



## A True Tool Box

*By Jost Zetsche*

**Last year,** I decided to discontinue the at-least-two-cars-per-family saga that is so popular here in the U.S. Anyway, last week I finally took the plunge and bought a new electric bike with which I can zip from home to my office and back every day. The first thing I did when we came home with my new treasure was to get out my tool box to tighten things, transfer a number of accessories from the sad skeleton of my last bike, and just sort of make this bike my own by working

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on it. While I was doing that, I felt pretty proud of my well-stocked tool box, which had just about all the little tools I needed for my purpose.

It got me thinking that this is very similar to the way we should view the

software programs on our computer—which really is just a big tool box that holds a lot of different tools. It is about being equipped with the right tools for the right task. If a particular project comes in that requires a little

extra imagination, we do not panic—we just look in our tool box to see which of our tools we can use to crack that nut (so to speak).

With this in mind, I went through the depths of my computer to find out which tools I truly need—not necessarily the ones that are nice to have for those super-exotic projects that come in every other year, but the well-constructed screwdrivers, hammers, Allen wrenches, and pliers that, in combination with each other, take us where we need to go.

In this list of basics, I am not including the foundational tools that I take for granted: tools to enter data (either a keyboard and/or voice recognition); an office suite with word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation abilities; an e-mail system; browsers; and, of course, a translation environment tool (TEiT).

## Communication Tools

For communication purposes, I use:

### Instant Messenger (IM)/Telephony

#### *Skype*

[www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)

I use Skype as my instant messenger (IM)/telephony tool. I have not even opened other IMs for a long time because virtually everyone seems to have a Skype account these days. A few weeks ago, I was at a conference where one of the speakers complained about the technical ineptitude of translators. He proved this by saying that “while most have Skype, they do not even use it to its full extent—just as an instant messaging tool.” It is true that there are many other ways that Skype can be used (it is my favorite way to set up conference calls), but the fact is that it seems to have become the preferred IM tool in our community—and that is not a bad thing.

### FTP Clients

#### *FileZilla*

<http://filezilla-project.org>

I know that file transfer to or from an FTP server can also be done with most browsers or FTP replacement services such as Yousendit.com, but I find it much easier to have all my addresses and passwords for the FTP locations of my clients (and my own) stored in one location, which then gives me instant access. There are a number of good FTP clients out there, including the open-source FileZilla.

### Tools for Text-based Files

I use my tools mostly for dealing with text-based files. Interestingly, some of those tools can even be used for exactly the kinds of files that they were not built for. Some of these tools and functions include:

### Text Editors

#### *EmEditor*

[www.emeditor.com](http://www.emeditor.com)

#### *UltraEdit*

[www.ultraedit.com](http://www.ultraedit.com)

Obviously, you need a text editor, and there are plenty of good ones out there. I like EmEditor for its superior code page handling ability and UltraEdit for the rest. I am not even going to go into what these tools can or cannot do, only this: they can do just about anything that your limited mind can imagine doing in unlimited ways to alter and modify text. (Did that make sense? If not, I was trying to say that these tools can do a lot.)

### Cutting/Combining Text-based Files

#### *Chainsaw*

[www.frankenwandern.de/software/chainsaw.html](http://www.frankenwandern.de/software/chainsaw.html)

#### *Twins File Merger*

[www.twins-software.com](http://www.twins-software.com)

I also like tools that cut large files into smaller ones and the reverse, that is, combine many text-based files into one. For the first task, I use the awesomely named Chainsaw. (I would like this tool for its sound effect alone, even if it failed to cut apart files—you guessed right, it is a howling chainsaw that you hear when you chuck your files). I use Twins File Merger to combine files. The latter tool continues to frustrate me because it tends to “forget” its registration code, but once I remind it, it does what it is supposed to do, which is to glue many text/XML/HTML or other files into one file. This can be very helpful when aligning a huge number of files, comparing files, or simply combining them for storage purposes.

### Text-based Search Tools

#### *Search & Replace*

[www.searchandreplace.com](http://www.searchandreplace.com)

With indexing tools now being included right in the operating system (Vista or, of course, all Mac OS X), text-based search tools may not be quite as valuable as they once were, but I still would not want to miss tools like Search & Replace that allow you to search instantly through a large set of files that you can determine on the fly. Of course, there is the “Replace” part also—a dangerous but sometimes welcome feature. ➡

## Searching Online and Offline Content

### *IntelliWebSearch*

[www.intelliwebsearch.com](http://www.intelliwebsearch.com)

Tools to search online and offline content quickly like IntelliWebSearch may not really belong in this category, but since I do not know where else to put it and I definitely want to mention it, here it is.

## **File Conversion Tools**

The text tools mentioned earlier are good for converting text-based files, but there are also other conversions that regularly need to be entertained:

## Converting Measurements

### *Convert*

[www.joshmadison.com/article/convert-for-windows](http://www.joshmadison.com/article/convert-for-windows)

There are many ways to do this, including using Google's search box, but I like to use Convert. No conversion is too difficult for my little Convert buddy.

## Converting PDFs into Word Files

### *ABBYY PDF Transformer*

[www.pdftransformer.com](http://www.pdftransformer.com)

There is no perfect solution for converting PDFs into Word files, but ABBYY PDF Transformer is probably the best choice for translators.

## Renaming Files

### *1-4a Rename*

[www.1-4a.com](http://www.1-4a.com)

This is not really a conversion, but once you see how easy it is to change 1,500 file names in one fell swoop, there is no way not to have a tool like 1-4a Rename.

## Converting Translation File Formats

### *Heartsome*

[www.heartsome.net](http://www.heartsome.net)

### *Swordfish*

[www.maxprograms.com/products/swordfish.html](http://www.maxprograms.com/products/swordfish.html)

### *Olifant*

<http://okapi.sourceforge.net/Release/Olifant/Help>

The utilities that come with Heartsome and Swordfish are an amazing resource to convert between TBX (Translation Memory eXchange format), TBX (TermBase eXchange format), and CSV (Comma Separated Value format), and their main translation editors are great ways to convert all kinds of files to XLIFF (XML Localization Interchange File Format). Olifant is an excellent tool for converting between Trados and Wordfast TMs and TMX, and that seems to be just about a complete tool set in that area.

## Converting Text into Translation File Formats

### *Sysfilter*

[www.ecm-engineering.de](http://www.ecm-engineering.de)

This is mostly for file formats with hard-to-get-to text, like desktop publishing and graphics formats. The German company ECM-Engineering offers the Sysfilter applications for tools like CorelDraw, Illustrator, InDesign, Photoshop, and Visio. Text can be exported into an XML or RTF file, which can then be processed and translated in your translation environment tool and reimported into the originating file format.

## **Graphics Tools**

### *SnagIt*

[www.snagit.com](http://www.snagit.com)

Graphics are not my forte, but SnagIt is the graphics tool I use daily to capture, annotate, modify, and send screenshots (images of dialog boxes or my screen). I have found that in asking my clients questions or communicating anything computer-related or computer-based, a tool like SnagIt could almost fall under the communication tools category.

## **Security Tools**

There is, of course, the Internet security suite, or alternatively the assembly of tools for all ugly matters dealing with viruses, spam, or spyware, but there are also some other security tools that I use fairly regularly:

## Windows-internal System Restore

The Windows-internal System Restore has saved me many times: Start> (All) Programs> Accessories> System Tools> System Restore. No, it is not perfect—and, yes, there are more comprehensive third-party tools—but I have been well-served with this Windows tool so far.

## Password Cracking

### *Elcomsoft*

[www.elcomsoft.com](http://www.elcomsoft.com)

This sounds worse than it is, but a number of times each year I have to deal with password-protected .zip or .doc files. These are files that I need to work with when the client has already gone home or simply does not know the magic open-sesame charm. Well, the tools from Elcomsoft can usually help me in no time.

## Project Quote/Evaluation Tools

For quoting or project evaluation purposes, here is another favorite little tool set:

### Web Spiders

#### **Teleport**

[www.tenmax.com/teleport](http://www.tenmax.com/teleport)

#### **HTTrack**

[www.httrack.com](http://www.httrack.com)

Web spiders can be used to download complete websites. While tools like Teleport or HTTrack do not do their magic on most dynamic websites, static websites are downloaded to your hard drive in a snap, and can

then be evaluated according to word and translatable versus non-translatable graphics count.

### Word Counting Tools

There is a variety of counting tools out there. In fact, it sort of boggles my mind that this relatively niche practice can apparently feed so many tool providers. The one that you choose should be able to count a wide variety of file formats, including PDF, XML, and HTML (and, of course, the MS Office formats). They also should be able to emulate Word's word count parameters—not because they are necessarily so great, but because they have become a standard.

### Graphic Browsers

#### **XnView**

[www.xnview.com](http://www.xnview.com)

Graphic browsers like XnView give you a quick and thorough overview of all the graphics in any given project and let you single out those that need to be translated.

### Getting the Tools You Need

You may have noticed that there are no expensive power tools on this list, but I guarantee that this combination of tools packs a powerful punch indeed!

*ata*



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