



capital translator

Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association
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December 1999/January 2000

Local Translators Contribute to *National Geographic* International Editions

by Alison Sondhaus Carroll

National Geographic is the only magazine with foreign language editions that publishes most of the articles appearing in the national edition simultaneously in selected countries, according to the *Geographic's* Editorial Director of Foreign Editions, Bernard Ohanian. He spoke at a panel on Friday morning of the ATA conference, which included three Washington-based translators who assist in the process: Scott Brennan (French and Italian), Camilla Bozzoli Rudolph (Italian), and Yukako Seltzer (Japanese).

The magazine published its first foreign-language edition in Japanese in 1995. Since then, it has added Italian, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Latin American, Polish and Spanish editions. As Mr. Ohanian described it, producing the foreign versions of this widely respected periodical is an exacting process involving well-established local publishers, experienced editors and, of course, highly qualified local translators. In addition to the article in English, the editors and translators are provided with a background document that fills in context, explains idioms used in the text and provides

other information that might be helpful to them. (Fact checkers in the U.S. have already spent six months working to guarantee the factual accuracy of information contained in the articles.)

Where do our panelists and other U.S.-based translators come in? When the translation is returned to the editorial staff in Washington, they pass it on to the translation reviewers here, who make sure the translated version is factually accurate. Each foreign-language version uses four or five reviewers on an ongoing basis for this task. Their job is to prepare a memo that lists any deviations from the source text. Obviously, incorrect numbers, dates, and the like must be reported, but more importantly, missed nuances, additional text or omissions are also brought to the attention of the U.S. editors. No comments on the journalistic or translation style are necessary, since the text has been rigorously edited abroad, and the task is basically to ensure that the meaning is captured and that no inaccuracies have been mistakenly introduced.

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President's Corner

by Scott Brennan

NCATA will close out 1999 with its Annual Meeting and Holiday Party on December 12. Many of us are just back from a very strong American Translators Association (ATA) annual conference in St. Louis, where a number of NCATA members presented papers or took part in their capacity as ATA officers and committee members.

It has been a busy year for NCATA. At our second annual Job Fair this past February, we welcomed 14 new corporate/institutional members and many new individual translators and interpreters. Don't miss the next one coming up February 19!

Other events included an NCATA professional development seminar targeting newcomers to the profession under the title "The Business of Translation," a chapter meeting with a program hosted by *National Geographic's* International Editions in May, a joint luncheon with the Society of Federal Linguists at the National Foreign Language Center in September, a German-specific chapter meeting hosted by the Goethe-Institut Washington in October, and accreditation exam sittings and practice workshops. Release of the hardcopy NCATA *Professional Services Directory 2000* was timed to coincide with the ATA conference, and hundreds of copies are already in the hands of buyers of translation and interpreting services worldwide. The online version has logged over a thousand searches in just the past 3 months (and that includes a visitor from Botswana).

Each of the volunteers I have had the privilege of working with over this past year deserves our heartfelt thanks. I often feel like my job is to get out of their way and let them do what they do so well!



Bill Keasbey will be stepping down after two years as Accreditation Chair, and a term as Vice President before that. I have relied heavily on **Therese Hathaway's** head for numbers and exceptional organization skills as Treasurer for the past two years, to compensate for my own lack of either. Over and above their specific duties, Bill and Therese have both been very effective board members, and we have all benefited from their thoughtful input and dedication to making Washington a great place to be a professional translator or interpreter.

NCATA Vice President **Sangeeta Prasad** and Secretary **Kriemhild Zerling** are just finishing the first half of their two-year term. Sangeeta captained NCATA's table at the ATA conference and, undaunted, will be the principal organizer of the upcoming Job Fair.

Membership Co-Chair **Alissa Webel** started out the year as Alissa Martin, making the transition right in the middle of the runup to the print version of the *Professional Services Directory*, one of membership's busiest times of the year. Even so, she handled it all with grace and was right there stuffing envelopes with a new ring on her finger!

Alissa shares membership duties with Membership Co-Chair **Tahmena Rauf**, who joined our group of volunteers in January. Both she and our new Program Chair this year, **John Vázquez**, have proven themselves time and again with their flexibility, energy and willingness to work for the good of us all.

The team that puts out this newsletter nine times a year (a unique feat among ATA's local groups) also deserves special recognition. *Capital Translator* Editor **Ruth Boggs** and

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Translators ...continued from page 1

The panelists agreed that the quality of the translations they review is uniformly very high. Nonetheless, they related several telling anecdotes to illustrate the meticulous approach needed to give the editors an accurate picture of discrepancies arising from translation. Scott Brennan described a story on cheetahs in Africa that was translated into French and had depicted the males who pursue females as *dragueurs de passage*, which he aptly translated as "any pick-up artist who comes through the door." The editors were alerted to the liberty taken with the rather scientific and straightforward English and could then confer with the foreign editor.

Camilla Bozzoli then related the story of the translation into Italian of an article about the discovery of the mummy of a young woman sacrificed by the Incas five centuries ago, called the *Doncella de Hielo* by the anthropologists who found her. This phrase had been translated into English as the Ice Maiden, a nice rendition capturing the medieval flavor of the original Spanish. The Italian translator in turn translated the phrase as *la Venere di Ghiaccio* [the Ice Venus], a leap Ms. Bozzoli felt was not justified, since it superimposed the mythology of the Greeks and Romans on the Incan civilization, while perhaps depicting a young and frightened girl in a way that did not fit the context. She cautioned the editors about the "happy-go-lucky" approach to translation of this phrase which, in her opinion, constituted a discrepancy in the target language.

These and other anecdotes highlighted the valuable contribution many of our local-area translators are making to the quality of the foreign editions of *National Geographic*. Plans to expand the foreign language publications are in place, according to Mr. Ohanian, encouraged no doubt by the success to date of their current efforts. ✍

NCATA Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the members of NCATA will be held on Sunday, December 12, 1999 at 12:00 p.m. at The Old Ebbitt Grill, 675 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005 (Metro Center station; complimentary valet parking provided).

On the agenda:

- Announcement of results of elections for President, Treasurer and Accreditation Chair;
- Report to the members by the President, Treasurer, Accreditation Chair and Membership Co-Chairs.

The deadline for adding other business to the agenda, as announced in the November 1999 issue of the *Capital Translator*, was December 1, 1999.

NCATA's annual Holiday Party will immediately follow the Annual Meeting. However, the two events are separate, and members may attend the Annual Meeting without attending the Holiday Party or paying the registration charge. ✍

NCATA Holiday Party

When	December 12, 1999 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. (immediately following the Annual Meeting)
Where	The Old Ebbitt Grill 675 15th Street NW Washington, DC 20005 (Metro Center station; complimentary valet parking)
How much	\$25 per person for the meal and soft drinks (gratuities included; several menu options, including vegetarian, will be available)

The end of the year is slowly creeping up on us, and it's time for NCATA's annual Holiday Party. You've worked hard and earned a chance to relax and chat about how good business has been! Plan to spend Sunday afternoon, December 12, enjoying the company of fellow translators and interpreters at one of Washington's most acclaimed restaurants, The Old Ebbitt Grill. We hope to see our Corporate Members represented by their employees. Guests are welcome.

Space is limited. Reservations must be received by December 7, 1999. Mail your check for \$25 per person, made out to "NCATA Holiday Party," to:

NCATA Program Chair
P.O. Box 65200
Washington DC 20035-5200

Questions? Contact NCATA Program Chair John Vázquez at (703) 845-7765 or JohnVazquez@msn.com. ✍

Accreditation News

by *Bill Keasbey*



In the year that is drawing to a close the chapter sponsored three accreditation examination sittings, in January, May, and September, each of which was oversubscribed. The translators in this area seem to be very eager to prove their competence by taking these examinations. There will be another examination sitting on Saturday, January 22, 2000, at the Graduate Education Center of The George Washington University at 1775B Duke Street in Alexandria, VA. The site is next to the King Street Metro Station, and there is underground parking at the site for a reasonable price on Saturdays. The examination will start at 2 pm and last for three hours. Each candidate will be given five passages in the language combination of his choice, e. g., French to English, from which he should choose and translate three. To be accredited the candidate must pass two of the passages.

In order to take the examination one must be a member of the American Translators Association and register with ATA Headquarters. The application forms and informational brochures on the program may be obtained by calling 703-683-6100, sending an e-mail message to Maggie@atanet.org, or through the ATA Website: <http://www.atanet.org>. In view of the fact that the capacity of the examination site is limited, it is desirable to register in good time.

To help candidates understand the accreditation process and prepare for the accreditation examination the Chapter is also sponsoring an accreditation orientation seminar on Saturday, December 11, 1999, at the Cleveland Park Branch of the DC Public Library, which is located

Virtual Résumé Clinic

sponsored by NCATA

The National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association (NCATA) will hold its third annual Job Fair on February 19, 2000, to bring Washington-area translation companies, translators and interpreters face-to-face. At the Job Fair, freelancers and job-seekers will have the opportunity to present their résumé to recruiters and be interviewed.

For members who would like guidance in tuning up their résumé, NCATA is sponsoring a virtual résumé clinic. Here's how it will work:

You are offered a one-on-one consultation with an individual who has actual hiring responsibility in the course of his/her duties. NCATA has put together a panel of experts who have volunteered to critique résumés by mail and/or telephone, at their option.

If you wish to participate:

1. Mail (a) your résumé, (b) a self-addressed, stamped envelope, (c) a check for \$10 made out to "NCATA Virtual Résumé Clinic," and (d) if you want a telephone consultation, a cover note stating the hours you are available and the number to call, to arrive before close of business on January 14, 2000, to:

NCATA Virtual Résumé Clinic
PO Box 65200
Washington DC 20035-5200

2. By February 15, the panelist assigned to you will either call to discuss your résumé, or your résumé will be mailed back with written comments. Note that résumés are randomly assigned to panelists; you cannot choose who will review your résumé. Each panelist has agreed to review a limited number of résumés, so résumés will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. If your résumé cannot be reviewed, it will be returned along with your check. ✍

at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Street, just south of the Cleveland Park Metro Station. The seminar will take place in the conference room on the second floor and will begin at 2 pm. The first part will consist of general remarks on the accreditation program and answers to questions from the audience. In the second part the participants will divide into groups by languages and go over sample passages to discuss translation strate-

gies. In order to attain maximum benefit from the process, participants should order a sample passage and translate it prior to the seminar. The passages may be obtained by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Bill Keasbey at 5031 Alta Vista Road, Bethesda, MD 20814, and specifying which language combination is desired, e. g., English to Polish. The seminar is free of charge and is open to all who are interested in the subject. ✍

NCATA Job Fair!

- When** 1:30 to 4 pm, Saturday, February 19, 2000
- Where** Ellipse Conference Center
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
4301 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia
- Why** Meet with recruiters from area translation companies and other buyers of language services, present your résumé and be interviewed

On February 19 the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association (NCATA) will host its third annual Job Fair, to bring Washington-area translators and interpreters face-to-face with area translation companies and other buyers of language services. At the Job Fair, freelancers and job-seekers will have the opportunity to present their résumés to recruiters and be interviewed. Participation in the annual Job Fair is one of the benefits of membership in NCATA.

The Job Fair will be held from 1:30 to 4:00 pm, Saturday, February 19, 2000, at the Ellipse Conference Center of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, located at 4301 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia, on the corner of Wilson Boulevard and North Taylor Street across from Ballston Common Shopping Center. Those who attended previous Job Fairs and NCATA's Business of Translation seminar last Spring will remember this facility. A map and directions will appear in the February issue of the *Capital Translator*.

Tell your colleagues about the Job Fair. Nonmembers are invited to join NCATA (annual dues \$25, download form from www.ncata.org), or pay \$10 at the door to attend the Job Fair. ✍

Errata

Despite our best efforts errors have found their way into the recently published Membership List and the *Professional Services Directory 2000 (PSD)*. Our apologies for any inconvenience. Please update your copies of the *Membership List* and *PSD* as follows:

Italian Language Connection, Inc.

E-mail:

ItalTranslations@cs.com

Mohler-Little, Gloria

E-mail:

gmlittle@mindspring.com

Multilingual Translation Services

E-mail:

Syhkmts@netvigator.com

Pisoni, Mark

E-mail:

ItalTranslations@cs.com

Shipp, James

Address:

525 Perkins Wood Rd,
Hartselle, AL 35640

Vázquez, John

E-mail:

JohnVazquez@msn.com

Membership Renewal Deadline

The deadline to renew your NCATA membership for 2000 is January 15. If you did not receive your customized membership renewal form with last month's issue of the *Capital Translator*, contact Membership Co-Chair Alissa Webel (née Martin) at MartinA2@gusun.georgetown.edu or (301) 442-6637. Renew on time to ensure uninterrupted listing in NCATA's online *Professional Services Directory*.

Important: If you joined NCATA on or after September 1, 1999, your membership is valid through 2000. Remember that you must renew your NCATA membership in addition to checking the dues rebate box on your ATA membership renewal form. ✍

NCATA and Goethe Institut Hold First Meeting of German Translators

by Ruth Boggs

On October 18, 1999, the Goethe Institut, a renowned center for German cultural events in the Washington, DC area, was the site of the first NCATA-sponsored meeting of German translators and/or interpreters.

NCATA President Scott Brennan opened the meeting and introduced the speakers. He emphasized that the meeting of German translators was the first in a series of language-specific events planned by NCATA.

Four speakers addressed language-specific topics:

- Jan McLin Clayberg, who specializes in the translation of patents and patent-related materials from German and French into English, discussed some of the finer points of translating patents. Her presentation built on some of her previous lectures and publications on this subject (see "Patentese ..." in the April 1998 *CT*).
- Claire Haymes provided an insider's perspective on translation related to international development issues, based on her experience as a German > English translator working for a German government agency. She touched on specific "sticky issues" and provided an extract of a glossary.
- Bill Keasbey talked about the translation of German proverbs into English. He passed out a list of German proverbs and sayings he had collected from Compuserve's Foreign Language Education Forum and challenged the audience to provide translations for each of them. Everyone enjoyed what proved to be a good exercise for the "little gray cells".

- Angelika Spears shared some helpful hints on keeping up with a living language from abroad. She discussed how she overcame an alienation from her native language after living abroad for an extended period of time, and provided some solid advice as well as tools and methods that can aid in keeping current with one's native language while living abroad.

The meeting provided German translators/interpreters living and working in the Washington, DC area with a great opportunity to share some ideas, seek solutions to common problems, and do some networking while soaking up the flavor of German culture provided by the Goethe Institut. Needless to say, the next event is already being eagerly anticipated. ✍



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

From the Editor

A few housekeeping notes:

Due to extensive ATA Conference coverage, the "Information Exchange" and "Technology Corner" departments will not appear in this issue. Look for them again in your February *CT*.

The *CT* is taking a year-end break.. As this is a combined December/January issue, the next *CT* will be in your mailbox in early February.

We would like to congratulate NCATA President **Scott Brennan** on his election as a Director to the ATA Board. Great Job!

The *CT* would like to wish everyone Happy Holidays and a happy, healthy and prosperous Year 2000! ✍

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Assistant Editor **Dimitra Hengen**, together with Production Manager **Karin Wuertz-Schaefer** and Advertising Coordinator **Angelika Spears**, have done an excellent job of recruiting articles and managing the details of production on a tight schedule every month.

Michael Wahlster is our able Webmaster and Editor of the *Professional Services Directory*, and is directly responsible for developing the website, searchable PSD and e-mailing list. I have long admired his keen eye for design and detail, and am thrilled he agreed to stay on after multiple terms as Membership Chair.

In addition to the regular volunteers, many other members have made contributions. In particular, I want to thank **Carmen Castro-Conroy**, **Lotti Eichhorn**, **Eric McMillan**, **Alison Sondhaus Carroll** and all those who volunteered at the NCATA table in St. Louis (see Marica Pariante Angelides's article this page).

Every single individual I have mentioned is a pleasure to work with. They are what makes NCATA is one of the most active and dynamic local chapters of ATA.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Holiday Party, and wish you a happy and prosperous New Year! ✍



Conference Coverage

It happened to me in St Louis

by Marica Pariante Angelides



Attending an ATA Conference always puts me in a good mood, especially this year, since I was unable to go the last two years. With a 4-year old jumping all over, and a business to run, not to mention a husband, I do not have a lot of time to get ready for the Conference. My new résumé is not ready, but so what? My info can be accessed on the ATA web site. I am not worried about it. Instead, I think of the old friends and colleagues I will see, and the new ones I will meet.

The minute I step in the cab to the airport, the story of the cab driver told by Vittorio Felaco (see the April issue of the *CT*) comes to my mind. I think that I am not ready for it. What if it happens to me? But my cab driver was born and raised in DC and has no intention of doing anything else but driving his cab. Now I am disappointed—it would have been a good story to tell at the Conference! I jump in a second cab at the St. Louis airport, and this driver is very talkative. I like that. I like to talk to people, and think it is enlightening to meet people from all over the world. That's what the conference is—a chance to meet colleagues and others from "everywhere."

*"Oh! Italiana! Sono stato a Roma per otto mesi prima di venire qui. Parlo italiano."*¹ With an interesting Russian accent! It turns out he knows where I grew up in Rome, because he was working very close by... And then, all of a sudden, the question comes: "So what does it take to become a translator?" Now, I am thinking, do I have a story here? And, am I ready for it? "Come to the

Conference!" I say—following Vittorio's suggestion. The ATA conference gives you the opportunity to participate in seminars and workshops, in short to learn new things. It gives you a perspective about the profession. To me it is also interesting because it allows me to put a face with some voices, and to visit a new place. The cab stops in front of the hotel before I can get an answer from the cabdriver.

This year I personally have two happenings I'm looking forward to: volunteering at the NCATA table, and the first meeting of the long-anticipated Italian Language Division (ILD).

[The chapter] is like a small ATA...right next door.

It was the very first time I volunteered for our chapter (or for any chapter, for that matter), and it was an incredible experience. I had the chance to talk to many colleagues about the chapter and what it does. I had the opportunity to meet other volunteers—mostly translators in language pairs other than mine—and also growing agencies wanting to find out about the NCATA *Professional Services Directory*. Also,

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St. Louis

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my Italian friends and colleagues stopped by to keep me company, and we had some quite interesting conversations with other visitors at the table. I personally find that stopping at a table is a bit like going to a restaurant. If the place is empty nobody goes in, but if it is busy, more and more people stop by. Not all the colleagues who stopped by were from the National Capital area, so one of the most frequent questions was: "What does the NCATA do for out-of-towners?" One of my answers: "The Annual Job Fair, where attendees came from as far as Boston and Chicago." The second most frequent question was: "What does the chapter do for its members?" Well, it gives translators an opportunity to market their skills at a more local level, to meet local colleagues, and to provide networking opportunities. It is like a small ATA, only right next door. Not to mention the listing in the online directory. I probably did not have all the answers, but I felt useful nevertheless, and I had fun doing it. I highly recommend the experience!

Some of the Italians reading this article are already aware of the ILD, but I am sure there are others who do not know about it, and I hope they will find this useful. The objective of the ILD is to give information, and provide services to its members in all professional fields related to the Italian language. Any ATA-member in good standing can become a member of the ILD. Roberto Crivello was elected Administrator, according to the bylaws, and the language "issue" was also discussed. It was decided that Italian is the preferred language during ILD meetings, but English can be chosen by those who are not comfortable in speaking Italian. Stress was put on active participation by all members to contribute to the development and enrichment of

the Division, and to the creation of a newsletter. I am glad I was part of this initiation event.

I am very glad I went to the Conference, even if I did not have my résumé (and my business cards were not "FedExed" to me until Friday morning). As a matter-of-fact, it was such a great experience that I'm already getting ready for Orlando in 2000!! ✍

¹ "Italian? I was in Rome for 8 months on my way here. I speak Italian!"

Marica Pariante Angelides is an Italian lawyer who provides freelance legal consulting, translating and interpreting services. She holds a Laurea in Giurisprudenza from the 'Università La Sapienza' in Rome and a Master of Laws from University of Pennsylvania Law School in Philadelphia, and is ATA-accredited (English > Italian). She lives in Washington, D.C., and can be reached at marica@angelides.net.

Translating German Financial Statements

by William P. Keasbey



Financial statements fascinating ???

Robin Bonthorne, who operates a consulting service in Mainz-Kastel/Germany, carried off a real "Kunststück" in his presentation titled "Mind the GAAP—Translating German Financial Statements."

He provided a detailed explanation of international accounting systems with all their esoteric complexities, which was so compelling that the members of the audience who filed into the room hung on his every word and abbreviation with riveted attention. And this on a Saturday afternoon, when everyone was already tired after almost three days of seminars and focused mostly on going home.

Bonthorne accomplished this feat by speaking articulately and

with obvious authority, citing references that everyone could use in their own translation work in this field.

His offer to follow up with another presentation on the same subject at the next ATA conference was met with great enthusiasm from the audience. ✍

Bill Keasbey, a G > E, R > E translator residing in Bethesda, MD, is the NCATA Accreditation Chair. He can be reached at 76121.2304@compuserve.com

English/French/Spanish Pre-conference Seminar with Alexandra Russell-Bitting

The Language of International Development

by Alison Sondhaus Carroll



The ATA annual meeting continues to offer excellent pre-conference opportunities to explore translation-related topics in depth. Alexandra Russell-Bitting's seminar was no exception. Ms. Russell-Bitting is a senior translator-reviser at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Washington, DC, and she brings extensive experience and insight to the subject at hand.

As Ms. Russell-Bitting pointed out, the core issue for all of the development banks as well as other multilateral organizations such as the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) is the reduction of poverty in the developing world. This special mandate covers activities in a number of areas:

- poverty reduction and social equity
- modernization of the state
- economic integration
- environment
- private sector development

Each of these areas has several subareas that were discussed in detail and may be found in the conference proceedings, which also includes an ample bibliography and a glossary of key terms in all three languages. This overview will mention only a few of the highlights of the three-hour session.

As in any specialized field, no matter how broad, there are a set of terms, expressions and turns of phrase that have developed and continue to evolve, as a function of the political and economic realities they reflect. English continues to be the source of most of this jargon, giving the into-English translator a definite advantage. Ms. Russell-

Bitting included a very handy selection of articles taken from newspapers and periodicals such as the *Economist*, highlighting current terminology and underscoring the importance of keeping up-to-date on the subject matter.

The first step in addressing poverty is to determine the poverty line, also known as the poverty income threshold, which varies from coun-

having a short-term effect (such as providing free school lunches) and the latter as providing longer term solutions (such as promoting rural electrification or microenterprise development, for example). Of course, all of the multilateral development banks (MDBs) share the long-term objective of the fight against poverty, which is to eradicate poverty.

After covering several issues in the area of poverty and social equity, Ms. Russell-Bitting turned to the political aspects of development, specifically, assistance to countries to help streamline government (or modernize the State), divest themselves of poorly run State-owned enterprises and improve efficiency in government-provided services. Key terms here include [good/poor] governance, defined by the World Bank as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development," accountability and transparency (making sure that rules are clearly spelled out, disclosed to the public and enforced, and that there is a system for redress and recourse if they are not). Other topics covered were decentralization and the strengthening of civil society organizations (CSOs), a designation that encompasses basically all noncommercial and nongovernmental entities, from religious organizations to political parties, universities, sports clubs and neighborhood associations, to name only a few. Two important terms in this context are empowerment (giving political power to disadvantaged

**...extreme poverty
is... the "income level
below which
adequate diet alone
is not affordable."**

try to country. Absolute poverty is defined by UNDP as "the income or expenditure level below which a minimum, nutritionally adequate diet plus essential non-food requirements are not affordable" while extreme poverty is a subcategory of absolute poverty, usually defined as the "income level below which adequate diet alone is not affordable." Poverty alleviation is also sometimes distinguished from poverty reduction, depending on which organization is using the term. The World Bank uses the two interchangeably, while the IDB classifies the former as

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A Comparison between Common and Civil Law

by Karin Wuertz-Schaefer

Have you ever wondered about the difference between Civil Law and Common Law? In the short time allotted to this subject at the ATA Conference in St. Louis, Kirk Peterson gave participants a glimpse of the different systems.

Most countries around the world use some version of the Civil Law, which can be subdivided into the Romanistic (with its base in the Napoleonic Code), the Germanic and Nordic legal families. Some of these adaptations of codes are tempered with additions or modifications according to the country in which they are used (such as Egypt, for example, which modifies its version of the Romanistic Legal Code with Islamic law).

On the other side are countries with a Common Law system that had its origins in the courts of England and has subsequently spread to most of the English speaking world. Common Law usually does not codify family law, including inheritance.

Here are some of the major differences between the systems. We have already touched upon the laws themselves:

- Civil Law consists of codes, which are comprehensive sets of written statutes; such codes are almost non-existent or very limited in scope in Common Law. Mr. Peterson described it almost as a judge in a Civil Law country flipping through the statutes and finding the closest description applicable to the case in question. In contrast, precedents are very important in Common Law, but play a much lesser role in Civil Law countries.

- Another big difference between the two systems is the judicial review of statutes and laws to determine constitutionality. Enactment and modification of statutes is the right of the legislature, and thus political under a Civil Law system with no involvement by the courts, while, as we all know, laws are widely interpreted by the judicial branch in the United States, a Common Law country.
- Under Civil Law, during the trial phase of a civil procedure a “hearing judge” is appointed who will take evidence and summarize it for the decision-making judge or panel of judges. Common Law emphasizes discovery (an exchange of information between the opposing parties) and the actual trial, at the end of which a decision is rendered by the presiding judge or, if present, the jury.
- Criminal procedures also differ under the two systems. The procedure is often called “inquisitorial” in Civil Law countries and consists of the investigative phase, which is conducted by the public prosecutor, the examining phase where the judge looks at the evidence, asks questions of the witnesses and compiles a written record, and the trial in which a judge or sometimes a jury reviews the written record, listens to arguments by both sides and then renders a decision. Under Common Law, which is “accusatorial” in nature, the police investigate, then present the results to the prosecutor who decides whether to bring charges or not. A judge may hold a preliminary hearing

on whether there is enough evidence. A trial by jury with a unanimous decision is the culmination.

While there are many more differences between these two legal systems, Mr. Peterson’s brief overview provided a review useful for translators. But as he said, if you are translating documents for different legal systems, don’t sweat it. After all, you are only supposed to make the material understandable to your clients. It is the job of lawyers to distinguish between the different legal systems. ✍

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groups like women, children and indigenous communities to exercise rights to reach their potential) and mainstreaming (bringing a particular group or sector into formal or official systems).

The remainder of the seminar focused on three additional topics: economic integration, concentrating on removing barriers to trade and

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“Leaving No Footprints: More Hazards of French-English Translation”

by Alison Sondhaus Carroll



Surely one of the highlights for French-English translators at the St. Louis conference was yet another stellar presentation by Lillian Clementi, whose well organized and clearly presented tips on selected grammar and style points (designed to be a continuation of her presentation at Hilton Head last year) should be heeded by every translator working in this combination.

As in previous presentations locally and at the national level, Ms. Clementi was thoroughly prepared and meticulous in her analysis, relying on a solid bibliography

in French and English, as she walked us through her process of problem solving in several tricky areas. Her talk covered the use of ellipses in French and what to do about them in English; the need to be alert to the French weakness for nouns and English’s preference for verbs, what she termed “verbification”; the importance of participles and gerunds in English; the power of English prepositions; and finally, how to tackle the abstractness of French and turn it into clear and concrete English.

Following is a brief comment on each topic (for a more complete overview, request a copy of the excellent handout, which takes you through each point in detail):

- Ellipses probably fall into the same category as rhetorical questions: they exist in English but they aren’t used so frequently as in French. Don’t simply reproduce them when translating from French into English – analyze their role and find good alternatives in English.
- Be mindful of English’s preference for action-oriented prose and don’t be afraid to leave out “empty” verbs, in cases such as
 - *entrer en contact avec*
[to contact]
 - *exécuter la modification de*
[to modify]
 - *procéder au calcul*
[to calculate], etc.
- Don’t forget that participles and gerunds help to maintain the economy of style and active tone that characterizes English. Here, I can’t help but reproduce the wonderful example of use of the gerund that Ms. Clementi chose:
 - art d’être parent*
parenting

rôle parental
éducation des enfants
rappports parents-enfants
condition parentale
soins (à donner) au nourrisson
manière d’élever les enfants

- A single preposition in English can often do the work of a prepositional phrase or clause in French—again, don’t hesitate to pare down and give your English translation the concise tone a strong preposition can give it:
 - *un train à destination de l’Allemagne*
[a train to Germany]
 - *dans un délai de deux semaines*
[within two weeks]
- The final point of Ms. Clementi’s presentation was to always bear in mind the distinct and unique nature of the two languages. Here, her passion for both French and English was palpable, and her examples illustrated beautifully French’s singular eloquence and English’s pragmatic core, even at the entrance to the grocery store:
 - *Nous prions notre aimable clientèle de bien vouloir se munir d’un chariot avant de pénétrer dans le magasin.*
[Take a cart.]

NCATA is blessed to have such gifted colleagues in our ranks. We can only hope that next year’s conference will feature another installment in this invaluable series. *Chapeau!* ✍

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regional integration efforts as part of a broader trade liberalization strategy; environmental considerations in development (including the environmental impact assessment (EIA); and finally, efforts by MDBs to enhance the role of the private sector. Ms. Russell-Bitting concluded the seminar with a series of useful exercises from French and Spanish into English, and participants clearly welcomed the opportunity to put their skills to the test. All in all, the seminar provided a thorough and organized introduction to translation in this challenging field and was well worth the early arrival in St. Louis. ✍

Alison Sondhaus Carroll is the owner of Commonwealth Language Services Ltd. based in Arlington, VA. She can be reached at alisoncarrol@compuserve.com

Calendar

Date	Time	Event	Location
Dec. 11, 1999	2:00 pm	Accreditation Workshop	2nd floor conference room, Cleveland Park Branch of the DC Public Library, Connecticut Avenue and Macomb Street, Washington, DC Contact Bill Keasbey at 301-530-5031
Dec. 12, 1999	12 noon	NCATA Annual Meeting	The Old Ebbitt Grill, 675 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005
Dec. 12, 1999	12:30 pm-3 pm	NCATA Holiday Party	The Old Ebbitt Grill, 675 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005 Contact John Vázquez at (703) 845-7765 or JohnVazquez@msn.com
Jan. 22, 2000	1:30 pm-4 pm	Accreditation Exam	Graduate Education Center of The George Washington University, 1775B Duke Street, Alexandria, VA. Contact Bill Keasbey at 301-530-5031
Feb. 19, 2000	1:30 pm-4 pm	NCATA Job Fair	Ellipse Conference Center, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, 4301 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA

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