

On-demand production of \TeX DVDs: first feedback

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Abstract

Distributing \TeX software on physical media has been a mission of the \TeX user groups since their earliest days. As of 2024, with wide availability of high-speed permanent access to the Internet, the user groups agreed to switch the way this service is provided: the DVDs are now produced and shipped only on demand, by a group of volunteers spread over the world.

1 The historic \TeX Collection DVD

Obtaining \TeX software has been a major reason to join user groups, especially before the advent of widespread Internet access. The 1980s saw floppy disks being exchanged between user group members; with an increasing number of packages deposited on CTAN, distribution switched to CDs in the 1990s, and quickly to DVDs (Fig. 1).

As of 2023, the \TeX Collection DVD contained more than 7.8 GB of \TeX -related software, in three distributions (\TeX Live, \MiKTeX and \MacTeX). In total, 3,300 copies were produced by DANTE for all \TeX user groups, at a cost of 0.50 euro each. DANTE, TUG and a few other groups were still shipping it to all their members, but other groups, for example GUTenberg, were already shipping to members exclusively on-demand.

For TUG, the contribution to production, plus shipping of 750 DVDs, represented a budget item of \approx USD 3,120 in 2023.

2 Why stop mass-production?

The general feedback was that the vast majority of members didn't need or want a DVD, having sufficient bandwidth to access downloads. Some people were even asking not to get it, to reduce clutter or to better spend community money and time. Therefore making the DVD as a large bulk production and mailing didn't seem the best choice any longer.

Nevertheless, approximately 20 individuals ordered a DVD from the TUG online store in 2023, and I personally provided 6 copies to French users in the same year; thus availability on physical media still has a real use, in some situations.

So time had come to switch from producing thousands of DVDs of which only a handful would be used, to an on-demand production.

Motion 2023.3 was voted by the TUG board in August 2023, ratifying the discontinuation of



Figure 1: A collection of \TeX Collection DVDs.
Courtesy Robert PAPOULAR.

\TeX Collection DVD as a general TUG membership benefit.

3 A network of volunteers to burn DVDs on demand

A network of volunteers was initiated in spring 2024. The only requirement to join this network: have access to a DVD burner, with a few spare dual-layer DVDs at hand.

A web form hosted on TUG web server now allows to request DVDs.¹ In the past, a single disc (the “ \TeX Collection”) was able to store all four components (\TeX Live, \MiKTeX , \MacTeX and a CTAN snapshot), but as of this year, this is no longer possible: the combined size exceeds the capacity of one disc, even dual-layer, so people have to select one or more of the four available DVDs.

New graphic designs for the DVDs and their sleeves were also conceived (Figs. 2 and 3) and will soon be made available to everyone.

The mailing list texdvd@tug.org can be used for discussion and special requests. Please do not post any personal information, such as your postal

¹ Thanks to Max Chernoff for developing this web form, along with its back-office interface, to handle DVD requests.

address, as the list archives are public (list archives and information: lists.tug.org/texdvd).

4 How can I get a T_EX distribution, today?

First option: installing a T_EX distribution over the internet is now far less tedious than fifteen years ago. If your computer has decent Internet access, give it a try!

tug.org/texlive/acquire-netinstall.html

Second option: the DVD images are all publicly available as ISO files. If a friend or relative nearby has a broadband internet access and a DVD burner, they can download them and burn a disc for you. The up-to-date links are given on this page:

tug.org/dvd/

Third option, the new one: rely on our network of volunteers! Just fill in and submit the DVD request form here:

tug.org/dvd/request.html

You will be contacted by one of the volunteers by private email. An arrangement will be made between you and the volunteer about the price of the DVD and shipment, and the way of transferring the money, and you will need to provide your preferred mailing address.

Please bear in mind that this service is being provided by people in their spare time, and that no profit is made on it. If you have the impression your request has got lost, or if you're having difficulties

contacting the person who has volunteered to handle your request, please send an email to the main mailing list for anything related to T_EX DVDs:

texdvd@tug.org

At this writing, it's been about 4 months that we have been working this way. About 26 DVDs have been shipped, for prices ranging from 3.50 euros (1 DVD, domestic shipping) to 10 euros (4 DVDs, intercontinental shipping). Payments have mostly gone through PayPal or direct bank transfers.

I personally have greatly enjoyed each time I dropped a DVD in the nearest mailbox, knowing that it would soon arrive at the other end of the world, ready for a T_EX installation!

5 How can I help?

If you have access to a DVD burner and are willing to give a hand distributing T_EX software, please consider joining the group of volunteers! Just send a message to texdvd@tug.org.

Another way to contribute to T_EX and the user groups that support it is donating at tug.org/donate, or to another group. All donations are welcome!

6 Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank the hundreds of individuals who have been instrumental in developing the software that we're now helping to disseminate across the globe on those four DVDs. I'm also very grateful to those who have consistently packaged the distributions and made ISO images available, each year. Finally, I want to acknowledge the work of all people who volunteered for this new mission.

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[jeremy \(at\) jejust dot fr](mailto:jeremy(at)jejust(dot)fr)
<https://tug.org/dvd>

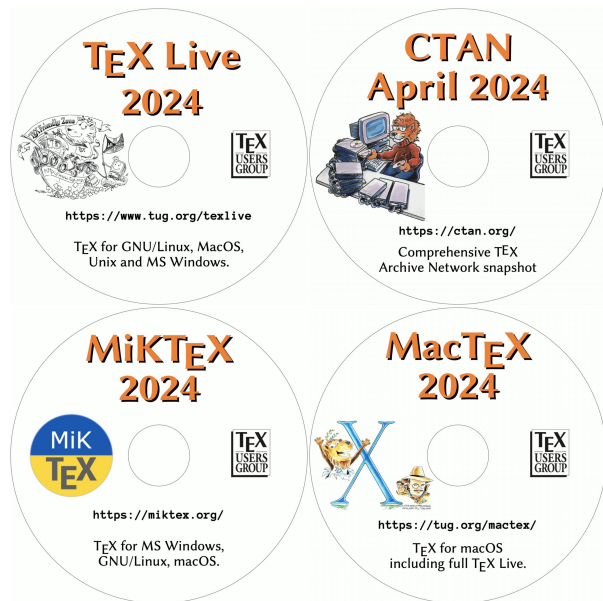


Figure 2: The four DVD designs, as of 2024. . .

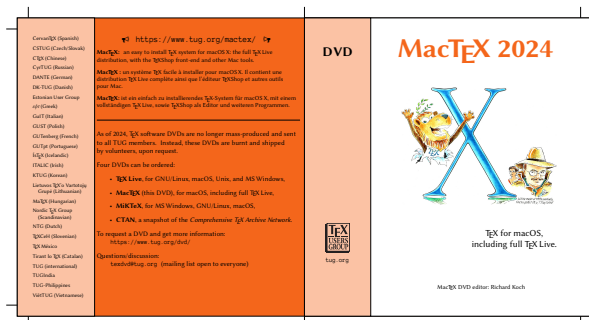


Figure 3: . . . and one of the sleeves.