BookMaking: a journey through open-source document and book creation

John Nash

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J C Nash

Why? (content)

- I've been writing for over half a century
    - "Lit 21" grade 11 survey of English literature
    - essay contests, novels, plays
    - 5 days a week
    - other creative writing

- Science, math and computing
    - theses (3), papers (many), documentation (much), books (half dozen – depends on edition count)

- Interest in printing and publishing
    - Nash Information Services started as publisher

- Historical stories – interesting opinions and anecdotes

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And...

- Academic career more or less requires publications

    – many journal and other items

- In computing arena, important to ***document***, which has led to working papers, blog-type reports, etc.

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Why? (methodology)

- Publishers have traditionally needed heavy investment: editing, typesetting, printing, binding, distribution

- Word Processing software and electronic formats offer a quantum cost reduction in many of the stages, but ...

- Proprietary software and equipment put content in jeapardy
    - lack of control of tools; changes to them
    - companies and products disappear (PublishIt!)

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2010

- *Across and Ocean and Time* (bio of Harry Nash)
    - difficulty with photo organization and captions
    - tried every text processor I could find (Word, OpenOffice, WordPerfect, AbiWord, WordPro, Lyx) – used LaT$_E$X
        - very heavy learning curve
        - BUT allows one to do anything if willing to work at it
    - Much owed to Donald Knuth (T$_E$X, Metafont) and Leslie Lamport (LaT$_E$X)

But ....

And, he said, "You have 24 hours to get from here to home and to New Haven in Sussex and go from there back to your unit."
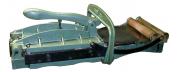
   This I did the next day; and when I got to New Haven at noon, I was ready to sail – but the boat did not sail until dark – and it was like a cork in the rough channels of the sea. Anyway, I was not seasick. The next morning we got off in Arromanches, I got a hitchhike to the airfield in Normandy, only to find it absolutely bare, which was not surprising since the troops had all moved on across France. *I hitchhiked across France* and spent one night in a school and then caught up with my unit on the Belgian-French border. From there we went into Brussels being the first Air Force [unit] into Brussels and this was the day after it was liberated.

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2012

- ***Thursday Afternoon***
  - started as short story to try to imagine the "how" of hitchhiking across N. France
  - then try to match to background
  - 12 GB of background (machine readable) plus many pages of other docs
  - Freely available epub on Archive.org
  - Several re-edits. Latest March 2017.

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2014

- John Wiley (Chichester UK)

- ***Nonlinear parameter optimization using R tools***

- Used LaT$_E$X and **knitr** (Yihui Xie, R-Studio), which allows program code in the text

- Builds 300 page book with updated work (changed data) in about a minute as pdf

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Since 2014

- Follow on to **_Thursday Afternoon_**

  - **_Recuperation_**

  - **_Avoiding the Potholes_** (change point of view)

  - **_Return to Flanders_** (not yet out)

    The first 2 are on **_Leanpub_**, but I have not promoted

  - **motivation** is to record oral history material so it is not lost, hopefully in a readable story

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Since 2014

- Investigation of "good" ways to make epub files
  - LaT$_E$X to epub; several abortive attempts, and some annoying discoveries of bugs and glitches
  - Believe I now have a reasonable recipe

- ***BookMaking*** an online project to write about how I write
  - https://gitlab.com/nashjc/BookMaking
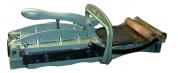 - not complete, but a work in progress

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Content of *BookMaking*

- My preferred approach is a streamlined subset of LaTEX, using TexMaker or TexStudio with some minor custom tags (\dialog{}, \letter{}) and keyboard shortcuts

  - Integrate with Subversion or Git version control/backup

- Also discuss Libre / Open Office, Asciidoc and dialects of markdown.

  – Input / collaboration welcome to get better explanation here

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Open questions

- Whether worth pursuing ***pandoc***

- Issues of getting images to display well in different ePub software and devices. Bitmaps are mainly a disaster.

- Other projects, e.g., Rstudio ***bookdown***, which seems targeted to Web output

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Stittsville Creative Writing Group

- Anthology: *Creative Musings*

- ePub and paper. About 20 authors.

- Used Google docs to gather the items, then LibreOffice to prepare copy --> pdf for printer.

- Written up as a case-study in BookMaking
  - Styles "worked" but not as well as I would like
  - Better transparency with styles would help, as would better understanding by "editor"

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Links

https://archive.org/details/AcrossAnOceanAndTime_201411

https://archive.org/details/ThursdayAfternoon160507 (note more recent edit also available there)

https://archive.org/details/CreativeMusingsAnAnthologyByTheStittsvilleCreativeWritingGroup

- For the following you need a password "SCWG" to unpack

http://web.ncf.ca/fh448/Recuperation170510.zip

http://web.ncf.ca/fh448/AvoidingThePotholes.zip

http://web.ncf.ca/fh448/ReturnToFlanders170510.zip

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Thanks!

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