



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

SOME IMPORTANT WORDS FROM THE EDITOR COMPENSATION TOPS THE LIST OF TRANSLATORS' CONCERNS

by Rosene Zaros

At the end of 2007, we published a survey form asking members to tell us what they think of the New York Circle of Translators, what they like and don't like, issues they would like to see addressed, and topics for presenters at monthly meetings. While we certainly did not hear from all members (we realize that translators are working longer and harder and sometimes simple pleasures like reading and interaction with colleagues don't fit into the schedule), there were certain answers that were repeated fairly consistently among those who did take the time to respond.

We were very pleased to see "The Gotham" appear so many times as an answer to the question: "What is the best thing about the NYCT?" It strengthens our resolve to do our best to keep you informed and to provide a platform for discussion of the issues that most concern you. Interestingly enough, answers to the question "What would you recommend to the Board about how the



NYCT can better serve your needs?" frequently were expressed as a question: "What can we do to raise rates?"

The fact that rates for translation have been stagnant, at best, for almost twenty years is certainly cause for alarm because, at the same time, we are dealing with massive increases in the prices that we have to pay for goods and services. This issue overrides all others because it is so basic to our existence. If we have to spend the majority of our waking hours just to pay the rent and put food on the table, there is no time left for involvement in the social and humanitarian issues that otherwise would be of great importance

(continued on page 3)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 4 Everything's Comin' Up Roses
- 8 Betrayed
- 11 New NYCT Brochure
- 12 President's Message
- 12 Election Results
- 13 NYCT February Meeting
- 14 NYCT March Meeting
- 15 Circle News

NEW YORK CIRCLE OF TRANSLATORS

(212) 334-3060



INTERIM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marian S. Greenfield, *President*
president@nyctranslators.org

Lori Colman, *President-Elect*
president-elect@nyctranslators.org

Nicole Lisa, *Secretary*
secretary@nyctranslators.org

Lyn Dominguez, *Treasurer*
treasurer@nyctranslators.org

Margarite Heintz Montez,
Program Director
programdirector@nyctranslators.org

COMMITTEES

Continuing Education: Jordan Fox



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

EDITOR

Rosene Zaros
zarosr@hotmail.com

EDITORIAL BOARD

Trudy Balch,
Ellen Sowchek,
and Betty Welker

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Bahl Graphics
kbahlmann@austin.rr.com

PRINTING

Mail Boxes, Etc. South Orange NJ
mailboxso@verizon.net

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION

Please submit all contributions as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word format. Articles should be limited to 1500 words or less.

The Gotham Translator is published six times a year by the New York Circle of Translators, Inc., a chapter of the American Translators Association. The deadline for acceptance of contributions is the first day of the month preceding the month of publication. Articles and other materials should be e-mailed to the Editor at editor@nyctranslators.org. The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or the policies of the NYCT or the ATA. All material submitted is subject to editing and becomes the property of the New York Circle of Translators unless accompanied by a copyright statement.

© 2008 by the New York Circle of Translators. All rights reserved. Nothing contained in this issue may be reprinted without explicit prior permission of the editor or, in the case of copyrighted material, the copyright holder.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Gotham Translator accepts and welcomes contributions of articles about all aspects of translation and translator-related issues. These may include, but are not limited to, specific translation problems or approaches to translation, legal issues, and the business of translation. We also welcome dictionary and hardware/software reviews as well as reviews of books, conferences and workshops. The "Members' Voice" section of each issue is devoted to translations, stories, and poetry written by members.

In general, articles and other submissions should be limited to around 1500 words. All text should be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word format. We prefer unpublished contributions. In the case of previously published submissions, please advise us of this fact at the time of submission. ■

Do you know someone who'd like to advertise in The Gotham Translator?

Please e-mail your text or artwork to the Editor at zarosr@hotmail.com no later than 15 days prior to the publication date. Please indicate the ad size desired. If your artwork is in soft copy (business card or other) please mail to the editor at the address below together with your payment.

Ad Rates (single insertion)

Full page (7.5" x 10")	\$150
One-half page (7.5" x 4.75").....	\$80
One-fourth page (3.5" x 4.75")	\$40
One-eighth page (3.5" x 2.25").....	\$20

Note: All prices are for black-and-white camera-ready copy.

Payment: As soon as you and the Editor have agreed on the ad size and publication date, you will be sent an invoice via email. **We must receive payment in advance before we can publish an ad.** You may make payment by check to the address below, allowing time for checks to clear the bank, or by PayPal to treasurer@nyctranslators.org via <https://www.paypal.com/>. Click on Send Money, then fill out SEND MONEY FORM.

The New York Circle of Translators
P.O. Box 4051
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163-4051

Words From the Editor (cont'd)

to us. It is a genuine dilemma because, if we had the time to become involved, to analyze, and to take a position on some of these other issues, it could change the course we are on.

After reading ATA President Jiri Stejskal's February message "On Statistics and Competition", I am even more astounded and dismayed by his cavalier attitude than I was when I read his January message. He states: "So how do we effectively compete in a globalized world? We make sure translation is not traded or perceived as a commodity. To do that we need to *specialize* in order to differentiate our translation or interpreting work qualitatively."

The very idea that we could, or even that it would be desirable to "make sure that translation is not traded or perceived as a commodity" is ludicrous. It requires that we accept the rather narrower sub-definition of "commodity" set forth in *Webster's New World Financial and Investment Dictionary* that "over time, as more companies enter a market, competition drives prices down, resulting in a product moving from being profitable to being little more than a commodity". If, on the other hand, we accept the standard definition of commodity as "something useful that can be turned to commercial or other advan-

tage", there is no doubt that translation is a commodity – and we certainly hope that it will continue to be.

His suggestion that "we need to *specialize* in order to differentiate our translation or interpreting work qualitatively" is fraught with problems both because of the subjectivity of the word "qualitatively" and because it seems to undermine our own ability to determine what we do best and to suggest that we may want to do change what we do in order to better position ourselves in the marketplace. We all specialize. I don't know a single translator who, when asked what his/her specialty is, would answer: "Oh, I do just about anything". On the other hand, we all know the folly of "specializing" in very narrow areas. I happen to have some "expertise" in ambling horses. Believe it or not, in ten years I actually did get one job where this "expertise" was useful! Try living ten years on a little over \$300.00! I was torn between laughing and crying when I read his closing sentence: "By becoming an expert in a carefully selected field, you can help to dispel the myth of translation as being a commodity and enjoy the satisfaction of truly professional work with the compensation that goes with it."

This man seems to completely miss the point of what translation is. First of all, I

don't have to be an "expert" (the term is ambiguous at best) in any field to translate well. The idea that one must have a law degree to adequately translate legal documents is insane. The translator is dealing with language not with legal principles. I don't have to know what a "subgrave" (Spanish) looks like or how it functions in order to translate the word as "subwoofer". I am, first and foremost, a writer and, as such, am working with language.

So, if we are looking to the leaders of our national professional organizations for answers to our questions, we may have a long wait. It seems that they are more willing to proffer platitudes and panaceas than to take a long, hard look at what is happening in the translation industry in 2008. Ultimately our best bet may be to look elsewhere for the support that we so direly need.

In this edition, we attempt to go beyond the problems that plague us as a local organization and bring you updates and articles that may give you greater insight into what is happening in our profession on a national and international level. We need to reassess where we are and what we need to do to move forward in a world where there are few givens and a great need for courageous action. ■

EVERYTHING'S COMIN' UP ROSES (WITH APOLOGIES TO STEPHEN SONDHEIM)

by **Bernie Bierman**

I often wonder whether the leaders (if one wishes to apply such lofty nomenclature) of this country's numerous translator and interpreter organizations live in some kind of blessed land of milk and honey, a land of beautiful aromatic flowers and streams and brooks of pristine water, a land of sunshine and smiles, where n'er a cloud darkens the day. And if such land of milk and honey exists, I surely want to go there.

Indeed, one can voyage to this land of sunshine via the many publications issued by these numerous translator and interpreter organizations. Therein, the visitor from the more earthly world of translation and interpreting will be fed with honey and sweets such as "A School Outreach Profile" or "Promoting Translation in Education" or "Translating U.S. Undergraduate Admissions into Spanish". And if your craving for honey and sweets has still not been satisfied, you can feast on the tasty grapes of

"Pursuing a PhD in Translation at Kent State University" or *"How a Linguist looks at Translation"*.

But at the less ethereal cyberspace watering holes frequented by less fortunate translators and interpreters, namely the "rabble" who have been condemned to live in the brutally real world of translation, there is lots of talk and chatter about declining income stemming from globalization, or the promised efficiencies of computer-assisted translation being translated not into more earning power, but markedly less earning power, or the domination of the translation service industry (a/k/a the translation *agency* industry) by businesspeople who are geniuses in marketing but would have difficulty understanding the meaning of "bonjour" or "guten abend", say nothing about comprehending the process of translation; and at those same cyberspace watering holes there is also constant talk and chatter

about other real world concerns with which the august leaders of our *professional* societies and associations need not bother their little heads. After all, in the land of milk and honey, such detritus as economics, busi-

ness, income and expenses are of zero importance. Truly, in the world of *professional* milk and honey, *professionals* do not soil their hands with pecuniary matters.

A visit to one of the numerous cyberspace watering holes where translators and interpreters gather will provide an excellent insight into the brutal economics and demographics that mark the real world of translation circa 2008. All one has to do is to peek at the translation job or project offerings made on those websites. If the offering prices were of the 1990's vintage, we would be damn fortunate! On the contrary, the price offerings are in most cases straight out of the 1970's and 1960's. Translation editors are offered compensation that is out of the 1950's!!

The moaning and groaning by translators - especially veteran practitioners - over the state of translation economics is growing louder by the week, particularly by those based in Western Europe and North America. Those based in the United States appear to be moaning and groaning the loudest, and for very good reason. The statistics developed by none other than the American Translators Association (that's right, you read that correctly: the American Translators Association) bear solid witness to the fact that average freelance translator earnings in 2007 U.S.A. are



SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION EQUIPMENT

LANDMARK AUDIO TECHNOLOGIES FM Transmitters
www.landmarkfm.com

INTERPRETER KITS FOR SALE OR RENT

Tuneable FM Transmitter

- Mobile and stationary use
- Battery or AC power
- Broadcast via microphone or existing PA system

6 Orpheus Receivers

- Fully tuneable
- Compact
- Cost effective

E-mail: info@landmarkfm.com
Call: 888-677-4387
www.landmarkfm.com

about on the plane of a mid-level government clerk or lower middle-management corporate employee.

Let us take a look at the only body of compensation-related statistics that we have for the U.S. translation employment market. However, a few preliminary comments are in order here:

The compensation surveys undertaken in the past 6 or so years by the ATA are in the opinion of this correspondent, one of the organization's more worthwhile achievements. These surveys are arguably one of the association's few incursions into the *business* of translation, for the idea that translation (and its sister endeavor, interpreting) is a *business* is virtually anathema to ATA officials and leaders. After all, when one is a *professional* laboring in a true *profession*, the mere mention of the word *business* is like holding a crucifix up to Dracula's eyes.

But as one now-retired ATA official told me a while back, "The ATA Board delights in issuing reports like the Compensation Survey, but none of the members bother to read them, and worse, take the time to understand what they really mean".

Having so prefaced, let's take a gander at some of these translator income statistics developed in ATA's Compensation Survey for 2007. In the first place, it must be borne in mind by the reader that this survey was developed by using only ATA members as respondents. (More accurately, 99.3% of the respondents were ATA members; 0.7% were non-ATA members.) Furthermore, it

is not clear whether the survey questionnaire was sent to or obtained by members of ATA chapters or affiliated organizations who are not members of ATA. And of course, we do not have figures for translators who are neither members of ATA nor of ATA chapters or affiliated organizations. Nonetheless, a fair assumption can be made that the figures shown in ATA's 2007 Compensation Survey are a *reasonable* reflection of the entire American translation and interpreting industry.

Finally, one more important caveat: The survey combines income earned from both translation *and* interpreting. This is clearly one of the major flaws of this survey in that it may be providing us with erroneous or misleading data.

We know (1) that many translators are not interpreters, and many interpreters are not translators; (2) that, in the past seven or so years, *translation* has experienced severe downward price pressures, much of it stemming from globalization and the increased use of computer-assisted translation ("CAT") tools, while fees for interpreting services have either held steady or slightly increased.

The biggest segment of the American translation and interpreting industry is composed of the full-time independent freelance practitioner (52%). The next

largest is the part-time independent freelance segment with 28%. Therefore, the survey only confirms what many of us have known for years: that the freelance (or independent) translator (and/or interpreter) forms the backbone of the industry. And given that, this author will focus almost exclusively upon that category.

There was a time not too long ago when an experienced freelance translator in the U.S. could be and in many cases was the prime

There was a time not too long ago when an experienced freelance translator in the U.S. could be and in many cases was the prime breadwinner of the family.

breadwinner of the family. I personally knew many such translators. If the average income figure arrived at in the ATA's 2007 Compensation Survey for an independent freelance translator is anywhere close to reality, and I for one believe it is, then the day of the prime breadwinner freelance translator in

America has gone with the wind.

The 2007 compensation survey reports that the average gross earnings (from translation and/or interpreting services) of a full-time freelance translator in 2006 was \$60,423. This is the average for translators having anywhere between 1 and 21 years (or more) of experience. The average gross earnings (from translation and/or interpreting services) of a full-time freelance translator in 2006 with 21 years or more of experience was \$69,883.

(continued on next page)

Everything's Comin' Up Roses (cont'd)

Now, it must be pointed out that the figure of \$60,423 is the average gross earnings of five (5) years-of-experience categories established by the survey-takers, with the lowest (1-to-5 years' experience) being \$41,947 and the highest (21 +) being \$69,883. And these two latter figures are themselves averages, which means that with respect to the category of more-than-21-years experience, there were those who earned above \$69,883, and likewise those who earned below \$69,883.

This latter figure tells us a story, a very important story. In 21st century America, a gross annual income of \$70,000 is not prime breadwinner money. *Let us not lose sight of the fact that the earnings reported by the ATA Compensation Survey for independent (freelance) translators are not salaries or wages, but business income, from which business expenses must be deducted.* And from the resulting difference, one must further deduct Federal income tax (and State income tax, whenever applicable), plus self-employment tax (i.e., social security/Medicare contributions). Thus, an independent (freelance) translator with just two dependents earning \$60,423, would be left with approximately \$45,000 - \$48,000 after deducting business expenses and mandated income taxes and social contributions. And it is safe to say that a person with just

2 dependents and an annual income in the range of \$45,000-\$48,000 would probably fall into that mass of people who are without basic health-care insurance. It is also safe to say that someone with 2 dependents earning between \$45,000 and \$48,000 is fairly close to being a candidate for food stamps.

"We are a little people, and like little people we think like little people"

(Prince Faisal of Arabia, as portrayed by Alex Guinness in "Lawrence of Arabia")

In other words, very clear other words, an annual income of \$70,000 is at best the income of a co-breadwinner. But in today's realm of economic realities, that figure is probably nothing more than a household supplementary income. Notwithstanding the bellowing by translators that theirs is a

profession, the above figures and all of the other figures shown in the 2007 compensation survey don't look exactly like *professional* earnings.

Now then, let us return to the average earnings of \$60,423 for a full-time freelance translator, and place that next to another statistic developed in the 2007 compensation survey, namely the percentage of female translators: 68.6%.

This juxtaposing of average annual earnings of ca. \$60,000 in an industry where ca. 70% are women should also tell us a story.

Despite the significant advances made by women in the job market and in the various professions in the past 25 or so years, and despite the average overall increase in employment earnings of women in that

same period, women still lag behind men in income and still lag behind them in the category of prime breadwinner.

Given these figures, one must ask whether the translation industry has become the domain of the educated homemaker-mother, whose language skills are able to provide either a co-income or supplementary income to the household. Indeed, these income figures will make a few of us recall a controversial piece written about a decade ago: "Translation: An ideal occupation for women".

The per-word unit has for at least one hundred years been the basis for determining a translator's fee. Although there have been suggestions and even isolated attempts to change this basis, it has remained the dominant form in translation services invoicing.

The natural efficiencies of the computer allowed for the corresponding increases in translator productivity, and that increased productivity kept the per-word unit firmly in its position as the dominant basis for determining translation fees. Since the time that the computer became the principal production tool, no one has questioned the practice of charging for repetitive words or phrases or entire passages that were very similar but not precisely identical.

The concept and the predominant thinking was that a translator's time had to be compensated even though the translator was not actually translating words, but merely blocking, copying, pasting and comparing and/or verifying.

But the advent of the computer-assisted translation (“CAT”) tool and its widespread implementation has dramatically changed the economic playing field, and translators, particularly those who are relatively new to the industry, have readily accepted the notion that they should be paid solely and exclusively for words translated only once, and that their time and knowledge applied to moving words and repositioning phrases or components of phrases, i.e., data movement, to provide complete and accurate communication *has absolutely no remunerative value*. Like those who marched in willing resignation and without protest to the “showers” and the gas chambers, the translators of the 21st century are seemingly doing likewise.

To this correspondent, it is not a question of what brought about this change in thinking that translators should be compensated only for so-called “new words” or that bastard sibling called “fuzzy matches”, but rather *who has promoted this concept and who is benefiting most by its application*.

In the freelance community, the “villains” are clearly the translation agencies, now predominantly in the hands of language-blind, profit-focused and marketing-focused businesspeople. The few translation agency owners who are

willing to speak about this issue, say that it is the translation clients who are forcing this change upon the translation agencies in an effort to lower translation costs, and therefore the agencies have no choice but to pressure freelance translators into accepting compensation solely for “new words” translated...at prices that would have looked attractive in 1978!

In the freelance community, the “villains” are clearly the translation agencies, now predominantly in the hands of language-blind, profit-focused and marketing-focused businesspeople.

Added to the mix are the attitudes of translator organizations, which have become more and more fascinated by machines and attendant technology than with the resulting economic impact. Worse, some of them have jumped into bed with the manufacturers of CAT and other translation-assisted tools, blindly but gleefully accepting handsome advertising revenues. In addition, translation organizations have encouraged their members to use this technology on the sole grounds that it provides for increased efficiency and productivity, although no studies have been sponsored or undertaken to determine what if any efficiencies are actually achieved, save for the efficiency of increasing profits at one end and lowering compensation at the other. Indeed, if CAT and other so-called translation-assisted tools are providing such increased productivity, then why is it that so many translators are complaining about longer hours of work and less compensation?

Something don’t smell right here.

The United States is now moving into a major economic recession, but a recession that is coupled with rising inflation. Every single one of us is now feeling the effects of this inflation, as prices for basic goods and services are increasing dramatically across the board. Yet, translation prices have dropped and translator income has remained relatively stagnant. And if we place any credence in the complaint that translators worked longer hours to earn in 2007 what they earned in 2006 or 2005 or 2004, then in effect what we have is a reduction in income.

If there is any veracity in the translation industry’s current economic indicators, then perhaps the time has come for all to ask themselves whether translation is an endeavor in which a person can earn a supplemental income at best, and whether it is an industry that constitutes a welcoming harbor and nurturing environment solely for “housewives” (desperate or proverbial), and one in which most of the practitioners are quite willing to march to their own economic gas chambers. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bernie Bierman is the author of *A Translator-Warrior Speaks: A Personal History of the American Translators Association, 1959-1970*, which is the only published history of the ATA. He was managing editor of *Translation News* 1989-1995), and has written extensively about the U.S. translation industry and its history. In addition, he was president of AdEx Translation International, Inc., and assisted in establishing the translation studies program at New York University. He is currently a semi-retired freelance translator, dividing his time between his homes in Pawling, New York and Marco Island, Florida.

BETRAYED

by Judith Wing

edited by René Osmorasz and L. Burt Rand, Jr.

[Editors' Note: It is quite seldom that a translator or interpreter turns up as a principal character in a novel or play or film. One of the more prominent roles given to a translator was in the 1963 best-selling novel "Fail-Safe" by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler, although in the 1964 film version of the book, Mr. Buck, the translator (actually an interpreter), was downgraded to a relatively minor character. In February of this year, the play entitled "Betrayed" opened off-Broadway in New York City to great critical acclaim. The play was adapted by George Packer from a 16,000-word article he wrote last year for The New Yorker, where he is a staff writer. In the article he laid out the terrible ordeals facing Iraqi translators, who were being hunted, tortured and killed by insurgents. And he showed how their pleas for help were met by breathtaking indifference from the very American officials for whom the Iraqis were risking their lives. The translators were denied even the most basic protections as they struggled to survive, including, most crucially, visas to the United States. But unlike in the film version of "Fail-Safe", in the stage version of Mr. Packer's article, the story remains centered around three Iraqi translators. Although news about this critically-acclaimed play was made available to the American Translators Association, and in particular its Public Relations Committee, and other translator and interpreter organizations, all chose to ignore it. The Gotham Translator is pleased and honored to present to its readers the following commentary by Judith Wing about the real-life "Betrayed" – the story and plight of translators in present-day Iraq.]

I wrote this article because I have been granted a unique view of history and am able to tell you a story based on the experiences of those around me; people I have worked with and grown to admire for the past year.

The request to write this story came about as a result of comments I entered into my class forum after having read a New York Times article written by Dexter Filkins describing his feelings about George Packer's play

"Betrayed" is the story of three young Iraqi translators, two men and one woman, motivated to risk everything by America's promise of freedom.

"Betrayed." "Betrayed" is the story of three young Iraqi translators, two men and one woman, motivated to risk everything by America's promise of freedom. This from an Iraq where four million people have fled their homes since 2003, and

where, by conservative estimates, several hundred Iraqi employees and contractors working for the United States government have been killed or outright murdered.

Filkins' comments had great meaning for me, as did Packer's portrayal of the enthusiastic and idealistic Intisar, the female translator. For me, the meaning wasn't merely casual or coincidental. For me, there was great meaning because I work with her, because I felt and tasted her tears when she watched the

play with her childhood friend, who too is a refugee in the United States. For me, "Betrayed" ripped at my heartstrings because I know too well that young Iraqi women like Intisar can never return to their homeland, can never marry or live

life in the traditional sense. I know too well that they continue to be the sole source of support of their families and that their loved ones still cannot disclose where they live or how they earn their living. In an earlier conversation with Intisar I asked her what her life was like in Iraq. Trying to find a way to make me understand she answered, "My entire life has been [Hurricane] Katrina."

While the three translators portrayed in "Betrayed" are a microcosm of a much larger problem of Iraqis who chose to work for and serve the U.S. government, the role played by Iraqi translators and interpreters in the American war effort in that nation can in no way be minimized. In fact, it has to be maximized, for unlike the contemporary wars that the United States fought in Europe and Asia, in the Middle East it was singularly unprepared linguistically. That is a fact that has been brought

out into relief numerous times by senior U.S. government officials, military and political leaders. Because of the very nature of this war, a combination of an insurgency, a quasi-civil war, a guerrilla war, coupled with an American ignorance of Arabic and Arabic dialects, an inordinate number of native translators and interpreters had to be recruited, trained and pressed into service. And that service was not necessarily behind some comfortable desk in the heavily fortified "Green Zone", but rather in the murderous streets and alleys of numerous Iraqi cities, towns and villages. Those very streets and alleys

- and highways - have been the killing grounds for many of those linguists.

Because of their service to the United States government, the religious barriers separating Shi'ah and Sunni have disappeared to make these Iraqi translators and interpreters part of the common enemy and to condemn them as traitors. They have lost more than hope, they have lost their country and their people; they can never return.

Yet, despite their service and loyalty to our nation, they are not welcome here either.

We needed them, and needed them des-

perately in Iraq, but we don't want them in America. Our thanks to these people is to establish an impenetrable bureaucracy. Indeed, the promise of help has been lost in a procedure so complex that a little less than a year ago, Kirk W. Johnson, former USAID coordinator for reconstruction in Fallujah, managed to enlist the help of the Washington law firms of Holland & Knight and Proskauer Rose to seek assistance with these impenetrable bureaucratic procedures.

Clearly, these translators and interpreters,

(continued on next page)

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION



Continuing Education FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS

TRAINING OF TRAINERS COURSE

Training of Trainers is a joint program with the Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation, Monterey Institute of International Studies, and the National Foreign Language Center, University of Maryland. This course is designed to address the needs of current and future instructors of interpretation wishing to enhance their teaching skills.

- Location: University of Maryland
Shady Grove Campus, Rockville, MD
- Dates: May 17-20, 2008
Saturday through Tuesday,
- Schedule: 9:00am to 12pm, 1:30pm to 3:30pm daily

WWW.MIIS.EDU

For full course description, dates, and how to apply, please visit our website at <http://translate.miis.edu/ndp/> or contact rachel.christopherson@miis.edu, 831.647.6422



Betrayed (cont'd)

part of tens of thousands of Iraqis who have helped the United States government, feel totally abandoned by that government. Every day, my co-workers gather and sort hundreds of documents for Iraqi war refugees. These documents, offered as proof of their loyalty to their former employers, consist of their life stories and awards received from American agencies and Iraqi authorities. They are collated and organized in preparation for their multiple interviews.

The bitter irony lies in the fact that despite the overwhelming number of Iraqis refugees, only a total of around 40 people have received asylum in the United States since the effort (if one can call it an "effort") began last year.

Mr. Johnson recently stated that if we, as Americans, believe we have a moral obligation to honor the sacrifice of these Iraqis, then we should know that we are failing them.

Many of the Iraqis who fled in fear for their lives and the lives of their families so many months ago are returning in desperation to Iraq. And when they return, they

become mired in poverty and are barred from working in their native land. And of equal significance is that fact that they have lost faith in the U.S. government with its convoluted bureaucratic machinery and endless miles of red tape that quashes

I would think that translators and interpreters would have bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood, and those bonds would propel some kind of action to assist their less fortunate colleagues.

all hope of asylum. It is interesting to note that Sweden accepted 20,000 Iraqis in less time than it took the our country to process 1,608 applications. And Sweden was not even a member of the so-called "coalition of the willing"!

While a play like "Betrayed" screams in agony for the three translators – who as I said previously, represent thousands of their countrymen – the silence from the American translation and interpreting communities is symbolically deafening. Although I consider myself an aspiring translator, I have through my translator schooling become familiar with the organizations that service translators and interpreters. Our professional translation organizations seem to be silent. Of all the articles published around the country I find absolutely nothing written about the Iraqi translators and interpreters.

Perhaps it is not the policy of the American Translators Association to become

involved in politics, but so many of the issues surrounding the Iraqi translators and interpreters are not political, but clearly humanitarian. It is my belief that to ignore the question and fail our fellow translators and interpreters is to participate in the horrors that will become the history of these people.

I would think that translators and interpreters would have bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood, and those bonds would propel some kind of action to assist their less fortunate colleagues. I would also think that there are many in the American translation and interpreting community who were supporters of their nation's deep political and military involvement in Iraq. Yet, what do I hear in my daily work?

I have heard people criticize these Iraqi translators and interpreters as unprofessional and untrained. I have heard comments with a subtext implying that the Iraqi translator is uneducated, is incapable of accuracy, and is untrustworthy, notwithstanding the fact that so many of them can produce for the asking testimonials from military officers, soldiers and administrators praising their service and abilities. Is it that we are repelled by them and therefore reject them because for so many their venue is an urban battlefield and not a comfortable courtroom or well-appointed office? Or is it that for those who opposed the American involvement in Iraq, these Iraqi translators and inter-

preters are nothing more than prostitutes who sold themselves to the highest bidder? And perhaps those who make these noises about “unprofessional” and “untrained” are being driven by the notion that the West has ethical standards and educational excellence not found in Middle Eastern countries. (I would invite the readers of this article to visit the Arab Organization for Translation at <http://www.aot.org.lb>. It might be informative and instructive to review their objectives and organizational structure.)

Perhaps it will be left to those of us at the grass-root level to do what we all know in our hearts needs to be done. But how much better it would be and how much more rewarding it would be if the fraternity and sorority of translators and interpreters were in the vanguard of this humanitarian cause. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

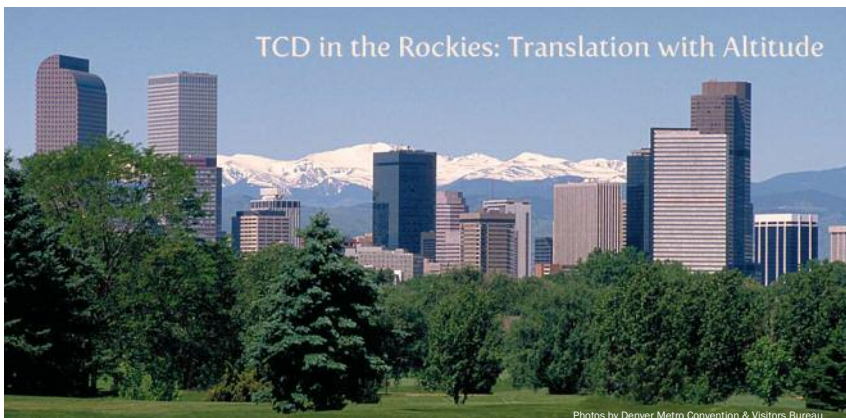
Judith Wing, daughter of Vizcaino Basques Joe Arrizabalaga and Josie Coscorroza, and mother of two daughters who were born and raised in Acapulco, Mexico, has lived and traveled worldwide. Moving from the Los Angeles area where she worked for the California Department of Corrections in South Central LA as a counselor, she has been employed with the law firm Holland & Knight LLP in Washington D.C. since 1999. Judith’s area of expertise is in Telecommunications and Immigration law. Currently enrolled as a student in New York University’s Translator Certification program, she is actively involved in *The List Program*, a program assisting Iraqi refugees, and herein expresses her concern for the Iraqi interpreters and translators caught in the devastation of a five year war.

NYCT TO HAVE NEW BROCHURE

Edna Ditaranto, past and incoming President has been working with a writer to create a brochure to promote the Circle. Her gift will be a great addition to our literature.

A few copies were printed for distribution at the ATA Spanish Division Conference in Philadelphia but the Board is still working on the final version. Since this brochure represents the New York Circle of Translators, we would like as much feedback as possible before finalizing it.

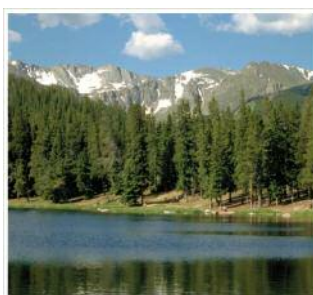
The draft version of the brochure is posted on our website at <http://nyctranslators.org/brochure/>. Please take a few minutes to look at it and send your comments to Edna at president@nyctranslators.org by the end of April. The Board will then meet in May to discuss any changes and publish the final version.



Photos by Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau

9th Annual Conference

Translation Company Division - American Translators Association
July 17-20, 2008 - The Inverness Hotel and Conference Center, Englewood, CO, USA



Highlights:

- Thursday evening reception and banquet
- Two days (Friday and Saturday) of informative educational sessions tailored to the needs and concerns of translation company owners and managers
- Topics will focus on industry trends, workflow tools, project management, sales and marketing, behavioral interviewing, and more
- Plenty of time and opportunity for networking, networking, and more networking!
- Optional Friday or Saturday evening activity in Denver, The Mile High City (www.denver.org)
- Sunday morning buffet breakfast

**Advertising, exhibit, and sponsorship opportunities available.
Stay tuned to www.ata-divisions.org/TCD for more information!**

Kim Vitray
TCD Administrator
vitray@mcelroytranslation.com
512-472-6753



Ellen Boyar
TCD Assistant Administrator
ellen.boyar@thomson.com
215-386-0100 ext. 1331

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Marian S. Greenfield



Marian S.
Greenfield

First, let me congratulate the incoming officers: President Edna Ditaranto, President-Elect Lori Colman, Secretary Nicole Lisa,

Treasurer Lyn Dominguez, and Program Director Margarite Heintz Montez. Thank you all for stepping up to serve the Circle!!! I look forward to handing off the baton at the April meeting.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Edna Ditaranto for having donated the services of a copywriter/designer to produce a draft of a new brochure for the NYCT that will help us rebuild our membership base. You'll find more information on that in this issue, including a link to the draft soliciting your feedback.

I set a few goals for my very short interim presidency and I think we have made significant progress since I was appointed. This is the first time in a long time that we have a full, duly elected (rather than at least partially appointed) Board. I know this group is eager to work together and they will undoubtedly continue this progress.

The Circle finances are recovering nicely now that dues notices have been received and dues have been paid and we have received the 2005 ATA Chapter Rebate. We're still working on the 2007 Rebate. Our temporary e-mail and snail mail fix is

working and we're well along in the process of getting bids on a new website that will incorporate permanent fixes. We already have one very workable bid, but are working on an RFP to solicit additional bids so that we can be sure we are getting the best website for the Circle at the best price possible. We owe webmaster David Mintz a very hearty thank you for holding our hand through this process. His help has been invaluable.

It was a bit of a shock to very quickly and unexpectedly put on my old hat as President of the Circle, but I was very pleased to serve, albeit briefly. I hope you

all agree that the Circle is now on surer footing and I am pleased to be handing her over to the very competent incoming Board, with which I have been working so closely since January.

Please support the new Board as much as you can... Remember the Circle is an all-volunteer organization and you get out of it what you put into it... So volunteer to write for the Gotham (which badly needs more, and more varied, member-generated content) or to serve on a committee or simply to provide input to the Board in the form of suggestions or constructive criticism. ■

ELECTION RESULTS

More than 25% of members participated in this election. This is an excellent turnout for any association election, especially when compared with past elections, when less than 1% of members cast votes. The results are as follows:

President: Edna Ditaranto – 61
President-Elect: Lori Colman – 60
Secretary: Nicole Lisa – 39
Secretary: Rubén Diaz – 22
Treasurer: Lyn Dominguez – 61
Program Director: Margarite Heintz Montez – 61

According to the NYCT Bylaws, terms begin on January 1 and run through December 31 following a fall election. Because elections were delayed, this year the term for President and President-Elect will be April 1 through December 31, 2008. The term for all other officers will be April 1 through December 31, 2009. Lori Colman will assume the presidency on January 1, 2009 for a term ending December 31, 2009.

It's a very exciting time for the Circle, so please try to join us on April 8 when the new Board will be present to greet you. ■

NYCT FEBRUARY MEETING TRANSITIONING INTO TEACHING TRANSLATION MILENA SAVOVA, PRESENTER

review by **Margarite Heintz-Montez**

The NYCT was fortunate to have Milena Savova, of NYU as a speaker for its February meeting. Milena discussed translation programs, teaching translation and segueing into teaching foreign languages.

One of the main differences between translation education in the U.S. and other countries is the lack of degree programs in the U.S. There are universities trying to rectify this; however, many institutes of higher learning feel that the costs of such a program far outweigh the benefits.

Meanwhile in Europe translation is considered an academic discipline and programs abound. The University of Geneva is considered to have the finest program available.

In countries such as Argentina, translators MUST graduate from a university program in order to begin working as a translator. They excel in legal work because all translators complete the same academic studies as those entering the legal profession-- that is until the final year. Only one year and the state exam separate an Argentinean translator and a lawyer, how many translators here in the States can claim that level of expertise?

Here in the U.S. the path to a career in translation, other than self-study and one

of the few degree programs available, lies in having job experience and then going on with continuing education courses. These last two seem the most common. Many professional immigrants find that they cannot work in their profession because of exams, licenses, lack of English proficiency or a combination of reasons and they turn to translation as something to tide them over or as a career change.

Programs in the U.S. that were touched upon were those at Kent state, Monterey, NYU, Binghamton and Hunter. Should any of the readers of this article wish information on these excellent programs please consult the websites of these institutions.

Areas of study involve:

- **Theory:** in language and translation
- **Terminology Management:** this is a new addition since the advent of CAT tools
- **CAT Tools:** sometimes the focus is on a particular tool; other times it includes a variety
- **Subject Matter:** it's always good to specialize
- **Practice:** this and Theory have been the traditional ways to study
- **Business Skills:** also a relatively new addition to studies, the translation business is no longer what it was thirty or so

years ago; deadlines, the internet and a myriad of changes in the world have given rise to this need.

A highly recommended book was *La Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darberinet. There is a 1958 edition and a 1995 edition.

But what about translators who were once teachers or those who wish to teach? Teaching as Milena explained is a separate profession. Some people are natural-born teachers; others need a little help. People with "exotic" languages will find it easier to teach at universities and language schools due to the difficulty in finding native speakers. Milena mentioned Hindi and Urdu as particularly hard languages to find instructors for at NYU.

Teachers in continuing education programs are usually part-time professors; they have the specialization or the language skill that is needed by the program at the current time. There is more flexibility in hiring continuing education teachers. Those who seek a full-time position at a university need to meet stricter requirements. It is not impossible but it requires more dedication and work to acquire a full-time position. Positions in elementary schools and high schools were not touched upon due to the varying regulations in the different states and school districts. ■

NYCT MARCH MEETING FREELANCING AND WORKING IN-HOUSE, THE INDUSTRY AND THE RECENT MERGERS

review by **Nicole Lisa**

On Thursday, March 6, Pedro Cano of Information Builders spoke at the NYCT's monthly meeting. The topic of his talk was Freelancing and Working In-



Nicole
Lisa

House, the Industry and the Recent Mergers.

First Pedro described his background and work at Information

Builders where he is a member of a four-person team of in-house translators. They outsource languages they cannot handle in house and are currently looking for translators of South and East Asian languages. He touched briefly on his company's decision to buy Idiom, which was costly in monetary terms (upwards of \$1 million) and in personnel (an entire department was eliminated). Although they have had great success in using the translation and project management software, his company is keeping a wary eye on developments after Idiom's recent purchase by SDL.

Pedro then quickly reviewed the recent ATA survey on compensation and concluded that although on the face of it, freelance translators earn more money in general, it is still more lucrative to obtain an in-house position because of the bene-

fits attached, such as health insurance, retirement options, etc. However, he noted the continuing trend in the industry towards outsourcing translators and the scarcity of in-house positions.

He then discussed the definitions of and differences between internationalization and localization. He defined internationalization as "the process of designing a software application so that it can be adapted to various languages and regions without engineering changes."

Localization is "the process of adapting software for a specific region or language by adding locale-specific components and translating text." He went on to say, "The distinction between internationalization and localization is subtle but important. Internationalization is the adaptation of products for potential use virtually everywhere, while localization is the addition of special features for use in a specific locale. Internationalization is done once per product, while localization is done once for each combination of product and locale."

In addition to language translation, internationalization and localization also take into consideration national or regional varieties of languages, special support for certain languages such as East Asian languages, local customs, local content,

symbols, order of sorting (e.g., alphabetizing in the target language) and cultural values and social content.

Audience members weighed in with a discussion of the merits of the use of English as an international language of computing versus the need to provide information in the user's own language. The audience also shared anecdotes of interacting with clients or engineers on localization projects and the difficulty of adapting programs or websites when they had not been designed with internationalization/localization in mind.

Pedro's introduction to Computer Assisted Translation software, including Wordfast, Déjà Vu, SDL Trados and Idiom, started an energetic discussion among members about the merits of each type discussed, their costs and what they could or could not do. The CAT tools range in price from approximately \$400 (Wordfast), over \$700 (Déjà Vu), almost \$1,000 (SDL Trados), to over \$1 million (Idiom). Some members of the audience had never used translation tools and others were obviously old hands. Everyone had their favorite (or least favorite) and was willing to discuss their opinions. SDL Trados, one member observed, seemed to have the biggest market share, both because Trados

is used by many freelancers and because SDL keeps buying its competitors. Another member noted that he thought it was because SDL Trados has the most aggressive marketing campaign, and that their advertising was omnipresent. When one audience member asked if anyone used Déjà Vu, another audience member replied that a colleague swore by it, that the updates were free (compared to SDL Trados, which requires users pay for updates) and that it supports both Quark and InDesign. Pedro explained that Idiom's high price is because it is designed for companies' use and is customized to each company's needs. Translators who work with a company that uses Idiom, however, download a translation interface for free.

Because of the lively debate, Pedro's review of industry trends was very brief. He noted that in spite of all the changes in the industry and technological advances, translation still needs a translator.

Most of the attendees and the speaker moved to the Heartland Brewery to continue the discussion over dinner. ■

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Nicole Lisa is the newly elected Secretary of the NYCT. She works as a Spanish to English translator for organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and UNIFEM, and she is currently taking on more legal translation work. She can be contacted at nltranslation@yahoo.com.

CIRCLE NEWS



■ NYCT MEETINGS

All meetings start at 6:30 PM and end at 8:00 PM with dinner at a nearby restaurant. Check website for details.

Please e-mail mystymy_@excite.com to confirm your attendance.

CAT Tools Skills

Update your CAT tools skills with a demonstration followed by a question and answer period on Wordfast.

Presenters: Kristyna Marrero and John Di Rico

When: Tuesday, April 8, 2008

Where: ANSI, 25 West 43rd Street

Working with the UN

Check website for details.

Presenter: Director of Documentation for
the General Assembly of the United Nations

When: Wednesday, May 7, 2008

When: ANSI, 25 West 43rd Street

■ WORKSHOP

The New York Circle of Translators and New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies are planning a full-day workshop consisting of two 3-hour workshops.

Reserve the date. Check website and next edition for more details.

When: June 14, 2008

Morning Workshop

Expanding Your Freelance Business
or Converting It into a Translation Company

Presenters: Kerri L. Modla and Marian S. Greenfield

Afternoon Workshop

TBA

■ ATA CERTIFICATION

The New York Circle of Translators and the New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies are offering an ATA Certification.

Those interested should go to the ATA website to register at <http://www.atanet.org/certification/upcoming.php> and also contact Edna Ditaranto at: edna@port-trans-specialists.com

When: June 21, 2008 1:00 – 5:00 P.M.



The New York Circle of Translators (NYCT) is a New York State not-for-profit corporation grouping independent translators and interpreters as well as companies and organizations. It is a chapter of the American Translators Association (ATA) which is, in turn, an affiliate of the International Federation of Translators (FIT).

NYCT members work in a variety of languages and specialties. Our members are committed to the exchange of ideas and mutual support. One of our goals is to educate the general public about the professional nature of interpreting and translating.

NYCT members enjoy the following benefits:

- Free monthly meetings featuring speakers on all aspects of the translation profession
- Networking opportunities at monthly dinners and annual holiday party
- Professional development workshops and seminars
- Subscription to our newsletter, The Gotham Translator
- Listings in the NYCT Online Membership Directory and the annual NYCT printed Membership Directory
- Referrals (if you indicate that you accept them, existing members may direct work requests to you or clients may contact you directly)

Visit us at www.nyctranslators.org and join online!



PO Box 4051
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163-4051