



# capital translator

Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association  
Vol. 24, No. 1 Spring 2002

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## NCATA members help WETA raise funds

For the third year in a row, NCATA members were instrumental in helping to raise funds for WETA TV, the local PBS affiliate in Shirlington, Virginia.

The event, which was held on March 4th and broadcast several times during the course of that week, featured renowned financial expert Suze Orman as the celebrity guest. Orman lectured on financial issues and fielded call-in and audience questions while NCATA members manned the phones and accepted pledges from the callers or participated as audience members.

WETA displayed the NCATA logo during the credits at the end of the show, and during its nightly programs on the following day.

Many thanks to the volunteers who gave of their time and efforts to participate in this worthy cause, which also helped promote the name recognition and visibility of our chapter. ✎

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Photo: John Vásquez



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## President's Corner

by John Vázquez



As I address my first words to you, I would like to acknowledge the work performed by my predecessor, **Scott Brennan**, during his four-year tenure as NCATA President. As we have witnessed over these years, Scott displayed great initiative, worked hard and was the driving force in many events and activities fostered by our association. Now, as President-elect of the American Translators Association, Scott will take his energies, ideas and vision to a national and international level, providing ATA members with what we, as NCATA members, have had the benefit of enjoying throughout his presidency. I know that I speak for all of us when I express our heartfelt thanks for Scott's time and dedication. NCATA has become the organization that it is today, due to his highly valuable contribution. The very best of luck to you, Scott, in all of your new endeavors!

My warmest and sincerest thanks also go out to all of you NCATA members who elected me to become the new NCATA President. I hope to keep the high standards of my predecessor and sincerely ask that all of you contribute to making NCATA work well, on an individual basis for each of you and as a collective, in the best spirits of camaraderie.

I would also like to welcome **Cheryl Hutchison** as our new Treasurer and a "welcome back" to the incombustible **Harvey Fergusson**, who will be the Accreditation Chair. We are greatly looking forward to their contribution, as well as that of our other current Board members and officers, as we plan new activities and events for the year 2002. The election results were provided by **Eric McMillan**, Election Inspector, via e-mail, after the 77 election ballots mailed and received by January 17, 2002, had been tallied. Thank you, Eric, for your continuous aid to all of us.

As we look forward, I would like to point out that, on the horizon, we have an upcoming Accreditation Workshop, to be held at the Cleveland Park Library in Northwest Washington, on Saturday, April 27. Harvey Fergusson is spearheading this initiative for all of those interested in preparing for the ATA Accreditation Examination. Furthermore, anyone who is already accredited and interested in helping Harvey prepare future candidates should contact him at [HFergusson@aol.com](mailto:HFergusson@aol.com).

One last very important point I would like to talk about is the recent purging of the NCATA database. My sincerest apologies go out to all of you who may have become concerned that, after having paid your membership dues, you apparently were not registered as members in good standing. The aforementioned updating and purging of our membership database was an important and time-consuming task. Now, I am glad to state that "most of the kinks are out of the system." In order to ensure that our work is complete, I would like to ask all of you to go online to the NCATA website ([www.ncata.org](http://www.ncata.org)) and check to see that: a) you have full access to your profile information; and b) this information is duly updated. In order to perform this, you must use your membership number, which is on the mailing address label on this newsletter.

In conclusion, I truly believe that an association works best when all of its members provide constructive input and criticism so that all of us can benefit from the collective effort of its members. As busy translators and interpreters ourselves, we understand that time is of a premium but I think that, if we all pitch in, in whatever means we are able, NCATA will be able to accomplish many goals for its members. ☺

## From the Editor...

by Ruth Boggs



Spring has sprung, and NCATA is also shaking off the winter blah's and heading full-speed into a season budding with activities. Check the Calendar on the back of your *CT* for upcoming events.

For your reading pleasure, turn to "Panta Rei", an article by **Steve Vitek** on the role of the Internet in the life and work of a translator.

Take some hints from **Amanda Ennis** on how to guard your privacy when working from your home office.

Let **Frank Dietz** show you how to deal with pesky acronyms ASAP, and allow **Chris Durban** and **Ted Crump** to humor you verbally and graphically with language-related issues.

**Sandra Zolotor** was kind enough to share with us some of her impressions gained at the recent WETA fundraiser, and **John Vásquez** contributed the photographs from this event.

If you feel energized enough to spring into action yourself, how about doing some volunteer work? Check out the needs of the Montgomery County Public School's (MCPS) Connection Resource Bank (CRB). Or, if you prefer to stay closer to home: the *CT* always gladly welcomes volunteer contributors. ✎

*Ruth Boggs is a full-time G > E and E > G translator and interpreter who lives and works in Fairfax, VA.*

## Can You Talk?

The Montgomery County Public School's (MCPS) volunteer database, a project of the Montgomery Education Connection, is looking for volunteers. MCPS teachers use the Connection Resource Bank (CRB) to access the volunteer resources in the community who help teachers make the curriculum come alive in the classroom by sharing their expertise and enthusiasm. The CRB provides speakers, tutors, mentors, judges and consultants for teachers to enhance their curriculums. The CRB also assists teachers in planning Career Days, Science Fairs and Field Trips, and also provides guest speakers for Teacher In-Service Training.

The CRB often receives requests from teachers for translators to speak with students about careers using languages other than English. They have contacted us through Donna Sandin in hopes of recruiting some volunteers from our ample and capable ranks.

When you sign up with the Connection Resource Bank, you volunteer to share your expertise in whatever way makes you most comfortable. You are given many choices about the way you provide your expertise. You can sign up to be a speaker, tutor, judge, and/or mentor. You can even pick the specific schools you wish to go to. Best of all, your contributions enrich instruction and provide hands-on learning experiences for students.

The Connection Resource Bank looks forward to adding you to its database. If you have questions you can contact Gail Woolf, Connection Resource Bank Coordinator (GAIL\_WOOLF@FC.MCPS.K12.MD.US) [underscore between first and last name] and Diane Fuchs, Connection Resource Bank Specialist (DIANE\_FUCHS@FC.MCPS.K12.MD.US) by phone at (301) 279-3100 between 7.30 a.m. and 5 p.m. ✎

## Once a year is not enough!

Why limit our social get-togethers to the annual Holiday party? In a bold and daring experiment, our President has proposed a Summer Social. Here are the details:

### International Pot Luck Dinner

**When:** Saturday, June 15, from 4 p.m. to dark  
**Where:** Rock Creek Park, Picnic Area No. 8  
**Who:** All NCATA members, family and friends

Please bring enough food for you and your party. A dish from your native country would put the flair in "International" spice up things.

Because space is limited to 75 people, John Vásquez will take reservations ([JohnVazquez@msn.com](mailto:JohnVazquez@msn.com))

Check online ([www.ncata.org](http://www.ncata.org)) for more details as the date draws closer.

# Internet Is Slowly Placing Emphasis In Translation Where It Belongs – On The Translator

by Steve Vitek

“... as they step into the same rivers, other and still other waters flow over them ...”

*Heraclitus*  
(in a new translation  
by Malcolm Crowe)

Only a few years ago, most people used to buy most things from stores and businesses that were conveniently located not too far from their home. I used to buy my Letts of London monthly diary, which in my case doubles as a simple translator's accounting ledger, from Stacey's, a store that also had an excellent selection of mostly monolingual technical dictionaries in downtown San Francisco when I used to live there in the eighties. It took me a while before I found a stationary store that carried this product after I moved to the California's Wine Country in early nineties. I used to buy airplane tickets from a travel agency called Free World Travel, also in downtown San Francisco, because they knew how to get cheap tickets to Europe on short notice. I don't even know any more whether Stacey's and Free World Travel are still where they used to be. It is not just that I live now two thousand miles away. I don't need them anymore. All I have to do now to locate a certain dictionary, diary or plane ticket is to go online and compare prices on two or three sites.

True, some people still prefer to shop the way they used to. Especially older people may find it hard to get used to a new medium. On the other hand, buyers of translation services are usually highly computer literate. This is even more true about

those who buy technical translation services: patent lawyers and their secretaries, patent system administrators, librarians, researchers. I imagine that there was a time when similar professions would simply turn to local *Yellow Pages* to locate a suitable translation service or translator. But I think that these days they are more likely to go on *Google* to find what they want. Their task is made easier by databases of translators that are compiled and maintained by national and regional translators' organizations and by websites of individual translators.

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## National And Regional Databases Of Translators Log Thousands Of Hits

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If you are listed in one or several of these databases as I am, you may have noticed as I have an increasing amount of e-mail requests for price quotes. A potential client will probably start his or her search by firing up a search engine and entering, for instance, “German translator” or “Japanese patent translation” into a search engine. This will result in hundreds or thousands of “hits”. Among the top twenty or so will be websites of individual translators, translation agencies and ATA and regional organization of translators.



Basically all of the above mentioned organizations of translators use the same system allowing to specify the languages, subject, location, etc. The search system used by the Northern California Translators Association is the same system as the one used by the Union of Translators and Interpreters in Prague. On the one hand, big corporations have an increasing presence on the net. According to Jupiter Media Matrix, only 14 companies controlled 60 percent of users' online time in 2001, down from 110 companies two years earlier. AOL, MSN, Yahoo! and other huge corporations are determined to win access to our credit cards by keeping our eyeballs glued to the computer screen through any means possible, including free Internet access for up to a year when you buy a new computer (MSN and CompuServe will do that for you to get you hooked), or a free mailbox allowing you, among other things, to access your other e-mail boxes (Yahoo! will do it for you free of charge to steer your dollars eventually where Yahoo! wants them to go). On the other hand, fortunately for us, translators, the business of translation is famously fragmented and no single company or large agency can claim to control a significant portion of the translation market. A well designed website of a single translator can thus bring to us the client who needs exactly the kind of service that we are offering through the power of the Internet. Translators are not the only people who have realized that the power of the Internet can be put to work for the little guy at a relatively low cost. Individual real estate agents who are not Internet savvy are losing a lot of

potential customers. When I sold my house last year and bought another one two months later two thousand miles away, I decided (I mean, my wife decided) to list our house in California with a local agent who had a website and who offered “virtual tours” of my house online. And I would not have been able to locate the agent who was helping me to find my new house in Virginia at all if she did not have a well designed website because I did not know anybody in Virginia at that time. Real estate agents put on their websites not only their listings and the usual propaganda praising their expertise, but also useful links to information that can be valuable to their potential clients – links to all regional real estate listings, mortgage calculators, school ratings, regional weather, salary scale information, etc. I have seen websites of other translators who have links to online dictionaries, other recommended translators, online machine translation sites, specialized online magazines, and articles dedicated to different translation fields and subjects, often presented at conferences of translators in different countries, etc. Meta crawlers are constantly crawling through the cyberspace, looking for more and more information about anything and everything, including you. Especially you! If you can translate a certain document from German or Japanese into English or vice versa, they will find you in the cyberspace, provided that you are visible. Unlike some products and services, what is created by some knowledge-intensive occupations (writers, programmers, composers, researchers, or translators from and into foreign languages) can be not only found, but also delivered online. You cannot eat a meal in a virtual French restaurant online or lift weights in a virtual gym, although you can certainly find information about restaurants and gyms in your neighborhood on the Internet. You do actually have to go there to eat and exercise. But

nobody has to come to a translator when everybody has an e-mail address. And just about everybody does have an e-mail address today. It is probably only a matter of time before your dog has one too.

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## A Whole Library Of Dictionaries And Encyclopedias That Fits Into My Laptop

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Internet has not only made individual translators much more visible on the worldwide translation market. It has also become an indispensable tool that can give us another precious gift that we often desperately need – life saving context. Although machine translation has made essentially no progress in the last half century or so, and in my opinion never will, until we figure out how to program machines to think the way humans do – which will happen at about the same time when the command “Beam me up, Scotty!” will in fact transport humans to another galaxy. Online search engines can quickly dig out information on just about any subject in just about any language. A Czech search engine that will search a database of recent new terms in Czech for me, including archives of Czech newspapers, is as easily accessible to me from my laptop as are search links of the websites of the Japanese Patent Office (JPO) or European Patent Office (EPO). Because I use these links basically daily as a huge collection of specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias that all fit in my laptop as long as it is connected to Internet, I put them on my website ([www.PatentTranslators.com](http://www.PatentTranslators.com))

to induce my clients to go to me first whenever they look for information on foreign patents. The JPO website has two versions, one in English and one in Japanese. The English version allows you to type in terms, patent numbers, or names of inventors in English to display patents in Japanese with an English summary. It comes in very handy when you are faced with a foreign word transcribed into Japanese, perhaps a person’s name identifying an obscure or brand new scientific procedure, which instead of being written in Japanese characters is transcribed into the Japanese phonetic system katakana, one of two Japanese phonetic syllabaries. The original spelling of the word may have been in English, or Dutch, or Russian, or in another language and you may have no idea what the original language was. It may take you quite a while to figure out what the correct spelling is, but the JPO and EPO link is one of the best ways to do that – namely, by throwing plausible word possibilities against the Internet wall to see what will stick. Patent translators often have to translate from foreign languages patents that have been originally filed in English as a US patent or European patent because patents filed in other countries are often changed to ensure compliance with the patent laws in a given country. The number of the original patent is right on the cover sheet of the Japanese patent and all you have to do is type it into the search link to display the context that you need in English. The EPO link is particularly useful to me, not only because the JPO link seems to always be busy (you will often see the following weird message: “The server gets crowded now, connect it later”, which must be a direct translation of the Japanese sentence “tadaima sahabah ga konde iru, ato de setzuzoku shite kudasai”, although the

...continued on page 6

**Internet**

...continued from page 5

Japanese message displayed at this time says that new data is being added. It may be that the JPO webmaster is trying not to overload non-Japanese (gaijin) brains with too much superfluous information, a Japanese tendency that I have noticed when I lived in Japan. Instead of “connecting it later”, you can go to the EPO site, which also displays Japanese patents, although only unexamined (Kokai) patents.

The EPO website lets you compare patents in different languages and track down names and obscure or new terms.

But the advantage of the EPO site is that it displays patents in Japanese with an English summary, together with patents in English, German, French, and even other languages such as Czech or Russian, if it is a translation of a US patent into Czech or Russian filed in respective countries. Because many technical terms were often created as translations of Greek or Latin word roots into English and German, sometime using the same Greek or Latin root, sometimes translated into an Anglo-Saxon or Germanic root having the same meaning in English and German speaking countries, you can confirm the same meaning of the word root in Greek, Latin, German, and English to make sure that you have the right word, provided that you have some knowledge of these languages. In technical Chinese and Japanese, these Greek and Latin roots were often translated into Chinese and Japanese characters, which have the same or similar meaning. This is a process that has begun at the end of the 19th century in China and Japan and is still continuing to some degree in Japan, especially in fields such as medicine (while phonetic transcription into katakana is another method). And sometime, when the only solution is to coin a new word construction in English, for instance when faced with a compound character con-

struction in Japanese or with a long noun compound word in English, it may be very useful to see how this term is translated into French, German, or Japanese patents. Instead of pouring over several dictionaries and/or encyclopedias in several languages, translators who work from several languages can use the search page of the European Patent Office to confirm a certain term, for instance in German, Japanese, and French based on the meaning of the word root and also based on the context in which this term is used in patents about similar inventions which were filed in different languages without having to open a single dictionary or reference book. Even ten years ago or so, it would have been physically impossible for one single person to make these comparisons in a few minutes with a few key strokes. Although all this information is now accessible to anybody, vital comparisons can be made basically only by a linguist who really knows his or her lan-

change may seem constant, this range too changes over time. The reason why there is no message on our answering machine although the call ID function shows that somebody called from an area code or number that we are interested in, as a philosopher of the Milesian school would put it twenty five hundred years ago, is simple: we can never step into the same river twice as it is no longer the same river. This is why even if a customer did leave a message on our machine, he or she may be gone by the time we call back, and an opportunity may be lost. A possible translation of the famous “everything flows” fragment from the Ionian dialect of Old Greek into the modern American idiom could be: “you either get on the bandwagon, or you are left in the dust”.

As the river of Internet flows through our world, it is slowly changing habits and relationships that have been in place in some cases for centuries. Only time will tell whether translators will be able to take advantage of the new opportunities that are flowing in our direction on the Internet river. But personally, I remain cautiously optimistic. ☺

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## The River Of Internet Flowing Through Our World Is Slowly Changing Old Relationships

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guages.

The famous statement “panta rei” (everything is constantly changing, literally “everything flows”), made by Heraclitus who lived from 536 to 470 BC, is just as true now as it was two thousand and five hundred years ago. The only constant is change. Even though the range of

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## How to Live With Abbreviations QED, ASAP, etc!

by Frank Dietz

Abbreviations can be the bane of a translator's existence, particularly when they appear in the barren terrain of a list without context. You are translating along merrily, when you suddenly come across the abbreviation "PLA". Let's see ... this could be People's Liberation Army ... or Programmable Logic Array ... or Pylon Loading Adapter ... or Power Level Actuator ... or...

Here are a few tips for dealing with these shrivelled words:

- Read on. Many times a writer will forget to explain an abbreviation the first time it is used, but will do so at a later occurrence. Use your word processor's Find function (if you are dealing with an electronic copy).
- Concentrate on the context. If you are dealing with a bank brochure, "ATM" is more likely to be "Automated Teller Machine", while in a printer manual "Adobe Type Manager" would be a better guess.
- Don't be afraid to ask the client (if that's possible). Some of the most knotty problems concerning abbreviations might turn out to be company-specific jargon (or even simply typos!)

Here are a few of the resources I use in attacking acronyms and abbreviations.

I still occasionally consult de Sola's *Abbreviations Dictionary* (Elsevier, 1978) which dazzles with its all-inclusive subtitle: *Abbreviations – Acronyms – Antonyms and Eponyms – Appellations – Contractions – Geographical Equivalents – Historical and Mythological Characters – Initials and Nicknames – Short Forms and Slang – Shortcuts – Signs and Symbols*. While it is not particularly strong on computer-related acronyms, it will tell you that the "Home of Contented Cows" is Carnation, Washington – just in case you needed to know.

Most of the time, however, I would try web-based resources first: **Acronym Finder** (<http://www.acronymfinder.com/>) is one of the heavyweights, with over 230,000 entries. Make sure you read the "Search Tip" section before using it.

If your abbreviation happens to consist of three letters, try **The Great Three-Letter Abbreviation Hunt** at <http://www.atomiser.demon.co.uk/abbrev/index.html>.

In many cases, though, it would be best to consult a specialized abbreviations site, be it **Postal Service abbreviations** (<http://www.usps.gov/ncsc/lookups/abbrev.html>), **Jane's Defence Glossary** for military acronyms (<http://www.janes.com/defence/glossary/index.shtml>), a list of acronyms related to the **European Union** (<http://eur-op.eu.int/code/en/en-5000400.htm>), **computer-**

**related acronyms** (<http://www.cs.tut.fi/tlt/stuff/misc/babel.html>) or **electronics acronyms** (<http://www.eetimes.com/docs/gloss1.html>).

For medical and pharmaceutical abbreviations, the **Pharma Lexicon** (<http://www.pharma-lexicon.com/>) is useful starting point (turns out, our old friend PLA could also be Peripheral Laser Angioplasty or Platelet Antigen or...)

A good compilation of online glossaries, with subjects ranging from accountancy to veterinary medicine, can be found at <http://www.opau.com/acro.html>.

Finally, don't forget your good old search engine. While a common acronym will most likely generate too many results, combining an acronym with some context words might just work, plus you have the option of filtering the results by language for instance at [http://www.google.com/advanced\\_search?hl=en](http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en).

So, BBFN, HTH (<http://www.cmmei.com/smile2.htm>). ☺

' 2002, Frank Dietz

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Great Moments in Languages

by Ted Crump



UBL: This desert air really gives me the frizzies. Sheikh: Girl, you wouldn't believe the trouble I have with split ends!

*What was really said on the tape*

## Onionskin

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

# Improper display

by Chris Durban



Straco is in a position to find a translator able to render both meaning and style in his/her mother thong" says this Geneva-based agency's website [[www.straco.ch](http://www.straco.ch)]. In these post-Monica days, is the *Onionskin* alone in wondering exactly what is going on over there in Switzerland? The company compounds its stumble with a reassuring "All translations subjected to peer review before delivery to ensure quality." It claims to work in all major languages.

Yet Straco is by no means alone. In recent months, readers have sent us a steady stream of bloopers from translation web sites. Offenders range from one-person businesses to seriously big players, and their missteps from atrocious howlers to "mere" plodding, with liberal sprinklings of spelling errors and grammar glitches. Thus, until a massive overhaul of its website in June this year, US provider eTranslate displayed chunks of French-language odes to its expertise in text many native speakers agreed was little better than raw machine output. Rewrites, including a final pass by marketing professionals in each target language, have now improved the site enormously, a company rep told us.

Again: anyone can make a mistake. But to omit crucial proofreading or display awkward promotional texts on a site – one's own web site, for heaven's sake – is a bit much. In most cases, problems appear to reflect a communications breakdown between the text commissioner and supplier. Yet this is surely a warning sign for potential clients:

these sites present the service offering of language specialists. It is not as if the brief was unclear (or was it?).

Looking on the bright side, a web site in potential customers' language gives users an idea of what they are likely to get. Buying in translation for their own needs is also an opportunity for translation providers to put themselves in their clients' shoes – and experience the frustration first-hand. Yet as one top-end translator notes: "In this business, you are as good as the last job delivered." For clients in the know, actual samples of work or hotlinks to successful translations online are more convincing than self-promotional prose. ✍

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## Press Release For Immediate Release

### Translator Interpreter Hall of Fame accepting 2002 nominations

The Translator Interpreter Hall of Fame (TIHOF) is now accepting nominations for 2002.

The TIHOF was founded September 30, 2000, to recognize the achievements of and pay tribute to the men and women who have helped penetrate cultural and linguistic barriers between the world's peoples.

Language specialists the world over observe International Translators Day every year on September 30, the Feast Day of St. Jerome, the patron saint of translators and the TIHOF's first honoree. Each year on this date, the TIHOF will honor additional outstanding practitioners of the art of translating and interpreting.

Nominations for historical or contemporary figures should include a biography and/or essay on the nominee (700 words or longer) with optional illustrations. Send entries to [nominate@tihof.org](mailto:nominate@tihof.org) by the deadline of August 1, 2002.

Nominations will be judged by a panel drawn from various translator and interpreter associations.

New honorees will be announced on International Translators Day, September 30, 2002 and published on the TIHOF website <http://www.tihof.org>, with proper credit given to essay authors and translators.

Submissions will become the property of the TIHOF. Nominees not inducted at the 2002 ceremony may be considered for future years.

# Impressions of a First-Time Volunteer

by Sandra Zolotor, as told to Ruth Boggs



## What prompted you to volunteer for the WETA fundraising event?

I got an email from NCATA, and I thought it would be an interesting experience.

## What were your expectations?

I had seen previous WETA airings a long time ago, so I was familiar with the basic format. I thought the phone people would be on TV, though. My main objective was to meet other NCATA members.

## Were your expectations met?

I was able to network a bit, and I got to see some familiar faces and meet some new people.

## Was NCATA the only organization volunteering at the event?

There was another group there, Chipotle, I think. They are the caterers and provided the food before the show.

## Who prepared you for the show, and how?

The helpful WETA staff prepped us before the show. Also, each volunteer received a booklet put together for this purpose. The form we used to answer calls served as a script.

## Why did you decide to work the phones, rather than being an audience member?

I wanted to have the satisfaction of saying that I raised a certain amount of money.

## What exactly did you do? How many calls did you answer?

I only received about five or six phone calls the entire night because the calls came in waves. The further back you sit, the less of a chance you have to get calls. There were, however, some contributors of \$500 each.

## Did anything funny or memorable happen during one of the calls?

There was a caller who wanted me to put Suze Orman on the phone so she could personally answer his question. Another caller had recently moved here from California and had been watching the equivalent of PBS in California for the past 20 or so years. It was nice that he was calling to make a contribution because he wanted to help out the station. At the time, WETA matched the contribution, so it was twice as much.

## How did you like Suze Orman?

Suze has a lot of energy! She came backstage to introduce herself to the volunteers before the show. After that, she was doing her thing on stage. I had never heard of her before this. There are a couple of people in the office, though, who have read her books and really feel that she explains complicated money matters in an easy-to-understand manner.

## Did you learn anything during this experience?

I learned things from Suze's presentation. One of them is that it is important to focus when looking at money matters. She emphasized the fact that if you have money in the stock market, it is imperative to stay in there for the long run.

## What rewards, if any, did you gain from this experience?

I enjoyed the volunteering as such. Not only that, but I got to hang out with other NCATA members and broaden my financial horizon.

## Did you find out how much money was raised that night?

NCATA raised \$41,215 that night. Of the 18 days that WETA had the pledge drive, the Suze Orman show

was the top pledge show, totaling \$129,065.

## Any final comments?

It is a good experience. I would recommend it to anyone who likes volunteering. ✍

*Sandra Zolotor is a project manager at ASET International and does freelance translating and editing from Romanian and French into English.*

## WETA Volunteers:

John Vásquez  
Irina Paramanova  
Nancy McCloskey  
Paul Merriam  
Mark Stafford  
Jean Hacken  
Terry Hanlon  
Lillian Clementi  
Vito Clementi  
Sandy Zolotor  
Kathleen Chamberlain  
Alan Tolerton  
Heide Crossley  
Harvey Fergusson

# Your Personal Space: Separating Your Personal and Professional Lives

by Amanda Ennis

A few weeks ago, I got a call from a small agency I know and like asking me to do a translation. In and of itself, this is a perfectly ordinary event that happens to all of us on a regular basis. What was extraordinary was the timing of the call: Sunday, 10:20 AM.

"Hello, Amanda," the caller begins, "did you get the e-mail I sent you?"

"No, I didn't. What e-mail? When did you send it?" I reply, with an irritated glance at the clock.

"Yesterday. [Saturday. As if I were a 24/7 office. My irritation grows by the second.] It's this teeny little translation I need for Monday morning, less than a page..."

I tell him in no uncertain terms that I am expecting visitors, frantically trying to throw my house into some semblance of order, and I don't care if it's three words, I'm not doing it.

I hang up and realize that it is time to draw a line in the sand.

Most freelance translators work out of their homes, making it difficult to truly "leave the office" at the end of a day or week of hard work. Likewise, some clients feel it is perfectly all right to disturb you at all hours of the day and night, including weekends. What can you or should you do about this situation? Exactly how do you balance your personal and professional personas without angering your clients or giving up every moment of what should be *your* free time?

Surprisingly, the most effective rule for teaching your clients to respect your personal space also applies to raising children or training dogs: Set clear limits, and be *consistent* in enforcing those limits.

First, if you do not already have set office hours, sit down and decide on some. If you're an early riser and/or do a lot of work with European clients, you might decide on a 7 AM-4 PM schedule. If, on the other hand, you like sleeping in, have other early morning commitments, or do a lot of work with California clients, you could go for an 11 AM-7 PM schedule. If you are a part-time translator, you can set shorter office

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## Set clear limits, and be consistent in enforcing those limits.

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hours or be available for calls only on certain days of the week. Think carefully about just how available you would like to be to your clients. Would you like to have weekend hours as well, or just work Monday to Friday? Or perhaps you're only available on weekends due to a full-time job in another field. Tailor your hours to your situation.

Second, once you have decided on your office hours, make them known to clients and stick to them. Record your office hours as part of your voice mail or answering machine message so clients will know when they are "out of bounds." And if you must be away from your desk during your stated office hours, try to give callers an alternate way to reach you: "Thank you for calling

Smith Translations. Our office hours are from 9 AM to 6 PM, Monday through Friday. If you receive this message during business hours, please try my cell phone at 555-1212. If you are calling after hours, please leave a message after the tone and I will return your call in the morning. Thank you!" This will show clients that you are serious about being available to them during your stated business hours.

Third, don't undermine your own efforts by making constant exceptions to the limits you have set. If you have decided your office hours end at 6:00 PM, turn on your answering machine at 6:00 PM. If you do answer a late call for some reason, be sure to say something like, "You're lucky to have caught me—the office normally closes at six." Don't respond to late-night client e-mails, either, unless you want to send the message that you are available at all hours of the day and night.

Finally, when it is time to close the office for the day, close it down completely. Turn your computer off, flip the answering machine on or let voice mail pick up calls, and create a physical barrier between you and your office. Close the door if your office has one. Close the cabinet doors and fold everything away if you have what I like to call a "computer armoire." Even if you have your equipment set up on a desk or table in your bedroom, dining room, or kitchen, you can throw a decorative blanket or sheet over your work area to help you bring an end to your workday.

As independent contractors, we pride ourselves on providing excellent service and a quick response

## Onionskin

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

# Wanted: skilled linguists

by Chris Durban

Readers report a spate of articles on translation and interpreting in the national and international press in recent months. A common theme: signs of a crunch ahead as users of translation and interpreting services scramble to cope with a shortage of expert talent.

On March 16, The Guardian's Ian Black filed a report from Brussels, warning "As the EU prepares to incorporate a dozen new languages, vital translators and interpreters are thin on the ground."

The European Commission already employs 1,900 in-house translators and interpreters—12.5% of its total staff—and spends an annual 180 million buying in work from freelance suppliers. And yet, says the Commission, it still costs only 2 euros (£1.25) per citizen per year, or 0.8% of the total EU budget "to [enable] all European citizens and their governments to play a part in the building of Europe, in their own mother tongue."

Plans to take in up to 12 new candidate countries in the years ahead are bound to lead to strains, since each new tongue multiplies the potential number of language combinations many times over. Cultural diversity, national pride and democratic legitimacy are critical issues, with linguistic misunderstandings offering enormous scope for perceived slights and worse. On the whole, Black gives the EU interpreters and translators high marks for keeping communication flowing [[www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0,7792,457772,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0,7792,457772,00.html)].

Across the Atlantic, the New York Times insisted on April 16 that a

shortage of linguists was undermining national security.

Example: in the early 1990s, the FBI held videotapes, manuals and notebooks on bomb making seized from Ahmad Ajaj, a Palestinian serving time in federal prison for passport fraud. In phone calls taped by prison authorities, Mr. Ajaj guardedly told another terrorist how to build the bomb, wrote journalist Diana Jean Schemo. Unfortunately, all of these clues were in Arabic. Not until after the explosion at the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993 were they reviewed by an Arabic speaker. The explosion killed six people and injured more than a thousand. In 2000, says the article, American colleges and universities graduated only nine students who majored in Arabic.

Similarly, testimony presented to a US Senate subcommittee in September 2000 indicated that roughly half of the State Department's diplomatic postings are filled by candidates without the requisite foreign language skills. Not to mention thousands of scientific and technical papers that go untranslated, depriving analysts and policy makers of vital information about the state of foreign research in a range of areas. Thus in 1998, nuclear tests in Pakistan and India caught US policy makers off guard. While official documents on the failure of US intelligence to translate information remain classified, an observer notes that the explosions "should not have been surprises." [[www.nytimes.com/2001/04/16/world/16LANG.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/16/world/16LANG.html)].

For the *Onionskin*, such articles are welcome signs of a growing awareness of the role played by professional translators and interpreters. It is a good time to be a language professional. And a good time, too, for the industry itself to speak up, letting government authorities, the private sector and the general public know just how translators and interpreters work—and how their skills can be put to use by others. ✎

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## Space

...continued from page 10

time to our clientele. We often accept assignments that will require evening and/or weekend work to complete on time without a second thought. These are admirable traits, and a certain amount of overtime is required of us all at one time or another, but unless you also carve out some time for your personal life, you may soon find that you no longer have one. ✎

*Amanda B. Ennis is a German > English technical/medical translator who has worked in both freelance and in-house translation management settings. She is a 1997 graduate of Kent State University and ATA-accredited in German > English. She lives in Kent/Ohio and can be reached at [germantoenglish@earthlink.net](mailto:germantoenglish@earthlink.net).*

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# Calendar

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
June 15, 2002	4 p.m. until dark	International Pot Luck Dinner for all NCATA members, family, and friends	Rock Creek Park Picnic Area No. 8, Washington, DC E-mail John Vázquez ( <a href="mailto:JohnVazquez@msn.com">JohnVazquez@msn.com</a> ) for reservations Check <a href="http://www.ncata.org">www.ncata.org</a> for more details later
Nov. 6–9, 2002		ATA Annual Conference	Hyatt Regency Hotel, Atlanta, GA Contact ATA at (703) 683-6100 or <a href="http://www.atanet.org">www.atanet.org</a>

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*Read it Online! NCATA's newsletter can be found at [www.ncata.org](http://www.ncata.org).*

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