JTC1 Ad Hoc Group on Terminology

Report of meeting, 2005-05-02 to 04, Gatineau, Canada

Background

JTC1 set up this ad hoc group following an offer by Canada to fill the gap in IT vocabulary standardization that has arisen since SC1, the relevant subcommittee, was closed about five years ago. The standard it produced and revised, ISO/IEC 2382, is now obsolete and there are no means to revise it.

Following my offer to collect together the definitions from SC22 standards, SC22 appointed me as its terminology representative. I was also asked to represent UK and BSI.

Canada set up this meeting of the Ad Hoc Group partly to demonstrate the facilities and expertise of the Canada Translation Bureau (CTB) to the SC representatives on the Ad Hoc Group, and also to explain how they envisage the project proceeding.

The minutes and presentations made during the meeting are to be published by JTC1; what follows are my personal impressions and views.

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Roger Scowen
May 2005

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Attenders

Only six SCs (subcommittees) and two NBs (National bodies) were present. The vast majority were Canadian Nationals: two from Europe, none from Asia. The convener claimed this indicates that most SCs have no problems or queries about the proposal. I believe it indicates apathy or lack of manpower.

Report

Requirement - An English and French database of specialist terminology is an essential resource in Canada where official (and many other) documents need to be published in both languages. Thus Canada needs ISO 2382 with its bilingual terminology of information technology - or something comparable with official status. Canada demonstrated the Termium system and software that the CTB uses to produce and maintain its database.

Canada's proposal - Canada envisages the JTC1 subcommittees updating the relevant (English) parts of ISO 2382, and providing the CTB with the results so that the CTB and SC together can produce and check the French equivalent terms. In each SC, there will be one representative who will liaise with the CTB and the rest of the SC.

Producing a subject terminology - Staff at the CTB currently use software called Termicom to develop and maintain a subject terminology, and offer to provide this to each SC representative. This is an interactive system for developing, examining and updating one term at a time, and thus loading a set of terms from a newly agreed standard will require batch input provided by the

CTB. The approach planned by the CTB could thus require a great deal of work for the SC terminology representative, especially if liaison turns out to be back and forth with each of the WGs: this would onerous in many of the SCs.

A terminology tutorial - The CTB have produced an online training package, *The Pavel Terminology Tutorial*, to familiarize subject experts with the fundamental concepts of producing a terminology for a subject. English and French versions are currently available. I recommend project editors to look at *The Pavel Terminology Tutorial* when they come to draft the definitions in their standard. It is accessible at `www.termium.com`.

Authority without control - ISO, JTC1, NBs, SCs, WGs, and Project editors all have different powers and responsibilities. Theoretically, there is a clear line of authority, control and management, but ultimately work on standardization is paid for by the employers of the WG members, and if they are unwilling to support work, then it is done slowly or not at all.

SC22 and ISO 2382 - JTC1 N6397 (2001-03-28) assigned responsibility to SC22 for maintenance of several parts of ISO 2382:

Part	Subject
2	Arithmetic and logic operations
7	Computer programming
15	Programming languages
16	Information theory

SC22 has so far ignored this responsibility.

SC22 and TCB experiment - I offered to provide a specimen of definitions from SC22 standards, work I have already volunteered to produce for SC22, in order to give CTB some idea of the scale of the project, and to see whether they can add value by identifying poor definitions and synonyms, and providing French translations.

Query - How does the European Commission cope with its even greater translation needs?

Conclusions

(1) *The Pavel Terminology Tutorial*, freely accessible at `www.termium.com`, is a useful tool when starting to produce a terminology for a subject.

(2) SC22 should review its responsibilities concerning ISO 2382.

(3) SC22 and BSI should cautiously welcome the Canadian proposal even though several problems remain, because if they can be overcome, we will not have to behave like Humpty Dumpty, 'When *I* use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less'.

Document history

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