

Book Review

Book review: *The L^AT_EX Graphics Companion*

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Michel Goossens, Sebastian Rahtz and Frank Mittelbach, *The L^AT_EX Graphics Companion*. Addison Wesley Longman, Reading, Massachusetts, 1997, ISBN 0-201-85469-4.

Before discussing the book it is best to establish the reviewer's prejudices. I normally use Plain T_EX rather than L^AT_EX. However, I do a bit of computer graphics so when Barbara Beeton asked me to review *The L^AT_EX Graphics Companion* I agreed.

The book begins with brief discussions of the principal graphics packages available for L^AT_EX. These brief discussions are followed by quite thorough discussions of these graphics packages:

- the L^AT_EX 2_ε graphics bundle,
- METAFONT and METAPOST,
- PSTricks,
- Xy-pic,
- XYMT_EX,
- ppchtex,
- FeynMF,
- MusiX_TE_X

A brief discussion of the chess font and `chess` package is also included.

The use of color in L^AT_EX 2_ε is clearly discussed. Fonts are always a bit of a problem in (L^A)T_EX. There is a useful discussion of PostScript fonts and the PSNFSS system along with a discussion of font manipulation tools and installation issues. The final chapter discusses PostScript drivers including `dvips`, `psutils` and Ghostscript.

As an example of the level of detail in many of the discussions of the various packages, the PSTricks chapter includes discussions of the basic components and concepts, the commands and how they are structured, the coordinate system used and the use of color. Numerous examples of graphics and mixed graphics and text, nodes and trees, basic data plotting and basic three dimensional graphics are given along with the L^AT_EX source that created them. A short discussion of customizing PSTricks is included. The chapter concludes with a useful list of PSTricks commands.

This is a useful book for anyone who uses any variant of T_EX because the concepts presented are

applicable across the T_EX community. It is not a book that most people will read cover to cover. Rather, you will dip into it to find specific information. That's how I reviewed the book. Specifically, I read the chapters on "PSTricks", "The world of color", "Using PostScript fonts", and "PostScript drivers and tools" quite thoroughly with good benefit. My principal criticism of the book is that the authors do not discuss installation of the various packages in enough detail to be useful. As anyone who has struggled to install one of these packages knows, getting them working correctly is no mean feat.

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