



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

March/April 2004

A Publication of The New York Circle of Translators

President's Letter



Guylaine Laperrière
2004 NYCT President

Dear members,

Let me start this letter by thanking Teresa Waldes and Helene Bergman for putting together the publication of the previous issue of *The Gotham Translator*. As we were taking over our new roles, we were very grateful indeed for Teresa and Helene's help.

You will notice that we have a new editor. Following a suggestion from the previous board, we have decided

to hire a professional editor for *The Gotham Translator*. His name is Jason Fargo, and you can read his formal introduction to the members on the next page. You can also read about the upcoming International Translation Conference that will held in June at NYU. Don't miss it! Accredited ATA members will have the opportunity to earn credits toward their requirements for continuing education. Also on the programming front, in April NYU is offering a workshop, presented by Richard Tretler, on accounting terminology. This workshop should also count as continuing education for accredited ATA members. For more information, please call NYU's translation studies coordinator at (212) 998-7028.

Members who attended the February meeting had the great pleasure of hearing Susana Greiss talk about our profession and generously share from her wealth of experience. We were glad to notice that many new members, as well as familiar faces, were in attendance. The meeting was completely booked, and we apologize to members who couldn't get in. Unfortunately, fire regulations have set the room capacity at 70 people, and we would not want to put your life at stake by not complying with the rules.

However, should a similar situation occur in the future, we will be better organized to face it. Going forward, all event registration must now be done by e-mailing the program director. Don't forget to leave your full name and contact phone numbers—that way, we'll be able to reach you in case there are any changes to our monthly program. If an event is closed, the program director will establish a waiting list.

Our new program director has been on a roll! She has received more than 35 completed surveys from members, and she will be sharing the results with you in our next issue. She has also organized our first workshop, offered to S>E and E>S translators who intend to take the ATA Certification Exam in April. Nearly 20 members and NYU students attended the workshop, conducted by Susana Greiss and Rosa Codina, on the most common mistakes made by translators on the ATA test. We would like to thank both Susana and Rosa for generously donating their time and sharing their expertise with future ATA-certified members! Good luck to all those who will take the test in April.

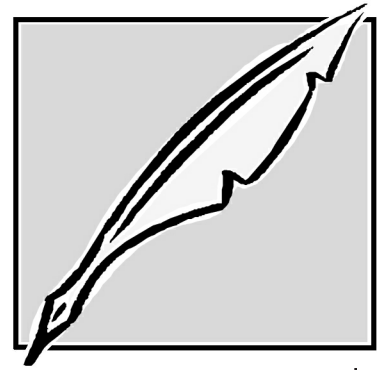
Our second workshop should take place during the entertainment seminar in New Jersey next May. More details will come in the May-June issue.

As we have just finalized collecting dues from members, I would like to remind everyone that members can update their profile at any time. You will need your password and ID number to be able to access your profile and edit it. Please note that we will not update your profile for you.

Finally, as you may have already heard, our secretary Nancy Wright has resigned from her position. We desperately need someone. If you always wanted to get involved, now would be a wonderful time to join the board! Interested candidates should apply ASAP. If you are interested, please e-mail the President. ■

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Greetings to NYCT members! This is my first issue as editor of *The Gotham Translator*, so I'd like to take a moment to introduce myself and explain a bit about where I'd like to see the publication develop over the coming year.

I've been a professional writer, journalist, and editor for over a decade. Over the years, I've also done freelance translation work from Spanish into English and vice versa.

I see *The Gotham Translator* as an important medium of communication, both from the Circle to its members and among the members themselves. My goal is to provide articles and other information of use to all members—both translators and interpreters—as you work to build your businesses and boost your incomes.

To that end, I'd like to ask all members and readers to share your thoughts with me on topics you'd like to see covered in these pages. And, if anyone would like to contribute an article or suggest a possible source for material, both the Circle and I would be most grateful. You can contact me at editor@nyctranslators.org.

In closing, I'd like to thank my predecessor, Helene Bergman, for her hard work and her words of advice.

I hope you enjoy reading *The Gotham Translator*! ■

THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

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

The newsletter is published six times a year and reaches a circulation of approximately 350-400.

Our ad rates are as follows:

Full page (7.5"x10")	\$150
1/2-page (7.5"x4.75")	\$80
1/4-page (3.5"x4.75")	\$40
1/8-page (3.5"x2.25")	\$20

Please note: All prices are for black-and-white, camera-ready copy.

To place an ad, please contact editor Jason Fargo at editor@nyctranslators.org no later than 30 days prior to the desired issue's publication date. Publication dates are Feb. 1, April 1, June 1, Aug. 15, Oct. 1, and Dec. 1.

Conference Announcement

NYU's 2nd International Translation Conference

Global Security: Implications for Translation and Interpretation

June 3-5, 2004

Pre-conference workshops: June 2, 2004

Today, the threat of terrorism has placed security at the top of the public agenda. The growing awareness of American vulnerability to Islamic terrorism has led to an increased demand for qualified interpreters in Arabic as well as other Middle Eastern, Asian, and African languages that have traditionally not been seen as highly significant. Professionals with those language skills are in more demand than ever before.

At the same time, the accelerating pace of globalization has led to other changes in the working environment for all those in our industry. Today's translators and interpreters compete in a truly global marketplace, as they can now work virtually anywhere, anytime, for any client. Also, more governments and individuals are starting to view issues such as human rights, public health, economic development, and the environment through an international rather than a local lens. As the scope for international contact in these areas grows, so too does the demand for knowledgeable language professionals.

The NYU conference is designed to help translators and interpreters respond to the changes currently affecting the profession.

"We've never heard so much about translators and interpreters in the media and in the press as we have done since 9/11," says Milena Savova, conference chair and director of the Center for Foreign Languages and Translation in NYU's School of Continuing and Professional Studies. "At the same time, the challenges are that we need translators in languages that were hardly necessary before.... There is a shortage of dictionaries; there is a shortage of training programs; there is still a lack of understanding among clients of what the responsibilities of a translator are."



The conference agenda has yet to be finalized, but the abstracts and workshops have been posted on the conference Web site at www.scps.nyu.edu/translationconf. Eminent professionals have been invited to lead hands-on workshops. Pre-conference workshop topics include: Developing an Arabic Reading and Translation Strategy, Debt Financing (English to Spanish), French Corporate Law Seminar, and Challenges in Translating Russian Financial Statements. A complete list of the workshops, along with their descriptions, is included in this issue of *The Gotham Translator*.

The conference will be held at NYU's Kimmel *(continued)*

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Center, 60 Washington Square South, New York, NY. The cost is \$320, or \$270 for those who register before April 15. Students pay \$250, or \$220 before April 15. A one-day pass to the conference is also available for \$120.

Conference attendees are eligible to earn 10 points toward the continuing education requirements for ATA certification, and those who participate in one of the pre-conference workshops can earn an additional three points.

To register, please call (212) 998-7171 or go to the conference Web site at www.scps.nyu.edu/translationconf.

Pre-Conference Workshops

Arabic to English . . . Developing an Arabic Reading and Translation Strategy

Ronald G. Wolfe, Ph.D.

Arabic, an inherently difficult language for Westerners, will require human translators well into the foreseeable future. Arabic's non-Roman alphabet presents an obstacle to reading comprehension because short vowels are eliminated from most handwritten and printed texts, even though they bear significant amounts of syntactic and semantic information. The lack of regular cognates between English and Arabic and the paucity of corpus-based dictionaries designed for use by English native speakers are other problems.

Verbs and nouns often look alike, so beginning translators often find difficulty choosing among alternative glosses in a dictionary because they have not developed a strategy for determining the respective syntactic functions of Arabic words. They may not recognize typographical or grammatical errors and be distracted into a literal translation that is meaningless or confusing.

This workshop, consisting of three segments, will provide translators with the strategy needed to analyze the Arabic morphology, syntax and lexicon of a text, even at the purely factual no-cultural-loading level (ILR R-2). The first segment will demonstrate and discuss 10 key dictionaries, grammars, and reference works that an Arabic translator should have and know how to use for professional success. In the final two segments, the participants will be assisted in developing a strategy for reading and translating Arabic texts at the ILR R-3 level (some cultural loading and opin-

ion). All participants will be provided with an advance electronic text (a three-page newspaper article) for translation prior to attendance at the workshop. Prior translation is required to ensure that workshop participants have already encountered and tried to resolve the problems the text presents.

German to English . . . Implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in Germany - Opportunities and pitfalls for the German financial translator

Ted R. Wozniak

Implementation of IFRS, formerly International Accounting Standards (IAS), is underway in Germany, bringing with it not only a new set of opportunities for the German financial translator, but a new set of pitfalls as well. This workshop will provide a brief overview of IFRS and the status of EU/German implementing legislation. The major changes in accounting treatment between IFRS and German GAAP (HGB) will be discussed, as will changes in terminology from the "official" German translation of IFRS. A set of illustrative financial statements will be used to familiarize participants with the new terminology. Finally, reference materials and sources will be discussed. Participants are encouraged to bring a list of their favorite reference and research materials to share with their colleagues.

Russian to English . . . Challenges in Translating Russian Financial Statements

Bob Taylor

This workshop will cover key balance sheet and income statement entries in Russian with proposed translations. Special attention will be devoted to unique accounting practices used in Russia, how they differ from generally accepted accounting practices, and how these differences can have a potential impact on reporting. There will be a focus on avoiding false cognates, using specialized financial dictionaries with the proper amount of skepticism, finding financial translation resources on the Internet, and forming equivalents for entries that are unique under Russian accounting practices. Participants will also be asked to complete one or more translation exercises during the workshop.

Italian to English . . . Challenges in Translating Italian Financial Statements

Bob Taylor

This presentation will cover the key reports and accounting entries included in Articles 2424 (Contenuto dello stato patrimoniale) and 2425 (Contenuto del conto economico) of the Italian Civil Code, with a focus on unique Italian entries and concepts. Guidelines will be summarized for avoiding false cognates, using specialized financial dictionaries with a proper amount of skepticism, finding financial translation resources on the Internet, and forming equivalents for entries that are unique to Italian accounting practices.



English to Spanish . . . Debt Financing

Silvana Debonis

This English>Spanish financial translation workshop will be divided into two parts. First, the instructor will introduce some basic concepts that will help participants understand the use of debt as a source of capital and as an investment vehicle. In this sense, it will discuss the sources of debt capital - bank financing and debt markets. Second, participants will get a hands-on approach to translating debt-related texts and will discuss specific financial terminology.

Spanish to English . . . Translating Debt - Spanish to English

Marian Greenfield

This hands-on seminar will lead attendees through the translation of various debt-related documents, including a loan term sheet and some bond term sheets. Participants will finish the seminar with a definitive translation of these term-rich texts, providing them with ample material to produce a debt translation glossary. Since participants will be working on the translation, they should bring along any financial dictionaries they have.

Software Localization . . . Where does a freelance translator begin with a localization project?

Carla DiFranco

Windows International, Microsoft Corp.

Navigating the field of software localization can be tricky. There is so much information out there, broken into different pieces, across different organizations - the sheer complexity of it all can be overwhelming. As a freelance translator, not accustomed to the tool-intensive environment of software localization projects, this is a daunting task indeed. This pre-conference workshop will go over some of the basics of software localization, focusing on real-life scenarios to highlight the following:

- Software localization skills that can be further developed, and how this can be done.
- What are some of the technical details you should be aware of when starting a software localization project?
- What questions should you ask your client - and what do the answers mean?
- Hands-on practice.

We will work with files, translation memory technology, and Windows system technology to practice and demonstrate some key problem areas. References will be provided for those workshop participants that wish to do further research. This pre-conference workshop is applicable for translators who already have basic computer skills and who are interested in taking on localization projects.

French to English . . . French Corporate Law Seminar

Thomas L. West III

We will compare corporate law in France with corporate law in the United States, focusing on the terminology and the concepts. We will then translate a set of French "statuts" into English as a means of reviewing the concepts.

Make the Court Reporter's Day!

By Diane E. Teichman © 2004

Whether you are a freelance judiciary interpreter or a staff court interpreter, you will find yourself working side by side with court reporters. Interpreters work with the court reporter in the courtroom as well as in any sworn statement. Based on our shared responsibility for the record, reporters are often a source of evaluation of our performance for judges and lawyers. Court reporting firms are frequently relied upon to contract with freelance interpreters, and your reputation with them can enhance or reduce your business. So, here's an additional support that can easily add value to your service and make you stand out with court reporters.

Provide the reporter with the spelling of foreign language names and places on a spellings page. It's easy and quick to do, and it means so much to the reporter that you will be remembered for this courtesy. I have been providing these pages for over 18 years, but I still hear about interpreters who won't offer to provide spellings for the reporter. Often reporters call me to help with spellings from another interpreter's job.

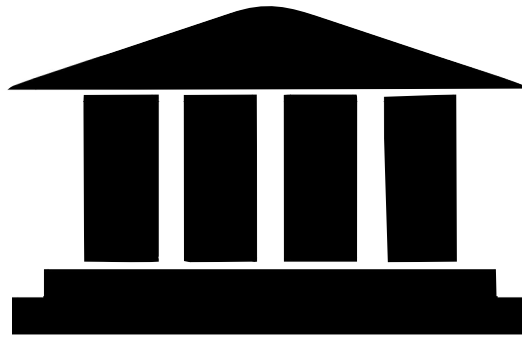
A full understanding of the reporter's job is important to appreciate the value of this service. What an interpreter sees on the job is just the tip of the iceberg.

For every hour of actual reporting of any statement under oath, the reporter faces at least another hour of editing before the transcript is ready to be delivered. The reporter writes on a stenography machine in a language called "steno," which is basically a phonetic script of the syllables heard by the individual reporter. For example, the word "attorney" in steno could be written as "toern", while "interpreter" could be transcribed as "interp."

Real-time reporters produce a near-complete transcript with the aid of a program installed in their laptop, which is connected to their stenography machine. Their laptop screens show the testimony already in English because they input case-specific terminology as part of the pre-job preparation. Unable to predict the pending testimony, they will afterwards need to add spellings.

Reporters often maintain a full dictionary for technical and scientific terms and apply them to long-running case depositions and statements. Even during the most contentious, argumentative, English-only deposition or courtroom proceeding, the transcript is thoroughly and efficiently produced. Courtroom reporters will already have the spe-

cific case names, but any new evidence offered in testimony that contains foreign language names will need correct spellings. The time required for hunting down foreign language spellings can increase the workload for a reporter.



Interpreters should consider the accuracy of the record as part of their responsibility. Veteran reporter Rick Smith of Charlotte Smith Reporting in Houston points out that "For both reporters and interpreters, the focus of our work is to be verbatim, and for us reporters the entire transcript has to be verbatim. I sign a certificate stating that what is contained in the transcript is transcribed

to the best of my ability. That includes correct spellings." Another reporter adds: "If anything, interpreters providing spellings make us look good by helping to provide a complete and accurate transcript."

Consider the potential transcript result in a Spanish interpreted deposition when the reporter hears the following testimony. The witness, *Juanaset Ismael Covarrubios*, states his address as *Pasaje Valle #1245, Urbanización Antiguo Cuscatlán, San Salvador, El Salvador*. He states his wife's name as *Aracely*, and his children are *Toyoc*, *Beatriz*, *Cesar*, and *Juanaset Jr*. The qualified interpreter is pronouncing these names of people and places in correctly accented Spanish, but this sounds like gibberish to the monolingual reporter. The transcript could look like this:

Q. Please state your name for the record.

A. *Jauntiest Israel Cover Your Bus.*

Q. Please state your address.

A. *Passage Value #1245, Urban Nation Ant Eater Cruise Atlanta, San Salvador, El Salvador.*

Q. Are you married?

A. *Yes.*

Q. What is your wife's name?

A. *Ought to Sell It.*

Q. And what are your children's names?

A. *Toyota, Beaters, Queasier, and Jauntiest Jr.*

The exactness of the record is required and regulated by the rules of civil procedure, thus protecting each individual's civil rights. This example demonstrates how testimony can be incorrectly transcribed. That can have far-reaching implications. For example, in the discovery process, the attorneys may want to rely on contact information. It is doubtful any correspondence would make it addressed to "Ought To Sell It Cover Your Bus" at "Passage Value #1245, Urban Nation Ant Eater Cruise Atlanta, San Salvador, El Salvador."

During the testimony of a witness, reporters are accustomed to noting an unclear word, but this interrupts their concentration and flow. The reporter follows along and takes down what the interpreter says, but since we are completely bilingual we will pronounce the foreign-language term in the source-language pronunciation without skipping a beat. This often throws the reporter off, unless they know in advance that you will be providing them with the correct spellings.

Here's what you can do: Incorporate the correct foreign-language spellings of certain words into your note-taking process. The reporter will need both the accurate spelling and the subject matter to find it for insertion in the transcript. Most such terms will form part of the witness's response to certain questions. Since most depositions follow a standard format of questioning, you can be prompted to copy the spelling as soon as you hear the question. You can write the word down, adding an indication of the subject matter—for example, "POB" for "Place of Birth." Starring it will help you find it in your notes afterwards. It is important, though, not to delay your interpreting flow while you are taking notes.

Some interpreters try to spell the words on the record, and that can interrupt the flow of questioning and the proceeding in general. It begins to sound like a spelling bee if too many words are spelled on the record. Practice beforehand will help you with this double-tasking process. It is reasonable for you to hurriedly write in "chicken scratch." Then, at the end of the deposition, you can copy your list on a fresh sheet of paper for the reporter to take. After a few years of fumbling around with my legal pad to make a clean list, I started printing up special sheets for this purpose. They have my name and contact information on them for further questions. The two-column format has a left col-

umn, entitled "Topic," and a right column labeled "Spelling." I even found lilac-colored paper, which is easier on the reporter's eyes.

Here is a suggested list of spellings the reporter will need and the subject matter in which they normally occur.

Spellings needed

Question Topic

People's names and nicknames

Personal history and family, coworkers and other witnesses to incident.

Places (streets, towns, foreign company and agency names)

Foreign residence and employment. Be prompted by the question "Where?"

Titles: individual, employment and degree

Personal history, education, and profession.

School and University names

Currency

Employment or purchases made in a foreign country.

Cultural events and traditions, dishes

Details about the incident. What action was performed and why.

Even the most experienced interpreters can improve their service. Smith tells the story of working with an interpreter whose interpreting skill impressed him but who fell short in overall service:

"I asked him when he first got there if he wouldn't mind helping me out by spelling the words that have to be on the record in Spanish and to just write them down for me before he left. Hours later, when we finished, he was leaving and I asked for the spellings. He said, 'I thought you were writing them down.' It turns out he had not written any down. I had to explain to him that I can only spell them out phonetically since I don't speak Spanish."

Taking the extra few moments to provide this service makes a difference to reporters. And you will be notably remembered. ■

Diane E. Teichman, a licensed court interpreter for the State of Texas and translator, has specialized in legal work since 1980. She is the series editor for the book series Professional Interpreting in the Real World. She can be reached at articles@linguisticworld.com. Her Web site is http://www.linguisticworld.com/diane/multi_matters.htm

CIRCLE NEWS

Secretary Resigns; Position still open

The newly elected secretary, Nancy Wright, has been forced to resign for pressing personal reasons. The board regretfully has accepted Nancy's resignation. According to the By-Laws of the NYCT, "vacancies on the Board occurring mid-term are filled through appointment by the President with approval of the Board..." The Board hopes that the position won't be open for long. Anyone who is interested in applying for this opportunity should contact Guylaine Laperrière, NYCT president, as soon as possible.

To ATA-Certified Members

We are in the process of obtaining continuing education approval from the ATA for the event held this past February 24. All ATA-certified members who attended Ms. Susana Greiss's presentation and who would like to earn continuing education points are kindly asked to contact the program director at programdirector@nyctranslators.com.

Continuing Education Workshop

On March 13, the NYCT and NYU jointly sponsored a workshop on the ATA certification exam. The workshop was conducted by Ms. Susana Greiss and Ms. Rosa Codina.



March Meeting

Despite the late-season snowstorm, a good number of brave, devoted translators and interpreters showed up. According to their comments, they were glad they decided to come. The speaker, Jon Ritzdorf, was excellent in passing on valuable info and in encouraging the attendees' participation. The topic of his presentation was "What do you need to know before or when buying CAT (computer-assisted translation) software?"

Entertainment Seminar

The ATA and NYCT are jointly holding an entertainment seminar, which will be held in Jersey City on May 22 and 23. The seminar will cover such areas as voiceovers, subtitling for films and television, and translation and interpretation for the entertainment industry. President Guylaine Laperrière will conduct a workshop on how to break into voiceovers. The conference will be eligible for ATA continuing education points.

NYCT Anniversary

This year, the NYCT is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its founding. The board is looking for ways to appropriately commemorate the event, and members are encouraged to share their ideas with the program director at programdirector@nyctranslators.com.

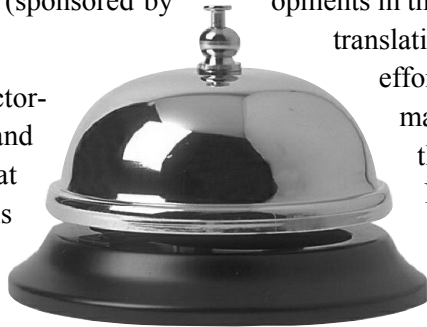
April Meeting David Prottas will present the results of his recent study of translators (freelancers, agency owners, and employees) as well as select data on the self-employed from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Work Force (sponsored by the Families & Work Institute).

David Prottas is completing his doctorate in Organizational Behavior and Human Resources Management at Baruch College. This is in fact his second career, as he spent the prior two decades in international banking. David's primary research interests are in work-family issues and non-traditional employment arrangements.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 14th, at 6:30 P.M. at The Foundation Center, 79 Fifth Avenue, 2nd Floor (east side of 5th between 15th and 16th Streets). Please note that for security reasons all visitors to The Foundation Center must be registered 24 hours in advance. E-mail programdirector@nyctranslators.org if you plan to attend the meeting, and your registration will be confirmed. By the way, the meetings are free of charge. The Article IV, By-Laws of the NYCT, states that "All members shall have the right to attend and vote at any general meetings of the Circle..."

If you'd like to reconnect with a colleague that you haven't seen for some time, or if you'd simply like to network in an informal way, please come and have dinner with us after the meeting. The tables are set for us at The Silver Swan, 41 East 20th Street, at 8 P.M. Dinner is \$28.00 per plate (tax and tips included) with individual drinks paid for separately. Please reserve for this event by emailing programdirector@nyctranslators.org. If you fail to make the reservation, it is possible that the restaurant may not be able to accommodate you.

We hope that you'll find the time to join us for both events!



May Meeting Steve Kahaner, the Executive Director of Juriscribe® and a member of the board of directors of The Association of Language Companies, will present an update on recent developments in the creation of quality standards for the translation industry. He will focus on the efforts of two organizations that have made significant progress in this area—the Comité Européen de Normalisation (CEN) and the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM)—and on the eventual adoption of an internationally recognized standard by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Mr. Kahaner is a licensed attorney and the founder of an agency providing translation, interpreting and related services to law firms, financial institutions and corporate legal and compliance departments throughout the world. His company is a founding member of The Association of Language Companies, of which he is the secretary and a director. Mr. Kahaner is also a member of various committees of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, including the Inter-American Affairs Committee, the Foreign & Comparative Law Committee, and the International Dispute Resolution Committee. He is a member of the New York State Bar Association and the Association of Corporate Counsel. Prior to entering the translation field, he was an attorney in the international corporate and finance departments of several major New York law firms. Mr. Kahaner began his career as a foreign associate at a well-known Spanish law firm.

Mr. Kahaner has also taught Spanish>English Legal Translation (Online) for NYU's Center for Foreign Languages and Translation, and he will teach the overall Legal Translation course for the Graham School of General Studies at the University of Chicago in 2005.

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We hope that you'll find the time to join us for both events!

Important Notes:

1. Our thanks to all of you who filled out the Survey. Your valuable input is truly appreciated, and you'll find out soon that it will be to your benefit. Those of you who haven't answered still can do so. Please refer to the link that you received in the Survey e-mail.
2. Our apologies to all of you who wanted to attend the February presentation by Ms. Susana Greiss but weren't able to register due to the lack of space. If a need to close the registration arises again, the information will be posted on the NYCT Web site immediately. In addition, all members will receive an e-mail informing them that the event is closed. ■

How to Break into Technical Translation

By Lisa Laplante

Maybe you're thinking of doing technical translation. Or maybe you've been asked to do some by a customer who absolutely wants you to be the one to do the job. If you



don't have direct technical experience, the following information may help you do a better job and earn more money doing this type of work.

I do high-level French-to-English translation, and being a self-employed technical translator is the most satisfying job I've ever had.

But I'd never be able to do what I do if I hadn't had lots of corporate, financial and engineering design experience, however unexpected that experience may have been.

Most of what I do is direct translation of patents, and occasionally documentation for claims of patent infringement. I've done contract and project bidding documentation, as well as drawings for product manufacturing, electrical and software diagrams, and building construction. If you hope to do this kind of work, I have some tips for you, which come from hard-earned experience.

Finding the Right Words

Use the Internet

Do Internet searches about equipment and terms you don't know. Don't worry about spelling. I've found a number of source-document typographical errors that way.

I rely on two Web sites: Google and www.granddictionnaire.com. The French translator's group on Yahoo! has also been very helpful. It's amazing what other translators know, and how generous they are with their knowledge.

Find outside resources

Get in touch with various professional societies. It is their

mission to disseminate knowledge about their profession. Their Web sites feature forums and databases that can help you, or steer you towards help.

Check with engineering schools and technological institutes for recommendations on reference works. Be careful, however, when checking with the competition, and never directly contact the originator of the document if you are working with an agency. Direct your questions to the agency representative; they will get answers for you. It's their responsibility.

And don't be afraid to get creative in your search for help. Once I had no idea how to translate a term in a pharmaceutical patent. I took the text and illustration to my neighborhood pharmacist and asked him what the item was called in English. He produced a clamshell container for birth control pills— That was it!

Very often I have contacted friends in France regarding my work. They've helped me enormously with vocabulary and even agreed to help when one of my customers prevailed upon me to do an English-to-French translation. Another friend collaborated with me on an electrical translation; in France, he translated the text from English to French, and I inserted the French text into computer-generated drawings.

How to Find Jobs

For me, work has been quite steady since I received my NYU certificate, even though I haven't passed the ATA examination yet.

At present I get most of my work from translation clearinghouse Web sites like Proz.com. On the translation market Web sites, I have seen many requests for translations of patents and other scientific documentation in many different language pairs. Furthermore, most translation clearinghouse sites offer question-and-answer

forums, regardless of language pair.

Translation agencies are often looking for translators with specialized technical knowledge. In 1999, I did a mass mailing of my brochure to several hundred translation agencies that I contacted through Tranfree (www.translators-tips.com), a one-time-fee translation agency database maintained by Alex Eames in England. I received a heart-

ening response from that. In fact, most of the companies that are my current repeat customers came to me through that mailing.

Often, clients for this type of work are located abroad. Keep in mind that overseas payment brings its own complications. Bank transfers are the most expensive and least reliable way to be paid. A check drawn on a foreign financial institution can take weeks to clear and be converted at an unfavorable exchange rate.

Cash payment is generally not an option. Once, after I did a very short job, a customer in Taiwan sent me a U.S. \$5 bill in the mail. For most jobs, though, I recommend PayPal, an Internet payment vehicle. PayPal has provided me with satisfactory service.

Despite those difficulties, technical translation has provided me with a steady flow of business and given me a chance to learn all sorts of new things. I've translated everything from patents for hip replacements to a patent for a candy-making machine.

Before embarking on my current career, I endured ten years of baptism by fire as a machine and systems design engineer. Since then, I have learned that many translators work in another profession before turning to translation. It wasn't what I'd planned to do, but I realize now that it's what I was preparing for all along. And it's been a great experience. ■

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It's amazing what other translators know, and how generous they are with their knowledge.

Translation agencies are often looking for translators with specialized technical knowledge.

NYCT member Lisa Laplante can be reached at llaplant@nji.com.

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)

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