

Markup languages and the terminal—Power at your fingertips

Thomas de Graaff & Daniel Arribas-Bel

September 5, 2014

Introduction

Recap

Our main goal:

To make our research as reproducible and visible as possible

This entails:

1. Sharing of code
2. Sharing of data (if possible and not proprietary nor privacy sensitive)
3. Sharing of output (presentation, article, website)

The power of plain text

1. Ubiquitous
2. Usually small in size
3. Portable across platforms (and versions)
 - ▶ it will not be obsolete soon
 - ▶ everyone can read it everywhere
4. It is scriptable (both as input as output)
 - ▶ code is almost **always** in text format
 - ▶ **usually** data is in text format as well
 - ▶ but underlying format for output (presentation, website, tables, articles, books) **can** be text as well

Latex and friends

Latex

1. What?

- ▶ A set of macros around Tex, a markup language invented by Donald Knuth

2. How?

- ▶ Latex is a document preparation system and document markup language. Source: Wikipedia

3. Why?

- ▶ Defacto standard in academic publishing
- ▶ Formulae used in html pages (e.g., Wikipedia)
- ▶ Macro's thus scriptable (whoohoo)

4. But...

- ▶ Notation a bit cumbersome
- ▶ For small texts a bit too much and not geared for HTML (see also)

A minimal example

```
\documentclass[12pt]{article}
\begin{document}
\section{My Paper}
I just discovered that:
\begin{equation}
e=mc^2
\end{equation}
\end{document}
```

Bibtex

- ▶ Basically a free reference manager (actually more a style of managing references)
- ▶ Very versatile and very powerful (most other markup languages work with bibtex as well)
- ▶ Free managers, such as bibdesk or mendeley, are now ubiquitous

Markdown

Why markdown?

1. Easy to learn
`http://daringfireball.net/projects/markdown/`
2. Much less notation than Latex . In general
 - ▶ Latex is for paper (aka dead trees)
 - ▶ Markdown is for HTML (blogs, wikipedia and so)
 - ▶ but sneakily uses some Latex when needed
3. Focus on text
4. Can be “easily” changed in html or pdf (via Latex)—even in Word if needed
5. Can be extended with code or—much better—its results

Language syntax

Emphasis:

```
*italic* **bold**  
_italic_ __bold__
```

Headers:

```
# Header 1  
## Header 2  
### Header 3
```

Language syntax (cont.)

Unordered lists

- * Item 1
- * Item 2
 - + Item 2a
 - + Item 2b

Ordered List

1. Item 1
2. Item 2
3. Item 3
 - + Item 3a
 - + Item 3b

Language syntax (cont.)

Links:

```
http://assemble.io/docs/Cheatsheet-Markdown.html
```

```
[Cheatsheet] (http://assemble.io/docs/Cheatsheet-Markdown.ht
```

Images:

```
![alt text] (http://example.com/logo.png)
```

```
![alt text] (figures/img.png)
```

Language syntax (cont.)

Code blocks:

```
```python
s = "Python syntax highlighting"
print s
```
```

which renders as:

```
s = "Python syntax highlighting"
print s
```

Language syntax (cont.)

To embed mathematics just use Latex notation:

```
$$e=mc^2$$
```

which surprisingly looks as excel type of formulae and renders as:

$$e = mc^2$$

Pandoc

The swiss knife of formats

So how do we glue everything together and produce wonderful html and pdf out of thin air? With **pandoc**

- ▶ Pandoc can convert from (not extensive):
 - ▶ markdown (whoohoo), Latex, HTML, DocBook, Org-mode, and ... Words docx
- ▶ To (and here we go...)
 - ▶ HTML formats (including those very cool and nerdy HTML(5) slides)
 - ▶ via Latex to pdf
 - ▶ Word (but support somewhat limited) and OpenOffice formats
 - ▶ various markup formats
 - ▶ and much more

The terminal

The terminal

- ▶ What?
 - ▶ Unix kind of application that is completely working without GUI's and governing all processes. . . (btw, powershell for Windows works now really well as well)
- ▶ Do we really need it?
 - ▶ not really, but it makes you faster, more versatile, nerdier, and you have to know what you are doing.
 - ▶ and there are some applications that only work in the terminal (such as make and pandoc)
- ▶ So, why is it so cool again?
 - ▶ you can make everything **scriptable**