This extract, taken from the ATA Chronicle, no. 6/2005, the American Translator Association's monthly magazine, offers a review of WordFinder 8 Professional.

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WordFinder ®

www.wordfinder.se

Graphic 1

Graphic 2

This product is primarily a piece of software that can be used to access CD-ROM dictionaries that are also sold by WordFinder Software. Dictionaries are available in the following languages: Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Spanish, and Swedish. (Note that the bilingual French and Italian dictionaries available at the time of this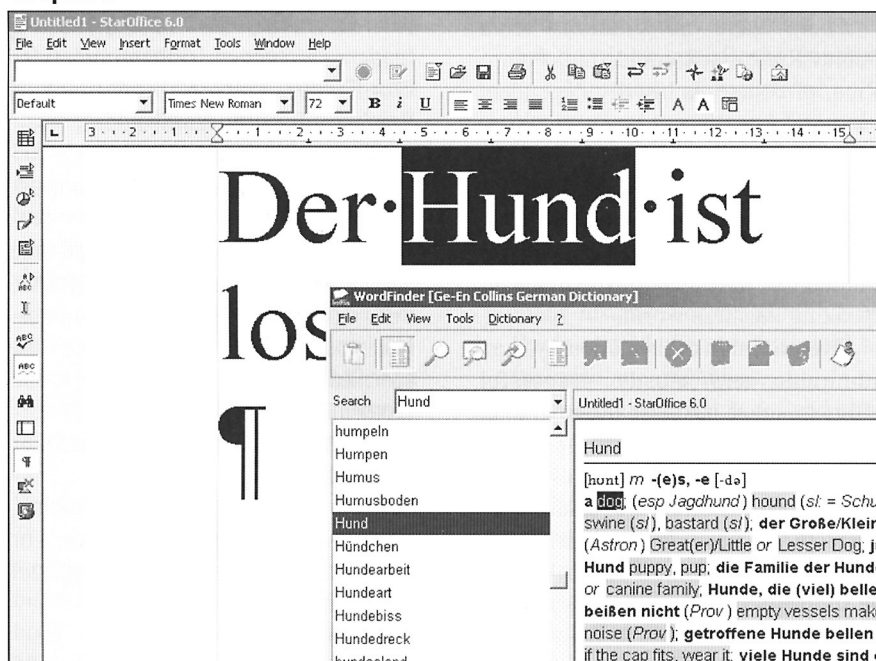 review only go into or out of the Scandinavian languages, not English; however, WordFinder Software is hoping to make French-English and Italian-English dictionaries available before the end of this year.) It is possible to purchase both directions or one direction separately. For the purposes of this review, I am using the *Collins German-English English-German Dictionary* (fourth edition). However, the review concentrates on the WordFinder software and on the computerized format of the dictionary rather than the contents of the dictionary, which are already well known to German-English and English-German translators. All my experience reported below was with WordFinder on the Windows 2000 platform.

This product is not just a CD-ROM that includes both the WordFinder software and a dictionary. WordFinder can also be used as a terminology management system to create and maintain one's own dictionaries (see below). Most people will probably use it as a CD-ROM dictionary, so first I will discuss how it is used in this way.
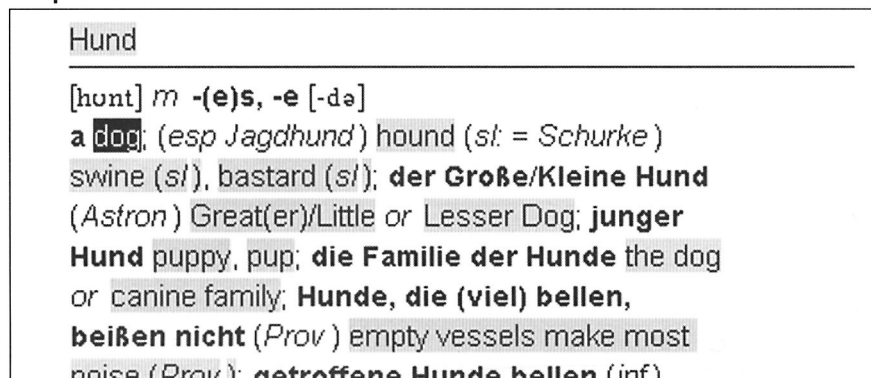
The dictionary is launched like any other software program. It can be used as a typical stand-alone lookup program, by typing or pasting a source word into a text box. If both directions of a language combination are purchased, it is possible to switch between them on the fly by clicking on the flags icon appearing in the upper right of the screen. When WordFinder is used in this way, it does not differ greatly from other CD-ROM dictionaries. However, the program can also interact in a useful way with other Windows programs. A discussion of how this feature is used follows.

First, select a word in a Windows program. This can be done not only in

Graphic 3

Graphic 4

Word, but in any Windows program, such as Déjà Vu. (I assume that this is also true on the Macintosh platform, although I have not tested it.) The program used here is StarOffice 6.0 (see Graphic 1). Next, press the left Control key and then the left Shift key in this order (this sequence can be changed, if desired). This copies the selected term to the Clipboard, pastes it into WordFinder, looks up the term, and switches the focus from the window in which the user is working to the WordFinder window (see Graphic 2). (This accomplishes the same thing as if you had typed Ctrl-C to copy the term to the Clipboard, then Alt-Tab the appropriate number of times to switch

to the WordFinder window, then typed Ctrl-V to paste the term into the "Search" textbox on the WordFinder window, and then pressed Enter to look up the term). Graphic 3 is a close-up of the WordFinder window that makes it easier to see what it contains.

Notice that one of the translations of this term is preselected in the WordFinder window. If this preselected term is not the desired translation, the user can select a different one. The only words that can be selected are the terms with a gray background, which are the possible target-language translations of the source term. Explanations and subject annotations are not copied when the dictionary is used in this way

(although there is a way of doing this). To select a different translation, use either the mouse or the right and left arrows keys. It is not necessary to drag the cursor across the word you want, so this can be done very quickly. Once the desired translation is selected, press the Enter key, and this highlighted word will be copied to the Clipboard, and the focus will be switched back to the original program from which WordFinder was activated. The term is then automatically pasted in to replace the source-language term that was originally selected. For example, see Graphic 4.

This process is often very fast and clean, but not always. For example, some translations include usage notes, such as what preposition to use, and these are sometimes part of the copied text, which may or may not have to be deleted.

The choice of the left Ctrl and the left Shift key to activate WordFinder can be difficult for people who are accustomed to using keyboard commands to move around in Word, since many users find this key combination, together with the right or left arrow keys, to be an easy way to highlight a series of words. What this means is that WordFinder often tries to look things up when the user doesn't want this. This can be overcome either by redefining the key combination used to activate WordFinder or by carefully pressing FIRST the left Shift key and THEN the left Ctrl key to move around in Word. However, it takes a certain amount of concentration to do this.

Another problem is that if the user accidentally presses the activation sequence (Ctrl + left Shift key) when no text is selected, the Clipboard is cleared. That is, if you have a word on the Clipboard that you wish to look up, and then accidentally press

Dictionary Reviews Continued

Graphic 5

the activation sequence with no text selected, the word is no longer there. This presents a problem if you want to look the word up in another CD-ROM dictionary or in a Web browser, since it means that it is necessary to copy the term again.

It is possible to use the wild cards "*" (for any number of any character) and "?" (for any single character). Searches are not case-sensitive. WordFinder is able to process wild-card searches very quickly, even searches with an initial "*", which some CD-ROM dictionaries have difficulty doing quickly. As is the case with many Windows applications, the special characters ä, ö, ß, and ü can be typed by inputting their ANSI code on the numerical keypad when the Alt key is depressed. Unfortunately, as is also the case in many Windows applications, it is necessary for the Num Lock key to be on when this is done, although many users prefer to leave it off so that they can use the keys on the numerical keypad as arrow keys. However, I was delighted to discover that it is not really necessary to type in the special characters at all. It is possible to type in "a" for "ä," "ss" for "ß," etc., and the words will be found, which is not the case in some CD-ROM dictionaries, such as the UniLex series.

The text in the WordFinder window does not wrap, and if the resizable window is too narrow to show all of it, the right edge is simply cut off. It

Graphic 6

would be nice if there was a scroll bar or some other indication that the right side is cut off. However, the window has to be very narrow for this to happen, and this is not usually a problem.

WordFinder includes an additional feature called WordFinder Easy Reader, which allows extremely quick and easy lookup of words that are displayed in Internet Explorer. Unfortunately, this feature only works in Internet Explorer, not in Mozilla, Firefox, or other Windows programs (however, see below). WordFinder Easy Reader is launched like any Windows program, and then it is activated by right-clicking on an icon in the Taskbar. When it is first opened, a short window opens across most of the width of the screen (it is across the bottom of the screen in Graphic 5).

Then, if the user opens Internet Explorer and allows the mouse to hover over an unknown word, this opens another window similar to, but larger than, a ToolTip window which displays the translation of the term (as shown in Graphic 6).

This way of using WordFinder Easy Reader allows a word to be looked up merely by allowing the mouse to hover over it. However, the program can be used in any Windows application using the wide window across the screen, without the ToolTip-like window. This is done by double-clicking on a word to select it and then right-clicking on it: The translation will appear in the wide window.

As I mentioned above, everything I have reported reflects my experience with the program on the Windows 2000 platform. WordFinder also has a Macintosh version, which I have not tested. At the present time there is not a native Linux version of WordFinder. There is a Linux program called CrossOver Office that provides Windows emulation in Linux, making it possible, for example, to install Microsoft Office, etc., on Linux. I tried installing WordFinder in this environment, but I was unable to get it to work, although I have had this difficulty with many CD-ROM dictionaries.

Attendees of ATA's 45th Annual Conference in Toronto may recall that WordFinder participated in the Translation Support Tools Forum. This is because WordFinder software can be used not only to query a CD-ROM dictionary, but also as a terminology management tool. It allows users to create their own dictionaries that can be used together with or separately from the dictionaries provided with the WordFinder software. In order to be able to take advantage of user-created dictionaries in the same way as described above, the dictionary entries have to contain certain special codes, which can be tedious if terms are entered one by one. However, there is a way of importing and exporting user dictionaries, so it is very easy to import a long list of terms into a user dictionary. What is especially nice about this feature is that a user can group his or her own dictionaries with the Collins dictionary (or any of the other dictionaries which are sold with WordFinder), so that a term need only be looked up once, not first in one dictionary and then in another. The priority in which the dictionaries are queried is also configurable. The grouping is completely transparent to the user. The user's terms appear alongside those in the Collins dictionary, and can be used exactly as described above.

What translators really need is a very quick and convenient way of copying and pasting terms back and forth between the program in which the translator is working and the terminology tool, and WordFinder does this better than any other terminology management program I am aware of. I highly recommend this product.

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