

Online Training Resources for Translators

As chair of ATA's Translation and Interpreting Resources Committee, my goal is to gather information on resources of all kinds, including those related to professional development. The following discusses short-duration online training that does not lead to a certificate or university credit.

WEBINARS

Webinars are online seminars—a sort of mini-class on a specific subject. Normally, you pay a fee and receive a link you can use to “attend” the talk live.

When I was chair of ATA's Translation and Computers Committee (2009–2011), I created ATA's webinar series after talking to Lucy Brooks, who was running a similar series for the Chartered Institute of Linguists, a sister organization in the United Kingdom. I ran the series for four years, then handed the baton to Karen Tkaczyk, who served as administrator of ATA's Science and Technology Division (2010–2015). Lucy now runs a for-profit webinar series under her own brand, eCPD.

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To provide readers with an in-depth look at how webinars for translators and interpreters are organized, including the selection process for speakers, I decided to interview both Karen and Lucy.

Naomi: What are the advantages/disadvantages of webinars over in-person events?

Lucy (eCPD): Webinars completely eliminate the need to travel. This clearly saves two things: money and time. In-person events can be presented many miles from a translator's home or office. It takes time to get there, and if the event is



really a long way away, accommodation and food are required along the way.

Webinars tend to be offered in bite-sized chunks, ranging from an hour to 90 minutes. It's easy to block this amount of time in your schedule, even on the busiest days. If you have to miss the live webinar for some reason, you will usually be able to view the recorded event after it's over (more than once if you desire).

Of course, in a webinar you don't get the same interaction with the speaker. You cannot see his or her body language, nor do you get to meet your fellow attendees. But if you attend a live webinar, you get a chance to ask questions and join in the interaction that is provided in many webinars.

To participate in a webinar, all you need is a computer with an up-to-date operating system and decent broadband. I find that the best option is a PC or Mac with dedicated Wi-Fi.

Naomi: How do you ensure top quality in your webinars and courses?

Karen (ATA): We contact potential speakers based on their reputation in the industry, conference evaluations, and personal references. ATA divisions also refer

speakers to us, with topics they know will be useful to their members. In fact, we encourage all divisions to do that. In particular, we would love to offer more language-specific sessions. We also look for speakers who are knowledgeable in business management for freelance translators and interpreters.

There is no foolproof way to find and select speakers. Some may be excellent at presenting in-person, but not as good at presenting online. The reverse is also true. The skill set is slightly different. Some people can train effectively when looking at a blank screen, whereas other speakers need to see the audience's energy and become dull or dry without it. ATA's job is to use all the Association's resources to find the best of our own, as well as great speakers from outside ATA.

Lucy (eCPD): For our own program of events at eCPD, I personally seek out speakers. I use my extensive knowledge of the industry to get top professionals, such as Gwen Clayton, Jason Willis-Lee, Andrew Leigh, and Joy Burrough-Boenisch, to offer presentations and courses to translators all over the globe. I also look for top professionals in other



industries—such as Christopher Barnatt (3D printing), Ken Adams (law), and Ivan Vasconcelos (oil and gas exploration)—to pass on their expertise in their areas and to give translators working in their fields a thorough background in the subject.

Naomi: What kinds of webinars do you have?

Karen (ATA): We have some language-specific webinars, but most of ATA’s webinars focus on business practices and specialty subject areas. Recent business webinars have covered negotiating contracts, terminology management, marketing, and proofreading. Subject-specific webinars have included intellectual property law, patents, the pharmaceutical industry, and medical interpreting.

Lucy (eCPD): We have covered many subjects during the six years I’ve been running eCPD Webinars. We organize them into 10 categories:

- Audiovisual (covering subtitling, localization, films, etc.)
- Business (marketing, finding clients, getting paid, getting started)
- Creative (art world, tourism, gastronomy, transcreation)
- Financial translation

- Legal translation
- Medical translation
- Science and technology
- Style
- CAT tools
- Research

There are around 150 titles in the library, so there is a lot from which to choose. There is also a section for interpreters. Many of the videos are offered in languages other than English (e.g., Polish law, a French translation workshop, the German legal system, and Spanish law).

Naomi: How do webinars compare to longer courses, like on Coursera?

Karen (ATA): Coursera and other Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) providers are an amazing resource. For subject matter expertise, they are hard to beat. Having said that, MOOCs usually last several weeks and require a much greater time investment than webinars, so they will not suit everyone.

Lucy (eCPD): Because the webinars are short (although they sometimes come in a series of three or five lessons), they are less of a commitment than taking a course on Coursera, for example. But the webinars

we produce are made with translators in mind, whereas MOOCs are not.

Naomi: What do webinar attendees say about the webinars after taking them?

Karen (ATA): Post webinar surveys ask attendees to rate content and speaker performance, as well as whether they would recommend the webinar to a friend. On average, 80% to 85% of attendees rate ATA content and speaker performance as “good to excellent.” An overwhelming majority say they would recommend the webinar to a friend. Some presenters draw rave reviews; others get quieter compliments. It’s hard to please such a diverse audience, but attendee surveys show we are getting it right as a rule.

Lucy (eCPD): On the whole, attendees are very appreciative of the medium. It allows people who have home and family commitments or who live far away from a large city to have access to high-quality training tailored precisely to translators and interpreters. Because we keep the quality high, the satisfaction rate is very high. So high, in fact, that eCPD Webinars is now an accredited provider of CPD (continuing professional development, or continuing education), upholding the demanding standards of the CPD standards office in London. We are also an approved training provider registered by the official Dutch government office (Bureau Btv).

Naomi: If someone misses out on booking a live webinar, can they purchase it retrospectively?

Karen (ATA): Absolutely! ATA has a library of recorded webinars available for streaming (www.atanet.org/webinars). There are no limits for how many times the webinar can be viewed, and recordings are available for at least five years.

Lucy (eCPD): We usually make a webinar that was broadcast live available in our e-library a few weeks later. Of course, people who view a webinar this way don’t have the opportunity to ask questions, but they can watch the video as often as they like, and all the handouts are available in the form of downloads. At certain times during the year we offer special promotions of our videos from the e-library, making

it a very cost-effective way to accumulate continuing education points.

Naomi: If someone books a live webinar but cannot make it to the live session, what happens?

Lucy (for eCPD and ATA): If you buy a seat at a webinar, whether for an ATA webinar or an eCPD webinar, it's essential to follow the instructions carefully. We ask you to register for the webinar, but we check the lists frequently and make sure that everyone is registered with GoToWebinar, the service we use to provide webinars, before the start of the webinar. Provided you don't "cancel" your place, which would mean you wouldn't show up in the registration database, you will receive a link to the recorded webinar a few hours after the webinar is over. We try to do this within a few hours, but it can take up to 24. In addition, if there is a handout, we send it to you.

Lucy (eCPD): Based in the U.K., eCPD is ideally located to hold live webinars at times that are also convenient to attendees all over the world. Some of our CPD courses start at 10:00 a.m. in the U.K., which is probably not ideal for people on the American continents, but great for people in Asia and Australia. Others begin at 2:00 p.m., and even 4:00 p.m., which is more convenient for those in the western hemisphere. Either way, all our webinars are recorded. Attendees who are unable to make the live event can ask questions retrospectively and receive an attendance certificate, provided they watch the recording within two weeks of the live session. After that, they can watch it, but the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback expires.

Karen (ATA): ATA webinars are usually scheduled for noon eastern time. That suits most people in the U.S. and many ATA members elsewhere who are a few hours ahead.

Naomi: Who runs webinars for ATA?

Karen (ATA): Mary David at ATA Headquarters does all the heavy lifting for the logistics and behind the scenes work. Lucy at eCPD takes care of infrastructure. After last year's ATA Annual Conference in Miami, I was asked if I would like to pick up the member review portion of the process. (Officially that

means I run the Webinar Subcommittee of the Professional Development Committee.) I would welcome other volunteers, should anyone love online training and want to help make the program stronger!

Naomi: How can someone propose giving a webinar? Do speakers receive payment?

Karen (ATA): We're happy to hear from anyone with subject matter expertise and speaking skills. Contact Mary David at ATA (mary@atanet.org). Speakers receive a stipend of \$300 from ATA.

Lucy (eCPD): I'm always happy to discuss proposals from potential trainers and to discuss terms. Proposed talks must meet our quality criteria, and I'm happy to discuss these if you approach me. ●

Other online training options not mentioned explicitly above are listed below.

LINKS TO ONLINE TRAINING RESOURCES

Translation and Interpreting Webinars and Courses:

ATA Webinar Series

www.atanet.org/webinars

The ATA Podcast

Episode 8: The ATA Webinar Program with Karen Tkaczyk

www.atanet.org/podcasts

Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer

<http://seminare.bdue.de>

eCPD

www.ecpdwebinars.co.uk

International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters

www.iapti.org/webinar/

International Medical Interpreters Association

www.imiaweb.org/education/learningseries.asp

National Council on Interpreting in Health Care

www.ncihc.org/trainerswebinars

Société Française des Traducteurs

<http://bit.ly/SFT-training>

Translation Automation User Society Translation Technology Webinars

<https://events.taus.net/events/webinars>

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) Coursera

www.coursera.org

(Provides universal access to the world's best education, partnering with top universities and organizations to offer courses online.)

Edx

www.edx.org

(Provides access to online courses from universities and institutions, including Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of California–Berkeley, Microsoft, and the Smithsonian.)

Class Central

www.class-central.com

(Features a directory of MOOCs offered by institutions in many languages.)



Lucy Brooks has been in business for over 30 years, and for 23 of these has run a small, successful translation business from her office in the U.K. A fellow of the Chartered Institute

of Linguists (translation and language services) and a qualified member of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting, she translates from German, French, and Spanish into British English, concentrating on technical, publicity, business, and commercial subjects. More recently, she has been providing online training for translators and interpreters through her company eCPD Webinars. Contact: lucinda.brooks@btconnect.com.



Karen Tkaczyk works as a French>English freelance translator. Her translation work is highly specialized, focusing on chemistry and its industrial applications. She

holds an MChem in chemistry with French from the University of Manchester, a diploma in French, and a PhD in organic chemistry from the University of Cambridge. She worked in the pharmaceutical industry in Europe. After relocating to the U.S. in 1999, she worked in pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. She established her translation practice in 2005. Contact: karen@mcmillantranslation.com.



Naomi Sutcliffe de Moraes has a PhD in linguistics (University of São Paulo), a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a master's degree in physics (University of California, Los

Angeles), and a bachelor's degree in law (University of London). She translates both Portuguese and Italian into English. She is currently a visiting professor at the Federal University of the ABC Region, Santo André, Brazil. She is chair of ATA's Translation and Interpreting Resources Committee. Contact: naomi.linguist@gmail.com.