What a difference a year makes. Last year at this time a polar vortex had descended over the city of Chicago as the planning team met at the conference hotel for the site visit. This time, I was in sunny Miami meeting with the hotel team at the Miami Hyatt Regency for a planning session for the upcoming 56th ATA Annual Conference in Miami, November 4-7, 2015.

The prospects for the upcoming conference appear to be sunny indeed. The beautiful hotel is bright and inviting with newly renovated guest rooms and excellent conference facilities for the many sessions to be offered. Last year’s conference in Chicago proved to be highly successful, which brought forth a plethora of over 400 intriguing session proposals—and the resulting challenge of choosing which ones to schedule into the 180 slots available. The Miami conference in November is sure to attract a wide variety of attendees from around the country as well as Central and South America. With a high number of attendees comes a high number of session proposals.

The conference sessions are the soul of ATA’s Annual Conference. There are few translator and interpreter conferences in the world that offer the number, variety, and quality of sessions that are available at ATA’s Annual Conference. The top-notch educational sessions include a select mix of invited speakers from around the globe as well as colleagues who generously share their experience and expertise. With over 18 different session tracks (e.g., particular languages and specializations, as well as general tracks aimed at freelancers, agency owners, and educators), there is something for all stakeholders in the translation and interpreting industry. The sessions are designed to provide practical information and skills that translators and interpreters can use in their businesses.

There is a tremendous wealth of knowledge from among our own colleagues. Members can submit their own session proposals easily via ATA’s website. Session proposals are being accepted until March 2, 2015. That may seem awfully far in advance of the conference, but the process of selecting sessions and speakers is long and deliberative. There is also a free webinar available for writing a successful proposal at www.atanet.org/webinars/ataWebinar133_proposals.php.

However, the heart of every ATA conference is the people: presenters and attendees alike relish the opportunity to renew old relationships and build new ones. There are tremendous learning opportunities that can take place in the hallways, restaurants, bars, and meeting spaces at the conference hotel. ATA’s Annual Conference is one of the few places on earth where you can share your joys and frustrations about the translation and interpreting industry with people who actually understand what you are talking about. Perhaps that is why many attendees refer to the conference as a “family reunion” that members return to year after year.

So be sure to mark your calendars for November 4-7, 2015. When the cold autumn winds start to descend, pack your bags and bring your sunglasses and share the sunshine and spotlight with your collegial “family” in Miami. See you there!