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From the TUG President

At the 10th EuroTEX meeting in St. Malo, I apparently offended some purists by concluding that the common bond we share is 'typesetting mathematics'. Ooops! Of course, TEX does more than beautifully display equations; create complex page layouts; organize numbering, referencing, and indexing schemes; and provide a venue for dozens of languages. We all know the power of this program. But what amazed me early on, and continues to excite me today is the effect TEX has had on the world's scientific community.

Science fiction and New Age religion have published numerous accounts of a future time when all mankind will share in the wealth and comfort of an advanced civilization. Fictitous stories about the power of technology to eliminate hunger, strife, even war, abound in popular media. But where is this utopia? How will a faster computer chip, an advanced operating system, or wider bandwidth solve the problems of humanity? They can't, and won't. What Dr. Knuth did for humanity was give us the tools, and the opportunity to communicate *and* create the technology that will change the world. But wait. It is not the technology, but the people that will advance society into someplace nice to live. With his original philanthropy, he laid the groundwork for the global community we now enjoy.

EuroTEX was a fabulous conference, especially in light of what is happening around us. Not only did we see ingenious advances in the use and display of information using TEX, we were given the source code so we can do it ourselves! This is incredible in today's world of bottom-line focus. But in the TEX community, it is just the way it is. Many of the ideas presented could have been transformed into potentially profitable commercial products. But not one TEXie withheld the tools they had created. It is the norm for the people of our community to share their ideas, hopes, and macros. Let me be the first to admit that I did not understand this for several years. As a business owner, I held tightly onto the developments we had. Many times we were asked for our macros and routines, but fear of eroding some competitive edge limited our thinking. It was only through the openness and willingness of the TEX Users Group that I began to see what honest collaboration can do. And after nearly 10 years of membership and contribution, it is all becoming quite clear.

One tremendous example is the gift of 4allTEX to the TUG community by NTG. This is certainly a sought-after program, and the availability at a nominal cost allows us to distribute it to all of our members. In addition to the efforts of your group to make it available, the German group Dante has generously offered to fund the costs of manufacturing. Wow! Dante has been incredibly helpful over the years, but the recent actions of Joachim Lamarsch, Marion Neubauer and the entire Dante organization have left me once again smiling at the spirit in TUG. This could be a case study in people-helping-people.

There must be other organizations like TUG, but I have never experienced another. To see collaborators from dozens of countries working together for the common good, without borders or boundaries, is to understand what is possible.