



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR



A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

by Rosene Zaros

We devoted our last issue of the summer to “you.” Now, as we enter the autumn season and the Circle becomes active again, we are focusing on ways in which all of you and I (not necessarily the speaking/writing “I”) must come together to form a “we” that can work together for the mutual benefit of all.

In this issue we are focusing on relationships. The translation industry itself can be viewed as a series of relationships which must be established and nurtured. The relationship between client, agency, and vendor is symbiotic. It is not parasitic. There is a mutual need.

The relationships between/among professional linguists are equally important. In this issue, George Witherington stresses that competent editing and proofreading are integral parts of high-quality translation. And, we could not survive without “a little help from...friends.” In our work, we definitely rely on the expertise of other translators. While competition

certainly exists, it is competition of a different sort. In this field, an agency and a translator may compete for a project with the same client, and the translator may get the job either way simply because of a good relationship with the agency. Ed Zad had a lot of good advice for those who attended the last Circle meeting.

Most of the relationships in this industry are win/win relationships but, in spite of all the good things that are happening in the translation industry, we remain a profession challenged. The Gotham Translator began to focus on some of these problems in the October 2005 issue, which is available at <http://www.nyctranslators.org>. There have been follow-up articles in almost every issue since then. Translators and interpreters are being killed or imprisoned simply for doing their jobs. They are also being employed to assist in illegal acts.

While our professional organizations have been very zealous in working to

improve translation standards, they have perhaps been less diligent in setting and following moral and ethical standards. We, as individuals and collectively, should be putting pressure on our organizations to adhere to ethical standards. If we do not, this may end up being a lose/lose relationship. In the meantime, it is important that we support our colleague Mohamed Yousry by our presence on October 16. ■

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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.

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TRANSLATION “FOR PUBLICATION” VS. “FOR INFORMATION”

by George Witherington

“For publication” translation is changing as traditional approaches give way to new solutions. A fundamental principle could be challenged in the process. Neither users' nor translators' interests have been best served by the translation industry's reluctance to differentiate between “for publication” and “for information” output. Users with “for publication” requirements have encountered a patchy industry offering, as few alternatives to standard “for information” translation have existed. Translators executing de facto “for publication” jobs have struggled against the odds to meet unacknowledged tougher requirements with little to show for their pains.

At the root of the problem has been the myth that a translation can automatically go straight from a translator's PC to publication.

Such a direct route is difficult if not impossible.

Disincentives for the translator, new editing practices, essential formatting and sparse language manage-

ment skills among users, all constitute serious roadblocks.

It may be time to bury the myth now.

Under the impetus of globalization, “For Publication”/“For Information” translation is increasingly being differentiated. Some industry players have responded by quietly upgrading to provide enhanced traditional “for publication” translation.

The most dramatic upgrade of all has been localization, a pioneering new process which at last seems to ensure genuine “for publication” quality. But



what are its implications?

The newly-emerged Anglo-Saxon localization giants are forcing a further rethink on the “for information” and “for publication” debate. Drawing on state of the art technology and methods, they have come up with pioneering systems that seem to ensure genuine “for publication” quality.

But will this mean that provider sign-off responsibility for print files now becomes the focus of a new debate?

DEFINING THE TERMS

To the layperson, the word “translation”

means a published article, a book or even a bound volume. To the professional translator, it means something quite different.

Ultimate user responsibility for translations has long been an unwritten law in the business. Translators unsure of their translation or unclear about source text meaning not infrequently

submit work to clients containing question marks or highlighted words.

Translator responsibility is clearly deemed to stop well short of the “finished” article.

Industry marketers may find themselves glossing over this point when selling translation services. Trying to explain the subtle differences to a hard-pressed, non-specialist prospect in a rush to print could mean lost business. Marketers can skirt the issue in the majority of cases anyway, as most translation is for information rather than publication. Some

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estimates put it as high as 80%. Danger occurs when a user publishes a translation intended only for information.

Many professionals will be aware of a celebrated instance. In 1999, the French national power utility ran an expensive English-language corporate advertising campaign. The copy in the full-page press ad was a quickly executed “for information” translation (“EdF offers competitive energetic solutions”). The translation provider had apparently received no instructions and assumed the job was for internal use.

Users are given little incentive to develop bi- or multilingual publishing after experiencing such worst case scenarios. Inappropriate resources mobilized to meet critical user needs no doubt partly explain translation for publication's disappointing growth.

For the provider, meanwhile, such mishaps create an image-management problem, which is unlikely to be resolved until the two types of translation are differentiated.

The risk of “for information” translation being accidentally published is the greatest when users lack necessary target-language expertise. This category includes the

growing population of non-native English speaking users publishing in English.

TRANSLATION FOR PUBLICATION: TOUGH ON THE TRANSLATOR

A properly flagged translation for publication is the supreme professional

A properly flagged translation for publication is the supreme professional challenge and a chance for translators to show their true worth.

challenge and a chance for translators to show their true worth. Yet the chips are stacked against them in this exercise.

The translator's professional risk and liability exposure is at its maximum. Little help may be provided, e.g. no client style sheet or terminology. Deadlines can be unrealistically short.

Responsibility for sign-off may be hinted at or explicit. Either way, translators simultaneously act as writer and editor/proofreader in violation of best practice. The two roles are normally split between separate persons in publishing to avoid errors.

The more time and effort spent on a translation for publication, the more the translator's income is diluted because of the piece-work remuneration structure (translators are paid by the word). A further irony is that the translator's extra work and effort go unnoticed and unremunerated when users treat translation and publication as synonymous.

There is no disguising that the translator's greatest professional challenge comes with some significant drawbacks.

INCREASING DIFFERENTIATION

“For publication” is increasingly differentiated from “for information” translation and its limits recognized, and globalization is forcing the distinction to be made.

Globalization is normally associated with the spread of the English language. A byproduct of globalization has been multilingual communication for a wide range of uses, e.g. global product launches, news services, press, websites.

Differentiating between the two types of translation for these exacting purposes becomes a necessity.

Further impetus has been given by the IT industry's localization concept. Software localization rather than straight recycling has legitimized incremental expenditure to adapt software to local conditions. Extraordinary language costs for local adaptation which were previously outlawed and an easy target for cost-cutting now look more acceptable in this light.

EXCEPTIONS THAT PROVE THE RULE

Exceptions no doubt exist. It may be that translations are directly published on a routine basis in special cases of long-standing arrangements and close cooperation between users and providers.

Similarly, just as there are authors whose work needs little editing or proofreading, so too are there exceptional translators able to produce near-perfect copy.

“FOR INFORMATION” TRANSLATION NONETHELESS DEMANDING

“For information” translation is usually offered as the standard service and conveys accurately the meaning of a foreign language source text without formatting or editing.

However, translators can only spend substantially less time and effort on “for information” than on “for publication” work at

their peril. Depending on its use and content, “for information” translation can require a surprisingly heavy translator input. Internal corporate documents (e.g. procedures, memos, market research, business reports) for important users such as senior management or clients' associates almost need to be of “for publication” quality. Correspondence, emails, etc., less so.

The availability of free internet-based machine translation (MT) services now acts as a further incentive for good-quality “for information” work by “human” translators.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

It may be time to bury the myth that a

translation can always go straight from a translator's PC to publication. Put differently, there is little point any more, in an era of zero-error published communication, in trying to blur the difference between “for information” and “for publication” quality. As we have seen, this practice spells danger and in any case people are starting to differentiate.

Essential formatting
is an even more
obvious obstacle to
automatically
publishing a “for
information”
translation.

So what is it that prevents a “for information” translation being directly published as a translation “for publication”? It is less a question of translation quality than other considerations. The drawbacks of “for publication” work from the translator's standpoint have already been mentioned. Other considerations are essential editing and formatting, remuneration disincentives and deficient language management.

These other considerations may seem insignificant and unimportant. Yet small details can seriously delay the publication of a translation while even minor errors can literally ruin an otherwise perfect document. The motivational and skill set factors can undermine the translator's best efforts. We look at these other considerations in detail.

EDITING FLEXES ITS MUSCLES

Editing in recent years seems to have

taken on increased importance in published communication. It is today recognized as an effective dual-purpose tool for error-free publishing and for regulatory and legal compliance.

Translation editing by (non-linguist) user staff editors (as opposed to translation revisers at agencies) has started happening naturally at the interfaces between publishing and translation. “For publication” translations in sectors like investment banking research are now usually edited by user editorial staff (mainly English-language) responsible for the user's entire published output.

The compliance monitoring role of editors is a more recent development. Regulatory or legal infringements in published material can lead to financial or legal sanctions, especially in English-speaking countries. Editors are ideally placed to prevent this happening.

Two specific problems concern editors who work on translated material: source-text integrity after target-text editing changes (and vice-versa); and differences in compliance standards between source- and target-language countries. In the first instance, significant editing changes in one language version need to be replicated in the other (otherwise the two publications will differ); in the second instance, acceptable in one country may mean banned in another.

Editing's newfound importance throws

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into sharp relief the disadvantages of competing, directly-published translations and the handicaps under which their translators work. Translators, for example, do not normally check translations from a compliance standpoint.

ESSENTIAL FORMATTING TASKS

Essential formatting is an even more obvious obstacle to automatically publishing a “for information” translation.

Layout and formatting do not usually

enter into translator remuneration calculations, are considered to be the user’s responsibility and a separate professional discipline — desktop publishing (DTP). Access to the master file may also be necessary, which can

pose IT file handling and confidentiality problems.

A large number of technical formatting and layout problems need resolving before sign-off of a print file. The examples are taken from French to English translation.

- Items or sections in alphabetical order: After translation, items or sections have to be physically rearranged in alphabetical order. For example, “Agro-alimentaire, Banques, Immobilier” (Food Manufacturing (1), Banking (2) Real Estate (3)) rearranged

in English alphabetical order gives Banking (2), Food Manufacturing (1), Real Estate (3). Translated glossaries always require this.

- Punctuation differences between the source and target languages: e.g. spaces before colons and semi-colons in French must be deleted in English. Ditto for the spaces before and after French quotation marks « and » (often incorrectly left in English translations).

The right type of punctuation is needed (e.g. quotation marks and dashes differ).

- Decimal points and numerals: commas in French must be replaced with full stops in English: 6,5% in French but 6.5% in English. Note also: 1 000 000 and 1,000,000.

- Suitability of titles: a title in one language may not work in another. “La Planète Bleue est Orange” (report on a mobile telecoms company) became “Orange: Get ready to go!”.
- Abbreviations. Policy decisions are needed about retaining the original foreign-language abbreviation or an equivalent in English (e.g. CPE or “first-job contract”; RER or rapid-transit network?).
- Foreign accents in English text, e.g. Société Générale, France Telecom. A consistent policy of inclusion or

exclusion of accents is required for published documents.

- Date reference logic: Where there is a time lag between the source text and its translation, time references (“this month”, “next month”) may require adjustment. We are all reminded of this point on January 2 when “this” year becomes “last” year.
- Date conventions: US system of month followed by day or the European system? e.g. 12/25 or 25/12.
- Page number references in text: The numeral (15) in “as mentioned on page 15” can differ between the two language versions because pagination does not always coincide.
- Software anomalies in the published print file: A typical glitch is currency symbols or fractions becoming invisible in the final print file because of cutting-and-pasting using older software.
- Miscellaneous: proper hierarchy of headings, consistent font sizes in footnotes, shape (round or lozenge) and size of bullet points, foreign words italicized or not, graphics properly sized and graphics lines of consistent thickness, correct spacing between paragraphs and headings, etc.

A translator or agency could feasibly take responsibility for some of the above crucial details but not all. However, the translation provider may sometimes be

the only party with the requisite foreign language target-text skills.

Translators who end up with sign-off responsibility for print files have to verify all formatting details, proofread and organize the insertion of proofreading corrections in the client's master file (see case study below).

DISINCENTIVE OF PIECE-WORK REMUNERATION

The dissuasive nature of piecework remuneration (translation pay is calculated on a per word basis) is frequently overlooked.

The main advantage of piecework (no “free riding”) is widely acknowledged.

But so are its drawbacks. The rush for quantity can lead to neglect of quality. A standard piecework rate may not reflect differing degrees of difficulty between jobs.

Translators benefit financially the most when they are in full flow and not held

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CASE STUDY:

PRINT-FILE SIGN-OFF RESPONSIBILITY ASSUMED BY REMOTE TRANSLATOR — PROOFREADING ANALYSIS

Bilingual publication parameters

- Published French to English translation: English version of bank's 2006 schedule of retail service charges (printed brochure).
- No. of printed pages: 28 (including cover)
- Source text word count: 10,515 (many numerals)

Publication formatting (specialised software on client premises)

- Fonts: frequently-changing normal and bold, black and multicoloured, plus occasional italics. Variety of font sizes.

Working file

- Original French language source file supplied in PDF format converted to Word by translator with loss of both formatting and phrase and sentence order. Client's DTP staff reset emailed English-language translation from scratch.

Proofreading analysis details

- Client emailed successive copies of PDF master print file (including the final all-clear version) to the remote translator a total of 5 times over a period of 25 days.
- A total of 143 proofreading changes were contained in four successive Word files emailed by the translator to the client for correction inputting. Each Word file showed two columns: cut-and-pasted turquoise highlighted errors in column 1 and cut-and-pasted yellow highlighted corrections in column two with adjoining text for easier identification by remote typesetters.

Sequence of proofreading passes and corrections per pass

| | 1st proofread | 2nd proofread | 3rd proofread | 4th proofread | 5th proofread |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Sequence of days | Day 1 | Day 12* | Day 19** | Day 23 | Day 25 |
| No. of proofreading corrections (total 143) | 73 | 18 | 47 | 5 | 0 |

* longer gap due to holiday break ** after user's decision to include glossary

SUPPORT MOHAMED YOUSRY

by Alison Dundy

On October 16 an innocent man will be sentenced to up to two decades in prison. The man is Mohamed Yousry, the government-approved court interpreter for the defense attorney Lynne Stewart and her client Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman. Mohamed Yousry is manifestly so innocent of charges of providing “material support” to terrorism and “conspiring to defraud the U.S. government,” that even U.S. attorney Anthony Barkow felt compelled to make this novel admission in his closing argument:

“Yousry is not a practicing Muslim. He is not a fundamentalist. Mohammed Yousry is not someone who supports or believes in the use of violence.”



for which he served as interpreter. Those are his “crimes.” That is why he was in the crosshairs of the U.S. government in a “terrorism” show trial.

Prejudicial frame-ups of so-called “enemy aliens” and their perceived sympathizers are as American as apple pie. History is replete with examples — from the Palmer Raids

against immigrants and anarchists in the immediate aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution, to the internment of Japanese and Korean Americans during World War Two, to the McCarthyite witchhunt of the late 1940s and 1950s, to the less-known but more deadly COINTELPRO (counterintelligence operation) program directed by the FBI to “neutralize” prominent Black activists.

Each and every episode of wrongful

prosecution has been accompanied by a concerted effort to whip up fear and loathing of the supposed “enemy within.” Thus, in the Mohamed Yousry trial,

Each and every episode of wrongful prosecution has been accompanied by a concerted effort to whip up fear and loathing of the supposed "enemy within."

utterly irrelevant videotapes of Osama bin Laden were allowed as evidence in the Manhattan courtroom less than a mile from ground zero. The atmosphere was such that juror number 39 wrote a letter to Judge Koeltl describing the fear she felt because other jurors

told her she would be responsible for the next terrorist act if she didn't vote to convict. In this case, justice was deaf as well as blind, and this juror's belated appeal to reconsider the verdict made no difference.

The uses and abuses of language and translation play no small role in frame-up trials. Thus, the “material support” to terrorism, allegedly provided by Mohamed Yousry, consisted of his interpretation of the Shaykh's words!

Mohamed Yousry is “guilty” of being Arab in post 9/11

America and guilty of having the professional integrity and courage to work as an interpreter in a high-profile “terror” trial against an Islamic fundamentalist cleric accused of plotting to blow up New York City landmarks. He is also guilty of having the guts to tell the FBI “No” when they asked him to do the dirty work and entrap the defense team

Prosecutors spun Yousry's interpretation for the defense attorney and the client as part of a sneaky conspiracy to send "messages" to nameless Islamic terrorists! This tactic has been used before. Careful dissection of the government's mistranslations of its illegal interceptions and wiretaps resulted in a significant defeat for prosecutorial rough riders in the case of Dr. Sami Al-Arian, a Florida professor framed as a "terrorist" for his defense of Palestinian people. Under cross-examination, a government translator admitted that he wrongly translated an Arabic word that means "pancakes" as "brigades" in a conversation between Dr. Sami al-Arian and another defendant in the case. If Big Brother is listening in at your breakfast table, one short stack could send you to the slammer for life.

That the American Translators Association (ATA) and the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) have refused to defend Mohamed Yousry is not a surprise, but still worthy of vigorous vocal protest. Open any issue of the *ATA Chronicle* and you'll see large paid ads by the National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, or State Department. As the saying goes, he who pays the piper calls the tune. So now we have what are called "national security

The uses and abuses of language and translation play no small role in frame-up trials.

languages," promoted by the ATA as a job opportunity for translators, no questions asked. The ATA talks a lot about "ethics" for interpreters and the alleged violation of them by Mohamed Yousry. Has anyone heard a peep from the ATA about government interpreters, perhaps ATA members among them, who assist the processes of unconstitutional wiretapping, physical torture and abuse? The infamous Lyndie England, who posed for photos while walking a naked prisoner on a leash like a dog in Abu Ghraib, used the services of an interpreter for her heinous abuse. Her torture victim told the *London Independent* (May 6, 2004) that he recalled having his hood removed and being told by the Arabic translator to masturbate as he looked at Ms. England. Fortunately, a vocal minority is standing up to challenge the ATA and NAJIT on these issues. Aaron Ruby's well-documented research, protest and exposure of the subordination of translation services to the CIA, FBI, NSA, and others, for the purposes of torture, "extraordinary rendition," and other abuses should be commended (see the July/August 2005 *Gotham* for his open letter to NAJIT and all members of the profession, as well as

Fortunately, a vocal minority is standing up to challenge the ATA and NAJIT on these issues.

his draft resolution for the upcoming ATA conference. Finally, something must be said regarding double standards and double-talk. The November/December 2005 of the *ATA Chronicle* condemns Mohamed Yousry because he "stepped out of the prescribed role for judiciary interpreters" by conversing with the defendant. Yet in the very same issue, the ATA hails Gamal Helal as a high-level government interpreter precisely for that same practice! The article, "Veteran Interpreter Has Been at Center of Mideast Talks" features a large pull-quote from Helal stating: "...It's not just interpreting, it's about establishing full communication, which requires establishing a personal relationship and creating an environment for it to flourish..." I guess the difference is which environment—Air Force One and Camp David, or a dingy prison cell in Rochester where Mohamed Yousry did his job as a government-approved interpreter.

Mohamed Yousry will be sentenced on October 16 at the Federal Courthouse in Manhattan. An injury to one is truly an injury to all, and everyone concerned with this terrible frame-up trail should be there. As Mohamed

Yousry recently stated, "We need to move on to the appeal and try to win some kind of legal victory to stop this from happening to other people." ■

PAYING ON TIME IS NOT ENOUGH

Reviewed by Rosene Zaros

Ed Zad, the dynamic vendor manager for the Americas at Lionbridge Technologies, began his presentation by putting up a slide showing an inquiry such as a translator might receive or pick up on the internet. The job was translating marketing brochures and consisted of about 40,000 words with a turnover time of two weeks. He asked those people who would consider accepting the job to raise their hands, and approximately a dozen people indicated that they would. There was a murmur of surprise when he said: “You would be making a big mistake.”

He then gave a bit more information. The marketing brochures were for an erectile dysfunction product and were intended for physicians. He again asked how many people would consider accepting the job. Fewer hands went up. “You need more information,” he stressed. Is there a glossary? Translation memory? Is it new material, or has it been translated before. You need to look at it! You need to discuss payment. Working with an agency is not about getting and completing a single job, it is about building lasting relationships.

And, how might a translator get into an agency such as Lionbridge, which is the largest localization company in the world with forty vendor managers worldwide who handle 10,000 resources daily? Ed outlined the following steps:

- Submit resume via website
- Respond to questionnaire dealing with capacity, price, references, how much work you did last year, etc.
- Take test in language and area of expertise

- Vendor is graded and, based on test results, is added to worldwide database

Let's face it — it's not as easy as it sounds! While a vendor would have to go through the above steps, it is important to keep in mind some things about the relationship between an agency and a vendor:

- It is not basically a buy/sell relationship
- Sometimes the agency and the vendor are competing for the same project or several agencies may contact the vendor for the same project
- Most translation companies do NOT do translations. They are middlemen.
- It must be a long-term relationship. There is a learning curve — a need to find out about one another
- Agencies want vendors that will grow with them and work with them. Vendors want agencies that appreciate their quality, pay on time, and offer continuous work.
- Agencies rely on freelancers to do a good translation — yet it is a very subjective product. Who determines what is a good translation?
- Freelancers need agencies because agencies have the sales, production and infrastructure that most clients are looking for.
- Agencies need vendors and vice versa, so who's doing who a favor? Nobody! There is a mutual need. It is business.

So, how does a vendor begin to establish a relationship with an agency? Ed offered the following suggestions:

- Send in your resumé and follow up, follow up, follow up.

- Do NOT specialize in EVERY subject!!! Limit yourself to five or six. Be as broad as you can. For example “Marketing/Advertising”, “Financial/Legal” or “Life Sciences” are three areas of specialization that can take in a multitude of sub-areas.
- Be willing to take translation tests.
- Remember the three Cs: Cost, Capacity, Compatibility
- Think about quality, value, and flexibility. Are you willing to jump through hoops for an agency they way they jump through hoops for their clients?
- Are you in competition with an agency?
- Vendors need to understand the agency's business, its needs, its culture.
- Look for agencies that fit your style and personality. Remember that there is a reason you are a freelancer!! Think about the agencies that you like to work with.
- Know the core business of an agency. Go to their website, talk to the vendor manager, to project managers.
- If you've been burned by an agency, move on. There are many others. Speak to peers. Ask them if they have worked with this or that agency. Do they seem to care about the end product? Do they pay on time?
- Is there a main contact person? You do not want to have to deal with 25 different project managers.
- Try to set pricing so as not to have to negotiate for every project.
- Does the agency use the right resources for the right projects?

- NETWORK!!!
- Utilize ATA, Proz.com, Craigslist (Yes, Craigslist!!!), as well as all industry events.
- Do your homework just as clients do: know the agency or if you are an agency, know the vendor. Think as the client thinks.
- Never underestimate face-to-face meetings. Meet the resource managers, vendor managers, and project managers. VISIT agencies. Remember, it's about relationships.
- An agency's database of resources is a little like a Zagat Guide. Know what's on the menu, the ambiance, the cuisine, the price. Find out what information is in the database and make sure that yours is there.
- Agencies and vendors need a system by which to grade one another — to know who can do what and how well. Make a list of agencies and evaluate them.
- Translation is an ART. We all need to respect the art and the artist. Agencies need to train staff; vendors need to understand what agencies do.
- Linguists work long, hard hours and are specialists; project managers likewise.
- Agencies need to pay on time, but vendors need to understand and respect and help to “grow” the relationship.
- Vendors need to understand the processes at all the agencies they work with. Again, it is about relationships.
- Agencies are not there to “rip you off,” and freelancers and not just looking to get paid.
- The industry is booming. It is an estimated \$3-7 billion industry. Microsoft alone localizes products into over 42 languages.
- You can have a viable career in the

language industry, but you need to work at it.

- If you are a freelancer, think as a business. Sell your services
- As the industry grows, agencies grow, and freelancers grow.

Ed's presentation was very well structured to cover such a large topic in such a small amount of time, but he managed to answer questions during the presentation and, for those of us who had dinner together, there was an additional oppor-

tunity to get more information and, in Ed's words to NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ed Zad is a language industry professional with more than 15 years experience in both sales and production. Currently vendor manager at Lionbridge, he has extensive experience with source development, database maintenance, testing qualifications, and recruiting specifically for outsourcing models. He is also an experienced producer/director for multiple language audio-video projects.



**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
TECHNOLOGY
THOUGHTS**

by Margaret Altieri

My first "President's Message" back in January talked about my background in technology and its importance and pervasiveness in our profession. I mentioned my first stint as "project manager" on the Circle's website upgrade back in 2002, and I find myself in the middle of another upgrade launched by my predecessor.

I don't need to elaborate on the how technology affects our personal or professional life. Most of us are familiar with CAT tools, and we regularly use online dictionaries and other resources to perform our work.

In 2002, we refreshed the "look and feel" of our website, published Circle documentation previously available only in hardcopy on our website, and updated the content of our site to accurately reflect the activities and services provided to members. But, time and technology never stand still.

Here we are in 2006, with another website upgrade in the works. The site graphics will get a "new coat of paint" to keep them looking clean and fresh; this upgrade will also address better security for the personal data we store online. Spam has become such a major issue for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that they have become much more aggressive about blocking mass mailings, so we are planning to upgrade our "NYCT Announcements" to a broadcast e-mail service. Once we get the technical upgrades in place, we can perhaps look to implement other features requested by members, such as online dues payment or podcasts of our monthly meetings.

So "Please Pardon Our Appearance" as we work to complete this upgrade. The end result will be well worth it. ■

CIRCLE NEWS

**■ CHARLES M. STERN
AUTONOMOUS AWARD
SUBMISSIONS DUE
OCTOBER 31, 2006**



As mentioned in the last few issues of The Gotham Translator, the Circle will be awarding the 2006 Charles M. Stern Autonomous Award at the end of this year. Names of candidates, together with a brief biography and the candidate's specific need or proposed use for this award, should be submitted, via e-mail, to president@nyctranslators.org before October 15, 2006. Candidates for this award must be members in good standing of the New York Circle of Translators. The winner(s) will be announced in the next issue of The Gotham Translator. The Charles M. Stern Autonomous Award was created in the late 1990s, from a bequest in the will of the late Charles M. Stern. Five hundred dollars (\$500) is the maximum amount awarded annually; if two members are selected, then each will receive \$250.



Thanks go to Gloria Barragán, who will continue as Secretary in 2007, and to Lana Rachkovskaya, who will continue as Program Director in 2007. Our thanks to Tom Sherlock for serving as Treasurer in 2006; unfortunately he will not be able to continue in 2007. Thanks also go to Rosene Zaros, editor of The Gotham Translator. President-

Elect Suzana D. Martinez will succeed Margaret Altieri as President in 2007.

■ 2007 COMMITTEE CHAIRS NEEDED



The Circle is also seeking members to act as the Certification and Mentoring Chairs.

Both Chairs are an important part of the chapter services we seek to provide to local members and to the larger translation/interpretation community. Please contact Margaret Altieri at President@nyctranslators.org for more information about either position.

**■ CALL FOR NOMINATIONS - 2007
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



Open positions: President-elect
Treasurer (preferably a two-year commitment)

Thanks go to Lori Colman, who continues to serve on the nominating committee. Please contact Lori or Margaret at president@nyctranslators.org if you are interested in either position. Candidates for President-elect must be active (voting) members of the ATA, while other officers need only be individual members (either active or associate) of the ATA.

■ 2007 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please renew early by sending your check to:
NYCT
P.O. Box 4051
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163-4051



Please make sure your contact information, services and specialties are up-to date in the Online Directory.

It is the sole source of mailing information for the Circle, as well as contact information for potential employers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Gotham is your forum. Let us know your thoughts on what we are doing. Please send your emails to editor@nyctranslators.org

We received several letters from readers expressing appreciation for the Gotham's coverage of political and ethical challenges facing translators in today's world. Because some were just notes of thanks and others requested to remain anonymous, we are printing only one.

To the Editor:

I would like to congratulate the editors of the Gotham Translator for the last two issues of the newsletter in which they tackled sensitive political issues, to wit, the case of the Arabic interpreter Mohamed Yousry, facing sentencing for terrorism related to his work as an interpreter for defense attorney Lynn Stewart and the matter of the role of linguists in abusive investigations sponsored by various arms of our government which stand in dubious relationship to international law and humane conduct.

It is commendable that our scrappy little newsletter has taken up these issues, particularly given the reluctance of the larger and geographically broader professional organizations in our field to address these issues in a serious way.

— Laura Esther Wolfson

In response to our articles on language, we received the following:

To the Editor:

I would like to shed some light on an incorrect piece of information that was published in the last Gotham regarding how we say the word "nous" in other languages. According to Wikipedia, people from Québec say "nous autres" instead of "nous". I wish someone would have verified this information as it is completely false. In Québec, we say and write "nous". In familiar spoken language only, we might replace the "nous" by "on", the indefinite pronoun in the third person, excluding the person who is speaking but in this case, meaning "nous". For example, if someone asked me what my family and I did during the winter vacation, I could answer: "on a fait du ski" for "Nous avons fait du ski." (We went skiing.) As for "Nous autres", it will only be used to put the emphasis on the "Nous" with the statement that will follow the "nous autres". For example: "Nous autres, les Québécois, on aime chanter." (We, Québécois, like to sing.) Note one more time the use of the indefinite pronoun meaning "we". This is for the familiar spoken language ONLY, not for the written language. I have been living in this US for over 16 years now and I have heard and read the worst stereotypes about my language and my accent, often with a condescending mocking tone (that is supposed to be friendly) and generally from people who know nothing about our history or our culture. I do expect more from translators and I certainly expect them to verify the information they publish when it pertains to languages. As the ad says, "the more you know..."

— Guylaine Laperrière

■ UPCOMING EVENTS

Circle Meetings

October 5, 2006

November 9, 2006

American Literary Translators Association Conference

October 14-18, 2006 • Bellevue (Seattle), Washington

ATA Conference

November 1-4, 2006 • New Orleans, Louisiana

Continuing Education Workshop Seminar

Jointly sponsored by the New York Circle of Translators and the NYU Translation Program:

"PDF Files and Formatting in the Translation Industry"

Saturday October 14

10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Go to <http://nyctranslators.org/WorkshopAnnouncementsOct14.pdf> for complete information.

(continued from page 7)

back by formatting, style or presentation considerations or proofreading. Thus they stand to gain more financially from the less challenging and less prestigious “for information” work. As “for publication” work is more time-consuming and demanding, the industry convention of paying the same rate for both types of translation financially penalizes translators.

The system appears illogical. Translators are called on to produce their best work for users' critical “for publication” needs just when the financial incentive is the smallest.

IMPROVING LANGUAGE MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The still low profile of “translation” can be gauged by the small number of mentions of the term in the index pages of international business theory textbooks. Sorely-needed language and translation-management skills seem to be largely off the radar for conventional management practice. Small wonder then that translation users are so often unsure of their foreign language communication strategy or requirements and lack specialist linguist staff.

At the same time, few efforts appear to have been made to draw on translation

industry expertise to eliminate this language management void. Even now, language and translation consultancy is relatively underdeveloped.

Premium agencies tend to rely more on high-quality translators than on translation tools, translation revising or marketing.

Translation for publication work may therefore not be properly flagged to providers, as layperson users may not realize the necessity. Thus the most important piece of information about a translation job may not be known, with the risk of accidental publication

of “for information” material.

INITIATIVES TO OFFER ENHANCED TRADITIONAL “FOR PUBLICATION” SERVICES

Quietly upgrading

Dissatisfaction over the industry's traditional “for publication” approach has triggered responses in the industry. The more traditional sections have been quietly upgrading to provide enhanced “for publication” quality. These efforts have taken the form of premium services, two-tier pricing and the combination of in-house revisers and CAT tools.

Specialist premium agencies

Some agencies now specialize by subject area, especially in medical, financial and legal translation, and charge standard

premium rates as high as double the standard rate. High rates attract a big proportion of “for publication” or equivalent work as well as the best-quality translators, who are the cornerstone of any specialization and justify the premium rates billed to clients. Premium agencies tend to rely more on high-quality translators than on translation tools, translation revising or marketing. This is particularly so when content is comment (prose) as opposed to industrial or commercial text (lists and standardized language).

Standard rates and “for publication” surcharges

In two-tier pricing, surcharges are billed for difficult texts or higher quality translations. Drawbacks to this technique (the difficulty of consistently delivering enhanced quality on occasional surcharge work and a devalued image of routine translating) explain why specialization at a blanket premium rate seems more widespread.

Translation revisers at agencies and CAT tools

Many generalist agencies now routinely have translation revisers and sometimes terminology staff. Financed out of mainstream revenues and representing a significant fixed cost, translation revisers boost quality through the elimination of previously undetected errors.

Nevertheless, there is some ambiguity over the reviser's role. Users may incor-

rectly interpret their presence as a guarantee of camera-ready or sign-off quality by the provider. In fact, revisers' main purpose is internal quality control, i.e. to check incoming freelance work.

Further improvement is afforded by automated translation tools and memories and terminology data bases, which make a dramatic difference to non-prose translation in particular. Both translation revising and CAT tools are essential for agencies seeking ISO certification.

Limits to traditional “for publication” upgrades

In the traditional sector, translation quality enhancement is most noticeable among the specialist premium agencies, some of whose output approaches camera-ready copy standard.

Even so, the same editing, formatting and motivational drawbacks apply.

Without integration in the client's authoring and production processes, upgraded traditional practitioners will still fall short of full camera-ready or sign-off quality. Meeting that standard has, in any case, never been their explicitly stated goal.

BEYOND “TRANSLATION FOR PUBLICATION” CONCEPT

The “for information” and “for publication” debate in the translation industry now has to take a pioneering new phenomenon into account. Localizers have spotted the shortcomings of both tradi-

tional and enhanced “for publication” methods and in their place market high-performance, integrated services carrying bigger profit margins. For the first time, there is a credible “for publication” offering with the localization provider appearing to assume sign-off responsibility.

Localization takes enhanced traditional translation for publication a stage further. Not only are translation revision as well as client or provider editing incorporated, but even the taboo of text adaptation is broken. To publish a translation directly without revision, editing or perhaps rewriting would be unthinkable in this context.

Localizers' website platforms offer users real-time translation, translation revision/editing and formatting facilities, with all the advantages of CAT tools, rationalization and project management thrown in. Users progress and validate their bi- or multilingual documents directly on the localizer's website.

Translation finally combines with DTP and revising/editing upstream and early instead of downstream and late. Time is saved by the quick “hand-off” of target language files, allowing parallel instead of lagged target-text formatting and processing.

Confined to a limited number of sometimes giant Anglo-Saxon providers, serving only high-end global users and not yet universally available, localization

is a pioneering development for an industry that has in the past struggled to come up with a viable “for publication” solution.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION POSED

Blurring the differences between “for publication” and “for information” translation becomes even more difficult after upgrading by traditional practitioners and the arrival of innovative integrated services from the localizers. However, the “for publication” and “for information” issue may be overtaken by a contentious new debate.

Localization's pioneering “for publication” offering poses an important question. Does the apparent acceptance of sign-off liability now seriously challenge the unwritten industry rule of final user responsibility?

This could well be the next item on the industry's agenda. Is there more change in store and will translation be used to the best effect? ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

George Witherington has spent his whole working life in translation, recently becoming a freelancer and writer on translation after 17 years heading up the French to English equity research translation team at BNP Paribas in London. He worked as an in-house agency translator in Paris during the 1980s and began his career as Russian to English translator at the BBC Monitoring Service.

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**THE GOTHAM
TRANSLATOR**



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!



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