There are three broad “layers” between putting down ideas into a source file and ending up with a typeset document. These layers of document writing are

1. authoring of the text with mark-up;
2. document layout design;
3. implementation (with \TeX{} programming) of the design.

We write the text as an author, and we see the visual output of the design after the document is generated; the \TeX{} implementation in the middle is the glue between the two.

\LaTeX{}’s greatest success has been to standardise a system of mark-up that balances the trade-off between ease of reading and ease of writing to suit almost all forms of technical writing. It’s other original strength was a good background in typographical design; while the standard \LaTeX{}2e classes look somewhat dated now in terms of their visual design, their typography is generally sound. (Barring the occasional minor faults.)

However, \LaTeX{}2e has always lacked a standard approach to customising the visual design of a document. Changing the looks of the standard classes involved either:

- Creating a new version of the implementation code of the class and editing it.
- Loading one of the many packages to customise certain elements of the standard classes.
- Loading a completely different document class, such as \texttt{KOMA-Script} or \texttt{memoir}, that allows easy customisation.

All three of these approaches have their drawbacks and learning curves.

The idea behind \texttt{xtemplate} is to cleanly separate the three layers introduced at the beginning of this section, so that document authors who are not programmers can easily change the design of their documents. \texttt{xtemplate} also makes it easier for \LaTeX{} programmers to provide their own customisations on top of a pre-existing class.

\*E-mail: latex-team@latex-project.org
1 What is a document?

Besides the textual content of the words themselves, the source file of a document contains mark-up elements that add structure to the document. These elements include sectional divisions, figure/table captions, lists of various sorts, theorems/proofs, and so on. The list will be different for every document that can be written.

Each element can be represented logically without worrying about the formatting, with mark-up such as \section, \caption, \begin{enumerate} and so on. The output of each one of these document elements will be a typeset representation of the information marked up, and the visual arrangement and design of these elements can vary widely in producing a variety of desired outcomes.

For each type of document element, there may be design variations that contain the same sort of information but present it in slightly different ways. For example, the difference between a numbered and an unnumbered section, \section and \section*, or the difference between an itemised list or an enumerated list.

There are three distinct layers in the definition of “a document” at this level

1. semantic elements such as the ideas of sections and lists;
2. a set of design solutions for representing these elements visually;
3. specific variations for these designs that represent the elements in the document.

In the parlance of the template system, these are called object types, templates, and instances, and they are discussed below in sections 3, 4, and 6, respectively.

2 Objects, templates, and instances

By formally declaring documents to be composed of mark-up elements grouped into objects, which are interpreted and typeset with a set of templates, each of which has one or more instances with which to compose each and every semantic unit of the text, we can cleanly separate the components of document construction.

All of the structures provided by the template system are global, and do not respect \TeX grouping.

3 Object types

An object type (sometimes just “object”) is an abstract idea of a document element that takes a fixed number of arguments corresponding to the information from the document author that it is representing. A sectioning object, for example, might take three inputs: “title”, “short title”, and “label”.

Any given document class will define which object types are to be used in the document, and any template of a given object type can be used to generate an instance for the object. (Of course, different templates will produce different typeset representations, but the underlying content will be the same.)
This function defines an object type taking number of arguments, where the object type is an abstraction as discussed above. For example,

\DeclareObjectType{sectioning}{3}

creates an object type "sectioning", where each use of that object type will need three arguments.

4 Templates

A template is a generalised design solution for representing the information of a specified object type. Templates that do the same thing, but in different ways, are grouped together by their object type and given separate names. There are two important parts to a template:

- the parameters it takes to vary the design it is producing;
- the implementation of the design.

As a document author or designer does not care about the implementation but rather only the interface to the template, these two aspects of the template definition are split into two independent declarations, \DeclareTemplateInterface and \DeclareTemplateCode.

\DeclareTemplateInterface

{\langle object type\rangle} {\langle template\rangle} {\langle no. of args\rangle} {\langle key list\rangle}

A \langle template\rangle interface is declared for a particular \langle object type\rangle, where the \langle number of arguments\rangle must agree with the object type declaration. The interface itself is defined by the \langle key list\rangle, which is itself a key–value list taking a specialized format:

\begin{verbatim}
  \langle key1\rangle : \langle key type1\rangle ,
  \langle key2\rangle : \langle key type2\rangle ,
  \langle key3\rangle : \langle key type3\rangle = \langle default3\rangle ,
  \langle key4\rangle : \langle key type4\rangle = \langle default4\rangle ,
  ...
\end{verbatim}

Each \langle key\rangle name should consist of ASCII characters, with the exception of , = and \r. The recommended form for key names is to use lower case letters, with dashes to separate out different parts. Spaces are ignored in key names, so they can be included or missed out at will. Each \langle key\rangle must have a \langle key type\rangle, which defined the type of input that the \langle key\rangle requires. A full list of key types is given in Table 1. Each key may have a \langle default\rangle value, which will be used in by the template if the \langle key\rangle is not set explicitly. The \langle default\rangle should be of the correct form to be accepted by the \langle key type\rangle of the \langle key\rangle; this is not checked by the code.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key-type</th>
<th>Description of input</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boolean</td>
<td>true or false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choice{⟨choices⟩}</td>
<td>A list of pre-defined ⟨choices⟩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commalist</td>
<td>A comma-separated list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function{⟨N⟩}</td>
<td>A function definition with N arguments (N from 0 to 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instance{⟨name⟩}</td>
<td>An instance of type ⟨name⟩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integer</td>
<td>An integer or integer expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>length</td>
<td>A fixed length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muskip</td>
<td>A math length with shrink and stretch components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real</td>
<td>A real (floating point) value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skip</td>
<td>A length with shrink and stretch components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokenlist</td>
<td>A token list: any text or commands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Key-types for defining template interfaces with \texttt{\DeclareTemplateInterface}.

\texttt{\KeyValue} \texttt{(⟨key name⟩)}

There are occasions where the default (or value) for one key should be taken from another. The \texttt{\KeyValue} function can be used to transfer this information without needing to know the internal implementation of the key:

\texttt{\DeclareTemplateInterface \{ object \} \{ template \} \{ no. of args \}}
\{  
  key-name-1 : key-type = value ,
  key-name-2 : key-type = \texttt{\KeyValue \{ key-name-1 \}},
  . . .
\}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key-type</th>
<th>Description of binding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boolean</td>
<td>Boolean variable, e.g. _tmpa_bool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choice</td>
<td>List of choice implementations (see Section 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commalist</td>
<td>Comma list, e.g. _tmpa_clist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>function</td>
<td>Function taking (N) arguments, e.g. \use_i:nn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instance</td>
<td>Integer variable, e.g. _tmpa_int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>length</td>
<td>Dimension variable, e.g. _tmpa_dim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muskip</td>
<td>Muskip variable, e.g. _tmpa_muskip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real</td>
<td>Floating-point variable, e.g. _tmpa_fp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skip</td>
<td>Skip variable, e.g. _tmpa_skip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tokenlist</td>
<td>Token list variable, e.g. _tmpa_tl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Bindings required for different key types when defining template implementations with \DeclareTemplateCode. Apart from code, choice and function all of these accept the key word global to carry out a global assignment.

\begin{verbatim}
\DeclareTemplateCode {⟨object type⟩} {⟨template⟩} {⟨no. of args⟩} {⟨key bindings⟩} {⟨code⟩}
\end{verbatim}

The relationship between a templates keys and the internal implementation is created using the \DeclareTemplateCode function. As with \DeclareTemplateInterface, the \langle template⟩ name is given along with the \langle object type⟩ and \langle number of arguments⟩ required. The \langle key bindings⟩ argument is a key–value list which specifies the relationship between each \langle key⟩ of the template interface with an underlying \langle variable⟩.

\begin{verbatim}
⟨key1⟩ = ⟨variable1⟩,  
⟨key2⟩ = ⟨variable2⟩,  
⟨key3⟩ = global ⟨variable3⟩,  
⟨key4⟩ = global ⟨variable4⟩, 
... 
\end{verbatim}

With the exception of the choice, code and function key types, the \langle variable⟩ here should be the name of an existing \LaTeX3 register. As illustrated, the key word “global” may be included in the listing to indicate that the \langle variable⟩ should be assigned globally. A full list of variable bindings is given in Table 2.

The \langle code⟩ argument of \DeclareTemplateCode is used as the replacement text for the template when it is used, either directly or as an instance. This may therefore accept arguments \#1, \#2, etc. as detailed by the \langle number of arguments⟩ taken by the object type.
In the final argument of \DeclareTemplateCode the assignment of keys defined by the template may be delayed by including the command \AssignTemplateKeys. If this is not present, keys are assigned immediately before the template code. If \AssignTemplateKeys is present, assignment is delayed until this point. Note that the command must be \textit{directly} present in the code, not placed within a nested command/macro.

\section{Multiple choices}

The choice key type implements multiple choice input. At the interface level, only the list of valid choices is needed:

\begin{verbatim}
\DeclareTemplateInterface { foo } { bar } { 0 }
{ key-name : choice { A, B, C } }
\end{verbatim}

where the choices are given as a comma-list (which must therefore be wrapped in braces). A default value can also be given:

\begin{verbatim}
\DeclareTemplateInterface { foo } { bar } { 0 }
{ key-name : choice { A, B, C } = A }
\end{verbatim}

At the implementation level, each choice is associated with code, using a nested key-value list.

\begin{verbatim}
\DeclareTemplateCode { foo } { bar } { 0 }
{ key-name =
  {   A = Code-A ,
      B = Code-B ,
      C = Code-C
  }
}
{ ... }
\end{verbatim}

The two choice lists should match, but in the implementation a special unknown choice is also available. This can be used to ignore values and implement an “else” branch:

\begin{verbatim}
\DeclareTemplateCode { foo } { bar } { 0 }
{ key-name =
  {   A = Code-A ,
      B = Code-B ,
      C = Code-C ,
      unknown = Else-code
  }
}
{ ... }
\end{verbatim}
The unknown entry must be the last one given, and should not be listed in the interface part of the template.

For keys which accept the values true and false both the boolean and choice key types can be used. As template interfaces are intended to prompt clarity at the design level, the boolean key type should be favoured, with the choice type reserved for keys which take arbitrary values.

6 Instances

After a template is defined it still needs to be put to use. The parameters that it expects need to be defined before it can be used in a document. Every time a template has parameters given to it, an instance is created, and this is the code that ends up in the document to perform the typesetting of whatever pieces of information are input into it.

For example, a template might say “here is a section with or without a number that might be centred or left aligned and print its contents in a certain font of a certain size, with a bit of a gap before and after it” whereas an instance declares “this is a section with a number, which is centred and set in 12 pt italic with a 10 pt skip before and a 12 pt skip after it”. Therefore, an instance is just a frozen version of a template with specific settings as chosen by the designer.

\DeclareInstance \DeclareInstance
\{\langle object type\rangle\} \{\langle instance\rangle\} \{\langle template\rangle\} \{\langle parameters\rangle\}
This function uses a \langle template\rangle for an \langle object type\rangle to create an \langle instance\rangle. The \langle instance\rangle will be set up using the \langle parameters\rangle, which will set some of the \langle keys\rangle in the \langle template\rangle.

As a practical example, consider an object type for document sections (which might include chapters, parts, sections, etc.), which is called sectioning. One possible template for this object type might be called basic, and one instance of this template would be a numbered section. The instance declaration might read:

\\DeclareInstance \{ sectioning \} \{ section-num \} \{ basic \}
\{\n  numbered = true ,
  justification = center ,
  font = \normalsize\itshape ,
  before-skip = 10pt ,
  after-skip = 12pt ,
\}

Of course, the key names here are entirely imaginary, but illustrate the general idea of fixing some settings.

\IfInstanceExistT \IfInstanceExistF \IfInstanceExistTF
\{\langle object type\rangle\} \{\langle instance\rangle\} \{\{true code\}\} \{\{false code\}\}
Tests if the named \langle instance\rangle of a \langle object type\rangle exists, and then inserts the appropriate code into the input stream.

\DeclareInstanceCopy
\DeclareInstanceCopy
\{\langle object type\rangle\} \{\langle instance2\rangle\} \{\langle instance1\rangle\}
Copies the \langle values\rangle for \langle instance1\rangle for an \langle object type\rangle to \langle instance2\rangle.
7 Document interface

After the instances have been chosen, document commands must be declared to use those instances in the document. \UseInstance calls instances directly, and this command should be used internally in document-level mark-up.

\UseInstance \UseInstance
{⟨object type⟩} {⟨instance⟩} {⟨arguments⟩}
Uses an ⟨instance⟩ of the ⟨object type⟩, which will require ⟨arguments⟩ as determined by the number specified for the ⟨object type⟩. The ⟨instance⟩ must have been declared before it can be used, otherwise an error is raised.

\UseTemplate \UseTemplate ⟨object type⟩ {⟨template⟩}
{⟨settings⟩} {⟨arguments⟩}
Uses the ⟨template⟩ of the specified ⟨object type⟩, applying the ⟨settings⟩ and absorbing ⟨arguments⟩ as detailed by the ⟨object type⟩ declaration. This in effect is the same as creating an instance using \DeclareInstance and immediately using it with \UseInstance, but without the instance having any further existence. It is therefore useful where a template needs to be used once.

This function can also be used as the argument to instance key types:

\DeclareInstance { object } { template } { instance }
{
  instance-key =
    \UseTemplate { object2 } { template2 } { <settings> }
}

8 Changing existing definitions

Template parameters may be assigned specific defaults for instances to use if the instance declaration doesn’t explicit set those parameters. In some cases, the document designer will wish to edit these defaults to allow them to “cascade” to the instances. The alternative would be to set each parameter identically for each instance declaration, a tedious and error-prone process.

\EditTemplateDefaults \EditTemplateDefaults
⟨object type⟩ {⟨template⟩} {⟨new defaults⟩}
Edits the ⟨defaults⟩ for a ⟨template⟩ for an ⟨object type⟩. The ⟨new defaults⟩, given as a key–value list, replace the existing defaults for the ⟨template⟩. This means that the change will apply to instances declared after the editing, but that instances which have already been created are unaffected.

\EditInstance \EditInstance
⟨object type⟩ {⟨instance⟩} {⟨new values⟩}
Edits the ⟨values⟩ for an ⟨instance⟩ for an ⟨object type⟩. The ⟨new values⟩, given as a key–value list, replace the existing values for the ⟨instance⟩. This function is complementary to \EditTemplateDefaults: \EditInstance changes a single instance while leaving the template untouched.
9 When template parameters should be frozen

A class designer may be inheriting templates declared by someone else, either third-party code or the L\TeX kernel itself. Sometimes these templates will be overly general for the purposes of the document. The user should be able to customise parts of the template instances, but otherwise be restricted to only those parameters allowed by the designer.

\DeclareRestrictedTemplate
\langle object type \rangle \langle parent template \rangle \langle new template \rangle
\langle parameters \rangle

Creates a copy of the \langle parent template \rangle for the \langle object type \rangle called \langle new template \rangle. The key-value list of \langle parameters \rangle applies in the \langle new template \rangle and cannot be changed when creating an instance.

10 Ad hoc adjustment of templates

\SetTemplateKeys
\langle object type \rangle \langle template \rangle \langle keyvals \rangle

At point of use it may be useful to apply changes to individual instances. This is supported as each template key is made available for adjustment using \SetTemplateKeys. For example, after

\DeclareObjectType{MyObj}{0}
\DeclareTemplateInterface{MyObj}{TemplateA}{0}
\{akey: tokenlist , bkey: function{2}\}
\DeclareTemplateCode{MyObj}{TemplateA}{0}
\{akey = SomeTokens , bkey = \func:nn ,\}

the template keys could be adjusted in an ad hoc fashion using

\SetTemplateKeys{MyObj}{TemplateA}
\{akey = OtherTokens , bkey = \AltFunc:nn\}

11 Getting information about templates and instances

\ShowInstanceValues
\langle object type \rangle \langle instance \rangle

Shows the \langle values \rangle for an \langle instance \rangle of the given \langle object type \rangle at the terminal.
\ShowTemplateCode \ShowTemplateCode \{\textit{object type}\} \{\textit{template}\}

Shows the \textit{(code)} of a \textit{(template)} for an \textit{(object type)} in the terminal.

\ShowTemplateDefaults \ShowTemplateDefaults \{\textit{object type}\} \{\textit{template}\}

Shows the \textit{(default)} values of a \textit{(template)} for an \textit{(object type)} in the terminal.

\ShowTemplateInterface \ShowTemplateInterface \{\textit{object type}\} \{\textit{template}\}

Shows the \textit{(keys)} and associated \textit{(key types)} of a \textit{(template)} for an \textit{(object type)} in the terminal.

\ShowTemplateVariables \ShowTemplateVariables \{\textit{object type}\} \{\textit{template}\}

Shows the \textit{(variables)} and associated \textit{(keys)} of a \textit{(template)} for an \textit{(object type)} in the terminal. Note that \textit{code} and \textit{choice} keys do not map directly to variables but to arbitrary code. For \textit{choice} keys, each valid choice is shown as a separate entry in the list, with the key name and choice separated by a space, for example

Template 'example' of object type 'example' has variable mapping:
> demo unknown => \texttt{\textbackslash def \textbackslash demo {?}}
> demo c => \texttt{\textbackslash def \textbackslash demo {c}}
> demo b => \texttt{\textbackslash def \textbackslash demo {b}}
> demo a => \texttt{\textbackslash def \textbackslash demo {a}}.

would be shown for a choice key \texttt{demo} with valid choices \texttt{a}, \texttt{b} and \texttt{c}, plus code for an \texttt{unknown} branch.

12 Collections

The implementation of templates includes a concept termed “collections”. The idea is that by activating a collection, a set of instances can rapidly be set up. An example use case would be collections for \texttt{frontmatter}, \texttt{mainmatter} and \texttt{backmatter} in a book. This mechanism is currently implemented by the commands \texttt{\textbackslash DeclareCollectionInstance}, \texttt{\textbackslash EditCollectionInstance} and \texttt{\textbackslash UseCollection}. However, while the idea of switchable instances is a useful one, the team feel that collections are not the correct way to achieve this, at least with the current approach. As such, the collection functions should be regarded as deprecated: they remain available to support existing code, but will be removed when a better mechanism is developed.

\ShowCollectionInstanceValues \ShowInstanceValues \{\textit{collection}\} \{\textit{object type}\} \{\textit{instance}\}

Shows the \textit{(values)} for an \textit{(instance)} within a \textit{(collection)} of the given \textit{(object type)} at the terminal. As for other collection commands, this should be regarded as deprecated.

Index

The italic numbers denote the pages where the corresponding entry is described, numbers underlined point to the definition, all others indicate the places where it is used.

A
\AssignTemplateKeys ........................ 610
B
bool commands:
  \l_tmpa_bool  ...............  5

C
\caption  ......................  2
clist commands:
  \l_tmpa_clist  ...............  5

D
\DeclareCollectionInstance  ....  10
\DeclareInstance  .............  7, 8
\DeclareInstanceCopy  ..........  7
\DeclareObjectType  ..........  3
\DeclareRestrictedTemplate  ......  9
\DeclareTemplateCode  ........  3, 5, 6
\DeclareTemplateInterface  ....  3–5
dim commands:
  \l_tmpa_dim  ...............  5

E
\EditCollectionInstance  .......  10
\EditInstance  ...............  8
\EditTemplateDefaults  ........  8

F
fp commands:
  \l_tmpa_fp  ...............  5

I
\IfInstanceExistF  ............  7
\IfInstanceExistT  ............  7
\IfInstanceExistTF  ............  7

int commands:
  \l_tmpa_int  ...............  5

K
\KeyValue  .....................  4

M
muskip commands:
  \l_tmpa_muskip  ...............  5

S
\section  ......................  2
\SetTemplateKeys  .............  9
\ShowCollectionInstanceValues  ....  10
\ShowInstanceValues  ...........  9, 10
\ShowTemplateCode  .............  10
\ShowTemplateDefaults  ..........  10
\ShowTemplateInterface  .......  10
\ShowTemplateVariables  .......  10
skip commands:
  \l_tmpa_skip  ...............  5

T
tl commands:
  \l_tmpa_tl  ...............  5

U
use commands:
  \use_i:nn  ...............  5
\UseCollection  .............  10
\UseInstance  ...............  8
\UseTemplate  ...............  8

11