



# THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

August 2003

A Publication of The New York Circle of Translators

## Mid-Year Report



**Teresa S. Waldes**  
2003 NYCT President

Many exciting programs are scheduled for early fall. As announced elsewhere in this issue, in September we have invited Beatriz Bonnet, ATA Board member and owner of a successful language services company in Colorado, to speak to us about "Marketing Yourself to Translation Market Segments." Her approach, combining market research and selling techniques to

target direct clients, is very powerful and I am sure her talk will prove both enjoyable and profitable to our members.

In early October, we will be offering an all-day Continuing Education workshop with Jost Zetzsche on how best to use computer tools in the translation business (see the announcement & registration form elsewhere in this issue. Be sure to register early!). And our October meeting will feature Maria Cornelio, who will discuss the field of medical translation. Many thanks to Renée Borio-Roman, our newly-promoted Program Director, and to Milena Savova, Continuing Education Chair, for helping put together this great set of events.

This summer we have been working on streamlining the NYCT's finances (and learning to use QuickBooks, which took some doing!). Our Treasurer, Maureen Gonzalez whom I thank for all her hard work, and I feel finally on top of things, finance-wise. In this connection, I also want to thank long-time NYCT member Vigdis Eriksen who donated a copy of QuickBooks 2003 and who recommended her book-keeper and accountant to us. I am happy to have in place this professional financial team who from now on will be available to advise us, train new officers and help with some of the financial chores.

As part of our financial review, we prepared a budget and determined that the association could be operated with less money. Therefore, I am pleased to report that the Board has voted to lower individual members' dues to \$50 beginning in 2004. At the same time, corporate members' dues will be

increased to \$75. Student dues will remain unchanged.

In closing, I want to salute the 25th issue of The Translation Journal, the excellent on-line quarterly magazine published by NYCT member Gabe Bokor (<http://accurapid.com/journal/>; also accessible through The Gotham Translator's links page). Gabe, who owns and operates Accurapid, a translation company in Poughkeepsie, NY, has for the past 6 years been putting together this highly respected and widely read translators' resource. We all owe him thanks for this wonderful gift to the profession. For those of you who don't know it yet, I recommend The Translation Journal, it's a great publication! In the current issue don't miss the feature article, a delightful profile of long-time NYCT member and linguist extraordinaire Alex Schwartz.

Post Scriptum: I was beginning to write this piece on the evening of August 14 and was of course interrupted by the blackout that affected us all in the Northeast. Hope you all endured it without major inconveniences. Hope also that the spirit of solidarity, which New Yorkers always show in these emergencies, will remain with us on a daily basis. This was the purpose that led to the creation of the NYCT, to provide a venue for translators to make friends and help each other out. Call it "networking" or call it what you will, the truth is that mutual help and solidarity will see us through many difficulties that would be daunting for any one of us if facing them alone. ■

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Voice-Over Business .....	2
ATA Legal Translation Conference .....	5
What a Notary Does: US vs. Latin America .....	6
Continuing Education Workshop .....	7
Adapting to an Ever-Changing Business .....	8
Circle News .....	10
NYCT Meeting Announcement .....	11

# The Voice-Over Business: Speak Now Or Be Forever Silent!

by Guylaine Laperrière

So you think you should be doing voice-overs. Complete strangers give you compliments on your voice each time you get on the phone. The airlines representative who takes your reservation over the phone ends up flirting with you. You've obviously got what it takes...but what do you do with it? The voice-over business can be all at once challenging, lucrative, scary, fun, humbling, intimidating and sometimes completely absurd. In any case, you need to be prepared. If you have been considering getting into the field of voice-overs, here are a few tips that will help you make your first recording a rewarding experience. After all, having the "right" voice is one thing, making sure they'll want to hear your voice again and again is another.

As a native speaker of a foreign language, you have probably been asked more than once if you do voice-overs. A lot of companies and government agencies need foreign language speakers to record their corporate videos, public announcements, training courses, advertising campaigns, phone systems, etc. Why do they record in the US instead of going to the target country? Simply because they often record in several foreign languages at the same time; it is a lot cheaper to rent a studio in one location and record every language there. It is also a lot easier for a client who wants to have some control over the recording session to deal with foreign talents who

understand English well, which might not always be the case if they have to record in the target country and use local talents.

It is essential for you to be able to identify your type of voice, your accent and the level of your abilities as a reader. Different types of voices land different types of jobs. Your voice is smoky, sexy, and naturally low in pitch? Chances are you will end up doing ads for perfumes and beauty products. Your voice is young and energetic? You'll be the young man telling the consumers how much weight you've lost on this miracle diet plan, or you'll be the mom who swears by these new diapers for her toddler. You have a calm, soothing voice? You will be recording corporate videos promoting the mission of such and such corporation. Voices are cast according to their type. They are often type cast and you must accept this fact. Rejection will be a part of the equation. Not knowing why you have been rejected will also be part of the equation. Not getting a job does not necessarily mean that your reading was mediocre at an audition; it could simply be that your voice was wrong for this specific project.

The voice-over business is still a very sexist industry. Men work more often than women do. You will very rarely hear a woman read about how to change a drive shaft on a tractor, nor will you hear a man describe a new line of cribs for infants. You can certainly help educating clients but don't expect the world to change for you. When you watch TV, when you listen to the radio, close your eyes and listen to the voices. Who is recording what? How does your voice measure up to what you hear? What would YOU be recording? Ask your friends, your family and your colleagues for their opinion on your voice.

As a foreign voice-over talent, make sure your accent is still "current" in your own language. Second generation speakers of a foreign language beware. If you don't regularly go to your country of origin, you have probably

## ***THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR***

### **Editor**

Helene Bergman  
editor@nyctranslators.org

### **Editorial Board**

Trudy Balch  
Marian Greenfield  
Nancy Wright

### **Design and Layout**

Bahl Graphics  
kbahlmann@austin.rr.com

### **Printing**

Mail Boxes, Etc. South Orange NJ  
mailboxso@mindspring.com

*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.*

*© 2003 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.*

lost your accent. Do not fool yourself; this business can be quite unforgiving. Remember that you might be able to fool an American client who does not understand a word of your language but you will be crucified once your voice is heard in the target country. Sounding "near native" is not good enough. You have to sound EXACTLY like a native speaker of that language. If you don't, consider instead recording in English with a foreign accent. There are a lot of requests for accented English readers and American voice-over talents are often preferred over native speakers. Why? Because, depending on their fluency in English, native speakers can be difficult to understand for the average American listener. Non-native speakers of English will often put the stress of a word on the wrong syllable, therefore changing the "music" of the language. American readers who speak a foreign language, particularly Americans whose parents are first generation immigrants, know how to get the "flavor" of the foreign accent while speaking in "proper" English.

Be aware of your ability to deliver a text. If acting is not your thing, you'll do well recording any automated phone system or industrial texts. If your natural voice is expressive and you love to play different characters, you will be perfect for children's stories, ads and other lively promotional material. If you are called in for an audition, ask what you will be reading for. If you feel you are completely wrong for a project, it's OK to let the agency know. When you make a decision about going or not to an audition, weigh the pros and cons and identify which part comes from the fear of being rejected and which part comes from truly knowing that a project requires abilities that are beyond the scope of your competencies. If you don't know yet where your abilities lie, go ahead, take a chance. You'll know soon enough.

You've been called to record a voice-over, you accepted the job and you don't know what to expect once you get in the studio. What if they find out you have no experience? Breathe, relax. If you said yes to the job, it's now time to prepare and to put on a show. Ask for the script ahead of time and rehearse your reading. Mark the words that are difficult to pronounce. Fix the punctuation that is confusing. Make note of the acronyms and company names so you can ask if they should be recorded in American English, in your own language or in accented English. Rehearse, rehearse and rehearse again. If the agency or the client who hired you asks you if you have experience, say that you have a little experience or

"some" experience. A little white lie is not going to hurt you as long as you can deliver the text! Clients get nervous when they take a chance on a newcomer; everyone in the studio at the time of the recording is on the clock from the moment you show up and clients fear that a beginner will take more time than what has been planned. Since you'll be a little nervous yourself the first time, there is no need to put everybody in the studio on edge.

From the moment you walk in the studio, be the most charming person you know. The first impression counts and clients like to work with flexible, reliable, easy-going narrators. Remember that your client's client might be there, so it is not a good idea to make *(continued on next page)*

## **NEW YORK CIRCLE OF TRANSLATORS**

### **(212) 334-3060**

### **2003 Board of Directors**

**Teresa S. Waldes, *President***

(212) 769-9411

president@nyctranslators.org

**Joel D. Buckstein, *President-Elect***

(212) 255-8400

president-elect@nyctranslators.org

**Consuelo Corretjer-Lee, *Secretary***

(212) 627-4506

secretary@nyctranslators.org

**Maureen Gonzalez, *Treasurer***

(718) 884-2952

treasurer@nyctranslators.org

**Renée A. Borio-Román, *Program Director***

(718) 381-4303

programdirector@nyctranslators.org

### **Committee Chairs**

**Teresa Waldes, *ATA Accreditation***

(212) 769-9411

twaldes@ix.netcom.com

**Milena Savova, *Continuing Education***

(212) 998-7033

milena.savova@nyu.edu

**Anne Witt-Greenberg, *Mentoring***

(516) 487-6128

trlegdoc@aol.com

**David Mintz, *Webmaster***

dmintz@panix.com

comments about the horrible quality of the product you will be reading about or bash the translation. Instead, if there are mistranslations or sentences that are problematic, ask questions before you start recording and offer solutions if you feel that the client is open to suggestions. If they seem hesitant, offer to record the text as is and an alternate version of the problematic sentences as well.

A monitor/director will also probably be there. Typically, a monitor is someone who is a native speaker of your language and who will monitor your reading for mistakes. At all times during the recording, be friendly to the monitor and avoid arguing with him/her debatable errors. If you believe you've been corrected when you did not make a mistake, ask politely to listen back. If you were right, you just move on, and if you were wrong, you'll be glad someone picked up the mistake.

The sound engineer will of course be in the studio during the recording. The engineer makes you sound good! The engineer is YOUR BEST FRIEND! When you take your place behind the microphone, let the engineer place it for you in the right position. Then readjust your sheets so you can see your text. Never readjust the mic! Once the mic is properly positioned, you will be asked to give a voice level. This is practice time for both the engineer and you. The engineer adjusts the level of your voice while you seize the opportunity to read the passages that are difficult to pronounce, the tongue twisters, etc. Remember to read at the level to which you will be recording.

When it's time to start recording, breathe deeply and relax. You have nothing to worry about: you have been rehearsing your text over and over again. Concentrate on the sound of your voice in the microphone and on delivering ideas rather than reading words. Listen and take directions. Avoid moving behind the microphone. If you get tired or thirsty, ask to take a pause. A tired voice will sound crackly and dry. Don't forget to eat before you go to the studio, as sensitive microphones will pick up your stomach's embarrassing gurgling sounds. It might also be a good idea to leave at home your charm bracelet, your dangling earrings and your "noisy" clothing for the same reason.

Whether you are recording for an ad, a phone system, a video, you will typically do 3 types of readings. You will

be asked to read in your own language while hearing simultaneously the English version in order to match the timing. OR You will be asked to read in a certain time frame but will not have the English version rolling at the same time. OR You will be asked to read "wild", meaning

that there is no time code to match. You will then deliver the text at your own pace and will not hear the English version while you read in your language.

It might seem a lot to juggle at once but as you become more experienced, you will get more comfortable with the process. Of course, you will have "off" days where nothing seems to come out of your mouth in the right order. In this case, apologize, concentrate on

your breathing and do your best. Remember that breathing deeply will energize your body and your brain and you want to be alert when you record. Make sure you stand or sit straight and keep the breathing flowing from your lower back and your abdomen to your rib cage. Breathing properly will also prevent you from getting tired and your voice will keep the same quality throughout a long recording session.

Doing voice-overs is a fun and lucrative way to supplement your income as a translator. As you become more experienced, you will be able to command higher fees. After all, clients will save time and money because you will be making less mistakes and recording in less time than planned. As people get to know you, you will discover that the same narrators are working over and over again. Clients often ask agencies (ad agencies, translation agencies, video production companies) to provide them with several different voices to choose from but in the end, the same good narrators are chosen over and over again. It's a small world after all.

So remember, doing voice-overs is no big mystery. You need to lie a little to get the job, rehearse a lot to keep it, never stop breathing to survive the recording session, be confident to impress your client and...have fun while you are recording! ■

*Guylaine Laperrière was a presenter at the ATA's Entertainment Industry Seminar in Los Angeles last February. She was recently a speaker at the NYCT. She is also a member of the Actor's Equity Association, the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. She is currently the Translation Studies Coordinator for the non-credit certificate program at NYU.*

***There are a lot of requests for accented English readers and American voice-over talents are often preferred over native speakers.***

# **ATA Legal Translation Conference**

## **Summary of 3 general sessions presented on the first day**

*By Roxana Huhulea*

The ATA Legal Translation Conference held in New Jersey on May 2-4 was an event that was eagerly awaited by all translators who specialize in the legal field, as well as by beginning translators interested in working in this field in the future.

The sessions offered were general, language neutral, and language specific sessions, geared towards resolving the issues specific to one language such as Spanish, French, Russian etc. vs. English. Most of the terminology difficulties came from the differences between the legal systems in Anglo-Saxon countries as compared to the legal systems in France or in Latin American countries, for instance.

Thomas West III presented the first general session and it referred to "Common Law and Equity." The session was presented in English and it contained examples from various Romance languages, concerning the difficulties of translating various English legal concepts. The problems lie not only in finding the adequate term for the translation, but first and foremost, in the fact that these terms have different meanings under English and French or Spanish law, for instance. Some of the concepts discussed were those of equity, common law and jurisprudence.

The second session was also language neutral. It was a roundtable discussion about the "Principles of Legal Translation." The participants were: Javier Becerra, who is a partner in a Mexican law firm that deals mostly with English into Spanish translations, Alejandro Garro, an adjunct professor of law at Columbia University, educated in Argentina, and Steve Kahaner, a US attorney who works extensively with Latin American countries and with Spain. The ideas that resulted from this discussion were that competent legal translation requires a good knowledge of the legal systems of the source and target language, familiarity with the specific terminology of that particular legal field and ability to write in the specific legal style of the target language. Some of the issues addressed, on which the speakers presented different points of view, were literal translation vs. conceptual translation, and how to deal with false cognates, that do not have equivalents in the target language. The suggestions offered were to leave them in the source language and possibly insert a footnote, or give a translation that is only partially adequate. An example was given of a text translated from English literally, which was difficult to

read and understand, and of a cleaned-up version of the same text, which did not follow the source so literally but rendered the meaning in an easy-to-follow Spanish version. The round table discussion was followed by an animated question-and-answer period.

The next language neutral presentation on Friday was "Marketing your Skills to Patent Law Firms: an Insider's Perspective," given by Brian Fish. Brian Fish is the translation coordinator of a large intellectual property firm based in Washington DC. He provided some very useful marketing tips for translators, such as: do not address a law firm as a conglomerate. In your efforts to market your services to a law firm identify one individual that you may have something in common with or that you were referred to, and try to address all your correspondence to that person. Do not get discouraged if you do not get a response the first time, follow up periodically, until you do get a response. Ask to come in and meet with the person, ask to visit the law firm and familiarize yourself with it. If you do get a first assignment, do your best to produce quality work and, most importantly, meet your deadline. If you have technical questions about the assignment, and you have exhausted your research resources without finding an answer, do not hesitate to call the law firm and ask these questions. They will be happy to see that you took the time and made the effort to find the correct answer. Do not make your price an issue, at least until you have established a relationship with the law firm.

I hope that this brief overview will give you at least an idea about the interesting issues discussed in the sessions. ■

*Roxana Huhulea has a degree in French and English from the University of Bucharest, Romania and is ATA accredited for French into English translation. She has over 20 years of experience translating for the foreign trade, financial and legal fields. She is a member of the ATA, NCATA, NAJIT, a former President of the New York Circle of Translators, and the assistant administrator of the French Language Division. She is currently working as a freelance translator based in New York.*

# An Inside Look at What a Notary Does: US vs. Latin America

## Translation of Notarial Clauses from Latin American Spanish into English

The purpose of Daniel Giglio's presentation was to compare the functions of a notary public in Latin America and the United States. Like most of the sessions at the conference, this was a very practical one. Translators need to understand the process of what a notary does, because so many of the documents we translate originate in a notary's office.



Notaries in Latin America have more wide-ranging responsibilities and more extensive training than in the United States. While their offices are not part of the State in the same way as offices of the executive, legislative and judicial branches, notaries, nevertheless, carry the full faith and credit of the State. This means that notaries are privileged witnesses and cannot be refuted in a court of law in Latin countries. There is the legal presumption that notarially drafted documents are authentic.

In one sense we may think of it as a dual record-keeping system, one representative of the individual or entity (*personas físicas / personas jurídicas*) and the other representative of the State. For example, a document such as the articles of incorporation of a business would be recorded with a notary and with the Commercial Registry of the State.

The differences between the duties of a notary in Latin America and the United States are striking. A full-service notary in Latin America, for example, may serve as a witness, record and authenticate documents and provide legal assistance and advice. In the United States, by contrast, notaries may only certify documents and register the date, time and type of transaction. They are not permitted to give legal advice.

Moreover, notaries in Latin America are legal professionals with a law degree, have advanced training in notarial studies and have served an apprenticeship in a notary's office. In addition, some countries such as Argentina require notaries to pass a rigorous qualifying examination.

Much of the presentation focused on terms that are commonly mistranslated. The following is a list of some of them:

### Term and common mistranslation .....Suggested Translation

Notario (escribano)/Notary Public	....Civil-Law Notary: to distinguish between the notaries of common law and civil law countries.
Escritura pública / Deed	.....Notarially recorded instrument or document. Described as the "mother" of all documents. Kept in the notarial record book and never taken out. Not the same as a deed, which is an instrument that conveys land.

Testimonio / Testimony	.....A notarially certified copy. Not the same as testimony, which is evidence given by a witness.
Acta Notarial / Notarial Act	.....Notarial instrument. Drafted by a notary. Not the same as a notarial act, which is an official function of a notary public.
Legalizar / Legalize	.....Certification that a signature is authentic. Legalize in English is to make lawful or imbue with the spirit of the law.
Protocolizar / Notarize	.....Enter into the notarial record book. Not the same as a notary's attestation that a signature is authentic.
Rúbrica / Rubric	.....Contains an official stamp, such as one by the College of Notaries, which issues the paper on which notarial acts are written. Rubric has various meanings in English, none of which mean the same as <i>rúbrica</i> .

## Judicial Decisions in Argentine Law



The purpose of Ricardo Chiesa's presentation was to provide information about civil law in general and specifically judicial decisions in Argentina in their broadest definition. "Resoluciones judiciales" may be thought of as an umbrella that covers all decisions issued by a judge or court in either a voluntary proceeding in which there is no opposing party or a lawsuit, in which there is an opposing party. Therefore "resolución" should never be translated literally as resolution or the court resolves.

These decisions (*resoluciones*) may be classified according to when and why they were issued. There are two types:

1. During the course of the proceedings: Routine procedural orders "*providencias simples*" (may or may not cause irreparable harm) or interlocutory decisions.
2. At the end of the proceedings: Judgment or "*sentencia definitiva*" of the first, second or last instance.

Routine procedural orders are intended to move the process forward. The judge issues them without hearing the other opposing party.

Interlocutory decisions settle disputes that arise during the proceedings. They require that both parties be heard. Examples include the right to litigate at no cost or a motion to stop the proceedings. They must also contain the grounds, a decision on the issues raised and an award of costs.

The "sentencia definitiva" is the decision in which the judge sustains or upholds the claim or denies the claim or dismisses the complaint. It should not be confused with the "sentencia firme" which is a final and binding judgment that has been agreed to between the parties and cannot be appealed. The speaker provided several more classifications of decisions including by content, by conclusions with regard to the claim and by the requirement that the judgment meet the petitions of the parties.

Because of the complexity of the material, the Q and A period

seemed to evaporate. Indeed the discussion was so lively and interesting that we were all prepared to continue the event beyond its allotted time. Fortunately each conference attendee received a printed copy of the lecture, which included a lengthy list of Latin phrases used in Spanish and English legal terminology. ■

*Betty Welker is a past Treasurer of NYCT, and has been a member of NYCT and the ATA since 1992. She specializes in Spanish-to-English and Portuguese-to-English legal and financial translations.*

**CONTINUING EDUCATION WORKSHOP**  
Jointly Sponsered by NYCT and the NYU Translation Studies Program

**A Translator's Toolbox for the 21st Century**

Presented by Jost Zetzsche

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2003 - 10 a.m. to 1 pm. - 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.**

**Woolworth Building, 15 Barclay Street**

(exact location to be announced. Watch our website: [www.nyctranslators.org](http://www.nyctranslators.org))

*Learn how to unleash the power of your computer for greater efficiency, speed, and pleasure in your work. This program was "standing-room" only at the ATA conference last fall!*

- Learn to fine-tune your computer so it works best for you
- Desktop Publishing (DTP) software explained
- Find out how to do far quicker, more efficient word counts, and about "spiders" that ensnare all the files in a website for you
- Leads on software programs that will increase your efficiency - some even for FREE
- Computer-Aided Translation (CAT) programs (Trados, Déjà Vu et al.) explained from the point of view of an experienced user
- And much, much more!!!

Jost Zetzsche is an ATA-accredited English/German translator and a localization and translation consultant. A native of Hamburg, Germany, Jost earned a Ph.D. in the field of Chinese translation history and linguistics in 1996. He began working in localization and technical translation in 1997, and in 1999 co-founded International Writers' Group ([www.internationalwriters.com](http://www.internationalwriters.com)). He has recently published "A Translator's Toolbox for the 21st Century-A Computer Primer for Translators" in book form.

**REGISTRATION FORM**

The early bird fee (postmarked by Sept. 26) is \$50 for NYCT members and NYU students, \$55 for others. Onsite registration will be \$60 for everybody. To register please fill out the registration form below and send it, together with a check or money order, to: New York Circle of Translators, P.O. Box 4051, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-4051. Write your check to the order of NYCT and note in the memo section "Jost Zetzsche Workshop." Complete information on how to get to the workshop will be posted on our website [www.nyctranslators.org](http://www.nyctranslators.org).

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (DAY) \_\_\_\_\_ (EVE) \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ NYCT MEMBER: Y N

# Adapting to an Ever-Changing Business *by Brian Ash*

The phone rang in the office around 10:00am. It was a slow morning until then, not that I had any other morning to compare it to. It was my first.

I wasn't sure what to say to our clients but no one else seemed to be around the office. The pause in the caller's voice made me think twice about answering.

"Am I calling Legal-World?"

"Yes," I told her. "My name is Brian. Can I help you?"

It was Cathy, calling from a court reporting agency in Long Island. She had the right place. I work for Legal-World Interpreting, a nationwide interpreting agency located in lower Manhattan. She needed a Russian interpreter for a deposition at Sutphin Blvd., a location I would come to know well.

Although I accepted and covered the assignment, it was pretty clear that Cathy had her doubts. But I understood why. I did nothing wrong. I just wasn't the person who normally answered the phone, the one she trusted.

A few moments later, another call came in. It was Cathy again. With the same caution in her voice, she asked to speak to my boss and even seemed



*It still amazes me how difficult it is for some interpreters to show up on time to an assignment. If you can't make it...it's time to take a step back and re-evaluate.*

relieved when I transferred her to Jeff's extension. He must have explained who I was and that I would be the one responsible for our interpreter assignments from now on. I could hear him explaining my role with the agency through the thin wall that separated us.

Jeff walked into my office a few minutes later to start my training. We laughed about it as he explained this would be just the first of many calls like that one. By mid-afternoon, I had stopped counting.

Now, Cathy and I speak every day, and sometimes it's just to say hello. But in February of 2002, I made people nervous. Clients and interpreters were equally apprehensive. The relationships they had worked so hard to develop with my predecessor were gone. And now, it was time to start over.

## Getting Started

As an interpreter, it must be a challenge to keep up with the changes in this industry. New agencies come and go.

Calendar clerks come and go. We are a perfect example. I am no longer responsible for the calendar at Legal-World. Actually, that position has changed hands a few times since I joined the team.

Each time a change like this occurs, the same questions arise. Who is he? How did she get here? What does she know about this business? What is he looking for? Relax. If you are a good interpreter, it shouldn't matter. The nervousness is understandable but you have to be confident in your abilities. Do a good job and the agency will call again soon.

But what does it mean to do a good job? The answer is simple. Show up on time, interpret for the client and send in your paperwork. But for some reason this simple concept is often overlooked.

It still amazes me how difficult it is for some interpreters to show up on time to an assignment. Most of us have normal office jobs that require us to be in by 9:00am. If

you can't make it to a job that starts at 10:00am or later, it's time to take a step back and re-evaluate.

Let's be honest, there will always be traffic in New York. The highways will always look more like parking lots in Long Island. You never know when the ferry will show up for Staten Island and the MTA will always manage to slow down an express train headed to the Bronx. This is nothing new. Allowing the time to get to an assignment should be the first consideration.

If an assignment starts at 10:00am, I would expect the interpreter to arrive at least ten minutes prior. Of course, starting at 10:00am and arriving at 10:00am are two different things. Attorneys cannot start a deposition if an interpreter is just walking through the door. It leaves no time for introductions and no time for organization. A professional would allow himself or herself the extra time.

Consider the clients. They are prepared for the case well ahead of time. The only aspect of their case in question is the interpreter. Their primary concern is not whether they will be able to ask all the right questions. They are just

hoping the interpreter will be there when they arrive. Yet some interpreters take this concept too lightly. Perhaps the longer we do our jobs, the more comfortable we get. Comfortable is not careful.

The only way to really handle this situation is to call the agency and let them know when you are going to be late. Give us an estimate, a realistic estimate, on when you will arrive. That way we can call the client to let them know ahead of time. They will be less likely to cancel the assignment and easier to deal with when you arrive. This makes your job easier and saves the agency from losing a client.

## **The Winning Combination**

Doing a first-class job as an interpreter refers to the work done before, during and after an assignment. I have more than a few interpreters that are great at what they do in a deposition room. Our clients love them and request them on a regular basis. Of course, I love it when this happens because we rely on our interpreters to maintain our reputation. But that's where the compliments stop flowing. In fact, most of them hardly ever fill their paperwork correctly, never write down the names of the witnesses and never turn in the paperwork on time.

These are the little things we look for as an agency. To us, it's what makes a good interpreter and a superior freelancer. If you can't be organized, then you're in the wrong business. For an unfortunate number of you, these little things become almost too difficult to ask for. I don't consider an assignment to be completed until the paperwork is filed. And neither should you.

I recently interviewed an interpreter for local assignments in New York. She asked me what I expected of her. It was a simple question with a simple answer. The difference now is that I'm no longer surprised by the question.

I have come to accept the fact that, like interpreters, not all agencies are the same. We have different expectations and we operate differently. I do have expectations, like anyone else. This business is built on trust. As freelancers, you must be responsible for yourselves and must simply trust the fact that agencies will not only pay you, but also pay you in a timely manner.

As a freelance journalist myself, I can easily identify with having money come in one week and zilch the next. You have every right to be concerned with the agencies you

work for. You are not an employee and your rights are limited in that sense. But you still have the power. You have the power to say no.

In reality, we need you as much as you need us. That is what keeps the agencies honest. We want you to say yes when we call with an assignment. In order for that to happen we have to maintain a positive reputation for paying you on time and treating you with respect. What can I do to make you say yes? I want to know, other than paying more money that is. Like I said, let's be honest.

## **Open Communication**

We do have a lot of expectations. That's true. But they shouldn't surprise you. What may surprise you is that very few of you ever voice your opinions.

Say something! If you are a good interpreter, and most of you are, you should not be worried about voicing your opinions. I can't speak for other agencies, but I will always listen to what an interpreter has to say. Grant me the right to disagree with you, but I will always listen.

If you don't feel comfortable enough to say something to an agency, there's something wrong. Either you know you aren't exactly holding up your end of the bargain or the agency has a reputation for not taking interpreters seriously. If that's the case, go somewhere else.

Not all agencies are perfect. Correction, no agencies are perfect. We make mistakes but it is how we handle them that make us better. There have been instances where an interpreter has pointed out a mistake I've made. I apologized and try my best to not

let it happen again. If anything, my respect for that interpreter is increased. I like confidence. I like knowing that the interpreters I send on assignments believe in themselves.

If you have a problem with an agency and do not voice your opinions, do not expect change. Do not expect anyone else to do it for you. Not your friends, not the organizations you belong to. You are an independent, freelance contractor. It is a career that demands organization, personal responsibility and, when done right, respect. ■

*Brian Ash is the operations manager for Legal-World Interpreting. Any questions or comments about this article can be sent to [briana@lwinterpreting.com](mailto:briana@lwinterpreting.com).*

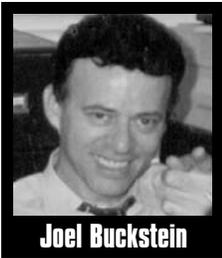


***Not all agencies are perfect.  
Correction, no agencies are perfect.  
We make mistakes but it is how we  
handle them that make us better.***

# CIRCLE NEWS

## New President Elect Appointed

Joel Buckstein, a Certified Personnel Consultant (C.P.C.) is President of Geneva Worldwide, Inc. an interpreting and translation company servicing government and private industry. Joel is a 1965 graduate of Long Island University and did post-graduate work at the New School for Social Research. He is married and lives in Roslyn Country Club.



**Joel Buckstein**

Joel has always been active in community and trade group associations. He previously was the President of the Roslyn Country Club Civic Association and President of the Metropolitan Association of Employment Agencies. He also

has served on the Board of Directors of APCNY (Assn. of Personnel Consultants of New York) and NYATS (New York Assn. of Temporary Services). He looks forward to working closely with the Board and membership of NYCT.

## New Program Director Appointed

Renée Borio-Román, our hard-working Programs Committee Chair has been promoted to Program Director. Renée is a graduate of the NYU Translation Certificate Program. After translating part-time for many years, she finally took the plunge in June 2001 and decided to leave her job as a Spanish teacher with the New York City Board of Education to begin working as a full-time freelancer. Her language pairs are Spanish and Italian into English. She specializes in educational material, but is primarily a generalist.

She hopes you will contact her at [programdirector@nyctranslators.org](mailto:programdirector@nyctranslators.org) or by telephone at (718) 823-8325 if you are interested in getting involved in planning and running NYCT events and dinners.



**Renée Borio-Román**



## Corporate Member Wins Govt. Contract

This past June Metropolitan Interpreters & Translators, Inc. was awarded a multi-million-dollar contract by the Drug Enforcement Administration to provide linguistic support to their operations in Los Angeles, Riverside and Ventura counties of California and in Las Vegas, Reno, and Lake Tahoe, Hawaii and the island of Guam. Under this contract, Metropolitan will provide monitoring, translation, transcription and interception services in more than 25 languages for the next five years. This is the culmination of thirteen years of hard work providing the best translation and interpretation services to agencies of the United States Government and the beginning of a new era for Metropolitan. For more information on the contract award and/or subcontracting opportunities please contact Mr. Joseph Citrano, Vice President of Operations at [Joecitrano@metlang.com](mailto:Joecitrano@metlang.com). Individuals interested in applying for positions under this contract can apply online at Metropolitan's website, [www.metlang.com](http://www.metlang.com)

## ATA Annual Conference in Phoenix on Nov. 5-8

Join your ATA colleagues in Phoenix for a rewarding experience featuring: (a) over 175 educational sessions; (b) a Job Exchange to promote your services; (c) over 50 exhibitors featuring the latest publications, software and services; (d) opportunities to network with over 1,200 translators and interpreters from throughout the U.S. and the world. For more info, visit <http://www.atanet.org/conf2003/>.

## Early Bird Announcement

For those of you who like to plan very far ahead, we have received a notice about a pan-European Colloquium on "Translation and Meaning" that will be held on May 18-21, 2005 in Maastricht, The Netherlands, and on September 23-25, 2005 in Lodz, Poland. For more information contact Prof. Thelen: [m.m.g.j.thelen@hszuyd.nl](mailto:m.m.g.j.thelen@hszuyd.nl) or visit the Colloquium website at: <http://www.hszuyd.msti.translation-and-meaning.nedweb.com>

# 2003 Meeting Announcement

## Marketing Yourself to Translation Market Segments

On September 16 come hear Beatriz Bonnet, who will discuss marketing strategies for translators and interpreters. Please note that due to the length of the presentation THE EVENT WILL BEGIN PROMPTLY AT 6:00 PM. Note also that THIS EVENT IS FOR MEMBERS ONLY. Due to the high attendance expected at this event we will be unable to accommodate guests.

Among the topics covered will be the following:

### Market and industry segment analysis

- Direct clients vs. translation companies
- Changes in the language services industry
- Vertical segments (e.g. financial, automotive, software, health care)

### Marketing and market research

- Researching the markets you are interested in
- Targeting your market
- Segment differentiation

### Customer satisfaction/retention

- When you actually get a job
- Interaction with clients before, during and after a job
- Ethics, business relationships, due diligence

Beatriz Bonnet, a native of Uruguay, has been a frequent speaker at many translation and interpreting

industry conferences and events. She sits on the ATA Board of Directors and is President and CEO of Syntes Language Group, Inc., an established language services company in the Denver Metro area. Beatriz is an ATA-accredited translator (English into Spanish and Spanish into English) and a Certified Federal Court Interpreter. She received Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University.



The meeting will be held on Tuesday September 16, at 6:00 p.m at The Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Avenue, 2nd floor (between 15th and 16th Streets). Please note that for security reasons all visitors to The Foundation Center must be pre-registered 24 hours in advance. Call (212) 334-3060 or email Renée if you plan to attend the meeting even if you are not going to the dinner.

Afterwards join us for dinner at 8:00 p.m. at Havana Central, 22 E. 17th Street (between 5th & Broadway). Dinner is \$30 per plate (tax, tip and a soft drink included). Please preregister for the meeting and dinner or both by e-mailing Renée at [programdirector@nyctranslators.org](mailto:programdirector@nyctranslators.org) or calling (212)334-3060. We look forward to seeing you! ■



### Welcome back, everyone!

We have somehow made it through monsoons, heat waves, cold snaps and a massive power failure. Summer came and went awfully quickly - hopefully, you all had time to enjoy it! I hope you will find the articles in this and the forthcoming issues interesting and informative. Do take time to look at the meeting and workshop notices as well!

There is something here for everyone. As always, I welcome your suggestions and contributions for future issues of the Gotham Translator.

## ***THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR***



The New York Circle of Translators (NYCT) is a New York State not-for-profit corporation regrouping 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](http://www.nyctranslators.org) and join on-line!

## ***THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR***

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