THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

WHY THE NEW YORK CIRCLE OF TRANSLATORS?

Part 1. The Board of Directors' last two years of work*

by **Leonard Morin**

It is obvious that the New York Circle of Translators lacks a *raison d'être* if it does not serve translators and interpreters. When I began as president-elect two years ago, I expressed my intention to make the association more relevant to members. Membership was dwindling and the previous board was struggling to keep the Circle alive, so whatever the organization was supposed to do, it was clear it had to start doing it better. Yet, in hindsight, I realize that this ambition poses inherent problems. What is really relevant to members? What do we need? What do we want? What can this organization actually accomplish?

When I took office, I prioritized organizing more captivating and educational meetings, in the thinking that this would entice and benefit members. The Board did not take long to deliver on this policy. Our April 2012 meeting featuring Sandra Bryan, the New York State Court interpreter coordinator, filled the room at the American Standards Institute with over fifty attendees and had standing room only. Last year, then Program Director Louise Jennewine sustained this effort by organizing several talks with broad appeal, such as Laurie Treuhaft's presentation on translating at the U.N., Ellen Sowchek's presentation on famous interpreters, and a panel on legal translation featuring three distinguished practitioners: Jean Campbell, Ph.D., Eileen B. Hennessy, and Igor Vesler.

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Yet a thorny and essential issue remains unaddressed: it seems obvious that higher remuneration is a goal of every practicing linguist. But does this mean a bigger cut for translators at the expense of agencies or the end client? Some of our association's members are these very agencies. Could all of our members actually agree on a plan of action to boost remuneration? Would such a platform put us under attack by some in the industry or unite us in confronting a problem that the whole industry faces?

Further, as a local chapter of the American Translators Association, we are restricted by ATA policy in any discussion about rates since it could be construed as an antitrust violation.

Although I sought to organize events that would empower members with a better understanding of the market at the macro level, such an overview of the market is difficult to attain. Affecting the functioning of the market is even more elusive. The Board discussed ways we could foster member interest in the Circle and grow membership as well as motivate our colleagues to participate actively as volunteers or Board members, yet this does not address members' needs directly.

Louise suggested and then conducted a member survey in order to be better able to respond to what members wanted. This study gave us valuable data, such as the fact that our members work in Spanish, French, and English more than any other languages by far and that the three leading reasons for their membership in the NYCT are to keep up with trends in their fields, to network, and to grow their businesses.

But even with the survey completed, the structure of the market continues to be the proverbial elephant in the room. Employment of translators and interpreters is expected to grow dramatically by 2020, but starting and surviving in the industry are more challenging than ever.

As this year's partially new Board tackles our organizational challenges with fresh courage, and Louise Jennewine transitions into her role as administrator, thereby reinforcing our organizational structure, she, the Board, and the membership must clearly envision our larger goals.

So why not start with the most fundamental question of all: do translators and interpreters in Metro New York need a local professional association? I think that, intuitively, we all know that we need the support of our colleagues united in this organization, but can we articulate what purpose exactly this serves? What can the New York Circle of Translators do for us and what can it do better? ■

*This article is the first in a series of two on the New York Circle's identity and larger goals. The next article will discuss the year ahead and beyond.

NYCT MARCH MEETING RECAP

The monthly meeting was a panel discussion on "So You Want to Work in the Translation Industry?" The panel included Nicole Michel, co-President of Translingua Associates, a translation agency, Milena Savova, the Director of Translation Studies at NYU and Alta Price, a freelancer literary translator.

The panelists all introduced themselves and gave a brief overview of their work and past history. There were questions from the membership during and following their discussions. Questions from the Program Director included:

Q How has the industry changed and what is the projection for the next 3-5 years?

A Nicole stated that it has changed quite a bit in regards to technology. When she started everything was with typewriters and now it's all e-mail amongst other new innovations. Alta mentioned client education. There is a lot more global knowledge at present. There are enlightened clients and those who, thanks to Google Translate, are looking for freebies. Milena believes that it is becoming more professional and this is a good thing. She mentioned that the Labor statistics projected the industry to have a 42% higher growth than other professions. Milena also mentioned that education-wise translation programs need to teach business skills and how to run a business in addition to translation and language skills.

Q What does it take for a freelancer to have a successful relationship with an LSP and what 3 qualities are agencies looking for?

A Nicole quickly replied responsiveness, responsibility and reliability. These are good qualities for all industries. Alta does not usually work with agencies but with publishing companies mentioned that direct clients are built through relationships. Always read the project a few times before accepting it, this will spare heartache.

Q For those getting started, what do you wish you had known?

A Milena said it is best to look at all options and do not quit your day job as it takes a couple of years to become financially solvent. It's also good to master extra language pairs, at least in reading comprehension. Some members countered that doing so is time consuming and makes it appear to clients that you are a jack-of-all-trades. However Milena said that it depends on the language pairs. Nicole and Alta both concurred that it is best to work in your native language.

Members asked about the different markets such as Hindi, Italian and publishing and the panel answered their queries. One member mentioned that working in-house in any position at an agency had been an eye-opener and was a good idea for those trying to gain understanding regarding the pro-

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fession. Another asked how one would get that position and Nicole said you should make yourself known to agencies. Alta mentioned ATA's mentorship program as a starting point. Everyone agreed that networking was vital.

Q Other than translation what other job opportunities are there for linguists?

A Milena mentioned localization work.

Q What about machine translation and CAT Tools?

A All agreed CAT tools and machine translation are here to stay. Milena spoke about the NYU program and how CAT tools should be your friend not foe. Memo Q seemed to be the tool of choice that was gaining ground currently. You should learn some type of tool in order to survive. Nicole agreed but stated that machine translation was a different matter entirely. She felt it was being abused by many and that translators were getting short-changed because of it.

Q Mistake you learned from?

A Nicole said she learned that you should never take on a translation that was over your head in subject matter. Milena stated never underestimate the time a translation would take and Alta said always read through a project a few times before agreeing to take it on.

In closing the panel advised members that an interpersonal network was invaluable, that client education should be promoted by everyone in the industry and that they were optimistic for the future of the industry. ■

CAT Corner is a monthly feature that looks at computer-aided translation software and other helpful tools for the translation industry.

CAT Corner

CLOUD TRANSLATION PROCESS, CURRENT AND FUTURE

by **Andrzej Zydroń**

The NYCT Gotham greatly appreciates the graciousness of both Multilingual Magazine and Andrzej Zydroń in granting us permission to reprint this article.

Cloud translation is making an ever-increasing impact on the localization industry. This is not surprising as the cloud is a natural envi-ronment for localization — translation by its very nature is a collaborative process involving project managers, translators, reviewers and correctors. A centralized, coordinated system is a natural constituency for such a process.

The first generation of translation management systems (TMS) and computer assisted translation (CAT) systems that originated around the turn of the century were tied to the desktop. Based on the concept of a central server with desktop CAT tools, collaboration involved e-mailing files. However, this is both time consuming and error prone by its very nature, and also results in little islands of isolated data. It is difficult for individual actors in this scenario to share large memories and terminology files. For large projects involving many translators, inconsistencies in translation could and did easily result, with repeated text being translated differently by individual players.

There was also the problem of installing, maintaining and supporting desktop software as well as the issue of licenses. With many of these first-generation TMSs, translators were required to use a specific CAT tool, which meant they had to either purchase it themselves or install it with a license provided for the duration of the project.

The traditional approach by software publishers regarding TMS and CAT software is the sale of a one-off license. This usually includes free support for the first year, followed by 15% to 20% maintenance and support fees for subsequent years. In addition, it is not uncommon to withdraw support for the version after three years and force users to buy an upgrade to the latest and best version. There are many disadvantages to customers from this practice, the main one being a large one-off financial outlay.

Cloud translation systems involve a different approach — you pay monthly so there is no large initial financial outlay. Additionally, you can vary your licenses according to demand. No organization has a constant demand for translation. It is usually feast or famine: one month you are snowed under with work, the next, things can be very quiet. The ability to adjust your licenses means you pay for what you need. With the traditional TMS and CAT vendor approach, if you suddenly acquire a large project that requires 30 more licenses you would be forced to buy the additional licenses even though you will no longer need them in two months. With a cloud-based system, you should be able to vary your licenses from month to month or even week to week according to demand.

Thus, with the cloud approach, your MS/CAT costs are a variable element of your business directly related to your sales, and not capital expenditure. In addition, as there is no software to install, you can be up and running with a system in minutes. All that is required is a browser and decent internet connection.

This is considering the license fees only, but in integrated computing architecture, the standard Windows PC is an expensive and inefficient tool to buy and maintain. This is not just from the perspective of any installed software but also from the aspect of backups, security and system maintenance. PCs are notoriously virus prone, and although on the face of it they appear to not require professional IT support, they are very complex to maintain. Just take the standard experience: after six to nine months of use, desktop software on Windows PCs often slows down significantly. This just gets worse over time, and the more software you install on a PC the worse things become. Every PC user has experienced it. Then there are the Trojans and viruses — antivirus software is by no means perfect at identifying viruses. From many

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perspectives, the Windows desktop is in terminal decline, overtaken increasingly by tablets and other devices. PCs are expensive to manage and maintain outside of a tightly controlled and centralized corporate organization. In an integrated collaborative environment, desktop-based software has many drawbacks and inefficiencies, and for this reason its time is quickly passing. The big advances in HTML standards and libraries have made the differences between individual browsers largely irrelevant, especially since the demise of Internet Explorer 6. The browser is now becoming the main tool in which we interact with centralized systems. Managing your banking and utility transactions as well as shopping via a browser is now commonplace. It is now also time to translate and manage translation online."

Cloud translation system design

The starting point of cloud system design should be standards — The OASIS Open Architecture for XML Authoring and Localization (OAXAL) initiative has produced some ideal standards-based templates for a cloud-based translation system. At the heart of OAXAL are many of the existing localization standards: TMX, SRX, W3C ITS, TBX, xml:tm, Unicode and XLIFF (plus XLIFF:doc and TIPP) as well as XML itself (Figure 1). Designing a cloud translation process from scratch provides the opportunity to implement all relevant localization industry open standards.

In a world where over 90% of data for translation is already being generated in XML, it makes sense to base the internal data structure on XML. Formats that are not in XML, such as FrameMaker, HTML or RTF, can be easily converted to and from XML. Having one consistent electronic form makes for a very clean, efficient and elegant design. It also allows for the creation of a data driven automation approach based on open standards, where you have only one extraction and

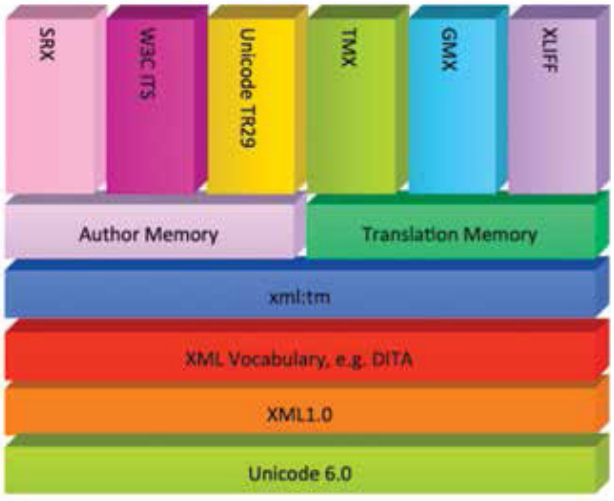

Figure 1: OAXAL standards stack.

matching process rather than one for each different file format.

The use of standards is also key: TMS and CAT tool publishers have not always been great at implementing and supporting standards. Take word counts as an example — the vast majority of tools each have their own proprietary way of counting words and characters. In fact, a major publisher after a recent acquisition had two CAT tools producing different word counts. In addition, one of the most widely adopted CAT tools had a tradition at one time of changing the word count methodology with every release. Unsurprisingly, the actual specifications of the proprietary counts are never published and thus cannot be verified. It is time for customers to end this nonsense by demanding support for GMX-V — the official standard for word and character counts.

Another aspect of the cloud translation process is the ability to interoperate with other TMS and CAT tools. Here again standards play a key role. The Linport initiative based on the XLIFF:doc and Translation Interchange Package Protocol from the Interoperability Now! initiative enables the seamless integration with other supporting TMS and CAT tools. The original XLIFF 1.2 standard allows for too many incompatible implementations to permit true interoperability, and it does not cater to reference materials and terminology in the exchange.

The server-based nature of cloud translation systems means it should feature scalable design. This is achieved using a service oriented architecture design where all of the individual components (analysis, extraction, translation memory management, terminology, quality assurance and spell checking, workflow and the actual translator workbench) are all implemented as individual web-based components. This provides an infinitely scalable approach where all individual components can be offloaded onto bigger and faster servers as the workload increases. Scalability must also include the ability to handle files and projects of arbitrary size. There should be no upper limits, and multiple actors such as translators, reviewers and correctors must be capable of working on the same files at the same time, all sharing translation assets such as terminology and translation memory in real time.

The cloud translation process must support flexible, customizable workflow management. This must include

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the ability to define your own workflow steps and the ability to inform all parties involved when individual steps are overdue. It is important to allow not only sequential workflow, but also concurrent steps such as reviewers and translators working in parallel. Transition from each workflow stage to the next must be automatic once the previous step has been completed.

Of course, there is little point in having a cloud translation system without the ability of translators, reviewers and correctors to work directly within a browser-based environment. The recent advances in HTML and available programming libraries have made cross-browser support and dynamic features available to allow the creation of a fully feature-rich, browser-based translation environment. The key is to be able to provide all of the features required, including TM matching, machine translation suggestions, navigation aids, quality assurance and so on. In other words, a fully functional environment for language professionals.

An online CAT tool must also allow multiple actors (project managers, translators, reviewers and correctors) to work on the same file at the same time, with everyone sharing translation assets such as terminology and TM even as it is being dynamically generated. Having a browser-based translation workbench means that all assets are held and available centrally in real time. Everything should be constantly backed up, so there are no software updates or incompatibilities to worry about. The user platform is irrelevant, so there is no reliance on one single work environment — the system can be accessed from a smartphone, tablet, Windows, Mac or Linux device.

Automation

The key to a well-designed cloud translation process is automation. A typical non-cloud process can incur large overhead costs (Figure 2). This is partly due to a considerable amount of manual intervention required to process a translation project without automation. There are many points of

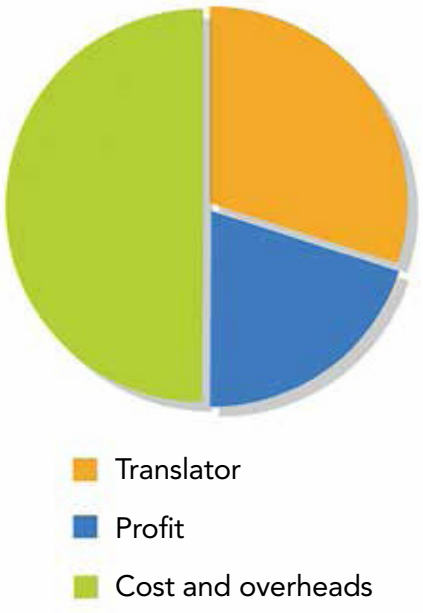

Figure 2: The cost of localization traditionally involved substantial overhead costs. Source: Reinhard Schäler, LRC-ASLIB 2002.

manual intervention, and as well as adding to the cost, this also represents a potential point of failure.

The cloud translation process provides for a fully automated environment, effectively eliminating all of the manual stages apart from the actual process of translation, review and correction – the ultimate intellectual transfer at the heart of the whole process, meaning the bit that you can actually relate to in terms of what you are paying for. Here all the processes in the green background represent totally automated processes (Figure 3). The only things that cannot be automated are the actual translation and review/correct stages that are done via the browser. In other words, everything is as automated as possible and centralized.

Other aspects of a cloud translation process are the integration with external systems such as workflow and CMS systems. Here the centralized and web-enabled nature of cloud translation systems makes seamless integration possible, such as the automatic transfer of data for translation once it is ready.

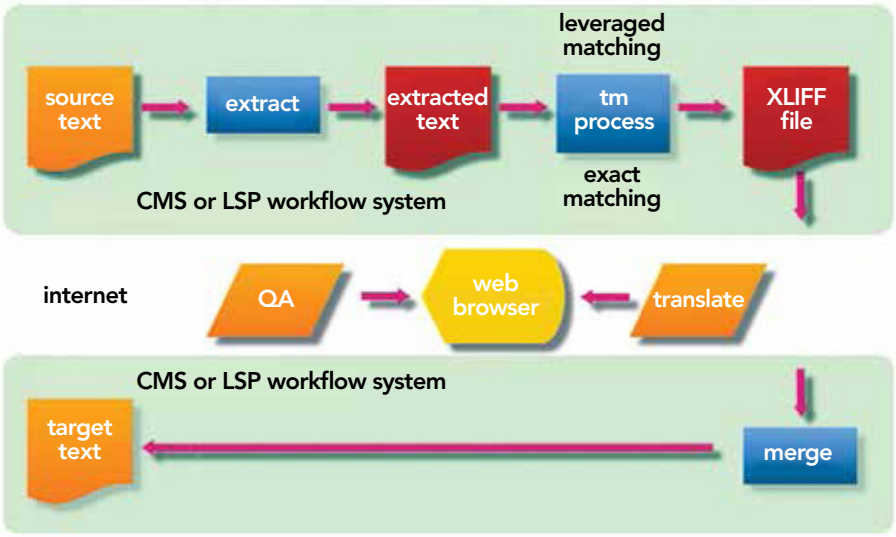

Figure 3: Automated workflow in cloud translation.

The future of translation is definitely going to be cloud-based as this provides the best fit for the collaborative nature of localization. For the developed world, at least, the main technical issues holding back adoption of the cloud as a translation process, such as browser technology and web standards, have now been largely resolved. The cloud translation process is here and it is soon going to dominate the industry, as the alternatives are much less efficient. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrzej Zydroń has been working in IT for 35 years, 22 of which have been in localization-related systems at Xerox, Ford and Oxford University Press. He is now the CTO of XTM International.

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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:

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