Almost a year ago I launched LaTeXTemplates.com and wrote a post here introducing templates and explaining their benefits to users of LaTeX. In the present post I would like to update the community on the progress of LaTeX Templates and present my thoughts on the progression of LaTeX over the last year and into the future.

LaTeX Templates Update

Since its launch in April 2012, LaTeXTemplates.com has grown in popularity and presently serves 3,000 visitors per day. The current collection of 38 templates in 14 categories is updated with new templates roughly every fortnight and there is a long list of templates in queue that I would like to add to the site. My top aim for the year is to grow the collection to provide a greater diversity of templates to better suit individual users' needs.

The site remains focused on providing high quality easy to use templates with a consistent commenting style. Early on I received several comments suggesting I utilize the bottom-up approach and allow users to submit their own templates for others to see and vote on but I believe this approach lacks the consistency and quality control that I aim to integrate into every template on LaTeX Templates. I am forever looking for beautiful LaTeX templates so please do submit any that you come across or create here .

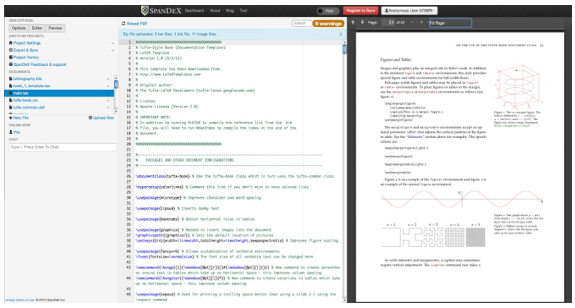
State of Play

Besides the introduction of LaTeX Templates, this past year has seen an increase in the prominence and popularity of services offering LaTeX in the cloud. Along with the established ScribTeX and ShareLaTeX, newcomers SpanDeX and writeLaTeX have burst onto the scene in a big way. All of these services allow online compilation of LaTeX documents and collaboration by multiple people on a single document. This trend mirrors the general trend in technology of centralization and cloud storage and, in my opinion, is especially useful for LaTeX. In my first blog post I mentioned that I believe templates combined with online

compilation can and should be the future of LaTeX, and in light of this, I would like to make an announcement.

Partnership Between LaTeX Templates and SpanDeX

I would like to announce that LaTeX Templates is partnering with SpanDeX , the premiere online LaTeX compiler and collaborative environment. SpanDeX features a quality LaTeX editor and provides a high-resolution preview of your document as you work on it (see below for SpanDeX in action). The service further allows collaboration of multiple authors on one document and version/revision history, which are incredibly useful in an academic environment for writing publications. The integration of DropBox support further adds to the ease of using SpanDeX by allowing you to backup and edit your documents locally without internet access then sync them once internet is restored.



SpanDeX example - click to enlarge the image

What Does This Partnership Mean?

This partnership means that I will be working closely together with SpanDeX to tailor the experience of using templates from LaTeX Templates in SpanDeX. All templates on LaTeX Templates will contain handy "Open in SpanDeX" links to open them directly in SpanDeX for instant editing and compilation. For those wishing to edit and compile documents locally, don't worry, templates will continue to be available for preview and download from LaTeX Templates.

Our aim is to establish a cyclical ecosystem whereby a LaTeX user wishing to create a new document first goes to LaTeX Templates to find a template they are happy with then opens it in SpanDeX for editing and online compilation. The document itself is stored securely on SpanDeX and DropBox and the compiled PDF is available for download by the user. When another document is required, SpanDeX will helpfully direct the user back to LaTeX Templates for choosing another template.

This partnership is a fruition of my vision for LaTeX. For too long LaTeX has been a niche system that requires technical skills to install and use, to the point that LaTeX has been dropping in popularity over the last 8 years. I want to reverse this trend and bring LaTeX to the masses by making the learning curve and skills required to use LaTeX much lower. Templates do this by reducing the time required to tailor a document to a specific need for both novice and advanced users. Online compilation takes the process one step further and abstracts the entire LaTeX backend from the user to provide only a compiled PDF. This means that novice users no longer need to figure out how to install LaTeX or find a certain package/font in order to compile a template.

I believe this partnership will benefit the LaTeX community and encourage more people to try out LaTeX. LaTeX is an awesome system and we need to show the world that it isn't as scary as they might think by making it as easy to use as possible while keeping the core functionality and customization.

Do you agree or do you think LaTeX should remain as it is? Leave a comment or drop me an email/tweet!

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