

Open Road Conference

“Creating a Useful and Accessible Multilingual Web Page for AQIS”

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Introduction

The purpose of this joint presentation between Cultural Perspectives and AQIS is to provide a valuable case history and model for an effective and useful multilingual web page.

The AQIS multilingual index page was developed not to meet some policy requirement nor as lip service to a government's commitment to access, but rather to provide an efficient and customer oriented source of quarantine information.

In discussing the web page the presentation will look at a range of issues and imperatives which drove the process and the final result. In doing this we will look at:

- the way that AQIS was handling multilingual information and the need to find new and better ways of developing storing and distributing information;
- the process by which both information and target languages were selected so that the webpage would play an integral role in the overall information delivery strategy;
- the construction of the site and the principles and imperatives which drove the process;
- the decision basis for the most appropriate web information formats to be used for the site with particular attention given to the technical problems encountered;

- the mechanisms chosen to increase access to the site thereby making the information more accessible;
- moving from access to fulfilment in multilingual information provision through the net; and finally
- marketing the site so that it reaches its intended audiences.

AQIS' Need for a Multilingual Web site

Prior to the development Quarantine Matters' Campaign; a comprehensive communications approach to the enhancement of quarantine as an issue of national importance, AQIS had provided multilingual information in pamphlet form in limited subject areas. Even this level of activity was problematic given the wide range of language requirements, the frequency of changes to the list of prohibited goods, and the difficulty of getting the information to people before they entered Australia.

Therefore as part of the ongoing non-English communications strategy development for the Quarantine Matters' Campaign it was decided to position the website as one of the main information delivery mechanisms in the Campaign. The benefits of using the web were:

- the web growing in importance as a source of information to the main client groups relevant to quarantine such as travellers, tour operators, and importers;
- the ability to position and catalogue information into language groups;
- the ability to have information downloaded 'just in time' rather than the previous printed information which was 'just in case';
- the ability to update the information immediately; and finally
- the ability to use the web to develop an ongoing information relationship between AQIS and its customer groups regardless of language;
- the ability to provide more information in languages other than English than before.

Selecting the right material and the right languages

The decisions about information type and languages came out of an articulated non-English communications strategy. This strategy utilised the following steps:

- Identification of existing seizures data from AQIS for both mail and personal entry into Australia.

- A consideration of the nature of people movement to Australia;
 - tourists
 - students
 - temporary visa holders
 - business people
 - domestic NESB residents VFR (visiting friends and relatives) Travellers returning.

- A search for data which would detail and enumerate these groups;-
 - Census
 - Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs recent arrivals data
 - Tourism data
 - AQIS seizures data

- The development of a framework of activity which would allow the identification of categories on non-English travellers/mail recipients, the relevant language groups in each category and the most appropriate form of information/PR intervention to both promote quarantine and modify inappropriate behaviour.

The final strategy has been concerned with getting information to tourists, overseas students intending to study in Australia, mail recipients, domestic NESB travellers, and people wanted to export/import goods into Australia.

Using the framework provided by these target groups, the use of the web was evaluated as well as a consideration of both existing and necessary multilingual information which would be placed on the web.

By taking this approach we were able to ensure that not only was the information appropriate for the target group, but also that the use of the web as a medium would be an appropriate and successful information delivery mechanism.

Positioning Multilingual Material Within the Website

The process of developing the multilingual aspects of the site was dictated by a number of basic principles. These were as follows:

- That the non-English pages have the same functionality as the English language pages of the site. As such the simple use of standard .pdf files was not appropriate and all pages had to be linked across the site and to related information regardless of its language;
- That the non-English pages look exactly the same as the English language pages;
- That the materials in languages other than English be accessible within two clicks and that its be readily identifiable on the home page.

With these as the minimum requirements both Cultural Perspectives and AQIS undertook the arduous process of developing the site.

I would now like to call on Janice Oliver, the AQIS Web Managing Editor to take you though and explain the site www.affa.gov.au

Navigation

The issue of how a site is constructed within a large government organisation is always complicated and indeed changing. At present the Department in which AQIS sits, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia has required that all of the Department be included in its web site.

This has created another tier within the site map prior to getting to the non-English material and has proven an added difficulty in that the AFFA name is far less known than AQIS. As such access to the site could be affected. In order to address this issue, the following have been put in place:

- The maintenance of the previous AQIS address as the link to the new site;
- The identification of AQIS translated materials on the AFFA homepage, which is made possible by the lack of any other translated material on the site.

The navigation within the site will remain an issue and might be further complicated with changes in the Departmental structure or the introduction of other multilingual initiatives in other areas within the Department.

Making the Site Accessible

Given the proposed international use of the site for accessing quarantine information prior to arrival in Australia it was deemed important to have the site registered with appropriate search engines. In order to do this AQIS employed the use of SubmitWolf V4.0 which simultaneously registers the site with multiple search engines.

As well as this initial registration, AQIS has undertaken to re-register on a fairly frequent interval to ensure that AQIS information continues to be indexed by the major search engines. Once the AFFA site redevelopment is complete the site will be re-registered.

As well as this external facilitation the site designers were keen to make the information as accessible as possible and used their understanding of the way search engines function to dictate the construction and registration of the site. The specific strategies included:

- Using the Dublin Core 'la' tag in metadata so that non-English documents can be located by search engines;
- Using the 'title' and 'description' fields in the 'properties' of .pdf and .doc documents so that the .pdf files and MS-Word files are returned by search engines as 'results' which include the document title and description;

- Use of parallel translations on the site to increase user confidence especially for those not familiar with the other language. AQIS is about to post MEATEX documents on the site in Dutch and English designed to assist the certification process for Dutch meat importers;
- The positioning of the English translations alongside the title of a non-English media release titles so that the material can be handled and disseminated by people who do not have fluency in the other language; and finally
- The use of parallel linking between English and the non-English translation.

PDF vs Other Formats

At the start of the process there was a lot of discussion between Cultural Perspectives and AQIS as to the desirability of .pdf files for translated material given its reliance on having Acrobat on the users computer and slower downtime than .html files. The advantage of the .pdf was the accurate translation of the language other than English characters. This factor far outweighed the download time disadvantage. Also the major clients are importers, international travellers, and travel agents, all of whom are computer 'savvy'.

In terms of the effectiveness of this decision, the results of a recent AQIS survey to electronic mailing lists indicated a 100% acceptance of the use of .pdf as a download format.

While this has been successful the changes in technology in the last year have been great and we do anticipate that in the near future we will be able to prepare all material in .html while still understanding that we will have to provide a .pdf version as backup.

Technical Problems

The construction process was not without its difficulties which were mainly due to the following reasons:

- The first was the desire to replicate the features of the English aspects of the site into the non-English pages. The sticking point here was the need to allow an email

facility from the .pdf file. We were not able to resolve this and have therefore had to accept links back to English pages to bring up the email facility;

- The second concerned the nature of links within the .pdf files. In developing the non-English aspects of the site the nature and types of links were developmental and with every change there was a need to reconstruct the .pdf file from the start. As such the learning from this is the real need to have a definitive map of the linkages required and to stay with this whenever possible;
- The final issue was that different materials existed for different languages and as such different types of links were required and pathways were different for each language. This increased the complexity rather than the difficulty of the task and therefore each language's content was unique.

The Success of the non-English site

Webtrends software is used to collect and collate the statistics for the AQIS web site. The statistical reports provide important information on the usage patterns, referring sites, software and computer platforms used by our clients.

This data makes it easy to identify what pages are the most popular, and also by looking at common exit pages whether there are information gaps.

We have collated the statistics for the languages other than English pages, since their release onto the site in May.

Usage levels of language other than English pages:

	Total	Average per day
Hits	67 065	438
Page views	26 570	173
Visitor sessions	6594	43

The total number of hits: is a count of all the successful hits including HTML pages, pictures, forms, scripts and files downloaded.

Page Views: is the count of hits to documents and forms

Visitor Sessions: are hits to the site by a single visitor within a timeframe

Between May and the end of September there were 3430 unique visitors, 2817 visitors who visited once and 613 visitors who visited more than once

Most requested pages

The travel information was the most requested. The Japanese and German information was the most in demand.

Most Requested Pages					
	Pages	Views	% of Total Views	Visitor Sessions	Avg. Time Viewed
1	http://www.aqis.gov.au/language/	3,552	13.61%	3,021	00:02:09
2	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantija.pdf	2,322	8.9%	646	00:01:00
3	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/german.htm	796	3.05%	666	00:01:30
4	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/japanese.htm	705	2.7%	601	00:01:57
5	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantizh.pdf	610	2.33%	262	00:01:01
6	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/indonesian.htm	579	2.21%	520	00:01:21
7	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/chinese.htm	567	2.17%	475	00:02:06
8	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcanties.htm	544	2.08%	485	00:02:08
9	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/qmagentsja.pdf	532	2.03%	242	00:00:29
10	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantifr.htm	509	1.95%	449	00:01:08

Top entry Pages

Top entry pages are an indication of where clients have been sent a specific URL or used a search engine to identify information. Most clients (48.19%) have entered the languages other than English pages using the languages index page. Once again the "What can't I bring into Australia" was the most requested document. German, Spanish and French speakers are

the most likely to enter the site using the search engines to find the "What can't I..." information.

Top Entry Pages			
	File	% of Total	Visitor Sessions
1	http://www.aqis.gov.au/language/	48.19%	2,957
2	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/japanese.htm	9.22%	566
3	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/german.htm	5.29%	325
4	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantide.htm	3.65%	224
5	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/indonesian.htm	3.32%	204
6	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcanties.htm	3.29%	202
7	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantifr.htm	2.68%	165
8	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/vietnamese.htm	2.44%	150
9	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/arabic.htm	2.11%	130
10	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/chinese.htm	2.11%	130

Most Downloaded Files

The "What can't I..." brochure was the most downloaded file, four of the translated files featuring in the top ten downloaded files. Five of the top ten downloaded files were Japanese translations for travel, freight, mail, travel agents and student groups.

Most Downloaded Files				
	File	No. of Downloads	% of Total Downloads	Session Downloads
1	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantija.pdf	2,322	18.55%	646
2	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantizh.pdf	610	4.87%	262
3	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/qmagentsja.pdf	532	4.25%	242
4	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/mailja.pdf	493	3.94%	227
5	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/fsfreightja.pdf	476	3.8%	147
6	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/finesja.pdf	422	3.37%	208
7	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/studentjsa.pdf	386	3.08%	189
8	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantith.pdf	315	2.51%	157
9	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/whatcantiko.pdf	301	2.4%	148
10	http://www.aqis.gov.au/docs/language/mailzh.pdf	278	2.22%	157

Most active countries

These statistics measure countries by the country indicated in the domain name for the client that enters the site.

Eight of the 15 most active countries for visits to our languages other than English area of our site have information translated into their language of origin. Four of the most active countries, have a national language of English - Australia, United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand. However all these countries have substantial NESB populations, who may prefer to read information in their first language.

Most Active Countries		
	Countries	Visitor Sessions
1	United States	2,342
2	AU	818
3	Japan	645
4	Italy	108
5	Germany	107
6	Thailand	79
7	France	71
8	Malaysia	62
9	Indonesia	60
10	UK	50
11	Canada	49
12	Hong Kong	38
13	Singapore	36
14	Netherlands	31
15	New Zealand (Aotearoa)	29

Top referring sites and search engines

It is a definite bonus to market languages other than English materials to other government entities and industry associations. The Australian embassies, Agriculture Fisheries, Forestry Australia and Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs all feature within the top 15 referring sites to our translated documents.

Our frequent re-registering with search engines has paid dividends, with Yahoo, Alta Vista, Google, Northern Light and Excite being the top five referring search engines. The statistical reports also identify the phrases used by clients using these search engines.

Client profiles

90 per cent of our clients use Internet Explorer or Netscape to access our site. 86% use the Windows platform. 90% of our clients are accessing our site from .com, .net or .org organisations.

The Next Steps

While the languages other than English pages exist and appear quite successful it is important to see the non-English pages as an ongoing project. This ongoing project orientation should involve a range of activities such as review, marketing and management.

In terms of review, it is imperative that the accessibility of the translated pages is measured on an ongoing basis and that the investigation is appropriate to the overall non-English communications strategy. This investigation should include:

- An evaluation of the AQIS site access statistics to identify trends since the release of non-English material on the site;
- The measurement of overall usage patterns of the AQIS site by international users so that language and translation gaps can be identified and addressed;
- The assessment of the impact on the site of changes such as the AFFA site amalgamation and the development of strategies to address these;

Through active investigation the site will remain appropriate to the needs of users.

The investment in electronic multilingual information also requires an active marketing and promotion of the site to its potential users. This will include:

- Active promotional strategies for the tourism industry both overseas and in Australia who would have an active interest in this information and whose needs would be met by the speed and efficiency of electronic document access;
- Active promotional strategies to potential international students through international students associations and education vendors such as *idp Education Australia*; and

- The strategic positioning of links on pages relevant to the travel process such as the Australian Tourism Commission, Lonely Planet and Travel.com.au..

The final aspect of the future will be the need for continued commitment to the site and its maintenance of the site through the allocation of time and money for the task.

Conclusion

Both AQIS and Cultural Perspectives are proud of what we have been able to achieve with the site and its success as a delivery mechanism for an important government campaign. We believe that the site is a model one which utilises the latest technology and thinking and we look forward to its maintenance as a means to disseminate non-English information through the net.