



# Capital Translator

## Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association

### September 2005

#### National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association

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### NCATA/ATA – Red Cross Partnership for Preparedness

#### Volunteer Interpreters Get Ready to Help

By Jay Eidson

ATA has partnered with the Red Cross to help to locate and train volunteer interpreters throughout the United States. The DC area volunteers were among the first to be trained under this partnership for preparedness. The Red Cross has experienced a high volume of Spanish-speaking callers in the past, particularly during the hurricane season that affects the Florida and Texas coasts.

In early August, the staff of the American Red Cross Disaster Response Center hosted a group of some half a dozen NCATA and ATA volunteers for a day-long training seminar at their National Headquarters Facility. The purpose of the seminar was to introduce the volunteers to the National Response Center’s telephone intake operations and the role of volunteers as multilingual call agents to be on duty during major disasters. Sallie Hairfield of the Red Cross was the host of the day’s activities.

Red Cross staff explained how the National Response Center was developed in the wake of the September 11, 2001 disaster. Previously, ad hoc telephone hotline centers were established locally for each individual disaster, as and when it occurred. But this system meant getting telephone lines and computers installed, finding and transporting trained call center volunteers, tying up local resources and getting accurate, current information on the resources available for that particular disaster.

In an effort to be better prepared to respond immediately to any large-scale emergency, the Red Cross

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has taken advantage of developments in telecommunications networking to develop the centralized Response Center at its National Headquarters. The facility has 150 workstations for call agents, connected to the toll-free disaster hotline telephone number.

From this central point, call agents provide round-the-clock emergency contact information to callers, including referrals and relief support. The call agents use the Red Cross's Web-based Online Resource Book, which is continually updated by Red Cross staff. Incoming callers are referred to bilingual Call Center representatives depending on the language selection they make from the voice response menu.

Are you interested in volunteering in the Washington, DC metropolitan area? Contact **Alexandra Russell-Bitting** at [alexandrarb@yahoo.com](mailto:alexandrarb@yahoo.com). For more information on the partnership between the ATA and the Red Cross, contact **Giovanna Lester** of the ATA Interpreting Division at [translanguage@iname.com](mailto:translanguage@iname.com).

At the training in Washington, DC, the volunteer interpreters learned the role and responsibility of call agents, how to use the online caller registration/referral form, and--perhaps most importantly--how to quickly locate and use a wide variety of resource information from the Online Resource Book. Currently, the scripts used by the call agents are in English only, but this provides an excellent opportunity for the NCATA/ATA volunteers to work on a standard set of Spanish language scripts.

Having received the training, the NCATA/ATA volunteers are now ready to be called to duty when the Red Cross gears up for any particular disaster. As one volunteer observed – “now the trick is to apply this knowledge in a real-life situation.”

**Jay Eidson** is a Washington, D.C., area-based freelance international consultant and translator of French, Italian and Spanish into English and is an interpreter. He is going to Rwanda to teach government procurement and good governance to government ministry officials at the Graduate School of Business and Finance. He is actively involved in the Spanish Language Division and enjoys the interaction on the listserv *Espalista*. He can be contacted at: [javhova@verizon.net](mailto:javhova@verizon.net).

### Note from the Editor

On behalf of the NCATA Board and the Capital Translator team, I hope that all of our members will enjoy reading our September issue and will find it informative.

Many thanks to our contributors and my dynamic team members, Douglas McNeal, Associate Editor and Guillermo Astigarraga for Layout and Design for helping to produce this issue. We are planning to cover many topics pertinent to translators and interpreters in our upcoming quarterly issues. I look forward to hearing your feedback.

Harvetta Asamoah

## Two Upcoming Events

**Seminar on Trade: September 24**

**Silver Anniversary Holiday Luncheon: December 4**

**"Seminar on Trade: Saturday, September 24, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at American University in NW Washington, D.C.**

Co-sponsored by American University in celebration of the Year of Languages, the seminar will feature staff translators from the U.S. Department of State who have worked on free trade agreements in Arabic, French and Spanish.

**Silver Anniversary Annual Holiday Luncheon: Sunday, December 4, 12:00 - 3:00 p.m. at the Occidental Restaurant in downtown Washington, D.C.**

To commemorate our 25th anniversary, we will have a guest speaker, live music and door prizes. Don't miss this chance to mingle, network and have some fun.

**For additional information, visit [www.ncata.org](http://www.ncata.org)**



### Meet the Board and Newsletter Editors

Above left:  
NCATA Board members pose in front of our banner at the National Zoo: (from left) Acting President Alexandra Russell-Bitting, Information Chair Donna Sandin, Treasurer Cheryl Hutchison and Membership Chair Maria Eugenia Kyburz.



Below left:  
Assistant Editor of the Capital Translator Doug McNeal (left) and Editor Harvetta Asamoah will be reporting on the picnic in our December issue."

# How the Translation Industry Is Like the Movie Industry

by Kevin Hendzel

**The secrets of the translation industry that nobody seems to say out loud, and why you need to know all of this to find plenty of work**

OK, first things first. Nobody goes into translation or interpreting to get rich or famous. We have no klieg lights, Botox injections or Rodeo Drive. Joan Rivers could not care less what any of us wears.

Having said all this, there are some surprising similarities between the translation industry and the movie industry. The industries share a basic commercial structure and philosophy that drive employment and hiring. Most workers in our industry are freelancers who are hired for specific projects. Ditto for the movie industry. We sell talent. So do they. There are many small, independent companies in the translation industry, just as there are many independent movie studios. Most companies in both industries are inherently conservative, which is why the same actors tend to get a lot of the work (sound familiar?). In both industries, actual performance and expertise count more than formal education. Once you are “discovered” in our industries you can get very busy indeed. Yet it’s very hard to break into the perceived “inner circle,” at least initially. Resumes are far less important than reputation, and what you actually produce is most important of all. Not surprisingly, hiring in both industries is driven principally by referrals. But success in translation, just like success in Hollywood, is not really about “who you know,” although that’s important for getting in the door. It’s about being good and having others (clients and translators alike) know this about you.

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## **Elections**

### **Call for NCATA Officer nominations, by 9/30**

We ask candidates for NCATA President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer to step forward by 9/30. Ballots will be mailed out in October and are due in late November. The new officers will be announced at the Holiday Luncheon on  
December 4.

## **ATA Holds Financial Translation and Interpretation Conference**

**by Alan Dages**

The American Translators Association (ATA) held its second Financial Translation and Interpretation Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Jersey City, situated just across the Hudson River from lower Manhattan and within easy view of the Statue of Liberty. The three-day conference ended on May 1. Nearly 200 people attended with about fifteen percent of them coming from abroad, mainly Europe and Latin America. Members of the financial translators' FTRAN Yahoo listserve were well represented, and a number of them made presentations. The ATA's President-elect Marian Greenfield organized the conference, which was sponsored by Eriksen Translation, Inc. located in Brooklyn, NY, and CLS Communication AG's Weehawken, New Jersey, office. CLS is a translation company based in Switzerland.

### **Overview**

Eight of the sessions were non-language specific (English only). These sessions provided a wealth of contextual information on a wide variety of financial issues ranging from prosecuting money laundering to an explanation of securitization. There were also twenty-eight presentations on French, Spanish and Portuguese translation. Recordings were made of all of the presentations, including of questions from the audience, which are available from the ATA website at [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org) on CD-Rom for \$69 for ATA members and \$129 for non-ATA members.

### **French Presentations: The Assault and Battery School of Translation**

Two of the most interesting presentations were "Aggressive Translations: How to Know How Far is Too Far" and "Benchmarking Style in French-to-English Financial Translation." Both presentations were given by David Jemielity, head of the translation team at Banque Cantonale Vaudoise in Lausanne, Switzerland and a part-time academic at the School of Translation and Interpretation of the University of Geneva. Mr. Jemielity, an American, studied English literature and philosophy at Amherst and Oxford. He taught English literature at the Universities of Paris, Lausanne and Geneva before turning to translation in the 1990s. He is understandably concerned about style and good writing skills in the translations he reviews.

In Mr. Jemielity's presentation, *Aggressive Translation*, he glossed "aggressive" as being similar to "loose" or "equivalent effect" translation. The goal here is "if the input is stylistically natural French, the output should be stylistically natural English." He also noted that, in financial translation (as opposed to, say, literary translation), even "if the source text isn't stylistically natural French, your client probably wants natural-sounding English anyway." Then, he provided an overview of what he termed French/English "structural and stylistic incongruity," which is roughly defined as the differing methods by which the two languages express a thought. This led to some useful suggestions:

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## **ATA Holds Financial Translation and Interpretation Conference continued from page 5**

Use more conjugated verbs in English than the source text does. Avoid nominalization. French is all about nouns ; English loves action verbs.

Get right to the point: key ideas and new information tend to show up earlier in English sentences than in French sentences.

Make the source text's underlying logic explicit in your target text – you'll often need to change the structure of the French sentence to achieve natural English [syntax].

Avoid the lyricism which may appear in French financial texts. English is less tolerant of this than French.

Don't "break up the family." The Subject-Verb-Complement family is more closely knit in English than it is in French. Qualifiers need to be placed outside this unit.

Mr. Jemielly wrapped up his presentation with a discussion of when excesses in the school of aggressive translation lead to "assault and battery". He gave some very good examples of translated passages illustrating the benefits and possible problems of this approach to deconstruct the source text in order to convey the text's meaning in grammatically and stylistically correct English. Here, he insisted on the importance of asking questions of the client or colleagues, which is crucial to knowing what is enough and how far would be too far.

**Alan Dages** is a freelance translator. He works from French and Spanish into English, and can be contacted at: The Right Word [Rightword33@cs.com](mailto:Rightword33@cs.com)

## **Spanish Sessions at the ATA Financial Translation and Interpretation Conference**

**by Harvetta Asamoah**

The Spanish sessions at this conference featured four speakers and covered financial translation from Spanish into English and English into Spanish. The highly-specialized topics included anti-money laundering regulations, American Depository Receipts, translating and interpreting for free trade negotiations, risk management and derivative instruments, financial markets, translating balance sheets and Argentine bankruptcy legislation. The ATA provided printed program materials for every program, so that attendees could have glossaries and notes from the programs that they did not attend.

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## **Spanish Sessions at the ATA Financial Translation and Interpretation Conference continued from page 6**

I attended presentations by three highly-credentialed translators: Silvana Dubonis on risk management and derivative instruments, Anton Pujol on American Depository Receipts, and Steven Kahaner on Argentine bankruptcy legislation. After giving us a clear basic overview of their subjects in English and Spanish, the speakers focused on several hands-on, practical translation exercises and provided excellent handouts. Far from being lectures, the presentations were highly interactive.

As a Spanish-to-English translator, I found that practicing translation into Spanish during Ms. Dubonis' presentation was a particularly useful exercise. Ms. Dubonis is scheduled to give a preconference seminar at the ATA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington on November 9, 2005 on "Taxation in Spanish-Speaking Countries" and a presentation on English into Spanish translation, "What Economic Indicators Tell Us."

The presentation by Steven Kahaner, executive director of Juriscribe®, on Argentine bankruptcy legislation drew on Juriscribe's extensive involvement in the translation of thousands of pages of documents relating to litigation regarding the reorganizations of several Argentine companies. Mr. Kahaner provided a glossary to attendees.

After attending these excellent sessions, as well as the superb French sessions discussed by Alan Dages in this issue, I am convinced that attending ATA conferences is a very effective way to expand our horizons by learning new subjects and to continue learning the tools of the trade, while enjoying the camaraderie of other translators.

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## **How the Translation Industry Is Like the Movie Industry continued from page 4**

**Translation companies are inherently conservative.** The majority of translation companies are small boutiques run by translators themselves. Several of the larger companies have evolved from smaller translator-run operations. These companies have invested heavily to attract and retain clients. Translation companies spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on marketing, sales, travel, proposal development, presentations, contract negotiations, etc. The translation market is extremely competitive, with over 20,000 companies, agencies and sole proprietors in the U.S. alone. It's possible—in fact quite common—for a translation company to spend \$15,000 - \$20,000 to compete on a contract or bid opportunity involving dozens of competitors and to lose it in the last competitive round. These are out-of-pocket costs that are not recoverable. The result is zero work for your company, and zero work for your labor force. Even when bids are successful, the relationships that a company develops and maintains with clients are only as good as the quality, reliability and consistency of the last translation it has submitted

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## **How the Translation Industry Is Like the Movie Industry continued from page 7**

or the last interpreting assignment it has completed. So the process of hiring a freelance translator or interpreter for any job is essentially a risk assessment. Is this person really good enough for me to risk this relationship on? If the new translator bombs a translation and we find out too late in the process to rescue it in the editing stage without missing the deadline, is it really worth the value of our relationship with the client? The answers to the two last questions, inevitably, are “no.”

**Risk-aversion = referrals.** This persistent risk aversion is the reason that work tends to be concentrated among the same group of translators and interpreters (46.9% of Slavic Language Division (SLD) survey respondents reported having “too little work,” while only 14% reported that they “turned down work”). This also explains why referrals and word-of-mouth are so essential to companies hiring new translators and to translators who are attempting to build a reliable clientele in the industry. According to the same survey, a whopping 67.2% of respondents report that most of their work comes from “word of mouth,” while 58% specifically cite “colleague referrals” (more than one response was permitted). So, not surprisingly, it turns out that translators rely on other translators’ opinions, experience, reputation and performance in selecting talent.

**Marketing Strategy: What works; what doesn’t.** Here are three fairly straightforward principles to keep in mind in any marketing strategy targeting the translation industry:

1. **Expertise:** You must be able to deliver
2. **Visibility:** People must know who you are.
3. **Relationships:** People must know that you can deliver.

**Principle 1. Expertise: You must be able to deliver.** Competence really does count. The reason “competence counts”—and the reason this is the most important point—is that most translation businesses are built on referrals, but sustained through relationships. This does not mean that all translators and interpreters who are busy are necessarily producing the very best work in the industry (more on that later). It simply means that most translators and interpreters are perceived to be sufficiently competent to meet their clients’ needs.

Don’t try to spin plates on your head. Actors like to regale potential clients with tales of their broad, rich and extensive experience. “I can do comedy and drama, have done off-Broadway, some commercial work, voice-overs, dance, spin plates on my head; anything you need.” Many translators do this too. “I can work in any field,” is a common claim. “I can work from or into my native language with equal ease,” is another. “I am fully multicultural in all my languages.”

The truth is, those of us outside the movie industry can see how an actor claiming to “do anything” comes across as a bit too ambitious, if not amusing or borderline desperate. Agents

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## **How the Translation Industry Is Like the Movie Industry continued from page 8**

know this too, of course. With a few notable exceptions—just enough to prove the rule—the best actors do not “do everything.” They specialize. The same is true of the best translators and interpreters.

**“Know thyself.”** Do not claim expertise you do not have. Please. Know exactly what you can do, and know exactly what you cannot do. Use a standard of excellence to define your capabilities. In other words, be aware of what you are good at, focus on that, and leave the other fields to your colleagues. Remember that overclaiming just makes you look like the plate-spinning actor. In our promotion of ATA and the profession in interviews on national TV and radio, reporters and producers are most surprised to learn how much translators and interpreters must know about the world—how expert we really must be in highly complex fields—to do our jobs well. “Know thyself” and thy limitations—in following this axiom you are paying due respect to your colleagues whose strengths are your weaknesses.

**Be thorough.** Explain all of your skills and expertise in excruciating detail—years of experience, training, education, software expertise, knowledge of formats, etc. There is no such thing as “too much” information, particularly in this hyperlinked age where online memory is cheap. Sell yourself on facts and expertise, on work that you have actually done, subjects you have truly mastered over many years. This approach is far superior to providing long lists of subject areas you may have done just once. Are you really better than your colleagues in these one-time areas? Unlikely. Besides, if the list grows too long, it begins to look like plate-spinning again.

**Principle 2. Visibility: People must know who you are.** There are several ways to improve visibility quickly and dramatically. The first and most valuable is to register your information at all the major translator/interpreter association and commercial sites on the Internet. The ATA site ([www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)) provides an on-line searchable database of translators and interpreters ([http://www.americantranslators.org/tsd\\_listings/](http://www.americantranslators.org/tsd_listings/)) that is used hundreds of times a day by translation companies and direct clients to find and hire talent. This is an important benefit of your ATA membership. Those of us on the ATA PR Committee promote this site to the national news media and potential clients at every opportunity. ATA members also report that the site has been an important source of work (according to the SLD survey, 53% of the respondents reported obtaining work from the ATA site). A few helpful points to remember:

1. You must go to the site and supply information yourself—ATA does not do it for you.
2. Be sure to update your contact information if it changes.
3. Remember that the information fields on the on-line form are limited in size, so in keeping with “be thorough” — it is vastly more efficient to provide a link to your Website and provide all your information there for potential clients to review.
4. If you are a member of an ATA local, regional, cooperating or affiliated group, register with the on-line searchable directories of each organization.

5. If you are a member of another translator or interpreter group (AIIC, NAJIT, etc.), be sure to register with their on-line directories.

**The rest of the Web.** There are several dozen translator and interpreter sites on the Internet that are visible to direct clients and translation companies, and new ones seem to pop up with great regularity. The most popular sites for translators and interpreters that include searchable databases and various job-posting boards and response systems include ProZ ([www.proz.com](http://www.proz.com)), Aquarius (<http://aquarius.net>), Translators Café ([www.translatorscafe.com](http://www.translatorscafe.com)) and Translation Zone ([www.translationzone.com](http://www.translationzone.com)). Be aware that many of the popular venues also attract non-professionals from around the world, and rates quoted on the boards may surprise and dismay you. If you focus on the professional sector of the market and deliver top-quality work, you will find these sites to be helpful in bringing work your way.

**What about resumé?** Translation companies, just like agents in Hollywood, are absolutely inundated by a tidal wave of unsolicited translator and interpreter resumes, e-mails, phone calls, business cards, letters and packages from translators seeking to improve their visibility. This, of course, is the least likely marketing technique to work in industries driven by “word of mouth” and “colleague referrals.” Why do translators (and actors) continue to do this?

There are several reasons. It’s easy. It’s non-threatening. It can’t hurt. It’s possible to reach out to a lot of companies. It sometimes works.

In fact, it sometimes works quite well. In cases of rare languages and special expertise, there is value in simply appearing in as many company databases as possible. However, in most of the commercially-viable language pairs and subject areas where competition is most intense, it is essential to stand out from the crowd if your goal is to consistently improve your total volume of work.

**Principle 3. Relationships: People must know you can deliver.** Note that this statement is distinctly different from, “you have to convince people you can deliver.” The gold standard for “knowing you can deliver” is a referral from a colleague with first-hand experience with your work. Interpreters rely on referrals of this type for an immense amount of their work. Colleague referrals are built on what colleagues know about you—it’s why they are so powerful. They reduce risk for the client.

**Prove it.** One area where translators and interpreters are surprisingly different from actors is in the “prove it” category. Actors have been known to cause bodily harm to their colleagues as they scramble over their heads in a mad dash to be the first to jump in front of agents, producers and casting directors. They can’t wait to prove it. It sometimes seems that translators don’t want to do this at all. When asked to present their translations for review or commentary—particularly in front of potential clients or colleagues—many translators become wide-eyed and very quiet. Some claim they have “no time,” or suggest they have “nothing to

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## **How the Translation Industry Is Like the Movie Industry continued from page 10**

contribute.” Some are reasonably concerned with client confidentiality, although there are obvious ways around this (translate open-source samples for a presentation, or discuss common terminology issues that contain no proprietary information). The reason this behavior is so surprising is that demonstrating one’s competence is the very best marketing you will ever do in the translation industry. Period. It puts your name and work out there for examination by clients and colleagues alike and shows what you are capable of producing. “Proving it” obviously includes live presentations at conferences or workshops, samples provided directly to clients or developed in consultation with clients, as well as virtual discussions in cyberspace or any event where translators gather. Look, actors are no dummies. They know that their careers are in the hands of agents and casting directors. Our careers are in the hands of a wider audience (translation companies and direct clients), but that potential audience also includes our colleagues, whose referrals are so valuable to building and sustaining a practice. Why pass this up?

**Sole Practitioner.** Translation is, by nature, a solitary profession. One reason translators may be reluctant to reach out to their colleagues is that they are used to working alone. This may also cause them to discount the importance of editing and the value of collegial relationships. Translators who do not cultivate close working relationships are simply at a comparative disadvantage in the market. It’s difficult, if not impossible, to overstate the importance of skilled editors and reviewers in advancing a translator’s expertise. Nothing was more important to my own professional development than the scrupulous editing of material I translated for published journals over many years. I can’t imagine ever coming close to competence without having the expertise of my colleagues informing my translations that passed across their desks. When I became a reviewer myself about fifteen years ago, I was very surprised to discover that 1) many translators with decades of experience who had been working in isolation had simply been making the same mistakes for many years (and were none too happy to learn about this from me, frankly) and 2) translators in the commercial market would claim to be “too busy” or “not interested” in reviewing or proofing each other’s work. How could they pass up the opportunity to learn from their colleagues? In my experience, nothing substitutes for the full-text review of colleagues’ work. This is so much more valuable than Q&A about terminology on the mailing lists or translator boards for the simple reason that we sometimes don’t know what we don’t know: We ask questions about terminology we don’t know, but forget about the material we think we do know—but in fact don’t.

**Who, me?** Working in isolation tends to breed nervousness—a sneaky, uneasy sense that perhaps our translations may not measure up, or that we will make a mistake (confession: I get nervous giving presentations, too). Resist the temptation to hide from the public; take every opportunity to be part of the professional community—present with a colleague, tackle a subject your mastery of which you are especially proud of, participate in discussions on the public boards. This is also an act of generosity, as we all learn from your expertise.

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## **How the Translation Industry Is Like the Movie Industry continued from page 11**

**“Yes, but...”** Any discussion of marketing techniques will inevitably lead to protests that despite good visibility, participation in on-line discussions and even attendance at conferences, translators can be left behind: many clients buy poor translations, many good translators can't find enough work, and some of the work is fleeing to lower-cost locations. It is true that the best translators are not always busy, and the market can be cruelly inefficient. Here is a final principle to keep in mind:

**The translation market is inefficient – hence, it does not define quality.** Major movie releases can pull in hundreds of millions of dollars worldwide and still be recognized as works of utter drivel. In the movie business, commercial success is unrelated to quality, creativity or originality. The market does not define quality. In the translation industry, the market doesn't define quality, either. Is this claim inconsistent with the argument that “expertise” is critically important? Not really. In the long run, one cannot succeed without expertise. But expertise alone is often not enough. This is because market inefficiencies, driven by clients who do not understand translation or their own needs, can sometimes frustrate or defeat expertise, or reward mediocrity. A common refrain among translators in the ATA continuing education debates last fall was: “I have many satisfied clients, so I must be good.” Not so. Just as \$100+ million of worldwide ticket sales is not going to make “Independence Day” into a modern-day film classic, the tens of millions of dollars spent on machine translation (MT) purchases is not going to transform the resulting semantic train wrecks into works of art. In fact, the situation is even more disturbing. It turns out that a significant number of clients are quite delighted to pay for machine translation because it's relatively cheap, fast as lightning and perceived to be “good enough.” Some clients are happy with regurgitated proto-English scrawled on the back of a bar napkin. Some customers even tolerate 15-second dead zones from an interpreter booth.

These are the inherent perils of relying on client feedback as the sole standard for professional excellence. Sometimes clients “don't know what they don't know” (in the case of MT) or are just happy to get whatever they can (in the case of the bar napkin). Being human, some clients are simply too embarrassed to confess to an excellent interpreter who has helped them in so many other situations that her written translation doesn't make any sense in English. Often these clients quietly seek help from translation companies (or other translators) in what we call “bail-outs,” where translations obviously produced by non-native speakers have to be rescued or “bailed-out.” The end client breathes not a word of this to the original producer of the

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### **Do You Have Something to Say?**

The Capital Translator is a place to say it. If you have any information to share with other members, let us know. We are accepting articles (500-1000 words) from all NCATA members. Send your letters, articles or article ideas to:

**Harvetta Asamoah at  
translations@supreme-translations.com.**

## **How the Translation Industry Is Like the Movie Industry continued from page 12**

work for much the same reason that many of us have trouble challenging our own physicians, hairdressers or car mechanics—people who often see us at our most vulnerable. These relationships can be charmingly complicated. Clients have a special bond to interpreters who are often their lifeline in a new and confusing culture and admire translators who help decode their documents. Clients value and need us in ways that create and nurture a certain culture of forgiveness in some situations. In our industry, which lacks a long-term, rigorous professional training path or board certification or licensing procedures, this is probably a good thing (as long as your expert colleagues are around to bail out the client—see “bail-outs” and “referrals,” above). The alternative is a system where it would be virtually impossible for beginning or even intermediate forgiveness in some situations. In our industry, which lacks a long-term, rigorous professional training path or board certification or licensing procedures, this is probably a good thing (as long translators and interpreters to get any work at all in the industry until they achieved a true level of advanced professional competence—even mastery. The end result is that the “masters” in our industry—the true experts with decades of extensive experience who regularly turn down work—end up appearing to completely dominate the industry. It’s true that the work tends to cluster around translators with the most experience and visibility. But the industry is far too large and diverse for this clustering to be exclusionary. It might be more accurate to say that, in most cases, the translators and interpreters with “too little work” have yet to appreciate the critical importance of expertise, visibility, and relationships to their commercial viability and success in the market. Without them, it is virtually impossible to succeed.

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**The author wishes to extend his most sincere thanks and appreciation to Lydia Stone, Nora Favorov, Lillian Clementi and Marian Greenfield for their exceedingly valuable observations, suggestions and insight on this article.**

*Kevin Hendzel is Chief Operating Officer of ASET International Services Corporation, a premier translation, localization and interpreting services provider headquartered in Arlington, VA. His own translations from Russian into English include 34 books and 2,200 articles published in physics, technology and law. Kevin also serves as Co-Chair of the ATA Public Relations Committee and functions as the ATA national media spokesman.*

*In his role as national media spokesman, Kevin has been quoted or appeared live on national media outlets such as CNN, FoxNews Live, ABC World News Tonight, CBS News with Dan Rather, MSNBC, National Public Radio, Voice of America, PBS, The New York Times, the Washington Post, the AP wire service, Reuters, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, USA Today, Wired magazine and over 600 newspapers and journals in the U.S. and abroad.*

## “Source Texts”

### Book Review

**French Criminal Law by Catherine Elliott (2000)**

**published by Willan Publishing,**

**International Specialized Book Services, [www.isbs.com](http://www.isbs.com)**

**\$35.00 Paperback**

**Reviewed by Harvetta Asamoah**

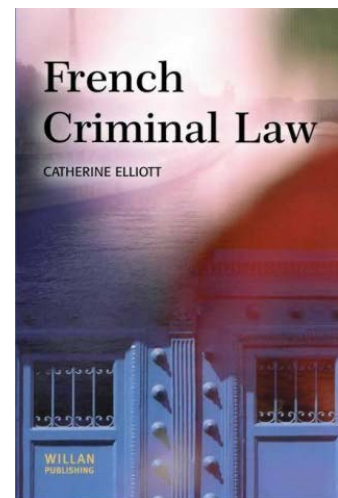
Catherine Elliott, a university lecturer in law currently at City University London who has received diplomas in French law, has written three books on the French legal system. *French Criminal Law* provides a concise and very clear and accessible overview of criminal law and procedure in France and compares it with English law.

The book serves an extremely useful guide for a legal translator because it contains excellent translations of some original text from the French Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure as well as a short French-English glossary and a sample translation of a short court decision. Translations, with the source text, also are included in the analytical discussion throughout the book, which provides additional context. In legal parlance, this is a great nutshell.

Chapter One contains an enlightening discussion of the evolution of criminal law in France. It can be very interesting to

**Translations, with the source text, are included in the analytical discussion throughout the book, which provides additional context.**

compare this discussion in English with the similar, slightly more detailed description in French in *Droit Pénal, Procédure Penale*, another great “aide-mémoire,” by Jacques Borricand and Anne-Marie Simon, published by Sirey Éditions and available from Dalloz ([www.dalloz.fr](http://www.dalloz.fr)).



The description of French criminal procedure includes translations of organization names and documents. Like each of the other chapters, it includes numerous citations to specific provisions, which can be consulted on the French government website, Legifrance ([www.legifrance.gouv.fr](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr)) The translations of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure on Legifrance are also very useful. Every chapter contains citations to court cases. The book briefly discusses legal changes and many important French cases, including the Klaus Barbie, Paul Touvier and Maurice Papon cases.

Each chapter provides a concise overview of the definitions of crimes: genocide and other crimes against humanity; voluntary and involuntary homicide, non-fatal offenses against the person; rape; property offenses and drug offenses. A legal translator may have to translate a document concerning any of these offenses, and there are significant differences between French

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## **Book Review: French Criminal Law by Catherine Elliott continued from page 14**

and English law in these areas. Other chapters cover general legal concepts and defenses. Each chapter concludes with a very concise comparative analysis of the differences between French and English law. In general, this analysis also applies to American law, due to the fact that American law is based on English common law.

In response to an overburdened system, French criminal procedure is changing very rapidly. I would advise the reader to make sure that any information or citation used in a translation is current. However, this does not affect most of the information in *French Criminal Law* and does not limit the usefulness of the book in any way as a guide for translators.

This book is one of my most cherished resources for legal translation. Anyone interested in the subject will find it useful. Thus, its intended audience is not limited to lawyers and law professors.

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### **British Slang: Lord Starlink Investigates**

#### **Do you have a story?**

Capital Translator is seeking good stories -- funny, sad, poignant stories. We hear that some NCATA members would enjoy reading about "unusual" experiences of other translators and interpreters. If you have a good one, send it to:

**Doug McNeal at:  
formcneal@hotmail.com.**

When Lord Starlink returned to his hometown of London, England after a long gap, he found that the language had evolved in his absence. In other words, slang words and phrases never heard in his childhood were now current. Let him illustrate with the case of Jeremy and Jemima, a courting couple of Starlink's acquaintance.

Jeremy has been "playing away" (cheating on his girlfriend). Jemima, the aforesaid girlfriend, finds the offending love letters and feels totally "gutted" (devastated). Jemima, justifiably aggrieved, then proceeds to "throw an almighty strop" (have a fit).

Jeremy comes groveling back to Jemima (there is probably a current English expression for "to come groveling back" but Starlink did not hear it, at least not on this visit). J and J discuss their relationship crisis, and in the current argot, they "get it sorted". Note, however, that they don't "sort it out". That's because, in current Londonese, the post-positive "out" in "to sort out" has been dropped.

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## British Slang: Lord Starlink Investigates continued from page 15

Thereafter, Jeremy and Jemima are able to "draw a line under the incident" (let bygones be bygones). But there is a catch – Jeremy must "bin" the love letters from the other lady (throw them out), and refuse to see the third party ever again. And if there is any further contact between them, Jeremy will soon find himself "binned" as well (although here, the useful term "dumped" will serve the purpose equally well on both sides of the Atlantic).

Which only goes to show that while Britain and the USA are two countries divided by a common language, certain human experiences are universal.

### Favorite Websites

The *Capital Translator* will publish short lists of Websites recommended by our readers as being particularly useful and NCATA members' Websites. The Websites may include dictionaries and glossaries monolingual, bilingual or multilingual, parallel documents and media, or educational Websites.

If you have a favorite Website, please send us the link, a short description, and your reasons for recommending the site. We will include the names and contact information of our contributors. Send your submissions to: **Doug McNeal** at: [formcneal@hotmail.com](mailto:formcneal@hotmail.com).

### Industry Websites

#### Common Sense Advisory

Common Sense Advisory provides a blog as well as research on translation, interpretation and localization markets and the industry. You'll check it for its informative reports and good humor.

Website address: <http://www.commonsenseadvisory.com>

## Spanish - Diccionario de Regionalismos de la Lengua Española

This website for Spanish regionalisms contains samples of a dictionary, a thematic vocabulary and regional terms, each containing thousands of words. The dictionary is searchable alphabetically. The user locates words in the vocabulary by geographical location by clicking on maps in vibrant colors or by names of countries or regions. The user can find words by topic in the regional terminology section. The printed version of the *Diccionario de Regionalismos de la Lengua Española* by Pablo Grosschmid and Cristina Echegoyen is published by Editorial Juventud, Barcelona.

Website address:

<http://www.hispanicus.com/drle/>

### Various Languages, Slang, Patois and Dialects

That word wasn't a typo. It wasn't in French, it was in Lorrain!!! Thank you, Lexilogos.

This Website in French contains a wealth of information for Arabic, French, Spanish, English, Québécois, Alsatian, and 118 other idioms, including Lorrain. The Arabic page, for example, furnishes bilingual dictionaries for French and English, transliteration and specialized dictionaries, Arabic names, and many other materials. Similar resources are also available for many other languages.

**Caution:** This Website in French includes insults and curse words in French and English.

Website address: <http://www.lexilogos.com/>

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**Favorite Websites - Glossaries and Dictionaries**  
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**Glossaries & Dictionaries**

**Multilingual International Trade Glossary - SICE Glossary**

The Organization of American States Foreign Trade Information System (SICE) provides a comprehensive glossary of international trade terms primarily in Spanish and English, and includes many acronyms in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese.

Website address: <http://www.sice.oas.org/GLOSSARY/Glossary.asp>

**French Criminal Law Dictionary**

This dictionary by former law professor, Jean-Paul Doucet, is essential for finding those obscure French criminal law terms in French.

Website address: <http://ledroitcriminel.free.fr/dictionnaire.htm>

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