

# Document Freedom Day March 31st

## Paths to Document Liberty in the Translation Market

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<http://a2e.de/i2p/10/03/dfd>

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To obtain our freedom to write/program multilingual text documents, we use a software stack that combines Deplate, Template Toolkit, TeX/LaTeX and the Docbook filter of OOffice. The latter allows us to produce the native MSWorld output on which a majority of customers keenly insists.

Unfortunately the Docbook filter of OOffice is rudimentary and necessitates manual postprocessing. Thus we are thinking of buying a few licenses of the closed-source XMLmind XSL-FO converter. Paying 150 eur per person for document freedom is not too much. The purpose also justifies the pollution of our otherwise entirely free software environment.

However what do we do when translation customers keep coming up with new requirements, e.g. those of using particular translation memory software? E.g. we are being asked to do a job with Transfast 7.0 or Superduper 8.0 etc all the time. Working with the free tool OmegaT will usually not be accepted because that tool does not produce the same proprietary output as Transfast or Superduper. These tools are imposed on the market by publicity campaigns in which translators' associations partner up with the companies. Translators participate in these document serfdom campaigns by advertising particular software products in their CVs. Awareness of standards is almost inexistent in the translation community.

Yet there are solutions even for translation memory. There is an open format for translation memory as well which is called XLIFF, and, similar to the XMLmind solution for MSWorld files there is the Heartsome Suite with its set of proprietary conversion tools which will convert XLIFF files into proprietary formats of the leading vendors. This will run on GNU/Linux for something like 500 eur per person. Fortunately the creation of these conversion tools has not been forbidden by means of patents.

The way toward document freedom in this area is far. So far it has been a catch-up race in which the promoters of closedness have maintained their lead. As long as even

text processing professionals think in terms of tools rather than standards this is unlikely to change. A alphabetisation campaign involving translators' associations could be an important step forward. But it would have to spread to all those centers of corporate "excellence" that have a policy of "standardising on X", where X is not a standard but a product or, even worse, a vendor of proprietary software, no, THE vendor of proprietary software. When it is taken for granted that everybody uses the same software, people will also find it normal to ask others to scrape their ass, i.e. collaborate with unknown customers on the basis of personal editing histories and intimate details of that software such as e.g. the way in which it handles inline comments and corrections. In extreme cases, the customer imposes an online editing tool, possibly with an insecure closed-source client that has to be installed on one's desktop, which again has to use a specified operating system made by THE software vendor. As long as these are the conditions of the race, open standards can only continue to struggle trying to catch up but have very little hope of ever taking the lead.

## 1 Resources

- XML
- Document Freedom Day March 31st
- OSOR.eu: Groups in 9 EU member states participate in DFD
- FSFE zeichnet Radiosender für Nutzung von Ogg Vorbis aus