



Professional Profile

For Terminologists

Introduction

The primary prerequisite for today's multilingual information society is unambiguous specialised communication. Terminology represents the central component of specialised communication and knowledge transfer. Terminology work supports these processes by describing the individual terms and providing them with unambiguous definitions and stipulating their meanings.

Terminologists are specialists in compiling, describing, maintaining and propagation of monolingual and multilingual specialised vocabularies. They are actively involved in all sectors of human endeavour involving data, information, knowledge and communication. Terminology work is an interdisciplinary activity; for this reason, terminologists very often work together with specialists from the most varied specialised subjects.

Today, terminologists are at work in foreign language services (translation and interpreting), in technical writing, in standardisation, patents and legal services, in information and documentation, in research and development, in language planning and language maintenance and in publishing houses (especially for dictionaries).

Terminologists in an upper management position are in charge of a terminology group or even an entire terminology service. Being responsible for content management matters, their duties consist of ensuring the methodical, organisational and technical aspects of knowledge management (document, information and communication management or any combination of these elements). Self-employed terminologists advise companies in the private sector, in non-profit-making organisations and public institutions in the use of terminology methods, data and tools.

What a terminologist does

■ **Compiling monolingual or multilingual terminologies**

- Documentation searches
- Evaluation of documentation to determine nomenclature
- Systematic and selective terminology searches
- Arranging terms in logical groups and setting up concept systems
- Classifying terminology stocks by subject matter
- Drawing up definitions
- Preparing terminology and validating the information processed into entries for data bases
- Quality management of the data
- Updating the data

■ **Terminology planning activities**

- Drawing up and implementing a suitable terminology-related language policy for the sector of activity involved (institution, organisation, company, language community, etc)
- Homogenisation of terminologies
- Creation and generation of new terms, product names or descriptions of functions
- Standardisation of terminologies
- Verifying the current and the correct uses of terminologies

■ **Making terminology collections available**

- Cooperation in the planning and designing of terminology data bases
- Evaluation of software products specific to terminology (benchmarking) and cooperation in the further development of these working aids
- Compiling entry structures and specifying working methods and routines
- Looking after the technical and content aspects of terminology data bases

■ **Advisory and training activities**

- Advising direct beneficiaries or terminology data bases (including colleagues and staff from the translation, technical writing, research, development, production and sales)
- Advisory services in conjunction with setting up terminology services
- Training and mentoring trainees and learners
- Introduction, training, and continuing education of terminology personnel within the organisation, institution, etc.
- Drawing up courses of terminology studies and integrating them into a specific overall study course
- Preparation of research results for teaching, training and advisory purposes and the development of teaching and study materials
- Providing support for terminology theses and dissertations

Prerequisites

■ General requirements

- Good all-round knowledge
- Fundamental competence in the specialised sectors in question
- Ability to find their way into other specialised sectors quickly
- Systematic method of working
- Planning and organisational competence
- Project management competence
- Interdisciplinary thinking and comparative working methods
- Inter- and intracultural thinking (also in the working cultures)
- Ability to recognise cultural differences
- Ability to think in abstract terms
- Ability to conceptualise
- Creativity
- »flair to detect and follow up clues«
- Negotiation skills
- Power of persuasion
- Ability to present reasoned and convincing arguments
- Communicative competence
- Social competences
- Ability to resolve problems

■ Specialised requirements

- Good knowledge of the principles of terminology
- Mastery of terminological working methods (normative and descriptive terminology work)
- Mastery of the electronic tools for terminology management and their interfaces with other applications
- Basic knowledge of information technology and documentation

■ Language competence

- High degree of mother-tongue competence
- Well developed feel for the language and a high degree of linguistic creativity
- Where multilingual terminology work is involved, a high degree of competence in at least one, however where possible, in several languages

■ Research and teaching competencies

- Basic competence in the theory of science
- Research competence in the terminology sector as a subset of specialised communication
- Didactic competencies relating to terminology above and beyond basic competencies

Training and qualification

Today, the teaching of terminology and practical terminology work are a constituent component of virtually every course of studies in the translation, interpreting or technical writing sectors. This content is rarely to be found in other arts and social sciences courses. Some institutes of higher learning are offering independent courses of training and continuing education courses for terminologists.

You can obtain information of courses of instruction and continuing education opportunities in the field of terminology

- in the RaDT brochure »Terminologie – Grundlage für FachkommandInformationsgesellschaft« (Obtainable from: termdat@bk.admin.ch)
- on the German Terminology portal (Deutscher Terminologieportal): <http://www.iim.fh-koeln.de/dtp/>

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