THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

CRISIS IN THE LANGUAGE SERVICES INDUSTRY?

by **Leonard Morin**

As we enter an age of unprecedented intercultural communication, the promise of translation and interpretation as professions stands nearly unrivalled.[1] But what will it take to be a language professional in these uncharted waters?

As our professional literature including this publication amply informs us, linguists will have to adjust to the changing landscape and proactively seize new opportunities. Tried and true skill as translators or interpreters simply will not suffice. The most obvious changes are technological, from computer assisted translation (CAT) tools, machine translation (MT), video remote interpreting, to smart phone apps. But there is also constant regulatory change, such as the efforts of the International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA) to institutionalize accreditation of interpreter training programs, translation companies' growing promotion of and adherence to official quality standards, and ongoing efforts of the ATA to promote translator and interpreter certification.[2]

Our profession is being taken more and more seriously, thanks in part to organizations such as the ATA and its local chapters. This development has spurred the creation and expansion of translation and interpreting programs throughout the country. In New York City, New York University and Hunter College are rapidly expanding their curricula for the language professions—good news for quality standards.

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The burgeoning of our field is not occurring in a vacuum. As Jay Marciano of Lionbridge Technologies

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1 Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "Interpreters and Translators," *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-13 Edition*. Available at http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm (*Visited January 18, 2013*). The report states, "Employment of interpreters and translators is expected to grow 42 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for all occupations."

2 "ATA Board Meeting Summary," *ATA Committee Reports 2011-2012*. Available at http://www.atanet.org/aboutus/committees_annual_report.pdf (*Visited January 18, 2013*). The ATA Board is currently investigating the feasibility of an ATA interpreter certification exam.

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

The Gotham Translator is published six times a year by the New York Circle of Translators, Inc., a chapter of the American Translators Association. The deadline for acceptance of contributions is the first day of the month preceding the month of publication. Articles and other materials should be e-mailed to the Editor at mystymy_@excite.com. 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.

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stated at the 2013 ATA Annual Conference in San Diego, the volume of media, information, and words is expanding prodigiously. He argues that this portends huge opportunity for linguists and language service providers. It also implies more work, and linguists will have to adapt their routines to meet the demands of the market.

Translators will have to take advantage of the opportunities that this new reality will bring, such as exploiting the growing market for translating tweets and other rapidly produced data.[3] Translators will have to be able to understand the workings of machine translation and how it can apply to their specific market segment. Can we use it in our work? How do we reliably calculate a reasonable rate based on this structurally divergent translation process? The same goes for the growing capabilities of CAT, in terminology bases and hybrid use with MT, among others.

That linguists will have to come up to speed with the latest technology and prepare themselves for rising professional standards will mean that they will have to invest in further education. Yet, it is not always clear what investments will pay off, since one will have to choose from a wide array of course offerings, and success in the field also involves intangible skills such as business savvy, marketing, and solid negotiation.

The investment in further education will be an investment of both time and money and will entail an increased burden: you can count on having to do more night classes in addition to your day job. As you implement the new technologies, you will need to reckon on starting out at a slower pace as you come up to speed. And this temporary reduction in productivity will have to be financed somehow.

One can take heart in the fact that the new opportunities can mean better pay, but only for the cream of the crop who have come up to speed with the technology, sharpened their skills with the right continuing education, employed the most astute and aggressive business practices, and in some cases had the luck to be in the right place at the right time.

For the rest of us, the picture will look dimmer. As most translation agencies will tell you, their clients are demanding lower rates. By extension, they are paying translators less too. So we are working harder and struggling harder than ever. And, miraculously, the innovative technological aids at times seem to translate into lower pay. Many in the field have championed the pursuit of specialization to raise quality and rates. But cultivating a specialty also implies a further investment of time and money and more risk ventured. As mentioned, one cannot be sure ahead of time that it is all going to pay off.

My impression is that many translators who have found it hard to survive in the field have founded an agency or become interpreters. But this does not negate the fact that somebody is always going to be the smallest fish in the food chain. What happens to translators—even if they are excellent—when they are hired by these newly founded agencies? What about governments and not-for-profit entities that hire many interpreters but must cut their budgets wherever they can? And the wage-earning linguist faces inflation that has been over 25 percent during the last ten-year period.[4]

Of course, most competent linguists have

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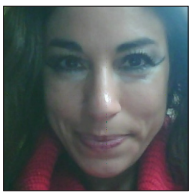
3 Adam Ostrow, "Twitter is Still Growing Rapidly," *Mashable*. February 10, 2010. Available at http://mashable.com/2010/02/10/twitter-tweet-volume/ (*Visited January 18, 2013*). From July 2008 to January 2010 the number of tweets per month rose from well under 200 million to over 1.2 billion. It may sound absurd to cite this as an opportunity for translators, but it illustrates the exponential increase in translatable material by virtue of the digital revolution occurring in our midst.

4 Inflationdata.com, "Cumulative Inflation by Decade Since 1913," Available at http://inflationdata.com/Inflation/Inflation/DecadeInflation.asp. (*Visited January 18, 2013*).



How to Win Direct Clients

An Introduction to Marketing, Self-Promotion and Search Engine Optimization

by **Rachel E. Lauber**

Finding a Path to Direct Clients

When I first started building out a business as a freelance translator at the very end of 2007, I did what every translator does: I set up my profile on the ATA website and other similar professional association websites serving to match up agencies with freelance translators.

The problem I soon found was that I had very little control over the kind of work I received. After spending what I felt was a disproportionate amount of time printing, signing, scanning and e-mailing back all kinds of legal paperwork before even starting a project for a new agency (new as in one I had never worked with before), I could finally settle down to work on a project. It never seemed like my *per-word* rate was really adequate to cover all of these other costs: administrative paperwork, translation time, billing and accounting, marketing and self-promotion, time spent at industry conferences, continuing education, etc. I felt like other people – agencies – were calling the shots. Moreover, how much could I raise my rates in the face of cyclical pressures from things like a contracting global economy and massive structural changes like the emergence and growing importance of machine translation and cloud-based translation solutions, just to offer a few examples?

It did not take me long to realize that I would need to go after direct clients. The profit margins were more attractive on work that I could bring in myself and outsource to other translators, and I could have direct control. The question I had to address, of course, was how to do this.

This article is for freelance translators and interpreters, or language service providers more generally, who want to expand their businesses but do not quite know how, or who are seeking ways to improve the reach of their marketing and self-promotion. ***Of course you do not need to be interested in outsourcing the work you get to other translators (i.e., fulfilling the role of a project manager). These marketing and self-promotion tips will be just as useful if you are a freelancer seeking direct clients – not for the purpose of outsourcing the translation work but rather for eliminating the middleman (the agency) – and are not sure how to get the clients.***

What I am going to tell you about here is not a reinvention of the wheel, because I have not done that. It makes no sense to do that; it is not efficient. Other people have already figured this stuff out, so why not draw on their expertise? That's what I have tried to do, and now I am going to share that with you, because I want every freelance translator in our community to be able to benefit from this and to be able to find new ways to attract direct clients through marketing, self-promotion and search engine optimization.

Your Business is Marketing

First and foremost you must remember that you are a walking self-promotion, press release, or advertisement for what you do and the product or service you provide. Your business is the business of translation or language service provider, right? Wrong! In actuality, you are in the business of *marketing translation or language-based solutions*. Whatever you do, you're in the business of *marketing*. Then, there is your product or service. In your mind you may equate being self-promoting with bragging, but this is a something you hold to be true that may not actually be true.

Look at it another way. By not telling people about what you do and the service you provide, you may be depriving people of a valuable service that they need. I am not talking about

standing at the entrance of Grand Central Station and handing out business cards, although that is a strategy I have seen people use. I have no idea whether it is effective. What I am suggesting, rather, is that whenever you see people you know – at your corner drugstore, at your dentist, your neighbor, your office mate, etc. – you respond to the query, "So, what's up?" with something along the lines of:

-"Well, actually, I'm very excited about a new business plan I've got going. I am branching out and trying to take in direct clients now."

-"Really?"

-"Yes, well, you know I'm a Turkish to English translator, and, well, I usually get work from agencies, but I would love to be able to interact with clients in a more direct way. It's so much more personal…."

I will grant that this approach may be more effective for me in Upstate NY where the communities tend to be smaller and have a very small town feel. This is true even in the suburbs and in cities like Albany. However, we all live in communities – belong to clubs or have gym memberships or take our kids to nursery school or daycare. In other words, we all interact with what are called *natural networks* that we can utilize as a means of communicating our marketing message. And remember, marketing is about letting people know you exist. *Nobody knows you exist except the people who know you exist.*

Marketing is about letting people know you exist. Nobody knows you exist except the people who know you exist.

That is really all marketing is. No one is going to know you are out there and available unless you tell them and that is especially true of all those potential direct clients. The easiest ones to get may be the ones right there in your own community, available to you through your own natural network. But there is only one way they are going to find out about you: you have to tell them.

You need to have conversations – real, live, in-person conversations with people – the people who will end up referring you to potential clients. I am not talking about LinkedIn or Facebook or Twitter. That has its place. Social media can be extremely valuable, especially in the virtual world of the translation business, but if you want to get direct clients – people from your own community, for example – you need to reach out to that community in person. *There is no substitute.*

It is so tempting in our business, because we spend so much of our day locked down, so to speak, in front of a PC, to restrict the vast majority of our interactions to e-mail, Skype, and various forms of social media. But reaching direct clients will mean interacting face-to-face with people. It will probably mean getting out into the real world in a real way – one that many translators – unless they are also interpreters – are not necessarily entirely comfortable with. You are not alone. This is not as hard as you think. It really is as easy as the conversation example shown above. You can have it with anyone anywhere. The everyday people you know and interact with when you are dropping your kids off or picking them up or running to your local drycleaner – the places where you know people. And if you were to sit down in front of your computer with a spreadsheet or at a table with a pad and pen and make a list of all the people you know locally, you probably know many more people than you realize.

You might even want to try that exercise. It is called putting together your natural network, and it can really help you feel confident that you have the means to market yourself locally.

Do You Have Business Cards?

And don't ever forget your business cards! The first question is, do you have them and do you carry them with you at all times? And I mean at all times. That means even when you are working out at the gym. I have a second business card folder that I keep in the bag where I carry my I-Pod and extra water bottle and other essentials in the cardio room at the gym. I am never ever without it.

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If you absolutely do not want to pay a printer to make up business cards for you, you can simply Google "free business cards" and find numerous websites that will allow you to select free ones that you can design yourself, so long as you are willing to carry that company's logo on your card. It really does not matter. You just need to make sure that you can always provide your contact information to people easily.

You want people to remember who you are and to know how to contact you when a need arises.

Marketing and Sales Are Numbers Games

Marketing and sales are numbers games. You need to talk to – that is, have live conversations with – so many people in order for that to yield so many potential project bids, which will then result in so many actual sales – i.e., closed deals.

A different approach: Waiting around to be contacted by agencies is one approach, but it takes the control out of your hands. Contacting the immigration attorney whose office is in your neighborhood and telling him you would like to offer a fixed price package on translation of all immigration related paperwork through him to his clients is a much more direct approach. Contacting five immigration attorneys might generate one actual lead in the form of a face-to-face meeting. Contacting 15 might generate three actual face-to-face meetings, of which one might lead to an actual business arrangement, from which you might actually start to get translation work referrals. *Direct marketing and sales are numbers games, so start having conversations.*

Or let's say you have made up brochures and arranged with local businesses and restaurant owners to display them in your neighborhood, you need to check back in, say, ten days or two weeks to see whether they are still there. What has happened to them?

- Is the restaurant window sill too crowded for all the brochures being displayed?
- Are one or two restaurants generating business for you, while others are not?
- Are none of them?
- Is this a worthwhile expenditure for you?

Your Website

We have whizzed through some of the basics of Marketing 101, but when a person you have talked to or who has picked up your brochure is thinking about working with you, the first thing s/he may do is look for you on the internet and try to find your website.

Do you have a website? Have you thought about your website? I created mine through Weebly.com, which I found to be inexpensive and user-friendly, but there are ways to do it directly through Google or other vendors. However, if you are not the most IT-savvy person around, your time may be better spent on revenue-generating activities, such as translation work, or even handling your accounts receivables. *You should consider outsourcing the creation of a website.* Post the job on Elance.com or use a Google search to find vendors who will build a website for you and compare prices. But make sure you have a website. It is unlikely nowadays that someone picking up your business card or brochure, who has not met you first, will not try to find your website before contacting you.

Search Engine Optimization Basics and Promoting Your Website

Search engine optimization is highly complex, and I am not going to pretend to be an expert. However, there are certain basics that anyone can learn, and Google has provided its users with a starter's manual that is easily downloadable from the Google Webmaster Central Blog: http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2008/11/googles-seo-starter-guide.html. You can also type into a Google search, "Google Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide," and you will come to the appropriate webpage with a link to the downloadable PDF.

What is search engine optimization? Search engine optimization is about making small modifications to the content of your website so that it is easier for search engines, such as Google, to index and understand your content, thereby allowing your website to move higher in search engine results when potential customers look up terms related to the product or service you provide.

So how do you figure out which words to use? Do a Google search and type in "Google Adwords Keyword Tool." Click on the lick that appears near the top of the list. Using the module that appears on that page will help you to start to figure out which terms are searched the most frequently by people seeking your particular type of translation service (e.g., "legal translations," or "Spanish to English translations) so that you can begin – and I mean *begin* – to understand how the terminology you use on your site affects the ranking of your site in Google and other search engines.

Blogging

The next step – and usually the easiest way to implement the results of the Google Adwords Keyword Tool – is by blogging. Blogging does not have to be an exercise in expository writing. There are many different approaches, and a format like Twitter is designed to accommodate so-called microblogging. Ultimately what you want is to be redirecting people to your website on a regular basis through the posting of new or updated content so that your website is always receiving enough traffic to appear on the first page of a Google search.

Optimally, I try to blog twice a month, but I usually am able to blog once a month. The important thing is that you choose a frequency and stick with it. My blog has its own name, "Turkish Dynamite!" and can be found under its own tab on my website. Immediately after publishing each new blog post, I alert my personal followers on Facebook and those people following the REL Translations Facebook page, and I post an alert on LinkedIn and Google+. Both the LinkedIn and Facebook page feed automatically to Twitter.

As I said earlier in this article, I am hardly an expert in any of this, and I am not trying to reinvent the wheel. I am just trying to share with all of you – my community of fellow translators, freelancers, project managers, and language service providers – what I have learned about marketing, self-promotion, and building out a business.

The next step for me in terms of blogging will be to focus on promoting my blog. As Diana Adams, author of the infographic found at the attached link points out, weekly or monthly blogging is great, but what about blog promotion? Once you feel like you have gotten the hang of blogging, there are numerous sites available for promoting your blog, beyond mere social media: http://www.bitrebels.com/social/30-ways-to-promote-your-blog/.

So get out there and start having conversations! Start marketing and promoting yourself. Do not be afraid to be a walking advertisement because the service you provide is necessary and useful. People need to know about it. Remember that even long-established companies like Coca Cola and Nike advertise. They just have sufficient resources to pay someone else to do the advertising for them, but even they understand that marketing and brand promotion are something that you never, ever stop having to do. You always want to be the first name that comes to mind. Just do it! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel E. Lauber is a freelance Turkish to English translator and has served as the Director of Translations for her own LSP, REL Translations & Turkish to English Business Services, LLC, for the last five years. Prior to that she spent ten years in the financial services industry, of which seven were spent as an equity research analyst on Wall Street. To learn more about Rachel and her company you can visit her website at http://www.RELTranslations.com, or view her public profile on LinkedIn at http://www.linkedin.com/pub/rachel-lauber/14/b11/497/.

NYCT Member Spotlight

Emily Tell

Q Thank you for agreeing to do our interview Emily. From past conversations I discovered that you volunteered your services as an interpreter for the NYC Marathon. Could you tell the Gotham how you become involved with them and what the duties entail?

A I became involved first as a runner with the New York Road Runners Club, the official organization of the NYC marathon, because I ran races for a number of years including the marathon twice – In 2009 and 2010. I found out about the opportunity to volunteer as a foreign language interpreter for the NYC marathon when I ran it in 2010 and met a French / Arabic interpreter who was volunteering at the finish line. I was so exhausted from running but was still mentally alert enough to ask her how she had become a volunteer interpreter! Then the following year I applied to volunteer at the finish line as a Portuguese / Spanish interpreter. Since I wasn't going to run the 2011 marathon I still wanted to participate in some way. The NYC marathon has over 40,000 runners and the majority is from abroad, speaking foreign languages and very little English. There is a huge demand for volunteers who are multilingual to volunteer at the starting line in Staten Island, at the finish line in Central Park and at the numerous medical aid stations scattered along the marathon route. As an interpreter at the finish line the main responsibility is to orient and help runners who have just completed the marathon towards the bag check, where to exit the park and where to receive medical aid if necessary. It's very exciting to watch runners finish the marathon but it can also be challenging because they are often very disoriented, extremely exhausted and in some cases in need of medical aid. One runner from Mexico cramped up in his legs and couldn't walk. So I instructed him to sit down, stretch and offered to get him ibuprofen. Eventually he was able to walk but there was a moment of uncertainty!

Q Other than the NYC Marathon what does your typical day of interpreting entail? How do you prepare?

A Every day is different! A typical day can involve interpreting in Immigration Court, NJ Superior Court or at the UN among other organizations. For example when I interpret at Immigration Court there is really no way to prepare since every hearing is different and we aren't told about them in advance. Hearings can involve a wide range of issues that come up in testimony which is taken in support of applications for asylum, cancellation of removal or voluntary departure. We are though provided a glossary of immigration terminology which is very helpful. As far as UN conferences go, ideally the client would provide us with the speeches, agendas and/or background materials to research any terminology. However many times we aren't

provided with any materials and there isn't any way to prepare.

Q When working on documents, what are your preferred CAT tools? What do you think about all this cloud computing?

A My preferred CAT tool is Trados but I recognize that there are many lesser known ones which are equally as good but just may not have the marketing budget that SDL has. I think it's great that there is so much virtual collaboration. Why not share translations? The potential problem arises when evaluating the quality of translations obtained from the cloud. How do you rate the quality of the translation? Is it in violation of client confidentiality? These are some of the issues which should be taken into account but by all means I believe in open collaboration and sharing. I also respect those who prefer not to share and collaborate. After all, translations are one's work product and intellectual property! A lot of effort goes into them!

Q What are some of the ways membership in the NY Circle has helped you professionally?

A The NY Circle has provided many wonderful opportunities to network with fellow language professionals. I've created great professional and personal relationships with some of the members. The lectures and presentations have also been educational and led to articles that I've written for the Gotham and to gaining knowledge around certain topics and issues. I think it's important to be active in local professional groups to raise awareness and to further our professions, which is still misunderstood in many ways by the general public.

Q Interpreters and translators have been in the media quite a bit lately, do you feel the media accurately portrays those in the industry? Or do you feel that the media only thinks of us as an afterthought when something goes awry?

A As far as interpreters are concerned, I think our role is definitely understated. A recent example is the participation of interpreters in the Hurricane Sandy disaster recovery who despite their vital role in reaching out to and communicating with LEP in affected areas has received little or no acknowledgement in the media. I would also like to see more people understand the difference between what translators and interpreters do. It would symbolize great progress once this happens.

Q Other than languages and running are there any other passions or talents that occupy your free time?

A In general I am a huge outdoors fan and love just about any activity outside. I recently learned how to surf when I was in San Diego for the 2012 ATA conference. I got up the first time and it was absolutely exhilarating! I've practiced yoga most of my life as well and was amazed at the similarities between yoga and surfing. The only (huge) difference is that with surfing your being moved by a wave and yoga you're on a stationary mat! At home I really enjoy cooking both for myself and for others. I find it relaxing and it helps me to unwind. There is also a sense of satisfaction from preparing my own food! ■

ATA Mentoring Program

by **Valeriya Yermishova**

In her November 2012 ATA Chronicle column, Dorothée Racette wrote, "The completely revised mentoring program accepted its first class of 30 mentees." As a current mentee, I decided to look into the program's history with Mary David from the ATA headquarters and its chair Susanne van Eyl.

According to Mary David, "ATA's original Mentoring Program began in the fall of 2001 with that year's ATA Annual Conference in Los Angeles. The mastermind behind the scenes was ATA Board Member Courtney Searls-Ridge. She poured her heart and soul into developing the program. The system of mentoring evolved over the years in a variety of formats, not all as successful as Courtney and her volunteers had hoped. But there were some good success stories along the way."

After approximately ten years, Courtney Searls-Ridge decided to step down as mentoring chair and Susanne van Eyl took the reins. Susanne says, "When I received the invitation to become committee chair, I thought this is something I can do. I loved being a mentor, and I felt that this concept was worthy of support. But when I spoke to previous mentors, I realized that many were frustrated with different things, and few wanted to serve for more than one year. So I started thinking about what we could change to make it a more positive experience for mentors. I wrote a concept and sent it to five or six people for comment. They made wonderful improvements to it, and the program as it stands emerged. Once I was sure that the concept was viable, I invited two people, Eric Chiang and Paula Gordon, to join the committee. To everyone's great benefit, they agreed, and with their help, additional improvements were put in place."

She adds, "The old program matched people up as the need arose, and so there were never many pairs active at the same time. Someone in my group of 5-6 sounding boards had the idea of forming a "class" each year, and with that idea the structure we now have took shape."

Mary David says, "Susanne took the program on last year and redesigned the structure from top to bottom. I will be the first to tell you that I was a bit skeptical of the "class" concept instead of an open registration throughout the year. Susanne and I discussed all her ideas at length and slowly she won over my reservations. And it's worked out very well, I think."

As for the mentor selection process, Susanne says, "The mentors we have are all successful in their fields and very knowledgeable about the different aspects of the business of translation. There is no single profile; each mentor was carefully chosen with the specific mentee's individual goals in mind. As an example, we paired someone who needed to specialize in a specific field with a mentor who is highly specialized in a particular field and who can teach the mentee what to look for in working towards that goal." She adds that "All mentors came highly recommended or were known to the committee based on their contributions to the Business Practices list or their language email lists."

I first learned that the mentoring program was accepting applications in the February 2012 issue of ATA Newsbriefs. Upon inquiry I was told by Susanne that "The program focuses on the business side of translation, and your mentor will, in all likelihood, not share your language combinations." A few days after the deadline, I was matched to an English>Brazilian Portuguese translator named Ana Iaria and prepared a series of questions for our first Skype session. Ana's advice helped me pace myself and not set off in a thousand directions

at once, and I soon realized that she was a key player on the ATA Business Practices listserv. I felt incredibly fortunate to have someone more experienced to contact with questions about CAT tools and business-related matters. When my first contract came in, I was able to ask her about any dubious clauses. Ana says that the program is "of great benefit for those starting out. Translation being such a widespread and scattered industry, it is great to have someone to ask questions, ask for guidance or simply to rely on. Both sides benefit from this—the mentor for being able to share experience and knowledge."

May Fung-Danis, a fellow mentee who has been working as a French>English freelance translator since 2008, thinks that "this program is valuable to translators at any stage of their career, not just to translators who are just starting out. Whether it is finding help in getting certified, getting advice on increasing visibility within the translation industry, specializing, etc.—the mentoring program connects those who are seeking knowledge and expertise with those who can provide it." When asked why she decided to apply, May says, "I wanted feedback on the way I was running my freelance business, on how I was managing my relationships with agencies, on the types of development opportunities that are available, on everything, really. My single perspective is very limiting. It is really helpful to get the perspective not only of another translator, but of someone who has more experience in the industry."

The program also established a Mentees and Mentors listserv where Mentors could share valuable resources and advice and Mentees could seek feedback from a smaller community and celebrate their milestones. I am certainly happy to have a place where I can ask basic questions. I wholeheartedly share May's opinion that "The ATA ListServs are great for that too, and I am definitely a huge fan, but there are times when you may not feel comfortable discussing an issue with an audience of 400 (the number of members on the Business Practices list, for example), or when you need some really targeted advice."

While my start-up period took (and continues to take) longer than expected, the year went by astonishingly fast. After finishing an English assistantship in France, I moved back to the U.S. in mid-May. I purchased my first CAT tool, SDL Trados 2011, during an SDL training day on ProZ.com after watching that website's "Group Buy" emails. I studied for and took the UN freelance translators' exam for the first time in July. Although I only passed the précis-writing portion, the studying helped me stay sharp and pass agency exams in my area of specialization. I attended my first ATA conference for one day in October—an experience made so much the richer by my mentor, who prepped me for it and advised me on marketing materials. She briefly introduced me at the ATA Business Practices Happy Hour and suggested that I go to the annual WordFast party. There, I ran into a group of old colleagues and met a slew of new contacts in a convivial atmosphere.

To anyone thinking of applying to the program, May Fung-Danis offers this advice: "[The] experience is wholly dependent on the mentee. The mentor can only provide guidance about where you want to go. You are in the driver's seat." According to Susanne van Eyl, the deadline for the 2013 application is tentatively set at March 15. Look out for an official announcement in upcoming issues of the ATA Newsbriefs! In the meantime, the program chair may be reached at sve@vaneyl.com. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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NYCT HOLIDAY PARTY

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January Business Meeting

The year is getting off to a good start for the NYCT. This year's meeting was attended by a larger spectrum of the membership. Quite encouraging, since one of the main goals of both the President and President-Elect is to boost the membership and rekindle the enthusiasm that the Circle enjoyed years ago.

Our newly elected Board Members are as follows:

- Edna Di Taranto – President-Elect
- Gigi Branch-Shaw – Secretary
- Louise Jennewine – Program Director
- Paolo Modigliani – Treasurer

Leonard Morin – transitioned from President-Elect to President which does not require an election

A moment of silence was observed for Denise, ANSI's long-time receptionist, who passed away towards the end of last year. She was always cheerful and helpful to us during our meetings.

The Board members presented reports of the past year. Both our President and President-Elect concurred that the website is still an issue. The Circle has been struggling with this for quite a long time. We inherited a website with problems and technical issues are still being tweaked. We are improving, albeit slowly. If there is anyone with technical expertise to assist the Board in this respect we would love to hear from you.

Leading the Board this year Leonard's main goals are to revitalize the membership, professionalize the Board and educate the public about our industry. On that score we have seen an increase in membership over the past year and we have even brought past members back into the fold.

To help revitalize the Circle, Louise, our new Program Director, sent out a survey to all members. The survey closed on January 27th. The survey will assist the Board in better serving the membership.

Louise has two events planned that will be dedicated to networking. Dinners after the meetings will continue. Dinners are getting a tad pricier as the restaurants in the area are raising their fees. The holiday party and summer picnic were a big success and will continue in future. Holiday pictures are in this issue of the Gotham.

Our new Secretary Gigi is trying to revive the committees. If you would like to volunteer please contact her and inform her of your interest. She is also in charge of our Facebook page. Activity is not too high at the moment but with more member input it should take off. If anyone is a social media maven and would like to assist please feel free to contact her.

The treasurer report details included information on our financial status. Our biggest expense is the Gotham newsletter. It costs quite a bit to put together and to mail out. Our editor is attempting to obtain some advertising revenue but it is proceeding slowly.

Our next expense is the internet services the Circle utilizes. Constant Contact is used to communicate with the membership. Skype is used by the Board and of course there is the website.

We are also looking for a more affordable location to hold our meetings. While ANSI is centrally located and handy for all modes of transportation, it too is raising its' rental fee.

Thankfully the Circle's membership has increased from previous years. While the all time high of 564 members has not been reached we had nearly 250 members by the end of 2012. The Board hopes to receive more renewals, increase the number of corporate members which has fallen precariously low and reach out to lapsed members.

The Charles Stern award was also discussed. The Stern award will be addressed in greater detail in a future issue of the Gotham by the President and President-Elect.

After the Board gave their reports the floor was opened for questions. Some questions and comments by the membership included a reminder about the ATA Chapter rebate. When renewing your ATA membership please flip to the back and check off your Chapter membership to the NYCT. The Circle receives money from the ATA for every member, if the member remembers to check off membership in the NYCT in the space provided. Other questions concerned the certification exam, social media, workshops, Paypal, the Stern award and the business of translation and interpretation. ■

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other skills. Some of them may opt for a career change. Yet, as no one will deny, the need for capable translators and interpreters is growing. Does this mean that a crisis in the translation industry is looming? Will there come a time in the not-so-distant future when critical documents that need to be reliably translated simply cannot be because there are not enough professionally practicing linguists?

And will the result be that medical protocols will either not be translated or will be translated incompetently? And that suspects will be set free because their constitutionally mandated right to be assisted by an interpreter in a criminal proceeding against them cannot be honored? And that businesses will lose billions of dollars because adequate translation of marketing materials cannot take place (one need only recall the bungled ad campaign of the Swedish vacuum-cleaner company: "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux"). Poor translation and interpreting are already causing havoc.[5]

Of course things do not have to be so bad. Rising standards, technical innovation, and new opportunity are essentially positive phenomena. The problem is that the industry's current configuration is ill-suited to convert these positive developments into better served clients and more prosperous linguists.

A first step to channeling these changes into better work and better pay is for linguists to work more with direct clients. This change will foster increased specialization and higher-quality products in addition to superior remuneration. A foreseeable impediment is that our clients will prefer one-stop shopping and individual linguists will not always be able to respond to their needs. The initial outlay necessary to prepare for such engagements is also likely to be substantial. So it will be crucial for linguists to collaborate with one another to take on the full cycle of translation and interpreting projects, from marketing, project management, the range of research tasks, translation or interpreting, and quality control, to accounting.

Agencies will maintain a prominent place in the industry. While translation companies often play an important role in matching clients with linguists and ensuring quality work, I do not think it is healthy for agencies to dominate the market.

Since education is crucial to the quality of our work, we obviously must embrace it. I do not believe, however, that we as individuals should necessarily bear the entire burden of the costs involved in transitioning to a better functioning language services market. Additional funding will have to come from elsewhere, perhaps in some cases from philanthropy, but unavoidably from government entities. After all, we are providing a public service. And many other vital industries in our country have been aided by government incentives to become or stay self-sustaining. The computer, oil, and automotive industries are just a few. Such government intervention will benefit society as a whole and, more fundamentally, boost economic activity. Conversely, society as a whole will suffer without it.

There is more work to be done than ever. Skilled translators and interpreters should not have to struggle to survive. If we as professionals proactively seek to better our lot, we should be able to do so. There is plenty of money in this industry and plenty more to be made. It is our responsibility to educate government, industry, and the public to take our profession more seriously and allocate resources accordingly. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leonard Morin has practiced full-time as a translator since 2004. He began his work as an interpreter not long thereafter. He currently works as a per-diem Spanish interpreter certified by the New York State Office of Court Administration. He also translates legal documents from Dutch, Spanish, and German into English. He earned a propedeuse degree in law in the Netherlands and graduated magna cum laude from Columbia University with a B.A. in Latin American Studies. Leonard has received translation and interpreting certificates and won academic prizes for his Spanish and German. He speaks Spanish, Dutch, and German fluently; is proficient in French; and a native English speaker. Leonard currently serves as president of the New York Circle of Translators.

5 Gail Price-Wise, "Language, Culture, And Medical Tragedy: The Case Of Willie Ramirez," *Health Affairs Blog*. November 19, 2008. Available at http://healthaffairs.org/blog/2008/11/19/language-culture-and-medical-tragedy-the-case-of-willie-ramirez/ (*Visited January 18, 2013*). The report cites the case of a man becoming quadriplegic due to a misunderstanding that arose with the intermediation of a non-professional interpreter. This is just one case that occurred in 1980, but anyone who has been around long enough to see what goes down in the field knows that this is just the tip of the iceberg.

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
- 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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