



ALCHEMY CATALYST VERSION 3.1

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Alchemy Software, the Irish company which took over the Corel Catalyst product, offers a whole product range with various versions to cater for different needs in the localization industry. The Enterprise version reviewed in this article is their top-of-the-range product.

The Alchemy Catalyst Environment

When you first start the product, you are presented with a screen allowing you to open an existing translation tool kit, TTK (the specific file format used by Catalyst), or to create a new one, which can easily be done by inserting the files requiring translation. Assuming you were provided with a TTK already set up, when you open it, you will find yourself in the Catalyst environment, which is made up of three windows: the Navigator window, the Workspace window and the Results window. Each of them can be closed at any time, which will prove quite useful in the course of work. Having all of them open while you work may be disturbing, although sometimes useful, as your screen will be somewhat cluttered, except if you have a 19" monitor.

At first glance, the function of the various windows is not obvious to the new user but you need only a couple of minutes to get acquainted with it. Although Catalyst has standard editing feature like Search and Replace,

you will probably need some time to get into the multiple and powerful options offered by the product. A good starting point is the sample localisation project described in the documentation, which will give you the opportunity to use most of the functions on the sample files provided. For a first insight into the product, the best solution is most probably the online tutorial freely accessible on the Alchemy Software Web site.

The Alchemy Catalyst workflow

The workflow will depend on numerous factors and whether you create the TTK or were provided with an existing one. Typically and skipping the details, it will involve leveraging from previous translations and/or glossaries, if any, translation, extraction and validation.

In the case of a piece of software never localised before, you can use the Pseudo Translate Expert to test the application to see whether it is localisation-proofed, in other words to ensure that there will not be any problem when you come to the real translation process. This Expert can insert accented characters in the strings to check accented character support and expand text strings by a percentage to simulate the effects of text increase after localisation. The main advantage of Catalyst to the translator is that instead of working in sometimes mysterious lists of strings exported in various formats (e.g. text files, spreadsheets, etc.) offering no

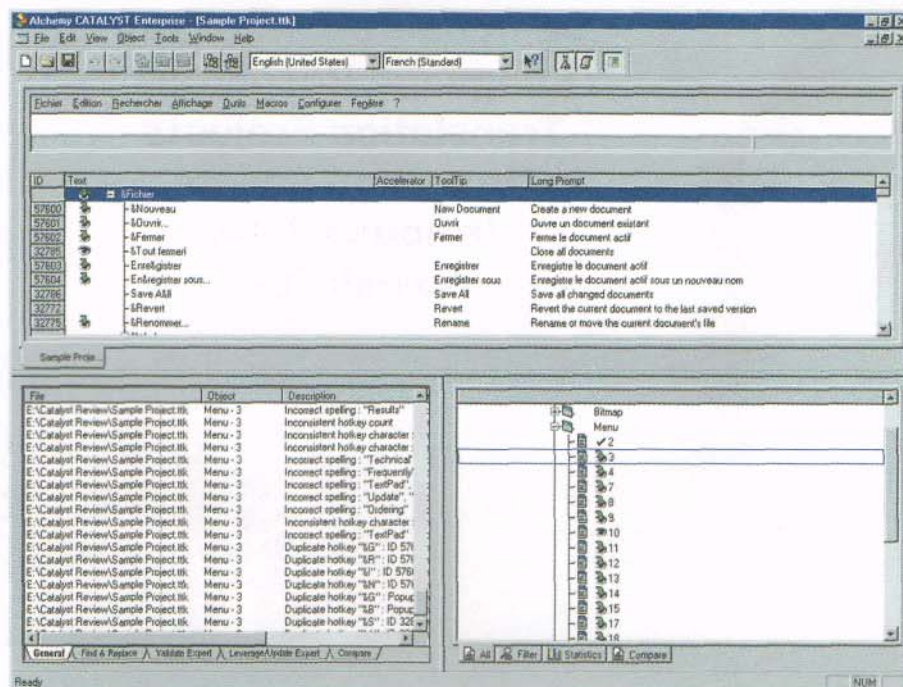


Figure 1: Cluttered screen, but showing partially translated menu in WYSIWYG mode at the top. The Results window shows the results of instant validation. The various icons in the Navigator window (bottom right) indicate the status of the various elements (signed-off, leveraged and for review).

context, the translator will see most of its translations in WYSIWYG mode. Menus, dialog boxes are all displayed on screen and can be edited directly in context in what we could call a real-time “You See What You Do” mode. No more guesses about strings being menu commands, button names, screen titles or whatever. Even more context is accessible if the application translated is based on the Microsoft Class Foundation. In that case, the simple Treat as MCF Resource command allows you to see and edit the menu options with their related tooltips and long prompts, which will be automatically updated in their respective string tables. A real boon for the translator.

The various editors offer a spellchecker which automatically marks in red any misspelling for immediate correction. Of course, the validation expert will also detect incorrect spelling and warn you. Alchemy Catalyst integrates a powerful search and replace function which works as in any word processing software with the additional capability to do search and replace operations on multiple files in a specified directory. This also helps reduce time-to-market, as validation can also be done directly by the linguist using the same tool.

Catalyst offers numerous automatic tests, like duplicate hotkeys in menus or dialogs, glossary consistency check, overlapping controls, etc. The WYSIWYG mode also allows easy resizing and alignment of the various interface elements once localised, all these operations being as simple as in any standard graphics tool. It is also worth mentioning that you can now resize the dialog editing window, which was impossible in previous releases and quite annoying.

The Navigator tabs

Another useful feature is the Statistics tab of the Navigator window. It allows you to know instantly the current status of your project, indicating word counts and status for the various elements. This window also has a Filter tab to access only certain types of items (e.g. untranslated or for review) with a click of the mouse. This allows you to display only the items that require your attention. The Compare tab (available from the Select version only) displays the colour-coded results of the comparison of two .exe files with the Comparison Expert. This expert allows you to compare two versions of an executable file to spot the changes, which on again can drastically reduce time required for testing.

Glossaries, leveraging and TMX support

These features of Alchemy Catalyst are probably among the most useful and impressive ones. While leveraging is not available in the standard version, you can still do impressive things with the multiple glossaries Catalyst can handle

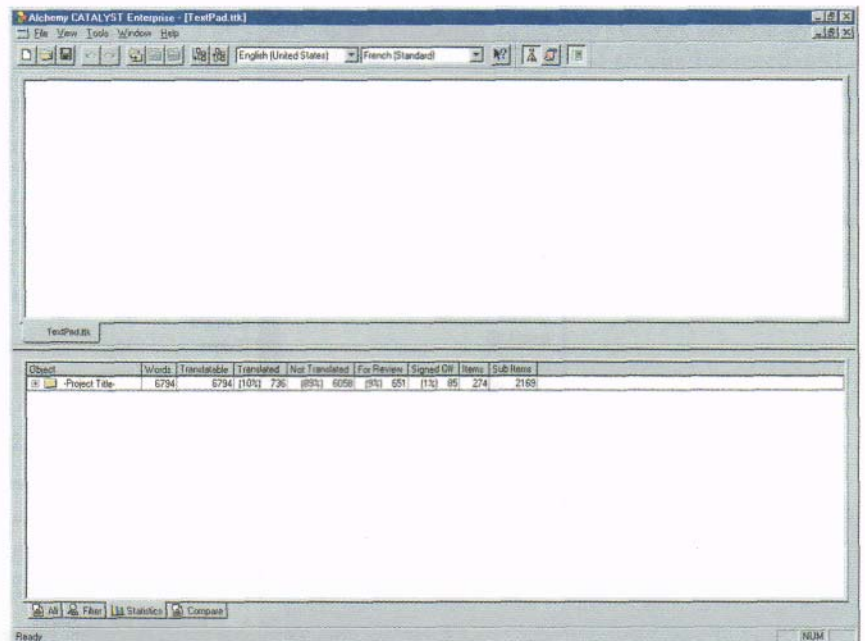


Figure 2: Statistics

simultaneously. Imagine you had translated a previous version of the product using another tool and you have a complete software glossary in TMX format (the previous releases were limited to tab-delimited format). You can select this file in the Catalyst options and any matching text will be underlined on screen. The translation can then be immediately inserted from a list of proposals displayed by pressing F2. You can also have several other glossaries attached and have the project glossary automatically updated with any new translation. Of course, you can as easily extract glossaries from your translation. From the Catalyst Advanced version, you can take advantage of the leveraging feature which will further ease your translation process. Now instead of having to press F2 to display a list of choices, you can instantly leverage from any existing TTK or TMX file with a total control on fuzzy matches. Catalyst can even add automatically the & for the hotkey at the beginning of strings when it is missing in your reference material. The validation step will in any case give you the opportunity to correct multiple hotkeys. It also generates extensive reports on the results of the leveraging process.

What is more, if in the course of your translation process, you receive an updated version of an .exe you are currently working on – not so uncommon – instead of creating a new TTK with the updated source .exe and leverage from your current TTK, you can use the Update Expert. In your current TTK, simply select the .exe requiring an update and Launch the Update Expert. After selecting the updated .exe file just received from the Browse window, you are presented with the same options as for a leveraging process. Make the appropriate selection and click OK. Your current TTK will be both updated and leveraged in a single operation.

The status indicators

The status indicators show the current of status of the various

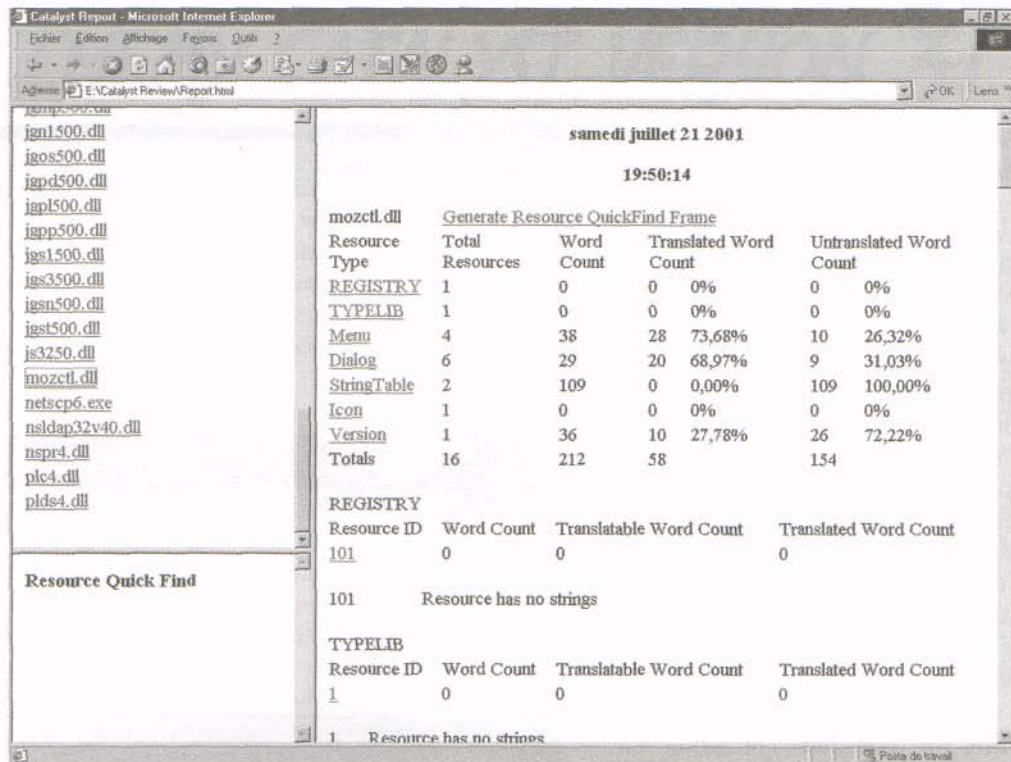


Figure 3: Leveraging report

elements you are working on. Five statuses are available: Locked (for strings that cannot be changed), Frozen (when an frozen item contains sub-items, these maintain their status when the parent item is unfrozen), Untranslated (for strings requiring translation), For Review (when a string has been translated, it automatically switches to this status) and finally Sign off when the string has been reviewed and validated. These status indicators facilitate tracking the localisation project. Changing the status of any item is quite simple. You only need to right-click on one or several items (Shift-click for contiguous items selection and Ctrl-click for non-consecutive items selection) and select the required status in the pop-up menu. You can also change the status of all the sub-items of an item, for instance all the menu options of a menu item, in one right-click on the main item. This multiple selection capability proves quite useful during a review process.

Alchemy Catalyst QuickShip

This QuickShip version of Catalyst provide translators with all the required features to translate TTKs prepared for them using the Enterprise Catalyst version: WYSIWYG and string editors, validation functions, glossaries and spell checking, etc. This allows users of the Enterprise version to prepare files for translation by any translator who can download the free QuickShip version from Alchemy's Web site. All these functions also obviously improve consistency within the software or with approved glossaries. Alchemy Catalyst is a totally open tool which succeeds in creating the alchemy between the linguist and the engineer.

More specific features

In addition to the features already described, Catalyst

has the availability to flip all dialogs in a file when translating to bi-directional languages. It is also possible to rename and reorder files in a TTK. Import and export options allow to share Catalyst settings amongst a group of translators. Catalyst supports translation, leveraging and validation for multiple file formats, including Ada code file, Qbasic/Basic, Cobol, C/C++/C#, CSV files, Delphi and Microsoft Visual Basic form files, C++ header files, ini files, Java, JavaScript and Pascal code files, Perl script files and standard delimited text files.

Although Catalyst can also handle hpj, cnt and rtf files for help system translation, it does not seem to be the best solution on the market for that kind of work.

What's new in version 3.1

- Runtime Validation
- Visual Comparison Expert
- New Language Support for Resources
- Glossary Consistency Check
- Multiple Selection in String Editor
- Update Expert
- WYSIWYG Editors
- New Flexibility & Project Control
- Translation Memory eXchange (TMX)
- Command Line
- Sharing Translation Memories
- Enhanced File Compatibility Support

Alchemy Catalyst versions

Although the reviewed software was Enterprise, it is important to pinpoint the various capabilities of the different versions. (see next page)

What about the future?

Well, the future is now! As these lines are written

Table 1: Catalyst versions and capabilities

CATALYST Features	Quickship	Standard	Select	Advanced	Enterprise
Visual Editors for User Interface	•	•	•	•	•
Visual Editors for Help systems	•	•	•	•	•
Editors for generic text objects	•	•	•	•	•
Editors for binary text objects	•	•	•	•	•
Editors for QuickShip TTKs	•	•	•	•	•
Find and Replace	•	•	•	•	•
Glossary Management Support	•	•	•	•	•
Spell Checking	•	•	•	•	•
Web Links	•	•	•	•	•
Command Line Processing	•	•	•	•	•
Import/Export TTK Sections	•	•	•	•	•
Project Management Reporting	•	•	•	•	•
Project Statistics	•	•	•	•	•
Language Support	•	•	•	•	•
Save TTK	•	•	•	•	•
Create TTK		•	•	•	•
TMX File Support		•	•	•	•
Extract from TTKs		•	•	•	•
Pseudo Translate Expert		•	•	•	•
Validation Expert		•	•	•	•
Visual Comparison Expert			•	•	•
Runtime Validation			•	•	•
Leverage Expert				•	•
Update Expert				•	•
SDK Code Expert				•	•
QuickShip Expert					•

Alchemy Software is announcing Alchemy Catalyst version 4.0. According to Alchemy Software, version 4.0 “combines secure editing environments for XML/XHTML based applications and Web sites, advanced contextual translation memory technology and introduces the fastest and most productive mechanism to translate repetitive text segments, all integrated into a single finely tuned project environment”. It will be put through its paces in another review!

Already one of the best of breed products in its current release, Alchemy Catalyst may well be the best-in-class in its upcoming version. ■

System requirements:

Alchemy Catalyst can run under Windows 95/98/2000/NT 4.0 on a 486DX2 SVGA computer with 16MB RAM, but requires Windows NT 4.0 or Windows 2000 to be able to directly extract translated DLLs or .exe files from the TTKs. The recommended system is a Windows NT 4.0/2000 Pentium 60, with 32MB RAM, a 300 x 600 monitor, a 2X CD-ROM drive and 30MB of free disk space for installation.

Prices:

Edition - Price in US\$

- **Standard Localisation Environment V3.1** - US\$ 499
- **Select Edition V3.1** - US\$ 899
- **Advanced Localisation Environment V3.1** - US\$ 2,499
- **Enterprise Edition V3.1** - US\$ 4,999
- **Quickship Edition V3.1** - FREE

More information:

Visit Alchemy Software Web site at <http://www.alchemysoftware.ie>

Ease of Us	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Aesthetic Appeal	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Speed	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Claims vs Reality	★ ★ ★ ★ ★