



# THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

## NAVIGATING IN A NEW ERA: TRANSLATORS IN THE AGE OF IMAGE AND SPEECH

by Eileen B. Hennessy

The ways in which translators work, particularly industrial translators, have been undergoing dramatic change since the advent of the computer, the Internet, globalization, the growing use of machine translation and CAT tool programs, and, in the case of into-English translators, the growing use of English as the lingua franca of international business, law, technology, and the sciences. The pace of this change is accelerating at such a rate that it is difficult to predict how we shall be doing our work and what the translation profession will look like five years from now.

There is another factor at work here, one to which I think we translators have not paid sufficient attention in our discussions of the subject. Our society has come to the end of the Gutenberg Era, the age of the primacy of the written word as source of information and education, and is now in the era of the moving image and the spoken word, embodied in film, radio, television, the telephone, the phonograph player, and the innumerable offspring of these seminal inventions. This sea-change is affecting every aspect of our lives, right down to our method of perception and our mental processes.

The problems facing the newspaper industry provide one example of this evolution. Why buy a newspaper to learn about the day's events when we can learn about them from television, radio, and the computer screen? An even

more eloquent example is the visible decline in the quality of writing, particularly in the American print media. Examples of incorrect use of prepositions, incorrect collocations, and ignorance of basic idioms of U.S. English abound in every newspaper and magazine and in signage of every kind--this notwithstanding the lip service that our society and its educational systems still pay to the importance of learning to read and write effectively. We are already reaping the first fruits of the continuing transition to the new era, a transition that began only a century or so ago, barely a blip in the history of our human race.

Are the writing professions going to disappear completely during the new era? Of course not. I doubt that the print versions of newspapers and magazines are going to vanish from the earth. I expect that authors will not stop writing poems and short stories and novels and non-fiction

*(continued on page 3)*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 4 President's Message
- 6 A Word From the Editor
- 7 NYCT Committees Meeting
- 8 Translation and the World of Tomorrow
- 10 ATA Spanish Division Mid-Year Conference
- 12 NYCT May Meeting
- 13 NYCT April Meeting
- 14 Languages of Terrorism
- 15 Circle News

**CALL FOR TREASURER**  
see page 4



# NEW YORK CIRCLE OF TRANSLATORS (212) 334-3060

### 2008 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Edna Ditaranto, *President*  
president@nyctranslators.org  
Lori Colman, *President-Elect*  
president-elect@nyctranslators.org

Nicole Lisa, *Secretary*  
secretary@nyctranslators.org  
*Treasurer (vacant position)*

Margarite Heintz Montez, *Program Director*  
programdirector@nyctranslators.org

### COMMITTEES

Continuing Education: Jordan Fox  
jordanfox@earthlink.net

Mentoring: Lana Rachkovskaya  
lana@capitaltranslations.net

Nominating: Lana Rachkovskaya  
lana@capitaltranslations.net

Program: Margarite Heintz Montez  
mystymy\_@excite.com

Membership: Nicole Lisa  
nltranslation@yahoo.com

Publications: Rosene Zaros  
zarosr@hotmail.com

Honors & Awards: Laurie Treuhaft  
treuhaft@un.org

ATA Certification: Edna Ditaranto  
edna@port-trans-specialists.com

Marketing & Public Relations: A.J. Elterman  
ajelterman@mindspring.com

Finance: Vacant



## THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

### EDITOR

Rosene Zaros, zarosr@hotmail.com

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Trudy Balch, Ellen Sowchek, and Betty Welker

### DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Bahl Graphics, kbahlmann@austin.rr.com

### PRINTING

Mail Boxes, Etc. South Orange NJ  
mailboxso@verizon.net

### 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 editor@nyctranslators.org. The opinions and views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or the policies of the NYCT or the ATA. All material submitted is subject to editing and becomes the property of the New York Circle of Translators unless accompanied by a copyright statement.*

© 2008 by the New York Circle of Translators. All rights reserved. Nothing contained in this issue may be reprinted without explicit prior permission of the editor or, in the case of copyrighted material, the copyright holder.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

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.

In general, articles and other submissions should be limited to around 1500 words. All text should be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word format. We prefer unpublished contributions. In the case of previously published submissions, please advise us of this fact at the time of submission. ■

Do you know someone who'd like to advertise in

## The Gotham Translator?

Please e-mail your text or artwork to the Editor at zarosr@hotmail.com no later than 15 days prior to the publication date. Please indicate the ad size desired. If your artwork is in soft copy (business card or other) please mail to the editor at the address below together with your payment.

### Ad Rates (single insertion)

Full page (7.5" x 10") .....	\$150
One-half page (7.5" x 4.75").....	\$80
One-fourth page (3.5" x 4.75") .....	\$40
One-eighth page (3.5" x 2.25").....	\$20

Note: All prices are for black-and-white camera-ready copy.

**Payment:** As soon as you and the Editor have agreed on the ad size and publication date, you will be sent an invoice via email. **We must receive payment in advance before we can publish an ad.** You may make payment by check to the address below, allowing time for checks to clear the bank, or by PayPal to treasurer@nyctranslators.org via <https://www.paypal.com/>. Click on Send Money, then fill out SEND MONEY FORM.

The New York Circle of Translators  
P.O. Box 4051  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163-4051

*Navigating in a New Era (cont'd)*

pieces, even if their works reach the public via the Internet or hand-held computer devices rather than on paper, and that those very devices may lead to the creation of new types and styles of writing, possibly in the form of ad hoc partnerships with other media to create multi-media productions.

But I also venture to predict that the influence of the text will continue to decline, along with the emphasis once placed on the importance of learning to write in clear, grammatically correct language and developing a good writing style. In other words, sloppy grammar, syntax, and word usage will become increasingly tolerated and accepted as the norm.

Translation is one of the writing professions. How are we translators going to be affected by the changes that will occur in the new era?

I believe that the brunt of the change will be borne by us industrial translators, and particularly those of us for whom the translation service companies are the primary sources of work. Most of us are free-lancers, and we have seen our incomes at least stagnate if not diminish in recent years because of out-sourcing to the low-labor-cost countries, the increasing use of machine translation and CAT tool programs by the translation companies and many of their clients, and, in the case of into-English translators, the growing use of English as the lingua franca of international business, law, technology, and the sciences, the traditional end-users of translations.

The translation companies began invest-

ing in the various CAT tool programs approximately ten years ago. They have been steadily storing up growing "libraries" of source-language documents with their translations. This means that the types and quantities of text that can be processed with the help of these programs are expanding steadily. It also means that in the future there will be less need for translations done "from scratch" and more need for editing, "filling in of blanks" (translation of words and sentences not already stored in memory), adaptation of "fuzzy-match" sentences, and general "smoothing" of these canned translations culled from CAT-tool memories. There is likely also to be more need for pre- and post-editing of machine-produced translations.

In other words, freelance translators who sub-contract to the translation service companies (and even to other types of clients, since awareness of machine translation programs and CAT tools, and insistence on their use, is increasing among corporate users of translations as well) will to a great extent need to stop being writers and to become good copy-editors, proofreaders, and data managers. Unfortunately, it is a long-standing, tried-and-true truism in the publishing industry that writers tend not to make good copy-editors and proofreaders.

There also seems to be a consensus in the translation industry that the translations produced with the assistance of computer programs are often not completely satisfactory. Unfortunately, what counts is the fact that they are acceptable to the end users, whose increasing indifference to and ignorance of correct and effective

writing is in inverse proportion to their increasing desire to "keep costs down"...at the expense of the copy-editors, proofreaders, data managers, and translators and other writers, who are paid at lower per-word rates and are not compensated for the time spent in executing the computer processing steps.

Translation "from scratch," i.e., translation as a writing profession, is not going to disappear. We translators are not going to disappear, any more than are other writers. But if current trends continue, the industrial translators of the future will need to be talented copy-editors and proofreaders, not talented writers. Those of us who want to be writers will need to change our attitudes and our work habits, particularly if translating has been our livelihood.

Some of us are hoping to benefit from a possible backlash against the sometimes questionable quality of out-sourced and machine-assisted translations. Some of us are talking about finding a different system of paying translators. Some of us have gritted our teeth and started editing and proof-reading machine-produced text. Some of us will develop new ways of using our writing abilities. Some of us will leave the writing professions completely and train for other work. Probably most of us will put together livelihoods that combine some or all of these options. Each of us will find a different way. Those of us who love to translate are having a particularly difficult time navigating the change. But navigate we must. In this respect there is no option. ■

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Edna Ditaranto

Can you believe it? The year already is half gone! After a stormy beginning, the waters are calming down, and our Circle is getting back into shape. Please join me in expressing heartfelt thanks to Marian Greenfield, who jumped into the NYCT tsunami head-on and rescued the Circle after the whole Board (save one) had resigned by the beginning of 2008. The exception was Margarite Heintz Montez, serving as Interim Program Director (thank you for hanging on Margarite, and for not giving up the fight). As you probably know, Marian had just stepped down in November of 2007 from a 4-year commitment as President-Elect and then President of the ATA. Thank you so much Marian!

We also owe a great debt to the other members of the board who stepped in to help put the Circle back on track, first as interim and now as elected officers: Lori Colman, President-elect; Nicole Lisa, Secretary; and Lyn Dominguez, Treasurer, who resigned effective May 31. Thanks goes also to Rosene Zaros, Editor of our newsletter *The Gotham*, who was instrumental in getting us back together, and who helped out during the nomination and election process, together with Lana Rachkovskaya.

So yes, we are getting back on track. Our one-day June workshop has come and gone (look for a report in the next issue of

the Gotham). The same goes for the ATA Certification sitting we sponsored – both in collaboration with New York University. These important events further the core mission of the Circle – to promote the business of translation and develop and improve translators' skills.



Edna Ditaranto

In February, when I accepted the nomination to run again for President, I started a list of things I would like to accomplish this time around. It got longer and longer, and by the April board meeting there were 27 items on my list.

Don't worry! I won't list them all here. But I would like to mention a few. The most important one for me is the creation of an Annual Susana Greiss Workshop. As many of you know, Susana Greiss passed away in March of 2006 at the age of 85. Susana was a very active and relentless (in a good way) member of the NYCT. In the late '80s and early '90s, Susana established the Circle's Continuing Education Committee, and organized many workshops for translators. I remember the NYCT holding at least two workshops every year during that period. Susana also co-authored with George Fletcher a book for new translators, *Survival Kit for Translators*. Proceeds from this very helpful book were donated in full, from the beginning, to the New York Circle of Translators. In her will, Susana bequeathed her books

and dictionaries to the Circle.

I could go on about how wonderful Susana was, but I believe I can express it more fully by creating a vehicle to continue Susana's passion – coaching and mentoring new translators about the translation business. So, I propose to hold a two-day weekend workshop every year in Susana Greiss' Memory. The first one is slated for the end of September or beginning of October, 2008. On that note, I would like to hear from anyone who would like to participate and/or contribute to the workshop (just send me an email: [president@nyctranslators.org](mailto:president@nyctranslators.org)).

Another important item on my long list is the revival of the existing committees, and the creation of a few new ones. Last month, we emailed the membership a sign-up list for existing and new committees, and we also had a kick-off meeting a couple of weeks ago to get things moving.

Besides the obvious, these committees serve to get more people involved in the affairs of the Circle. Our Board is composed of just five members, but the Circle today has about 300 members. As with any group or business, our success is dictated by how much each of us invest ourselves and collaborate with each other.

Being involved at a committee level is a win-win situation for all. As a committee member you have the opportunity to do something meaningful for your fellow

translators, and in return you will get recognition for your work. When you put yourself out there, you can be sure that the rewards will come back to you two or three-fold, if not more. This is the basis of networking – the more people you know, the more people will know you. So if you have not joined any of our committees yet, it is never too late, and you will always be welcomed.

There are just two more items I would like to mention briefly. Next year, 2009, the Circle will celebrate our 30th anniversary, and we are planning a special celebration. Also in 2009, the ATA conference will take place at the Marriot Hotel in our own backyard and we, as local chapter, will step up to welcome our fellow translators to New York (where it all started, actually).

As we head into the summer, I hope these plans inspire you to come back full of energy this fall. We are all The New York Circle of Translators, and the Circle is for all of us. Without the members, and the special few who give of their time to serve as officers, we would not exist. We really came very close to disappearing a few months ago. Our organization needs the participation of all of its members, so if you have not been involved recently, this is an exciting time to renew your commitment. Yes, it can be hard work, and it does take time, but it is worth it! The feeling of accomplishment you get is incredible – even if things don't always go as planned, and they often don't. Actually, I am finding my involvement

with NYCT to be even more fulfilling the second time around.

Have a great summer, and I hope to see you at our August Summer Picnic (see the

announcement in this issue of the Gotham), and at our monthly meetings and events starting again in September 2008. ■

## CALL FOR TREASURER

- Do you know QuickBooks?
- Do you have some time each week that you could donate to the Circle?

Would you like to serve as Interim Treasurer and possibly run for a full term in the fall? If so, please contact Edna Ditaranto at [edna@port-trans-specialists.com](mailto:edna@port-trans-specialists.com).

This is a wonderful opportunity to join all those members who are discovering the benefits of getting active and getting involved.

## MENTORS NEEDED

Share your Knowledge and Experience, Become a Mentor!

The Mentoring Committee orchestrates the pairing of linguists who are new to the field with seasoned professionals to create a symbiotic relationship wherein the mentor gleans satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment by sharing the benefit of his or her experience and the mentee is the recipient of great knowledge and expertise by someone who has a longstanding presence in the translation and interpreting field.

If you would like to become a Mentor, please write to: [mentoring@capitaltranslations.net](mailto:mentoring@capitaltranslations.net)

We are looking for Mentors in these particular areas:

- English<>Spanish Translations
- English<>French Translations
- English<>German Translations
- English<>Chinese Translations
- Financial & Legal Translations
- Technical Translations
- Marketing Translations
- Interpreting

Any other areas and language pairs are welcome to join

It is recommended that a Mentor has at least 10+ year of full-time translation experience.

***Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction."***

We look forward to hearing from you!

- Mentoring Committee

## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR IN PRAISE OF GADFLIES

by Rosene Zaros

Translators hear the word “professional” a lot these days. It’s a nice word. It has a lofty sound. Certainly nobody would object to being called “professional”. One might, however, object to the degree of conformity demanded by ATA in order to be considered “professional”.



Dissent requires a great deal of what the Germans call *zivil-courage*, the courage to stand up for one’s beliefs even if doing so results in being labeled “unprofessional”, “disrespectful”, “not

“nice”. It seems that in our environment, in order to be “professional”, one must refrain from all critical dissent and debate.

If one dares to question or criticize, it must be done indirectly or “constructively” but, overall, it is better to say nothing at all. To be called “unprofessional” is tantamount to being called “unpatriotic”, and we all

know where that leads.

This emphasis on being “professional” is a form of oppression. Its purpose is to control behavior and to suppress critical discussion. Being “professional” is a little like being “nice”. Back in the 70s, feminists encouraged women not to be “nice” because it was disempowering them. The term “bitch” lost all its pejorative power.

---

**In the world of translation, being told that we should be “professional” when we have had the nerve to disagree or criticize or denounce is nothing more than a command from those in power ordering us to conform.**

---

In fact, quite the opposite, it became the key word for *B-Word Worldwide*, which is a nonprofit, independent, feminist media organization best known for publishing *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture*, a print magazine devoted to feminist analysis and media criticism.

In the world of translation, being told that we should be “professional” when we have had the nerve to disagree or criticize or denounce is nothing more than a command from those in power ordering us to conform. It is in this context that we need

to pay homage to our “patron” gadflies. The term “gadfly” like “bitch”, in general, has been pejorative and it has frequently been bestowed on pesky, “unprofessional” individuals by those who are on the receiving end of the gadfly’s attentions. What they overlook, however, is that the gadfly is not interested in self-attention or self-promotion. He or she has a cause that is pursued with passion. The gadfly is a social critic who brings to light some unpleasant facts with the goal of improving the human (in this case, the translator’s) condition. Unfortunately, it is frequently a thankless task. The powers that be will go to great lengths to discredit anyone who exposes their behavior. The human gadfly is akin to the whistleblower, who exposes corporate or governmental wrongdoing, and who may find his or her life (or job) in danger because of what has been revealed.

While it is highly unlikely that our patron gadflies will be “disappeared” because of their “unprofessional” behavior, it is important to recognize and to appreciate what these human gadflies are doing as

they prick and sting the conscience of translator society. Maybe, just maybe, it will result in change.

History is filled with examples of gadflies. They are part of a proud tradition. It is said that Socrates considered himself to be one in respect to the city of Athens. He took pride in “needling” the political leaders of the time and in “stinging” the conscience of society. If we have learned anything at all from history, we should have learned that when a social gadfly is killed or silenced, it is society that suffers because the gadfly’s role was to goad people into (re)action of some sort.

There are also examples of gadflies in literature. The first one that comes to mind is Don Quixote from the work by the same name written by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. While many readers today see Don Quixote as a “lunatic” who couldn’t deal with the modern world, in reality, he was in conflict with the dominant ideology. When a priest criticizes him for reading books about chivalry and says he is mad because he believes in giants, Don Quixote replies that the Bible, which cannot be lacking in truth, tells the story of a huge giant named Goliath. In other words, the problem is that he, Don

Quixote, believes in books of chivalry while the priest believes in the Bible. Those readers who would dismiss Don Quixote as a lunatic “tilting at windmills”

fail to feel the secret music, the exquisite parody, and the terrible sting of Cervantes. The word “quixotic” is, indeed, an apt description of the modern gadfly. ■

## NYCT COMMITTEES MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2008

review by **Margarite Heintz-Montez**

The NYCT Committees Meeting was called by Edna Ditaranto, NYCT President. In the past NYCT had only three active committees – Continuing Education Committee, Nominating Committee and Mentoring Committee. A few more committees were added to the list which will help the NYCT Board of Directors with various aspects of NYCT activities. The following Committees are now a part of NYCT: Honors and Awards Committee, chaired by Laurie Treuhaft; Membership Committee, chaired by Nicole Lisa; Publications Committee, chaired by Rosene Zaros; Mentoring Committee, chaired by Lana Rachkovskaya; Nominating Committee, chaired by Lana Rachkovskaya; Marketing and Public Relations Committee, chaired by A.J. Elterman; Continuing Education Committee, chaired by Jordan Fox; Program Committee, chaired by Margarite Heintz Montez; ATA Certification Committee, chaired by Edna Ditaranto; and a Finance Committee, which will be chaired by the Interim Treasurer.

The meeting started with a discussion of basic responsibilities of each committee. Once everyone understood what their responsibilities were, Edna Ditaranto asked the committees to work in groups and solve a particular task with regard to each committee’s business. Working in groups was actually refreshing and very effective. Everyone was able to outline their plan of action and the work is to continue throughout the year.

All committees were assigned a priority task, which will hopefully be implemented by September. Some of these include an e-newsletter, working towards the 2009 ATA conference which is being held in New York and finding candidates for the NYCT elections at the end of this year.

It is exciting to see how many people are becoming involved in the Circle's business and the number is growing. Please contact NYCT if you are interested in serving on any of the above listed committees. ■

# TRANSLATION AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

by **Bernie Bierman**

[Author's Note: The following article is adapted from an article of the same name that appeared in 1989 issue of "Translation Review", a journal published by the University of Texas at Dallas. The original article was inspired by a piece entitled "Translation for the Age of Post-Literacy" written by an old colleague of mine, Jonathan Slater. His article appeared in the same 1989 issue of "Translation Review". The phrase "The World of Tomorrow" was the descriptor given to the New York World's Fair of 1939-40, which the author visited as a child 24 times in those two years.]

As I mentioned in a previous article published in the *Gotham Translator*, crystal ball-gazing or saying the sooth are two endeavors for which I am eminently disqualified. But developments of the past five or so years in the world of translation spurred me to go through some of my old files and exhume the article that I wrote for *Translation Review* nineteen years ago. After reading it, I began to wonder whether I should re-think my lack of qualifications as a soothsayer.

When Jon Slater first called me nineteen years ago and asked me to present an article for a panel discussion that he was chairing for the American Literary Translators Association, entitled "Translation for the Age of Post-Literacy", I looked at that title and was totally stumped. Was the "Age of Post-Literacy", I asked myself, some perverse idea dreamed up by Jon suggesting that this would be the age when humanity would

come full circle? In other words, our return to whence we cometh: to the age of pre-literacy. Was Jon trying to suggest that "post-literacy" would signify a return to grunting, groaning and drawing pictures on cave walls?

The designation "post-literacy" also made my thoughts go back to the years 1939 and 1940, when an impressionable little boy was taken by his father to the New York World's Fair to see what the future had in store for all of us: all sorts of gadgets and machines that would make our lives more productive and certainly more enjoyable. It was billed as "The World of Tomorrow", and it most assuredly looked more attractive than the world of 1939-40.

Well, some of "The World of Tomorrow" came true and some of it still remains a vision. The visionaries of 1939 saw travel in space, and just thirty years later, Neil Armstrong set foot upon the moon. The visionaries of 1939 who imagined some of those gadgets and machines lived to see some of them become realities, although perhaps not precisely in the way they had imagined.

And the visionaries of 1969, 1979, 1989,

and 1999 have imagined even more remarkable machines and gadgets for our future, including some that will not merely make the human endeavor more productive, but replace the human almost entirely, and even more significantly, replace that ultimate piece of machinery – the human brain.

On August 18, 1988, *The New York Times* described somewhat the replacement of the human brain by the computer:

---

**According to the computational gurus of twenty years ago, those of us engaged in creative endeavors would no longer have to be burdened by thinking.**

---

*"The Defense Department's advanced research agency plans to increase significantly its financing of radically new kinds of computers that are based on how the brain works... The computers are called neural networks because they are loosely patterned on*

*the interconnected web of neurons, or nerve cells, in the brain. Such computers, while still in the developmental stage, have shown great promise for tasks...like recognizing objects or understanding speech...they seem to be able to learn from experience".*

Yes, according to the computational gurus of twenty years ago, The World of Tomorrow would see computers that would be capable of *thinking* and even

doing like humans. They would listen, speak, act and react, and naturally read and write like humans. But would they create? Some visionaries of twenty years ago drew the line there. But others did not. They saw the computer in *The World of Tomorrow* as having creative powers. The future of computational creativity was reported by *The New York Times* on September 4, 1988:

*“Proponents of the computer’s use in music, besides predicting that it will better release the creativity of musicians, also recommended the computer for cost-effectiveness”.*

How interesting. The marriage of creativity and cost-effectiveness. As my dear friend, the late Captain Butler of Charleston might have remarked, *“A minor point at such a moment, my dear”*. However, in exercising its policy of fair reportage, *The Times* did describe the reactions of those still desirous of remaining in the Stone Age:

*“The use of the computer may result in musicians being more passive and less activity engaged in the creation of music. The ease of programming could lead to the composition of facile, uninspired music”.*

But what did those critics, those reactionaries, those Neanderthals of the 1980’s know? Did they not belong in the same class as those who warned Columbus that he would fall off the Earth if he sailed too far into the Atlantic?

According to the computational gurus of

twenty years ago, those of us engaged in creative endeavors – and I presume that includes translators – would no longer have to be burdened by thinking. The thinking would be done for us. If there was going to be any creativity, it would have to be cost-effective. Yes, according to those gurus, our future was most certainly and definitively with the computer. Long live the computer! Down with human creativity! Time wasters to the gallows! Out with your brains! Creativity is the opiate of the intellectual.

As a dues-paying member of the Flat Earth Society, I dismissed the tarot-card readings of the computational soothsayers of twenty years ago, particularly with respect to translation. I laughed at the voices within the translation community that sang of a future of machine and computer-assisted translation. But I was wrong. The Translation World of Tomorrow and the Age of Post-Literacy are here...right now.

The major battle in the translation industry between computer efficiency and human inefficiency has been won by the former. The computer has conquered its major foes: vocabulary and terminology. The rest – verb conjugation, case structure, phraseology, grammar, idiom, nuance – will eventually fall, and fall easily to the power of the computer, if these aspects haven’t already fallen.

Yes, indeed, *The Translation World of Tomorrow* is now today. And clearly, if today’s translators are quasi-accepting of machine translation, they are fully accepting of MT’s little cousin, CAT. CAT is not

the future. CAT is today. And CAT means more efficiency and more cost-effectiveness (particularly for those who have to pay for translation). For the translator, more efficiency comes from less thinking. What the CAT programs provide in the way of terminology and/or phraseology are accepted as gospel. The 1989 *Translator of Tomorrow* who is now the *Translator of Today* does not have to waste precious time pondering over alternative terms or phrases. The terms and phrases are right there, ready for the picking. And more often than not, no picking is required. Thus the product of this awesome electronic gadgetry is simplicity, productivity and cost-effectiveness. And the language of today’s translator? Simple, controlled, clean, devoid of such linguistic “debris” like nuance or subtlety. Thus, the Translation World of Today has become a kind of “McDonald’s” of communication. And its citizens? Well, let’s say they are linguistic hamburger jockeys.

And what is my response to the state of things, and particularly to the state of language wrought by the various forms of computational translation and its linguistic hamburger jockeys? It is the same as my response of 1989, which was a broad paraphrase of a statement made by the aforementioned Captain Butler of Charleston:

*I want to go somewhere, find some place where there is still something left in language that is of charm, of grace, of feeling, or poetry, or human passion and compassion”.* ■

## THREE DAYS OF WORKSHOPS, NETWORKING AND FUN THE ATA SPANISH DIVISION SEMI-ANNUAL MID-YEAR CONFERENCE

review by **Nicole Lisa**

From March 28 to 30, Spanish translators and interpreters gathered in the historic section of Philadelphia for the ATA Spanish Division Semi-Annual Mid-Year Conference. More than 150 attendees



Nicole  
Lisa

from all over the Spanish-speaking world, including Colombia, Mexico and Spain, and from all over the United States met for three days of workshops, networking and fun. Also present were representatives from translation companies and InTrans Book Services.

The organizers, Mariana Stolee, Milly Suazo-Martinez and Francesca Samuel, are to be congratulated on their efforts to put together a very informative conference with a schedule that included 18 sessions on varied topics, a preparatory session for the ATA exam and an exam sitting. The organizers did such a good job and the hotel provided such superb service that it was easy to miss the signs of all their hard work.

The conference began bright and early on Friday on a balmy spring day as we munched on fruit and croissants and sipped our coffee in preparation for three event-packed days. Attendees swung right into networking mode and there were many reunions of friends and colleagues who were excited to see each other in per-

son. A few newcomers hung back on the fringes, but were quickly invited to introduce themselves and mingle.

Both translators and interpreters found many sessions addressing their needs. Several presentations looked at the tools translators use in their work. Rosalie Wells, the webmaster of the Spanish Division Webpage, held a marathon six-hour workshop on Trados, divided into Basic and Advanced sessions. The Basic session introduced newcomers to the CAT tool and covered how to set up the software and get started on a translation. Several practice documents were provided to showcase the functionality of placeables and fuzzy or 100% matches. She also covered some keyboard shortcuts and offered to email a list of shortcuts and a macro to make the program easier to use.

The Advanced session quickly became very advanced as Rosalie fielded questions. One attendee asked about dividing or organizing large translation memories, which led to a discussion on setting up fields and attributes in the translation memory. Later, Salvador Virgen demonstrated the secrets of MS Word at a very well-attended session and provided a plethora of shortcuts and divulged many secrets to make translators' work more productive, including tools to compare documents, protecting documents, working without a mouse, and manipulating formats, tables and textboxes. On the last

day, Rosalie Wells shared her expertise with dictionaries and demonstrated the use of different types, including Redes: Diccionario Combinatorio del Español Contemporaneo, a dictionary that contains no definitions, but rather provides an analysis of how a word is used in combination with other words; various electronic dictionaries, including Babylon, which allows the user to search all dictionaries she has downloaded or purchased with the click of the mouse; and dictionaries of Spanish usage, including one edited by María Moliner.

Other sessions addressed technical aspects of translating into Spanish. María Barros, who works at the United Nations, discussed how it is easy for translators to juxtapose English grammar on a Spanish translation by not paying enough attention to articles, prepositions and conjunctions. Alicia Agnese, who owns a translation business, addressed the topic of the passive voice in English source texts and when to use or not to use the "se" formation in Spanish. Javier Labrador, from TransPerfect Translations and the Hunter College interpretation program, demonstrated the most common pitfalls he sees as a quality manager. Álvaro Villegas, a medical translator, discussed strategies to fine tune translations to eliminate constructions that sound odd to a native ear and provided examples of mistranslations that made the audience laugh. Izaskun Milani Orkwis, a financial translator,

addressed a slightly different topic, and spoke of the benefits of reviewers and translators working together to create better translations than either could alone.

There were also several sessions for interpreters. Marianne Teleki and Ana María Varela Gill spoke about working with Lionbridge Federal, which provides interpretation services to the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice. Jorge Ungo, an interpreter trainer, presented at two sessions, the first on ethics and standards of practice in the judiciary, healthcare and conference fields and the private sector. His second presentation provided interviewing tips including preparation, samples of questions interviewers ask, questions interviewees should ask, and gave an employer's view of the skills an interpreter should demonstrate, including interpreting skills, linguistic ability, cultural competence and subject knowledge.

Several sessions did not fall into any of these categories. Marko Miletich, coordinator of the Hunter College Translation and Interpreting Program, spoke about teaching translation and the types of errors made by students. Georganne Weller, Director of Linguistic Policies for INALI in Mexico, looked at the political and institutional language used by the federal government in Mexico, which often left translators from other parts of Latin America or Spain at a loss. Mercedes Guhl, who translated *Alice in Wonderland* into Spanish, spoke about the challenges and responsibilities translators of children's books face. Anne Jones, who has been translating since 1989, examined the adoption of foreign words into Spanish

and the dictionary of the Real Academia Español, often with confusing results. Finally, two sessions touched on the medical field. Michael Blumenthal, director of M&M Translations, presented on "The Pancreas: Function and Dysfunction," to inform translators and interpreters about this important organ; Rocío Txabbarriaga, a medical translator, spoke about translation standards in the medical field and the problems that arise when they are not followed.

Of course the conference was not all speakers. Coffee breaks, lunches and dinners were opportunities to stretch, introduce ourselves and to take quick peeks at the quaint brick buildings and blossoming cherry trees around the corner from the hotel. A welcome reception was held the first night, with food, drink and music. Some attendees dressed up in preparation for a night on the town, while others arrived in the business casual attire we had worn all day in anticipation of an early night and luxurious hotel beds. The room was filled with the roar of conversation as we switched casually from Spanish to English and back, until the organizers serenaded us at the end of the night.

At 8 am on Sunday morning we had a

final session with Olga Lucía Mutis and Mati Vargas, a health and wellness practitioner and a translator in the same field, respectively, who led us in a mini marathon of health, reminding us to listen to and care for our bodies. We meditated, stretched and finally danced around the room. And then the conference ended with a closing brunch-- one last chance to chat and exchange cards before we scattered to our individual homes and desks. Until next time! ■

#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Nicole Lisa is the newly elected Secretary of the NYCT. She works as a Spanish to English translator for organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and UNIFEM, and she is currently taking on more legal translation work. She can be contacted at [nltranslation@yahoo.com](mailto:nltranslation@yahoo.com).

### Wireless Communications Equipment for Interpreters

The use of wireless equipment frees the interpreter from having to sit next to the listener. The interpreter can now move to a spot offering the best hearing and visibility, where the interpreter can concentrate on the message without interruptions or distractions.

Although some courts provide this equipment for its interpreters, availability is not always guaranteed. And many courts and other venues don't even offer it.

**For less than \$100, interpreters can now have their own set of wireless transmitter and receiver**, including microphone and earphone. In many instances, the rental of similar equipment for just one day exceeds this purchase cost.

TN Communications offers dependable, long-lasting wireless equipment. Equipment is very light and small and easily fits in a shirt pocket. Transmitters and receivers come with a one-year warranty.

In addition to single-channel equipment, multi-channel transmitters and receivers are also available. Optional headset microphones and headphones are also available.

Visit [www.tncommunications.com](http://www.tncommunications.com) for product specifications and availability. Or you may call 1-888-371-9005 or email [info@tncommunications.com](mailto:info@tncommunications.com) for more information.

## NYCT MAY MEETING INS AND OUTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

review by **Nicole Lisa**

**O**n May 7, Stephen Shekel, Director of the Document Division of the Department for the General Assembly of Conference Management, gave a candid



Nicole  
Lisa

presentation about working for the United Nations as a translator or interpreter to a packed room of NYCT members. Mr. Shekel first spoke in general

about the kind of language translators and interpreters can expect to encounter. He noted that the United Nations is a diplomatic body and that its mission is achieved through negotiation among the 192 member states. The language used, therefore, is frequently vague, uses broad generalities and is purposefully impenetrable. In short, it is often confusing and poses special challenges to interpreters and translators. Additionally, rather than a one-to-one client-vendor relationship, he said that, in reality, the relationship is 192 to one: 192 clients to one language professional, as members states often advocate with the bureaus for specific (sometimes conflicting) translations of key portions of a text or other mechanical changes. In such cases, precedent rules (mostly). The complete body of United Nations documents can be searched on the Official Document System at <http://www.ods.un.org/>. He noted

that documents not in this system, including web pages of UN agencies, country reports and unofficial documents often circumvent official UN translators, and as a result have varying degrees of quality.

Mr. Shekel then addressed the topic dearest to the attendees' hearts—how to work for the United Nations. He first noted that there are approximately 300 translators employed in New York City alone, and that in recent years they have not been getting enough qualified translators through the exam system. Additionally, many long-term employees are now retiring, leaving further vacancies that need to be filled. As a result, and as part of ongoing transparency measures, the translation bureaus are actively recruiting and looking for new candidates. In fact, Mr. Shekel's presentation to the NYCT was part of this outreach.

In order to be considered as a candidate, an applicant must be aged 56 or younger, must have an undergraduate degree and his or her main language (also called mother tongue or native language) must be one of the official United Nations languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian or Spanish. The applicant must also be fluent in two more official languages (although those with Arabic, Chinese or Russian may only be required to have two languages total). The appli-

cant must be able to pass an exam in one of the main working languages, French and English, and in his or her other language. For example, a Spanish-to-English translator would also be required to pass the French examination. An Arabic translator (because of scarcity) would need to pass the Arabic and English or French exams. Exams are held at least every three years and more often when there are unfilled vacancies, as is the case for translators into English and French at the moment. Vacancies for French translators are particularly urgent. The exam schedule can be found at <http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm>.

Applicants can also contact the chief of the language bureau for their native language. The requirements for temporary staff and contract employees are the same, including passing the examinations, and an ad hoc exam can be administered in between official examinations. The United Nations also out sources approximately 26% of its language work, and agencies can bid for contracts. Because of the volume of work and because the contracting agency cannot refuse any work submitted by the United Nations, the company must be of a certain size and cannot be a start-up.

Finally, Mr. Shekel addressed grades of translators and revisers, which determine

rates. Grades run from one to three, with three being the highest grade in both categories. United Nations rates are further determined on a local or non-local basis dependant on the place of residence. Rates are determined per 1,000 words in three categories: simple, moderate and difficult/urgent (rarely employed). Desk top publishing needs are determined at a higher rate and previously translated material at a lower rate. Per-word rates range between \$72 and \$230 per 1,000 words. Because many temporary and contract staff are needed to work in-house at the United Nations headquarters, rates are also determined on a daily or monthly basis, ranging from \$230 to \$390 per day, and \$6,212 to \$10,600 per month. All confidential materials stay in house for example, and much of a UN translators work is reporting on meetings, either verbatim or in summary form.

Mr. Sekel urged any attendees who were not daunted by his presentation on the challenges of diplomatic and bureaucratic translation to contact the different language chiefs. The meeting then moved to dinner at Dopo Teatro, where members enjoyed lively conversation and tasty food. ■

#### ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Nicole Lisa is the newly elected Secretary of the NYCT. She works as a Spanish to English translator for organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and UNIFEM, and she is currently taking on more legal translation work. She can be contacted at [nltranslation@yahoo.com](mailto:nltranslation@yahoo.com).

## NYCT APRIL MEETING WORDFAST PRESENTATION

review by **Margarite Heintz-Montez**

On April 8, 2008, the New York Circle had the honor of welcoming John DiRico and Kristyna Marrero from Wordfast as presenters. Both John and Kristyna extolled Wordfast's virtues while demonstrating its capabilities and explaining its plethora of benefits for freelance translators.

Wordfast is a Translation Memory (TM) tool that is geared specifically towards freelance translators and is less than half the price of many of the other Translation Memory programs. We were shown some key functions of the program, such as how to select an existing Translation Memory and how to create a new one. While John focused mostly on the features of the program, Krystina explained why it was beneficial to freelancers. John discussed the possibility of creating User-Defined Macros and actually did a demonstration on how to customize the program to suit the individual user's needs. This aspect is especially functional for quality control since you can program it to point out typographical errors, search for specific terms, etc. John also placed major emphasis on a facet of the program that is perhaps the most important and useful for freelance translators—that of a virtual network of Translation Memory. Internet-based TM enables multiple translators in various parts of the globe to work together simultaneously. This enhances productivity because it calls for remote translation teams to link together and share the TMs they have created or are in the process of generating.

The program is compatible with any Translation Memory tool that supports TMX. It can also be used across a variety of platforms, including Windows, Mac OS, and Linux. This, of course makes it more user- and technologically-friendly. While most Translation Memory programs take days or even weeks to learn, because of the intuitive Microsoft Office interface, Wordfast can be learned in a matter of hours. The fact that it is easily linked with external resources such as other TMs, dictionaries, glossaries, etc. further augments the translator's productivity and reduces the probability of errors.

More of the practical aspects of the program were mentioned as well. For example, there is a trial on Wordfast's website ([www.wordfast.com](http://www.wordfast.com)) that the translators can download before they buy the program. We were also informed that the license is good for 3 years and that unlike costly technical support, Wordfast maintains a community-supported knowledge base that is also available on the website.

Since not that many members of the audience had used Wordfast before, there were a number of questions and lively conversation about the program. All in all, the presentation provided insight into a TM tool that is maybe not as well-known as SDL-Trados, but is just as significant and beneficial. ■

# THE LANGUAGES OF TERRORISM

From the Editorial Notebook

The following statement was culled from the website of the American Translators Association ([www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)):

*"Although the number of interpreters and translators has more than doubled in the past five years in the United States, there is a "huge shortage," said Marian Greenfield, president of the American Translators Association, which has nearly 10,000 members in more than 70 countries.*

*"Greenfield said the shortage exists, in part, because of the U.S. government's 'awakening to language needs' [sic] but also because of the boom in global commerce and the growing immigrant population in the United States.*

*"We are,' she said, 'extremely far behind in the languages of terrorism'."*

In present-day Iraq, terror bombings are a near-daily occurrence. Does that mean that **Arabic** is a language of terrorism? Earlier this year, the United States Senate passed a resolution calling the Revolutionary Guards of the Iranian Armed Forces a terrorist organization. Does that make **Farsi** a language of terror-

ism? In late May, a terrorist's bomb was detonated at the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. Is **Urdu** now a language of terrorism? In Colombia, a 20-year war against terrorists of a group known by the initials FARC shows few signs of abating. Does that mean that **Spanish** can be added to the list of languages of terrorism? In Scotland, a group of would-be terrorists from England, including one who was a physician, attempted a terror bombing at Edinburgh. All were native Britons. Did their action make **English** a language of terrorism? For the past quarter century, Sri Lanka has seen few days without some kind of terrorist event. Do we add **Sinhala** and **Tamil** to the list of languages of terrorism?

Do we retro-classify **French** as a language of terrorism because the Algerian nationalists (considered by the French as nothing more than terrorists) in the French-Algerian War of 1955-62 all spoke, read

and wrote French? Do we retro-classify **Russian** as a language of terrorism because of terrorist activity in Czarist days. Or perhaps we should not even

---

**Do we retro-classify French as a language of terrorism because the Algerian nationalists in the French-Algerian War of 1955-62 all spoke, read and wrote French?**

---

bother with such retro-classification since modern-day terrorists operating in Chechnya (among other areas in the eastern part of Russia) are speakers of Russian in addition to their local and regional languages. Do we retro-apply the designation

language of terrorism to **Serbo-Croatian** because Gavrilo Princip, a member of a Serbian terrorist group fired the bullet that killed Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophia, and precipitated World War I. Or here again, perhaps we should not even bother with such retro-classification since Serbian-speaking terrorists and **Albanian**-speaking terrorists did their thing in modern-day Kosovo.

Maybe some of our readers or even Ms. Greenfield could clarify the term "languages of terrorism" for us. ■

## CIRCLE NEWS



### ■ NYCT TREASURER RESIGNS

It is with much sadness that we announce the resignation of our Treasurer, Lyn Dominguez. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work and diligence during these hectic and trying months. She will be greatly missed.

### ■ NYCT WORKSHOP

Expanding your Freelance Business/Project Management

Date: Saturday, June 14, 2008

Time: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Where: Woolworth Building  
15 Barclay Street at Broadway across from City Hall  
Public Assembly Room  
New York City, New York

### ■ SUSANA GREISS WORKSHOP

The Circle is starting plans for our two-day 1st Annual Susana Greiss Workshop which will take place in early October 2008. Watch for details.

### ■ NYCT ANNUAL PICNIC

Good Food, Good Friends, Great Fun - Great Networking Opportunity

Date: Sunday, August 24, 2008

Time: 1:00 PM

Where: Marian Greenfield's home  
2619 Holly Avenue  
South Plainfield, NJ 07080

Phone: 908-561-7590

#### Advance Registration

Adults: \$20, Children: \$10

#### Payment on Site

Adults: \$25, Children: \$10

Please make check payable to New York Circle of Translators and mail by August 20, 2008 to:

Edna Ditaranto  
NYCT President  
298 Wedgewood Drive  
Paramus, NJ 07652

Please make reservation by sending an email to our Program Director, Margarite Heintz Montez at [mystymy\\_@excite.com](mailto:mystymy_@excite.com)



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](http://www.nyctranslators.org) and join online!



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