

Book Reviews

Book review: *A T_EX Primer for Scientists*, by Sawyer and Krantz

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Stanley Sawyer and Steven Krantz, *A T_EX Primer for Scientists*. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 1993, ISBN 0-8493-7159-7.

In general, I like this book. It is written with the novice user in mind and the presentation is successful. As stated in the preface,

...1) It is an aid to the busy scientist, mathematician, or engineer who wants to learn to use the computer typesetting system T_EX as quickly and easily as possible; 2) It is a reference for the more experienced T_EX user.

The “how-to” approach works. Examples are presented in abundance. This makes the text useful as a copybook. Furthermore, the authors discuss likely typesetting errors and the correct T_EX code to use for repairs. When I commit to learning T_EX and leave L^AT_EX this will be one of the books I use to effect the transition.

Krantz and Sawyer is organized into two major divisions: *A First Course in T_EX* (Chapters 1–7) and *A Second Course in T_EX* (Chapters 8–14). The first division focuses on introductory issues, particularly topics required for mathematical typesetting. I believe that a fledgling typesetter should be able to handle most of the tasks required for scientific typesetting after reading the first division. The authors begin their book with the obligatory introductory chapter, then present three chapters on typesetting mathematics. A discussion of text macros and T_EX fonts follows in chapter 5. The authors use the final two chapters in the first division to flesh out details required for typesetting technical documents. Items such as type size and margins, headers and footers, references, etc., are discussed. Also included is discussion of the differences between typesetting and word processing: ligatures, hyphens, kerning, and spacing.

Although one might be tempted to consider the first division elementary typesetting, this is not the case. Krantz and Sawyer move beyond elementary typesetting issues and discuss typesetting of complicated formulae. They provide difficult examples and effectively demonstrate production of well-typeset mathematics for the reader. The plentiful examples

should provide templates a reader of this book can use right away.

The second division is an investigation of more detailed items. In these chapters are presented the niceties that have kept me using L^AT_EX (but the book is about T_EX). Instructions for setting up numbered lists, displays, graphics, and more fonts are presented. Also discussed are low-level programming considerations: variables, counts, boxes, and font magnification. Some additional topics of interest to routine users of T_EX are the tabbing environment, table typesetting, and a discussion of typesetting tables of contents, indices, and so forth.

I have only two minor complaints: I found the discussion of hardware and software systems for T_EX systems weak. I would have relegated this material to an appendix or deleted it. In addition, I found one minor error (not in the T_EX part of the presentation): Krantz and Sawyer mistakenly state that the text editor *QEdit* is part of the MSDOS operating system. This is not true. *QEdit* is the product of SEMWare located in Marietta, Georgia (blatant plug). I use SEMWare’s products and can heartily recommend them.

In summary, I recommend *Krantz and Sawyer* as a reference work for new T_EX users. I am not an advanced T_EX user, so I cannot address the utility of this work for advanced users; however, my subjective assessment is that *Krantz and Sawyer* and *The T_EXbook* would be an excellent starting point for moving from novice to hacker.

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