

TeX users. Only TeX users who know how to program (in a programming language or in TeX macros) should attempt to read this book, and then such users should already be familiar with most of TeX's advanced features.

However, to be fair, *TIP* covers just about every aspect of writing TeX macros you will ever need to know. Most of the *TIP* macros can be used with L^ATeX as well as plain TeX and the macros do provide substantial capabilities.

Perhaps the best way to look at *TIP* is as an outstanding collection of macros that happen to come with four volumes of documentation.

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Book review: *Il TeX – Introduzione al linguaggio e complementi avanzati*

Claudio Beccari

Gianni Gilardi, *Il TeX – Introduzione al linguaggio e complementi avanzati*. Zanichelli/Decibel, Bologna 1993, 226 pages, hardbound. ISBN 88-08-10860-0, 36 000 Lit \approx 21 US\$.

Another book on TeX was published in 1993 in Italy; the publisher Zanichelli is one of the leading scientific publishers in this country and in addition to the many valuable university books (remember: the University of Bologna was founded in 1088 AD) is also publishing a series on typography, book design, desktop publishing, etc.; Zanichelli is one of the few publishers that accepts (L^A)TeX manuscripts from authors.

With the cooperation of the publishing company Decibel Editrice of Padua, this book on TeX is perfectly set with TeX in 12pt (with a tight baseline skip of 13pt as is customary in Italy) and done with a high resolution phototypesetter so that the traditional cm fonts have a marvelous look and excellent readability.

The page design looks like the work of a book designer, although no explicit information is given in this regard on the colophon page; both headers show the section title filled with an `\hrulefill` so as to be aligned with the external margin, while the left foot shows the chapter ordinal and the right foot the chapter title; both footers have the page number

aligned with the external margin and the copyright notice and the ISBN number aligned with the internal margin. Many other design details are properly chosen but this is not the place to discuss such fine points. The quality of paper and the hard cover complete the book in such a way that one has the impression of a lasting work; the price is fully affordable and lower than one might expect for such a high quality technical product.

The book is divided in four large chapters: 1) TeX and the world of text, 2) TeX and the world of mathematics, 3) TeX further on, 4) TeX beyond survival. The first two chapters are at a beginner's level and describe in a very simple way how to set text or math. There are plenty of examples and the various control sequences that get involved are chosen so as to follow an increasing level of difficulty.

I particularly appreciated the math examples that consist of complete sections of sample math articles or books, where a whole subject is dealt with, so that theorems, lemmas, in-line math expressions, displayed labeled and unlabeled equations, simultaneous equations, combinatorial diagrams, ... are shown together with the code for producing them by means of the traditional plain TeX macros. The fact that the author is a professor of Mathematical Analysis (at the University of Pavia) explains why the math examples are so well chosen.

The third chapter deals with less elementary topics, such as macros without parameters and tabular alignments and tables with both vertical and horizontal rules. Again, a multitude of examples helps in understanding the intricacies of certain TeX constructs that are necessary with the `\halign` command. For the first time in a book on TeX I see an example of `\valign` that is not trivial.

The author considers the level of chapter 3 the "survival level"; this is why the title of chapter 4 is "beyond survival". The last chapter in fact deals with the more sophisticated macros containing parameters, conditionals, delayed expansions, and the like. The only important topic that is not dealt with in the whole book is the set of commands and macros for producing the dvi output, that is the output routine. This is a precise choice of the author — he did not want to write a handbook on TeX, but a book on TeX that could help beginners to become ever more confident with the language and reach good levels of programming skills so as to be able, if necessary, to deepen their knowledge of certain topics directly from the TeXbook; the latter, as everybody admits, is not a book for beginners (although most of us had to begin with the TeXbook).

Gianni Gilardi achieved another important goal: that of writing the book in an informal way, so

that the reading is pleasant and fluid; as a university professor myself, I know the difficulty we have (in my country) in writing informally, because the tradition of Italian academicians is just the opposite, that is to be formal in every circumstance. The informal attitude is achieved also with the help of a couple of characters, Mr. Tizio and Mr. Caio (who, together with Mr. Sempronio, make up the triad of persons that, since Roman times, have always been used in all examples of legal cases — you see, the academy shows up again!); Tizio is a \TeX guru, or at least a \TeX wizard, while Caio is a stubborn and clumsy beginner who makes a lot of mistakes, and is always asking Tizio for help. These two guys are also depicted in an appendix, \TeX grafica, that displays the graphic capabilities of plain \TeX without the help of special fonts.

The book is completed with a short guide: an appendix where a list of \TeX commands is associated with the most common typesetting tasks identified by simple keywords, so that if you look for, say, “page numbering” you find `\folio`, `\nopagenumbers`, `\pageno`. The instructions for this short guide say that you must use it in conjunction with the analytical index where every command (primitive, plain, or defined in this book) is reported and marked with the page references where the greatest part of the information about that command can be found.

The book does not contain important errors; there are very few typos, and for what concerns \TeX I could notice only the following (minor) ones: the commands `\smallbreak`, `\medbreak`, and `\bigbreak` are described as doing the same as the corresponding `\dotskip` commands with the addition of inviting \TeX to break the page there; on the contrary, the former macros clearly test the last skip amount before doing anything. Further on, `\smash` is described as operating only in math mode, while the definition of `\smash` clearly contains `\ifmmode ... \else ... \fi`.

In conclusion, I find this book a very valuable one for beginners, who may become, with its help, good \TeX users with relatively little effort; I recommend it also for those \LaTeX users who want to start writing for themselves option or style files containing macros of a good level of sophistication; chapter four might be very helpful.

I regret that the book does not spend a word¹ about the language facilities offered by \TeX 3.x;

¹ This is not completely true; languages associated with counters are used for showing how to use `\ifcase` and `\ifnum` in an example macro that sets the date for several languages.

in the United States this problem seems to be not so important but in Europe we use several languages for all purposes — technical, scientific, business, tourism, etc.; we must use at least the national language and English (the variety defined as EFL: English as a Foreign Language) as the *lingua franca* of every international activity. Therefore a section on language shift and customization might have been of great help.

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Book review: *Stop Stealing Sheep*

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Erik Spiekermann & E. M. Ginger, *Stop Stealing Sheep & find out how type works*. Adobe Press, 1993; 174 pp. ISBN 0-672-48543-0. \$19.95.

The significance of the title of the book *Stop Stealing Sheep* is revealed in the sidebar on page 7 of the book. The authors quote Frederick Goudy, an American type designer, as saying, “Anyone who would letterspace black letter would steal sheep.” They point out that they have also seen “lowercase” used in the quote instead of “black letter” but that the idea is the same. Mr. Goudy was given to making broad-based, opinionated statements. He eventually apologized for this one, but this is the kind of passion that the subject of design and typography elicits in a great many people.

Design, typesetting, and printing used to be fields limited to a chosen few who demonstrated the skill, experience, learning, and compulsiveness to work at it. If you ever get a chance to work in a letterpress studio with printers who print using traditional methods, you’ll experience this fervor firsthand. It’s not something that is taken lightly by those who indulge in it.

In recent years, with the advent of highly accessible computers and software almost anyone with an inkling to tinker with page layout software is able to participate in the great publishing frenzy. More people than ever before are producing brochures, signs, their own business cards, self-published books, whatever printed material can be