 

XLIFF TC – ISO TC 37 liaison report

# A short introduction to XLIFF

XLIFF stands for XML Localisation Interchange File Format. This standard was created as a format for the interchange of translatable content. When XLIFF was initially envisioned, it was in response to the growing complexity of the software localisation process. At the time, the Internet 'revolution' was forcing software publishers to converge upon new technologies based on software standards such as HTML, XML and Java. Although these standards were designed with the international market in mind and were intended to simplify the development of globalised applications, they had the opposite effect on localisation. The proliferation of so many disparate software resource formats meant that the process of localising Internet based applications was complex, expensive and opaque. Software publishers seeking to localise these products had to choose between two equally expensive options: develop complex localisation tools internally, or outsource the entire localisation process as a "black box".

In addition to responding to the complexity of the software localisation process, XLIFF also began to be considered as a solution to the equally complex documentation and technical communication localisation process. Challenges in translating proprietary word processor and desktop publishing files, and even challenges having to do with the age-old task of localising text strings in graphics showed proved to be a potential good fit for XLIFF.

XLIFF reduces this complexity of localising software by providing a standard, XML-based, end-to-end, tool neutral resource container. Software and documentation publishers can extract their localisable content into XLIFF and localise them using shrink-wrapped tools solutions, customized tools or automated enterprise workflow systems. Additional process efficiency is achieved by XLIFF's built-in support for Computer Aided Translation technologies such as translation memory and machine translation.

# XLIFF 1.2

In February 2008 version 1.2 of XLIFF became an OASIS standard. As well as having to win a vote of all OASIS members, The XLIFF TC had to provide evidence that the standard was being used by a number of companies in a commercial setting. XLIFF 1.2 is a widely used standard at present and the majority of tools used for translation support XLIFF.

# XLIFF 2.0

Following the release of XLIFF 1.2, work began on the next major release, XLIFF 2.0. The widespread use of XLIFF led us to know of some short comings in the standard. It also showed that there was an issue in relation to Interoperability. Many of the tool providers had written extensions for XLIFF and these meant that XLIFF from tool A was not always understood by tool B. XLIFF 2.0 deals with these shortcomings will greatly improve interoperability and will add some new functionality. The approach being taken is that XLIFF 2.0 will be modular. Tool providers will not be able to create extensions which lead to different flavours of XLIFF. The tool providers have supplied the XLIFF TC with details of the extensions to XLIFF which they have developed and these will be incorporated into XLIFF 2.0 where appropriate. There will also be conformance testing of XLIFF 2.0. Information on the work of the XLIFF TC is available here: <http://www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc_home.php?wg_abbrev=xliff>.

# ISO TC 37 Liaison

The OASIS XLIFF TC and OASIS were voted liaison members of TC 37 at the end of 2010. We would like to thank TC 37 for this. We understand that the OASIS XLIFF TC will have the responsibility for developing XLIFF and both OASIS and ISO will publish the standard. At the time the OASIS XLIFF TC became a liaison member we were made aware of statements by the chair of ISO TC 37 SC 4 that XLIFF could be incorporated into part 2 of MLIF. The XLIFF TC does not agree with this. If any individual would like to make a proposal such as this they should be members of the XLIFF TC and do so through the XLIFF TC. We welcome the vote to establish a new SC 5 for the translation and interpreting industry and see this as the home for XLIFF within ISO TC 37.

# XLIFF Symposium

The 2nd XLIFF Symposium will take place on 28 September 2011, in Warsaw, Poland. It is the main event of the pre-conference day of TM-Europe 2011. The symposium builds on the success of the 1st XLIFF Symposium which was held last September in Limerick, Ireland as part of the 15th Annual Internationalisation and Localisation Conference organised by the LRC. You can find information on the XLIFF Symposium at <http://www.tm-europe.org/xliff>.