Preface

This book presents a guide to a computer typesetting program for a high quality output. The program is in public domain and belongs to the most extensive software products which can be used without any licence fee. Of course, the extent of the program is measured not by the size of the executable code but by the extent of the "software context" and of ideas connected with the program. The goal of this book is to guide the reader through this extensive "labyrinth of relations".

The first chapters can be read also by a reader, who has no notion of the program described but who has a minimum knowledge about computers. The chapters 1 and 2 make the reader familiar with the basic ideas of the program and with its "uniqueness" compared with commercial typesetting products. If the ideas of the program attracted reader's interest and the reader wanted to work with the program, it would be necessary to refer to another literature. This book is not intended as another manual of practical work with the program at the user's level. The textbooks [34, 97, 82, 103 and 11] give an introduction to the program for users—authors of texts. Exact references are presented in Appendix D (Documents and References). The text [97] is available also in the electronic form and is included in the free distributed (Czech) installation package.

The next chapters will be appreciated by the readers, who have got the communication with the program at the user's level in hand, but who want to gain deeper knowledge about the "software context", which is hard to find in the literature. Such an information is usually dispersed over various doc-files, papers, and/or books.

The text of the book does not mostly concentrate on the exact description of usage of utility programs and/or macros, because this stuff is in progress and the text would be out of date after a short period. Therefore, the text of the book is concentrated on generally usable ideas. The exception of this rule is Appendix C (CTAN), which gives the view of the present "software situation" in the field of utility programs and macros.

The chapters are thematically closed and, within a chapter, the text proceeds from simple notions to more complicated ones. It is possible to read first only the introductory paragraphs of each chapter, and then to go back to read the rest of the chapters. The text is illustrated by a large number of examples.

At the end of each chapter there is a paragraph "Suggestions for further reading". The references concerning the subject of the chapter are included in this paragraph.

I hope that this book will be useful for various groups of readers. It can help the reader without any previous knowledge about the program to decide, whether it is senseful for him to use it. To experienced users, it can give a view of a large amount of possibilities of the program they have no notion about. It facilitates the orientation of system administrators in large installation packages.

At his point, I would like to thank everybody who have helped me with the text of this book. Specially, I am grateful to Karel Horák, Jiří Veselý, Oldřich Ulrych, Petr Sojka, Jaroslava Jašková and Martin Olšák for a careful reading of my manuscript and for their suggestions, which contributed to a better final version of the text.

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