

Credits

Earlier editions of *Formatting Information* were prompted by the generous help I received from T_EX users too numerous to mention individually. Shortly after TUGboat published it (Flynn 2002), I was reminded by a spate of email of the fragility of documentation for any system which is constantly under development. While the core of L^AT_EX is as stable as ever, there have been revisions to packages, issues of new distributions, new tools, new interfaces, new books and online documents, corrections to my own errors, suggestions for rewording, and in one or two cases mild abuse for having omitted package X which the someone felt to be indispensable.

The last few editions have been the result of a few years of allowing it to lie fallow, accumulating suggestions and finding errors, but taking on board the large number of changes which daily pass in front of all of us who read [comp.text.tex](#) and [tex.stackexchange.com](#), and the sometimes more obvious changes visible when one installs a new version of T_EX. The previous edition came after a longer pause while I finished my research into editing interfaces for structured documents (Flynn 2014a), which took rather longer than I expected, so there was rather more to change; plus I switched the web version to a HTML5 mobile layout, which meant reprogramming the transformation. The new print editions now uses X_YL^AT_EX, which has meant no more worrying about stray UTF-8 characters, and the ability to use different fonts. This edition now assumes the reader uses X_YL^AT_EX and *biblatex* with *biber*, and all the examples and package references have been updated to match.

I am grateful as always to the people who sent me corrections and suggestions for improvement. Please keep them coming: only this way can this book reflect what people want to learn. The same limitation still applies, however: no mathematics, as there are already a dozen or more excellent books on the market as well as many online documents, some listed in ‘Where’s the math?’ on page xxx, which deal with mathematical typesetting in T_EX and L^AT_EX in finer and better detail than I am capable of.

As I was finishing an earlier edition, I was asked to review an article for *The PracT_EX Journal*, which grew out of the Practical T_EX Conference in 2004. At that meeting, Peter Flom specifically took the writers of documentation to task for failing to explain things more clearly, and as I read more, I found myself agreeing, and resolving to clear up some specific problems areas as far as possible. I was delighted to see at subsequent Practical T_EX Conferences, in 2006 and

later, that more presenters, especially in the Humanities, have stepped up to Peter's challenge.

It is very difficult for people who write technical documentation to remember how they struggled to learn what has now become to them a familiar system. So much of what we do is second nature, and a lot of it actually has nothing to do with the software, but more with the way in which we view and approach information, and with our general level of knowledge of computing. As computer systems become more sophisticated, they require less detailed knowledge from users, even while the takeup of computer usage rises. The result is a generation of users who know what they want, but who are wholly incapable of knowing when they've got it, and lack the vocabulary and the experience to explain how to get it; who have only ever seen one way of doing something, and believe that if the result looks pretty, it means it must be right. As technical writers, we need to explain *why*, not just *how*, so if I have obscured something by making unreasonable assumptions about *your* knowledge, please [let me know](#) so that I can correct it.