



Does your book's design allow its message to cross cultures?

by Kim Pettit



Co-Edition Blunders

This column is not suitable for co-edition—and I planned it that way. Most full-color magazines, in fact, are not produced to facilitate multiple printings in different languages. Magazines depend on visual appeal much more than most books, and therefore make far greater use of graphic elements including color, illustrations, photographs, typography, and white space.

Children's books, like magazines, also depend on visual appeal. But some books for children and other illustrated books can easily be contracted for co-edition, while others cannot. What makes the difference?

What not to do

Did you notice the title of this column? The drop-cap? The subhead? These are printed in color—that is, in a color other than black. When contracting with publishers to print a book in multiple languages, every use of text in color requires a plate change—and increases the cost of production. A variation on this color problem occurs when your design includes white text on a color background, such as in the quote that graces this page.

Another issue is that some languages require significantly more space than others. Spanish, for instance, on average is ten percent longer than English. Since the savings in a co-edition result from the second and subsequent publishers' ability to use the same artwork as the original, that layout must include enough space to accommodate the text. Co-editions work best when the size of the block of text changes little from one language to another.

Co-editions work best when the size of the block of text changes little from one language to another. English, Arabic, and some Chinese-language projects could not join in a single co-edition, because they are not written and read in the same way.

A lot of the material in *InterLit* is didactic, as befits our mission of equipping publishers for greater effectiveness in bringing ? to their communities. That means we rarely ✎ (or use the 🖨) to compose a ¶ that includes pictures for words. A 📖 with lots of pictures may bring a 😊 to ♀ and ♂, and children ♥ them, but because words in different languages have varying lengths, and sentences have different grammatical structures, such a layout, ☹, can be ☠ for co-editions. A related issue is making sure the symbols used in your 📖 are

understood the same way in the target culture as they are in the author's culture, or else your material will ☠.

It is not just symbols that have to cross cultures, but art as well. The authors in this issue of *InterLit* discuss how their contexts influence the choices they make. To publish a book suitable for co-edition in other contexts, take a hard look at the messages its pictures communicate to others. Are the facial features, skin tones, gestures, body language, clothing styles, surroundings shown in the book consistent with the message you want to give? Is the style of the art deemed acceptable for that subject matter by the target audience? Does any image include text? If so, how important is it that someone be able to read what it says in his or her own language—and how much will it detract from the book if you do not replace that picture?

Details make the difference.

The A-B-Cs of co-editions mean that it is impossible to collaborate on books that are organized alphabetically, for the same reason that translations for material based on acronyms, puns, or rhymes are also difficult. Each language has its own beauty and unique characteristics, and successful co-editions are those where the text works together with the artwork to delight readers.

What to do

This issue of *InterLit* discusses design in different cultures. Our colleagues share what they must take into account to publish literature that will appeal to readers in their specific markets. This column, with its focus on books suitable for co-edition, is no exception. It identifies what is problematic and offers solutions for reaching a specific market—in this case, potential publishing partners. The point, then, is to design with discernment. Determine whom you want to reach, do your homework, and then use the gifts of creativity and grace that God has given you. ▽

Key: ☩ = Christ, or the Gospel. ✎ = write. 🖨 = computer. ¶ = paragraph. 📖 = book. 😊 = smile. ♀ = men. ♂ = women. ♥ = love. ☹ = sadly (unlike the prior 😊, in this sentence the symbol ☹ served, not a noun, but as an adverb). ☠ = poison, or death. ☠ = bomb, or fail (this usage of the verb is slang).