PROJECT-BASED INTERNSHIPS BRING RETURN ON INVESTMENT
Working to Enhance the Value of ATA

They say there are two seasons in the Pacific Northwest: the raining season and the staining season. For roughly six to seven months of the year there’s a steady supply of the former. Yet, there are a few precious months in the spring and summer when the rain stays away long enough for those of us with wooden houses to slap a coat of waterproof stain on our four walls before the rains return.

Part of the challenge with ATA Board work is that your to-do list is always much longer than the available time and resources. As a past ATA President once remarked to me, serving on the Board is like walking down the hallway of a house. As you pass through, you have the chance to hang a new picture or fix a light fixture before you have to leave it to the next group.

Fortunately, we entered the hallway this year in a much better financial position than in previous years. At each meeting, the Board carefully considers our finances and our desire to offer affordable programs to our members, while maintaining a healthy “rainy day” fund and investing in the Association’s future. Over the past few years, by streamlining expenses in areas such as The ATA Chronicle and boosting revenues from ATA’s Annual Conference, we were able to eliminate our equity deficit and return to a healthy financial situation. Much of the January and April Board meetings were devoted to considering a number of prudent projects to enhance the value and secure the future of ATA.

One of the key improvements that the Board decided to invest in this year is ATA’s website. The website acts like the front door to the Association. It’s often the first impression that potential members and the public have of ATA. So, after four years since the last update, the Board decided it’s time to redesign the site with a more contemporary look and improve the ease of use and access to information. Similar to the revamp of The ATA Chronicle, a special committee has been appointed who will be drawing up a list of suggested “must-haves” and “nice-to-haves” and begin working with a newly appointed and dedicated website manager at ATA Headquarters to restructure the site.

In addition to the website, the Board recognized the importance and growing demand for professional development opportunities among the membership. This program has been revitalized in recent years with a steady stream of webinars covering a range of topics on translation, interpreting, technology, and general business skills. To expand these offerings, ATA has invested a dedicated professional development manager on staff who can help coordinate additional courses and mini-conferences, both online and in person. We anticipate expansion of the Professional Development Program to begin after the Annual Conference.

Public Relations is another program that underwent major investment and growth in recent years. The program has grown to a committee of almost a dozen people, including speakers at a number of industry events and a team of four members working exclusively on articles for trade publications. The return on our investment in a public relations firm has been excellent in terms of the number of article placements in industry press that target the actual buyers of translation and interpreting services. Nevertheless, as any public relations agent will tell you, there’s no such thing as spending “too much money” on public relations, and ATA’s Public Relations Committee is always carefully considering new investments in the program.

The wish list for additional investments never ends, and figuring out which investments are wise under the circumstances is a delicate task for any Board. Generating revenue is easy to agree on, but deciding how to spend it is where the real debate begins. Although many of the plans and programs that the Board has discussed and invested in may not come to full fruition until after my term, I’m grateful for the opportunity to add an additional coat of stain to the solid, welcoming home that is ATA.
Looking for Member News and Humor and Translation? These columns and more can now be found in the Chronicle-Online edition: www.atanet.org/chronicle-online!

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Looking for Member News and Humor and Translation? These columns and more can now be found in the Chronicle-Online edition: www.atanet.org/chronicle-online!

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www.linkedin.com
Looking Ahead to ATA58

Enclosed with this issue of The ATA Chronicle, you'll find the Preliminary Program for ATA's 58th Annual Conference, to be held October 25–28, 2017, at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC. For this, our first conference in our nation’s capital since 1975, we’ve selected a conference hotel that’s in the heart of the action, within walking distance of Dupont Circle and Embassy Row, and just a short subway or cab ride away from DC’s many museums and attractions. Although many of us are familiar with the Washington Hilton as the location of the attempted assassination of then-President Ronald Reagan, you might be surprised to learn that guitar legend Jimi Hendrix played in the hotel’s International Ballroom in 1968. So I think it’s safe to say that ATA58 is going to rock!

Following our very successful conference in San Francisco in 2016, we received many helpful evaluations from our attendees focusing on individual sessions and on the conference as a whole. We truly value your feedback, and filling out those evaluations made you part of this year’s conference planning team. While there are some things we can’t change—I think all of us wish we could attend two or three sessions and events at once—we do know that our attendees want more advanced sessions, more sessions that teach a skill that can’t be learned from an article or webinar, and more time to network with colleagues and with current and potential clients.

Last year’s inaugural Advanced Skills and Training Day, held the Wednesday before the main conference begins, was a tremendous success. This year, we’ll once again be offering a variety of three-hour trainings on Wednesday morning and afternoon, with a focus on advanced, hands-on topics that leave you with new skills you can implement right away. Check the Preliminary Program for the full lineup, and make sure to register early, as many of the AST courses sold out last year.

We received over 425 session proposals for the main conference—a record number. From those, we selected 169 sessions that cover a wide range of topics and levels. In a typical year, about one-third of our attendees are participating in their very first ATA conference and need to learn the basics of our industry. Another third have attended more than five ATA conferences and want advanced-level sessions and plenty of networking time. To accommodate everyone’s networking needs, we’ll be bringing back last year’s very popular Job Fair and Brainstorm Networking events, and many of our divisions will be holding dinners and networking events for their members. To round things out, the energetic team who runs our Buddies Welcome Newbies program will once again be pairing first-time attendees with experienced ones to ensure that our first-timers have a welcoming face to look for throughout the conference.

The adage “it takes a village” applies not only to raising children, but to putting on an event that brings together some 1,800 attendees from around the world. I want to extend a huge thank you to our tireless staff at ATA Headquarters who make sure that the conference logistics run smoothly, to all of our division administrators, assistant administrators, committee chairs, and other volunteers who review every one of those 425 session proposals, and to ATA President David Rumsey and the rest of ATA’s Board, who provide lots of patient guidance and support throughout the conference planning process.

We’re looking forward to another incredible conference in DC, and having you there will make it even better! As I overheard on the escalator during our San Francisco conference, “You can’t download an experience like this.” Thank you for being an ATA member, and we’ll see you soon in DC. 🏛
ATAs Annual Conference: A Gauge for Professional Growth

This issue of The ATA Chronicle traditionally kicks off the Annual Conference. Conference planning is well underway, thanks to President-Elect and Conference Organizer Corinne McKay, those who submitted proposals for conference sessions, and the committee chairs and division leaders who reviewed the over 425 proposals we received. Heres more on the Annual Conference and some other items of note.

Annual Conference: ATAs Annual Conference—the premier professional development event for the language services industry—features something for everyone. Veterans will get advanced programming that’s hard to find anywhere else. Newbies will get a snapshot of the translation and interpreting professions and be exposed to many of the experts in the business. In addition, all attendees can take advantage of valuable networking opportunities. According to the overall conference survey, 96% of conference attendees said they made new contacts at the conference, and 43% said they got a job from attending the conference.

See for yourself what’s planned for ATAs 58th Annual Conference, which takes place in Washington, DC, October 25–28, 2017. Check out the Preliminary Program for the conference, which was sent with this issue, and the conference web page: www.atanet.org/conf/2017. Register by September 15 to get the best rate.

Voting in This Year’s Elections: The slate for this years ATA elections is set: President-Elect: Ted Wozniak; Secretary: Lois Feuerle and Karen Tkaczyk; Treasurer: John Milan; and Directors (three positions): Jennifer Guernsey, Tony Guerra, Geoff Koby, Elena Langdon, Madalena Sánchez ZampaULO, and Kyle Vraa. Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting of Voting Members on Thursday, October 26, 2017, in Washington, DC. To vote, you need to be an Active or Corresponding member. Specifically, you must have passed an ATA Certification exam or successfully completed the Active Membership Review process. If you havent done this review, there’s still time. Its quick, online, and free! For more information on the Active Membership Review process, please see: http://bit.ly/ATA-Active-Membership.

Staff Changes. Please join me in welcoming Adrian Aleckna as our professional development manager. Her primary responsibility is managing the Annual Conference, although she will also look to create other learning opportunities, both online and in person. Adrian brings her energy and expertise to ATA after working for Experient, a meetings management company, for several years. Adrian takes over running the Annual Conference from Teresa Kelly. Teresa moves to a new position as web manager and graphic designer. She will work with key volunteers and staff in the redesign of ATAs website and the subsequent day-to-day administration of the site. Teresa has done an outstanding job with creating and maintaining the conference site as well as designing the Preliminary and Final Programs for the conference.

Summer Learning: ATA is taking a break over the summer from offering live webinars, so be sure to catch up on ATAs on-demand webinars. Each offers an hour of focused learning from experts in the industry. And the live Q&A session at the end of most webinars is great for putting the information into context and practical use. Please see: www.atanet.org/webinars. There are both free and paid webinars listed. In addition to the webinars, you can also catch up on the free ATA Podcast Series. These podcasts offer an inside look at various ATA programs and activities, such as the Annual Conference and the Certification Program. You can subscribe to ATA podcasts so youll be informed every time a new one is posted. This is a great way to stay connected to what your membership can do for you. For more on the podcasts, please see: http://bit.ly/ATA-podcast.

Board Meeting: The next Board meeting is set for July 29–30, 2017 in Denver, Colorado. More information will be posted in the members only section of the website. As always, ATA members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Thank you for being an ATA member. We hope to see you at ATAs 58th Annual Conference in Washington, DC!
GET READY
by registering now
Register by Sept 15 to save 30%!
www.atanet.org/conf/2017/registration

GET ONLINE
to see what ATA58 offers
Find photos, videos, and testimonials to discover why you must attend.
www.atanet.org/conf/2017/attend

GET BOOKED
at the Washington Hilton
Discounted ATA rates are available until Oct 4, 2017 or as space allows.
www.atanet.org/conf/2017/hotel

GET A BOOST
by advertising with ATA
Your brand can be seen by 1,800 attendees and 11,000 members!
www atanet.org/conf/2017/advertise
Report for the First Eight Months of FY2016–17

The Association’s finances have continued the positive development of the past few years. Based on near-final figures, the 2016 Annual Conference was a financial success and the deficits incurred on other program services continue to decline.

For the period from July 1, 2016 through February 28, 2017, our change in net assets (net income) was $464k, compared to $507k in the same period for FY2015–16. Of that $464k, $441k is from “operating activities” and approximately $23k is from investments.

REVENUE AND EXPENSES

Total revenue for the period was $2,470k, up 6% from $2,341k for the comparable period in the previous fiscal year. Membership revenue posted a slight increase of 1.2% (from $1,221k to $1,236k), Certification revenue declined 7.3% year-on-year to $127k versus $137k, and Conference revenue increased by 15% (from $920.5k to $1,062k).

Other less significant revenue sources showed mixed development. The ATA Chronicle posted a 42% decline in revenue (from $29.3k to $16.8k) due to reduced advertising. Professional Development revenue saw an increase due to more webinars, Publications revenue posted a slight increase, and Other Revenue sources posted a decline due to fewer royalties following the change in service providers for professional liability insurance. (See Figure 1.)

Total program expenses for the period increased by 18.9%, from $1,364k to $1,622k, primarily due to higher conference expenses (up 41%) for San Francisco compared to Miami. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 1: Revenue for the period from July 1, 2016 through February 28, 2017

Figure 2: Expenses for the period from July 1, 2016 through February 28, 2017
Of the next three largest program expense items, Certification expenses remained almost unchanged at $202k, and Chronicle expenses declined almost 6% compared to the previous year. Membership Services posted a slight increase in costs, from $166k last year to $174k as of the end of February.

Divisions expenses were up 6%, from $77k to $82k, and Professional Development expenses increased very slightly (from $36k to $38k) due to more webinars. Publications expenses saw a negligible 2% drop, from $60k to $59k.

Total expenses for support services, which are the overhead expenses that are not allocated to a specific program, decreased by 10% to $407k (previous year: $454k). While some individual items saw significant changes in percentage terms, the amounts are not material in absolute terms. General and Administrative expenses posted a 25% decrease, primarily due to a shifting of resources among programs resulting in a higher allocation to program services expenses (less unallocated overhead). Public Relations (PR) and marketing posted a 31% decrease year-on-year due to higher expenses incurred last year as the PR program was reinvigorated and due to initial expenses for PR and speaker training. Officers and Directors expenses fell very slightly, from $53k to $52k. Volunteers and Governance expenses posted a 7% decrease, from $16k to $15k.

ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND NET ASSETS

Our Statement of Position (balance sheet) as of February 28, 2017, also shows positive development. With respect to assets, our balance of cash and cash equivalents is up 30% year-on-year to $1,941k, compared to $1,470k. We have accounts receivable of $41k (previous year: $0). Prepaid expenses declined year-on-year from $42k to $39k.

Our investment funds saw a 59% increase to $524k, following the investment of excess cash, while our net property and equipment assets declined (from $137k to $99k) due to depreciation. Total assets improved by 33%, rising from $1,944k to $2,578k.

Our current liabilities posted a minor increase of just over 2%. These liabilities consist almost entirely of unearned dues. Deferred rent, the only non-current liability, rose 167% (from $43k to $113k) due to an early renewal of the lease and the related carryover of deferred rent from the previous lease.

Our net assets (equity) increased by 33%, from $1,944k to $2,578k. (See the two statements at the end of this report on page 9 for more details.)

MAJOR PROGRAM RESULTS

The overall trend for the first eight months of the fiscal year remains positive and encouraging. (See Figure 3.)

The Membership program has a net surplus of $1,062k year-to-date. The Annual Conference shows a net profit of $170k.

The “subsidized” programs continue to show progress as planned. Certification has a current net loss of $75k. The Chronicle’s deficit is $160k. Divisions posted a deficit of $82k. Professional Development’s net loss year-to-date stands at $21k, and the net loss on Publications is $55k.

Dues Increase: Based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics data for the CPI-U as of March 31, 2017, and in accordance with the Dues Policy adopted in 2015, there will be an automatic dues increase of $5.00 for an individual membership effective for 2018.

Investments: The Finance and Audit Committee approved the investment of $300k from our balance. In addition, the position in two mutual funds was closed and replaced by similar exchange traded funds.

LOOKING FORWARD

The net profit from the Annual Conference and the continuing positive development with respect to the deficits incurred in the “subsidized” programs are very encouraging. Absent unforeseen negative developments, I see no reason why the Association should not close out the current fiscal year in the black once more.
## Preliminary Consolidated Statement of Activities (with overhead distribution)
### For the Period of July 01, 2016 thru February 28, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Year-on-Year Change</th>
<th>REVENUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>$1,235,582</td>
<td>$1,220,570</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>126,490</td>
<td>136,395</td>
<td>-7.27%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>16,841</td>
<td>29,252</td>
<td>-42.43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>16,980</td>
<td>14,055</td>
<td>20.81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>3,778</td>
<td>3,392</td>
<td>11.19%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Revenue</td>
<td>9,020</td>
<td>16,473</td>
<td>-45.36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$2,470,412</td>
<td>$2,140,020</td>
<td>5.55%</td>
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### EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Services:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>201,447</td>
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<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>176,634</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>892,296</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
<td>83,876</td>
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<tr>
<td>Membership Services</td>
<td>173,656</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>37,655</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>58,618</td>
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<td>Total Program</td>
<td>1,622,212</td>
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<tr>
<th>Supporting Services:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries &amp; Benefits</td>
<td>175,280</td>
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<tr>
<td>General &amp; Administrative</td>
<td>148,903</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR/Marketing</td>
<td>16,492</td>
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<td>Officers &amp; Directors</td>
<td>51,790</td>
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<td>Volunteers &amp; Governance</td>
<td>14,536</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Supporting</td>
<td>408,961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Expenses      | $2,029,173           | $1,817,909           | 11.62%               |

### CHANGE IN NET ASSETS BEFORE INVESTMENTS

|                      | 441,239              | 522,711              | -15.59%              |

### Nonoperating Activities:

| Dividend/Interest   | 6,507                | 6,222                | 4.88%                |
| Realized (Loss) Gain | 23,488               | -                    | 0.00%                |
| Unrealized (Loss) Gain | (6,407)              | (21,555)             | 70.28%               |

| Total Nonoperating Activities | 22,588               | (15,333)             | 247.31%              |

### NET ASSETS - JULY 1, 2017, 2016

|                      | 384,582              | 507,378              | -30.58%              |

### NET ASSETS - FEBRUARY 28, 2017, 2016

|                      | $848,408             | $324,509             | 161.37%              |

## Preliminary Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
### as of February 28, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Year-on-Year Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
<td>$1,861,296</td>
<td>$1,428,526</td>
<td>30.29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts Receivable</td>
<td>41,460</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepaid Expenses</td>
<td>38,647</td>
<td>41,851</td>
<td>-7.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Current Assets</td>
<td>1,941,403</td>
<td>1,470,377</td>
<td>32.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INVESTMENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Funds:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>239,497</td>
<td>177,306</td>
<td>35.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Income</td>
<td>384,459</td>
<td>151,399</td>
<td>158.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Investments</td>
<td>523,926</td>
<td>328,585</td>
<td>60.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and Equipment</td>
<td>509,332</td>
<td>509,888</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less accumulated depreciation</td>
<td>(429,900)</td>
<td>(167,360)</td>
<td>113.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net property and equipment</td>
<td>99,432</td>
<td>342,528</td>
<td>73.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deposits</td>
<td>13,016</td>
<td>8,513</td>
<td>52.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>$2,577,771</td>
<td>$1,944,002</td>
<td>32.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS** |          |          |                     |
| **CURRENT LIABILITIES**      | 105,234   | 83,417   | 25.98%              |
| Deferred Accounts            | 1,511,294 | 1,495,206| 0.97%               |
| Total Liabilities            | 1,616,528 | 1,578,623| 2.40%               |
| **DEFERRED RENT - NONCURRENT** | 112,925   | 42,511   | 165.64%             |
| Total Liabilities            | 112,925   | 42,511   | 165.64%             |
| **COMMITMENTS**              |           |           |                     |
| **NET ASSETS - UNRESTRICTED** | 848,408   | 322,869  | 162.77%             |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets | $2,577,771| $1,944,002| 32.69%              |
Remote Interpreting: Feeling Our Way into the Future

Barry Slaughter Olsen

It was very interesting to read Barry Slaughter Olsen’s article in the May-June issue. I’ve just experienced the full impact of this change in my work as a medical interpreter. I hope my story can help explain why the change to remote interpreting has been viewed in a negative light so far in this field and how we can improve the situation.

Last February the health care network where I’ve worked for the past five years let 50 of my interpreter colleagues go. About 20 of our team remained. Only 10 of us were in full-time positions, since an interpreter was needed to cover each hospital and two interpreters were necessary to cover all the clinics in town. The rest of the work was left to phone and video remote interpreting.

I was probably one of the people left on the team because I’ve always promoted the use of new technology. At the clinic where I worked, I prompted nurses to use phone interpreters for all phone calls to patients. I was expecting the arrival of an iPad, hoping it could be used for the appointments that my colleague and I couldn’t cover, or so we could finally take some time off without leaving the clinic unattended. We also started discussing plans to implement telemedicine. I had also suggested the possibility of having us be able to work remotely, considering one of the clinic’s big challenges was the limited amount of space available.

When the health care network’s leadership implemented remote interpreting technology, it happened very swiftly. They didn’t ask for feedback from interpreters or providers, and they didn’t consider the differences in needs and requirements for each setting, like Mr. Olsen’s article very wisely recommends.

The implementation of remote interpreting capability turned out to be a fantastic development for many areas within the health care network. Adult clinics, for example, had language
access for the very first time. Speakers of languages other than Spanish suddenly had immediate access to an interpreter, no matter how rare the language, where before they had none.

Unfortunately, in other settings like pediatrics, the change has been short of catastrophic. For example, I was sent to a pediatric clinic to help relay a sensitive diagnosis to a mother. When I introduced myself to her in the waiting room, I was horrified when she told me she had been asked to bring a family member who could interpret for her. I immediately corrected this misunderstanding and contacted the manager. The manager was apologetic and said she had already talked with her staff. It turns out the providers were refusing to use the phones and video remote interpreting system, in part because of connectivity issues. The implementation had been so swift that there had been no time to test the technology before it started. The connection often dropped, not all rooms had phone jacks, there were dead spots in hospitals where the iPads didn’t pick up the connection, there were not enough phones and iPads, and the technical team was not prepared to deal with all the requests. However, these are all things that can eventually be fixed.

The most concerning reports were about the actual interpreting service. Even though the interpreting company contracted by the health care network had promised to hire certified medical interpreters, in actuality very few of them were certified. As a result, providers working in genetics started to complain about phone interpreters not being knowledgeable enough to handle the appointments smoothly. Providers in highly complex or sensitive clinics in the network also complained about interpreters not being adequately prepared. Another colleague observed a video remote interpreted encounter where the interpreter seemed very qualified, but was apparently based in Costa Rica and had trouble understanding the TexMex jargon and the cultural cues.

A nurse saw me as I was walking through the hospital and asked me to help with a hospital discharge. I encouraged her to use the phone or the video remote interpreting system, but she waived me off saying, “It’s ok. The patient speaks enough English and can help his mom.” Horrified, I ran after her to stop the nonsense. When I saw the patient, I blanched. I knew him. He was a patient from my old clinic who suffers from a mild intellectual disability. He had been interpreting the encounter.

These are only a few of the innumerable frightening stories I’ve seen during the past three months. In short, the difficulties for providers have been so great with the new system and the lack of quality interpreting that they find it more effective to “wing it” in Spanglish with the patients.

Why is this happening? The answer has nothing to do with resistance to new technology. It’s happening because there was no research and no consulting with interpreters and providers before implementation. It also seems that greed got the best of some interpreting companies, and rather than hiring certified interpreters, they’re hiring any bilingual individual because they can pay them less.

Technology is a tool. When used as such, it can help us accomplish great things within our profession. However, when technology is employed as a way of replacing human knowledge and expertise to save money, it can only lead to poor and often dangerous results.

While the leadership in the medical world figures this out, I recently handed in my resignation and have accepted a position as a translator with the local school district. I’m excited to go back to translation and return to the educational setting. Change is not only inevitable, but also nice once in a while.

Let’s welcome change and progress in our professions, but always on the basis of research and best practices. We should never lose the ultimate goal of guaranteeing smooth communication between our clients. The medical world will eventually figure out that technology should only be in the capable hands of certified interpreters. In the meantime, I can only hope that the translation world will handle the advances in neural network technology more wisely.

Melissa González | NBCMI-certified medical interpreter-Spanish | ATA-certified English>Spanish translator | Austin, Texas
Translating My Way Around the Periodic Table

At the end of 2016 I was invited to speak at the Spring 2017 National Meeting of the American Chemical Society (ACS) in San Francisco. With nearly 157,000 members, ACS promotes and supports chemistry and its practitioners. (For more information about the ACS, see www.acs.org.)

A freelance technical writer I met about 10 years ago at a prior ACS meeting invited me. She and I had kept in touch, being rare freelancers among chemists, and had met several times at various other ACS events. As symposium coordinator, she was looking for a diverse set of people who are chemists, write for their careers, and can speak in public.

Now, fast-forward six months. Several of the six speakers chosen for the symposium connected beforehand on Twitter and LinkedIn. We used the hashtag #chemistscanwrite before, during, and after the event to help promote the symposium, which was one of many taking place simultaneously across the city for the 18,917 people (!) registered for the national meeting.

I was able to explain what an association like ATA can do to help attendees and how subject matter experts can thrive as translators and interpreters.

In early April I found myself in the lovely Nikko Hotel in downtown San Francisco. Our symposium was called “Chemists Writing for Fun and Profit: Write Your Own Career.” The other speakers included a journalist, a blogger, a trainer, and published authors. The audience was a roomful of chemists from academia, industry, and government.

The title of my talk was “Translating My Way Around the Periodic Table.” Translating chemistry for a living was a novel idea to many in attendance, so my topic appeared to grip the room. Making assumptions based on the accents of those asking questions and the contacts I made afterward, I think that a substantial portion of the audience was bilingual.

When preparing my talk, I knew I needed to establish some fundamentals, as translation and interpreting would not be well understood by the majority of those present. The format I came up with appears to have worked and would be applicable to almost any technical field. Here it is:

- I established my credibility as a chemist (gave a short biography).
- I set out some fundamentals about translation on a single slide. (I used ATAs resources for School Outreach at the college level for inspiration: http://bit.ly/ATA-outreach-college.)
- I explained the nature of the business (freelancers, agencies, end customers, limited in-house work) and a little about being self-employed.
- I talked about the benefits of being a member of an association, using ATA and the Northern California Translators Association, the local ATA chapter in California (www.ncta.org), as examples.
- I talked about the credentials that can help us stand out in an industry with no barrier to entry, specifically those I have: ATA certification, SDLs certification program for Studio and similar tools, and being an MITI (a qualified member of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting).
- I then used real-life examples to show how much broader the range of chemistry I translate is than the narrow areas to which practicing chemists tend to be exposed: everything from standard operating procedures for pharmaceutical manufacturing to adhesive datasheets to patents for photovoltaic cells.
- I concluded by stating that I was very fortunate to have a freelance career that I love and tied that up with some thoughts on the symposium’s theme that “chemists can write” for a living.

The first questions were just as you might expect: “Where did you get your first jobs?” “How do you price translation?” For me, the answer to the former is ProZ.com, so I explained online marketplaces. Regarding pricing, I talked about per word/hour/job pricing and explained the norm for the bulk market and then what can happen over time if you move into the value-added market. Attendees also asked about my business name and other aspects of branding as a self-employed person.

Overall, I feel that speaking at this event resulted in an increased awareness of translation and interpreting as a career for professionals with a very specific skill set. In addition to those in the room, many of the attendees had followed the #ACSSanFran Twitter feed and seen tweets about my talk. It was also encouraging to see supportive tweets from ATAs Public Relations Committee at the same time, using the event hashtags #chemistscanwrite and #ACSSanFran.

I enjoyed this opportunity to promote translation and interpreting as a profession and to familiarize people with the importance of what we do. I was also able to explain what an association like ATA can do to help them and how subject matter experts can thrive as translators and interpreters.

The comment that stood out to me most from my experience came early in the morning, when I was introducing myself to one of the other speakers. “Wow, that’s amazing. You can do that for a living?”

Why yes, yes I can.
Recap of the Colorado Translators Association’s Seventh Annual Conference

A late April snowstorm couldn’t keep people’s spirits down during the Colorado Translators Association’s seventh annual conference!

More than 80 language professionals braved a spring snowstorm to attend the Colorado Translators Association’s (CTA) seventh annual conference, held the last weekend of April in Boulder, Colorado, at the stunning National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) building nestled against the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The theme for this year’s conference was “Change your mindset—grow your business.” The three-day event of ATA’s Colorado chapter drew speakers and attendees from across the U.S. and beyond, and offered a variety of educational sessions for both beginning and experienced translators and interpreters.

The weekend kicked off Friday, April 28, when 19 attendees took ATA’s certification exam at the conference venue. While most exam candidates opted to take the computerized version, several candidates preferred to stick with the handwritten exam, which is always an option.

The exam sitting was followed by a casual happy hour sponsored by CTA at Backcountry Pizza, a popular Friday evening hangout in Boulder. This was a good opportunity for attendees and speakers to catch up with old friends and make new acquaintances ahead of the main conference.

CTA was delighted to host many out-of-state and international attendees this year. ATA President-elect Corinne McKay, a longtime CTA member, opened the conference with a heartfelt welcome speech that energized the audience. Corinne noted that two CTA members—Jane Maier and Karen Tkaczynk—are currently serving on ATA’s Board.

“CHANGE YOUR MINDSET—GROW YOUR BUSINESS”

In keeping with this year’s theme, keynote speaker Sameh Ragab presented an inspirational talk on how freelance translators can adopt a winning mindset to help them gain a competitive edge. Sameh, an international speaker and industry trainer who traveled all the way from Cairo, Egypt, had presented at CTA’s sixth annual conference. He received so much positive feedback that CTA’s board decided to invite him back. Sameh shared personal insights and experiences that have helped drive his own business success. He also gave attendees a teaser of what to expect during his scheduled full-day workshop on Sunday.

There’s no doubt that CTA’s members are the backbone of this small but mighty ATA chapter!

After the keynote, attendees chose from a program of 12 breakout sessions that covered such topics as marketing, website development, subtitling, conflict resolution, copyright, and tax deductions. For interpreters, CTA offered a three-hour workshop on handling emergency room situations, as well as a session on intercultural mediation in health care. The following is a brief sampling of what attendees learned during the weekend.

Finding Your Unique Selling Points (Presenter: Tess Whitty): A unique selling point is the reason people do business with you and not someone else. Tess presented five practical tips on how to find and define your unique selling points, plus how to use them to find and contact translation buyers.
CTA’s board of volunteers worked hard to pull together a conference that would offer attendees the most for their money.

Love Letters from the Field: How to Manage Feedback without Losing Your Cool (Presenters: Steve Lank and Victoria Mendoza): Managing client feedback effectively can be tricky, but how we do it can make or break a relationship. However, since much of the feedback we receive is subjective, responding in a way that’s respectful yet authoritative is critical. Using real-life examples, Steve and Victoria demonstrated techniques for approaching this often unpleasant task in a way that allows communication to remain professional and productive.

Take a Walk on the Client Side! How to Better Understand Your Client and Be a Great Partner (Presenter: Lynnette Wennerström): When it comes to clients, have you ever asked yourself, “What are they thinking?” During her presentation, Lynette offered a peek into a client’s mindset and provided tips on how to manage the client-supplier relationship more effectively.

Panel Discussion: Change of Venue (Presenters: Karen Williams, Eve Bodeux, David Russi, and Rachel Sinn): The panel discussed their experiences spending extended periods as working professionals in their source/target language countries of Germany, France, and Spain, and how that has refreshed their cultural, linguistic, and professional outlook.

Translators worldwide often struggle to educate clients on the benefits of paying for professional translation services as opposed to using a bilingual employee or a free machine translation service. Karen, a German>English technical translator who worked onsite with a client in Germany, shared a compliment she received that resonated with attendees: “Anyone can become a microbiologist, but what you do is amazing.” Enough said.

Saturday’s events concluded with a reception at NCAR, giving speakers and attendees a chance to mingle. As an added bonus, attendees also had the opportunity to purchase signed books by Tess Whitty, Eve Bodeux, Corinne McKay, and Izabel E.T. de V. Souza. In addition, Tess and Corinne generously offered raffle prizes for the conference. Two lucky attendees won a chance to improve their business with the help of professional training from these renowned industry experts.

The board was delighted to see many new faces among the enthusiastic group of attendees. There are already plans afoot to make the 2018 conference even better!
Can Competency-Based Education Enhance Translator Training?

The growing demand for qualified translators highlights the importance of effective translator training. Whereas many academic programs deliver uneven results, competency-based education provides a promising framework for more consistent outcomes.

How do people become translators? What do effective translators need to be able to do? Do academic translator training programs do a good job of teaching such skills? If not, how might they be improved or reconceptualized? As a university professor who engages in translation work and teaches courses on the subject, I spend a lot of time thinking about questions like these, particularly now that more and more of my department’s students are expressing an interest in the translation option of our foreign language major. Fortunately for them, the language services industry is expanding and the demand for qualified translators is on the rise. But the question remains: How can we maximize the effectiveness of university translator training programs?

While planning a presentation on this topic for the 2017 conference of the Mid-America Chapter of the American Translators Association (MICATA), I decided to start by asking attendees what they thought we should be teaching. After all, who better than professional translators to identify the competencies needed for success in their industry? As I continued to plan the presentation, I realized that translator training might be a good fit for another topic I’ve been researching for a while: competency-based education.
At first, attendees seemed a bit surprised that a university professor was asking them what he should be teaching. But before long a robust discussion had broken out, with attendees eagerly sharing their thoughts about what it takes to be an effective translator. Many expressed interest in identifying competencies and helping with other program design aspects by continuing to collaborate online after the conference. The discussion I started at MICATA—and hope to continue with readers of this article—centers on the following question. With its emphasis on teaching and assessing real-world skills or competencies, could CBE have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of translator training?

THE PATHWAYS TRANSLATORS TAKE

Any discussion of the need for better translator training should take into consideration how people actually become translators and what kind of training they receive along the way. Although there are as many pathways into the profession as there are translators, I think it’s possible to condense most kinds of experiences into two broad training and professionalization routes we might call the “proficiency plus circumstances” and the “formal training” pathways.

Graduates of the “proficiency plus circumstances” pathway are individuals with advanced proficiency in two languages—often bilingual immigrants or heritage speakers—who at some point decide to try their hand at translating or interpreting. What begins as a couple of favors or sporadic jobs develops into regular freelance work, a new source of income, and an expanding professional network. Although “proficiency plus circumstances” translators bypass formal training, they nonetheless learn through on-the-job experience and professional development programs. This certainly describes my own experience. I developed proficiency in Spanish by living abroad before earning advanced degrees in Spanish and becoming a university professor. Despite never having taken a course in translation, I received plenty of requests to do translation and interpreting jobs. I began teaching a course on translation at my university and worked for several years as a Portuguese→English translator for a large Brazilian investor relations firm. Eventually, I discovered MICATA and ATA, and this contact with working professionals has made my teaching much more industry-focused.

By contrast, graduates of the “formal training” or academic pathway undergo a good deal of classroom training. They typically start out as college students who decide to major in a foreign language. Some of these students take a translation course or two, while others—perhaps concerned about post-college work prospects—complete minors or undergraduate certificates in translation. A handful go on to complete master’s degrees in translation or translation studies. At various points along the way, these academic-track translators-in-training begin the process of professionalization, mixing paid jobs in with class projects. While some end up in careers unrelated to the languages they love, others join the ranks of the language services industry, putting the quality of their academic preparation to the test.

DO TRAINING PROGRAMS MAKE THE GRADE?

The fact that many talented, hardworking bilinguals have followed the “proficiency plus circumstances” pathway into successful translation careers appears to call into question the very need for formal training. However, all translators—including those with strong natural language aptitude—can benefit from academic training as long as it’s truly effective. Whether existing academic translator training programs serve candidates well is an open question. Without a doubt, some programs do, in fact, offer up-to-date curricula, focus on real-world skills, and assess those abilities reliably. Many others, however, are less effective than they could be.

Drawbacks common to many university-level translator training programs—be they master’s programs or undergraduate majors, minors, or certificates—include:

- Having been cobbled together from existing courses, meaning that they’re not designed “from the ground up” to produce qualified translators.
- Including too many courses that have nothing to do with translation or translation-related issues.
- Overemphasizing theoretical aspects and literary translation while neglecting real-world domains (e.g., medicine, law, business, and technology).
- Relying on instructors with limited real-world experience and industry familiarity.
- Failing to recognize the skills candidates already possess, or not granting credit for prior learning.
- Taking a long time to complete, which increases cost.
- Assessing students’ ability to perform real-world tasks unevenly.

Again, not all programs have these kinds of shortcomings, most of which reflect limitations inherent to traditional approaches to higher education. Often, program designers with the best of intentions are impeded by institutional policies or departmental politics. But conditions in higher education...
are changing in ways that favor new approaches. As education costs skyrocket, students are increasingly concerned about the alignment of academic programs and the demands of the job market. Savvy foreign language departments are realizing quickly that business as usual—lots of literature and culture classes—is a recipe for dwindling enrollment and program cuts. All this as the demand for qualified translators is forecast to increase sharply.

In such a context, competency-based training approaches have the potential to be an effective and efficient means of producing qualified entry-level translators. A well-designed CBE model might successfully avoid many of the drawbacks of traditional university-level programs by:

- Involving industry professionals in the development of competencies to ensure that what programs emphasize are up to date.
- Using backward design principles to build programs focused on relevant learning goals.
- Using rigorous assessments to reliably determine what candidates are able to do in real-world contexts.
- Focusing instruction and learning activities on topics that prepare students for assessments.
- Recognizing skills incoming candidates have already mastered to reduce the time it takes to complete the program.
- Allowing students to move through at their own pace, potentially reducing costs.

AN INVITATION TO COLLABORATE

Academic translator training programs still have a place, but we owe it to the students we’re training to ensure that they’re focused on the linguistic competencies and professional dispositions they’ll need to be successful as they begin their careers. One of my purposes in writing this article is to invite readers to come together to help me “crowdsourced” the contours of a sound competency-based translator training program design. This may sound like a complicated and lofty goal, but I believe it’s attainable and that this kind collaboration has the potential to produce remarkable results.

If you’re with me, the first step in our collaboration will be to identify general program-level competency clusters, such as language proficiency, theoretical concepts, business and marketing know-how, technical writing skills, and indispensable “soft skills.” The next—and possibly most important—step is to break these down into specific competencies—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions candidates must demonstrate to receive a credential. Once these have been established, we’ll move on to identifying or creating the assessments candidates will complete to demonstrate mastery of each competency. Finally, we’ll work together to identify meaningful sequences of learning materials and activities.

I understand if you’re skeptical or if you just can’t take on one more volunteer project. But if you’re interested in being a part of this experimental program design project, I welcome your help. To participate in the first phase, simply email me at jasjol71@gmail.com and indicate the email address you use to access shared documents on Google Docs. Once everyone who wants to help is on board, we’ll get started. I hope this overview of competency-based education has been helpful, and I look forward to working with you soon.

With its emphasis on teaching and assessing real-world skills or competencies, could competency-based education have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of translator training?

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Project-Based Internships Bring Return on Investment

If you want your company values to include embracing responsibility, collaborative effort, caring, high standards, respect, and empowerment, you must not limit an intern to mundane and inconsequential tasks.

“I’m researching the benefits and drawbacks of two terminology extraction methods for a language services provider.” This is not what we might expect to hear a student say when we ask what they do at their internship. But this sort of meaningful project is exactly what experiential learning—the kind of learning that takes place in a practicum experience—should entail.

An internship shouldn’t be about getting coffee. It shouldn’t be paper shredding or scanning documents. It shouldn’t be odd jobs, menial tasks, or repetitive actions like passing out water bottles or collecting time sheets. And the worst-case scenario—which is unfortunately all too common—an internship shouldn’t be about doing almost nothing because the agency didn’t prepare in advance for what the internship would entail, who it would support and affect, and who would take the time to provide training and feedback.

Such activities generally don’t constitute experiential learning. Furthermore, assigning little to no work, menial work, or inconsequential work paints the picture that your organization doesn’t value purposeful tasks, planning activities, and everyone’s time in the same way. If you want your company values to include embracing responsibility, collaborative effort, caring, high standards, respect, and empowerment, you must not limit an intern to mundane and inconsequential tasks. You should also pay your interns, although some might not agree with this.

Here I’ll describe my company’s unique project-based approach to an internship program, explain how project-based internships add value for an organization, and list some of the challenges to overcome implementing such a program.

RECRUIT AN INTERNSHIP DIRECTOR/MENTOR

The key to leading a project-based internship program is the internship director/mentor. This is the individual who listens to the needs and strategic direction of various stakeholders to better identify potential projects within the organization.

At Avantpage, my role is continuous quality improvement. This role extends to various areas of the organization, including operations, vendor management, sales, and administration. I have a finger on the pulse of these sectors, which allows me to listen to the needs and desires of each area and determine potential projects.

Every organization is different and the ideal director/mentor may have a distinct job role in various companies, but the key point is to identify the person who communicates on a regular basis with all areas of the organization. One of the benefits of establishing an internship program is that the appointed director/mentor has the opportunity to learn about a variety of roles, responsibilities, and activities within the organization, which cultivates appreciation and empathy across departments. Such employee cross-training has been recognized as essential to a flexible workforce and an element of agile management.

In short, the director/mentor must understand the value each department brings to the entire group and learn about concrete activities, strategies, and processes in each department to create a well-defined project and coherent set of activities for the internship.

ESTABLISH AN INTERNSHIP CYCLE

Once you have a director/mentor in place, the second step for developing a project-based internship program is to establish the internship cycle. This cycle usually depends on the academic calendar of the
local universities from which you recruit interns. In our case, the local university uses a 10-week quarter system, which means we begin our internship cycle about 10 weeks before the academic quarter begins. Our entire cycle lasts 20 weeks. Thus, we’re always planning for the next internship simultaneously while overseeing the current one.

There are five phases to our internship cycle:

- **Project development**
- **Recruiting, interviewing, and scheduling**
- **Onboarding**
- **Training, daily mentorship, evaluation, and feedback**
- **Transition**

**Project Development:** In the project development phase, the director identifies a need or desire in a particular area of the organization and collaborates with individuals in that area to create an appropriate project for the intern. For example, for one internship project, I listened to the people involved with vendor management discuss the need to train translators and layout specialists on what elements make a piece more or less comprehensible and how to measure the reading level of a document. I collaborated with vendor management to determine the scope of the training materials to be researched and developed. I also had one person commit to serve as a subject area expert who would work with the intern on these materials.

I then created a syllabus for the internship with input from the area expert in vendor management. The syllabus included the contact information for human resources, the mentor, and the subject area expert. It also listed the objectives for the internship (that the intern could take to their university advisor), expectations, a project overview, a calendar, and timeline.

**Recruiting, Interviewing, and Scheduling:** I then turned to human resources for the recruiting, interviewing, and scheduling phase. We collaborated to create the recruiting announcement for a readability intern, which was posted at the internship centers of local universities. The human resources department also set up interviews so that the vendor manager and I could interview the three finalists.

**Onboarding:** Like the recruiting, interviewing, and scheduling phase, the onboarding phase relies heavily on the expertise and processes of the human resources department as the intern is brought on as an employee. There is evidence to suggest that greater proactivity and productivity are correlated to greater attention being placed on employee socialization. In other words, interns feel more accepted and valued when they’re accorded the same attention as other incoming employees.

**Training, Daily Mentorship, Evaluation, and Feedback:** The bulk of an internship involves constant planning, training, and assessment with feedback. For example, when we brought on an intern who cleaned up our sales leads database, we had already identified smaller units within the larger project, such as merging duplicate sales lead entries and annotating leads by industry and specialization. I organized initial training sessions with our marketing team for each of these subunits and designated area experts to be available in case the intern got stuck or had questions. For daily mentorship, I had a five-minute conversation with the intern at the end of each day, where I asked her to summarize what she had learned. Finally, I gave her consistent feedback during these conversations, as well as more formal input at the end of each subunit.

**Transition:** The final stage in the internship cycle is the transition stage, in which the intern prepares to leave the organization. Most importantly, this is when the employees who stand to benefit from the work accomplished prepare to make use of the information produced. For example, one of our interns was tasked with comparing manual glossary creation with automatic term extraction. The report she produced at the end of her internship wouldn’t have been of much value had there not been a plan in place for how to use it after her departure.

To facilitate this transition, the intern wrote a final reflection and a handover document. The final reflection benefits both the intern and the organization. In this case, the intern produced a summary of her activities that she could take to her university advisor. We were left with information such as the dates of the internship and a description of the project, along with the documents produced during the project. The handover document often contains links to files or screenshots demonstrating what was accomplished and where to find the fruits of the labor. Thus, when our glossary comparison intern left, we knew exactly where to find her report and could immediately make value-adding decisions on whether manual or automatic term extraction made sense for various localization projects.

In each of the examples above—the readability internship, the sales leads internship, and the glossary internship—there is a common set of criteria: a well-defined, short-term, value-adding, mutually beneficial set of coherent activities centering around a single topic, theme, or goal, with training, evaluation, and feedback built in. These interns...
provided a product, report, knowledge, or improvement that our organization could use. As a result, the intern had a clear role within the organization by completing an entire project. This is why we call this style of internship either a role-based or a project-based internship.

**CHALLENGES**

I’ve focused on the positives in project-based internships, but I also want to point out challenges with this program.

**Project Design:** One of the biggest challenges is the brainstorming and project design that takes place before an intern is interviewed. The project development that emerges from within the organization that doesn’t originate from top management is crucial to bottom-up cultural change. This is key if your organization is aligned with a philosophy of bottom-up change.

For us, the benefit of overcoming this challenge is that many processes at our organization have been defined and modified as a result of our internship program. These include training processes in readability, glossary building, and inbound marketing strategies for attracting ideal freelancers to join our team.

**Cost:** Another challenge is cost. The cost of paying an intern is relatively low compared to the cost in terms of the time required for preparation, training, mentoring, and evaluating. This is why creating a value-adding project is necessary for a return on investment. If an intern produces something the company doesn’t use, or if the intern fills a position that’s better suited for a long-term part-time employee, the company will not experience a return on investment for the preparation, training, and mentorship required for success.

**Stakeholder Commitment:** Finally, one of the biggest challenges in this system is getting the stakeholders involved to commit. That means identifying the person who will be the director/mentor and having the networking competence to also gain a commitment from the subject area experts who stand to benefit from the project. Having these experts on hand is important to help develop, train, and evaluate the work of the intern. Modeling this kind of teamwork to interns is a great way to brand your organization as a learning organization.

**INTERNSHIPS CREATE A REWARDING COMPANY CULTURE**

Language services providers rely more heavily each year on a flexible workforce that demands a rewarding company culture. Engaging employees in committing to support an internship program cultivates pride in their work and provides an opportunity to reflect on their role within the organization (“What is it that I do here? “What’s the big picture?”). In addition, the cross-training that occurs as a result creates an agile workforce. Finally, the partnerships that language services providers develop with universities are equally important ways to invest in the community and connect to a pipeline of future employees who may arrive already having contributed meaningfully to the industry during a project-based internship.

**NOTES**


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Expanding Your Business: Genealogical Translation

The genealogical translator acts as a historical sleuth, using language and cultural knowledge to aid those trying to unlock the clues to shed new light on old documents.

Genealogical translation is a growing market niche that supports the popular pastime and profession of tracing ancestors. Like many other specializations, genealogical translation demands a special skillset that can only be developed through study and experience. However, you’ll find the hard work will pay off with opportunities in a rewarding and academically intense field.

Genealogy and Genealogical Translation

Genealogy is defined as a research field employing the practice of “accurately reconstructing forgotten or unknown identities and relationships.” Genealogy is a growing profession. In addition to tracing ancestors for their clients, genealogists can serve important business and legal needs. For example, attorneys working on heirship court cases often call in genealogists to prove family relationships and search for missing heirs. Governments seek the assistance of genealogists to help locate relatives of soldiers killed in action or to identify unidentified remains using DNA and more traditional genealogical methods (e.g., military and hospital records, personal letters).

What ties the branches of the genealogical profession together is the need to uncover relationships through analyzing evidence drawn from documents, personal recollections, artifacts, DNA, and more. Key to this analysis is the ability to understand the historical conditions and context in which the source document was created. Even more basic is the need to be able to read and understand the languages in which these documents are written. For U.S. citizens tracing their roots, it doesn’t take long before the research jumps to the “old country” and to a foreign language. This is where the genealogical translator steps in.

Genealogical translation involves the translation of historical and modern-day documents, such as records pertaining to birth, marriage, divorce, and death, as well as court records, deeds, academic records, and more. The work of the translator might also extend into research, such as searching foreign-language websites and communicating with foreign archives, parishes, and libraries. The genealogical translator can provide a simple translation of a historical document, such as a birth or baptismal record, or a more detailed analysis. For example, why and how was the document created? Is it typical of the time and place in which it was recorded? Does it include boilerplate language? Are there any peculiarities that make it unusual? Are there any clues, such as notes in the margin, which would lead the researcher to other documents? In this sense, the genealogical translator can often serve as a research guide.

An Example

Figure 1 shows an example from a book of church records with clearly written French script. Note that there are several records on the two-page spread, some apparently written by different scribes. French readers will observe the formulaic or boilerplate language (e.g., signatures, titles, or phrases that are reused throughout the document).

Figure 2 on page 22 shows an image from an older French church book that’s very difficult to read due to its condition. It’s included here as an example of the type of nearly illegible document a translator in this field might encounter. Trying to read a document is particularly difficult when viewing it on microfilm or as a digital image, as is the case with the document shown in Figure 2. Being familiar with the formatting of historical documents and recognizing boilerplate language (e.g., “I, the undersigned priest…”) will serve the translator well when attempting to decipher the writing contained within. For
example, by observing the writing in the left margins of the document in Figure 2, the translator will note that there are several records on each page. The writing in the margins indicates the type of record, such as a baptism, and the name of the person. Fortunately, the dates of these records are included in each entry in this document, and some are even legible (e.g., mil six cent quatre-vingt douze, or 1692). In such cases, if the date is unknown or illegible, a skilled translator might be able to estimate a broad timeframe based on the handwriting and prose style.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?
Genealogical translation requires intensive study, but skills can be sharpened by focusing on a few key areas.

Language Competency: A thorough knowledge and level of fluency in the chosen language is an obvious necessity. Also important is a targeted understanding of additional languages that might be included in historical documents. For example, Italian records might include Latin, the language of the Catholic Church. These records might also include French or Spanish, the languages of nations that once occupied parts of Italy. If written during times of transition, the records might include a mix of all three languages. Building a word list in these languages will help the translator with the task at hand.

Historical and Geographical Knowledge: Shifting boundaries can greatly affect the documents in terms of how they’re written and where they’re kept. For example, France currently has 101 jurisdictional districts called departments, including its foreign territories. The number of departments has varied over time, meaning the translator will need to know in which department to search during the time the document was written. This extends to France’s foreign holdings. For example, the Department of Gênes no longer exists. It covered Genoa and its surrounding area in what is now Italy. Genoa and the Liguria area were taken by Napoleon in 1805 and remained part of France until his defeat in 1814. Many of these records—mostly written in French, but sometimes in a mix of French and Italian dialect—can be found in Genovese and Italian archives.

Paleography: The ability to read handwritten, difficult-to-read script is a must for every genealogical translator. Scripts vary greatly depending on the time period in which the record was written, but also depending on the scribe. A good practice of genealogical translators is to study the scribe’s handwriting (if possible). For example, if the translator is working on a baptismal record, the record might also be found in a book of baptisms that’s accessible online or on microfilm. Viewing several entries will help the translator with difficult words or letters, or to clarify abbreviations. Abbreviations and symbols were often used to save space on expensive paper, and to save the scribe’s time. A genealogical translator will often follow a scribe over time, learning his style through the years of service.

Genealogy Standards: Much of the genealogy field adheres to some sort of standards in research and reporting. Many follow guidelines outlined in Genealogy Standards, a book published by the Board for Certification of Genealogists. Many of these standards apply to translators, such as the need for source citations (Standards 1–8), the requirement for the careful handling of images and original materials (Standard 20), and the necessity to read handwriting correctly, which is a given in the translation field (Standard 23). Following these standards will help ensure that the client receives a quality product.

WHERE DO I LOOK FOR TRAINING?
Training for genealogy research is plentiful, including intensive programs through Boston University, Excelsior College, Brigham Young University, and the University of Strathclyde. (Please see websites listed on page 23.) Learning
institutes, such as the Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy and the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh, and conferences, such as the National Genealogical Society Family History Conference, offer quality genealogical training. Paleography, word lists, and genealogy lessons are also available online through FamilySearch.org and The National Archives U.K. In addition, FamilySearch offers paleography tutorials in many languages. (See Figure 3.) You can also search for paleography books in your language.

Volunteer work can also provide helpful experience and education. National or local genealogy, historical and cultural organizations, or libraries may offer opportunities to practice reading and translating old documents. FamilySearch, a website offering free access to millions of genealogical records, has a well-organized program in which volunteers can index records online, spending as little or as much time as they desire. Choosing records in your language of study can help build your skills.

WHERE DO I FIND CLIENTS?
The Association of Professional Genealogists is one of the organizations that offer member directories where you can list your specializations. Consider joining or at least looking for professionals who may need translation help. Many embassies and consulates also maintain lists of interpreters and translators. Those seeking citizenship or dual citizenship through these offices may need assistance in translating their vital records.

CHALLENGING BUT REWARDING
Genealogical translation can be a challenging and rewarding specialization. Clients can range from those wanting to learn more about their ancestors to attorneys searching for heirs. Formal and/or self-education are important to building a deeper understanding of the documents. Learning the paleography of various time periods will help, as well as reading multiple examples from the same scribe, if possible.

### Old German Type and Handwriting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roman Type</th>
<th>German Type</th>
<th>German Script</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aa</td>
<td>Aa</td>
<td>Aa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vv</td>
<td>Vv</td>
<td>Vv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ww</td>
<td>Ww</td>
<td>Ww</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3:** One of the many language-specific paleography tutorials available online from FamilySearch (“Research Guide, Handwriting Guide: German Gothic”).

### NOTES

### RESOURCES FOR GENEALOGY TRANSLATORS

#### TRAINING
- **Boston University**
  https://genealogyonline.bu.edu
- **Brigham Young University**
- **Excelsior College**
  http://cpd.excelsior.edu/genealogy-courses

**Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh**
www.gripitt.org

**Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy**
https://ugagenealogy.org

**University of Strathclyde**

**PALEOGRAPHY, WORD LISTS, AND GENEALOGY LESSONS**

- **FamilySearch**
  www.familysearch.org
- **The National Archives U.K.**
  www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography

WHERE TO FIND CLIENTS
- **Association of Professional Genealogists**
  www.apgen.org

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Bryna O’Sullivan works as a French-English genealogical translator and professional genealogist specializing in Connecticut, Luxembourg, and U.S.-Canada research. He has a BA in French literature from Tufts University.
Interview with Besim Nela, Former War Zone Interpreter

Throughout the history of mankind, interpreters have been present when individuals, tribes, races, and nations have had to communicate across language barriers. Of all the different scenarios in which interpreters have to work, surely the war zone must be among the most challenging. Those who interpret in legal, medical, business, and community situations can only imagine what it must be like to work while bullets are flying, bombs are exploding, and people are dying. My guest this month, Besim Nela, has been there and done that.

Besim is originally from Kosovo, in southern Serbia, a landlocked area in the central Balkan Peninsula. Historically, the Balkans, in southeastern Europe, were on the trade routes between east and west, and have always been a crossroads where cultures, religions, ethnicities, and languages have been thrown together, not always with peaceful results. The region has been in a state of turmoil for generations. Since the end of World War II, it has been torn apart by armed uprisings and civil wars that have played havoc with national borders and resulted in the slaughter and displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

In June 1999, NATO stationed a peacekeeping force in Kosovo. The British army was part of that Kosovo Force (KFOR), which was charged with establishing and maintaining security during the hostilities and humanitarian crises of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Besim worked as an interpreter with the British army in Kosovo for two years (1999–2001).

Besim, let’s get a little background. Where did you grow up?
I grew up in Lipjan, a city not far from Prishtina, in Kosovo.

According to your résumé, you speak English, Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Serbo-Croatian. Where and how did you learn these languages? Which one is your native language?
My native language is Albanian. I learned Serbo-Croatian in school as a second language. I learned Macedonian when I spent a year in Macedonia (south of Kosovo) in my very early teens. Bosnian is pretty similar to Serbian. When I came to the U.S., most of my friends here were Bosnians, so I was able to learn the language quite easily. I started learning English in elementary school and then took English as a second language (ESL) for about a year at Goodwin College in Connecticut, just after I arrived in the U.S. in April of 2002.

Did you go to college here, other than taking the ESL course at Goodwin?

What kind of work are you doing currently?
I’m a manager for a company called Novitex in Windsor, Connecticut. I work there at night, and during the day I interpret and translate in the Connecticut court system for an agency called Language Link.

When and where did you become an interpreter? What made you decide to do that?
I became an interpreter when NATO troops came to Kosovo in 1999. I needed a job and the pay was really good.

Did you become a translator at the same time?
No, I didn’t start translating until 2015, here in the U.S. I took the translating and interpreting classes that the agency I work for provides. I also took online classes, but I also taught myself.

Tell us about your experience interpreting with the British army in Kosovo. Were you a soldier or a civilian working with the military?
I was 18 years old when I started working for the British army. The KFOR unit was stationed close to where I lived, which is why I signed up for work there. The army was looking for people who could speak English, and I was picked to help soldiers with language issues in the field. I was a civilian, but I became a contractor for the army when I got the job.

I was stationed at a camp called Elizabeth, which was in Lipjan. I stayed on the base in private quarters with the other interpreters when they needed me, but most of the time I lived at home because it was just a five-minute walk from the camp.

At first it was all about getting a job because work was difficult to find since the war had done so much damage to my country. But it didn’t take long to realize the dangerous nature of the assignment. We were provided with a bulletproof vest and helmet, which we were required to wear at all times because of the risks involved.

I accompanied British soldiers into mine fields and interpreted for Serbians and civilians who had lost family members. Because I was very familiar with that part of the Balkans, I knew the traditions and understood the ethnic divisions. It was because of this knowledge that I was also used as a map reader.

At that time, my interpreting colleagues and I had just started to feel alive again after having lost everything in the war. We had an opportunity to work, make
a living, and help others as well. It felt great. It was the only job I’ve ever had where I couldn’t wait to show up the next day. When they called for me, I ran to work even though it was dangerous.

**Were you in a pool of interpreters who were called on randomly, or were you attached to a particular group of British army personnel with whom you worked on a regular basis?**

It depended. Anyone from army personnel could call on us as needed, but most of the time we were assigned to a group of soldiers when they went on patrol or went to defuse landmines and bombs. After a year in the field I ended up interpreting for officers, generals, and peacemakers at meetings.

**Tell us about a “normal” day in the life of an interpreter in that war zone. What sort of missions were you sent on? Were you in danger at any time?**

On a normal day, I would go to work and joke around with the soldiers while waiting for my orders. We went out on patrol on foot or in cars. I was mostly assigned to places where landmines had been detected, and my job was to tell civilians to clear the area until the bomb or landmine had been defused and warn them to stay away from those areas at all times. I was also supposed to try to find out more information from civilians and interpret between them and the bomb squad specialists, who were called Gurkhas. I was working close to them. Yes, we were in constant danger.

**Was it a “day job” in the sense that you went somewhere during the day, then returned to your base at night? Or were you sometimes gone for days at a time?**

It was mainly a day job. We would go somewhere for a few hours, come back to have lunch, and then go out again. There were also times when we went to other cities for two or three days and then came back to base.

**What sort of situations required your interpreting services? Were you interpreting for civilians who had got caught up in the fighting? Were they adults, children, or both? Did you interpret for enemy soldiers during debriefing or interrogation? Or at meetings of**

Of all the different scenarios in which interpreters have to work, surely the war zone must be among the most challenging.

**some kind? What sort of conversations were you required to interpret?**

I interpreted for all sorts of situations, mostly for adults. I was interpreting for civilians who got caught up in ethnic fights, protests, robberies, and other threatening situations. This kind of interpreting was done in the open and was not confidential. But I also had to interpret for enemy soldiers during debriefing and interrogation, mostly for the war crimes tribunals. I was also called to interpret at meetings between generals, officers, soldiers, and community members of different ethnicities. These meetings were very confidential.

**Which of your languages did you use most frequently?**

I used Albanian, Serbian, and English most of the time.

**What was your status in the eyes of the enemy forces? If you were a civilian, was that respected, or were you considered an enemy soldier, regardless?**

My status was that I was a member of the KFOR unit, even though I was a civilian. That was respected most of the time, but there were instances when I was considered an enemy soldier or interpreter. It depended on the situation and on whether people were being accused or if we were there to help them.

**Were you ever captured by enemy forces?**

No, I was never captured, and I never heard about any other interpreters being captured at that time. We were pretty safe in that sense because we were with soldiers.

**Given the ethnic diversity of the Balkans, what sort of resources did you have at your disposal when faced with unfamiliar terminology? For example, were you able to consult with fellow interpreters or do research online? Was there a “library” of some kind at your base camp?**

Yes, we could consult with fellow interpreters if we got stuck. We used to ask each other about words that were new to us. Different interpreters were good in different areas, and we learned from each other every day. You could say that we had a class after our shifts, when we would stay late and talk to each other about that sort of thing. There were no libraries or online research options, but we had dictionaries with us at all times that we could use if needed.

**ATA’s Code of Ethics** expects translators and interpreters “to convey meaning between people and cultures faithfully, accurately, and impartially.” The commentary on the code explains that, “impartial translation and interpreting requires the translator or interpreter to adopt a mantle of neutrality.” **In the heat of battle, on the front lines of a war zone, what sort of situations did you encounter that challenged your commitment to that mantle of neutrality?**

There were times when I felt angry about certain situations, but when it came to interpreting and doing my job, I did the best I could to interpret faithfully and accurately and tried my best to be neutral. I was there during the war in the 1990s. I remembered our neighbors shooting at
ANNOUNCEMENT

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OUR WORLD OF WORDS continued

us as my family and I ran for our lives, hoping and praying their bullets wouldn’t hit us. So, later on, it wasn’t easy to be neutral when I had to interpret for those same neighbors and the KFOR soldiers. I knew I was there to interpret for these individuals, not to judge, but keeping all that straight was very difficult. I learned more about how to remain impartial as time went by.

**What was the most challenging aspect of your job as an interpreter with KFOR?**
The most demanding part of being an interpreter for KFOR was having to experience and feel what soldiers and peacekeepers go through. To make sure I interpreted accurately, I was also learning more English every day, every hour, while trying to improve myself in every way.

**How did your assignment come to an end? Did your tour of duty expire? Did you decide you were ready to move on?**
The sad part was the British KFOR forces were stationed in Kosovo for only two years. Their main focus was landmine eradication rather than other tasks. When their tour or contract ended, they were replaced with KFOR troops from Finland. However, the replacement troops favored the enemy side, the minorities as they were calling them. My colleagues and I were no longer being treated as we had been by the British, so we all left and moved on. Some went to work for other agencies such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, International Rescue Committee, or the police department as interpreters. I took my savings and opened a restaurant in Lipjan. I worked at it for a year, which was a complete change of lifestyle.

**What did you learn from that assignment that helped you later on in other interpreting or translating jobs?**
I’m not really sure because I stopped interpreting for a while after the assignment ended. I started interpreting again once I came to the U.S., but it’s different over here. You have the opportunity to take classes and learn more, you can work remotely online (which is easier), and you can become a certified interpreter or translator, or be screened for work in the courts. The experience doesn’t feel the same. Perhaps it’s because interpreting under dangerous conditions made it more challenging for me. I loved taking risks.

**Looking back, do you miss any part of that assignment?**
I miss every single day of that time and every assignment. It was a dream job. That was the best time of my life.

**What was the most memorable incident during your time with KFOR?**
I can’t think of anything in particular, but I do remember my first flight in a helicopter. We were trying to cheer up some kids whose village had been burned. The soldiers took the kids for a ride and I was assigned to accompany them. The kids enjoyed it, but my stomach didn’t.

**How would you compare your experience in Kosovo to what interpreters are currently facing in the Middle East?**
I would say my experience was pretty similar, except that interpreters now probably have more options to search for terminology online and learn more that way. As far as the danger is concerned, it’s hard to tell. I would say that interpreters in the Middle East are probably in more danger.

**What advice do you have for translators or interpreters who might sign up to work in a war zone?**
My advice to them would be to follow all the rules, be accurate, be faithful, be safe, try to interpret as fast as you can, and do your best to be neutral.

**Many thanks, Besim, for this interesting perspective on the role of the interpreter in unusual circumstances.**
Translators without Borders is a nonprofit organization based in the U.S. that “aims to close the language gaps that hinder critical humanitarian and development efforts worldwide.” The organization maintains a global network of professional translators who volunteer their services to provide aid in humanitarian crisis response. The efforts of TWB are worthwhile mentioning in more than one respect, but sticking to the theme of this column—translation technology—I’ll report on exactly that in relation to TWB. But first, here are some numbers that may illustrate the far reach of TWB.

There are presently over 4,000 registered translators worldwide in the TWB Workspace, a platform where a wide range of nonprofit and aid organizations approved by TWB can request translations, and where TWB translators can accept and deliver the work on a pro bono basis. There is also a much smaller group of “rapid-response translators” registered on the site. (The platform was developed and donated by ProZ, but you can still use Workspace even if you’re not a ProZ member.) TWB works in approximately 190 language pairs and has translated 43 million words so far (10 million in 2016). Some of the hot spots in which TWB has been involved include the European and Burundian refugee crises, the earthquakes in Nepal and Haiti, the typhoon in the Philippines, and the Ebola and Zika outbreaks.

I talked with Mirko Plitt, who joined TWB as the head of technology in June 2016, about what technology TWB is using and why things in that area may have been moving a little more slowly than if the organization were a commercial entity.

Mirko says that for years TWB worked like a non-governmental organization (NGO), rushing from crisis to crisis, each with a different set of parameters and requirements. This resulted in essentially no time to stop and streamline technological efforts, even with the basic tools that many of us take for granted, such as a shared translation memory.

The efforts of Translators without Borders are worthwhile mentioning in more than one respect, including those related to translation technology.

It wasn’t that solutions were unavailable. In fact, many translation technology companies had offered free access to their technology (“free” as in “no monetary compensation,” but not necessarily in “no public relations benefits”), so it wasn’t finances that stood in the way. Instead, the organization needed to hire a dedicated specialist (who turned out to be Mirko). This person would not necessarily be subject to the ongoing operations, but would be specifically in charge of developing the technological framework for translation and other language-related tasks.

This is where things stand at the moment. Mirko has developed Kató, which is a customized version of the same system on which Matecat is based. (Kató is named after Kató Lomb, one of the first simultaneous interpreters.) This system was chosen because: a) it was open-source and, therefore, customizable without having to rely on the technology vendor; b) it was easy to use without the need for specialized training; and c) it could be used by virtually anyone, professional translator or not. Kató, in connection with the TWB Workspace, now enables partners (TWB lingo for NGO clients) to upload translatable documents in MS Word, PowerPoint, OpenOffice, and text formats. (A project manager has to be involved for other formats.) Translators in the right language combination accept and translate the documents while using the language resources of MyMemory (a mixture of contributed translation memory resources, aligned materials, and machine-translated data), if those are available. They can then store and share translation memory data with other TWB translators in an otherwise private translation memory.

Since the documents are often too large for individual translators to work on, they can be split into as many parts as desired. Translators working on different parts of the documents can communicate with each other through a chat feature. Editors (or other personnel) can work on the documents simultaneously, allowing for a very quick turnaround of often mission-critical information.

These are not TWBs only recent technological achievements. It has, for instance, been involved in the development of a glossary app that consists of audio snippets in various languages that can be used by aid workers. (These snippets can be recorded within Kató.) An application programming interface (API) for Kató was published so that it can be integrated into other systems. In addition, TWB recently launched machine translation systems for Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) and Sorani (Central Kurdish), which are the main languages for Kurdish refugees. I was particularly intrigued with the Kurdish machine translation solution. Neither of those languages had existing workable
offline solutions, so Prompsit, a language technology company, took three weeks to prepare an open-source rules-based machine translation system (Apertium) and prep it for the training of Kurmanji and Sorani. The company then guided 10 Kurdish translators for a week via Skype for the data and rules entry.

Can we expect great results from that engine? Linguistically speaking, I would say likely not. But from a humanitarian perspective? No doubt.

There are other aspects aside from humanitarian that I found meaningful when talking to Mirko. As Mirko noted correctly, the technological gap between languages has increased even more just this year. Neural machine translation has propelled languages that are deemed as “more important” into a territory that seems unreachable for the other 99+% of languages. It’s organizations like TWB who try to give some of those languages a technological underpinning that they’re unlikely to get elsewhere.

If you’re interested in contributing your talents to TWB, you can find information about becoming a volunteer right here (www.translatorswithoutborders.org/volunteer).

**Jost Zetzsche** is the co-author of *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*, a robust source for replenishing your arsenal of information about how human translation and machine translation each play an important part in the broader world of translation. Contact: jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.
Skeptical Hippos and a Paradigm Shift

A few months ago I had the chance to speak at the wonderfully organized BP17 Translation Conference in Budapest, Hungary. (According to the conference website, BP stands for business practices.)

Having been asked to give one of the main TED-style talks, I settled on just a few image-based slides to discuss how to convince clients that you’re worth every penny. One of the most popular slides featured an image of a skeptical-looking hippo with the appropriate caption “skeptical hippo.” I used it to illustrate the type of client who cannot be convinced of your value as a translator or interpreter, no matter the price or situation. I’d like to suggest that we spend very little time on skeptical hippos when negotiating with clients. Instead, we should focus our efforts on those clients who can be convinced of our value with a strong argument—the one linguists often forget to present during the negotiation process. Allow me to elaborate.

At some point in our careers we’ve all met skeptical hippos. These are mostly direct clients who:

- Have somehow gotten stuck with pricing and implementing a translation or interpreting project, but would rather be doing something else.
- Think translation and interpreting are unnecessary.
- Think that everyone should just speak English.
- Have many more important things to do.
- Think they would be excellent at doing the translation themselves because they studied in Spain during their senior year in college, but: a) don’t have the time, b) were told by their boss to hire a professional, or c) find that their Spanish is just a “little bit too rusty for this manual on hydropower and its applications.”
- Think they should spend zero dollars on this project.
- All (or a combination) of the above.

Does this sound familiar? I bet it does. I’ve had quite a few of these clients throughout the years, and what I’ve learned is that no matter the argument, you usually can’t convince them. The usual arguments we’ve presented are: our impressive credentials, certifications, translation or interpreting experience, recommendations from clients and colleagues, subject matter expertise, etc. While these are all very worthwhile and should be mentioned, they have, in my experience, not been enough to convince the skeptical hippo. Thus, in many cases it’s probably best to just send in your price quote. When the skeptical hippo reacts along the lines of “That’s outrageous! I thought it would be 75% cheaper than this! I could do this myself!” you thank them politely for their interest and move on.

Instead of focusing solely on our qualifications, let’s focus the client’s attention on the revenue that their company is more than likely to make thanks to language services.

As entrepreneurs, time is the only resource we truly have. This means that every moment we spend convincing potential clients of our value when it’s already quite clear they can’t be convinced, we’re blocking ourselves from using the time to work on lower-hanging fruit: clients who can be convinced with an economic argument. Some of these skeptical hippos might be so skeptical that they think we should pay them for the privilege of working for them. (I can almost see some of you nodding in agreement as you read this.) Now, what’s that one argument we oftentimes forget to use to convince clients we are worth every penny?

You see, potential clients frequently consider translation or interpreting as a straight cost, which makes sense. They have to spend their money to get these services from us. However, sometimes the person who has been tasked with pricing and implementing a translation or interpreting project has failed to consider that translation and interpreting services are an investment in any company’s future. (Usually someone higher up on the chain of command realizes this.) For a company to grow—even American companies who have a large market share in English-speaking markets—they have to look at markets abroad. And foreign markets mean foreign languages, which is where we come in.

So, I suggest a paradigm shift when it comes to having conversations with clients about the value of translation and interpreting services. Instead of focusing solely on our qualifications, let’s focus the client’s attention on the revenue that their company is more than likely to make thanks to language services. Remind potential clients that language services are an integral part of their international growth strategy. They only have to invest in, say, the translation of a brochure that one time to reap the rewards of reaching XYZ potential new customers in markets they have not been able to reach previously. Now that’s an economic argument everyone at any company in the world, regardless of size, business model, or target markets, understands—except for the skeptical hippos, that is.

Judy Jenner is a Spanish and German business and legal translator and a federally and state-certified (California, Nevada) Spanish court interpreter. She has an MBA in marketing and runs her boutique translation and interpreting business, Twin Translations, with her twin sister Dagmar. She was born in Austria and grew up in Mexico City. A former in-house translation department manager, she is a past president of the Nevada Interpreters and Translators Association. She writes the blog Translation Times and is a frequent conference speaker. She is the co-author of The Entrepreneurial Linguist: The Business-School Approach to Freelance Translation. Contact: judy.jenner@twintranslations.com.

This column is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors. Ideas and questions should be directed to judy.jenner@entrepreneuriallinguist.com.
since the release of my video on the language requirements for interpreters in the United Nations (UN), I’ve been contacted by many aspiring interpreters with questions that are more or less the same.

Basically, they want to know whether they qualify, and they also wonder what else they could/should be doing to merit consideration as a future UN interpreter. At some point in their messages, they’ll offer their own elaborate plan to learn this and that language and travel to this and that place.

The latest of such emails—and by far the most gracious—came from Hai, a young man from China/Singapore. After passionately sharing his benign obsession for languages in general and for interpreting in particular, he outlined his game plan:

I have a strong mastery of both English and Chinese (I grew up bilingual), took a good amount of French and a little bit of German in college, self-studied Japanese and Korean, and have been trying to beat the unfamiliar Cyrillic script into my head (…) One of my personal goals in life is to master six languages, although I know that is more my ambition speaking than cool-headed thinking.

Note that in one paragraph Hai tries to squeeze all six languages he believes he’ll need to break into the UN, plus Russian as a backup. While I fully understand and sympathize with his desire to have it all (haven’t we all been there?), the irony is that as far as the UN is concerned, Chinese and English is all he would ever need (to qualify as a Chinese interpreter).

Hai’s approach springs from a skewed yet popular notion that more languages—even non-UN languages—may somehow compensate for a less than ideal mastery of the few that do count.

**THE ABC SYSTEM**

What Hai and many others fail to realize is that working as an interpreter for the UN—whether as a freelancer or staff interpreter—requires specificity. Regardless of how good you are as an interpreter, you’ll only be considered if you understand and adapt to the specific language requirements of the job.

In the high-end conference environment of multilateral organizations such as the UN, the European Institutions, and the Bretton Woods organizations, you’re only supposed to interpret into your native languages. The ways in which you can use the other languages under your belt varies, in greater or lesser degree, according to a number of factors. To better grasp this concept, one first needs to understand the ABC system of language classification used in professional interpreting circles:

- **An A language** is usually the language you were born into (a.k.a., your native language). It could also be your main language of schooling, if your education—from high school and beyond—was completed in a different language. It’s a language you totally master and can use confidently and correctly in formal or informal settings. A few interpreters will have two A languages.

- **A B language** is a language you understand and speak fully, but which is still a foreign language to you nonetheless. It’s usually a language you learned in school or through on-off interactions and experiences in a foreign linguistic and cultural...
environment. For use in the booth, a B language must be one you speak impecably. It’s a language you can interpret from as well as into (under certain circumstances).

A C language is a language you understand, but one you’re not fully comfortable speaking. C languages are usually numerous, and in time it’s easy for interpreters to increase their repertoire of passive languages. These are languages one will interpret from, but never into.

In interpreting, less is usually more. And the reason is simple: focus! To excel as an interpreter, you need to tell the core from the fringe, sort the wheat from the chaff. Only after you’ve discarded what you don’t need can you commit all you have into whatever is left. And believe me, to excel at that level, it will literally take all you’ve got.

That need to focus continues to hold true when it comes to choosing your working languages. You’ll need to increase your knowledge and vocabulary exponentially in the languages upon which you rely in the booth. In that context, it would be wise to limit their number. At least while you’re trying to get your foot in the door at the UN.

Now that number will vary depending on the booth you’re targeting. For example, to qualify as a staff English booth interpreter in the UN setup, you must have either Spanish or Russian as a passive language (i.e., C-level), in addition to French. The same holds true for French booth interpreters (in this case, with the addition of English). This is done in an effort to minimize relay, the system whereby interpreters will interpret from other interpreters if they don’t understand the language spoken on the floor.

Now, as a future Chinese interpreter, our good friend Hai will only need two active languages to qualify as UN material: an A-level Chinese and a B-level English (or French). The same can be said of Arabic interpreters. They need a native command of Arabic and a competent, strong command of either English or French. Adding a few more passive UN languages would certainly help and make Hai more versatile, but this isn’t a requirement.

SOME ADVICE

With that in mind, the advice to Hai, and others facing a similar dilemma, is to take the easy route:

Flex your Chinese and English muscle exclusively for some time, until you qualify as a Chinese interpreter.

If you’re more comfortable in English, then you’ll need to polish your French and hammer that Cyrillic script twice as fast into your skull. Few pleasures compare to the joy of being able to converse, read, and interact in beautiful and complex languages such as Korean, German, and Japanese. Yet as non-UN languages, they will do little to nothing in helping you materialize your dream.

Finally, do invest in that master’s degree. Long gone are the days where self-taught interpreters could easily break into the big league. Look for a reputable school and give it your best. Not only will you learn new things, you will also enlarge your circle of influence, guaranteed.

Finally, dear Hai, do forgive me for using your message and concern publicly to make a point. Rest assured nothing in my message is meant to discourage you. On the contrary. Frankly, with your drive, it won’t be long before you become a UN interpreter in your own right.

See you in New York. Or Geneva, for that matter.

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NOTES

The SDL AppStore is a hub for the latest third-party apps designed to enhance translator productivity. With more than 300,000 downloads and 33,000 users, the SDL AppStore has quickly become a resource for translators, reviewers, and project managers to find and download apps that complement SDL software. The SDL AppStore is a free and open platform.

Paul Filkin has worked with SDL since 2006. As a client services director, his main focus is helping users of SDL technology get the most from their investment and providing advice to anyone who needs it. He started the SDL Community forums for translators, and has continued to build on this by creating communities of like-minded users so they can benefit more from sharing their experiences directly in an environment where SDL can most effectively get involved. For the past few years he has been working with a team focused on supporting developers who wish to work with the application programming interfaces for the SDL Language Platform. He also maintains the multifarious blog (https://multifarious.filkin.com), where he addresses many of the practical issues faced by translators and translation companies when using SDL translation technology. I had the opportunity to exchange a few emails with Paul to discuss his work with the SDL AppStore.

Can you give us a short timeline of the SDL AppStore (formerly OpenExchange)? Can you also tell us what SDL hoped to achieve with it and whether it met that goal?
The OpenExchange was launched in 2010 with SDL Trados Studio 2009. It provided five basic application programming interfaces (APIs) that allowed developers to create applications/integrations. (For those unfamiliar with term, APIs enable programs to communicate with each other.)

The old Trados applications were integrated into the workflow of many companies to such an extent that migrating to SDL Trados Studio would have been impossible without the ability to do something similar with the new Studio platform. But we also wanted to try and create a better platform that developers and users could employ to extend their use of our products. APIs are key to this.

It’s been an interesting journey and we’ve learned a lot about how to support a platform like this. Not just in terms of making apps available, but in being able to properly support the developers who use the technology to create solutions for themselves, their companies, and for the SDL AppStore.

It’s a journey we’ve not completed and it evolves constantly, but I think we’re seeing really positive results, both for us and our customers. So, yes, I think we’ve met our original goal and I’m really proud of how SDL has allowed it to evolve in such an open way. I think the work we’ve done in this area has played a large part in the transformation of SDL. I believe that today we’re seen as an open company with a mission to support the needs of our customers. This platform is key to delivering on that mission.

Now, here’s a brief timeline of the implementation of the SDL AppStore:

■ The SDL OpenExchange was launched in 2010 on translationzone.com with five APIs.
■ The first SDL app to be published was SDL TTX It! The first third-party app was Excelling MultiTerm by Kaleidoscope.
■ We hit 10,000 unique AppStore users around March 2013.
■ In 2014, we started the Developer Experience Team outside of SDL core development so we could properly support third-party developers, maintain apps developed by SDL, and continue to grow what we started.
■ We reached 100 apps in May 2014.
■ With Studio 2014 we introduced the Integration API, which allowed developers to customize the user interface and create completely new features that could run within Studio.

The AppStore is not only for language solutions.
We ran a developer competition in the summer of 2014. By June 2014, we reached the milestone of 100,000 unique downloads. By the end of 2014, we had 20,000 unique users.

In 2015, the Developer Experience Team created a custom library to simplify development in SDL Trados Studio. This helps novice developers get started and reduces the coding effort for more experienced developers.

We provided two more APIs in 2016: the Terminology API and Batch Task API.

We then ran an app idea competition in the summer of 2016 (the winner was SDL Analyse) before reaching more than 30,000 unique AppStore users later that year.

OpenExchange was renamed SDL AppStore as we extended its use to support more of SDLs product offerings.

We had 214 apps and exceeded 300,000 downloads at the end of May 2017.

The most popular app to date is the Glossary Converter, with almost 19,000 downloads.

In 2017, the Developer Experience Team created and released a custom library to simplify development with SDL Trados GroupShare.

Can you give us an idea of how many apps are presently offered on the SDL AppStore versus how many apps have been developed for private use?

It’s worth noting that the SDL AppStore is not only for language solutions. We probably have almost as many apps available for our content management solutions as we do for language. SDL is committed to supporting the API ecosystem, and this means the AppStore, open source, and API lead development in general. In terms of language solutions, as of April 2017, there were 210 apps available on the AppStore. We’re also approaching 300k downloads.

The apps consist of various kinds of solutions: some are fully integrated into the products, some are standalone tools, and some are integrated with other types of products. The reason I make this distinction is that the only apps we know about for sure are the plugins developed for private use, because we sign them electronically for our customers to remove the warning message when Studio starts.

There are over 1,000 developers who have signed up to be able to work on apps that could eventually be offered on the AppStore. This doesn’t account for the fact that access to the APIs and the software development kit (SDK) are free. In addition, there’s actually no need to sign up unless you intend to see your apps published on the AppStore. This is why knowing exactly how many apps have been developed for private use is pretty hard to determine. We used to require all developers to sign up to get access to the APIs, but we decided this was a barrier to growth. We wanted to make this process as simple as possible for developers.

So, coming back to your original question, I can tell you that I’m aware of almost 200 plugins that we’ve been asked to sign electronically for private use.

The SDL AppStore is something I see as a natural progression for any API strategy once you have a sufficiently large user base sophisticated enough to take advantage of it.

Are there any success stories of developers who’ve been able to make developing and selling apps into a profitable offering?

This is another tricky one for us to answer. It’s important to note that this is not a profit-making scheme for SDL. We provide the APIs as a value-added service and our website is primarily set up to serve free applications. There are around 44 paid apps available on the AppStore. In most cases, the developers actually redirect traffic to their own websites, where the sales are completed. So, we don’t really know how successful they are. We also see some developers creating solutions that they sell only on their own websites, such as Kaleidoscope. In these cases, I think there are some developers who have been more successful than others at making this a more profitable exercise. The biggest difficulty is that the majority of our users won’t pay additional money for apps, so it’s not really a high-volume business.

Another important point to make is related to the motivation for creating apps in the first place. In regards to the apps on the AppStore, the prime motivation isn’t money. Many people do this for exposure and to showcase their skills, and some just like to develop and solve problems. In particular, I believe there’s a high degree of satisfaction to be gained by solving a problem that other users have mentioned from time to time. Jesse Good (a “translator by day and coder by night” in Japan) is a very good example of this, and many of his apps have come from discussions on the SDL Community forums (e.g., CleanUp Tasks, Copy Tags, and Target Word Count). In fact, the most downloaded app of all time, the Glossary Converter, is an app we would have loved to integrate into our products at some point, but the developer enjoys giving back to the community and has no intention of selling it or handing the source code over to us. He sees this as a way of being a part of the wider freeware community that he has been able to benefit from over the years.

Coming back to motivation, we also regularly provide contact details for third-party developers when we’re asked by our own customers how they can create solutions for things. The most common requests are custom file types and integrations to content solutions. For example, we see requests for bilingual XML, where the customer wants a content management system (CMS) that exports/imports bilingual XML. We also have some particularly large customers who regularly employ third-party developers to work on integrations for an intriguing array of database systems, ranging from pure document management to alternative translation memory systems and terminology solutions.

I don’t know if I would say these are success stories, but in addition to the work most of these developers already do in project management, translating, and general consultancy, I think the SDL AppStore has provided more strings in their bows! Perhaps one more interesting
example is where a freelance translator who did a little programming in college took advantage of the APIs in Studio. In just a short period he became quite an expert on machine translation and how it could be used in conjunction with translation tools. So much so that after a couple of years he transitioned from freelance translating to a full-time programming role with Amazon!

Are there apps that have made it into the next version of Trados Studio? Has the success of apps influenced the course of development of the next version of Trados Studio (or MultiTerm)?

I like the idea of the SDL AppStore being an extension of the product and providing the user with some choice, rather than bloating it with more and more solutions that we thought were good ideas. We generally don’t see apps making it into the core product, but there are a few exceptions.

A good example would be AnyTM, which solved a problem our user base had been forced to work around since the early Trados days. You probably recall the days when you tried to add your English (U.S.) translation memory (TM) to an English (Great Britain) project, but received a message that the languages didn’t match. Now, any TM overrides this and allows you to use “any TM” you like! This app became part of the product with SDL Trados Studio 2015.

Another example would be InsertSymbols, which makes it much easier for users to enter non-standard symbols and accents without having to use ALT codes or have a custom keyboard installed. It’s probably worth noting that the developer in both cases was actually an SDL developer. He was motivated to look for solutions to things being discussed on the SDL Community forums that would not fit into the wider strategic work he did in his day job.

In terms of apps that influence the course of development, that’s harder to say. The core development teams tend to work on larger and more strategic projects. Most apps don’t deliver the sort of functionality we would take and put into the product. But if I were to go out on a limb, perhaps the Glossary plugin was influential in guiding the teams toward providing a solution for termbase creation in Studio. There are also solutions like SDL MultiTerm Workflow, which is a rebranded QuickTerm provided by Kaleidoscope and built on top of MultiTerm Server. Here the work delivered was so comprehensive that when we looked at creating our own solution it really made more sense to partner with Kaleidoscope, which is what we did.

Why do you think other translation tool vendors have not followed suit? While many have APIs, there are no developers who have a comparable AppStore or who are proactively selling the idea of developing third-party tools.

I think the simple answers are either that they don’t see the value in this—and I can recall listening to the negative views of some of our competitors on this several years ago—or that the effort required to support an infrastructure like this is too great. Many of our competitors do have APIs, but there is a world of difference between the capabilities and variety of features available through the APIs for the SDL Language Platform and those in our competitors’ products. I think some of the cloud-based tools have pretty good representational state transfer (REST) APIs, but when it comes to the desktop tools, SDL is significantly more capable. With all the API documentation, SDKs, and sample applications freely available on the web, we’re also able to allow a developer to create their integrations without talking to us at all.

You have to be prepared to support the developers who wish to use this platform. Once you open it up, the resource requirements to support it are not to be taken lightly. We’ve introduced an open-source policy for the apps we develop in-house and made this available to anyone. We also created a developer community that provides a great way of bringing people together to help each other. This community also helps us engage with our users and to continually evolve the platform we offer. I think many translation tool vendors probably don’t have this to the extent SDL has.

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

Paul Filkin is a client services director for SDL Language Technologies, where he has worked since the end of 2006. His main focus is helping users of SDL technology get the most from their investment. He can be seen regularly on Twitter, the SDL Community forums he created, and on many of the public forums providing advice to anyone who needs it. More recently, he has been working with a team focused on supporting developers who wish to work with the application programming interfaces for the SDL Language Platform. He also maintains a blog addressing many of the practical issues faced by translators and translation companies in using technology for their work (http://multifarious.filkin.com). Contact: pfilkin@SDL.com.

Jost Zetzsche is the co-author of Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World, a robust source for replenishing your arsenal of information about how human translation and machine translation each play an important part in the broader world of translation. Contact: jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.
What’s Cooking in ATA’s Certification Program

ATA’s Certification Committee and language chairs met for their annual meeting on April 22–23, 2017, in Alexandria, Virginia. (Each exam language combination has a language chair administering the passage selection and graders. ATA currently offers testing in 28 language combinations.) The meeting took place in conjunction with ATA’s Board of Directors meeting. Here are some highlights of what we discussed and what’s in store for the future.

Computerized Exam: One Year and Counting! We just celebrated the first anniversary of the computerized ATA exam, in which candidates bring their own laptops to the site, where they can type their translations and use online and computer-stored databases for research. ATA has held 15 computerized sittings for 199 candidates since April 2016. Chances are there’s a computerized exam coming soon to a site near you!

Exam Candidate Survey: If you’re planning to take a certification exam in the near future, there’s a new feature in the registration process—a short survey that asks the following questions:

■ What is your A language? (Your most proficient one: usually your native language)
■ What are your B/C languages? (Other languages you translate/interpret to or from)
■ Have you taken an ATA practice test? If not, why?

The purpose of the survey is to gather data that might help predict success on the exam.

New Policy for Lapsed Certification: If you have ever been ATA-certified, you probably recall the requirement of submitting 20 continuing education (CE) points every three years to maintain certification. In the event that a certified translator “lapsed” (i.e., did not submit the required CE points and/or discontinued ATA membership), the previous policy was that submitting 20 CE points (and rejoining ATA, if applicable) was sufficient for reinstatement, regardless of the length of time certification had lapsed. The Certification Committee has revised that policy. Now, if certification has lapsed for less than three years, submission of 20 CE points is still sufficient, but if more than three years have passed since the last accumulation of 20 CE points, the individual needs to take the certification exam again. This policy will take effect on January 1, 2018, so if you fall into the “lapsed” category and want to maintain your certification status, be sure to send in your CE credits before the end of this year.

Earn CE Points for Participating in the Buddies Welcome Newbies Program: In case you’re looking for more ways to rack up those CE points, the Certification Committee has decided to award points for those who volunteer to be “buddies” in the Buddies Welcome Newbies program at ATA’s Annual Conference. For those who don’t know about this program, it’s a mutually rewarding networking opportunity in which “newbies” (first-time attendees) are paired with “buddies” (seasoned attendees). The program is designed to help first-time attendees get the most from their conference experience. Watch for more information about the Buddies/Newbies program on ATA’s conference website as this fall’s conference approaches (www.atanet.org/conf/2017).

Language Chairs Training: The annual grader training for language chairs also took place April 22–23 in Alexandria. More than 60 graders attended from virtually all existing language groups (plus a few up-and-coming ones). Sessions covered a wide range of topics, such as how to keep graders motivated, intersections and purposes of error categories, and the mission of candidate preparation.

Into-English Grading Standards (IEGS): The exam candidate preparation mission includes providing candidates with specific information about what graders are looking for. Toward that goal, there is a set of standards that graders use for marking exams translated into English. That document is quite broad in scope, extending over 50 pages. ATA’s Certification Program now has a dedicated group that is revising and condensing the IEGS to make it a handier reference tool—and one that can be consulted even during computerized exams. The new version will be posted on ATA’s website once it’s ready and approved.

Emerging IT Needs: The language chairs meeting in Alexandria also included a brainstorming session to discuss possible solutions for streamlining processes, including sending exams to graders, marking exams, tabulating results, reporting results to ATA Headquarters and candidates, and assembling a digital database of completed exams for future analysis.

Look for more updates from ATA’s Certification Program in future issues of The ATA Chronicle!
At the National Security Agency, translating a foreign language is not just an academic exercise. It is a critical step in keeping our nation safe.

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- Arabic
- Chinese
- Farsi
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