



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR



THE PURPOSE OF THE NEW YORK CIRCLE OF TRANSLATORS

Part 2. The Board of Directors' work in 2014 and beyond*

by Leonard Morin

In this essay, I discuss the Board's current work and where we envision it will or may take us.

Current Projects

Since Paolo Modigliani came into office as our treasurer in January of 2013, he has done a stupendous job of cleaning up our finances. He has brought membership renewal and management under control, thereby meticulously documenting our member count and breaking down the related payments in spreadsheets. Last year upon commencing his tenure, he migrated our accounts to QuickBooks, furnishing a very professional, ongoing presentation of our finances including detailed balance and profit and loss sheets. His conscientious custodianship has prompted the Board to be more alert and realistic about our financial capabilities and limitations.

Paolo played no small role in the new scheme to reallocate the funds bequeathed to the Circle by

founding member Charles Stern. This new arrangement, authorized by Mr. Stern's executor, Elaine F. Friedman, Esq., allows the Board to use the bequest to fund workshops for members, chiefly to compensate the instructors.

Previously, the Circle was not allowed to touch these some \$56,000 in our bank account except for the controversial

Stern award, which no one wanted to receive (see March/April issue of the *Gotham*: "Report from the President"). Now, the Board can use the proceeds from the workshop registrations to cover other ongoing expenses, such as the design of the Gotham—now available online only to save costs—and our new paid administrator.

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The Gotham Translator accepts and welcomes contributions of articles about all aspects of translation and translator-related issues. These may include, but are not limited to:

- specific translation problems
- approaches to translation
- legal issues
- the business of translation
- dictionary and hardware/software reviews
- reviews of books, conferences and workshops.

Any ideas or leads on interesting stories and articles for which we may try to obtain reprint permissions are also welcome.

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. In case of previously published submissions, please advise us of this fact at the time of submission.

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Our first paid administrator, Louise Jennewine, took up her duties as of January 1, 2014. Her activities facilitating and coordinating the Board's work have been extraordinarily salutary already, improving the member experience and further implementing the association's principles as stated in the Bylaws. Louise submits a monthly report of her work, including a review of the past month and a list of her goals for the coming month, to Paolo and me.

Louise and I regularly go over these tasks and projects. Some of them have been: 1) helping Edna Ditaranto and Diana Méndez organize our upcoming weekend workshop; 2) assisting with the new Web site project; 3) assisting with our outreach effort; 4) sending out event announcements by e-mail blast; 5) managing our member drive and other tasks involving our paid intern, Miguelina Núñez; and 6) keeping track of incoming messages on our Skype account.

In addition to Louise, Sarah Edelman and I have been involved in organizing outreach events, with one at NYU and another for attorneys in the works. Last fall Diana Méndez and I presented

at NYU and Hunter. While last fall we presented to students of masters and undergraduate language programs at NYU, this time we will present to non-credit students.

The main project our intern Miguelina Núñez has worked on is member outreach, which has entailed her finding ATA members in the tri-state area who are not current or former New York Circle members. We have contacted these individuals and corporations outlining the benefits of becoming members of the Circle. In the end, this search yielded us 328 new contacts, but we do not yet have figures as to how many have become NYCT members.

The Web site

Starting in 2012, the Board investigated how the Circle might improve the functionality of the New York Circle Web site. Problems with the Web site first became apparent to me when I attempted to use it to send out e-mail blasts, which resulted in unformatted e-mails that were hard even to decipher. It was an embarrassment to me, the Board, and the organization. Other problems also surfaced: membership renewals had to be processed manually by the Board; members often got error

messages when they attempted to renew; there were multiple typos on the site; and the calendar function did not work.

Although, not before long, we were able to remedy the announcement problem by setting up an account with Constant Contact, the member database in particular turned out to be a persistent headache. Besides the above-mentioned manual processing of renewals, if we deactivated any old member, we would not be able to review their data by generating a member report. In other words, it made it so we could only review the records of deactivated members manually, by sifting through them one by one on the Web site.

By end of 2012, it was obvious that we needed a new Web site. The database was a source of frustration for members and the Board, but the Web site itself was designed in the antiquated asp.net format and would continue to cause glitches, such as manifested in the ill-formatted e-mail blasts.

After a protracted search, Secretary Gigi Branch-Shaw and I were able to find a designer and programmer who came well recommended and would migrate

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our site to WordPress. This would enable us to update and maintain it much more easily and use a basic theme that would be compatible with countless plugins. The designer, who designed the Web site for our sister organization the Colorado Translators Association as well as many individual translators, is Websites for Translators.

After months of dialogue back and forth about the design and functionality, we are currently in the process of implementing the site. Completion of the site was slated for April, but has been delayed due to the numerous coding details and the difficulties of coordinating with the designer and programmers in Europe. Yet, once the new site gets off the ground, we expect that it will significantly improve the user experience and the ability of the Board to communicate with members; it will also look and work better for visitors.

Personnel changes

Program Director Diana Méndez has put on several very successful events, including a panel on working in the translation industry, a résumé workshop, and a talk on medical interpreting, which is in the works as of this

writing. Unfortunately for us, Diana will be participating in a doctoral program outside of the city, so we will be losing her as of June 1 of this year. I am happy to say, however, that member Kate Deimling has agreed to join the Board as program director. Diana, Louise, and I are in the process of bringing Kate up to speed, and we have high hopes and expectations of her coming role.

On a tragic note, President-Elect Chunwen Wang passed away in February (see obituary in this Gotham). I have since appointed Valeriya Yermishova to fill her place. Valeriya was the logical choice since she was the run-up candidate for president-elect in last year's elections. Valeriya seems eager to contribute to our fine organization, and the rest of the Board is also very excited to work with her.

Our new vice-presidential system will enter into force as of January 1, 2015. We will hold an election in November of this year for president and vice-president and the victors will begin their two-year terms of office as of that date. The new system will reduce the yearly hustle to find an incoming president-elect to a biannual election of president and vice-president. The trea-

surer, secretary, and program director will be elected to begin their two-year terms the alternate years, i.e. effective January 1, 2016. I will step down as president at the end of 2014, but we hope that Valeriya will run as a candidate for presidency. Since Secretary Gigi Branch-Shaw and Treasurer Paolo Modigliani will end their current terms as of December 31 of this year under the old system, a one-time, one-year term will have to apply to their successors for 2015. Then, the November 2015 elections will decide who will serve as treasurer, secretary, and program director for 2016-2017.

Paolo and Gigi have notified me that they will step down as treasurer and secretary, respectively, as of December 31, 2014, due to other commitments. This is disheartening news, since they have both shown themselves to be unusually competent and reliable officers. Yet we expect that the newly formed nomination committee, consisting of Martin Hoffman and Greg Gencarello, will yield worthy candidates to fill their shoes.

I would be remiss not to mention the contributions of several members who have stepped up to volunteer. Kate Deimling and Bernard Askienazy have

been involved in editing the Gotham. And as I mentioned, Sarah Edelman has been involved in our ongoing outreach effort. The contributions of our intern, Miguelina Núñez, have been significant, including her crucial role in our new member drive.

What this means to members

I think it is obvious that all of these projects are serving members. Although it should be clear to the reader from the foregoing that a lot of energy and resources go into keeping the organization afloat, we are not living hand to mouth. A better Web site and better accounting will improve the member experience and maximize our financial efficiency. They will also serve as a platform for us to realize our larger goals. The same can be said of the new president/vice-president system, which will smooth the transitions of officers. I should note that, although Paolo and Gigi have announced that they will not run for additional terms, they have pledged to continue to support the projects they have initiated after their current terms.

Our great monthly meetings help their attendees position themselves better in the market with the latest, most as-

tute, and most direct information and analysis. Instituting the paid administrator insures our sustainability and continuity as an organization, in addition to improving the member experience. Since Margarite Heintz Montez's capable stewardship of the *Gotham Translator*, it is published with much greater consistency, enabling members to exchange ideas and stay up to date more and better. The new members acquired by Miguelina's project will not only strengthen us by their sheer numbers but by the human resources they bring to bear.

But will these efforts mean better paid work for members? Will they boost quality in a significant and pervasive way? Will they mean that translators and interpreters know where to look for good clients who will treat them fairly and pay them well? Will customers be better able to navigate the market for translation and interpreting services?

Conclusion

I would argue that we are doing just about everything we can short of sitting down with the ATA and discussing the issue of rates and quality and serious regulation of the industry. By regulation I mean an industry where

high-quality work will yield fair remuneration and where novice linguists have clarity about what path to take to achieve success commensurate to their abilities. Such regulation would entail that customers could look to the New York Circle of Translators or the ATA with confidence as guides to finding reliable, high-quality services.

The ideal I outline above may still be a ways off. In fact, such ambitious regulations are beyond our current capacity if not beyond our authority. But I would like to think that the projects we are working on now are moving in the direction of a market in which linguists, their clients, and society all get a fair deal. I think it is incumbent on us, as members and as the Board, to continue this discussion and look for ways to make such a market possible. ■

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 Courts. He also translates chiefly legal documents from Dutch, Spanish, and German into English. He currently serves as president of the New York Circle of Translators.

*This article is the second in a series of two on the New York Circle's identity and larger goals. The first article appeared in the last issue of the Gotham and discussed the work of my administration to date.



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

CAT Corner

KILGRAY TRANSLATION TECHNOLOGIES RELEASES memoQ 2014

memoQ 2014 offers a wealth of productivity boosters for individual translators, translation companies and other companies alike.

Project templates completely automate the management of recurring project types. This saves project manager training time and makes the translation workflow less prone to errors. Working with memoQ 2014's new project template and workflow automation feature, both individual translators and project managers can save 80% of the clicks previously needed for project setup and management. memoQ 2014's translation pane has been enhanced to provide project managers with an instant overview of projects, including structure and assignment information.

Image localization enables memoQ 2014 users to manage image localization within their standard localization processes: it automates the process of extracting images embedded in documents and includes functionality for transcription, sending notes to localizers, and re-inserting images.

Using Language Terminal, individual translators and project managers can manage their translation projects in an easier, more efficient way. In addition to creating real-time previews for translating Adobe InDesign files, Language Terminal users can create, in parallel, local or online projects in memoQ and project records in Language Terminal, and also check out the progress of their projects, and assign Language Terminal users to their memoQ projects.

Other features for translators include importing terminology from SDL Trados and STAR Transit packages, renaming projects and translation resources, joining several files together or splitting them for translating with a pre-

view. The new release also adds support for Adobe Photoshop files and integrates with TaaS (Terminology as a Service), a cloud-based terminology platform.

Translators and translation companies often receive Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel files that have objects embedded within. memoQ 2014 by default extracts these embedded objects and automatically adds them to the project – so handling these became much easier than before.

Please read more about what's new in memoQ 2014 for individual translators at <http://kilgray.com/products/memoq/whatsnew> and for translation companies and other companies at <http://kilgray.com/products/memoq-server/whatsnew>.

Kilgray offers a fully functional, 45-day free trial for memoQ translator pro 2014 and a 30-day free trial for memoQ server 2014. Kilgray gives one year of free upgrades and support for new customers. Existing customers can buy an upgrade and support package for another year for 20% of the list price. ■

ABOUT memoQ

memoQ is the world's most advanced translation environment for translators, reviewers, translation companies and other companies involved in localizing communications. memoQ is award-winning software appreciated by thousands of individual and in-house translators and hundreds of translation companies and enterprise customers.

Learn more about memoQ translator pro at <http://kilgray.com/products/memoq>, the memoQ server at <http://kilgray.com/products/memoq-server> and the memoQ cloud server solution at <http://kilgray.com/products/memoq-cloud>.

CHUNWEN WANG

Dear New York Circle Members,

On behalf of the Board, I express with great sadness the loss of our president-elect Chunwen Wang. Chunwen passed away on February 22, 2014. The Board respects the mourning and privacy of Chunwen's family, who has not shared further information with us. Chunwen was only 47.

We were charmed by Chunwen's humility. Despite her monumental career achievements, including being a United Nations interpreter and ATA-certified English to Chinese translator, she expressed profound gratitude for being elected as president-elect. Indeed, she seemed similarly to appreciate any fortune that befell her.

The Board was delighted to have Chunwen join us. In particular, Chunwen had very useful and inspiring ideas about doing outreach to translation and interpreting end-clients. She had offered to facilitate such events with Chinese business and community organizations, among others. We can only imagine what other ideas and actions she would have contributed if her life had not ended so prematurely.

Chunwen informed us of her health condition around the time of the election. Apparently it was not until very recently that she was diagnosed with the terminal heart condition. Since we knew her health was delicate, we urged her to take care of herself first and let us know if there was anything she was not up to. We had not been able to reach her for the last few months.

Members can express their regret and honor for Chunwen via tributes.com:

<http://www.tributes.com/obituary/show/Chunwen-Wang-100694256>

Sincerely,

Leonard Morin

President

New York Circle of Translators

BOARD REPLACEMENTS

Due to the tragic and premature death of Chunwen Wang, our president-elect as of this year, and the departure from New York City of Diana Méndez, our current program director, the Board has had to find replacements. Fortunately, two very capable members have had the generosity to step up and work on behalf of their colleagues. Here are their introductions.

Valeriya Yermishova (French and Russian to English translator), President-Elect (till January 1, 2015)

I earned a B.A. in French Language and Literature from SUNY Binghamton and a French-to-English translation certificate from NYU SCPS, and am currently working on a Russian-to-English translation certificate at the University of Chicago Graham School. Thanks to mentoring from former NYCT Mentoring Committee Chair Lana Rachkovskaya, I began my career in project management and proofreading in early 2011. Currently, I proofread high-volume financial documentation and translate mostly legal, business and literary texts. I am excited to spend the summer working on my first book-length translation for Dalkey Archive Press and to start work as a freelance UN translator and précis-writer this fall.

Since joining the NYCT in 2010, I met wonderful colleagues both in and outside my language pairs and received invaluable professional advice. I am extremely grateful to this organization and would like to support the Board in planning interesting and relevant events for our members, growing our membership and educating potential clients about our work. In addition to the NYCT, I am a member of the ATA and NAJIT and organize a weekly in-person French-to-English translation workshop.

Kate Deimling, Program Director (till January 1, 2016)

*Kate Deimling is an ATA-certified French-to-English translator specializing in art and culture, journalism, marketing, and international development. She also holds a Ph.D. in French from Columbia University. In addition to translating, Kate covers the New York art world for the French newspaper *Le Journal des Arts*. She has gained a lot from the presentations and camaraderie of the Circle and looks forward to helping members keep up with trends in their fields and learn about various aspects of the profession in her new role as program director. Suggestions welcome!*

Thanks from the Board to Valeriya and Kate! We are really looking forward to working with you! ■

RECAP: MAY MEETING

Improving LEP Population Health & Health Care Through Meaningful Communication –
Eric Candle, President National Training Institute, NY Chapter Chair International Medical Interpreters Association

recapped by **Margarite Heintz Montez**

The monthly meeting started with some startling facts. NY State has 20 million people, 25% of them or roughly 5 million can't speak English. New York City hospitals see about 600 of these people (Limited English Proficiency patients) per day. Some 250,000 per year. What does this mean in terms of health care? Quite a lot actually.

Because of this medical interpreting has experienced a tremendous amount of growth in the past 15 years and is expected to keep growing. While there are many reasons that patients do not receive the needed care such as financial and cultural, oftentimes something as simple as transportation to and from the doctor or hospital can pose an issue. However, one reason stands out.

Communication is the root cause of patient harm. This is true in 70% of cases. Not being able to read or understand hospital admission forms or informed consent forms led to greater costs for hospitals and more readmissions. This inspired the International Medical Interpreters Association to begin trainings and certification for medical interpreters. New laws have also been beneficial in terms of decent medical care. These have helped both the medical staff, hospital, interpreters and most importantly patients.

Both cultural and language barriers exist in terms of providing service to LEP patients. Something as simple as a "check" mark in a box on a list of symptoms or medications can pose a problem. Here in the States when a

patient "checks" a box it means "yes" I have that symptom or "yes" I take blood pressure pills. In China, Japan and some Scandinavian countries a "check" means something different. 55% of native English speakers born in the U.S. do not understand "doctor speak." How can a LEP patient even begin to comprehend what medical personnel are trying to explain to them? This is where a qualified medical interpreter steps in.

Steps being taken to establish medical interpretation as a professional field are:

- clarifying terminology
- clarifying medical interpreter roles
- establishing a code of ethics and standards of practice

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MANY TRANSLATORS HAVE A ONE-DIMENSIONAL VIEW OF WHO THEY ARE

Patenttranslator: reprinted from the Patenttranslators Blog with kind permission from Steve Vitek

I have noticed that many translators have a one-dimensional view of who they are and what it is that they can do.

A long time ago, when I was starting out as a freelance translator 27 years in San Francisco, back when a 20 MB hard disk was an elitist luxury (my first computer, called "Leading Edge", had only two floppy drives), and noisy dot matrix printers were hungrily eating whole boxes of special, perforated computer paper, I thought of myself as a guy who will simply concentrate on translating, which naturally meant that I would be working only or mostly for translation agencies because I had no idea how to go about finding direct customers on my own.

Without giving the matter much thought, I accepted as perfectly natural a division of labor in which translators concentrate on translating, while translation agencies concentrate on finding work for translators and channeling it to the best translators who then don't

have to worry much about anything, other than the quality of their work, once a relationship of trust has been established between a translator and a translation agency.

And it worked like this, at least for me it did, for many years. The problem is, the relationship of trust between a translator and an agency has been severely damaged by the corporate translation agency model. And because trust based on past experience is not even a valid argument in this new bottom-line model, simple Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs), which used to have only a hundred words or so when their main purpose was still to protect clients' confidential information, were turned into what I call Declarations of Acceptance of Servitude which these day can easily run well over 3,000 words.

To be sure, there are still agencies, usually small ones, often but not always run by translators or former translators who continue the tradition in which

trust based on past results and experience forms the most important content of the relationship between a translator and an agency, but they are probably in a minority now.

But translators still have several choices in this new environment.

1. They can accept the new definition of their role in the translation process in which they are relegated to being cheap, hired help, easily replaceable by another, cheaper "vendor" of translation services in the corporate translation agency model.

Acceptance of this role represents the path of the least resistance, and it may make sense for some people to do so, especially if they are just starting out, depending on the personality of the translator.

2. They can concentrate on working only or mostly for the traditional type of agency in which translators are sought out mostly for their

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unique characteristics and skills including education, expertise and experience rather than mostly on the basis of how much they charge.

To me it makes much more sense to refuse to work for the bottom-line type of translation agencies mentioned under point 1. No matter how little one charges, somebody out there will always charge less, which means that the translators in this kind of relationship will constantly be exposed to the pressures and continuous demands to lower their rates.

The traditional business model of agencies that could be called "translation agencies with a human face" is less sensitive to the pricing pressure, although obviously, it is not immune to it either. It is much harder to find these agencies because they seem to be in a minority now. However, this is the only kind of agency that I am still working for now.

Because every translator has a different background, different education, different experience and skills, and different languages and translation fields are offered by different people, once a "good fit" is found between the capa-

bilities of a translator and an agency, a relationship which can last for years or even decades is often established in the traditional translator-agency business model.

3. But there is also a third choice that many entrepreneurial translators are making. Instead of concentrating all of their efforts, energy and time on trying to drum up business only from translation agencies, they also actively pursue direct customers.

Identifying direct customers is even harder than trying to identify translation agencies that still pay good rates and treat translators as valued professionals rather than as easily replaceable obedient cogs in a complicated machinery designed to generate the maximum profit as quickly as possible.

But it can be done, and different translators use different methods for this purpose. I rely mostly on my website (I am not sure that the blog helps much as it is aimed mostly at translators rather than clients or potential clients), and on traditional methods such as direct mailings and referrals from my existing clients, mostly patent law firms.

While it is much more difficult to determine who and where our direct

clients are, once they do figure it out, translators can use basically the same methods, or at least very similar ones, to advertise their presence and capabilities to them instead of to agencies.

A translator who works only for translation agencies has only one kind of income: the income that is generated from his translations, after the agency has taken its cut. A translator who works also or mostly for direct clients should be able to eventually generate three kinds of income:

A) Income generated from translations for translation agencies (after the agency has taken its commission).

B) Income generated from translations for direct clients (at higher rates because no agency commission is involved).

C) Income generated by other translators working for a translator who performs the function of an agency.

Although it is generally better to be able to rely on three types of income instead of just one, many translators, perhaps even most of them, would not be interested in working as an agency in addition to doing the kind of work that they prefer, namely translate. This is a different type of work and there is a

learning curve with many dangers, especially during the initial phase.

But I believe that to those of us who enjoy both translating and management of translation projects, the decision whether to learn how to run a translation business that is oriented mostly or only towards translation agencies, or mostly or only toward direct clients, the choice in this case should be a no-brainer.

Instead of a one dimensional view of what translators can do for a living, a three-dimensional view emerges of a small, specialized translation business (the fashionable term is “a boutique”) that unlike the corporate translation model is much better suited to cater to many niche markets that large translation agencies are not able to satisfy, partly because most of the people who are managing and working in these mega agencies (monolingual owners and young, inexperienced and usually also monolingual project managers) are due to their limitations simply unable to tell a good translation from a mediocre or a bad translation. ■

NYCT SUMER PICNIC

The NYCT Sumer Picnic will be held in Central Park on Sunday, August 3rd. The rain date is Sunday, August 10th. Mark your calendars.

MAY MEETING

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- providing education/training of medical interpreters
- providing education/training of interpreter trainers
- training providers who work with medical interpreters
- establishing national certification for interpreters
- establishing an accreditation process

A qualified medical interpreter should have strong language skills that should be tested in language proficiency. They should also be culturally aware. Interpreters should know medical terminology and complete a training program. They must grow through continuing education and adhere to a code of pro-

fessional ethics.

Both the Affordable Care Act and the Joint Commission Standards for Patient-Centered Communication have changed the healthcare arena for LEP patients and interpreters. One change is that hospitals must provide a qualified interpreter for patients. This increases the need for qualified interpreters.

Mr. Candle went on to explain the IMIA’s training. It consists of 4 hours and there are two different parts. Certification is currently available in Spanish, Cantonese, Russian, Vietnamese and Mandarin.

More information can be found at www.certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org and www.healthcareinterpretercertification.org ■



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 meetings, summer picnic and 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!