

Re: getting out of LaTeX

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- *From:* "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* 29 Aug 2006 12:41:25 -0700
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Alexander Magidow wrote:

Brian M. Scott wrote:

On 29 Aug 2006 05:31:11 -0700, "Peter T. Daniels" <grammatim@xxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in <news:1156854671.785353.70960@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> in sci.lang:

Felix Rawlings wrote:

[...]

Peter, when are you going to take the trouble to learn just a little bit of TeX/LaTeX, and thus stop making a fool of yourself when, from your deep ignorance of this system, you criticize it at every possible opportunity?

I see its output; that's all I need to know that it's crap. When I also see that in order to format anything you basically have to program every change, that confirms that it's crap. It's for "software engineers," not scholars.

It's used much more widely than you seem to realize, and certainly not just by software engineers (or even 'software engineers'). There is, for instance, a LaTeX class, `sfms`, for typesetting science fiction and fantasy manuscripts, and

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I know several writers who use it, as well as others who use LaTeX but not sffms. It is of course used by a great many scholars; it's standard now in mathematics (though I've managed to avoid learning it so far) and in physics, a lot of linguists use it, and it (and variants) are slowly spreading even into the humanities, though Word remains much more common there.

More relevant to Peter, it has reasonable Arabic support— and most

Jonathan Rodgers said that if he had known what he was getting into when he did his translation of Fischer's grammar in "Eberhard Mattes' typesetting program EMTeX, in combination with Klaus Lagally's set of TeX macros, ArabTeX" (xi), he never would have used it; it took him far longer to type the book than to translate it.

(And it still has those ugly spaces between the paragraphs — though the leading is uniform throughout, not widening to accommodate the Arabic the way Wright's grammar does.)

importantly, automatic transliteration into encyclopedia Islam style

When I wrote an article for the 3rd edition, I wasn't asked for any style whatsoever.

(and one other style) (this is probably extensible if you're a tex wizard, also). I just wrote my senior thesis on 'i3raab in Latex, and while the initial learning curve was steep, it paid off and looked much more professional(and was much easier) than if I'd used microsoft word.

There's an excellent Arabic font, called "Traditional Arabic," that does proper ligaturing. I don't know where we got it.

I used the transliteration method of inputting Arabic (i.e. for the bismallah, it looks like: bism-i al-llah-i ar-ra.hm_an-i ar-ra.hIm-i.) While this might seem counterintuitive at first, my typing speed in Arabic is abysmal, so it was much easier for me to use this encoding, and required no switching keyboard layouts or anything. Macs have XeteX which has even better Arabic support.

On another note, if you insist on using Word, and are affiliated with a

Not I, but my employer so insists; I got him to buy FrameMaker 7.2 for

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Windows (it has far fewer keyboard shortcuts than the Mac version, which is frustrating) — but since it doesn't do Unicode, I can't do anything with Hebrew, Syriac, or Arabic in it. (We do have a few Hebrew L-to-R fonts, which suffice for the incidental word, but are impractical for longer passages.)

I am not affiliated with a university.

university, they often offer "Writing academic papers and theses in Microsoft Word" classes at universities for free or a nominal fee. These will teach you how to handle sections, references and everything in a way that will be more consistent with what you want. Most people think Word is an awful program— this is like saying that manual cars are horrible if you can't drive them. People need to be trained to use Word properly, and when they're not, that's when frustration sets in.

I know exactly how sections are `_supposed_` to work, and I have no problem inserting cross references; it simply refuses to update them when their numbers change. This would not happen in FrameMaker.

Alex

PS— I personally prefer latex to word in that less is hidden from me. When I say, `\section{Section Name}`, I know exactly what it will look like, and I know it will be 100% consistent with every other sections header. In Word, I always fear a backspace will remove some hidden tag, sending everything into 72 point Comic Sans MS. However, if I knew Word better, I don't think it would be as much of a problem.

Word doesn't use "hidden tags." Maybe you're thinking of WordPerfect.

All paragraph formatting is "contained in" the paragraph symbol at its end (just as all section formatting is "contained in" the following section break marker). Interestingly, when a Word file is imported to FrameMaker, each paragraph has some sort of invisible character just before the Frame paragraph symbol (i.e. if you Backspace with the cursor just before the paragraph symbol, it deletes something else before it gets to the ending period); I suspect this invisible character is a remnant of where Word keeps its formatting information.

TeX/LaTeX files are saved as text files – so that you can edit them with any simple text editor. If the stuff that you are interested in was indeed typeset with LaTeX, the examples should be available as ASCII text

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(unless they were originally in some sort of graphics format imported into LaTeX, that is).

Linguistic examples cannot be "available" as ASCII text. ASCII text has no diacritics, for instance.

Of course they can, just as mathematical examples can. For instance, in math mode the string `\alpha_j` generates a lower-case alpha with a subscript 'j'.

That's typing 8 characters rather than 2 plus two formatting clicks.

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