

# Translating the Internet

by Michael J. McCann MA MITIA

The rise and rise of the Internet over the last decade of the old millennium and across the new frontier of the third millennium is, together with the invention of the alphabet some three thousand years ago and the creation of the printing press in the Middle Ages, one of the most significant methods of communication yet devised.

The Internet's most salient feature is its universality, something appealing as a means of communication to all nations and peoples, to public entities and private individuals, in some 70 principal world languages, though the 55% predominance of English as the new international *lingua franca* of commerce is clearly evident.

Its second most significant feature is its non-ownership. No single nation, corporation or person owns it as a medium of visual and written communication, just as no one owns any language as a medium of verbal communication.

Arising from these two most significant features is a third emerging characteristic that of the confidence with which the Internet can be safely used. It is not communication for the sake of communication. It is not an end in itself, but rather a means to disseminate information with practical immediacy, permanent status and negligible cost. Its safety lies in its vastness and commonness out of the reach of monopolies.

The linking of thousands of server installations around the globe, and of millions of individual PCs to those servers ensures a permanent new library of facts, a new forum for all aspects of business and social interaction, both public and private, from government networks to private chat-rooms and e-mail lists.

For Irish business, expressed as a concept, in the widest possible sense, from Government, to private manufacturing or service industries, to groups and associations, sometimes jokingly stated in our country as Ireland Limited or even as Ireland.com Limited, the Internet now

substitutes for a large part of what was previously handled by ordinary posts and telecommunications.

Despite the advent of the mobile phone for individual personal calls, nothing can compare in cost to date of sending a single e-mail to an entire database of thousands of clients for the price of less than a postage stamp.

Many firms now invoice daily and send monthly statements by Internet. The Banks would have us 365 all our business on-line if they could, from ordering statements, to transferring monies from one account to another, to paying the outstanding bill. It will trustfully only be a matter of time that discounts will be offered for doing your business solely on-line, to say nothing of ordering your weekly groceries from your favourite supermarket.

It is a sign of the times yet to come in Ireland that, in my own translation business recently when corresponding by e-mail with a new Finnish client, I was asked how was our invoice to be paid. As we offer a number of Internet on-line possibilities, I outlined these by e-mail and then finally wrote, “or else just drop us a cheque in the post.” Imagine my surprise, when this client – a substantial player in the field in Finland – stated that they had never seen a cheque as they are not used in that Nordic country, all transactions being done by automatic ATMs or over the Net!

The world of translation has been transformed in the past ten years by the InterNet. Translators can now live in Bangalore or Bangor, in Wellington or Waterford and from the comfort of their own office or studio return work as if in the physical office next door, with total security and confidence.

Translation businesses, agencies or representative groups such as the Irish Translators’ and Interpreters’ Association and the Irish Writers’ Centre reap the benefits of progress, but most significantly of all, do so in the convinced knowledge that the present InterNet is only the Middle Ages printing press prototype of better systems yet to come and awaiting us on tomorrow’s doorstep.



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## Internet domains relative to this article

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<a href="http://www.accents.ie">www.accents.ie</a>	Accents Ireland (Dublin)
<a href="http://www.acmhainn.ie">www.acmhainn.ie</a>	Resources in Irish
<a href="http://www.alliance-francaise.ie">www.alliance-francaise.ie</a>	Alliance Française
<a href="http://www.esatclear.ie/~bigapple">www.esatclear.ie/~bigapple</a>	Big Apple Translations (Dublin)
<a href="http://www.cic.ie">www.cic.ie</a>	Cló Iar-Chonnachta (Conamara)
<a href="http://www.dcu.ie/~dculs">www.dcu.ie/~dculs</a>	Dublin City University Language Services
<a href="http://www.bealtaine.ie">www.bealtaine.ie</a>	East Clare Telecottage (Scarriff)
<a href="http://www.eofeasa.ie">www.eofeasa.ie</a>	Eo Feasa Agencies (Leixlip)
<a href="http://www.eurotext.ie">www.eurotext.ie</a>	Eurotext Translation Services (Dublin)
<a href="http://www.eurotranslate.ie">www.eurotranslate.ie</a>	Eurotranslate (Newry)
<a href="http://www.iol.ie/~cathy">www.iol.ie/~cathy</a>	Eurotranslations (Cork)
<a href="http://www.infomarex.com">www.infomarex.com</a>	InfoMarex – Panel of Translators and Database
<a href="http://www.translatorsassociation.ie">www.translatorsassociation.ie</a>	Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association
<a href="http://www.writerscentre.ie">www.writerscentre.ie</a>	Irish Writers' Centre