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InDesign and World Languages

InDesign Helps You Make It a Small World After All

by **DIANE BURNS**

While it's understandable that most reviews and tutorials pay attention to InDesign's sexier features like nested styles, transparency, and its compatibility with other Creative Suite applications, one of its most significant features is little seen and not often talked about—that is, support for Unicode and all the advantages that come with it. One of the big breakthroughs of Unicode is that it finally allows a layout program to support almost all the world languages.

Quark very early on introduced versions of XPress that supported not only European languages, but Asian languages as well, yet none of these versions share a common file format that let you move easily from one to the other or publish all languages in a single file. InDesign thus moved worlds ahead in multi-lingual publishing.

InDesign's Unicode support lets you publish files that contain languages as diverse as German, Japanese, and Arabic, all in one file. Further, any language version of InDesign can open a file created by any other language version (except the Middle East version), so, for example, the English version can open a file created with the Japanese version. With our world growing smaller, this capability can be essential for today's publishing.

Over the next couple of issues, we'll look at how InDesign handles various world languages. This first installment will cover some of the basic issues involved in handling different languages and examine publishing in European and related languages, including Polish, Greek, Turkish, and Russian. In the next article in the series, we'll consider how InDesign handles the East Asian languages, Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Finally, we'll take you on a tour of the Middle Eastern version of InDesign, which accommodates layout of languages that are composed from right-to-left, including Hebrew and Arabic.

Before you can take advantage of InDesign's capability to handle multiple languages, there are a few basics that are important to understand.

The Basics

InDesign doesn't translate text from English into another language. InDesign is for layout, once text is translated. Machine translations are available, but they're rarely good enough to use in a final product; at some point, a person familiar with the language needs to get involved. (For an example of the limitations of machine translation, and a good laugh, use the translation feature of Google to read a page from another language.) Translation firms with a good reputation are the best place to go for reliable translations. Once text is translated, the next step is getting it into InDesign.

The options for getting text into InDesign are essentially the same whether the text is in English, Turkish, or Chinese: you can input text directly into InDesign, paste it into InDesign via the Clipboard, or import it via the **File > Place** command. Let's look briefly at each of these options as they relate to text in other languages:

Inputting Text Directly in InDesign. We don't think much about inputting text when English is the only language involved, but English actually uses a fairly small set of characters. Many languages, including European languages such as Polish or Czech, require special characters that English doesn't use. Other languages, such as Russian or Greek, use a completely different alphabet, while still others, including Japanese or Chinese, don't use alphabets at all, but rather require ideographs or phonetic characters that bear no resemblance to English whatsoever. Fortunately, because both Macintosh OSX and Windows XP support Unicode, it's fairly straightforward to input many diverse languages, since both operating systems include options to turn on input systems for a variety of languages. In OS X, these options are in **System Preferences > International > Input Menu**; in Windows XP, click the Details button on the Languages tab of the Regional and Language Options Control Panel. Note that you need to turn on these input options only when actually *inputting* text in a language. If you're doing design or layout only, input options for a language don't need to be available.

Pasting Text into InDesign. Again, when English is the only language involved, we don't think much about copying and pasting text into InDesign. However, it turns out that regardless of the language, copying and pasting text into InDesign is generally not the best practice. On both the Macintosh and Windows platforms, most applications put multiple formats into the Clipboard, and InDesign tries to choose the richest format it can find, which may or may not yield the desired results. Like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're going to get. This problem becomes even more acute when trying to paste text of different languages from a file in text-only format; InDesign has no way of knowing what encoding should be used to bring the characters in correctly, and you can end up with nothing but garbled characters. Rather than using Copy and Paste, it's best to use the Place command, which allows InDesign to be much more intelligent about how to bring in text.

FIGURE 1: When importing files in text-only format, use the Text Import Options dialog box to choose the correct encoding for the language you're importing.

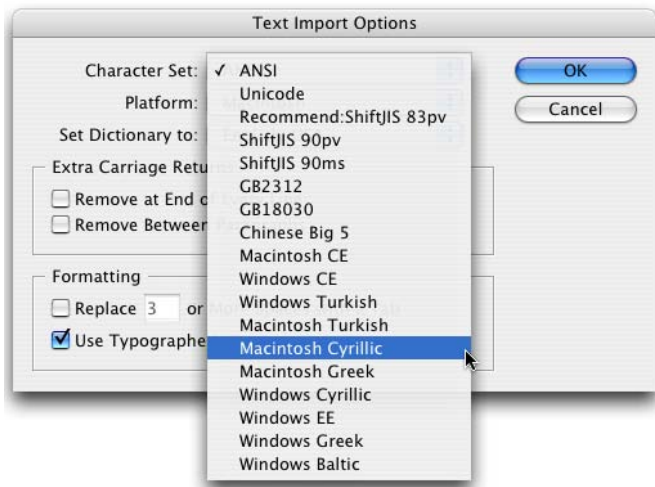


FIGURE 2: Use the Language menu in the character palette to apply the correct language dictionary for spell-checking and hyphenation.



Placing Text into InDesign. Regardless of the language, any text, RTF, or Microsoft Word file can be imported into InDesign using the **File > Place** command. In the case of RTF or Microsoft Word files, this process is usually simple, and you need only Place the file. In the case of text files, however, it's important that you import the file with the correct

character encoding for a particular language. Fortunately, InDesign ships with 18 different character encodings, which cover most of the major language groups. To choose the correct encoding, click on Import Options in the Place dialog box before importing the text (**Figure 1**).

Language Dictionaries

If you require only a line or two of text in a different language, you needn't be concerned about much more than getting the text on the page and formatting it. But if you're working with larger quantities of text, take advantage of InDesign's language dictionaries. Language dictionaries perform two important tasks: spell checking and hyphenation.

These dictionaries are easy to apply. From the Character palette, or the Character panel of the Control palette, choose the required language from the pop-down menu at the bottom of the palette (**Figure 2**). InDesign then checks the selected text against that language's spelling/hyphenation dictionary.

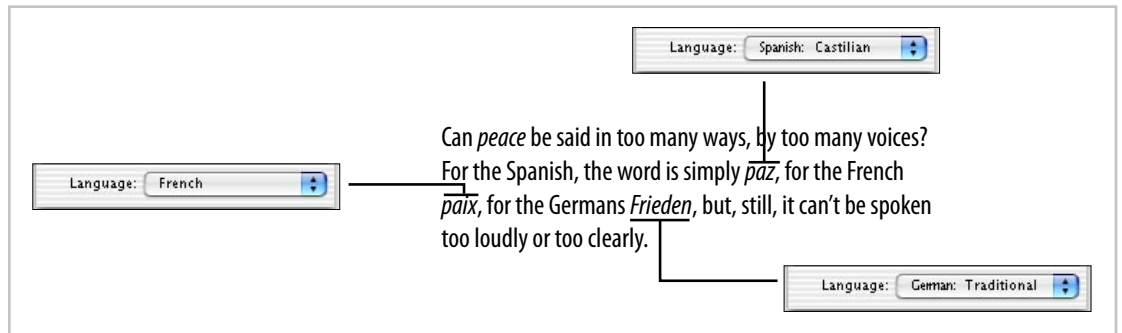
Because language can be applied at the character level, you can apply a language to a single word (**Figure 3**). This can come in handy when you're spell-checking text that has references to words in other languages. For example, let's say you're writing a review of a hot, new Mexican restaurant that serves "awesome chiles rellenos." Every time you spell-check your document, InDesign will flag the word "rellenos." But apply the language Spanish, and "rellenos" will be flag-free. More importantly, it will actually be checked against the correct spelling for the word, which makes this approach more desirable than simply adding the word to your user dictionary.

Even better, assigning the word "rellenos" as Spanish ensures that the word won't hyphenate between the two "l"s. (The double-l is treated as a single character in Spanish, so normal English hyphenation would cause problems.) Different languages have very different and very complex hyphenation rules that InDesign can track for you.

Another challenge of working with multiple languages is that many languages use different symbols than English for open and close quotation marks. InDesign solves this problem by adjusting which symbols are used, based on the language dictionary that's applied. You can further control these symbols by changing the default settings to those required in the **Preferences > Dictionary** dialog box.

InDesign CS2 added spelling and hyphenation dictionaries for several Central European (CE) languages, including Russian, Turkish and Greek. Users of InDesign CS must buy a special CE version of InDesign CS, available through a third-party developer, Winsoft (www.winsoft.fr), or use third-party dictionaries, which may add languages or use

FIGURE 3: Because language dictionaries are applied as a character-level attribute, you can spell check text containing words in multiple languages in the same paragraph.



different hyphenation rules. For example, the InDiHyph Hyphenation plug-in from aextra Software (www.aextra.biz/en/home.php) adds dictionaries for Icelandic, as well as Indonesian Bahasa and Malay.

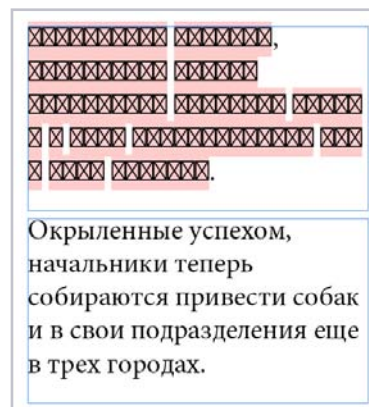
OpenType Fonts: Beyond English

While Unicode is an essential part of InDesign’s ability to handle world languages, another important aspect of working with languages involves choosing the right font. Most fonts purchased in the U.S. will handle Western European languages, such as French, German, or Italian. But other languages, including such Central European languages as Czech or Polish, for example, require extra characters that many common fonts don’t contain, and—as I mentioned earlier—other languages, such as Greek or Russian, don’t use our alphabet at all.

While the general composition requirements of these languages are the same as English—they all read left-to-right and can take advantage of spelling and hyphenation dictionaries—it is essential that the font used contains the characters required by the language. OpenType fonts are a good choice in general, but one of the common misconceptions about OpenType fonts is that they automatically contain the characters necessary to publish most of these languages. That is simply not the case. Even the label of “Pro” with an OpenType font doesn’t guarantee anything about the characters the font may include. For example, the font Garamond Pro doesn’t contain the characters needed for typesetting in Russian, but Garamond Premier and Minion Pro do.

How will you know if the font you’re using doesn’t have the necessary characters? That’s easy: you’ll see the dreaded pink boxes (**Figure 4**). To find out whether a font contains the characters you need, go to the source: the font foundry. If it’s an Adobe font, check the Adobe online store—click the “More Info” tab for each font family. The listing for “Character Sets” will indicate if the font has the necessary characters for the language you’re working with.

FIGURE 4: When working with multiple languages, it’s important to ensure the font you’re using contains the necessary characters. For example, Adobe Garamond Pro (above) doesn’t include the characters for Russian, but Minion Pro (below) does.



To typeset Polish text, for example, a font must contain the Adobe CE character set; to typeset Russian, the Cyrillic character set is required. Once you’ve identified the right fonts to use, however, InDesign makes publishing in those languages a breeze. In fact, more publications are using InDesign all the time (**Figure 5a and 5b**).

FIGURE 5A: From left, the Russian daily Zhizn, the Russian shopping guide *Ja pokupaju*, and the Greek publication *Epixeirō*. Samples courtesy of SoftCare Software-Service GmbH, developers of the InDesign-based K4 Publishing System. For more examples, see www.softcare.de/references/index.php

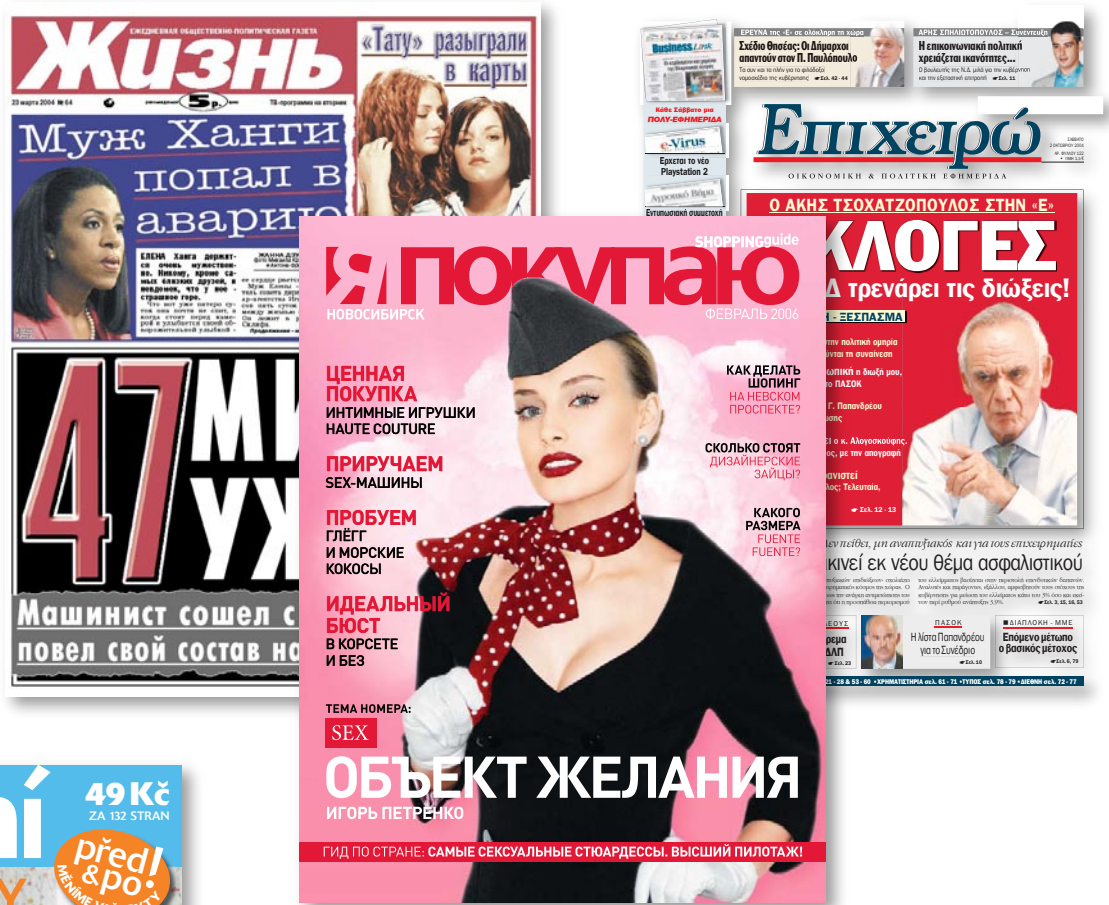


FIGURE 5B: Covers of lifestyle magazines from the Czech branch of Hachette Filipacchi: from left, *Bydlení* (www.hf.cz/index_bydleni.html), *Apetit* (www.hf.cz/index_apetit.html), and *Yellow* (www.hf.cz/index_yellow.html).

Other Language Versions

The English version of InDesign does a good job of publishing in many of the world's languages. However, there are some areas where it falls short. For example, when it comes to publishing long documents, the English version lacks the important ability to alphabetize lists correctly in many languages, such as Greek and Russian. This means that your Index and other alphabetical lists in those languages may not be sorted correctly.

And while you can input and import Asian text using the English version, it doesn't compose the text correctly. In the next article in this series, I'll discuss some problems and workarounds when working with Asian text. Another shortcoming is that the English version of InDesign can't work with languages that read from right-to-left, such as Hebrew or Arabic. You need the Middle Eastern version for that. I'll dive into that in the third installment.

In the meantime, InDesign continues to make the world a smaller, and better, place in which to publish.

DIANE BURNS is a pioneer in electronic publishing, founding *TechArt International* in 1984 as one of the first Macintosh-based design firms in the country. Today TechArt is a leader in print and web design, specializing in projects in East Asian languages. She has authored several books on graphics software, including QuarkXPress and Illustrator.