Introduction to Emacs

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- What is Emacs?
- How I use Emacs
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SOME HISTORY

The **text editors** we use today are very different from the text editors used in the early decades of computer science.

One of the first line editor was developed in $1969\,\mathrm{for}$ the UNIX operating system, and it is called ed

ed - Line editor

How to use di ed (1/2)

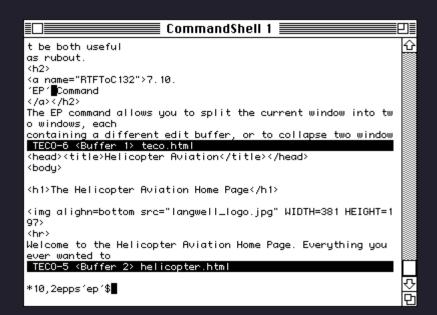
Write "Hello World!" in the file hello.txt

```
$ ed
a  # start append mode
Hello World! # write text
.  # stop append mode
w hello.txt # write to file
13
```

Out of **ed** and other similar editors came the **vi** family of text editors

- ed, 1969
- vi, 1976
- vim, 1991
- neovim, 2014

Another editor of that time was called **TECO**, and it was developed in 1962 by **Dan Murphy**, during his period at MIT.



 $ext{TECO}
ightarrow ext{Text Editor \& COrrector}$

TECO implemented the notion of macros

TECO is not only an editor but also an interpreted programming language for text manipulation.

Arbitrary programs (called "macros") for searching and modifying text give it great power. (Wikipedia)

What are macros?

What are macros?

Macros are methods for saving arbitrary sequences of keybinds under simple alises, which can then be called on in order to execute again the saved sequence.

Example of a TECO's macro

So complex it is pratically a "write-only" language

```
!START! j 0aua
!CONT! l 0aub
qa-qb"g xa k -l ga 1uz '
qbua
l z-."g -l @o/CONT/ '
qz"g 0uz @o/START/ '
```

(Craig Finseth, The Craft of Text Editing)

(Real Programmers Don't Use Pascal)

Out of TECO came different extensions of the editor.

Among these we find TECMAC e TMACS, developed around 1976 from Guy Steele, Dave Moon, Richard Greenblatt, Charles Frankston, et al.

 $TECO \longrightarrow TECMAC$, TMACS

Also in 1976, Richard Stallman, Guy Steele and Dave Moon develop the first version of EMACS

 $?MACS \longrightarrow EMACS \longrightarrow Editor MACroS$

After this first implementation of Emacs various others came later

- TECMAS, TMACS (1976)
- EMACS, EINE (Eine is Not Emacs) (1976)
- Multics Emac, ZWEI (ZWEI Was EINE Initially) (1978)
- ZMACS (1980)
- Gosling Emacs (1981)
- ...
- **GNU Emacs** v13.0 (1985)
- ...

Emacs Timeline

Of these, one of the most important has been **GNU Emacs**, released in 1985 as the first software of the **GNU project**, founded by **Richard Stallman** in 1978.



Key difference between **Emacs** and **vi**

vim was developed to edit text, and only edit text. **Emacs** was developed as a comprehensive software system that can also edit text and that runs on top of the underlying OS.

Let us now understand in depth what makes Emacs special.

WHAT IS EMACS?

Initially, you can think of Emacs as a very, very powerful text editor.

Emacs can indeed edit any sort of text, and in general it is very powerful when it comes to textual manipulations.

We must be careful however to not think of Emacs as only a text editor.

That's because Emacs is much, much more.

Emacs contains an interpreter for the programming language called **emacs-lisp**

Elisp code that computes the n th Fibonacci number

$$1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, \dots$$

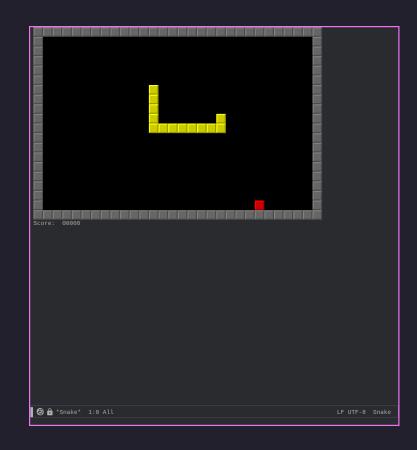
$$F_1 = F_2 = 1 \ F_n = F_{n-2} + F_{n-1}, \; n \geq$$

```
Questo è un file di testo.
Emacs permette di modificare e gestire i file di testo.
Ma Emacs non si limita ad essere un text editor.
Tramite Emacs siamo infatti in grado di eseguire codice elisp.
#+begin_src elisp
(defun fib (n)
  (cond ((eq n 1) 1)
        ((eq n 2) 1)
         (+ (fib (- n 1))
            (fib (- n 2))))))
(fib 10)
#+RESULTS:
: 55
11:50 LF UTF-8 Org (+5)
```

What makes Emacs extremely flexible the ability to execute emacs lisp code, which is a Turing-Complete language with many interesting characteristics.

For example, we can play games in emacs





Learning Emacs comes down to learning about **emacs-lisp** and the ways in which you can use elisp code to program any sort of actions and behavior that Emacs can execute.

It is about learning what it truly means to have a fully programmable and extensible software.

I suggest you to read the 1981 article by Stallman himself https://www.gnu.org/software/emacs/emacs-paper.html

EMACS The Extensible, Customizable Self-Documenting Display Editor

Richard M. Stallman
Artificial Intelligence Lab
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA 02139

Paper abstract

EMACS is a display editor which is implemented in an interpreted high level language. This allows users to extend the editor by replacing parts of it, to experiment with alternative command languages, and to share extensions which are generally useful.

The ease of extension has contributed to the growth of a large set of useful features. This paper describes the organization of the EMACS system, emphasizing the way in which extensibility is achieved and used.

The importance of emacs-lisp (1/2)

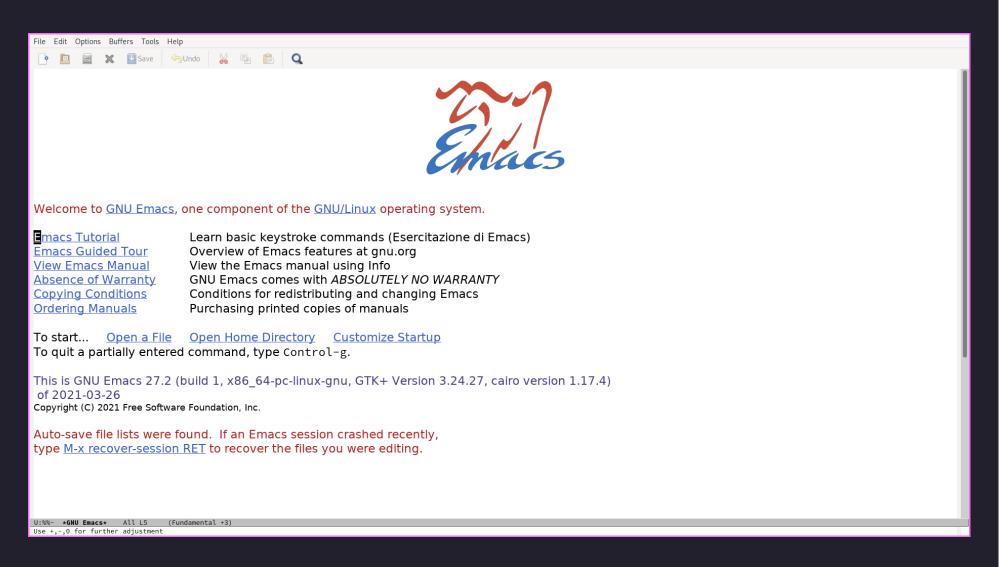
Adherents of non-Lisp programming languages often conceive of implementing an EMACS for their own computer system using PASCAL, PL/I, C, etc. In fact, it is simply impossible to implement an extensible system in such languages. This is because their designs and implementations are batchoriented; a program must be compiled and then linked before it can be run.

The importance of emacs-lisp (2/2)

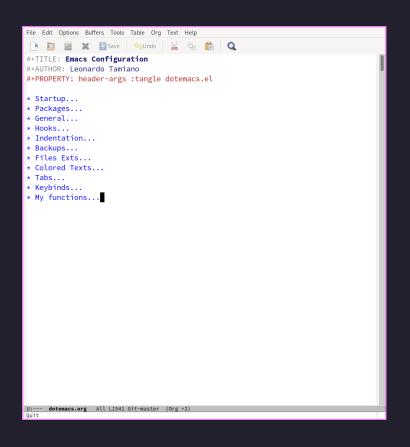
An on-line extensible system must be able to accept and then execute new code while it is running. This eliminates most popular programming languages except LISP, APL and Snobol. At the same time, Lisp's interpreter and its ability to treat functions as data are exactly what we need.

HOW I USE EMACS

Even though Emacs is a very powerful tool, it's learning curve is non-trivial.



It takes a lot of dedication, effort and time to unlock it and to begin to understand its power.

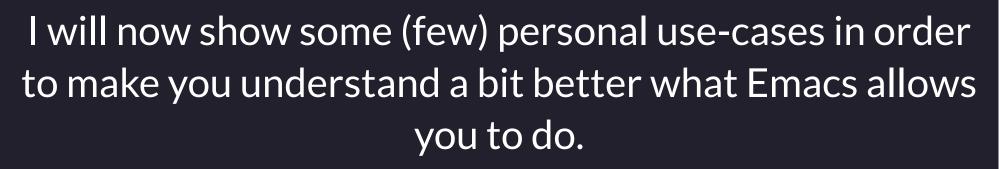




```
#+TITLE: Emacs Configuration
#+AUTHOR: Leonardo Tamiano

⊕ Startup...

🖶 Packages...
⊕ General...
⊕ Hooks...
  Indentation...
♣ Colored Texts...
⊕ Tabs...
⊕ My functions...
```



I have divded my use-cases into the following categories:

- OS interface layer
 - Terminal emulator
 - File explorer
 - Email manager
- Programming
 - Git client
 - Rust IDE
- Org-Mode
 - Notes
 - Blog
 - Slides

OS INTERFACE LAYER

TERMINAL EMULATOR

There are various packages for transforming Emacs into a typical terminal emulator

(vterm, term-mode, shell-mode, eshell)

FILE EXPLORER

Emacs has a built-in file explored called **dired**, which allows us to deal with files and directories.

```
/home/leo/repos/TBD/test:
  total used in directorye 44 available 334.3 GiB
 drwxr-xr-x 11 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 .
  drwxr-xr-x 8 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 ...
  drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir_junk_1
D drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir junk 2
  drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir junk 3
 drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir junk 4
  drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir junk 5
 drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir junk 6
 drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir 7
 drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir junk 8
 drwxr-xr-x 2 leo users 4096 24 apr 10.52 dir junk 9
```

EMAIL MANAGER

There are packages for dealing with emails (mu4e, gnus, notmuch)

```
* mu4e - mu for emacs version 1.4.5
        * [j]ump to some maildir
        * enter a [s]earch query
        * [C]ompose a new message
        * [bu] Unread messages
        * [bt] Today's messages
                                     (0/0)
        * [bp] Messages with images (0/414)
        * [;]Switch context
        * [N]ews
        * [H]elp
        * database-path
                               : /home/leo/.cache/mu/xapian
                               : /home/leo/Maildir
        * in store
                              : 7824 messages
        * personal addresses : leonardotamiano95@gmail.com, leo95.shop@gmail.com, leo95.game@gmail.com, leo95.dev@gmail.com,
leotwork@protonmail.com, leonardo.tamiano@alumni.uniroma2.eu
 🥊 🖂 🔓 *mu4e-main* 1:0 🎎
Use +,-,0 for further adjustment
```

For those interested in a possible mu4e configuration walkthrough, check out my blog post on the matter https://blog.leonardotamiano.xyz/tech/mu4e-setup/

PROGRAMMING

The extreme flexibility of Emacs allows to create custom IDE-like experiences in various programming languages.



The magit package allows a simple and intuitive client interface to the versioning software git.

```
Head:
          master Update
          local/master Update
Untracked files (13)
Unstaged changes (12)
modified dotfiles/.compton.conf
modified dotfiles/.i3blocks.conf
\overline{@}@ -5,6 +5,10 @@ separator=true
 separator_block_width=15
 markup=pangon
+[covid19]
+label=VAC
+interval=once
# Disk usage
 # The directory defaults to $HOME if the instance is not specified.
modified
           dotfiles/emacs bookmarks
modified
           languages/bash/ppa
modified
           languages/latex/cv/auto/cv.el
modified
           languages/latex/cv/cv.log
modified
           languages/latex/cv/cv.pdf
modified
           languages/latex/cv/cv.tex
modified
           languages/python/utils/index_generator.py
modified
           notes/languages.org
modified
           notes/os.org
modified
           notes/tools.org
Recent commits
♠ ♠ magit: knwl 30:0 : ...
```

RUST IDE

Thanks to **lsp**, **rustic** and **rust-analyzer**, we can have a comfortable experience while programming in **rust**

```
Quit
```

In general, for most programming languages you will find an Emacs package for that language.

ORG-MODE

Out of the many functionalities of Emacs, org-mode is without a doubt among the greatest thing you will find in Emacs.

Org-mode can be seen from two point of views:

- 1. As a markup language, such as markdown, xml or html
- 2. As a major-mode in Emacs

Org-mode files are plaintext files that are dynamically processed by Emacs

```
#+TITLE: Esempio file Org-Mode
#+AUTHOR: Leonardo Tamiano
* Outline 1
  Prova.
** Sub-Outline 1.1
*** Sub-Sub-Outline 1.1.1
*** Sub-Sub-Outline 1.1.2
** Sub-Outline 1.2
*** Sub-Sub-Outline 1.2.1
    Prova prova.
 Outline 2
** Sub-Outline 2.1
** Sub-Outline 2.2
   Prova prova.
*** Sub-Sub-Outline 2.2.1
*** Sub-Sub-Outline 2.2.2
**** Sub-Sub-Sub-Outline 2.2.2.1
test.org 21:32 All
                                          LF UTF-8 Text (+4)
se +,-,0 for further adjustment
```

```
#+TITLE: Esempio file Org-Mode
#+AUTHOR: Leonardo Tamiano
⊕ Outline 1
 Prova.
 * Sub-Outline 1.1
  ₹ Sub-Sub-Outline 1.1.1
  * Sub-Sub-Outline 1.1.2
* Sub-Outline 1.2

★ Sub-Sub-Outline 1.2.1

   Prova prova.
⊕ Outline 2

☆ Sub-Outline 2.1

  Sub-Outline 2.2...
Use +,-,0 for further adjustment
```

The syntax used by org-mode is called **Org-Mode Markup Language**

```
* This Is A Heading
** This Is A Sub-Heading
*** And A Sub-Sub-Heading
    Paragraphs are separated by at least one empty line.
    *bold* /italic/ underlined +strikethrough+ =monospaced=
    [[http://Karl-Voit.at][Link description]]
    http://Karl-Voit.at → link without description
    - list item
      - sub-item
        1. also enumerated
    - [ ] yet to be done
    - [X] item which is done
    : Simple pre-formatted text such as for source code.
```

Source: karl-voit - Org Mode Is One of the Most Reasonable Markup Languages to Use for Text

NOTES

Anytime I have to take a note on something, I use Emacs with org-mode.

- Studying
- Penetration testing
- Writing

HTB writeup written in org-mode

```
#+TITLE: HTB - Reddish
#+AUTHOR: Leonardo Tamiano
⊕ Enumeration...
Privilege Escalation...
⊕ Original Walkthrough...
⊕ Video notes
All 1000 scanned ports on reddish (10.129.180.63) are closed
1880/tcp open vsat-control
  nmap -sC -sV -p 1880 reddish
PORT STATE SERVICE VERSION
|_http-title: Error
 * Pivoting from Docker #1 to Docker #3...

⊕ Resources and Extra...

♣ Flags...
 thtb/m/r/reddish_log.org 1172:1
                                                          All ⊠ [500] LF UTF-8 Org 🎾 maste
```



I manage my blog in a single file org.

```
#+TITLE: Blog Content
#+AUTHOR: Leonardo Tamiano
#+HUGO BASE DIR: ...

⊕ About...

⊕ Reviews...

⊕ Posts

 :PROPERTIES:...
  DONE How to manage e-mails in Emacs with Mu4e :tech:emacs:...
🕆 DONE The Complete Beginners Introduction to Emacs - Part 1/3 - How I use Emacs :tech:emacs:...

◆ DONE The Complete Beginners Introduction to Emacs - Part 2/3 - The Basics of Emacs

★ DONE Se questo è un uomo

🕆 DONE The Complete Beginners Introduction to Emacs - Part 3/3 - A Crash Course on Emacs-Lisp
* DONE Sulla pigrizia
* DONE The Importance of RSS
   DONE How I Learned the Power of the Command Line
* DONE How I Track my Expenses with Ledger
TOONE On Doubly-Linked Lists, and how they are Implemented in the Linux Kernel
  DONE Implementing a Crossword Solver in C++
DONE La tregua
* DONE Lettera pre COVID-19
⊕ HTB Writeups
  DONE HTB Writeup - Bashed
  DONE HTB Writeup - Nibbles
TOONE HTB Writeup - Poison
  DONE HTB Writeup - Valentine
⊕ Scratch...

⊕ COMMENT Local Variables

blog/content-org/content.org 141:7 All
                                                                       LF UTF-8 Org 🐧 master
```



```
To understand better this vulnerability the following resources
    might help:
    By downloading the version of the code right before it got fixed,
    we can start to analyze the flaw. The files of interested are
    two, as is shown the commit: ssl/d1 both.c and
    ssl/t1_lib.c. Since however the d1_both.c is used for the DTLS
    implementation, which a version of TLS that uses the UDP
    transport protocol - as opposed to the traditional version of TLS
    that uses TCP - we will only check out t1_lib1.c. Let us
    first discuss the flawed version of the code, and at the end we
    will discuss how it was fixed.
    The function of interest is tls1_process_heartbeat(). As soon as
    we enter in the function the server reads the number bytes that
    the client declared to have sent, and puts such number in the
    payload variable.
#ifndef OPENSSL NO HEARTBEATS
 hbtvpe = *p++;
 n2s(p, payload);
    If the message was an heartbeat request, the server then proceeds
    data specified by the client, that is on the variable payload.
t blog/content-org/content.org 9407:70 95%
                                                                          LF UTF-8 Org 🐧 master
```

Bonus

Inside heartbleed (CVE-2014-0160)

To understand better this vulnerability the following resources might help:

- Commit in which it was fixed
- CVE-2014-0160
- https://www.exploit-db.com/exploits/32745
- https://www.exploit-db.com/exploits/32764
- https://stackabuse.com/heartbleed-bug-explained/

By downloading the version of the code right before it got fixed, we can start to analyze the flaw. The files of interested are two, as is shown the commit:

ssl/dl_both.c and ssl/tl_lib.c. Since however the dl_both.c is used for the

DTLS implementation, which a version of TLS that uses the UDP transport protocol as opposed to the traditional version of TLS that uses TCP - we will only check out
tl_libl.c. Let us first discuss the flawed version of the code, and at the end we
will discuss how it was fixed.

The function of interest is tls1_process_heartbeat(). As soon as we enter in the function the server reads the number bytes that the client declared to have sent, and puts such number in the payload variable.

```
#ifndef OPENSSL_NO_HEARTBEATS
int

tlsl_process_heartbeat(SSL *s)
{
    // -- p points to record data from client
    unsigned char *p = &s->s3->rrec.data[0], *pl;
    unsigned short hbtype;
    unsigned int payload;
    unsigned int padding = 16; /* Use minimum padding */

    /* Read type and payload length first */
    hbtype = *p++;
    // -- read 2 bytes from p and put them in payload
    n2s(p, payload);
```

SLIDES

I prepare my slides using org-mode

```
TITLE: Introduzione ad Emacs
#+AUTHOR: Leonardo Tamiano
⊕ Che cos'è Emacs?...
Come utilizzo Emacs
 Per quanto Emacs sia un tool estremamente potente, la configurazione
 iniziale lascia molto a desiderare, sia in termini di estetica che
 Investendo abbastanza tempo ed impegno però è possibile trasformarlo
 Andiamo adesso a vedere alcuni (pochi) use-case personali di
⊕ Perché imparare Emacs?...
 intro_emacs.org 270:0 ______
                                                                       11:38 LF UTF-8 Org
```

INTRODUZIONE AD **EMACS LEONARDO TAMIANO** Created: 2021-04-24 sab 11:37

WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN EMACS

Learning Emacs is difficult, mostly because it's ideas are not trivial to understand, since they are vastly different from what we're typically exposed in our development years.

Yet, there are many reasons why someone might decided to learn Emacs.

Why should you learn Emacs?

- it can be fun!
- it can expand your mind
- it can increase your productivity

At the end of the day, I do not think it is useful to approach Emacs just simply because you want to be more productive.

You will get stuck, you will lose (momentarily) your productivity, and you will go back to tools that work "ok" on first install.

Approach Emacs with an open mind.

Allow yourself to explore, to waste time, to get stuck.

This will bring you closer to the true power of Emacs.

The more you learn about Emacs, the more you will understand all the different problems that ca be tackled with it, with uniquely fascinating solutions that only makes sense within Emacs.

You can even make memes in Emacs.

Yes, memes.



