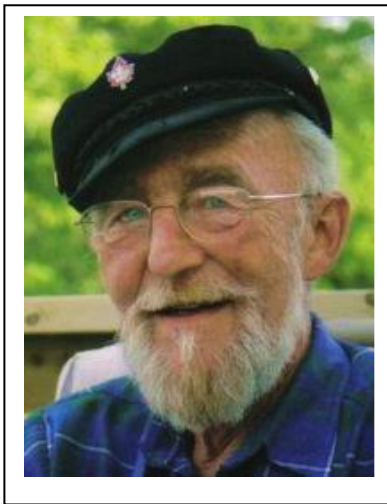


# The Family Historian

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## Online Translations



Many of us have to deal with records in a language with which we are not familiar and the free online translation services seem like the ideal answer to the problem. I have tested them with words and very short phrases, when I knew the translation, and found they worked reasonably well.

Many of the documents we are interested in are forms of one kind or another and these tend to use a fairly restricted vocabulary. You could xerox several forms and, using a dictionary, create a glossary for that type of form. The Family History Library (FHL), in Salt Lake City, ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)) has a number of them online.

Documents that contain a lot of text are a different matter. Many researchers use the free online translation services but I am not convinced that this is the best idea. Since you do not know what you are feeding into the system, you have no way of evaluating the output.

The first step is to establish that you really want this document translated. Translating the title with either a dictionary or online service will be suggestive. Scanning the document for names, dates, and places will also be helpful.

If you feel the document is important enough to translate, then it might be better to have it done by someone who knows the language. I have seen some strange things emerge from large bodies of text. You can try it yourself by having it translate several paragraphs from English to another language and then have it translated back to English again. If it is close to the original, you may have a good tool. A 'Google' search for Translation Services will give you a good list to choose from.

I tried this recently and the translations below were produced by perhaps the most popular translation service on the internet. (1) is the original simple paragraph that I submitted for translation. (2) is the French translation and (3) is how the service translated the French version back to English.

1. The storm created havoc in the city and the country. Power lines were down, roads were under water, and vehicles were stranded everywhere.
2. Le donner l' assaut à a créé le ravage dans la ville et le pays. Les lignes électriques étaient vers le bas, les routes étaient sous l'eau, et des véhicules ont été échoués partout.
3. To give the attack created the devastation in the city and the country. The power lines were to the bottom, the roads were under water, and of the vehicles were failed everywhere.

Let's face it, we are dealing with an automated language dictionary. There is no understanding or thinking involved. That is why most of the companies that offer these free services also have a professional translation service to deal with documents.

## Fraternal Organizations

Many of our ancestors belonged to fraternal organizations such as the Masons, Elks, Odd Fellows, Forresters, Knights of Columbus, or others or they have memorabilia bearing strange initials.

Rich Hertzog has created a website that lists hundreds of these organizations, with hot links to many of their websites. You can find it at : <http://www.exonomia.com/links.htm> . It was really created for collectors of society emblems but if you go to the bottom of the Home Page and select < society/fraternal > you will be taken to an alphabetical listing of the societies with their links.

I welcome comments, queries, and suggestions at: [p\\_wohler@hotmail.com](mailto:p_wohler@hotmail.com)

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