gust.org.pl/bachotex/2014-pl/presentations/formy-ksiazki.pdf`). Fascinating illustrations!

Slides and recordings of the UK TUG 2013 and 2014 meetings are linked from their home page, `http://uk.tug.org`. A number of interesting topics are covered.

A look at the persistence of "archaic" typographic practices was featured in the Boston Globe: "Modern typefaces vs. the Massachusetts court system: Why does one of the nation's most progressive states do its legal business in old-fashioned Courier?" (`http://tinyurl.com/p232hva`). The image of an ancient typewriter heads the article. (This typewriter is very like the one I learned to type on in summer school. Even then it was an anachronism, from long before Courier was created, in 1955. Other anachronisms in the article are so prevalent that it should have been held for publication until April 1!) When this was mentioned to Chuck Bigelow, he responded with a reference to an article he wrote with Gordon Legge published in the *Journal of Vision* (`http://www.journalofvision.org/content/11/5/8.long`); monospace fonts are still used in Hollywood scripts:

... fixed-width Courier, which provides a convenient, predictable metric. Each standard script page corresponds to roughly 1 min of movie time, so the number of pages gives producers an estimate of the length and production cost of a movie.

"Overheard" on the TeX.stackexchange chat: "Archimedes principle: the upward force by the text on a float is equal to the weight of the text the float displaces. :)" (The perpetrator will not be identified here, to protect the guilty.)

Google Code, an open-source project hosting service started in 2005, has been home to some TeX-related projects. Effective 12 March 2015, the service has disabled new project creation, and 25 January 2016 has been announced as the closing date. The full announcement can be found at `http://google-opensource.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/farewell-to-google-code.html`. At least one affected code developer has migrated his code to GitHub (`https://github.com`), but other sites are possible. If your code has been hosted at Google Code, you probably already know about this change; if you are looking for something that has been hosted there, and are unsure of its new location, it's probably best to check with the developer.

A final admonishment

There is much going on in the TeX world. I am tuned into a number of the (LA)TeX forums and mailing lists, and the level of activity is high. Along with the usual plethora of beginners' questions, interesting topics of general interest abound, many worthy of more in-depth and polished coverage. If you are responsible for such material: please consider writing it up and submitting it for publication here.

If you are only an observer of interesting material, rather than the originator, and would like to see it addressed in print, send a note to the editors citing the source (preferably with reliable links), and we will endeavor to persuade the perpetrators to write it up for publication.

Another occasional feature that we've missed in *TUGboat* is cartoons and other illustrations on typographic subjects. If you see a drawing or photo that fits our "profile", let us know, and we'll try to persuade the creator to become a contributor.

TUGboat is your journal. Enjoy reading it, surely — but please also think about becoming an active participant.

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