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Last fall, an ATA member working as a court interpreter in Chicago reached out to a number of professional associations to alert them to a proposed practice under consideration by the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EIOR) that questioned the need for interpreters working in pairs in immigration courts. ATA commented on the draft and was a signatory of a joint letter sent to EIOR, which in turn decided to delay the implementation of a new interpreting system. (You can read the letter here: http://bit.ly/EIOR_Letter.)

Shortly before the holidays in December, ATA was invited to give a presentation to the renowned Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) in the Washington, DC area. ILR is an “… organization established for the coordination and sharing of information about language-related activities at the Federal level” (www.govtllr.org), and we used the opportunity to update the audience on our association’s activities and services and to point out the detailed search function in our online directories.

The letter of response and the presentation are just a few examples of our many activities and daily efforts to promote the interests of our profession, an obligation we take very seriously. At the same time, these services are just one side of the coin of your membership in our organization.

ATA welcomes new members throughout the year, with full understanding that the membership fee is a sizeable investment for someone just starting out in the profession and establishing a career or for those living in other countries. ATA also enjoys a solid retention rate, with close to 85% of members renewing every year. Everyone has his or her own reason for joining, and members rightfully expect a return on their investment. However, both new and existing members sometimes make the mistake of simply sitting back and waiting for things to happen. There are a number of ways to increase the value of your ATA membership throughout the year and, best of all, most are completely free.

As the very first step after joining or renewing, be sure to set up or update your personal profile in the online directory so potential clients can readily find you and your contact information. Our website had 3.5 million page views in 2012, and most visits are associated with searching the online directories to find—you! If you are unsure what to say about yourself, visit the profiles of other members who work in the same language pair or area of specialization to see a few sample profiles.

In a recent survey, ATA asked about the value of various membership benefits. Close to half of all respondents ranked networking with others in the translation and interpreting professions, learning from others in ATA, professional relationships with colleagues, and access to specialized information as “very valuable.” All of these benefits have something in common: you have to take the first step to access them. ATA provides a wide range of networking options through its divisions and online offerings, but the Association will not subscribe new members to any of them automatically—that is a step you have to take.

Whether you just renewed your membership or joined for the first time, make it a belated new year’s resolution to get the most out of your investment this year and start exploring our many communities. Chances are, you will wonder what took you so long.
ATA finished 2012 with 10,890 members—an increase compared to 2011. For several years now, our total membership has held steady at around 11,000 members. We hope to break through that plateau this year by reaching out to, among others, students, military linguists, and regional group members who are not already ATA members.

Some may question why we need to keep increasing membership. It is because membership revenues support ATA’s ongoing activities and fund new ones. In addition, there is simply strength in numbers. As the largest organization for translators and interpreters and others working in the language services industry in the U.S., and definitely one of the largest in the world, our size helps our voice get heard. As the industry grows, we are working to grow with it.

Of course, we will continue to strive to retain the members we have. We have achieved this over the years, with solid renewals of nearly 85% for overall membership and above 95% for certified and other Active members.

Please renew your ATA membership if you have not already done so. You will cover your ATA dues by getting just one job from your online ATA directory listing or by learning about one time-saving tool. You will also learn from peers so you do not have to reinvent the wheel whenever you run into a problem.

The top reasons for not renewing are financial concerns and failure to pass the certification exam. Many first-year members join ATA, take the exam, do not pass, and then do not renew. This course of action is easy to understand, but please keep in mind that this is when an ATA membership can provide real assistance. ATA offers access to resources and colleagues who can help individuals become better translators and interpreters. ATA’s Certification Program is just one of the benefits of membership. In addition, ATA’s online professional services directories offer members the best direct marketing to quality clients—65% of ATA members report having received work through one of the directories. The ATA Chronicle provides a wealth of knowledge, including numerous website resources for even greater breadth and depth of information. ATA webinars also present a wide variety of opportunities to learn at affordable rates.

It pays to be a part of ATA. Thank you for renewing!

Welcome Lauren Mendell
Lauren Mendell joins ATA’s Headquarters staff as the member relations and office manager. Lauren will assist ATA members and non-members alike with inquiries and requests regarding ATA programs and services. Prior to ATA, Lauren worked in a variety of customer care positions, including at a call center for a major phone company.

Be Sure to Renew
Membership renewals have been mailed. If you prefer to renew online, please go to: www.atanet.org/membership/renew.php. If you have already renewed your ATA membership, thank you. If you have not, please do. ATA has much to offer in 2013 to help you professionally.

Don’t Miss Out!
Many of ATA’s announcements, including division newsletters, webinar schedules, and conference updates, are sent to members by e-mail. To be sure that these messages don’t end up in your spam folder, take a minute now to add ata-hq@atanet.org to your “safe senders” list.

ATA does not sell or rent the e-mail addresses of its members. Also, be sure to keep your contact information updated. You can make updates online at www.atanet.org/MembersOnly or you can send your updated information to mis@atanet.org with your ATA membership number in the subject line.
Judy Jenner’s “Anatomy of a Deposition, Part II”

The outline of civil depositions that Judy Jenner provides in her November-December *Entrepreneurial Linguist* column is concise and helpful in terms of preparing the interpreter for the type of questions to expect. But, as with all legal proceedings, it is also of tremendous benefit to translators and interpreters to understand why attorneys say what they say, whether in writing or verbally.

In a deposition in an insurance case such as the one Judy describes, it is the job of the lawyer for the insurance company (or party being sued) to try to show that the deponent already had a preexisting condition that may have led to the pain/disability/limits on occupational opportunities or activities of daily living that are now being claimed. The vast majority of the questions are designed to elicit such circumstances. For example, if the deponent worked in construction one summer 20 years ago when he was a college student and lifted heavy loads, perhaps that caused a back injury that is now just “acting up.”

Similarly, questions relating to the accident/incident itself attempt to show that the deponent bears at least some responsibility, thus reducing the liability of the insurer and its subsequent obligation to pay benefits. Did the deponent exercise proper caution at all times, and did he take immediate steps to mitigate the damage once it occurred?

Deponents are indeed instructed by their attorneys to give vague answers or profess not to remember much, and this does create an atmosphere that can range from tense to toxic. Once you understand the choreography of the deposition, you are less bothered by this and can function more professionally.

Eve Hecht
Elizabeth, NJ

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Reminder: Beware of Scams

If it is too good to be true, it is probably a scam. A number of email and online scams have specifically targeted translators and interpreters. Stay vigilant!

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The prize in ATA’s eighth annual School Outreach Contest went to ATA member Birgit Vosseler-Brehmer for a photo marking her presentation to an 11th-grade English class at the Kurfürst-Salentin-Gymnasium in Andernach, Germany.

The winning shot shows a relaxed Birgit seated on a flight of stairs with a crowd of smiling 17-year-olds. Two of the students hold copies of The ATA Chronicle, clearly linking the photo to the translation and interpreting professions. “The teacher suggested taking the picture on the stairs,” Birgit recalled. “The Chronicle seemed the simplest, most effective way of showing that the presentation was about translation, and I was pretty sure that I could get the students to pose with it in their hands.”

Closing a Gap

Though the prospect of winning a free conference registration was attractive, Birgit was also strongly motivated by what she saw as a lack of information on careers in translation. “I remembered myself when I was young and didn’t have enough personal input on choosing a career,” she recalled. “Though there is an internship program at my girls’ school, there isn’t any career information. I suggested a series of parent presentations to the middle school director, and she invited me to speak to her advanced English class.”

Now What?

Once she had the invitation, Birgit had to develop content for her presentation—and it was her first experience with school outreach. “At first I was at a loss and didn’t know where to start,” she said. “I looked at a couple of the model presentations on ATA’s School Outreach page (www.atanet.org/careers/school_outreach.php). I also read the suggestions on speaking to high school students and followed the general advice on content. I described the daily life of a translator, covered the

It was important to me to show that translation is a real career and that you need to be professional if you want to succeed.
tools and skills you need, and compared modern working conditions to translation in olden days. It was important to me to show them how freelancers work—and that in addition to having language skills, you need to know how to run a business.”

**ATA to the Rescue**

The materials on the School Outreach webpage also helped Birgit overcome speaker’s nerves. “I was scared: I thought, ‘I hope I survive this.’ And because it was an English class, I had to present in English, which made it even more challenging,” said Birgit, a native German speaker.

“Talking to young people was also a little scary—they can be rather critical—but that fear turned out to be unfounded. I went to the School Outreach webpage and read the section on managing nerves. I also reread my notes from an ATA Client Outreach session on public speaking,” she said.

**Practice, Practice, Practice**

Birgit also worked hard to make the presentation a success, practicing her remarks several times to polish her speaking style and calm her nerves.

“The first time it was awful,” she recalled. “The next time it was a little better but not great, and by the third or fourth time, the words really started to flow.”

**A Day in the Life**

During her presentation, Birgit gave the 17-year-olds a glimpse into the life of a translator, describing a typical workday, providing an introduction to translation tools, and discussing the pros and cons of working from home.

“The teacher told me that she had recently talked to the class about working in a home office, so I was a living example of what they’d just discussed,” she said. “I also wanted to encourage young people to think about a freelance career, especially women. It’s not easy for women to combine truly professional careers and family in Germany. It was important to me to show that translation is a real career and that you need to be professional if you want to succeed.”

At the teacher’s request, Birgit also discussed curricula vitae (CVs) and how the students could adapt them when they apply to schools in other countries. “It’s not effective just to translate a CV,” she told them. “You have to tailor it to the target audience.”

**A New Footing with Teachers**

In addition to making the students more aware of translation, Birgit also hoped to achieve a second goal—establishing a peer-to-peer relationship with their teacher.

“Sometimes teachers view us just as parents, not as professionals with careers, and I find there’s still some prejudice against working moms,” she said. “I wanted to put the relationship on a different footing and be helpful to the teacher, and I think I succeeded. The teacher was quite impressed with the information I provided and wanted to give it to the school’s career counselor.”

A freelance translator since 1999, Birgit translates from English into German and has practiced translation in both the U.S. and Germany, where she is also a member of the Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer. Since the beginning, she says, she has focused on professionalizing her practice, becoming more specialized, and building her subject area knowledge. “Currently my main areas of expertise are automation, linear motion technology, and environmental analysis. I’m also working hard on finance,” she said. “Adding more direct clients to my portfolio is another important goal.” She lives in Andernach with her husband Thomas Brehmer and their daughters, Sarah, 16, and Nathalie, 14.

**“Go for it”**

Asked what she would say to fellow translators and interpreters about her School Outreach experience, Birgit replied, “Go for it. Do it—it’s really a worthwhile experience. And it’s important to stay in touch with young people.”
It took us a long time, but translators have finally largely accepted that technology plays an important role in our professional lives. Most of us use advanced translation technology such as translation environment tools (TEnTs) that include terminology management, automated quality assurance, and translation memory. And those who do not have typically made informed decisions on why they do not.

When it comes to machine translation (MT), however, the situation is very different. It is probably fair to say that most of us wish we had never been forced to have an opinion on this subject, but forced we are. No matter whom we talk to in the general public about translation, MT inevitably comes up. Answering with platitudes or scornful dismissal does not help anyone. Instead, we have to know and understand what we are talking about.

In addition to the important issue of how we represent MT to the outside world, though, there is another more fundamental question we need to address: What role could or should MT play in our professional lives? This is the slippery and many-hued topic that translators Charlotte Brasler and Jost Zetzsche try to tackle in this conversation.

Charlotte: Attending the Association for Machine Translation in the Americas (AMTA) conference last October in San Diego was a real eye opener for me. I came away with so much to think about regarding the future of being a translator/post-editor and about the challenges our industry faces. I also came away with an instant, very humbling experience of how little I knew about MT, and I would venture to say that many translators out there are no different from me. There is an acute need for translators to educate themselves much more thoroughly about what MT is all about and where and how it can be applied.

Jost: I agree, most translators do not know much about MT (aside from the same-old-same-old jokes about the silly mistakes). By the same token, many within the MT community do not know much about translators either. That is why I thought it was great that both ATA’s Annual...
Conference and AMTA’s conference were co-located in San Diego last year. So, what kind of things do you think translators need to learn about MT?

**Charlotte:** Translators need to have a basic knowledge of MT. For example, what distinguishes rule-based, statistical, and hybrid MT from each other? What is good MT and bad MT? For which languages and domains does MT work the best? Translators also need to understand buzzwords like BLEU score, SAE J2450, and Edit Distance. When translators can speak intelligently on these subjects, we can engage in a much more professional dialogue with “the other side,” the MT community. I was positively surprised to hear many AMTA attendees express their appreciation at seeing professional translators attending their conference, so if we reach out, I am certain we will receive a warm welcome. Now, what do you think is the greatest impediment to translator involvement in MT?

**Jost:** Your list sounds like a lot for translators to learn about MT! Honestly, I am not sure that every translator needs to know each of those details. I think it does not hurt to know that one kind of MT engine relies on data (statistical), one on rules (rule-based), and yet another on a mix of both (hybrid), and that every MT engine will produce different results. Most importantly, though, every professional translator needs to understand how MT relates to us and our profession. This is not only important for our own understanding and confidence, but also so that we can communicate it to the outside world—kind of along the lines of my “Talking Points” GeekSpeak column in the October 2012 issue of The ATA Chronicle.

Once we have managed to form an opinion about MT based on its actual merits and shortcomings, rather than on some pre-formed ideas—which are the greatest impediment to translator involvement right now—then we can determine whether becoming more involved in MT has any benefit to us individually. We might even want to take part in some higher level activities such as working for MT developers or engaging in strategic consulting with companies about its use.

**Charlotte:** In my opinion, the greatest impediment to translator involvement is a mixture of ignorance (“Machine translation is just Google Translate”) and fear (“The machine will eventually replace me, so I will stick my head in the sand now”). If we can change our attitude to “This is interesting, so how can I make this work for me?”—in short, embrace change—then we are in a much better mindset to take advantage of MT.

**Jost:** At this point, I suspect that many translators still see the question as “Can I make this work for me?” rather than “How can I make this work for me?”

**Charlotte:** Maybe, but I would like to see all types of translators get involved by educating themselves better about MT. Some translators may indeed look into MT and post-editing and say, “That’s not for me.” That is fine. At least they have made the effort of looking into the possibilities offered by MT and can now speak from experience rather than hearsay. Others will look at MT and see it not only as an opportunity to take their interest in linguistics in a new direction, but also as an opportunity to generate more income without working harder or longer in a market that is continually being squeezed on price.

The important thing to remember is that we are such a diverse bunch. One end of the spectrum could be experienced translators who are able to charge “premium rates” from established direct clients. They may doubt the relevance and usefulness of MT if they already earn a comfortable living and the language combination in which they work is not suitable for MT. At the other end is the new graduate who may be contemplating a traditional freelance career versus a post-editor/MT consulting career. I think that the level of involvement will depend on who you are and where you want to go with your career in languages. Most of us probably fit somewhere in between. We work for agencies, we are feeling squeezed on price, and we will embrace technology to the extent that it makes us able to translate faster and better so we can maintain or improve our income without working more and more.

**Jost:** Yes, you are probably right. When I think of MT and the professional translation community, I can think of four levels of engagement:
first, development and consulting; second, fine-tuning and training customized MT programs for ourselves or our clients; third, as a post-editor of MT texts (typically these involve customized MT programs); and fourth, using MT as a translation aid alongside other aids such as translation memories.

Charlotte: Yes, those four levels of engagement could be seen as a pyramid representing the degree of translator involvement today. At the top, Level 1, is involvement on the developer side, working with MT development companies such as Systran, Google, and Microsoft, and working with translation buyers to help them find ways to integrate MT. The next level down, Level 2, is testing and fine-tuning MT engines based on the client’s or your own data. This could be done for your own needs or in an in-house or consultant role. This level represents an area with real opportunity for translators who want to combine an interest in technology and linguistics. Level 3 involves working as a post-editor for agencies already using a customized MT engine and whose clients belong to Level 2. This is a fast growing area with an immediate and pressing need in many languages, and this will only rise.

The widest and lowest level, Level 4, which involves using MT as a translation aid to speed your translation work, is the level in our pyramid to which most translators belong. They use a TEnT with a connection to an online statistical engine like Google or Microsoft. They do not use a customized engine with their own translation memories. Since most translators belong to Level 4, their point of reference when asked about MT is naturally to think of Google Translate. The eye-opening experience for me recently was that MT is so much more than large online statistical engines like Google, and the argument for and against it is infinitely more complex and interesting.

Jost: So you are talking about the customization of MT engines for a specific purpose?

Charlotte: Yes, an MT engine can be something you train for whatever you need it to translate, such as your specific language combination and subject area. For example, if you are a freelancer and have a sufficient amount of data in your translation memories, you can train your own engine. This requires a certain amount of technical skill, but it is not rocket science. There are already several open-source MT engines online, and though they may not yet be “mature,” they are out there and will only continue to evolve. Having your own engine with your own data also gets around the sticky issues of confidentiality, because you feed only your own closed system and do not send data into cyberspace. This issue of confidentiality is relevant both to freelancers entrusted with their clients’ data and to big corporate clients. Training your own engine means that you are also in control of the data that serves as the engine’s “diet.” You can make sure it receives only quality data, which increases the quality of the output. I see MT as just an extension of today’s TEnTs, in that they provide suggestions when the fuzzy match drops below 75%, similar to the sub-segment leveraging that virtually all TEnTs already provide. MT just makes that function much more powerful. And remember: the MT engine in a “closed,” customized system is still pulling from data in translation memories that were created by a human in the first place.

Jost: Those are good points, but it is important to keep in mind that well-trained MT engines typically work well only for the very specific subject areas/clients for which they were trained by the translator. Any deviation from that messes with the accuracy. So this might work wonderfully for some translators with one or two really big clients, but others might find it hard to justify the effort of training an MT engine for each of the many clients and/or types of projects on which they work.

Charlotte: The translation industry is changing quickly, and no matter how fast and efficient we become with our TEnTs, we cannot stop the deluge of content that is being generated and the scarcity of translators to translate it all. The result is that many companies are looking into MT to save money and time and still get their material translated. Humans are slow and expensive but creative; machines are fast and cheap but stupid. In
between stands the quality factor. That is where we as translators come in: we can affect this quality that the “stupid” machines cannot figure out themselves. If we can use the machines to help us increase our speed—which we are already doing with TEnTs—and post-edit the MT output to a human translation quality level, we will all reap the financial benefits. The clients will get their content translated faster and cheaper, and we will make more money by producing more high-quality words faster. That is a win-win situation.

Jost: I think we need to be careful about generalizing when saying that companies will increase their use of MT and have content that needs to be post-edited. There will doubtless be more and more companies going that route, but I would say it is safe to assume that for a number of years to come the amount of text that professional translators will have to deal with that needs to be “translated from scratch,” without having been translated by a machine first, will outweigh the stuff that needs to be post-edited.

You are right, though. There is already an unmet need for MT post-editors, and that need will continue to increase. This means a lot of good opportunities for some of us, but I also think that many of us will not encounter post-editing MT for a long time to come. Of course, this very much depends on variables such as language combination, area of specialization, target group, and the type of customer. Would you agree?

Charlotte: Yes, generic MT programs certainly have shortcomings when it comes to certain languages. While the Scandinavian languages (except Finnish) in combination with English are a sort of poster child for output quality, other languages such as German, which is syntactically very different from English, are not yielding the kinds of quality MT output that make MT attractive to use. So it really depends on the language combination.

Aside from improving the productivity of translators, other usage scenarios of MT include raw MT or lightly post-edited MT that is considered sufficient by the users of the MT output—the readers of the translation. A case in point would be knowledge base articles for software, where a mediocre translation is still better than nothing, and many users actually answer “yes” when asked if the article solved their problems. Considering the short life span of a knowledge base article, MT offers a great solution that is “fast, cheap, and useful.” Again, all MT use cases are different, and it is hard, if not impossible, to generalize.

Regarding the quality produced by MT, I think it is important to ask the following: If MT can be honed to human quality level through customization of the engine and post-editing of the output, does it matter if a translation was done from scratch by a human, or by a trained machine and post-edited? The answer to this question would certainly depend on the output’s “fitness for its purpose,” as mentioned above. In my mind, the answer is a resounding “NO.” If MT makes knowledge available to people who would otherwise not have access to this knowledge because it is locked in another language, it does not matter if the translation was produced by a trained machine.

Jost: Yes, MT can be used in very positive ways to open up content for language groups that do not have access to much content otherwise. Examples include Google’s and Microsoft’s release of Haitian Creole MT programs after the Haiti earthquake, or the recent release of Hmong and Mayan MT capabilities by Microsoft.

I think that it is really important, however, to understand that there is a fundamental difference between the work of post-editing MT translations and post-editing fuzzy matches, and often this is not represented fairly in the MT community. Provided that your translation memory is in good shape, editing a fuzzy match means altering an inherently correct segment (correct as a translation for the earlier source segment) to match your current source segment. Typically this involves changing a couple of terms, which can be done easily. This is not necessarily so with
MT, though, which is not inherently correct. It can be, but it does not have to be. If you work in my language combination (English>German), you will quickly find that more often than not there are fundamental changes you will need to make to bring the translation to the required quality level.

Charlotte: How widely do you think MT is being used by translators today? This would include desktop tools like Systran and PROMT, or Google Translate and other statistical engines available through application programming interfaces in many TEnTs today.

Jost: Many people would like to know that number! I am as clueless as most, but I think it is safe to say that the number of professional translators who are using MT has risen in the past couple of years. I suspect that you would find large differences of usage among different language groups, type of projects, experience levels, and even in the way it is used. Significantly, MT seems to have transitioned into one of many productivity tools that are useful to some but not all, and I think the stigma it used to have among translators is gradually going away.

Charlotte: I would sure like to know that number as well. My gut feeling is that few translators have used a customized engine, but many translators are currently experimenting with tools like Google Translate. My other feeling is that few translators have “come out of the closet” so to speak about using online MT. This could be due to the perceived stigma attached or to the confidentiality they are potentially breaking. However, I think that on both fronts we can expect to see exciting developments in the coming years as attitudes toward MT and confidentiality change.

Notes
1. BLEU (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy) is an algorithm for evaluating the quality of text which has been machine-translated from one natural language to another. The output from MT is considered to be of good quality if it closely matches a professional human translation.


3. Edit Distance (also called translation error rate) is an algorithm for calculating the minimum number of edits that have to be made to a string (the MT output) to make it match another string (the reference translation). This was discussed in AMTA President Mike Dillinger’s tutorial on machine translation during the 2012 AMTA conference in San Diego.


5. Knowledge bases are data repositories that have been designed to enable people to retrieve and use the information they contain. They are commonly used to complement a help desk or for sharing information among employees within an organization. They might store troubleshooting information, articles, white papers, user manuals, or answers to frequently asked questions. Typically, a search engine is used to locate information in the system, or users may browse through a classification scheme.

Send a Complimentary Copy

If you enjoyed reading this issue of The ATA Chronicle and think a colleague or organization would enjoy it too, we’ll send a free copy.

Simply e-mail the recipient’s name and address to ATA Headquarters—ata@atanet.org—and we will send the magazine with a note indicating that the copy is being sent with your compliments. Help spread the word about ATA!
In my life before becoming a freelance translator, I worked at a variety of jobs, including one in which I was responsible for the entire information technology (IT) infrastructure of a nonprofit organization. This taught me a lot about how to set up a reliable IT system, and many of the lessons learned in this job are applicable to my situation now as a freelance translator. I often think about how much more difficult my work would be without this IT expertise, and for this reason I would like to share some basic tips for making IT work for freelancers.

It is important to understand where IT systems are most vulnerable. Where do the failures occur that have the potential to disrupt your business, and what are the best ways to deal with these issues?

**Data Loss**

Let’s start with hard drives and data loss. Without a doubt, the most failure-prone part of any computer is the hard drive. In my experience, the hard drive installed in a desktop computer will generally last about five years. The hard drive installed in a laptop will last anywhere from three to five years, and it is in no way unusual to have it fail after just one year, particularly if the laptop is moved about a lot while it is running and its hard drive is unlocked.

You can upgrade to solid-state hard drives, which theoretically have much lower failure rates, but they are a comparatively expensive solution without extensive field testing, so you still need to plan for a hard drive or system failure as a normal event and have a well-rehearsed Plan B. After all, even improved hard drive technology will be vulnerable to theft, flood, and fire.

This means you need to have a data backup system. The system needs to back up your data in real time or something close to it, it needs to do this automatically, and the data also needs to be backed up to an off-site location. There are currently a number of providers that will back up your data over the Internet, and this is really the simplest possible solution. You install the software once and it runs for years, waiting for the point when you actually need it.

I recently restored all of my data after a hard drive failure using such a service. It took just a few minutes to log into the site of my provider from another computer and request my data. The restore process ran overnight, and in the morning all of my data was back. No crying or gnashing of teeth. Data loss is an expected event, and you should be able to deal with it without any stress. Some of these services also make your files available for browsing on a website, giving you immediate access to all of the files on your work computer from anywhere in the world.

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**Information Technology for Freelancers: Redundancy Is Key**

By Matthew Hayworth

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Without a doubt, the most failure-prone part of any computer is the hard drive.
the world, even from a smart phone, which is very convenient. A helpful tip in this regard is to store all of your data in a single folder on your desktop or in your root directory. Label the folder “DATA” or something similar, and then be absolutely disciplined about making sure all of your data is stored in this folder. This is handy when you need to migrate from one computer to another as well as when you need to find all of your data after a restore process.

**Computer Failure**

You always need to have at least two computers at your disposal that are fully configured with all of your software. That sounds expensive, but this sort of redundancy is absolutely key to a reliable IT system. It is the only way to ensure that you can work on an uninterrupted basis should a failure occur. In any case, computers are really not that expensive, especially if you do without the latest overpriced processors. Since technology changes quickly enough, it is best to replace your computer every two years at a minimum with an inexpensive but up-to-date new computer with a clean operating system. Remember not to skimp on the RAM. Memory is very cheap, and a typical software configuration such as Studio 2011 with Dragon NaturallySpeaking 12.0 already demands at least 8 GB to run optimally. Expect the minimum to be 16 GB within two years—that is just the way the computer world works.

**Internet Failure**

Internet connections go down, and you should have a reasonable response to such an event. This could be moving your “office” to a coffee shop with a free wireless local area network (WLAN), but it is better to get yourself a USB stick or similar device that provides you with wireless Internet access over cell towers, assuming such service is available where you live. The cost-effective solution is a pay-as-you-go service that allows you to arrange immediately for a limited amount of service as required, but you need to have everything figured out before you actually need the service.

If you use a wireless router for your own WLAN, it is best also to run an Ethernet cable directly to your work computer so you can easily bypass the wireless router if it stops working. I actually run my work computer off an Ethernet cable all the time. It is the only device in my household that connects to the Internet on a wired basis.

**Power Failure**

If you have a desktop computer, you need to connect it to an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) unit. It has a battery that will bridge short gaps in the power supply (including harmful brownouts) and allow you to save your work at the beginning of an extended outage. Use tape to secure both ends of the computer’s power cord so that the computer cannot be disconnected from the UPS accidentally.

The battery in a laptop computer will bridge such power gaps, but a laptop needs to be connected to a surge protector. It is best to have a small, single-socket surge protector so that it is easy to take this protection with you when you use the laptop away from home.

**Printer/Scanner/Copier/Fax Failure**

You need at least two printers. Ideally they should both be wireless, allowing any computer to print to them at any time. You might want them to be slightly different devices, such as a plain black-and-white laser printer and a color laser printer or a multifunction device (printer, copier, scanner, fax). If one printer fails or runs out of toner, you can just switch to the other one for your basic printing and deal with the malfunctioning device at a time that is convenient for you.

Your scanner, copier, or fax may or may not be an important piece of equipment for your business, but you should have some way of dealing if any of them fail. Options include a multifunction device that duplicates scanning/copying/faxing functions you already have or smart phone apps that will scan or fax documents for you in a pinch.

**Redundancy Is Key**

A key theme with all of this advice is redundancy. You need a duplicate of everything: data/software/hardware/power/Internet. This may seem wasteful in some cases, but computer technology is terribly unreliable and prone to failure, and you should treat it that way.

**Bonus Tips for Laptop Users**

1. The cooling system of nearly all laptop computers is inadequate...
for today’s fast, hot-running processors. You need to provide an auxiliary cooling system in the form of a good-quality powered laptop cooling pad. If you notice that your laptop is overheating after a year or more of use, it may also be necessary to clear the dust out of it. If you do not know how to do this, take it to a repair shop. When your laptop cooling pad starts to rattle, it is also likely clogged with dust. You can clear it out with a vacuum cleaner.

2. Laptops are also subject to theft, so a laptop lock that you use both at home and while traveling is a good idea.

3. Even though a laptop has a short useful life as a work computer, it is relatively easy to refurbish it yourself by replacing the hard drive, upgrading the memory, and reinstalling the operating system. These old laptops can then serve as a line of protection for your current work computer. You can take them on vacation, to the beach, poolside, etc., or allow them to serve as decoys to keep your children and other relatives from touching your work computer. One of my decoy laptops is now on its fourth hard drive, but it is still doing a wonderful job of protecting my work computer. If you do not know how to refurbish a computer, it is a good skill to learn, both for the environment and your business.

**Bonus Tip for Everyone**

You did install virus protection, right? On several occasions I have had small agencies send me infected files. There is no reason to be vulnerable to viruses. Subscribe to a respected service.

**Peace of Mind**

In conclusion, while it may seem daunting to have to make investments of time and money in your IT system, you are ultimately investing in peace of mind. You will not have to go to bed at night praying that everything will work and your data will still be there in the morning. If something does happen, you can quickly go to Plan B.
Dr. Roseann Dueñas González is a 21st-century luminary in the field of language access in the U.S. She founded the Agnese Haury Institute for Interpretation at the University of Arizona’s National Center for Interpretation, Testing, Research, and Policy, and served as its director from 1983 until September 2012. Upon hearing the news of her retirement from the Institute, I asked her to share some thoughts on the status of our profession.

To give those readers not acquainted with you an idea of the influence you have had on the legal interpreting profession in the U.S., please give us a brief summary of some of the salient points of your career.

As a linguist, I specialized in language policy, registers of English, and language proficiency testing. I was hired by the Arizona court system in 1976 to identify defendants who needed an interpreter. That led to my study of courtroom English, which became the basis of my 1977 doctoral dissertation, and a lifetime of work. Here are a few highlights from my years in the field:

- The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts consulted my dissertation research for the implementation of the 1978 Court Interpreters Act.
- Following passage of the Federal Court Interpreters Act, I led the development of the model that eventually became the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (Spanish<>English).
- In 1983, I founded the Agnese Haury Institute for Interpretation at the University of Arizona’s National Center for Interpretation, Testing, Research, and Policy to provide court interpreting training and to meet standards set by the federal testing model.

From 2000-2012, I was the principal investigator for projects at the Institute. This resulted in the development...
of curricula for a major in translation and interpreting at the University of Arizona, as well as onsite and online education designed to improve the registers of Spanish teachers who teach translation and interpreting in high schools. (The latter was funded by the Department of Education.) During this time, I was also asked to conduct job analyses and develop certification instruments for American Sign Language (ASL) and trilingual interpreting (Spanish/English/ASL) for the State of Texas.

Most importantly, my work training students at the Agnese Haury Institute and my collaboration with national interpreting experts during federal testing and rater training led to several endeavors, including:

- The 1991 publication of *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy, and Practice*, in collaboration with Victoria Vasquez and Holly Mikkelson. It is among the most often cited works in law review articles and other scholarly work on court interpreting. The 2012 revision offers further refinement of interpreter practice, protocol, and ethics.

- The expansion of the curriculum at the Agnese Haury Institute to include training for interpreters interested in working in health care settings.

- The development of nationwide short courses in test preparation and introductory or advanced court interpreting, as well as hybrid online/onsite training and testing options to provide opportunities for interpreters seeking to improve their skills.

Why were you selected by the Pima County Superior Court in 1976 to assist in identifying defendants needing an interpreter, which led to your doctoral dissertation?

The Pima County Superior Court called the English Department at the University of Arizona and asked for a testing specialist. The late Judge Ben Birdsall, of Pima County Superior Court, wanted a systematic way to determine whether or not a defendant needed an interpreter. I explained that the language of the courtroom constituted a particular register that was different from ordinary English, and that for this reason I would have to devise a language test specifically for this purpose. Judge Birdsall provided me with access to cases, some research support, and a pilot population. That was the beginning of the rest of my life.

What is the best measure of growth experienced by the Agnese Haury Institute since its inception in 1983? Approximately how many interpreters have received training?

The Agnese Haury Institute can best be measured by its influence on the growth and development of the court interpreting profession. Its commitment to sharing knowledge and experience is foremost. The Institute was created out of a willingness of master court interpreters (of which there were few in 1983) to share their knowledge and create a continuing platform where not only linguistic and interpreting skills could be honed, but where all of the content knowledge required of court interpreters could be presented. Approximately 2,500 interpreters have taken courses there to date.

Do you believe that, as recognition for the profession increases and as remuneration merits, we will see more traditional educational opportunities through the creation of much-needed conventional degree programs?

As I stated in *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation*, the quality of court interpreting, the growth of the profession, and the quality of language access depends upon the establishment of a national academic infrastructure of translation and interpreting undergraduate and graduate degree programs with an emphasis on interpreting and a focus on judicial settings. However, higher education has been reluctant to embrace court interpreting as a viable field of study. Obstacles to such an infrastructure include the continuing lack of recog-
nition of interpreting versus translation as a formal field of study. Higher education is also slow to recognize the need to train capable interpreters for judicial, medical, and other critical settings. As this need becomes better known through the enforcement of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by the Departments of Justice and of Health and Human Services, professional interpreters, linguists, lawyers, judges, and other professional groups will have an increasingly stronger argument to begin creating academic programs. However, diverse educational paths are still needed.

Have you compared the learning curve and the stage of our profession in the U.S. with that of other parts of the world?

Although other countries such as Spain are significantly ahead in terms of providing educational opportunities at state-funded and private universities and colleges, the U.S. court interpreting profession as a whole is light years ahead of its European and other international counterparts in terms of remuneration and the status of certified professional court interpreters in the justice system. This fact emanates from the rigorous standards set by the federal courts and their enforcement through the federal certification examination program, as well as the commensurate remuneration policy established by the federal courts for those who have this unique capability. Although there may be many court interpreters doing outstanding work in the field who are not certified at the federal level, the standards set by federal certification provide an exemplar for all state and local courts and for other high stakes settings, such as medical.

State interpreter associations need to plug into local colleges and universities and make it known that access is a primary aspect of their agendas.

What can interested parties do to lobby government and private sources to support programs like the ones you have spearheaded to develop language access in the U.S.?

As private citizens, as members of the court interpreting profession, and as members of professional interpreting and translation groups such as ATA and the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), interpreters need to consider every possibility in terms of providing language access. The question should always be how does this agency, court system, etc., meet the language access needs of its limited-English-proficient population? How can I assist them to understand their obligation to provide language access? State interpreter associations need to plug into local colleges and universities and make it known that access is a primary aspect of their agendas. They need to work collaboratively with universities to make language access a true part of every facet of these institutions.

What are the next goals for our industry and how can language associations help to achieve them?

The primary goal for the profession is to strengthen its associations and continue to work toward the broader goal of language access, which will lead to greater professionalization. For example, NAJIT’s new concentration on policy statements and collaboration with the American Bar Association and other agencies is an excellent beginning that should be expanded.

Professional associations and all court interpreters should concentrate on creating uniform standards of certification among the 50 states. They should lobby for the establishment of an office within a federal agency to oversee state and local certification of interpreters. Such an office could also work to ensure that national interpreting telephone and video relay agencies and other providers are employing persons who have passed a rigorous certification examination in legal, or any venue in which laws are applied or where life outcomes are affected. Until there are uniform standards among states and national or international agencies providing interpreting and translation services, the court interpreting profession will never achieve its potential. Moreover, as it comes of age, the profession must begin to promulgate professional ethical standards that provide more specific guidance for interpreters to follow as well as ways of policing itself.

We wish Dr. González all the best after her many years of distinguished service. We look forward to her continuing advice as the fruits of her labor blossom.
Translators must be versatile, resourceful, and creative. We must also keep our feet on the ground and be able to deliver a project on time. Deadlines are an integral part of our discipline, and we ignore them at our peril.

*Webster’s* defines a “deadline” (*dead + line*) as:

1. A line drawn within or around a prison that a prisoner passes only at the risk of being instantly shot.

2. A line or mark made on the bed of a cylinder press to indicate the limit to which the printing surface may extend.

3. A fixed time limit: a date or time before which something must be done and after which the opportunity passes or a penalty follows (i.e., the deadline for filing income tax returns); or the time limit after which copy is not accepted for use in a particular issue of a publication (i.e., 3 a.m. is the deadline for the newspaper’s morning edition).

4. A group of military vehicles put aside for repair or periodic maintenance.

According to Wikipedia, “a time limit or deadline is a narrow field of time, or particular point in time, by which an objective or task must be accomplished.”

Neither source so much as mentions the word “unreasonable,” which tells us that neither speaks on behalf of a full-time freelance translator.

I live with deadlines. Some are unreasonable, but they are strictly take-it-or-leave-it propositions. I do not have to accept them, but then I would not get paid. I will receive an e-mail that says something like: “Yet another project for you, sorry for no notice.” It is from a video production company that makes training videos for all manner of tasks and situations in the workforce: kitchen sanitation, chicken handling, team spirit, warehouse protocols, and so on. Once a project is under way the implacable recording schedule governs the lives of all concerned, and the translator must keep up or the project falls behind. The deadlines are brutal and unforgiving.

*Wikipedia’s* “narrow field of time” closes in on me in suffocating waves of claustrophobia as I grasp the magnitude of my incoming workload—and resulting limited personal time—and gasp for air. Although I am usually subscribed to the third definition listed earlier, I can easily relate to the first one and think of a deadline as a merciless horizon: if I do not deliver on time I will be dead. But on projects like this one I am as good as dead until I deliver.

The assignment is to translate a batch of scripts, and since the video has already been shot in English, the Spanish voiceover has to be short or...
long enough to fit into that little space of time. Easier said than done. True, some frames are straightforward and take little unraveling. But others are convoluted and wordy to begin with and must be distilled down to their essential meaning, which is usually all that the time will allow. My mind focuses on these frames and shuffles and winnows the words in the script, searching for the essence, looking for that ideal articulation that captures the meaning in a natural, colloquial way that sounds like native Spanish and fits in the time allowed. Phew! Then on to the next frame. There are 22 pages. And 12 more scripts. And the clock is ticking. I cannot talk now, I am on a deadline.

An alternative to that grim scenario is the sweet, sunny e-mail that attaches a guide for young children visiting a museum, with delightful texts about paintings and artists and works of art from New Guinea. “And there’s really no rush, by about the end of the month, will that work for you?” The text is great fun to translate, if you like that sort of thing. There is the same shuffling and winnowing, but here, instead of fitting the translation into a space of time, it has to be fitted into a child’s point of view. It is a translator’s lagniappe, an opportunity for one’s inner child to come out and play.

Book, poetry, and art catalogue translations are complex projects in and of themselves and bring the added pressure of greater visibility, the sense of having one’s work on display. This pressure is, of course, pushing back against the client’s publishing deadline, and the translator gets squeezed in the middle. Sometimes extreme pressure produces marvelous results—like diamonds!—and the translation is exquisite, a thing of beauty. At other times the words in the source text are assembled in what seem to be illogical sequences that do not quite make sense. No matter how simple or complex the text, there are always knots in the threads that must be teased out, unraveled, and untied. Natural complexities are fair game, but when the writing is mediocre or—worse!—downright sloppy, I am wont to simmer, and struggle to refrain from railing at the screen. There is no point, I tell myself; it is a waste of precious time. Some texts are sublime, some make me furious. That is how it is.

And then there are variations on the theme, mostly of a literary style, in a variety of categories. By literary I mean that there is an element of literary creation involved in the translation process, made necessary when the source text evokes images or tickles connotations that must be expressed—can only be expressed—in a language inspired by literary considerations. By that definition, of course, some institutional newsletters can be considered literary translations; so can websites, and parental consent forms, and advertising brochures. That does not mean that I am ready to translate Don Quixote, but I am closer than I was a year ago.

Deadlines are an inevitable part of every project—the “death and taxes” of the translation industry. The more excruciating the deadline, the more likely it will include a night shift. I like working at night; there are fewer interruptions. The later the hour, the more the mind is immersed in the translation, with occasional furtive excursions to a parallel universe of thoughts and memories and other distractions. Some nights I have an out-of-body experience and seem to be standing right behind me, peering over my own shoulder, looking at my process, scrutinizing what I am doing. My process has three stages: reading, writing, and revision.

I look at one sentence at a time and identify the various “elements” in each one. These could be clauses or ideas or parenthetical comments, that sort of thing. I let those elements float around in my mind as I absorb the overall gist of the sentence and wonder how I would express it in the target language. I rearrange the sequence of the elements in my mind, trying to make the translated sentence sound as though it was originally written in the target language. Then I write it, which is the second stage, in which a translator is a writer no matter what he or she does for the rest of the day.

The third stage involves tweaking and pruning and polishing the text until it sounds right from start to finish. How do we know when it sounds right? Our ear will tell us, if we cultivate our awareness of how people talk, how they string words together, so that we can “hear” what we are writing and know whether it sounds convincing. Among other things—such as an ability to write and a firm command of grammar, rules of syntax, dangling participles, and

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There would be fewer translations if there were no deadlines.
so on—good translation flows from a finely attuned cultural sensitivity that absorbs and identifies forms of expression and patterns of speech.

How long does that take? Some say that a translation is never really finished; it is merely abandoned at some point. The success of a translation owes as much to the choice of words as to their assembly. The articulation—the selection and arrangement of “connecting” words like verbs, conjunctions, prepositions—is what gives a text its fluency and its particular colloquial quality. It is what makes a sentence sound as though it was written by a native speaker. The third stage—quality control—may be lacking in glamour and might seriously challenge my patience, but it is arguably the most crucial.

In the grand scheme of things, some translations are important; many are not. But every written word has its own particular permanence: the potential to leave a trace of one’s passing. The translator’s work is thus part of the fabric of history.

Why do we do it? Why do we translate? Many reasons come to mind, but one thing is certain—there would be fewer translations if there were no deadlines.

Some texts are sublime, some make me furious. That is how it is.

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**ATA’s Online Directories**

**Six Tips to Help You Make Contact**

1. Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
2. Update your contact information, especially your e-mail address and phone numbers.
3. Use the “Additional Information” field, noting education and career experiences, unusual specialties, and any dialects you can handle. By using a “keyword” search, clients can find your services based on a set of very specific skills and experience.
4. List your areas of specialization.
5. Review your listing monthly to experiment with different wording or add new information that may set you apart from others.
6. List non-English-to-non-English language combinations, such as Portuguese into Spanish and French into Italian.

A listing in ATA’s online Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services or the Directory of Language Services Companies can be one of your most valuable member benefits. With more than two million hits a year, consumers and businesses have clearly learned to look at ATA’s directories first when shopping for professional translation and interpreting services.

Make those updates online at www.atanet.org/onlinedirectories/update_profile.php
"Please Discuss," a new feature that will appear periodically in this magazine, is designed to promote discussion of pertinent issues in our industry. Moderator Corinne McKay proposes a topic and asks industry experts to respond. The dialogue will then continue on ATA’s LinkedIn group (www.atanet.org/linkedin.php). Corinne, an ATA-certified French→English translator specializing in international development and legal translation, currently serves on ATA’s Board of Directors. She is the author of How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator. To propose a topic for a future edition of “Please Discuss,” e-mail corinne@translatewrite.com.

Computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, quality assurance programs, and terminology management software are the ultimate “frenemy” of many translators. These programs save us time, make our translations more consistent, and help us win business, but they can also be expensive, time-consuming to master, and are not fully interoperable. Software companies feel our pain, but point out that very few translators use the training materials that are out there, even when the materials are free. The question for software companies and translators is what do we need from each other?

Tuomas Kostiainen: English→Finnish translator and Trados trainer

I spend close to 2,000 hours per year using my CAT tool, so a comfortable user experience is essential for me. To make my user experience comfortable, the program needs to work well, be reliable and reasonably intuitive, and include all of the necessary features. Of course, modern CAT tools cannot be Notepad-easy, but there is certainly plenty of room for making them more intuitive and less cumbersome from the translator’s perspective. A well-written help function and good customer support are also important, and I really like seeing active participation from tool vendors on user lists such as Yahoo! and LinkedIn.

Part of the comfortable user experience is also interoperability between the various tools. If I can use my favorite tool for everything, I can utilize all of my translation memories and other resources more efficiently and have more time to learn the tool even better. This might reveal something about my social life, but I consider the TMX translation memory standard one of my best friends, and I would like to find other good “standardized” friends like that for project packages, for example, to improve interoperability. The day I can handle every client’s files reliably in my favorite tool with little or no extra hassle, I will be happy. And when I am happy, I am also happy to upgrade my tool whenever new features are introduced.

It is easy to ask for better and easier tools, but translators (and project managers) should also learn to use the tool(s) they have thoroughly—sleeping with a Trados manual under a pillow does not help. But what helps is spending a few hours studying the training and support material offered by the vendors and having a trainer or colleague show you what you do not know and what you should know.

While the tool vendors should make their tools easier to use, we also need to recognize that the tools are getting more complex because of our increasing demands, and if we do not learn to use them to the fullest potential we are losing time and decreasing our profitability.

Angelika Zerfass: independent translation tools consultant

From a trainer’s perspective, I would argue that the training material that is “out there” is very often limited to “getting started” guides, online help, and a few recorded webinars on specific or new features of a tool. Going through all of that material might help you to understand the basics, but it takes a lot of time, especially to find the information in the first place. What translators need is to understand the processes associated with the tool’s workflow so they can use the software successfully (e.g., for some tools, you just open the document, but others require you to prep the files before you can start to work). As far as I know, there is not much material available on that. I know that my fellow trainers and I are creating this type of content for training classes, but this information is often only available to translators who are taking those classes.

I would hope that the technologies used to create the software would eventually be able to give the user more guidance with these processes. Instead of creating error messages (some of which are quite cryptic), the software should allow the user to access information on how to avoid such errors, or at least offer a solution other than having to search a knowledge base and all forums for more input on an error message. So, for example, instead of telling the user that a file could not be imported into the project and stopping the process for all other files until the user deletes the file manually from the project and tries again, it would be helpful if the software asked the user if the file should be deleted by the system or saved to a separate folder before continuing. Or, the user could be alerted that changing the segmentation rules in an existing project will only apply to newly
imported files and not to the ones already in the project.

**István Lengyel: chief executive officer of Kilgray Translation Technologies**

At Kilgray, the developers of memoQ, we have always tried to keep in close contact with translators. While in the beginning the majority of our revenue came from language services providers, we always knew that only a product that improves productivity for translators as well as for companies could be successful.

Those translators who are ready to spend a few minutes talking about how they work give us the most useful input for future programming. The way forward is to think about groundbreaking ideas, rather than always just looking at feature comparisons between tools. There is no “one tool fits all.” A financial translator needs quite different things from a software localizer or a technical translator. Vendors and users need to acknowledge that not every translation tool is the same, just like not every translator is the same. It is your productivity and the added value to your customer that makes a tool work for you.

I am happy to see that translators are embracing interoperability, which makes it possible to work in a preferred tool, not necessarily the tool used by your customer, and still deliver the final product in the format requested. Many people accept that it is not the tool you use, but rather the knowledge and skills you have, that defines your place in the translation market. Successful translators can influence their customers. Do not be afraid to help your customer!

Translators who understand the benefit and possibilities of translation technology get the most out of it. Rather than learning only where to click, spend some time analyzing what you are doing and understanding the tool’s design principles. You spent years learning the language, and more years mastering translation skills. Learning and thinking about the business you are in and the technology you are using is not a waste of time! Nor is letting us know your thoughts a waste of time—we need to hear from you.

**Paul Filkin: SDL Language Technologies**

Software should either save you money or help you make more of it. Our ongoing focus at SDL is to develop software that helps translators be more effective. To make sure we achieve this goal, we need a regular open dialogue with our customers so we can continue to learn how to make software that supports them better, not only with regard to how we develop, but also how we explain the way it is used. This latter point may be even more important than listening to new ideas. Users often ask for something the software can already do, but they are just not aware that it can.

To help our users, we have technical support teams, a knowledgebase, regular blogs, YouTube videos, online help, training courses, and we spend time in public forums. So why does this seem to be not enough? It is not just an SDL problem. Users of all applications the world over do not invest enough time in skilling up to get the best from their software. Likewise, translators are not able to find time away from a pressured workload to develop their CAT tool skills. This poses interesting industry questions. Could translators be more efficient and improve their output quality if they understood how to use their CAT tools to maximum effect? Should they be investing in themselves as well as in their CAT tools? Would this make them more productive?

If we could change one thing in how we work together with translators it would be for everyone to find the time to build their knowledge proactively before launching into that first project. Reading software manuals and taking training courses first can reduce the potential of tainting their relationship with their CAT tool software as they take those first steps.

Of course we cannot simply blame the users for this. Our task as software developers is to make sure the software is intuitive so that even a cursory glance through the documentation would be enough to get started. However, there will always be questions that you want to ask. So once you have read the documentation, watched a video, or delved into the online help, where do you go if you still have queries? What can SDL put in place to help a translator report feedback or ask a question?

We recently launched the SDL Journey and SDL QuickStart to help users start with SDL Trados Studio 2011. Another thing we may do in the future is introduce a customer feedback program that is actually baked into the software. That means if something happens unexpectedly, the software can tell us straight away. We could also give you the option to let us see which features you use most, and which ones you do not use at all. This will help us know where we need to focus in the future.

Building software involves many choices, vast numbers of decisions, and large amounts of financial investment up front. We cannot account for every eventuality or every taste. So if something goes wrong, or could work in a better way, just let us know. In many ways all of this comes down to the same thing—just keep talking because we value your input and listen to everything you say!
New this year, the certification practice test is available to anyone, regardless of ATA membership status. ATA members will continue to pay $50 per passage, whereas nonmembers will be charged $90. We hope that this greater availability will boost interest both in the Association and in certification, and that a larger number of qualified candidates will pursue certification as a way of demonstrating translation competence and commitment to the profession.

Why Is the Practice Test Part of a Sound Strategy for Pursuing ATA Certification?

Practice tests are actual exam passages that have been retired. Although exam texts differ from sitting to sitting and year to year, the practice sets are chosen specifically to best represent the types of passages that appear in the actual exam. Candidates can get an idea of the sort of text they will see in the exam and prepare accordingly.

Practice tests are returned with markings and feedback. Exam candidates are provided notice of Pass or Fail, and failed candidates also receive information about their overall score. With the practice test, the marked text itself is returned to the candidate, together with a point breakdown by error category and a rubric that provides a more holistic performance assessment. This feedback can be quite helpful to prepare for the actual exam.

Tips for Using the Practice Test

Allow plenty of time. Practice test grading turnaround depends on volume and other factors, so candidates should allow six to eight weeks to receive results. Plan ahead: by the time you register for an exam sitting, it is probably too late to get practice test results back.

Take more than one. Three practice test passages are available for each language pair, one in Category A (general subject matter), one in Category B (science/technology/medicine), and one in Category C (business/finance/law). If you can do only one, A is recommended, since that passage is mandatory on the exam. But consider doing a B and/or C as well. You can space them out, too: get the results back from one and apply that insight when doing another passage.

Take the test under exam conditions. Since candidates work on the practice test at home, they are free to take as much time and use whatever resources they want when completing it. However, it is often more instructive to duplicate the exam conditions. Set aside 90 minutes of uninterrupted time and use only printed reference material. Allow adequate time at the end to proofread your work for careless errors. If possible, do the exam by hand. While a limited number of keyboarded sittings will be held in 2013, most candidates will still be handwriting their exams in the near future.

When you receive your practice test results, pay close attention to the Framework for Standardized Error Marking and the Rubric for Grading forms that are included. This feedback may tell you what areas to focus on in order to improve your prospects on the exam. For example, do you need to proofread more carefully? Should you work on target-language grammar or spelling? Could you need more or better dictionaries or glossaries?

Upgrade old tests. If you requested and paid for a practice test more than a year ago and never got around to translating it or having it graded, ATA Headquarters will send you a current version of the passage for the same language pair upon request.

For more information about the certification practice test, see www.atanet.org/certification/aboutpractice_test.php.
The e-mail came late on a Friday afternoon. I was standing in line at the pharmacy to pick up post-op painkillers for a really nice client who had become a wonderful friend. My job was to keep her pain-free and relatively comfortable and entertain her for the afternoon until her husband could come home from work. I checked my messages on my smartphone, and there it was, in what seemed like big, bold letters (they actually were not). The subject line from one of my best clients read “Translation Error.” My heart seemed to skip a beat. I grabbed the prescription, raced to my friend’s house, and read the e-mail while she was taking a nap. I was a bit scared, to tell you the truth.

However, it was not nearly as bad as I had imagined. I am sure you all know the feeling. We are human, and we make mistakes, albeit most of us know the feeling. We are human, and as I had imagined. I am sure you all know the truth.

It turns out the so-called translation mistake consisted of the absence of two lines in a table. We fit the customer’s translation on one page, as instructed, and thus ended up taking out two single lines from a table. Granted, we should have asked the customer, but it did not seem like the table needed to have a pre-defined amount of rows, so we adjusted the formatting to make the table fit on one page. In retrospect, this was not very smart: we should have double-checked with the client, but hindsight is 20/20.

Within 20 minutes of receiving the e-mail, I had written a brief message on my smartphone’s tiny keyboard assuring the customer that I would review this issue over the weekend. I apologized for any inconvenience and told her I would get back to her by Monday. In the end, everything worked out just fine and we have continued to get plenty of work from this wonderful client. Here is a short list of things to keep in mind when you make a mistake, which will invariably happen at some point in your career.

Respond quickly. It is difficult to deal with conflict, but delaying the inevitable does not help. Show initiative by acknowledging the client’s concern as soon as possible.

Take responsibility. Even if you outsourced the work to a colleague or if you are a language services provider, the responsibility is ultimately yours. Accept the fact that you made a mistake. Nothing is more unattractive than a provider making excuses.

Apologize. It is what is expected from a professional, and you should definitely make sure you sound sincere in your apology. It does not have to be long: a few sentences will suffice.

Offer a freebie. Recognizing your error and trying to make amends is never a bad idea. Send a handwritten card, offer a discount or a small free service, or, in extreme cases, send flowers (or something similar). Show the customer that you care about this relationship and that you want to retain the business. It also happens to be much cheaper to retain an existing customer than to land a new one.

Move on. Many times, we tend to be so mortified by our mistakes that we get timid, keep on mentioning the error, or stop believing in our abilities. Relax and put it in perspective. You cannot change the error, but you have most likely dealt with it in a professional manner. No one expects you to be 100% perfect 100% of the time. Clients might remember you most for how you dealt with the challenging situations.
How to Start a Successful Career in Scientific and Technical Translation

(Posted by Susanna Weerth, an English-German translator, editor, and interpreter specializing in life sciences, patent, and legal translations, on ATA’s Science and Technology Division’s blog, http://ata-sci-tech.blogspot.com.)

If you are interested in starting or switching to a career in scientific and technical translation and want to know how to begin, you might be interested in reading the advice offered by Jennifer Clowery, the 2012 recipient of the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation’s JTG Scholarship in Scientific and Technical Translation or Interpretation. Jennifer graciously provided answers to questions about how she became a scientific and technical translator and interpreter. I would like to thank Jennifer for sharing her experiences and ideas on how to pursue a successful translation and interpreting career in science and technology and wish her luck and success!

When did you decide to choose translation and/or interpreting as a career, and how did you decide on a school for translation/interpreting?

I had been an English as a second language teacher for several years after I graduated from college. I enjoyed it very much, but eventually decided to move on to a different challenge. Since I loved languages, I started to think about the possibility of pursuing a career in translation and enrolled in an online translation course through New York University. I absolutely loved it, and subsequently began to research master’s degree programs. It was not until I came across the Monterey Institute for International Studies (MIIS) that I thought about incorporating interpreting into my studies. Once I realized that MIIS was one of the few schools in the U.S. where I could get a degree in both fields, I knew that was where I wanted to go.

Why do you think it is important to specialize?

There are many good reasons to specialize. First, there are so many translators on the market, especially in my language combination (Spanish>English), that you need to think about how you are going to set yourself apart from everyone else. Clients want to hire translators who have an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and have experience in the field. Moreover, specializing is beneficial to us as professionals because it enables us to be faster and more efficient by cutting down the time spent on research and terminology, but still allowing us to maintain high quality.

What was a major event/turning point in your translation/interpreting studies that sparked your interest in scientific and technical translation?

Actually, for a long time scientific and technical translation intimidated me and I never thought I would want to work in those fields. I think this is a common attitude among novice translators and interpreters—we think we are “language people” who are not cut out for science. However, the program at MIIS includes a heavy emphasis on scientific and technical texts and speeches, and our professors insisted that with sufficient preparation and research, we could produce high-quality work. I realized they were right and that, like most things in life, it was merely a matter of time and effort. I enjoy scientific and technical translation and interpreting because it affords me the opportunity to learn more about the world in which we live and how it works.

Which trainings/mentors were the most important to guide you in learning the skills for your specialization and/or choosing a career path?

Absolutely all of my professors in the program hold their students to high standards and teach them the skills necessary to excel in the field. Professor Uwe Muegge, director of CSOFT, a language services provider, teaches computer-assisted technology classes and provides us with a wealth of information about translation tools, terminology management, and best practices. In order to be competitive and to minimize potentially costly, and even deadly, mistakes in the scientific and technical translation fields, it is essential for translators to be able to utilize all of the tools at their disposal.

Outside of this academic training, where could you see yourself developing the necessary experience to become an excellent scientific and technical translator/interpreter?

From what I have seen, it is a rather difficult field to break into as a translator because many translation companies require several years of experience as a scientific and technical translator. In addition to my studies, I have been working as a freelance quality assurance specialist for a translation and localization company that focuses on life sciences, and this has given me the opportunity to work with project managers and gain experience working with a range of different text types. Moreover, I plan on...

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Dictionary of Medicine:
French-English with English-French Glossary

Reviewed by:
Eric S. Bullington

Author:
Svetolik “Paul” Djordjević

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The Dictionary of Medicine: French-English with English-French Glossary has long been a standard reference in this field, and deservedly so. Svetolik “Paul” Djordjević is a well-known lexicographer with some four decades of experience as a medical translator. He spent the majority of his professional life as a medical translator for the U.S. Social Security Administration in Baltimore, Maryland. Djordjević is also the author of several bilingual medical dictionaries. This new fourth revised electronic edition of the dictionary was published in October 2012 through Djordjevic’s own publishing house, Jordana Publishing. The dictionary is the fruit of many years of labor by the author, who set out to create a comprehensive reference for medical translators working from French into English. Djordjević has continued to revise and update the dictionary throughout his career.

This edition greatly expands the number of acronyms and abbreviations, and includes such welcome additions as “RAS,” the acronym for rien à signaler (ably translated as “no appreciable disease,” or “NAD”). Djordjević is currently working on the French-English Dictionary of Medical Abbreviations, Acronyms & Eponyms, due out sometime this year. His research for this upcoming book has clearly benefited the work under review, since more than 1,100 of the edition’s 5,200 new terms are medical abbreviations or acronyms.

What to Expect

The dictionary is sold as a single-volume CD-ROM, compatible with all computers that run Adobe Reader (including Windows, Mac, Linux, iOS, and Android computers). For Windows users, the CD-ROM also provides a convenient launcher.

Some traditionalist may question the decision to publish the edition in an electronic format, but this approach carries significant advantages over the usual paper-bound dictionaries. The dictionary is now eminently portable, a very important quality in this day of home offices, mobile workers, and coffee shop desks. Furthermore, both the free and premium Adobe Acrobat readers feature excellent search utilities that allow users to search the entire dictionary for words or phrases. Some may miss the rustling of the pages when searching for a term, but electronic searches offer users the ability to find all instances of the lexical item in question quickly and easily, not just the information under the item’s entry. Doing the same level of research on an item with a traditional paper dictionary is extremely time-consuming, and that is assuming that the dictionary has excellent cross-indexing.

The layout is much the same as the previous edition: a very readable serif font, proper line spacing, and a pleasant overall appearance. Readers with visual impairments will benefit from the electronic format’s zoom feature, as well as from Adobe Reader and Adobe Acrobat Pro’s “Read Out Loud” component, which reads selected entries out loud using Adobe’s text-to-speech synthesizer.

New Material

As mentioned above, the author’s additions to this edition include a significant number of abbreviations and acronyms. Many of the acronyms are of the type found in clinical reports, such as “a/c” (arythmie complète), AIVOC (anesthésie intraveineuse à objectif de concentration), and “ICP” (intervention coronarienne percutanée). All of the new abbreviations reviewed were translated accurately and accompanied by their equivalent English acronym or abbreviation. In
my experience, the abbreviations and acronyms found in clinical reports written up by physicians and nurses, being relatively nonstandard and incredibly numerous, are among the greatest challenges for novice medical translators and non-specialist translators when translating medical documentation. As such, these additions should prove particularly useful for translators who do not work with clinical reports on a regular basis.

**Quality**

The fourth electronic edition is of a very high quality. In addition to the new entries and abbreviations mentioned above, Djordjević has also corrected the relatively few errors and misspellings that crept into the prior edition. A very small number of typos crept in among the edition’s additions, such as accident d’exposition au sang in lieu of accident d’exposition au sang, but these do not detract from the overall quality of the edition.

**Coverage**

The *Dictionary of Medicine: French-English with English-French Glossary* has long been one of the most comprehensive works of its kind, with more than double the number of entries found in other popular bilingual medical dictionaries such as Mosby’s *English-Spanish Dictionary of Medicine*. The current edition covers a wide range of diseases, conditions, signs, symptoms, techniques, and other medical terminology, with the back of the CD cover citing 119,000 terms in all areas of medicine, 13,460 eponyms, 1,440 proprietary drugs, and 2,200 adverbal phrases. The inclusion of some 1,000 new abbreviations and acronyms, which now number 11,789, strengthens the dictionary’s already impressive collection of these sometimes challenging lexical items.

Overall coverage of the third edition was already excellent, and the improvements to be found in this edition only serve to cement the work’s well-deserved position on the desk of serious French<>English medical translators around the world.

**Availability**

The new edition can be purchased directly from Jordana Publishing’s website listed on page 32. It is hard, if not impossible, to find the dictionary through other common online outlets, with Amazon searches for “French-English Medical Dictionary” turning up a pocket dictionary and an obsolete medical dictionary from 1921 well before any mention of Djordjević’s dictionary. Luckily, Jordana Publishing has their own web store, which accepts online payments and ships to locations outside of the U.S. (as long as a street address is provided).
Better World Books, located in Mishawaka, Indiana, provided outstanding service to this translator two months ago. For exactly one British penny, plus mailing costs, they shipped a language-learning aid to me in the form of a book that apparently is hard to find after only a few years in print. Maybe it is a bit disheartening to see a book that a translator worked on—and one which he translated from two different languages, no less—sell for such a pittance. Also, I confess my bewilderment at the Amazon world of international e-commerce, where items sometimes sell for incredibly tiny amounts. Why does anyone arrive, met all of my expectations. It is a great addition to my collection, and this is my way of offering praise to the seller.

New Queries
(English>Danish 2-13.1) If you can, try your Danish expertise on “enterprise system brokers” and “integration appliances” in the field of communication equipment. Here is some context: “Support for both direct interface connection to other HIT devices and systems, as well as management of interfacing through enterprise system brokers (often referred to as Interface Engines or Integration Appliances).” What on earth are the items in bold?

(English>French 2-13.2) One part of this query is easy: knowing what the problem term means. “Combining peas” are peas grown on a large scale, which are harvested by a combine harvester. So far, so good. Now, what about the French for this?

(English>German 2-13.3) Evidently a “dimple” is a type of damage that containers can suffer. The term appeared in an article on welding techniques. Any ideas on how to translate this into German?


(English>Russian 2-13.5) To produce a good medical text, can anyone provide a translation for “accurate relative quantification?” Here is some context: “Reliable and accurate relative quantification of germline and somatic CNVs … Precise discrimination of subtle copy number differences, … Unique universal multi-copy quantification reference included optimized reagents, control, and protocols to prevent false positives and negatives.”

(English>French [English] 2-13.6) What kind of competence is exhibited by a Swiss law office if it has Legiferierungskompetenz, assuming that the word has no typos? English is acceptable as an answer, although the original query did not involve English.

(English>Italian [English] 2-13.7) The term alterthumes Himmel appears in Heinrich Brugsch’s Religion and Mythology. Here is a chance for our literary translators to shine.

(English>Italian [English] 2-13.8) The translator posing this query had problems with Brennerlaufleistung while trying to produce good Italian for this mechanical engineering text. The source-language text in question reads: Der Thermostat wird einfach zwischen die bestehende Steuerung und den Brenner geschaltet und überwacht und optimiert die Brennerstarts und die Brennerlaufleistung. English is acceptable as an answer, although the original query did not involve English.

(Italian>English 2-13.9) An advertising pamphlet for a special polyurethane material used for padding and covering wounds like bedsores contains the term rocchetto per fistole (a reel or coil of some sort). Here is the context in which it appears: Se necessario, tagliare, modellare più pezzi e/o utilizzare il rocchetto per fistole per Zaffare eventuali diramazioni, fistole e scollamenti. What is this device?

(Polish>English 2-13.10) What sort of mechanical device (perhaps a ring of some sort) is a pierscien uszczelniający podkładowy? Even a search on the site of Gdynia Maritime University’s Department of Technology (http://kpt.wm.am.gdynia.pl) failed to clear up the question for this translator.

(Spanish>English 2-13.11) Calidad proved to be a maddeningly elusive word when it showed up as a column heading in a wage compensation table from Spain. Here is some context: Nuevas tablas salariales anuales 2011 NIVEL BRUTO BASE Calidad A 20.990.51 7.924.08, 13.066,43. What could it be?

(Swedish>English 2-13.12) What does rensas ur mean when it appears in a text discussing software? The translator found a passage that spoke of “sensitive data” that would be rensas ur of databases. He suggests “deleted” and “cleared out,” but perhaps a better choice might be lurking out there somewhere.
Replies to Old Queries

(English>Hungarian 10-12.2) (spike gun): Andras Kiss notes that this is a piece of hardware that exists only in video games and low-budget action movies, and therefore it is devoid of any official military name. He found a gaming website in which the word tüskelővő (literally “spike-shooter”) was used. The explanation for it is that it works similar to a nail gun by shooting spikes at high speed.

(German>English 11-12.1) (prox. kl. RIM): Randall Condra says this is a “proximal small intermedial artery.” Not everyone has an intermedial artery, he points out, and the size can vary. Imre Takacs says that kl. must be kleinkalibrig or kleinlumig, a proximal segment of a small-lumen (or small-caliber) intermedius or intermediate branch.

(Italian>Croatian [English] 11-12.4) (tribulale del riesame): Henry Christoffers had second thoughts after offering “appellate court” for this, and states that it might be best rendered as “review board,” depending on its powers and procedures. According to the 1971 Serbo-Croatian-English Dictionary compiled and edited by Morton Benson, riesame means “reexamination.” Based on that, the Serbo-Croatian could be apelacioni (drugostepeni) sud.

(Russian>English 11-12.9) (правой части надстроенной петли росчерка): Elena Hughes offers the following translation for this forensic handwriting query: “The form of movement during the right-hand side of the upper-score loop of handwriting.” Eugenija Sokolskaya offers “right portion of the flourish loop above the line,” and Henry Christoffers suggests “in making the right-hand portion of a flourish’s loop above the line.” Alex Lukoff’s contribution: “Right portion of the superlinear loop of the stroke (flourish)” or “right portion of the ascending loop of the stroke (flourish).”

(Spanish>English 10-12.8) (salir chintiado): George Braun’s suggestion for this—which is entirely different from the solutions that have appeared in this column previously—is that it could mean any of the following: “to leave” or “turn out saddened” (apeñado), “humiliated” (avergonzado), or “scared shitless” (cagado). Which one of these it is, George states, depends on who says it to whom, how it is said, and the context of the conversation.

(Spanish>English 10-12.9) (caja profesional): This must refer to a health maintenance organization, says Ana Isabel Beltrán. Examples she knows from Colombia are the Caja Nacional de Salud or Caja de Previsión Social. Saskia Zeggen defines it as “membership contributions to professional organizations.”

(Ukrainian>English 11-12.10) (пере- едирясовим розмивом): Henry Christoffers believes this could not be anything other than “pre-Triassic erosion.” Kathleen Davis and Alex Lukoff agree, but Alex also provides an alternative: “pre-Triassic washout.” Serge Kotlar agrees with the latter, and offers the following translation for the entire sentence: “The lower Permian sedimentary structures have been completely destroyed by the pre-Triassic washout in all of the upthrust areas.”

Thanks again to everybody who contributed, and I hope your year is going well so far!

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Humor and Translation
A Revolutionary Translator

Mark Herman
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Long before I had ever heard of Guantánamo as the site of an offshore American prison located at an American naval base obtained from Cuba via a perpetual “lease” after the Spanish-American War, I knew that Guantánamo was the easternmost province of Cuba from the folk song “Guantanamera,” the first verse of which is:

Yo soy un hombre sincero  
De donde crece la palma,  
Y antes de morirme quiero  
Echar mis versos del alma.

[I am a sincere man  
from where the palm tree grows,  
and before I die I wish  
to pour out my verses from my soul.]

The origin of the music is open to debate, as can be found by reading several articles in Wikipedia, although Pete Seeger, probably the most famous American singer of the song, undoubtedly contributed to the final form in which most people know it. The chorus, “Guantanamera, guajira guantanamera,” is similarly problematic, with guantanamera usually translated as “girl from Guantánamo” and guajira left untranslated. But guajira guantanamera can probably also mean guajira (a type of country song) from Guantánamo.

However, there is no doubt where the verses originated. They were adapted by Julián Orbón from four different poems in the Versos Sencillos (Simple Verses), written in 1891 by the Cuban poet and revolutionary José Martí (1853-1895). Martí spent much of his life in exile, and much of his exile in New York. As reported in the Special Nueva York issue of the journal Translation Review (#81, Spring 2011, actually published Spring 2012), Pete Seeger, who had first learned the song while in the Catskill Mountains north of New York City, was amazed to find that Martí had actually written “the lyrics only 13 miles from where Seeger first heard them.”

And Martí was also a translator. Esther Allen, in the same issue of Translation Review, says that Martí did several translations … [that] are included in the various editions of his Obras completas [Complete Works]. In addition to that work for hire, Martí also, at his own expense, translated into Spanish, then published and distributed Helen Hunt Jackson’s Ramona, a hugely popular novel about racial tensions among Anglos, Indians, and Mexicans in California following its annexation by the U.S. He did this, clearly, as a way of alerting readers in Mexico to the dangers of U.S. expansionism.

Martí was killed in 1895 in an attempt to free Cuba from Spain without U.S. intervention, an attempt thwarted by American authorities who definitely wanted, and soon were fighting, a Spanish-American War.

But Martí’s reasons for wanting to translate Ramona were also literary. According to Allen:

He admired the work’s literary qualities and believed that these, in addition to the subject matter, gave it a rightful place in Latin American literature. He saw no reason at all why the fact that it was written in English would disqualify it from inclusion.

In his preface he explicitly states that Ramona is perhaps nuestra novela [our novel].

Here is the section on translation from a Wikipedia article on Martí. It seems that not much has changed, technological innovation notwithstanding, for translators since the late 19th century.

José Martí is usually honored as a great poet, patriot, and martyr of Cuban independence, but he was also a translator of some note. Although he translated literary material for the sheer joy of it, much of the translating he did was imposed on him by economic necessity during his many years of exile in the U.S. Martí learned English at an early age, and had begun to translate at the age of 13. He continued translating for the rest of his life, including his time as a student in Spain, although the period of his greatest productivity was during his stay in New York from 1880 until he returned to Cuba in 1895.

In New York he was what we would call today a “freelancer” as well as an “in-house” translator. He translated several books for the publishing house of D. Appleton, and did a series of translations for newspapers. As a revolutionary activist in Cuba’s long struggle for independence, he translated into English

Submit items for future columns via e-mail to mnh18@columbia.edu (that is 18, not el-8) or via snail mail to Mark Herman, 2222 Westview Drive, Nashville, TN 37212-4123. Discussions of the translation of humor and examples thereof are preferred, but humorous anecdotes about translators, translations, and mistranslations are also welcome. Include copyright information and permission if relevant.
a number of articles and pamphlets supporting that movement. In addition to English, Martí also spoke French, Italian, Latin, and Classical Greek fluently, the latter learned so he could read the Greek classical works in the original.

There was clearly a dichotomy in Martí’s feeling about the kind of work he was translating. Like many professionals, he undertook for money translation tasks which had little intellectual or emotional appeal for him. Although Martí never presented a systematic theory of translation or wrote extensively about his approach to translation, he did jot down occasional thoughts on the subject, showcasing his awareness of the translator’s dilemma of the faithful versus the beautiful and stating that “translation should be natural, so that it appears that the book was written in the language to which it has been translated.”

Martí’s position as a literary translator may be typical, but he is not. In addition to being a translator, he was, and remains, a national hero in the country of his birth, and “Guanamericana” has become the unofficial national anthem of Cuba.
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