

ance parameters may be overcome. The dvi driver algorithms include one of two possible approaches to the “rounding” problem. The first approach is to position and round each rule from dvi individually. In the second approach, the dvi driver works only with rounded values (one pixel = one unit) before making the queue of kern, rule, kern, rule. . . In this case, the roundoff error can accumulate and the parameter c can be overcome. But it seems to me that the barcode scanners can read the code better if the metrics of the consecutive bars and spaces are preserved instead of the global width.

As I observed, the dvi drivers usually round the rule width up to the pixel units and never down. The consequence of this feature is that spaces tend to be one pixel smaller than the rules of (presumably) the same width. Therefore I recommend to add one half of the pixel size to the bar correction, namely to the `\bcorr` register.

I have heard that EAN barcodes are successfully read from stickers printed by matrix printers with a very low resolution at module X size of 0.33 mm or comparably small. That would imply that the tolerances of the barcode scanners are usually much higher than those required by the standard.

References

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Letter

An open letter to the TUG Board

It has been suggested by those whose opinion I respect that my somewhat emotive statements concerning the plan to split *TUGboat* from the automatic benefits of TUG membership whilst retaining *TTN* was not calculated to lead to sympathy for my cause. Whilst I accept this, I also know that once an idea has become entrenched it requires more than moderate words to cause a re-consideration of the situation, and I therefore feel that the force with which I put my points was not out of proportion. However, as many board members were not present at the meeting, and as it will no doubt take some time for the minutes to be circulated, I would like to briefly re-iterate my point of view and to explain it.

The proposal, as put at the meeting, is to reduce the membership fee by \$20.00, and in addition to make *TUGboat* available as an ‘optional extra’ for a further \$15.00; *TTN* will continue to be sent to all, and its content will be enlarged and improved. The arguments adduced in favour of this are that (1) *TUGboat* is of interest to only a minority of members, whilst (2) *TTN* is of interest to all.

Clearly (2) is at best debatable, and at worst totally flawed: several speakers emphasised that they did *not* want to receive *TTN*. Proposition (1) is interesting, and the obvious question is “on what is this assertion based?” When were the members polled to ask if they valued *TUGboat* or not? How much of this argument is based on hearsay and rumour, and how much on fact?

When I received my first *TUGboat*, it was almost completely incomprehensible to me: I had no idea what the majority of articles meant. But then the same was true for *The T_EXbook*, and for the Algol-60 and -68 reports: they were initially complete gibberish, expressed in a language that only the congnoscenti could possibly understand. But I did not give up: I persevered. And each time that I re-read *TUGboat*, or *The T_EXbook*, or the Algol-6X reports, I learned a little more. And when the next issue of *TUGboat* arrived, I was able to read a small amount of it without excessive effort, although other parts remained a mystery. But again I did not give up; again I persevered; and with each issue of *TUGboat* my understanding grew.

But as my understanding grew, so did my love of T_EX; each article was a further insight into the

brain of its designer and creator, Don Knuth; and the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn.

And finally the day came when I felt confident enough to propose an article of my own; not too long, not too technical, but my first faltering step as an *active* member of the T_EX community, no longer completely passive and totally dependent on others for my every T_EX need.

And all of this came about through the magic of *TUGboat*, under the inspired editorship of the irreplaceable Barbara.

Then, several years later, I received my first copy of *TTN*. I was horrified: it was almost completely filled with the disgusting details of the infighting which had taken place before, during and after the 'night of the long knives'. It was about *TUG*, not about T_EX.

But I did not join TUG to learn about TUG; TUG is simply a vehicle, not an independent entity with a de facto right to existence. It exists for one purpose and one purpose only: to propagate the word about T_EX.

And in that last sentence I summarise what I believe is at the heart of this somewhat heated debate: TUG should be about T_EX, not about TUG.

Now you can argue that (a) TUG members need to know about TUG activities, and (b) that *TTN* carries T_EX-related matter. With (a), I can take no exception: *of course* we need to know about TUG activities. But we do not need a whole magazine/journal/w-h-y devoted to the subject: a few pages in *TUGboat*, ready-prepared by the present/incoming *TTN* team so as to minimise the load on Barbara, is all that is required. But with (b), I take great exception: there is *no need* for a second TUG publication about T_EX; it already has a first-class publication in *TUGboat*, and anything which competes with it simply serves to diminish its value. When I have read a useful snippet in *TUGboat*, and need to find it again at some point in the future, I can either consult the on-line indexes, or scan the back covers (modulo the ragged-right, "aren't we clever designers?", Vol. 7, no. 1) to find the article of interest. I do not *want* to have to remember whether it was in *TTN* or *TUGboat*—I want to *know* that it was in *TUGboat*, the definitive T_EX journal.

But yes, I agree; more articles for beginners are needed. But their place, too, is in *TUGboat*, at the very beginning; and each article thereafter should be a little more complex, until the final one is of the level demanded by Joachim Schrod and others of his intellect. And by structuring it in this way, the reader will be gently led, just beyond the limits of their own ability. And with each issue their ability

will grow, until they, too, are *contributors* to the wonderful world of T_EX, not merely passive users.

And therein, dear Board, surely lies the flaw of your proposal: you seek to divide the T_EX community into providers and users, thereby emulating all that is awful about the appalling world of Word Imperfect and Quark SlowBoat. Please ask yourselves: is this really what you want?

Three final points, purely concerned with finance. (1) Do you really believe that there exists an organisation stupid enough to pay \$60.00 for *TUGboat* alone, when it can pay \$55.00, throw away its copy of *TTN*, and still receive *TUGboat* for \$5.00 less? (2) Do you really intend to raise your prices to students, by charging them \$5.00 per year *more* than they are presently paying? \$20.00, being 50% of the proposed TUG subscription, plus \$15.00 for *TUGboat*, is \$35.00; (these were the exact figures given at the business meeting in response to Anita's query, although seemingly no-one present noticed this); at the moment a student pays 50% of \$60.00 (\$30.00) and receives *TUGboat* as an integral part. And (3), what about economies of scale? As the number of copies of *TUGboat* which you produce diminishes, the unit cost increases; is it your covert intention to make *TUGboat* so expensive to produce that you can eventually justify ceasing its publication altogether?

Yours very sincerely,
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