LISA

Terminology Management Survey

Terminology Management Practices and Trends

LISA™

Localization Industry Standards Association

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Since 1990, the Localization Industry Standards Association has been helping companies *enable global business*. LISA is the premier not-for-profit organization in the world for individuals, businesses, associations, and standards organizations involved in language and language technology worldwide. LISA brings together IT manufacturers, translation and localization solutions providers, and internationalization professionals, as well as increasing numbers of vertical market corporations with an international business focus in finance, banking, manufacturing, health care, energy and communications.

Together, these entities help LISA establish best practice guidelines and language technology standards for enterprise globalization. LISA offers other services in the form of standards initiatives, Special Interest Groups, conferences and training programs which help companies implement efficient international business models to provide a return on investment for their Globalization, Internationalization, Localization, and Translation (GILT) efforts.

LISA partners and affiliate groups include the International Organization for Standardization (ISO Liaison Category A Members of TC 37 and TC 46), The World Bank, OASIS, IDEAlliance, AIIM, The Advisory Council (TAC), Fort-Ross, €TTEC, the Japan Technical Communicators Association, the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), the European Union, the Canadian Translation Bureau, TermNet, the American Translators Association (ATA), IWIPS, Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT), Termium, JETRO, the Institute of Translating and Interpreting (ITI), The Unicode Consortium, OpenI18N, and other professional and trade organizations.

LISA members and co-founders include some of the largest and best-known companies in the world, including Adobe, Avaya, Cisco Systems, CLS Communication, EMC, Hewlett Packard, IBM, Innodata Isogen, Fuji Xerox, Microsoft, Oracle, Nokia, Logitech, SAP, Siebel Systems, Standard Chartered Bank, FileNet, LionBridge Technologies, Lucent, Sun Microsystems, WH&P, PeopleSoft, Philips Medical Systems, Rockwell Automation, The RWS Group, Xerox Corporation and Canon Research, among others.

Why Do the Leading Corporations and Organizations Around the World Support LISA?

LISA has a proven track record of partnership with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multinational corporations. LISA helps these bodies implement best practice and language technology standards, while providing them with access to the best independent information about what it takes to manage their multiple language content efficiently to communicate effectively across cultures. LISA has held more than 45 international forums and global strategies summits in Asia, Europe and North America, as well as workshops, executive roundtables, and other events tailored to meet the needs of specific groups or industry segments. LISA's members and partners know that they can come to LISA as an unbiased information resource to learn about the cost factors, technologies and business trends that affect how they do business in an increasingly globalized and integrated world.

Why Do GILT Service Providers Support LISA?

LISA has provided an open forum for more than twelve years for GILT service providers to discuss the business and legal issues that affect them, and to learn from one another and from their customers. Like their clients, service providers understand that they need to stay current on technical standards and business developments in the GILT industry. They also know that they can rely on the largest archive of GILT-related information in the world, available to LISA members, including all (1) issues of the *Globalization Insider* (LISA's content-packed newsletter, now in its 13th year of publication), (2) presentations and summaries from every major LISA event since 1997, and (3) research and survey reports that indicate where the GILT industry is today and where it is headed in the future.

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LISA Terminology SIG

Edited by
Arle Lommel

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Introduction and Summary

This report provides results from the 2004 LISA Terminology Management Survey, as analyzed by the LISA Terminology Special Interest Group (LISA Temrionlogy SIG - http://www.lisa.org/term/). These results looked at trends in terminology management by companies within the localization industry. The questions asked are listed below in slightly shortened format (for the exact text and answer options, see the Appendix).

1. What type of company do you work for?
2. Is terminology systematically managed at your company?
3. If yes, indicate the types of terminology management performed.
4. If no, explain why you do not manage terminology.
5. How many person/hours are spent annually on terminology work in your company?
6. Organizationally, where is the terminology staff in your company?
7. Does your company use terminology management tools?
8. If yes, please describe them
9. Do any of the tools integrate with other localization or authoring tools?
10. If no to Question 7, why does your company not use terminology management tools?
11. What is the biggest problem you could remedy for your company by upgrading your terminology management processes or tools?
12. What information do you collect for a single term?

The results of this survey indicate that, although the majority of companies within the localization industry do engage in terminology work, the level of sophistication and dedication to terminology work varies widely, and many content creators consider terminology work to be a part of the localization process rather than a core part of the content creation process. This leads to imbalances in who carries out terminology work and problems in implementing systematic processes for the management of terminology.

Many companies still use spreadsheets for their terminological data gathering and exchange needs, a factor that severely limits the sophistication of data that can be represented. It seems that most current terminology management systems within organizations will not be able to support the anticipated needs of on-demand translation, and that solutions will need to grow in sophistication to meet future needs.

Those actively working with terminology management often understand the benefits of terminology management very well, but have trouble in making this value understood by upper management and by their clients. In general management and clients do not see terminology information as a deliverable and thus do not pay for it.

Analysis

A total of 81 responses were received, broken down as follows:

- 40% localization service vendors
- 3% localization tool vendors
- 26% user of localization service or tool
- 31% other

The respondents in the "other" category included:

- software companies
- manufacturers
- telecommunication companies
- consultants
- educators

Interestingly, a number of respondents providing translation services classified themselves in the "other" category indicating that they did not see themselves as localization service providers.

Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated that terminology is systematically managed in their company. Of those respondents, 50% perform multilingual terminology management, 31% perform bilingual terminology management, and 8% perform monolingual terminology management.

Twenty-five percent of respondents indicated that their company does not manage terminology systematically, for the following reasons in descending order of frequency:

- Terminology is not requested by the client, and translation activities are intrinsically project and client focused.
- There is no budget to do terminology work
- There is no time to do terminology work
- The organizational infrastructure of the company does not support a consolidated effort

Half of the respondents spend less than 200 hours a year on terminology-related work.

Seventy two percent of the respondents reported that they have terminology staff, organized as follows:

- 43% within the localization department
- 26% centralized at the company level
- 17% within the publication/documentation department

- 15% in other areas

Respondents who selected the "other" category indicated that terminology is managed on an ad-hoc basis by authors, project managers, vendors, freelancers, and students.

The majority of respondents (82%) indicated that they use terminology management tools. The comments suggest that approximately seventy five percent of the tools are off-the-shelf commercial products, 12% are developed in-house, and the remaining 12% are not specifically terminology tools, but rather other software products adapted for that purpose, such as spreadsheets and general database programs. Seventy percent of the terminology tools are integrated with other tools and the comments suggest that the integration is with localization tools and not with content authoring tools.

The reasons given for why respondents do not use terminology management tools seem very significant to the industry. Only 10% of the respondents replied that they do not need the tools, while 60% said they have not found the right tools. Only 16% percent indicated that lack of budget is the reason. Twenty five percent indicated that they do not have information about available tools. Thus the main reason why respondents do not have terminology tools is that they are dissatisfied with the functionality of existing tools, and one quarter of the tools market is not being reached by the tools marketing campaigns.

If terminology management processes and tools were upgraded in the company, the main benefit would be realized in the following areas (in descending order of number of responses):

- increased consistency and quality of content
- increased productivity and reduced duplication and waste of effort, reducing costs
- increased integration with content authoring, content management, and translation tools
- improved ability to deliver glossaries and other information to customers and vendors

In response to the questions about what types of terminological information is collected, 25% of respondents do not collect any information about terms at all. This corresponds to the earlier result that 25% of respondents do not perform terminology management. Of the remaining 75% who do collect terminology information, the types of information collected are listed below, arranged in descending order.

Information	Source language	Target language
Categorical	81%	59%
Contextual	78%	59%
Semantic	78%	56%
Administrative	65%	52%
Relational	50%	37%
Grammatical	45%	34%
Illustrations	18%	11%

Table 1. **Percentage of those respondents collecting specific types of information (percentages are of those who collect terminological data).**

Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from this data. First of all, categorical information is the most important in this industry which is heavily organized on a client and project basis. Secondly, contextual information (e.g. context sentences) ranks higher than semantic (e.g. definitions), confirming a fact previously demonstrated by LISA that context sentences are frequently replacing definitions in the fast-paced localization environment, especially when they can be extracted by machine. Administrative information ranks higher than related terms, grammar, and illustrations, an indicator that workflow information is more important than some strictly terminological data for the localization industry. Illustrations rank lowest, suggesting that the promotion, by some terminology tools vendors, of the merits of their tool based on its image-storing capability is of little relevance to practitioners compared to the need for better administrative functions.

The relatively low ranking of grammatical and relational data suggests that the terminology collected and stored by the localization industry will not be capable of meeting the sophisticated demands of emerging extended applications such as for text mining, content management, machine translation, and enhancement of search engines.

One final note is that in all these information categories, the information is more often collected for the source language than for the target language. This also confirms an earlier finding by LISA that the localization industry is being called upon to manage source language terms more than would be typically expected for a "translation" industry. There needs to be an increased partnership with the source language content developers in order to correct this imbalance.

When describing their terminology process, a surprising number of respondents (35%) indicated that they use spreadsheets as a primary collection and distribution tool, and then may import the data to a terminology system later. This approach is adopted when the respondent has to work with different tools, such as when working with multiple vendors. This suggests that spreadsheets are the most practical solution to the lack of tool interoperability at this time. This is an unfortunate situation, since the use of spreadsheets is severely limiting with respect to the type and structure of information gathered. It also seems that more respondents are dealing with multiple, separate databases than a consolidated centralized one, and more respondents are using vendors to manage their terminology than doing it in-house.

The final comments generally show concerns about the perceived value of the work. Terminology is perceived by the respondents as very important but is undervalued by the client and by management. Because terminology is not viewed as a translation deliverable, customers do not consider it important and do not pay for it. Respondents handling terminology for translation purposes are at the receiving end of a consistency problem in the source and are frustrated by the disengagement of the source community. As one respondent put it, management needs to "press for corporate identity" in the source community.

Conclusions

Members of the LISA Terminology SIG had the opportunity to view the raw survey results, and provided the following conclusions.

Mark Childress, SAP Terminologist:

> *I think what most companies fail to develop is a sense of terminology as a cost-reducing factor. "Do terminology later!" Or, "Do the terminology when we have enough time for it!" Rather than putting terminology work in the forefront of product development and standardization, as a requirement for specifications, it's treated as an annoying factor. The LISA Terminology SIG has produced examples proving that terminology management prevents costly errors.*
>
> *Terminologists need to communicate the economic value of terminology management to managers more effectively. Managers have a large number of factors to deal with. Terminology is just one of them.*

Kara Warburton, IBM Terminologist:

> *Once again we see that translators and other localization industry practitioners are expected to provide magical solutions to terminology problems that extend beyond the scope of localization, with inadequate resources, budgets, and tools. As the content development and localization industry evolves to respond to the demands of real-time translation, content reuse, and sophisticated information management and retrieval, how will we be prepared to provide the required terminology content if we are still using spreadsheets? The tools are still too translation oriented which forces all the terminology work onto the translator.*
>
> *Most of the people in the trenches who are asked to develop terminology management strategies for their employer lack adequate training. We must raise the awareness of the role of terminology not only in the localization industry but in related language industries. LISA should lobby the content development community to recognize their role in ensuring that quality terminology and appropriate tools and data are fed into the localization process.*

Dalila Rosales, Oracle, Senior Language Specialist:

> *Terminology management is generally perceived as a valuable add-on in terms of quality, increase of productivity, cost reduction, content management and information exchange. However, in practical terms, terminology work is still considered the lower end of the translation process. As a future direction, not only more work needs to be done in terms of*

interoperability of tools and processes, but also terminology work and terminologists need to become key partners of a successful localization management organization.

Uwe Muegge, Medtronic Terminologist:

The results of this survey are another indicator for the limited scope of globalization efforts undertaken by typical buyers of localization services. Terminology, at least for the source language, needs to be available long before texts are being localized if high translation quality, short cycle times and low costs are of any consideration. However, the responses to this survey indicate that terminology work is typically carried out long after the authoring stage and that there are typically no interfaces between the terminology management system and the authoring/content management system.

The case for controlling terminology at the source was made many years ago, and a number of LISA members have in fact succeeded, at least in part, in providing comprehensive terminology support to both authors and translators.

There is a sizable body of literature available on terminology best practices, complete with ISO standards; and mature tools for automating the collection, storage/retrieval and checking of terminology have been available for years.. But the results of this survey further illustrate that there is a huge gap between the state of the art in terminology management and the common practice in organizations actually involved in the creation and localization of content for global markets.

This survey sends a clear message to LISA to redouble its efforts in providing a platform for making much-needed information on tools, processes and best practices readily available to its membership and the industry at large.

Nicole Sévigny, Translation Bureau, Public Works and Government Services Canada:

This LISA survey shows the need to raise the awareness of the economic value of terminology management both with language specialists and managers. In that regard, it complements the Exploratory Study on the Economic Value of Terminology, *conducted by the Translation Bureau in 2002–2003 through a survey of more than 3000 Canadian corporations, 449 of which accepted to answer to a detailed questionnaire. One of the findings of the study was that the use of terminology increases with the size of the business and the scale of its interprovincial (in*

Canada) and international activities. (A copy of the two reports on the study is available, in English or French.)

While the above study addresses the value of terminology work in the Canadian context, there is a need for more research on the value of terminology in the language industries as a whole, and to explore the return on investment of establishing appropriate terminology at the design and marketing phases of product development or for training purposes, in a number of fields, in unilingual, bilingual or multilingual contexts.

APPENDIX – Survey Questions

1. **What type of company do you work for?**
   ☐ Localization service vendor
   ☐ Localization tool vendor
   ☐ User of localization tool or service
   ☐ Other (please specify)
   If you selected other please specify: [__________]

2. **Is terminology systematically managed at your company?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. **If you answered *Yes* to question 2, indicate the types of terminology management performed.**

   ☐ Monolingual
   ☐ Bilingual
   ☐ Multilingual

4. **If you answered *No* to question 2, explain why you do not manage terminology:**

5. **How many person hours are spent annually on terminology work in your company? [____]**

6. **Organizationally, where is the terminology staff in your company?**

   ☐ Centralized on a company/corporate level
   ☐ Part of the localization department
   ☐ Part of the publication or documentation department
   ☐ We don't have terminology staff
   ☐ Other (please specify)
   If you selected other please specify: [__________]

7. **Does your company use terminology management tools (proprietary or commercially available)?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. **If you answered *Yes* to question 7, please describe the tools:**

9. **If you answered *Yes* to question 7, do any of the tools integrate with other localization or authoring tools?**
   ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Additional comments: [__________]

10. **If you answered *No* to question 7, please explain why your company does not use terminology management tools.**

- ☐ We have not found tools to suit our needs
- ☐ We do not have a budget for tools
- ☐ We do not have information on available tools
- ☐ We do not need the functionality offered by tools
- ☐ We do not have staff
- ☐ Other (please specify)

  If you selected other please specify: [__________]

11. **What is the biggest problem you could remedy for your company by upgrading your terminology management processes or tools?**

12. **What information, if any, do you currently collect for any single term?**

	source language	target language
Nothing	☐	☐
I don't know	☐	☐
term	☐	☐
grammatical (part of speech, inflection, etc.)	☐	☐
semantic (definition, explanation, etc.)	☐	☐
contextual/usage (sentence, usage note, etc.)	☐	☐
categorical (subject fields, products, etc.)	☐	☐
administrative (status, date, author, etc.)	☐	☐
term relations (synonym, antonym, related terms, etc.)	☐	☐
illustrations	☐	☐
other (please specify below)	☐	☐

Additional comments: [___________]

13. **Briefly describe your current terminology management practices (e.g., "localization vendor manages all terminology for us" or "we collect terms and definitions in spreadsheets", etc.):**

14. **Please provide any additional relevant comments regarding terminology management at your company.**

Any information you provide may be used freely by the Localization Industry Standards Association.

[SUBMIT]

The Localization Industry Standards Association
Domaine en Praël • CH-1323 Romainmôtier • Switzerland
Tel: + 41 (24) 453 2310 • Fax: +41 (24) 453 2312 • lisa@lisa.org