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Changes in translation work

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Editorial from the CEO

The invention of the Gutenberg press around 1440 has been credited with heralding the beginning of mass communication and in particular the wide distribution of the Bible. The first book to be published was the Latin Gutenberg Bible. Translation and mass production of the Bible in German by Martin Luther and in English by William Tyndale in the 1520s-30s is said to have threatened the powers of both the political and religious leaders of the time, as well as impacted societal structure and culture.



In our current digital age it could be argued that we are seeing change that is as significant as the Gutenberg press. It is in this light that this edition of *Wycliffe Today* looks at the impact of technological change on the process of Bible translation, the publication of Scripture, and its distribution. Sometimes the changes technology brings are incremental and other times new technology totally transforms the landscape. In the translation of the Bible into minority languages we are moving towards a new landscape.

Barry Borneman

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Some things change, some stay the same

The impact of technology on translation work

Translating Scripture is a complex process and despite technological advances, will remain complex.

Translating the nuances and subtlety of language; translating cultural-laden meaning to be understood in a totally different culture; translating words spoken and written by people with a Hebraic worldview for those with a different worldview; translating sentences to a language with a completely different grammatical structure, word order, and even logic, is complex work.

To solve complex matters, a well functioning team is essential: a team which works well together, whose members appreciate each other's contribution, are able to take correction from each other, and are willing to receive input from experts outside the team. This is valuable beyond measure.

What has changed with technology is that many of the tedious 'donkey work' processes have been significantly sped up or in some cases are no longer even required. Before computers, a translated verse could be typed over a hundred times from the first feeble efforts until the approved text for publication.

Now it is typed once and refined (sometimes many times) with every version automatically saved. Once a translation team needed a room full of biblical commentaries and linguistic articles and other resources, but now they are available electronically via specialised software and web-based repositories.

A translation advisor living on another continent can even check translation being done by a local translator in real time. The days when expatriate translation workers returned home and left the local translation team to continue unassisted are also over. They can now be in regular contact by phone or internet. This is increasingly becoming the norm.

Of course not all new technology is suitable for Bible translation. Newer and faster is not always better. Recently some organisations have proposed new methodologies that they claim will see translation completed in months rather than years. It is risky for translators to allow technology to be a substitute for good processes. Bible translation remains complex and requires thoughtful, prayerful and difficult decisions by the translation team and the community it serves. That cannot be rushed.

PRAY

Ask that God would strengthen the many teams working on Scripture translations.



PHOTO BY ELYSE PATTEN



How beautiful are the feet...

The impact of technology on Scripture use

Translated Scriptures are of no use if they are unused: written but unread, recorded but unheard, filmed but unseen.

For Wycliffe, making the translated Scriptures accessible to the people they are translated for goes hand in hand with translation work. Here, advances in technology and in particular the growing reach of the internet, are having a significant impact.

Stuart Cameron (translation advisor, digital media) captures the speed of change when he writes,

When we published the Helong NT in 2012 (West Timor), we created a web version with concordance to help Helong readers who had internet access. We thought we were cutting edge at that time. Yet a few years later, that is old hat.

Today Scriptures are uploaded to the Digital Bible Library and made available within a few days on websites and on mobile phones through apps. Audio recordings are bundled with the text so people can read and listen to Scriptures simultaneously. New readers can also listen to the audio and follow the highlighted text and build up their reading confidence.

Alan Rogers, who has more than 30 years' experience in the Northern Territory using media to support Scripture engagement, says there has never been a more exciting time. Alan says,

Has there ever before been the possibility of end-users making their own encouraging, uplifting, teaching, comforting, educational and biographical materials, with the possibility of them turning viral and being used by God to further his kingdom - without relying on input from 'experts'? No, never!

A clear example of this comes from the Christians at the remote Northern Territory community of Manyallaluk. Dance and actions to Christian songs have always been part of their expression of worship. Now when they have a youth camp they produce their own rap songs based on Scripture. In doing so they are engaging with Scripture and creating something new for themselves.

Through many changes, the message we preach remains unchanged. Paul issued a challenge to the Roman church that is still a call to us today: But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, **How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!** (Romans 10:14-15 NLT).

Today those 'beautiful feet' may come in the form of the translated Scriptures in an app, webpage or on YouTube. The times have indeed changed.

MORE

Explore our online treasure trove of Scriptures in multiple languages. Visit [wycliffe.org.au/explore/language-facts/bibles-in-other-languages/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/explore/language-facts/bibles-in-other-languages/)

WATCH

The story of Joseph in a Manyallaluk rap: <https://tinyurl.com/y8qxecdq>



Member spotlight

Some things don't change: we still need people like Keith and Carol Barber

While new members represent the future, retiring members give us the history on which to build our future.

Keith Barber recently retired from Wycliffe after serving for 26 years alongside his wife Carol. They began in Papua New Guinea in 1992. Then in 2000, they continued to serve in the Australian home office until recently, when a heart attack stopped short an anticipated many more years of service for Keith. Carol continues to serve in Human Resources.

Keith's retirement highlights how some things don't change in Wycliffe. We are a volunteer organisation made up of ordinary people responding in faith, growing in God.

Keith says,

It has been in the fertile pastures of Bible translation involvement that I have had the opportunity to grow in God, and experience many of the things for which he is known. These include healing, grace, seeing his higher priorities, feeling his companionship, and receiving visions, to name a few.

Wycliffe will continue to rely on people with faith in Jesus who are also captured by the power of the Scriptures and their relevance for all people. Keith says,

It is gratifying to know how worthwhile Bible translation is, and I am always so thankful that this is the work to which God, in his infinite wisdom, called the Barbers.

God continues to call.

Preparing for digital distribution: **Romania**

Scriptures in the Romani languages of Romania will soon be available digitally.

This includes a website in development that will make available all the translated material in the Romani dialects spoken in Romania. The website will also have links to translations in Romani dialects spoken outside of Romania.

A Scripture phone app is also being prepared in the South Vlax dialect. Most of the proofreading and programming is done, but there are more steps to complete before the Scriptures can be accessed. Please pray for God's help and guidance to complete this exciting project.



PHOTO BY MARC EWELL

OPEN UP THE GATE

Changes to Scripture publication

by Barry Borneman

In 1991 I was visiting the International Publications Department in Dallas and I had in my possession something that I had not realised was breaking new ground.

It was the second edition of the Kriol Holi Baibul from northern Australia (published 1987). Unbeknown to the international administration, this Bible had been laid out on a Macintosh computer in Darwin and the photocopy-ready edition printed on a laser printer at the Darwin Apple Store. It had then been printed and bound in Korea.

With decisions made for a specific local context, some of the universal Scripture printing guidelines were deemed inappropriate by the translation team. We had used a larger font and numerous illustrations, some locally produced. To my surprise, some did not share my joy. Words like quality assurance, precedence, cost and due process were on their lips. They were the professional gatekeepers for Scripture publications worldwide and this *Kriol Baibul* had not passed through their gate. A revolutionary 1980s Macintosh computer and laser printer have started an unstoppable trend of moving the publishing of Scripture from centralised to local control.

Today this revolution is complete. The production of the 2007 Kriol Bible involved Paul Eckert (Bible Society) spending a couple of weeks working with the Kriol translators in Darwin to decide on how and what they wanted in their Bible. Gordon Thompson (SIL typesetter, Alice Springs) took those ideas to produce an exquisite Bible with colour plates, maps and gold-lined pages. The Kriol Baibul was not only their translation, but also now their publication.

Gordon Thompson has since moved on to be the Pacific-wide publications trainer and he has seen this change to local control gain even more traction. Gordon recently went to Vanuatu to train a translation advisor to do typesetting locally. Gordon wrote,

This enabled the wider translation team to gather around and interact with the typesetters as decisions were made about the design and format of their publication. I'm sure this would have resulted in more ownership of the final product.



GORDON THOMPSON WITH PASTOR KORAH

Changes in technology mean Scripture publication, once the domain of experts in our publishing department in America, is now in the hands of hundreds of local translation teams around the world. The result is an immediate, affordable, quality and locally relevant Scripture publication.



Learn more about the opportunities that digital publishing has created. Visit wycliffe.org.au/digital_revolution

ALL THAT GLITTERS

Reflections from MAD Australia 2017

By Jessica Rogers

A team of adventurers recently returned from the Australian MAD (Ministry, Adventure and Discovery) safari. Adventurer Jessica Rogers shares how overcoming hardships let her have meaningful moments where she discovered a possible longer-term call.

Walking back from the outhouse, my head-torch light was reflecting off several glittery things in the leaf litter. I gently kicked the ground where I could see one of the sparkles. The shiny thing was a spider. All the sparkles on the ground were spiders' eyes. The bush floor was covered with them.

That night I was depressed. We were two weeks into the MAD trip and I was exhausted, ready to give up and go home, convinced that mission was no place for someone with anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Our next destination was Wadeye, where we would have no running water, no toilets, and plenty of mosquitoes. Knowing from experience that mosquitoes can lead me to panic attacks, and it would only get harder to sleep, I contemplated how I could avoid going altogether.

Despite my hesitation, I continued anyway. I'm so glad I did.

Our second-last night at Kurantiga beach, a family property in Wadeye, two little girls came up to me. They were Murrinh-Patha girls from the family with whom we were staying. Munmun said, 'She has a gift for you'. Then Veronica handed me a small bottle of glitter nail polish. It was a small but incredibly generous gesture.



The next day we were brought to a beautiful secret beach. In the water together, Veronica gave me a second gift: a blackfella name. I was excited to receive it, but didn't

understand its significance. Veronica's father Edmund told me about my new name. He said it was his gift to me, and it was not only Veronica's name, but also her grandmother's name. It was his family totem, the honeybee. To be given a blackfella name was to be accepted as family.

That night I assembled a gift for Veronica that included my own pair of glitter sandals. They had been much admired by the local girls because of their sparkles, and I hoped that Veronica would enjoy wearing them once she grew into them. I gave Veronica my gift the day we left, and I think I left a piece of my heart with her also.



I was truly blessed to have met the people at Kurantiga, and fully intend to return to Wadeye as soon as God allows. I have begun teaching myself the local language of Murrinh-Patha in the hopes that someday I will get to work with the people of Wadeye on their heart-language Scriptures.

MORE

This is an abridged version. To read the full piece visit www.wycliffe.org.au/all_that_glitters

Finding the appropriate metaphor

David Blackman
Alyawarr Translation Project
Regional Coordinator, Central Australia

Every language uses metaphors, but they may only have meaning in one culture. Translating them literally may be meaningless. Jesus' question in Luke 7:24 is an example:

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind?

John the Baptist had been baptising people in the Jordan River, where papyrus grew thickly, sending hollow reeds vertically and horizontally. Their roots dangled in the water and the entire mass floated around as the wind blew. Jesus' hearers would have understood that he meant John was not like the reeds. He was not a person without firm roots in God. He was not a person who would move this way and that with changes and fads in teaching.



Central Australian rivers are normally dry. They flow briefly after substantial rainfall and dry up into a series of billabongs, gradually reverting to a sandy riverbed. Only the permanent waterholes have reeds.

Using Alyawarr words for various native grasses made the image meaningless and unnatural. I left it for a while.

One day I heard people describing Christians who fall away: 'They're just floating'.

I asked what they meant.

'Like the leaves on the billabong, they're just floating and going nowhere.'

After discussion with the translators, this turned out to be a suitable equivalent metaphor for Luke 7:24. These sentences now back-translate as: *Why were you looking for John? Maybe you were thinking he was just floating - not?*

*Ilekewarl arrantherr John-ew nthwenh?
Arrantherr apek iterrenh ikwer, ra irrwerlap-
anerl-anenty-arrpantey?*

Luke 7:24b (Alyawarr)