This User's Guide brings together in one document everything needed for the day-to-day use of Version 3 of the Lout document formatting system.

There are three other documents describing Lout: the Expert's Guide , which you need if you want to add new features to Lout; a journal paper on the design and implementation of Lout ; and a set of overhead transparencies that cover much the same ground as this Guide. These documents are all distributed with the software.

Lout is distributed free of charge under the GNU Public License. The primary source is directory ftp://ftp.cs.usyd.edu.au/jeff/lout in which may be found a gzipped tar file containing the main distribution (currently lout-3.21.tar.gz), and various other things including a PostScript version of this guide. The distribution contains source code, libraries, documentation, license, and installation instructions.

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Lout began in 1984 as a research project into the design of a high-level language for document formatting. At that time my name for the subject was 'document layout,' and this terminology survives in the name 'Lout'. The initial design was strongly influenced by Brian W. Kernighan and Lorinda L. Cherry's eqn equation formatter , and also by Brian K. Reid's Scribe system . That research phase ended in October 1991 with the first public release of Lout.

Since then the system has been steadily improved and extended. Optimal paragraph breaking and automatic hyphenation were copied from Donald E. Knuth's TeX system , and the optimal paragraph breaking algorithm was applied to the problem of producing optimal page breaks. The first implementations of horizontal galleys and optimal page breaking were by my student Gabor Inokai. Vincent Tan contributed the PDF back end. Valeriy E. Ushakov has smoothed the path for many people, by his contributions to improving Lout's robustness, and his tireless management of and responses to the Lout mailing list. The number of other people who have offered comments and suggestions to me is so great that it is quite out of my power to acknowledge them individually. I hope that seeing their ideas adopted will be thanks enough.

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