Guidelines for Authors

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Contents

The information in this file is mostly out-of-date. `lisp-p.org` *is no longer a magazine so much as an alternate domain name for my personal web site, much of which is Lisp but not nearly all of which is Lisp. I'm still happy to post your Lisp articles here.*

1   Introduction

So you're thinking of writing a Lisp-related article for Yadda Lambda. Here's how to go about it.

2   All-Important Disclaimer

While reading these guidelines, always remember that:

> I'm new at this, so these guildelines probably aren't quite right. Whenever they appear to be more problematic than helpful, let me know & we'll work our way through it. This isn't the first version of the guidelines, & I'm sure it won't be the last.

3   Schedule, What to Expect

Here's the basic steps you'll go through.

Notice that an idea of a topic is not the first step. It's great if you have an idea for a topic, but don't let lack of such an idea prevent you from writing.

1. Realize that you've been called to enlighten or entertain the world by writing an article about Lisp.

2. Ensure that Yadda Lambda's payment & legal requirements are compatible with your own. If you're thinking "legal, schmegal", then they probably are, but you might want to make doubly certain by reading the No-Nonsense Copyright Boilerplate in section 5.3.1.

3. Send an article proposal to the Lisp Magazine's editor[1]. Be sure it's clear that you are proposing an article. Tell me about your topic & any special copyright or legal arrangments you'll need.

   If you still don't have an idea for a topic, let me know you'd like to write an article, but you don't know what to write about. Tell me a little about yourself & your Lisp expertise. You & I will figure something out.

4. Write your article. Be sure to read the style section on this web page.

5. Send me[2] your article. You & I will exchange zero or more messages in which we edit your article.

6. You're article will appear in an issue of Yadda Lambda published soon after!

7. Add an item to your resume that says you've been published in Yadda Lambda magazine.

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[1] mailto:editor@lisp-p.org
[2] mailto:editor@lisp-p.org

4   Style

4.1   Language

What language? Well, Lisp!

But what natural language? Any. I presume most submissions will be in English, but any natural language is accepted if I can get an independant someone to read it & verify that it's about what the author says it's about, not just a list of, say, profanity or dumb blonde jokes.

It'd be great to publish articles in many languages, with each article translated into several languages. Currently, I could get the occasional Russian, French, or Spanish article translated to English.

Anyway, don't let lack of English stop you from writing an article. I won't let it stop me from publishing the article.

Always use English when exchanging e-mail with me.

4.2   Markup (a.k.a. Format)

4.2.1   Plain Text

The basic way to write your article is as plain text. Separate paragraphs with one blank line. If a chunk of example code is short, say less than 10 lines, put it in the body of your article, inline. If it's larger, put it in a separate file & I'll put a link to it in your article.

4.2.2   HTML

You can insert your mark-up yourself if you prefer. I'll still review & possibly reformat your article.

Let's try to stick with a simple subset of HTML. (Also, like I said at the beginning of this file, I'm new at this, so we can morph these guidelines as I learn more.)

1. Put inlined example code in <pre> and </pre>.

2. If you want something Italicized, use the and tags. Similarly, if you want something in bold, use and tags.

3. Don't underline.

4. Use <h2>, <h3>, & other <h*> tags for your section headings. (<h1> is reserved for the article's title.)

5. Try to use the &-escaped HTML tokens to indicate special characters. For example, where you want the double-quote character ("), use the `"` token.

6. Pictures, example code, & other files for your article will be in the same directory with your article's body. So if you have a picture of, say, performance statistics, in a file called `mystats.gif`, you would link to it like this: `<img src="mystats.gif">`.

7. Supplementary files, such as pictures & example code, may have pretty much any file names you want, but they must not begin with "`gms-`", nor should they contain space characters. Mixed-case is okay, & case is significant.

8. No draconian font changes. Don't specify a font face or a size. Use the `small` & `big` tags if you need to change font size, but try not to change font size often.

4.2.3 Multimedia Articles

Multimedia articles are encouraged!

As I've prepared for this magazine, I've been thinking about what an online magazine can do that a print magazine can't, & I've gotten a little excited about it. People as a whole still use online publishing as an alternative to paper, but it could offer a lot more.

I don't mean just embedded sound clips & videos. Instead, imagine code listings that can be executed on-the-spot in the article, with an animated current-line pointer & displayed variable contents (sort of like what a debugger does) so that readers can see an algorithm in action. Or research results displayed in a graphical widget so that the data may be viewed as text in columns or as different types of graphs, all selected interactively by the reader.

If you want to do this kind of thing in your article, go for it! Sadly, I can't offer much help at its implementation. I'm not a very experienced HTML jockey or Web master, as you can probably tell by the lack of bells & whistles in my magazine.

4.2.4 LaTeX

You get coolness points if you want to submit your article in LaTeX, bless your heart. Make sure it compiles easily with LaTeX2HTML. You can use the `html` package that comes with it.

What's simplest for me is a single `*.tex` source file, but we can experiment & get whatever working that best suits your article.

4.2.5 Word Processors

Please do not send me your article as a word processor document. I don't have any word processors with which I could read your document. (Evil things, they are, with their WYSIWYG interfaces which distract an author from content because it makes him worry about how the document looks.) Besides that, the end result for your document is HTML so that browsers everywhere, even old ones, may view it.

4.3 Length

Length doesn't matter nearly so much as whether the article was enjoyable & informative. So don't worry about length a whole lot. If it takes 10 to 60 minutes to read your article, that'd be just peachy.

5 Legalities

It's boring, but it must be discussed, clarified, & agreed. *What is it?* It's the dreaded *legal agreement*.

5.1 Money

First, I can't pay you. Yadda Lambda is funded out of my pocket, so I can't pay. It'll be just peachy if Yadda Lambda becomes an income-generator, but the current plan is a free magazine & a hobby for me.

5.2 Credit

You'll get full credit. I might also want to credit anyone who translated or reviewed your article, too. Each issue will (probably) have a page in which I write a paragraph about each author & other contributors. (So if you want to give me a suggested paragraph, go for it. Oh, & a small (128-by-128) photo!)

5.3 Copyright & Ownership

You still own your article. You are just giving Yadda Lambda permission to publish it online. (Notice that "publish" is loaded with implications when applied to online because the act of publishing online is creating & transmitting copies.)

Here are some suggested boiler-plate copyright agreements. Also, I can customize a copyright agreement to suit the author, subject to the details I've discussed in the Custom Copyrights section.

5.3.1 No-Nonsense Copyright Boilerplate

If you're thinking "I just want people to read & enjoy my article", this is the copyright for you. Let's call this the No-Nonsense Copyright Boilerplate, in honor of people who might choose it.

If you choose this copyright, I'll put a copyright notice like this one at the bottom of your article:

The mention of semantics is to allow your article to be translated between, say, ASCII and EBCDIC, or to allow people to remove unnecessary whitespace.

Notice that this copyright does not say anything about preventing people from selling copies of your article. I suppose it's possible for someone to sell copies of your article if you use this copyright notice.

5.3.2   Safe Copyright Boilerplate

Here's a more restrictive copyright notice. It's intended to allow people to view your article from the Yadda Lambda web site, to keep private backup copies, & for other sites to mirror Yadda Lambda while retaining other rights for you.

By the way, This copyright boilerplate is sort of a watered-down version of Ted Nelson's[3] idea for "transcopyright".

5.3.3   Custom Copyrights

If you don't like either of my suggested copyright boilerplates, suggest your own. There are some things you must ensure.

Your article & its copyright remain yours, absolutely. The only right you give Yadda Lambda is (this is important) *a non-exclusive, non-revocable right to "publish" your article online in an issue & in its archives for at least one year from the date Yadda Lambda puts your article online.*

Let's take this apart for clarification & to beat the topic to death.

"Non-exclusive" means that you can give, sell, or otherwise transfer publication rights to other organisations. Yadda Lambda will not claim that no one else can publish your article.

"Non-revocable" means that you can't revoke the publication rights you gave Yadda Lambda because you gave, sold, or otherwise transferred some publication rights to another organisation. So if you want to trasfer some rights to another organisation, but they say that their publication rights must be exclusive, we have a problem. Actually, I'd say the other organisation has a problem because Yadda Lambda's agreement, which you entered first, says that you can't revoke the rights you gave Yadda Lambda.

"In its archives" means that Yadda Lambda intends to keep your article online in an archive of articles it has published for at least a year. Your article will be reachable through the issue in which it was published & through an issue-independant database of articles. ("Issue-independant database of articles": Fancy way of saying an online searcher & an index.)

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[3]http://www.sfc.keio.ac.jp/ ted/

"One year". That's one Earth year, in case there were any doubts.

"For at least one year" means that you must give Yadda Lambda that non-exclusive, non-revokable permission to publish for one year, & if you give it for longer, like "in perpetuity", that'd be just peachy. But one year is okay. No less. After the time expires, & if you choose not to extend it, I'll remove your article from Yadda Lambda. I'll probably leave a place-holder where your article was, but it will just say that there used to be an article here, with such-&-such a title and written by so-&-so. Yadda Lambda cannot be held responsible if other people do not delete their own copies of your article after the time limit expires.

I put *publish* in quotes in the statement because publishing online requires different mechanics than the traditional, paper-related meaning of publish. Publishing a document online requires creating copies of the document & transmitting them to other computers; the acts of copying & of transmitting are one & the same. When someone views the published document, they do so by copying it to their computer, whether into memory or on secondary storage. Yadda Lambda may not be held responsible for what people do with those copies, whether keeping them or making more copies. Yadda Lambda will not implement any copy-prevention mechanism & cannot be held responsible for whether people behave in a manner respectful of the restrictions placed on the document's use by the owner of the copyright. We will, however, display a copyright notice with your article in the hopes that people will be mature enough to respect it.

If you want to suggest a custom copyright notice for your article, contact Yadda Lambda's ¡a href="mailto:gene@acm.org"¿editor¡/a¿.

6 End Notes

- *underlining. . .* Underlining comes to us from typewriters which had limited fonts. When you think you want something underlined, you probably really want it *emphasized*.

- *the lack of bells & whistles...* By the way, like the guildelines, I hope & expect that this will improve as I become more experienced.

<p style="text-align:center">End.</p>