

# The EuroTeX 2003 Conference

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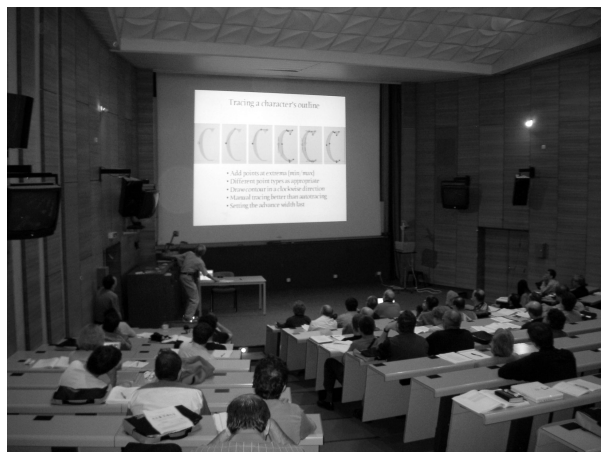
<http://omega.enstb.org/yannis>

## *Who, Where, When*

The Fourteenth European TeX Conference [1] was organized by the Computer Science Department of the “*École Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications de Bretagne*” [2], a “grande école” (= French engineering school) located in Brest, Brittany (in western France). Forty-four talks were held over four days, starting on June 24th, 2003. More than 125 people attended the conference, coming from places as remote and diverse as Russia, Hong Kong, Australia, India, South Africa, Brazil, California, Canada, and of course... several European countries. Nevertheless we sadly missed most of the TeX & TUG veterans (Barbara Beeton, Karl Berry, Alan Hoenig, Mimi Burbank, Patricia Monohon, and many more), probably because of the TUG meeting in Hawaii held very shortly after Brest.

## *Topics*

Academic conference or TeX users meeting? This is the usual dilemma when dealing with TeX, which brings together people doing academic research as well as practitioners, not to mention people simply doing it for fun. We tried to cover all aspects. The theme of this conference was “Back to Typography”, intended as a reaction



(Taken by Tereza Haralambous)

to previous conference themes dealing mainly with advanced technological aspects of TeX, like “TeX and the WWW”, or “TeX in the era of XML and Unicode” that followed in 2004. The idea was to focus on what makes TeX unique: Don Knuth’s (and his followers) passion for fine typography.

This thematic orientation gave us the opportunity to welcome contributions outside the strict scope of TeX & friends. In fact this may have been the first TeX conference at which there were speakers who had never heard of TeX, and discovered it during the conference. Many papers were submitted in MS Word format, also a very unusual fact for a TeX conference.

## *Overview of the Talks*

Although not clearly labeled as such, we tried to organize sessions by gathering talks in similar areas of interest. Day 1 was a very TeXnical day, with talks on present or future extensions of TeX (“superglue”, Omega, ConTeXt, advanced output routines, font management, etc.). Not surprisingly some talks also dealt with XML.

The morning of Day 2 was a kind of continuation of Day 1, featuring talks on various topics around TeX. In the afternoon we switched to completely different subjects, namely Arabic calligraphy, semiology and history of typography, intertextuality. This was the part of the conference which was the farthest from TeX proper and the closest to the humanities.

Day 3 was also split in two parts. In the morning we dealt with two main issues: bibliography (Bibulus, mlBibTeX, BibTeX++) and METAFONT extension projects. In the afternoon once again we had “non-TeX” talks, but this time more technical and related to fonts (in general), history of typography and layout, collaborative DTP, and the like.

Day 4 started as a “font day”, since more than half of the talks dealt with fonts, their history, technologies and applications. Only at the end of the day did the topic shift to multilingual support and critical editions.



(Taken by Tereza Haralambous)

### *Languages*

As was the case for the Parisian EuroTeX 1991, many talks were held in French. Fortunately we had a simultaneous translation team, made up entirely of colleagues from the Language Department of ENST Bretagne: Janet Ormrod, Mary Gravot and Patrick McLaughlin. They did an heroic job, not only translating at high speed but even explaining and commenting when necessary. We are extremely grateful to them!

Unlike Paris '91, the Brestian EuroTeX proceedings contain a significant number of papers written in French (almost a fourth of the papers, more than a third when counting pages). This may seem irritating to the average English-speaking reader, but let us not forget that even a mere fifty years ago it was quite common for papers in important scientific journals, even American ones, to be written in the author's native language, be it French,

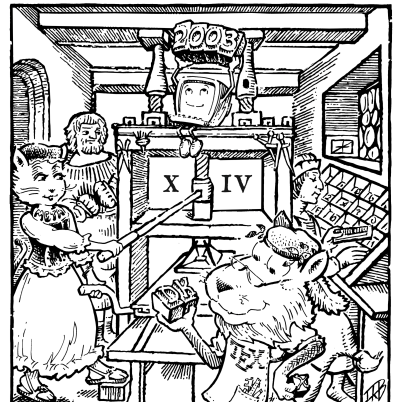
German, Italian or Spanish. And in the humanities this is still the case today.

### *Logo and (Typo)graphical Aspects*

The TeX community likes tradition, and one of most beautiful traditions for the iconography of conferences (also book covers, t-shirts, mugs and whatever that can carry a picture) is to use drawings by Duane Bibby [3], showing the TeX lion, METAFONT lioness and their small computer companion in the context of the conference. For Brest '03 we could dress the lion as a sailor or a pirate (Brest is the favourite harbour for French pirate stories), or as an Obélix-like Celt carrying menhirs. We preferred to stick to the typography theme: the lion and lioness have become craftsmen in an 16th century printshop. The lion holds two character blocks in his right hand (the letters "DK": initials well-known to every TeX user) and one block in his left hand (the Greek letter "χ"). One of the most beautiful Bibby drawings!



Our fearless translators at the task (taken by Tereza Haralambous)



Although the conference was held in France, the visual style of its proceedings is rather British. The banner “Back to Typography” is typeset in Hoefler’s *English Textura* [4] (from the collection “Historical Allsorts”), a font inspired by Caxton’s blackletter, which brings us back not only to typography, but to the very origins of British printing:

## Back to Typography

The font used for the text is the result of a monumental project of typeface digitization of William Caslon’s historical collection of typefaces: Justin Howes has drawn 14 (!) different optical sizes, ranging from 8 to 96 points, in roman, italics and small caps. This font set is called *Founders Caslon* [5], and Justin has kindly allowed us to use it for this volume. Typewriter text and mathematical formulas are set in Computer Modern.

### *Social Events*

In the late afternoon of the first conference day, the bookstore *Dialogues* [6], one of biggest bookstores in France, invited us for an “ap ritif” cider session. For a few hours the bookstore was open only to conference attendees, allowing them to browse among hundreds of thousands of books.

On day 2 we had our gala evening at a restaurant outside town. Before dinner we had a Breton folk dance session, where attendees had the chance to learn Breton dances from members of the local folk dance group in traditional costumes. Breton music was played by the *Kazimodal* [7] band, 2/3’s of which were members of the conference programme committee. After dinner the music switched to rhythm & blues, also performed by colleagues at ENST Bretagne: the *Tom Chicago* band [8].

On Saturday, June 28th, we had our big excursion: the attraction was *La Vapeur du Trieux* [9], a train con-



Some heavy dancing going on (taken by Tereza Haralambous)

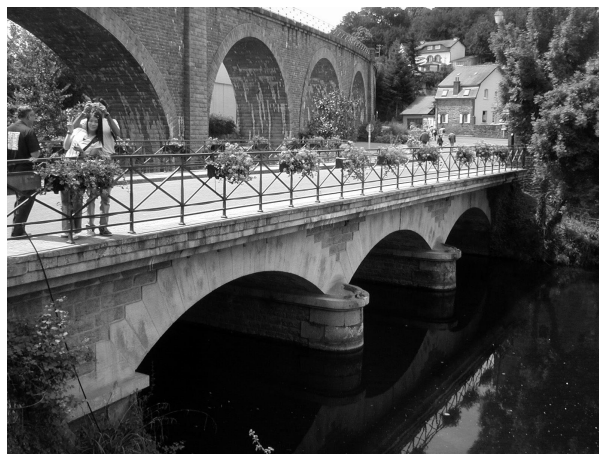


*La Vapeur du Trieux* (taken by Dag Langmyhr)

necting Paimpol to Pontrieux, hauled by a 120-ton steam locomotive, built in Germany in 1912. Pontrieux is a very beautiful Breton village, and the weather was perfect — as we planned it.



At *Dialogues* bookstore (taken by Dag Langmyhr)



A beautiful bridge in Pontrieux (taken by Dimitri Marakov)

### Gratitude

A conference is a collective effort and many volunteers participated in this one, colleagues, students, and others. But a few people worked hard for a long time before the conference even started, and these people deserve a special thanks: Anne-Marie L'Hostis and Odile Ély managed and organized the food, dormitories and hotels, transportation, gala, excursion, t-shirts and mugs, registrations, financial issues, and so much more. Without them the conference would have been a failure and the author would have had a nervous breakdown.

Many thanks also to Andrzej Borzyszkowski and GUST for organizing the EuroT<sub>E</sub>X bus, a 5,000 km Warsaw-Brest roundtrip with stops at several German towns and Paris.

My dear wife, Tereza Haralambous, was the “official” conference photographer, but many attendees also took pictures. We have gathered more than 500 of them on the conference Web site [10].

The conference received funds from public institutions such as the Conseil général du Finistère [11], the Région Bretagne [12], the Communauté Urbaine de Brest [13] (afterwards renamed Brest Métropole Océane), and the Groupe des Écoles de Télécommunications [14]. It also received donations from TUG, GUT and DANTE. Air France and SNCF offered a discount on airway and railway tickets. Our warmest thanks go to all of them.

### In Memoriam

The author could not finish this introduction to the EuroT<sub>E</sub>X 2003 proceedings without a thought for his father, Athanassios-Diomidis Haralambous, who passed away a few days before the conference. Besides being a loving father, he was both a scholar and a scientist, and a passionate book lover. As the eternal song says, *Venit mors velociter | Rapit nos atrociter | Nemini parceretur*.



The registration desk volunteers: Selma Matougui, Frédéric Miras, Kamal Gakhar, Anne-Marie L'Hostis (taken by Tereza Haralambous)

### References

- [1] <http://omega.enstb.org/eurotex2003>
- [2] <http://www.enst-bretagne.fr>
- [3] <http://tug.org/tug2003/bulletin/bibby>
- [4] <http://www.typography.com/catalog/historical/more3.html>
- [5] <http://www.hwcaslon.com/>
- [6] <http://www.dialoguesenligne.com/>
- [7] <http://kazimodal.trad.org>
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- [9] <http://www.vapeurdutrioux.com/>
- [10] <http://omega.enstb.org/eurotex2003/photos>
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- [12] <http://www.region-bretagne.fr/CRB>
- [13] <http://www.mairie-brest.fr/cub/default.htm>
- [14] [http://www.get-telecom.fr/fr\\_accueil.html](http://www.get-telecom.fr/fr_accueil.html)



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