

Bringing spelling to artists

How many times has the phrase “why can’t the computer do that?” been uttered in newspapers? Well, the folks at Tansa Systems have an answer for that question, but it’s not so much the computer as the software they use that will stifle some of those queries.

Tansa, a Norwegian company that has U.S. offices in suburban Sarasota, Fla., provides newspapers with a complete and very powerful copy-editing system. The Tansa Text Proofing System 3 goes well beyond the typical spell checker and actually analyzes the document at lightning-fast speed.

The system is server-based and can be used across the newspaper, not just in conjunction with the editorial system. For newspapers looking for consistency across all departments, Tansa gives publishers the assurance that whether from marketing or editorial, advertising or circulation, word usage will be the same.

Newspaper groups, in fact, can guarantee consistent style across all of their newspapers by customizing Tansa and using it from a centralized location.

“We announced at NEXPO our new Tansa Update,” said Robert Laszlo, director of operations for North America. “It works similar to Microsoft Windows’ update.”

The update pushes new software out to a newspaper’s server and allows the administrator to install the updates. Tansa also pushes out dictionary updates.

“We added about 200 words to the base English dictionary,” he said.

In the Tansa system, the server holds the dictionary (or dictionaries) and the clients all work from the same dictionary or subset. The client application runs within whatever program the newspaper decides to integrate it with — editorial system, layout system, advertising system, or even a stand-alone word processor.

Tansa creates the dictionary for the newspaper by feeding it 10 years’ worth of

published material from the newspaper. Once that is done, the customization kicks in. The Associated Press Stylebook can be incorporated into the system as well as any in-house style manuals.

“Tansa Updates also pushes a log file from the newspaper’s server,” Laszlo said. “Tansa

said. “We will have French by the fall and German by the end of the year.”

The system can be localized for all the above languages. The dictionaries can be customized at the time of install and then can be regularly customized by the newspaper’s style editor or any person willing to be the chief dictionary sheriff.

The backend uses XML-based Web Services that allows it to run on almost any available client.

The Tansa client currently integrates with such off-the-shelf applications as Microsoft Word, Adobe InDesign and Quark XPress. Copy editing of artist-produced graphics will be greatly reduced by having the artist run the Tansa client on creations that include text.

As anybody who has proofread a graphic can tell you, that alone can amount to a huge time savings.

Tansa says it can reduce typographical errors up to “90 percent.” That’s pretty significant for newsrooms having to do more with less.

Productivity is immediately felt on the copydesk. Tansa claims editors experience a 40-percent increase in productivity. However, the unexpected boon

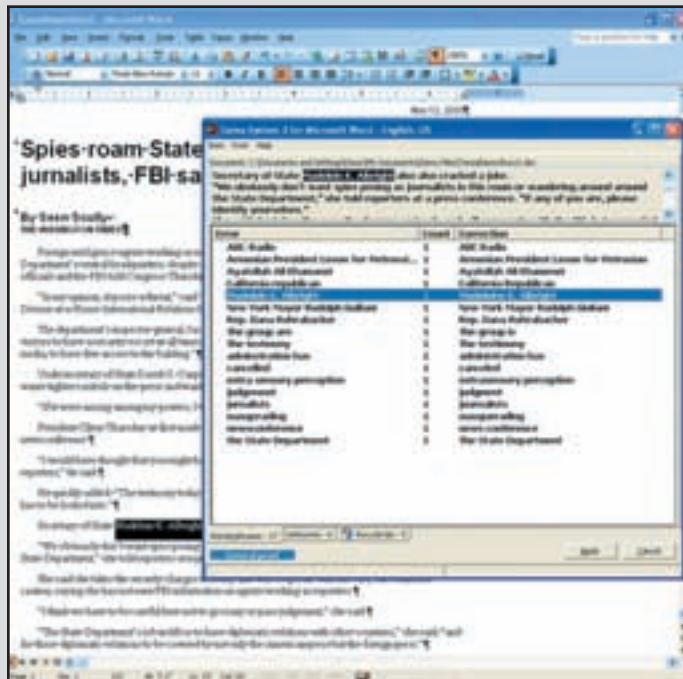
comes from having the Tansa system run where copyediting of text is not normally done — on artists’ workstations, on reporters’ terminals, on ad order entry personnel’s computers. The integration with Adobe InDesign also brings with it the ability to check the layout system’s hyphenation with the Tansa Hyphenation plug-in.

“We just completed the conversion for the Adobe Creative Suite 2 line,” Laszlo said. “We are finishing up on the Quark 6.5 extensions.”

Tansa will be looking at implementing a browser-based interaction, Laszlo said. “We will be adding web browser capabilities,” he said. “We will also be enhancing our dictionary with more functionality including a thesaurus and definitions.”

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— Jason Zappe



Dictionary, please: The Tansa Text Proofing System 3 allows anybody who uses word processing — not just newsroom people — advanced spelling.

analyzes the raw data and will send suggested updates on words not in the dictionary but which show a frequency usage.”

The process of spell checking a document with the Tansa system might seem to be complex, but it really takes place almost instantaneously. The document is sent to the Tansa server and is analyzed lexically and grammatically for punctuation, capitalization, personal names, company names and place names that are in the dictionary.

It also analyzes the grammar by comparing phrases, and can check up to 10 words in a sentence for grammatical validation.

The science behind it involves several pattern-matching algorithms and it can process “tens of thousand of words per second.”

Tansa can now proof text in British and American English, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. “We just added Spanish,” Laszlo