

## Re: Word 2008 – does it do right-to-left text

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*Source:*

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Mac/microsoft.public.mac.office.word/2007-01/msg00413.html>

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- *From:* John Lockwood <[john.lockwood@xxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:john.lockwood@xxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Tue, 16 Jan 2007 14:11:43 +0000
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Some valid points made there John.

However Microsoft keep boasting they are the biggest Mac developer team outside Apple and yet they cannot (apparently) manage to do what much MUCH smaller teams have. As I pointed out NeoOffice already can do r-t-l on a Mac and will soon do Open XML and even VBA all Intel native on a Mac.

Microsoft after all can no longer claim their Mac developer team has to split their efforts doing lots of products.

By the way, I believe Nisus Writer Express at least purely uses the built-in Tiger routines since it says that (to do it) it requires Tiger.

Even none r-t-l languages like Russian (Cyrillic), Welsh, and Greek don't really work in Word 2004 because it still does not do Unicode. Apple's free TextEdit (the Mac equivalent of Windows WordPad) does a better job with such Word files!

There maybe a cost to Microsoft for adding rtl support but as they are having to clean up the code anyway I don't believe it would have been as big as you think IF they had made the decision to kill two birds with one stone. It is also the case that Office 2008 currently offers practically nothing to entice people to upgrade.

We already know we are going to loose VBA support (which even though we are a 100% Mac site we use in both Word and Excel internally, and we also need to be exchange files with PC users). Intel nativeness is nice to have but Office 2004 works fine (with VBA as well) in Rosetta. Therefore being native is not itself sufficient justification to pay for an upgrade.

The ONLY reason left from my perspective for upgrading (since we are loosing VBA, and apparently not getting better language support) would be if Microsoft had taken the opportunity of having to substantially re-write Office to move to Xcode and as a result FINALLY killed off the hundreds/THOUSANDS of ancient bugs we still suffer from (see <http://word.mvps.org/Mac/MSKBKnownIssues.html> for just a few of them). In particular Office 2004 still has major problems with Apple servers. Unfortunately does anyone seriously believe Microsoft are actually going to

Re: Word 2008 – does it do right-to-left text

fix these bugs? (Some of which are 20+ years old!)

I really cannot see any justification for spending tens of thousands of dollars (or UK equivalent) upgrading our company to Office 2008 for such a mediocre upgrade.

I take your comment on board about Microsoft in the past undertaking to continue Office for Mac at a time when Apple were in serious trouble. However things have changed, if Microsoft discontinued Office for Mac TODAY I would not have the slightest worry and might instead say thank god!

On 16/1/07 05:42, in article C1D2B0FC.5BCC4%john@xxxxxxxxxxxx, "John McGhie [MVP – Word and Word Macintosh]" <john@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Hi John:

We have to be careful to constrain ourselves to the facts here, otherwise we just set Phillip off again :-)

Changing text direction is such a fundamental change in an application that it must be designed in from the ground up. The fact that Apple has finally released full support for RTL means that other vendors can "begin" to do that design work.

My understanding is that Nissus and Mellel wrote their own right-to-left routines because the Apple ones didn't work. And by doing so, I am sure they improved their sales by 200 or 300 per cent. If Microsoft were to do the same thing for Mac Office, they could expect to improve Office sales by 0.033 per cent.

The fact that we WANT them to do that does not alter the fact that the board of directors might well go to jail if they approved the project :-)

Of course, as an IT Manager, you already know the following, but I will include it here to avoid setting Phillip off :-) We need to be careful of the term "re-write" when applied to a piece of software with 30 million lines of code in it :-) Under those conditions, the objective becomes "Do everything possible to AVOID re-writing it." Otherwise, you go broke.

The very clear direction from on high for Office 2008 will be something like "Take Windows Office 2007, remove the products that are too hard, remove the features that are not needed on the Mac, then make as few changes as possible to get the rest of it to simply 'work'"

So: If Apple RTL support is now sufficiently complete that Microsoft can simply unhook the Windows RTL support module from Office 2008 and hook up the OS X one, then OF COURSE they will do it. It might get them 100,000 new sales. Some of them to Al Quida and the Israeli government. But if we're talking about a team of 100 developers working through every module, every dialog box, every line of code that puts something on the screen and

Re: Word 2008 – does it do right-to-left text

changing the way it operates to fit in with Apple's RTL support, then it's not going to happen. There's not enough sales to fund it.

I wonder if the same enthusiasm will be evident at Apple, which just announced a mobile phone without enough rows on the keyboard to support accented characters, let alone RTL languages...

I richly enjoyed the Apple marketing slogan "Think Different". But the user base for which Microsoft Office was made saw it as a "Warning Label" and recoiled in horror. I think Apple quickly understood that it made a horrible mistake there, and jumped back itself pretty quickly. But it will take a few years for their user base to come on board. On the other hand, I do enjoy the PC with a cold vs Mac adds currently running. I'm typing this in the Mac while the latest PC sits on the desk beside me hacking and spluttering while I fill it up with Penicillin :-)

I don't know why you believe that Microsoft Office does not support ODI. It already does, along with any other XML-based format for which you possess a DTD and a Transform. The only change forthcoming is a translator to enable users to convert between the two.

I will agree that Messenger for Mac is deliberately crippled :-) Of course it is. And it will stay that way until Apple allows it into .Mac and AOL allows it into AIM. Right after that, expect it to suddenly uncripple itself.

After spending some time with Windows Media Player 11, I have decided that it's not a bad product. It has some nice bells and whistles that iTunes doesn't offer.

I think there is one reason I can give you to spend your money on Office 2008. The Open XML file format. If I said to you "You will get no more corrupt documents, and no more interchange with Windows problems" I think you would consider it. You may wait to see what they really deliver: but I still think you'll grab your checkbook.

Of course, I may be wrong. If Mellel and Nissus Writer will do all that your users need, you could save yourself a bundle. But few companies in my experience have needs that limited.

Cheers

On 15/1/07 11:45 PM, in article C1D127E9.1A2C5%john.lockwood@xxxxxxxxxxxx, "John Lockwood" <john.lockwood@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

On 12/1/07 14:19, in article C1CDE419.58F15%john@xxxxxxxxxxxx, "John McGhie  
[MVP – Word and Word Macintosh]" <john@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Re: Word 2008 – does it do right-to-left text

Hi John:

Now, if Steve Jobs were to show Microsoft his design specification for Pages, Microsoft may be a little more forthcoming about the feature set for Word 2008 :-)

While we wait to find out, I invite you to reflect on this:

Word does right-to-left perfectly on the PC, and Mac Word is essentially a port of the PC code. So the copy of Word you are using right now already contains right-to-left support.

It's not working. It's disabled. Because something is missing. I leave you to ponder what it is that might be missing, and which company should have supplied it by now :-)

This is the excuse that Microsoft have been using for years and initially was a VALID excuse in that Mac OS X prior to Jaguar didn't really do right-to-left at all, Jaguar did it poorly but Panther fairly well and Tiger does it perfectly.

This is evidenced by the multiplicity of other word processors for the Mac which DO support right-to-left text (e.g. Mellel see <http://www.redlers.com/mellelmultilingual.html> and Nisus Writer see <http://www.nisus.com/Express/> ).

So as I stated Microsoft are having to re-write Word anyway, and no longer have an excuse for not adding this feature. Any failure to do so would in my opinion reflect a DELIBERATE decision to [not] do so (i.e. to deliberately continue to disadvantage Mac users).

The Israeli government has already practically declared war once before over this issue (see <http://www.macobserver.com/article/2003/10/15.4.shtml> ), I am surprised the Arabic world has not similarly declared a Jihad against Microsoft over this! After all several Arabic publications use Macs including Al Jazeera! See <http://www.ameinfo.com/102511.html>

Note: NeoOffice also supports right-to-left text, it will very soon [far, far sooner than Microsoft] support Open XML files, and it will also support some VBA in its spreadsheet module whereas Excel 2008 will not. Its also ALREADY available as a native Intel version.

It is incredible that Microsoft keep boasting they have the biggest team of Mac developers outside Apple and yet produce so very few products [the

## Re: Word 2008 – does it do right-to-left text

number of which continues to shrink] and not even particularly good products either.

Ultimately Microsoft's patently deliberate crippling of their Mac software is I feel counter-productive. A Mac user will look at their obviously crippled products (e.g. MS Messenger) and think – Microsoft obviously are not very good at writing software its a good thing I am not using Windows as that must be crap as well. A Windows user can look at iTunes on Windows and see a full quality non crippled application that is far easier to use than WMP and has more features than WMP. They can then think, blimey if that's how good their free software is for Windows imagine how good the rest of their software for their own operating system must be. Hence the [increasing] number of switchers to the Mac.

I would also say that historically having a GOOD cross-platform offering has been a major reason for several software products succeeding over others which did not (e.g. Quicken vs. MS Money, Excel vs. Lotus 123). This is one of the main reasons Office succeeded in the first place and quite possibly why iTunes is succeeding now. This is a lesson Microsoft have clearly forgotten and the result will likely be far fewer sales of Office 2008 upgrades than Microsoft presumably expect. I as an IT Manager certainly see no justification so far for spending tens of thousands of dollars upgrading all our users.