



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

October 2002

A Publication of The New York Circle of Translators

The One With The Most Books Wins *by Marie José Daigneault*



Marie José Daigneault

This used to be what translation was all about. I remember with a certain amount of nostalgia those days (and many nights) searching through pages and pages of reference books for the perfect expression, the exact meaning, the subtle nuance. The smell of ink and paper on my

fingertips. The crisp sound of turning pages. Endless little black letters on white, or often yellowed, background. And also calling colleagues, which provided for a nice little interlude in an otherwise very quiet and undisturbed environment, surrounded only by those silent, yet knowledge-full, literary dinosaurs.

Those days are gone. Today, being a translator is all about *The One with the Most Computer Skills Wins!* The advent of word processors, faxes and modems, initially, then e-mail, translation memory, terminology databases available on CDs and on-line, and the Internet, among other beauties (or demons, depending on how well your Internet connection is working that day) have literally shattered the old way of working, and revolutionized our industry.

Of course, demand for speed has also increased three-fold, but to a large extent, the proper use of these tools makes it possible to achieve tighter deadlines, while still maintaining quality.

Unfortunately, these technologies can also be overwhelming at times. I have found that the best way to remain abreast of the new tools is still to join professional associations, read their publications, attend meetings, conferences, workshops and networking events, take classes, and remain ever curious.

Next month, our mother association, the *American Translator Association*, will be holding its annual conference in Atlanta. If you have never attended one of them or are not planning to go this year, you should seriously consider or reconsider it. It is by far the best place in the US to learn more about our industry and the up and coming technologies that will continue to change, and dictate, the way we do business.

NYCT will also be offering continuing education opportunities, as it has in the past, including a workshop this month on translating for international organizations.

Also, relationships still go to great lengths to help all those involved figure out how these things operate, and how we can best utilize them to achieve our goals and deadlines!

Staying up-to-date is essential to our success and credibility as professional linguists. It ultimately saves

us valuable time and allows us to produce even better, more consistent output. Time is money, and yes, we must take time to make time.

I hope to see you all in force at the upcoming ATA Conference and NYCT events. ■

Staying up-to-date is essential to our success and credibility as professional linguists.

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Call For Nominations

The Board is proud to announce that it has asked Marian S. Greenfield, who has kindly accepted, to once again chair the Nominating Committee for this year's election of Circle officers that will serve during 2003 and 2004. The Committee is now in the process of putting together a slate of candidates for the three positions that need to be filled: **President-Elect**, **Treasurer**, and **Program Director**. All three have a two-year term, the President-Elect serving as President the second year (a short description of each position appears elsewhere in this issue). While officers will not receive compensation for their work, travel expenses incurred in order to attend the required monthly Membership meetings and Board meetings may be reimbursed upon request.

Nominations by petition are also possible. They require a written petition signed by five Circle members in good standing, which must be submitted to the Circle Membership Secretary (Consuelo Corretjer-Lee, fax number 212-627-4506) no later than October 10, 2002.

The deadline for Candidate statements is **October 15**,

2002. Statements should be sent to Teresa Waldes at twaldes@ix.netcom.com for publication in the November issue of the Gotham. Ballots will also be included in the November issue of the Gotham and the election will take place on November 30, 2002. Elected Officers will be announced at the December 2002 Holiday Party. We look forward to hearing from you! ■

The NYCT 2002 Board

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The NYCT 2003-2004 Board

Description of positions

President-Elect

The President-Elect shall assist the President as required by the latter and shall furthermore perform the duties of President in the event of the latter's absence or incapacity, resignation, removal from office, or other vacancy in such office. (Consult the Bylaws for a description of the President's duties.)

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall receive and collect all monies; record all monies received and disbursed in any form on behalf of the Circle; deposit all the funds of the Association in a bank designated by the Board of Directors; and share with the President the right to make withdrawals and sign checks individually for amounts not exceeding one thousand U.S. dollars (US\$1,000). All disbursements in excess of said sum of \$1,000 must first be approved by the Board, and all checks or payment orders in excess of \$1,000 shall be signed by both the Treasurer and the President. The Treasurer shall be the Chair of the Circle Finance Committee and shall, at the Annual Meeting of the Circle or at other times requested by the Board of Directors, make report of the financial condition of the Circle. The books and records kept by the Treasurer shall remain the property of the Circle and shall be available for inspection at any time by the Board of Directors or an auditor appointed by the Board. The Treasurer shall submit a financial report to the Board of Directors of the American Translators Association. It shall also be incumbent on the Treasurer to prepare a balance sheet, which shall be audited and submitted for the members' approval at the annual meeting of the Circle.

Program Director

The Program Director shall be responsible for planning, preparing and organizing monthly meetings, dinners and events such as networking events and holiday parties. ■

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Our Editor, Ellen Sowchek, has decided to hand in her resignation. Ellen has produced several issues of the Gotham, improving its contents along the way. Says Ellen: "I am really pleased that the Gotham is back on track. It is becoming a real, substantive publication again, and I am very proud of the issues that appeared under my editorship."

Goodbye and Thanks to our Editor

Our thanks go to Ellen for her efforts. We wish her health and success in her endeavours.

Our President-Elect, Teresa Waldes, will be looking for a replacement for this volunteer position. Please submit any candidatures to twaldes@ix.netcom.com.

The NYCT Board

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NYCT October 22nd Meeting to Focus on Translation and Localization

Join us on October 22nd for an exciting meeting on translation and localization! Carla DiFranco will be speaking to us on the skills needed for translators working in today's localization market. Learn how to add value to your services as a translator and partner with your clients, who need your expertise and support. We will discuss, from a translator and project manager point of view, what you should know about HTML, XML, fonts and various translation tools, and how to communicate with clients interested in globalizing their content. This presentation is designed to be attendee-friendly! Handouts will be provided.

Carla DiFranco is currently a Localization Program Manager at Microsoft, specializing in translation tools, recycling strategies and workflow improvement. Previously she worked as a freelance translator (German to English patent translation) as well as operations manager of a localization company, specializing in web-based training courses. She has been teaching terminology, translation and computer applications for translators since 1997.

The meeting will be held at the Masonic Hall, 71 West 23rd Street, room 2 Central, from 6:30-8:00 p.m. Join us for dinner afterwards at Bondi's Restaurant, located at 7 West 20th St. Price per plate is \$27, tax and tips included. Dinner is *cash only* (no cheque or c. card payment). Drinks are paid for individually. Please reserve by e-mailing Debbie at dfolaron1@nyc.rr.com or calling (212) 334-3060. We look forward to seeing you there! ■

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Translation Studies and Court Interpreting at NYU

*by Milena Savova, Director
Center for Foreign Languages and Translation*

Since 1984 the School of Continuing and Professional Studies has been offering professional translator training to the New York community. The development of the program and its growth have been closely linked with the NYCT: the Circle is our first resource for instructors and a large number of our students come from there too. We give back by providing training in areas that are important to the success of translators as well as by encouraging our students to join NYCT as early as possible. We also take pride in the fact that we have several of our graduates on the faculty.

Thanks to the School's aggressive development of online courses we have been able to start offering our programs to students beyond New York City, all over the US, and abroad. Our current non-degree offerings are as follows: French to English, English to Spanish and Spanish to English programs are offered both on site in NY and online; German to English and English to Portuguese are offered only online. The latter two were our smallest programs and have been strengthened significantly by drawing on a larger pool of applicants.

There is a great deal of anxiety on the part of students and faculty as they embark on their first online experience. And it's understandable: being an Internet and e-mail user helps but does not fully prepare you for online learning/teaching. A common phrase nowadays is "Online instruction is the future." I wouldn't unreservedly subscribe to it. Online instruction is definitely a part of the future, an option, an alternative, but all instruction will not be online: We, humans, still need the "old-fashioned" human interaction. The greatest advantage of online education is the access it provides to people who wouldn't otherwise have that opportunity. Currently, we have students in Argentina, Brazil, India, Kenya, and numerous states in the US. We have a student in California who lives four hours away from the nearest library. We can also broaden our faculty hiring base: we have faculty in Argentina, Brazil, Seattle, South Africa, Spain and other places.

Translation is an activity that lends itself to online instruction since nowadays all translation work is performed electronically anyway. In that respect the online instruc-

tional medium eases students' transition into the profession. The teaching and learning online experience differs from the traditional onsite one but the results can be the same. Online pedagogy is still in its infancy and we are learning and discovering new ways of teaching with every new course. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each

and every one of you who have put their trust in us and supported our efforts in this endeavor - it hasn't been easy or smooth but with everyone's input and dedication it has been getting better. Our progress has also been due to the excellent support from the School's Office of Information Technology. This is a group of people who are not only at the top of the profession but are also truly committed to making our courses a success. Thanks to their efforts

we are using a cutting-edge technology, which allows for real-time written communication as well as live audio contact.

Based on the success of our non-credit offerings we have taken the bold step of developing a graduate Master of Science program in translation to be offered online. It will be launched in Spring 2003. Its focus is legal and financial translation. The target language is English and, initially, it will be offered with five source languages, viz. French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. Later we will add Arabic, Chinese,

Japanese, Korean and Russian. Admission requirements are a Bachelor's degree or equivalent, and two source languages. People who have only one source language, or whose second source language is not strong enough, can apply to a Graduate Certificate program, beef up their second source language in the meantime, and then move into the Master's program. To obtain an MS degree students will need to take 42 credits and develop and defend a thesis (a large translation project.) To obtain a Graduate Certificate students will need 21 credits without a thesis. Both groups of students will be taking the same courses. All applicants will have to pass an admissions test. Students will have to take required and elective courses in three groups: language theory courses, subject-matter background courses, and practical translation courses.

Here is how you can find out more on our programs:

If you go to www.scps.nyu.edu/translation, you will find out more about the curriculum of both credit and non-credit programs. By going to www.thevirtualcollege.org you will peek into the "The Virtual College" software platform,



which is used for all of our online courses. If you call (212) 998-7200, you can request an application packet for the MS and Graduate Certificate programs. And last but not least, if you call our office at (212) 998-7030 you can talk to a human being.

Any description of what we do would be incomplete without mentioning the Spanish/English Court Interpreting program. It was launched six and a half years ago and is going strong. Unlike the translation programs where students must take core courses and electives, in court interpreting everyone has to take the required six courses. Students acquire a solid foundation for entering the profession of court interpreter. Reports from the field indicate that our graduates are successful in obtaining jobs and performing at them. A number of graduates have passed state and/or federal certification.

As we begin a new and exciting academic year and a new season in the life of NYCT I would like to invite all of you to contact us with ideas and feedback on our performance in training the next generation of translators. Whenever we need new instructors we turn to the Circle first. Don't hesitate to contact my colleagues or me, if you are interested in teaching - our doors have always been open to Circle members. I thank you for all your support and wish you a successful and peaceful year. ■

Jane C. Lamb-Ruiz

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Auracom International is proud to offer its continued support and appreciation to the members of NYCT, ATA and other professional organizations that aim at improving the translation industry's standards.

A Roundelay of Report-Writers

by Peter Wheeler

The presidents of China and Colombia were having difficulty finding a topic in which they shared an interest.

"Seen much of Wheeler the Wreport-Writer wrecently?" "Not since that time that he was only two bodyguards away from me," replied President Jiang, relieved that the conversation was flowing again. President Pastrana realized he was bested - "Oh, in my case he was right at the back of the hall." The president of Burkina Faso joined in eagerly: "When I opened a meeting in Ouagadougou, Wheeler was sitting outside in the car with his driver. He seemed to think he'd already seen too many official openings, but I did get a sort of contact buzz from his distant presence."

The first two looked around in some surprise, listened politely to the speaker, and returned to their conversation. Jiang had established his dominance now, but his triumph was short-lived -- he was about to be trumped by Vice-President Gore: "Well, I've had him on the same platform as me." Gore looked smug, the others crestfallen. "Of course, that was in the days when they had the report-writers up on the podium, instead of as nowadays at the back of the hall."

What are these report-writers? Or précis-writers, or summary-record writers, or even rapporteurs? Well, they kinda, like, you know, write reports. Of international meetings. Why would a member of the Circle be one? Because most of them are in fact translators. Within the UN system, for much of their working time the translators are not actually translating, but acting as report-writers for meetings. On the basis that it is better for report-writers to be listening to the speakers directly, rather than through the filter of the interpreters, in as many cases as possible. Since UN translators have to have three official languages -- as against the two required of non-language officials -- this makes them the personnel of choice when there is report-writing to be done. And the same principle is followed when the report-writers are freelancers under contract.

Jotting down what happened in a meeting sounds like a walk in the park -- a stroll in the Dragon Pool Park, as President Jiang might have said - but the catch is that the report of one day's meeting is usually required by the following morning. Which means that we start the meat of our work when the delegates are already packing up for the evening. Which in turn can lead to some pretty late nights, some fairly zonked-out report-writers and a considerable effort to be back on station, suit polished shiny and shoes pressed crisply, tie brushed flat and hair neatly knotted, at

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the beginning of the next day.

The long nights start with the question of what sort of report is required. Paradoxically, the easiest are those where we are supposed to record every delegate's position-what we call the "he said she said" type. There, the main requirement is fiendish speed at note-taking. More difficult are the reports where we are supposed to distill only the essence: "Hey, guys, that stuff about the Kasserine Pass, and 'C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre,' and the White Mountain, and 'Some chicken - some neck,' he didn't actually mean all that stuff, right? He was just saying 'Back off!,' right? And since whatsisname did back off, we can leave all that out, right?"

Those long nights can take on a dreamlike quality. Not only because of the sheer intensity of concentration needed for the write-ups, but also because of the tension between getting it done by the impossible deadline and getting it done right. It is then that the details of producing a really correct report seem to loom implacably largest: is it "of" or "on" in the Universal Declaration ... Human Rights? And the Office of the High Commissioner ... Human Rights? Is that "on," or "of," or "for?" I knew it once, I wrote it down on an envelope. And what about the Commission ... Human Rights? Then I tucked the envelope somewhere I'd be sure to remember. But what about the International Convention ... Economic, Social and Cultural Rights? Where did I put that envelope?

Is "the" up or down when "Lao People's Democratic Republic" comes in the middle of a sentence? Or should that be Democratic People's Republic? Korea's one way round, isn't it, and Laos is the other. And the "the" rule - Laos is one way, isn't it, and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" is the other. Or not? Or am I getting confused? I wrote it down on an envelope somewhere.

"Was Kazakhstan speaking as Kazakhstan, or as a co-opted member of the Polish delegation?" "When she's Kazakhstan, she speaks Russian; when she's a co-opted member of Poland, she speaks English."

"You've got to shorten this - you're giving Greenpeace more lines than the President of the host country!"

"That guy from Ramsar, observing at this meeting of the Biodiversity Convention, when he said 'Of course, the Convention is absolutely the primary environmental instrument,' did he mean that the Ramsar Convention is, or that Biodiv is?"

At other times the stress comes paradoxically because there is no tension, just waiting, waiting, waiting; for example because our report cannot be put to bed until some politically sensitive wording has been agreed between different sides. "... may be genetically modified living organisms...." / "... might be genetically modified living

organisms...." Those can be the really long ones. Then, as the evenings turn into nights and the nights turn into early mornings, the questions tend to be different: "What's the latest you can buy wine in Montreal?" (11 p.m., although I did once persuade a dépanneur owner to sell me some at 2 a.m. As a Muslim, he probably thought that the extra three hours on my route to perdition weren't going to make a difference anyway!) Or "Hey, chaps, how do you say 'Bring it to Security, and then ask for the leport liters'? I've found an all-night sushi delivery place." Or, as one of our leaders will say with a delightful Irish lilt: "Will ye have a drop o' Jameson?" We usually will. (On one such occasion, I



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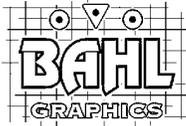
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remembered that I had been grocery shopping that day and had a huge slab of Brie in my briefcase. "Will ye have a drop o' Jameson?" "D'you want a lump of Brie?" "Will ye have another drop o' Jameson?" "Want another chunk of Brie?" All night long.)

And then there was the time in Sri Lanka when it really looked as if we would finish work in time to get to at least the end of the cocktail reception. (Receptions are good, even if we don't manage to attend, because we know that 99% of the delegates will be there, and thus won't be tampering with our report!) Work was going well, there was a bus and an Army escort standing by to take us from the conference building to the center of Colombo, we needed just a little more time... and then an air-conditioner blew. The computers started to overheat, one by one the power outlets shut down and the irritating chirping of the UPSs got louder, our network went down making our references inaccessible, documents became corrupted, computer technicians looked hopeless, the room got hotter. Finally, the bus left with the documents control staff, but without the report-writers.

But Docs Control did not forget their colleagues! Around midnight, they came back from the reception bearing dishes of curry which had cooled down enough to congeal and turn greasy, and bottles of white wine which -- in sympathy --

had warmed up to about the same temperature!

In those bizarre hours, when nothing seems to be going right, the two types of question sometimes blur into one another: "Was that French guy speaking as France, as the European Union and its Member States, as the European Commission, or as the observer from the Sanctions Committee?" "I don't know, but I took a note.... hey! Who's put a dollop of curry on my notes?"

"Who was that one who spoke in Arabic between Japan and Belgium? I've only got 'L.'" "I just put 'L,' too, but I'm pretty sure it was Libya." "I only put 'L' as well, but I'm certain it was Lebanon." "That's not 'L,' it's 'E' for 'Egypt' with smudges of Brie on it!!"

But suddenly, incredibly, the last 't' has been dotted and the last 'i' crossed, the last signature of approval obtained, the name of every convention and international organization checked and rechecked, and the day's report can go for reproduction. At the same time, it will be going -- perhaps going halfway around the world to a more useful time-zone -- for translation into the other five languages, but for the report-writers the day is finally done.

The dawn sky is lightening.

"Will ye have a drop o' Jameson?" ■

Susana Greiss

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The New York Circle of Translators (NYCT) is a New York State not-for-profit corporation regrouping 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)

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