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[See table of contents](#)

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ON THE SUBJECT OF TRANSLATION¹

or *Editing Comes First*

By helping the translator, people requesting translation work get a better product. This help may be as follows:

“The economics of the situation being what it is, translators cannot independently afford the advice of specialists and experts in all the different fields, whose advice they need, however. It is not safe for them to work without it. So a Company has adopted a very simple procedure, beneficial to the translator and beneficial to themselves. When a translation has definitely been ordered, with the foreign-language text in the translator's hands, he first goes through the text, solving in advance all anticipated terminological and other vocabulary problems, and all problems of meaning and interpretation, the solutions being recorded on little white cards, which go into his permanent file, so that no problem of any kind has ever to be solved twice — since in this way nothing is, or ever can be, “forgotten”. If, at this stage, a problem is encountered which the translator, with his own knowledge and equipment, finds himself unable to solve, making a note of it, he will finish his preliminary examination of the text, and then — with the Company's permission and blessing — telephone their scientist who has requested the translation (who still also has a copy of the foreign-language text), and together they will solve the problem.

The scientist who requests a translation is usually the one person in the world most interested in having it correct... Company scientists do not feel themselves inconvenienced by sometimes being asked to help assure that it *will* be correct. Hence the essential “editing,” when needed, is done in advance — before actual translation begins. Then, all problems solved, his desk clear of books, the translator translates — from his file.

The Company, then, enjoys a translation service which answers satisfactorily to their needs. They did not find it ready-made. They have had to help create it. They are glad that they did. You may have to do the same.”



(1) By Robert Addis. Taken from an ATA publication as a contribution of its California Chapter. April 1964. Copies of the text may be obtained from the American Translation Association, Post Office Box 489, Madison Square Station, New York, N.Y.