



capital translator

Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association
Vol. 20, No. 4 May 1998

First Annual NCATA Job Fair Gets High Marks!

by Ruth Zimmer Boggs

Here's what you missed if you opted to spend the afternoon of Saturday, March 28th, basking in the first intense rays of spring sunshine, or if you had other compelling reasons not to attend the First Annual NCATA Job Fair:

- Seventeen translation companies and two government agencies taking résumés and/or interviewing candidates.
- 52 colleagues and great networking opportunities.
- Meeting a number of new individual and corporate NCATA members.

NCATA President Scott Brennan, who, with Vice President Kim Olsen and Program Chair Alissa Martin, put this event together, was justifiably delighted. "We're having a great turnout," he said halfway through the afternoon. "We've already signed up over 30 new members."

The recruiters were equally pleased. Eve Lindemuth, Manager of Worldwide Translator Relations for Language Management International, a Denver-based company, came all the way from Colorado to attend.

"I was very impressed with the turnout," she said. "I was anticipating a fair number of people, but not as many as turned out. It was great. I felt like I was getting a good exposure to the East Coast translators."

She was seconded by ATA-President Muriel Jerome-O'Keefe, who was there to represent her own company, JTG.

"The Job Fair was excellent and well organized. I heard some very positive comments from FBIS, PSC, and CACI. As far as JTG is concerned, we met a number of new (or unknown to us) translators in language combinations we were looking for. I was happy to see that both seasoned translators and newcomers came. Most of the employers were well-known and respected in the field, which is a good sign for the organizers and the attendees."

How can one assess the success of a job fair in general?

"By how many people attend," says Eve Lindemuth. "Even if they are not *true* translators yet, it is good exposure and always interesting to meet people who are in the business."

That's exactly what brought David Cuddihy, who works for a

government agency and translates Spanish >English, to the job fair.

"I wanted to test the waters," David said. "I'm thinking about moving out of the area and getting involved in the translation business, and I wanted to see what's out there."

Dimitra Hengen, a new NCATA member and seasoned English > French translator, knew exactly

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President's Corner

by Scott Brennan



Thanks to all of you who turned out for NCATA's first job fair and made it such a success! In addition to the new corporate members and other recruiters which took part, I would like to welcome the 34 new individual members who joined at the door. Given the enthusiastic response from all those involved, we look forward to making the job fair an annual event. On behalf of the members of NCATA, I would especially like to thank NCATA Program Chair **Alissa Martin** for the hard work she put into organizing the job fair. If you attended, you probably had the chance to meet her at the desk as you entered. The event went as smoothly as it did due in large part to her efforts.

Unmark your calendars! The International Development Workshop, originally scheduled for May 2, has been postponed until June. Scheduling conflicts with the speakers and venue forced a choice between the scheduled date and the strong program outlined in this space last month. We are currently working with a tentative date of Saturday, June 20. Watch next month's *Capital Translator* for complete information and registration materials.

I would like to encourage new and old members alike to consider volunteering for the offices of Membership Chair and Secretary.

Michael Wahlster has generously continued to serve beyond the two terms he has already contributed as Membership Chair, and Vice President **Kim Olson** has been handling the duties of Secretary, but these are only stopgap solutions. The Membership Chair plays an essential role in NCATA's operations, and duties can be shared by a membership committee or co-chairs. Tasks such as running the NCATA website and managing the membership database can easily be spun off, and are especially suited to a volunteer with some computer experience. Equally vital, the Secretary handles NCATA correspondence, ballots and record keeping. As members of the board, both officers participate first-hand in shaping NCATA's future.

If the local programs and face-to-face contact NCATA has offered have been valuable to you, or if you want to make professional contacts and learn from other experienced colleagues, please consider volunteering for one of these positions, or even contributing a Saturday to help with one of the upcoming events. Many of the people you see at NCATA events have served on the NCATA board in the past. Contact me at (703) 242-7171 or sbrennan@compuserve.com to volunteer or with your suggestions and ideas. ✍

Notice

The International Development Seminar, originally scheduled for May 2, has been postponed until June. Watch next month's *Capital Translator* for complete information and registration materials.

NCATA INCOME AND EXPENDITURES - 1997

Cash in bank as of January 1, 1997 \$ 4,075.23

Income:

Dues	7,075.00
ATA Chapter Rebate	1,501.00
Professional Development Seminar (Legal Workshop)	2,924.00
Social Events (Holiday Party)	960.00
6/96 Regional Conference Profit Share	567.50
Professional Services Directory Sales	1,455.00
Advertising	
Capital Translator	35.00
Professional Services Directory	665.00
Interest Income less Fees, Bank Charges and Withholding Taxes	<u>73.71</u>

Total \$15,256.21

Expenditures:

Capital Translator	4,913.03
Printing, Production Manager, Postage/Supplies/Other Costs	
Professional Services Directory	
Printing	1,541.02
Marketing/Mailing/Supplies/Shipping	1,041.52
Membership Directory	275.75
Other Publications (NCATA pamphlet/Website card)	302.00
1997 Ballot Costs (production/printing)	128.80
Revised Bylaws (production/printing)	125.75
Membership Expenses (renewal mailing/other)	366.12
Professional Development Seminar (Legal Workshop) and 2/24 Chapter Meeting	1,327.29
Social Events (Holiday Party)	960.00
Refreshments (Programs/Board Meetings)	697.72
NCATA Telephone (monthly charges/service transfer)	638.89
Internet Fees/Web Page	0.00
P.O. Box Fee (2 years @ \$66.00/year)	132.00
Office Supplies/Postage/Miscellaneous Expenses	278.95
Other Miscellaneous Expenses	<u>89.61</u>

Total \$12,818.45

Cash in bank as of December 31, 1997 \$ 6,512.99

Submitted by:

Barbara M. Oldroyd

Barbara M. Oldroyd, NCATA Treasurer 1997

The substantial turnout at the recent NCATA Job Fair shows that interest in our profession is high. What can a newcomer to the field of freelance translation expect? And what is expected of him/her? Is freelancing for everyone?

Laura Benali, a student in the Translation Certificate program at George Mason University, explored these and related questions in a term paper. For her research, she read a number of articles on the subject, surveyed ten professionals in the field, and interviewed several others. What she learned may help some of our new members, in particular newcomers to the field of freelance translation, to gain a proper perspective. —ed.

Part 1 of a 2-part article

Working as a Freelance Translator

by Laura Benali



Once a prospective freelance translator has developed the necessary high-level reading comprehension skills in his/her source language and high-level writing skills in his/her target language, s/he must then consider a number of additional factors in his/her career preparation. These factors include subject specialization, attainment of professional credentials, and resource development.

One area of professional preparation that the translator must consider is the debate over generalization (“breadth” of knowledge) vs. specialization (“depth” of knowledge). For good reasons, the current trend is toward specialization. According to Kevin Hendzel, “Translators with a formal education in the various subject areas have a huge advantage in the commercial market...This expertise will improve the translation, solidify understanding, protect the client, and enhance [the translator’s] authority. ...[T]ranslators come in two varieties: *specialists* and *hungry*.” Those who replied to my survey varied in their specializations, and most respondents had multiple areas of expertise, but business appeared to be the “bread and butter” specialty (to quote one respondent) by a slight preponderance. According to a translation company recruiter I interviewed, a translator might be well advised to specialize in business and/or legal translation for the highest degree of marketability.

Another debate that is raging in the translator community is that

over attainment of professional credentials. The American Translators Association (ATA) offers an accreditation to those who can pass the exam. However, according to one translation agency director I interviewed, a survey appearing in a 1995 issue of *The Chronicle* reported that 60% of translation companies responding identified ATA accreditation as the least important qualification they were seeking in freelance translators. Indeed, of the ten translators responding to my survey, only five were ATA accredited. On the other hand, some agencies do use the accreditation to make a “first cut” of résumés, citing as their reason that passing the exam does indicate a basic level of competence, as well as a certain level of commitment to the profession. Thus, whether to seek ATA accreditation remains a judgement call on the part of each translator.

If ATA accreditation is not among the most important credentials a translator can have, what qualifications are translation companies seeking? The same agencies appearing to reject the ATA accreditation in the 1995 *Chronicle* piece identified recommendations, samples, and their own tests as the most important factors in hiring freelance translators. Translation bureau owner Gabe Bokor writes that “[t]ranslators for specific jobs are initially selected on the basis of their general educational, linguistic, and professional backgrounds, the submitted sample translations, and the

quality of the résumés submitted... Criteria for repeat assignments include, in addition to the successful completion of the first project, the translator’s reliability, availability, and professional response to criticism” (Bokor). Carol J. Davis adds that quality is the bottom line: “[A] great personality doesn’t count if the quality isn’t there. Conversely, if someone produces exceptional quality but has some eccentric qualities that require a little extra effort from us, we’ll likely work with that person anyway” (Davis).

A further area of professional preparation that must be considered by the prospective freelance translator is that of acquiring resources for the practice of translation. Because the freelance translator usually works out of his/her home or home office, s/he must supply that office with computer hardware and software, research materials, and other office equipment such as a FAX machine and possibly a photocopier, among other things. In addition to representing a substantial investment, this aspect of freelance work can also be one of its greatest challenges. According to former NCATA President Lillian Clementi, “At first the number of things you need to know seems absolutely overwhelming: accounting, taxes, computers, faxes, modems, software, dictionaries,... and so on.... [A]ttending professional association conferences and meetings is extremely helpful in picking up this kind of knowledge.” Nor does this aspect of freelance

work appear to be one that the translator can afford to neglect. According to agency director Carol J. Davis, a freelance translator's résumé should address the following: "What reference sources do you have in your personal library and how current are they? Describe in detail your computer hardware, peripherals, and software. Specify which platforms and programs you actually own and use and which formats you can supply via conversions" (Davis). As for software, survey respondents identified some sixteen different programs used. Most of the programs identified were word-processing or desktop publishing programs. The preferred word processing program appeared to be Microsoft Word 6.0, mentioned by seven out of the ten respondents.

In summary, a prospective freelance translator must make important decisions concerning aspects of his/her professional preparation such as specialization, credentials, and resources. Informed decision-making in these areas can go a long way toward affecting the translator's success in his/her field.

...to be continued next month

Sources

Bokor, Gabe, "Translation Bureaus—A Fencesitter's View." *The Chronicle* (January 1997): 12-13.

Davis, Carol J. "Freelancers and Translation Companies—A Winning Team!" *Global Vision: Proceedings, 37th Annual Conference of the ATA, Oct. 30-Nov.3, 1996, Colorado Springs, Colorado*. Ed. Muriel M. Jerome-O'Keefe. American Translators Association, 1996. 21-29.

Dohler, Per N., "Translating into English for International Translation Companies." *The Chronicle* (January 1997): 20-21.

Henzel, Kevin, "The Seven Virtues of the New Translating Era." *The Chronicle* (January 1997): 14-15.

Howell, Betty, "The Choice of Staff or Independent Status: A Montrealer Finds This Choice a No-brainer...." *The Chronicle* (January, 1997): 18-19.

Welcome

A warm welcome to our new corporate members: **ASET International Services Corporation; CACI Language Center; Department of State; Diplomatic Language Services Inc.; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Foreign Broadcast Information Service; Globalink, Inc.; Inlingua Language Service Center; JTG, Inc.; Language Innovations, LLC; Language Management International; M² Limited; Soshei, Inc.; and Translingua, Inc.**

This month, we have an unusually large number of new individual members. Welcome to **Gisele Almeida, Sergio Alonso, Andy Batmanghelidj, Susanne Bunzel-Harris, Teresa Bustamante, L. Chekin, Anna Corrales, Eduardo R. Corredera, Mark H. Eckert, Pamela Fine, Earl George, Paloma Goulemot, Diana Grintalis, Zennia D. Hancock, Andrea Heggen, Dimitra Hengen, A.G. Horvarth, Randall T. Husbands, Rachel Jones, Marlies Kurtz-Singh, Patricia López-O'Reilly, Karen McDowell, Gloria Mohler-Little, Mónica E. Núñez, Anwar Ouazzani-Chahdi, Tracey Peña, Françoise Picardonny, Avgust Pokhlebkin, Jeremiah Riemer, Brian Rose, Julie M. Rotter, Laura A. Shropshire, Jeff Skinner, Hala Soufi, Holly Stephens, Andrei Stites, Isolde Tharrington, Sana B. Thompson, Yolanda Wiese, David N. Wigtil, Roman B. Worobel, Barbara E. Wright, Yan Yang, and Kriemhild Zerling.** ✍

Job Fair ...continued from page 1

what she wanted. Armed with a stack of updated resumes and copies of books she has translated, Dimitra made the rounds, and was very successful indeed.

"Within three days after the Job Fair, I had two interviews that resulted in job offers," says Dimitra.

If you didn't make it to the Job Fair, a list of the recruiters who attended is provided here for your convenience. And, as the title implies and the turnout all but demands, this will not remain a one-time event.

In the words of ATA-President Muriel Jerome-O'Keefe: "I hope the NCATA will repeat this effort in the future. Compliments to all." ✍

Companies and agencies who sent recruiters to the Job Fair:

Language Innovations LLC
Inlingua (Rosslyn, VA)
ASET International Services Corp.
Translingua
Diplomatic Language Services Inc.
Language Exchange (Boca Raton, Florida)
Sohsei Inc.
PSC Inc.
JTG
M²
CACI Language Center
Language Management International (Englewood, CO)
Globalink
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)
U.S. Department of State

Inglis At Large

The Containment Doctrine

by Neil Inglis



As you all know, Lady Diana Spencer was killed in a car crash in Paris last year. Stumped for an idea for my bimonthly column, I wrote reminiscence about Lady Di. Not an original idea, I'll admit; although most (but not all) *CT* readers approved.

The time is thus ripe for a debate about the content of translation magazines.

In general, magazine contributors also have strong feelings about editorial content. Last year, I myself chipped into an electronic argy-bargy regarding possible articles for future issues of *Capital Translator*, objecting to proposed profiles on married couples and day care. A colleague in London called me a *selfish pig bachelor* as a result.

We had better begin with some first principles. All publications (translation magazines included) have the right to impose editorial control over contributors' submissions. Editorial content is constrained by the proprietor's choices and preferences, and/or (as in our case) by space considerations and the needs of readers. Of course, there are plenty of subjects on which a translation magazine is not really competent to publish—although we could squeeze in more topics than we realize.

There is strength in diversity. The *ATA Chronicle* (under Jeff Sanfacon's superb editorship) has improved precisely because the coverage of topics has broadened. A legal commentary on employee handbooks (in a midsummer 1997 issue) was one of the best articles I had read on any subject, in any publication, for months.

It is a big mistake to assume that other magazines (out there in the big bad world!) limit themselves to

their nominal subject matter. Far from it. Indeed, a willingness to go out on a limb may distinguish a great magazine from a merely good one. Three examples from the private sector will suffice:

- (i) The two *smile* (human interest) stories published daily in the *Wall Street Journal*; they are a blessed relief from NASDAQ stock prices, and are often the best bits in the paper.
- (ii) Ever read the capsule restaurant reviews in *Forbes* magazine? They add an indispensable lightness of touch to the proprietor's pontificating. As we all know, *Forbes* is not a food magazine. Does this matter? Of course not!
- (iii) *Biblical Archaeology Review* (*BAR*) combines serious scholarship with juicier material. *BAR* subscribers wouldn't have it any other way. Each issue of *BAR* closes with a humorous, brightly colored photograph of a recently discovered relic, together with humorous (and sometimes frivolous) commentary. *BAR*'s editors were tempted to discontinue this section, perhaps on grounds of irrelevance; but readers (me included) demanded its restoration.

Given budget constraints, *ATA* chapter magazines must devote space to practical matters (accreditation, *happy hours*, elections, Christmas parties, seminars, etc.). This housekeeping material forms an integral part of such publications' editorial mission. Housekeeping material is seldom scintillating, however; and precisely because of the tedium factor, I do hope that my **Inglis at Large** columns have added variety to what is unavoidably a utilitarian publication. It

cannot be otherwise unless we make it so.

What is the alternative? Take a look back at some old issues from the *ATA Chronicle* of the 1980s, and what do you find? Simpering screeds about machine translation (God help us!), dreary tracts on quantification. Computers were coming into vogue back then, and readers were subjected to the kind of windbaggery you always encounter when people fancy themselves to be pioneers.

...(and) if Planet Earth is invaded by Martians tomorrow, I will devote my column to that...

Left to their own devices, translation publications will succumb to a kind of *entropy syndrome* and become simply unreadable. Are translators that interested in semiotics, philology, or diatribes against *ATA* accreditation? Articles drawn from outside the confines of translation are essential to prevent hardening of the arteries and preserve reader interest. Context and perspective are essential.

Quite apart from that, I as a contributor simply cannot come up with bimonthly articles on translation subjects. The well of

inspiration would run dry too fast. If you want regular columns from me, I in turn need the leeway to write (within reason) about what takes my fancy at any given time. Most of my articles have some sort of cross-cultural spin of the kind that appeals to linguists, thus translation is never far behind. Last year's Lady Diana column was an exception, but a pardonable one under the circumstances (and not a unique exception; rest assured that if Planet Earth is invaded by Martians tomorrow, I will devote my **Inglis at Large** column to that, and not to quantification or MT. Sorry!).

This debate would be less pointed if translators did more creative writing of their own; but alas, for some reason they don't (even though in theory every translator should write as a sideline). I am not speaking of the *Capital Translator*; NCATA is blessed with a fabulously industrious and supportive membership. But listen to other local associations (in the translation industry and beyond), and you will hear how a handful of stalwarts are left to cope with administrative chores while others sit on the sidelines and quarrel among themselves. Fellow members, let us not go down that road. Let us pitch in and contribute as much as we can, build on past efforts, and face up to the challenges of the imminent millennium! ✍

Neil Inglis is a translator and author based in Washington DC. He emigrated from England in 1984, after earning degrees in modern languages and translation from the University of Cambridge and University of Westminster, respectively.

The American Translators Association Policy Statement

Antitrust laws make unlawful any agreements among competitors that directly or indirectly restrain competition, including agreements among competitors which directly or indirectly affect prices. Gathering and publishing of information on competitive rates charged by translators must be performed under procedures intended to ensure that the information gathered and published is impartial and objective and does not encourage the setting of rates. ATA intends to comply with such procedures in the dissemination of any rate information.

ATA intends to comply strictly with antitrust laws and all other laws that affect ATA. The Association requires that its Divisions and Chapters comply strictly with those laws. It is essential that ATA, its Divisions and Chapters, and its members ensure that activities comply with antitrust laws. The purpose of this Policy Statement is to focus on the need for antitrust compliance.

We urge that ATA members follow these guidelines:

- Avoid actions which create the risk of antitrust violations.
- Bear in mind that discussions among members regarding translation rates, methods of calculating translation rates, rate levels, future rate expectations, rate projections, or any other matter which may affect translation rates can create a risk of antitrust violations. Do not circulate written statements, comments, suggestions, or views etc. regarding any matters which may affect translation rates, and do not make public announcements or statements on those matters.
- Matters that affect rates or restrain competition among members should not be discussed at meetings.
- Consult with counsel on any questions which might have competitive or antitrust implications.

Finally, this Policy Statement is intended to highlight antitrust issues affecting ATA and its members. It does not answer all questions which may arise under the antitrust laws. ATA urges that members who have antitrust questions consult legal counsel.

Adopted by ATA Board of Directors,
March 25, 1990

A brief disclaimer/comment from the Editor:

While the sentiments expressed by the author are, of course, entirely his own, they are food for thought and provide a welcome opportunity to gently remind our readers that the *Capital Translator* is a newsletter by the members for the members. Any contribution, on any topic, is appreciated and will be considered for publication. Feel free to call or e-mail me, and I will be more than happy to discuss lengths, deadlines, etc.

And last but not least: A heartfelt **Thank You** to our regular contributors, who take (unpaid) time out to add ambiance to what otherwise may indeed be mere "housekeeping." ✍

Calendar

Date	Time	Event	Location
June 20 (tentative)	all day	International Development Workshop	TBA Contact Alissa Martin, 301-718-0405
Nov. 4-8		39th Annual ATA Conference	Hilton Head, SC Contact ATA at 703-683-6100

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