

Re: How do physicists deal journals in other languages?

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- *From:* Andy Resnick <andy.resnick@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
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blackhead wrote:

If you have a look at Feynman and Wheeler's:

Classical Electrodynamics in Terms of Direct Interparticle Action
http://prola.aps.org/pdf/RMP/v21/i3/p425_1

There are references to French and German journals. Is it really the case that these two guys were multi-lingual?

How do physicists get around the problem of trying to read a journal in another language they can't speak?

That's a good question— English-speaking scientists (especially unilingual Americans, myself included) are lucky that English has become the universal scientific language over the past 50–100 years. Prior to that, it was German, and before that, French. Before that was Latin, I suppose.

When needed, I make use of translations:

1960's Russian physics papers were mostly translated by the U.S. Government and readily available.

"classic" papers are sometimes translated by enterprising individuals and made available (Forster's original paper on energy resonance transfer is an example)

Modern papers (mostly abstracts and short reports) can sometimes be figured out because the jargon looks the same, and diagrams provide additional clues.

But yes, occasionally I come across a paper with a title that looks really interesting and relevant and is not comprehensible because it's in a different language— Japanese/Korean, more and more.

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