PROMOTING ATA AT THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
Interpreters: A Critical Presence in ATA

With over 3,000 individual members, ATA's Interpreters Division includes nearly one third of our Association's total membership. During my time in ATA—now about 17 years—interpreters have played an ever-growing role (literally, and figuratively!) in ATA, to the greater benefit of the Association as a whole. That growing presence has also motivated us in ATA's leadership to take a closer look at the benefits we offer interpreters and how to advocate for interpreters in the larger world of language services.

Critical to ATA's increased inclusion of interpreters is our Interpretation Policy Advisory Committee (IPAC), headed by ATA Board Member Melinda Gonzalez-Hibner. As chair of IPAC, Melinda advises ATA's leadership on all things interpreter-related. She and her committee—experts in multiple “flavors” of interpreting such as medical, conference, court, and community—work on ATA's own interpreter policies (more on those below!), and also advise me on how ATA can or should speak up for interpreters when interfacing with our national and state governments and other entities.

If you’re an interpreter, you should first make sure that you’re taking advantage of all the interpreter-specific benefits ATA offers. Most importantly, if you hold a recognized interpreting credential in conference, health care, or legal interpreting, make sure to apply for our Credentialed Interpreter designation (CI), which appears in ATA directory searches alongside the CT credential for ATA-certified translators. ATA has also made a concerted effort to include the interpreter point of view in many of our core programs by appointing interpreters to key positions, such as webinar chair (Director Elena Langdon) and Chapters Committee chair (Director Tony Guerra).

Additionally, interpreter advocacy has come to the forefront in recent months. ATA members in Texas—including Austin Area Translators and Interpreters Association President Marco Hanson and ATA Director Cristina Helmerichs—alerted us to a disturbing set of proposals in the Texas legislature that would decrease the passing score on the Texas state court interpreter exam from 70% to 60%.

With help from Bill Rivers, executive director of the Joint National Committee on Languages, the language lobbying organization to which ATA belongs, ATA drafted a letter strongly opposing these bills and sent it to key members of the Texas legislature. Likewise, we’re becoming involved in court interpreter advocacy in South Carolina, where some interpreters are being paid only for “talking time” (i.e., half the time that they are actually on duty) when interpreting in a team of two.

Dealing with issues such as these has been a new departure for ATA, especially for those of us who think of a translators association as consisting mainly of desk-bound “word nerds” who need some prodding to get out from behind the computer screen. Greater involvement of interpreters in ATA has motivated us to stretch our boundaries—to the great benefit of the Association at large. We hope that the presence of interpreters in ATA will continue to grow well into the future!

Notes
1. For more information on ATA’s Interpreters Division, visit www.ata-divisions.org/ID.
Responding to Disaster: Best Practices and Lessons Learned from the 2017 North Bay Fires

The disastrous 2017 North Bay fires in California presented enormous challenges for disseminating timely and accurate information to the large, predominantly Hispanic, non-English-speaking population of Sonoma and Napa Counties. My experiences made it clear how a lack of preparation, at both the personal and community level, can exacerbate the challenges of a natural disaster.

International Literature: A Data-Driven Approach to Prioritizing Diversity

Why do books from some languages find their way into English while other cultures remain underrepresented? AmazonCrossing’s editorial director discusses what it takes for a book, author, and translator to reach readers in a new language.

10 Simple Ways to Boost Your Translation or Interpreting Website’s SEO

How many freelance translators and interpreters really take the time to adjust a few things behind the scenes to boost their website’s search engine ranking?

Looking for Member News and Humor and Translation? These columns are found in the Chronicle-Online edition: www.atanet.org/chronicle-online!
AT60: Professional Development at Its Best

T his year is a milestone for ATA as it will hold its 60th Annual Conference in beautiful Palm Springs, California. Palm Springs is a lovely small town with some great dining and entertainment options. (More on the venue in future columns.) For now, I would like to focus on one of the main reasons for attending professional development sessions.

AST DAY

Advanced Skills and Training (AST) Day takes place on Wednesday, October 23. This “conference-before-the-conference” will provide specialized education and networking opportunities. AST Day offers a selection of three-hour courses specifically chosen to provide intensive, interactive instruction from highly-acclaimed speakers. Course details and speaker bios will be provided when available.

The sessions for this year’s AST Day have already been selected. There were 90 high-quality sessions proposed on a wide variety of topics. Unfortunately, the schedule only allows for 14 slots. As conference organizer, I had the very difficult task of trying to select the best of the best. If only there was more time to include all the excellent proposals we received. I want to thank everyone who submitted proposals for their enthusiasm and support of ATA’s professional development program. Please submit again next year.

The selected sessions cover a wide range of our members’ fields of practice. Topics will include legal translation, interpreting skills for Spanish interpreters, subtituting, machine translation and post-editing, and tips for working on translation projects more efficiently.

REGULAR SESSIONS

We received 435 proposals, of which just 40% (174) were able to be selected. Each session was reviewed by subject matter experts, who also had a difficult job recommending the cream of the crop. While I relied heavily on their recommendations, the final decision was mine alone so any criticism is mine to bear. Just as with the AST sessions, ensuring that the regular sessions cover as many fields of practice and areas of interest as possible is very challenging. Proposals were received for all 30 educational tracks, so there will certainly be something of interest for every attendee. Due to the proximity of this year’s conference to Los Angeles and the large number of sessions submitted by members of the new and enthusiastic Audiovisual Division, the AV track was given special emphasis this year. This is an exciting and growing field of practice about which I encourage all attendees to learn. Again, I would like to thank everyone who submitted a proposal.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Of course, AT60 will offer more than just educational sessions. There will be networking opportunities, where you can meet prospective clients and fellow translators and interpreters. Here are just a few of the events scheduled for attendees:

■ **Book Fair:** This event is returning after a long hiatus. Member-authors will have a table offering their books for sale. It’s a great chance to get an autographed copy! (Okay, they may not win any literary prizes, but we know they have great value to us!)

■ **Breakfast with the Board:** This is your chance to get to know ATA’s leadership! A few tables at the general continental breakfast will be reserved for this event. ATA Board members will also be available for informal discussions throughout the conference. Take this opportunity to introduce yourself, ask questions, or convey your ideas.

■ **Brainstorm Networking:** Work in small teams to tackle business-related challenges while making friends and creating partnerships. Don’t forget your business cards!

■ **Buddies Welcome Newbies:** First-time attendees (Newbies) are paired up with seasoned attendees (Buddies) to get the most from their conference experience.

■ **Dictionary Exchange:** Donate dictionaries and other reference materials you no longer need and find ones you can put to good use. One linguist’s trash is another’s treasure. Tables will be available for you to drop off and/or pick up used dictionaries (for free!).

■ **Exhibit Hall:** Get a first-hand look at new products you will actually use. Visit school reps offering programs designed for your development. Take the opportunity to meet with employers who might be looking to recruit your services!

■ **Job Fair:** Taking place over two nights, this event will help you obtain work and meet new clients. Agency reps will host tables and post their current and ongoing needs.

■ **Mindful Movement and Zumba:** These morning exercise sessions will get your blood flowing before starting your busy day!

Also on tap again this year will be the Welcome Celebration, Business Practices Happy Hour, and After Hours Café, as well as many other social events.

MAKE AT60 YOUR YEAR

So, come celebrate ATA’s 60th anniversary conference and help us make AT60 the best conference ever! Visit the conference website for more information (www.atanet.org/conf/2019). The site will be updated as planning progresses. If you haven’t decided to attend AT60 yet, check out the video of attendees at AT59 (www.atanet.org/conf/2018).
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Educational Interpreting 101: It’s a Lot Harder than It Looks | Natalia Abarca and Katharine Allen
I found the article on educational interpreting by Natalia Abarca and Katharine Allen in the March–April issue particularly interesting. I wanted to inform readers of a program in Indiana that addresses some of the issues they discussed.

In 2016, the state board of education obtained a grant to train special education interpreters across the state. The training was free to all bilingual teachers, school employees, and other interested interpreters. The program covers Indiana’s Special Education Rules Title 511 Article 7, practice scenarios, code of ethics, and standards of practice based on those developed by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. Many of us who are certified medical interpreters took the training and are interpreting in the school district for special education. I don’t know if any other trainings are available nationwide and would be interested in finding out what other states are doing to address the issue of school interpreting.

Maria Schwieter | La Porte, Indiana

Taking Charge of Your Rates | Simon Berrill
Excellent article! There’s a certain sense of satisfaction at increasing rates, knowing that you should still be fine even if the client declines to accept. I’ve often used rate increases to thin demand. I would only add that while you are indeed free to choose when to increase your prices, you may have more chance of success if you do so before the client has already set their budget—so perhaps a month or two before the end of the year.

Oliver Lawrence

FEATURED FACEBOOK POST

American Translators Association
April 20

Mental Health in Freelance Translation: Isolation
“Isolation can make the liberating world of freelance feel like a prison, but there is a way out of that cell…. [T]here are numerous articles on freelance isolation right under your googling fingertips, but I’d like to give you a translator’s perspective on the matter, be it from my own experience or the experiences of translators from my personal orbit. For your consideration, here are some tips on leaving your little lair of translation.”

Read on—

TOP TWEETS

Facebook’s flood of languages leave it struggling to monitor content:
https://reut.rs/2Guk498
APRIL 23 / @ATANET

English translations of Armenian memoirs share diaspora stories with a new generation | LA Times:
https://lat.ms/2ZuPzIC
APRIL 22 / @ATANET
The American Translators Association’s Board of Directors met April 13–14, 2019 in Alexandria, Virginia. The Board met in conjunction with the Certification Committee and Language Chairs meetings. (Each exam language combination has a language chair administering the passage selection and graders. ATA currently offers testing in 30 language combinations.)

Here are some highlights from the Board meeting.

**Working Budget:** The Board approved the July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020 working budget and the 2020–22 draft budgets. The approved working budget of $3.1 million is a slight decrease compared to the current budget. (The decrease is due to the projected lower revenue for this year’s Annual Conference in Palm Springs, California.) The working budget provides an interim financial framework. By using this interim budget, changes and revisions can be made based on the actual year-end figures. The final budget will be approved at the next Board meeting.

**Annual Conference:** The Board discussed plans for ATA’s 60th Annual Conference, October 23–26, 2019. After reviewing the proposed revenue and expenses, the Board consensus was to maintain the registration fees and not increase them for this year.

**Mid-Year Seminars:** The Board reviewed the final report from Professional Development Committee Chair Anne Connor on the Law Seminar held earlier this year in Jersey City, New Jersey. With the success of this seminar and the interest in doing others, the Board agreed to move forward on another specialized advanced training seminar for next spring. We will share more information as plans take shape.

**Governance—Articles of Incorporation:** The Board reviewed proposed changes to ATA’s Articles of Incorporation. The proposed changes reflect current ATA practices. Any proposed revisions will need to be approved by the membership. The Articles of Incorporation along with the bylaws are the foundational documents that guide ATA’s governance.

**Governance—Mission Statement:** The Board approved revising ATA’s Mission Statement. Here is the new Mission Statement:

“ATA’s mission is to promote the recognition of professional translators and interpreters, to facilitate communication among its members, to establish standards of competence and ethics, to provide its members with professional development opportunities, and to advocate on behalf of the profession.”

The Board meeting summary is posted online. The minutes will be posted once they are approved at the next Board meeting.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WALTER BACAK, CAE
walter@atanet.org

Board Meeting Highlights and 25 Years!

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CANDIDATES ANNOUNCED
ATA ELECTIONS | 2019 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

ATA will hold its regularly scheduled elections at the upcoming 2019 ATA Annual Conference in Palm Springs, California, to elect a president-elect, secretary, treasurer, and three directors. Further nominations, supported by acceptance statements in writing by each additional nominee and a written petition signed by no fewer than 60 voting members, must be received by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee by June 1. Acceptance statements and petitions should be submitted to Nominating and Leadership Development Committee Chair David Rumsey (ata-hq@atanet.org). Candidate statements and photos of the candidates will appear in the September/October issue of The ATA Chronicle and on ATA’s website. The candidates proposed by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee are:

- **President-elect (two-year term):** Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo
- **Secretary (two-year term):** Karen Tkaczyk
- **Treasurer (two-year term):** John Milan
- **Director (three positions, three-year terms):** Alaina Brandt, Veronika Demichelis, Tony Guerra, Aaron Hebenstreit, Cristina Helmerichs, Diego Mansilla

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25 YEARS WITH ATA!

I recently celebrated my 25th anniversary with ATA. When starting out, few folks think they are going to work someplace that long. It just happens. I’m fortunate that it happened with ATA. Thank you to all the members, volunteers, and staff along the way. I look forward to serving you as we continue on.
ATA Adds Its Voice to Language Advocates in Nation’s Capital

Over 160 world language advocates gathered in Washington, DC on February 14–15 to meet with members of Congress for Language Advocacy Day. This annual summit of administrators, business owners, educators, and language industry leaders is organized by the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL), the authority on language policy in Washington, DC. Every year, ATA lends its voice as one of the advocates from the language professions to meet with Congress and request legislation and funding in support of language education and industry priorities. In addition to numerous language educators, several translator and interpreter sister organizations participate in the event.

As ATA’s representative, I was honored to join world language educators PreK–12, researchers, analysts, translators, interpreters, business owners, and other representatives of leading language associations from over 40 states to advocate for America’s language enterprise. A great addition this year were two ATA members who “got the advocacy bug” in 2017, when ATA and JNCL sponsored a Translation and Interpreting Advocacy Day prior to ATA’s 58th Annual Conference in Washington, DC.1

While the focus of legislative requests this year was on budget appropriations, discussions and materials provided to congressional staffers brought translation and interpreting services front and center. Delegates could relate language proficiency to international relations, social justice, economic growth, and national security. ATA’s expertise in the business and government aspects of the language industry are helping cement our place with congressional offices looking to support languages and the vital role they play in the U.S.

I would encourage all ATA members and supporters to sign up to receive policy alerts from JNCL (https://languagepolicy.org). These contain specific actions and templates/scripts you can use to make advocacy easy. Follow #LanguageMatters and @JNCLinfo on Twitter for opportunities to amplify others’ messages. The current political climate means we have a stellar opportunity to make meaningful changes happen for the benefit of all.

NOTE

In February 2019 I had the pleasure of representing ATA at the European Language Industry Association (ELIA) Together conference in Barcelona, Spain. (ATA was a sponsor.) ELIA describes itself on its website as the “European not-for-profit trade association of language service companies with a mission to accelerate our members’ business success.”

Throughout the year, ELIA hosts a number of events for language services companies, but the ELIA Together conference is a yearly event targeted to both freelancers and language companies. As defined on ELIA’s website, the Together conference is a: “two-day event that brings together professionals from across the industry for an open dialogue on industry trends, to learn mutually-relevant new approaches, to update technical skills and, ultimately, serve our end clients better. Most importantly, it’s a friendly, collaborative environment in which to develop lasting relationships.” I couldn’t agree more.

**MASTERING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

The theme for the 2019 conference was “Mastering Digital Transformation,” which ELIA defined as: “Focusing on what your business needs to do to stand out from the crowd and how to provide solutions to the changing needs of our end clients.”

The event kicked off with keynote speaker Javier Zamora, senior lecturer in the Department of Information Systems at the Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa Business School of the University of Navarra in Barcelona. His presentation, “The Digital Mindset: Beyond the Technological Fads,” was inspiring and eye-opening for those in attendance. Zamora started by providing a brief history of machine learning and artificial intelligence. He shared an illustrative anecdote about the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence from 1955. That year, a group of researchers stated that they could discover and solve the problems of how machines use language in just two months if they could get the proper funding and build the perfect team of 10 scientists. Zamora got a good round of giggles and pats on the back from the translator-filled audience at that story.

Although Zamora emphasized that no one knows exactly where technology is heading—or if machines will ever reach singularity—he really drove home the importance of embracing new technologies instead of rejecting them. There is no denying that we, as humans and as translators, have to realize and accept that machines can now perceive and learn, but they can’t yet abstract or reason. If we know the limits of artificial intelligence, we can figure out how to leverage its uses for our own competitive advantage. Zamora encouraged us to be knowledgeable and aware about the tools available to us. Whether we like it or not, machine translation (MT) is a reality in our industry. Zamora also reminded us that advancements in technology are affecting every sector on the planet, not just ours. He ended on a positive note, saying that technology will improve our sector if we’re willing and able to use it appropriately and to our advantage.

**TRENDING TOPIC:**

**MACHINE TRANSLATION**

Zamora’s keynote speech set the tone for the conference. During coffee and lunch breaks, or in the hallway between sessions, I didn’t hear much of the usual MT bashing I often hear at other translator and interpreter industry events. I participated in numerous conversations about MT that were quite refreshing. People talked about its advantages just as much as its disadvantages. I learned a lot, especially since I’ve not personally worked with MT before.

I had an incredibly enlightening conversation with an agency owner turned MT tool owner. He explained his current business process to me, saying that he trained specific MT tools for each of his clients. He said that once the machine was trained and put in place, he was back to square one—the same square one as any translation company: finding specialized translators that are good enough to work with the text at hand. He emphasized that the translation process really hadn’t changed that much. He still needed specialized translators to post-edit specialized texts. He was on a mission to tell as many translators as possible to rest assured. We aren’t being replaced by machines, we’re just working faster because of them.

**FREELANCERS, LANGUAGE COMPANIES, AND TOOL REPRESENTATIVES**

ELIA welcomed a total of 236 attendees: 80 language services and computer-assisted translation tool companies and 119 freelancers. The remaining attendees were a mix of university professors, language consultants, and others. What I liked most about this conference was the great diversity of attendees interacting and mingling the entire time.

The two days of the conference were divided into two session tracks (“specialization” and “trends and technology”), which took place in separate rooms. As at most conferences, the sessions were hit or miss. The specialization track sessions were full of great ideas on how and why to specialize. Unfortunately, after two days of back-to-back sessions on specialization, they ended up being a bit repetitive. This was due to no fault of the presenters, since it’s hard to spin specialization in a million different ways. The trends and technology track
was more varied, touching on items of interest to both freelancers and language companies. Some of the sessions that were specific to language companies were quite insightful for freelancers as well. I learned why language companies ask freelancers to do free tests, how project managers select a freelancer for a job, and what the onboarding process looks like from the language company's side. One of my favorite sessions was about productivity, such as using email templates to save on typing time or the Pomodoro method to stay on track during the work day.

**WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR FREELancers?**

The conference concluded with a panel session called “What Does the Future Hold for Freelancers?” I was honored to participate on the panel alongside such esteemed colleagues as:

- Jerzy Czopik, a freelance translator and interpreter and the vice president of the Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V., a professional association of interpreters and translators in Germany.
- Clio Schils, president of ELIA and global director of life sciences at CQ Fluency.
- Annette Schiller, chair of the International Federation of Translators (FIT) Europe, the Regional Centre Europe of FIT. She is also a professor of translation at Dublin City University and a freelance translator.

The ELIA conference app made it possible to survey the audience live to kick off the panel. Responses came up on the screen as they were submitted.

- “Do you think the future will change your life?”
  - “Yes, positively” received 96 votes
  - “Yes, negatively” received 11 votes
  - “No, it will not change my life” received 3 votes

We were pleasantly surprised by the positive results, which set a great tone for the panel discussion. We answered tough questions from the moderator, Diego Crescieri, founder and chief executive officer of Creative Words, a localization company based in Italy. We spoke about our personal thoughts on the future, the most important skills that freelancers need to develop to remain relevant in tomorrow’s market, and how language services companies and freelancers can work together to better tackle current and future challenges in our industry. I personally encouraged freelancers to keep an open mind regarding new technologies, to make the most of the technology our agency clients have to share with us, and to stay informed.

The panel was well-received by attendees, who engaged with us in a lively Q&A session at the end. For me, one of the highlights of the panel came from an ELIA member who stood up and said that she was a big fan of ATA. She explained that she had attended an ATA conference in the past, was extremely impressed with how it went, and hoped that ELIA would eventually grow to be as large as ATA.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

I would highly recommend attending the ELIA Together conference. I met interesting colleagues and connected with potential clients while learning a lot along the way. Next year’s date and location are still to be determined, but I hope to see you there!

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*Molly Yurick* is a Spanish>English translator specializing in the tourism, hospitality, and airline industries. She has worked as a medical interpreter in Minnesota and as a cultural ambassador for the Ministry of Education in Spain. She has a BA in Spanish and global studies and a certificate in medical interpreting from the University of Minnesota. She is currently living in northern Spain. Contact: molly@yuricktranslations.com.

**NOTES**

Responding to Disaster: Best Practices and Lessons Learned from the 2017 North Bay Fires

Here are some of the lessons learned from the 2017 Northern California wildfires in hopes that it will help translators and interpreters better serve their communities in the event of a natural disaster.

Wake up, Santa Rosa is burning!” In the late evening hours of October 8, 2017, this frantic message was heard over and over again, echoed by police officers, firemen, and neighbors. However, not everyone understood the message. For many of Santa Rosa’s extensive Latino community, this first night of horror was just the beginning of a frightening and confusing time that was greatly exacerbated by a lack of timely information in Spanish.

“I think Sonoma County is a great place to understand that language access is the difference between life and death in these kinds of situations.” (Alegría De La Cruz, Sonoma County Chief Deputy Counsel)

The effects of global climate change, making headlines across the planet, have resulted in an increase in severe weather events. Access to timely and accurate information during these events can literally be a matter of life and death. Translators and interpreters can play a critical role in bringing lifesaving information to non-English-speaking communities. But even if you’re ready and willing to use your linguistic skills to help, knowing where and how to be of service during an emergency can be a challenge.

This article was inspired by my experiences during the 2017 wildfires in Northern California that killed over 40 people, devastated over 200,000 acres, and destroyed over 8,000 homes and businesses, including entire neighborhoods, in my hometown of Santa Rosa. My hope is that what I learned during and after the fires will be helpful to other translators and interpreters in the unfortunate event that a natural disaster occurs in their community.

As the severity and magnitude of this tragedy became apparent, my first thought was “How can I help?” I desperately wanted to make a difference, but I had no idea where to start. I vividly recall driving around town in the smoke-filled air, running into police roadblocks and detours as I tried to make my way to the Red Cross registration center and other sites where emergency assistance was being provided. As I stood in an hours-long line to register as a volunteer, I learned my first big lesson of disaster preparedness:

Lesson #1: Don’t wait until an emergency strikes to register with the Red Cross or other disaster-response agencies. Volunteers can only be mobilized quickly in a community if they are pre-registered and trained. The need is often the greatest during the first hours and days of a natural disaster.1

After an afternoon bagging pears at a local food bank wishing that I could be more useful, I had a moment of clarity. I was listening to the radio on my way home and realized that all of the emergency updates I was hearing and seeing on the news were in English. I thought, “Who is communicating all of this vital information to the non-English-speaking members of our community?” It was then that I realized my Spanish translation and interpreting skills could probably be put to good use. But I still had no idea where to plug in my skills or where I could be most useful.

After a long and frustrating day of dead ends, I finally found my entry point to be of service when I saw a plea for translators and interpreters on a social media post from our local deputy public defender.

1 The effects of global climate change, making headlines across the planet, have resulted in an increase in severe weather events. Access to timely and accurate information during these events can literally be a matter of life and death. Translators and interpreters can play a critical role in bringing lifesaving information to non-English-speaking communities. But even if you’re ready and willing to use your linguistic skills to help, knowing where and how to be of service during an emergency can be a challenge.

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of language coordinator when she realized no such position existed in the county’s emergency response plan. By responding to her request, I was able to connect with the county’s public information officers, who immediately put me to work translating public safety and health announcements, CalFire updates, and other pressing communications.

Lesson #2: Connect with your county’s public information officers prior to an emergency, provide your contact information and skillset, and ask to be contacted in the event of an emergency to provide language access services.

Although it felt gratifying to finally put my language skills to work, I quickly realized that my work translating these materials was just the tip of the iceberg. Our county was not prepared to address the enormous scope of language access needs in those critical first days and weeks of the fires.

Lesson #3: Research your town or county’s emergency response plan prior to an emergency to determine if it includes a language access plan, and if there are policies and procedures in place to implement it. If these aren’t in place, partner with local community-based organizations that support immigrant rights to begin the process of advocating for the inclusion of a language access plan.

Despite a large population of non-English-speaking community members of different ethnicities, our evacuation centers and local assistance centers weren’t staffed with interpreters. The lack of qualified interpreters made it difficult for these community members to access health care, information about safely returning to homes in areas affected by the fires and cleanup efforts, or to get the assistance they needed to apply for disaster relief or find temporary housing.

Lesson #4: Advocate for the creation of a cohesive, centralized bank of vetted, qualified interpreters who can be mobilized when needed. If this isn’t happening at the county level, work with your local interpreting association or local ATA chapter. Social media groups of professional translators and interpreters are also great places to organize ahead of time.

“**If no information is provided, that gives the opportunity for misinformation.**” (Bernice Espinoza, deputy public defender and criminal immigration specialist)

The quote above refers to the spread of rumors that immigration agents were present at evacuation shelters and relief centers. To add fuel to the fire, the head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) falsely accused an undocumented immigrant of starting the wildfires, creating an even more combustible atmosphere of fear and mistrust of authority figures. This resulted in widespread reluctance among undocumented evacuees to seek help and shelter due to fears about ICE. Many of these evacuees fled the city to camp on beaches or sleep in their cars rather than in the evacuation shelters, where they feared government agents would round them up. Because these concerns were not anticipated, proactive efforts to combat the spread of misinformation were not made.

Lesson #5: Partner with trusted community-based organizations to help further proactive efforts to ensure that all community members feel safe and welcome in local evaluation shelters. These efforts need to be addressed ahead of a disaster, not during.

Up until this point, we’ve largely discussed the actions that your community can take as a whole to be better prepared in the event of a natural disaster. But what else can you do, as an individual, to prepare yourself? What follows are some additional suggestions based on my experiences.

Lesson #6: First, make sure your own home and loved ones are safe. With that as your foundation, establish some boundaries to maintain your well-being. In our eagerness to help, and fueled by the adrenaline of an emergency situation, it’s easy to burn out. Find the balance between helping and taking care of yourself and your family.

The old cliché “put your oxygen mask on before assisting others” holds true in this situation. In the various presentations I’ve given on this topic, only a handful of people raise their hands when asked if they have a family emergency plan in place. When my daughter and her husband had to evacuate their home in the middle of the night during the fires, they showed up on our front doorstep at 3:00 a.m. with their pets, a set of Harry Potter books, and a basket of bathing suits and winter hats! In the panic of the moment, there’s no time to make critical decisions about what to grab.

Lesson #7: Pack a “go bag” with three days of supplies for each family member. Have animal carrier and leashes easily accessible. Make a list of irreplaceable valuables and paperwork and ensure they’re stored in an accessible manner. Taking these easy steps will give you peace of mind and ensure you have the basics covered if you should have to evacuate. There are many great resources online for family preparedness plans.

Lesson #8: Think ahead to the types of natural disasters to which your region might be susceptible and gather vital safety supplies ahead of time (e.g., respirator masks, inflatable rafts, water purification tablets, etc.).

After having volunteered as an interpreter in a number of different situations after the fires, including working shifts at a Local Assistance Center (LAC), a Red Cross shelter, and interpreting during community forums, I realized the need for flexibility, quick thinking, and creative use of portable simultaneous interpreting equipment. At a Latino community forum, for
RESPONDING TO DISASTER: BEST PRACTICES
AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2017 NORTH BAY FIRES continued

Don’t wait until an emergency strikes to register with the Red Cross or other disaster-response agencies.

My experiences during the 2017 wildfires in Sonoma County made it clear how a lack of preparation, at both the personal and community level, can exacerbate the challenges of a natural disaster. In these times of climate uncertainty, what we can count on is that these unfortunate events will occur with increasing frequency. There’s so much we can’t predict or control about when and where the next natural disaster will occur. What we can control, however, is our own level of preparedness and the degree to which we’re ready to be of service to our communities by putting our valuable language skills into action. Further, as a language access advocate, you can play an important role in your community by working with others to help your town or county ensure that language access is included in their disaster response plan.

Lesson #9: If you’re called to assist in an unfamiliar environment, it’s vital to be able to step out of your comfort zone and adapt to quickly changing circumstances. If you’re used to interpreting in a conference booth, for example, you might literally have to step out of the box and be prepared to adapt using a variety of different strategies. I found it invaluable to own a set of portable simultaneous interpreting equipment, as not all settings have access to this equipment, which can be used in a variety of ways.

One of the biggest challenges for me, as a translator and interpreter who works primarily in the health care field, was dealing with very specific fire disaster terminology. Finding glossaries and other resources in advance would have saved time and eased the stress of the quick turnaround needed for the CalFire reports, which came in at various times of the day and night due to rapidly changing conditions.

Lesson #10: Locate and research terminology related to the disasters most likely to occur in your area ahead of time. Another valuable resource is Doctors without Borders, who are ready and willing to jump in with translation help during a crisis.

NOTES
1. Information for volunteering with the Red Cross can be found here: www.redcross.org/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities.html.
2. Information on how to make an emergency plan can be found here: www.ready.gov/make-a-plan.

Julie Burns is a veteran interpreter trainer with 20 years of experience in health care interpreting and translation, as well as extensive experience in health education and training in Latin America and the U.S. She is a certified medical interpreter (Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters) and a certified worker’s compensation medical interpreter (State of California). She is also an ATA-certified Spanish>English translator. She has an M.Ed. in adult education. She is the former director of the Bridging the Gap Interpreter Training Program and has trained thousands of interpreters. She has served as a board member for the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, International Medical Interpreters Association, and California Healthcare Interpreting Association. She is the 2018 recipient of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care Language Access Champion Award. Contact: julie@julieburns.net.
International Literature: A Data-Driven Approach to Prioritizing Diversity

Investment, infrastructure, and influence drive the global publishing industry. Can we develop a data-driven approach to prioritizing the world’s languages to focus investment in new regions to diversify the books being translated?

Amazon’s leadership principles have taught me data-driven decision-making. Across the company results are measured and reviewed weekly, strategies are developed from the data up, and we listen to customers to develop our path forward.

It can be challenging to apply data analysis in publishing, but these tools felt uniquely helpful as I approached a difficult goal: prioritizing new languages for translation. Amazon Crossing combines close reading, editorial vision, and strong relationships to nourish our publishing program. If we want a balanced and diverse list, we need to be intentional with how we choose what to read and with whom to work.

As editorial director of Amazon Crossing, I have the challenge of leading acquisition decisions for an imprint publishing fiction and nonfiction in translation, and with it the responsibility of holding a broad view of what’s happening in publishing globally. With a goal of diversifying our list, I wondered what data might help identify areas for investment in research and relationship-building. The editorial team has connections with a large network of agents, publishers, and literary translators, all of whom surface books and authors for our consideration. Since we launched in 2010, we’ve published 400 books from 23 languages and 37 countries. To discover new regions, languages, and literatures, we must reach out in search of new experts, but where to begin?

Various sources release publishing statistics each year, and, helpfully, Wikipedia editors pull data from many sources to create this overview. Publishing output alone doesn’t signal opportunity for English translation, but it could shine a light on blind spots: markets with robust publishing output but no representation in our submission pool. The top 25 countries by number of new releases published each year spans from 440,000 new releases in China to 19,900 in Canada to 14,984 in Romania. (See Figure 1 below.) To date, Amazon Crossing has published books from 68% of these countries. The outliers are countries beyond the reach of the Eurocentric book fair circuit. Perhaps publishing output signals opportunity for future discoveries from India, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Czech Republic, Malaysia, and Romania. Though we haven’t announced acquisitions from India, the Czech Republic, or Romania, we frequently receive submissions from these countries. But in Taiwan, Vietnam, and Malaysia, our Rolodex comes up short.

So, how would we start a new relationship with, say, Malaysian publishers? There are likely to be increased resources thanks to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) selecting Kuala Lumpur as the 2020 World Book Capital. (This itself was likely thanks to Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidis 2016 challenge to local authors to win a Nobel Prize in Literature by 2057.) With global ambitions come infrastructure investments. According to the Three Percent Database, South Korean literature has seen a marked increase in English translations in the U.S. since Korean President Kim Song-Un’s 2012 statement that it was about time his country achieve this glory, with four translations in 2008 and 11 in 2018. Resources such as translation funding, translator workshops, English magazines, international book fair visits, and international editor fellowships to visit Seoul are costly but effective in increasing translation output. (There were no titles from Malaysia published in 2008 and 2018. The Three Percent Database includes only one Malaysian entry, Ng Kim Chew’s Slow Boat to China and Other Stories, translated from Chinese by Carlos Rojas and published by Columbia University Press in 2016.)

Of course, we could engage with resources funded by the Malaysian government should they become available. We could also start reaching out to publishers we can find, but how do we also ensure we’re finding the best books by using translators, naturally.

Amazon Crossing encourages submissions at https://translation.amazon.com/submissions. We’ve found many of our best books through translators, such as Malagasy author Johary Ravaloson’s Return to the Enchanted Island (November 2019), brought to us by Allison Charette, and Spanish bestseller Paul Pen, an author long...
Far-Reaching Literatures

- Publishing pace alone doesn’t drive translation efforts
- 64% of most-translated source countries are also the top publishers by # of titles per year – heavily resourced local and international publishing networks (72% are also among the top 25 most-translated into the US in 2017)
- What are these other markets doing that drives their books globally through translation?

Figure 2: Sample from UNESCO’s Index Translationum data for the Top 50 Countries by Exported Translations

When we stumble onto leads outside our language abilities, we often engage translators to read, assess, and create sample translations to help us consider the broadest possible range of books.

championed by translator Simon Bruni (we’re now on our third thriller with the pair, Under the Water, in October 2019). When we stumble onto leads outside our language abilities, we often engage translators to read, assess, and create sample translations to help us consider the broadest possible range of books.

Any reader can lead us to great books: our open website for submissions removes the barrier to entry for those outside our existing community, and language localization further expands accessibility (users can submit in 14 languages). As we reach in new directions, additional language support can help us expand and target our engagement. So, how do we prioritize languages for attention?

Countries have wildly different statistics about literary imports and exports, but there are only a few ways books reach across borders—human networks create a common infrastructure worldwide. But any individual’s network is only so big, and we each choose where to focus our energy. These simple forces are the paths toward translation for any author. We expand our view by learning from different countries to see how resources are invested to maximize cultural diversity, and specifically literary translations. A quick look at UNESCO’s Index Translationum data for the Top 50 Countries by Exported Translations shows a strong correlation between the world’s largest book exporters and the most published source countries in the U.S. (See Figure 2 above.) Clearly, those with export muscles are succeeding at reaching U.S. publication.

To open ourselves beyond this focused minority of well-funded literature focused on driving exports—which often means English proficiencies and submission materials, attending book fairs, and materials out of reach for many—we’re investing in access and visibility. However, the goal is still connecting with individuals. People decide which books are published and, as with so many aspects of life, no matter how much data you have at your fingertips, it often boils down to who you know.

**PATH TO GLOBAL PUBLICATION**

Authors are writing books all over the world. The lucky ones get a good agent with global contacts, and/or a good primary publisher with a powerful network of foreign contacts to whom they pitch books for translation. Editors all over the world are reading to find the next bestseller, but what languages are they reading in and what are they hoping to find? These are primary filters that block much of the world’s publishing activity from notice.

Publishing is a business, and readers influence the entire cycle with their buying/borrowing/book club selecting—and with their reading. The most talked about books sell the most copies, triggering the chain of events that brings popular books to the world through translation. The bigger the readership, the more investment publishers and booksellers are willing to make to drive further growth.

To illustrate the hero’s journey of international success as an author, I thought it might help to start with a best-case-scenario, if only to spotlight the complexity of crossing publishing borders.

For top names, like Robert Dugoni, a New York Times, #1 Wall Street Journal, and #1 Amazon internationally bestselling author, the publishing cycle is virtuous and exhilarating. Agent Meg Ruley at Jane Rotrosen Agency gets a new book, reads it, gets the chills, and when it’s ready, business wheels spin quickly. Gracie Doyle, editorial director at Thomas & Mercer, makes an offer for World English rights as well as all the languages where Amazon Crossing publishes translations: Germany, Italy, Spain, France, and China. Sabrina Prestia, foreign rights manager at Jane Rotrosen Agency, gets the word out to a network of subagents worldwide, all of whom know publishers in their markets who are eager to read and publish the latest in the Tracy Crosswhite series. Most of these editors are fluent in English. If the agent is timing the pitch with international book fairs in Frankfurt or London, this work happens in person, at tiny tables on a crowded convention center floor.

Dugoni’s books have been translated into dozens of languages, including French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Slovakian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Editors at each publishing house acquire the book—some having read the novel in English, others relying on the author’s past success rate, and some trusting the word of scouts or readers. Each chooses a translator and works with their teams to create the translated book that ultimately reaches the reader. If the readers love it, the author...
can count on this cycle moving smoothly for a glorious career.

This path is winding at best even for an author who is already a global brand name. Amazon Crossing is making explicit efforts to reach further upstream to find interesting books. What can we do to find books that are not yet proven bestsellers, in languages beyond the best-funded literatures, and authors who might be marginalized?

FORGING NEW PATHS
I would like to walk through an example of a book I acquired from beyond my network, adding Bangladesh to our list of 37 countries published to date and the Bengali language to our list of 23 languages translated. The numbers can feel like a distraction when discussing diversity, but in a data-driven environment like Amazon, it pays to count. And if you’re reaching beyond the world you know, it also pays to be explicit about where you would like to explore.

With this thought in mind, I secured approval to attend the Sharjah International Book Fair in November 2017. Nearly all my meetings were with agents and publishers I had never met. I made good use of the online registry of attendees as I set up my schedule, and I also asked a few trusted colleagues to make some introductions. I met Mitia Osman, publisher of Agamee Prakashani, a top press in Bangladesh, and after a presentation of her catalog I decided to ask: “If I’ve never read a book from Bangladesh, where would you have me start?” I was struggling to interpret titles listed on the catalog pages as possibilities and needed some deeper insight. Mitia wasn’t sure where to lead me, but she immediately mentioned a book that holds special meaning in her own personal canon.

Published on World Book Day, April 23, 2019, I Remember Abbu by Humayun Azad was translated by award-winner Arunava Sinha. It contains a moving foreword by the author’s son, Ananya Azad, explaining his father’s tragic death and his devotion to his work, and illustrations by Bangladeshi artist Sabyasachi Mistry. In chapters alternating between the voice of a child and the diary entries of her beloved Abbu (father), we learn the history of Bangladesh’s fight for independence—a war fought by people determined to protect language and culture—through the experience of one family. Humayun Azad (1947–2004) is regarded as one of the most influential writers in modern Bengali literature. An esteemed poet, academic scholar, critic, and linguist with more than 70 titles to his credit, he was awarded the Bangla Academy Award in 1986 for his contributions to Bengali linguistics. In 2012, the Bangladesh government honored him posthumously with the Ekushey Padak Award. Throughout his career, he was praised for his outspoken critique of fundamentalism and his unflinching support of the Bengali language and the culture it represents.

The author photo Mitia sent me was captioned “rebel against bigotry.” How could I possibly resist amplifying his call for freedom?

So now, we put this gem out into the wilds of publication, taking a great leap of faith launched thanks to two readers’ deep connections to it, striving to spark curiosity so many can discover this book’s capacity to heal the wounds that divide us. It’s one delicate thread in the web of humanity.

FILLING THE GAPS
It’s my hope that many such threads will leap out for the Amazon Crossing team as we develop more sophisticated views on global publishing. We have a range of language skills in-house: from Scandinavian languages expert Elizabeth DeNoma, French and Spanish with Liza Darnton and myself, and a wonderfully diverse array of interested colleagues around the globe. Thanks to the internet and translation tools, we can more easily search across languages than my younger self could ever have imagined, albeit in a coarse and restrained way. Resources like the Publishing Trends International Bestseller list feature (which rounds up a monthly top 10 from various countries), online magazines like Asymptote Journal and Words Without Borders spotlighting a vast array of literature and a wealth of translation and editorial insight, and Book Twitter offer prismatic perspectives with plenty of opportunity to go deep. So, how do we focus our energies?

Beyond assessing the world’s publishing activity to find gaps, we also assess the world’s popular literature to seek trends. In addition to global lists, Amazon Charts tracks the most-read books in fiction and nonfiction, and we monitor the bestseller lists in the U.S. and U.K. marketplaces. For example, the recent Nielsen report focusing on growth in translation sales offers both cause for optimism and direction data to guide our predictions.

Business decisions are often made based on patterns of exclusion or overemphasis. We’ll ask ourselves if this fills a gap, or does it land in an overcrowded marketplace that is difficult to distinguish from its peers. As we’re designing a metric, we’re not only trying to identify trends visible in the data, we’re also looking to spot things such as outliers and omissions. Who saw Marie Kondo coming, or predicted a shift from the darkness of Scandi crime to the life-affirming Man Called Ove franchise? I remember when everyone insisted humor doesn’t translate! The data itself offers a point of reference, but we’re still dealing with human hearts and minds, and many breakout successes surprise even those who chose them.
The Three Percent Database, created by Chad Post at the University of Rochester and hosted by Publishers Weekly, is the most helpful reference for seeing what other U.S. publishers are choosing to translate, and to spot both gaps and areas of most investment.

The chart in Figure 3 above shows 2017 titles in English translation in the U.S., limited to “original translations of fiction and poetry published or distributed here in the U.S.,” to quote the Three Percent blog. It’s incomplete because there is no absolute way of spotting translations in the marketplace (there would be if all publishers included the translator’s name in title metadata), but imperfect data at least gives us a starting point. The database has a Creative Commons license and all are encouraged to slice and dice the data, and to contribute missing titles. I find it a useful reference for keeping up with what other presses are discovering.

The top countries shown in Figure 3 are perhaps unsurprising, and the bottom of the list may be unsurprising as well. It’s harder to spot those missing entirely: 86 countries saw one or more new translations last year, just 44% of the 195 countries in the world. It’s difficult to focus on invisible literature within the established international publishing network. So, how do we facilitate the growth of up-and-coming markets, and even more importantly, see through all the layers of potential bias and filter systems to reach underrepresented voices?

Comparing top countries for translation exports with U.S. translations released is a crude way to spot opportunities to engage with languages or countries with few or no translations being released in English. There is no reason to assume books from these countries will sell, but if our goal is to build infrastructure, this is a fertile place to start. We know there are publishers investing in local authors, someone we can email and start a conversation, industry magazines where we can feature a call for submissions, and translator talent we might tap to help us expand our scope immeasurably. And if nothing comes of this outreach, if we’re wasting time investigating what people are reading in Malay or Hindi, what is lost? It’s an opportunity cost, but to me these connections prove fruitful whether sales follow or not, and the infrastructure we build could support a future generation’s diverse reading.

NOTES


2. To date, Amazon Crossing has not published a French Canadian author, though we have published U.S.-based authors writing in Spanish (Giannina Braschi and Lorea Canales), one Canada-based author writing in German (Bernadette Calonego), and one Australian who identifies as an Indonesian writer writing in English (Tiffany Tsao).


7. I’m using publicly available data here, including Publishers Marketplace deal announcements and international Amazon bestseller lists. My apologies if elements of this exercise prove out of date.

8. From the author’s website: www.robertdugonibooks.com/resources.


Gabriella Page-Fort is the editorial director of Amazon Crossing, where she has worked since 2010. She has helped publish award-winning authors of international bestsellers from around the world, such as Rodrigo Rey Rosa, Laura Restrepo, Johary Ravaloson, Martin Michael Driessen, Dolores Redondo, Oliver Pötzsch, Zygmunt Miłoszewski, and Ayşe Kulin. She was named Publishers Weekly Star Watch “Superstar” in 2017. In her spare time, she is a literary translator from French and Spanish and a musician. Contact: pagefort@amazon.com.
When you take the time to put your website to work for you, you’ll see the benefits when clients call on you more often because your site came up in a Google search.

Everyone knows that it’s important to think about search engine optimization (SEO) for their business website, but how many freelance translators and interpreters really take the time to adjust a few things behind the scenes to boost their website’s search engine ranking? Before we dive in here, let me make a full disclaimer that I’m no SEO expert. However, I’ve learned a few things over the years that have been very effective in my own career when it comes to my professional services website.

Ready to get started? Okay, here are 10 simple ways to boost your translation or interpreting website’s SEO:

1. **Think about consumer behavior.** Are the folks who would be looking for your services online using specific terms? What are they searching for? What are their pain points? It’s essential to include key search terms in your website’s keywords (you know, on the back end of the website) so that these people can find you more easily. This is a simple fix that will allow you to reap the benefits as long as people continue to use those search terms, which you can update as needed.

2. **Make sure your site is mobile-friendly.** It’s also important to pay specific attention to mobile-first content, since more people these days are pretty savvy users of mobile devices. Your site should be mobile-friendly (i.e., navigable and formatted to fit well on the screen of a mobile device such as a tablet or smartphone). If you’ve ever visited a site that was not mobile-friendly, you probably remember how annoying it was to try to read the content or find what you were looking for. This is another update you can make to your site that will improve users’ experience.

3. **Pay attention to your site’s speed.** It needs to be fast and void of those error message pages (think 404) announcing your site is missing stuff. These types of pages can slow your site down and will surely also put a damper on users’ experience. Things like videos or images that aren’t adjusted properly for your site can also slow down the speed at which your website loads. Remember, you only have mere seconds to catch someone’s attention when they visit your site, so it’s important to get these things right.

Things like videos or images that are not adjusted properly for your site can also slow down the speed at which your website loads.

4. **Have high-quality backlinks to your site.** These backlinks could be things like a link to your website from a professional directory—like the ATA directories—from an article you wrote for a respectable publication, or even from a guest blog post you penned. Think outside the box a bit and make good use of backlinks! If you find that any links leading to your site are broken, take the time to kindly request that they be fixed by providing the
person or publication with the proper link. Sites that have high-quality backlinks are also considered to contain higher quality content by search engines, so don’t overlook having a small collection of good backlinks.

5. **Be smart about the “title tags” you use for your website.** What are title tags? This is a fancy name for another one of those behind-the-scenes easy fixes you can make. Title tags are the names you give to the various pages on your website (e.g., services). These tags will show up in online searches as clickable headlines in search results. They tell search engines and visitors what any given page on your site is about, so it’s important that the titles you choose are concise and accurate.

It’s key to get these title tags right so that search engines know how to categorize your website in a search and so those doing the searching can find you easily. You can adjust the title tags on most pages of your website, but I would argue that the most vital ones are the home page, your bio or “about” page, and blog posts (if you write them). For example, you don’t want to use your name as the title tag of your home page. If I put “Madalena Zampaulo” as a title tag, I would have no idea if my ideal clients would be able to find me since they may not even know my name yet! Instead, it’s better to use something like “Madalena Zampaulo | Medical Translator + Freelancer.” Use terms in your title tags that describe what you do and that would make good search terms!

6. **Keep your URLs short and include some keywords in them.** I’ll admit this is something I need to work on myself as I’m a wordy person. But keeping URLs to five or six words after the last “/” in a URL is a good goal to set. On the other hand, don’t be too short or generic with your URLs either. A URL like www.thisisanexample.com/?p=abc will not take you very far when it comes to search rankings, but one like www.thisisanexample.com/medical-translator-technical-devices-expert is way more effective and should boost your site’s rankings in search engines.

You only have mere seconds to catch someone’s attention when they visit your site, so it’s important to get these things right.

7. **Choose your “H2” tags wisely!** H2 tags are different from your title tags, but are still relevant and something your target market might use in a search. (For Squarespace site users like myself, these are called “Heading 2 tags”). H2 tags allow you to break up the content you’re sharing to make it scannable and easy to read, which gives you the ability to rank even higher in search results. Think of H2 tags as the title of a page section or blog post. For example, if I were posting this article on a blog, I would use the H2 tag “10 Simple Ways to Boost Your Translation or Interpreting Website’s SEO” as the title of the post. It’s designated as an H2 tag, which means it’s highly searchable by anyone who is looking for this type of content. H2 tags provide readers with a clearer picture of what your content covers and allows them to quickly find the specific information they want.

8. **Mention your keyword within the first 100 words of a site page or blog post.** Believe it or not, by using keywords toward the start of a page, your site will rank better in search engine results. Brownie points if you use a keyword in the first sentence!

9. **Keep your thesaurus handy for those Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) keywords.** The what? This is just a fancy way of saying the synonyms related to your main keywords. (Yes, you can use synonyms!) Make sure you include them on your site’s home page or in your blog post. This allows Google to determine how relevant your page is to search inquiries and will help direct people who might be searching for the same thing using different words. For example, let’s say your keyword is “medical translator.” You could include the LSIs “health and wellness translator” or “life sciences translator.” Check out this free tool to find semantic keywords to complement your primary keywords: https://lsigraph.com.

10. **Optimize the images on your site!** What am I talking about? It’s easy—name them! When you upload an image to your website, be careful not to leave the file names that read something like “IMG4781.jpg.” Instead, give them a real name that includes a keyword or two. Something like “Medical_translator_Cincinnati.jpg” is a smart choice for someone looking for more medical translation clients local to the Cincinnati or southern Ohio/northern Kentucky area. By naming your site’s images with keywords, there’s a much higher probability of your site ranking higher in search engines than someone else’s site that isn’t taking advantage of this simple strategy. Try it!

When you take the time to put your website to work for you, you’ll see the benefits when clients call on you more often because your site came up in a Google search. The tips above are easy to implement and take just a few minutes, but you have to carefully (and strategically) plan to make your site appealing to your ideal clients. Remember, put your energy into making your site rank well in searches so you can be found by those you want to work with. This may not necessarily be the same as the clients for whom you’re currently working. Consider who your ideal client is and go from there. Good luck!
ATA Law Seminar: Four Perspectives

Attendees from this year’s ATA Law Seminar discuss what they learned from high-level speakers.

CHRIS VERDUIN
As a certified court interpreter of a language other than Spanish, there have been times where I’ve had difficulty finding the appropriate, acceptable continuing education training that’s required to maintain my certification. I’ve even considered paying a hefty price for beginner material for which I had little use simply to get the continuing education units. It seems that those involved in court administration are becoming more aware of this dilemma, and some states I work in are now taking steps to resolve the situation by providing reasonably-priced, more focused seminars that qualify for continuing education units. ATA’s Law Seminar fit the bill perfectly.

Keynote—Lessons Learned the Hard Way: Takeaways from 26 Years Managing a State Judiciary’s Translation and Interpreting Program

Robert Joe Lee’s keynote was a revelation of what it takes to get a certification program underway.

Lee worked for the New Jersey Judiciary from 1978 until his retirement in 2008. After a few years working as a research associate in the probation division and staffing the Supreme Court Task Force on Interpreter and Translation Services, he managed New Jersey’s translation and interpreting program to ensure equal access to the courts for linguistic minorities. He has coordinated the development of court interpreter tests in numerous languages, as well as numerous policies in the field. In collaboration with the staff of the National Center for State Courts and three other state judiciaries, he helped establish the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification and led New Jersey to be a charter member.

All in all, it was a productive day of learning, discussion, and networking.

Lee explained how the New Jersey Judiciary was transformed from an organization that had virtually no policy regarding translation and interpreting to one where appropriate standards of quality control and professional
performance by language professionals are an unquestioned, normal part of its operational culture.  
I expected a dry historical presentation of the steps taken to establish New Jersey’s translation and interpreting program, but I actually found myself riveted to the chain of events as Lee described how he felt compelled to relentlessly pursue an avenue for providing linguistic equality. Since my career began under Lee’s leadership, the events related were all the more interesting and relevant to me.

Lee embarked on a long and arduous journey to replace the practice of allowing pretty much anyone who speaks another language to interpret in court. After years of perseverance, setbacks, resistance to change, patience, and what Lee calls “serendipity” (i.e., taking advantage of unexpected doors of opportunity), testing for judiciary interpreters was developed. However, even after testing was implemented, it still proved incredibly difficult to find interpreters who could achieve a passing score. Even now, the pass rate for state tests in general is incredibly low and courts still struggle to find competent interpreters in many languages of lesser diffusion.

One of the lingering questions in my mind regarding New Jersey interpreters is why the state doesn’t require continuing education for its court-approved (as they are called in New Jersey) interpreters. In other states, continuing education is something that’s expected and required for court interpreters. Lee explained that due to the lack of adequate funding and the scarcity of competent interpreters to fill existing needs, the immediate focus has been on the provision of qualified interpreters in all languages. Allocating already scarce resources to the area of continuing education would require additional funding and personnel for oversight. Lee’s practical outlook made perfect sense.

Melinda Gonzalez-Hibner—Performing from the Stand: Advanced Sight, Simultaneous, and Consecutive Skills
Melinda Gonzalez-Hibner gave attendees many things to consider in her engaging presentation. She pointed out that all the skills we use in the various modes of interpreting are interconnected. She emphasized engaging in ongoing practice, since no one outgrows the need for focused, intentional skill building that includes ways to specifically measure progress. The following points stood out:

1. **Pay attention as you practice.** Be aware not only of what is said, but of the emotions, tone, gestures, and facial cues and how to transmit them appropriately.

2. **In a court situation, try to avoid eye contact with either party, since our role requires us to foster the direct relationship between the parties involved.** Options for making this happen were addressed, such as where to look, where to sit, and what to
do if the witness starts speaking English. (The answer to the latter is to repeat the English.)

3 Never stop shadowing, in both languages, or more, if you work in more languages. Shadowing means listening to and repeating any spoken material in the same language in which it’s presented. Shadowing in our working languages helps us maintain active vocabulary, challenges brain function, and helps maintain speed of retrieval (immediate language access), which tends to lessen as we age. Any type of practice material will work, from Ted Talks to the news or even watching soap opera in your languages.

4 Mix up practicing all the modes of interpreting. Identify your biggest need and focus on it first.

5 Record your practice sessions. Make a recording when you practice your interpreting, play it back, find out what’s lacking, and try again. And again. And again.

We were sent practice materials before the session to download on our devices for use. I always struggle with even the simple technology on my cell phone (e.g., where is that stupid recording button, which thing do I press and how do I stop it, how do I play it back, etc.). However, I soon realized that the more I was forced to do these maneuvers in the group, the more comfortable and adept I became at performing the logistics involved. This means that I will be much more likely to tackle such exercises at home alone!

Elena Langdon—Anatomy of a Deposition and How to Master this Niche

Elena Langdon’s session was divided into two sessions: deposition and ethics. (Fellow attendee Bridget Hylak provides more details on the latter below).

For those experienced court interpreters who have not yet branched out into depositions, Langdon’s presentation provided the basic structure and procedures involved, such as what to do, and perhaps more importantly, what not to do, in that area of legal interpreting. It focused on the specifics of interpreting at legal and non-court hearings in the U.S.: sworn depositions with attorneys, hearings for government agencies, and other similar situations. Elena covered videoconferencing, how to make fast friends with the court reporter, how to deal with “immigrant speak,” and logistics. Preparation (and survival) strategies, vocabulary, and dos and don’ts were also addressed.

The second session provided theories and models of ethics that are important for informing and guiding the canons of ethics by which judicial interpreters make ethical decisions. These basic ethical theories are: 1) virtue ethics, 2) deontology, 3) utilitarianism, 4) cultural relativism (laws), 5) social group relativism, and 6) egoism. The end goal is to be able to make a decision that agrees with as many of these principles as possible.

BRIDGET HYLAK
Elena Langdon—Ethics in Action: Moving Beyond Should and Shouldn’t

Elena Langdon’s workshop was an eclectic mix of fact, theory, and introspection. Langdon took us inside and outside the box of our profession. She began by providing a general overview of what ethics are and aren’t, and then ever-so-gently dared to suggest that we could (and should) give closer thought to what they “should or shouldn’t” be. Delving into the area of what ethics “should and shouldn’t...
led many of us to realize we have a lot more to consider.

**EVELYN YANG GARLAND**

**Holly Mikkelson—Translating Legal Documents: Expert to Expert**

This language-neutral workshop addressed the issues encountered by legal translators of all languages who must deal with the sometimes impenetrable and arcane language of the law. As Holly Mikkelson observed, law is a very conservative institution that resists change. Judges and attorneys still use legalese heavily despite the plain English movement. Because of this, Mikkelson says she intentionally incorporates legalese into her translation so that it will look familiar to its target audience. Additionally, she’s convinced that the use of certain legalese helps make the text more succinct.

Her workshop covered the history of legal language and the use of commonly used legal expressions. A lively interactive practice session followed, where participants “translated” back and forth between legalese and plain English. Mikkelson emphasized the importance of research, which is an indispensable step in her approach to translation despite her extensive experience working as a court interpreter and legal translator for over 40 years. She provided a list of recommended readings for translators who wish to learn more about legal translation. All in all, it was a productive day of learning, discussion, and networking.

**PAUL MERRIAM**

**Sandro Tomasi—Translating Legal Terms Based on Functional Equivalency**

Since legal translation and interpreting are comprised of not only translating from one language to another but also translating from one legal system to another, it’s vital for court interpreters or legal translators to go beyond the linguistic aspects of the source- and target-language terms and be mindful of the legal concepts behind them. Sandro Tomasi’s workshop provided essential legal translation theory along with techniques that can be applied to written and oral communication. Translation examples based on functional equivalency were also included.

Tomasi provided some historical material on the theory of legal translation. These included the 1907 Rossel translation of the Swiss Civil Code from German into French, where the French-speaking population of Switzerland was given the right to insist that they be provided with material in the spirit of the French language, rather than Gallicized German or Germanized French.

Tomasi’s primary emphasis was on the concept of legal transfer as opposed to linguistic transfer. A specific example given was the term “lineup,” for which some American case law was provided to clarify the concept in English. Six possibilities for translation were provided with discussions of how they might be affected by case law. Tomasi also discussed how to deal with situations where the words don’t exactly match. Some techniques for handling such situations include using explicitation (e.g., “Bye. Good luck” as opposed to the literal “Bye. Luck”) and compensation (adding information in a later utterance: e.g., referring to the president as “she” in a later sentence when the gender is clear in Spanish—la Presidenta—but ambiguous in English—the president).

**BIG THANKS**

So, thanks and bravo to ATA, Headquarters staff, and key volunteers who took part in putting on this event. We look forward to more opportunities of this kind in the future.

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Dealing with Sexual Harassment

Thanks to the #MeToo movement, women and men around the world finally feel more comfortable discussing the issue of sexual harassment in and out of the workplace. However, I've noticed that this is a subject that rarely comes up in the interpreting profession.

Does that mean it doesn't exist? Of course not, but perhaps especially in court interpreting, oftentimes interpreters feel like a small cog in the wheels of justice (even though they're one of the most essential elements). Interpreters have been taught to be invisible (which, in my opinion, we shouldn't be). This may be compounded by the fact that interpreting, and in particular court interpreting, is a female-dominated profession.

This is a complicated and complex issue with no easy answers and lots of room for improvement, and one that might be best suited for either a conference session or in-depth personal discussions, but I wanted to share some of my thoughts here in the hopes of perhaps jumpstarting the conversation.

Yes, It Has Happened to Me: The situation occurred only once, but it had a lasting effect. It was in a room full of male lawyers where I was the only woman. It was uncomfortable and felt humiliating, especially because the unwelcome comment was made by a senior lawyer in front of everyone, which luckily resulted in some outrage from other attorneys. It was very clear to me that sexual harassment is about power and control. It's a way to objectify women (and men). The harasser feels he (or she) can do it, and probably has done it for years and gotten away with it. I hate to admit it, but I wish I would have had a brilliant reaction, but I didn't. I was just too stunned to say anything, especially since the comment came out of left field and I was ill-prepared to deal with it.

Forwards, I felt terrible that my rhetoric and usually quick reactions let me down, and that I was essentially propagating the problem by not having said anything. I hope it doesn't happen again, but I will be prepared to react if it does.

How Should You React? This is a tricky issue, and I'm no expert in dealing with this, but whatever you say isn't good enough/strong enough or too strong. Oftentimes, regardless of what you say, the harasser might remark, “But it's only a compliment!” to which you could say “I welcome compliments on my work, but not on my appearance” or something similar. I think you should make it clear to whoever made the unwelcome comment or advance that you think it’s inappropriate and that you want them to stop. Depending on the setting, you may also bring this up with the appropriate governing body and/or authority. But here we run into yet more complexity. It's a well-documented fact that sexual harassment goes underreported because the harassed party fears for her (or his) job. Most of us are independent contractors, but still, would you report one of your best law firm clients to the bar association and risk never getting retained by them again? What about if the senior judge at the courthouse you work at the most is harassing you? Now we're back to power and control, aren't we? I wish there were better answers.

The Flip Side: While being a woman in the oftentimes male-dominated world of law can be challenging, it can also have its advantages, whether we like it or not. I've been retained for several assignments specifically because I'm a woman, which seemed unfair to my male colleagues, but that was the client's request. I don't think that gender should be a factor in interpreting (unless you are going to an oil platform or to a women-only hospital or something similar), but it can be.

Sexual harassment is an issue in all professions and every walk of life, including ours. I look forward to discussing this issue more widely with colleagues and clients alike. What do you think? Has this happened to you? How have you dealt with it?
Using Neural Machine Translation Beyond Post-Editing

In the past, I’ve conducted a number of back-and-forth email conversations with experts on topics that are interesting and useful to me and, hopefully, to the community at large. The following conversation turned out to be very useful as well, but it was not conducted as straightforwardly as some of the others. Why? Well, it’s because my discussion partner, Félix do Carmo, and I made certain assumptions as we communicated that the other either didn’t understand right away or that were muddied by our own preconceived ideas. As a result, we went back and forth a number of times to amend our questions and answers. We soon realized that relying on assumptions about post-editing must also be a “problem” for others trying to have similar conversations. Indeed, it might be a symptom of many discussions, whether between the machine translation development community and translators, or even between translators with different specializations and language combinations, where the needs, tools, and language requirements demand different solutions.

Today I’m starting a conversation with Félix do Carmo, a translator and now also machine translation researcher, about better usability practices for the professional use of machine translation (MT). Félix, do you want to introduce yourself?

I’m the managing director of TIPS, Lda., a translation company specialized in Portuguese that I established with colleagues in 1994. I’m also a postdoctoral researcher at the ADAPT Centre at the Dublin City University, currently working as an EDGE Fellow in KAITER, a project which aims at studying and developing a tool that interactively learns and supports translators’ editing work. My main interests are in the application of machine translation processes as supports to translators, covering areas like post-editing, human factors, machine learning, and translation tools.

I started teaching translation technology to university students and teachers in 1998. In 2010, I took the opportunity to work on a PhD, which allowed me to learn and collaborate with computer scientists and get to know the insides of MT. My project, which I finished in 2017, focused on studying how to describe and support post-editing. I then received a fellowship to the ADAPT Centre, which has allowed me to work as a researcher with people like Joss Moorkens, Dorothy Kenny, and Andy Way and to try to influence MT researchers to develop tools for translators, rather than autonomous devices. So, although I’m not producing translated and revised words, I see myself as a translator, playing different roles in the world of translation. I also take advantage of every opportunity to learn as much as possible about my profession.

Like you, I’ve also been interested in working with MT, not so much from the angle of traditional post-editing, but more in terms of using MT suggestions as one of a number of data sources to help translators in the translation process. I’ve been particularly eager to find good ways to use translation environment tools to semi-automatically use partial data from MT segments. That certainly seems to be a good method when working with statistical MT. I wonder what difference it makes that we now (typically) use neural machine translation (NMT). Are the results of NMT usable in the same way as the results of statistical MT?

That’s an interesting question. To answer it, we probably need to start with some technical information about the different systems. In statistical machine translation (SMT), the decoder that “translates” is essentially a search algorithm. For each word and group of words in the new source sentence, the search algorithm consults the phrase table, which contains aligned words and groups of words from the training data, and extracts the best equivalent. So, the approach is paradigmatic: each source word creates a slot, which may be filled in by any word in the phrase table. The search algorithm looks for the best fit, as if it was looking for LEGO pieces, slotted into position in a vertical, top-down movement. This means that the resulting sentences are sometimes awkward, with syntactical errors and elements that don’t go well together.

The decoders in NMT work differently. The decoder doesn’t search for LEGO pieces from tables of aligned phrases. Instead, it first uses neural networks to learn and then identify the best sequences to translate full sentences. This is done from the mathematical representations of the sentences it learns from large amounts of parallel data. This mathematical data is only converted into words in the last stage of composing the translation. NMT tries to construct a sequence horizontally (linearly), not from the top down, but beginning to end, with each sequence of previous words determining the next word. So, it’s as if the system works syntactically. First, it learns the design of the puzzle and then it learns which pieces form that design. That focus on the sequence, the syntagmatic view of language, is what makes NMT more fluent than SMT, since the connection between the elements that compose a target sentence are more tightly knit together.

So, when you and I think of MT output being disassembled into pieces that may be fed separately to a translator, we’re thinking in terms of the SMT models, but this doesn’t describe what happens in typical NMT models. NMT is...
not conceived to output partial data, but whole sequences.

But SMT was not conceived to be used that way either, but just happened to be generated that way. Wouldn’t it make sense to say that a translation suggestion that comes from a neural engine also has valuable parts, regardless of whether the entire sentence sounds more fluent as a whole? And also independent of whether the suggestion was put in there as parts (as in SMT) or in the sequential manner you’re describing for NMT? If that’s so, then I don’t completely understand why an automated fragment search doesn’t make sense when working with NMT. But I’m very interested in what we can do with the MT suggestions once the (noninteractive) MT engine has “done its job” and presented the suggestion within the translation environment tool. Technologically speaking, now it’s the task of the translation environment tool to present the usable parts of the suggestion. Speaking from a workflow perspective, this typically means that it’s the translator’s keystrokes that enable the tool to present suitable fragments.

You’re right. If we start from the point of already having full suggestions and want to know how to extract information from them, then we shouldn’t be discussing NMT and whether it fundamentally affects this process of choosing the best solutions. Like you say, it’s no longer the task of the MT engine but that of the translation environment tool to present the words you want to use from the full suggestions it receives.

Again, this is a search problem, and there are many approaches for these complex problems. The sheer nature of linguistic data, which is so variable, makes searching linguistic items an even harder problem than usual. You suggested that typed keystrokes should bring up the correct suggestions from the different sources you have, but can you be sure the full suggestions from MT engines contain the words you want to write? For example, you may have several synonyms in two or three different suggestions, but not the one you’re looking for. So, it’s probably not enough for the algorithm to do a simple search in these suggestions. Instead, it will need to look in other sources (perhaps monolingual data) for the word you’re typing. But under which conditions or rules should this search be done for it to be effective and efficient?

I agree that the current search mechanisms that are based on keystrokes are not advanced. There are no fuzzy features, or there is certainly no linguistically-driven search for synonyms or the like, but maybe that’s not even what’s needed. After all, the translator may not want to see a fuzzy match or a synonym if they’ve already decided to go with a certain term. What I take from this, though, is that there is no real difference in “harvesting” fragments from previously generated MT suggestions, regardless of whether they come from SMT or NMT. What other developments or perhaps under-researched areas are you looking at that would make NMT useful beyond “just” post-editing it?

Let’s think about the current scenario in the translator’s desktop, in which, as you say, MT suggestions can be used “as one of a number of data sources to help translators in the translation process.” Although new sources of data bring new solutions, they also bring new problems. We could say that the impact of NMT in the translator’s desktop is still globally under-researched. Let me discuss a few examples of issues that are not currently being researched enough.

NMT still requires very large amounts of training data, resorting to more data than translation memories usually hold. This means that NMT will always present hypotheses that will create new conflicts with a translator’s local resources. Although research says that NMT produces “better output,” this definition of quality is usually measured in isolated and simulated scenarios. We need different evaluation factors and metrics.
to understand how useful “better output” actually is in real scenarios.

For us to discuss how we can move “beyond post-editing” and help translators develop new ways of working, we need to talk about the translation process itself. I believe there’s still too much fog created by the introduction of the term “post-editing” in the industry, and we need to take a step back and try to get a clear view of what we call translation and what we call post-editing. Let me try to briefly express my view on this.

If your system feeds fragments of suggestions to translators so they can write the translation, then they are actually translating, not post-editing. Translators have to generate the translation in their mind before choosing to accept or change each word or phrase that is being presented dynamically to them. That’s why we talk about a high cognitive load in this process, because the translator’s thoughts are constantly being interrupted by the support system. Most of these systems are known as “interactive machine translation,” but I would call the process “interactive human translation,” because the resulting translation comes from that mental process. There isn’t enough research on these cognitive loads and the effects of such things as increased productivity in a regular work life.

Post-editing, on the other hand, essentially involves editing. This is only possible when translators are presented with a full suggestion by the MT system that’s good enough for them to read. Instead of thinking about a full translation alternative, translators are able to identify parts of the suggestion that require editing. In a post-editing project, translators edit some sentences, but they may also need to translate quite a few. So, post-editing involves both editing and translating. The threshold from which a translator is no longer editing but is actually translating is another under-researched area in which I’m interested.

But let’s not fool ourselves into thinking that when we talk about editing, we’re talking about a simpler task that’s easier to learn and automate. If we go back to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic approaches (one approach identifying slots and filling them in, and the other approach more concerned with the relations in a sequence), we find that even editing involves those two dimensions in a decision process that’s very difficult to predict. Editing may be broken down into four actions: deleting, inserting, replacing, and moving words. Only replacing is “simply” paradigmatic: you identify a slot that’s occupied by the wrong word and replace it. Moving a word is a good example of a syntagmatic action because you mess with the structure your MT suggestion constructed. But estimating these actions isn’t easy. It’s been demonstrated that estimating all options of new positions of an element in a sequence is one of the hardest mathematical problems you can ask a computer to do. Again, more research is needed into the patterns of editing and how to create assistants that support these processes.

As our industry matures, we should identify the value of each node in the supply chain and adapt technology and management of resources to each of those nodes.

That’s really interesting, but really theoretical. What’s being done in academia with NMT in a more practical manner to move beyond “post-editing,” as vague as that term might be?

I would say that current research is still very much focused on using and applying NMT to produce better output to feed to traditional translation tools. Here we should mention four areas of current research that will affect the way NMT output will be presented to translators: INMT, AMT, APE, and QE.

1. Interactive Neural Machine Translation (INMT) is dedicated to developing ways to incrementally feed output to translators from neural networks trained on parallel corpora. These systems model the translation work as described above. The translator generates the translation, starts writing, and the NMT system suggests the next fragment. If all goes well, the translation is created faster than if the translator didn’t have this “voice over the shoulder.” For these systems to be accepted and become regular tools translators use, they need to feed suggestions that are adjusted to each context. Since INMT outputs words that are constrained on the words already written, there’s the expectation that the suggestions presented by these systems will be better than those possible with SMT engines. However, this is still an area that raises more questions than answers. For example, can you constrain the output not just on the previous target words, but also on a list of validated terminology, and control how accurate the whole process is?

2. Adaptive Machine Translation (AMT) has been proposed as a term to describe systems that learn the specific traits of each translator’s work and adapt suggestions to those traits. It’s not yet clear how this will be done, which traits these are (some refer to this as “style,” which is one of the vaguest terms one can use), and how effective this actually is.

3. Automatic Post-Editing (APE) is another complementary area that’s being researched. The name may sound like
Another way to replace translators, not only in the translation stage but also in the editing and revision stages. Actually, I would say that APE is just another way to improve the output. It has been shown that applying NMT technology to APE improves the output of MT systems. However, again, despite the improvement in the output, this doesn’t change the nature of the translating/editing work that’s required or the fact that this work still requires professional translators.

4. Quality Estimation (QE) tries to provide some indication of the segments that may not require much editing, as well as those that may require extensive translation work. QE may also serve to highlight words that are probably wrong in a translation suggestion. This is complementary information that may help in the translation decision process. The use of NMT methods for QE has also enhanced the capacities of QE methods.

So, INMT, AMT, APE, and QE complement each other in helping the translator. They provide translators with better suggestions (either interactive/dynamic segments for them to use to build a translation, or else better full sentences for them to edit). They also help filter out bad suggestions and guide the translator’s attention to those areas that may require more work.

To describe how to leverage this technology to provide translators with more than just better output for them to edit, discussions have focused around terms like “augmented translation” or “knowledge-assisted translation.” Such discussions actually began a few years ago when we started talking about the next generation of translation tools. Apart from the integration of some of the concepts above, like INMT in Lilt or QE in Memsource, most of these ideas still haven’t become a reality in the daily lives of most translators.

Academia and the industry tend to spend more time discussing the names for technology than on making the revolution happen. One of the most recent signs of that is the suggestion to stop talking about NMT (because it’s said that it’s now officially the same as MT), and to talk instead about artificial intelligence (AI). But all these new terms simply express the challenge to combine not just the plethora of sources we mentioned earlier, but also the plethora of technological approaches into the same tools.

There’s still too much fog created by the introduction of the term “post-editing” in the industry, and we need to take a step back and try to get a clear view of what we call translation and what we call post-editing.

I really like the suggestion about talking about AI instead of NMT. It’s also interesting to see that some of these areas of research have not only found their way into the tools you mention, but also tools such as SDL, Intento, and ModernMT. As a final question, I would like to ask you something practical. The typical translator doesn’t have access to customized MT engines (with the possible exceptions of the adaptive engines mentioned above, or if the client provides access to a customized MT). If translators choose to use an MT engine, they will end up using engines like Google, Microsoft, or DeepL. How can one of these engines—or indeed several at the same time—be used more productively or creatively than just having translators essentially respond to the suggestions these engines make? How can translators be in the “driver’s seat” when using these resources?

For me, the next technological step will be personalization. Actually, it’s not such a ground-breaking proposal, since this is another buzzword that has been hanging around for a while.

As our industry matures, we should identify the value of each node in the supply chain and adapt technology and management of resources to each of those nodes. Corporations will go on managing big data, but they will suffer from the anonymity and genericity of that data. Language services companies will need to manage their clients’ data judiciously, and freelancers will need tools that help them manage their own data locally.

So, to be in the driver’s seat, translators will need to have a clear right to manage the data they produce. They will also need to be allowed to keep personal translation memories of all translations they do, as well as have more access to other translators’ and companies’ resources and to an increasing number of tools and technology. Translators will need to know their work better. They will need tools that record and give them better insight into what they’ve done in previous projects, whether these are individual projects or collaborative ones.

The translation tool will receive input from MT engines, translation memories from personal, client, or collaborative projects, terminology databases, previous answers to queries, online discussions on translation suggestions, and many other resources. As such, translators will need various tools (see below).

The main thing about tools that are adapted to specialized translators is that they should work in the background to feed the best suggestions possible for the text. Ultimately, though, the decision making will still need to be done by the translator.

As for the details of how to use these technologies productively and creatively, instead of just responding to suggestions, let’s think about a futuristic scenario in which translators work in a mode simply called “interactive translation.” This scenario would integrate MT and translation memory, different text resources and online features, and support both translating and editing work. It would also support both “interactive” and “pre-translation” translators: those who prefer to type over some text, and those who prefer to write from scratch.
In interactive translation, everything would come down to the challenges of building a good interaction with translators, and this means having an interface that adapts dynamically to their needs. Let me describe some features I envisage for this future adaptive tool.

The interface should be very clean and uncluttered at the beginning of the translation process, helping translators read the text that needs translating, perhaps even presenting them with an automatic summary. This interface might also show translators other projects in their pool of resources that may be associated with that text, as well as the main terms and segments that might prove problematic throughout the translation. At this initial stage, the tool will provide very detailed statistics that estimate the amount of effort necessary and the quality of the MT output. It could also provide other details that might be useful for more advanced users, such as the capability to extract rules from style guides and client instructions to help automate the review process.

Translators will be able to approach the translation in many different ways (e.g., working from the first segment to the last, or starting with those that are problematic). In the background, the tool will select the best resources for each segment—either a translation memory, a solution provided by an MT engine, or a composition from fuzzy matches, terminology, and any other resources.

When translators start work on a text, they will see the best suggestion the tool provides for each segment. If a suggestion is a perfect fit, they will be able to validate it. If they want to know more about a suggestion, translators will have a simple way to dig deeper and find where it comes from, how reliable it is, or if there are other alternatives from more preferable resources. Translators will also have the option to act on these suggestions one by one or to aggregate them (e.g., dealing with all full matches from a reliable translation memory at once). But if the suggestions provided need editing, translators will have several forms of support that I’ll describe in a bit more detail below.

The suggestions from the tool will always be presented in full, but translators will be able to manipulate them (e.g., by moving things around, deleting words, or inserting new ones). When they select a word to apply any of these actions, the tool will adapt and show different supports. For example, when translators decide to replace words without moving them, the system should be ready to present alternatives for that position (e.g., perhaps simply a change in the form of that word). When translators move words around, the system should be able to suggest changes that depend on the new position of those words. The suggestions provided will not be the same for each translator or for each project. So, it will be fundamental that the tool learns from the translator’s behavior (e.g., to predict regular edits and to save and reuse them in similar contexts in other projects).

There are other activities translators do that may be supported by these new tools, such as web searching or making annotations and queries. The knowledge behind decisions supported by these resources is not currently integrated into translation tools, and it would be great to have this closer at hand.

When translators stop work, the tool would be able to provide them with statistics on how far they are in terms of the whole project, or other assignments they are currently working on, and how the project is going in terms of final checks. Before submitting the finished translation to clients, the tool would do a QA check and reuse the records of the decisions made to guide translators when revising the project. For example, the tool might help translators prepare a report for the reviser that includes the most troublesome passages or a list of the sources that were used for new terminology.

The main thing about tools that are adapted to specialized translators is that they should work in the background to feed the best suggestions possible for the text. Ultimately, though, the decision making will still need to be done by the translator.

We could go on dreaming of the details of such tools, but our dreams as translators are not the same for everyone. For example, you and I realized during our conversation that you dream of tools that are not so focused on editing as the tools I think about. The tools you envision do not play such an intervening role, but rely on the translator generating the translation.

But the main idea I take from our conversation is how we moved from the impact of existing technology to a discussion on how we use it. For me, this is the right way to discuss technology. Conversations should not be dominated by a fear of how MT or any other technology determines our work methods or even the definition of our tasks. Instead, we should be talking about the type of research that focuses on the technology we need. There’s still a lot of research to be done on individual working methods and how these change according to the project, motivation, or even mood.

It was great to see how you and I share the excitement to think in terms of the future, and to try to imagine how current and new generations of translators will use smart tools that adapt to them.

Although research says that neural machine translation produces “better output,” this definition of quality is usually measured in isolated and simulated scenarios.

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Audiovisual Translation: Preparing for This Market

W

e live in an era of easy access to video production and consumption. An example of this is the incredible metrics for YouTube. (300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute, and almost five billion videos are watched on YouTube every day.)

To this number, add data from a recent Nielsen Company Audience report saying that U.S. adults spend an estimated 10 hours and 39 minutes per day staring at their phones, computers, and other media devices. As media consumption continues to increase, other stats are equally mind-blowing: the average user spends 88% more time on a website with video, and by 2019 video will account for 80% of global internet traffic (85% in the U.S.).

All of this is to say that video has become vital to marketing strategies, and nowadays, translating movies is not the only market for audiovisual translators. With the increased demand for video localization, there is also increased interest from everyone, from translators to language services providers and language technology providers, to enter this market.

Focusing on video subtitling, there are numerous software solutions available for all tastes and budgets. With a bit of poking around, you might find one that fits your needs. Before discussing the specific application that I’ve been testing this past month, I’ll provide some introductory comments on the pitfalls inherent in this type of translation. This should help you grasp how the right tool can help mitigate the challenges.

CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION FOR SUBTITLING

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) scholars have conducted subtitling studies focused on audience attention or engagement. By using methods like eye tracking they can make recommendations on such factors as the optimal length of time to display the subtitle on screen, text segmentation (line breaking), subtitle shape, reading speed, etc. The goal of these studies is to allow viewers to follow the text in the subtitles comfortably while making sure that they understand the information conveyed. Appropriate subtitle speed and segmentation allow viewers to follow the text in the subtitles with ease and have enough time to take in the on-screen action. If subtitle speed is too fast and segmentation doesn’t adhere to linguistic rules, viewers may find it difficult to follow and understand the information contained in the subtitles. Even a translation deemed grammatically perfect, with the most accurate terminology, could be considered useless if your viewer can’t read it. Having this in mind, below are the main challenges an audiovisual translator faces daily.

Time and Space Constraints (Reading Speed): The subtitle must be displayed on the screen during the appropriate time. The audience should have enough time to read the text, and the text should not cover more space than necessary on the screen. Reading speed varies according to the audience (e.g., children, adults, level of education, to name a few). So, the decision about how many characters to display per second is relative to your viewing public.

Inter-Semiotic Translation: Audiovisual translators are not only translating text from one language to another. They are converting spoken words into written form. As such, they must consider congruence with all the other visual signs, including gestures, expressions, and images hitting the audience at the same time. That’s why the ability to render full meaning with concise text, while respecting its context, is so important.

Video has become vital to marketing strategies, and currently, translating movies is not the only market for audiovisual translators.

Information must be prioritized to convey the right message and avoid dissonance.

Shot Changes: The subtitles should follow the audio but also respect what’s happening visually. For example, when there’s a shot change and the camera shifts away from the speaker, you risk your subtitles being left hanging. Any such glitch will affect the viewer and break their immersion in the visual experience.

Tech-Savvy: With this type of translation, there’s a constant need to deal with technical aspects. It’s common to have audio or video format problems, and audiovisual translators need to know how to convert files and adhere to technical specifications presented by the client or that are inherent in the product you need to deliver. Does the client want you to provide the subtitles in .srt, .sub, .tml, .xml . . . ? Do they want you to embed the subtitles to the video? Is the subtitle time-coded to the correct frame rate? Many such questions can arise.

Finally, it’s imperative to keep in mind that in this type of translation, the public will be exposed to the source language throughout the viewing experience. The greater their knowledge of the source language, the more likely they are to compare the original words spoken with your translation. You have to be prepared to educate your client on the constraints described above and how you will need to adapt your translation to navigate them.

TRYING A SUBTITLING TOOL: SUBTILENEXT

Currently, we have access to countless tools with subtitling functionality. I decided to try out SubtitleNext, a full-featured professional subtitling application. Other translation tools have recently bolted on audiovisual capabilities as an afterthought. SubtitleNext, on the other hand, has a 25-year legacy focused on addressing media challenges.

Although I’ve been in the audiovisual field for some time, I only recently discovered SubtitleNext at the 2018 “Languages and the Media” conference in Berlin, Germany. After testing it,
I decided to share my observations because many colleagues are now just getting started in the audiovisual world. This tool is dedicated to the multimedia industry and facilitates the localization of videos for users ranging from creators to distributors, including translators, editors, audiovisual artists, and project managers.

I started by downloading a free demo at https://shop.profuzdigital.com. (Note: you’ll need to provide your first name, last name, and an e-mail to download).

At first glance, it’s easy to be overwhelmed by all the elements of the user interface. Orient yourself by thinking of the controls as three main areas: the control toolbar on the top, the control state panel on the bottom, and the main subtitle area in between. Later, you can rearrange the view according to your preferences and customize the shortcuts as you wish. I describe the main elements of the toolbar below. (The number beside each item corresponds to its location shown in Figure 1 above.)

**Control Toolbar**

1. **Main Menu**: This menu contains a comprehensive list of commands.
2. **Time Display**: Displays the current timecode (hour:minute:second:frame).
3. **Font Attributes toolbar**.
4. **Subtitle Control toolbar (used to split, merge, insert, or delete subtitles)**.

**Control State Panel**

5. **Contains the media manipulation command buttons (play, pause, jump back, jump forward, open video)**.
6. **The Media position slider bar**.
7. **Presets of color for quick access font change**.

**Main Subtitle Area**

8. **Columns Header**: Provides information about the meaning of each column—e.g., the number of the title, the actual title, and the timecodes (in and out).
9. **The title currently being worked on**.
10. **Collapses video preview and timecode (TC) details**.
11. **Number of the current title**.
12. **Safe Area**: A visual notification of the maximum working area.
13. **Vertical Position**: You can drag to adjust the vertical position of the title.
14. **Characters per second (cps)**: This is the subtitling speed, or reading speed. This number will give you a hint as to whether or not the viewer will be able to read the subtitle. (To have a practical parameter, Netflix establishes in their English template *Timed Text Style Guide* a maximum of 17 cps for children’s program and 20 cps for adult programs.)
Horizontal position: You can drag to adjust the horizontal position of the title.

Audio Timeline: This shows audio spectrums, waveform, shot changes, subtitle number, and duration. You can use this timeline to adjust timing perfectly while you listen to the sound by dragging the subtitle rectangle.

The text you see in Figure 1 represents a current subtitle. You can also see how it looks on the video preview.

HOW TO CREATE A SUBTITLE FILE

When starting SubtitleNext, a Properties window will pop up. (See Figure 2 to the right.) You will need to choose the source and target languages in the dropdown menus. You will also need to complete the name of the file, and there are some specs about frame rate and screen aspect. For films, the frame rate is usually 24, but check the frame rate of your video asset because it has to match the frame rate of the subtitle file to avoid sync problems. The default setting is 25. Click Next to accept all other default settings until you can click OK. Now you're ready to start.

On the main menu (see #1 in Figure 1), under Video, or under the down arrow icon in the Toolbar (#5), you can load the video to be subtitled. It can be a video file or a URL.

Then, you can drag the slider to find the audio position on the waveform (#10). Tap ALT+F9 to set the “time in” and ALT+F10 to set “time out.” If you don't like these shortcuts, you can go to Options in the Toolbar and select Customize Keyboard. (See Figure 3 to the right.)

You should also customize the number of characters you want to have per line, the number of lines, and so on. To do so, go back to Options in the Toolbar, select Preferences and then Titles in the dropdown menu. (See Figure 4 on page 32.)

You can now write the text of the subtitle on the video preview, and you'll be able to see it on the right, in the mini titles area (#17). You can position the subtitle vertically or horizontally by using the arrows (#13) and (#15). Now press CTRL + ENTER or hit ENTER twice to create the subtitle. Repeat the process as many times as needed. Congratulations, you created your first file!

With this type of work, I save the file upfront and keep saving periodically to avoid wasting time and effort. SubtitleNext lets you set a regular time interval to save your file automatically. You can set the time interval for saving files easily in the Preferences window show in Figure 4, and it can spare you from awful surprises. Unfortunately, the free demo version doesn't let you save files. From the Explorer version on, though, it allows saving and exporting to all professional formats. After creating the file, you could be asked to embed the subtitles to video, which is also possible to do with this tool.
As you can see, the learning curve in audiovisual translation can’t be underestimated. The same holds true in learning how to use a complex tool. The good thing is that SubtitleNext provides online video tutorials on the SubtitleNext YouTube channel. Beyond promotional videos, you can find more instructional content focused on performing specific tasks. In my opinion, the best resource is the user’s manual, which I had to access after downloading the demo version. (You can find it at https://help.subtitlenext.com.) The company has also invested in a “Club” and an “Academy” for aspiring subtitlers and academic institutions. As a member of either group, you qualify for a discount of up to 30% if you decide to purchase a license.

SOME NEGATIVES
It took a while to get used to the interface. A drawback of the free demo version is that it doesn’t allow saving files. Under Preferences > Spelling, I learned that you are able to add local and online dictionaries, but I haven’t tried it yet. Also, I couldn’t determine whether the tool can incorporate a terminology database and would need to investigate this further. The same goes for the integration of machine translation. Historically, subtitlers have resisted using the latter, but this is a topic for another day!

There are different bundles with different prices, and although not cheap, they are less expensive than comparable subtitling tools. The Novice bundle supports .srt but not .xml, and Explorer handles all professional formats. There’s a jump in price from Novice to Explorer, so this would be a big investment for the translator who only receives subtitling jobs sporadically.

Figure 4: Preferences
As you can see, the learning curve in audiovisual translation can’t be underestimated. The same holds true in learning how to use a complex tool. The good thing is that SubtitleNext provides online video tutorials on the SubtitleNext YouTube channel. Beyond promotional videos, you can find more instructional content focused on performing specific tasks. In my opinion, the best resource is the user’s manual, which I had to access after downloading the demo version. (You can find it at https://help.subtitlenext.com.) The company has also invested in a “Club” and an “Academy” for aspiring subtitlers and academic institutions. As a member of either group, you qualify for a discount of up to 30% if you decide to purchase a license.

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ATA AUDIOVISUAL DIVISION (AVD)
ATA’s Audiovisual Division was established in August 2018 with the mission to support and mentor audiovisual linguists. After our first annual meeting during ATA’s 59th Annual Conference in New Orleans, we found that most of our members were new to the field. This article was written with this audience in mind. I invite readers to meet the AVD team and join us in taking

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES ON AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION

HOW I FOUND THE TOOL HELPFUL TO MEET THE CHALLENGES PRESENTED
1. The tool helps you visually spot if you exceeded the limit of characters per line (usually from 37 to 42). This measurement alone is not enough to ensure your subtitles can be read. SubtitleNext tracks characters in relation to time on-screen by gauging the characters per second, or “cps” ratio (#14). If this number is too high (meaning over 20 + 25% tolerance), the viewer will have trouble fully understanding the message.
2. The video preview reveals the context your subtitles will land in. Remember that it’s not about translating only text, since all the visual aspects render meaning. Tools that can read .srt files but don’t let you preview the video are like flying blind.
3. For a better user experience, you can spot the shot changes (SC) on the audio timeline (#16). This will allow you to make informed decisions while working on the synchronization.
With the increased demand for video localization, there is also increased interest from everyone, from translators to language services providers and language technology providers, to enter this market.

Remember, if you have any ideas and/or suggestions regarding helpful resources or tools you would like to see featured, please email Jost Zetzsche at jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.

NOTES

NEW CERTIFIED MEMBERS

Congratulations!

The following members have successfully passed ATAs certification exam:

**Chinese into English**
Laura Brown (Luo Dai)
Broomfield, CO

Jingyi Wang
Staten Island, NY

Bingxia Yu
Chicago, IL

**English into Chinese**
Yunteng Zhang
Davis, CA

**English into Russian**
Anna Livermore
New York, NY

**English into Spanish**
Rocio Viegas Barros
Indian Land, SC

Myriam Caicedo
Houston, TX

Julio A. Jimenez
Euless, TX

Carol Legnazzi
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Maria Mateos-Caldwell
San Angelo, TX

Victoria Mendez
Montevideo, Uruguay

Virginia Rech
Rosario, Argentina

**French into English**
Eve Bodeux
Lafayette, CO

**German into English**
Melody Winkle
Seattle, WA

**Portuguese into English**
Annie Sapucaia
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

**Russian into English**
Valeriya Yermishova
Brooklyn, NY

**Spanish into English**
Rachael Koev
Virginia Beach, VA

Thomas McNeely
Philadelphia, PA

Jennifer Mosby
Noel, MO

Veronica Sardon
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Shawn Thane
Lund, Sweden

Rafael Trevino
Washington, DC

Daniel Valcarcel
Decatur, AL

Fernanda Brandao-Galea

Fernanda Brandao-Galea has worked as a Brazilian Portuguese linguist since 2011 after diverse careers: chemical engineer, law student, and project manager in LATAM IT go-to-market strategies. She completed a translation certificate program, an audiovisual translation post-graduate course, and is currently enrolled in a localization certificate program at the University of Washington. She is the professional development coordinator for ATA’s Audiovisual Division and the event director for the Northern California Translators Association (an ATA chapter).

Contact: Fernanda@f2-global.com.
Opening Up the Exam to Nonmembers

As of January 1, 2020, ATA membership will no longer be required to earn and retain ATA translator certification. Why is this happening and what does it mean for those who are already ATA-certified—and for the Association?

Linking certification to membership has always been a mixed bag. On the one hand, certification has been perceived as a valuable membership perk, a way of standing out from the crowd that creates a strong incentive for joining and remaining a member of ATA. On the other hand, experts recognize that professional credentials linked to membership in a specific organization enjoy less prestige among key stakeholders and the general public. Enhancing the standing of ATA certification is the main reason behind the Board’s decision to make it available to nonmembers as of January 2020.

For people who currently have the ATA-certified translator (CT) designation, little will change. They will still be required to earn and periodically submit continuing education (CE) points. They will still be prominently identified as certified in ATA’s online Directory of Translators and Interpreters. And they will still have access to the official seal confirming their credential. One thing that will change is that they will not have to remain a member to retain the CT designation.

Nonmembers who gain certification beginning in 2020 will also be able to use the CT designation and seal, and they will also have to earn CE points. However, they will not be listed in ATA’s Directory of Translators and Interpreters, nor will they enjoy the many other benefits of membership. In addition, the exam registration fee for nonmembers will be significantly higher than for members.

Eliminating the membership requirement could result in a net loss of members, as some newly certified individuals remain nonmembers and some current members decide not to renew. The ultimate impact of this is impossible to predict, but actions are being taken to minimize the financial impact. For example, ATA’s Membership Committee will be redoubling its membership retention efforts, and plans are in place to target newly certified nonmembers with an information campaign designed to bring them into the fold. Bold action entails risks, but the Board and the Certification Committee believe that the advantages of this change outweigh the potential drawbacks.

Enhancing the standing of ATA certification is the main reason behind the Board’s decision to make it available to nonmembers as of January 2020.

David Stephenson is the chair of ATA’s Certification Committee. An ATA-certified German>English, Dutch>English, and Croatian>English translator, he has been an independent translator for over 30 years, specializing in civil litigation and creative nonfiction. Contact: david@stephensontranslations.com.
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