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## How do you say 'muggle' in Ancient Greek?

**University of Calgary professor's Harry Potter collection highlights the challenge of translating Potter to the world**

The adventures of Harry Potter now have a worldwide audience, but just how easy is to translate words like 'quidditch' and 'Slytherin' into languages like Mongolian, Urdu, and Ancient Greek?

Nick Žekulin, a professor of Russian at the University of Calgary, has collected 67 translated volumes of the first book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. The collection includes volumes from around the world in Faroese, Icelandic, Latin and Occitan and helps illustrate the challenges of translating the world of Harry Potter.

"The huge number of Harry Potter books sold in other languages draws attention to the role of translators as cultural mediators and facilitators," says Florentine Strzelczyk, director of the U of C's Language Research Centre, a hub for researchers investigating language. "A translator's role is to not only translate, but also to adapt the tone, humour and suspense of the narrative to the cultures and languages in which the story is going to be received."

In the Ukrainian version of the book, for example, the translator chose to portray Hogwarts as an orphanage for poor children, whereas the Hebrew translator decided to keep the English boarding school setting because she believed readers would accept it as part of Harry's fantasy world.

Žekulin began collecting the translated volumes while on sabbatical in Prague in 2003, after his daughter brought him the first four Harry Potter books in case he needed "an escape" into English. He enjoyed reading the books and, as he travelled around Europe that year, he picked up copies of the first volume in the other languages he could read: Russian, Czech, German and Slovenian. Gradually, friends and family members began to bring to him copies from their travels.

J.K. Rowling introduced readers to Harry Potter in 1997. The seven books in the Harry Potter series have sold more than 350 million copies worldwide (11 million in Canada) and have been translated into 67 languages. Almost one third of the Harry Potter books sold worldwide are translations.

The **Harry Potter in Translation** collection will be on display in the lobby of the University of Calgary's Language Research Centre, (Craigie Hall D 4<sup>th</sup> floor), from February 24 to March 10.

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