Dear MATI members

The end of the year approaches, and with it, the conclusion of MATI activities for 2004-2005. During our first full year of existence, much has been accomplished. We are inching towards 150 members, and with this year’s experience behind us, we will be able to put in place a medium and long-term plan for MATI. We are preparing the program schedule for next year, which includes our Annual Conference in Chicago, in June. The membership directory and application process is being overhauled to make it more streamlined and practical.

MATI was well represented at the ATA conference, where we had a table with informational materials about the Association and published works from members. MATI will also be an exhibitor, jointly with the ATA, during the upcoming American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages conference in Chicago. Lastly, you will soon receive notice of our December holiday events, which will be held separately for Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin.

Membership renewal will start in January, and all new members who joined MATI as of October 1, 2004, will have their membership extended through 2005 FREE! As always, we welcome your suggestions for programs, speakers and activities.

Moira Pujols,
M ATI President
I recently attended the 45th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association, held in Toronto, Canada, October 13–16. I was a new attendee, and these are some of my impressions.

My immediate thought is that it was a great idea to go. Besides getting away for a while — Canada is after all a foreign country, even if just barely — the conference was very useful for meeting people, making contacts with translation agencies, and going to lectures and presentations which both were stimulating and informative. I learned of things I would normally not have known about, and I came back with a better sense of the business, new ideas, and with a renewed sense of energy similar to that experienced after a getaway vacation. I was refreshed and enthused — and my expenses were tax-deductible!

Probably the best thing about the conference was meeting new people, and I met a fair number — I have a stack of business cards to prove it! It was probably the most important aspect as well, since so much of the translation business is built upon personal contacts. The often-heard slogan “If you're not networking, you're not working” is so very correct. As someone who is fairly new to translating and therefore has a limited number of contacts, the conference was invaluable in providing me with a setting for introducing myself to others and getting to know what they did. Some of these contacts...
will certainly lead to work in the future.

The conference organizers did their best to facilitate opportunities for networking by providing a networking session on Thursday, a German Language Division Happy Hour on Friday, twice daily coffee breaks as well as other activities. During the networking session, food was provided in the Exhibit Hall as an extra incentive to get people to congregate, and the Happy Hour featured drinks and finger sandwiches.

In the Exhibit Hall, various organizations were promoting their wares, which included selling translation software, books, CDs and DVDs, and courses of study in translation and interpretation. It was also an opportunity to meet agencies who were looking for freelancers, and I applied to all the ones that were looking for technical translators.

Another feature of the conference was the Job Marketplace. This was an area in the Exhibit Hall with space for some agencies that were recruiting, and for translators and interpreters that wanted to leave their resumes and business cards. The latter were then available to anyone who was interested. This feature was useful in several ways — you could find out who specialized in the same area as you, which could be useful later on. Also, you could find out how other people wrote their resumes and designed their business cards. Some stood out as being much better than others. I saw that both my resume and business cards could be improved considerably.

The names of smaller agencies who did not have representatives at the conference but who were recruiting were made available in a binder. The names and specialties of individuals who couldn't attend were listed in two books, one of which was by alphabetical order with information on the people, and one which had the people grouped by specialty. This was a nice service provided by the ATA, and one which I was told quite a few people took advantage of. However, I felt it was no match for actually being at the conference.

The sessions were fun and quite useful. During the presentations, many of the ideas that I had were validated and reinforced — for example, a presentation by Eve Hecht entitled “Translating Product Literature” maintained that, if you want to translate German directions, advertising etc. correctly, you should save American packaging and use it for guidance. So save those instructions that came with your smoke detector — they can be useful! Of course, this works for all languages.

For me, it is always good to hear German spoken, and, somewhat perversely, always fun to see native Germans making errors in English analogous to errors that native English speakers often make in German. To see some English words misused by capable German speakers, especially on presentation slides, was actually fun, proving again that perfection is quite difficult to attain in translation.

“Free and Open Source Software for Translators” by Corrine McKay was of great interest to me, and would be also for anyone who, for various reasons, would like to be free from Microsoft products. The big deal here is Linux, an operating system that is available for free or very low cost, as well as many other products, such as word processors, and accounting and computer-assisted translation software. For those that may be interested, a good place to look is OpenOffice.org — you may find that you will never have to pay for software again!

“Taking Care of Business: Making it Pay” by Jonathan Hine offered practical advice on how to make a business success. It offered methods for calculating how much to withhold in taxes (50% suggested), how much of a reserve to build up for those hard, no-money times (6 months rather than the usual 3 was suggested), and how much to charge, per word or per hour, to stay on-goal — financial planning in other words. Hine was enthusiastic and rousing, and that came across to the audience. This was a fun and useful session.

Although I currently specialize in technical and scientific translations, attending the conference brought another possible direction to mind, and that is patent translation. In “A New Patent Translation Handbook” session by Kirk Anderson, Lillian Clementi and Nick Hartmann, the presenters gave a good summary, along with many details, of the patent translation business. The handbook is due to be out in the spring, with perhaps a short course available in Washington about the same time. If I hadn't attended the conference, I likely would not have known about this, something that may turn out to be very important for me.

Before the conference, I knew nothing about translation memory software. Having now talked to a number of people who use it, I found that some liked it quite a lot and some disliked it, quite a lot, and why. In addition, in the Exhibit Hall, I obtained a demo CD from one company and a full-featured trial version
from another. With all this information, I should be able to decide whether I wish to use such software in the future.

Some other observations: the setting was nice, and spacious. The Sheraton Centre was quite a large complex containing a hotel, meeting rooms, shops and restaurants, and places just to sit and talk. Since it was downtown, everything else was available just outside. A list of attendees, with names and addresses, was provided. This turned out to be very useful for making contacts after the conference.

Things that I didn't do but wished I had: I should have gone to a pre-conference seminar or two. After having talked to people who attended some of them, it sounds as if it would have been a good idea. I should also have attended some sessions that were listed under other languages but were presented in English — I probably would have learned some things that I would not have expected. Finally, I should have stayed for a few days afterwards to explore Toronto — a world-class city with many interesting things available. I hope to make up for these oversights next year at the 46th Annual ATA Conference in Seattle — there is a very tall tower there too.

Ged Gasperas is a freelancer who translates from German to English. His background is in engineering and science, and he lives in Chicago. Ged can be reached at ged@digidyne.com.
Brennan, ATA President. “The Lewis Galantière Award recognizes the best in this tradition.”

The judges agreed. One wrote: “The poems are knockouts. Jacobsen is in the same league with poets such as Milosz, Herbert, Szymborska, Mandelstam, Pasternak, and Akhmatova. This book has been a very happy discovery for me. The translations function perfectly as English poems in their own right.” Another judge noted, “Jacobsen was one of Norway’s foremost poets, and this work offers an English-speaking public a wide selection of some of his finest work in an updated form. Greenwald’s consultations with Jacobsen also lend this work an authority that, since Jacobsen’s death, will be absent from other editions.”

North in the World presents 121 poems by Rolf Jacobsen in English and Norwegian on facing pages, as well as an introduction and notes supplied by the translator. Rolf Jacobsen (1907–1994) has been called “one of the West’s greatest twentieth-century poets, who may be ranked on a par with Auden, Eliot and Montale” (David McDuff, Stand Magazine). North in the World is the fruit of twenty years’ engagement with Jacobsen’s poetry by Greenwald.

Roger Greenwald attended The City College of New York and the St. Marks in the Bouwerie Poetry Project workshop, then took graduate degrees at the University of Toronto. He has won two CBC Literary Awards for his own writing, as well as numerous awards in the United States and Canada for his translations. He has published one book of poems, Connecting Flight, and several volumes of poetry in translation, most recently Through Naked Branches: Selected Poems of Tarjei Vesaas, which was a finalist in the U.S. for the PEN Award for Poetry in Translation. Roger Greenwald is currently a Senior Lecturer and Director of the Writing Centre at Innis College in the University of Toronto.

In accepting the award at the ATA conference in Toronto, Mr. Greenwald read his translation of “Bildene” or “The Images” from North in the World, stating that he felt that, although the poem was written decades ago, in it Rolf Jacobsen addressed the reality of our society today.

The Images

—have it easy now.
Make themselves at home,
get the sofa and the best chair.
The words
have to take the long way around,
maybe they have to rest a while too,
comb their hair or clean off their shoes
(often the road’s a bit muddy);
thен they can come in too,
but they don’t get the sofa.
Peter Less has been living in Chicago, where he practices law, for over 50 years. He attended the Geneva School of Conference Interpretation and, in 1946, interpreted at the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi war criminals. Less, whose mother, father, sister, and grandmother were killed by the Nazis, had to sit in the courtroom and interpret for some of the masterminds responsible for these atrocities. How could he do it? Mr. Less’s presentation at the ATA 45th Annual Conference in Toronto (October 13-16, 2004) was a highlight of the event. This interview is reprinted from the September 2004 issue of The ATA Chronicle.

As I clip a microphone to Peter Less’s tie, he says: “That’s how they have microphones now, not these old ones bolted down in the middle of the table.”

I then show him some archival photos of the Nuremberg Trials.

He says, “Umm-hmm, those are the guys. There’s Hermann Goering and Rudolf Hess... Hjalmar Schacht—he was one of the three found not guilty. Erhard Milch—I had him in a deposition. He knew perfect English. If there was one word in my translation he didn’t like, he would correct it. He was usually right.”

Would you tell me about your childhood?
I grew up in a nice, comfortable middle class German home in Koenigsberg. My father was an attorney and my mother managed my grandmother’s store. As the Nazis came to power, things got worse and worse. In 1938, when I was 17, I told my parents we should leave Germany. But like so many intellectuals, they said: “This cannot go on much longer. Social democrats will come back soon.” So I left alone and went to Switzerland. They stayed. My family perished. My father, my mother, my grandmother, and my only sister are all gone. I am the only one still around.

Why did you choose Switzerland?
That was the only country where I could go without a visa at the time. For a while, my father would send me 50 marks a month to live on, but about six months later that became illegal. I had to find another way to survive, but I had no residence permit and no work permit. So I became a student of hotel management at the École Hôtelière in Neuchâtel, where I spent some very useful months. I learned to cook, to wait on tables, and I got good food.

When the course ended, I became an undocumented alien. The Swiss authorities issued me a so-called “tolerance permit” valid for three months. After three months, I’d go back to the police and they would ask: “Why haven’t you left Switzerland yet?” And I would say: “I would love to! Tell me where I can go! The Germans are in Germany, Austria, France, in Italy, all the surrounding countries—where can I go?” And so they would renew the permit.

Eventually, the Swiss put me in a labor camp, but it wasn’t bad. We got military food, so the Swiss soldiers ate the same things we did. Nice billets, a nice commander, and weekends off. We were free to go to the big cities on the weekends. If we had a few pennies, we went to Zurich and had a good time chasing girls, going to the movies, and sitting in coffee shops.

What kind of work did you do in these camps?
Needless work. Dig ditches one day, cover them up...
the next day. We told those in charge that we could be helpful to the Swiss economy if they would only let us. “No, we can’t—these are orders from above.” But there were always nice people in Switzerland who helped refugees, such as the Quakers. They had pamphlets in French, and we would translate them into German, English, or whatever they needed. And they paid us, which was totally illegal because we were not allowed to work outside of the camps.

Then one day, a nice Swiss Foreign Service officer named Merz, said: “We can get you out of here if you agree to do work where there is a shortage of labor. You have a choice: a butcher, a baker, a painter, or a barber.” I chose to be a barber and got placed with a barber in La Chaux de Fond who needed an apprentice, and stayed there for about a year.

Then Merz found out that the University of Geneva was willing to give refugees a grant. By that time I knew French, so I enrolled in the Faculté des Lettres and got my University degree. Attached to the University of Geneva was the École d’Interprètes, a Rockefeller-founded department that trained simultaneous interpreters. I spoke German, English, and French, and I enrolled there. It was a two-year course. They put us in a glass booth. At first, they would speak very slowly, accentuating every syllable: “Heute ist das Wetter sehr schoen.” — “Today the weather is very nice.” After a few weeks, they would speak quickly and with an accent. We gradually learned to listen and to speak at the same time.

There were about 15 or 18 students in my class. We graduated shortly after WWII ended. At that time, the Americans, the British, and the French were organizing an international war crimes tribunal. One day, American officers in uniform came to the school. They tested a dozen people and hired three, including me. “Tomorrow morning,” the American officer said, “you must fly to Nuremberg.”

As students, in addition to learning the skill of listening and speaking at the same time, we studied various terminology—military, political, legal, including Nazi terms, and the rank equivalents in the French or American army—so we were prepared. I was 25.

When we arrived at Nuremberg, they gave us a couple hours of training and then put us in a glass box in the courtroom. We worked in hour-and-a-half shifts (an hour-and-a-half in the morning, an hour-and-a-half in the afternoon), and it felt longer than an eight-hour day at the office. The day wasn’t finished then, either, because at night we had to correct the gibberish transcribed during the day. When you interpret fast, sometimes you don’t speak elegantly, but when it gets printed in the record, everything must be correct.

We also did translation work. For example, when the final judgment was issued, it had to be translated. It was 360 pages long. The military police locked us up in an old Bavarian castle and told us: “You will be court marshaled if a word leaks out of what’s in those papers. Every reporter is going to offer you your weight in gold to get a scoop, to be the first.” We couldn’t leave, couldn’t even use the phone.

**What was the average age of the Nuremberg interpreters?**

We were fairly young. The two French sisters were only 22, but the others were a little older.

There were four languages used for interpretation in the courtroom: German, French, English, and Russian.

The interpretation equipment was primitive: a
microphone bolted down in the middle of the table, and you had to bend over to speak into it. It was uncomfortable and strained your back. You couldn’t turn your head because then it wouldn’t capture your voice. The earphones were big, like you see in old movies. They fit over your head, heavy and tight, and crushed your ears. They were terrible, very uncomfortable. Your ears were red when you finally got rid of them.

And the sound was scratchy, like an old record. There was also a button you could push in the interpreters’ booth. It would turn on a red light that told the speaker to slow down. They’d see that red light, slow down for about 15 seconds, then go back to their usual manner of speaking. The volume depended largely on the speaker. If the speaker did not speak loud enough, there was nothing you could do to enhance the volume. And if they were shouting too loud, there was nothing you could do to tone them down. I interpreted the proceedings between German and English.

I had to interpret as well as translate. If a witness testified that she had to jump out a first floor window, the Americans would say, “big deal, street level.” I had to translate it “second-floor window”—then they would say, “oh, that was quite a fall.”

Sometimes witnesses would use languages not offered at the trial. They would use Yiddish or else speak too fast. In those cases, you could just get the gist of what the witness was saying across, but you had to make it clear that this was not a literal translation. Some witnesses were crying, muffling their words with their sobs. We did the best we could.

What were some of the other languages that witnesses used?
Polish, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian.

How were those languages handled in the courtroom?
In those cases, the witnesses had to give a written statement that was translated into English. The authorized translation would then be read into the record.

Where were you staying while interpreting at the trials?
We were housed in beautiful villas confiscated from top Nazis, located in the suburbs of Nuremberg. There were about three or four interpreters per villa. At the end of the workday, jeeps would drive us to our temporary homes and pick us up again in the morning to go to the courthouse.

We ate at the Grand Hotel, the only hotel that was still standing. Everything else was destroyed, but the Allies kept the hotel in good shape because they had to sleep somewhere. The waiters and waitresses were all Germans. They got paid in cigarettes. I sent my entire salary home to my wife, and used the allowance of cigarettes I got to buy things.

Once that same year, 1946, I was flown to the Four-Power Conference to Berlin to translate for two days. On my time off, I walked the streets and bought a typewriter—and paid almost a whole carton of cigarettes for it. I still have it.

How many interpreters were there total?
About 30 or 40 altogether, in all languages. All the time I worked there I didn’t even know all of them, since they had different hours and shifts. I saw the ones that were sitting next to me during the same shift.

We were young and not very experienced, but we were indispensable. The Ecole d’Interprétes was the only place that trained interpreters at that time.

Did you have a supervisor?
Yes, Brigadier-General Telford Taylor was an intermediate boss. He died recently, in 2003 in New York. The real boss was Robert H. Jackson, the Supreme Court judge who was the chief of counsel. I spoke to him on the telephone just before he died.

Did you get any time off?
Yes, we had some days off, and weekends. Once I got Friday off, so I quickly went to Paris to meet my wife, who came up from Geneva.

What stands out in your mind today about your

“...We felt like pioneers, but at the same time we didn’t think we were anything special. We were kids, we were adventurous, and we liked what we did. At night we went to the movies...”
work as an interpreter at Nuremberg? 
I guess the fact that we were the first. The Nuremberg Trials were the first time simultaneous interpretation was used. They had to use it, because if they used consecutive interpretation, especially with four official languages, the trials would only just be finishing now. So we felt like pioneers, but at the same time we didn’t think we were anything special. We were kids, we were adventurous, and we liked what we did. At night we went to the movies.

How did you maintain your neutrality? 
It wasn’t easy. You were sitting in the same room with the people who probably killed your parents, but you could not let your feelings interfere with your job. You swore to interpret as faithfully as possible, to put the speaker’s idea into the listener’s head. So we did.

At the recent International War Crimes Tribunal of Slobodan Milosevic, interpreters received psychological aid to deal with the descriptions of atrocities they had to interpret. Did you receive any psychological aid? 
No, they didn’t really know what psychology was back then—Freud had just died in 1939—but we were young and we could disassociate our feelings from our job.

When you moved to the U.S. in 1946, did you work as an interpreter here? 
No, but I did work as a translator and teacher for Berlitz, teaching German and French to GIs coming home from the war. We taught them how to say things they wanted to know (like “where are the girls?” or “which is the best beer?”). My wife translated for the Red Cross. She also worked for them in Geneva, translating records, looking for missing persons and prisoners of war. She even met Winston Churchill.

You told me that you were a member of the International Association of Parliamentary Interpreters, the forerunner of today’s AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters). Did you remain a member after you left Geneva? 
Yes, for a year or two, and then I lost contact. But I still have a certificate hanging on the wall at my house.

What was the mood like on the part of the audience? 
Well, they had to remain calm, because any commotion would get you expelled from the courtroom. They had to just sit there and observe. They couldn’t smile, applaud, or express any hatred or repugnance. Courtrooms are run with a lot of decorum in general, and that was especially true there, when the eyes of the world were on that courtroom. All the newspapers were there, and there was radio equipment all over the place.

Do you know if the court building is still there today? 
Oh yes, I saw it years later.

What were the defendants’ attitudes? 
They were all different. Hans Frank showed genuine remorse, while others showed phony remorse in order
to get a lighter sentence or escape the hangman’s noose. Some were not remorseful at all, but said they “just sat in their office and signed papers.”

What special terminology did you have to know? The Nazi terminology and ranks for the army and the SS—we translated them into equivalent American or British terms. Oberst was a colonel, for example. Some things we didn’t translate, like “the SS.” It stands for Schutzstaffel, but you didn’t translate that since everybody knew what it meant.

Did you meet all of the interpreters at Nuremberg? No, there were nine other trials going on. I interpreted at the major war criminals’ trial—Hermann Goering, Rudolph Hess, Hans Frank, Ernst Kaltenbrunner and others. There were also the doctors’ trials, the concentration camp trials, the industrialist trials, and others. They went on from 1945-46, all the way until 1949. I did not stay until the end.

Why not? You said you were making a great living. I sure was, but I got a visa to go to the U.S. and couldn’t let it expire.

Was your visa to the States kind of a thank-you gesture on the part of the Americans that hired you? No, I got the visa on my own. Now, because I was attached to the U.S. Army, upon my arrival in the U.S., I had to report at the Pentagon in order to get an official release from my duties.

After Nuremberg, did you consider continuing as an interpreter? Yes, for a while. I wanted to work at the newly founded United Nations, but they didn’t need German.

So after you didn’t start working at the United Nations, what did you do? I went to law school. I always wanted to be a lawyer because my father and my uncle were attorneys. I did all kinds of odd jobs to get through school.

Did you make any mistakes at Nuremberg that you remember? Oh yes, once I made a big mistake and almost caused World War III. It was over a word—a name, actually—“Rascher.” The question was “What did Rascher do?” and I translated: “What did Russia do?” The Russian officer immediately jumped up, shook his hands in the air, and said: “WHAT?! What are you involving Russia for?” I then had to explain that I meant the German General Rascher, not Russia the country, and apologized.

What were some of the difficulties? Well, the fact that the German defense counsel were good attorneys in Roman law, and the Americans and the British were good attorneys in common law. That sometimes made it difficult to explain the concepts, not the words.

Could you do that while interpreting? No, you had to explain the concepts before and after, off the record, because they would use terms that the other side couldn’t understand. When an American
attorney speaks about the writ of habeas corpus, a German would say, “what is he talking about?” Then you had to explain what legal document they had. On the other side, the Roman law professionals would use Latin terms that we don’t know in America, and you had to be careful in explaining it, but you can’t always do this in open court.

So you had to be a legal expert?
Yes, we studied legal terminology at the Geneva School. We studied international law, Roman law, and common law. So we knew what it was, but to impart these ideas into the head of the listener is not very simple, because they are all brought up in their own culture, which, to them, is the only meaningful and correct one. They don’t realize that other systems are built on different assumptions.

What kind of law do you practice now?
Mostly family law.

Having lived through tumultuous historical times, what advice would you give us today?
Don’t follow somebody who tells you what’s good for you. I like the motto “Lead me to those searching for truth, but keep me away from those who have ‘found it’.”

The author wishes to specially thank attorney Paula Weisberg for making the connection between the two generations of interpreters, and Agnès Donnadieu for her photo work.

Tanya Gesse is a conference interpreter of English, Russian, German, and Hebrew based in Chicago. Contact: tanya@tanyagesse.com.

(Editor’s Note: Professional translation training is still hard to come by in this country, and most of us don’t live in cities where such programs are offered (like Milwaukee). So we asked Maria Edstrom to give us her perspective on one such program that is available both on-line and in New York, since, in earning her certificate there, she has studied in both milieus. We hope other readers will share their experiences with continuing education opportunities.)

New York University’s Translation Certificate Programs

By Maria Edstrom

The School of Continuing and Professional Studies (SCPS) at New York University offers certificate programs in French-to-English, German-to-English, Spanish-to-English, Arabic-to-English, English-to-Spanish, and English-to-Portuguese translation studies, as well as in general translation studies. There is also a medical interpreting certificate for Russian and Spanish, in addition to a certificate in Spanish/English court interpreting.

In order to qualify for the NYU translation program, applicants must pass an open-dictionary translation test that is designed to test writing proficiency in the target language and understanding of the source language. (But have no fear, the pass rate is much higher than the ATA certification exams, and the test is only meant to weed out those who are truly not proficient enough in the language pair to benefit from the program.)

Once accepted into the program, students must complete a total of six courses in order to earn the certificate, including one introductory class, four core classes, and one elective class (or five core classes and no electives). Core classes for the French-to-English translation certificate include Legal I, Legal II, Commercial I, Commercial

The program also offers the option for students to do a translation internship as a seventh course. Students must complete a separate application for the internship and must include translation samples (which can be extracted from class work) and references. When I applied for an internship in early 2003, there were approximately eighteen companies and organizations participating in the program, including several medical facilities (Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, New York University Downtown Hospital, Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital), law firms (Cravath, Swaine & Moore, Kenyon & Kenyon, Richard P. Dieguez Law Offices, Shearman & Sterling), translation agencies (Erikson Translations, Euronet Language Services, Inc., Global Language Services, InterNation Communication, Inc., Milev Traductions, Translations.com, The Magnum Group), museums (The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art), an investment organization (The Inter-American Investment Corporation), and a publishing agency (French Publisher’s Agency).

I chose to do an internship with one of the law firms, and it consisted of approximately 30 to 40 hours of work translating a variety of commercial, legal and financial documents (a project glossary was provided to me); I picked up the documents in person and returned the translations via email to the translation coordinator. Overall, I was very pleased with my internship experience. I felt it not only offered me excellent, real-life experience on a current large-scale translation project that was occurring at the firm, but it also turned into several months of paid freelance translation work once the internship ended.

The current cost for translation classes is $715 (which includes the $20 per-class registration fee), which is down from the $740 rate that was being charged at the end of 2003, when I took my last class. At current rates, earning a certificate and doing an internship would come to around $5000, plus the cost of dictionaries and reference materials, which varies by class. Most of the classes I took didn’t require that students purchase specific dictionaries, but rather a bibliography was provided of recommended dictionaries, materials and other references that we could choose to purchase or not (depending on our budgets and interest). Of course, not buying any dictionaries at all could potentially end up compromising the quality of your assignments (and therefore your grades), but on the other hand, I felt one could do quite well purchasing one or two choice dictionaries (that weren’t always so expensive). Another more time-consuming but potentially worthwhile option would be to use the University’s libraries and reference materials. And, of course, we were often given online glossaries and sources that complemented traditional dictionaries.

Students must complete the six courses within four calendar years, which means an average of at least 1.5 classes per year. Since there are three terms each year at NYU (fall, spring, summer), this is relatively easy to accomplish, even while working full-time. Classes meet once a week, usually for about two-and-a-half or three hours, and they are usually scheduled for a weeknight (e.g. from 6 to 9 p.m.) or a Saturday (e.g. from 9 a.m. to noon).
One significant advantage to the NYU certificate program for interested parties around the country (and even around the world) is that many of the translation certificate classes are offered online and I assume certificates in most languages could be earned without ever going to New York (with the possible exception of the entrance exam—I am not certain if it can be taken off—site in the case of remote students). The last class I took in 2003 was an online French to English medical translation class. In order to participate, I had to have a computer with certain technical specifications, a minimum-speed internet connection, and a sound card, all of which are fairly standard these days, so if you have a reasonably up-to-date computer, you should be able to participate in any of NYU’s online classes. NYU sends each student a headset with a microphone prior to the first class (or you can use your own).

The online environment took a little while to get used to, but overall I was quite impressed with how well it worked and with the quality of the sound (voice) transmission. I think as students become more accustomed to, and comfortable with, an online classroom, the experience might be even better. I came away from the experience concluding that it was a very good—if not perfect—solution to the distance problem, and that it was also probably a good time saver for students based in New York, since their commute was eliminated.

As a whole, I was satisfied with the experience and with what I got out of the class. However, I did feel there was something missing and that, if I had the choice and convenience were not a significant issue, I would opt for an in-person class. For example, I felt it was more difficult for the instructor to pace the class correctly, to gage people’s reactions, without eye contact (the online environment does not allow participants to see one another on screen — only voices are transmitted) in order to solicit answers, to get a feeling for how well people were following the discussion and to sense possible confusion or frustration. Similarly, it was more difficult for the students to give the teacher subtle cues, and raising one’s hand (or lowering it) became a bit more of a commitment because of the time lag in switching microphones (only one person can speak at a time, and this was controlled by the teacher) and the small hassle of changing one’s mind about speaking up or answering a question. And, of course, there was not the same opportunity for students to converse, mingle and share with each other before and after class—that is, you can “arrive” early to an online class and talk to one another before the lecture starts, but in my experience, there was definitely a different feeling to this interaction and the easy spontaneity of an in-person classroom was missing.

As I mentioned earlier, some of these “disadvantages” may be somewhat mitigated as people become accustomed to interacting in an online environment and the protocol becomes more natural. Regardless, if you don’t have access to a local translation program or classes, these online classes are absolutely worth considering. The class I took was attended by people around the U.S. (the instructor was located on the West Coast), and there was even one student in Germany who woke up in the middle of the night once a week to come to class.

For more information about the NYU translation certificate programs, visit http://scps.nyu.edu/departments/certificate.jsp?certId=157 or call the translation department at (212) 998-7028.

Maria Edstrom is a newly certified French to English translator. She completed New York University’s certificate program in French to English translation studies in December of 2003, which included an internship with Cravath, Swaine & Moore law firm in New York City. She received her French to English ATA certification in July 2004, and specializes in commercial and legal translations. Contact: medstrom2003@yahoo.com.
Successful Freelancing & Blueberry Muffins

By Nicholas Hartmann

Conference presentations about freelancing appeal to me just the way blueberry muffins do: I eagerly look forward to every one. Like blueberry muffins, however, freelancing presentations can be disappointing if their contents fail to meet my expectations.

Kelly James-Egner’s presentation about successful freelancing to the October 2, 2004 meeting of the Midwest Association of Translators and Interpreters (MATI) in Chicago, however, was fresh, enjoyable, and satisfying. Entitled "Building Your Business: A Three-Step Plan for Career Success," her talk was both concise and wide-ranging, filled with engaging personal anecdotes and practical advice for freelancers in any field.

Drawing on her experience since 1997 as an ex-lawyer who has built a successful career as a freelance writer, James-Egner first discussed the need for each freelancer to establish a personal Brand, based on individual background, experience, likes and dislikes, and perceptions of market needs. The next step is to "spread the word" about one’s capabilities, first by developing a ten-second personal abstract that effectively answers the inevitable cocktail-party question "And what do you do?" Freelancers then need to put themselves in situations where that question gets asked, although face-to-face networking is only one aspect of the entire process James-Egner calls "raising your profile": creating and distributing business cards that convey useful information, writing articles, developing an expertise, and becoming familiar with your profession so you can talk intelligently about it with outsiders.

The successful freelancer then needs to shift the emphasis away from him—or herself and think more about what the customer wants. "Accurate," "dependable," and "expert," for example, are all features of a translator’s capabilities, but the customer will be more interested in benefits: "less editing expense," "fewer worries about delivery," and "confidence in the final product," respectively. Other aspects of this customer-centered approach include basic professional courtesy and a willingness to do more than is expected.

Having discussed the importance of Brand and Benefits, James-Egner moved on to Bucks: building a career. She vividly described the methodical, persistent approach she took to expanding her own freelance writing practice: breaking down long-term objectives into small, achievable goals; tracking progress toward those objectives; establishing good working habits; following up every contact, especially after a rejection; and being positive and confident about making deals, getting paid, and asking for more money.

Kelly James-Egner’s last instruction to the assembled freelancers was to Believe in ourselves, our abilities, and our future.

Brand, Benefits, Bucks, Believe... blueberries. Coincidence? I think not.

(Kelly James-Egner’s work on health, fitness and nutrition has appeared in more than 50 national magazines, and she is a frequent speaker and lecturer. She is the author of three non-fiction books about writing and freelancing, as well as two novels. Complete information is available at her Web site (www.becomebodywise.com), and she can be contacted via e-mail at kelly@becomebodywise.com.)

Nicholas Hartmann earned BA and MA degrees in 1973 and his PhD in 1982 and has worked full-time as an independent technical and scientific translator since 1984. He now specializes in translating patents and related documents for corporate clients and law firms in the US and Europe. Dr. Hartmann holds ATA certification in French-English, German-English and Italian-English and was just elected to the Board of ATA. He can be contacted at nh@hartmann.com.

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M ATI’s treasurer Jeff Gary found himself with quite a challenge in front of him. His laptop was not talking to the overhead projector, and he had to revert to writing on a blackboard, a low tech nightmare for a high tech “guru” like Jeff.

However, he kept his cool and proceeded with the program. Jeff gave us an add-on to his presentation at the MATI conference last July in Milwaukee, this time emphasizing the day-to-day workflow steps for project managers. He outlined the four main steps of the process. These are the four elements a project manager takes into account in order to develop a work order:

1. Quote
2. Project Setup
3. Translation-Editing-Proofing
4. Post Translation Tasks (including Desktop Publishing)

The project manager must ask the client the following questions:
Into which language? With which format? Will there be additional changes? Is a translation memory available? Do client-approved glossaries happen to exist? Is there a need for the alignment of previous translations? What will be the deliverable format (e.g. PC or Mac)? Is there a specific subject matter?

During this process, the manager also educates the client, stressing for instance the concept of developing a glossary with in-country people.

Jeff, who is very knowledgeable about Trados, answered questions from the audience about fuzzy matches, also stressing the need to renegotiate with the client if the translation memory (TM) is in bad shape. He gave us useful tips, like turning off MSWord’s track changes function, which is not compatible with Trados.

As far as the project setup is concerned, and especially when dealing with localization, a software engineer must prepare a text-only file, i.e. extracting the terms, updating the TM from the bilingual file, for instance, cleaning up the files, and converting the format.

Jeff gave some interesting figures about scheduling the translation-editing-proofing phase. An agency expects the translation of about 1,500 to 2,000 words per day. For reviewing a document, it would be about 6,000 words per day.

Last but not least is the multilingual desktop publishing (DTP) phase, where text expansion can be a serious issue. DTP is paid on an hourly basis. Metrics do exist for its throughput, which is between 10 and 20 pages per hour.

This was a worthwhile presentation for freelancers as well. When a direct client calls, we put our “project manager” hat on and have to ask the right questions, their number depending on the complexity of the localization project at hand. Jeff also shed light on the sometimes difficult job of a good project manager, who must adapt to the “translators’ culture” and to his client communication style. He or she is pulled in different directions. It shows what professional translation agencies should offer to the industry, including among others a high-level technical knowledge of linguistic software…

A project manager should never be a secretary just making phone calls to find any available linguist at a given point in time… A project manager is an overall coordinator who is the single point of contact, responsible for all the scheduling and following hour by hour the current status of the project. He or she can add a lot of value to the process.

But Jeff, tell me, what we are gonna do when Trados crashes on us? That should be part three of his presentation; Jeff should definitely be invited back with his PowerPoint presentation up and running and his armada of software.

Jacques Lacava is an active member of the ATA and MATI. He earned a Ph.D. from the University of Paris VII. He now manages Le French Link, an interpretation/narration/consulting firm based in Chicago. He can be reached at lacavaj@lacava.net.
Dear MATI Members:

This is the first letter to our “Dear MATI” advice column, together with a response from an experienced colleague and MATI Board member. InforMATIion hopes this is helpful to many of our readers, and we look forward to more letters. Let’s keep the conversation going, to the benefit of all!

The Editor

Dear MATI,

Often when I am interpreting, I feel so sorry for the person that I am interpreting for and let my emotions get the best of me. I leave the meeting feeling sad that I can’t do more for the person, “fix” the problem, or at least make some suggestions. Any suggestions on how not to get so emotionally involved with my clients? Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

Signed,

Anxious in Cicero

The response:

I would answer that you need to read the National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care on the NCIHC Web site. That Web site is www.ncihc.org. If your emotions get in the way, perhaps you should not take the assignment.

Enrica J. Ardemagni
MATI Board of Directors

contratiempo

Taller de redacción y estilo para traductores y escritores

20 de noviembre de 2004 — 9:00 am a 4:30 pm — Columbia College
33 E. Congress, Aula 311 — Chicago, IL (se entra por Congress o Wabash)

contratiempo, nfp te invita a su taller avanzado de redacción y estilo dirigido a los traductores interesados en perfeccionar su expresión escrita, y a los escritores en general. El objetivo del taller es practicar y reflexionar sobre el acto y efecto de la escritura, para elaborar textos expresivos y correctos, y transmitir información a través de un lenguaje claro, preciso y adecuado.

Impartirán el taller Febronio Zatarain y Julio Rangel, miembros del consejo editorial de la revista cultural contratiempo y otros colaboradores de la revista.

9:30 – 12:30 Taller I — El español en los medios
Los vicios evitables

1:30 – 4:30 Taller II — La sintaxis inglesa vs. la castellana
Dudas y dificultades ortográficas

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email moirapujols@aol.com
Taller I $45  Taller II $45  Taller I y II $80.00
Fecha límite de inscripción: 17 de noviembre
Mínimo de 8 participantes
UPCOMING EVENTS

Sat./Sun, Nov. 13-14  NAJIT and MICATA Advanced Training Workshop
“Parrots or Ombudsmen?”
For English/Spanish and ASL only
Kansas City, Kansas Community College
For more information or to register, www.najit.org
or call NAJIT at (205) 267-2300

November  University of Arizona Skill Development Seminars
for Interpreters, including Legal Interpreting,
Introduction to Interpreting, and more
For more information, visit UA’s web site:
ci.arizona.edu

And watch for email announcements of MATI holiday events in your area!

Congratulations are in order

According to a September 27, 2004 report in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Iverson Language Associates Inc. has appointed Héléne Wimmerlin director of client services. In that position, Héléne will manage the company's entire client services department and oversee final delivery of services. Those who attended the first annual MATI conference in Milwaukee last July will remember Héléne for her expertise and patience in providing CAT training that was offered at that conference.

Thanks to Barbara Collignon for sending this item to InforMATIon.

InforMATIon Submission Guidelines

We encourage readers to submit articles of interest to our readers related broadly to the fields of translation and interpretation. For example, reviews of books or software products, reports on MATI-sponsored events, developments in your field, marketing ideas, are all welcome. We also appreciate announcements of upcoming events involving our profession. We suggest articles approximately 1,200 word in length, and please submit your contribution in electronic format, preferably as a MSWord document. Pictures and graphics in electronic format are also welcome, although we cannot guarantee that we will be able to publish them. And be sure to include your name and contact information, as well as a short biographical entry (3–4 sentences) in the electronic file with your article. We suggest the Chicago Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press) for your editing guidelines.