

A GLOSSARY IN PRINT: THE PROBLEMS AND REWARDS OF PRODUCING YOUR OWN GLOSSARY FOR SALE

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For those of you who have come to hear about computers - and I realise that applies to most of you - now's the time to take that post-prandial nap! And if you have come to hear about computers as such, instead of terminology as such, then my talk is not for you anyway.

Now computers are fine in the right circumstances and I do not want to give the impression that I'm against them. In fact we investigated the possibility of using them for production of our Glossary (updating, indexing, etc.), and the layout of the glossary is specifically designed to facilitate transfer of the contents of the Glossary to computer (subject, of course, to copyright). We can all benefit from computerisation, as we are seeing at this conference. However, I think it is important to remember that computers are no more than a tool and are not always justified by the circumstances or the cost. Many of us cannot afford them, and it would be a pity if our expertise were wasted for that reason. I think it would therefore be a mistake to assume that term banks (in the general sense) in tomorrow's world will all be prepared by computer.

My message will therefore be to encourage those individuals among you who may have thought about publishing your own dictionary or glossary of whatever, and may feel intimidated by all this talk of computers by the large organisations represented here. My project would be within the resources of every single one of you, either to produce or, for that matter, to purchase.

In this particular session, you are also expecting to hear something about marketing. No doubt you will all have received some of those YES and NO envelopes in the post from time to time, enclosing messages like "Open this envelope for news of your Bonus Award!" or "Check inside for your free gift!", or a prize draw certificate promising you all sorts of fabulous winnings. How nice it would be to have volume sales to justify that sort of marketing expenditure! But I'm not going to talk about that either. What I am going to talk about is a very personal project which has a very practical application. So I make no apologies if my words are flavoured by my own personal feelings and reactions.

As we are all so very pressed for time, I could in fact condense my talk into one sentence and then sit down - so please listen carefully to my next statement: "The problems of producing your own glossary are partly financial but mainly procedural (contents, formal, printing, marketing): the rewards are entirely personal and seldom financial." But I haven't come all this way just to tell you that, which does not tell you very much anyway. So I will expand on that sentence as far as time permits.

I am an accountant. Not certified (although sometimes I think I should be), but chartered - which probably sounds at least as bad to those of our guests from abroad who do not know the exact meaning of those terms. The work of accountants is not totally unlike that of translators. I remember when I started my accountancy training many years ago, I asked a fellow trainee what it was like to be an accountant, to which he replied that it was like being a mushroom: they shut you away in a dark cupboard, and from time to time someone opens the door and throws in a load of manure!

The glossary which I am going to talk about is therefore an accountancy glossary. (See Fig 1: Title page: Glossary of European Accounting Charts - Volume I). I do not propose to describe it in detail here. I must apologise if I lapse into accountancy jargon from time to time, but this is a specialist glossary and in any case the principles are the same for any specialist subject. Apart from this, accountancy impinges on every commercial company and therefore on any technical subject because, whatever its activity, every company has to keep accounts. Again, I am sure you all know the ordinary accountancy expressions, such as "reconciling the bank" (which means apologising for your overdraft) or "contingent liabilities" (for example a pregnant wife!).

Our glossary is not a conventional dictionary. (Fig 2: Contents page for German section). It is a translation into English of lists of account headings and balance sheet classifications recommended in the countries concerned, and at this stage it gives UK English only, although an American supplement is planned in the near future. As you see in Fig 3: full contents page, it contains three sections - French, German and Spanish - and each section comprises an introduction (with some notes on historical background in the country concerned, etc.), the foreign headings listed in contextual order with the appropriate English translation next to each heading, and an alphabetical index in the original language concerned.

There are four main steps to be taken when compiling the contents of such a glossary:

1. Deciding what to include (or leave out). This was no problem in our case, because the accounting plans are standard in the countries concerned.
2. Interpreting the correct meaning of the original. This is obvious and requires no further explanation here.
3. Deciding on the appropriate translation for each term/heading. This is the crucial step, and in our case was even more difficult than usual because we have only given one

translation in each case (I shall comment on this again when I refer to context in a moment). In his opening address to the conference, Brian Roden said that you have to work in committee; I agree. Obviously you can work alone, but in my experience an individual tends to get too close to his own preferred terminology and it is essential that such preferences be 'bounced' against the opinions of others. Each of the sections in our Glossary was prepared initially in draft by one member of our 'committee of three', and then every single term was discussed in committee until the most acceptable alternative was agreed.

The type of alternative translation chosen can be one of several. Before giving a brief outline of these, it is worth reminding ourselves what the purpose of translation is. Briefly, it is to "enable the reader to understand the meaning of the original text in the context of that original text". With this mind, the translation may be either:

- a) Straight translation, if the word means precisely the same as the original. The French réserves and the Spanish reservas, for example, are the same as the English 'reserves'. The French provisions and Spanish previsiones, however, are not necessarily the same as English provisions but may be either reserves or provisions, so that case must be taken before using the same word.
- b) Different term entirely, if appropriate. The German heading andere Verbindlichkeiten, for example, is often used to head up exactly the same collection of liabilities which are classified as 'current liabilities' in an English balance sheet, so that the literal translation 'other liabilities' should not be used.
- c) Equivalents, provided that they mean the same. The dangers of using equivalents cannot be over-emphasised and have already been mentioned at this conference by Professor Reeves, among others. The dangers are particularly acute in legal and financial texts; a limited company, for example, is not the same thing as a société anonyme or SARL in France, nor as a GmbH or AG in Germany.

If no translation can be found in any of the above three categories, there are two further types of alternatives which may be considered:

- d) A literal translation (producing a phrase which does not exist in English), in order to make it clear that the heading is unique or has a meaning which is peculiar to the country concerned. Some headings, for example, refer specifically to national legislation, and this fact should be indicated in the translation.

- e) An explanation, in order to give the heading its proper meaning and avoid misunderstanding. As you see from Fig 4, the French Plan subdivides "called up capital" between capital "non amorti" and capital "amorti". If we look at the phrase "non amorti", a non-accountant translator would probably translate this literally as 'unamortised capital' and be quite content with that. Unfortunately we do not talk about unamortised capital in the UK, so that such a translation would have no meaning to an English accountant. Your accountancy translator with no knowledge of the precise functioning of the French Plan would probably say to himself "Aha!" and translate the heading as 'unredeemed capital'. This, however, would be even more misleading, because unredeemed capital in the UK has a different application from that in the French Plan. In the UK, unredeemed capital is simply capital which has not been redeemed, and the phrase would be understood as such by an English accountant. In France, however, this heading is only used if some of the capital has been redeemed, and this heading is used for that part of the capital which remains after part has been redeemed. A rather cumbersome translation is therefore necessary: 'Balance of share capital remaining where part has been redeemed', but the English accountant reader knows exactly what is intended.
4. The last stage in compiling the contents is to stand back and made sure that the translation chosen cannot be misunderstood. This is very important, and I will give only one example. (Fig 5) The 'reserve' accounts in all three sections of the Glossary include a heading which is nearly always translated into English as 'legal reserves'. This alternative is chosen in accordance with 3(a) above, on the assumption that a straight translation (because it is a straight translation in each case) will mean the same. I have never been happy with this translation, because there is no such heading in an English balance sheet and it could be misunderstood by the English reader to mean "lawful" reserves, i.e. reserves which are permissible (tax-allowable reserves, for example) but optional. In the case of the German heading however (gesetzliche Rücklage) the reserves are compulsory, i.e. statutory. The word 'statutory', however, itself presents some difficulty in the French and Spanish plans, because it could be confused with another heading (and another meaning) which we have translated as 'reserves provided for by the company's statutes'! I hope this illustrates the problem.

My last point about possible misunderstandings brings me back to the question of context. Context is all-important. The same word can mean two totally different things in consecutive lines of text, and one of the problems with conventional dictionaries is that the user has to select the appropriate meaning on the basis of his own knowledge. The unique layout used in our Glossary, where each balance sheet heading, for example, is subdivided on a decimal system with further subdivisions down to the level of detail required, means that every heading is shown in its precise context and that an accountant does not necessarily even need to refer to the index at the back of each section, but can go

straight to the particular section of the balance sheet with which he is concerned. The index, for its part, gives only the relevant account numbers where each term can be found, so that the reader is compelled to look up the term in the correct context of its surrounding headings. Also, as only one translation is given, the reader can safely assume that the translation is acceptable in the context shown (although other alternatives may be equally acceptable), and that there is no chance of selecting a wrong translation. (see Fig 6 for sample page from Section Three : Spain).

I would just like to point out one or two other features of the Glossary. It has a spiral binding, which enables it to lie flat on the desk when opened at a particular page (compared with a bound volume, which requires all sorts of acrobatics to keep it open at the desired page). The form of spiral binding chosen also enables future supplements or updates to be inserted and replaced pages removed without difficulty. The index pages at the end of each section are on coloured paper for ease of location. At one time we considered using coloured card, but found that it was then difficult to open the Glossary anywhere apart from at the index!

Marketing. So far I have told you a lot about the product, because the product is important for the market. However, the most important thing is that there must be a market for your product. I understood one of the earlier speakers to say that he was involved in preparing glossaries for which the prospective user was not yet known. This may be OK for large organisations, but I can assure you that you must be sure of your market before you start work on any project of a size such as ours. It is very much easier to produce or adapt a product for an existing market, than vice versa.

Choice of publisher is important. We did approach one large publisher, but his expensive equipment and other overheads were such that he required a much larger volume run than we envisaged, and he also required us to underwrite any loss on unsold copies. As we were therefore being asked to bear the risk of losses anyway, we also decided to maximise any profits and publish ourselves. Publishing oneself does have disadvantages, arising mainly from lack of time and advertising coverage. This inevitably involves a reduction in volume sales, but this can be more than recouped by the higher return per copy sold. There are no other problems connected with publishing: ISBN numbers, VAT, etc. are all quite simple.

Printing. We have an arrangement with a local printer, based on a photocopying process, which enables us to order very small print runs at a time as required, thus keeping down our capital costs and the costs associates with stocks of unsold copies.

Selling price. We originally hoped to keep the retail price below £10, but once it moved above this level we added in several extras, such as a glossy cover, coloured index pages, stronger packaging etc. and allowed the price to move up relatively sharply. This policy proved correct.

Advertising. Mailing shots through the post are fairly successful in this country, not so successful in some others. Reviews in professional magazines are useful, if you can get them, coupled with advertising in appropriate journals. My customers have proved very loyal, and

conferences such as this have proved very useful opportunities for publicity. An international accountants' congress was held recently in Mexico, where we managed to arrange for 2,000 copies of a publicity leaflet to be inserted in delegates' folders - essentially our target market all brought together in one place!

Time is the main problem when marketing your own glossary.

Rewards: so what are the rewards? They are less easy to define than the problems, but are in any case not financial. The time taken to process a single order (despatch, invoicing, payment, accounting etc.) accounts for a large part of any gross profit margin which may have been allowed. No, the rewards are entirely based on personal satisfaction. I needed such a glossary for my own work (and am finding it increasingly useful all the time); we identified a gap in the supply situation and feel that we have gone some way towards filling it; and we have produced a product which has been well received by the specialists at whom it was aimed. The day I left to travel to this conference there were 4 orders in the post, including 3 from Japan and 1 from Italy. Anyone who works on his own gets a tremendous kick from that sort of thing. I do not want to boast, but I sent an inspection copy of the Glossary to the largest firm of accountants in Europe, who thereupon ordered 8 copies initially for their German organisation; they have now come back with a further order for 50 copies of the German and 10 copies of the French sections for use by their various offices in those and other countries, which I regard as the supreme accolade.

There are other rewards too, of course. I have gained some new translation clients from the publicity generated by the Glossary, so that there has been a mutual spin-off between my translation activities and sales of the Glossary. I have also added enormously to my own personal knowledge of the subject, partly from the intensive exchange of ideas and opinions with my two colleagues on the project and partly from our use of the most up-to-date reference works (including the EEC Fourth Directive and the UK 1981 Companies Act).

Our future plans include publication of an American supplement in the near future and supplements and updates to this existing volume when required. We also intend to publish other volumes dealing with other countries, but this will only be possible at infrequent intervals owing to our other work commitments.

I started this talk with a dig at computers. I should now like to retract any sting which may have seemed to be behind those remarks. Nonetheless, I insist that, in present economic circumstances and with improving communications, both of which mean that self-employment will continue to grow, there are circumstances (particularly of size) where traditional methods are still the best. And I can assure you that the personal rewards are far greater.

Figure 1

GLOSSARY
of
EUROPEAN ACCOUNTING CHARTS

EUROPEAN CHARTS OF ACCOUNTS WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Volume I

France	Plan Comptable Général (PCG)
Germany	BDI Industrie-Kontenrahmen (IKR)
Spain	Plan General de Contabilidad (PGC)

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Figure 2

Section Two : Germany

Chart of Accounts from the Industrie-Kontenrahmen

Introduction

German text with English translations

Index of German terms

Figure 3

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
Preface	(i)
Section One: France	
Chart of Accounts from the Plan Comptable Général	1
Introduction	2
French text with English translations	5
Index of French terms	59
Section Two: Germany	
Chart of Accounts from the Industrie-Kontenrahmen	71
Introduction	72
German text with English translations	75
Index of German terms	103
Section Three: Spain	
Chart of Accounts from the Plan General de Contabilidad	111
Introduction	112
Spanish text with English translations	115
Index of Spanish terms	163

Figure 4

FRENCH TEXT WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

GROUP 1	
CAPITAUX PERMANENTS	
CAPITAL EMPLOYED	
10	Capital <i>Capital</i>
100	Capital social <i>Share capital</i>
1000	Capital appelé <i>Called up capital</i>
10000	Non amorti <i>Balance of share capital remaining where part has been redeemed</i>
10001	Amorti <i>Redeemed share capital reserve</i>
1001	Capital non appelé <i>Uncalled capital</i>
105	Fonds de dotation <i>Capital provided (to public enterprises by government or public bodies)</i>
11	Réserves <i>Reserves</i>
110	Primes d'émission, d'apport, de fusion <i>Share premium account</i>
1100	Primes d'émission ou primes d'apport <i>Share premiums</i>
1101	Primes de fusion <i>Merger premiums</i>
1109	Primes de conversion d'obligations en actions <i>Premiums on conversion of debentures into shares</i>

Figure 5

GROUP 3	
EIGENKAPITAL, WERTBERICHTIGUNGEN UND RÜCKSTELLUNGEN	
CAPITAL, RESERVES AND PROVISIONS	
30	
33	Eigenkapital Capital and reserves
	300 Grund- oder Stammkapital Share capital
	310 Gesetzliche Rücklage Legal / statutory reserve
	315 Rücklage für eigene Aktien Reserve for own shares
	320 Andere Rücklagen (freie Rücklagen) Other reserves (free reserves)
34	Sonderposten mit Rücklageanteil Special reserves (tax-allowable)
35	Wertberichtigungen zu Sachanlagen Provisions for depreciation of fixed assets
36	Wertberichtigungen zu Beteiligungen und zu Wertpapieren des Anlagevermögens Provisions for decline in value of long-term investments
	360 Wertberichtigungen zu Beteiligungen Provisions for decline in value of investments in group and related companies
	365 Wertberichtigungen zu Wertpapieren des Anlagevermögens Provisions for decline in value of other long-term investments
37	Pauschalwertberichtigung zu Forderungen General provision for bad debts

Figure 6

203	Maquinaria, instalaciones y utillaje <i>Plant, machinery and equipment</i>
2030	Maquinaria <i>Machinery</i>
2031	Instalaciones <i>Plant</i>
2032	Elementos de transporte interno <i>Internal transport equipment</i>
2033	Utiles y herramientas <i>Tools and equipment</i>
204	Elementos de transporte <i>Transport equipment</i>
2040	Material autom6vil <i>Motor vehicles</i>
2041	Material fluvial <i>Inland waterway vessels</i>
2042	Material ferroviario <i>Railway rolling stock</i>
2043	Material naval <i>Seagoing vessels</i>
2044	Material a6reo <i>Aircraft</i>
205	Mobiliario y enseres <i>Furniture and fittings</i>
2050	Mobiliario <i>Furniture</i>
2051	Equipos de oficina <i>Office equipment</i>
2052	Material de oficina <i>Office fittings</i>
206	Equipos para procesos de informaci3n <i>Data processing equipment</i>
207	Repuestos para inmovilizado <i>Spare parts for fixed assets</i>
208	Otro inmovilizado material <i>Other tangible fixed assets</i>
209	Instalaciones complejas especializadas <i>Specialised complex installations</i>