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### IMPRESSUM:

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This issue contains a special insert with a call for presenters for FORUM 2000.

\* Each Topic has a two-letter abbreviation, for example

- CL for Controlled Languages
- TR for Translation Issues
- TO for Tools
- ML for Mailing List Discussion

The contributions (articles or comments) are numbered consecutively through the different issues of TC-Forum.

When commenting to any of the contributions, please refer to these "codes" for ease of understanding.

## Dear colleagues:



We had asked for contributions on the subject of machine translation for this TC-FORUM - and we received some highly interesting ones. They show, from different

points of view, that the process of writing and translating technical documents covers a wide spectrum of different situations.

**Cross-Media Publishing** gets more and more attention. Catalogues, Conference-Proceedings, Manuals etc, are often planned to be published on paper and/or CD-ROMS and in different languages as well. Correspondingly the tools to create, translate and layout these documents change. The pre-production-, translation- and production costs and time get a new significance. New concepts for structuring documents and tools to handle such documents on the workbench of technical authors are therefore required – as you can read in this TC-FORUM.

**Forum 2000** in London is approaching rapidly - the Program Committee has received a marvellous number of proposals by presenters - and by the time you read this TC-FORUM the preliminary program will exist. Further

information for delegates and exhibitors will be published in different media, including our Website [www.tc-forum.org](http://www.tc-forum.org) and the Websites of the ISTC ([www.istc.org.uk](http://www.istc.org.uk)), STC ([www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)), and others. Ron Blicq gives an outlook on this extraordinary conference (12 - 14- June 2000) in this TC-FORUM.

In London we will have a good opportunity to discuss the approval, by the government of Great Britain, of the **National Vocational Qualification NVQ for Technical Communicators**. We share the joy and contentedness of the British Institute for Scientific and Technical Communicators and congratulate them for this extraordinary achievement. After Switzerland, Great Britain is now the second country in the world (to our knowledge) where our profession has received official recognition – and we hope that many others will follow.

I have received some complaints on **the delivery of TC-FORUM** from countries outside Europe. Please understand that we, as a purely sponsored virtual organisation, have to choose the cheapest way to ship TC-FORUM

to you, i.e. by land and sea, which can take weeks. However, you can always read our most recent information earlier by visiting our Website [www.tc-forum.org](http://www.tc-forum.org) and/or subscribing to our mailing list [tcf-gen](mailto:tcf-gen) (details on how to subscribe are available in the Website).

Finally I have the pleasure to welcome **two new National Contact Persons:**

Riccardo Renna from Italy <[numa.dj@iol.it](mailto:numa.dj@iol.it)> and Delio Destro from Brazil <[ddestro@uol.com.br](mailto:ddestro@uol.com.br)>.

Delio is the first contact person on the continent of Latin America; we look forward to widening our horizon to this large continent and co-operating with our new colleagues in this part of the world.

*Hans Truniger*

## Thank you to the Sponsors of TC-FORUM:

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- ▶ **TWIN**, Technical Writers of India

## Comment on Technical Writers Gain Control (CL 17)

by *Ami Isseroff*

Ursula Reuther describes in her article on page 4 of TC-Forum 2-99 (CL 16) a need for "...easily readable, understandable, and translatable documentation". She goes on to describe MULTILINT, a tool to automate control of documentation style.

Here, I shall confine myself to a few narrow technical points, and leave the wider implications of this notion for another forum.

...easily  
readable and  
easily trans-  
latable –  
at the same  
time?

1. The stated requirement for documentation that is both easily readable and easily translatable is self-contradictory. Easily readable prose is idiomatic and in some cases colloquial. It takes advantage of "shortcuts" that are intrinsic to each language to reduce word count, such as dropping the definite article in English, or forming a new word by concatenating several words in German. It is written in the syntax, word order and tempo that are characteristic of the particular language. Therefore, it is inherently more difficult to translate than prose composed from a set of rules applicable to a large set of languages.

Consider the following sentence taken from the article:

"So, given the modular design and flexible handling of the system, the MULTILINT approach consists not only of a system which controls the technical writer, but also the technical writer controls individually what is going to be controlled and how this control is realised."

With respect, while that might be a perfectly good sentence when translated into German, it has certain shortcomings as English: it begins with "So"; it lacks parallelism; it is forty words (an entire paragraph!) long; it uses the root word "control" four times in a single sentence; and it misuses "given" to mean "due to." Those are some 'dry' and formal reasons why it is a bad sentence. The main problem is that it is difficult to read, and that the reader must make several allowances for foreign syntax before deciphering it.

2. The repertoire of rules that the MULTILINT program will follow will be programmed by someone or a small group, and therefore the program will never be better than the style of the people who decide the rules. Consider the effect if only prose such as the example given above is allowed.
3. The article makes much of the ability of the program to allow exceptions. That is, the writer can shut off or ignore rules or warnings that do not make sense. This assumes that the writer will always be alert to catch the problems, and that the problems will always be obvious. The dangers inherent in spell-check programs that automatically substitute "whorehouse" for a misspelling of "warehouse" are too well known to require further discussion. Malapropisms will always occur because software can never understand what you are writing about. For example, when I wrote "In the beginning the Lord God Jehovah created the heavens and the Earth, and he saw...", the grammar check program commented: "They is usually preferred." A writer may not always be alert enough to catch such a problem.
4. The range of correct constructions that the program allows will always be narrower than that permitted by correct grammar. This will result in a tendency to 'standardised prose,' which some people may find desirable. However, the standardised constructions will often be much wordier and less readable than the correct alternatives that are not in the repertoire of the program.

I would be interested to know what others think.



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## Comment on a message by Amo Fuchs to the tcf-gen Mailing-List (CL 18)

By Jeff Allen

At 19/05/99, Amo Fuchs wrote:

*Try to adjust your menus/instructions on an LCD screen of a PC (programmable controller) with say 8 lines of 40 characters only!*

*I cannot imagine that any manual of CL or other tool could help, except your manual (pun intended) exercise with the piece of equipment considered. You may, e.g., have to shorten words, and your dilemma will be how to trim a word so that the user understands that there is an abbreviation and not an error. This means that in your background you rely on a certain knowledge of the manufacturer and of the user. And in each case it will be different.*

Caterpillar Inc has actually been working over the past 2-3 years on an adapted version of their CL (originally for narrative text and procedures) for diagnostics and troubleshooting procedural texts. This includes text to appear on mini-screens, including codes and abbreviations. I did some of the first diagnostics and troubleshooting pilot test writing in Caterpillar's CTE for such texts in 1995.

*This is of course a strong argument in favour of a disambiguos language - it is just that one may need to have a wholistic approach to a text and to consider both the text and it's phisical support.*

Service  
Manuals on  
CD-ROM and  
Laptop-  
Screen

Service manuals written in CLs may eventually disappear in paper form. Some manufacturers are moving to CD-Rom media so that manuals can be displayed on portable computers and laptops, many with touch screen and voice activated interface for the mechanics to work with. This is possible with the Mentis wearable/portable computer platform. We had a demo model of this computer on my past project at Carnegie Mellon University.

I have heard that some manufacturers are already implementing the Mentis wearable computer in (nearly) hands-free environments.

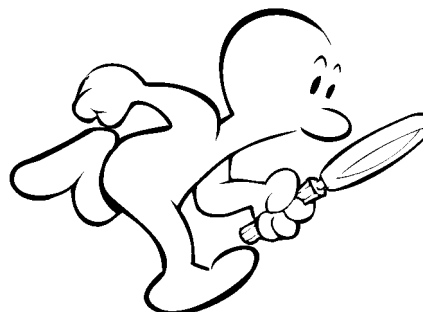
*On the other hand, when you write a manual for an aircraft, you do not have certain limitations of paper, I guess.*

On the contrary, the binding of a 500 - 1000 page service manual does not last very long. Electronic media help deal with this problem. CD-Roms are searchable on SGML codes, pre-determined computer screen fields, and typed in free-form text.



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## A Writer's View of Using a Controlled Language (CL 19)

by Donna Muldoon

*The following article is reprinted from Shenouda News, a publication of Shenouda Associates Inc., specialists in writing that eases communication.*

While the benefits of using a controlled language are clear from a business perspective (reduced translation costs, standardized phrases, reduced potential for misinterpretation), applying it can be a challenge when writing even simple service procedures.

The main concept behind Kodak International Service Language (KISL) is "one word, one meaning." KISL comprises fewer than 1100 words; words that can be used only as the part of speech for which they are approved. For example, the word "damage" is designated as a noun. With proper usage you can write, "Do not do damage (n) to the work surface" but you cannot write, "Do not damage (v) the work surface."

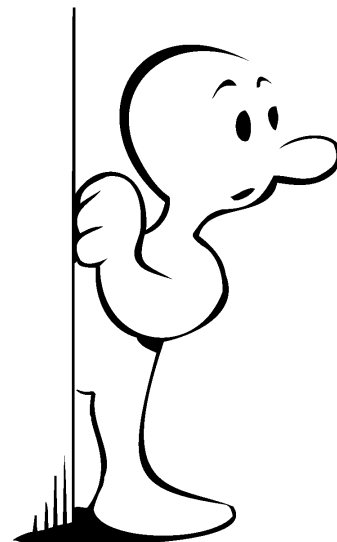
**Using CL becomes second nature.** Using a controlled language becomes second-nature after a while. Phrases such as "de-energise the equipment," "remove the covers," and "disconnect the sensors" are standard. A writer quickly learns to replace "Follow the right directions" with "Do the correct procedure."

Because KISL is very specific in its definitions and use, I have sometimes had difficulty in describing variances and subtleties. "Push the bar until it just touches the roller" conveys a better sense of the degree that the bar and roller should touch rather than "Move the bar up to the roller." At times KISL can also be wordy. Instead of using the common phrase "Turn the assembly upside down"

you must substitute "Place the assembly with the bottom side up." I hesitate each time I have to write "Make a call to the Service Center" instead of "Contact the Service Center," particularly when I know that the communication will be conducted by electronic mail or fax.

The frustrating challenges of applying KISL are more often offset by the satisfying results of writing clear, concise steps for complex and detailed procedures, and knowing that they will be understood by all of the readers. It is nearly as satisfying (dare I say it?) as transforming an engineer's scribbled input into readable and usable text!

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## Planning for Forum 2000 Well in Hand

*by Ron Blicq  
President, INTECOM and  
PCS Delegate to Forum 2000*

If you attended Forum 95 in Dortmund Germany (November 1995), you will know what to expect at Forum 2000, which will be held in London, England in the middle of the Millennium Year. This time even more features will be included in the program.

The site is the Commonwealth Conference Centre in Knightsbridge, and the dates are June 12 to 14, 2000. The Professional Communication Society (USA) is one of four cosponsor societies—the others are the Society for Technical Communication (STC) in the US, the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (ISTC) in the UK, and Gesellschaft für technische Kommunikation e.v. (tekomp) in Germany. PCS's particular role in planning and implementing Forum 2000 is Conference Operation and New Media Technology.

Forum conferences are held every five years. They are the place where member societies of INTECOM (The International Council for Technical Communication) meet, exchange ideas, and refresh international relationships.

The planning committee—with representatives from all four sponsor societies met in Cincinnati, Ohio, on May 16, at the site of the STC conference. Top on the discussion list were a decision to explore the feasibility of holding international video conferences, as was done at Forum 95, and to focus on evolving communication technology. As at Forum 95, Idea Markets will be the prime method of presentation (tested and proven on this continent at IPCC 98 in Quebec and the STC 1999 conference in Cincinnati), with pro-and-con debates as a new feature.

### Forum 2000 Theme

**Technical Communicators Leading the Way!**

As we enter the new millennium, Technical Communicators will make their mark in history. Documenting technology is our responsibility and, with the advancement of tools and equipment in all aspects of life, Technical Communicators will have to seize the opportunity to lead users in the future.



### Travel/Vacation Aspects

The timing of Forum 2000 is ideal for combining the conference with a visit to the UK. In mid-June the weather is ideal and you will be travelling before the majority of British school children break for their summer vacation (about mid-July). There will be much to see and experience in London at the start of the new Millennium—in particular the Millennium Dome at Greenwich. If you're concerned that accommodation will be hard to find, the conference committee is assembling a list of hotels from luxury down to bed and breakfast, at which space will be held and attractive prices will be negotiated in advance for Forum 2000 participants.

I look forward to seeing you there!



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## Fast Online (Machine) Translation - but...? (TR 12)

by Ulrich Thiele

**Preface by the Editor:**

We had planned to collect papers **on machine translation** for this TC-FORUM - and we received some interesting papers. They show from different viewpoints that writing and translating technical documents covers a wide spectrum. You find below a short German text and its translation in two forms:

(a) Online machine translation (10 seconds) without post-editing.

(b) The machine-'product' (a) manually post-edited (10 minutes work by a professional translator).

Decide which of these two versions you feel is most acceptable. We will be interested in your comments.

Source Text (German)	(a) Online Translation (not post-edited, 10 sec)	(b) Online-Translation (post-edited, 10 min)
<p><b>Vorbemerkung zu diesem Artikel</b></p>	<p><b>Remark to this article</b></p>	<p><b>Remark to this article</b></p>
<p>Englisch ist nicht meine Muttersprache. Es kostet mich also mehr Zeit, einen Artikel direkt in Englisch zu verfassen. Weniger Zeit hat es mich gekostet, die deutsche Version ins Internet an einen automatisierten Übersetzungsdienst zu schicken; Die Übersetzung war nur 10 Sekunden später zurück; <b>das unveränderte Ergebnis sehen Sie hier.</b></p>	<p>My native language is not English. It costs me thus to more time to write an article directly in English. Fewer time it cost me to send the German version in Internet to an automated translation service; the translation was only 10 seconds later back; you see the unchanged result here.</p>	<p>English is not my native language. Therefore it takes me longer to write an article directly in English. It costs me less time to send the German version to an automated translation service on the Internet; the translation was back in just 10 seconds ; you see the post-edited result here.</p>
<p><b>PowerPoint</b> Der immer blaue Hintergrund ist nur eines von vielen Anzeichen für den Verlust der Präsentationskultur im elektronischen Zeitalter. Früher gab es Gestaltungsrichtlinien und Werbeabteilungen, heute sehen wir nur noch Arial, Times und blaue Hintergründe.</p>	<p><b>About PowerPoint</b> The always blue background is only one of many signs for the loss of the presentation culture in the electronic age. In former times there were to organization guidelines and publicity departments, today sees we only Arial, Times and blue background.</p>	<p><b>About PowerPoint</b> The omnipresent blue background is only one of many indicators of the loss of the presentation culture in the electronic age. Formerly there were organizational guidelines and publicity departments; today all we see is Arial, Times and blue backgrounds.</p>
<p>Jeder Mitarbeiter gestaltet und produziert alles selber, auch Screendesign und Imagebroschüren. Aber Microsoft hilft ja dabei mit Assistenten und blauen Hintergründen.</p>	<p>Each coworker arranges and produces everything, also screen Design and image brochures. But Microsoft helps thereby with assistants and blue would background.</p>	<p>Each co-worker arranges and produces everything, even screen designs and image brochures. But Microsoft helps us with on-screen assistants and blue backgrounds.</p>

Jeder ist nun Experte, nicht nur auf seinem Fachgebiet, sondern auch als Typograph, Designer, Druckvorlagenersteller. Welcher Arbeitgeber zählt die Stunden, die seine Mitarbeiter mit Powerpoint, Trial und Error verbracht haben, statt mit Sacharbeit und Vortraginhalt? Rechnen die Unternehmens-Buchhalter überhaupt nach, wieviel die Do-it-yourself-Overheads mit ungezählten Ausdruck-Versuchen kosten? Jeder Werbegrafiker kommt für kleines Geld und mit viel mehr Erfahrung unvergleichlich effizienter zum Ziel (ohne blaue Hintergründe, wohlgemerkt!).

Der Anwender von Default-Hintergründen legt keinen Wert auf Corporate Design, gibt sich keine Mühe, sein Unternehmen im richtigen Licht darzustellen. Die bessere Lesbarkeit auf blauem Hintergrund ist nichts anderes als eine faule Entschuldigung.

Everyone is now expert, not only on its field of activity, but also as a typograph, designer, artwork creator. Which employer counts the hours, which its spent coworkers with power POINT, Trial and error, instead of with special work and lecture contents? Do the enterprise accountants check at all, how much the DO-it-yourself-Overheads with uncounted printout attempts costs? Each advertising commercial artist comes for small cash and with much more experience incomparably more efficiently to the target (without blue background, mind you!).

The user of default backgrounds attaches no importance on Corporate Design, gives themselves no trouble to represent its enterprise in the correct light. The better legibility on blue background is nothing one but a putrid apology.

Everyone's an expert now, not only in their area of expertise, but also as a typographer, designer, and graphic designer. What employer has counted the hours its employees have spent in trial and error with Powerpoint, , instead of on their own work and the contents of a presentation? Do the company's accountants ever check at all , how much the do-it-yourself-overheads with innumerable botched printouts cost? Any commercial artist can be had for a small fee and with much more experience, who can reach the goal far more efficiently (without blue backgrounds, mind you!).

The user of default backgrounds attaches no importance on corporate design, and doesn't trouble themselves to represent his or her enterprise in the proper light. The better legibility on a blue background is nothing but an excuse for laziness.

### Concluding remark by the author

Even if the attainable quality of automatic translation systems is insufficient under certain conditions, and despite careful preparation of the original text, nevertheless the translation provides a useful basis for a technical translator:

The automatic translation greatly simplifies the production of a foreign language text and leads, all in all, to an efficient translation process. For example, the translation of a customer Website with the help of an automatic translation system (i.e. post-edited machine translation) cost us only a third of the time, which we had previously calculated as pure "manual work".



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## Introducing "King Memo" (David vs. the Goliaths?) (TR 19)

by Wolfgang Abele

I work as a freelance translator, mostly with Word and html files. I also regularly organize localization projects involving translations into the main European languages. When I looked around at the translation memory systems on the market today, I found them not only seriously overpriced but also laden down with so many features that I'd never expect to use in a month of Sundays.

User-friendly

TM-Systems:

Wishful

Thinking?

OK. So it's nice having Unicode support (just in case I eventually get round to learning Japanese). And yes, it's neat to be able to link your glossaries to pictures and sounds, but I'm not much interested in a multimedia database, either. Text will do just fine, thank you.

I also got the impression that these systems were just a tad lacking in user-friendliness. For instance, in one program, I tried several times to export a TM database. I just couldn't figure it out at all. Just when I was putting it down to my own incompetence, I asked two users who had just completed a two-day training course.

Know what? They couldn't do it either!

This kind of complexity - in a tool whose goal in life is to save me time - strikes me as somewhat counterproductive.

On the other hand, none of the main vendors have implemented what I would consider smart features, namely any sort of syntactic or morphological analysis. While they have fixed bugs, added filters for DTP programs, introduced Unicode etc., the basic approach has hardly changed at all in the last five years. The developers have put a great deal of engineering effort into handling the intricacies of different file formats, but from an algorithmic or linguistic point of view, I don't see much improvement.

So I decided to write my own translation memory system, which I call King Memo, partly as a programming exercise and partly because I reckoned that a simple and inexpensive program might well be useful to other translators with needs similar to mine. Since I made the first beta available for free download, I have been encouraging other users to get involved in the development process. Although I'm always grateful for bug reports and suggestions for improvement, the wish-list does seem to have grown considerably, particularly in the last couple of weeks.



King Memo is a translation memory system for Windows and is designed for working with Word 97/2000 and html files. It consists of two parts: the main program (also called King Memo), and a collection of Word macros called Segment. King Memo allows you to create a glossary (= translation memory) from previously translated Word and html files and to perform a fuzzy search in that glossary. Segment can be used to create a glossary during the actual translation in Word. Some of the comments I have received have been useful in tracking down some of the initial bugs. For that reason, the current Beta 1.1.4 now seems to be pretty reliable, whereas Segment is still an alpha version.

The main benefits of King Memo are:

- Because it uses only csv text files, it does not produce yet another special file format. This means that glossaries can easily be exchanged and read by other translators using different programs. Incidentally, the widely used Microsoft glossaries also come as csv text files.
- It's fast and efficient. Although all users have so far only experimented with small glossaries, King Memo is quite capable of handling very large glossaries. A fuzzy search in MS's WIN 98 glossary (5 MB+ and 43,000 entries) takes less than half a second on a Pentium 166. And yet it requires only 2 MB of RAM in search mode. So, as you use your wordprocessor, it runs inconspicuously in the background.
- It's easy to use. King Memo is compact, with less than 1000 lines of code and no bells and whistles. I maintain that, after reading the brief instructions, even a CAT newbie can get by. If he or she has any questions, I'm happy to answer them via email.

Future development of King Memo is still wide open. I'm currently working on improving and extending the html-related functions and on developing the documentation. In addition, the Saarbrücken-based Institute for Applied Information Science (IAI) has just become involved in the project and we are going to be carrying out some computer-linguistic experiments based on King Memo and a UNIX program. Version 1.0 of King Memo is due for release in October/November 99. I have also considered putting the source code of Segment under the GNU license. Everyone interested in VBA, who would like to play around with the macros, is welcome to get in touch with me.

May I close with a request? I'm still searching for the ideal icon for King Memo. What I have in mind is something like a little fat barefooted man with a crown on his head. So far, my little King has proved quite elusive. If anyone can provide me with a suitable picture, I would be most grateful.

A beta version of King Memo can be downloaded from  
<http://home.t-online.de/home/Wolfgang.Abele/>

**Wanted:  
Icon for  
King Memo.**

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## Internationalising Documentation (TR 14)

by Harald Stücker

The challenge:  
translate  
better and  
faster!

The translation market is growing with tremendous speed. Pressure comes from various angles: volume, time, quality and price. Hence the challenge can be stated thus: Translate more better and in less time at a lower cost! There is no way this can be done without the use of translation tools.

Following standard terminology, I will distinguish pure Machine Translation (MT) from Machine Aided Translation (MAT). We may subdivide the latter further into Human Aided Machine Translation (HAMT) and Machine Aided Human Translation (MAHT):

- HAMT: The core job is done by an MT engine. The human translator helps with preparing terminology (coding) and the text (pre-editing) and repairing (post-editing) the text.
- MAHT: The core job is done by the human translator. A machine may help with terminology management and translation memory (TM).

### Internationalisation

Translation as an afterthought is still widespread. As a multilingual documentation consultant, however, we keep emphasising the unity and interdependency of the whole process, and drawing attention towards its beginning. This is what we may call the internationalisation aspect of documentation.

By internationalisation we understand the design of a (software) product with localisation at a later stage in mind. If language resources are not strictly kept separate from code, localisation will be difficult, error-prone and - with big and complex products - may eventually turn out to be impossible. In general, localisation as an afterthought will be very expensive in terms not only of cost, but also of time and quality.

The same applies to documentation in general. Because internationalisation is an issue wherever products contain language or location-specific information, it is always an issue for documentation. This is especially true if MAT is used.

### (MA)HT or (HA)MT

Before you start authoring, you should decide whether and how you will translate the text. The distinction put forward by Jeff Allen (TC-Forum 1-99, p. 5) between texts destined or chosen for translation is crucial here. The degree of rigour you have to employ on authoring depends on how much you want the machine to do.

### Using (MA)HT

If you know that a core use of MT is excluded, you may allow for a lesser degree of rigour in authoring. Here are some points to keep in mind concerning Translation Memory (TM) systems:

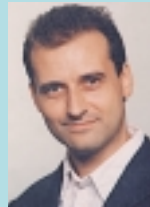
- Create a monolingual terminology database before authoring. This is especially important where the documentation is written by more than one author. The use is threefold:

- (1) your source documentation will be more consistent,
- (2) multilingual terminology will be more easily created, and
- (3) because of (1) and (2), your translated documentation will be more consistent.

- Loose talk about matching can be misleading. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a 100 % match. Translation is concerned with content/context, but "match" is a purely formal and statistical category. You will always have to double check.
- It is widely held to be true that not all texts are suitable for TM processing. This is not obvious. Given effective content management, even less repetitive, more creative types of text (like marketing or collateral material) may profit from a TM connected to the product family.
- Layout changes in a new version may lead to poor matches or much post-editing effort to reformat tags. Use a template system and allow layout changes only on template level. Basically, the separation of form and content is what internationalisation is all about.

put. At worst, given the wrong process, post-editing can be much more time-consuming than translating from scratch.

To summarise: In a multilingual documentation process involving n languages, you will have to pay no less than n times for each mistake committed at authoring stage. Internationalising documentation pays.

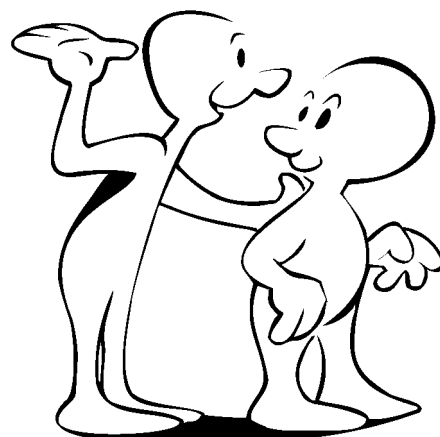


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## Using (HA)MT

If the machine will take over the core part of the work, the text has to be authored more rigorously as a destined-for-translation-text:

- You should use some kind of Controlled Language (CL).
- You have to perform a different kind of terminology work. You not only have to translate the original monolingual terminology, but also have to code syntactic and semantic information.
- A properly CL-authored text may need only very little pre-editing. The main task will be to protect text that is not to be translated. For every text not properly authored or only chosen for translation, the pre-editing stage involves a re-authoring.
- Post-editing is a very different task from translating. Especially you cannot apply the principle of charity (i.e. "if you don't understand immediately, presume the author intended to make sense and try again!") towards a machine out-



## A Bomb or a Tobacco Pipe? (TR 15)

*by Delio Destro*

A good understanding of the subject matter or the access to a specialist is an important element in technical writing and translation. It is a quality issue that I don't believe too many people in the business would dispute. In Brazil, however, the creation and translation of technical material has increasingly become a problem exactly because this factor is being overlooked. Let me illustrate this situation with a concrete case.

During the 1996 Olympic games, a pipe bomb rocked the Centennial Olympic Park in downtown Atlanta. Seconds after the event the whole world knew about it. The news agencies, with satellite links open 24 hours a day, beamed down a torrent of live information (most of it in English) to every news organization on earth.

In Brazil, most of the local TV and radio stations immediately broke their regular programming, by-passing their own local crews in Atlanta, to report "ao vivo", about a "bomba caximbo" that had gone off in Georgia. This would be positive and routine journalism if "caximbo" wasn't the Portuguese word for a "smoking pipe", not the plumbing device of the same name used in the assembly of home-made bombs. To make things worse, the same mistake was concurrently made by other competing networks, proving they either copycat each other or have the same lack of quality control in the processing of information received in another language. The "bomba caximbo" went on for over two hours until one translator working in my office got tired of it and called the news agency. Five minutes later the pipe bomb was a "bomba caseira", i.e. a house-made bomb. A quick check in any half-decent dictionary or a call to a professional translator would have avoided the embarrassment.

Not every  
Pipe is a  
Tobacco Pipe.

This simple and crude translation error demonstrates a growing trend in the communication establishment in Brazil: More and more, people in all areas of communication relay information without any research or verification, even in technical communication. Therefore one finds the same type of mistake in machine manuals, technical magazines, training videos, etc. Translation is where the problem is most acute but even documents generated in Portuguese by native Brazilians are frequently faulty.

There are many reasons leading us to this situation. In my opinion, the three most important factors are: misguided and vague standards, time-to-market pressures and, above all, the almost total absence of educational options in technical writing and technical translation in this country.

I will present my perspective on each one of them in the future. For now, take my word for it: smoking pipes do not explode, even when loaded with my brand of tobacco.



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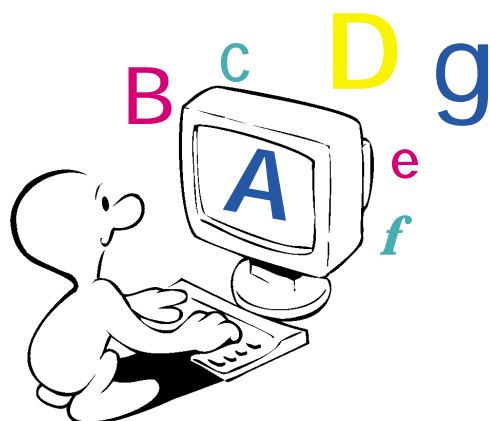
## SALTing the Alphabet Soup (TO 11)

*by Sue Ellen Wright*

So long as technical writers and translators are competent professionals to begin with, the single most significant controllable factor in controlling text and translation quality is consistency in using terms. Whenever multiple authors or translators are working on a large document or set of related documents, inconsistency in using certain terms may occur, even if each person in the document production chain is using some kind of authoring or translation tool that includes a termbase. The problem that can arise is that in today's distributed environments, with freelancers and consultants working together on large projects, not everyone is necessarily using the same tools with the same termbase.

Additionally, more and more technical communicators and translators are moving into integrated environments involving multiple computer applications, particularly in the localisation area. Here we see an increasing need to leverage terminological resources across platforms and program boundaries.

The language industries are rapidly embracing the use of translation tools such as automatic terminology lookup, terminology mining, terminology consistency checkers, and machine translation. Authoring tools that involve access to a termbase are also appearing, at least in the context of controlled language, but will over time no doubt also be used in the authoring processes where the syntax is less controlled.



The danger that arises in these kinds of environments is that different tools use different kinds of terminology management systems. Certainly, everyone is familiar with integrated systems like STAR Transit/TermStar and TRADOS Workbench/MultiTerm; products which enable users to access human-oriented terminology databases while using Translation Memory. But the criteria and modeling features of NLP dictionaries prepared for Machine Translation differ significantly from the concept-oriented terminology resources favored by human translators and multilingual technical writers.

The ideal terminology management system of the future will

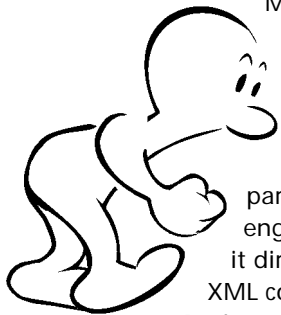
- utilize "smart" extraction utilities to lay the groundwork for efficient term entry into databases, and
- be interoperable with a wide range of tools, not just with word-processing and TM, but with MT, various localisation tools, and AI expert systems, including ontologies.

A glance at existing interchange formats designed to make this all possible may cause confusion. A litany of acronyms confronts the potential user: there are MARTIF and GENETER, TMX and TBX, and OLIF, OTELO and OSCAR (which sounds like some sort of operatic trio where an errant Swede meets a noble, but tragic Moor and they end up serenading the heroine together with her perky, trousers-role page...). And they are implemented in SGML, XML, and stand-alone tagging formats that are similar to SGML. It's alphabet soup with a strong dash of T's, X's, and O's, not to mention M and L.

For a quick rundown, here's who's who:

- MARTIF, the Machine-Readable Terminology Interchange Format, is ISO 12200:1999; it is an SGML-based formalism intended for the interchange of terminological information between and among termbase systems.
- GENETER is a generic model for SGML-based representation of terminological data. Both

## SALting the Alphabet Soup (cont.)



MARTIF and GENETER are designed to 1) represent terminological data and 2) to serve as an intermediate format between different applications and platforms. They differ in that GENETER is designed for use with standard SGML parsing tools, whereas MARTIF is forward engineered with the intention of adapting it directly to XML schemas as soon as the XML committee finalizes the schema standard. Both standards have their adherents, with GENETER finding favor with some term bank systems and MARTIF (and its spin-off formats) looking attractive to language industry players who are interested in short DTDs and using schemas for data element and content validation.

- OLIF (the Open Lexicon Interchange Format) is a component of the OTELO project (Open Translation Environment for Localization) and was primarily intended for the exchange of lexical resources among different translation tools, especially in conjunction with OTELO's Common Lexical Database (CLDB). A major focus of OLIF is the expression of basic NLP-oriented terminological information used in MT environments. OLIF can accommodate very simple terminological entries, but it lacks MARTIF and GENETER's ability to express embedded relationships and to mirror entry and termbase structures.
- A product of LISA, the Localisation Industry Standards Association's OSCAR SIG (Open Standards for Container/Content Allowing Re-use), TMX, the Translation Memory Exchange Format, is rapidly being adapted by all major TM publishers to facilitate the interoperability of the various TM applications. OSCAR's future TBX (Termbase Exchange Format) is likely to be a flavor of so-called "Blind MARTIF," which will be designed to enable people to simply use the format without customised negotiations with exchange partners. TMX is especially interesting because it was one of the first exchange standards written from XML and incorporates Unicode and meta-markup features that can be adopted to future interchange solutions.

All this makes for a nice stew of acronyms, but without an interoperable unifying core, these elements will not contribute adequately to system integration. Recently yet another group was formed called SALT: Standards-based Access service to multilingual Lexicons and Terminologies. SALT's purpose is to (a) test and refine an XML-based lex/term-data interchange format combining MARTIF and OLIF and called XLT, (b) develop a website for people to try out various XLT utilities, and (c) develop an XLT toolkit for lex/term-related product developers. The utilities will include conversion routines between OLIF and XLT, between Geneter and XLT, and between several other formats and XLT, as well as guidelines for those who want to develop their own conversion routines. The goal is to create a black-box kind of tool set that will enable users of programs that have implemented output to XLT to perform lossless conversions to and from other XLT-enabled formats in order to leverage their data in a variety of interoperable environments.

The SALT consortium, under the leadership of Alan K. Melby (Brigham Young University (BYU) and LinguaTech International), has enlisted the cooperation of a range of American and European universities, as well as the interest of tools developers (Trados, Star, EP, Logos, Systran, and L&H), industry organisations (LISA, AMTA), and a number of LISA-affiliate corporations, such as Microsoft. It will continue its efforts under the aegis of the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee 37 for Terminology, Subcommittee 3 for Computer Applications.

For more information on SALT and the SALT team, check out. <http://www.ttt.org/salt>

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# Word as HTML/XML/SGML-editor by using the MarkupKit 1.1 of SCHEMA (TO 12)

by Stefan Freisler

As insiders very well know, the HTML-Export integrated in Word97 produces only poor results. The generated HTML contains a number of disturbing HTML-tags making further processing difficult. Several Macro-programmers and suppliers of software have picked up this issue and offer different converters promising to solve the problem.

Most conversions are based upon the idea to produce a true copy of the print-layout, if possible automatically, to prevent users from having to put time and effort in configuring and structuring afterwards. That the latter is a precondition to receive a sensible conversion is self-evident, when one looks at the 'fantastic' outcome of such systems.

Information which is not included in a document will not suddenly appear by converting automatically, and announcements will not change this.

## The different approach

Our approach is based on the fact that authors producing larger texts usually structure their documents by paragraph-styles and character-styles, which are analysed by the program. This enables the user to produce, through the configuration of the converter, syntactically correct and 'clean' HTML, XML and even SGML.



## In practice

When our MarkupKit is installed, a new type of file "MarkupKit Document" is integrated in the File-save-dialogue of Word 97. This happens when the files for configuration are adapted to the existing formats, and the user selects "file-save as-MarkupKit Document". The process is then completed invisibly behind the scenes.

New File-Type in Word 97

The advantage of this close integration lies not only in the ease of use but in the possibility to start up the converter via visual basic applications, and thus allow for further integration into customised software systems.

## Easy configuration

To configure MarkupKit you define a so called „Mapping“ in XML-syntax for every paragraph style, character style and special character used in Word. That is, if you have defined a paragraph style in Word as "body text" the mapping would be defined as follows:

```
<MAP TAGNAME="P" PARSTYLENAME="BODY TEXT">
</MAP>
```

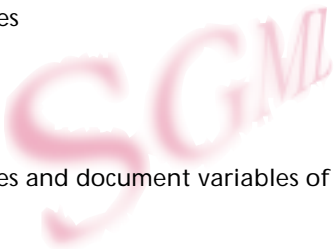
What happens is that the name of the paragraph style (PARSTYLENAME="BODY TEXT") is assigned to an HTML-Tag (TAGNAME="P"). That's all ! The MarkupKit comprises, in addition to the converter-plug-in for Word 97, a command-line version allowing for the conversion of RTF-files from other word-processing systems.

## Features of conversion

The following features are processed by MarkupKit, supplementary to paragraph styles and character styles:

## Word as HTML (cont.)

- Special characters and unicode characters
- Tables in any complexity
- References to images
- Embedded images
- Footnotes
- Cross-references
- Index entries
- Document properties and document variables of Word.



MarkupKit is able not only to transform referenced images into the right image references, i.e. for HTML, but also to convert automatically inserted word-graphic-objects into different graphic formats. For this purpose MarkupKit is equipped with a graphic-converter which allows for converting into several graphic formats.

### Conclusion

MarkupKit is a practical and reliable converting tool. If you have some knowledge in HTML and if you frequently have to convert a considerable number of texts, then MarkupKit displays its strengths.

MarkupKit was not designed for competing with a converter trying to transform complete Word-documents into a visually demanding HTML, but as a converter for the transformation of contents and structures of Word-documents into syntactically perfect markup language of any kind.



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## PDF in Practice – Simple Creation

by Peter Boegler

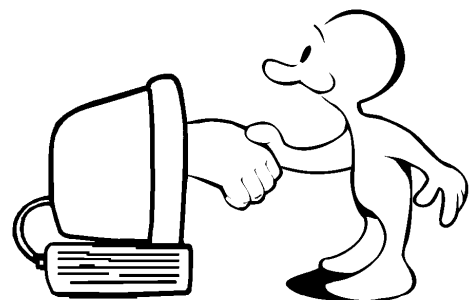
### PDF in Technical Documentation

#### Comparison of PDF and HTML

In electronic media we come across the two "competing" formats, PDF and HTML. A closer look reveals, however, that the two formats are used with a different aim in mind and therefore cannot be considered as competitors.

HTML is the original Internet format. Text information in this format is structured according to DTD as in the case of SGML. Graphics are not a component of HTML, but they are referenced in screen resolution as external files. The time required to load HTML via the Internet is optimal. HTML/XML is therefore ideal for fast transport of information in cases where detailed visual information is not required (e.g. for software documentation).

In comparison, PDF traditionally uses Postscript as a preprint format. The layout and the connection between illustration and text in the document are retained in the exact form the author created the document. Due to password protection and the use of digital signature since Acrobat 4.0, the contents of documents cannot be manipulated by the end user. Graphics in PDF can be zoomed and printed at high-quality; the quality of the PDF documents is of printing standard. The increased load time when passing files via the Internet is, however, a disadvantage.



# of Electronic Publications, Catalogues and Archives (TO 13)

Comparison between Acrobat PDF and HTML		
Property	PDF	HTML/XML
Structure of contents	-	O/+ DTD-structured
Graphics display	+ Print quality, zoom function	- Screen resolution, no zoom
Illustration-text connection, print quality	+	-
Access rights	+	O
Digital signature	+	-
Web performance	O	+

## Technical Documentation Requires PDF

In technical documentation, in particular for machines and machinery, descriptions and illustrations have to be clearly connected. The graphic quality should be high enough to perform a screen zoom and to produce a recognisable print-out. At present, these demands can only be sufficiently met using PDF.

The W3C's efforts to establish zoomable vector formats (SVG, Web-CGM) in HTML or XML have been unsuccessful due to differing interests.

### Creating and editing PDF from DTP Programs

Although PDF files can be viewed and printed using the Acrobat Reader which is available free of charge, the Adobe tool required to create and edit PDF files is only available in the Adobe Acrobat package. Since the release of Acrobat 4.0, the user can choose between three possible methods for creating PDF:

- Acrobat 4.0 enables direct import of FrameMaker, HTML, MS Office and several graphic formats.

- The Distiller, a component program, converts Postscript files from any program.
- The printer driver PDFWriter enables PDF files to be "printed".

Because of the graphic and print processing restrictions in Windows, PDFWriter is admittedly the easiest to use in comparison to Postscript. However, as PDFWriter is subject to certain restrictions, only documents requiring a lower quality should be used (for example, documents without EPS graphics).

## Acrobat Distiller Creates Professional PDF

The Distiller can be put to professional use in Acrobat 4.0 where the distiller problems encountered in Acrobat 3.0 during conversion of True Type fonts, are no longer an issue. The documents are printed in a file via a standard Postscript printer driver which the Distiller subsequently "distills" to PDF. Distilling is advantageous as the Postscript option pdfmark is analysed during distilling. In this way, hyperlinks, bookmarks and document information can be transferred from the Postscript print files into the PDF document. The pdfmarks can be integrated via blank EPS files and via manipulation of the Postscript docu-

## PDF in Practice (cont.)

ment. (For example, part numbers can be linked to the order form via a pdfmark hyperlink.) Most DTP programs support pdfmarks by default.

### Creating PDF from DTP Programs

- FrameMaker: hypertext, message boxes, web-links and hierarchical bookmarks are created. Document information and properties are not available.
  - Interleaf: PDF files with hyperlinks are simple to create using an additional program from ITL ([www.itl.de](http://www.itl.de)). Document information and properties are not available.
- PageMaker: Can do virtually anything. Even the appropriate distiller options can be set and saved as a profile.
- QuarkXPress: Poor functionality. Only a table of contents can be linked automatically.
- Corel Ventura Publisher: Only possible in the English version. Hyperlinks and document information are supported. Bookmarks are not available.
- Microsoft Word: Microsoft has tried particularly hard to ignore PDF technology and has not installed any support for PDF. A PDFMaker Word macro is however available free of charge from the Adobe Web Site. Creating PDF using the PDFMaker can be an enjoyable experience. Hyperlinks, bookmarks, weblinks and even notes are created.

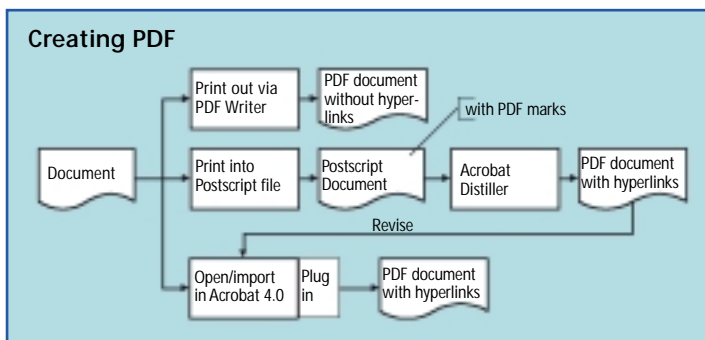
...it depends  
on your DTP-  
Programs

### Creating Publications and Catalogues for CD and Internet/Intranet

After attaining the individual documents as linked PDF files, a complete CD or Internet/Intranet solution is desirable. After all, users require to be led by enhanced navigation to their target documents. Furthermore, a CD should appear in a standardised form and should portray PDF files from different sources in the same form. A wide variety of Acrobat Plugins and help programs are available to aid the technical editor. Some of the possible functions include the following:

- OCR of the text sections in a PDF file using Acrobat Capture
- Full-text index of all documents using Acrobat Catalog
- The ability to convert web pages (also entire Web sites) into PDF using Acrobat WebCapture
- Personal buttons in Acrobat Reader to open the index for example.
- PDF files can be set with security and file opening options
- Automatic creation of hyperlinks
- Automatic creation of hierarchical bookmarks for navigation
- Automatic creation of menu pages from a file tree structure

Original documents created in a professional document management system are usually easier to handle. The documents can be converted to PDF in a batch job and the navigation structure is derived from the document properties. External service providers can offer support for concept planning and realisation of PDF publication solutions.



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## Topics of Interest on a Listserver (ML 2)

by Lisa Syed

*The following article was printed originally in the May 1999 issue of Shenouda News, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of Judy Shenouda. The article neatly summarizes recent discussions on our listserver; it's interesting to hear another publication's point of view.*

As you know, this paper version of TC-FORUM is distributed free of charge to about 2,000 subscribers in 34 countries. If you haven't as yet discovered the online Technical Communicators' Forum, log on at <http://www.tc-forum.org> to learn more about this listserver. Over 400 members worldwide subscribe from countries as diverse as Germany, France, UK, US, Denmark, India, Canada, and the Netherlands. Subscribers can offer topics and participate in the discussions. The forum offers opportunities for members to discuss topics of specialized interest that are relevant to the field of technical communication.

Here are some issues that were recently discussed:

### A Rose by any Other Name

The question of how to define a technical communicator elicited several responses. The discussion began with this definition: "A technical communicator is a specialist who processes complex technical information into a format comprehensible to defined end-users to enable them to carry out an action or to understand a concept."

A contributor added the definition of a technical writer from the (US) 1998-1999 Occupational Outlook Handbook, noting that the newer term "technical communicator" is not listed: "A technical writer develops, writes, and edits material for reports, manuals, briefs, proposals, instruction books, catalogs, and related technical and administrative publications concerned with work methods and procedures, and installation, operation, and maintenance of machinery and other equipment."

Another contributor included a definition of a technical writer from the (US) Teacher's Guide to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Information. "Technical writers make scientific and technical information easily understandable to a nontechnical audience. They prepare operating and maintenance manuals, catalogs, parts lists, assembly instructions, sales promotion materials, and project proposals. They also plan and edit technical reports and oversee preparation of illustrations, photographs, diagrams, and charts."

A member added these thoughts, translated from French:

*"A technical communicator is a communications specialist. His or her role is to permit users to use products that are of an ever-growing technical complexity. During the design phase of the product, the technical communicator acts as the user's lawyer in his or her own company, herewith participating in the commercial success of this product.*

*Depending on the mission's definition, and on the product and information support involved, the services he or she offers can vary. We identified the three following main intervention areas:*

- *user information policy advice*
- *documentation projects management*
- *design and creation of user-oriented information devices."*

A British member took issue with exclusivity in language use to say, "Technical writers ought to be aware that to write readable text, they need to get the reader on their side. Since more than half the world's readers are women, using language that excludes them is not likely to help to get the message across. It is simply no longer acceptable to write as though men... are the only people in the world..."

...participating in the Commercial Success of Products.

Topics of Interest (cont.)

Continuing discussion on CL.

**Controlled Language**

A member has invited people from different fields of interest to provide their definitions of the terms "controlled language" and "sub-language" and will post the responses in a report at a later date.

Further discussion on controlled languages led to the historical development of how the European Association of Aerospace Industries' (AECMA's) Simplified English (SE) came into being. SE is now the most accepted controlled language in the aerospace industry.

Other controlled languages mentioned are:

- British American Scientific International Commercial (BASIC) English developed by Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards in the 1920s
- Caterpillar's Fundamental English (CFE) in 1970, which led to the development of Hyster's Easy Language Program (HELP), J.I. Case's Clear and Simple English (CASE), E.N. White's International Language of Service and Maintenance (ILSAM), and Perkin's Approved Clear English (PACE)
- McDonnell Douglas' Technical Dictionary published in 1979
- AECMA's Simplified English, which became available in 1986; controlled versions of French, German, and Swedish are now available
- General Motors' controlled language, CASL, which is used to write the service manual of the Chevy Metro for the model year 2000

On the home front, Shenouda employee Donna Muldoon has worked on a variety of projects using Kodak International Service Language (KISL), see p. 6.

**Metrics**

This discussion was related to measuring quality, readability, and accuracy in documentation. One member asked about metrics to measure documentation quality. The member cited an example of measuring errors per page, but noted that this measure is flawed because it is not easy to determine what an error really is.

One respondent listed three systems to measure quality:

- Variations of usability tests with or without video
- Document certification audits
- The degree to which generally accepted rules to technical writing have been violated

Within the discussion, Web sites are provided for further details.

Yet another member considered how the Flesch-Kincaid reading grade level scale can compare two versions of a text. The results, though measurable, have no correlation to readability. Authors can write documents compliant with the Flesch-Kincaid scale, but these are not necessarily readable. "For most technical documentation, the quality metric is the performance enhancement on the intended user group."

Document quality is not measured within documents, but needs external verification from the intended audience.



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Rennes2 University, Rennes**

### COMTEC '99

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Comtec '99 is an international technical communication congress organized by French technical communication society CRT (Conseil des Rédacteurs Techniques). It will review changing methods, technological innovations, and their impact on the profession.

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**30-31 October 1999**

**Nagaoka, Institute of Design, Japan**

### 4th ASIAN DESIGN CONFERENCE

**International Symposium on Design Science**

Some Details have already been printed in TC-Forum 2-99.

For further information contact:  
4thadc@syst1.ti.chiba-u.ac.jp

**10-11 November 1999, London**

### 21st Conference "Translating and the Computer"

The annual conference "Translating and the Computer" has

been an important forum for Machine Translation and Translation Aids users over the past 20 years. This year's conference will address the latest developments in translation (and translation-related) software.

Further information is available from

+44 (0) 171 903 0030 (voice)

+44 (0) 171 903 0011 (fax)

email:

nicole.adamides@aslib.co.uk

**22 - 24 November 1999, Helsinki**

### IST '99 Exploring the Information Society

The IST 99 conference addresses the key themes and innovative developments that characterize the turn of the millennium.

A variety of sessions will look at the issues from the perspectives of people, business and technology. They give an integrated insight into the most recent developments in Europe and world wide. The conference provides a unique window into the 21st century.

The Mobile Multimedia Summit 'The Euro-Prix MultiMedia Art 99 Gala' will take place in Tampere on 21st November 1999. Further information:

about the IST 99 conference:

[www.ist99.fi](http://www.ist99.fi) and

mailto: [ist99@dg13.cec.be](mailto:ist99@dg13.cec.be) with "IST99" in the subject line

about the Investment Forum:

mailto: [ist99@dg13.cec.be](mailto:ist99@dg13.cec.be) with "investment Forum" in the subject line.

## Professional Events

25 - 26 November 1999, Mannheim:

### tekom-Conference

Technical Information in the World-Wide Web

international delegates are very welcome

For further Information  
mailto:info@tekom.de  
or visit [www.tekom.de](http://www.tekom.de)

27 - 28 March 2000

Hurdal Konferansesenter, Norway

### YGGDRASIL '00

"Tomorrow's users"

Annual Norwegian conference for Technical communicators and interface designers

YGGDRASIL '00 is the third annual conference arranged by the Norwegian Computer Society (DND) and the special interest groups for user documentation/technical communication (FOBDOK) and user-friendly IT systems (BITS).

The objective of the YGGDRASIL '00 conference is to stimulate growth and development between different communities working with human-computer interaction and user communication. The target groups include technical writers, designers, course developers, user-interface designers and developers.

The deadline for submitting abstracts is the 1st of September 1999.

For more information contact:<sup>1)</sup>

29 - 30 April 2000

Seattle, Washington, USA

### CLAW 2000:

3rd International Workshop on Controlled Language Applications

The 3rd International Workshop on Controlled Language Applications (CLAW) is planned to be held 29-30 April 2000 as a 2-day pre-conference Workshop in conjunction with the ANLP (Applied Natural Language Processing)/NACLA (North American Computational Linguistics Association) in Seattle, Washington, USA.

For the full version of the call for papers, as well as for on-going and updated information on CLAW2000, please consult the workshop website:  
<http://www.up.univ-mrs.fr/~veronis/claw2000>.

For information on the past two CLAWs see:

<http://www.ccl.kuleuven.ac.be/CLAW/programme.html> (CLAW96)

<http://www.lti.cs.cmu.edu/CLAW98/> (CLAW98)

For general inquiries please contact: Jeff Allen:  
[postediting@hotmail.com](mailto:postediting@hotmail.com).

31 May - 2 June 2000

Athens, Greece

### The 2nd International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC2000)

For the full Announcement, Call for Papers and for general information about the conference, please contact:  
the LREC2000 website:

<http://www.icp.grenet.fr/ELRA/lrec2000.html> or <sup>2)</sup>

For general information about ELRA, please contact:<sup>3)</sup>

12 - 14 June 2000 London, England:

### Forum 2000

Technical Communication Leading the Way

Details on Forum 2000 have been printed in previous issues of TC-Forum already and in this issue as well.

The list of presenters has been closed meanwhile. A preliminary programme and further details for delegates and exhibitors will be published by the end of September also on the following and other established websites:  
<http://www.istc.org.uk>  
<http://www.stc.org>  
<http://www.tc-forum.org>  
<http://www.tekom.de>

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+47 22 36 37 01 (fax)  
or [www.softinn.no](http://www.softinn.no)

2) the LREC Secretariat:  
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