

crossAuthor for translation-oriented authoring Spot-on source texts for translation

Efficient translation begins with the source text. Maurice Mayer explains how crossAuthor can help authors to write for translation.

A lot has happened since the first computer-assisted translation tools were introduced to the market about two decades ago. But one thing has remained unchanged over all these years: the finished original text has always been submitted for translation, no matter whether it was composed professionally or on the fly. With crossAuthor for translation-oriented authoring, across Systems now provides a new approach that starts from the composition of the original text, thereby integrating the technical writer in the workflow. This software is an interface to the across Language Server, which serves as a central platform for all language resources and translation processes.

Cost savings and increased efficiency are the buzzwords but how does the authoring support work for writers?

Since their introduction, translation memory (TM) systems have revolutionised the translation trade and provided a means of handling the translation workload, which has increased considerably in recent years. These systems mainly consist of databases in which translated sentence pairs (for example, a source sentence in English and its German translation) and terminology entries are stored. While doing their work, translators can access these databases. This implies that multiple translations of sentences are a thing of the past and timeconsuming research is no longer necessary. Thus, the use of TM systems can reduce the translation workload, while at the same time increasing the quality and consistency of the translations.

The emphasis, however, is on 'can'. If the source text contains formulations that do not exist in the TM, there is no alternative to translating these formulations anew. The same applies to the use of specialised terms. If these terms are not used consistently - just think of the frequently used example ,hard drive' or ,hard disk' - this will cause confusion among readers and increase the downstream translation workload, resulting in additional costs. Of course, it is always possible to eliminate inconsistencies afterwards. However, this too means additional work (and cost), as the entire translation process must be repeated. Therefore, translation-oriented authoring is a must.

Writing with a view to translation

Put simply, translation-oriented authoring means nothing else than writing so (well) that the subsequent translation involves as little work as possible. To ensure this, crossAuthor enables authors to access the central data storage of the across Language Server, which is also used by translators, terminology specialists and proofreaders.

For editorial staff, the change brought about by this connection is relatively small: while they still write using their usual editor, the system now continuously offers matches from the databases of the

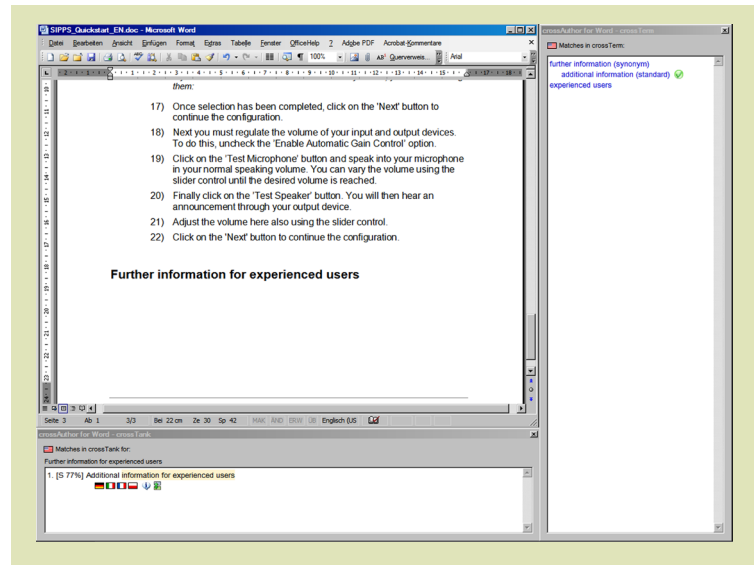


Figure 1. crossAuthor with Microsoft Word

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across Language Server. Technically, this is achieved by means of plug-ins that are linked to the across interfaces, thereby connecting the editor to the across Language Server (Figur 1).

Author support in the accustomed work environment

After starting crossAuthor and logging in to the across server, two additional windows open up alongside the editor window. One of the windows display the sentences for which the across database already contains translations. In this way, the author immediately sees what has already been translated (Figur 2).

For example, if the database already contains a translation for 'Additional information for experienced users' the system will notify the author that a similar phrase is available for 'Further information for experienced users' and show available translations. Instead of the original phrase, authors can insert the match in their text by clicking the mouse or using shortcut keys.

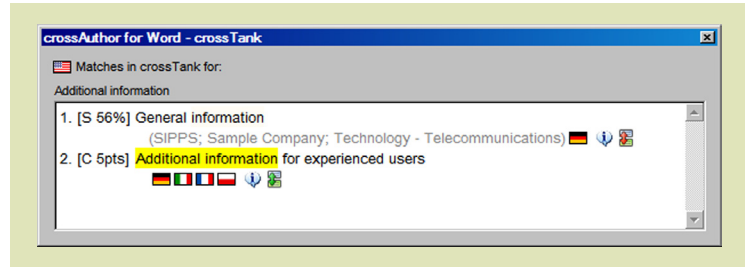


Figure 2. crossAuthor window with matches in the TM

The second window lists terminology entries in the across database. For words that have already been used, the system shows the corporate standard, acceptable synonyms and alternatives that should not be used. For example, an author typing 'additional information' might be advised that it is the standard (preferred) term, that 'further information' is an acceptable synonym and that 'more information' should not be used (Figur 3).

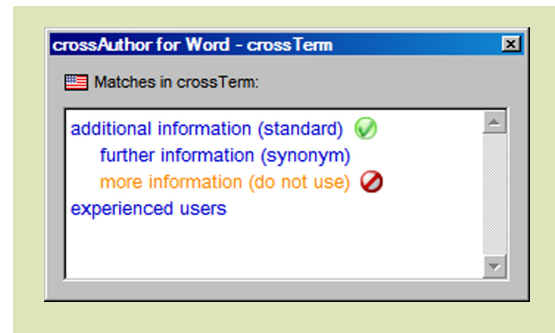


Figure 3. crossAuthor window with matches in the termbase

Words that should not be used are highlighted and smart tags enable authors to insert preferred alternatives. This direct connection to the termbase ensure that authors use standard corporate terminology when composing technical documents.

If necessary, authors can adapt the plug-in to their specific needs. For example, authors can modify the shortcut key for importing hits to the source text or set filters to refine the search in the across database (Figure 4).

Depending on the approach and the specific tasks, crossAuthor can be used either while editing source texts or in batch mode to check texts that have already been written. In the first instance, crossAuthor allows for ad hoc modification of questionable wording while, in the second instance, it performs a systematic review and a final quality assurance check.

An online help and a manual in PDF format facilitate the first steps with crossAuthor.

Translation-oriented authoring for external service providers

Translation-oriented authoring is becoming increasingly important now that, with outsourcing and offshoring, various external agencies and internal departments are often involved in the content and layout of marketing and technical documents. Until now, these groups have rarely been involved in the translation process and have not been able to access language resources in a useful and efficient way. However, as most of these groups use desktop publishing systems that can be connected to the across Language Server, this is set to change. Consistent, uniform use of corporate terminology will be far easier, resulting in a substantial reduction in the quality assurance and localisation overhead.

Open architecture and interfaces

For the deployment of translation-oriented authoring functionality, the standard interface 'crossConnect for crossAuthor' enables real-time access to the TM and the termbase.

This interface is used in conjunction with a crossAuthor plug-in on the editor side.

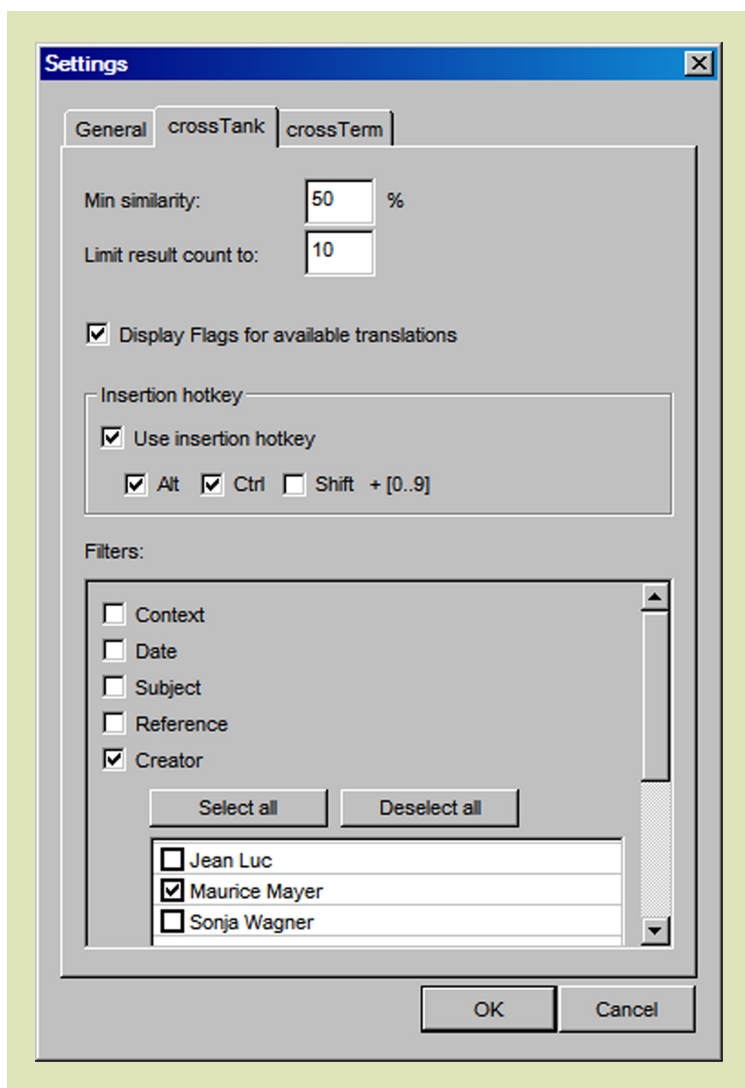


Figure 4. Dialog window for customising crossAuthor

Currently the plug-in for Microsoft Word is available from across. Other plugins for FrameMaker, Arbortext/Epic and XMetaL will be available soon. In addition, plugins for other editors, e.g. for Adobe InDesign, are offered by across partners.

Conclusion

Thanks to open interfaces and integrated systems, translation-oriented authoring is now a reality. Technical writers now have access to the kinds of tools that translators have had since the introduction of TM systems. Of course, the efficient use of translation-oriented authoring depends on the quality and quantity of the stored language resources. In this respect, the machine can only provide assistance. The rest still needs to be done by humans.

Naturally, the introduction of translation-oriented authoring functionality brings about some changes for authors. They will have to get used to their new roles and responsibilities, and modify their approach to some extent, but this should not be too difficult. After all, the advantages for authors are obvious:

- The consistency of the composed text is improved, a top priority for all involved.
- Authors no longer need to carry out burdensome research and style guide checks.
- Last but not least, authors can contribute to the cost saving and efficiency improvements mentioned at the start of this article.

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