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## Toward a Handbook on English-language Publishing in Japan

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## **Toward a Handbook on English-language Publishing in Japan**

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日本における英語出版についての手引書

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### **Abstract**

Despite the frequent complaint that Japan does not communicate much about itself, in fact a great deal more is published in English in this country than is true even of many Western countries. Much of this steady and constantly-growing stream of English-language materials, however, is poorly translated, inadequately edited, and unattractively published. Rather than serving to enhance Japan's international image, correct misperceptions, and attain the goals set by its producers, often it achieves quite different, unwelcome effects.

People who are responsible for producing English-language materials for their organizations often do not have adequate information and guidance to accomplish their jobs effectively. There is no comprehensive guide showing how and where to start, how much and what kind of work is involved, or how much it should cost, and no systematic reference work covering the manifold minutiae of an English-language publishing project, how to deal with special difficulties, and how to plan and assess the results of a Japanese-to-English translation task.

This paper presents a proposal for a "Handbook on English-language Document Production and Publishing in Japan." In addition to a detailed table of contents, it presents in an appendix some guidelines on "how to count pages" as an example of the type of material the handbook would provide. The Conference on Research Writing in Japan revealed many of the difficulties that arise in publishing English-language materials in Japan; this paper outlines a proposal that could pave the way toward solutions to some of those problems.

みずからのことを発信することが少ないとの批判を頻繁に耳にするにもかかわらず、実際は、日本においては西洋諸国における英語による出版物よりも、さらに数多くの情報が英語で出版されている。たしかに英語による情報発信傾向は増加傾向にあるものの、残念なことにそれらの多くが、稚拙な翻訳であり、十分な編集もおこなわれず、出版されても、人目をひくことはなかった。そのため、日本の国際的イメージを向上させ、誤解を正し、著作者の目的を達成するのに役立つどころか、まったく異なる、好ましからざる効果をあげることも少なくない。

英語による資料作成をうけおう会社や団体などの担当者は、自分たちの仕事を効果的に達成するための十分な情報や手引を持たないことが多い。英語による資料の作成に関して、どこから、どのように手をつけるのか、どの程度の量の、どのような種類の仕事かともなうのか、あるいは、どのくらいのコストがか

かるのか、などを示す包括的な手引き書は存在していない。また、英語による出版プロジェクト特有の難しさにどのように対処するか、日本語から英語への翻訳作業をどのように計画し、その結果をどのように評価するかといった多岐にわたる細目を網羅する体系化された参考資料もない。

本稿は、「日本における英語文書作成と出版に関する手引き書」について具体案を示している。内容の詳細な一覧表に加え、この論文は補遺の中に手引き書が示教する資料の種類の一例として「ページの数え方」に関する指針を示している。「日本における研究論文作成についての会議」は、日本での英語資料の出版に生じる難題の多くをあきらかにした。本稿は、このような問題のいくつかに対する解決策に向けたおおまかな道すじをつける具体案1例である。

The publication of literature and information in English originating in Japan could be a flourishing industry if it were not hampered by the—largely unrecognized—disorganized state of professional expertise. English-language publishing is an enormous topic, even when the scope is limited to Japan. As we indicate below, there is a pressing need to gather together the accumulated know-how and experience of those who have been working with English-language documents in Japan for several decades, in order to save time and effort for those taking up this work for the first time, whether in print or online. A handbook of manageable size that could be produced in the not-too-distant future could not possibly cover every type of publication. This proposal, therefore, does not extend to the areas of technical translation or editing, and some types of scientific writing.

English-language materials—newspapers, books, magazines, journals, conference and symposium papers, newsletters, brochures, research papers, contracts, letters, and so on—are coming out in a steady stream in Japan and the quantity is growing constantly. Some of these materials strive to promote business or national objectives, some are responses to the challenge of the “international era” as Japan sees it, and others advertise individual and corporate efforts and achievements. Despite the frequent complaint that Japan does not communicate much about itself, in fact a great deal more is published in English about the country than is true even in many Western countries. Some of this information is professionally prepared and reaches international standards in form and content. A large amount of the English-language material produced in Japan, however, is poorly translated, inadequately edited, and unattractively designed. Rather than serving to enhance Japan’s international image, correct misperceptions, and attain the goals set by its producers, often it achieves quite different, unintended effects.

Meanwhile, the people who are responsible for producing English-language materials for their organizations often do not have adequate tools to accomplish their job without a struggle. There are books on English grammar, manuals on how to write e-mail letters, how to write research papers in English, how to create websites, and guides that enumerate tricks of translation. There are volumes on

training for interpreting and conversation skills, and style guides for academic publishing and for journalism. Much of this literature is aimed at projects working from English to Japanese. But there is no guide for endeavors going the other direction—from Japanese to English: how and where to start, how much and what kind of work is involved, how much it should cost, what kind of details have to be attended to, and how to plan and assess the results when the task is *Japanese to English*.

In short, there is no comprehensive handbook on the basic procedures and techniques for producing quality English-language documents in a Japanese publishing environment. Just as they did forty years ago, most people working in this field still proceed on a trial-and-error basis, and they still have to rely on fragmented information. They turn for support mainly to people they happen to know, professionals they come across by chance or by thumbing through the yellow pages, or by contracting the cheapest agent they can engage. Too often their efforts produce less than satisfactory, often ineffective results, and are frequently attempted without adequate funds or a carefully considered schedule.

While the tradition of information *importing* goes back hundreds of years—and Japan has a truly impressive history in this field—the situation is different for *exporting* information. So-called exporting of information gathered momentum only during the post-World War II era, extending over roughly fifty years. The need for documentary information in English became critical after 1945, and for the first time organizations, businesses, foundations, and other Japanese bodies had to produce it themselves. The task could not be left to outside tourist agents, researchers, journalists, or writers, even though it meant producing documents and printed media in languages and forms that were often unfamiliar. The amount and importance of this work has been steadily growing and is now becoming a major industry, but still it often has to stumble along without enough qualified professionals, reliable guides, or even basic recognition of the kind of expertise needed. Although the technologies of word processing, graphic design, printing, and publishing have rapidly advanced into completely new frontiers, offering many advantages and shortcuts, the difficulties of producing publications of international caliber are as serious as ever.

### **Passing on Accumulated Know-how**

Publishers and other organizations (the client side) have long relied on the help of non-Japanese with various levels of expertise in J-E translation, English editing, copyediting, copywriting, proofreading, and English typographical and graphic design. Sometimes these people bring genuine, polished skills to Japan when arriving from overseas; sometimes they are professionals who have advanced skills built from long apprenticeships in Japan or elsewhere, or they may be self-trained.

There are also some who have no training and no genuine skills at all, but are able to pass themselves off as experts because they are “native” speakers of the English language. In the postwar period through the end of the twentieth century, native speakers of English interested in Japan who happened to be here could be hired for such work, and they performed many of these tasks, sometimes very well, often with mediocre results, and frequently, with very bad results. Usually transients, they were hired on a temporary, or piece-by-piece basis, and the general belief that these “native speakers” have polished English writing and editing skills still prevails. The myth that “native” equals proficiency in English is still strong and is still crippling the production of quality English-language materials.

A great deal has been learned, nevertheless, over several decades, both by those who do the work—professionals and amateurs—and by the clients and publishers who pay for it. Their accumulated knowledge and skills, however, have not been organized in a systematic fashion to provide easy access and allow continuing revision and elaboration. One reason is that such information was until recently needed only by a limited number of professional translators, editors, graphic artists, typesetters, printers, publishers, and so on. Today, the amount and variety of documentary information (in printed and other media) being generated are burgeoning, particularly with the new media made possible by the Internet. Professionals cannot handle all the work; amateurs have to be able to perform some or all of the tasks involved.

Money is tighter in the post-bubble era and organizations often do not want to commit large funds to the production of English-language materials. Further, the time allotted is frequently limited, determined by prearranged events or budget schedules. Those involved in such projects have to know the most efficient procedures for preparing and publishing these materials to avoid wasting funds, time, and human resources.

The abundance of newly available electronic and publishing know-how often puts editing, design, and the production of information in the hands of amateurs. Many of us find ourselves having to accomplish tasks that were once performed by other professionals. A translator never had to deal with design-related problems such as line space, line widows, excessive hyphenation or choice of fonts because there was an editor or designer in charge of those problems. Now, a translator may find that a text rendered into English at great pains comes back from a printer looking hideous because no other professional was working in the interface. Translation, copywriting and copyediting, graphic and book design, typesetting, and printing all were once distinct fields of expertise, handled by individuals or companies with tested experience and abundant accumulated know-how. Now, those of us connected with the output (*hasshin*) of information for international consumption are often asked to “manage somehow” for all these processes.

## Supports for Professionals

There are two professional groups offering support to people engaged in the production of English-language materials in Japan. One of them is the Society of Writers, Editors, and Translators based in Tokyo (with a strong Kansai chapter) and founded in 1980 (see Wilkinson, this volume). SWET extends networking and professional skills-sharing opportunities for established wordsmiths and newcomers alike. It publishes a membership directory and a quarterly newsletter to record and share skills and experience. A volunteer group run by an informal Steering Committee, SWET's institutional base is by no means solid or permanent, but it has lasted 23 years through the dedication of the volunteers who run it. The Japan Association of Translators, founded as an offshoot of SWET in 1985, is a similar volunteer-run organization, driven primarily by the contributions of its members. But there are few other local organizations that support wordsmiths working in Japan or with Japan-related material in English, and can network and share skills.

## Existing Resources and Guides

Editors and translators in Japan rely for standard rules and guidelines on a number of authoritative works, mainly the *Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed.), *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, and the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. These works, however, are aimed at texts originally in English and do not give detailed help on handling non-Western content. So far, only one reference work has been designed and compiled specifically for people working with the production of English materials in Japan. This is the *Japan Style Sheet*, originally published by SWET in 1983 and revised and published for the commercial market by Stone Bridge Press in 1998. The *Japan Style Sheet* is available through online distributors and major bookstores in Japan, and directly from SWET. A second volume relevant for this work is *Wordcraft*, a volume of essays and articles of enduring value that were originally printed in the *SWET Newsletter* between 1980 and 1990. *Wordcraft* is only available from SWET (see the website, [www.swet.jp](http://www.swet.jp)).

The *Japan Style Sheet* explains style questions relating to Japan not taken up in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, such as handling of romanized Japanese words in English text (capitalization, italics, hyphenation, romanization, etc.), rendering personal names, specialized terms, place names, dates, weights and measures, and other matters. Its content is the result of tested practice by editors and translators since the 1950s.

*Wordcraft* contains valuable hints on language pitfalls frequently encountered by editors and translators working in Japan and answers questions on editing, typography, layout, and other matters. In it are articles illustrating the different ways texts can be translated in a variety of fields from a series entitled "Over Their Shoulders." The last part of the book includes reviews of dictionaries, guides, and

other references useful to those in the SWET-related professions. While some of the advice has become obsolete because of the great changes taking place in word-processing technology, the book contains much of timeless value.

Despite the help provided by these two volumes, no comprehensive, authoritative handbook exists to answer wider and more detailed questions pertaining to the publishing of English-language materials in Japan, particularly in the era of online publishing and the Internet. Such a handbook is needed. It might be called "Handbook on English-language Document Production and Publishing in Japan," and a tentative table of contents is given below. Comments on this outline are welcome and may be sent to the authors (see the list of contributors).

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## **Outline for a Handbook on Translation, Production, and English-language Document Publishing in Japan**

### **1. Translation or Writing**

- What kind of translator do you want?
  - Academic
  - Literary
  - General professional (categories: good-writing type, faithful-to-original type, background-in-the-field, rough-draft hacker, above-all-cheap)
- Where to look, what to look out for, value of directories, agencies, association directories, etc.
- Testing a translator for your project; criteria for evaluating a J-E translation

### **2. Assessment and Planning**

- Amateur/do-it-yourself/in-house committee vs. commissioning to professionals
- Page counts (see *SWET Newsletter* article, Appendix 1 below)
- Background research and editing of Japanese ms.
- Tables, charts, illustrations, photos involved (e.g., will they need reworking?)
- Time and scheduling
  - Big and small projects
  - Scheduling in stages/not as lump
  - Monitoring progress
- Budget
  - Rates
  - Subdivision of tasks (e.g., dividing translation, editing, proofreading)
- Appropriateness of text for translation; special problems to be addressed
- Preparing a manuscript for the translator (format, spellings, terms, dating)
- Publication
  - Rights issues
  - Choosing a publisher

### 3. Design and Printing

- Designer (person knowledgeable in “*Ôbun insatsu*” (Western-language graphic design and typography)
  - Role of the graphic designer (why important to the final product/when necessary, when not)
    - Grid
    - Fonts (display and main text)
    - Special needs (bilingual text, photographs, etc.)
- Is format appropriate for audience
- Printing company (English DTP capable/ knowledgeable in “*Ôbun insatsu*”)

### 4. Stages of Project

- Translation/writing (translators/authors)
- Editing (includes research and fact-checking). Crucial phase requiring professional expertise (Differences from “*henshu*”)
  - What does an English editor do?
  - Who can do it?
  - What’s involved (style, technical matters, checking facts, consistency)
  - N.B. Importance of “line editing” as customary in English publishing, for accuracy, readability, effective presentation to target readership
- Author/supervisor (may be client) re-checking
- Editor collation of corrections; response to queries, final changes
- Permissions/copyright issues (For long quotations, photographs, poetry/verse, etc. permissions in writing are required before publication, and proper credits must be given in the text and design.)
- Design: begins when complete manuscript is ready
- Copyediting and preparation of text for printer or website (capitalization, indentation, block quotes, headings, handling of footnotes and bibliography, etc.)
- Proofreading (usually in two stages, with final page layout stage at end)
- Indexing
- Covers, title pages, publishing data, cataloging information, ISBN/ISSN numbers, etc.

### 5. Handling Digital Files

- Keeping organized (dating, labeling, filing), formats, compatibility matters, conversion, working with collaborators (copyeditors, proofreaders, authors, clients) in digital or hard-copy form (high tech, mixed tech, and low tech)
- Use of electronic proofreading programs
- Use of printable data files (PDFs) for proofreading (advantages and disadvantages)

### 6. Desktop Printing (DTP) and Layout/design

- Professional versus amateur, dividing up the work; preparing the data for the manuscript for typesetting
- Role of professional graphic designer and how to set up collaboration with editor and printer (Author or client should work through editor at this stage, not directly with printer.)
- Manuscript mark-up for layout/ typesetting

- Typesetting pitfalls (line space, word/letter space, special characters, bilingual text).
- Working with printers in Japan (layout, fonts, short lines; special characters)
- Proofreading (coping with spacing, font, and character problems)
- Who is in charge? How to establish a production chain of command for best results in various situations (when designer can mediate, when no designer involved, etc.)

#### **7. Distribution**

- Try to negotiate distribution terms and conditions if possible; study distribution plan if one exists and get expert opinion if you don't know much; avoid pitfalls in agreement (contract concerning distribution), how to use agents
- How to make information about the publication available and where

#### **8. Methods of Payment**

- Understanding the needs of authors and translators, freelance editors, etc.
- Dealing with grant deadlines, professional contract categories, etc.  
For example, "translation" can be charged as a flat fee covering everything from literal translation to proofreading, or it can be divided up into "translation," *koetsu* (line editing) for style and effectiveness, copyediting, and proofreading.

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### **Maximizing Professional Teamwork**

It may help to survey the kinds of professional expertise needed for rendering a Japanese document into an English publication. The whole process has numerous steps, and not every document receives the attention of a different specialist for each step. Still, for best results, at least three and sometimes four or five or more people are involved. They work on different stages of the project, and each person's function depends on the others. The teamwork of several experienced professionals who are trusted and know how to cope with whatever hurdles appear can be expected to turn out a very good result.

#### **Translation**

It is usually extremely difficult for a Japanese, unless trained overseas, to produce smooth and effective English texts through translation without the help of a skilled English editor. Even native speakers of English need editors. Accurate and effective J-E translation requires training and experience, and the collaboration of people with complementary skills. That experience includes training and discipline in English writing skills as well as competence in and sensitivity to style and field-specific practices for various categories of writing (e.g., scholarly, journalistic, or scientific, PR, and advertising). Since translating language involves translating culture, the J-E translator has to be familiar with cultural backgrounds and popular assumptions and must have access to appropriate sources of knowledge.

Because the translator often cannot be expected to have all the skills necessary to work alone, the ideal is a team process. If the translator is a Japanese native speaker, an English native-speaker editor or translator should collaborate, correcting the style and expression for effective results. If the translator is an English native speaker, a Japanese editor or translator should check and correct the draft to eliminate errors and assure that the logic, argument, and (as much as possible) nuances of the original are retained.

There are a few very talented J-E translators who can work alone, but they are rare. The only way to assure an acceptable product is to build collaboration into the process. From long experience we strongly recommend two basic rules:

Rule 1: If your J-E translator is Japanese, be sure that an English-literate editor with knowledge about Japan line-edits (*koetsu*) the draft. If your J-E translator is a native English speaker, be sure that a Japanese with strong knowledge of English checks the entire draft to catch translation errors and misinterpretations and is able to look up terms and references that need amplification or clarification.

Rule 2: Since J-E translation takes time and specialized expertise, be sure to plan adequate time to secure the services of your translator of choice, as well as to check and edit the draft. The less time you have the more important it is to hire a highly qualified translator in order to assure that no mistakes are made. If you have more time, choosing a cheaper but less qualified translator may be one option. In the end, you will save money by using more experienced translators, even if the rate is higher.

### **Editing translations and non-native speaker's writing**

English readers have a very low tolerance for unnatural, poorly written English, especially for the awkward syntax and expressions that can result from word-for-word translation. They are likely to ignore, belittle, or ridicule the result. For this reason, line editing has a long tradition in English-language publishing and the editor exercises considerable authority over the author in setting the standard of the text.

A translation, even by the most skilled translator, tends to favor its source, and traces of the process of switching from Japanese syntax and writing conventions to those of English inevitably remain. These problems can be resolved through skillful editing. To end up with a natural English style, presentation, vocabulary, and flow requires professional expertise and a fresh perspective. No matter who writes the text or produces the translation, someone else should be assigned as editor.

Editing is different from “henshu” as it is practiced in Japanese publishing. Editing is more interventionist. It involves rewording, sometimes trimming the text, requesting amplifications, checking facts the author may have guessed at in haste,

eliminating inconsistencies, etc. The editor acts as an expert the author can rely on to assure a high-quality, saleable, or effective publication.

The editor takes responsibility for making the text accessible and appealing and should make certain that it conforms to an organized structure and reads smoothly (the effectiveness of the final product depends heavily on these qualities). The editor also checks facts and details, queries the author when the meaning is unclear or the facts require checking, and incorporates diverse suggestions from readers of the draft. The more substantial the project (i.e., a book), the more crucial it is that the entire manuscript be carefully checked by a single editor. In short, the work of a good editor can boost readership and have an impact on the reputation of the author. Here again, on the basis of long experience, we recommend the following rules.

Rule 1: The editing process is indispensable to a high-quality product. This applies no matter how experienced the translator. It is work that should be considered and remunerated separately from the translation.

Rule 2: If the translator is an English-native speaker and highly skilled, the editing required can be called “copyediting” and the rate of payment can be lower. Such editing consists predominantly of cutting out unnecessary words, improving phrasing, tightening sentence structure, and making usages and style consistent.

Rule 3: If the translator is less experienced or non-native in English, the editor will have to rewrite sentences, reorganize some text, and rely on the Japanese text to achieve a high-quality product. This work takes more time and expertise and merits a higher rate of pay.

### **Copyediting**

Once the translation and editing processes have been completed, the technical aspects of the text need to be organized to achieve consistent style and presentation (including headings, reference and citation styles, handling of illustrative material, etc.) for the particular publication involved (especially if it is a periodical). Copyediting may be done separately by the editor and/or translator, or by a third person, but it should be undertaken as a separate process, *prior to* any typesetting, layout, or website uploading process. It should *never be done* for the first time after the text has been laid out and typeset in galley form.

Computer-generated manuscripts, especially when several people are participating, have their own common pitfalls, including dropped words, words inadvertently left in the text, garbled characters, and omissions. A copyeditor coming fresh to the manuscript will see these problems more easily and resolve or query them.

The copyeditor does the final checking of spelling, numbers, figures in charts, names, dates, and heading consistency. For this purpose a carefully prepared pretypesetting manuscript should always be printed on paper. This will usually be done using a word-processor, before the document is formatted for publication.

### **Proofreading**

The term *kôsei* in Japanese, though generally translated as “proofreading,” is often assumed to mean editing or copyediting. It can also be used to mean rewriting awkward sentences and correcting grammar. During the preliminary examination of the working text, both client and professional should take pains to use this term carefully and with full understanding of the other side.

Proofreading in the strict sense, namely, comparing a newly produced draft to the previous version, has been made easier with the introduction of advanced technology, but it still needs professional attention.

A “style sheet” or list of points to which proofreaders should give special attention for the particular publication at hand should be prepared. It indicates document-specific treatment of words, preferred spellings, exceptions to standard editing rules, etc.

New techniques of proofreading and author checking using PDF files are available, but the merits of traditional reading with paper galleys should always be considered.

### **Design**

In the proposed Handbook, the topic of design for publications and documents should be introduced by a specialist. There is a considerable gap between the objectives and assumptions of Japanese graphic design and those of English-language graphic design. Working in this field in Japan requires a thorough understanding of the people and practices, language skills, and a knowledge of terminology on both sides. There are some printers with experience of English-language work; the rest, especially the smaller firms, can be taught to do what is needed, but care must be taken throughout the process to ensure that the right techniques and equipment are being used.

Unfortunately, budget constraints often rule out the use of specialized and professional expertise (i.e., a graphic designer) even for the design of a document destined for publication and wide distribution. The common practice of relying on the printing company for design-related tasks, which may have been acceptable for Japanese printing, leads only to trouble for English-language publications.

At the same time, Japanese graphic designers often consider themselves creative artists who need not worry about the concerns of an editor and deserve higher pay than other members of the production team. The tension between the

editor, who is concerned with a clear, readable, and internationally presentable design, and a designer, whose primary concern may be an opportunity for artistic achievement, can cause considerable trouble for a project. In producing English-language materials, mutual understanding should be sought at an early stage, and an effective compromise found.

Points to be discussed in this section of the Handbook include:

- Forms for submitting an edited manuscript to a designer for typesetting or computer (DTP) formatting
- Who marks the manuscript for the typesetting or computer-formatting operator
- Channels for communication between editor and designer/printing operator
- How to solve English typesetting or formatting problems (word and letter space, hyphenation, special character problems, handling of bad breaks and extra text, etc.)
- How to compile an index

## **Printing**

Today translators and editors can prepare copy in digital form, turn over digital files to a printer, and then receive galleys in printed or PDF format. Many problems still occur, however, resulting from the transfer of data from word-processing software to DTP layout software or printing layout equipment. Some of the worst include poor word spacing, garbling of characters, ill-suited fonts and line-spacing, and excessively complicated layouts and font choices.

Any English-language publishing project needs a printer with equipment suited to production of Western-language printing and with expertise in typography, layout, and other aspects of design. Unfortunately, many clients prefer to use printing companies with which they have established relationships, regardless of their familiarity with English-language printing. Ultimately, the printer's lack of experience and the mistakes that result often cost more than using the services of a properly qualified printer. (Inexperienced printer operators can be trained to maximize the capabilities of the equipment/software and produce satisfactory results, but the editor or designer has to know how to teach the operator about software specifications, techniques, etc.)

Japanese graphic designers, moreover, are often ill-equipped to guide the printing company through the pitfalls of English printing, often forcing the editor or even the translator—whose knowledge of printing and design techniques is usually amateur—to help the printer tackle problems in the typesetting and layout. Eventually, it is hoped that printing companies will take the initiative to learn the necessary procedures.

Various levels of technology are involved, depending on the scale of a project and the other professionals involved. In some cases traditional/physical typesetting

still needs to be done at the printing company; at the other extreme, the editorial side can produce perfect camera-ready copy and the printer simply makes plates and prints and binds the result. The different approaches have various merits and pitfalls.

### **Collaboration Across Professions and Funding Requirements**

As the above outline for the proposed Handbook indicates, the compilation process must involve professionals in a number of different specialties, from translating, editing, copyediting, and proofreading, to designing and printing. The guide should be accessible, moreover, to the non-specialists who are likely to be commissioning the work, be they ministry officials, corporate PR staff, foundation/institute/NPO staff, as well as individual scholars, writers, journalists, and translators. It should be published in bilingual format, Japanese and English.

A number of publishers specializing in English-language books about Japan were established after 1945, such as Charles E. Tuttle, John Weatherhill, Inc., Kodansha International, and University of Tokyo Press. The publishers of English-language quarterlies, including the Center for Social Science Communication (*The Japan Interpreter*, etc.) and its successor Center for Intercultural Communication, Japan Echo, Inc. (*Japan Echo*), Asahi Shimbunsha (English-language newspaper; *Japan Quarterly*), Toyo Keizai Shimbun (*Oriental Economist*), and others gained tremendous experience and know-how in the field. Translators, editors, and proofreaders who worked with these organizations from the late 1960s and later are still active but are now scattered in freelance and independent endeavors, and many of the companies and publishers where they were trained have been disbanded.

The growing trend toward digitization of publishing, online and print-on-demand publishing, has meant that some of the technical know-how has been superseded, but the core skills of translation and editing, copyediting, and proofreading have evolved along with the technology. More sophisticated skills have raised efficiency and productivity. But computer and software manufacturers do not consider needs of the small market formed by wordsmiths in all languages, and their products are moving steadily away from systems that serve our needs in the language professions. Even knowledge of where new technology does not serve as well as the old is now a matter of unwritten professional experience that can be shared to broad benefit. Efficient find-and-replace functions, broad platform compatibility, and character unification are crucial issues. Progress in resolving those and other still-imperfect areas of technology will make the work of wordsmiths smoother, faster, easier, and better.

This paper proposes the launching of a project to compile a comprehensive Handbook with the participation of experts from each related profession and input from as many experienced persons as possible. Institutional backing is needed to coordinate the project, provide at least some working funds, and to insure that it

results in a publication that can be made widely available. Expertise in the publishing of English-language materials in Japan is already available but needs to be documented, organized, and published and then widely distributed.

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SWET

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## Appendix 1: Sample Section of Handbook: On Counting Pages

### What's in a Page? Setting Your Units of Charge

*The following article was originally published in the SWET Newsletter, No. 87 (December 1999). It is reprinted here by permission of the compiler, Lynne E. Riggs.*

What's in a page? 250 English words, 350 words, 200 words, 25 lines, 2000 characters, 400 characters, 200 characters, 1200 characters . . .

All of these, and others, are commonly encountered "standard" pages, by one measure or other. Translators, editors, proofreaders, rewriters, book designers, typists/keyboarders—wordsmiths of all kinds—consort with several of these in doing professional work in Japan.

Client: "We have 10 pages of text that needs proofreading (*kôsei*). How

much do you charge and how soon can you finish?”

Proofreader: “What are your ‘pages’ like?”

“We have something we want translated by Monday. It’s four A4 pages’ worth.”

Translator: “How many characters on a ‘page’?”

“What is your rate per page?”

Translator: “That depends on the ‘page.’”

*One of the questions asked most frequently by those entering the editing, rewriting, proofreading, typing, and translating fields is how to calculate the “pages” or other units proper to their kind of work. While the “page” may be the unit most immediately graspable to the client, it turns out to be a most elusive unit. A recent thread of discussion on SWET-L, SWET’s electronic mailing list, brought out some of the varied issues the subject of the “page” elicits among experienced professionals. Here we compile some conventional knowledge of SWET members, and draw on comments from the SWET-L thread. Thanks to Miriam Bloom, Daniel Day, Martin Ecott, David Eunice, Maynard Hogg, Hugh Miller, Wayne Root, Dennis Schneider, Fred Uleman for their contributions.*

In mediating the counting gap between client and professional, a number of factors come into play. The very first thing to be established with the client is what the unit of charge for professional services will be: hour, page (and what unit of page), English (alphabetic) character, Japanese character, or English word. Below are some of the typical units of charge and ways of counting “pages” and “words.”

#### *The English word*

The English word is a common unit of charge for translation, editing, proofreading, and rewriting. Where once words were counted by hand by various methods, today most computers and word processors do the job. Some people charge by the total number of words in a document; others use a fixed word unit as their standard of charge.

#### *The 250-word page*

This unit is part of the legacy of the typewriter era, particularly in the United States, where the 250-word, double-spaced pica-typewritten 8 1/2 x 11 page was the unit for high school compositions, university research papers, and expository writing class essays. A page with that quantity had good-sized margins and plenty of space between the lines for corrections and comments. Publishers liked this format too, which gives the editor’s red pencil plenty of room to work. With that long tradition, it is still around as a unit. The words may be counted by the computer, but for editing, rewriting, and sometimes translating, the unit is still often 250 words as a “page.”

### *The 280–350-word page*

In Japan, where the standard manuscript page is A4 size, 25 lines on a page leaves a lot of wasted paper. A full page of text with 3 cm left/right margins and 2.5 cm top and bottom margins in a font like Palatino contains about 330 words. This format is preferred for print-outs of running text to be read by authors, clients, editors, and proofreaders, regardless of the unit in which professional services are charged.

### *The English (alphabetic) character*

For some texts, such as those consisting of short captions, questionnaire responses, diagrams, “pages” defy regular counting. One way of calculating the quantity is to count the characters in the entire text, and charge per character. If it is easier to transform the number of characters into word units, an average “word”—say 5 characters—can be determined. It can also be used as the basis for a “page” unit.

### *The Japanese character*

In J-E translation, one of the most common units of charge is the number of Japanese characters. The *genkō-yōshi* (grid-lined printed sheets used for writing manuscripts) provided a “page” with a 200- or 400-character standard, and writers used one square for each character and each item of punctuation. Today, the 400-character unit is often retained as a graspable quantity, although the total number of characters in a word-processed Japanese text can be counted easily by the computer.

### *The line of text*

For convenience, such as when translating titles of articles, names of works of art or craft in an exhibition, captions for photographs or illustrations, it may be useful to set a “per line” charge, defining a line as, for example, an average of 10 words, and setting the price in accordance with an amount that reflects the time taken, the expertise assumed, or the difficulty of the work.

## **Kinds of work and units of charge**

### *Writers*

For writers, the most common unit is the word. Commissions are generally made for a piece of desired length: a 100-word paragraph on *kusamochi*, a 2,000 word essay on Tanabata, or 5,000 words on the politics of Japanese ODA. Some magazines pay by the printed page (their printed page).

### *Editors, proofreaders, and rewriters*

Perhaps because work in these areas is closely involved with publishing, it is often paid by the page, although the “page” may be defined differently by the client or by

the freelancer. Most often the unit of charge is the 250-word page or the page of the particular publication, after typesetting and layout, with adjustments made for non-textual areas.

### *Translators*

J-E translators of various types are paid in a number of ways: Here are some of the more common units of charge:

- Literature, by 400 character *genkô yôshi* page
- Non-fiction (essays, journalism, scholarly papers), 400-character *genkô yôshi* page
- Medical papers: by the final English 250-word page or by the word
- Manuals: by number of words in resulting translation or by number of characters of original Japanese
- Consumer/marketing reports: by number of English words
- Website texts: by characters of original Japanese or by number of resulting English words
- Government documents: by number of characters, as counted digitally by client or as calculated by translator; some translators charge by number of English words in the resulting translation

E-J translation is usually calculated in terms of the number of Japanese characters in the resulting translation. This was easily calculated in pre-computer days when translations were written on *genkô-yôshi* sheets. Today, computers count the number of characters in a document.

### **Who counts?**

In some cases the client will have counted the number of words or the number of characters (English or Japanese) digitally or by other means, and know the amount of work to be done at the outset. (It is a good idea to *see* the text physically before taking on a job. A third-hand fax of a manuscript in long-hand or a word-processed manuscript by a poorly trained keyboarder who couldn't really read the author's handwriting—resulting in many typos—is a sure formula for slowing down the translator.)

Often the client has no experience and asks the translator, editor, or proofreader how he/she will charge. In any case, it is up to the professional to know what unit to use for particular kinds of work and what rate to charge. It is always a good idea to check the count received from a client.

If your count of a manuscript is the basis for billing, be sure your procedure is

agreeable to the client. There are basically two ways of counting: (1) digitally, as the computer will do it, which gives the strict number of Japanese characters, the number of English words, number of 1-byte characters, etc., and (2) the looser approach, following the old *genkō-yōshi* principles, in which every line of text is counted, even with a few characters in the line, as a full line.

**Advice for the page-wary (excerpts from the SWET-L thread, an e-mail list service)**

The important thing before accepting the job is to get it clear what the unit is and how much it is going to cost. Any talk of page-size elasticity from an agent is totally disingenuous.

Client education is one of the things that we neglect at our peril. I try to maintain flexibility, but I am unwilling to work with people who think that I can be squeezed. Like most people who work with other people's words, I care about what I do and I don't like being infected with a couldn't-care-less state of mind by middle merchants.

One thing that you have to educate clients about is that rates which allow editors (or writers or translators) to make a decent living from a 40-hour work week are reasonable . . . be assured that Japanese businesses know all about unit sizes. You have to stand your ground in what can be a tedious bargaining ritual, but that is what a lot of business is all about.

(David Eunice, Osaka)

There is a "standard" Japanese page that is 400 characters. This is a 400-*ji genkō yōshi*. And you might be able to work this into the explanation by saying that your 200-word (or 230-word, or whatever) page is equivalent to a 400-*ji genkō yōshi* and that's why you have made it your standard.

....

And if you count the total and divide, you don't even need to mention "page." Just tell your clients it is so much per 1,000 per words or portion thereof. (Using 1,000 rather than 200 as the base is probably easier for them to understand, and it gets you away from the "page" idea.)

[Maybe] the easiest thing to do would be to not even bother looking for a translation for "standard page" but to simply ask them to use A4 paper for convenience, to double-space with 25-30 mm margins so you'll have room to make changes, and to use 12-point so your eyes won't rebel. Specify things so it comes out to 220-250 words per page. Then just charge them by how many pieces of paper they send.

(Fred Uleman, Tokyo)

If the average English word is 5 letters plus space (USA Today readability, not medical papers), 250 words is 1500 keystrokes without the carriage returns and punctuation that make it readable.

I second [the] suggestion about using 200 words as your “page equivalent” yardstick—especially since it fits so well with the “divide by 2” upper bound for converting 400-*ji genkô yôshi* input text to English output. For starters, most of you are no doubt using word processors that conspire against fitting your output into the Procrustean bed of the mythical 230-word page: 65 fixed-width characters per line, 23 double-spaced lines per page.

“What about short jobs?” I say: consider the total production-line cost of setting up before (switching your mind from the last job, digging out your notes, researching new bits, thinking up a file name <g> and sending off the finished product). Moral: Deep down, you’re charging for your time, so set a minimum charge to cover all the non-translation time required.

(Maynard Hogg, Tokyo)

As a freelance, I use the character-counting system to work out standard lines, 55 characters (incl. spaces) per standard line, rounded up to the nearest line and multiplied by my line rate (varying according to the nature of the text, my relation to the customer, etc.). All other “consulting work” (copywriting, revision, proofreading, typing in eastern European languages, tracking down appropriate fonts, etc.) is charged on an hourly basis.

I have had contact with some freelance translators who actually get paid by the hour for all translation work. That’s fine if the customer is prepared to accept you are worth so much an hour, but my experience is that in most cases I would lose out like this because generally having a reasonable rate enables me to compensate for more time-consuming texts with the dead easy ones.

(Martin Ecott, Switzerland)

You can try the international word count. That’s one of the tools translators used before they had word processors that would count words. It was originally devised on typewritten work that was not right-justified. Count the longest line on any page, including spaces, and divide that figure by 5. Then count all the lines in the text omitting any line that is less than half a page in length. Then multiply that figure by the figure divided by 5. It will give you a count that is fairly close to what you would get if you counted every word, and the longer the text the more accurate it becomes.

(Wayne Root, California)

(L E R)

