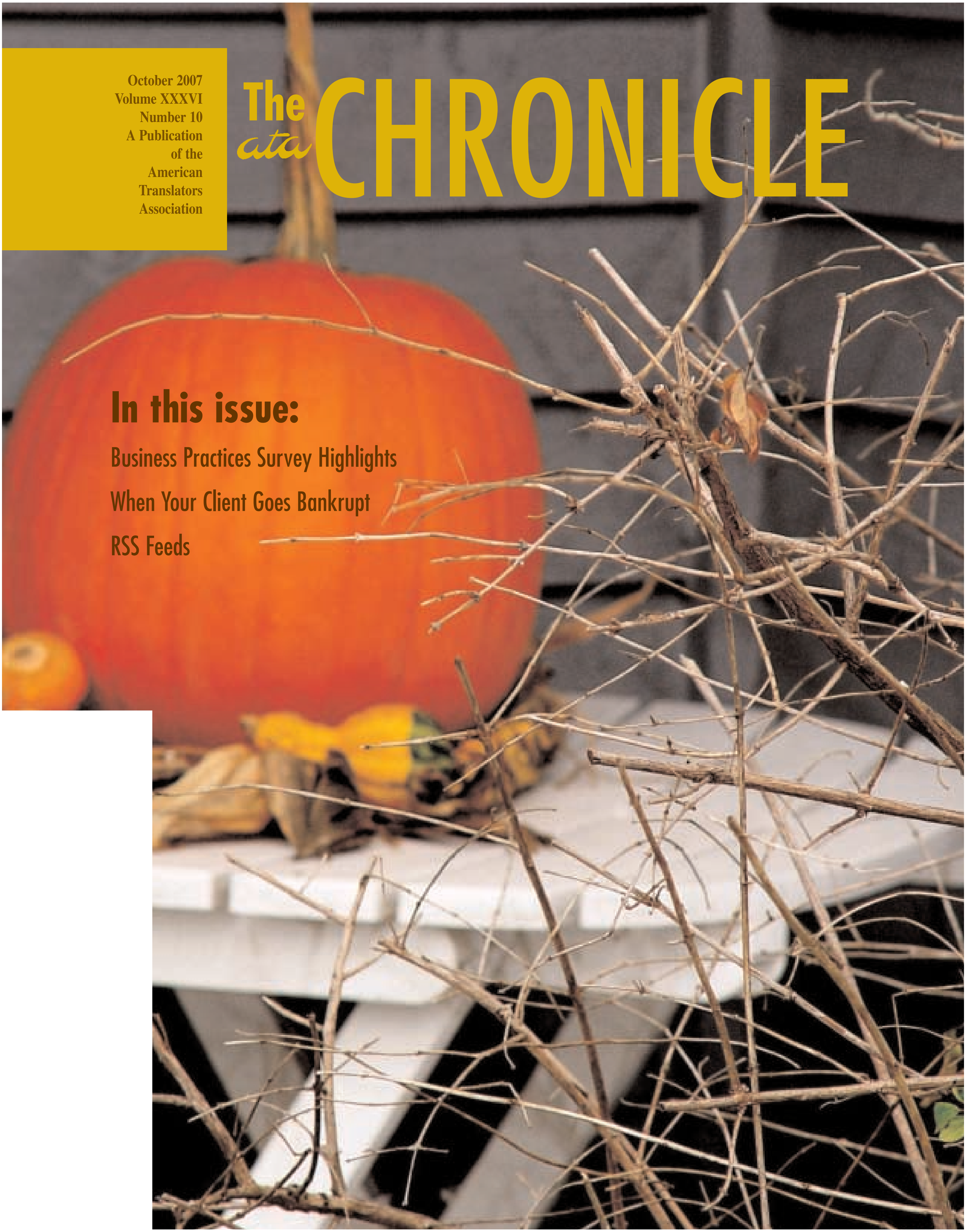
October 2007
Volume XXXVI
Number 10
A Publication
of the
American
Translators
Association

# The ata CHRONICLE



## In this issue:

Business Practices Survey Highlights

When Your Client Goes Bankrupt

RSS Feeds

# Tips and Tricks for every SDL TRADOS user…

**Jennifer Abdel-Hadi**
Training Co-ordinator
SDL TRADOS Technologies
Email: jenniferabdel-hadi@sdl.com

“We are committed to helping all our customers make the most of their SDL TRADOS Technologies solutions. To achieve this, we have organised monthly free live web seminars, where all users can learn new tips and tricks to make the most of their software. These sessions are hosted by our Support engineers, who will endeavour to let you know the inside workings of our software to enhance your productivity.

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- Handling different file types
- Where to find help and community websites
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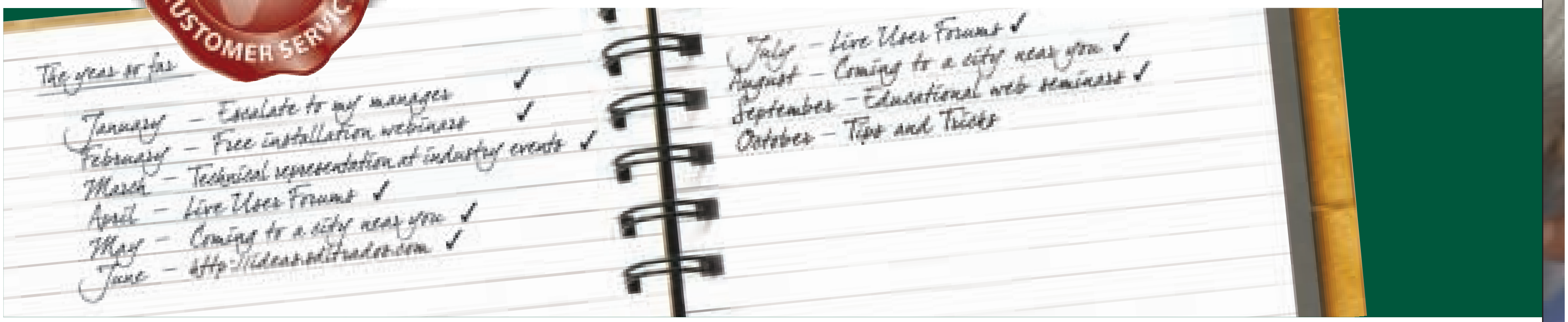
The year so far
January – Escalate to my manager ✓
February – Free installation webinars ✓
March – Technical representation at industry events ✓
April – Live User Forums ✓
May – Coming to a city near you ✓
June – http://ideas.sdltrados.com ✓
July – Live User Forums ✓
August – Coming to a city near you ✓
September – Educational web seminars ✓
October – Tips and Tricks

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# Contents October 2007

**American Translators Association**
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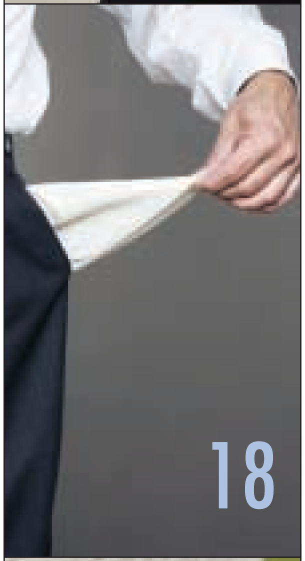

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## Stay Tuned

Look for coverage of ATA's
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in San Francisco
in the January issue.

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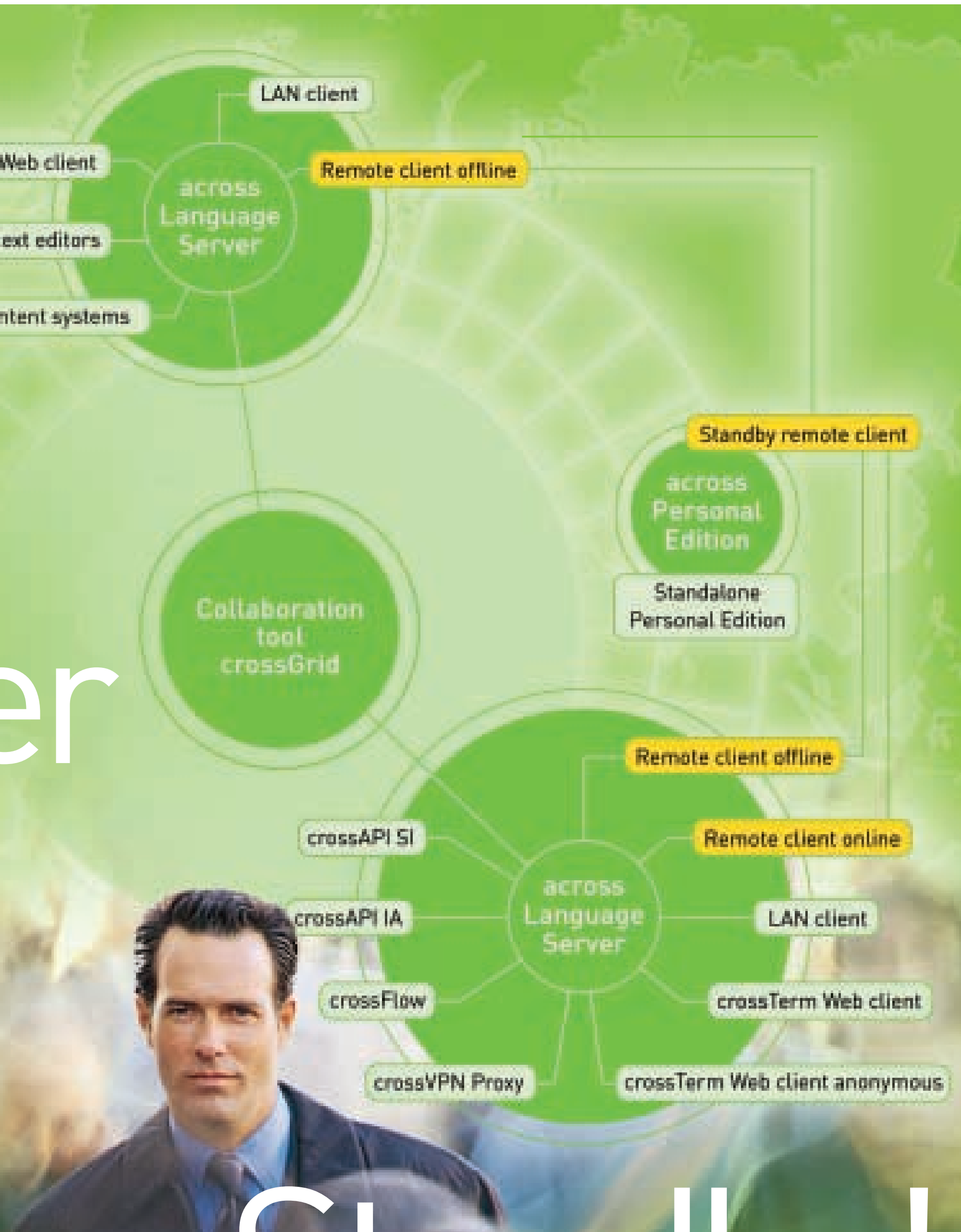
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Standalone Personal Edition
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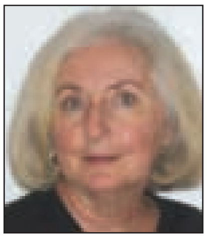
# Our Authors October 2007



**Anne Milano Appel**, Ph.D., a former library director and language teacher, has been translating professionally for over 10 years. In addition to ATA, she is a member of the American Literary Translators Association and the PEN American Center. Several of her book-length translations have been published, and shorter works that she has authored or translated have appeared in other professional and literary venues. Her translation of Stefano Bortolussi's novel, *Head Above Water,* was the winner of the 2004 Northern California Book Award for Translation, and her translation of Giulio Leoni's novel, *Mosaic Crimes,* was published simultaneously in the U.S. and U.K. in 2007.

**Mike Collins** is the president and co-founder of Global Translation Systems, Inc. He has over 20 years of technical translation experience. He currently serves as the president of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters. Contact: mike@globaltranslation.com.

**Dorothee Racette** works as a full-time freelance translator from her home in upstate New York. She is an ATA-certified (German↔English) translator specializing in medical and biomedical texts. She served as the administrator of ATA's German Language Division from 2000 to 2004. She is an ATA director and co-chair of the Business Practices Education Committee. Contact: dracette@hughes.net.

**Naomi J. Sutcliffe de Moraes** is an ATA-certified Portuguese→English freelance translator based in São Paulo, Brazil, where she recently completed a Ph.D. in linguistics at the University of São Paulo. Originally from the U.S., she earned a B.S. in mechanical engineering and an M.S. in physics from the University of California, Los Angeles. She specializes in engineering, legal, and medical translations. Contact: nmoraes@justrightcommunications.com.

**Michael Wahlster** is a technical English→German translator with over 25 years of experience. He was co-founder and long-time manager of a photo typesetting and design company in Tokyo, Japan. He has been offering desktop publishing services for more than 15 years, and web development services since the introduction of the Mosaic browser. Contact: Michael@GW-Language.com.

## We Want You!

*The ATA Chronicle* enthusiastically encourages members and non-members to submit articles of interest. For *Submission Guidelines,* log onto www.atanet.org/chronicle. *The ATA Chronicle* is published 11 times per year, with a combined November/December issue. Submission deadlines are two months prior to publication date.

# From the Executive Director

**Walter Bacak, CAE**
Walter@atanet.org

## Changing of the Guard

**Thanks Marian:** With this year's elections, ATA will see a change in leadership. First, ATA President Marian S. Greenfield finishes her two-year term. It has been an honor to work with Marian. The amount of time and energy she has devoted to the Association has been amazing. Like the other presidents that I have served, I have gained much from Marian's stewardship of the organization, such as a better understanding of human resources management and how to increase the productivity of the people you work with (which she learned and honed through 19 years at Wall Street giant JPMorgan). I also gained an appreciation for looking at conference educational content from more than just how many, say, Spanish sessions there are, but from various angles, including balancing the distribution of into- and from-English sessions and striving for more advanced sessions.

But, as Marian will tell you, she is not going away. She will still chair the Professional Development Committee, which oversees ATA's Professional Development seminar series.

Thank you for all that you have done for ATA.

**Welcome Jiri:** ATA has been fortunate enough to have highly qualified members willing to serve as president. The run continues. On November 2, President-elect Jiri Stejskal will begin his term as ATA president. Jiri brings a wide range of experience to the top position—he is a company owner, a translator, and an adjunct professor. He has served ATA in several areas, most notably as ATA treasurer for two terms (four years) before being elected president-elect in 2005. As president-elect, Jiri oversaw the conference planning for the past two years, participated in various translation and interpreting standards efforts, and served as ATA's representative to the Joint National Committee on Language, the lobbying organization for the languages professions.

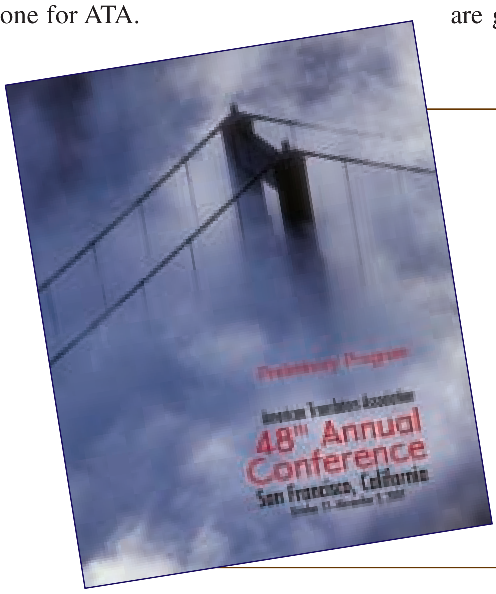
**Elections:** The proxies and supporting election material were mailed early this month to all voting members. The material is also available online in the Members Only section of ATA's website. Please be sure to submit your proxy if you are unable to attend the Annual Conference in San Francisco.

Speaking of elections, this year we are guaranteed to see some new faces on the Board as Directors Dorothee Racette and Tony Roder have decided not to run again. Dorothee will stay on to serve as chair of the Business Practices Education Committee (which she co-founded with Director Nicholas Hartmann). Tony will continue to help with the Language Technology Division, which he helped establish. Thanks to both of you for your service to ATA and the Board.

**New Member Benefit:** A very promising ATA member benefit is being unveiled this fall. The new ATA Job Bank goes online. We will have much more on this at the Annual Conference, online, and in *The ATA Chronicle*. There is no more direct way to enhance the value of ATA membership than by getting freelance projects and salaried positions for members.

**Scam Alert:** The e-mail scammers have been keeping busy, so please be vigilant. If the offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. Please see www.atanet.org//ata_activities/internet_scams.php for more information.

Thank you for being an ATA member, and see you in San Francisco!



American Translators Association
48th Annual Conference
San Francisco, California
October 31–November 3, 2007

## From the President

**Marian S. Greenfield**
President@atanet.org

# Thanks!

This column has always been very hard for me to write, as I strive to select topics of interest to the membership in general, rather than focusing on my comfortable terrain of financial translation or building one's freelance business. This month's column is certainly the hardest, as it is my last as ATA president. I have

## A Look Back at What We Have Accomplished

As this is my farewell column, I thought it would be a good opportunity to review some of the progress ATA has made during my term, through the outstanding efforts of my colleagues on the Board, other key volunteers, and the staff at ATA Headquarters. I want to thank them all for the hard work, and also wish to thank all of you for your support of ATA.

- First and foremost, I am very pleased to announce that on September 14 we surpassed the 10,000-member mark. Our numbers make us a real force to reckon with, and certainly the largest translation and interpreting association in the U.S. and among the strongest national associations in the world. We will also certainly achieve record attendance at our Annual Conference in San Francisco, with over 1,700 attendees expected. What an incredible networking opportunity!

- Other recent achievements include the well-received, award-winning redesign of The ATA Chronicle, and the completion of the redesign and content revision of ATA's website, which commenced on past President Scott Brennan's watch.

- We also added a staff position to address member benefits and special projects, with Jamie Padula taking over Mary David's chapter and division responsibilities and Mary moving into the newly created position of member benefits and project development manager. A valuable member benefit that has already resulted from Mary's new focus is the new online ATA Job Bank. The Job Bank is much more user-friendly than the one that existed in the 1990s, and we certainly plan to promote it extensively.

- We have also successfully implemented the first reporting period for the Certification Continuing Education Program (and continue to revise and broaden the options for earning points), further burnishing our ever-more prestigious Certification Program, which has made great strides in recent years to enhance the value of the certification credential. We have also established the professional designation Certified Translator, or CT, which ATA-certified translators can put after their names, for instance, on business cards.

- The ATA Annual Conference continues to be ATA's focal point each year. We recently signed the contract for ATA's 2012 Annual Conference at the San Diego Hilton adjacent to the Convention Center. The Board heard all of you calling for free Internet access loud and clear, and at our urging Experient, our meeting management company, negotiated complimentary Internet service for all conference guest rooms in San Diego. Of course, the technology and Internet access that will be available in hotels five years from now is an unknown, but at least we are assured of free access for our conference.

- Speaking of signing conference contracts, one of my greatest pleasures while on the Board (prior to my presidency) was when we signed the contract for our 50th anniversary conference to be held in the fall of 2009 at the Marriott Marquis in New York City. I had been advocating for New York City for years, so I was happy to be on the Board that made it happen. I was also proud that after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, ATA leadership did not waver. We were one of the first large meetings to reconfirm our contract, manifesting our commitment to support the rebuilding of the city. ATA and New Orleans were both better for it.

- Some efforts I have shepherded that are well underway and/or nearing completion are: the computerized certification exam; a major, long overdue revision of ATA's Bylaws; a long overdue revision of ATA's Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practices; and ATA's History Project, to be completed in time for our 50th Anniversary in 2009. I hope you all have found these efforts worthwhile, and I look forward to serving you and ATA in other capacities in the future.

enjoyed my mandate immensely and hope that you all have found my contributions worthwhile, hopefully outweighing any missteps I have made.

> This month's column is certainly the hardest, as it is my last as ATA's president. I have enjoyed my mandate immensely and hope that you have found my contributions worthwile.

Many of my columns have discussed my travels representing ATA, as I have focused on building relationships with many translation and interpreting associations both inside and outside the U.S. These travels have often resulted in attracting interesting invited speakers for ATA Annual Conferences and Division Mid-year Conferences, and have generated some valuable connections for ATA members who have been invited to speak at other conferences.

As my presidency comes to a close, I have received a flurry of invitations and have been on the road quite a bit.

In June, ATA Public Relations Committee member Rina Ne'eman and I presented the ATA Roadshow at the Association of Language Companies (ALC) Conference in Providence, Rhode Island. The Roadshow is a multimedia presentation promoting ATA's public relations activities and how other associations can learn from them and launch initiatives of their own to raise the profile of the translation and interpreting professions. Our presentation was extremely well received and gave me a platform for extensive discussions with ALC President Marla Schulman on projects of mutual interest that ATA and ALC could cooperate on. Hopefully ATA President-elect Jiri Stejskal will continue these efforts.

The following week, I was in Des Moines, Iowa, for the Iowa Interpreters and Translators Association (IITA) Annual Conference, where I gave the keynote address and taught a workshop. I took advantage of my presence there to promote ATA not only to the IITA attendees, but also in a radio interview.

As chair of ATA's Professional Development Committee, I organized the Court Interpreting Seminar, which was held in early September in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Presenters Janis Palma and Cecilia Mary received rave reviews, and we hope to present this seminar again in the future. While in Puerto Rico, I also taught a financial translation workshop at the University of Puerto Rico, which gave me the chance to promote ATA and the Annual Conference to a room full of freshly minted translators and interpreters, many of whom were interested in joining ATA and attending this year's conference. There was also much interest in establishing an ATA affiliate in San Juan.

Shortly afterward, I traveled to Rio de Janeiro to attend the very interesting and successful Associação Brasileira de Tradutores conference, where I again presented the ATA Roadshow and spoke on a panel about the benefits of translator/interpreter associations. Once again, there was a great deal of interest in ATA membership and the Annual Conference, and it was a great opportunity to chat with local ATA members.

From Rio, I hopped over to Buenos Aires. I met with local ATA members and other folks interested in joining ATA, gave a financial translation workshop at the Colegio de Traductores Públicos de Buenos Aires, and promoted ATA's Annual Conference.

As for my last month in office, I will attend the Congreso Internacional de Traductores e Intérpretes del Colegio de Traductores del Perú, where I will meet with local ATA members and those interested in ATA and with leaders of local translation and interpreting groups interested in working with ATA. I will also be presenting on financial translation at the Congreso.

Finally, at my last conference as ATA President, also in October, I will be speaking on a panel at the International Federation of Translators-Europe Copyright, Intellectual Property and Translation Tools Seminar in Barcelona. I hope to bring back some interesting food for thought on translation memory ownership to continue the discussion at ATA.

Thank you all for the opportunity to serve you and the American Translators Association.

Learn about ATA's Pro Bono Project!
See page 61.

# Letter to the Editor

*Address your letters to Jeff Sanfacon at jeff@atanet.org or American Translators Association, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314.*

## An Independent Bookstore Catering to Independent Contractors

**Seeing a reference** listing for legal publications in the July issue and dealing with a recent customer comment regarding publication prices made me think of something that happens more often than I would like, and so I decided to write about it in an attempt to create a better understanding of how things work for small independent booksellers like myself. Since this letter is directed to my translator and interpreter friends, I would like to think that I have a captive audience.

First, a little history for those readers who do not know me. In 1986, I was the manager of W.S. Heinman, a small mail order import bookstore dealing with German, French, and Dutch novels and an incredible amount of nonfiction. The store also carried a handful of foreign language dictionaries. One of my customers, a New York City translator, said I might do well by displaying my wares at ATA's Annual Conference. So, in 1988, I attended my first conference in Seattle, Washington. I traveled all the way to the West Coast with a couple boxes of books, put them on a table, and they changed hands faster than I could count the money. That first time, now 19 years ago, I sold a little less than $3,000. I felt I had hit the jackpot, but the owners of W.S. Heinman did not share my enthusiasm. Soon after, I started i.b.d., Ltd., where I limited myself to finding books for the professional translator and interpreter; nothing but specialized, high-quality publications for a growing profession.

In 2004, I started InTrans Book Service, this time with a focus on Spanish books and English non-language-specific publications. Twenty years later, I am still traveling all over the country displaying my books at translator/interpreter conferences and seminars. The conferences and my website are my outlets for what my customers need. I am passionate about what I do and would not change it for the world, but there are a number of threats that make it even harder to keep afloat. The same Internet where I peddle my books also poses a risk, and this brings me to my first comment (not a criticism), which I want to use to illustrate how difficult it can be for small businesses.

In the July issue of *The ATA Chronicle*, the article "ATA's Legal Translation and Interpreting Seminar" contains an insert called "Legal Reference Guide" that lists four important reference tools. As is customary, all the necessary product data is mentioned: title, author, publisher, publication date, price, language, and ISBN. In addition, the reader is informed of an outlet where the product is available. In this case, Amazon.com and Barristerbooks.com.

Let's look at the prices listed in the article's reference guide: *The Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage* ($19.77); *American Jurisprudence Legal Forms* ($99.99); *Black's Law Dictionary* ($61.95); and *Legal Language* ($19.00). The publishers' list prices for these titles are: *The Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage* ($29.95); *American Jurisprudence Legal Forms* (the second edition is out of print and no longer available, except for a solitary copy offered on Amazon.com); *Black's Law Dictionary* ($67.00); and *Legal Language* ($20.00). As you can see, all products, with the exception of *American Jurisprudence Legal Forms*, are offered at prices ranging from 35% to 5% lower than the publishers' list prices.

All of these publications are also available through independent booksellers, of which there are, unfortunately, very few left. Independent booksellers serve a more specialized community—by definition, smaller—and are dedicated to bringing their customers personalized service and helping them find the best possible product. But the independent bookseller works at a disadvantage that he cannot overcome: the discount. I will try to illustrate with a few examples of how the discount has caused disarray in the playing field. It is the same in most industries, but here I am talking only about the book industry.

Many of you may well ask why there is such a price discrepancy between the big retailer and the independent bookseller. Well, the independent bookseller generally purchases one to five copies of a given publication for stock, depending on the popularity of the book. On a typical purchase, he gets a discount between 20% to 30% if he orders from the publisher, and up to 40% if he orders from a wholesaler. For example, let's look at the discounts that InTrans Book Service gets on the above-mentioned dictionaries. The discount for *Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage* is 40%, leaving me with a margin of $11.98, which seems like a decent profit on a book, but keep in mind that the bookseller has three to four copies on the shelf that may take several weeks to sell. The discount for *Black's Law Dictionary* is 20% ($13.40), and *Legal Language* is 20% ($4.00). Because of the much higher volume, Amazon and the other big stores can negotiate higher discounts with publishers—55% and up for a bestselling book, and less if the book is not a bestseller. This results in a lower discount to the consumer. In some cases, there is no discount at all. Thus, the independent bookseller has no leverage to negotiate higher/better discounts.

Don't get me wrong. I understand that when buying small quantities, it means more work and more overhead for a smaller profit margin for the publisher or distributor. My problem is that if a store is able to negotiate a higher discount and turns around to give some of that money back to the customer, it may appear that the independent bookseller is overcharging or making an unfair profit. Nowadays, even the publishers are selling at discounts directly to end users. They are now in direct competition with the big stores, and the publishers would rather give the customer 10% or 20% than 40% or 55% to the retailers.

Call me old-fashioned, but the idea is that the publisher builds in a margin that he can give away to the bookstore as a bonus for the work the bookseller does on his behalf. I have no problem with the big stores getting a higher discount, since they take larger risks, but they should not be allowed to sell below the industry-wide agreed-to retail list price.

Amazon and the big bookstores depend on mass sales, the quick turnover, followed by books for which there is a steady demand down to the more obscure publications. These stores usually do not cater to specific groups. The specialized publications are stocked in small quantities, just like at the independent bookstores, or are not stocked at all, or are subcontracted out.

Not too long ago, a customer called to ask if I could match the price Amazon had for *Redes – Diccionario combinatorio del español contemporáneo*. If you were to order the book from Spain, you would pay close to $90.00 (international postage and handling included). I sell the book for $95.00, but Amazon offers it for $48.93. My cost price is higher than what Amazon sells it for, and that does not include the shipping charges from Spain to the U.S. My answer to the customer was, "No, I cannot match that price." With such a price differential, I suggested that the customer go to Amazon and purchase the dictionary there. Six or seven weeks later, the customer called back and grudgingly purchased the book from me because Amazon could not deliver. Instead of feeling victorious that the customer came back to me, I felt sad because I think she felt ripped off.

This is just one of many examples I could give when it comes to the obscure, at least for the general public, books that I happen to sell. Nevertheless, I cannot subsist on selling obscure titles alone. I have to sell all of the above-mentioned books as well, but at the list price. What good would it do me, in the case of the *Dictionary of Modern Legal Usage*, for example, to sell a book for $19.77 when I have to pay $17.97 plus an average of $2.50 for postage and handling? That puts me 71 cents in the red, which I cannot afford.

We all want to pay less for what we need or want. My business model is such that I have to go by the suggested retail price in order to offer what I offer, and if what I offer is valuable to you, call me for a book you are looking for and I will try to find it. Ask me a specific question and I will try to answer it. If you are having a hard time finding a specific term, I can occasionally look in the available dictionaries to help you out. This is part of my service and the added value I provide to you. The choice is yours.

In conclusion, how often have you seen any of these discount stores display their wares at a professional function you attended? It is your independent bookseller that gives you personal service and attention, who makes the effort, and pays for the trip to the conference or seminar in your region so that you can check out dictionaries and books before buying them sight-unseen. Do not let your independent bookseller disappear!

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## Significant uptake in certification user adoption fuels three new levels

### Industry uptake

The SDL TRADOS Certification program has been constantly increasing in popularity. There are now over 6,000 translators and project managers involved in the process. The program has established itself as a comprehensive professional education program designed to develop expertise in the use of SDL translation technology tools.

Every day more corporate language departments around the world are using SDL TRADOS Certification to help them accelerate time to market. Over 90 companies worldwide are endorsing or undergoing Certification including Siemens A&D, Open Text, Nikken Corporation, and Microsoft. Additionally over 200 Language Service Providers around the globe have been embracing the program. These include: US-based Iverson Language Associates, Inc., LinguaLinx, Inc., Canadian firms ACCU Translations and All Languages, and New Zealand LSP Blue South. Many leading European companies are also involved including Swiss-based CLS Communication and USG, Denmark's Translation House of Scandinavia, PROMT of Russia, Belgian B&K Projects, German Eskenazy Translations, Italian Vertere, ORCO S.A. in Greece, and Net-Translators in Israel.

In addition, increasingly Universities around the world have been looking to SDL TRADOS Certification as a way of building and testing their students' knowledge on SDL TRADOS software.

> ProZ.com has integrated since August the SDL TRADOS Certification credential as part of their translator and resourcer profiles, to accommodate the growing response to the program. Proz.com is the web's leading online translation community, with over 200,000 registered translators interpreters and linguists.

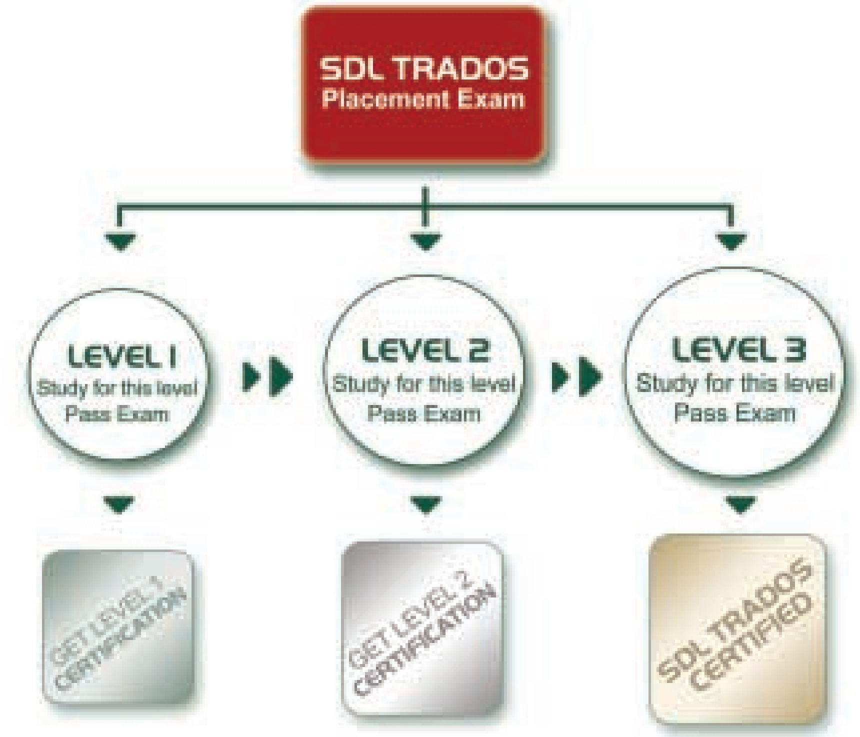
### Benefits for Freelance translators

Translators can benefit from the SDL TRADOS Certification program in many ways.

**Learning:** More translators than ever are using translation technology, terminology management and automated quality assurance checks to their full potential after sitting on one of the SDL TRADOS Certification training courses.

**Credibility:** Each SDL TRADOS Certified translator receives industry recognition that helps them promote themselves when looking for new customers. They receive a personalized web page and link with their contact details and areas of specialization as well as a Certification ownership card.

> "By promoting SDL TRADOS Certification with our LLP vendors, we believe that this will help us to deliver our product to market in the shortest possible time and at the highest possible quality."
>
> Yaron Hezroni,
> Local Language Program Manager, Microsoft



### Users now have greater flexibility in achieving one of the three Certification levels:

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Also, in response to customer demand, the process to becoming certified has now been opened up for many more users. The new program recognises success in passing each of the first 2 levels of Certification exams, previously known as Getting Started and Intermediate.

With the new levels now available, SDL TRADOS Certification has become an even more flexible credential that offers translation professionals the precise level of differentiation they have been asking for.

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The new SDL TRADOS Certification 2007 program has been developed to ensure that the powerful functionality available in SDL Trados 2007 is used to its maximum potential. It is also designed to increase the levels of quality and consistency through the use of the unique SDL package technology.

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# Exploring Freelance Business Practices

*By Dorothee Racette*

**Did you know that** freelance translators and interpreters account for more than 70% of ATA's membership? Yes, the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in our association…or is it? Time and again, ATA's Business Practices Education Committee hears from independent contractors who are learning business management skills through the school of hard knocks. In an increasingly open and competitive market, these mistakes are costing them dearly.

Earlier this year, the Business Practices Education Committee surveyed ATA freelancers to zero in on their management needs. Our short questionnaire was designed to look at marketing, time management, job-related organization, accounting methods, tax and insurance issues, legal matters, and collections. With a good understanding of where members stand on these basics, ATA will be able to offer specific workshops, publications, and services that could truly have a positive impact on a freelancer's business performance.

Exactly 1,077 individuals participated in ATA's Business Practices Survey this spring. The survey responses drew an interesting portrait of the typical business conditions and practices of ATA members working as independent contractors. There were some surprises—who would have guessed that pencil and paper is still the most popular scheduling method, or that more than half of the survey-takers had no collection problems in the past two years—and some anticipated results.

> The survey responses drew an interesting portrait of the typical business conditions and practices of ATA members working as independent contractors.

## Assessing Priorities

After analyzing the responses, a list of priorities was developed to assist in planning for future ATA business skills workshops and publications.

### 1. Marketing and Client Selection

Focused marketing and client selection go hand in hand and can contribute much to the development of small translation businesses. Questions concerning these areas of freelance business practices were an important part of our survey.

Not unexpectedly, the responses revealed that many ATA freelancers would like to learn how to market themselves more effectively. Approximately 42% of the respondents indi-

## Survey Results Snapshot

### Business Training

**66.3%** of respondents indicated they had **no formal business training.**

### Workflow and Office Management

**Pencil and paper** is still the most popular organizing and scheduling method, used by 52.1% of respondents, followed by **software programs** (38.9%), and **no method at all** (18%). The majority (47.4%) reported that they spent less than 10% of their work time on administrative and business tasks.

### Working Hours

**50.9%** of respondents reported that they **occasionally** accept weekend assignments, while another 46.7% work on weekends "**regularly.**" Only 2.4% indicated that they categorically decline such work and "**never**" work on weekends. For the majority, **7-8 hours** of translation work a day is normal.

### Retirement Planning

71.2% of respondents have a **retirement or investment account** set up, but only about three quarters are able to make regular contributions to the retirement account. 43.6% hope to retire in less than 20 years from now.

### Collection Efforts

The vast majority (92.7%) of the respondents said they handle their own collection efforts for overdue accounts. Just over half of the respondents (56.8%) reported **no overdue accounts** in the past two years, but almost the same number (50.9%) said they had to **give up on a payment** in the past.

cated that they have no long-term marketing strategies, and 38.4% said that their marketing skills are in need of improvement.

The survey results also demonstrated that without successful marketing, many freelancers cannot afford to be overly selective in their choice of clients. What many do not realize, however, is that this scenario can set them up for difficult customer relationships and payment problems down the road. In the long run, it simply does not pay to accept work without looking at who is offering the job. This is a crucial lesson to learn.

But there is more. In a comment echoed by many other survey-takers, one freelancer noted, "It would be useful for freelance translators to place more emphasis on building a clientele of direct clients." This statement points to the critical role that client selection can play in keeping a business afloat. It is risky for any independent contractor to depend on just one income stream. Good marketing can bring in enough clients to allow the freelancer to diversify revenue through careful selection.

Our short questionnaire was designed to look at marketing, time management, job-related organization, accounting methods, tax and insurance issues, legal matters, and collections.

### 2. Client Management

A good deal of client management can be accomplished through client selection—more specifically, by checking out a potential customer before accepting an assignment. While this practice cannot eliminate all issues that come up during the business relationship, it can certainly go a long way toward the most crucial one—getting paid.

A little more than 10% of survey respondents conceded that they never perform background checks on their clients. Another 15.7% admitted that they were unsure how to go about performing a check.

Poor payers will certainly not go away, and the increasingly global nature of our business is making collections even more difficult. It is essential for freelancers to learn effective strategies for identifying "black sheep," and to recognize this as their first step in client management.

Of course, there is more to client management than just vetting customers. Retaining the client and building a word-of-mouth referral network is every bit as important. After landing the assignment, it is all about understanding and providing customer service—from smart project management practices and communication to knowing how to make the most efficient use of the time allotted for the assignment. It is this last one that can undo all your best laid plans and make you rethink your independent contractor status! This seems to be a fact that many survey-takers realize as they noted that learning good time management skills

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was one of their most important goals.

### 3. Insurance Issues

With the cost of insurance growing substantially each year, it has never been more important to understand what each type of insurance plan covers and what it contributes to a business. Our survey showed that health insurance remains a major concern for ATA freelancers, and many of the free-text comments underscored the need for affordable and functional health insurance. Consistent with the statistics for middle class professionals quoted by the media, 12.1% of survey respondents indicated that they do not have any health insurance.

ATA currently offers its members discounted professional liability, small business, life, and long-term care insurance plans. Health insurance plans are also available to members through an agreement with Mutual of Omaha's broker network, but clearly this is not enough. There is a huge need for assisting members with information on the pros and cons of various insurance options and the avenues for getting health insurance coverage.

## Top Priorities

### for ATA's Business Practices Education Committee

#### Marketing

Respondents to the Business Practices Survey ranked marketing/advertising as their number one interest, and ATA's Business Practices Education Committee has put ongoing education in this area at the top of their planning list.

#### Client Management

Priority number two for 33.3% of survey respondents and for ATA's Business Practices Education Committee is learning client management skills and the basics in "business self-defense" strategies.

#### Insurance

The third priority for the Business Practices Education Committee is to assist members with information on the pros and cons of various insurance options and the avenues for getting health insurance coverage.

#### Accounting in Foreign Currencies

Cash flow is crucial to any business. Therefore, the fourth priority on the Business Practices Education Committee's planning list is basic education in accounting and taxation for freelance business owners.

> There is a lot ATA and its members can do to assist our colleagues in acquiring business management skills.

### 4. Accounting in Foreign Currencies

As a consequence of the increasing internationalization of the industry, many of us are working for clients in multiple countries. In all, 49% of survey respondents indicated that they received at least some foreign currency payments for their services. Online banking has made it feasible for independent contractors to maintain bank accounts in other countries, thus allowing their clients the option of paying in their own currency. Still, ATA freelancers note problems in the process, not the least of which are the fees associated with wire transfers and how to account for the income earned abroad. The Business Practices Education Committee will be looking into basic education in accounting and taxation for freelance business owners.

### Summary

Thanks to all the individuals who participated in ATA's Business Practices Survey this spring, four specific areas of business performance were identified as top priorities for a majority of ATA freelancers.

There is a lot ATA and its members can do to assist colleagues in acquiring these business management skills—online discussions, publications, and workshops all have the potential to reach a broad audience. In the year to come, look for updates on the Business Practices Education Committee's endeavors in these areas and for ways to contribute your knowledge to this effort.

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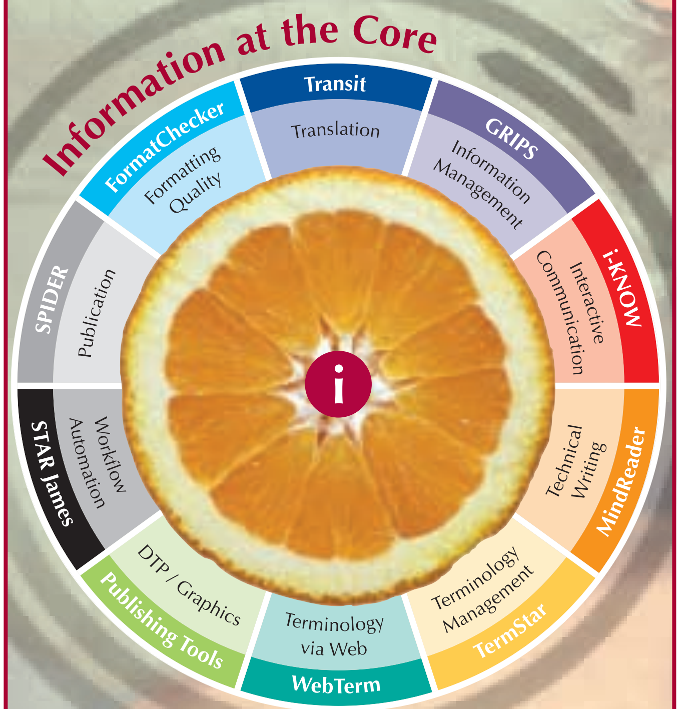
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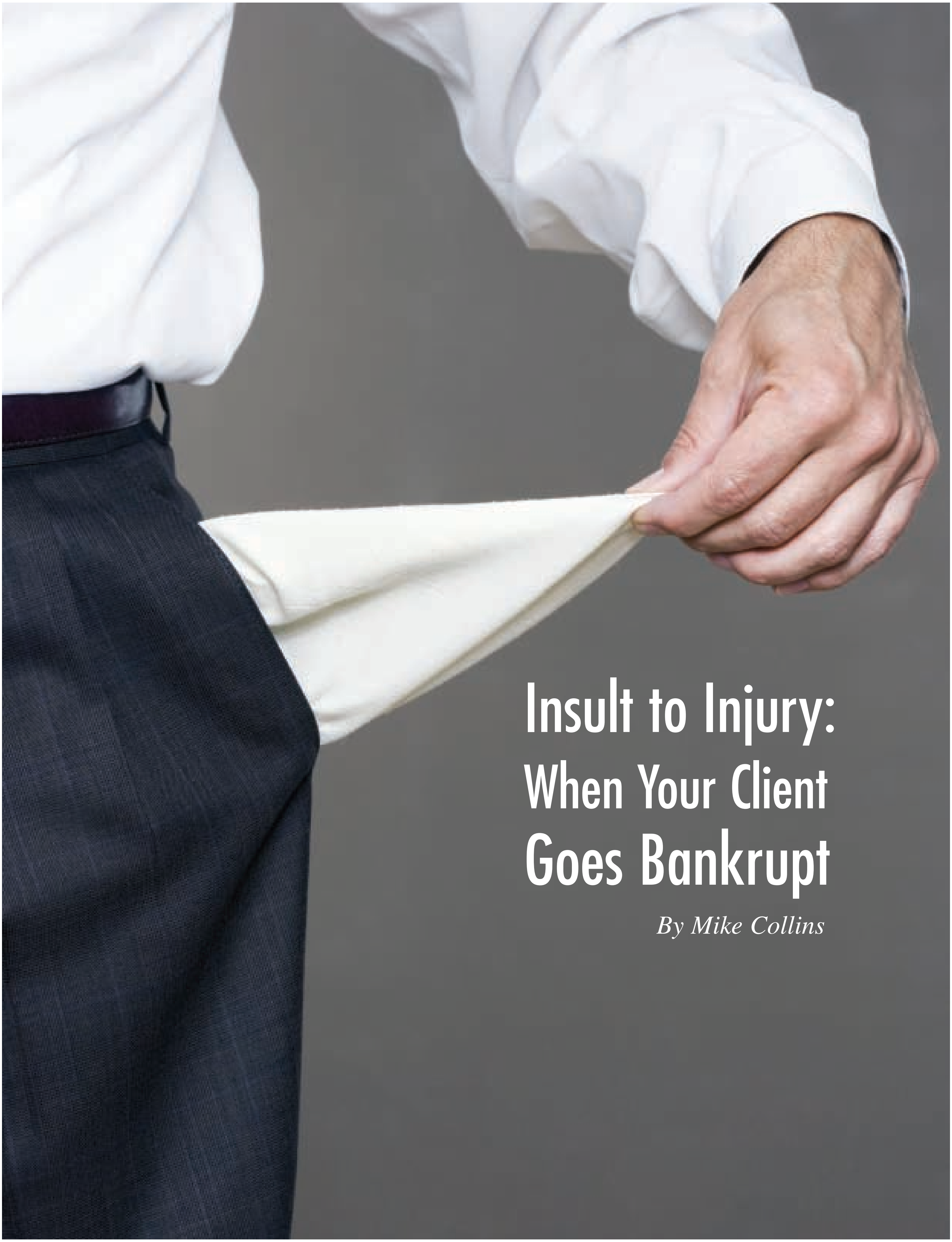

# Insult to Injury:
## When Your Client Goes Bankrupt

*By Mike Collins*

*The following originally appeared as a two-part series in the Spring and Summer 2007 issues of the* CATI Quarterly, *the newsletter of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters (www.catiweb.org). The following is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors.*

> The corporate world is fraught with traps and pitfalls, and each business owner must decide on a course of action based on the facts on the ground.

**When a major client** filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy about two years ago, it came as quite a shock. Not only were some $7,000 of outstanding invoices now protected against collection and unlikely ever to be paid in full, but a stable, long-term, and mutually profitable relationship with a favorite client was suddenly in doubt. All that was bad enough. Then we got the letter….

Bankruptcy is a fact of life in the business world. Companies fail for all sorts of reasons, and the personal and commercial repercussions are often wide-ranging. For suppliers to those companies, the disruption can be difficult or even crippling. Everyone is familiar with the most common issues—unpaid invoices, (potential) loss of an important customer, and uncertainty about the future—but not everyone is aware of one potential nasty surprise.

## General Bankruptcy Information

The law provides for several types of bankruptcy. The most common of these are Chapter 7 (liquidation), Chapter 11 (reorganization), and Chapter 13 (debt repayment plan). Chapter 7 provides for the liquidation of assets. This generally means the sale of a debtor's nonexempt property and the distribution of the proceeds to creditors. Under Chapter 7, a court-appointed trustee oversees the liquidation and distribution of the bankrupt party's assets to creditors. Chapter 13 is most often filed by individuals earning regular income, and involves arranging to make partial payment of debts to creditors. Chapter 11, which is what our client chose, is a form of bankruptcy that involves a reorganization of the debtor's business affairs and assets. Chapter 11 is commonly filed for by businesses in financial trouble who need time to restructure their debts.

## Declaring Chapter 11

A few well-known things happen when Chapter 11 bankruptcy is declared. The bankruptcy filing date represents a sharp dividing line: any outstanding debts or invoices owed by the declaring company before that date are frozen. It is illegal for creditors to try and collect debts protected under bankruptcy. A trustee is appointed by the court to handle the affairs of the company. The trustee's tasks include examining the records of assets and liabilities, determining how much can be repaid to which creditors, and defining categories of debts (e.g., secured versus unsecured).

Vendors can continue to work for the reorganizing company. Any work performed after the date of filing is handled and paid according to the existing business practices; that is, any payments owed for such work are written on a clean slate, theoretically without fear of non-payment. Indeed, companies that refuse to do business with a reorganizing company just because it has filed for Chapter 11 may be subject to penalties under the law, although enforcement of this stipulation might be difficult in less obvious cases.

When our client declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in November 2004, we were generally aware of these facts, and learned about other issues in consultation with our attorney. We wrote off (literally and figuratively) the outstanding invoices and continued to work with our client.

## The Paper Chase

A steady stream of correspondence began arriving in regard to the filing, including: notices for entry of claims, confirmation of claims, filing deadlines, requests for lists of outstanding debts, ballots for accepting or rejecting the liquidation plan, and court hearing notices. Forms were filled out and signed, information provided, and the fine print duly read. Then we got the letter….

It appeared in the mail like the others on the letterhead of the legal firm handling our client's reorganization/liquidation. At first, it seemed to be just one more formality to wade through. Among the things the letter mentioned were the "Preference ➡

Claim," the 90-day preference period, and the monies received by our client during said preference period. By the time we were finished reading and digesting the letter's contents, we were in utter disbelief, but let me explain a few things first before continuing.

## Preference Claims

There are a couple of legal terms associated with bankruptcy I did not mention above, namely "preference" and "voidable preference." Basically, these refer to a situation where one creditor is paid or compensated preferentially at the expense of others during the period before Chapter 11 is declared. Let me explain how this works.

Say Company A is a buyer and Company B is one of Company A's suppliers. Company B becomes aware that Company A may be in financial trouble, and begins to suspect it may declare bankruptcy. Company B knows that if that happens, it may not get paid for work it has done, so it pressures, negotiates, or otherwise "encourages" Company A to pay its debts to Company B ahead of other creditors. If Company B is successful, it may be able to minimize its losses after Company A files for bankruptcy.

To prevent and mitigate such occurrences, the law provides for a "preference period," which is defined as the 90 days prior to the declaration of bankruptcy. "Preference" or "preferential payments" refer to payments made during this 90-day period where the payee was given preferential treatment over other creditors. "Voidable preference" means that where the court/trustee deems such payments were made preferentially, the preference can be voided, and the preferential payments made earlier must be repaid. In our scenario above, if the trustee judges that the payments made to Company B were preferential, it can assert preference and demand repayment of those monies on behalf of (the estate of) Company A. It may now be clear to you where all this is going….

## The Preference Defense

The letter we received was a claim on us to repay over $21,000 we had been paid for work done during the 90-day period before our client filed for Chapter 11. The letter went on to say that "applying credits for new value" reduced the amount to around $20,000, and then made an offer to settle for roughly 80%, or $17,000, "…in order to avoid the time and expense of litigation…."

The idea of our small company somehow manipulating this huge client seemed laughable. We had never heard of such a thing, but our lawyer had. He explained the preference concept to us and the standard defense against it, and asked for a record of our invoicing and payments with this client for the past year. If it came to litigation, the burden would be on us to show that: 1) there had been no change in the way we had done business with this company over the past year; and 2) that we had done business in a manner consistent with our industry.

While our attorney was reviewing the material, we received a letter recalling the first one. This second communication stated that the earlier preference claim letter had been sent in error, and apologized for any inconvenience. Our anger dissipated a bit—obviously it had been a mistake, as our attorney confirmed when he said that everything was in order with our payments, and that any case against us would be very weak. We sent a bill with justification for the legal expenses we had incurred to the attorney who had sent us the original preference letter (though we did not really expect a response).

That was in April 2005. Things remained quiet for over a year except for the occasional item of bankruptcy-related correspondence. Then, in June 2006, we received virtually the same letter again, listing what we had been paid during the preference period and offering to settle for 80% of the total, "…to avoid unnecessary litigation…." I contacted the firm and explained that we had already received this letter once before, and that it had been withdrawn as a mistake. The response to me was that just because they had withdrawn it earlier did not mean that they had waived their right to press the claim again.

> There may be more at stake than losing outstanding invoices when a client goes bankrupt.

## The Settlement Game

Once again, we turned to our attorney, who brought in a bankruptcy specialist from his firm to help out. We quickly learned that the preference claim, designed to ensure fair distribution of assets during Chapter 11, was very often abused. "I make lots of presentations to business groups on bankruptcy law," said our specialist. "Whenever I get to this topic, the anger

## Suggested links for more information:

**U.S. Courts Information Pages on Bankruptcy**
www.uscourts.gov/bankruptcycourts/bankruptcybasics.html

**Cornell University Law School Legal Information Institute**
www.law.cornell.edu/wex/index.php/Bankruptcy

**Brief summary of the 2005 changes to Bankruptcy law in regard to preferential payments**
www.kkrlaw.com/articles/seller499-1.html
(see under “Preferential Transfers”)

in the audience is palpable.”

What frequently happens, he explained, is that the trustee or the trustee’s law firm will cast a very wide net concerning preference claims. Rather than diligently searching for instances where payments were actually made during the preference period, they simply list most or all of the payees during the 90-day preference period. What follows is then a game of negotiation and settlement designed to bring enormous amounts of cash into the bankruptcy trust, with the law firm usually taking a percentage.

Preference claims are tried in federal court before a bankruptcy judge. A typical defense would consist of producing records showing that there had been no deviation from the ordinary course of business during the 90-day period, and hiring an expert witness to testify that the terms of business between the client and the vendor were normal for the industry in question. Up until 2005, any litigation over preference claims had to be done in the jurisdiction of the trustee. The law has since been amended to change this to the jurisdiction of the litigee, and to bar preference claims for amounts under $5,000. However, our client’s bankruptcy had been filed before the law was amended, and we faced the prospect of being forced to defend any litigation in a court in Tennessee, instead of our home state of North Carolina. This would add additional costs to our defense, including hiring counsel out of state.

Widespread abuse of the type we experienced was one of the reasons for the 2005 amendment. Federal bankruptcy judges were well aware of these abuses, and that could be a point in our favor in our case, which is still ongoing. As for punishing the abusers, the only option is to file post-trial motions to investigate whether the determination of preferential payments was proper. If it was not, the trustee and/or lawyers can be sanctioned.

### The Creditor’s Net

In the case of our client, there were a few unusual circumstances that seemed to support our supposition that this was not a simple preference claim, but rather a gold-digging expedition. When the company filed for Chapter 11, its largest creditor moved in to purchase the bankrupt company and began liquidating it. We knew this creditor was owed millions of dollars and stood to receive (like the rest of us) only pennies on the dollar in repayment. Anything the creditor could do to enrich the estate before distribution would increase its total recovery in the end. Once the wide net was cast, many businesses would likely settle to avoid the headache and expense of litigation.

Our attorneys reasserted our position that the payments we had received were not “voidable” (could not be claimed as having been paid preferentially). We included a detailed list of invoice dates, check-received dates, and other information as justification.

The response from the trustee’s attorney was an offer to settle for $6,750, considerably less than the original proposal. This indicated to us that he had reviewed our documents and was aware that his case was very weak. Our attorney confirmed our assumptions, and added that this amount was roughly equal to what we would probably have to pay to defend ourselves. In other words, the trustee’s attorney was gambling that we would do the numbers and pay protection rather than risk a lawsuit.

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## High Stakes

We had arrived at the moment of decision: should we settle or fight? We consulted with our attorneys at length. While we had the strongest defense they had seen in such a case, one can never be sure what will happen in court. Although it was clear that the trustee knew his case was weak, if we failed to settle and then somehow lost in court, we would be liable for the entire $21,000 of the original preference claim. “In addition, the trustee has nothing to lose,” the bankruptcy specialist told us. “They can hand these cases off to be tried on a contingency basis, so that they incur no expenses, and the litigating attorneys are paid only if they win.”

With these stakes in mind, and one day to think about it, my two partners and I considered what to do. We knew that the easy thing to do was to settle (i.e., pay them to make them go away). After all, the settlement they were offering was considerably less than what they had originally demanded. What if we went to court and lost? The hit to us would be substantial.

In the end, we decided to fight. From the cold perspective of the balance sheet, this may not have been the best decision. However, in our minds there was more at work here than dollars and cents. There was a principle at stake—the principle of not giving in to what, in our eyes, amounted to extortion. There was also the principle of our belief in the system. We knew we had not been paid preferentially, and, therefore, there could be no evidence of it. Our attorneys had informed us well on the possibilities and options. We had to believe that the court would look objectively at the evidence and rule in our favor. Lastly, we felt that if we were going to have to spend some $6,000 anyway, we would prefer to give it to someone for defending us against a wrong, rather than reward the trustee’s bad behavior.

Our attorney sent the trustee’s attorney a curt response rejecting their offer, and suggesting they prepare themselves for our post-trial motions. We have heard nothing since, but that does not mean we are out of the woods.

## Stay Informed

I hope that presenting our case here will help inform and prepare my business colleagues should they ever face a similar eventuality. In no way do I want to suggest, however, that our final decision and course of action is the best or the right one for anyone else. The corporate world is fraught with traps and pitfalls, and each business owner must decide what to do in such a situation based on the facts on the ground.

However, I do believe that there are many things in our business environment that encourage us to settle too easily in cases like these. The end result has probably been wider abuse of the law. It is my hope that the 2005 amendment to the bankruptcy law will reduce the number of such cases of abuse, but they will most certainly not be going away. In any case, it is important to be aware that there may be more at stake than losing outstanding invoices when a client goes bankrupt.

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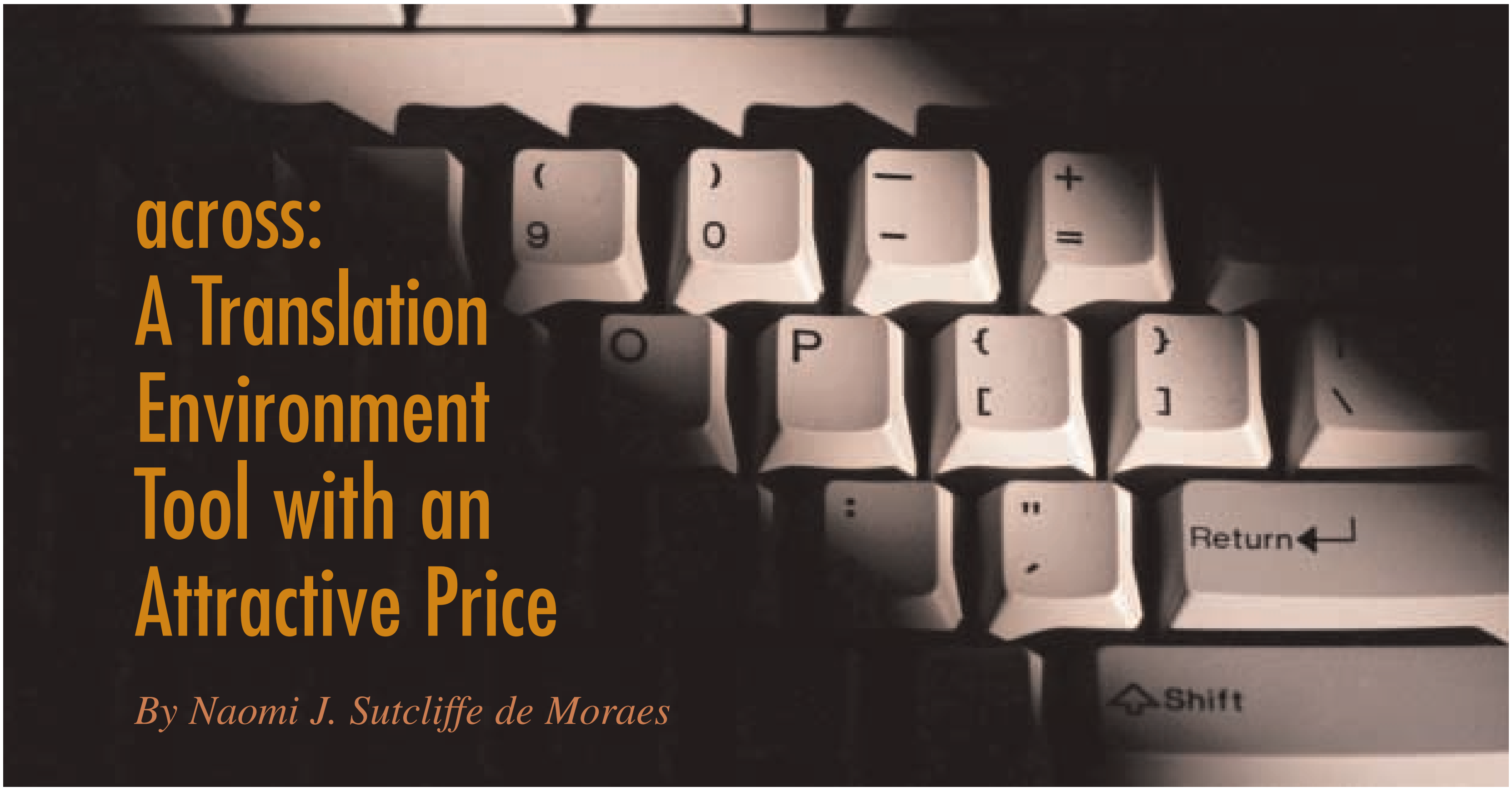


# across: A Translation Environment Tool with an Attractive Price

*By Naomi J. Sutcliffe de Moraes*

*Please note that the reviewer is not affiliated in any way with the products being discussed. This review does not represent an endorsement of the product by ATA. All opinions are solely those of the author.*

**This review will** introduce readers to the across Personal version for freelance translators. This is a relatively new tool, and it is clear from its features that the programmers looked carefully into what worked and what did not in other tools when designing the product.

> It is clear from its features that the programmers looked carefully into what worked and what did not in other tools when designing this product.

There are basically two versions of across: across Personal Edition and across Language Server. The across Personal Edition is designed for freelance translators. It is meant to be run on a PC by the translator or editor, and works both as a stand-alone tool or in connection with the across Language Server version. The across Personal Edition is free for freelance translators (registration is required), but must be purchased by companies for their in-house translators. The across Language Server contains project management features that are beyond the scope of this article, but a freelance translator would probably not need this version, so only the Personal Edition is being reviewed here. Since across is similar to Déjà Vu X in many respects, this review will follow the same line of questioning used in the Déjà Vu X review published in the August and September issues.

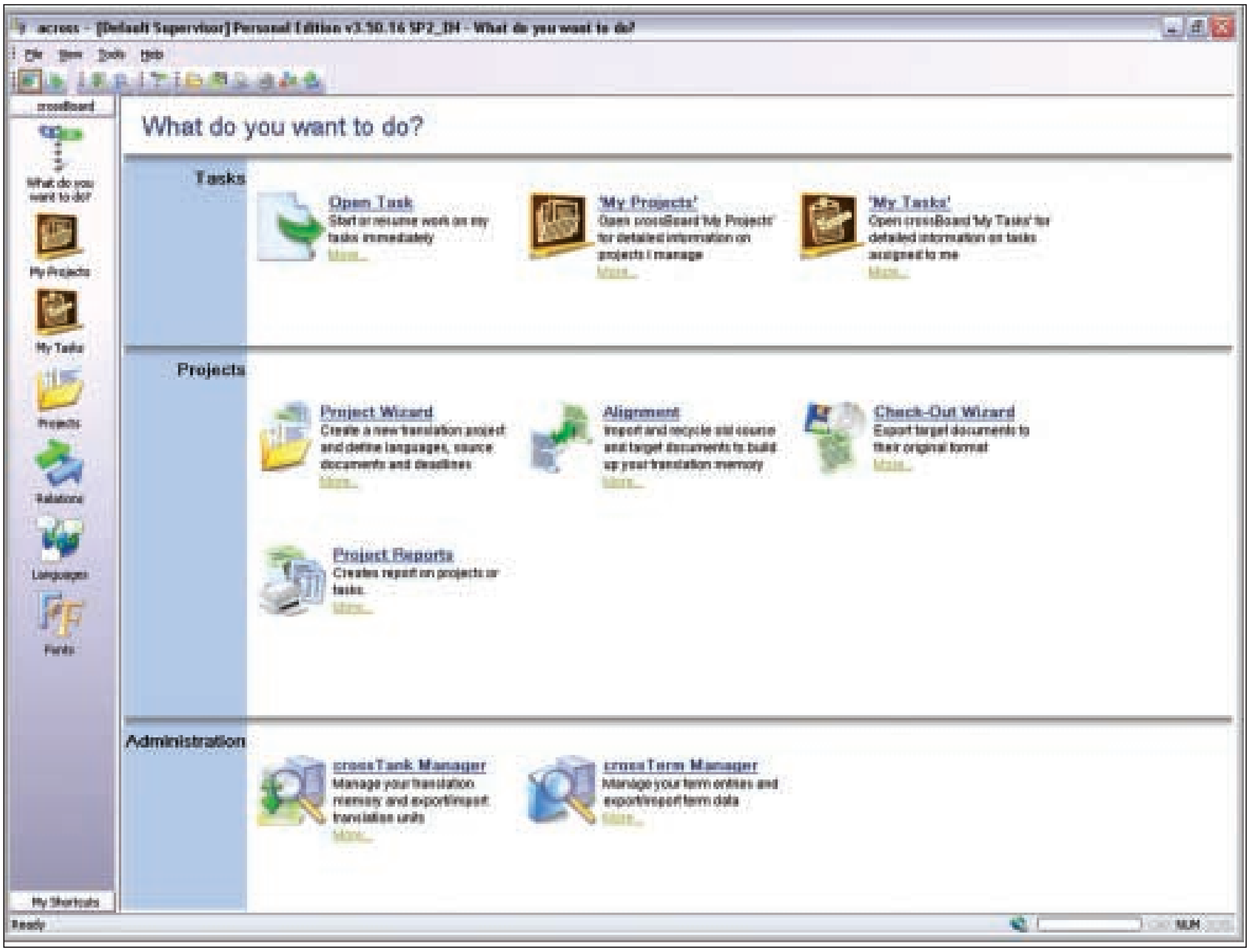
## How easy is it to get started?

I found the program easy to download and install. Afterward, you can run through the online tutorials to get up-to-speed on the main features. The *Step-by-Step Manual* has 209 pages, and is oriented toward the across Personal Edition. The *Overview* manual has 338 pages, but includes information for both the Language Server and Personal versions. The software interface and manuals are available in English, German, and French.

When you start across, the first screen you will see is a control panel called crossBoard (see Figure 1 on page 27). This screen guides you through creating projects, importing and exporting files, and opening tasks you wish to return to. Like similar tools, you must first create a project and import the files to be translated, and then open the file you want to work on (called a task). This interface provides all the information you will need to perform basic workflow tasks, but the manual provides further assistance.

Like other environment tools, across tells you how many words you have translated (and the total number of words) for both the file and project. This feature helps me keep track of time and meet deadlines.

Figure 1: crossBoard



across - [Default Supervisor] Personal Edition v3.50.16 SP2_IH - What do you want to do?

File
View
Tools
Help
crossBoard
What do you want to do?
My Projects
My Tasks
Projects
Relations
Languages
Fonts
My Shortcuts
Ready
NUM

What do you want to do?

Tasks

Open Task
Start or resume work on my tasks immediately
More...

'My Projects'
Open crossBoard 'My Projects' for detailed information on projects I manage
More...

'My Tasks'
Open crossBoard 'My Tasks' for detailed information on tasks assigned to me
More...

Projects

Project Wizard
Create a new translation project and define languages, source documents and deadlines
More...

Alignment
Import and recycle old source and target documents to build up your translation memory
More...

Check-Out Wizard
Export target documents to their original format
More...

Project Reports
Creates report on projects or tasks.
More...

Administration

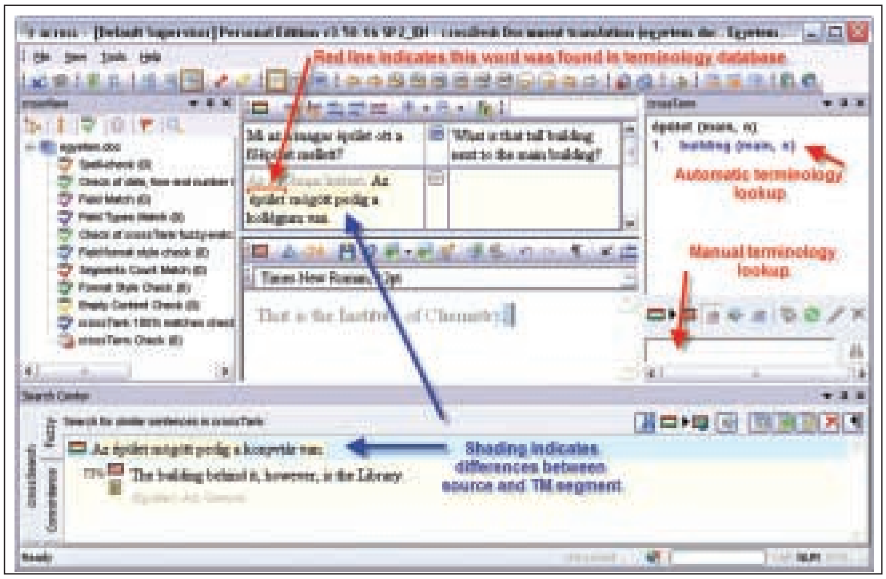
crossTank Manager
Manage your translation memory and export/import translation units
More...

crossTerm Manager
Manage your term entries and export/import term data
More...

## Is the translating/editing environment easy to use?

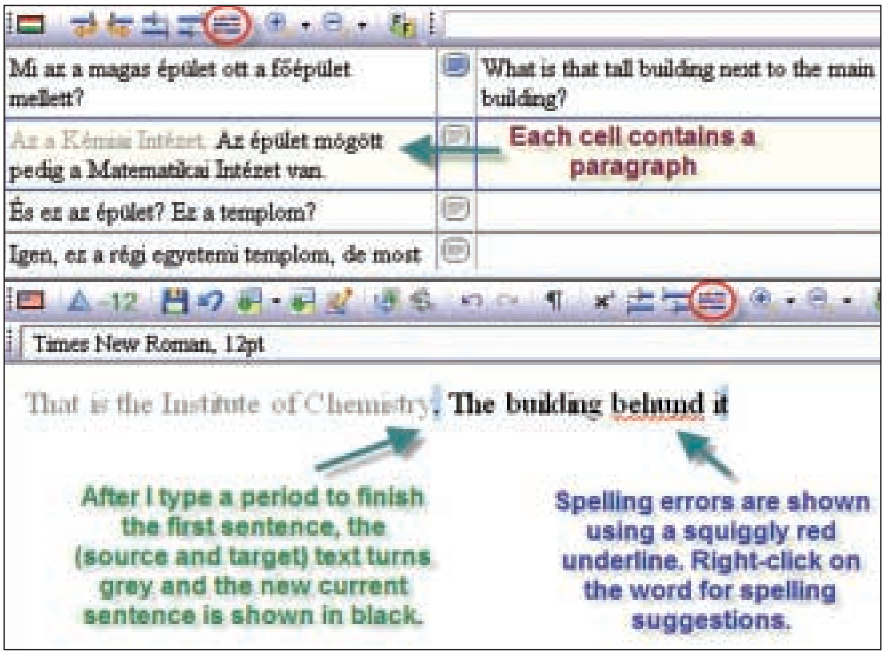
The editing environment is basically button- and shortcut-oriented, with few options in the menus. Hovering the cursor over the button displays its name and its keyboard shortcut. (See Figure 2 for an overview of the across editing environment.) In this layout, the terminology window shows terminology matches on the right, the Search Center window shows translation memory (TM) matches below, and the crossView window provides quality assurance information on the left. The source and target texts are shown in two columns in the center, with the target paragraph editing window at the center of the screen. ➡

Figure 2: across Working Environment



Red line indicates this word was found in terminology database
Automatic terminology lookup
Manual terminology lookup
Shading indicates differences between source and TM segment
Search Center
Ready

## Figure 3: Editing Window



| | |
|---|---|
| Mi az a magas épület ott a főépület mellett? | What is that tall building next to the main building? |
| Az a Kémiai Intézet. Az épület mögött pedig a Matematikai Intézet van. | Each cell contains a paragraph |
| És ez az épület? Ez a templom? | |
| Igen, ez a régi egyetemi templom, de most | |

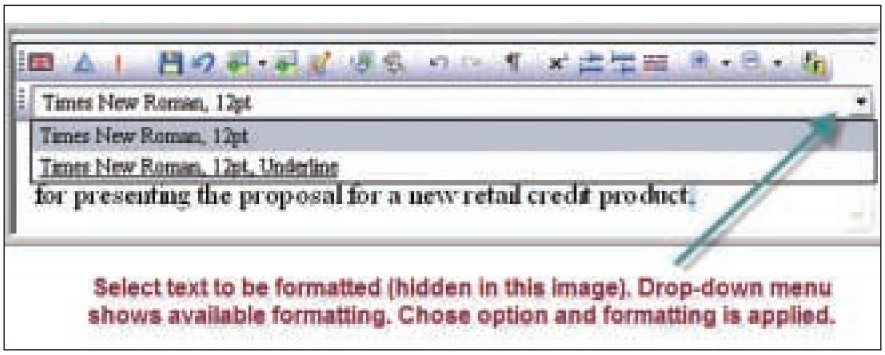
Times New Roman, 12pt

That is the Institute of Chemistry. The building behund it

After I type a period to finish the first sentence, the (source and target) text turns grey and the new current sentence is shown in black.

Spelling errors are shown using a squiggly red underline. Right-click on the word for spelling suggestions.

## Figure 4: Text Formatting



Times New Roman, 12pt

Times New Roman, 12pt

Times New Roman, 12pt, Underline

for presenting the proposal for a new retail credit product.

Select text to be formatted (hidden in this image). Drop-down menu shows available formatting. Chose option and formatting is applied.

Figure 3 shows a larger version of the central area of the working environment. Each cell contains an entire paragraph, but only one sentence is shown in black characters in the editing window at a time. (Despite the two-column format, which is similar to Déjà Vu X and SDLX, you must type the translation into a third window below.) The tool automatically switches to the next sentence when you finish the previous sentence (I love this!). Typing Ctrl+Alt+Enter confirms the paragraph translation and takes you to the next paragraph. (Unfortunately, this shortcut requires two hands.) I just wish the tool would switch to the next paragraph automatically.

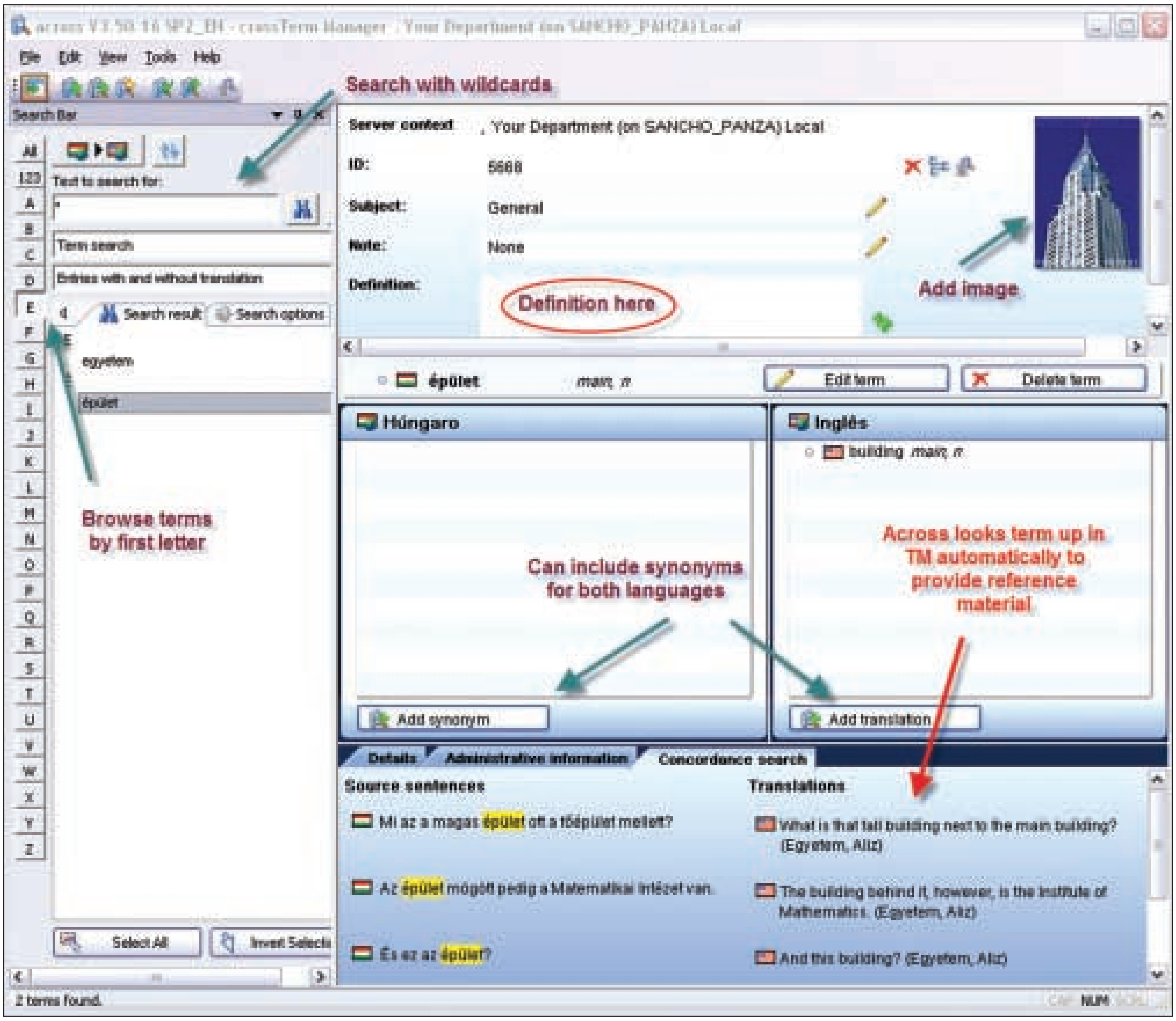
Having one paragraph per cell provides more layout context than tools that provide just one sentence per cell. You can copy the source sentence or the entire paragraph to the target editing window with a button or keyboard shortcut—a nice feature. If you type an abbreviation and the program thinks you have started a new sentence, there is a convenient button on the editing toolbar (circled in red in Figure 3) that allows you to register an abbreviation so across will recognize it in the future. There is a similar button for defining sentence breaks in the source text (also circled in red in Figure 3).

As shown in Figure 3, the program underlines misspelled words as you type, just like in MS Word. Right-clicking provides spelling suggestions. This will probably be one of the most favorite features among users. There is also an AutoText feature.

All formatting styles in the source sentence are available when translating via a drop-down menu (see Figure 4). Select the text to be formatted, and then select the formatting. In the two-column source/translation window and in the editing window, bold appears as bold, italic appears as italic, etc. Most of the examples in this review do not show this because my sample text has no formatting. I would prefer buttons for simple things like underline and bold, but the system is simple and clear enough. While you cannot insert formatting that is not present in the original sentence, you can apply any available formatting styles to any word in the translated sentence.

Other interesting features are across' two search tools. The "simple" search tool does not step through the file occurrence by occurrence. Instead, it opens a separate window showing all occurrences of the search text (target language only). You can then mark/unmark the checkbox next to each occurrence before applying a replace function. Clicking on an occurrence skips to that line in the main window. The window opened by the "Find All" function in MS Excel is similar. A second search tool can search in source or target text, but does not allow replacement. It also shows a

Figure 5: Main crossTerm Window


across V3.50.16 SP2_BH - crossTerm Manager - Your Department (on SANCHO_PANZA) Local
File Edit View Tools Help
Search with wildcards
Search Bar
All
123
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
Search result
Search options
Select All
Invert Selection
Browse terms by first letter
Definition here
Add image
Edit term
Delete term
Húngaro
Inglês
Can include synonyms for both languages
Across looks term up in TM automatically to provide reference material
Add synonym
Add translation
Details
Administrative information
Concordance search
NUM

Text to search for: *

Term search

Entries with and without translation

egyetem

épület

Server context: Your Department (on SANCHO_PANZA) Local

ID: 5688

Subject: General

Note: None

Definition:

épület main, n

building main, n

| Source sentences | Translations |
|---|---|
| Mi az a magas épület ott a főépület mellett? | What is that tall building next to the main building? (Egyetem, Aliz) |
| Az épület mögött pedig a Matematikai intézet van. | The building behind it, however, is the Institute of Mathematics. (Egyetem, Aliz) |
| És az az épület? | And this building? (Egyetem, Aliz) |

2 terms found.

list of occurrences rather than stepping through the text.

## Can I use across even when I will work with others who do not have it?

The program is based on the client/server concept, and a company owning the across Language Server can take your translation and send it to an editor in an across format. If you want to work with an editor outside this relationship, you can export the file to its native format, but it cannot be imported back into across to update the database (which both SDL Trados and Déjà Vu X can do if the editor is careful to respect the codes and formatting). Aligning the edited file, deleting the original translation, and running pre-translation could be a work-around, but I have not tried it.

You can export a partially translated file, which is a feature I wish Déjà Vu X had. The program exports the translated paragraphs and automatically fills in the source where no translation was provided. This is also how you can back up your translation.

## Is the terminology database well-integrated with the translating environment?

The terminology tool, designed for corporations, is far more complete than many translators might need. However, the default setting only includes a few of the possible fields. It even has a "quick term entry" option for when you are in a hurry and only want to link term A to term B. (See Figure 5 for the features available in crossTerm.)

There is just one terminology database for each language pair, and it is concept-based, allowing for more than a one-to-one relationship between terms. You can add an image, a definition, and synonyms for terms in both languages, in addition to other fields (not shown in Figure 5 because they are displayed on the Details ➡

## References

### References

**across: Version reviewed: Personal Edition v. 3.50.16 SP2_EN**
www.across.net

**Babylon**
www.babylon.com

tab). You can search the database with wildcards or browse by the first letter of the term. The crossTerm window even shows you TM matches as a reference for concordance information (see the bottom of Figure 5).

One of my favorite features of crossTerm is that you can look up words in it from within the editing environment without opening a separate application. As shown in Figure 2 on page 27, there is a search field at the bottom of the crossTerm window in the editing environment, and you can type any word (in either language) and search for it in crossTerm. To add terms to crossTerm while translating, select a term in the source cell and in the editing window, then type Shift+Alt+1 (or click on a button) to send the term and translation to crossTerm. You can add additional information, such as gender, part of speech, and usage, or leave these fields blank.

According to across, terminology lookup is language-specific for English, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, German, Norwegian, Russian, Swedish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. The lookup function also considers the morphology of the source language when searching crossTerm, based on word stems.

> I was impressed by the responsiveness of across' technical support.

### Is the TM database well-integrated with the translating environment?

The across Personal Edition finds segments in the TM (called crossTank) that are similar to the source segment, as shown at the bottom of Figure 2. I have no complaints, compared to the other tools I have used. Just click on the translation in the Search Center to insert the segment in the edit window. According to across, you will be able to select among the different possible translations with a key combination in the next release. If the only difference between segments is a number, crossTank changes the number automatically to match the source text when the translation is inserted. It does not, however, have an assemble function similar to the one in Déjà Vu X. CrossTalk does a good job of showing the differences between the original text and the found segment, shading the text in both the source cell and the Search Center window (see Figure 2). You can also search crossTank manually on the concordance tab in the Search Center.

There is one master TM database for each language pair, which many translators prefer. There is also just one terminology database for each language pair. Information on client, project name, and area are added automatically.

### Compatible File Formats and Tools

The across Personal Edition can import TMs and terminology databases from external formats. It also includes an alignment tool, which I did not try. It can import MS Office (including MS Office 2007), XML, HTML, FrameMaker files, and some software interfaces. The company says a future version will be compatible with Windows Vista. Please refer to the company website for more details on compatible file formats.

One interesting feature is across' ability to search specific websites from within the tool using the Search Center. You can configure which sites it searches, and they are opened in an external browser, showing the result. The program can also be integrated with Babylon, which provides electronic monolingual and bilingual dictionaries for a limited number of languages.

### Quality Assurance

The across Personal Edition has many quality assurance features built into the editing environment, and displayed in the crossView window on the left in Figure 2. It keeps track of spelling errors, missing formatting, and other possible errors as you work. When the translation is done, the program displays a window with a summary of possible problems to remind you to check them. You can also configure it to complain about mismatched numbers as you translate.

Another nice time-saving feature is the update function. This can be used when a source document is changed after all or part of it has been translated. The program compares the original and updated document and erases the translations for the changed paragraphs. (These translations remain in the TM.) You can then skip through the document and update the translation using TM matches where appropriate. When I have tried translating an updated document with Déjà Vu X or SDL Trados, neither program has ever made the process as easy as this function does.

## Stability

I have only used across to translate five small jobs, so I cannot comment on its ability to import large files or files with many figures. In any case, never try out a new environment tool on a project with a tight deadline, because there is always a learning curve. If anything goes wrong, you could miss your deadline.

## Miscellaneous

I was impressed by the responsiveness of across' technical support. I used the product for three months, and they always answered my questions quickly. Considering that they did not know I was writing a review and that I was contacting them regarding a free product, their response seems nothing short of amazing.

If you do not yet use a tool because of the cost or because you are not yet accustomed to using tools other than MS Word, e-mail, and an Internet browser, this is your chance! If you use another tool, but are interested in the specific features described here, give across a try. I think I am hooked already!

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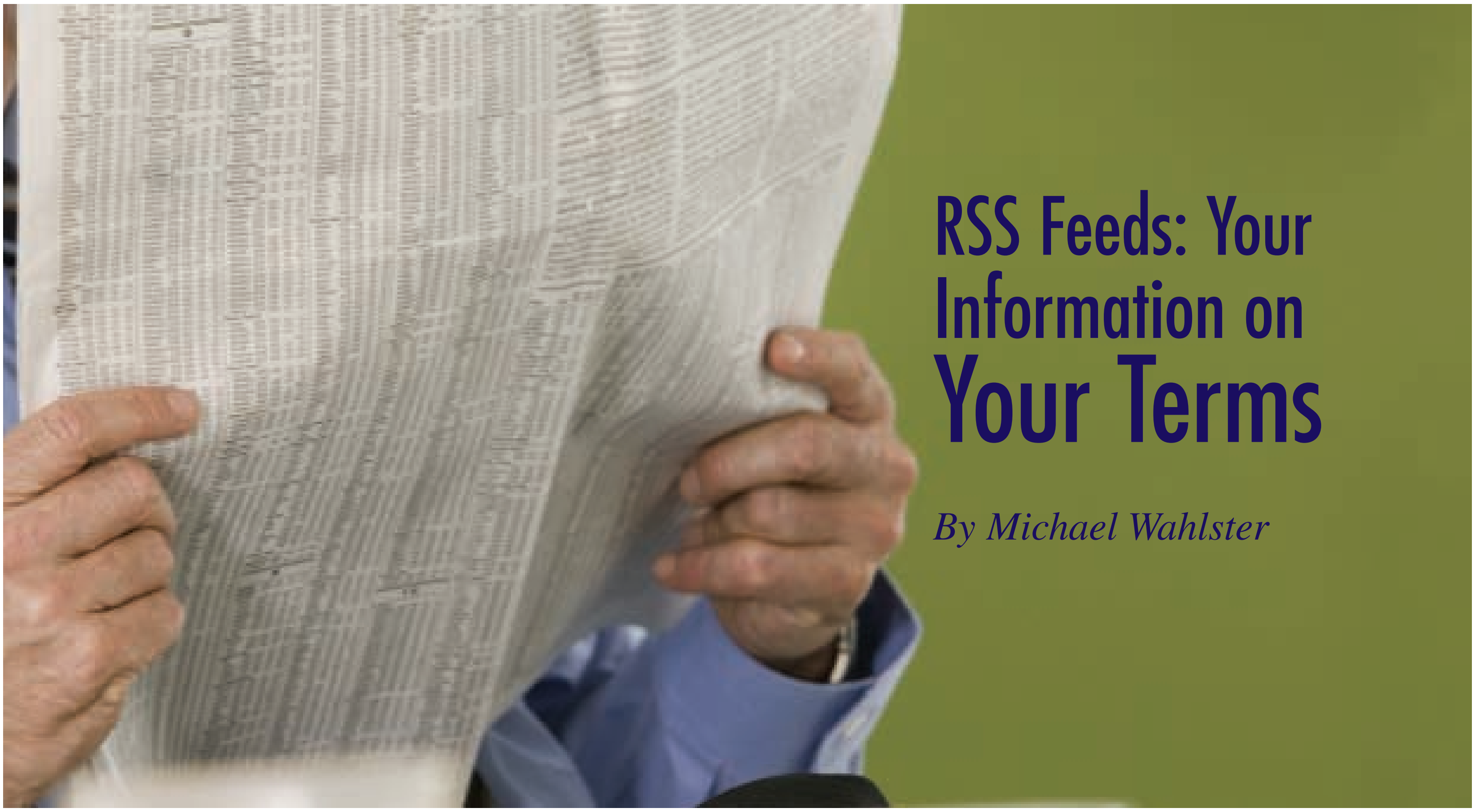

# RSS Feeds: Your Information on Your Terms

*By Michael Wahlster*

**If you are like** most people, you visit several websites regularly. You might seek out professional organizations for industry news and events or visit software product sites for reviews and online help—or perhaps you simply want to check out the BBC for the latest cricket scores. Yet, the Internet is an information jungle, and navigating it on a daily basis (or even several times a day) is time-consuming and tedious. How do you find what you are looking for quickly and easily, and, more important, how do you manage the information you receive? The answer is RSS.

## What is RSS?

RSS, or Really Simple Syndication, is a data file format used for delivering regularly changing web content. Content in an RSS document (called a *web feed* or *channel*) can be read using a software application called a news feed reader (also known as an *aggregator*). Many news-related sites, web logs, and other online publishers syndicate their content as an RSS feed for subscribers. Every time the site is modified, the RSS feed is updated with a summary of the new information. The feed reader will capture this change and display the information from the feed in a format that subscribers can easily read on their computers. An RSS subscription lets subscribers keep up with their favorite websites automatically, without having to go around to various websites checking for updates.

## How does it work?

Typically, a content provider publishes a feed link on its site, which end users subscribe to using a news feed reader program located on their computer or online. Initiating the subscription process is usually as simple as dragging the link from the web browser to the feed reader or by clicking on the RSS feed icon in the browser (see Figure 1 on page 33). When instructed, the feed reader checks the user's subscribed feeds and asks all the servers in its feed list if they have new content. If so, the feed reader either makes a note of the new content or downloads it to the subscriber's computer. Feed readers can be scheduled to check for new content periodically. When websites provide web feeds to notify users of content updates, they frequently only include summary information or website links in the web feed rather than the full content itself. Web feeds are operated by many news websites, web logs, schools, and podcasters.

> **RSS feeds are time savers and make it easy to scan a large number of websites quickly for content that is new and potentially interesting.**

This form of information syndication was first adopted by web logs and other social network sites. At the end

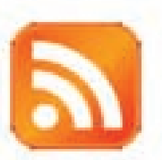

**Figure 1: Square RSS Feed Icon**
Until recently, there was no uniform icon to designate RSS feeds. Text links and designations such as XML, RSS, and Atom are still found on many sites. This square feed icon is emerging as the de facto standard icon for news feeds. It is mostly colored orange, but there are also blue versions, notably in the Apple universe.

of 2002, *The New York Times* started to offer RSS feeds for different news topics, and this is generally considered the breakthrough that lead to the widespread application of news feeds. Today, feed links are available on most sites that offer frequently updated information.

## In-box for the Internet

How does RSS help us manage the information we find online, and why should we find out about news feeds? Google has a short video, available at www.google.com/reader/view, for those who sign up for the Google feed reader. In the video, Chris Wetherell, an engineer at Google Reader, explains the value of RSS feeds:

> "When you have an e-mail in-box, for instance, you don't have to check with Larry, Cheryl, and Sergey to find out if they sent you e-mail. It just comes in your in-box and you get to read it whenever you want. Google Reader is a little like that, but for the entire Internet. You don't have to go to this site, or that site, or the other site to find out when something is updated. In Google Reader, it just all comes in to you, and you get to read it whenever you want."

RSS is not the only way users can be notified of changes to informational content on websites. E-mail notification is another common way users choose to be alerted to updates. For example, you can ask CNN to send you an e-mail notification whenever there is a news item that fits your parameters, and *The New York Times* will send you headlines. However, there is a downside to e-mail notification:

- Each sender uses a different method to notifiy subscribers of content updates, so that news from different sources is not presented in a uniform fashion.

- News updates show up among your other e-mail and can get lost.

- Updates can be mistaken for spam and might be filtered out of the mail stream.

- You have to make your e-mail address known in order to receive notifications.

RSS has none of these disadvantages. Some advantages of RSS notification include:

- Subscribers are not required to disclose their e-mail addresses, so there is no increased exposure to threats associated with e-mail, such as spam, viruses, phishing, and identity theft.

- If users want to stop receiving news, they do not have to send an "unsubscribe" request, but can simply remove the feed from their feed reader.

- All feeds show up uniformly and are easily grouped, sorted, and compared. The feed items are automatically "sorted" because each feed URL has its own set of entries (unlike an e-mail box, where all messages are in one big pile and e-mail programs have to resort to complicated rules and pattern matching).

Since RSS is a news channel, there is a sender and receiver: the website author, who syndicates the content; and the visitor, who subscribes to the content. The author maintains the RSS feed on the website, and visitors who are interested in receiving updated content can subscribe to the feed.

There is one caveat to this method: RSS feeds are not individualized web searches. The content delivered by feeds is what the website author puts into the feed, not what the subscriber would like to get out of it. There are also no search words or filters, which is why organizations like BBC News go to such lengths to divide their feeds into ever smaller categories. This is because the narrower the category, the more focused the content.

## RSS Reader Software

Think of the RSS reader as the "e-mail program" for the Internet. As you visit sites you want to keep track of, you subscribe to their RSS feeds. The RSS reader, in turn, will keep an eye on all your subscribed feeds. Any changes to a website's content are listed in the reader so that you have a quick picture of what is new every time you open your RSS reader.

As with most things Internet, RSS readers are anything but standardized, and there are many choices of RSS readers available. Some are free and some incur a license fee. Some reside on your computer and some are online. For example, Internet Explorer and Firefox both offer RSS subscription functions. Some RSS readers

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work through your mail program. Different programs offer different ways of organizing feeds. So, to a large extent, it is a question of personal preference, and you should try a few different programs to see which you like best.

Since it is so easy to subscribe to RSS feeds, your subscription list can grow very long, very quickly and your reader can end up storing a really large amount of data. Because of this, I would stay away from using browsers or software that integrates with an e-mail program. This will make the local files of a browser or e-mail application very large.

I prefer to use online readers because I can access them from any computer. Since I started using RSS feeds early on, I use a program called Bloglines, but I think that, given the ease of interface and functions such as tags and trends, Google Reader offers the most "bang for the buck" at this moment. Here is a short list of readers and where to find them:

**Google Reader**
www.google.com/reader

**Web: feeds.reddit**
http://reddit.com

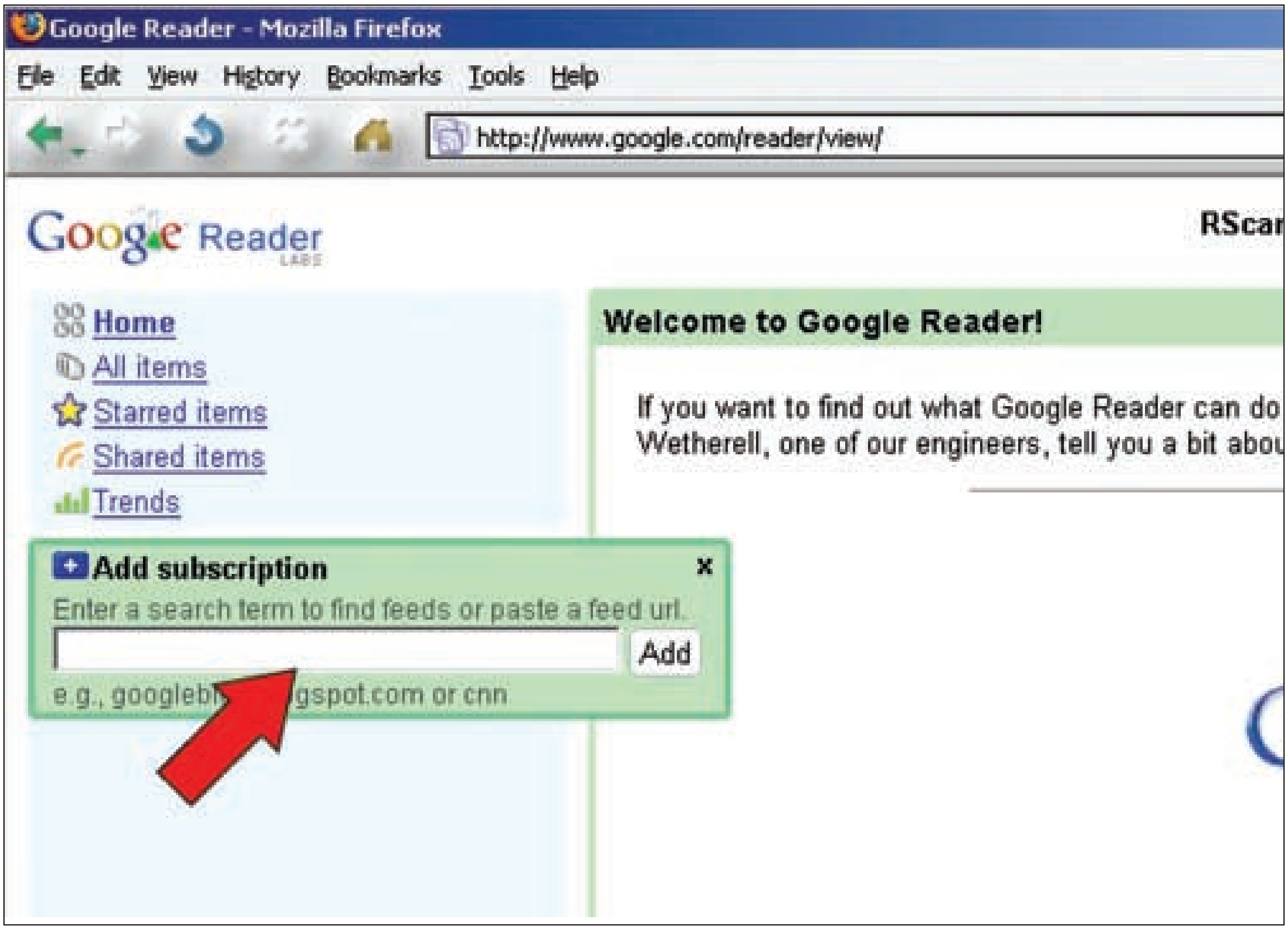
**Bloglines**
www.bloglines.com

**Mac OS X: NetNewsWire**
www.newsgator.com/Individuals/NetNewsWire

**Windows: SharpReader**
www.sharpreader.net

**Linux: Straw**
www.gnome.org/projects/straw

Figure 2: In Google Reader, copy the Cricket RSS feed URL into the Add Subscription field to subscribe to the feed.


Google Reader - Mozilla Firefox
File
Edit
View
History
Bookmarks
Tools
Help
http://www.google.com/reader/view/
Google Reader
LABS
RScar
Home
All items
Starred items
Shared items
Trends
Add subscription
×
Add

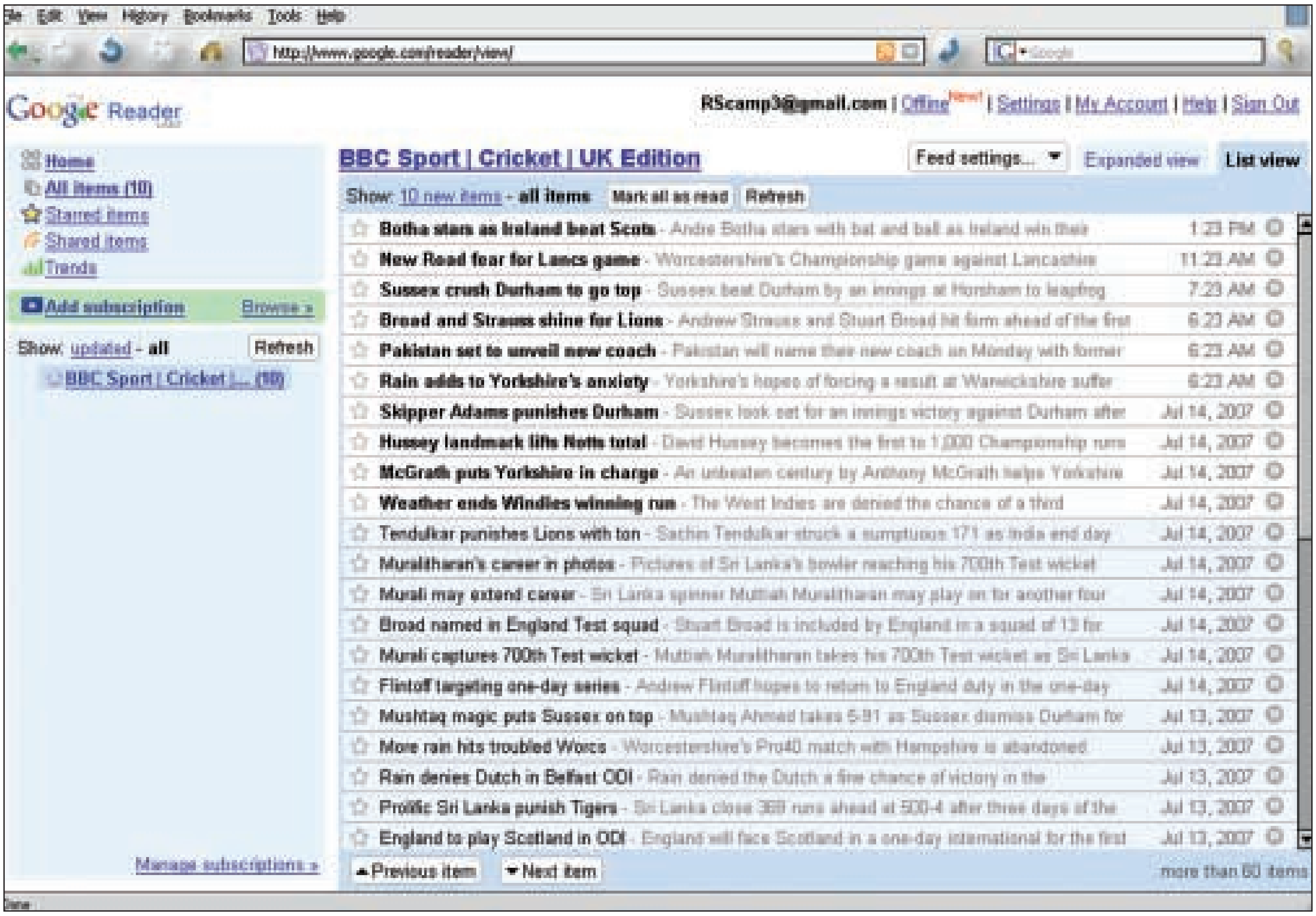
Welcome to Google Reader!

If you want to find out what Google Reader can do
Wetherell, one of our engineers, tell you a bit abou

Enter a search term to find feeds or paste a feed url.

e.g., googleb gspot.com or cnn

**Figure 3: Cricket-related news items published by BBC News appear, from the most recent to the oldest, in the right panel; the subscribed feed shows in the left panel. Note that this is "List view."**


File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
http://www.google.com/reader/view/
Google
Google Reader
RScamp3@gmail.com | Offline New! | Settings | My Account | Help | Sign Out
Home
All items (10)
Starred items
Shared items
Trends
Add subscription
Browse »
Show: updated - all
Refresh
BBC Sport | Cricket |... (10)
Manage subscriptions »
BBC Sport | Cricket | UK Edition
Feed settings...
Expanded view
List view
Show: 10 new items - all items
Mark all as read
Refresh
Previous item
Next item
more than 60 items
Done

Botha stars as Ireland beat Scots - Andre Botha stars with bat and ball as Ireland win their 1:23 PM
New Road fear for Lancs game - Worcestershire's Championship game against Lancashire 11:23 AM
Sussex crush Durham to go top - Sussex beat Durham by an innings at Horsham to leapfrog 7:23 AM
Broad and Strauss shine for Lions - Andrew Strauss and Stuart Broad hit form ahead of the first 6:23 AM
Pakistan set to unveil new coach - Pakistan will name their new coach on Monday with former 6:23 AM
Rain adds to Yorkshire's anxiety - Yorkshire's hopes of forcing a result at Warwickshire suffer 6:23 AM
Skipper Adams punishes Durham - Sussex look set for an innings victory against Durham after Jul 14, 2007
Hussey landmark lifts Notts total - David Hussey becomes the first to 1,000 Championship runs Jul 14, 2007
McGrath puts Yorkshire in charge - An unbeaten century by Anthony McGrath helps Yorkshire Jul 14, 2007
Weather ends Windies winning run - The West Indies are denied the chance of a third Jul 14, 2007
Tendulkar punishes Lions with ton - Sachin Tendulkar struck a sumptuous 171 as India end day Jul 14, 2007
Muralitharan's career in photos - Pictures of Sri Lanka's bowler reaching his 700th Test wicket Jul 14, 2007
Murali may extend career - Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralitharan may play on for another four Jul 14, 2007
Broad named in England Test squad - Stuart Broad is included by England in a squad of 13 for Jul 14, 2007
Murali captures 700th Test wicket - Muttiah Muralitharan takes his 700th Test wicket as Sri Lanka Jul 14, 2007
Flintoff targeting one-day series - Andrew Flintoff hopes to return to England duty in the one-day Jul 14, 2007
Mushtaq magic puts Sussex on top - Mushtaq Ahmed takes 5-91 as Sussex dismiss Durham for Jul 13, 2007
More rain hits troubled Worcs - Worcestershire's Pro40 match with Hampshire is abandoned Jul 13, 2007
Rain denies Dutch in Belfast ODI - Rain denied the Dutch a fine chance of victory in the Jul 13, 2007
Prolific Sri Lanka punish Tigers - Sri Lanka close 369 runs ahead at 500-4 after three days of the Jul 13, 2007
England to play Scotland in ODI - England will face Scotland in a one-day international for the first Jul 13, 2007

## How to Subscribe to Feeds

If you would like to use an online feed reader, you need to register as a user. With Google (as with other large services), your e-mail user account will also work with the feed reader. When you find a website you would like to monitor, identify the RSS link. Most often, the link shows up as the orange square feed button that is shown in Figure 1 on page 33, or else a rectangular button with the letters "RSS" or "XML." Sometimes it is a text link that says "Syndicate this" or a similar phrase.

Copy the link into the "Add subscription" field of the RSS reader. If you are using your browser as the reader, you simply click on the subscription button (see Figure 2 on page 34).

The reader software will now monitor that feed and all subscriptions. You can make groups and organize the feeds. You can display just the headline of the feed, or the headline and the first couple of lines of the content. If you are interested in one of the items listed, click on it and it will take you to the full article on the website it came from.

The RSS reader gives you, in one place and organized in a uniform format, all new items and changes that have taken place on the websites you have subscribed to. At a glance, you can decide which items you are interested in, and with a click go directly to the original website and source material to read the full text. It is possible to create folders for feeds, tag news items using keywords, and structure the display in different ways to make the result more meaningful

**If you are the author of a website that has frequently updated content, such as news, an events schedule, membership lists, or "Top 10" lists, you can use RSS feeds to generate more traffic for your site.**

(see Figure 3 on page 35). Using an RSS feed is much less time-consuming and more productive, since you only access material you really want to find out more about.

## Syndicate Your Own Site

If you are the author of a website that has frequently updated content, such as news, an events schedule, membership lists, or "Top 10" lists, you can use RSS feeds to generate more traffic for your site.

RSS feeds are not only convenient tools for readers, they also provide additional links that are indexed in search engines. Moreover, there are many feed lists out there that specialize in tagging and listing feeds. Such lists can help make your site more visible. Web logs alone come in staggering numbers.

So how can you give your website a feed to make it attractive to readers and indexable by RSS-specific listings? A number of publication applications, in particular content management software, automatically create RSS feeds. Well-known names in the open-source sector are Mambo, Drupal, Movable Type, Expression Engine, and WordPress. Blog software, such as LiveJournal and MySpace, also creates RSS feeds. If your website does not use any of those content systems, you may be able to create feeds with the help of Feedburner, a web-based application. Please check out the following sites for more information:

**Drupal**
http://drupal.org

**Expression Engine**
http://expressionengine.com

**Feedburner**
www.feedburner.com

**Mambo**
www.mamboserver.com

**Movable Type**
www.movabletype.org

**WordPress**
http://wordpress.org

## Conclusion

RSS feeds are time savers and make it easy to scan a large number of websites quickly for content that is new and potentially interesting. They require the initial investment of setting up the reader program, but the time required to do that is negligible compared to the time saved once the reader takes over the regular monitoring of the feeds. It is not uncommon to monitor hundreds of feeds in a very small amount of time, which would be impossible to accomplish if you had to visit each site separately. If you are surfing the web regularly for information that changes on an unpredictable schedule, you should seriously consider letting an RSS reader do the work for you by bringing the information to your computer automatically.

## Need Help with Feeds?

If you would like to use feeds as content on your own website and your programming skills are not up to speed, you can Google for ready-to-use widgets that let you insert RSS content into your web pages. Check out **http://snurl.com/1qj1j** to see a web page built exclusively from feeds I subscribed to in an account I created to illustrate this point.

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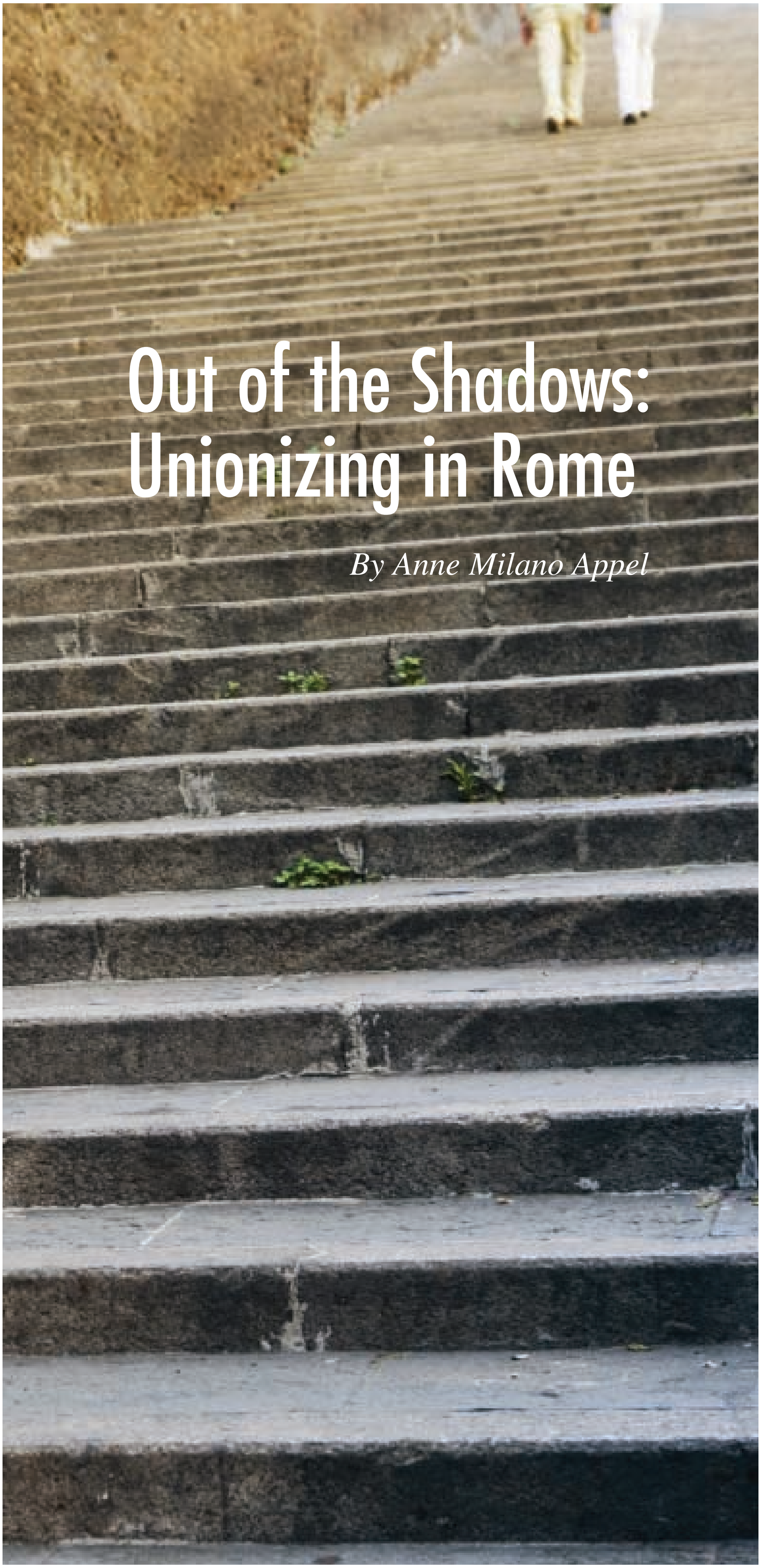
For details please visit our websites: www.techinput.ru and www.techinput.com.



# Out of the Shadows: Unionizing in Rome

*By Anne Milano Appel*

**In my former life** as a library director, unions were a bane and an anathema, but this was probably because I was "management" and the staff union was seen as "the adversary." Now that I work as a freelancer, the distinction between the two is decidedly blurred. My recent trip to Italy provided me with the opportunity to rethink the utility of union membership for a freelance literary translator.

In May, while in Rome, I attended the XX Congresso Sindacato Nazionale Scrittori (SNS) at the headquarters of the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL), the Italian labor federation. The SNS, one of several writers' unions in Italy, had recently been bolstered—I am tempted to say enhanced—by the presence of a vocal activist group of literary translators who were ready and willing to push for better working conditions for both writers and translators in their profession. I had decided to attend the Congresso to see how things were done "all'Italiana," wondering why we American translators did not have a similar union presence in the U.S., and whether there was indeed a material difference between a union and a professional association as we know it.

What follows is a summary of some of the key issues discussed at the Congresso. The quotes come directly from the speakers and attendees, who generously agreed to be interviewed or were kind enough to provide me with written transcripts of their comments.

## The Attraction of a Union

The issues facing literary translators in Italy are the same as those we face here in the U.S., including visibility, due attribution, decent compensation, and copyright protection.

Professional associations in Italy do not seem to be any more effective at resolving these issues than associations in the U.S. As a means of comparison, I looked through the mission statements of several U.S. organizations, and the National Writers Union is the only one I found that specifically states that it is working to defend the rights and improve the economic and working conditions of writers, though this statement does not explicitly include translators.[1]

Perhaps the underlying issue here lies in the fact that unions and professional associations serve a different purpose, although there are some unions that call themselves professional associations and vice versa. As I see it, unions are concerned with defending the rights of translators, improving their economic and working conditions, and safeguarding legal interests regarding their work (e.g., copyright). Professional associations tend to be concerned with promoting the profession as a category, focusing on professional training and disseminating information about the profession. Both naturally have an interest in promoting and supporting legislative initiatives benefiting the profession and its practitioners. Perhaps these differences might explain why literary translators would look to membership in a union to promote the visibility of their profession.

**The endorsement of culture is an important element in Italy that is indicative of a way of life that values civilization, education, and tradition.**

## From a Virtual Community to an Act of Faith

In looking at the situation of literary translators in Italy, it is probably no accident that most of the translators who are now part of SNS are loosely associated through Biblit, a virtual community and discussion forum established in 1999 made up of translators working from and into Italian. In her comments to the assembly at the Congresso, Marina Rullo, founder of Biblit, explained that literary translators were participating at the Congresso for the first time, calling it, "a sign of our determination to come out of the shadows and make our voices heard."

As an online community with no legal ties, Biblit serves as a network of solidarity that occasionally undertakes initiatives to promote the cause of translators, but efforts at raising awareness can only go so far: "At a certain point, we realized that these initiatives were not enough, and that a more incisive action was needed at the political and institutional level that only a union could guarantee," says Rullo.

Still, she conceded that the decision to join SNS was not an easy one to make. In a profession marked by isolation and individualism, there is a natural mistrust of associations of any kind, and unions are perceived as being particularly bureaucratic and political. Rullo went on to say: "Joining SNS represents an act of faith on our part and at the same time a declaration of intent. We are here to act for dignified working conditions and fair compensation."

Though conscious of their responsibility as the vanguard of a potentially much greater number of translators who might decide to join Biblit should there be strong, concrete signs of activity and change and greater professional visibility, Rullo explained that no one appears to be looking at the situation through rose-colored glasses: "We are aware that the road is long and the available resources limited…all the more reason to have an organization like the union behind us."

## The Role of Culture

Perhaps the note that struck me most at the Congresso was the repeated emphasis on the word *cultura* (culture in the broadest sense of the term). Indeed, the opening remarks by SNS President Mario Lunetta set the tone, when he stated that the objectives of the union were to encourage creativity, safeguard authors' rights, and promote culture.

The endorsement of culture is an important element in Italy that is indicative of a way of life that values civilization, education, and tradition. In fact, one speaker began his remarks by quoting from Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia*: *"fatti non foste a viver come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza"*; that is, "you were not created to live like insensitive brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge" (*Inferno*, XXVI: 119-120). Brutishness resides in ignorance and is always lying in wait. The book is a shield against living brutishly and is considered a *bene culturale* (part of the cultural heritage).

At the same time, there was a strong current running

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through the comments of the various speakers that suggested an ongoing decline in culture, not just in Italy, but in other countries as well. The media are less and less interested in culture, said a speaker, while another noted that there has never been a great interest in reading in Italy: “The book has always been a bit at the margins.” Along this line, Trond Andreassen, president of the European Writers’ Congress (EWC), stated that he was “both surprised and saddened” by the fact that the role of authors was barely mentioned in a recent European Union (EU) paper on how to strengthen the publishing sector within the EU, rightly noting that “without authors…the book industry has nothing to trade.”

Writers create national literatures with their language, but world literature is written by translators.

Andreassen went on to stress the role of translators as well as authors, citing the “invaluable importance of translations and translators” in a context of intercultural dialogue. As he put it:

> “Each writer can sit in his own country and play a more or less important role at home, but when his stories and thoughts are to move across borders and make their way in a different linguistic landscape, a writer needs another writer—*l’autore invisibile,* the translator. As the world grows tighter, distances are shortened; as our eyes are opened to new realities, new cultures, and literatures, we gradually discover the importance of translation, and above all, the importance of good translations, adequate translations.”

He went on to cite José Saramago, the Portuguese novelist and 1998 Nobel Prize winner for literature, who once stated that writers create national literatures with their language, but world literature is written by translators.[2] These statements were reinforced by Rullo, who stressed the decisive role of translation in the cultural transmission, appreciation, and awareness of European cultural diversity.

If it is true that a disregard for culture in Italy is currently “at an elevated level,” as one speaker expressed it, why is this so? The consensus seemed to be that culture is threatened both in the political and economic arenas. Political currents pressure culture through attempts to transform it into ideology. Just as economic interests view the book as a revenue-producing article, so political interests see it as a product to persuade and even manipulate the reader. When political tides exert pressure to determine content, to use the book to further a political plan, promote specific policies, or endorse a specific agenda, the writer and the book become a tool in the service of ideology, and the idea of culture as a self-sufficient act of creation is compromised. The economic field, in turn, views culture as a commodity to be transformed into an industry: the book is seen as a product to generate profit. This is certainly true in the U.S., where at the recent BEA, BookExpo America, held in New York City, Beatriz Casoy Ashfield, who directed the last two London Book Fairs before the event was sold to Reed Exhibitions, was quoted as saying that “…in America, ‘commerce’ isn’t a dirty word…no one is afraid to sell.” In both cases, political and economic, the autonomy of culture as a creative activity is at risk.

There was strong sentiment expressed by speakers and attendees at the Congresso that literary content should not be determined either by the State or by the publishers; nor should it be determined by profit. How to reconcile the need for a profitable, viable publishing industry with the goal of creativity? One suggestion put forth was to recognize that the writer’s work is not only creative, but also representative of a skill. The writer is not just an artist, but also a *tecnico* (technician), in the sense of being an expert in his or her craft. In a word, culture, creativity, and technique must go hand in hand, just as in the union the promotion of creativity and the diffusion of culture are two goals that share the spotlight with the safeguarding of authors’ rights.

Rullo, speaking for the translators, made the defense of rights a priority while not excluding the other two goals: “Our commitment to action does not mean that cultural promotion is excluded a priori from our intentions. Nevertheless, we feel that the energies of our section and of the union must be applied principally to the legal, economic, and professional protection of the sector.” She went to say that she considers the entry of translators into SNS as a “first step toward change.”

## Resistance to Change

One of the most sobering things I heard at the Congresso was a statement by Marcella Dallatorre, who said: “I have been a translator for 40 years, and in 40 years nothing has changed.” In her remarks, Rullo regretfully noted that, “not even the great commitment and dedication to the union on the part of colleagues such as Marcella Dallatorre” has been able to effect change. Yet, Dallatorre was far from resigned, and her comments were challenging and provoking rather than defeatist. Italy is so far behind other nations, it risks looking ridiculous, she said, yet there is no reason for it to remain so: “We’re not isolated, we’re part of the European context. All we have to do is look around and see what other countries have done to resolve the problems.”

Examples of the kinds of solutions Dallatorre was referring to can be easily found. Consider the recent formation of HALMA, the European network of literary centers intended to serve as a platform for literary exchange. The main idea behind the network is to create a European structure across national borders, enabling authors, translators, editors, and literary facilitators to be active across different cultural regions, organizing joint projects and other endeavors. Still at the development stage, the program, which is expected to begin in 2008, calls for 16 literary centers to be set up in 11 participating countries (Italy is not one of the founding member nations).

Another type of example, aimed at a more activist defense of translators’ rights rather than cross-cultural exchange, is the so-called “Frankfurt Admonition” regarding a planned new version of the copyright law. In this case, German authors, publishers, and booksellers spoke out jointly for the protection of intellectual and cultural property, formulating their demands in an open letter to the German government. The view expressed in the “Admonition” is that: “Any sort of political pressure to achieve open access to copyright protected works is a gravely misguided decision.”[3]

The writer’s work is not only creative, but representative of a skill. The writer is not just an artist, but also a *tecnico* (technician), in the sense of being an expert in his or her craft.

More than 10 years ago, in a paper presented at the International Conference on Legislation for the Book World, held in Warsaw in November 1996, Dallatorre had outlined three “essential conditions for a fair translator-publisher relationship”:

1. The existence of a written contract, rather than an informal oral agreement.

2. The enforcement of the provisions of the copyright law that are often ignored without any legal consequence.

3. The existence of a copyright law that is clearly written, unequivocal, and detailed, without any ambiguity or vagueness.

Today, these conditions still remain out of reach, as do other conditions of equity. As Rullo pointed out: “Though the law confers on us the qualification of ‘writer,’ many things, such as royalties, that are considered a given for writers, for translators remain a mirage.” The consensus seemed to be that, in Italy, the prerequisites that make dignified working conditions and fair compensation for writers possible are systematically disregarded, not only because the law fails to be applied, but because the Italian copyright law *(diritto d’autore)* has remained more or less unchanged since it went into effect in 1941. Unlike in many European countries, where copyright laws underwent a profound revision in the 1990s, the commission to revise the Italian law, after a hopeful start during the years of Silvio Berlusconi’s government, ultimately ran aground on the shoals of politics.

## Principal Goals

In view of the situation, the translators of SNS have set the following goals:

- Revise the copyright law to:

    — Eliminate the “unless otherwise stipulated” clauses *(clausole del patto contrario).*

    — Require that percentages regarding secondary uses of the work, including electronic formats, be specified.

    — Reduce the maximum duration of the contract from 20 to 10 years.

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- — Make explicit the provision of the need to pay the translator a fixed fee plus royalties proportional to the success of the work.

- Negotiate a standard contract with publishers. This has already occurred in various European nations, where translators and publishers' associations have agreed to a sensible contract that represents a compromise between the economic interests of the two categories and serves as a model for individual contracts.

- Work toward effective implementation of the European directives on reprography and library loans, with distribution for the entire category of any non-apportionable funds, in the form of grants, courses, and programs for professional formation and development.

- Create an autonomous social security fund.

Are these goals attainable? What can translators realistically hope to achieve through membership in SNS? Perhaps a note of optimism can be found in Andreassen's words to the assembled group as he recounted a recent translators' strike in Norway:

"I cannot fail to mention the so-called translators strike in Norway last year. After many years of drawn-out negotiations with the publishers' association to renew the standard contract, the united translators from different organizations unanimously said: 'Enough is enough! The contract is outdated!' And to make this point clear, the translators sat down in the square between the major publishing houses in Oslo with old-style typewriters. The contract stated that translations were to be consigned as 'typewritten manuscripts'—which just shows how old-fashioned the contract used to be—and our translators said: 'Well, fine, here you are: typewritten pages'!

The newspapers and television reported this as a funny stunt, and in this manner, the translators managed to show that they were the creative element, while the publishers were conservative bores. The strike went on for several months, but a lot was obtained in the end, including a totally new standard contract with annual regulations of the fee, copyright for electronic publication, and better remuneration for re-publishing. The strike was perceived in the press and in the publishing business as funny and high-spirited, but it was also a strong political statement. In many ways, the Norwegian translators have paved the way for other groups of creative professions, such as writers and freelance journalists."

Andreassen concluded his remarks by stating that SNS had every reason to give its Translators Section a very warm welcome.

The members of the Translators Section of SNS have already begun working toward the achievement of their objectives, in the belief that the time may now be ripe. Never before has it been more essential to join forces in order to convince the government to adopt a serious cultural policy that will afford authors the same respect accorded to the other professional categories, and allow them to keep pace with the rest of Europe. Are their objectives attainable? Are their expectations realistic? A few of the translators who attended the Congresso shared their views with me.

> Never before has it been more essential to join forces in order to convince the government to adopt a serious cultural policy that will afford authors the same respect accorded to the other professional categories, and allow them to keep pace with the rest of Europe.

### Finding a Place at the Table

Claudia Valeria Letizia admitted to a certain skepticism that tempers optimism. Her cynicism derives from the prevalently "industrial-political" nature of Italian publishing, in which "cultural" aspirations necessarily take second place because of the ultimate need to sell and make a profit. "The SNS is the only pre-existing structure that can offer us a shred of help to change the status quo. Assuming that we are able to find a seat at the famous table," she explained.

Her enthusiasm, if any, is stirred by the group of translator colleagues who are demonstrating their willingness to act in order to change things, and she praised them for their human quali-

## Additional Information:

**American Literary Translators Association**
www.literarytranslators.org

**Associazione Italiana Traduttori e Interpreti**
www.aiti.org

**Associazione Nazionale Italiana Traduttori e Interpreti**
www.aniti.it

**Biblit**
www.biblit.it

**Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro**
www.cgil.it

**European Writers' Congress**
www.european-writerscongress.org

**HALMA**
www.halma-network.eu

**International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies**
www.iatis.org

**National Writers Union**
www.nwu.org/nwu

**PEN American Center**
www.pen.org

**Sindacato Nazionale Scrittori**
www.sindacatoscrittori.net

ties, their commitment, and their ability to organize and publicize their cause. Still, their number is relatively small, both with respect to the SNS membership and, especially, with respect to the overall number of translators in the Italian publishing arena. "Sometimes I wonder: will it really be worth it?" Letizia told me.

Isabella Zani agrees with Letizia that the most crucial point is for translators to find a seat at the table. It is not clear to her how SNS plans to convince publishers to sit down and discuss contracts. "The publishers have no interest in changing things, and we have no clout to force them to negotiate," she said. Zani believes it will take an intervention "from the top," that is, from the legislature, in order to revise the copyright law. "Only then can we think about sitting down with the publishers to discuss how to make the contracts conform to the new norms." Since this means involving the Italian parliament (even if only at the commission level), and since the nation is currently struggling with so many other urgent issues, Zani concedes that the endeavor "seems nothing short of utopian." While admitting that she may perhaps be more pessimistic than Letizia, she says she will wait and see, and try to make a contribution in whatever way she can.

### Guarded Optimism and a Wait-and-See Approach

Luisa Piussi also arrived at the Congresso with a good deal of skepticism and low expectations, but was pleased by the significant representation of translators and the fact that their approach (at their first appearance at an SNS conference) appeared to gratify long-time members of SNS. As for finding a seat at the table, Piussi asked: "What choice do we have?" She pointed out that with SNS about to join CGIL, which is

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Italy's oldest labor union organization, "it is the only realistic possibility we have to be heard 'from the top,' and it is only from above that an authoritative invitation to sit down at the discussion table can come." She noted that although SNS and CGIL do not necessarily have the knowledge to negotiate the conditions of the Translators Section of SNS, they have the formal structure, know the political procedures, and command the necessary channels to request meetings that an individual translator, working in isolation, does not have.

Rosaria Contestabile more or less shares these views: "Let's just say that union membership and, above all, a growing awareness as a profession is something that has to be done, but the results will only be seen in the long term, if at all." Though she does not see any inclination on the part of the Italian government to do anything to represent translators' interests, she felt that "the exchange of information among us and a certain group spirit are the positive side of the coin."

Laura Prandino, regional manager for the Tuscany Section of SNS, saw a "bit more concreteness and a little less self-referentiality" on the part of the union's "historic" component, chalking it up in part to "an injection of enthusiasm and pragmatism from the Translators Section." Fundamentally, however, there remains the problem of identifying issues on which writers and translators in SNS might find common ground.

For Prandino, the immediate objective is to earn visibility and credibility as a union, explaining that this is the only way to be able to "count" for something during negotiations, but that visibility must be earned through participation. She explained, "We must take advantage of the few already existing structures, such as the various regional centers of SNS, and establish contacts with regional and local authorities, as well as with other European organizations, to find out what is being done in other countries (for example, Germany, Norway, and Spain), and try to avoid the errors that have already been made in other countries."

Still, Prandino admits that the disheartenment that she sees in some who have joined the union is a little worrisome. Being part of SNS, or any translators' union, necessarily means coming to terms with long periods of time and considerable effort, she says, even just to reach the first results. To expect anything else at this time, she cautions, will only mean coming up against inevitable disappointment.

## Further Thoughts

On the whole, most attendees I spoke with saw the participation of translators at the Congresso as a first step toward unified class action on the part of the profession toward greater visibility, agreeing that in the meantime, they must wait and see, while continuing to persevere and do what they can.

All things considered, are the translators right in considering their entry into SNS as a first step toward change? Only time will tell. Meanwhile, Rullo remains guardedly optimistic: "The four years until the next Congresso will hopefully confirm that we made the right choice."

## Notes

1. The mission statement of the National Writers Union (www.nwu.org/nwu) states that it is: "The trade union for freelance and contract writers: journalists, book authors, business and technical writers, web content providers, and poets. With the combined strength of nearly 2,000 members in 16 chapters nationwide, and with the support of the United Automobile Workers, the Union works to defend the rights and improve the economic and working conditions of all writers."

2. José Saramago, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for literature, came out in favor of inquisitive translators in May 2003 during a speech to attendees at the Fourth Latin American Conference on Translation and Interpretation in Buenos Aires.

3. The admonition letter was signed by the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (German Publishers & Booksellers Association), the Verband deutscher Schriftsteller (VS - Association of German Writers), and the PEN-Zentrum Deutschland. Calling on the government to think through a considered concept for "meaningful reinforcement of protection for creative production in the 21st century," they expressed a concern that goes beyond that of material interests. "This is about fantasy and creative powers, both on the part of authors and of publishing companies," said Börsenverein President Gottfried Honnefelder. He went on to state that, "an unfiltered surplus of sources that have not been subject to the quality control of publishing companies will inevitably lead to the absence of creativity." (See http://nl.buchmesse.de/ref.php?id=32f8a2e17093ms455.)

## Certification Forum

**Diane Howard**
Deputy Chair, ATA Certification Committee

# What You Don't Know About Being a Grader

As ATA President Marian S. Greenfield announced in her August column, one important reason for the increase in ATA's certification exam fee—which will go up to $300 for the 2008 examination year—is to provide better compensation for graders. This recognition of the work graders do has been needed for a long time, and is a major component in making ATA's Certification Program even more professional.

So what do graders do, you may ask? Let me walk you through an exam year.

The graders' year begins in the spring, when language work groups start looking for passages for the next calendar year. Passage selection is one of the most difficult and time-consuming things that graders do. The Passage Selection Task Force, working under the guidance of ATA's Certification Committee, has set standards to ensure consistency in passage difficulty, both across all 26 language pairs and from year to year. Choosing passages that meet these standards is an essential element in the fairness of the exam, and requires a great deal of time and attention. Graders spend hours discussing whether a given passage is appropriate and identifying the challenges in each text. Passages are often taken for a trial run when graders translate them under exam circumstances (that is, with only the resources and time available during the actual test) to see if there are any unexpected difficulties that might eliminate the passage.

At some point during the spring, the chairs of each language work group and the Certification Committee meet for workshops and updates on exam procedures. This meeting allows graders to make suggestions for program improvements and to discuss procedures with their colleagues to ensure that all work groups are applying program rules in the same way. Also, graders with a particular expertise or an idea for a new approach to any facet of the program give workshops to refine the exam process further. After the meeting, the work group chairs write summaries that are distributed to their group members so that all graders are kept informed of current program policies. Staying abreast of program developments is a responsibility of all graders, and one that requires a fair investment of time.

Moving into the summer, the passage selection process continues. The work groups have chosen their sets of passages and written the translation instructions that provide the context for both the exam candidate and the graders. At this point, the passages are sent to the Passage Selection Task Force for review. The review process is not just a handoff of the selected passages, but often requires extensive communication between work group members and the reviewer. In the process, any translation challenges are identified and refined, and every effort is made to ensure that the passages are appropriate for translation under exam conditions. It sometimes happens during this step that one or more passages are rejected, and the work group has to start from scratch and find entirely new texts. Once the passages have been approved, all graders prepare sample translations.

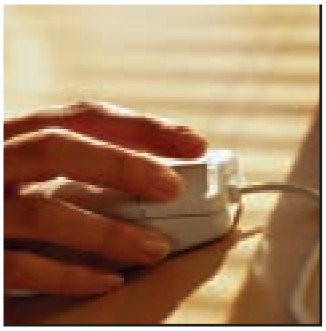
In the fall, people start preparing for ATA's Annual Conference, which is the yearly opportunity for all graders to meet and discuss how the program is working and to receive updates from the Certification Committee. During the conference, graders participate in special grader workshops in addition to the regular conference sessions. They also spend Sunday morning after the close of the conference at a workshop on guidelines, policies, and improving the program, which is an additional burden on their time and finances. In many cases, graders must focus entirely on certification training and activities during the conference, leaving them very little time for anything else.

Winter brings a flurry of grading as the exams from the conference are distributed. Grading, however, is not a seasonal activity. Throughout the year—and while coping with the processes mentioned above—the graders are marking tests under deadlines that often interfere with their personal and professional lives. Tests to be graded arrive on an erratic schedule because there are more sittings at certain times of the year than others, and there is no way to predict the language combinations that will show up at most sittings. Only the Spanish graders in both directions can count on exams from every sitting that occurs.

In addition to regular exams, graders also score practice tests and participate in review and appeal panels. Graders devote a great deal of time to marking each practice test, because that is a major opportunity to communicate the format and expectations of the exam system to potential candidates. During reviews and appeals, graders literally agonize over each mark. Our standard is that graders must be able to justify objectively each mark they give.

Grading and all the other activities required to create and maintain a professional, fair, and consistent examination are extraordinarily time-consuming. The hours that graders donate to the program constitute a form of subsidy—in terms both of work performed and paying work given up to perform grader

*Continued on page 52*



# Business Smarts | Training for New Subject Specialities

**Dear Business Smarts,**

I have been working as a freelance translator (French) for about five years. I earned my ATA certification a while ago, and I get regular work from several translation companies. Since I was an information technology specialist in a former life, I mostly translate software manuals and documentation. This line of work has been steadily decreasing over the past year and no longer keeps me as busy as I would like. Just recently, one of my regular agency customers got a new client who makes plumbing fixtures, and now they are asking if I can translate test reports, catalog pages, and maybe even some older patents. I would love to add some additional specialties so that I can work to capacity, but I do not know how to go about it. What should I do?

*K.H.*
*Virginia*

**Dear K.H.,**

Training yourself for a new subject specialty is never easy, and it is not even easy to decide whether you should branch out from the topics you already handle. The two most important factors are, of course, time spent and money earned, and they need to be considered in both the present and the future. Given the recent decline in your workload, you are wise to think about branching out right now. If an agency customer with whom you already have a good relationship is giving you an opportunity to put newly acquired knowledge to work immediately, it is definitely worth your while to invest some time in learning about something new.

Once you decide to add another subject specialty, you need to do some work. If the new area you are exploring is plumbing, you can start in your own bathroom. You should already have a basic understanding of how everything in there works, and you can expand your expertise by spending an afternoon in the relevant aisles of your local hardware store or home center. Work your way through all those mysterious connectors and components, and read the labels; you may also be able to find catalogs of plumbing supplies at the store. As always, the Internet is a tremendous resource: try writing down a page or two of terms that you find in the plumbing-connector section, and do a simple search. You will probably find lots of well-illustrated sites that not only tell you what things are called, but how they function.

The last factor to consider—and the most important—is interest. No matter how much effort you put into familiarizing yourself with a new branch of knowledge, you will find it useful as a long-term specialty only if it really interests you. Think carefully about all your life experiences and how they may have prepared you to learn about something new. Did you take some university courses in a field that caught your interest at the time, but you never pursued? Do you have hobbies that might lead you into new subject areas? Do you manage your family's financial affairs and understand all the statements and disclosures? The vital distinction you must make is between a challenge and a chore: acquiring a new translation specialty is an intellectual adventure, and it is a journey you must want to make.

## Comments?

ATA members can discuss business issues online at the following Yahoo! group: **http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/ata_business_practices.** You will need to register with Yahoo! (at no charge) if you have not already done so, and provide your full name and ATA member number in order to join the group.

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*The information in this column was compiled by members of ATA's Business Practices Education Committee for the benefit of ATA members. This column is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors. Send your questions about the business of translation and interpretation to* The ATA Chronicle*—BPEC Q&A; 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314; Fax: (703) 683-6122; E-mail: businesspractices@atanet.org. Questions must be accompanied by a complete name and address, but will be published anonymously or pseudonymously upon request.*

Mark your calendar now! | ATA's 49th Annual Conference | November 5-8, 2008
Orlando, Florida

## GeekSpeak

**Jost Zetzsche**
jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com

# Online Translation Memories

In my last few newsletters, I have discussed the pros and cons of online translation memories (TMs); that is, server-based TMs that can be simultaneously accessed by various translators). This is a relevant and very current question because many products now offer this feature. In fact, for some products, server-based TMs are at the very core of their functionality. For instance, there is Lionbridge's Logoport; commercially available tools like Idiom, across, the server-based editions of Trados, as well as SDLX, MemoQ, Fusion, Lingotek, Wordfast, and Alchemy Language Exchange; and various other tools. Each of these tools has recognized and responded to the need for real-time sharing of TMs.

And at first glance it is hard to find anything wrong with this. True to the very concept of translation reuse with TMs, it simply does not seem to make sense to duplicate translation and terminology research efforts across different project participants. Why not access the data that my colleague has already worked on in real-time? In the pre-online-TM days, large projects that required the cooperation of various translators (and editors and proofreaders) were often frustrating. The nightly or weekly TM data exchange among the different participants in the project was (and, in many cases, still is) a very manual and tedious process that often resulted in a good amount of rework (fixing translations or stylistic issues that were done inconsistently) and quite a bit of overhead work with downloading, importing, and merging TMs. Some of us were able to negotiate payment for that kind of work; others were not. Plus, the quality of those TMs often declined rapidly as well. Not every team member was up to par on maintaining his part of the TM, and often no one was really responsible for keeping the TM clean.

Still, some of my readers had very strong opinions that came out against the use of these TMs. Here is a sampling of their complaints:

- There is no control over the state of the TM.
- TMs are misaligned or otherwise of poor quality.
- There is less freedom to choose a work environment because of the requirement of constant online access.
- There are always potential access problems to TMs outside of normal working hours with no one there to fix it.

Let's look at each of these valid points in more detail.

**Lack of control and quality of the TMs:** Yes, there is a loss of control when dealing with TMs that you have not created yourself and for which you cannot guarantee the quality. And if the TM is not well managed—which many are not—the quality issues do in fact come up. TMs are only as good as the content that is entered, and problematic TMs not only do not help, they actually hinder the progress of a project by multiplying the problems. However, the poor TM maintenance that we sometimes see is because we are still dealing with relatively new technology. There is a learning curve, and I am certain that the job title of *TM Maintenance Specialist* will be very common in the not-too-distant future. (How does that sound for a second, third, or fourth career?). Also, aside from the human factor, there is still plenty that can be done to carry out quality control checks automatically with the respective programs. This will have to include the flagging of duplicate and differently translated entries, sophisticated user access models, and terminology control through links to well-maintained terminology databases, among others.

**Online access:** Most of the products mentioned earlier give you the choice of either downloading the relevant data to work offline and then uploading the data to the main TM ("synchronization"), or working on a live database. The benefit of real-time communication among the different translators/editors/proofreaders is certainly lost when using the first route. I think that in this question we find ourselves in a twilight zone between eras. With the exception of some remote locations, ubiquitous online access will be a reality in just a few years, and until then we may just have to plan around hotspots if we like to work while being mobile.

**Database uptime:** Whether we like it or not, it has become a reality that large companies, both on the language service provider side and on the client side, have become multinational and are often available around the clock with business centers worldwide. Still, when working with smaller companies, downtime after business hours might occur, and there simply have to be strategies in place to deal with this, such as an emergency contact or payment to the translator during the lost time. (That does not sound so bad, does it?) And beyond that, we certainly need to see robust products where downtimes are the rare exception.

Nobody would question that communication is an important facet of work in a work group, whether it is virtual or not. At its lowest possible

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## The Onionskin

**Chris Durban**
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# Sounding the Silly Season

August is a slow month for news, which may be one reason why translation shows up more readily on the media radar screen. Industry activists point out that this can work to translators' advantage, if entertaining and informative profiles of translators and accounts of their work replace silly-season filler.

### The Spice of Life

An example of this would be an insightful article in *Variety*, the U.S. entertainment industry daily, reviewing conditions in the subtitling market. "Little time and low pay have negative impact" is one conclusion drawn by journalist Archie Thomas, but he also examines how some subtitlers do such a remarkable job.

Experts cited include Jerome Henry Rudes, founder of the Avignon Film Festival and a consultant to LVT Laser Subtitling. Mr. Rudes criticizes last-minute subtitling done without the proper resources and care. Problems surface later, "at the screening of your film in Lima or Lisbon, when the audience is not laughing at the funny lines," he says. Rudes advises moviemakers to give "your girlfriend from Pennsylvania who did a semester abroad in Milan" a miss in favor of real professionals.

As in other fields, subtitles suffer from being at the end of the production chain: when delivery of a final cut is delayed, killer deadlines strike. Dan Olliff, vice-president of international film operations at Paramount, divides the process into dialogue translation and the physical process of subtitling. Phase two is complicated by security concerns, he says; reels may be fed to companies producing physical prints in split shipments to limit the risk of piracy.

Helena Koutna, a member of Britain's Institute of Translation and Interpreting who has subtitled over 300 DVDs, including *Shrek 2*, *Ice Age*, and *There's Something About Mary*, also weighs in on this topic. She notes that a squeeze on prices can tempt agencies to use cash-strapped, unqualified students. Among her own examples of added value: locating specialized ship and sailing terminology for the Czech subtitles of *Master and Commander*, a task she describes as "not easy in a land-locked country."

The genesis of this particular article bears mention. Helena Koutna works as an interpreter every year at the highly regarded Karlovy Vary Film Festival in the Czech Republic. In July, she interpreted at the festival for Peter Bart, editor-in-chief of *Variety*, who headed this year's jury. During breaks, she discussed with him the difficulties of producing top-notch subtitles. A few weeks later, *Variety's* London correspondent was on the phone, and the rest is history, which you can read about at www.variety.com/article/VR1117970060.html?categoryid=13&cs=1.

### Putting the Knee In—Where It Hurts

The glitz and glamour of the film industry make subtitling and dubbing an excellent hook for readers in the general public, but loss of life and limb through a translation error is even better, with needless pain and discomfort running a close second. This probably explains why reports of 47 knee endoprostheses incorrectly implanted due to a translation error at a Berlin hospital spread quickly through the German press in mid-August.

These stories were relayed to other European countries, and within hours, medical experts were on the record deploring the sale of medical equipment labeled only in English and judging the errors inadmissible.

Press reports in both German and French cited labels marked "Non-Modular Cemented" that had been mistranslated as *zementfrei* or "not requiring cement." As a result, wrote journalists, 47 prostheses were implanted without cement, with a considerable number of patients reporting troubles. The hospital has now contacted those affected and is offering to make up for the mistake. But, as usual, someone will have to pick up the bill—remedial surgery to fix a botched knee job costs €6,500, and a legal adviser representing two patients deems €14,000 reasonable compensation for the pain and suffering. The insurance companies smell blood.

A flawed translation at this level is a smoking gun for lawyers—and a silver bullet for anyone seeking to promote awareness of the risks of foreign-language texts. So the Onionskin was naturally keen to see who was behind the "mistranslated labels" mentioned in the press reports.

For implant manufacturer Smith & Nephew, products have not been labeled incorrectly at any time. In fact, "this is not a language issue," a company spokesman told us, pointing instead to "internal quality controls at St. Hedwig's"—processes including storage, logistics, and general quality control that were beyond the manufacturer's responsibility.

The same source confirmed that whereas the outer packaging is indeed only in English, a detailed instruction manual in German is included inside the package along with each device. This is in full compliance with German law, he insisted. A press release on the company's website states that the company believes the English labeling is sufficient: "The English labeling of packages is common use and understood by surgeons worldwide." "We have been producing these devices for 15 years, and have never had a mix-up before," said the spokesman.

Another company representative agreed, insisting that surgeons should be familiar enough with the various types of devices to recognize which one they were installing, and to know whether cement was needed or not: "Would you really want your surgeon to be consulting a step-by-step 'how to insert this implant' instruction sheet as you lay on the operating table?" Linguists comment that many self-proclaimed bilinguals are not as fluent as they think, which, along with faulty process controls, might be the real point where the language factor enters this story.

To date, none of our sources has been able to show us a physical "mistranslated label"; if the term refers to the box itself, Smith & Nephew say that the packaging they deliver complies with German law and is in English only. Who indeed coined *zementfrei*, and where? Were the devices stored on a shelf or in a bin marked *zementfrei* (by hospital staff?)? Pure speculation, and the hospital, St. Hedwig-Krankenhaus, has no comment.

## Color Blind

From tainted pet food and toothpaste to formaldehyde in children's pajamas, Chinese products have been in the hot seat this summer. Those who saw reports of a "Racist Sofa Outrage" that broke in Toronto last April might have seen it coming.

It all began when Doris Moore purchased a dark brown sofa from Vanaik Furniture, a local retailer. According to the Associated Press, it was her seven-year-old daughter who first noticed the tag on the upholstery: "Nigger Brown." The Moore family is black, which made the incident particularly offensive.

Whodunit? Not me, said store owner Romesh Vanaik, who blamed the wholesaler, Cosmos Furniture. Not me, said Cosmos's Paul Kumar. Not me, said the manufacturer. At the end of the day, Kingsoft Corporation, a Beijing-based software company was left holding the bag.

At Kingsoft, Huang Luoyi, a product manager for translation software, blamed an outdated version of its translation engine. Mr. Huang said that he was aware that "nigger" was "a very bad word." His company had taken the definition from a Chinese-English dictionary they have been using for 10 years. "Maybe the dictionary was updated, but we probably didn't follow suit," he told the Associated Press, and apologized for what he termed "a regrettable error." Other observers pointed out that the flawed label might reflect a misspelling of "niger brown," a term (rarely used nowadays) for a dark chocolate color.

For Ms. Moore the apology was not enough. The incident had "taken a toll on her family," she told Associated Press, and said she was planning to seek compensation.

Lessons for translation buyers? Get it right the first time: use a professional translator, proofread texts before display, and beware raw output from translation software (and spellchecking software). And if you are working with foreign suppliers, put a quality control system in place to make sure they do not take shortcuts.

*With thanks to Bob Blake, Robert Bononno, and Neil Inglis.*

The Onionskin is a client education column launched by the ITI Bulletin (a publication of the U.K.'s Institute of Translation and Interpreting) in 1996. Comments and leads for future columns are very welcome; please include full contact details. Contact: chrisdurban@noos.fr.

### GeekSpeak

Continued from page 47

denominator, a shared TM is nothing but a subtle and powerful communication tool. While there are limitations that have not yet been completely overcome, most of us will get used to this next stage of the TM evolution.

And if you cannot or simply prefer not to get used to working with online TMs, it is certainly your choice to continue working with smaller clients who are less likely to use that technology.

The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost also publishes a free technical newsletter for translators (www.internationalwriters.com/toolkit).

# Success by Association

## Arizona Court Interpreters Association

**Quick Facts**

- Established: 1980
- Website:
  www.aciaonline.org
- Contact:
  Arizona Court Interpreters Association
  162 W Myrna Lane
  Tempe, AZ 85284

The Arizona Court Interpreters Association (ACIA), founded in 1980, is the only statewide court interpreter association in Arizona. The majority of current members are practicing interpreters and translators who provide language services to the state's various court systems in 14 spoken languages and American Sign Language.

### Mission

ACIA endeavors to maintain high standards for interpreters and translators who provide professional and culturally-sensitive language services in a variety of environments. ACIA accomplishes this by:

- Offering workshops and seminars on ethics and other timely issues given by professionals in their fields. These events are free for ACIA members.
- Providing a forum for members to network and to share ideas, experiences, and employment opportunities.
- Working toward the establishment of state certification and testing programs.
- Providing a standard of professional conduct and a professional code of ethics.

Please visit www.aciaonline.org for complete membership details.

### Newsletter

*InterPress,* published quarterly, contains information on meetings, interpreter resources, and terminology issues. Members have the option of receiving the newsletter through the mail or e-mail, and can download copies as PDF files from the association's website.

### Online Member List

ACIA's online member list provides contact information and details about each member's services (i.e., languages, specializations).

### Website

In addition to membership information, ACIA's website (www.aciaonline.org) contains: association news and event listings; the member list; the association's bylaws and code of ethics; resource links; the *InterPress* archives in PDF format; and a frequently-asked-questions page.

*ATA chapters, affiliates, and local groups serve translators and interpreters in specific geographic areas. They provide industry information, networking opportunities, and support services to members at the local level and act as liaisons with the national association. This column is designed to serve as a quick resource highlighting the valuable contributions these organizations are making to the Association and the profession as a whole.*

Translation
getting it right
A guide to buying translations
ata
american translators association

## Translation: Getting it Right

"By applying even half the tips in this guide, you will improve your chances of getting a translation that works."

*Translation: Getting it Right* is an ATA client education booklet available in print and online. ATA members can order up to 100 copies at no cost. To download a PDF copy of this booklet, visit **www.atanet.org**.

# Member News

*Send your news to Jeff Sanfacon at jeff@atanet.org or American Translators Association, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314.*

- **Eriksen Translations** was named one of the 100 women-owned business enterprises having an impact on supplier diversity in the summer 2007 issue of *Women's Enterprise USA*.

- **Everett Jordan** has left his position as director of the **National Virtual Translation Center**. Jeff Robinson will be stepping in.

- ATA Secretary **Alan K. Melby** has been awarded the 2007 Eugen Wüster Prize in recognition of his dedication and contributions to the field of terminology. The award, sponsored by the International Information Centre for Terminology, was presented to Alan at the ISO Technical Committee 37 meeting in Provo, Utah. The Eugen Wüster Prize, named after the "father of terminology science," is awarded every three years to individuals with an outstanding life record in the field of terminology. Melby is a professor at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

- **SDL International** was among the recipients of the 2007 International Stevie Award in the "Most Innovative Company in Europe" category.

- **Syntes Language Group** has been ranked as the 17th fastest growing private company in Denver, Colorado, by the *Denver Business Journal*.

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## New Certified Members

Congratulations! The following people have successfully passed ATA's certification exam:

### English into Croatian

Seka S. Plemenitas
*Ringoes, NJ*

### English into Portuguese

Marcelo N. Almeida
*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

Paulo Mendes
*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

### English into Spanish

Daniel G. Grau
*Buenos Aires, Argentina*

Tomas Russ
*Carlisle, MA*

### Arabic into English

Christine A. Kwilinski
*Grandville, MI*

Richard L. Marrash
*Fairfield, CT*

### Dutch into English

Lydia K. Heilmann
*Fairfield, CT*

### German into English

Marlene E. Heinemann
*Seattle, WA*

Angela R. Woodworth
*Eichstaett, Germany*

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## Active Member Review

Congratulations! The Active Membership Review Committee is pleased to grant active status to:

Dierk Seeburg
*Mesa, AZ*

Michele L. Bantz
*Hoboken, NJ*

Paula Dieli
*San Francisco, CA*

Carlos J. Wesley
*Leesburg, VA*

### Certification Forum

Continued from page 45

duties—that has gone largely unrecognized up to now. The demands placed on graders by the program and its development have continued to grow, thus requiring graders to dedicate more of their professional and personal time. By increasing grader compensation, the Board has acknowledged the work that graders put into the certification system, brought compensation for the paid tasks closer to the industry standard, and made recruiting and retaining professional graders much easier.

However, as noted in the first paragraph, the purpose of the increased compensation is not only to reward graders properly for the work they do, but also to contribute to the further professionalization of the program by putting graders and ATA Headquarters in a relationship resembling the translator-agency model that will include a strong quality control element in addition to the checks on grader performance already in place. Also, graders will be required to meet ongoing education requirements in addition to those currently needed to retain certification. The Board and the Certification Committee agree that these changes will further strengthen our already strong certification program.

And to all the graders out there: thanks for a really great job. You deserve all the support we can give you.

# Upcoming Events

**October 31–November 3, 2007**
American Translators Association
48th Annual Conference
San Francisco, California
www.atanet.org

**November 7–11, 2007**
American Literary Translators Association
30th Anniversary Conference
"Celebrating the Past, Imagining the Future"
Richardson, Texas
www.literarytranslators.org

**November 15-18, 2007**
American Council on the
Teaching of Foreign Languages
41st Annual Convention & Exposition
"Bridging Cultures Through Languages"
San Antonio, Texas
www.actfl.org

**November 24–26, 2007**
Organización Mexicana de Traductores
Capítulo Occidente
11th International Translation
& Interpretation Congress
"San Jerónimo 2007"
Guadalajara, Mexico
www.omt.org.mx/general.htm

**November 24–26, 2007**
FIT Regional Centre Latin America
2nd Meeting of the FIT Regional
Centre Latin America
Guadalajara, Mexico
www.omt.org.mx/general.htm

**December 27–30, 2007**
Modern Language Association
123rd Annual Convention
Chicago, Illinois
www.mla.org/convention

**March 7-8, 2008**
Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies
Nordic Translation Conference
London, England
www.awaywithwords.se/nordic.htm

**May 13-17, 2008**
Association of Language Companies
2008 Annual Conference
San Francisco, California
www.alcus.org

**August 4–7, 2008**
International Federation of Translators
18th FIT World Congress
Shanghai, China
www.fit-ift.org

# Dictionary Review

*Compiled by*
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## *Elsevier's Dictionary of Art History Terms French↔English*

**Author:**
Jean-Pierre Michaux

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Jean Leblon

**The title page** of *Elsevier's Dictionary of Art History Terms* indicates that it was compiled by Jean-Pierre Michaux, a "professeur Agrégé de l'Université de Lille." The *agrégation* is a competitive examination that confers on the successful candidate the right to teach in public high schools (*lycées*) and in some of the post-secondary schools. Instead of a teaching career, Michaux chose to join his father's management company, eventually becoming its president. Throughout his career as a financier, Michaux has pursued what he calls his passion for contemporary art. He has been the director of an art institute, and he owns a gallery in Le Louvre des Antiquaires.

### Organization

Michaux's dictionary is comprised of the standard two general sections: 229 pages of French→English; 316 pages of English→French. Actually, the entry words and phrases are listed individually and cross-referenced within each half of the dictionary in such a way that a user, with few exceptions, does not need to guess where to look for a phrase that includes a certain term. While it takes a moment to understand the principle, a few examples will show how it is quite helpful.

### Content

In the French section, the list of 54 abbreviations used to identify the subfields includes many that the reader would expect and recognize (*archit*., *grav*., *mob*., *sculpt*.), and quite a few that he may be surprised to find, such as *equ*. (*équitation*), *jur*. (*juridique*), *mil*. (*militaire*), and *nau*. (*termes nautiques*). The English section lists only 47 such identifications. I did not find any entry marked *jur*., but a large number marked *nau*. (for instance, under *mât: mât d'artimon, mât de Beaupré, mât de hune*).

Because there is no guide on how to use the dictionary, the best way to explain its organization is to give some examples. Let us suppose that we want to find the English translation of the phrase *dentelle à l'aiguille*. There is no need to wonder where to find the translation, since we can go to either *dentelle* or *aiguille*. If we choose to look at *aiguille*, which appears below *aiguille* and its various translations, first general then according to field, we will find listed alphabetically as headwords "*broderie à l'**aiguille** s.f.* [text.] - needle-embroidering, needle-work, crewel-work"; then "*dentelle à l'**aiguille** s.f.* [text.] - needle lace, needle point lace, point lace." But we can also look at *dentelle* instead of *aiguille*, where we will find *dentelle à l'aiguille* with exactly the same translations.

Conversely, working from English→French, if we wanted to find a translation for "needle point lace," we could find our answer at either one of the three entries (needle, point, or lace). By the way, if we wanted to translate "needle-work" and "went to work," we would find under the translation of the single term "work," a list of some 94 entries of phrases and compound words, from "appliqué **work**" and "bad **work**" to "wood-**work**" and "youthful **work.**"

### Omissions

Such complete and precise cross-references are not without a few surprising cases of interesting alphabetization or other glitches. For instance, I did not figure out why *bureau à un caisson* comes before *bureau à cylindre,* while *bureau à rideau* comes last in a list of eight entries, until I realized that the entries are alphabetized according to the next noun in the phrase. Other seemingly inconsistent entries are those that are not cross-referenced in more

➡

than one entry of a compound or phrase. For instance, "box-bed" (furniture)—*lit-armoire*—can be found under "bed" and under "box" in the English section, and in the French section, it appears only under *armoire*, but not under *lit* (which is not there at all).

It is not easy to say what can be found and what cannot in this dictionary. Again, there is no indication given by the author or editor. A comparison with other French→English art dictionaries would help, but I was not able to consult any of the few that came up from a search, especially Claude Ferment's *Dictionnaire des termes de l'art*. There are many monolingual French and English glossaries and dictionaries, some of which I used to check on omissions in this work. In a dictionary that unexpectedly gives the translation of "soup ladle" and "tendency" as a general term without any reference to a subfield, it is surprising not to find terms such as "bearing wall," "darkroom," depth of field," "*fin de siècle*," "horology," "shellac," and "tracer." There are many other terms that the author decided not to include for one reason or another: "beader," "deltiology," "megaron," "sprue," "tamping," "tanka," "tchotchke," and "xerography."

There are other omissions, if indeed they are omissions: *broyage* (*de couleurs*) does not appear under *couleur*, but *broyer les couleurs* does, which should suffice. Since the dictionary does not have a guide detailing how terms are organized, I must assume that such apparent absences may be explained by the use of the parentheses. Here is another example: *condamner* (*une porte*) in the French section is reflected in the English section by "block up (a door)," but it is not to be found under *porte* in French nor under "door" in English, as would be expected. Still, I did not understand the reason for the parentheses.

## Typographical Errors

Typographical errors are rather few, but disappointing: ***couteau dechassee***; *film en* ***coleurs***; *gravure en* ***colours***; ***blank*** *window*; ***maz*** (for maze); *Mouvais* ***œil***; and *Virgin of the Seven* ***Soirows***. Note that the English spelling is British (aluminium, colour, labour, travelling, porphyr, etc.). As for mistranslations, I found only a confusion in the case of "eyeshade" translated as *abat-jour*, which is "lampshade," while "eyeshade" is *visière*, but that may be a British usage.

## Proper Names

A few last words about proper names. There are no names of artists listed as single entries, and only a few are identified in parentheses: *Enterrement du Comte d'Orgaz* (*du Gréco*); *Enseigne de Gersaint* (*L'*) (*de Watteau*); and *Ronde de nuit* (*La*) (*de Rembrandt*). Why, one might ask, is *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*Le*) not similarly identified? There are many entries of works of art, particularly paintings, but they are, I assume, given as generic themes rather than specific works: "*Déposition de croix s.f. [peint. & relig.]*—Descent from the cross"; "*Rois Mages* (*Les*)*, s.m.p. (relig.)*."

If we go to the entries that include the term *Vierge* and "Virgin," we find no less than 55 entries, from "Birth of the **Virgin (The)**" to "**Virgin of Tenderness (The)**," all of which are listed under other terms ("birth" and *nativité*, "tenderness" and *tendresse*). Only four of the entries are attributed to an artist in the English section, and three in the French section (for example, *Onze Mille Vierges (les) (de Carpaccio)* is found only under the letter O. There are also some names of places, buildings, mythological, historical and biblical personages, religious feast days, and biblical chapters, but the rationale for their inclusion is not evident.

## Overall Evaluation

The cross-references within each section definitely make this dictionary very easy to use. It means, of course, that the claim of "approximately 40,000 terms" should really be changed to "40,000 entries," given the fact that all terms consisting of more than one word are repeated at least once, and often twice or more. Nonetheless, the dictionary remains a wealth of information on art history terms from the commonplace to the specialized and the esoteric. The identification of the subfield is also very helpful, especially in the case of multiple translations of one term.

My major complaint is the lack of consideration given to the user who wishes that he had not had to discover on his own how the terms were organized, which is something that should be included in an introduction, along with an explanation of the choice of terms. Why can one find the *Birth of the Virgin*, but not the *Birth of Venus*? I do not miss it, but I would appreciate knowing that the entry is not included before I waste time looking for it. As for the relatively few typos and inconsistencies noted, the examples given here will show that they should be easy to correct in a future edition.

**Jean M. Leblon** taught at several colleges and served as chairman of the Department of French at Vanderbilt University. After retirement, he worked at Microsoft as a translator and senior French terminologist. Since then, he has been an independent translator, narrator, and interpreter. He has served on the boards of ATA, the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society, the Alliance française, and the Seattle-Nantes Sister Cities Association. Contact: jean_leblon@msn.com.

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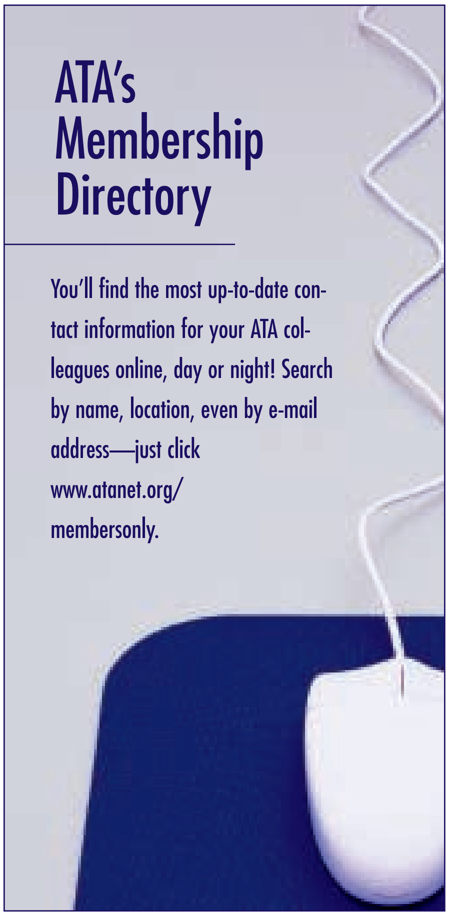

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# The Translation Inquirer

## John Decker

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As I write this in the evening, I now know of a language dialect that was unknown to me as recently as early this morning. If someone had come up to me and told me that, as close as 350 miles from where I am now, there are speakers in very significant numbers of a dialect called Joual, I would have first paused, blinked, and then my mind would have started racing with thoughts such as, "This must be an émigré group that brought their dialect with them from….where? The West Indies? The Caribbean? Indigenous Hispanic America? Where?" But Joual is none of those. It is a working class dialect of Quebecois French, and since tourists from that area often drive through this state on their way to warmer climates, I have probably heard Joual in restaurants and stores without having the slightest clue as to what it was or where it came from. I will be alert for the sound of it, if I can detect it, from now on, though. And the moral of the story is, Learning Never Stops. Never.

### Abbreviations
used with this column

E–English
Fa–Farsi
F–French
G–German
Gr-Greek
I–Italian

Po–Polish
Pt–Portuguese
Sl–Slovak
Sp–Spanish
Uk–Ukrainian

## New Queries

**(E-Fa 10-07/1)** Farsi comes to this page at last! Quoting from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra,* we need a good dynamic translation of *shooting the messenger.* Perhaps the play already exists in Farsi, but assuming it does not, some creative work here is needed to express fully the notion of lashing out at the bearer of bad news. Who would have guessed this expression goes back to 1598?

**(E-G 10-07/2)** The English somewhat-slangy term *bragging rights,* taken from an online game, requires a German equivalent. I am bracing myself: there could be a ton of responses to this one, depending on how creative you are with the German language.

**(E-Gr 10-07/3)** This bit of text, regarding medical instruments, including the troublesome *Lucite manifold,* needs to make its way into Greek: *Once the cells were seeded in the appropriate compartments, the chip was assembled in a* ***Lucite manifold.*** Is there anyone capable of dealing with this?

**(E-Po 10-07/4)** A ProZer requested a Polish equivalent for the following, and we are in an excellent position at the outset due to a virtual dictionary definition: *A* ***bradytroph*** *is a strain of an organism or cell tissue that exhibits slow metabolism. This may be due to an enzyme defect or absence in a metabolic pathway that is essential for growth…a* ***bradytroph*** *may more often be referred to as a "leaky auxotroph."* Any ideas?

**(E-Uk 10-07/5)** An automotive term, *windshield suction pedestal,* needs a good Ukrainian equivalent, says a ProZer. Ugh, do I have one of those in my vehicle?

**(G-E 10-07/6)** In an expert report on a pipeline, Cappie found **(x.a)** *Blasenzugstutzen* and **(x.b)** *Schiebertasse*. For the former, here is some context: *An dem underirdisch eingebauten* ***Blasenzugstutzen*** *können zerstörungsfreie Prüfungen ohne Freilegung dieses Bereiches nicht durchgeführt werden.* As for **(x.b)**, it is *Zwischen der Pumpstation und der* ***Schiebertasse*** *des MOV ist die Leitung oberirdisch verlegt.* What are they?

**(I-E 10-07/7)** Let's get architectural, with the first 11 difficult words of this text: ***Caposaldo delle umanissime verità di carne della pittura dei territori da*** *Giotto è la Madonna dell'Umiltà del fabranese Allegretto Nuzi, protagonista della scena artistica fiorentina allo svoltare della metà del XIV secolo*. What is the English?

**(Pt-E 10-07/8)** Here is something from viticulture: a ProZ member wants to know what good English would be for *agua-pe*. It comes from this sentence: *O Dia de S Martinho comemora-se 11 de Novembro. Neste dia, em Portugal, assam-se castanhas e prova-se o vinho novo. A tradição manda que se festeje com castanhas,* ***agua-pe*** *uma fogueira para salta, musica e muito convivo.*

**(Sl-E 10-07/9)** A hearty welcome to Slovak in this column. In an insurance contract, A ProZ user found, "*Poistitel' je povinný: a. zasielat' poistníkovi najneskôr do 18. dna kalendárneho mesiaca nasledujúceho po uplynutí poistného obdobia,* ***výkaz poistného*** *udalosti za mesiac…ktorého vzor je v polohe c. 3 k tejto zmluve….*" How do we render the words in bold print in English?

**(Sp-E 10-07/10)** Replies had begun to come in on this by the time the

Translation Inquirer encountered it, but they looked less than convincing. The abbreviation UE appears in an informed consent form. First comes the protocol number, then the name of the sponsor, then, in a list, *Iniciales del paciente* ***(UE)*** *Nº del paciente* ***(UE)*** *Fecha de nacimiento del paciente* ***(UE)***. What on earth could they be?

**(Sp-E 10-07/11)** Here is some biomechanics, if that turns you on. Under an overall heading of *Principios mecánicos aplicados al aparato locomotor*, the first principle is *Sistema biomecánico. Cadenas biocinemáticas – grados de libertad y* ***condiciones de ligaduras de los movimientos***. Even the Translation Inquirer knows what *grados de libertad* is, but what is the meaning, in English, of the bold-print words that follow?

## Replies to Old Queries

**(E-G 6-07/1)** (*clear working days*): Unrelated to weather, this term, says Marian Comenetz, has to do with a series of full days, with the exception for the first and last, that is, Sundays and holidays. The term is legal, and Marian found it in the 2005 edition of the *Diccionario de Términos Juridicos* by Enrique Alcarez Varó and Brian Hughes.

**(E-Sp 6-07/5)** (*construction of religious identity, fear of the other, maintaining boundaries*): Marian Comenetz feels that *construction* in this three-part phrase refers only to religious identity, and not to the two items that follow. Again, Spanish appears to have slavishly followed English academic-speak: a Google search revealed 228,000 hits for *Construcción de la identidad*. Even *desarrollo de la identidad* (*development of identity*) has 56,000 hits.

**(F-E 7-07/4)** (*Les mauvaises herbes graminées*): Gonzalo Ordòñez would translate this as: *The already sprouted gramineous, dicotyledons, and cyperaceae weeds…"*

**(G-E 6-07/7)** (*OwiG*): This, says Marian Comenetz, is the *Gesetz über Ordnungswidrigkeiten*, and a Google search for it reveals that all the hits involve capitalization of the "W" as well: *OWiG*.

**(G-E 7-07/5)** (*Preis um Preis*): Without having too much context to go on, Marian Comenetz nonetheless assumes that there is a verb in the sentence, and therefore it might be rendered as *carried away many prizes* or *won one prize after another* or *garnered many awards.*

**(I-E 7-07/6)** (*Paesi transfrontaliero Adriatici*): Amy Lamborn has no precise knowledge of the context in which this phrase appears. She surmises that what is being referred to are the Adriatic countries that are participating, with the regions of Italy that border on the Adriatic Sea, in cross-border programs involving concerns like the environment, culture, or infrastructure, which would benefit both countries, one example being the *Adriatic New Neighborhood Programme.* Lindsay Sabadosa calls it the *Adriatic Crossborder Operational Programme,* and says that it embraces Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia.

**(Sp-E 6-07/12)** (*c.s.p.*): It means *club social privado*, says Marian Comenetz, and her reply echoes that of Mercedes Guhl two months ago. The club in question appears to have celebrated its 25th anniversary, as she found out from using the Internet to track down the Mundo Salser-Asociación de Melómanos de Bogotá.

**(Sp-E 7-07/8)** (*penular*): Gonzalo Ordòñez thinks this might be a typo for *pendular*, which has a mechanical meaning in the line of *estàtico* and *rotatorio*.

**(Sp-E 7-07/9)** (*endite*): Since it looks so strange in the context given on page 56 of the July issue, Gonzalo Ordòñez suspects it may not to be a Spanish word at all, and finds it very hard to accept it as meaning *exploratory surgery.* According to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary*, *endite* in English is a variant of *indite,* which means *to make up, compose, put down in writing.* Formerly, it also meant *to dictate.* More information is needed to ascertain the role of *endite* in a list of surgery-related terms.

*The Translation Inquirer does not mind that there are fewer of the old workhorse languages in the 11 queries above than normal. Is that okay with you?*

This column is solely intended as a means of facilitating a general discussion regarding terminology choices. For feedback regarding pressing terminology questions, please try one of these online forums: Lantra-L (www.geocities.com/athens/7110/lantra.htm), ProZ.com (www.proz.com), or Translators Café (http://translatorscafe.com).

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# Humor and Translation

## Mark Herman

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# From Captain Macheath to Mack the Knife

*The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay was first performed in London in 1728 and ran for 62 nights. A revival opened in 1920 and ran for three and a half years.

But it is not *The Beggar's Opera,* and its protagonist Captain Macheath, that most Americans have heard about. Rather it is *Die Dreigroschenoper,* and its protagonist Mackie Messer (Mack the Knife). This is due in large part not only to Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, the librettist and composer of *Die Dreigroschenoper,* but to two translators: Elisabeth Hauptmann, who translated *The Beggar's Opera* into German so that Brecht could adapt it into *Die Dreigroschenoper* (and who, some say, actually wrote parts of *Die Dreigroschenoper* herself); and Marc Blitzstein, who translated *Die Dreigroschenoper* into what English speakers know as *The Threepenny Opera.*

Much of the information that follows can be found at www.threepennyopera.org/histOffBway.php.

The first performance of *Die Dreigroschenoper* occurred on August 31, 1928. According to the website, "After a slow start…[and] somewhat mixed reviews, the show takes off, and several new productions in Germany are arranged within days." By 1929, there were over 40 new productions in Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Finland, and the Soviet Union.

But the reception among English speakers was harsh. In 1933, the musical opened on Broadway in an English translation by Jerrold Krimsky and Gifford Cochran. The critics hated it and the run lasted only 12 performances. In February 1935, a complete performance (I do not know whether in English or German) was broadcast by the BBC to unanimous criticism, including by Kurt Weill himself. In 1937, an edition of *The Beggar's Opera* was published by Heritage Press in New York, in which an Introduction by A. P. Herbert referred to *Die Dreigroschenoper* only as a "queer twisted version" of Gay's work.

And so, while the work continued to enjoy popularity in Germany and elsewhere—in 1938, the Nazis had to stop playing songs from it as examples of "degenerate art" because the audience enjoyed them too much—among Anglophones the work was represented by just one ballet, Antony Tudor's 1938 *Judgment of Paris*, which Tudor choreographed to Weill's music.

And then, shortly after Weill died in 1950, American playwright Marc Blitzstein began writing his English translation. In 1952, Blitzstein's version was tried out at Brandeis University. In the cast were Jo Sullivan, wife of Broadway librettist and composer Frank Loesser, playing Polly Peachum (who "marries" Macheath), and Lotte Lenya, Kurt Weill's widow, playing the prostitute Jenny (who betrays him). Lotte Lenya had been the original Polly in 1928.

In March 1954, the production opened in New York and ran, with one intermission, until December 1961, for a total of 2,707 performances. Jo Sullivan and Lotte Lenya were still in the cast, joined by Beatrice Arthur playing Lucy Brown, Macheath's other "wife."

In 1956, a production opened in London that was not hated by the critics.

And so *The Threepenny Opera* became established throughout the world, including among English speakers. There have been several English translations since Blitzstein's, though none as good in my opinion. There have also been several popular recordings of the Moritat (i.e., the Ballad of Mack the Knife). There have also been three movie versions: one made in 1930 in German and French; one made in 1963 in German and English, in which Sammy Davis, Jr. plays the street singer who sings the Ballad of Mack the Knife; and one made in 1989 in English, with Raul Julia as Mack the Knife. Unfortunately, none of the movie versions succeeds as a production of the work.

One reason why productions fail is that some directors (and translators) refuse to believe that the work is truly as savagely biting as Brecht, and indeed also Gay, wrote it. But consider Brecht's Kanonen (Cannon, or Army) Song, the refrain of which ends:

> *Wenn es mal regnete und es begegnete*
> *ihnen 'ne neue Rasse, 'ne braune oder blasse,*
> *dann machen sie vielleicht daraus ihr Beefsteak Tartar.*
>
> [Should it rain and should they [the soldiers] meet
> a new race [of people], brown or pale,
> then perhaps they will make from them their Beefsteak Tartar.]

or, in Blitzstein's singing translation:

> If we get feeling down, we wander into town,
> and if the population should greet us with indignation,
> we chop 'em to bits because we like our hamburgers raw!

Herman is a librettist and translator. Submit items for future columns via e-mail to hermanapter@cmsinter.net or via snail mail to Mark Herman, 1409 E. Gaylord St., Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858-3626. Discussions of the translation of humor and examples thereof are preferred, but humorous anecdotes about translators, translations, and mistranslations are also welcome. Include copyright information and permission if relevant.

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# 2007 ATA
# Pro Bono/School Outreach Project
# Center for the Art of Translation

*By Kirk Anderson, 2007 Pro Bono Project Coordinator*

The beneficiary of this year's ATA pro bono project is the San Francisco-based Center for the Art of Translation (CAT), whose groundbreaking program, Poetry Inside Out (PIO), brings translators into Bay Area classrooms. CAT will be presented with ATA's first award for outstanding achievement in translation in public education. In addition to a monetary prize, ATA will place as many as 20 volunteer translators and interpreters in PIO classrooms to discuss our professions with the students. Those attending ATA's Annual Conference in San Francisco can see students participate in a reading on November 1 at Chronicle Books, 680 Second Street, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Founded by ATA member Olivia Sears, CAT receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council. Among its many activities, CAT publishes the respected literary annual *Two Lines: A Journal of Translation* (now in its 14th year), which features English translations (always published with at least an excerpt of the original) from dozens of languages in genres extending far beyond traditional literature.

Among CAT's most innovative activities is its PIO program, which brings literary translators into elementary and middle school classrooms in the San Francisco Bay Area's public schools to talk about the art of translation. Among other things, the PIO program, which works predominantly with bilingual Latino children, but is also developing a pilot program in Chinese, seeks to demonstrate the benefits of bilingualism, encourage language learning, and promote reading and translation skills through a series of activities, culminating in anthologies of student work and public poetry recitals.

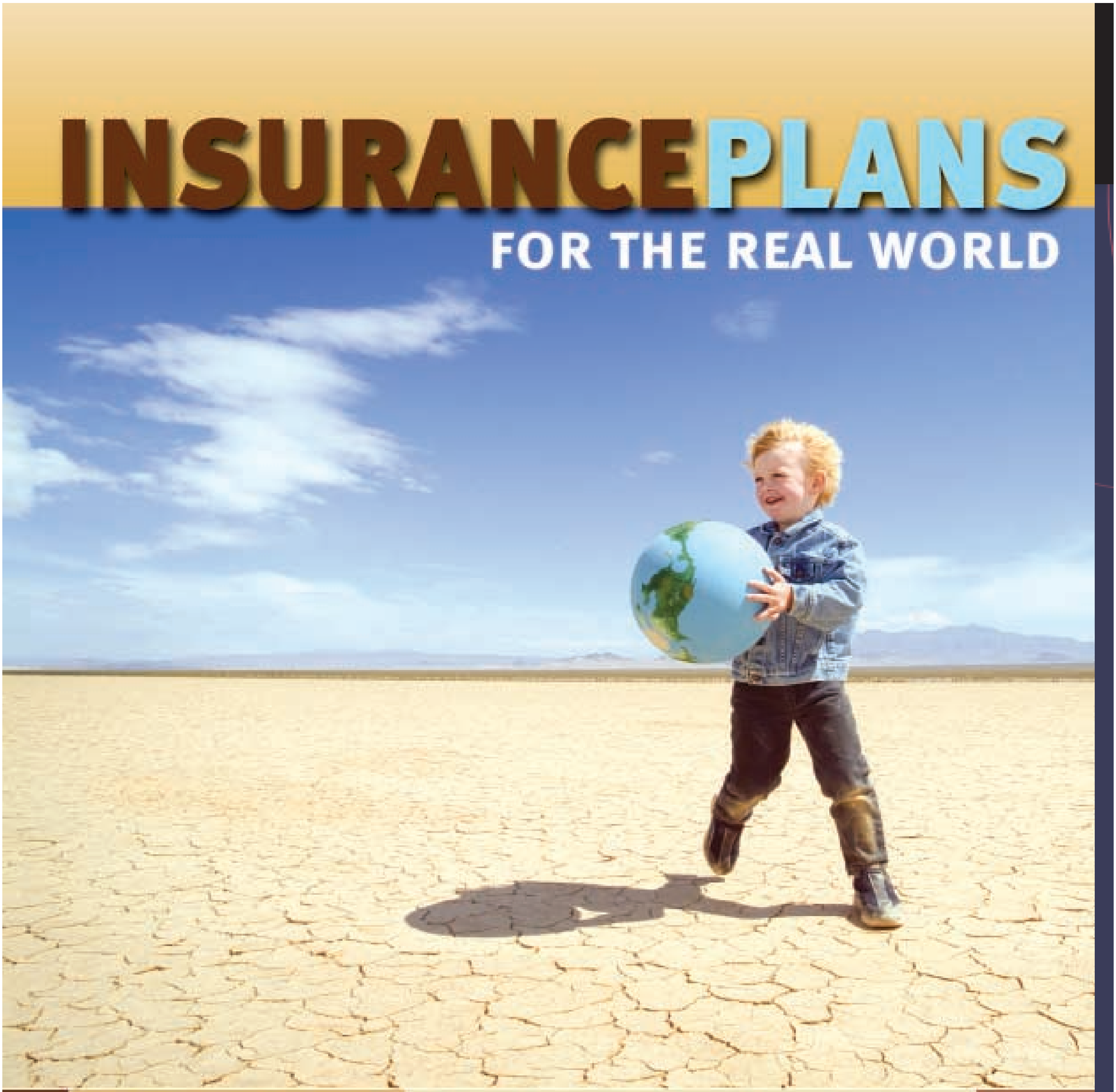
As is clear from the published anthologies and the awards won by students, the program is a remarkable success. In talking with CAT's administrators about ATA's upcoming conference, they expressed an enormous interest in bringing ATA members into their classrooms to provide their students with a broader perspective on the power of translation. After the initial volunteer visit on November 1, 2007, volunteers from the Northern California Translators Association, an ATA chapter, will continue to visit classrooms during the remainder of the 2007–2008 school year.

The PIO program, the only one of its kind, echoes ATA's primary purpose: to promote the recognition of the translation and interpreting professions. By recognizing and supporting such a program, ATA not only encourages the expansion and replication of their efforts and similar local grassroots efforts to raise awareness of translation and interpreting, but also plays an active role in the cascading impact such efforts will have on future generations of language professionals and their clients.

On behalf of ATA, I would like to thank CAT and its PIO program for the great work they are doing; the Northern California Translators Association in general, and Tuomas Kostiainen, Yves Avérous, Naomi Baer, Alison Dent, Jacki Noh, and Ines Swaney in particular for their support of this project; ATA's Board and Headquarters staff for their assistance in making this project a reality, and particularly ATA Public Relations Committee members Lillian Clementi and Tony Beckwith; and the many volunteers who have yet to be selected as of this writing.

## For more information

Center for the Art of Translation
www.catranslation.org



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