

Editing a statistics textbook

Sytse Knypstra

Both the 2006 and 2010 editions of a statistics textbook for the Dutch market were edited using Word. The use of Word however had a few drawbacks. Although the publisher had little or no experience with $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}/\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}/\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$, it was agreed to use $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$ for the next edition which has to appear in 2016. Some concern remained however about the continuity of the project if the editing would have to be taken over by someone else. A possible way to alleviate the publisher's concern will be discussed.

1. Introduction

In 2014 I was asked to do the editing for the next edition of a statistics textbook. This book is a translation into Dutch of a US textbook [1] and intended for use in higher education in the Netherlands and Belgium. My primary task is to adapt the translation of the text for a Dutch speaking audience and to check the proper use of statistical language. In 2006 and 2010 I prepared the previous Dutch editions.

2. Workflow

For the past two editions, I used to receive a Dutch translation of the English original in Word format, in which the pictures and all formulas were missing. After I adapted the text the publisher made a copy for proofreading in pdf format in which the pictures and formulas were also rendered. If I wanted a certain formula to be modified, I produced my version of the formula in pdf (using $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$), which I sent to the publisher's editor, who then adapted the proofprint.

When I once decided to leave out one figure, the editor had to adapt the numbering of the successive figures and of the references to these figures in the text manually. Being used to $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$'s symbolic referencing, this really surprised me.

As I prefer to control the whole editing process, I requested to perform the editing myself in $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$. The publisher's editor agreed, al-

though she expressed a few concerns. Her major concern was that the continuity of the work would be endangered in case someone else had to take over my task. At the publisher's there is little to no experience with $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ or $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$ and a source text peppered with $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$ keywords may appear intimidating to non- $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ -nicians. Therefore I tried to find a way to meet the publisher's concern.

3. $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$ made easy

Very soon the use of Markdown came to my mind. Markdown is a markup language in an easy-to-read, easy-to-write plain text format [2]. Typesetting directives are included in the source text in a natural, non-obtrusive way. Undoubtedly my publisher's editor would have no problems reading the source text and recognizing the typesetting directives. A tool, Pandoc [3], exists that is able to convert a text in the Markdown format to virtually any other existing document format, such as (X)HTML, XML, ODT (OpenOffice, LibreOffice), DocBook, docx (Word), EPUB (ebooks), InDesign ICML, $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$, to mention only a few. And through $\text{ConT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$ you can create a pdf file. This workflow:



which is described by Aditya Mahajan in [4], appealed to me. I tried it out on a few pages of 'my' statistics textbook. I used Aditya's filter module [5] in which Pandoc was set to convert

contextgroup > context meeting 2014

an external markdown file to a ConT_EXt file and subsequently to a pdf file. I used Pandoc's flavour of markdown [6] which handles a more extended syntax than John Gruber's original definition [2].

It worked well until I used a frame around a paragraph. Inside this frame markdown's typesetting directives had no effect. The same was true when I used a coloured background for a paragraph. I found two workarounds: (1) you can put `\startmarkdown ... \stopmarkdown` inside the frame or (2) the frame's contents can be put in a buffer and the buffer can be called from inside the frame. But both solutions would be contrary to my aim for simplicity. Essentially the problem is that Markdown's features are poorer than what I needed and what can be easily realised with ConT_EXt.

4. Conclusion

Ultimately I dropped the idea and decided to write the source text completely in ConT_EXt trying as much as possible to separate contents from typesetting directives. General directives (e.g. font, header definitions) are kept in a separate environment file, while incidental directives (e.g. boldface words, pagereferences) are bound to the spot where they have to be applied. But still I wish some of the Markdown elements could once become a part of the standard ConT_EXt syntax.

Isn't the following table

	Low	**Medium**	**High**
On	.50	.10	.05
Off	.25	.07	.03

a lot easier to read (and write) than:
while both tables are rendered as:

```
\starttable[|l|c|c|c|]
\HL
\NC      \NC {\bf Low} \NC {\bf
Medium} \NC {\bf High} \AR
\HL
\NC On  \NC      .50    \NC      .10
\NC     .05     \AR
\NC Off \NC      .25    \NC      .07
\NC     .03     \AR
\stoptable
```

	Low	Medium	High
On	.50	.10	.05
Off	.25	.07	.03

5. References

- [1] **James McClave, Terry Sincich** [2014] Statistics (Twelfth Edition), Pearson Education Ltd.
- [2] **John Gruber** [2004] Markdown. <http://daringfireball.net/projects/markdown/>
- [3] **John MacFarlane** [2006] Pandoc, a universal document converter. <http://johnmacfarlane.net/pandoc/>
- [4] **Aditya Mahajan** [2011] Using ConT_EXt to convert markdown to PDF. <http://randomdeterminism.wordpress.com/2011/01/09/markdowntopdf/>
- [5] **Aditya Mahajan** [2010] The filter module. <https://github.com/adityam/filter>
- [6] **John MacFarlane** Pandoc's markdown. <http://johnmacfarlane.net/pandoc/demo/example9/pandocs-markdown.html>