



capital translator

Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association
Vol. 23, No. 2 Summer 2001

NCATA holds 4th Annual Job Fair

by Ruth Boggs

NCATA held its 4th Annual Job Fair on June 9, 2001, preceded by a chapter meeting for corporate members.

For an indoor venue, the weather could not have been worse: The brightest sunshine of the year, temperatures in the high seventies, and no humidity – a day that beckoned to be spent outside. The harty souls who forsook the golf course, the park or the backyard in favor of the Job Fair were there because they meant business.

Ask any number of people why they attended, and you will get any number of different answers.

Vanina Gambini (vanina_gambini@hotmail.com) is an English <> Spanish scientific and literary translator who just moved here from Argentina. She is new to the area and wanted to market her services and get a feel for the local translation business.

Dylan Westfeldt (dwestfeldt@adrem.ws) has been in business since 1995. He is an English <> Spanish translator and conference interpreter. He attended the job fair two years ago and came back to renew contacts.

Edméa McCarty (mccarty@ix.netcom.com) is an English <> Portuguese translator. She brought

along Samanda de Jesus, who attended for the first time and regretted not bringing enough resumé and business cards. Edméa estimates that her fellow Brazilians made up the biggest contingent of this year's job fair.

Harvey Fergusson (HFFergusson@aol.com) attended for the fourth time, which definitely makes him a regular. He has been a French > English and Italian > English translator for 15 years and appreciates the networking opportunities at the job fair.

Responses from the exhibitors/corporate members were equally enthusiastic.

Mercedes Pellet, CEO of M² Ltd: "This was a wonderful opportunity to see how much the local translation community has grown in just a few years! Particularly impressive was the degree of professionalism of the participants as they introduced themselves with well-crafted resumé and business cards in hand. As an old timer, I felt the Job Fair provided a double treat by allowing us to catch up with old friends and to put faces to many of the people with whom we have established telephone relationships."

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President's Corner

by Scott Brennan



Translation and interpreting have come a long way in just a few years. We now work routinely for clients around the globe. Our services are in greater demand than ever. Even in the darkest corners of business and industry, the awareness is dawning that effective communication across language barriers is the one thing the global marketplace cannot do without.

That gives us all a higher profile. As we know too well, here inside the Beltway, anyone in the public eye must control their image, or someone else will. Clearly, the time has come for us to develop and pursue a comprehensive public relations strategy for the T&I profession. With that goal in view, I would like to offer this brief, personal thinkpiece.

My current thinking is that a 3-pronged approach would make most effective use of our existing resources.

First, **heighten awareness of T&I** through press placements and positioning ourselves as an authoritative source of information for journalists and others on issues relating to translation and language. Recent opportunities in the news have included the questions over the cultural context for the co-pilot's last words as recorded on the black box in the Egypt Air crash, or the carefully considered translation of the word "sorry" in the Chinese government's official version of the Bush administration's statement ending the standoff on the Navy signals intelligence plane that made an emergency landing on Hainan Island.

The most effective tone we can take, I think, is "Just the facts, ma'am." No adjectives. No superlatives. Nothing to prove. We want to explain what translators and interpreters do, have done (glamour stories), and can do.

In my view, this fundamentally proactive approach would be best supported by a professional public relations firm. The idea is not a new one; it has been in the air at ATA for several years. The basic policy decision we need to make is whether we as members are ready for the level of effort required. I understand the typical PR expenditure for an association like ATA is from 3% to 5% of the annual budget: A substantial amount, but we would not be taking out full-page ads in *Newsweek* or the *Wall Street Journal*.

On the contrary, I believe this kind of work is most effective when done behind the scenes. Rather than making a big splash, we want to work steadily and deliberately to bring about subtle and lasting changes over the long term.

Second, **targeted marketing of our services** aims for very tangible results. The goal is to generate job leads by putting our members in the right place at the right time, to respond to prospective clients' immediate and specific needs. We are already doing this to some extent locally and nationally through our online and hardcopy directories. Active promotion of those resources at trade shows and other industry events would be a natural outgrowth. Unlike our efforts to raise awareness of the profession in general, this component would be driven primarily by volunteers.

Third, **strengthening our professional infrastructure** will put us in a position to set the standard for T&I in this country. That is the real thrust of the recently drawn roadmap for changes to the ATA accreditation program. A strong, widely trusted credential needs to be supported by a robust professional

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NCATA Elections

NCATA's member volunteers are its lifeblood. Without them, there would be no *Directory of Translators & Interpreters*, professional development seminars and programs, website, job fair, ATA accreditation workshops, networking opportunities or *Capital Translator*. Consider taking on a leadership role in the Chapter. The offices of **President**, **Treasurer** and **Accreditation Chair** come up for election at the end of this year. Serving on NCATA's Board is an excellent opportunity to make the national capital area a better place to be translator or interpreter. The **President** oversees all aspects of Chapter operations and is responsible for making NCATA a valuable part of members' professional lives in the broadest sense. From the administrative standpoint, the President is the Chapter's liaison with ATA, coordinates the

organization of events, chairs and sets the agenda for board and membership meetings, and makes appointments as necessary. The **Treasurer** receives and disburses all NCATA funds, maintains financial records, presents an annual report to the membership, and is responsible for the Chapter's financial affairs in general. The **Accreditation Chair** works closely with ATA headquarters to arrange accreditation exam sittings and recruit qualified proctors, schedules and organizes accreditation workshops, and is responsible for all matters relating to the local administration of the ATA accreditation program. All three officers are elected to two-year terms and are voting members of NCATA's Board of Directors. Elected officers must be members in good standing of both NCATA and ATA. ATA's bylaws require the

President and Vice President to be active members of ATA. Note that a recent ATA board resolution has decoupled ATA accreditation and active (voting) membership status. The board meets roughly once every two months, to coordinate work done by each officer in his or her respective area with a fair degree of autonomy. Interested but want to know more? Contact NCATA's current officers at the numbers given on page 2. All candidates must submit a 150-word statement by October 5 to the election coordinator, NCATA Secretary Carolina Restrepo. Candidate statements will be published in the *Capital Translator*, and ballots will be mailed to members in October. The election results will be announced at NCATA's 2001 Annual Meeting held before the Holiday Party, tentatively scheduled for Sunday, December 2. ☞

Your New Member Number

Turn your *Capital Translator* over and look at the address label. You will notice a number printed above your name. This is your new NCATA member number.

Beginning next month, you will need your member number to access the online update features of NCATA's *Directory of Translators & Interpreters* and edit your directory entry directly on the NCATA website at www.ncata.org. NCATA Webmaster Michael Wahlster and Sandra Burns Thomson are busy putting the finishing touches on the web programming and presentation. You will be notified by e-mail as soon as this new section of the website is up and running (make sure you are signed up for NCATA's e-mailing list). ☞

Accreditation Examination

The next ATA Accreditation Examination is to be held on Saturday, September 8, 2001 from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the University of the District of Columbia, 4200 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC., in Building 44, Small Auditorium A03.

Candidates need to have been a member of ATA for at least 4 weeks in order to take the examination and must present a photo-ID for admission. They are requested to arrive at least 15 minutes early to allow time for announcements and questions.

Harvey Fergusson II will be happy to answer any questions from candidates at 703-844-8444.

The next Accreditation Examination has been scheduled for that same location on Saturday, January 12, 2002 from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. ☞

This article first appeared online in the July 2000 issue of Translation Journal (www.accurapid.com/journal) and is reproduced here by permission of the author and publisher. Thanks, Steve and Gabe. —ed.

Reflections of a Human Translator on Machine Translation

or

Will MT Become The “Deus Ex Machina,” Rendering Humans Obsolete In An Age When “Deus Est Machina?”

by Steve Vlasta Vitek



There's a tremendous gulf between microprocessors and brains. People still don't know exactly how the brain works. Brains remain quite a mystery....A machine can collect lots of data and make inferences and judgement. It becomes philosophical: what does it mean to understand? You can create something that has the look of understanding and the feeling of understanding. But it is what lets us make a leap to understanding something and make insights into something else. This is one thing that electronics can't do.

Michael Slater, publisher of the Microprocessor Report, Sebastopol, California

Every now and then Federal Express delivers a thick envelope to my home office with at least a dozen Japanese patents and a cover letter from a patent lawyer asking me to provide a price quote for translating the whole package. After the initial rush that comes from seeing big dollar signs—when I am done counting the pages and multiplying them by my estimate of the number of words to arrive at the dollar figure—I try to calm down as I prepare a fax to the lawyer. More often than not, the price is too high, and the lawyer has to find a way to argue the technological aspects of a patent case without knowing all the details of what is in those patents. There are, however, ways to get around the cost problem. Sometimes I am asked to translate only the patent claims, which will reveal

some of the needed information at a fraction of the cost.

There are also English summaries online, available for five dollars, describing the gist of the design in peculiar, but usually fairly understandable, English written by native Japanese speakers. Another alternative is to have the package translated by a machine at a fraction of the cost of human translation. One can achieve some kind of understanding of the design from the words thrown at you by a machine, especially if the reader of the translation is an expert in the field. It is much cheaper to use this option: the average cost for machine translation of a patent is about sixty dollars, while the average cost of human translation is at least ten times higher.

The problem is that the machine does not understand the meaning of the document at all. Therefore, although most of the technical terms used by a machine will be correct, it is up to the reader to make sense of those words haphazardly jumbled together by a non-thinking machine. The following is a random example of commercial machine translation of a short section taken from a simple Japanese patent. The translation was obtained from an online search service that offers, among other things, machine translation.

“circle 1.. In case of mask which uses metal sheet. You explain making use of Figure 1. pattern a which corresponds to mark “A” in metal sheet 4 is formed, the metal sheet 4 must be

formed with photograph etching and not. As for this pattern b because of notch type, bridge 11 in order to prevent the coming out portion of metal sheet become necessary. As a result, mark “A” which marking is done is not correct mark “A” always in object to be marked, it becomes mark where portion of bridge 11 lack. Because of this, it was a eyesore even in eye where portion which lacks existed in mark “A”, saw, there was a possibility which the mark misperception is done.”

In case you are wondering what the text above actually means, this is how this imperfect human translator would translate the same paragraph:

“(1) Figure 1 indicates a case when a metallic plate is used for a mask. In order to form pattern “a” with a corresponding mark “A” in metallic plate 4, the metallic plate must be formed with photoetching or a similar process, including a notch in the pattern, and bridge 11 must be formed to prevent partial detachment of the pattern from metallic plate 4. The result is that the marking substance will not necessarily form a precise mark “A” which can be used for marking, but rather, the mark will be formed with a deficient part containing the bridge part 11. That is because the bridge part is normally left in the pattern, although this not only creates a visual distraction, but it can also cause a mark recognition error.”

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

Even this translation, done by an experienced translator who has translated thousands of similar patents from Japanese and other languages, may still not be completely clear unless the reader can see the accompanying Figure 1 and also understands how marks are used in the manufacture of electronic components. This is particularly true when one translates between two languages as dissimilar as Japanese and English. Unlike in European languages, Japanese nouns usually have no singular or plural, and Japanese verbs, especially verbs used in patents, usually have no tense. Other grammatical features normally present in a European language, such as subject, may be missing in Japanese or replaced by a unique Japanese grammatical feature called *wadai* (“topic”), which has largely adverbial characteristics from the viewpoint of Western grammar. Western grammatical concepts are not really applicable to Japanese because many important concepts and aspects of the Japanese language do not exist in European languages, and vice versa. For instance, the Japanese grammatical categories of “topic” (*wadai*) and “particle” (*joshi*) simply have no equivalents in systems developed on the basis of a descriptive grammatical theory for Latin, French, English and other European languages. Given how difficult it is to explain all these linguistic aspects even to a linguist, it must be very difficult to program all these grammatical differences into a piece of software.

However, one look at Figure 1 would explain to a human reader exactly what is meant in the paragraph above. Obviously, I always translate the text while looking at the figures, and I was only guessing the precise meaning of the Japanese text until I saw the figure. There is no way around it—we cannot translate that which we do not under-

stand. The meaning is of paramount importance in the translation process. And unlike humans and chimpanzees, machines by definition do not understand the meaning of anything and never will. This is why machine translation that aims at accurate translation of the meaning of the original text is an exercise in futility, regardless of how many billions of dollars, yen or marks are spent in the pursuit of this elusive

humans by dumb machines. I would also argue that not even patent lawyers are paid enough to deserve being abused by unfeeling machines in this manner. There must come a point at which the patent lawyer’s brain will refuse to play a silly game with a silicon translator, wherein the silicon translator supplies the words in English and the specialist tries to supply the real meaning of these words.

...although most of the technical terms used by a machine will be correct, it is up to the reader to make sense of those words haphazardly jumbled together by a non-thinking machine.

aim. MT will never really amount to anything more than a tool, a useful tool for translating words from one language into another, words that do not necessarily say anything about the meaning of the original text at all, except perhaps by accident. The meaning cannot be supplied by a machine—it has to be supplied by a human being. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that a patent lawyer will be able to supply the real meaning of the passage by reading the machine-translated words and looking at the figures. However, most of the time, the machine product will be crude and almost incomprehensible, even with a very simple descriptive passage. In my opinion, forcing patent lawyers to go through this process every time when they need to arrive at the real meaning of a sentence represents abuse of very intelligent

A Cost-Effective Alternative Or Abuse of Humans By Machines?

At that point, the lawyer may realize that sixty dollars for a machine-translated patent is not such a bargain after all. This, obviously, is what I’m counting on. I think that, all things considered, MT is an excellent invention. It makes sense to pay sixty dollars for a patent translation when you’re swamped with dozens of patents that might contain the information that you are looking for. And it is probably possible to determine based on machine translation of words which patents do not contain relevant information and which patents may. At that point, a human translator will probably be asked to

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Reflections ...continued from page 5

supply a human translation containing not only the proper technical terms but also the real meaning of the foreign language text. It is probably wasteful to go ahead and translate twenty-four patents at an average cost of six hundred dollars per patent in order to discover two or three patents that are in fact relevant and important for arguing a case, as a good accountant will be quick to point out. But it makes sense to translate all of them “on the cheap” by a machine and then to ask a human translator to translate one or two important patents as evidence of prior art design. And judging from my interaction with my clients, this is already happening. Machine translation, instead of being the scourge of our profession, is in fact an extremely fortunate development for translators. It broadens the scope of resources that are now available to our clients during a search for prior art (existing design). It is also likely that CAT (computer-aided translation), a close relative of MT, is suitable for translating repetitive passages that need constant updating with only minor changes each time. It makes sense to quickly and inexpensively update existing translations of weather forecasts, the daily status of water levels on European rivers (which flow through a different country every few miles, as oblivious of national and linguistic borders as Vikings of old)—perhaps even cellular phone communication manuals and the like—by machine and then have them edited by an experienced human translator who understands the specific conditions and requirements. This kind of translation can be done with the help of CAT/MT *provided the input range is extremely limited and the input, the translation process, and the output are subject to strict, professional human control.*

Building a Tower Of Babel from Silicon Bricks

Which also leads me to believe that the simple, routine kind of translation work that can probably be done by machine may soon disappear in the quicksand of MT, although even this kind of translation will still need human editing, so that the only kind of translation left for me *...is the kind I like to do!* The kind of translation that requires an intimate knowledge of languages combined with analytical thinking and understanding of an infinite number of situations that can only be achieved by the human brain, with its billions of connections supplying the sparks needed in a mysterious thinking process. I don't think we understand what really causes thinking to occur and how it all works any better than we did two or three thousand years ago. If we did, we would not be trying to build another Tower of Babel, this time around from silicon bricks. It is an expensive proposition, and the payoff may not really be worth it. The expectation that machine translation will soon replace humans, still prevalent among the gullible, monolingual public, is—dare I say it—nothing but a new piece of evidence of human ignorance and arrogance. Regardless of the speed at which computer chips can process information, and in spite of the fact that this speed has increased about 500 times in the past few years, the quantum leap that is a characteristic of human thinking—when we reach a new conclusion based on the information presented to us and based on our human experience—is something that we will never be able to program into a machine. If we could do that, machines could replace not only human translators, but also their clients: patent lawyers, medical doctors, judges and engineers. To try to reduce human language, which is as complex as human thinking, to a series of zeroes

and ones is clearly an exercise in futility. In fact, it might be easier to input all applicable laws and technical designs into a computer and then use this computer instead of a patent office examiner to evaluate the relative merits of a technical design.

Commercial services offering MT online realize that their product is not really a translation, that is to say, a rendition of the *meaning* of the original text into another language. They sometime use a different term for the MT product, such as “gisting,” and contrast this “gisting” to “custom translation” (i.e. human translation). Machine-translated texts usually carry a disclaimer on every page in which no guarantee is given that the “translation” is accurate and no responsibility is assumed for the machine-translated product. This protection against a lawsuit filed by an angry customer who might have expected a real translation for his money is definitely needed when every single sentence usually contains a number of gross errors. If a translation done by a machine is accurate, it can be accurate only coincidentally, because the machine does not understand the concept of accuracy.

Still, it is clear that machine translation will play an important role in the new millennium, helping to bring down the communication barriers in the newly interconnected world. It is up to us human translators to explain to the general public what machine translation is, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and what role it is likely to play in the future development of our civilization. We translators have insight into this problem that other professionals can hardly be expected to have.

Deus Est Machina!—The God Is a Machine!

About a year ago, on C-Span (a non-commercial cable TV channel in United States that covers public

affairs), I saw Raymond Kurzweil, the author of the Kurzweil scanning method for character recognition by software, answering questions about likely future trends in technological development. He was very optimistic about the future of machine translation. He was convinced, he said, that machine translation will soon achieve the same kind of accuracy that is now achieved by optical scanners, which can convert printed pages into digital units containing the words printed on the page. I don't know whether he really believes what he was saying or whether he was more interested in boosting his company's stock or promoting his new book. But his geeky audience was clearly pleased with his answer. It was what they expected. The public wants to believe that machines will soon replace humans and complicated texts containing the result of an extremely complicated thought process expressed in languages that have been evolving continuously for millennia will be soon translated by slightly smarter machines with faster microprocessors able to achieve an accuracy of, say, 95.5%. "Deus ex machina" will soon be replaced by "deus est machina." The Bible will be soon translated by a sheet-fed optical scanner instead of a team of biblical scholars, and instead of a hundred years, the whole translation will take only a few hours! That will truly be the New Testament of our age.

And since this exciting technological development is just around the corner, or at the worst, no more than a few decades away, there is really no need to learn foreign languages. All we have to do is design the faster chip and hire a few good software programmers, as Raymond Kurzweil proposes in his book *The Age of Spiritual Machines (L'âge des machines conscientes)* when computers surpass human intelligence.

And I Thought Silicon Breast Implants Were a Scary Concept!

Kurzweil probably does believe in what he is saying because he believes that human consciousness, a *conditio sine qua non* if we want to create artificial intelligence that can translate the real meaning of any text, can and will be simulated by computers in the near future. He also says that humans and computers will merge so that human memories will be downloaded into a machine and mechanical neural implants will be installed in human brains. (And I thought silicon breast implants were a scary concept!) There are, of course, other scientists and philosophers examining the issue of human consciousness and intelligence who come to the exactly opposite conclusion. For instance, in his recent book *The Mysterious Flame*, the philosopher Colin McGinn argues that evolution itself has so designed our minds that we cannot understand or explain intelligence. Whether we call something evolution, God, or cosmic intelligence, all of these names are indicative of the same principle—everything happens for a reason, and this reason usually cannot be understood on the level of human consciousness. Unfortunately, we humans are capable only of this relatively low level of consciousness, although from time to time we may be able to

catch a glimpse of divine consciousness, or evolution if we want to call it that, usually without realizing what is going on.

All I can say is, good luck, Mr. Kurzweil, and more power to you! Thanks, among other things, to your superior machines, whose intelligence will presumably soon exceed yours and mine, we human translators can look forward to a booming business in the exciting field of human translation for a few more centuries. ✎

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Steve Vlasta Vitek was born in Czechoslovakia, where he majored in Japanese studies and received his M.A. (Magister of Arts) degree from Charles University in Prague in 1980. He lived and worked as a translator in Czechoslovakia, Germany, and Japan. He has been living and working as a freelance technical translator from Japanese, German, Czech and other languages in United States since 1987. Vitek now lives in Chesapeake, Virginia. His website is at www.PatentTranslators.com.

Join NCATA's Electronic Mailing List

Sign up with NCATA's electronic mailing list to receive announcements on job leads, seminars, conferences and NCATA events. The list is optional: Go to www.ncata.org and subscribe under the "Mailing List" option. You can cancel or register a new e-mail address at any time.

This channel of communication is especially important for NCATA, now that the *Capital Translator* has moved to quarterly issues. New members, please note that you are not automatically added to the e-mailing list when you join. ✎

The Top 10 Ways to Bring More Joy to Your Workday

Some refreshing thoughts for a hot summer day

by Linda

1 Start your workday by jotting down 3-5 things you are grateful for. Place the list where you will see it on and off throughout your day.

When we focus our attention on our blessings and on gratitude, we fill our heart and mind with positive energy. That energy assists us in bringing a positive attitude to each of our tasks each day.

2 Spend your lunch hour and breaks doing activities that energize and revitalize you.

So often we feel the need to work through lunch and breaks or at least to spend those times in tasks. Instead, choose to use that time to energize and revitalize yourself. Take a walk at lunch, paying attention to the trees, animals, and people around you. If you enjoy reading, use one break a day to read a few pages in a novel or an inspiring collection of essays. Chat with people at the local newsstand or coffee shop. Taking a real break from our jobs, even for ten minutes, allows us to return to our tasks with more energy and a fresh perspective.

3 Make your workspace more attractive.
We all work better when our space attracts us to it. A single flower in a bud vase takes little space but adds beauty that we can both see and smell. A small painting with bright colors can provide us with a focal point of beauty. An attractive pen and pencil set, especially one given us by someone we care about, can provide us with beauty as well as a reminder of our important relationships.

4 Commit yourself to making only positive comments about others you work with.

When we verbalize the negative, we give it power. Rather than making those around you wrong with the words you speak, focus on what makes them right. When problems exist, find ways to make the situation win-win instead of trying to affix blame.

5 Laugh.
Find humor in the little things that happen every day. When the copier jams, rather than getting frustrated, laugh. When you drop a pencil or a file folder, laugh. When the elevator seems to be taking forever, laugh. If you react to such things with humor instead of annoyance, your blood pressure will remain normal, your frustration level will decrease, and your colleagues will appreciate your attitude. Reader's Digest was, indeed, right. Laughter is the best medicine — and stress can kill.

6 Work smart, not hard.
Too many of us base the value of our work on the number of hours we put in or the stress level we endure. Instead, take time to appreciate each accomplishment, no matter how small, and give yourself credit for finding ways to delegate what can be appropriately delegated and for finding appropriate shortcuts that decrease your work time while increasing your productivity.

7 Appreciate those you work with.
Acknowledge the contributions, both large and small, of those you work with. Let

them know that you see and appreciate the contributions they make, not only to the goals of the organization, but also to the culture of the workplace. Acknowledging the contributions of those we work with helps us to see our colleagues more clearly as people. It also reminds us to contribute positively to the workplace ourselves.

8 Be your Authentic Self.
By sharing our true self with our colleagues, our superiors, and our clients, we give them our most precious gift. When we act against our own authenticity, our work becomes struggle. We can only be truly joyful when we are true to ourselves.

9 Learn to accept change willingly.
No matter what the job, changes happen. When we resist change, holding on to our past understanding of expectations, frustrations grow. Learn to be flexible. The willow weathers storms more gracefully than the mighty oak. And the more gracefully we weather the storms, the more fully we can find joy in our work.

10 Hire a coach.
With the partnership of an unconditionally supportive coach, we can find ways to reduce stress and increase joy in our daily lives, both on and off the job. With a coach we can align our core personal values with the work we do, providing us with a greater sense of meaning and purpose in our lives. ✍

Translators and Elephants

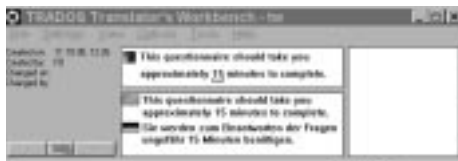
by Frank Dietz

Translators, like elephants, are supposed to remember a lot. Besides your general knowledge of the source and target language and diverse specialized subject matters, you are also supposed to remember how you translated “resource allocation” in chapter 1 of the manual when the term comes up again in chapter 9. This is where translation memory programs prove useful — they help you remember and thus ensure consistent terminology usage. These programs remember previous translations and offer you suggestions when a full or partial (e.g. “Click on Save to open the Save menu” vs. “Click on File to open the File menu”) match occurs. Instead of retyping (or even copying and pasting) entire passages, you can insert existing translations with a mouse click and then adapt them if necessary.

The leading TM programs currently on the market are Trados Workbench (www.trados.com/index.asp), StarTransit (www.star-ag.ch/products/), Atril's DejaVu (www.atril.com/), IBM Translation Manager (www-4.ibm.com/software/ad/translat/tm/) and SDLX (www.sdlintl.com/products/sdlx/nav/main.htm). The pros and cons of the individual programs have been hotly debated, and this article will not go into those issues, but rather discuss TM software in general. A review of several programs can be found at www accurapid.com/journal/03TM2.htm.

Who would profit from using TM programs? First of all, translators who receive their assignments almost exclusively in electronic format rather than on paper. Also, the TM program has to support the file formats you most work in, whether directly or through import filters (check the manufacturers' websites for details). The operating system of

your computer is also crucial — there recently was a discussion on a translators' mailing list concerning TM programs for the Macintosh,



and as far as I remember, no one knew of any that run on that operating system. Translation memory software is also only useful for text types with a substantial amount of repetition, such as manuals, catalogs and longer texts that are often updated. Short texts, personal letters, advertising slogans and other material that lacks the repetition factor would profit considerably less from using a TM program. Finally, you should consider using a TM program if several of your major clients keep asking you about it. Translation agencies like translators to use TM programs, as it speeds output, enhances terminology consistency within projects and allows them to build translation memories that they can send to the translator who will tackle the next iteration of the text. A number of agencies have actually developed proprietary TM tools that translators can download for free. While it is nicer to receive something for free rather than spend hundreds of dollars on a TM program, these tools are often used exclusively by one agency, and you also have to count the time you have to invest into learning to use them.

Translation memory programs have some drawbacks, too. Besides the OS and file format compatibility issues already mentioned, they ensure consistency rather than qual-

ity. It is easy, for instance, to make a typo during an initial translation and then perpetuate it whenever the matching sentence is inserted. Also, translation memories created by another translator have to be used critically — just because a sentence has been already translated does not mean it was done correctly. Further drawbacks are the price of the program (though competition has lowered prices considerably) and the fact that most programs use a so-called dongle, a hardware device to be plugged into your computer's parallel port (which you might already be using for a Zip drive, a tape drive, a printer etc.).

So, is a TM worth your time and money? That depends on the type of work you do. If you often work with texts containing substantial amounts of repetitions, or if clients frequently ask you whether you use a particular TM program, you should seriously consider it. You can and should download a demo version from the manufacturer's website, though, before spending your money on the full version. ✎

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www1.jump.net/~fdietz

Local Effort Pays Dividends at NY Financial Conference

Talking Big Money in the Big Apple

by Lillian Clementi

One of the world's great financial capitals played host to ATA's groundbreaking Financial Translation Conference May 18-20. The association's first subject-specific mini-conference, hosted by NYU's Center for Foreign Languages and Translation and held at New York University's School of Law, drew well over 300 attendees and was widely acknowledged a success. In his remarks at the opening session, ATA President-Elect Tom West acknowledged that the Board had originally had doubts when Marian S. Greenfield, Chair of ATA's Professional Development Committee and a co-organizer of the 1996 Regional Conference, first pitched the idea in November of last year, but in the end the Board had picked a winner. With energetic support from ATA headquarters and NYU co-organizers Lorena Terando and Milena Savova, Greenfield assembled a strong program that proved irresistible to many translators with an interest in finance. As West noted, some of the most prominent names in translation had flown in from around the world to present papers—Danilo Nogueira from Brazil, Robin Bonthron from Germany, Chris Durban and Robert Blake from France and Leticia Leduc from Mexico, to name only a few.

The conference attracted strong corporate support as well. Contributions from sponsors Eriksen Translations, ASET International, TRADOS, CLS Corporate Language Services AG, McNeil Multilingual, Syntes Language Group and Merrill/NTEXT, combined with fees from exhibitors and job fair participants, totaled \$9000, Sponsorship Chair Kevin Hendzel said.

Overall, presentation quality was extremely high, with many sessions aimed specifically at experienced

financial translators, though there was a wealth of information for the newcomer as well. The program for Friday, May 18, consisted entirely of plenary sessions in English on financial topics. Opening ceremonies were followed by a roundtable presentation on Euronext featuring Jean-Michel Savre, Managing Director of Euronext US, and well-known financial translators Bob Killingsworth, Chris Durban, and Robert Blake. In the second morning session, international-banker-turned-translator Robert Taylor provided an overview of basic accounting principles and highlighted some of the most common pitfalls for translators. After lunch, German financial translation guru Robin Bonthron offered a snapshot of the accounting and reporting environment in Europe, focusing on recent moves by the European Commission to harmonize accounting standards in Europe and their potential impact on the translation industry. The last session featured an overview of accounting principles and forms of business organization presented by Richard Tretler, an international businessman and an instructor with NYU's Center for Foreign Languages and Translation. A reception for all conference participants ended the official program for Friday.

Most of Saturday's and Sunday's sessions were oriented towards translation of specific types of documents, with topics ranging from commercial paper in Brazilian Portuguese to risk management in French to IPOs in Spanish and German. Many of these language-specific breakout sessions adopted a workshop format, with participants asked to suggest solutions for problem terms. Translators unable to attend the New York Conference may still be able to benefit from it:

the staff at ATA headquarters is currently compiling proceedings that will include most of the handouts distributed at the conference along with whatever notes the speakers choose to contribute. A broadcast e-mail will notify ATA members when the proceedings are complete and ready for distribution.

Facilities at NYU Law School's Vanderbilt Hall were pleasant, attractive and generally well adapted for the conference. While it was impossible for NYU's facilities to offer all of the amenities of a large conference hotel, the smaller size of the New York event gave it a more intimate atmosphere than ATA's annual gathering. Organizers provided a guide to restaurants and resources in the surrounding Village to assist out-of-towners, and many of the attendees clearly took advantage of the opportunity to enjoy the city.

Though some participants said they would have preferred a wider variety of subjects, Greenfield reported that both informal feedback and conference evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. "I hope this will launch a series of ATA mini-conferences," she said. "It was a fantastic experience for me, both as an organizer and as a participant, and I hope someone with expertise in another field will pick up the ball and run with it. When they do, I hope they are as blessed with wonderful volunteers and speakers as I was, and of course, they can rely on ample support from ATA HQ and the Professional Development Committee." ✍



Job Fair

...continued from page 1

Heide Crossley, the new NCATA Program Chair who had a hand in putting the Job Fair together, said: "This year's Job Fair was on a slightly smaller scale than in previous years, but as always, we were able to attract quality participants. We opened with twelve exhibitors who made themselves available to the attendees, and I think everyone's objectives were met. Thanks to Scott Brennan and those behind the scenes, it turned out to be another successful event for NCATA."



Earlier in the day, NCATA President Scott Brennan had opened the Corporate Member chapter meeting with a welcome and introductions.

Randall Morgan, Co-founder, Chairman and CEO of ASET International Services Corp., gave the first of two presentations by focusing on the importance of an unwavering commitment to quality.

Building on that theme, Mercedes Pellet, Co-founder and CEO of M² Ltd, candidly shared her early beginnings, some of the challenges and problems she has encountered over the years, and some innovative solutions she has come up with.

About the NCATA's annual Job Fair, Pellet says: "NCATA recently asked its corporate members how it can best serve them. The resounding answer to that question is: By holding more events like the Job Fair!"

Ruth Boggs is a full-time G > E and E > G translator and interpreter who lives and works in Fairfax, VA. She can be reached at REZB@aol.com.

Advice To Translators

by H. Pearson Hopper

- 1. If you have time, look up every word—especially the words you know.**
- 2. When in doubt, stay as close as possible to the original.**

(Comments by Paul T. Hopper)

1. Among the problems that can be caused by "the words you know" are problems with misleading cognates ("false friends"—for example, *pathos/Pathos/pafos* in French/German/Russian should usually be rendered as English "fervor" or "emotional charge" or even "rhetoric/bombast" rather than "pathos"), and with additional meanings of words that you know only in one or two of the more common contexts. Once you have learned to avoid the traps of false friends, and once you have learned the less common meanings in their appropriate contexts, presumably you need not continue to look every word up every time.

A corollary: terms in aviation and related fields should be looked up first in an aviation dictionary (Rowland A. Wells, Kurt F. Leidecker, A. M. Murashkevich); medical terms should be looked up first in a medical dictionary; etc. General terms and terms whose field you're not sure of should be looked up first in a general dictionary. And when bilingual dictionaries prove inadequate, other kinds of research will be required, starting with the office card file (if your office has one), proceeding to other reference works, and ending with the consultation of experts, when available. (Hilary Uyehara points out that the creation of characters by someone writing in Japanese (etc.) may stymie most of these research approaches. Consult the author?)

2. If you stick close to the original, even if what you produce is not correct in the target language, an informed reader may be able to infer what the correct target-language version should be. But if you commit yourself to an uninformed guess, even the best-informed reader may be baffled.

This hint applies only if you are in doubt. Obviously, if you already know, or are now reliably informed of, a correct target-language equivalent, no matter how little it resembles the expression in the original, you will use it.

On the other hand, if you are totally at a loss, you should quote the original expression, with as much context as you consider necessary, and in square brackets provide either your best guess (if you have any) or the explanation "equivalent not known." This is a last resort, if all the research approaches outlined above prove fruitless. ✎

Staying Tuned: NCATA Holds Second PR Event at WETA



by Lillian Clementi

On March 7, local translators and interpreters gathered at WETA to answer phones during the PBS affiliate's Spring pledge drive. In exchange for our support, WETA displayed our logo and acknowledged NCATA/ATA on the air. The station raised \$9,400 in pledges during our evening in the studio.

Although an especially nasty strain of flu sidelined many volunteers right before our scheduled appearance, ATA and NCATA mustered enough muscle to fill the studio and take sole credit for the shift. Special thanks go to **Maria Kyburz** for stepping in at the last minute to help replace the flu casualties.

Phone traffic was brisk during several of the pledge breaks, but the evening included plenty of time to relax while programming aired. WETA provided light refreshments, a tour of its studios, and stuffed Teletubbies as door prizes. Despite a few difficulties with finding the station and the occasional eccentric caller, most of the volunteers seemed to enjoy the experience.

Jessica Abreu volunteered for the second year in a row and was rewarded with a second door prize. "It's fun," she said. "I'd do it again. I enjoy the opportunity to meet other translators and interpreters and spend time together when you're not on a job. I like doing something

for a worthy cause, and I also got a really big kick out of the guy who gives the tour of the station."

Several members of the group took advantage of the opportunity to spend time with friends and family. ATA staffer **Terry Hanlon** also joined the group for the second consecutive year, with friend **Mark Stafford** in tow. **Odile Bosch** brought her daughter, **Claire**, who is bound for the University of Virginia in the Fall, and **Claire Haymes** was accompanied by her husband, **Russ**. "Russ loved being on television! I was looking for a seat in the back, but he wanted to sit on the first row. I discovered a whole new side to my husband."

NCATA President **Scott Brennan** also revealed unsuspected depths. A well-placed source who observed him closely during presentation of the door prizes reported that, in addition to his broad legal and financial expertise, Scott also knows all the Teletubbies by name.

Discover a whole new side to your loved ones. NCATA currently plans to make this an annual event, so if you weren't able to join us in 2001, plan to come in March of 2002. We're also looking for new PR activities and would welcome your ideas. Contact Lillian Clementi at (703) 820-8663 or clementil@cs.com. ✍

Thanks to everyone who came to WETA in March:

Jessica Abreu
Barbara Altman
Odile and Claire Bosch
Scott Brennan
Lillian and Vito Clementi
Heide Crossley
Mary DeShazo
Harvey Ferguson
Zohreh Granfar
Terry Hanlon
Claire and Russ Haymes
Maria Kyburz
Jill McClain
Paul Merriam
Barbara Oldroyd
Kim Olson
David Mel Paul
Sally Robertson
Mark Stafford
John Vázquez

Lillian Clementi is a past president of NCATA and a French and German into English translator based in Arlington, VA. She can be reached at clementil@cs.com.

NCATA's Online Directory: Spread the Word

When clients ask you for referrals, remember to mention NCATA's online *Directory of Translators & Interpreters* at www.ncata.org. Your listing in the online directory and the hard copy distributed to hundreds of buyers of translation and interpreting services is a benefit of membership in NCATA. ✍

Poetry and Translation at the Linguistic Crossroads of the Information Age:

Poetry by Bernd Stickelmann

NCATA will host a chapter meeting featuring German poet Bernd Stickelmann on Tuesday evening, September 11, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Borders Books downtown.

As we enter the 21st century, we find that information technology has not only altered our everyday reality, but has also profoundly transformed the ways in which we perceive that reality. Bernd Stickelmann experiments with this notion and its effects on linguistic expression. How can language begin to address this new sense of reality?

Bernd Stickelmann will perform poetry from his 1997 collection *Stadt Mitte Draußen Draußen auf der Autobahn* (City Center Out Out on the Highway), a work that with its fast-paced, multi-layered, cursory perceptions is reminiscent of channel surfing. It places the eternal human search for identity within the context of mediated experience. Join Bernd Stickelmann, his translator Susanne Martikke, and performance artist Dawn Hannaham for a journey on the information highway.

Please note that the program will be in German, with performances of English translations of poems.

Borders Books is located at 1801 K Street NW in downtown Washington DC, a block and a half from either the Farragut North or Farragut West metro station. For more information visit www.ncata.org and click on "Capital Translator Online." ✎

Welcome New Members!

Darlene Almont
 M. Elizabeth Aloni
 Dyran Altonburg
 Constanza Barrera
 Don Birnie
 Hellen Cole
 Nancy Cox
 Minaki Cralle
 Samantha De Jesús-Deras
 Douglas Divers
 Fengzhu Ge
 Eliana Gomez
 Jacquelyn Holland
 Nair Jackson
 Julijana Jularic-Beekman
 Sophie Karsch
 Vitali Kopylov
 Ji Lee
 Patricia Lesnoff
 Edméa McCarty
 Nancy McCloskey
 Amy Menge
 Elena Miller
 Luigi Moscatello
 Mariela Murria
 Blanka Owensova
 Kenneth Palnau
 Mr. & Mrs. Petterson
 Richard S. Quiggins II
 Tressa Rappold
 Irina D. Robertson
 Cinzia Roveta
 Sung H. Rowe
 Tiziana Saponaro
 María Claudia Siegrist
 Helena Tekko
 Terry Thatcher
 Heidi H. Varblo
 Nanami Vittor
 Adolfo Von Randow
 Stephan White
 Heidi Whitesell
 Ann Wiles
 Joseph Willis
 Jane Wolfrum
 Haiyng Yuan
 Izabella Zandberg

New Area Codes for Code Relief in Virginia

On June 1, 2001, Central and Southside Virginia, including Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Danville, South Boston, and Emporia will receive a new area code: 434. For a map of the new area, visit www.state.va.us/scc/news/map.pdf.

A little later this year, on September 1, 2001, Southwest Virginia will be assigned the area code 276, changed from 540.

In the works is also a new overlay area code for the Tidewater region (www.state.va.us/scc/news/757areamap.pdf). The existing area code, 757, was split off from the 804 area code just five years ago.

According to the State Corporation Commission, the 540 area code is also in need of "code relief." The 540 region runs along Virginia's Appalachian Mountains from Winchester to Cumberland Gap and includes areas around Fredericksburg and Martinsville (www.state.va.us/scc/news/540splitmap.htm). It has existed since 1995, when it was split off from the 703 area code. ✎

Charlas at the Mexican Embassy

by Scott Brennan

On April 24 NCATA's community of Spanish-English translators and interpreters gathered for a language-specific chapter meeting at the Embassy of Mexico. The program of presentations by four NCATA members was well received, with active participation from an audience topping 100.

John Vázquez, NCATA vice president and staff translator at the Mexican Embassy, spoke on the niche business of voice-over acting.

Mr. Vázquez described his lean years as a struggling radio Santa Claus in Spain, until one day the voice-over talent in an agricultural fair video was suddenly (and mysteriously) taken ill, and the under-study got his big break.

The demand is there for documentaries, corporate videos and animated series/films, Mr. Vázquez noted, and voice-over is often overlooked as an option for foreign language specialists, especially interpreters.

There is no such thing as a bad voice, he pointed out; it all depends on what the casting director wants. Of course, raw talent needs to be developed: Inflection, delivery, style, mood/acting and, especially, breathing. Mr. Vázquez offered tips on how to make demo tapes/CDs, which no longer require a session in the recording studio.

Look for Mr. Vázquez's voice and face on PBS in September and October, as one of four people cast for teasers celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month.

Claudia Engle, senior Spanish translator/reviser at the Inter-American Development Bank, chose as her topic *Translation with a Competitive Edge: A Reviser's Perspective*.

Emphasizing the need for freelance translators to work self-sufficiently, Ms. Engle offered practical

tips on the diplomatic development-speak that characterizes IDB documents, along with useful general guidelines on taming *el español barroco*.

Ms. Engle identified five categories of errors she sees freelancers commit again and again: Lack of attention, construction problems, improper use of terminology, subtle oversights and offhand translations that may sound credible. It was interesting to this reporter that none of these areas but one relates directly to the skill the translator brings to the job. With the exception of mastery of subject-specific terminology, all spring from the occupational hazards of rushing, *deformación profesional* and generally a failure to finish the job of carrying meaning and structure over from source to target.

Freelance translator **Maria Eugenia Kyburz-Ochoa** spoke on translating for the Spanish-speaking immigrant community within the United States, lamenting *el español envilecido*.

Some of this Spanglish, especially Ciberspanglish, can be blamed on technologists native to English and government printing office translation contracts that went to the lowest bidder, but much of it Ms. Kyburz views as an insidious threat to Hispanic identity. Even so, there is no denying Spanglish is a thriving reality all over this country; the New York Times recently ranked it as that city's third most-commonly-spoken language, after English and Spanish.

This issue generated lively discussion: Where does a translator's loyalty and duty lie? The language of Cervantes, Lorca, García Márquez, Borges and Paz; or the intended reader of the translated social security form or public health leaflet on immunizations? Are the two truly

distinct, and is there truly a conflict?

Mercedes Pellet, vice president of translation company M2 Ltd. and former NCATA president and ATA treasurer, asked *Is too much accuracy ruining your translations?* Focusing on three Spanish translations of a short English text that was technical in subject-matter, but designed to communicate effectively to a lay audience, Ms. Pellet pointed out the areas where "overly accurate" translations failed to do just that.

For example, a translator might 'accurately' render the tight English couplet "The higher the viscosity, the thicker the solder paste" as "Cuanto más alta sea la viscosidad, más espesa será la pasta de soldar." But that sounds gringuesque. How about "Entre más viscosidad tenga la pasta de soldar, más espesa será?"

And what does "que se parece a la manteca de maní" ("has a consistency similar to peanut butter") really communicate to a Colombian factory worker? Perhaps a better metaphor would be "que tiene la consistencia de vaselina" (vaseline). Ms. Pellet offered a number of other phraseology ideas to seed the imaginations of resourceful English to Spanish translators.

Many who attended the chapter meeting relaxed afterward around the corner at Primi Piatti restaurant. As far as this reporter could tell, no one suffered ill effects from mixing Italian food with Spanish conversation, and all went home happy with an evening well spent among friends and colleagues



President ...continued from page 2

development and continuing education program, and that is an area where NCATA can shine as a thriving local community of working translators and interpreters. As I see it, our tradition of generosity among colleagues, enjoyment of each others' company and love for the work we do are among our greatest assets.

Ultimately, others see us as we are. Public relations needs to start at home, by taking a hard look at the way we do our job every day. Nobody else can do that for you or me. The story we have to tell is written each morning anew. ✍

NPR Interviews Veteran Interpreter Dimitry Zarechnak

For those who missed the interview with former State Department interpreter Dimitry Zarechnak on NPR's Weekend Edition on July 21, you can listen to the segment on NPR's website. Go to <http://search.npr.org/cf/cmn/cmnpd01fm.cfm?PrgDate=07%2F21%2F2001&PrgID=7>, and scroll down to the following segment: Interpreting Bigwigs Neal talks with Dimitry Zarechnak, Russian language interpreter for American presidents from 1971 to 1999. Zarechnak talks about the challenges interpreters face getting the words and ideas just right. ✍

The "Onionskin" is a column in the ITI Bulletin (UK). ITI is the UK's foremost association of professional translators and interpreters. -Ed.

Collectors commiserate as communication collapses

by Chris Durban

Mr. Alexander: Thank you for everything that makes for my. Have I already seen this tomorrow my hour that the clever web was already. For my question until tomorrow not he/she rots to make the order. You when he/she wakes up tomorrow will already be processed.

A strong one hugs Enrique Sherry

This message capped what Alexander Feht describes as a "long and linguistically tortuous exchange" that began when Sr. Jerez, a Barcelona businessman and enthusiastic stamp collector, contacted him for information on stamps he was offering on eBay.

The price was agreed and the deal done, or almost — all that remained was to arrange payment. Unfortunately, Mr. Feht, an accomplished linguist who lives in Colorado, speaks no Spanish. And Sr. Jerez cannot read or write English.

At last! thought the Onionskin — a textbook example of how machine translation can facilitate simple commercial transactions! This was nothing to do with "literature",

A Community of Languages

Translation services for the languages of the European Parliament have opened their web sites to the general public as a part of the EP's "European Year of Languages" site at www.europarl.eu.int/trans/default_en.htm. ✍



which MT vendors readily admit is not their thing, while implying (and in some cases stating outright) that everything else is.

Initially skeptical, Feht was willing to try, he said. He turned to the Microsoft Office Update web page [officeupdate.lhsl.com/], which offers translation from English into and out of six major European languages through L&H (Lernout & Hauspie) Online Translations. Conscious of the limitations of machine translation, he used the simplest possible structures in his own messages. Yet communication floundered all the same. The buyer complained, probably because the Spanish missives he was receiving were similar to his own, shown above.

The case is exemplary in that both parties knew what they wanted, shared a passion for stamp collecting, and were determined to press on. For less focused users, or readers with no vested interest in plowing through gibberish, raw MT simply doesn't make the cut. Volume scans for gist and triage, yes. Inbound yes, but only in certain situations where both parties are aware of potential misunderstandings. Outbound, at users' risk and peril. ✍

Chris Durban is a French > English translator specializing in finance and capital markets. Based in Paris, her extracurricular translation activities include coordinating the Paris Bourse workshop for financial translators, promoting signed work, and encouraging client education in general. Chris can be reached at 101327.35@compuserve.com

Calendar

Date	Time	Event	Location
Sept. 8, 2001	1:30 to 4:30 pm	ATA Accreditation Exam	University of the District of Columbia, 4200 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC (Building 44, Small Auditorium A03) Contact ATA Headquarters at 703-683-6100
Sept. 11, 2001	6:30 to 7:30 p.m.	Chapter Meeting (German)	Poetry of Bernd Stickelmann Borders Books, 18th and L Streets NW, Washington DC Contact Susanne Martikke at SMartikke@worldwatch.org
Oct. 31 - Nov, 3, 2001		ATA Annual Conference	Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles CA Program and registration forms available online at www.atanet.org/conf2001 Contact ATA Headquarters at 703-683-6100
January 25-28, 2002		ATA Spanish Division Conference at Sea	A 3-day Carnival Cruise Miami-Nassau- Miami. Visit the SPD website at: www.americantranslators.org/divisions/ SPD/Cruise2002/crucero2002.htm.
August 7-10, 2002		XVI World Congress of the International Federation of Translators (FIT)	Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada Visit www.fit2002.org

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