



# ATA's Power-Packed Energy Conference

By Jackie Reuss

## Accustomed to compact

European cities, I never did find Houston's downtown during my visit to Texas this past May to attend ATA's Energy Conference. I could definitely see that Houston was a boomtown, and, judging by the large turnout of attendees from the metropolitan area, a very busy place for translators and interpreters as well. I guess the local attractions will have to wait until my next visit, though, since the Energy Conference, oil rig tour, and Offshore Technology Conference did not leave time for tourism.

## Offshore Technology Conference

My first stop, thanks to complimentary one-day passes offered to ATA attendees by Rowan Companies, Inc. (a major international offshore and land drilling contractor), was the Offshore Technology Conference, which attracted a record 67,000 visitors this year. Choosing from a broad technical program, I heard industry leaders speak on projects ranging from floating production storage and off-loading (shipping and oil industry) in West Africa and Norwegian Sea exploration to integrated asset management in the giant offshore Mumbai High field. Afterward, I toured the exhibitor

booths quickly and collected a surprising number of contacts in addition to the usual documentation.

## Bob Palmer Oil Rig Tour

Special thanks to ATA's own Elizabeth Langley for arranging the oil

feet of water in the Gulf of Mexico (400 feet in extreme weather). Steering us clear of the welders, Gary guided us below deck through offices and meeting rooms, by sleeping quarters for up to 120, and into the engine, pump, and cement rooms. A picture is worth a

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rig tour provided by Rowan Companies, Inc. The tour proved to be an irresistible attraction that, unfortunately, conflicted with Cheryl Hutchinson's session on nuclear reactors and Steven Marzuola's talk on oilfield operations and technology. We were bused 90 miles to the *Bob Palmer*, a Gorilla-class jack-up rig. Donning hard hats and safety glasses, we followed Offshore Installations Manager Gary Farris up the gangway to the rig floor. The mammoth derrick, draw works, cranes, and drill pipes provided a full measure of this enhanced Super Gorilla designed to operate in 550

thousand words, but nothing compares with hands-on experience! Fully charged by the day's experience, we eagerly boarded the buses back to the main event.

## Research Techniques and Primary Resources for Technical Translators

Aaron Ruby

After opening remarks by ATA President Marian S. Greenfield, the Energy Conference officially began with Aaron Ruby's review of research techniques and resources for technical translators, or, as he put it, "translator-



The Bob Palmer, a Gorilla-class jack-up rig (Photo courtesy of Jackie Reuss)

researchers.” Aaron explained that domain-specific resources are essential, but to meet client needs, we often have to deploy search skills outside our specialties. Aaron cited an array of resources in oil, gas, and related fields, from non-specialized dictionaries to primary texts and standardized terminology. To troll the digital media’s virtually infinite potential, Google (the translator’s best friend) can be fine-tuned by country- or language-specific searches and image or combination queries (e.g., [term]+[glossary] or [define:]+[term]). Aaron underlined the benefits of *Wikipedia*, which is sometimes dubious, but an excellent resource for technical information and illustrations, as well as file indexing and automatic backup.

### **Environmental Aspects of Energy Production and Consumption** *Patricia Bobeck*

Geologist Patricia Bobeck’s session on the environmental aspects of energy production and consumption gave an even-handed overview of the primary polluters (coal, lignite, uranium, oil, and natural gas) and related activities, such as mining; power generation and distribution; petroleum production; refining, storage; and distribution; and nuclear waste disposal. Looking only briefly at renewable energy and such relatively non-polluting technologies as “clean-burn” coal, “waste-to-energy,” or landfill methane, she examined in detail various techniques to contain pollutants, remove impurities, and promote degradation. She retraced the mechanisms resulting in air, soil, and groundwater pollution, and global climate change. The upside of this grim picture, at least for us, is that new energy policies and technologies promise lots of translation work!



## ATA's Power-Packed Energy Conference Continued



The crew prepares to board the *Bob Palmer* (Photo courtesy of Jackie Reuss)

### Unit Operations: The Heart of the Chemical Plant

**Roger Martin**

With Roger Martin we journeyed to the center of the chemical plant. An engineer and undeniably good communicator, he described the processes used across different industries and the “unit operations” or basic steps involved. Along the “oil route” we explored distillation, its tops and bottoms, the bain marie (also known as a double boiler), moonshining and the two-stage still, as well as assorted trays, towers, and exchangers. From there we moved on to catalytic reforming and extraction of aromatics, which are named for their sweet smell, but are of major industrial interest. Once separated into intermediate chemicals, aromatics are used to manufacture products as varied as explosives, paints, or resins, and even plastic sandals and shower curtains.

### A Primer on Oil and Gas Law Terms in French and English

**Steven Mines**

I left Roger Martin’s session as he was guiding attendees along the “corn route” and joined a language-specific (French and English) session on oil and gas law terms. Steven Mines put us through an ordeal akin to torture. Like dripping water on our foreheads, he trickled excruciating dribbles of safety guideline and training jargon on our brains, which he directed us to translate. With our defenses down, he knocked us out with a *Loi sur les baux portant sur du gaz naturel et du pétrole*,

the nuances of which, amazingly, several participants apparently grasped. In dire need of consolation, we staggered off to the Welcome Reception.

### Oil and Gas: A Portuguese Potpourri

**J. Henry Phillips and Thelma Sabim**

From the next day’s menu, I chose a “Portuguese Potpourri,” one of the language-specific sessions. From J. Henry Phillips, we learned that many upstream oil and gas terms commonly used in English in countries like Brazil, Mozambique, or Angola are best left untranslated. After helping us recognize some of them, he turned to

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the “stumpers.” For these difficult-to-translate terms, he recommended PETEX, a website on training courses for the oil and gas industry from the University of Texas ([www.utexas.edu/ce/petex](http://www.utexas.edu/ce/petex)), and a number of dictionaries and CDs related to petroleum, geophysics, and exploration.

After Hank, Thelma Sabim led us downstream through refining, transportation, and trading from a Brazilian perspective. As she discussed the various products—essentially fuels and lubricants—and related services from gas stations to convenience stores and fleet credit cards, she referred us to relevant online glossaries and the monolingual dictionary of the Agência Nacional do Petróleo (Brazil’s national petroleum agency).

### Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms

*Aaron Ruby*

Aaron Ruby’s session on offshore oil and gas platforms abounded with images, diagrams, explanations, and definitions of different components and how they are fabricated, transported, and positioned. He focused on terminology used in several Latin American countries as well as idioms and slang specific to PEMEX projects in the Gulf of Mexico. Illustrated by Spanish translations, the content was nonetheless accessible to beginning and experienced oil and gas translators whatever their working languages.

### Online Documentation as a Terminology Source in the Energy Sector

*Igor Vesler*

One of the major difficulties for a specialized translator, and a recurring theme of the conference, is to ferret out accurate terminology. Igor Vesler, revisiting this issue in his session on online documentation, explained why traditional specialized dictionaries and glossaries are increasingly inadequate.

## Links of Interest

Agência Nacional do Petróleo  
[www.anp.gov.br](http://www.anp.gov.br)

Energy Glossary (French)  
[www.centreinfo-energie.com/glossary.asp](http://www.centreinfo-energie.com/glossary.asp)

Offshore Minerals Management Glossary  
[www.mms.gov/glossary/index.htm](http://www.mms.gov/glossary/index.htm)

Offshore Technology Conference  
[www.otcnet.org/2007](http://www.otcnet.org/2007)

Oil & Gas Glossary  
[www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/oilandgas/glossary\\_of\\_terms/glossary\\_of\\_terms\\_a.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/oilandgas/glossary_of_terms/glossary_of_terms_a.html)

Petroleum & Natural Gas Glossary (English, Russian, Italian, French, German)  
[www.pngis.net/glossary](http://www.pngis.net/glossary)

Petrochemical Terms, Ipiranga (Brazil)  
[www.ipq.com.br/index.php?secao=glossario](http://www.ipq.com.br/index.php?secao=glossario)

Rowan Companies, Inc.  
[www.rowancompanies.com](http://www.rowancompanies.com)

Schlumberger Oil Field Glossary  
[www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com](http://www.glossary.oilfield.slb.com)

Well Logging Glossary  
[www.spwla.org](http://www.spwla.org)

For one, terms are almost always out of context, while full-text search engines index billions of pages full of terms in their context. To separate the reliable wheat from the doubtful chaff, he advised translators to retrieve matching document types and to start with the most authoritative documents, particularly in the oil and gas and nuclear power industries, such as international treaties and conventions, domestic laws and regulations, international standards, and international terminological databases. Igor also emphasized the value of personal contacts, such as experts, project personnel, or specialists in charge of documentation management.

### Outline of the Upstream Oil and Gas Industry

*John Rock*

Since I was not sitting for an ATA certification exam, my adventure ended with John Rock’s presentation devoted to surveying and mapping technologies, drilling engineering,

and well logging. He described the primary exploration tool, magnetometer, and seismic surveys, and their processing and interpretation. A Ph.D. in physical oceanography, his explanations on multiplexing/demultiplexing (“very simple, but [computer] time-consuming”) would have left many on the wayside without his excellent graphics. We also investigated less conceptual aspects, such as drilling muds and fishing techniques.

### With Energy to Spare

All in all, this was an exceptionally rich (but exhausting) conference. Its 30 sessions offered more than enough choice, although I did regret the cancelled sessions on renewable energy. The two bonuses framing the conference were unique, and I strongly recommend that translators working in oil and gas visit next year’s Offshore Technology Conference, entitled “Waves of Change.”

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