The Year 2000 and Translators

This handout provides a number of resources for finding information about the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem. In a nutshell, the Year 2000 problem is that a large number of electronic devices, including many PCs, represent years as two digits. When the year 2000 comes the clock will change from '99' to '00', and a host of problems can follow if the computer suddenly "thinks" that January 1st, 2000 is really January 1st, 1900.

Although many programs may not have trouble with the change, you will need to get in the habit of writing out the full year for every date (e.g., "1998" instead of "98"). If you use programs that ask for dates in a two-digit format try to obtain newer versions that offer a full four digits. (Some programs, as an alternative, while using four digits internally, provide you with the option of using a two-digit shortcut called a "window". For example, using a "30-70" window, 00–29 are converted to 2000–2029 and 30–99 are converted to 1930–1999. Even then the user must have the option of entering four digits when the shortcut would indicate the wrong century.) If you software does not in some way support long dates, either through manual entry or through a window, consider using a program that does use four-digit years so that you will not face problems.

For most users old data files that uses two-digit years are more likely to cause problems than are system- or application-level bugs. Nonetheless, there are real concerns with certain applications. The following information will help you determine your risk from Y2K problems.

The information in this handout is divided into four sections:

1. Application software information (for programs commonly used by translators)
2. Operating systems information
3. How to test you PC's internal clock for Y2K compatibility
4. General Y2K information

1. Application software information (for programs commonly used by translators)

Word Perfect (http://www.corel.com/2000.htm)
According to Corel, current versions of WordPerfect and WordPerfect Suite for both Macintosh and Windows (including 3.1) are all Y2K compliant. The Corel WP Language modules for various platforms are also reported to be Y2K compliant. Any language versions released before 1997 are not included in Corel's testing program, so users would be advised to test their own copies with non-essential data.

Microsoft Office and Word (http://www.microsoft.com/technet/topics/year2k/default.htm)
According to Microsoft, the English version of Office 98 for Macintosh and all versions of Office 97 for Windows (including international versions) are Y2K compliant. Word 6.x and Office 4.2 for Macintosh and all Office 95 versions for Windows are listed as Y2K compliant with minor complications. Early international versions of Works are not Y2K compliant and should be upgraded. Old Excel data that uses two-digit years may represent a serious risk. For a complete listing of all compliancy testing at Microsoft, please visit the above-listed website.

Quark XPress (http://www.quark.com/about/itn059.htm)
Quark states that the following programs are Y2K compatible: QuarkXPress version 3.32 and later, QuarkXPress Passport version 3.32 and later, QuarkImmedia version 1.5 and later, Quark Publishing System version 1.12 and later. Quark does strongly caution users to check individual extensions for Y2K problems.

Adobe FrameMaker, PageMaker, and Acrobat (http://www.adobe.com/newsfeatures/year2000)
According to Adobe, Framemaker 5.5 and later, as well as current versions of PageMaker and Acrobat, will be unaffected by Y2K problems.

Nisus Writer (http://www.nisus.com)
The website for Nisus does not appear to contain any information on Y2K compatibility issues. On Macintosh current versions of Nisus are unlikely to have problems (few Mac applications will have direct problems), but no information is available for the PC version.

Claris Works, FileMaker Pro (http://www.claris.com/news/docs/year2000-c.html)
Claris and File Maker state that all of their current programs will handle the year 2000, but applications linking to mainframes may face difficulties. This should, however, pose little risk to the average translator.

Other software (see section 3)
There are numerous Internet sites that deal with the Y2K problem. Many of these provide links to lists of programs with known problems. If you use software not listed above, please consult the software developer's website or one of the sites listed in section 3.

2. Operating systems information

Most current operating systems are unlikely to have software problems with Y2K. Older hardware, however, may require maintenance to function correctly. Many of the sites listed in section 3 contain information on replacing old hardware system clocks that may not be

Y2K compliant. Even if you are using a Y2K compliant system, such as the Mac OS or Windows 95/98/NT, it would be wise to test your system for Y2K compliance since third-party system additions or extensions may not be Y2K compliant. Free software is available to do this. (McAffee, for example, has a tester for PCs available at **http://www.zdnet.com/vlabs/y2k/testy2k.html**). Since most translators operate either Windows 95/98/NT or the Mac OS, the following information is provided about both systems:

Macintosh (**http://www.apple.com:80/macos/info/2000.html**)
At the application level there are relatively few programs that will have trouble with the Y2K changeover, but this does not mean that individual user's data or programs are not problematic. (Apple's website provides information on how to test your Macintosh for Y2K compatibility.) According to Apple:

"The Macintosh and Mac OS have had the ability to properly handle dates past 1999 since the introduction of the Macintosh computer. Any Mac OS application that makes correct use of the Mac OS Toolbox for clock functions will not have a problem transitioning to the year 2000.

"The original date and time utilities (introduced with the original Macintosh 128K computer in 1984)… [allow] the correct representation of dates up to 6:28:15 A.M. on February 6, 2040. The current date and time utilities… [cover] dates from 30,081 B.C. to 29,940 A.D."

Windows (**http://www.microsoft.com/technet/topics/year2k/default.htm**)
Microsoft claims that DOS versions 5.0 and later and Windows 3.0 and later (at least in their English versions) are Y2K compliant. Early international versions of Works and Access are not Y2K compliant, and could affect system-level performance if the system uses them. Microsoft says that Excel represents the biggest Y2K problem since many users may have stored years in their data in a 2-digit form.

3. How to test you PC's internal clock for Y2K compatibility

In order to test your PC's internal clock (BIOS) follow the following instructions. **Do not change your system clock from within Windows.** (These instructions assume that you are using Windows 95, 98 or NT. If you are using Windows 3.1 you will have to adjust these instructions as appropriate to your system):

1. Create a DOS boot diskette. (To create a DOS boot diskette find FORMAT.COM [typically in C:/WIDOWS/COMMAND] and run it from the DOS prompt by typing "FORMAT A: /S /V". Follow the instructions that appear on your screen and name your disk something like "DOS BOOT")
2. Shut down Windows as normal from the START menu.
3. Boot from the DOS boot disk you just made. You should see an A:/ prompt in DOS.
4. Type "DATE" to see what your system has set for the current date. Type "TIME" to see the current system time.
5. Now type "DATE 12/33/1999" and "TIME 23:59". Wait one minute and then type "DATE" again. If your system has correctly rolled over, the DATE function should return "01/01/2000" as the date.
6. Shut your computer down and reboot it from the DOS boot disk. Type "DATE" once more. The date should display "01/01/2000' once more. If DATE returns 1900 in either this step or in step 5, you may need to replace the BIOS with a Y2K compatible BIOS. Your local computer store should be able to help you with this.
7. Using DATE and TIME reset your system's clock to the current date and time. You can now reboot your system in Windows.

4. General Y2K information

The following sites contain information that may be useful:
- **http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/special/y2k/index.html.** This site has a useful little article that explains which aspects of a company (including a small company) need to be examined to prevent Y2K problems. The site also has Y2K compliance-checking utilities for PCs. There is very little on this site for Macs, but the coverage for PCs is good. A good listing of related sites is also available.
- **http://www.scm-ae.com/itgroup/iary2ks.htm**. This site provides links to information on Y2K problems for Mac. This paints a some-what less rosy vision of the future than does the Apple site.
- **http://www.bug2000.co.uk/home_bug/html-docs/index.shtml.**This British site is useful for those wanting a grasp of technical prob-lems without much "techno-talk" but does not contain information on specific software packages. The site does, however, cover a wide variety of non-software products such as camcorders, alarm systems, etc.
- **http://www.year2000.com**. A good set of links, including links to articles in non-English languages that might be useful in dealing with clients who are not yet aware of the issues involved with Y2K compliance.
- **http://www.garynorth.com.** This page presents the worst of all possible scenarios for Y2K problems. Interesting and perhaps alarm-ing, but not particularly relevant to translators or small businesses.
- **http://www.y2knews.com**. This site is targeted more at large companies than at smaller organizations or individuals, but some of the information would be useful to translation companies.
- **http://www.yahoo.com/computers_and_internet/year_2000_problem**. Contains a number of links, from the useful to the bizarre, on Y2K issues. The list is a good start for those wishing to know more about these issues.