



Sorting through
the Web's maze of
offerings for
professional translators.

by Bert Esselink

Translators Take to the Web

The profession of translator seems to have added a lot to its store of respect and popularity through the Internet-initiated globalization hype. According to a report recently published by Forrester Research, "Translators will find themselves with generous salary and benefits offers, while computational linguistics experts will be courted with as many perks as Java programmers."

Even president Clinton has recently recognized the value translators add to international trade and business. In his letter to American Translators' Association (ATA) president Ann G. Macfarlane (published on the www.atanet.org site), he writes: "As we prepare for the opportunities and challenges of an increasing globalized world, the need for dedicated competent translators will be even more important."

So where do these "dedicated and competent" translators hang out today? Where do they meet, share experiences, and find jobs? Are they still listed in the yellow pages, or have they gone totally virtual? In my search for references to post on the recently launched www.locguide.com Web site, I checked out the most popular meeting places for translators on the Web today, and selected the most useful and interesting sites.

Meeting places for translators on the Web can be roughly divided in the following categories:

- Translators' Portals
- eGroups or Mailing lists
- Translators' Organization sites
- Magazines or e-zines

Obviously, there are also other resources for translators on the Web, for example the hundreds of personal sites created by translators, usually containing useful links, terminology resources, and service offerings. In this article, I will stick to Web sites containing information relevant to translators with respect to conducting business, translation technology, finding projects, etc.

Which are the sites that are really worth visiting, and which mailing lists or newsletters really merit a subscription?

Translators' Portals

Three types of translators' portals can be distinguished:

1. Information portals for translators
2. Translator's job marketplaces
3. Translator's communities linked to a service or tools provider

Examples of the first type—information portals—include the Translator's Home Companion at www.lai.com/thc.html, a site that recently re-emerged with a new look and feel, and PicodeOro at www.picodeoro.com.

Most of these portals contain references and links to other Web sites or places of in-

terest for translators. They are normally not very interactive, and often contain the same links to dictionaries, organizations, and other references relevant to translators.

Examples of the second type, job marketplaces, are Aquarius (www.aquarius.net), and Proz (www.proz.com). These portals enable companies to post requests for translation online, and translators can subscribe to the service to respond to these requests. They mainly act as a means of helping freelance translators, agencies, and clients to meet. Currently, Amsterdam-based Aquarius maintain the largest searchable translator database, and their site attracts thousands of visitors every day.

The third type of translator portal is hosted by a service or tools provider. Here are some examples:

- TranslationZone (www.translationzone.com), maintained by Trados
- TranslatorCentral (www.translatorcentral.com), maintained by Uniscape
- eTranslate.net (www.etranslate.net), maintained by eTranslate

A full list of these portals is included on the www.locguide.com site in the References section. Most of the translators' portals offer functionality similar to Aquarius, except the focus is obviously on the technology or service offered by the hosting company.

eGroups or Mailing Lists

Mailing lists have always been one of the most commonly used Internet features by translators. A mailing list like lantra-l attracts thousands of translators, who post questions, ask translations for specific terms, or exchange business experiences. The risk of mailing lists is flooding your inbox with hundreds of messages, most of which may not be of interest to you. If the volume is too high, most mailing lists allow you to request a message digest once a day.

Many mailing lists are now managed in egroups, coordinated from the www.egroups.com Web site. eGroups is a free email group service that allows users to easily create and join email groups or mailing lists. Some lists are public, others are only accessible after you have subscribed.

Searching for "translation" on www.egroups.com generates a large number of hits, as many different translation lists have been created, sometimes related to a specific subject area or technology. Here are some examples of popular mailing lists on eGroups:

- **catmt**
(www.egroups.com/list/catmt)—hosts discussions regarding Computer Aided Translation and Machine Translation software
- **nelocsig**
(www.egroups.com/group/nelocsig)—hosts discussions regarding internationalization, localization, and globalization
- **translation-jobs**
(www.egroups.com/group/translation-jobs)—list that enables professional translators and agencies to find available translation projects

From all available eGroups, the language-specific lists, such as "traducteurs" for French translation issues and "el-lenguaraz" for translators in Argentina, are those that attract most visitors and contain the most valuable information. These lists have become very active places for translators who wish to meet colleagues in the same locale or translating into the same target language.

One of the most popular mailing lists for translators still remains lantra-l, a "forum for all aspects of translation and interpretation of natural languages." The lantra-l archives can be found at <http://segate.sunet.se/archives/lantra-l.html>. It is recommended to visit the lantra-l archives as opposed to subscribing

because of the large number of messages posted.

Translators' Organizations Sites

Most (freelance) translators are affiliated with some type of professional translator organization, which in most cases is active only in the country the translator resides in. Examples are ATA (www.atanet.org) in the US and the ITI (www.iti.org.uk) in the UK.

Most of these translators' organizations publish a printed magazine to their members and maintain a Web site with information relevant to the local translation market. An example of such a publication is the excellent *MDÜ Magazine* published by the German *Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer* (www.bdue.de). Most of the articles in the magazine are in German though, and thus not readily accessible to the global translation community. Recent editions contained articles comparing various translation-memory and software-localization tools.

The amount of information published to the Web by these organizations varies greatly. Some organizations don't publish more than the objectives and activities of the organization, while others publish a wealth of information, including newsletters, to the Web. The more Web-savvy translators' organizations also maintain searchable databases of translators, mostly restricted to their members, on their Web sites.

Most of the information is rather static. Interactive translators' forums related to specific languages or subject areas are still hosted mainly by external mailing-list providers such as eGroups, or newsgroups such as sci.lang.translation.

Some translators' organizations publish their magazines or newsletters to the Web. Examples of such free downloads are *The Monitor* by the Mid-America Chapter of the ATA at www.ata-micata.org and MITA Newsletter at www.users.ticnet.com/mita. Probably the best free translators' newsletter is the *Capital Translator* published by the National Capital Area Chapter of the ATA (www.ncata.org).

Magazines or e-zines

Apart from the local magazines published by translators' organizations, numerous other magazines or e-zines try to span the global translators' community. Examples of language-industry-related magazines are *Multilingual Technology* (www.multilingual.com), which is published every

month and has a strong focus on software and Web internationalization, and *Language International* (www.language-international.com), which is published bimonthly and is focused more on general language-industry developments. *Multilingual* is distributing a free mail-based newsletter called "LanguageTech" which contains a selection of press releases published in the language and localization industry.

Many companies offering Web globalization services or technology offer free e-zines or newsletters that normally combine product or company news with general globalization news. Examples of these magazines are GlobalSight's "eGazette" (www.globalsight.com) and eTranslate's "GlobalTimes" (www.etranslate.com). News published in these newsletters is highly company-centric and often less relevant to the translator's community.

A highly successful e-zine in the translators' community is "TranFree" by Alex Eames. Through his site www.translator-tips.com he provides practical tips to freelance translators on how to conduct their business and become successful. His "TranFree" e-zine is now being sent to over 10,000 translators worldwide.

The Best Of

After research into freely available translators' resources on the Web, I have compiled the following hot list for translators. When you don't have much time, but still want to keep up-to-date with industry and technology developments, visit the following places:

- Find translation jobs or projects: www.aquarius.net
- Learn how to run a translation business: www.translatortips.com
- Read the latest translation industry news: www.translationzone.com
- Share business experience: www.egroups.com/bp_disc
- Read about the latest Web globalization trends: www.idiomtech.com
- Locate glossaries on particular subjects: www.lai.com/thc.html

Apart from these sites, subscribe to mailing lists on www.egroups.com that discuss your languages, your organization, or your translation technology. It has never been easier to directly contact colleagues and share experiences!