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Transcriber's Guide to Translation Typing using Braille2000

(Note: this document has been updated for Braille2000 Version 2; most but not all directives also with with Braille2000 Version 1.)

Use your skills; save your fingers

If you have the assistance of motivated typists, you and they comprise a formidable team of braille producers. The typists can input the prose, following some simple guidelines for the layout of the text. You can take their text files and quickly create well-formatted contracted braille, proofread it, and make any final adjustments to the page layouts. There are no statistics available so far, but it would not be surprising for a transcriber to keep up with four typists, and produce two to three times the braille per week than if working alone.

The basics

The translation typists need to produce text files of a type known as “Rich Text Format” and often called RTF. The RTF standard was created by Microsoft but it is a public standard and other word processing programs understand it. In particular, a translation typist can use Microsoft Word, Microsoft Works, Microsoft Wordpad, and Corel WordPerfect, to name a few. Note that Wordpad is a standard part of Windows.

You will receive RTF files of text, prepared by translation typists. These files are then Inserted into the braille document using Braille2000. The Insert process also translates the text into contracted braille and does basic page formatting. The result is braille in the document file, as if you had entered it yourself. After you insert the braille, you can make all sorts of changes to the text, perhaps as you proofread the braille. If you wish, you can create a back-translated ink-print and send that to the typists for proofreading for content. You should still proofread the braille yourself, perhaps after the typists have proofread the back-translated print copy. And you may need to adjust the layout of some pages, particularly if you are preparing the transcription for interpoint embossing.

By the word “text” we will refer to the English RTF file and its content. By the word “braille” we will refer to the braille ABT file and its content.

Page layout relationships

The better your translation typists do at putting the prose into a good page layout the less work

you will have to do. There are six text to braille layout relationships which can be used. These relationships guide the braille format when doing implicit format control.

1. Centering versus Left-justified

Text which is centered generates centered braille. Text which is Left-justified generates normal (left-justified, non-centered) braille. Other text alignments, such as right-justified should not be used by typists.

2. Italics versus Normal font

Text which is set in italics generates italics in braille.

3. Indent and Paragraph (left) Margin

The amount of paragraph indent and “runover” (in text, one uses the term left margin, but it is the same concept) determines the indent and runover of the braille. The text indent and left-margin settings should be set in jumps of quarter inches, with each eighth-inch corresponding to one braille cell position. The table below shows the indent and left-margin settings for popular braille paragraph forms. Note that the left-margin measurement is taken from the left side of the printable area on a page and thus does not include the page margins.

Braille form	Text indent	Text margin
1-1	0”	0”
1-3	0”	0.25”
1-5	0”	0.5”
3-1	0.25”	0”
3-3	0.25”	0.25”
3-5	0.25”	0.5”
5-3	0.5”	0.25”
5-7	0.5”	0.75”

4. Right-indent

The area of the page used for text is that between the left- and right-side page margins. For example, if the page margins are 1.75” left and right, there will be 5” of text space when the left-margin is at 0”. If you adjust the right-hand margin for a paragraph (via the ruler) to be earlier than the page margin (by sliding the right-margin to the left), you achieve what is called a “right-indent”. The translator will shorten braille lines by the amount of right-indent, using the scale of 1/8” per cell. Only tables of contents and poetry should use this approach, normally with a right-indent amount of 0.75” (6 cells).

5. Tabs

Tab stops work much the same way, with each 1/8” of text space mapping to one cell position.

6. Choice of font

You may use any font you like, with the following two provisions:

- a) Elements of text that should be set in Computer Braille Code can be set in Courier font;
- b) Elements of text that are literal ASCII-braille symbols can be set in a braille font, such as "Braille from BRL2000.

All other fonts are translated to the target language, set in advance of translation via the Braille2000 "Language" button.

You can do an entire file using implicit formatting, as described above. As an alternative, Translation Typing offers several explicit format directives, listed below. An explicit format directive is placed alone on line or at the beginning of a paragraph. It specifies an overriding braille format for the immediately following text and all subsequent text that has the same text layout (same indent and left-margin, and same style (centered versus left-justified). When the text layout changes, implicit formatting resumes, unless (a) you use another explicit format directive, or (b) you have used %explicit to switch to everything-explicit mode.

When an explicit format control is used, text paragraphs might as well all be blocked at the left margin (0" indent and left-margin). When everything is explicit (via %explicit), then all text might as well be written at the left-margin, including centered headings (centering is in this case indicated by the %centered directive, and need not appear centered in text).

There are thus three ways to prepare Translation Typing text:

1. by carefully laying out the text, making sure the indent and left-margin are right for braille,
2. by laying out the text in a good-looking way, and using a format directive whenever this is contrary to braille practice, and
3. by arranging all the text in as simple a form as possible and indicating all braille layouts via format directives.

Approach 1 makes no use of format directive, except for %pn=. Approach 2 uses format directives only as required and does not use %explicit. Approach 3 begins the file with %explicit and then uses a format directive for all changes in layout.

Special directives

There are a few aspects of page layout that are unique to braille. These are indicated by special directives which can appear inline (in the text) or as a separate paragraph. A special directive is a single word that begins with the % sign. When written inline (with the text) it is typed as a word, set off (as needed) from any adjacent text by blanks. The following special directives are defined. Italics denotes a variable (fill-in) part of the directive.

Directive	Use
%explicit	To ignore paragraph shape and rely only on directives for braille format control
%implicit	To honor paragraph shape (indent and margins) and to format the corresponding braille paragraph according to the scale of 1/8" per cell; you may use directives below as required
%pn=number	To give the print page number
%tnl	To generate a left-of-text (beginning) TN symbol
%tnr	To generate a right-of-text (ending) TN symbol

<code>%page</code>	To generate a braille page break
<code>%center</code>	To cause all following paragraphs to become centered braille
<code>%head</code>	To cause the single following paragraph to be centered with a blank line before and after
<code>%subhead</code>	To cause the single following paragraph to be a 5-5 paragraph with preceding blank line
<code>%runhead</code>	To cause the single following paragraph to be taken as the running head
<code>%left</code>	To cause all following paragraphs to be regular (uncentered)
<code>%x-y</code>	To set the following paragraphs as x-y braille paragraphs (x, y are numbers)
<code>%toc</code>	To set the following paragraphs as contents entries
<code>%tocv</code>	To set the following paragraphs as contents entries of level v (v=0,1,2,3, etc.)
<code>%indent</code>	To set the following paragraphs as 3-1 braille paragraphs
<code>%indentv</code>	To set the following paragraphs as indented paragraphs of level v
<code>%block</code>	To set the following paragraphs as 1-1 braille paragraphs
<code>%blockv</code>	To set the following paragraphs as block paragraphs of level v
<code>%note</code>	To set the following paragraphs as 7-5 braille paragraphs
<code>%tnote</code>	To set the following paragraphs as 7-5 braille paragraphs with leading and trailing blank lines.
<code>%list</code>	To set the following paragraphs as 1-3 braille paragraphs
<code>%listv</code>	To set the following paragraphs as list items of level v
<code>%space</code>	To generate a blank line in braille
<code>%spacev</code>	To generate v number of blank lines in braille (v=1,2,...9)
<code>%reqsp</code>	To check for a blank line in braille at this point, generating one if necessary
<code>%gv</code>	To change the language (braille grade) to number v, where v is 0: literal ASCII-braille (source text is not translated at all) 1: uncontracted form of the current language code (if such is possible) 2: contracted form of the current language code (if such is possible) Note: for a document in a foreign language (always uncontracted), 1 and 2 do nothing
<code>%L</code>	To set the language back to its previous value (if any)
<code>%Lv</code>	To set the language to language number v (the given number must have been defined previously, see below, or else you will be prompted to select the definition during translation) v must be a positive number (%L0 and %L are equivalent)
<code>%Lv=keywords</code>	To set the language (for automated translation) Keywords separated by commas and without any spaces are used to set the language for translation and define that choice as language number v so that this same language can be selected throughout the remainder of the document by number only
<code>%Lkeywords</code>	To set the language via keywords The same behavior as above but without defining any language number
<code>%%text</code>	To use the % character as plain text, use %% to represent %

The use of any of the format control directives causes the adoption of explicit format control. You could follow some explicitly controlled paragraphs with `%implicit` to resume implicit

formatting. %pn=, %tnl, %tnr, %space, %page do not adopt explicit format control (they make no change to explicit versus implicit control, and can be used with either).

If the percent sign appears as plain text but not the first character of a word, just type the percent sign in the usual way. It will not be taken as a special directive unless it begins a word. Only if a word begins with a plain percent character (rare) do you need to type it as a double-percent.

Inserting the file

An RTF file is brought into Braille2000 via the Insert or Append buttons in the Control Panel. You then select Text File and a Windows open-type dialog box appears. If the "Files of type" box is not set to Rich Text files, change it, and then proceed to select the file to be translated.

You can also paste text from the clipboard. When working in the Braille View, use a right button click to the Paste button in the Control Panel. Then select Print-text. When working in the Print View, just click the Paste button.

If you are doing textbook format and the typists have used %pn= you should click the "Options" button at the bottom of the dialog box and then put a checkmark in the box for the "Generate print page numbers" option. In the options box you will also find a control for handling italics and bold.

Using the %L directive

The %L directive was introduced in December 2010. To use this directive, you may need to update your software to a current release. The %L directive is needed only in RTF material that is composed of multiple languages, such as a mix of English and French, or where portions are contracted and others are uncontracted (for switching between contracted and uncontracted translation, the %g directive may also be used).

The %L directive (written here with capital L for clarity, but like other directives it is not case sensitive, i.e., you may use %l just as well) can be used in two main ways:

1. To declare the language for major sections of the document, as in
%Lenglish,contracted
block of text in English
%Lspanish
block of text in Spanish
%Lenglish,contracted
continuing in English
2. To declare a phrase within other prose that should be translated in a foreign language (note that in many contexts isolated foreign words are transcribed with dot-4 notation (i.e., as English) and do not use the foreign language codes), consider
Then he said, %Lfrench Sacré Bleu %L and hung up.
In the above line, the %L by itself returns to the prior language (presumably English).

You identify your choice of language by writing %Lkeyword,keyword,keyword... using as many keywords as needed to make your choice clear. No spaces are permitted in the entire %L directive. You can write %Lgerman and get good results because Braille2000 currently has only one German language choice. If you write %Lenglish, you may sometimes get uncontracted English (depending on context) because Braille2000 has several languages whose name contains the keyword English. %Lenglish,contracted or %Lenglish,uncontracted are better. The internal names %Lenglish2 and %Lenglish1 are the same things respectively. You can also use the abbreviations you see on the Language button, such as %Laeg2, and the names you have given to languages you define yourself.

When a document contains a great quantity of language changes, you may define a language number to minimize the directive. Language numbers run from 1 up (and need not be used in sequence, i.e., you can use 23 without having used 1 through 22). A language number must first be defined via the directive %Lnumber=keywords, as in %L3=English,Uncontracted. This directive sets the designated language and defines it as language 3 which may then be used simply as %L3. Once the definition is made, you can use %L3 wherever you would use the longer directive, for example in %L3 a phrase that is to be uncontracted %L and then normal material.

If you use %Lnumber without ever defining what that language number is to be, you will be prompted to select a language to define that language number, while the translation is in progress. Once defined, %Lnumber (for the same number) will indicate the given language throughout the document, during translation. Once translated, language numbers are discarded from the braille file, but language transitions, affecting back translation and spelling checking, endure, and can be spotted as “Lang” annotations.

When preprocessing a print document with comprehensive tools, such as MS Word, you may be able to construct time-saving macros to insert %L directives in an automated or semi-automated manner.

Summary

Translation Typing, used to produce RTF files of English prose, can save you hours of direct entry time. As you can imagine, translation typing can't do everything. And you don't want to overburden volunteer typists with too many braille format issues. But there is still a lot of braille prose that is formatted in simple sensible ways, braille you won't have to enter yourself if you have helpers doing translation typing.

For books that have many lists, tables, or math expressions, you will have to decide at what point it is easier to input the whole thing in braille yourself. For some difficult items, you may find you can save time by having typists prepare all the prose and then you come along after it is translated to braille and insert the “hard” parts. You will have to select a strategy on a case by case basis.

It is particularly helpful, when proofreading translation-generated braille to have quick shortcuts all set up for putting paragraphs into various standard indent/runover formats. You can often

proofread and adjust the paragraph layout in one operation, and with good shortcuts any braille format adjustments won't slow you down.

Appendix: Operational Details

The directives cause the following results.

Directive	Result
%explicit	Text layout is ignored, except for paragraph boundaries.
%implicit	Text layout is inspected and converted to cell positions in the scale of 1/8" equals one cell; any format directives below apply to the immediately following homogeneous layout of text, i.e., the format directive ends when the text layout changes
%pn=number	Generates a print page turn
%tnl	Generates a left-of-text (beginning) TN symbol
%tnr	Generates a right-of-text (ending) TN symbol
%page	Generates a braille page break
%center	Generates a centered region with a blank line before and after; blank lines are generated only as needed
%head	Does %center for the single following paragraph; then restores the previous layout declaration
%subhead	Does %reqspace; %block3 for the single following paragraph; then restores the previous layout declaration
%runhead	Declares the following paragraph to be the running head
%left	Cancels centering
%x-y	Sets indent to x and runover to y
%toc	Sets indent to 1 and runover to 3 and right-indent to 6 (same as toc0)
%tocv	If v=0, does %toc; else sets indent to (v*2)-1 and runover to 3+(v*2) and rightindent to 6
%indent	Sets indent to 3 and runover to 1 (same as indent1)
%indentv	Sets indent to 1+(v*2) and runover to (v*2)-1
%block	Sets indent to 1 and runover to 1 (same as block1)
%blockv	Sets indent to (v*2)-1 and runover to (v*2)-1
%note	Sets indent to 7 and runover to 5
%tnote	Sets indent to 7 and runover to 5
%list	Sets indent to 1 and runover to 3
%listv	Sets indent to (v*2)-1 and runover to 3+(v*2)
%space	Adds a blank line to the braille
%spacev	Adds v blank lines to the braille
%reqsp	If the preceding braille line is not blank, does %space
%gv	To change the language (braille grade) to number v, where v is 0: literal 1: uncontracted 2: contracted
%L	To set the language back to its previous value (if any)
%Lv	To set the language to language number v (prompt if language v not defined)
%Lv=keywords	To set the language via keywords and also define a language number

%Lkeywords To set the language via keywords