# Documentation

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Documentation is a recurring issue on the mailing-list. Writing documentation is generally done in parallel with developing code as this helps consistency. Where in the past there was one 'big' manual, nowadays separate manuals are written on specific parts of the system. Boekplan has been set up in order to sell manuals but this does not pay off. The usergroup developed ambitious plans for writing manuals and hopefully, those who subscribed to work on this will produce results. Documentation will surely be on the agenda during the 10th ConTEXt-meeting also.

## Documentation

For me the easiest way to develop code and document it is to have it all on the machine that I work on. As I cannot stand an ugly source I often edit tiny bits and it's convenient to edit the source, manuals and test suite at the same time. Writing a (somewhat technical) manual at the same time as the code gets written (or rewritten or improved) helps consistency too. In the meantime there's are lot of old (MKII) and new (MkIV) manuals, articles and presentations laying around.

Documentation has always been a bit of an issue. There has been quite some documents and although there is an (old) 'big' one, my current modus operandi is to write 'smaller' ones that cover a subset of functionality. This also makes it easier to publish them as there is more change that they're in some finished state.

A few years ago Taco, Ton and I organized a way to meet the demands by users for printed (or published) manuals and we started 'boekplan' and there are a few manuals there specially written for the everage (or beginning) user. However, for some reason the effort doesn't really pay off (in fact it costs money). A stepwise release of more manuals, even if they classify as complex or too technical, might help to improve this situation.

At successive meetings ambitious plans have been discussed and the current state of affairs is that a group of users will come up with a set of manuals that suits the average user. This series (of a dozen manuals) will be available on 'boekplan' and forever silence the users complaining about the lack of manuals. For me the advantage is that I don't need to bother with that and can just focus on the manuals that I provide myself as part of the code base. Of course those writing these manuals can use examples and explanations from existing documents.

All our manuals have always been available on the website and ConTEXt garden but in 2015 I started adding some to the distribution. One reason for this was that the standard large TEX distribution TEXlive demands that sources are included. However, this puts an extra burden on us because now we also need to make sure that the source is clean and without hacks. The idea is that a user can process the manual but of course that also limits what you can do, especially with additional resources that one can or won't make public (if only to prevent abuse). I was always reluctant to provide the full sources because one can bet on it that some users will just copy the (often somewhat distinctive) style of a manual or in the worst case reuse the cover page for themselves, thereby suggesting that something originates from here. Distributing sources also means extra work in an effort that already takes a lot of time and resources without any compensation (and time is something I ran out already long ago).

Anyway, the only way to provide manuals in a distribution is to also provide the sources. I'll not start a discussion here about why a PDF file alone is not okay. After all, license discussions are wasted on me, especially as they throw everything on one pile. Artistic aspects (for what they're worth) are kind of neglected and one might wonder what can happen with for instance notes and examples written from a personal perspective: everything could be recycled. As an example, the probably most violated documented source is the TeX source as Don Knuths original and unique prose gets mixed with additions of lesser quality. Fortunately it has the published book as ultimate reference.

When I started putting manuals in the distribution, I could only hope for the best. In 2016 more manuals were added and eventually all manuals that make sense for MkIV will be there. The idea is that in the process errors get corrected and omissions compensated. Eventually all these (often more technical) manuals will be available on 'boekplan' in printing on demand so that they nicely complement the user manuals. I can only hope that in the meantime those who signed up for the other manuals eventually will write them, but that is something the ConTeXt group is responsible for.

For sure at the 2016 meeting, documentation will be on the agenda again.