

March 8, 2011

TermWiki: Terminology management just got easier

Uwe Muegge

- » [international management](#)
- » [translation and localization](#)
- » [business culture](#)
- » [information development](#)
- » [outsourcing](#)
- » [technical communication](#)

Find out about new articles on www.tcworld.info and learn about upcoming events and industry news.

[Subscribe](#)

breadcrumb: e-magazine » information development »

March 2011



Uwe Muegge is the Director of MedL10N, the life science division of CSOFT. He is currently a member of TC37 at the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and teaches graduate courses in Computer-Assisted Translation at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

uwe.muegge@medl10n.com
www.medl10n.com

Definitions

collaborative software

type of software that enables work on a common project by several concurrent users that may be geographically distributed

glossary

collection of words that have special meaning in a project

term

word that has a special meaning in a given subject field

termbase

database that contains a collection of words that have special meaning in a given subject field

terminology

collection of words that have special meaning in a given subject field

By Uwe Muegge

TermWiki: Terminology Management just got easier

More and more practitioners in the technical communication and translation/localization field are beginning to understand the critical role multilingual terminology plays in the lifecycle of products and services, especially if those products and services are offered on international markets. What's still not well understood is the fact that exchanging glossaries via e-mailed spreadsheets is creating almost as many problems as it solves. This article describes the key features of the latest release of TermWiki, the free collaborative terminology management solution that now supports personal glossary management.

Managing terminology with spreadsheets is typically not a good idea



The screenshot shows the TermWiki website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'Log out', 'My Glossary', 'My watchlist', 'My preferences', 'My talk', and 'view'. Below that is a search bar with the text 'Look for...' and a 'go' button. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'The Terminology Cloud!' showing 815,169 terms, 'Term in the News' with a featured article about the Academy Awards, 'Top Contributors 2011' with a trophy icon, 'Recently Added & Updated Terms' listing terms like 'recreation velocity', 'eddy velocity', 'eddy flux', and 'eddy correlation', and 'Featured Terms' with a grid of term cards including 'World Joyland Entertainment', 'wiki Software', 'divorce ceremony', 'Tiger Mother Parenting', 'black hole Astronomy', 'Yawning/No-More Pharmacological', 'kepi luwak Beverages', 'iPhone 5 Mobile communications', and 'bodybuilding Fitness'.

TermWiki's home page featuring the familiar WikiMedia user interface

Documents only offer limited collaboration features

If you think about it: Any type of document that resides on the hard drive of a personal computer or floats around via e-mail has a number of inescapable drawbacks. While it's certainly not impossible to have a team of collaborators work on a spreadsheet glossary, the document paradigm certainly does not facilitate collaboration among geographically distributed team members; especially if you want to involve a large number of potential contributors.

Also, structuring and controlling the data categories that the groups within an organization collect in each of their glossaries can be problematic. Remember the old Microsoft Glossaries where there were significant variations/incompatibilities between individual data collections? And not to mention defining a workflow for editing, translation, and validation.

terminology management

effort to control the usage of words that have special meaning in a given subject field

terminology management system

type of translation software that enables users to efficiently collect, process, and present terminology

validation

process of checking that an entry (or a part thereof) complies with certain established requirements

wiki

type of collaborative software program that typically allows web pages to be created and collaboratively edited

Documents can easily become unwieldy

A spreadsheet may seem like a workable solution at the beginning of a terminology management effort when there is little or no data. But once the number of terms gets beyond a few hundred, the need to categorize terms by product lines or business units emerges, and the number of languages increases to a dozen and more, the spreadsheet that was originally so easy to use all of a sudden turns into a data management quagmire where keeping track of who made what change and for what reason, managing selective updates, and maintaining synchronicity across different languages is almost impossible.



Overview of some of the potential issues managing terminology with Excel involves

How TermWiki changes the game

There are three key differentiators that separate TermWiki from traditional document-centric terminology management solutions.

TermWiki is completely web-based

Unlike a typical workstation terminology management approach, where the software application resides on an individual PC, TermWiki is a cloud-based system, which means there is no special software to install and maintain on the user side. All it takes to search, enter, upload and download terminology data in TermWiki is a web browser and an internet connection.

In addition, this web-centric approach makes any term that a user enters into the system automatically available to all other users. Centralized web-enabled terminology management means that all terminology stakeholders not only have easy access to the terminology collection at any time, but also to the latest version of it.

TermWiki is extremely easy to use

One of the goals of the TermWiki project was to make the user experience of this new terminology management system as intuitive as possible. Users of TermWiki are immediately familiar with the wiki interface that features a task-oriented layout where all major items are in plain view and immediately accessible.

Last semester, TermWiki was one of the tools that translation and localization students used in the Terminology Management course that I teach at the [Monterey Institute of International Studies](#). One of the comments I repeatedly heard was how enjoyable it was to work with TermWiki after many students had spent a lot of time and energy setting up a standard terminology management tool that requires the definition of every single data category and the creation of input models before it can be used to create entries that go beyond simple term pairs. In TermWiki, with its clearly structured input methodology and available pick lists for many data categories, even a novice user will be able to create meaningful entries within minutes after logging on to the system for the first time.

TermWiki is totally free

Although TermWiki not only provides a comprehensive set of powerful terminology management features but also contains hundreds of thousands of searchable, fully defined and categorized terms in more than 70 languages, the community version of TermWiki is a resource that's available at absolutely no cost. And users don't have to deal with annoying pop-up commercials; in fact, there is no advertising on the entire site.

Combining a hosted terminology management system that's designed for use by terminologists and non-terminologists alike with a business model that makes a free version available to the global technical communication community makes for a winning solution: In less than a year since its initial release in April 2010, TermWiki has gathered a large number of users and contributors, with a current growth rate of approx. 10,000 new terms every day.

What's new in TermWiki?

TermWiki supports personal glossaries

As the name implies, the My Glossary function enables users to create, upload, manage, and search their own personal glossaries with TermWiki. In fact, users can even invite their colleagues to review, edit, and translate the terms in their personal TermWiki collections. In addition, the discussion tab that is part of every term page provides a platform for exchanging opinions and a tool for capturing the evolution of the entry as a whole and any part thereof. And if needed, personal glossaries can be downloaded entirely or in part, i.e. only certain data categories, via an Excel export feature.

TermWiki has its own browser bar



The TermWiki Toolbar simplifies searching and entering terms

A feature that was added very recently, the [TermWiki Toolbar](#), is a browser add-on that can be installed in minutes and enables instant look-up of terms, definitions, and translations for specific industries, languages, and products. This toolbar also simplifies the process of sharing terms and translations with just a few mouse clicks. As a complementary tool for the TermWiki platform itself, the TermWiki Toolbar also includes multiple quick-links to functions regularly employed by TermWiki users.

The TermWiki Toolbar highlights the fact that TermWiki is a concept-based system that allows users to search content within specific industries and even product categories. As a result of the highly structured input methodology and TermWiki's advanced search features, users can perform targeted searches that produce more relevant hits faster than most other web-based terminology resources.

TermWiki features a terminology workbench

Unlike many other terminology management systems that force users to add terms sequentially one term at a time, TermWiki's Terminology Workbench allows users to enter up to ten terms into the database at a time, using pick lists for many data categories for added efficiency. This input method is a great time-saver for users who are managing terminology in small batches of terms.

Users who wish to enter more than ten terms at a time, not to mention entire terminology collections, can take advantage of TermWiki's Excel import feature that lets users convert existing monolingual and multilingual termbases of any size within just a few minutes.

Is there a solution for organizations that need to keep their data private?

TermWikiPro for corporate users

In the community edition of TermWiki, all glossaries, including data in My glossaries, are shared resources, which makes TermWiki the terminology management solution of choice for freelancers and small organizations that are willing to make their linguistic assets available to the entire TermWiki community.

For organizations that are looking for a solution that offers complete privacy of their data, TermWiki sponsor [CSOFT](#) is offering [TermWikiPro](#), a highly customizable hosted service that includes all the features and functions of the free Community edition, plus a number of advanced features that streamline user management, security, and scalability.

References and links

- DEPALMA, D.A. TermWiki Lowers the Barrier to Terminology Management. Global Watchtower [online]. 2010, no. 14 January 2010. Available from World Wide Web:<<http://www.globalwatchtower.com/2010/01/14/csoft-termwiki>>
 - MUEGGE, U. Disciplining Words: What You Always Wanted to Know About Terminology Management. tcworld, 2007, vol. 2, no. 3, p. 17-19.
 - MUEGGE, Uwe. TermWiki: A New Collaborative Terminology Management Solution. tcworld [online]. 2010, Available from World Wide Web:<<http://www.tcworld.info/index.php?id=188>>
 - www.termwiki.com
-