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Welcome to LATEX 2ε, the new standard version of the LATEX Document Preparation System. This document describes how to take advantage of the new features of LATEX, and how to process your old LATEX documents with LATEX 2ε. However, this document is only a brief introduction to the new facilities and is intended for authors who are already familiar with the old version of LATEX. It is not a reference manual for LATEX 2ε nor is it a complete introduction to LATEX. It is somewhat of an historical document now, since LATEX 2ε came into existence in 1994 [1,2].

The previous version of LATEX was known as LATEX 2.09. Over the years many extensions have been developed for LATEX. This is, of course, a sure sign of its continuing popularity but it has had one unfortunate result: incompatible LATEX formats came into use at different sites. This included ‘standard LATEX 2.09’, LATEX built with the New Font Selection Scheme (NFSS), SliTEX, AMS-LATEX, and so on. Thus, to process documents from various places, a site maintainer was forced to keep multiple versions of the LATEX program. In addition, when looking at a source file it was not always clear for which format the document was written [3].

To put an end to this unsatisfactory situation, LATEX 2ε has been produced; it brings all such extensions back under a single format and thus prevents the proliferation of mutually incompatible dialects of LATEX 2.09. With LATEX 2ε the ‘new font selection scheme’ is standard and, for example, amsmath (formerly the AMS-LATEX format) or slides (formerly the SliTEX format) are simply extensions, which may be loaded by documents using the same base format. The introduction of a new release also made it possible to add a small number of often-requested features and to make the task of writing packages and classes simpler [3].

LATEX 2ε is the consolidation step in a comprehensive reimplementation of the LATEX system. The next major release of LATEX will be LATEX3, which will include a radical overhaul of the document designers’ and package writers’ interface to LATEX. LATEX3 is a long-term research project but, until it is completed, the project team are committed to the active maintenance of LATEX 2ε. Thus the experience gained from the production and maintenance of LATEX 2ε will be a major influence on the design of LATEX3 [3].

In principle we can use Microsoft Word to edit our documents, too.

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