INTERNATIONALIZATION and LOCALIZATION for TRANSLATORS

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L10n

Localization is the process of adapting a product or service for a specific country or region. Frequently, L10n refers to the adaptation of websites, video games and computer software for a particular locale.

i18n

Internationalization is the technical design that needs to be done at a programming level so that a software application can potentially be adapted to various locales without further engineering changes.

Long story short…

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The first responsibility of the i18n engineer is to go through the code and separate all of the computer code from the text strings, words or phrases that are translatable. These strings are then moved to *resource files*. The resource file can then be sent to a translator who will localize these words or phrases into the target language.

Basically, a resource file should be a map of unique identifiers with a corresponding string in the target language. Remember not to change the identifiers and placeholders. Although most programming languages are whitespace-insensitive, follow their conventions. Beware of plurals, text expansion and resizing.

A localization kit contains tools, instructions and resources that will allow a software product to be localized. These include product description, requirements, contacts, delivery expectative, file and folder names, process definition, schedule, source material, word counts and ownership agreement.

There are at least three kinds of testing involved in a localization project: linguistic testing, cosmetic testing and functional testing.

The most important tool is a good text editor. If you're working with a lot of string translation, a TM can be a timesaver. A good software localization tool will allow you to resize elements, change fonts and colors, find and fix hotkey conflicts, and more. If you're working with a lot of binary files this is a critical tool.

RESOURCES

Books

A Practical Guide to Localization, Bert Esselink

XML Internationalization and Localization, Yves Savourel

Online

http://dudgeoninternational.com/ata
http://englishespanol.com/tag/l10n
http://imug.org
http://www.gala-global.org
http://i18nguy.com
http://blog.vengaglobal.com

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