



capital translator

Newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Translators Association
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November 1997

How to get the call and what to do when you get it! NCATA Workshop on Legal Translation

by Ruth Zimmer Boggs

Alison Sondhaus Carroll and Lillian Clementi, who opened the NCATA Legal Workshop held on September 27, 1997, know the scenario only too well: A phone call from a law firm in search of translators for a case to be litigated. Having dealt with this type of situation on several occasions is what prompted them to share their experiences in this workshop, and attendance figures provided ample evidence of our membership's interest. Sixty-five people came to the seminar, some from as far away as New York.

Carroll and Clementi streamlined their advice for dealing with an anxious client, boxes full of foreign language documents, tight deadlines, and at times unrealistic expectations into 10 tried and true tips:

1. Operate on the principle of abundance, not scarcity. Share big projects. Doing so will assure quality control, promote networking, and put another translator to work.
2. Take into account that the translation deadline may exceed the original estimate by far. Make a realistic assessment of the

translation task at hand and your availability.

3. Be realistic about what you can do, and find ways to economize on time and resources. Be honest about your knowledge in a specific subject area.
4. Make it clear that any document leaving the firm must be edited and proofread by another translator. Mark rough translations and drafts as such, and use brackets and footnotes, if necessary.
5. Set up a system to track your work and avoid duplication. An efficient way of doing this is a chart or binder; in documents, use footnotes as cross-references.
6. Adapt to personalities and make the process as painless as possible. Address the client's concerns.
7. Use available resources, and don't be shy about asking for them. This includes background information, existing case documents, related patents, reference materials, etc. Check the client's library; ask if you can use the client's human resources for tasks that can be performed by a non-translator.
8. Organize terminology and

update it regularly. Set up glossaries, document solutions.

9. Back up, back up, back up, and make a hard copy of *everything*.
10. Establish a *rotating point of contact* to manage time overruns and take care of the client's ongoing needs.

...continued on page 3

Inside

President's Corner	2
Congratulations	2
Accreditation Exam	4
Web Library	4
Brazilian Attorney	5
Neudeutsch	6
Résumé	7
1998 PSD	7
Letter to the Editor	7
Calendar	8



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President's Corner

by Lillian Clementi



NCATA members have begun to voice strong opinions on the upcoming bylaws vote, and I hope that you'll continue to express your views to the Board and to the *CT* between now and the vote on December 14.

As you consider the draft bylaws, you may want to focus on several key changes. For one thing, the bylaws are much shorter: the long list of standing committees, many of which are no longer in existence, has been replaced with brief language allowing for standing and ad hoc committees to be established as needed. The text has also been rearranged to follow the standard format for corporate bylaws in the event the chapter elects to incorporate over the next few years.

In another important change, bylaws amendments would be adopted by written ballot instead of the voice vote required under the current system. NCATA member **Lotti Eichhorn** has already expressed opposition to the existing voice vote procedure, and I agree that members should not be required to be physically present in order to vote. For this year, however, we have to abide by the current requirements. We've chosen to hold the vote on the same day as this year's Holiday Party because it is the only meeting scheduled for November and December, and because the Holiday Party tradi-

tionally has a high turnout, thus making the vote as convenient as possible for as many members as possible. To address member concerns, we have also arranged to convene a Business Meeting at the restaurant approximately 30 minutes in advance of the party so that no one will be required to attend the party in order to vote. Details will be provided in the December *CT*.

Finally, we will hold a separate vote on creating a corporate membership category, since this issue may be particularly controversial. However, I urge you to support this change, since I am confident that opening the chapter to corporate members will benefit everyone. Several fine translation companies in the Washington area are already eager for more opportunities to find good translators, and as a freelancer I am always ready to make contact with companies that are committed to a quality product and a mutually beneficial relationship with their translators. Not all translation companies can be described this way, of course, but closer ties between good translators and good translation companies will make it easier for everyone to find the good guys and avoid the bad ones. I think it's time to open NCATA to corporate membership, and I hope you'll join me in voting yes on this issue. ✍

Congratulations...

to NCATA member **Mercedes Pellet** on her nomination as candidate for President-elect of the American Translators Association;

to NCATA member **Eric McMillan** on his nomination as candidate for Secretary of the American Translators Association; and

to NCATA Membership Chair **Michael Wahlster** on his nomination as candidate for Director of the American Translators Association. The elections will take place in November at the ATA Annual Conference in San Francisco. ✍

Workshop ...continued from page 1

And, perhaps most importantly, don't be intimidated or overwhelmed. It's a big job—but you will get it done!

As a fitting counterpoint to Carroll's and Clementi's presentation, Brian Fish, in-house translator for the intellectual property law firm of Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, L.L.P., Washington, D.C., shared his experience of working with freelance translators, including suggestions on how to make contact with a law firm, and how to receive freelance translation work from it.

His advice? Go a step farther than just sending random résumés. Call the firm you want to work with. Find out who their translation coordinator is, and ask for a meeting to discuss how you can be of service to the firm. Keep these meetings brief and come prepared with some basic literature about your services. Résumés and all self-promotion should highlight not only your language skills, but also any technical and legal experience you may have.

When in a pinch, law firms frequently consult referral lists. Try to get your name on referral lists such as school alumni (Georgetown, SAIS, etc.), in the ATA guide, on embassy lists, etc.

Once you have landed an assignment, whether it is background or on-site litigation work, Fish suggested some basic guidelines for solid legal translation.

- Ask questions and take notes. Who is the client? Who is the defendant? What information is the most critical? Lawyers are often so *into* the case that they neglect to pass this crucial information on to the translator.
- During translation, worry about the one thing that matters: Accuracy. Keep formatting simple. If in doubt about prepositions (a frequent problem in legal and technical translation), ask the attorney.

- Respect deadlines. Deadlines are often crucial to lawfirms. Negotiate beforehand if a suggested deadline seems unrealistic. Don't accept work if you don't think you can meet the deadline. Ask for a preliminary fax copy before making a decision. If you run into a snag, inform the client ASAP so other arrangements can be made.
- Be sure to take on only those assignments you think you can handle. Do not, however, be timid about asking attorneys for help or confirmation of certain phrases. Ask in advance if a special vocabulary list is available. When working on-site, pick the brains of the technical specialists.
- Once you have established a good rapport with a firm, do not be afraid to turn work down. People understand that you're busy and if acceptance means a lousy final product, it will ultimately be to your disadvantage.
- If called to work on-site, you will probably be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Read it carefully and keep a copy for yourself.
- Payment for on-site work is usually based on hourly rates rather than word rates. Find out what the case involves, and offer what you truly feel is a fair hourly fee, given your experience and your knowledge of the normal hourly fee range for such work.
- If working with other translators, agree beforehand to create a common vocabulary list to establish basic consistency in translation.
- When doing a translation at home, try to send a hard copy snail-mail unless specifically told that it is unnecessary. Clip a name card to your translation. Have name cards ready when working on site.
- When sending fax copies, check within a half-hour if they are legible. Ask if the translation needs to be certified. Phone a few days after you've sent a translation to assure that all is well.
- Make it known when you are going to be away. Try to be an available translator—be sure your answering machine is working properly, your fax machine is set up and, if possible, that you have a pager or portable phone.
- Set a reasonable time limit in which you would like to be paid and specify this diplomatically on your invoice. Don't be afraid to inquire if time passes and you have not received a check. Things do get lost.
- Even if your schedule is tight, try to take as many technical/science classes as possible to increase your knowledge base. Fish suggested mixing business and pleasure: If you have a hobby such as photography, take a course in optics, etc.
- If work is slow, do not call any firm persistently. In the course of a year, a firm has slumps in translation work. Persistent calling tends to be intrusive.
- Finally, it doesn't hurt to show your appreciation if you feel you've been treated well. A simple "Thank you for choosing my services" can be enough to make a good impression on a client.

On that note, I'd like to say a big "Thank You" to Alison Sondhaus Carroll and Lillian Clementi as well as Brian Fish, Sergio Sardenberg and Mônica Sawyer for satisfying our curiosity, getting our creative juices flowing, and letting us reap the benefits of their professional expertise. ✍

A Warm Welcome to the Following New Members

Ralph Han, Ellen Kalb, Susan C. Rials, Maria Luisa Rodriguez, Deborah Sage, and Alan Tolerton

Accreditation Examination Reminder

If you are planning to take the accreditation examination on Saturday, December 13, at the Alexandria Graduate Education Center of The George Washington University and have not yet registered, you should not wait much longer, because the space is limited and will probably fill up fast. You may obtain the registration forms by calling ATA Headquarters at 703-683-6100. To take the accreditation test you must be a member of the American Translators Association and must have turned in a practice test, unless you are already accredited in another language pair.

The Graduate Education Center is located at 1775B Duke Street in the same complex as ATA Headquarters. It is right across from the King Street Metro Station. Parking is available in the Colonial Parking garage (entrance on Duke Street) for a weekend rate of \$2. ✍

The World (Wide Web) is Your Library!

by Cassandra Decker

At the Legal Translation Seminar on September 27, attorney and translator Mônica Sawyer gave an informative presentation about Internet resources for translators. Sawyer mentioned a number of valuable sites and search engines. She also provided a terrific handout which gives a great deal of information about how to find what you need on the Internet.

Translators in the U.S. who work from English into another language can be at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to finding target language resources. Going to a library to do some background research could quite likely involve a plane trip! Now, however, you can access up-to-date information in almost any language, without leaving your desk, for the price of a modem and Internet connection.

Finding specialized information on the Internet can be very easy, if you know how to use search engines effectively. Search engines are a free (that's *free*, as in no money) way to navigate the Web. Sometimes they turn up too much information; an unrefined search can turn up tens of thousands of web sites. On the other hand, if your query is too specific, the search engine won't find any matches.

You can improve your chances of finding what you need by using Boolean logic, like putting operators such as *and* or *or* between your terms. *Nuts and bolts* would find every document which includes both the words *nuts* and *bolts*, but *nuts or bolts* turns up documents which contain *nuts* as well as documents which contain *bolts*. You can find wonderful guides on how to use these Boolean operators at the following URLs. This document was included in Sawyer's handout:

<http://searchenginewatch.com/powersearch.htm>

Another part of the handout, *Top Ten Advanced Internet Search Tips* is available at this URL:

<http://www.epa.gov/Region2/library/powertip.htm>

The glory of search engines is that you can search for terms in many different languages, not just English. AltaVista allows you to select many languages at their main site. Other search engines, such as Yahoo, Infoseek, and Excite, include links to their foreign language search engines. Companies based in other countries also run search engines, one example is Goo, a Japanese search engine at

<http://www.goo.ne.jp/>.

A multi-lingual, Europe-based search engine is Euroseek, at

<http://www.euroseek.net/>.

And what will you find? Newspapers! Law schools! Libraries! Professional publications! A veritable gold mine of information, mostly free, and available to you 24 hours a day!

Here are some things Sawyer found:

FindLaw:

<http://www.findlaw.com>

Cornell Law School:

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/TeiaJuridica>:

<http://www.teiajuridica.com>

Here are some meta-search engines. These are search engines which search multiple search engines at one time.

<http://www.dogpile.com>

<http://www.metacrawler.com>

<http://www.mamma.com/>

The Internet is an extremely valuable, yet economical, tool for translators who want to do high quality work. Using the Internet, you can learn more about what you're translating and confirm terminology. Having access to the Internet is like having a multi-lingual library right in your own office. Can you afford *not* to get on the Net? ✍

Brazilian Attorney Gives a Few Tips From His Practice

by Alison Sondhaus Carroll

Sergio Sardenberg, a Brazilian attorney who has been advising U.S. companies engaged in investment or trade in or with Brazil for over three decades, provided the NCATA workshop on legal translation with a welcome perspective from the point of view of an attorney. Keenly aware of the power of language and the importance of understanding context and maintaining accuracy when delving into the legal area, Mr. Sardenberg gave a very enlightening overview of some of the issues he has faced in his international practice, which has included his own translations of contracts, charters, powers of attorney, corporate resolutions, deeds, statutory provisions, court decisions, legal opinions and memoranda, affidavits and so on.

Sardenberg repeatedly stressed the need to understand the cultural aspects of the countries at issue when attempting to translate legal documents. These documents reflect differences in legal environments and institutions, not to mention historical and cultural heritages, customs, politics and general psychology. He described the pitfalls that arise when parties to an international transaction do not understand one another's mental processes, and, for example, there is "an appearance of consensus but no meeting of the minds," as he so rightly put it.

Drawing on several comparisons between the Brazilian and U.S. legal systems, Sardenberg noted by way of example that because reliance on a person's word is not embraced by Brazilian culture as it is in the United States (indeed, it is one of the basic underpinnings of the U.S. legal system), the role of the notary public in Brazil goes far beyond that of his U.S. counterpart. In Brazil, notaries

attest to the veracity of another's word, identity, documentation, etc., thereby helping to create "a protective bureaucratic wall against fraudulent acts" (even if legal documents may be used to further illegal aims). The translator must pay due attention to the bureaucratic terminology often used in such documents, and his or her client needs to understand its importance.

Sardenberg also referred to the institution of the *Audit Court* or *Accounts Tribunal* (*Tribunal de Contas*) in Brazil, which is a hybrid

Sardenberg...stressed the need to understand the cultural aspects of...countries...

administrative entity that oversees government accounts and expenditures, but is not subordinate to Congress and plays a sort of *watchdog* role in Brazilian society. Rulings from this court are full of terminology drawn from Brazilian constitutional, administrative and tax law (influenced by the U.S. and Europe), criminal and procedural law (with Roman, Austrian, German and Italian origins) and governmental and general accounting rules and practices. Anyone who has waded through one of these rulings knows how short bilingual resources can fall, and why consulting monolingual resources in the *source language*

first are the only way out of the morass.

Sardenberg pointed out that words of Latin origin (a favorite mode of expression used by erudite judges in Brazil) may also be misleading because they have evolved to mean one thing in Brazil and another in the United States.

Participants had numerous questions for Mr. Sardenberg after his well-organized and thoughtful presentation. Among them were requests for suggested resources for Portuguese and English translators (going in either direction), and he mentioned the *Guia Prático de Tradução Inglesa* [*A Practical Guide to English Translation*] by Agenor Soares dos Santos (Cultrix, Univ. of São Paulo, 1980), the *Dicionário Jurídico/Legal Dictionary*, by Durval de Noronha Goyos Jr. (Observador Legal Editora Ltda., 2nd edition, 1994) (P>E, E>P) and *Vocabulário Jurídico* [*Legal Terminology*], by De Plácido e Silva (Forense, 4th edition, 1994) (P>P). I would add two more useful resources I have acquired recently: *Guia da Linguagem de Contratos Internacionais* [*A Guide to the Language of International Contracts*] by Eric Boyé (Publicações Dom Quixote, 1993) (English, French and Portuguese) and the *Dicionário de Tecnologia Jurídica* [*Dictionary of Legal Practices*] by Pedro Nunes (Livreria Freitas Bastos S.A., 12th edition, 1994). Don't forget to consult your Spanish sources too; one I have added recently to my collection is the *Nuevo Diccionario Bilingüe de Economía Y Empresa* [*A New Bilingual Economics and Business Dictionary*] by José Maria Lozano Irueste (Ediciones Pirámide S.A., 4th edition, 1996), which contains some useful terms for business contracts and corporate documents. ✍

Neudeutsch over alles

by Johnson

Whatever will a united (continental) Europe do about English? The French will try to defend their own language against it. The Germans barely bother. Johnson is no expert: army service there taught him little more than to misread the road signs to the elusive village of Umleitung. He should have waited 40 years, writes Kent McPherron, an American resident of Munich: any fool can learn Neudeutsch.

His flight will take him to Munich's *Flughafen* even now; but *Airport* is making ground. There with some help from the *Rent-a-Car* office, he'll drive to the *Park+Ride* space at some city-edge metro station. For a long stay, he might buy a cheap car from the *Oldtimer* section of the classifieds. Once in town—no fear of being *gekidnappt* on the way—a whole new *Lifestyle* awaits him.

But first, to work. The Neudeutsch phrase *off Camera* has given journalism a still Neudeutscher one: an outsider commenting on some event speaks *aus dem Off*. He may be seen *live* (pronounced *life*, and often so spelt by the inexpert) on *Farb-TV* (T and V pronounced as in English), or recorded on *Color-Film*, or, these days, *Video*. Hi-tech, of course, is spattered with Neudeutsch. Mr. MCP is offering a prize for a translation of *laser-ranged gating* into German (or into English, Johnson suggests). At least one's computer is subject to a *Maus*, not a mouse. but these days one will *check* with it. And why *auslösen* something? It's quicker to *triggern* it (inflected, like other Neudeutsch verbs, just as in Altdeutsch, though the noun is *Triggering*, not *-ung*).

Management and its gobbledygook joined Neudeutsch long ago. So too in finance, from *Bankingshops*, found in supermarkets, to *Buy-out*. Advertising men love Neudeutsch,

just right for promoting *Image*—a term so common that satirists mock it with a pseudo-German *Imätsch*. McDonald's, as in burger, specializes in Neudeutsch, with *Mäc Love not War* and *You Ess Ey*, a play on the verb *essen*, to eat. Fair enough for *Fast-Food-Restaurants*; Johnson prefers the sort of place that serves *Biffalamo*, an old Bavarian import, but not from English—*boeuf à la mode*.

Out shopping, what is Johnson to buy his wife? The not wholly

...any fool can learn Neudeutsch.

solemn guide to *dem Look: Modetrends von A bis Z* in a popular local paper suggests *Badedress* (it could have added *Beachmode*), *City-mimikry*, *industrial Chic*, *quick-drying*, *Sportswearstoffe* and *Wet-Look*. *A Blazer? Pullover? Shirt?* A young nephew, who fancies himself as a *Trendsetter*, might welcome some *Boxershorts*. Maybe *ein cooles T-Shirt*, they're *Bestsellers?* Alas, his uncle has no idea of the right size: *small, medium* or even *XX-large?*

Neudeutsch flourishes in many other trades. And, as in English, makers have to protect their names: the verb *eintupfern*, from Tupper, as in Tupperware, is a registered trademark. No wonder, with all the *counterfeit* around these days.

And now, some amusement! In July, as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported ironically, Johnson could have gone to Garmisch-Partenkirchen to a *Festival for Adventure-Teams der Outdoorszene*, with

Mountainbiking, Free-Climbing, Bodyboards and *Disco-Party*, where even feeble *Outdoor-Freaks* were invited to do a bit of *Trail-Running über Stock und Stein mit dem Bike* (altdeutsch: *Fahrrad*).

But Johnson is a *Nobody* at sport. So off instead to watch Bayern München. Soccer terminology has remained firmly German, except (you guessed) *Hooligan* and *Foul*. He'd meet more Neudeutsch on the tennis court (*Match-Point, Tie-Break*) or golf course—though he never played enough of that game even to get a *Handikap* (or, by now, *-cap*), sadly *gehandicapt* for business life as this has left him.

Back from the game, Johnson's evening awaits him. Past the age to be *in the Scene*, past even the *Midlife-Crisis*, he won't go to the *Rockfete* that threatens him *Be there or be boring*, nor even the street festival that promises *Live-Musik und vieles mehr Fun*. Still less to a *Single-Bar* or a *gay club*, though not for fear of being *geoutet*. A *Show* maybe, or a *Musical?* Johnson recalls his last real-world visit to Munich, that ended with Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*—an English word borrowed, with some re-spelling, straight from German. He settles down in his room to a cassette of *Opernhighlights*.

And so, having made his *Last-Minute-Buchung*, off to the airport to pick up his *Ticket*. Then to *einchecken* and so back—with a bit of *Jet-Lag* maybe, for all the good work of the *Stewardessen*—to dear old London Shtanschtcd.

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Technology in the Résumé

by Eve R. Lindemuth

In this column I would like to address the way technology and technical skills are presented in the translator's résumé.

When I read a résumé, I immediately search for what type of technical skills a translator possesses. If you are a translator who does not specialize in technical translation, *keep reading!* You too—as a service to your customers *and* as proof that you are someone who is aware of new trends in the industry—must show your clients that you can use current technology to respond quickly and efficiently to their needs.

Whether your areas of specialization are advertising, literature, or arts and entertainment, you should—as a basic requirement—be able to produce electronic files for your clients. Mark clearly on your résumé the programs in which you are proficient. Let your clients know if you use Word, WordPerfect, PageMaker, AmiPro or what-have-you. List the versions as well (if the only thing you list is WordPerfect 5.1, you might want to think about upgrading!). This information is important in this time of technological transition.

For example, many people have problems reading Word 97 files with earlier versions of the product, even

when it is first *saved down* in Word 97. Or, some people are just not comfortable doing conversions between different proprietary software and would rather you use the same program that they do.

Note also on your résumé what type of hardware and operating system you have: PC? Mac? CD-ROM? Video conferencing capabilities? At times clients need to choose individuals who have certain technical capabilities, and letting them know exactly what you have will encourage them to offer you the job.

Once you have created electronic files, you should be able to deliver them by CompuServe, e-mail, electronic bulletin board system, file transfer protocol (ftp), or all of the above! The use of e-mail has become so common place that all types of professions are expected to have access to it. I get frustrated when I can't contact my travel agent or lawyer by e-mail! Expectations are rising: make sure your clients can contact you how they wish.

If you do have additional technical knowledge, make that known as well, especially if you are selling yourself as a technical translator. Surprisingly enough, I have had many applicants ask me what ^o is while stating they are experienced

technical translators. The bottom line is this type of knowledge is quickly becoming a basic requirement for all types of translators.

Remember, even if your area of expertise or interest is not technical translation, the more you can share about your technical knowledge, the more comfortable the client will be trusting you to produce a top quality product.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I just received the October 1997 issue of *CT* with the enclosed proposal for an amendment of the bylaws. I find a number of objections to the procedure. According to the bylaws (Art. V), a general meeting is to be held "at least once a year." I do not consider the Christmas party a general meeting; this is a social event, not for the purpose of transacting business.

I very much miss the professional meetings (as in the Pepco days) and think that it should be possible to arrange at least one such event a year. If that is unrealistic, this vote should be incorporated into the annual election which is, regrettably, already done by mail (Art. IV) in order not to disenfranchise the dues-paying members of the organization who, for whatever reason, cannot or do not wish to attend the Christmas Party.

Sincerely,

Lotti N. Eichhorn

Professional Services Directory 1998 now available

The new and improved Professional Services Directory for 1998 is hot off the press. It has more than 200 entries and is used by translation and interpretation companies throughout the country. Members who have ordered and paid for their copy at the time of renewing their 1997 membership will receive the new PSD in the mail after the ATA conference.

If you have not ordered your copy but would like to receive one, send a check for \$10.00 (\$15.00 for overseas addresses), made out to NCATA, to NCATA Directory 1998, PO Box 65200, Washington, DC 20035-5200.

As always, the Directory is available on-line at <http://www.ncata.org>, where you can also find issues of this newsletter in electronic form. ✍

Calendar

Date	Time	Event	Location
November 5 - November 9		38th Annual ATA Conference	Hyatt Regency Hotel, San Francisco, CA Contact ATA Headquarters 703-683-6100
December 13	1:30 pm	Accreditation Examination	Graduate Education Center, GWU, 1775 B Duke St., Alexandria, VA Contact ATA Headquarters 703-683-6100 or Bill Keasbey 301-530-5031
December 14	TBA	NCATA Holiday Party	Mongolian Restaurant, Bethesda, MD Contact Alissa Martin 301-718-0405

The *Capital Translator* sadly reports that Deanna Hammond lost her battle with cancer on October 11, 1997. Hammond co-chaired the first organizing meeting of NCATA in 1980 and went on to serve as chapter secretary in 1981. On the national scene she served as ATA Secretary, President-Elect and President. She was also on the ATA Government Liaison Committee, was ATA representative to CCS, and represented ATA either officially or unofficially to JNCL on occasion.

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