

Internationalizing your online documentation



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Agenda

- Who is this guy?
- What the heck is internationalization (I18N)?
- What do I need to know?
 - General guidelines
 - Design issues for help
 - Single source and I18N

Who is this guy?

- **Bill Burns**—Scriptorium Publishing
 - Writing, consulting, and training
 - FrameMaker ACE and WebWorks Publisher certified trainer
- **Background**—three and a half years in internationalization

What the heck is internationalization?

- **Internationalization (I18N)**—preparing a product so it is easier to localize
- **Localization (L10N)**—reengineering a product for a specific market, including translation
- **I18N?**
 - I, followed by 18 letters, followed by N
 - Like L10N, one of the many popular abbreviations in the industry

I18N summarized

- **When you internationalize a document, you do the following:**
 - Eliminate culture-specific allusions.
 - Design to allow flexibility in formats, layout, character set, font, and other attributes.
 - Treat text so it can be translated easily.
- **Internationalization saves time and resources during localization.**

General guidelines

- **A lot of ill-conceived guidelines persist about writing for international audiences.**
 - Most focus on style and usage.
 - Few focus on design, or they focus on the wrong issues.
 - Most provide prescriptive rules instead of general principles.

Myths about writing for international audiences

- “We don’t need to translate. English is international.”
- “Use less language and more icons and images. Pictures are already international.”
- “Don’t use gerunds.”
- “Don’t use passive voice.”
- “Use passive voice.”
- “Make each sentence as concise/terse as possible.”

What you should do

- Write using clear, consistent terminology.
- Provide culturally neutral content.
- Avoid humor, metaphor, and idiom.
- Avoid allusions to movies, sports, religion.
- Use colors and graphics with care.
- Provide English and metric measurements.
- Use proper formats for currencies, phone numbers, dates, addresses, and numeric values.

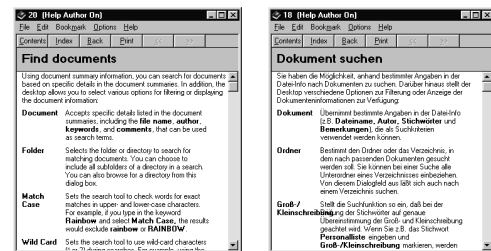
Design issues

- Text expansion
 - Side headings
 - Tables
 - Callouts
- Style usage
 - Styles vs. button-bar formatting
 - CSS vs in-line style formatting
- Text embedded in graphics
 - Callouts
 - Screen captures
 - Photographs
- Links, scripts, and macros
 - Hot spots in image maps
 - ALink/KLink macros
 - JavaScript messages

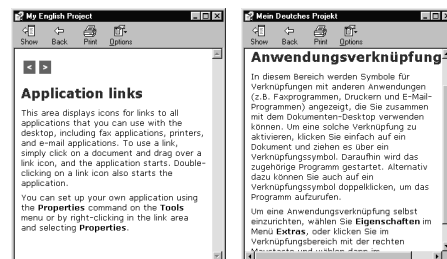
Text expansion

- Most sentences and clauses expand 20-30%
- Words and phrases can double in length
- For double-byte character sets (DBCS), text expands vertically and can shrink or expand horizontally
- Problem areas
 - Side headings
 - Tables
 - Frames in HTML

Text expansion (continued)



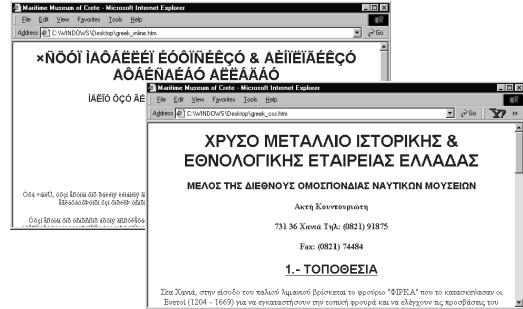
Text expansion (continued)



Style usage

- **Style definitions vs. button-bar**
 - Styles provide global control.
 - Style overrides hinder global control.
 - Button-bar formatting = evil.
- **CSS vs. in-line formatting**
 - CSS reduces file size and provides global control.
 - In-line formatting bloats files and requires local changes.
 - CSS makes style changes easier.

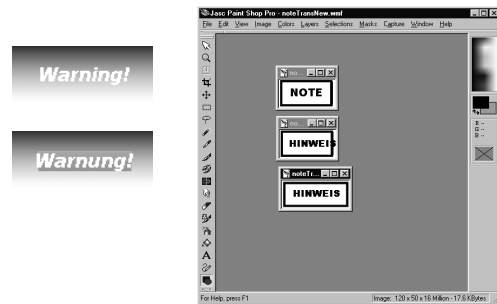
Style usage (continued)



Embedded text

- Callouts that are embedded in bitmaps are difficult to translate.
- Screen captures introduce dependencies into schedule.
- Photos with text are very difficult to localize properly.

Embedded text (continued)



Embedded text (continued)



Embedded text (continued)



Links, scripts, and macros (continued)

A link with HTML link (good)

```
<OBJECT id=hhctrl type="application/x-oleobject"
  classid="clsid:adb880a6-d8ff-11cf-9377-
  00aa003b7a11"
  codebase="hhctrl.ocx#Version=4,74,8875,0">
<PARAM name="Command" value="ALink">
<PARAM name="Item1" value="desktop">
</OBJECT>
<p><a href="JavaScript:hhctrl.Click()">Related
  Topics</a></p>
```


Links, scripts, and macros (continued)

Concatenated text strings = bad news

```
function customDateString(oneDate) {
  var theDay = dayNames[oneDate.getDay() + 1]
  var theMonth = monthNames[oneDate.getMonth() + 1]
  var theYear = oneDate.getFullYear() + 1900
  return theDay + ", " + theMonth + " " + oneDate.getDate() +
  ", " + theYear
}
. . .
<SCRIPT LANGUAGE="JavaScript">
document.write("Today is " + customDateString(new Date()))
</SCRIPT>
```

Links, scripts, and macros (continued)

Variables move during translation.

Variables

 Today is Monday, April 26, 1999

Single source and I18N

- Know the tool's character-support capabilities.
- Understand requirements for all help formats.
- Adhere strictly to a structured development approach.
- Use style definitions for paragraph and character formatting.
- Try to keep all translatable text in the source files.
- Apply conditional text at paragraph level or higher.
- Duplicate elements for online and hardcopy use.
- Consider design issues such as text expansion and link text.

Single source and I18N (continued)

Common technique in WebWorks Publisher

No

```
<table border="0">
<tr>
<th align="left" valign="top">Note</th>
<td valign="top"> $DATA;</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

Yes

```
<table border="0">
<tr>
<th align="left" valign="top"> $DATA(number);</th>
<td valign="top"> $DATA;</td>
</tr>
</table>
```

Single source and I18N (continued)

Cross-references in FrameMaker

No

For more information, see "Making Quick Copies."

For more information, see "Making Quick Copies" on page 58.

Yes

For more information, see "Making Quick Copies."

For more information, see "Making Quick Copies" on page 58.

A note about special characters

- Different fonts and character sets support different characters.
- Not all character sets support all HTML entities.
- Not all tools support all character sets.
- Tools such as WebWorks Publisher come with incomplete character maps.

Resources

- *Technical Writing 101: A Real-World Guide to Planning and Writing Technical Documentation*, by Sarah O'Keefe and Alan Pringle (with Bill Burns), ISBN 0-9704733-0-3
- *The HTML Help Design Handbook*, by Cheri Lockett Zubak and Robert Chandler (with Leta Herman and Bill Burns), ISBN 0-9645293-3-5
- "Is your documentation translation-ready?" *Intercom*, pp. 12-17, May 2001