

The `filecontents` package*

Scott Pakin
scott+fc@pakin.org

September 20, 2019

NOTICE

The version of L^AT_EX released in Fall 2019 incorporates all of this package's functionality (and more) into the L^AT_EX kernel itself. As a result, there is no longer a need for the `filecontents` package. Please use the new, built-in `filecontents` environment instead.

1 Introduction

`filecontents` There is a little-known environment called `filecontents` that is built into L^AT_EX 2_ε. Here is `filecontents`' description, which was taken from `ltclass.dtx`:

The environment `filecontents` is intended for passing the contents of packages, options, or other files along with a document in a single file. It has one argument, which is the name of the file to create. If that file already exists (maybe only in the current directory if the OS supports a notion of a 'current directory' or 'default directory') then nothing happens (except for an information message) and the body of the environment is bypassed. Otherwise, the body of the environment is written verbatim to the file name given as the first argument, together with some comments about how it was produced.

The environment is allowed only before `\documentclass` to ensure that all packages or options necessary for this particular run are present when needed. The begin and end tags should each be on a line by itself. There is also a star-form; this does not write extra comments into the file.

(The comment about `filecontents` being valid only before `\documentclass` is, in fact, untrue. `filecontents` is allowed anywhere in the document's preamble.)

*This file has version number v1.5, last revised 2019/09/20.

The `filecontents` package provides a hacked-up version of the `filecontents` and `filecontents*` environments that lifts the two restrictions stated above, namely that existing files are never overwritten and that `filecontents` must be used before the `\documentclass` declaration (really, the `\begin{document}`). `filecontents` is therefore a more convenient way to write external files from within a \LaTeX document than is provided by default by the \LaTeX 2_ϵ kernel.

Sample usage `filecontents` works much like `verbatim`, except that it takes a mandatory filename argument:

```
\begin{filecontents}{myfile.tex}
This text gets written to \texttt{myfile.tex}.
\end{filecontents}
```

The preceding code will write a `myfile.tex` file with contents resembling the following:

```
%% LaTeX2e file `myfile.tex'
%% generated by the `filecontents' environment
%% from source `mydocument' on 2001/07/31.
%%
This text gets written to \texttt{myfile.tex}.
```

`myfile.tex` can then be incorporated back into the document with `\include` or `\input`. Had `filecontents*` been used instead of `filecontents`, the file would have contained only the “`This text gets written to \texttt{myfile.tex}.`” line. `filecontents*` is therefore useful for writing non- \LaTeX files such as Encapsulated PostScript files.

If you use the `ltxtable` package you may find `filecontents` particularly useful. `ltxtable` is a crude conglomeration of `longtable`, which allows tables to cross page boundaries, and `tabularx`, which enables tables to stretch to a specified width. `ltxtable`'s interface is a bit cumbersome, however; it requires that the `longtable` environment be contained in a separate file. With the `filecontents` package you can create this file right before the `\LTXtable` invocation—a far more convenient alternative than having to manually place the table within a separate file.

2 Implementation

Most users can stop reading at this point. The Implementation section contains the annotated source code for the `filecontents` package itself, which is useful only to people who want a detailed and precise explanation of how `filecontents` works.

To give credit where credit is due, I wrote virtually none of the `filecontents` code myself. It comes almost exclusively from the \LaTeX 2_ϵ source code, specifically from the file `ltxclass.dtx`, which is attributed to Frank Mittelbach, Chris Rowley, Alan Jeffrey, and David Carlisle. I merely made a few small changes (indicated

below by bracketed blocks of code and comments) to make the `filecontents` environment more convenient to use.

```
1 <*package>
```

`\filecontents@old@kernel` Except where indicated, the source-including comments to the `\filecontents` macro was taken verbatim from `ltclass.dtx`.

```
2 \begingroup%
3 \catcode\*=11 %
4 \catcode\^^M\active%
5 \catcode\^^L\active\let^^L\relax%
6 \catcode\^^I\active%
7 \gdef\filecontents@old@kernel#1{%
8   \openin\@inputcheck#1 %
```

In the original code a pre-existing file would not be overwritten. In the new version the file existence check is used solely to decide whether to output “Writing file `\<filename>`” or “Overwriting file `\<filename>`”. Control flow then always falls through to what used to be the `\ifeof` case (file does not exist; open it), never the `\else` case (file already exists; do nothing).

```
9   \ifeof\@inputcheck%
10     \latex@warning@no@line%
11       {Writing file \@\currdir#1'}%
12   \else %
13     \latex@warning@no@line%
14       {Overwriting file \@\currdir#1'}%
15   \fi %
16   \closein\@inputcheck %
17   \chardef\reserved@c15 %
18   \ch@ck7\reserved@c\write%
19   \immediate\openout\reserved@c#1\relax%
```

```
20 \if@tempswa%
21   \immediate\write\reserved@c{%
22     \@percentchar\@percentchar\space%
23     \expandafter@gobble\string\LaTeX2e file \#1'^^J%
24     \@percentchar\@percentchar\space generated by the %
25     '\@currentvir' \expandafter@gobblefour\string\newenvironment^^J%
26     \@percentchar\@percentchar\space from source \jobname' on %
27     \number\year/\two@digits\month/\two@digits\day.^^J%
28     \@percentchar\@percentchar}%
29 \fi%
30 \let\do\@makeother\dospecials%
```

The `inputenc` packages might have marked some of the upper 128 character codes “active” (category code 13). That confuses `filecontents`. Hence, we locally mark

each of the upper 128 character codes as “letter” (category code 11) so that they can be written correctly to a file.

```

31 \count0=128\relax %
32 \loop %
33   \catcode\count0=11\relax %
34   \advance\count0 by 1\relax %
35   \ifnum\count0<256 %
36 \repeat %

```

```

37 \edef\E{\@backslashchar end\string{\@currentenv\string}}%
38 \edef\reserved@b{%
39   \def\noexpand\reserved@b%
40     ###1\E###2\E###3\relax}%
41 \reserved@b{%
42   \ifx\relax###3\relax%

```

There was no \end{filecontents}

```

43   \immediate\write\reserved@c{##1}%
44 \else%

```

There was a \end{filecontents}, so stop this time.

```

45   \edef^^M{\noexpand\end{\@currentenv}}%
46   \ifx\relax##1\relax%
47 \else%

```

Text before the \end, write it with a warning.

```

48   \@latex@warning{Writing text `##1' before %
49     \string\end{\@currentenv}\MessageBreak as last line of #1}%
50   \immediate\write\reserved@c{##1}%
51 \fi%
52 \ifx\relax##2\relax%
53 \else%

```

Text after the \end, ignore it with a warning.

```

54   \@latex@warning{%
55     Ignoring text `##2' after \string\end{\@currentenv}}%
56 \fi%
57 \fi%
58 ^^M}%

```

```

59 \catcode^^L\active%
60 \let\L\@undefined%
61 \def^^L{\expandafter\ifx\csname L\endcsname\relax\fi ^^J^^J}%
62 \catcode^^I\active%
63 \let\I\@undefined%
64 \def^^I{\expandafter\ifx\csname I\endcsname\relax\fi\space}%
65 \catcode^^M\active%
66 \edef^^M##1^^M{%
67   \noexpand\reserved@b##1\E\E\relax}}%
68 \endgroup

```

```

\fc@no@preamblecmds LATEX 2ε declares \filecontents, \filecontents*, and all of the related
helper macros as \@onlypreamble, meaning they become invalid after the
\begin{document}. The following code re-enables their usage anywhere in the
document. It was taken from the pkgindoc package (which is generated from
ltclass.dtx), but modified to re-enable only the commands needed by filecon-
tents, not all of the class and package option-processing commands, as well.
69 \def\fc@no@preamblecmds#1\do\filecontents#2\do\filec@ntents#3\relax{%
70 \gdef\@preamblecmds{#1#3}}

Newer LATEX kernels define a most sophisticated filecontents environ-
ment than what this package provides. We currently use the existence of
\filec@ntents@opt as indication that the new filecontents environment is
available.
71 \ifundefined{filec@ntents@opt}{%
Older kernel: Install this package's version of the filecontents environment.
72 \let\filec@ntents=\filec@ntents@old@kernel
73 \expandafter\fc@no@preamblecmds\@preamblecmds\relax
74 }{%

Newer kernel: Issue a warning and do not install this package's version of
filecontents.
75 \PackageWarningNoLine{filecontents}{%
76 This package is obsolete. Disabling it and\MessageBreak
77 passing control to the filecontents environment\MessageBreak
78 defined by the LaTeX kernel%
79 }%
80 }
81 </package>

```

Change History

v1.0	General: Initial version 1	v1.2	\filec@ntents@old@kernel: Added percent signs after each line in the loop as per Heiko Oberdiek's suggestion for getting filecontents to work with the guitar package 4
v1.1	\filec@ntents@old@kernel: Made it possible for filecontents to write Latin-1 characters as per Harry Schmidt's feature request and Frank Mittelbach's suggestion of how to implement it. 4		Added percent signs after the \else and \fi lines as per Heiko Oberdiek's suggestion for getting filecontents to work with the guitar package 3
v1.1a	General: Clarified/corrected the \documentclass restriction as per Robin Fairbairns's suggestion 1	v1.3	\filec@ntents@old@kernel: Added a \closein to fix bug

latex/1487 (reported by Ulrike Fischer and Heiko Oberdiek)	3	2018-04-01 L ^A T _E X release	4
v1.4		v1.5	
<code>\filecontents@old@kernel:</code>		General: Declare the package	
Update definitions of <code>^^L</code> and <code>^^I</code> for compatibility with the		obsolete when running under newer L ^A T _E X kernels	5

Index

Numbers written in *italics* refer to the page where the corresponding entry is described; numbers underlined refer to the code line of the definition; numbers in *roman* refer to the code lines where the entry is used.

Symbols	<code>\^</code>	4–6, 59, 62, 65	<code>\filecontents</code> . . .	69, 72	
<code>\@backslashchar</code>	37	C	<code>\filecontents@old@kernel</code> <u>2</u> , 72	
<code>\@currdir</code>	11, 14	<code>\ch@ck</code>	18	<code>\filecontents</code>	69
<code>\@inputcheck</code> . . .	8, 9, 16	E	<code>filecontents</code> (environ-		
<code>\@latex@warning</code> .	48, 54	environments:	ment)	<i>1</i>	
<code>\@latex@warning@no@line</code> 10, 13	<code>filecontents</code>	<i>1</i>		
<code>\@percentchar</code>		F	P		
.	22, 24, 26, 28	<code>\fc@no@preamblecmds</code>	<code>\PackageWarningNoLine</code>		
<code>\@preamblecmds</code> . .	70, 73 <u>69</u> , 73	75	