Czech and Slovak are covered by several general-purpose dictionaries and other resources online. In theory, a translator into or from English could throw away all his print and local software dictionaries, yet still find what he needs online. In practice, most would find working solely online more cumbersome than liberating. Without going to that extreme, however, a translator can profitably use some of the online resources as supplemental references—but with caution.

Online Glossaries
Some might understand “online resources” to be anything online, including specialized glossaries. But given space constraints and the diversity of texts, glossaries are outside the scope of this quick overview. Three exceptions merit attention, however:

**InterActive Technology for Europe**
http://iate.europa.eu
This site is the successor to the well-known Eurodicatom, and covers several languages of the European Union. It gives examples and indicates the reliability of terms.

**Terminologická databáze**
http://isap.vlada.cz/852566AC0072089E/terminologie
This is a glossary of government terms compiled by the Czech government for its turn at the presidency of the European Union Council. It includes downloadable terminology files (e.g., isap.vlada.cz/Dul/zavaznet.NSF/CzAngl/OpenView). The site requires Java.

**Evropská Unie**
www.evropskaunie123.cz/kapitoly.php?id=29
This site does not contain any glossaries, but it does offer links to several specialized glossaries.

General-Purpose Dictionaries
Among general-purpose online dictionaries are the following.

- lingvosoft.com/English-Czech-Dictionary
- onlineslovniky.cz
- slovnik.azet.sk
- slovnik.cz
- slovnik.sukvos.com/preloz.php
- slovnik.zcu.cz/online/index.php
- slovniky.centrum.cz
- slovniky.idnes.cz/normal@slovnik.aspx
- slovniky.lingea.cz
- slovniky.sms.cz
- www.teos.sk/index.html
- web.volny.cz/najdito/slovnik
- zoznam.sk

This list is less diverse than it appears. All the sites use data from the PC Translator program, with four exceptions:

- onlineslovniky.cz (from Millennium, which sells locally installable dictionaries);
- slovniky.lingea.cz (which also sells both printed and installable dictionaries); and
- slovnik.zcu.cz/online/index.php (a GNU license site).

For this review, I used the sites listed to check for the following terms: **odůvodnění** (the reasoning of a court decision), **krajinomalba** (landscape painting), and “topiary.” In addition, the content of Millennium’s onlineslovniky.cz site was compared to two pages from a respected print dictionary, *Velký Česko-anglický slovník* (Fronek, 2006). The following paragraphs summarize the results of my online searches.

Terminology Look-up
The Lingea site lacked several terms and put each meaning of a word on a separate superscripted line (e.g., “row1,” “row2,” “row3”), effectively hiding the differences in source meanings. Lingea’s most user-friendly feature was to show source-language synonyms of the search term, which could be clicked to see their suggested translations. The translations were often similar, but this feature was useful nonetheless.

The sites based on PC Translator usually did not translate “topiary,” but sometimes said (as did the idnes.cz site) that it means “a person who knows how to shape trees and bushes.” This is wrong, of course, since the correct word for such an individual would be a “topiarist.” In addition, several PC Translator-based sites also suggested translating **krajinomalba** with “topia” (other suggestions included “landscape painting” and “landscape”). The word may exist, but its scope is limited—a fact the sites did not flag.
The Slovak sites, although also based on PC Translator, at least noted the limited domain via a reverse translation, defining “topia” as *krajinomalba na sténách v antike* (landscape painting on walls in antiquity). For *krajinomalba*, they also suggested “paysage,” which is a term more likely to be understood by English speakers, although the Concise Oxford still marks it with italics as “foreign.”

The best dictionary sites for Czech are the Volny site (using Millennium data) and Millennium’s own onlineslovniky.cz (its subscription-based professional version). For “topiary,” Millennium’s “simple” version gives only the adjective *přístřihnutý* (keř, strom do ozdobné podoby), meaning “to clip a bush or tree into an ornamental shape.” That is okay as an adjective, but does not convey the meaning of the result or art of doing such trimming. Millennium’s paid “professional” version adds an entry for “topiary work,” which it translates as *tvorování dřevin* (shaping of woody plants), which is fine, but not necessarily better than the slovnik.cz (PC Translator) or GNU/FDL sites, which offer *umělecké tvarování keřů* (artistic shaping of bushes).

Millennium is, unfortunately, somewhat marred by redundant entries for many words. For example, it provides *odůvodnění | n, odůvodnění* (pro porotu nebo soud), along with six other entries, none of which added any new meaning. Another example of redundacy was *plískanice*. It appeared five times—one alone, once as “am.” (American), once as “brit” (British), once as “meteor.” (meteorology), and once as “f” (French)—and each time with the same eight translations: rain and snow; sleet; sleet brit.; slt (sleet); slt (sleet) meteor.; slush; sposh am.; and sudden shower.

Such repetition, which appears word after word, seems to exist only to inflate the number of entries and equivalents Millennium can claim. Unfortunately, this decreases the site’s usability, as there are no domain or nuance hints or examples.

Millennium’s online “professional” (subscription-based) database appeared to be complete when it was compared to the printed 2006 edition of the *Velký Česko-anglický slovník*. It included all the printed volume’s terms in addition to some others such as *plešák* (groundwort), *plevnetec* (oatgrass), and *plískavice* (dolphin). However, quantity is not an unmixed benefit, and there are signs that Millennium’s completeness is the result of mere copying, not independent lexicography. For example, Millennium incorrectly suggests “amorous | pl.” as a plural noun to translate *pletky*. Given that the *Velký* translates *pletky* as (among other things) “amorous intrigues,” it is reasonable to suspect that Millennium copied only one of the two words found in the *Velký*, mistaking the “s” for a plural marker. Such copying may also explain Millennium’s odd use of the phrase *pletou se mu nohy* (he’s shaky on his feet) as a headword, where anyone else would use the infinitive *plést*. This same phrase occurs as an example in the *Velký*.

In languages with diacritics, alphabetization can be an issue. When Millennium was asked to search for words beginning with “pli,” it skipped words beginning with “pli” (long “i”) even though standard Czech alphabetizing ignores the length mark. This deprives Millennium of one of the benefits of the mixed alphabetical order to be found in printed Czech dictionaries, which gives them transparency and the ability to show surrounding material at a glance.

Millennium’s offering of many doubtful terms (sposh?), which are undifferentiated from reliable ones, means that it can only be used safely when going into one’s mother tongue. The suggestion to translate “plch” as *graphiure* (alongside garden-variety *dormouse*) is just one example. The word exists, but with limited geographical application. Offering “plch” for *graphiure* could be helpful, but not vice-versa. Typos in Millennium, such as “fiht” (for “fight” as a translation of *rvačka*), add to the need for caution.

In short, the Volny, Millennium, and Zoznam.sk dictionaries can be useful, but their suggestions must be taken with great caution, especially if translating out of, not into, one’s stronger language. A good printed dictionary like the *Velký Česko-anglický slovník* still offers quicker look-up and an overview of surrounding words. The online bilingual dictionaries I reviewed did not do a good job of providing examples or context. Also, the words Millennium had and the *Velký* did not were all easily found by Googling. Given that Millennium costs about as much per year as the *Velký*, people could disagree about where the best value lies.

**Monolingual Dictionaries**

A final class of online resources should be noted. Monolingual dictionaries are almost inherently more reliable than bilingual ones, and provide reality checks whenever nuance and context dependence might be involved. Three are noteworthy.

**Ústav pro jazyk český**

bara.ujc.cas.cz/psjc/search.php

**Český Národní Korpus**

ucnk.ff.cuni.cz/english/index.php
Slovenský synonymický slovník
slovnik.dovrecka.sk/synonymicky-slovnik

The first site searches and displays the definitions of the Příruční slovník jazyka českého, along with images of the original research cards from which the lexicographers worked, including their full-text exemplars of each word’s usage. The second site is the Czech national corpus, in which a search will show any existing word within the context of about 50 characters on either side. It accepts regular expressions, so one can type “koče?[kc].+” in the search field to find all declined forms of the word kočka (cat). The third site finds Slovak synonyms.

Tread Cautiously

Online bilingual dictionaries for Czech and Slovak are maturing, but caution is still needed. For the time being, online discussion groups and monolingual dictionaries are a better bet.

2010 Student Translation Award

In 2010, ATA will award a grant-in-aid to a student for a literary or sci-tech translation or translation-related project.

The project, which may be derived from any facet of translation studies, should result in a project with post-grant applicability, such as a publication, a conference presentation, or teaching materials. Computerized materials are ineligible, as are dissertations and theses. Translations must be from a foreign language INTO ENGLISH. Previously untranslated works are preferred.

Eligibility

The award, to be presented at ATA’s 51st Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado (October 27-30, 2010), is open to any graduate or undergraduate student, or group of students, attending an accredited college or university in the U.S. Preference will be given to students who have been or are currently enrolled in translator training programs. Students who have already published translations are ineligible. No individual student may submit more than one entry.

Applications

Applicants must complete an entry form and submit a project description not to exceed 500 words. If the project is a translation, the description must present the work in its context and include a substantive statement of the difficulties and innovations involved in the project and the post-completion form the work will take. The application must be accompanied by a statement of support from the faculty member who is supervising the project. This letter should demonstrate the supervisor’s intimate familiarity with the student’s work and include detailed assessments of the project’s significance and of the student’s growth and development in translation.

If the project involves an actual translation, a translation sample of not less than 400 and not more than 500 words, together with the corresponding source-language text, must accompany the application. The translation sample may consist of two or more separate passages from the same work. For poetry, the number of words must total at least 300.

Deadline: June 4, 2010

Award

$500, a certificate of recognition, and up to $500 toward expenses for attending ATA’s 51st Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado (October 27-30, 2010). One or more certificates may also be awarded to runners-up.

Please send your applications to:
Student Translation Award
American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation, Inc.
Muriel Jérôme-O’Keeffe, President
c/o American Translators Association
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590
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