HOW TO DEAL WITH QUESTIONS DURING A TRANSLATION PROJECT
Building Upon a Strong Foundation

In addition to living on the West Coast, where sailing is a major pastime, I also share a similar experience with many of my neighbors of having built my own home. The process is not for the faint-hearted, and you have to live with the decisions you make along the way—literally. But the basic framework of a house is an excellent metaphor for how ATA is structured and how we operate.

At the very bottom, often buried underground, lies the foundation. The foundation is a robust structure that supports the entire house. Designing the foundation often requires careful foresight to establish the right balance of flexibility and durability to support the rest of the house.

In ATA, our bylaws serve as the Association’s foundation. The bylaws set forth how the organization is structured, including various types of members, frequency and organization of meetings, and the rules governing the Board and certain committees.

Because a foundation is cast in concrete, modifying it is a highly complex and labor-intensive operation that should not be undertaken lightly. Likewise, changes to ATA’s bylaws are made relatively rarely, roughly every two to three years, and require a two-thirds majority of votes to pass. The last round of bylaw revisions added term limits to Board members and altered the name and charge of the Active Membership Review Committee.

On top of the foundation sits the actual framing for the house. The framing maps out the individual rooms, such as the living room, dining room, or the bedroom. While the framing may be dictated to a certain extent upon the foundation, it provides for a fair amount of creativity to design a house that will be enjoyable to live in.

The equivalent analogy of the framework within ATA includes our policies and procedures. ATA’s policies and procedures are used to establish many of our various programs and specify how they will run. And while it’s much easier to make changes to the framing of a house rather than the foundation, living in a house that is perpetually under renovation isn’t a lot of fun. Likewise, ATA’s Board of Directors reviews our various policies and procedures thoroughly and adjusts them carefully and deliberatively based on the conditions and developments within the Association and outside of it. Recent procedures established by the Board include the Credentialed Interpreter designation in the website database, the creation of the keyboarded certification exam, and processing member resolutions, among others.

On top of the house is the roof, which helps protect the framework and the foundation. Without a strong roof, the entire structure is vulnerable to decay and potentially to collapse. This is particularly the case on the West Coast, where they say there are essentially two seasons: “raining season” and “staining season.”

The analogy to the roof for the Association involves the surrounding legal and financial protection for the Association. ATA operates in a U.S. legal and economic environment with the accompanying emphasis on liability, lawsuits, and legal opinions. For the same reason that many residents of the West Coast choose metal roofs for their durability, we have been fortunate over the past 20 years to be working with a legal team that specializes entirely in association law with an excellent track record to prove it. We also work with an excellent accounting firm to ensure that our financial stability and compliance with regulatory requirements is rigidly upheld. Our financial auditor recently described our financial procedures as “exemplary” and a model for other associations.

When built with care, consideration, and clarity of purpose, a house can stand for generations. Likewise at ATA, which has been in existence for over 50 years, the careful consideration of the delicate interplay between our bylaws, policies, and our surrounding environment will ensure many more years of success for the Association.
12
How to Deal with Questions During a Translation Project
What can translators do to ensure a project goes smoothly from start to finish? Well, one of the best and most straightforward things you can do is to ask the client some questions.

16
Crafting the Perfect Pitch: A Comprehensive Guide
Of all the ways to market your skills, getting an article in a publication or posted to a blog your clients will read is my all-time favorite method.

19
The Embassy Translator Revisited
What do embassy translators do and how do they contribute toward carrying out the mission of a foreign embassy in the U.S.?

24
Transitioning from Student to Translator
Here are a few tips to help you navigate the vicious circle of not being able to get work without experience and not being able to get experience if you can’t get work.
FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT
CORINNE MCKAY
corinne@translatewrite.com
Twitter handle: @corinnemckay

Study Day: Looking at the Big Picture

In addition to serving as the conference organizer, ATA’s president-elect traditionally organizes the Board’s annual Study Day. Each year, we add an additional day to our January Board meeting to step back from nuts-and-bolts topics and look at bigger-picture issues affecting ATA and the language industry as a whole. We then use those discussions to guide ATA’s priorities throughout the coming year.

As a Board, our role is to guide ATA’s strategy. That’s an important distinction, because the Board doesn’t handle implementation of that strategy: we create it, and our Headquarters staff, supervised by our Executive Director Walter (Mooch) Bacak, then implements it.

Ahead of our 2017 Study Day, all Board members completed an online survey to get a general overview of the Board’s assessment of the Association and the industry. We looked at questions such as:

- What are ATA’s most and least successful programs, services, or roles?
- What makes those programs, services, or roles so successful, or less successful?
- In 2016, what was ATA’s biggest accomplishment? What was our biggest missed opportunity or failure? How can we build on that accomplishment or prevent that missed opportunity in the future?
- What should ATA’s top priority for 2017 be, and why?

During Study Day, we broke into small groups and talked about some of the pressing issues facing ATA.

During Study Day, we broke into small groups and talked about some of the pressing issues facing ATA.

members, and international members. We discussed what these constituencies contribute to ATA, what benefits ATA can offer them, and what benefit they bring to ATA. We also looked at voting rights within ATA: should they be tied to certification? Years of membership? Open to all members?

Finally, we looked at two issues that affect the language industry as a whole: what is the role of machine translation in our industry, and how will it affect ATA’s members in the coming years? And, what is, or should be, ATA’s advocacy role within the language industry. How much time, money, and energy should ATA allocate to advocacy efforts? How can we sustainably engage our members on this? Should we collaborate with other groups in doing this?

Following these roundtable discussions, we did a strategic planning exercise called “Start, Stop, Continue.” Each Board member made a list of programs, services, or roles that ATA should start to work on. Then, because we can’t just keep adding things to our plate—we have to take some away to make room for the new—everyone made a corresponding list of programs, services, or roles that ATA should stop working on. Finally, we made a “keep doing what we’re doing” list, of programs, services, and roles that ATA should continue working on. To conclude the exercise, every Board member wrote their top pick for each category (stop, start, continue) on a flip chart, and we all “up-voted” our favorite items. This exercise generated a list of the most pressing items that participants suggested we should stop, start, or continue doing.

To round out the day, Treasurer Ted Wozniak gave a very helpful presentation on reading our financial statements and related documents that are included in every Board meeting book. We then closed by looking at the full spreadsheet of feedback from our members that we received in 2016. You’ve probably been asked—on our ataTalk forum or through a division or chapter listserv—for your feedback ahead of a Board meeting. Not only do we set aside time during each meeting to post this feedback for all Board members to see, but we look at the bigger picture and trends in feedback during Study Day.

I left Study Day feeling energized and excited about the possibilities that lie ahead, for ATA and for the language industry in general. As a Board, we are 13 people from different backgrounds, with different perspectives and priorities. We are translators, interpreters, language company owners, and translation educators. Some of us are freelancers and some of us work for employers in the courts and in academia. During Study Day, we bring this diversity of perspectives to the table to do the best possible job for you. Thank you for placing your trust in us. We are listening.
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SPIDER MARKETING: HOW TO GET CLIENTS TO COME TO YOU | SIMON BERRILL

I enjoyed the article, and I think I’m a successful spider! I’ve been in business for 26 years providing English/Spanish translation and interpreting services. The majority of these reliable clients have come from referrals, as stated in the article. I’m not one to keep up with Facebook or Twitter, but I have a large network of contacts on LinkedIn and love my profession.

Jackie Metivier | Cary, NC

Thank you for a very enlightening article. I don’t have a personal website (although I’m on a number of directories as well as LinkedIn). But after reading your article, I’m seriously considering setting (a professional) one up. Thanks!

Paula Gille Loubier | Greendale, WI

EXCELLENT ARTICLE, SIMON! This is the first time I’ve ever seen anyone mention the benefits of “networking” with colleagues, although I would argue that it’s more like socializing than anything (lucky for us). But I agree that referrals from colleagues are one of the primary ways to get new clients. It’s quite possibly the main reason why translator associations exist! Thanks for spreading the word.

Natalie Pavey | New Brunswick, Canada

WHY ERGONOMICS MATTERS TO PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS | SHARON O’BRIEN AND MAUREEN EHRENBERGER-DOW

Very well researched and presented article. Ergonomics is a favorite topic of mine, which is why I gave a presentation on this area at ATA’s 55th Annual Conference in 2014 (“Your Body, Your Most Neglected Tool: Ergonomics for Translators”). I was pleased to see a lot of interest from attendees, but also sad to hear many stories of preventable problems.

In my years working first as an occupational therapist and now as an interpreter/translator, I’ve always been aware of the importance of preventing injury or fatigue. People seem to gravitate to this or that “miracle” product while not seeing the big picture: no matter how ideal your work station, it’s not meant to be used for hours at a time. Also, there is no one solution that will work for every person. We need to incorporate movement and positional change. Thanks again for your article!

Irene Radillo | Tucson, AZ
The American Translators Association’s Board of Directors met January 21–22, 2017, in Los Angeles, California. The meeting followed the Board’s annual Study Day.

The annual Study Day provides an opportunity for the Board to discuss in-depth aspects of the Association and the translation and interpreting professions. The Study Day is coordinated and led by ATA’s president-elect, who, by office, is the chair of the Governance and Communications Committee. This year, President-elect Corinne McKay guided the Board discussions through various topics, including voting rights, machine translation, and advocacy. Treasurer Ted Wozniak also provided an overview of ATA’s finances. The Study Day discussions do not necessarily result in concrete plans for action, but they do help the Board come to a consensus on issues that serve as the foundation for working through complex options for the Association.

Here are some highlights from the Board meeting.

- **Director Appointment Approved:** The Board approved the appointment of Christina Green as director to fill the vacancy left by Chris Durban’s resignation. Christina, who served previously on the Board in 2015-2016, holds office until ATA’s 2017 elections this October.

- **2021 Annual Conference Site Selected:** The Board approved the Hyatt Regency, Minneapolis, Minnesota, as the host hotel for the 2021 ATA Annual Conference. The other upcoming conference sites are: Washington, DC (2017), New Orleans, Louisiana (2018), Palm Springs, California (2019), and Boston, Massachusetts (2020).

- **Nominating and Leadership Development Committee Appointment Approved:** The Board approved the appointment of the members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. They are Past President Dorothee Racette (who was previously approved as chair), Lucy Gunderson (Divisions Committee chair), David Stephenson (Certification Committee chair), Connie Prener (a longtime grader), and Milena Calderari-Waldron (a certified interpreter and advocate). The Committee reviews and selects the slate of candidates for ATA’s annual elections. In addition, the committee monitors and grooms potential future leaders.

- **Website Redesign Planned:** President David Rumsey discussed with the Board plans to revise and update ATA’s website (www.atanet.org). The Board then shared changes they would like to see, such as improving the navigation and making it easier for clients to find the Directory of Translators and Interpreters and the Directory of Language Companies.

- **Credentialed Interpreters Now Featured:** Director and Interpretation Policy Advisory Committee Chair Melinda Gonzalez-Hibner reported that credentialed interpreters are now recognized in the Directory of Translators and Interpreters. She reported that 40 members have successfully completed the process to have their credentials featured. The credentialed interpreter designation is reserved for those who have passed interpreter proficiency testing. The testing must have been performed by an organization vetted by the committee. Conference, health care, and legal interpreting credentials are currently recognized. (For more information, please see www.atanet.org/certification/interpreter_credential.php.)

The Board meeting summary is posted online. The minutes will be posted once they are approved at the next Board meeting. Past meeting summaries and minutes are also posted online at www.atanet.org/membership/minutes.php.

The next Board meeting is set for April 22–23, 2017, in Alexandria, Virginia. As always, the meeting is open to all members, and members are encouraged to attend.

**FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

WALTER BACAK, CAE
walter@atanet.org

**Minneapolis, Minnesota, the 2021 Annual Conference Site**
Treasurer's Report for the First Five Months of FY2016-17

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

For the period from July 1 through November 30, 2016, our change in net assets (net income) was $536k, compared to $892k in the same period for FY2015–16. The Association is thus continuing to post positive net income and add to its positive equity balance.

REVENUE AND EXPENSES

Total revenue for the period was $2,007k, up 9% from $1,843k for the comparable period in the previous fiscal year. (See Figure 1.) Membership revenue posted a slight increase of 1.9%, from $802k to $817k, and certification revenue rose 14.5% year-on-year from $90k to $103k. Other revenue sources posted declines in revenue. However, these declines were not unexpected, and these revenues are not significant in relation to total revenue. The most significant change in revenue was the 17% increase in revenue from the Annual Conference, rising $151k to $1,064k versus $913k.

The increase in registration and exhibitor fees accounted for most of the increase in conference revenue. The increase in certification revenue was due to a change in accounting policies on the one hand, and a new revenue source on the other. Exam revenue was previously recognized on a cash basis (i.e., when it was received). It is now recognized in the period in which the exam is administered in order to better match revenues with expenses. This change resulted in $18k in accrued revenue from the last fiscal year, which will be recognized this year. The Credentialed Interpreter designation has added a new revenue stream to this program as well.

Chronicle revenue continued its decline, falling 56k year-on-year. Professional development revenues posted a slight decline in absolute terms, from $15k last year to $13k this period.

Of the two minor revenue sources, Publications showed a very minor gain in absolute terms of $200, while Other revenue posted a 75% drop year-on-year. The decline from $11k to just under $3k was a result of a change in insurance providers with a concomitant delay in revenue.

Total program expenses for the period increased by $561k, from $682k to $1,243k. This 82% increase is primarily due to an unusual timing effect last year. (See Figure 2 on page 8.) The Conference expenses in the previous period of $179k did not yet include final hotel expenses for the Annual Conference in Miami, while this year’s figure of $781k (an increase of 337%) reflects hotel expenses from ATA57 in San Francisco.

Of the next three largest program expense items, Certification and Chronicle expenses each fell about 8% compared to the previous year. Certification expenses fell from $127k to $126k, and Chronicle expenses declined...
addition to the Board of Directors, posted an increase from $8k to $12k due to expenses related to standards.

ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND NET ASSETS
Our Statement of Financial Position (balance sheet) as of November 30, 2016, also shows positive development. With respect to assets, our balance of cash and cash equivalents is up 115% year-on-year to $1,605k compared to $748k. We have accounts receivable of $42k (Previous Year: $0). The increase in both cash and accounts receivable relate to the Annual Conference. Prepaid expenses declined year-on-year from $19k to $15k.

Our investment funds saw a 2.6% increase to $355k while our net property and equipment assets declined from $147k to $105k due to depreciation. Total assets improved by 68%, from $1,273k to $2,141k.

Our current liabilities posted a large increase due to bills related to the Annual Conference outstanding as of the reporting date. Again, the lack of a final conference hotel bill in 2015 is reflected in this item. Hence, short-term payables rose from $71k last year to $622k. Deferred accounts from unearned dues and certification exam revenue rose by 22%, from $461k to $564k. Our noncurrent liabilities, which consist entirely of deferred rent, fell by 19% to $34k.

Our net assets (equity) increased by 32%, from $1,273k to $2,141k.

MAJOR PROGRAM RESULTS
Projecting interim results for some programs out to a full year, or comparing periodic results for some programs is and benefits remaining here). General and Administrative expenses posted a 37% decrease, primarily due to the timing of the conference hotel expenses mentioned above. The lack of hotel expenses in 2015 reduced the allocation of General and Administrative expenses to the conference, resulting in a higher-than-normal figure for the same period last year. Public Relations (PR) and marketing posted a 51% decrease year-on-year due to higher expenses incurred last year as the PR program was reinvigorated and because of initial expenses for PR and speaker training. Officers and Directors expenses fell 37% (from $30k to $19k) due to an unusually high number of reimbursements coming in the second fiscal quarter last year. Volunteers & Governance, which includes various committee work such as on standards, awards, etc., in
fraught with uncertainties. However, not only is the overall trend of program “profitability” positive, but there seem to be positive developments with respect to all the individual major programs. (See Figure 3 on page 8.) For those programs that traditionally operate at a net loss, the year-to-date loss as of the end of November 2016 is lower than the comparable figure for 2015. The membership program has a net surplus of $709k, versus $697k last year. The Annual Conference posted a net profit for the second year in a row, coming in $283k in the black. A year-on-year comparison is not meaningful due to the issue with the hotel bill mentioned previously.

The Certification Program has a current net loss of $22k, versus $47k last year. The Chronicle’s deficit has decreased from $118k to $114k. Divisions posted a deficit reduction of $12k to $52k. Professional Development saw its net loss decrease from $14k to $10k, and the net loss on Publications went from $40k to $35k.

**ATA57 Annual Conference**

As noted previously, the overhead allocation to the Annual Conference will be adjusted at the end of the fiscal year, which will probably decrease the surplus currently reported. However, the results will almost certainly remain positive. ATA57 currently shows a total conference revenue of $1,064k and total costs of $781k (including overhead of about $160k), for a net profit of $283k, which compares to $287k for ATA56 in Miami. Please note that the net profit will change at the end of the year when the conference overhead figure of $160k is adjusted when total annual expenses and total hours/salaries and benefits are known. The final conference overhead figure is expected to range between $200k and $265k, for a net profit between $161k and $96k.

**Update on Audited Results for FY2015–16**

The auditors made some adjustments to the figures last reported. The adjustments to the preliminary figures related to Office rent, Leasehold improvements, and Depreciation are “normal” adjustments made by the auditors each year. The adjustment made to certification revenue reflects the change in accounting policy mentioned previously.

The Association’s consolidated financial statements [consolidated means they include the activities of the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation (AFTI)] were given an unqualified opinion by the external auditors. (The statements are included on page 10.) In plain English, this means that no significant accounting issues were found during the audit and that there are no indications that the consolidated financial statements have any material inaccuracies.

The final conference overhead figure is expected to range between $200k and $265k, for a net profit between $161k and $96k.

For the 2015–16 fiscal year, the Association had consolidated revenue of $3,104,331 (Previous Year: $2,991,595) and consolidated operating expenses of $2,547,850 (Previous Year: $2,953,343), for a change in net assets (net income) from operations of $555,281 (Previous Year: $38,252). Investment income of $7,495 (Previous Year: $6,191) resulted in a total change in net assets (net income) of $562,726 (Previous Year: $44,443).

As of June 30, 2016, the Association had total assets of $1,704,263 (Previous Year: $1,088,983) and total liabilities of $1,295,622 (Previous Year: $1,243,068). Our net assets (deficit) at the end of FY2015-16 was $408,641 (Previous Year: $154,085). The Association has thus eliminated the equity deficit and is now back “in the black.”

**Investments**

As of January 29, 2017, the Association’s investment account had a market value of $1,180,986. Of that amount, just over $814k is in cash. The Finance and Audit Committee has discussed the portfolio, especially the large cash balance, but also two specific mutual funds that have seen a rating downgrade. After consulting with our investment advisor, it was decided to sell three mutual funds and to reinvest the
proceeds in exchange-traded funds (ETF) with the same investment objective as the mutual funds they will be replacing. It was also decided to invest $300,000 of the cash in ETFs as well. Our investment advisor will conduct additional research and make specific recommendations for the investment vehicles and timing. It is quite possible that he may advise waiting for additional certainty in the markets before investing the excess cash.

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. Congratulations to President-elect Corinne McKay as the conference organizer, as well as the Headquarters staff and volunteers who helped make ATA57 a financially successful conference. And to all the directors and officers, members, and again the Headquarters staff, who have all contributed to our financial turnaround and currently sound financial footing.

As I enter my last year as treasurer, I’m very pleased to be able to report such positive developments.

As I enter my last year as treasurer, I’m very pleased to be able to report such positive developments. The Association has made great strides on its path to financial stability and should it continue to stay the course, our finances will no longer be such a large constraint on our provision of services to our members. During the recent Study Day with the Board during which the Board brainstormed and looks at longer-term strategy and goals, President-elect Corinne McKay mentioned that is was nice to once again be able to think in terms of implementing some of the ideas that were presented. In past years, there was sometimes a sense of “Yes, it would be great to do X, but we don’t have the money.” It is not unreasonable to expect to now see some programs get budget increases in the upcoming draft budgets for future fiscal years.
Advocacy Matters

If you talk with anyone in our industry, it becomes readily apparent that our stories about how we acquired our languages are all very different. But however different, there’s one common thread that runs through our narratives: spending time away from our home countries. Whatever our circumstances, we’re part of a very small group of people who not only speak and write two (or more) languages, we speak and write them very well. And it’s clear that there aren’t enough of us.

Studies indicate a gap between the number of highly qualified interpreters and translators and demand, and that gap is growing. What’s more, that skills gap extends well beyond our industry. World language teachers are increasingly difficult to find, and business are expressing dismay at not being able to find new hires with the language and cultural skills they need to compete in a globalized world. We need to do better.

People from all corners of the language enterprise gathered in our nation’s capital in February to advocate for federal support for language learning during Language Advocacy Day.

It’s against this backdrop that 130 people from all corners of the language enterprise gathered in our nation’s capital in February to advocate for federal support for language learning during Language Advocacy Day, hosted by the Joint National Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS). In addition to congressional funding for elementary and secondary education programs, advocacy efforts also included grant programs for overseas studies, teacher education programs, defense research and language instruction, domestic and foreign intelligence analysis, as well as business regulations that allow the translation and interpreting industry to function.

This group fanned out over Capitol Hill to talk with senators, representatives, and both congressional and executive branch staffers about the importance of strengthening our language learning programs. By coming together on one day and using the amplifying power of social media, our message was heard. In fact, the conference hashtag (#JNCL17) was trending on Twitter for a short period (before other breaking headlines took the limelight). I’ve included some of these Twitter posts here for you to view.

The biggest news—and public relations opportunity—was the release of a report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on the State of America’s Languages, commissioned by Congress (hashtag #LangReport). The previous report, which dated from 1979, was called the “Carter Commission.” The hope is that the new report will have the same impact on national, regional, and local educational policies as the report that spurred the nation’s infatuation with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programs. The report was released at a press event on February 28, 2017. A data-rich companion website (www.leadwithlanguages.org), a campaign powered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, went live the following day.

The report’s recommendations and data can use to make advocacy easy. Follow #LanguageMatters and @JNCLinfo on Twitter for opportunities to amplify others’ messages. Last year—before the current administration energized so many—our collective efforts sent over 20,000 messages to the Hill. The current political climate means we have a stellar opportunity to make meaningful changes happen, to the benefit of all.

Caitilin Walsh is a past president of ATA (2013–2015). She currently serves as chair of ATA’s Education and Pedagogy Committee. She was recently elected to the executive committee of the Joint National Committee for Languages. An ATA-certified French>English translator, she produces translations for the computer industry and food lovers alike. She is a graduate of Willamette University (Oregon) and the Université de Strasbourg (France). She teaches ethics and business practices at the Translation and Interpreting Institute at Bellevue College. She is also a member of the Translation and Interpreting Advisory Committee for the Puget Sound Skills Center. Contact: cwalsh@nwlink.com.

OUTREACH REPORT | BY CAITILIN WALSH
How to Deal with Questions During a Translation Project

You should never be shy when it comes to asking questions about a job.

It’s never easy to ask questions. As professionals, we might fear that people reading our questions will think we should have known, or found, the answers ourselves. Many of us have also experienced translation project managers or clients who have ignored the questions we asked, or at least not paid attention to all of them. It also takes time to write questions, check the answers, and discuss some of the options and/or implement any subsequent changes.

Clients are sometimes swamped with work, don’t have time to reply to questions, are not able to provide answers themselves, or simply underestimate the value of this exchange process.

When translation projects go through translation agencies, project managers are sometimes completely inundated by the mountain of jobs they must oversee simultaneously and could get annoyed if they receive a lot of questions to sort out. They might overlook some or simply not invest enough time in dealing with them, or perhaps not relay them to the various project stakeholders.

Here I’ll explain what I believe are some best practices when dealing with questions, not only as a project participant (translator, reviser, desktop publishing expert, tester, etc.), but also as a project manager and client. These practices are based primarily on what we do in my company, so they might not be applicable to every situation.

DEALING WITH QUESTIONS AS A PROJECT PARTICIPANT

Pay attention to templates. When the client or the translation agency provides you with a question template, always use it properly and follow the instructions. For instance, you might be requested to include the entry date in a specific format, like DD/MM/YY, or to insert the pertinent file name next to each question. These templates, whether online or off (e.g., an MS Excel sheet), usually contain lines or cells where you can insert your questions. Make sure you only enter one question per line/cell. Grouping two questions in a single line/cell can confuse the client, who might only answer one of them.

If the query file is shared among all project participants, examine it first before asking questions that may have already been raised. You’ll gain time and save the client and the project manager the trouble of having to deal with the same question twice (or more).

Regroup several questions under a single topic when they can be generalized. For instance, avoid creating an entry for every product name asking if they should be translated. Instead, ask: “Can you confirm that product names remain in English, but we should translate ‘for’ before ‘Windows’ and ‘Mac’ in occurrences like ‘COMPANY PRODUCT for Windows’?”

If the project is multilingual, unless otherwise specified, write your questions in the main communication language. For instance, since most projects within my company involve a dozen languages, people usually write their questions in English, which makes them easier to share among the teams. My clients are also located primarily in English-speaking countries, so we can easily share questions that are already written in their language. Nonetheless, as French-speakers, my team will accept questions in French for a French-only project, provided that the client speaks the language. However, we would not be able to do the same for Japanese, since we
Adapt all questions to the recipient’s language level. If the end client is a non-native speaker, it might be preferable to phrase the questions with simplified wording to be 100% sure that they grasp the meaning immediately and answer quickly. People might get frustrated if they need to invest time trying to understand highly technical questions written in a language in which they are not fluent. Conversely, if the client is particularly sensitive to your style of writing, it might be equally important to polish your communication style.

Make all questions complete and explicit so the client can answer promptly. Sending only closed questions that can be answered with either “Yes” or “No” is probably the best option. Proposing your own solution gains your client time and increases the probability that they will confirm immediately rather than postpone (or forget) to write down long explanations. For example, don’t ask “What does ‘user network’ mean?” Instead, make your own interpretation of the term clear (“Can you confirm that in this specific context, ‘user network’ means ‘a network of users’?”). Avoid suggesting two options for the same question (e.g., “Does ‘user network’ mean ‘a network of users’ or ‘the network of a user’?”). When reading too quickly, some clients might simply answer “Yes,” which will then force you to guess what the correct option is or request clarification.

If a language reviewer is answering your questions, they can suggest translations for problematic terms. But if someone speaking only the source language is answering them, add an explanation describing what you understand or propose in this language.

Always add context with your questions, even if it’s not planned in the template. Don’t hesitate to insert context relevant to your question, such as the full paragraph from the text or even a screen capture, when you feel this will help your client grasp the point immediately. Clients usually have no time to open the source files to look for context. It’s handier for them to have pertinent context provided next to your question or proposed translation. Please be aware that when you copy context directly from tagged files, internal tags or code displayed within the query file might confuse the client. In this case, remove any tags or code and format the copied content so that only the text is visible. For example, don’t leave the context like this:

```
Assuming that the word “Quotation” is inserted in cell A1, the result appearing in cell E27, in the <strong>Price/task</strong> column, corresponds to the formula “=B27*D27.”
```

Instead, clean it up as follows:

```
Assuming that the word “Quotation” is inserted in cell A1, the result appearing in cell E27, in the Price/task column, corresponds to the formula “=B27*D27.”
```

You can combine comments as well (e.g., to explain why you chose one option over another, or where you found specific information). Obviously, verify that your comments are very clear and make sense to the reader.

Review your questions before sending them. Imagine you’re the one receiving the questions. Would you be able to answer them easily and quickly if you didn’t have a background in translation or didn’t have 100% mastery of the source language and subject area? If you think you could, then go ahead and send your questions!

### DEALING WITH QUESTIONS AS A TRANSLATION PROJECT MANAGER

Most of the advice covered in the previous section also applies to translation project managers. However, as middlemen, translation project managers should follow a few more management practices specific to their task. Indeed, one of their roles is to ease communication. Sorting questions, informing translators about the end client’s expectations, and managing both the project team and the client’s comments efficiently will increase the chances of achieving a successful project.

If the end client doesn’t provide you with a question template, use the translation agency’s or create a new one yourself. You should tell your subcontractors the kind of information to provide with their questions and any presentation to follow. If not, you might end up spending hours extracting data presented in various formats. Typical template categories to include would be “Date,” “File Name,” “Source Term,” “Target Term,” “Context,” “Comments,” and “Client’s Answer.” However, depending on your projects, you could always add more categories.

When teams send you questions, read each one carefully before sending them to the client. Make sure all questions are 100% clear and understandable. If you don’t understand some of the wording, the client might also be puzzled. In these cases, don’t hesitate to rewrite problematic questions yourself or ask the team/freelancer to do it. Occasionally, you might even have to soften the tone used for certain questions. For example, some people are very straightforward and use imperative forms, such as “Confirm this term.” You could make this sound a bit more polite by saying, “Can you please confirm that this term is correct?” In addition, double-check that all the appropriate categories provided in a template are filled in properly. If not, correct any mistakes and supply any missing information yourself (e.g.,
Depending on the client’s profile, it might be worthwhile to separate questions related to content from questions related to language. For instance, the client’s job coordinator might decide to transfer queries on product features to engineers who are able to supply detailed technical explanations. They could then send the proposed translated terms in Korean to their local manager in Seoul and the Dutch ones to the sales team in Amsterdam. Receiving three different files will definitely make this contact person’s work easier.

Once the client has dealt with the questions and returned the answers, check carefully to ensure that they are all clear and none are missing. Clarify any issue with the client first instead of sending the file to several translators or linguistic teams who will then face the same problems. In the event of an emergency or time differences, you could first ask your teams to confirm that everything has been addressed properly, as they might be better experts in the field than you. To avoid involving several teams in what might turn out to be a waste of time, you could instead ask for one team’s opinion.

Decide if the responses need to be communicated only to those asking the questions or if they might be useful for everyone working on the project. For instance, getting confirmation that the client’s Italian validator prefers *firma* instead of *signature* for the English term “signature” will only be useful to the Italian team. Whereas if the German team wanted to know whether proper names appearing in examples needed to be localized (e.g., replacing “John Smith” with “Max Meier” in the target text), include context or correct the referenced file names).

While reviewing the questions, try to answer some yourself instead of sending them all directly to the client. Project managers gain experience from one job to the other. After managing several projects in the same sector or for the same client, you might already know a lot about the subject and be able to assist your team. Alternatively, you can turn to your colleagues or company staff (linguists or members of the technical team) to see if they can provide you with more information. On multilingual projects, it could make sense to first send the question file to all team members, asking if anyone can share explanations that could be helpful to others.

If the schedule allows, avoid sending questions every day or, worse, multiple times a day. Instead, gather questions together and send them in batches once or twice a week, or even once or twice a month for very long projects. Of course, it’s preferable to send questions as soon as possible, but take the time to group them to avoid flooding the end client with too many e-mails.

Delete any duplicate questions before sending the question file to your client. Similarly, make certain that some of those “new” questions have not already been clarified in previous batches or even during an earlier project. Remember, the fewer questions the client receives, the more chances you’ll have of obtaining answers. Why not create a reference folder for each client containing all the questions that have already been solved?
the client’s answer will be valuable to all the project’s teams. Unless otherwise instructed, all the linguistic teams working on the translation project should definitely be notified of these decisions.

If a team member disagrees with some of the client’s answers, verify that any comments to the client are written in a respectful way. Whenever needed, rewrite comments yourself to avoid offending the client. Obviously, check that the justification for rejecting a client’s response is correct and well argued and will result in the client either confirming the initial choice or validating your team’s comment. To be on the safe side, before delivering the final files to the client, you could perhaps double-check that all teams have properly implemented the answers the client has provided across the entire project.

Finally, let’s point out that for some projects, when the schedule allows, it could be extremely beneficial if the translation project manager takes the time to review the source text to spot any potential issues and solve those with the client. This will allow the project manager to either supply the necessary information or communicate issues that have already been solved when launching the project into production.

**DEALING WITH QUESTIONS**

**AS A CLIENT**

Depending on the reason they order translation jobs, end clients might have a mastery of both the content and the requested target language. They might also be experts in the field, but only speak the source language. They could also be fluent in the target language, but have no clue about the translated subject. You might also encounter clients who have to request a translation in a language they can’t read for a domain they have never dealt with before. Whatever the case, clients have to be conscious that translation teams sometimes need extra information or validation of their choices to deliver quality work. This is why it’s very important for clients to spend time handling questions properly. Here are a few guidelines to pass on to clients to help them do just that.

Clients have to be conscious that translation teams sometimes need extra information or validation of their choices to deliver quality work.

For instance, if people’s job titles in a document need to be translated, the client should try to find a list of the local job titles in use and distribute it to the translation team. It’s far too dangerous to let people make assumptions. Translators are professionals, not wizards who are able to guess some internal terminology or undisclosed data.

**DEALING WITH QUESTIONS THE RIGHT WAY PAYS OFF**

Dealing with questions is time consuming. It can be frustrating. And at times, you might even consider that it’s not worth the extra effort. Nevertheless, asking the right questions, transferring them to a qualified person, answering willingly, and making sure everyone involved gets relevant answers is crucial for a good end result.

As with everything, professionalism and moderation always prove to be a good recipe every step of the way. This will ensure that everyone gets the right information without wasting too much time and can meet the expected quality level.

**Nancy Matis** has been involved in the translation business for almost 20 years, working as a translator, reviser, technical specialist, project manager, and teacher, among other roles. After obtaining degrees in translation and social and economic sciences, she worked for an international translation firm for several years. She currently manages her own company based in Belgium, specializing in localization, translation project management, consulting, and training (www.translation-project-management.com). She also teaches translation project management at Université Lille 3 (France), KU Leuven (Belgium), Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium), and through webinars. Besides publishing articles on project management and the importance of teaching this subject to future translators, she has also written about terminology management in projects and quality assurance in translation. She is the author of How to Manage Your Translation Projects. She has also published articles on LinkedIn Pulse, ProZ, and several blogs, including Translators Family. Contact: nancy@matis.be.
Crafting the Perfect Pitch: A Comprehensive Guide

Getting an article in a publication your clients will read has the added bonus of making you look like an expert in their business as well as yours. But before you see your name in print, you’ve got to learn how to pitch your article so that it gets picked up.

Of all the ways to market your skills, getting an article in a publication or posted to a blog your clients will read is my all-time favorite method. It’s much cheaper than advertising and has the added bonus of making you look like an expert in their business as well as yours. As if that wasn’t enough, there is the rather bizarre possibility of potential clients spotting you at one of their events and saying they saw your article. That connection will make any conversation much easier.

How do you do it? There are several stages to pitching an article and you won’t master any of them the first time. I accrued a lot of rejections and missed opportunities at the beginning. While rejection hurt like mad at the time, it really helped me hone my craft. To make this little guide easy to follow, I will go through the process chronologically.

**FIRST, PICK AN AUDIENCE**

I really shouldn’t have to write this, but bad targeting is a really common mistake. I’ve lost count of the number of people who have pitched material for my blog with no idea which audience I target or even which audience they wanted to reach!

The more specific the definition of your audience is, the better. My top target at the moment is U.K.-based events managers who organize international events, but who don’t have an interpreting team or are looking for a change. My secondary target is event managers who want to shift into the international events market, but don’t have the supplier contacts to do so. In both cases, I’m aiming more at the younger, tech-savvy market than at the massive established players. I’m also more interested in those who don’t specialize in fashion or medical products.

That’s how specific you need to be, at least at the outset. If you want the full reason why you need to be that specific, listen to any podcast on marketing. The short and dry version is that it’s much easier to write a brilliant but narrow pitch than to try to please everyone.

**NEXT, HANG OUT WITH THEM**

Before you even think about what and where to pitch, you need to spend time (preferably in person) with people from your target market. Go to their events, subscribe to their magazines, and join their LinkedIn groups. Do anything, in fact, that allows you to learn how they communicate (including industry jargon) and the issues they view as important.

If you try to skip this stage, you might end up in the same ridiculous situation I encountered when I pitched an article to an events magazine on running successful “multilingual” events. I received a very nice e-mail from the editor saying that my topic was outside the magazine’s interests. The next day the magazine published a very similar article on running successful “international” events by another writer.

Lesson learned—one ill-chosen word equals one very annoyed interpreter.

You simply can’t write a great pitch without learning the industry jargon and style used by your target audience. This is, by the way, another reason for being specific. In my case, I need to learn how the attitudes and communities of younger events professionals differ from their older counterparts.

**LISTEN A LOT**

This is an extension of the point above, but the slight repetition is necessary. It will always be tempting to jump right in and pitch an article after receiving your
first issue of an industry magazine or skimming a single blog post. However, I can just about guarantee that this approach will fail miserably.

My mum used to say that you have two ears and one mouth for a reason. And that adage applies here. In the same way you might slice apart a project brief or comb through a source text, give yourself time (i.e., at least three magazine issues, three all-day events, a few months reading a blog or studying the comments in an online discussion group, or some combination of them all) to soak up the atmosphere and outlook of your target audience before you even consider pitching.

Strangely enough, over time, something amazing happens. As you get to know the people you want to reach, ideas for pitches seem to arrive by themselves. Suddenly, the gaps in their knowledge and, more importantly, the things they perceive to be important become obvious. Once you understand these gaps and what your target audience deems important, the rest begins to take care of itself. However, it takes practice.

Let me add one little note based on brutal experience. Before you pitch, make sure all your interactions with your potential audience are professional and try to resist the urge to correct misconceptions. No one likes a smarty-pants and criticism will not be welcomed until you’ve built up a really strong relationship with the target group. I’ve lost count of the number of people in my own profession who have thrown away any chance of having a positive influence by publicly criticizing current and potential clients.

**PRACTICE IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

At the same time that you’re getting to know your target audience you should be working on your writing craft somewhere semi-public, but where you can’t be rejected. I will go a bit against the grain here and say that, for most people, a personal or business blog is not the best place to practice.

There are two reasons for this. The first is that in both the target sector (e.g., for me, it’s events management) and the translation and interpreting professions, the posts that get shared the most tend to be those written for fellow professionals and so it’s likely that a large proportion of the people you contact will either never get back to you or won’t reply for at least a month. Don’t worry. By contacting a few editors simultaneously, you can reduce anxiety and increase the chances of getting that early win. Just remember to develop a system to keep track of what you said to whom!

**TARGET MORE THAN ONE EDITOR AT THE SAME TIME**

Once you have some practice under your belt, and especially if you have gathered some positive feedback from people in your target market, you can start to find editors. Editors are your gateway to valuable space in magazines and blogs, and should therefore be approached with due care and something nearing adulation!

Seriously, the best tactic I’ve found, which I still use, is to follow trails through articles posted in market-specific groups (e.g., works cited, blog rolls, or additional links to recommended articles) and then compare this list to the publications that appear when you search on Google for terms describing your target market and the words “magazine” or “publication.” Often, the leading industry magazines will actually be called something like [industry field] News or [industry field] Weekly. If you can see circulation numbers, all the better. But remember, you want the best publications for your specific target market, not necessarily those with the highest numbers.

In my market, I could easily pitch to magazines with huge circulation numbers that target the U.S. But given that readers of these publications would be highly unlikely to hire me, that would be a pretty pointless exercise!

Once you have this information, always send pitches to two or three potential target publications at a time. Experience has taught me that editors are juggling about a million things at once, so it’s likely that a large proportion of editors you contact will either never get back to you or won’t reply for at least a month. Don’t worry. By contacting a few editors simultaneously, you can reduce anxiety and increase the chances of getting an early win. Just remember to develop a system to keep track of what you said to whom!

Do not, however, fall into the trap of blanket pitching too many editors at once. Contacting two or three editors at a time is about right. By the time you do proper research and familiarize yourself with these editors’ needs and publication styles, you’ll find that even keeping track of two or three pitches takes work. But it’s more than worth it when your pitch lands you an article.

**BASE A PITCH ON THE EDITOR’S NEEDS (AND YOUR EXPERTISE)**

Editors have three basic needs: 1) solid, relevant content that requires as little work as possible, 2) more hours in the day, and 3) coffee. Once you realize that, you can make sure that you hit at least the first two areas in every pitch.

Ask yourself, “If I were reading this magazine or blog, why would this content be important to me?”
I always pitch by first looking through one or two recent issues (or, if I’m aiming for a spot in a blog, about a month of blog posts) and imagining where my content might fit in and what attraction it might have for the audience. Before I even start writing to an editor I ask, “If I were reading this magazine or blog, why would this content be important to me?”

Notice that I didn’t say “for me.” We all think our business is absolutely vital for our clients, but if we can’t make a compelling case for why they’ll agree with us, the editors of the publications aimed at those clients will just dismiss us. Answering that question badly or not at all has been the number one reason for me receiving rejections. And I’ve had a lot of rejections!

It’s much easier to write a brilliant but narrow pitch than to try to please everyone.

A simple way to reduce the risk of making that mistake is to try to include the phrase “I was reading the latest issue of [magazine] and I noticed that…” in your e-mail. You could also say, “I noticed that you had a great piece by John Smith on [insert topic] for international associations,” or, “I noticed that you were going to discuss selling across cultures in a future issue.” You can phrase your introduction to an editor any way you want, but hooking on to what the publication is already saying is a great start and shows that you’re reading carefully!

A word of warning, though. If you’re going to finish that sentence with “I noticed that you haven’t covered [x],” be very careful. Often, that just gives editors a reason to tell you that your pitch is outside the publication’s scope, since you’ve just revealed that it isn’t a common topic. The only time that angle has worked for me is when I found that a publication had covered something near my specialization, but left an important bit out. In that case, I would write something like, “I noticed that Joe Bloggs wrote a great piece on international events, but he didn’t talk about working with interpreters. Since that is such a vital part of making international events work, I would like to build on what he wrote.”

MAKE LIFE EASY FOR YOURSELF (AND THE EDITOR)
The most important part of pitching based on an editor’s needs is making it easy for the editor to make a decision. Most magazines are split into sections, so you should absolutely suggest the section in which your article might work the best, based on what has already been published.

You can make life easy for yourself by reducing the entire article down to a three-sentence paragraph, including the context, the problem, and the solution. For a recent blog post on the website of a leading industry magazine, I mentioned the need for British events companies to win international business post-Brexit, as well as the problem of the U.K.’s less than stellar record for language learning. The solution, I argued, was to work effectively with interpreters. To ease any doubts, I threw in some links to existing content that talked about some of those issues. Within 24 hours, the editor contacted me to offer prime space on the blog.

That three-sentence summary lets the editor quickly tell if you have a good idea, but it also gives you a ready-made structure for your final piece, with enough wiggle room to allow your creativity to shine. In a pinch, you can also use this summary as the introduction of the final article, at least temporarily.

THINK SNAPPY
The very last part of writing the pitch is making sure it’s way shorter than this article on how to write pitches!

Remember, editors are busy so make sure your e-mail can be read in about 30 seconds and skinned in under 10. The longest version of your pitch should be three paragraphs long and look something like this:

- A short, suitably complimentary introduction, including your hook, a maximum of one sentence introducing yourself, and ending with the topic of your suggested article in five words or less.
- The trademark three-sentence summary of your suggested piece.
- A suitable friendly sign off, inviting the editor to get back to you.

Feel free to keep the pitch even shorter, but resist the temptation to stuff everything into a paragraph that looks like it has eaten too much Christmas turkey. When in doubt, cut stuff out.

WELCOME FAILURE, CELEBRATE SUCCESS
And after you’ve done all that, will success be assured? Sadly, no. Part of the process of pitching is the “fun” of failure. Some e-mails will never be answered. Some will come back with a rejection. Some—those precious ones—will come back with acceptances.

It always pays to remember that a “no” from one editor is often a stepping-stone to “yes” from another. Some publications won’t be suitable for the content you want to write, and that’s okay. For others, the timing will be wrong. That’s okay, too.

The skills you pick up from studying clients and learning their needs and then writing appropriate pitches become a vital part of your toolkit for other areas of your marketing, including writing for your business. Add to that the joy and interest you get when clients see you as an expert in their field, and the work is definitely worth it!

Jonathan Downie is the owner of Integrity Languages in the U.K. He provides French <> English conference and business interpreting services, public speaking, and content writing. After two years as a columnist for industry publications, including the ITI Bulletin and VKO Kurier, he published Being a Successful Interpreter: Adding Value and Delivering Excellence (Routledge, 2016). His work has appeared in magazines for senior administrators, the U.K. events industry, and Flight Time, the in-flight magazine of the European regional airline, Flybe. He is a board member of the European Society for Translation Studies and the Institute of Translation and Interpreting. He has a PhD in interpreting from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, U.K. (thesis topic: client expectations of interpreters). You can find his blog at www.integritylanguages.co.uk/blog. Contact: jonathan@integritylanguages.co.uk.

jonathan@integritylanguages.co.uk.
The Embassy Translator Revisited

Through translating and editing embassy documents with a U.S. reader or audience in mind, a translator for a foreign embassy in the U.S. plays a vital role in helping the embassy accomplish its mission and achieve its goals.

In 2004, I wrote an article for the September issue of *The ATA Chronicle* based on my presentation, “The Embassy Translator: A Connecting Link Between Cultures and Countries,” at the National Capital Area Translators Association’s “Translating for Foreign Governments” seminar, held in April of that year in Washington, DC. Now that so much time has passed, I would like to bring you up to date on the job of an embassy translator.

WHAT DO EMBASSY TRANSLATORS DO AND HOW DO THEY FACILITATE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CULTURES AND COUNTRIES?

As the in-house translator for the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, DC, I work from German and French into English and edit documents written in English primarily by non-native speakers; that is, by speakers of German, French, and Italian, three of the four official languages of Switzerland. The fourth official federal language, Romansch, also called Rumantsch Grischun, is rarely used at the embassy. However, just in case, I’m prepared with my *Romansch-English/English-Romansch Dictionary and Phrasebook*, by Manfred Gross and Daniel Telli.²

In addition to translating and editing for Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States Martin Dahinden and his administrative staff, I translate and edit for all the sections of the embassy:

- Political and Legal;
- Economic and Financial;
- Communications, Public Diplomacy, and Cultural Affairs;
- Consular and Administrative;
- Science, Technology, and Higher Education;
- Defense;
- Military Procurement; and
- Police Liaison.

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF A FOREIGN EMBASSY IN THE U.S.?

In a nutshell, it’s to represent the home country and defend its interests in the U.S. So, how does an embassy translator help carry out the embassy’s mission? The translator is charged with the official translation of a wide range of material, which can include items of an official, political, legal, economic, cultural, scientific, technical, or military nature (e.g., reports, speeches, memoranda, legal documents, media releases, diplomatic notes, and cultural and technical documents). In addition to being accurate, each translation must relay the embassy’s message so that it is understood across cultures. Based on my 22 years of experience at the Embassy of Switzerland, the following are just a few of the tactics I’ve used to help ensure that all embassy communications with which I’m entrusted achieve their desired objectives.

“AMERICANIZING”

One way of achieving a successful translation is through what I call “Americanizing”—translating and editing embassy documents with a U.S. reader or audience in mind to achieve the desired results or objective. “Americanizing” documents can also help improve the image of the country the embassy represents in the U.S.

As the Swiss Embassy’s in-house translator, I do translations into American English of documents written in German and French by Swiss native speakers of those languages. In doing so, I work with three different cultures: Swiss German, Swiss French, and U.S. American. The following are some examples of “Americanizing” I’ve encountered in my work.

---

They are especially interested in knowing if something that they’ve written could be misunderstood or viewed as offensive by an American reader.

In translating Swiss government documents, “Americanizing” frequently entails finding appropriate U.S. equivalents for titles and institutions specific to Switzerland. Finding U.S. equivalents for Swiss officials and agencies on the federal level is not particularly difficult. There are excellent resources available, such as Swiss government publications in English and TERMDAT, the Swiss government’s multilingual terminology database.

Even with access to these resources, you still need to watch out for some tricky terms. For example, one tricky title is Staatssekretär in German and secrétaire d’État in French. The correct English translation is “state secretary.” In the Swiss government, a state secretary ranks right below the head of a federal department in four departments: the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Federal Department of Justice and Police, Federal Department of Finance, and Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education, and Research.

There are seven federal departments, each headed by a “federal councillor,” who belongs to the seven-member Federal Council, the executive branch or “government.” In Switzerland, the government only consists of the executive branch, but the U.S. government is comprised of three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial.

Sometimes Staatssekretär is mistakenly translated into English as “secretary of state.” Please note, however, that the Swiss counterpart of the U.S. secretary of state is the foreign minister or head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs: Aussenminister, or Vorsteher des Eidgenössischen Departements für auswärtige Angelegenheiten, or ministre des affaires étrangères, or chef du Département fédéral des affaires étrangères.

When translating Swiss military documents, the translator has to know that the English equivalent of die schweizerische Armee and l’armée suisse is Swiss Armed Forces. The Swiss Armed Forces are comprised of the Land Forces and the Air Force. Army, as defined in the

It’s essential to be aware of the differences between the Swiss civil law and U.S. common law systems.

addressed as “The Honorable.” In that regard, you’ll be able to find everything you need in the 35th anniversary edition of Protocol: The Complete Handbook of Diplomatic, Official, and Social Usage, by Mary Jane McCaffree, Pauline Innis, and Richard M. Sand, Esquire. Over the years this handbook has been an invaluable resource when editing letters to presidents, former presidents, cabinet members, members of Congress, and other high-ranking government officials. The publication is also a handy reference for formal and informal invitations, which are such an integral part of diplomatic life.

What else does “Americanizing” mean to an embassy translator, especially when the job involves translating potentially politically-sensitive documents?

“Americanizing” also involves editing for content or meaning. In my job, that entails providing feedback to my Swiss colleagues when they ask for my “American” reactions to their documents.

Using American English instead of British English spelling and expressions: Since the Swiss are taught British English in school, they write in British English and are not always familiar with the differences between the British and American forms of English. My Swiss colleagues appreciate having their British and uniquely “Swiss” English transformed into idiomatic American English because it helps them get their point across and make a favorable impression on their American readers, conversation partners, or target audiences.

When my Swiss colleagues have specific questions, I’ve found that a dictionary of American English usage can be very helpful in pointing out and confirming the differences between British English and American English spelling and punctuation.

Correcting errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, word order, and capitalization according to American English usage: In that connection, my “bible” at work is The Chicago Manual of Style published by the University of Chicago Press.3

“Americanizing” correspondence through the use of correct titles and forms of address for American officials: It’s important to know, for instance, that a senator or representative should be
U.S., or Land Forces, would be translated as Heer and Forces terrestres.

It can also be challenging to find U.S. equivalents for Swiss officials and government bodies on the cantonal, district, and municipal levels. For example, a Swiss canton is equivalent to a U.S. state, and there are 26 cantons in Switzerland. One problematic Swiss German cantonal job title is Staatschreiber. Since there is no exact equivalent in the U.S., I had to find a definition of the term in the Dudenverlag publication Wie sagt man in der Schweiz? Wörterbuch der schweizerischen Besonderheiten, by Kurt Meyer, and then come up with an approximate translation. With helpful hints from some of my Swiss colleagues, I finally came up with “the head of the cantonal chancery.” A cantonal chancery is the central authority of the cantonal government and cantonal parliament. Depending on the canton, a Staatschreiber might also be called a Kanzleidirektor, Landschreiber, Ratschreiber, Ratschreiber, Staatskanzler, or Kanzler, and, in a French-speaking canton, a Chancelier or Chancelier d’Etat.

A recommended resource for finding the titles of Swiss federal officials and the names of federal government bodies in English is The Swiss Confederation—A Brief Guide, which contains an English description of the organization of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The guide is also published in German, French, Italian, and Romansch. A very good source of information on the Federal Council and the Swiss administration is the Swiss government’s portal at www.admin.ch.

In searching for appropriate German translations for titles and institutions specific to the U.S., I’ve found that the Politisches Wörterbuch zum Regierungssystem der USA, an English-German, German-English political dictionary on the U.S. government by Ulrike Ehnes, Patrick Labriola, and Jürgen Schiffer, can be useful.

“Americanizing” also constitutes finding appropriate translations for Swiss concepts that don’t exist in the U.S. For example, there is no exact English equivalent for the Swiss term Heimatort because the concept simply doesn’t exist in the U.S. Although the term is usually translated into English as “place of origin,” hardly anyone in the U.S. knows what a Swiss “place of origin” actually is. In Switzerland, the term Heimatort, or lieu d’origine, is extremely important since every Swiss citizen must have one. In addition to being a citizen of a canton of origin and the Swiss Confederation, everyone is a citizen of his or her “place of origin” and is entered in the family register of that place of origin. The “place of origin” is defined as the place where the family (usually the father) comes from, and should not be confused with the “place of birth.” Although the “place of origin” could conceivably be the same as the “place of birth,” that is not necessarily the case. To complicate matters further, a Swiss citizen could even have more than one “place of origin.”

In translating legal documents into English, “Americanizing” means taking into consideration that Switzerland and the U.S. have entirely different legal systems. The Swiss Embassy occasionally receives questions about legal matters involving American and Swiss citizens residing in the U.S. or Switzerland. Translating the responses to such questions requires an understanding of how certain issues pertaining to citizens of Switzerland and/or the U.S. are handled under Swiss and U.S. laws. Therefore, it’s essential to be aware of the differences between the Swiss civil law and U.S. common law systems.

Much of the legal translation work I’ve done for the Police Liaison Office involved translating letters of request, also called letters rogatory. These are sensitive and confidential documents usually issued by a Swiss court to a U.S. court requesting judicial assistance in criminal investigations where there is cooperation between Switzerland and the U.S. The Federal Act on International Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (IMAC) is an excellent resource that provides the legal basis for such bilateral cooperation. It can be found on the Swiss government’s online portal.

Comparing the German, French, and English versions of bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the U.S. is an excellent way of finding correct legal equivalents in the three languages.

There are several highly recommended resources for translating Swiss legal documents into English. The U.S. Department of State’s Treaties in Force provides a listing of the treaties between the U.S. and Switzerland, among other countries. The TIAS database, also available online from the U.S. Department of State, contains some of the texts of international agreements to which the U.S. is a party, such as the English and German versions of the Extradition Treaty between the United States of America and Switzerland. The texts of treaties between Switzerland and the U.S. as well as other
countries can also be consulted online in German, French, and Italian from Das Portal der Schweizer Regierung.\(^2\)

Since English is not an official language of Switzerland, there are no official English versions of Swiss laws. However, unofficial English translations of selected Swiss laws and ordinances from the Swiss Federal Council’s Classification Compilation are available online in a variety of categories, including private law, criminal law, education, national defense, finance, public works, health, and technical cooperation.\(^3\)

**Editing English-language publications on Switzerland with American target audiences in mind contributes to the Swiss government’s public diplomacy efforts throughout the U.S.** In the past few years, the Swiss government has focused increasingly on public diplomacy to introduce Americans to different aspects of Switzerland and Swiss culture. I’ve participated in many of those efforts by editing English-language publications on Switzerland on a wide variety of subjects, including On Track to the Future: Sustainable Transportation, A Challenge for the 21st Century; Modern Direct Democracy in Switzerland and the American West; Switzerland’s Economic Footprint in the United States: Creating Jobs and Supporting the U.S. Economy; and Earn While You Learn: Switzerland’s Vocational Education and Training System, A Model for Apprenticeships in the United States.

In addition, I’ve helped Ambassador Dahinden and his wife share their passion for Swiss and Swiss-American culinary history by translating and editing nine small books on colorful historical culinary history by translating and editing. I’ve read the memoirs of the Swiss-Italian family that founded the original Delmonico’s restaurant in New York City. And I’ve translated over a dozen books and pamphlets by personalities, including Oscar of the Waldorf, César Ritz, and the Delmonicos, who were instrumental in the development of the modern hotel industry and American hospitality.

In translating and editing press releases and official statements intended for the U.S. media, it’s essential to use accurate, precise, correct, and up-to-date terminology. In my job, I especially enjoy translating press releases and Sprachregelungen, which are official statements by the Swiss government in response to inquiries by the news media. Since my translations are quoted by newspapers and online media, such as The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and the ABC News and CBS News websites, I must ensure that they fully convey the meaning of the original Swiss German or Swiss French text and that they are written in idiomatic American English.

**The Swiss government has focused increasingly on public diplomacy to introduce Americans to different aspects of Switzerland and Swiss culture.**

When I edit English press releases translated in Bern, for example, I often have to change words and expressions from British English to American English. Sometimes I also have to correct terms that are old-fashioned and incorrect from the standpoint of diplomatic terminology. In one press release, I was amused to find the term Potentatengelder translated as “potentates’ assets,” conjuring up visions of oriental potentates from the Tales from the 1001 Nights. So, I changed the term to the more modern and accurate “dictators’ assets.” To my dismay, Schutzmacht is sometimes translated incorrectly into English as “protective power” instead of “protecting power.” In Swiss diplomacy, the term is very important because Switzerland presently has six protecting power mandates: representing U.S. interests in Iran, Iranian interests in Egypt, Iraqi interests in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabian interests in Iran, Russian interests in Georgia, and Georgian interests in Russia.

**When editing texts written by non-native speakers of English, “Americanizing” can involve correcting unintentionally humorous and potentially embarrassing errors that might be misunderstood and misinterpreted by an American reader or audience.** In editing Swiss documents, I’ve encountered some wonderful examples of unintended humor that would give American readers a hearty chuckle. In a draft of introductory remarks, I once came across “Mr. X is one of the most wanted men at the National Science Foundation.” Obviously, the author of the draft, a native speaker of Swiss German, had no idea that being one of the “most wanted” is not all that desirable in the U.S.

**A VITAL LINK TOWARD THE EMBASSY’S MISSION**

An embassy translator must be a renaissance person who is creative and adept at doing research, and must be able to handle a wide variety of documents covering many different fields. Furthermore, an embassy translator must be familiar not only with the culture of the home country and that of the host country, but also with the diverse cultures within the home country. Through facilitating and smoothing the way for communication, an embassy translator serves as a vital link between cultures and countries and makes a valuable contribution toward carrying out a foreign embassy’s mission in the U.S.

**NOTES**

5. TERMDAT can be found at www.termdat.bk.admin.ch/Search/Search.
7. The current edition of The Swiss Confederation—A Brief Guide, can be...
2017 HONORS AND AWARDS NOW OPEN!

ATA and the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation (AFTI) present annual and biennial awards to encourage, reward, and publicize outstanding work done by both seasoned professionals and students. Awards and scholarships for 2017 include:

- **The Alexander Gode Medal**, ATA’s most prestigious award, is presented to an individual or institution for outstanding service to the translating and interpreting professions. This award may be given annually. Nominations are solicited from past recipients of the Gode Medal and the membership at large.

- **The Alicia Gordon Award for Word Artistry in Translation** is given for a translation (from French or Spanish into English, or from English into French or Spanish) in any subject that demonstrates the highest level of creativity in solving a particularly knotty translation problem. Open to ATA members in good standing.

- **The S. Edmund Berger Prize** is offered to recognize excellence in scientific and technical translation by an ATA member. The award is given annually.

- **The Harvie Jordan Scholarship** is awarded to an ATA Spanish Language Division member in good standing to promote, encourage, and support leadership and professional development within the division. The scholarship is given annually.

- **The Marian S. Greenfield Financial Translation Presentation Award** is offered to recognize an outstanding presenter of a financial translation session during ATA’s Annual Conference.

- **The Student Translation Award** is presented to any graduate or undergraduate student, or group of students, for a literary or sci-tech translation or translation-related project. The award is given annually.

- **The Ungar German Translation Award** is awarded for a distinguished literary translation from German into English published in the United States. The award is bestowed biennially in odd-numbered years.


---

**Cheryl A. Fain** has been the in-house translator and editor for the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, DC, since 1994, and has over 30 years of professional experience. Her translations have been published on Swiss government websites and by U.S. and international newspapers and online media. She has also edited a wide variety of English-language publications on Switzerland. From 1984 to 1994, she was a medical translator in the Social Security Administration’s Central Translation Section. She is also an ATA-certified German>English and French>English translator. She has an MA from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, a BA from the University of Rhode Island, and spent a year at the University of Salzburg in Austria as an undergraduate. Her articles have appeared in the ATA division publications *Source*, *Caduceus*, and *interaktiv*, as well as *Proteus*, the newsletter of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators. Contact: cheryl.fain@eda.admin.ch.
Transitioning from Student to Translator

How can you transition from classroom to career successfully? Establishing an online presence, setting your rates, and finding the right clients are crucial factors in getting started.

So you’ve graduated. Congratulations! Investing time and money in a recognized qualification was a great decision. But what next? How do you put your education to work and start earning money in exchange for your skills?

To give yourself the best chance of success, we’ve put together some tips to help you navigate the vicious circle of not being able to get work without experience and not being able to get experience if you can’t get work. Read on for our recommendations on how to get started.

PRESENTING YOURSELF AS A PROFESSIONAL

There are a number of ways to show potential clients that you’re a professional even before you’ve landed your first paid job.

Create a polished, up-to-date résumé and a profile on professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn and ProZ. The key here is to highlight the positive, such as your diploma, any special achievements while you were a student (especially if they involve writing skills), time spent abroad in your source language culture, and memberships in professional associations (ATA and your local chapter at the bare minimum).

Taking on a leadership role within these associations and documenting that in your profile will help you stand out as a committed professional.

Create an e-mail signature that serves as a mini business card each time you communicate. Make sure you include your language pair and the services you offer (e.g., “French to English translator and proofreader”).

Be responsive and reliable. Show potential clients that you’ll be easy to work with. Make sure your e-mails are professional and polite. If an agency asks you to complete a test, or once you’ve secured an initial paid job, don’t miss the deadline! This is your chance to make a great first impression.

Create an online presence. Think of this as virtual networking. It’s all about getting your name out there, not just among potential clients, but among the translation community as well.

Consider using Twitter to raise your profile. It’s a great way to connect with other translators and interpreters—like an online equivalent of stepping out to the water cooler to chat with coworkers! Following other translators, professional organizations like ATA, and reputable agencies will also help you keep up with industry trends. A word of warning: it’s not easy to compose a clear message in 140 characters or less, so make sure your tweets are a good reflection of your skills as a professional writer.

Finally, the ATA e-mail discussion lists are a great way to make yourself known as you continue to learn about all aspects of the translation/interpreting professions from your peers. These discussion lists—known as listservs—are open to all ATA members and you can sign up for as many as you like. Before you jump into the conversation or ask a question, read through recent posts to get a feel for the tone and content of the discussions and...
the listserv etiquette. You should also read the rules and guidelines before posting.

In addition to the translators/interpreters who actively post on listserv discussions, there are many passive readers—so you can be sure your contribution is getting a wide audience. Your writing should be flawless. Established translators sometimes use the listservs as a way to find potential collaborators who catch their eye with a well-thought-out post. You won’t always agree with every contributor, but try to avoid coming across as confrontational while you’re establishing your reputation among the group. Again, you want to give the impression of being easy to work with because you never know who’s reading your posts.

There are a number of ways you can show potential clients that you’re a professional even before you’ve landed your first paid job.

**SETTING THE RIGHT RATES**

Figuring out what to charge is a daunting task for newbies. A common mistake is to charge below market rates to compensate for lack of experience. Think twice before offering super-low rates. For example, when Meghan worked as a project manager, she viewed low rates as a red flag and would steer clear of cheap translators.

When you start out, you’ll likely take longer to complete a translation than someone with more experience. If you charge a low per-word rate, you’re taking a double hit—your hourly income will be “low per-word rate x low number of words per hour.” That’s not a good way to start paying off your student loans! Plus, when your income is low you’ll be tempted to take on more work to compensate, and the quality of your work will suffer.

Do your research to determine what the average market rates are for your language pair. The most recent ATA Translation and Interpreting Services Survey\(^+\) and the ProZ average reported rates chart\(^+\) can help you do this. Other resources include ATA’s Translator Earning Calculator\(^+\) and U.S. CalPro.\(^+\)

Calculate backwards from your desired salary to determine your ideal per-word rate. Simply put, this involves deciding what your target annual salary is (remember to take taxes, overhead, paid vacation, sick days, and so on into account), determining how many words you translate in an hour, and then using your intended per-word rate to calculate how many hours/days/weeks you would have to work to make that target salary. If your yearly work time for that rate is reasonable, and if the rate you used is in line with the market rates you’ve found through your research, you’re on the right track.\(^+\)

The bottom line: know your self-worth as a qualified professional.

**GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR WITH AGENCIES**

A great place to find work when you’re getting started is through translation agencies. Working with an agency can help you maintain a steady stream of work and focus on specific subject areas in which you would like to specialize. When you work with an agency, you’re able to dedicate most of your time to translating, since the agency handles many other aspects, such as marketing, sales, project management, desktop publishing, etc.

The question is how do you find agencies? A good place to start is to attend conferences and other networking events (e.g., through ATA or your local chapter). These events will often have exhibitor tables where you can meet agency representatives. Since so much of our work is done online, these events are a rare opportunity to have a face-to-face meeting with colleagues and potential clients! Bring business cards to networking events and conferences, and make sure they include a link to your website and/or professional online profile(s).

You can also find agencies through online research—ATA’s Directory of Language Companies is a good place to start.\(^+\) Many agencies have a careers section on their websites where you can look at translator/interpreter requirements and submit your information. This method is often more successful than sending a cold e-mail to a general contact address listed on the company’s website. Don’t even think about mass-BCCing your résumé to numerous recipients. Not only is this an unprofessional way to introduce yourself, but you’re also unlikely to receive many responses. If your only contact option is through e-mail, make sure you address it to a specific person, preferably someone who is listed as a vendor manager.

Finally, sometimes word of mouth is the best marketing. Keep in touch with instructors and fellow students from your translation program. Your first jobs may come through them. In fact, Sarah landed an in-house position with an agency after learning about an opening from a former instructor. You can also ask other translators about their favorite agency clients. They may be able to provide an introduction to vendor managers.

**UH OH, THEY’RE ASKING ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE!**

New translators may be concerned about agencies’ experience requirements. Many agencies do have policies on the number of years translators should have under their belt before applying. How do you get your foot in the door as a newbie? Look for agencies that have more lenient experience policies—they’re out there, we promise. These agencies use other requirements to vet translators/interpreters, such as education, training, and performance on a test (more about tests later). You may also find that some agencies are flexible in how they define experience. While some specifically require full-time experience, others may be willing to consider your time as a volunteer, intern, etc.\(^+\)

**PROCEED WITH CAUTION**

A word of warning. While you’re busy contacting agencies for work, it may come as a welcome surprise when an agency reaches out to you to inquire about your services. While there are many great agencies out there, unfortunately, sometimes e-mail scams make their way around the translation/interpreting community as well.
In general, it’s best to be cautious about opening an e-mail not addressed to you directly, not mentioning a specific language pair, or providing very vague details of a project and no source document. If you’re unsure about a potential agency client, you can ask others (maybe one of the new contacts you’ve made while working on your online presence as mentioned above). You can also consult websites such as the ProZ Blue Board,10 Payment Practices,11 and the Translator Scammers Directory.12

Taking on a leadership role within associations and documenting that in your profile will help you stand out as a committed professional.

YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE
Before starting to work with an agency, you may be asked to take a short translation test. Generally, a test is a 250- to 300-word text in your source language and area of expertise (or in a general subject area). You’ll be asked to translate it according to certain guidelines (you may be given a style guide and a glossary). The agency will share your results with you and keep them on file for future reference. This is your opportunity to make a stellar first impression with a potential client, so be sure to do your best work and send it back by the agreed deadline!

ONCE THE WORK STARTS COMING IN…
It can be very exciting once jobs start pouring in and you transition from marketing yourself to translating full-time. We recommend a few general habits to ensure that your business runs smoothly.

Build your resources toolbox. This can include online and paper dictionaries, online forums and listserves, style guides, and glossaries. You may also be provided with client- or project-specific resources, including translation memories. Make sure you’re comfortable with each resource and put them to use as you work on projects.

Ask for help when you need it. Sometimes your source texts may not be crystal clear. Be sure to highlight anything you’re unsure about and discuss it with your client as soon as possible to ensure an accurate translation. Many clients prefer a standard document (in Excel, for example) to track questions, which is a great way to keep your questions and their corresponding answers organized.

Stay open to feedback. Learn from each job you work on and encourage feedback from clients. This will demonstrate your desire to improve. Your ability to learn from constructive criticism will highlight your professionalism as well.

KEEP UP THE HARD WORK
The approaches mentioned here should help you build successful relationships with your clients as you grow your freelance business. Just remember, you can always be on the lookout for new clients—and you never know when you’ll need to hand out a business card! Before you know it, you’ll be well on your way to changing your status from “recent graduate” to “savvy entrepreneur.”

NOTES
1 Follow the ATA on Twitter at @atanet.
9 We have both worked as volunteer translators for Kiva.org and found it to be a rewarding experience.

Sarah Puchner is a French>English translator with Anglocom. Prior to that she worked as an in-house translator for an agency with offices in France, Canada, and the U.S., as an in-house quality reviewer for a language services provider, and as a freelance translator. She has a degree in French and Hispanic studies from the University of Salford, U.K., and a graduate certificate in French>English translation from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. She was the recipient the 2010 ATA Student Translation Award. Contact: puch@tds.net.

Meghan McCallum is a French>English freelance translator specializing in corporate communications, human resources, marketing, and financial documents. She has an MA in language, literature, and translation (concentration in French>English translation) from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Before going freelance (www.fr-en.com), she worked in-house for several years at a global language services provider, serving as a project manager and quality manager. She is the coordinator of ATA’s School Outreach Program and vice president of the Midwest Association of Translators and Interpreters (an ATA chapter). Contact: meghanraymccallum@gmail.com.
Interview with Mike Dillinger, Machine Translation Pioneer

Translation has been an integral part of our human evolution ever since we developed the ability to speak. But with the arrival of the industrial age, the spread of globalization, and the birth of technology, it was inevitable that someone would eventually wonder if machines were capable of performing this task. Research began in earnest in the early 1950s, and great progress has obviously been made since then. Machine translation, or MT, is the name for both the technology and for an established subfield of linguistic engineering that creates systems to translate text or speech from one human language to another.

My guest this time has spent some 20 years deeply immersed in the theory and practice of MT. Mike Dillinger currently manages taxonomies and MT at LinkedIn. He is a member of the External Advisory Board at the ADAPT Centre (a leading center for MT research) in Dublin, Ireland, and advises startups in the U.S., Israel, Australia, and Brazil. He has twice been president of the Association for Machine Translation in the Americas, and has experience with all phases of planning, development, deployment, and evaluation of MT systems. He led LinkedIn’s and eBay’s first launches of full-scale production MT, spearheaded the development of the first commercial MT-translation memory (TM) tool integration (Star Transit with Logos MT), and developed an interactive speech-to-speech MT system.

Mike earned a PhD from McGill University, in Montreal, for research on the cognitive processes of simultaneous interpreting and comprehension of technical content, as well as degrees in linguistics in the U.S., Canada, and Brazil. He is also an experienced translator and interpreter who has worked in English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French. Mike wants organizations everywhere to enable global communication by developing content that’s understandable and translatable, and by deploying MT effectively.

Thank you for spending time with us, Mike. Let’s start with a little history. Can you summarize the highlights of MT’s development?

A research collaboration between Georgetown University in Washington, DC, and IBM resulted in the first widely-known MT system from Russian into English. It was reported on the front page of The New York Times on January 8, 1954, and, of course, led to the hasty conclusion that the problem of automatic translation was essentially solved.¹

Fun facts: it wasn’t a real MT system, just a proof of concept, with about two dozen rules and fewer than 200 words in its dictionary. It was basically what we now call a hybrid system, in which rules used the most probable word senses. It was, however, a spectacularly effective system because it convinced the U.S. and Russian governments to pour millions of dollars into research to “finish” developing the technology. The U.S. first used MT to translate Russian scientific publications to track their technology development during the Cold War. Later, MT (from Logos Corp) was used to translate helicopter repair manuals into Vietnamese.

Fast forward through the 1970s, when U.S. government funding dried up and Europe and Japan took the lead in MT research, trying to capture translators’ knowledge in rules stored on a computer—“rule-based MT.” In the 1980s, again at IBM, a new statistical approach emerged in which the software would calculate the likelihood of one particular translation based on many examples of human translations—“statistical MT.” Again, this new approach convinced the U.S. government to provide financial support, and MT took off as a research area in the 1990s.

In the early 2000s, Google formed a group to work on MT, and companies like Language Weaver started to offer statistical MT systems as products. Since 2007, much progress has been made in making MT technology more easily available, both to researchers (with the Moses toolkit) and to translators, with Microsoft Translators Hub, Google’s Translator Toolkit, and products like Kantan MT. Most recently, significant progress has been made on two fronts:

1. MT systems can now be “adaptive.” In other words, the systems get updated every time a human makes a correction. (One example of this can be found at www.lilt.com.)

2. A newer research approach called “neural” MT is improving how MT systems leverage information in the context of a sentence being translated.
Most translators are, of course, very familiar with MT, and use it in their daily work in one way or another. Just to get us all on the same page, please give us your definition of MT: a description of how it works and how it differs from Translation Memory (TM). Both technologies (TM and MT) have the same job: to provide possible translations for expert review. TM technology focuses on reusing whole segments (mostly sentences). But you don’t get anything if most of an incoming sentence doesn’t match, unless you ask for an “assembled” translation that guesses piece by piece. MT just produces assembled translations, but in a much more sophisticated way. That’s it.

Speed is obviously one of MT’s great advantages. How fast can a machine translate, compared to an average human translator? The average human translator delivers something like 2,000 words per day. An average MT system can produce something like 2,000,000 words per day, and engineers know how to increase that rate with super-fast TMs.

Can you give us an idea of the volume involved? How many words are being processed by MT programs on an average day in the U.S. and worldwide? Is it possible to compare that with the volume of human translation? Let’s take one example: Google Translate. It processes about 100 billion words per day, in 103 languages, for 500 million users around the world. That’s equivalent to the output of 50 million translators every day.

Translation technologies are translator “accelerators,” not translator “replacements.”

Where is MT mainly used? In what areas, what sectors?
MT is mainly used in two scenarios:
1. The “no-other-choice-but-MT” scenarios (e.g., translating search queries, e-mail, tweets, and user feedback), ecommerce, informal “I’m-just-curious-translations,” translations of customer support information, and espionage. What they all have in common is that the volume of source documents is far too large for humans to tackle, and the information in the source documents is too ephemeral or not very valuable. It’s also really horrible translation work. Can you imagine translating search queries or e-mail all day! In this sense, MT is doing us a favor! This kind of MT actually creates more work for human translators. It helps organizations identify important information—serving a triage function—that humans often have to translate.
2. The “I’m-in-a-hurry” scenarios, such as big localization projects for multinational contracts and project launches at global companies. Again, there’s usually far too much content and too little time for normal translation processes, so we use MT to pre-translate. When we set things up correctly, MT can make the whole process about four times faster.

How has MT impacted technical writing, and source-material writing in general? I’ve worked quite a bit with tech writers at a range of companies, and it’s clear to me that the impact of MT itself has been very small. The impact of TM technology and translation pricing, however, has been substantial. To save money (reason #1!), decrease project turnaround time, and increase readability for end users, many companies have adopted tools like Acrolinx and content management systems to improve the consistency and reuse of their source content.

In the early days of TM and MT, some translators were apprehensive, scared that technology was about to make them redundant. You had a great response to that. You said: translation technologies are translator “accelerators,” not translator “replacements.” Please expand on that idea. Translation technologies today perform pretty poorly for most kinds of content, especially when writers don’t write consistently or clearly. TM and MT tools simply aren’t mature enough to be “let out of the house” on their own when the goal is publishable content. In any scenario where the source content is valuable or the reader’s understanding is important, we continue to need human translators. By the way, the amount of economically valuable content that should really be translated is estimated to be at least 10 times what we are doing today. That means that we need to find ways to accelerate the translator’s productivity, so we use MT as a translator accelerator.

You have also said that there are two ways for translators to work with MT: post-editing and turbo-translating. Please tell us more about those two methods.
In post-editing, someone else controls the MT system that provides you with draft translations. Often, these individuals don’t know what they’re doing or aren’t paying attention to the same things as you. So, you don’t always get the best possible candidate
translations with which to work. That’s why you have to be extra careful when you accept post-editing jobs, since not all MT output is of the same quality.

In “turbo-translating” you know enough about MT to control the process and create your own draft translations. This means you can better manage the resources the system uses, you control the trade-off between speed and accuracy, and you can predict the kinds of problems you’ll find and prepare for them. The older rule-based MT systems offered more direct control over different linguistic parameters, so they were better for turbo-translating. Statistical systems are usually black-box systems that we can’t control much.

Actually, I think there is a third way to work with MT, but it’s not available yet. I call this new option “hybrid-intelligence” translation. The idea is to leverage the strengths of both machine intelligence and human expertise by letting the humans “drive” the machine. This approach is like fly-by-wire systems for pilots: the pilot is definitely in charge and the system works out thousands of routine details to allow the pilot to focus on the important things. Adaptive MT is the first step in this direction, and I think there are many more things we can do to allow translators to “pilot” their MT systems.

The post-editing field looks like a future growth area for many in our profession.

Is that how you see it? Is post-editing something any translator can do? What are the requirements?

Yes, post-editing will surely continue to grow, and very rapidly. There’s some controversy concerning your second question. I believe that anyone who can correct a junior translator’s work can correct MT output. Researchers have already documented huge differences in how quickly people can do post-editing, and a large part of that is due to experience rather than special training. I still can’t identify any specific training that post-editing requires.

Do all post-editing clients want the same “product” from a translator, or are there different standards or levels? Do they all want a translator’s best work, or do some want something that’s just “good enough”?

This is actually the beauty of post-editing. Whereas before MT we could either provide a first-rate translation or none at all, now we can calibrate the translation quality more precisely to the client’s needs. For a while, we saw people ask for “light” post-editing and “full” post-editing. “Light” post-editing is an effort to find and fix only the most misleading and blatantly incorrect translations (e.g., missing negation). “Full” post-editing is the task of bringing MT output up to your usual, high standard for human translation quality. Unfortunately, it’s hard for translators and clients to agree on when we’re done with “light” post-editing, so it’s a headache to manage. “Medium” post-editing has appeared as an option that’s easier to manage: fix only terminology and grammar, and don’t worry about style and tone versus “full” post-editing, where we have to fix everything.

We read that improvements in MT technology for spoken language applications are being driven by the interpreting requirements of military operations overseas. How will those improvements impact civilian interpreters working in our usual environments (medical, legal, corporate, etc.)?

Military operations overseas have incredibly demanding requirements for speech-to-speech MT. This technology has to interpret between uneducated speakers of unusual dialects of unheard-of languages and more educated speakers of varying dialects of English using machines with no Internet connection in extreme weather conditions. The equipment has to be light enough to carry along with a 40-pound backpack and robust enough for a truck to drive over, with batteries that last for weeks. And speech recognition has to work in the middle of traffic and gunfire. Oh, and we have to build the system with next to no example sentences (data collection in a war zone isn’t easy) and make sure that it can cover a wide range of topics. If we can make progress on any of these fronts, then civilian interpreting technology will certainly improve. Right now, soldiers in the field don’t have any MT systems to use. They rely on human interpreters.

Is there a healthy level of international cooperation in MT development? At what level does that occur: government, military, industry, or academia?

Yes! The International Association for Machine Translation holds its MT Summit every other year to gather together the global MT community. Researchers, both in industry and academia, collaborate routinely across national boundaries. Multinational companies hire people from around the world. I’ve consulted for the European Community and worked on MT projects in at least five countries.

How does a machine learn—and keep learning—how to translate? How does it incorporate new words, phrases, and terminology into its repertoire? How does it expand its ability to process syntactical shifts and other linguistic features as language evolves?

Machines “learn” by ingesting, analyzing, and storing information about example human translations. Notice the scare quotes: machines only “know” what they’ve seen. An MT system has a huge database of all the words it has ever seen, all the translations for each word it has ever seen, and all the contexts in which both the word and its translations have occurred. It “learns” by adding more human examples to this database and by recalculating the most likely translations for each source sequence. It evolves by acquiring more information about some words and sentences than about others. We have to feed the system with more example translations continuously. Lots and lots of example translations, until we get good coverage of the words and sentence types that we need for a specific project. And we need linguists to do this kind of “feeding” work.

As the volume of available content requiring translation increases exponentially daily, it’s clear that human translators cannot supply the need. Can current levels of MT keep up?

MT can keep up in terms of quantity, but not quality. The challenge is the increase in valuable content, which MT can’t handle well and is already too much for humans to handle. Today, a great deal of valuable content simply goes untranslated.
We read that 14 languages are required to reach 90% of the world’s most economically active populations, but most websites can only deliver content in about seven. What are those seven languages? Which languages will be next as capacity increases?

These are what companies call the Tier 1 languages. Although the list varies from company to company, it usually includes English, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, German, and French. The next batch, the Tier 2 languages, varies more according to each company’s international strategy, but usually includes Korean, Arabic, Italian, Indonesian, Dutch, Traditional Chinese, and the Scandinavian languages.

Finally, please tell us what developments in MT we can expect to see in the near-to-medium future, and where translators and interpreters fit in that evolving scenario.

In my opinion, the most interesting areas of MT research are domain adaptation, neural MT, and hybrid-intelligence systems.

Domain adaptation is the part of an MT system that tries to pick and choose which translations, of all the millions of translations the system has seen, will be most relevant for your specific project. There’s some really fascinating work going on in Europe to make this adaptation faster and more accurate so that we get much better candidate translations.

Neural MT, the hottest, latest fashion in research circles, uses much more contextual information far more efficiently. It promises far better word sense disambiguation so that we get more accurate word choice in the candidate translations it proposes. It’s also producing grammatically better candidate translations. Neural MT is already showing up in online MT systems and many more improvements are sure to come.

Hybrid-intelligence translation systems will someday let the translator “drive.” The main assumption is that for the foreseeable future, MT won’t be able to do publication-level translation of valuable information on its own. So, we must find ways to merge the things that MT systems do well with the things that only human translators can do well. The first systems of this type we call adaptive MT, which is built bottom-up for translators: when you (or your team) correct a translation, your corrections are applied immediately to the remaining unreviewed sentences. An adaptive MT system “learns” much more relevant and more reliable information (for that particular project), learns it much faster, and presents it back to the translator much more quickly than ever before. In future systems, translators will not only correct a machine’s output; they will also teach it linguistic rules, stylistic preferences, and project-specific idiosyncrasies.

Thank you, Mike, for this highly illuminating review of your fascinating field.

NOTES


Sources for More Information on Machine Translation

ADAPT Centre
www.adaptcentre.ie

Association for Machine Translation in the Americas
https://amtaweb.org

International Association of Machine Translation
www.eamt.org/iamt.php

Lilt
www.lilt.com

ANNOUNCEMENT

Upcoming ATA Webinars for 2017
www.atanet.org/webinars

April 4, 2017

Translation Contracts: Beyond the Basics
Time: 12:00 noon U.S. Eastern Standard Time
Registration: ATA Member: $45; Non-Member $60

This webinar will discuss non-disclosure agreements (when and under what circumstances to sign); the benefits of having your own terms of service; and how to use ATA’s model agreement and a contract checklist to draft your own terms of service. We will also examine some of the most common “problem clauses” in translation contracts and learn how to interpret them.

May 4, 2017

Transcreation: Translation with a Twist
Time: 12:00 noon U.S. Eastern Standard Time
Registration: ATA Member: $45; Non-Member $60

This webinar provides some background on how transcreation works, which skills are required, and how you go about transcreating copy. Some English into Dutch examples will be provided, but understanding Dutch is not required.

May 25, 2017

Why Can’t I Raise My Rates?
Time: 12:00 noon Daylight Saving Time
Registration: ATA Member: $45; Non-Member $60

This webinar will provide an introduction to the economics of language services. Freelance translators and interpreters have some level of differentiation as they pertain to the language services market.

Online and On Demand!

Strengthen your skills and expertise with the education you need when you need it. Effective and affordable, more than 60 ATA webinars are available for streaming 24/7. Check out the complete library at www.atanet.org/webinars.

Can’t Attend?
Register for the webinar now and a link to the recorded version will be sent to you after the live event!
I’ve been very interested in morphology in translation technology. No, let me put that differently: I’ve been very frustrated that the translation environment tools we use don’t offer morphology. There are some exceptions—such as SmartCat, Star Transit, Across, and OmegaT—that offer some morphology support. But all of them are limited to a small number of languages, and any effort to expand these would require painful and manual coding.

Other tools (e.g., memoQ) have decided that they’re better off with fuzzy recognition rather than specific morphological language rules, but that clearly is not the best possible answer either.

So, what’s the problem? And what’s morphology in translation environment tools about in the first place?

Well, wouldn’t it be nice to have all inflected forms of any given word in your source text be associated automatically with the uninflected form that’s located in your termbase or glossary, and have that displayed in your terminology search results? And does it feel a little silly to even have to ask that question at a point when it should be a no-brainer to have any given tool provide that service? In case you wondered, the answer to these questions is “Yes, yes, resoundingly yes!”

On the other hand, there’s a reason why we’re stuck where we are. It happens to be cost. If you really have to manually enter morphology rules for all languages, it quickly becomes a Sisyphean exercise (starting with: “What exactly are all languages?”). If you do it just for the “important” languages (which, at least in the eyes of technology vendors, means “profitable”), you end up with the situation we already have with the tools mentioned above.

A few years ago, a group of folks, including myself, had the idea to crowdsource the collection of morphology rules for and with each language-specific group of translators. Once the rules were collected, they could then be integrated into the various technologies. It sounded good, but it was hard to get the project started due to a lack of funds to build the necessary infrastructure and/or the time it would have taken to raise funds, among other issues.

Enter translation environment tool Lilt with a very cool proposal that may very well be the solution. Lilt’s latest version introduces a “neural morphology” engine for all presently supported languages minus Chinese (so: English, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Swedish).

Here is the honest truth, though. When I first read the press release some time ago, I rolled my eyes fondly and thought to myself that the folks from Lilt were just thinking it was wise to throw a little “neural” around while it’s hot.

It turns out I was mistaken, however, as I found out when I talked with Lilt’s John DeNero, who is the architect of this part of Lilt’s system. John tried to explain to me what the system does and why it can make a big difference. It was not so hard to understand the second part, but my feeble untechnical mind had a hard time with the first part.

Wouldn’t it be nice to have all inflected forms of any given word in your source text be associated automatically with the uninflected form that’s located in your termbase or glossary, and have that displayed in your terminology search results?
NEW ATA PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE BROKER

Alliant is the new broker for ATA-sponsored professional liability insurance. The underwriter is still Lloyds of London. All policies remain in effect and unchanged.

Why choose the ATA-sponsored professional liability insurance?

The policy is specific to the translation and interpreting professions. This is not a one-size-fits-all plan, but a plan that is specific to the work you do.

What does the ATA-sponsored professional liability insurance cover?

- **Broad definition of translation/interpreting services**: Covers activities relevant to a translator or interpreter, including editing, publishing, and proofreading.

- **Coverage for contingent bodily injury and/or property damages**: Covers errors in providing translation/interpreting services that result in bodily injury and/or property damage. These types of claims are typically excluded by generic professional liability policies.

- **Coverage for cyber liability, including HIPPA and HITECH breaches**: Covers breaches related to the provision of professional services in violation or breach of the HIPPA and HITECH Acts.

Visit ata.alliant.com for additional information.

Questions? Contact Alliant at +1-703-547-5777 or ata-questions@alliant.com

---

**NOTE**

2. Oscii Lexicon.

---

**GEEKSPEAK continued**

(By the way, we always assume that it’s us, the less-technically-inclined, who are to be pitied when we don’t understand technology. But can you imagine how pitiful life is for the more-technically-inclined who have to speak baby talk when communicating to us?)

An article by Radu Soricut and Franz Och, “Unsupervised Morphology Induction Using Word Embeddings,” provides a good summary of the system.\(^1\) It essentially analyzes large monolingual corpora, detects morphological modifications (in theory, they could be any kind of modification; in practice, Lilt focusses on suffixes right now), and classifies them. Since any word is evaluated and also classified within a context, the system is able to distinguish between the adverbial ending -ly in English when it encounters “gladly” versus “only.” Using the same contextual analysis, the system is also able to make very educated guesses about the morphological transformation of unknown words. (For instance, it might never have encountered “loquacious,” but chances are it would assume—correctly—that the adverbial transformation would be “loquaciously.”)

This works with every language that uses morphology (therefore excluding Chinese, for instance), provided there is enough corpus material to train the system. The time it takes for a new language to be trained is about two and a half days (on very powerful computers). That’s it.

Now, it’s not perfect (what is??). John was very open in his assessment about where the system fails. It tends to fail with irregular morphology (it might not recognize “geese” as the plural of “goose” or “well” as the adverbial form of “good”), and there are about 5% of all cases where John felt that the engine should have made a correct judgment but did not.

On the other hand, terminology hits have increased by a third for its users since Lilt introduced the system two weeks ago.

I consider this a quantum leap—in particular because it will not only benefit the large European and Asian languages (where applicable), but the long tail end of other languages as well.

You might say, Lilt covers only a handful of languages, so doesn’t that end up being the same thing? The answer to that is (a two-fold) “no.” First, you can expect Lilt to continue to add languages, and—even more importantly—the module used to build these neural morphology engines is open-source and available for every translation technology developer online.\(^2\)

Here is what John said about the available engine and its usability:

Here’s our open-source release of the morphology system. It’s released as an academic project and doesn’t have any formal support, so it’s not a product. If someone wanted to use it, they would have to figure it out on their own (though, of course, I’m happy to answer questions).

So, get on it Kilgray, SDL, Atril, Wordfast and, and, and….

It’s also very promising that there are other areas where morphological knowledge can be used by a translation system. How about actively changing the inflection of a term that is automatically inserted based on its usage in the source? Or how about changing that inflection when repairing fuzzy matches? Or when repairing machine translation suggestions?

The sky’s the limit with this. Be creative!

---

**NOTES**

2. Oscii Lexicon.

---

**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.
Is Twitter Stupid?

Without even getting into politics, there are many controversial things in the world today, and Twitter is one of them (albeit one that’s relatively innocuous). I was an early adapter of Twitter in 2008, although I did join the then-new social media platform kicking and screaming. Some of the concerns I had back then are still being voiced today, including:

- I don’t care what other people eat
- Following (people I follow): 5,496
- I need more social media in my life like I
- Followers (people who follow me): 11,000
- Handle: @language_news
- www.atanet.org

I advised 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.

1. Discipline to watch their online time.

If you are a Twitter hater—or someone who thinks Twitter is just stupid, or pointless, or a waste of time—I invite you to read without prejudice and see if you can perhaps start to appreciate the value of this free tool for entrepreneurs like us.

Twitter is a social media platform that lets you follow people, who in turn can choose to follow you back. For instance, I follow one of my favorite writers, Joyce Carol Oates, because reading her tweets makes me happy and (presumably) smarter. However, I’m not offended that she doesn’t follow me back.

Twitter is also an online news and social media platform that’s space-restricted, meaning you get only 140 characters, which is a few sentences, depending on your fondness of punctuation. It’s an open platform, so what you tweet will be visible to all, unless you send a direct message to someone. You can easily reach a lot of people, but you also have to be careful with what you say.

There are, of course, downsides to this technology, the main one being that you can spend all day on it, but self-employed linguists usually have enough self-discipline to watch their online time.

What’s so good about Twitter?

2. Twitter lets you keep your finger on the pulse of your other languages. For example, I follow hundreds of Mexican government accounts. In addition to total immersion in your source/target languages, surrounding yourself with the language as it’s written and spoken in Mexico (for instance) is invaluable. Gender-inclusive language is one of my research interests, and it’s fascinating to see it evolve, including on Twitter.

3. Twitter helps you increase your online footprint. Twitter is a huge site with more than 300 million users, so being part of it is good for you and your website’s search engine optimization (SEO). Simply put: if potential clients Google you, your Twitter account will come up near the very top of the search results, and that’s good. Tweet wisely.

4. Twitter helps cement your role in the industry. People will follow you if you have interesting things to say and go beyond what you had for lunch (no one probably cares, unless it was at Chez Panisse). Retweet links to well-written articles, respond to other users, engage in smart conversations (“replies”), talk about your work (only giving identifying client information if the client has cleared it, etc.).

Ideally, your tweets will make it clear to colleagues and future and current clients that you’re passionate about the industry and engaged in it. All this for free! Interestingly enough, some clients have asked me to tweet about their new products and services because I have more followers than they do.

5. Twitter is a great teacher. I’ve learned a lot of things on Twitter, and not just about language. I follow political scientists, economists, professional tennis players, novelists, chess players, astronauts, homelessness advocates, charities, friends, judges, the dog of a governor, etc. Not all of it’s interesting, but much of it is. If it’s not interesting, there’s an easy solution: don’t read it. I use lists to group accounts.

6. Twitter can help you find jobs. My colleague Uwe Muegge tweets enthusiastically about in-house translation and interpreting positions, pretty much every day. (You can follow him at @UweMuegge.)

7. Twitter is a great communication tool at conferences. I enjoy live-tweeting during many of the conferences I attend, including ATA’s Annual Conference, so those colleagues back home can benefit as well. Likewise, I enjoy reading the Twitter stream from conferences I can’t attend myself. There’s usually a handy hashtag (which is essentially just a way to group information), such as #ata57, which was the hashtag for last year’s ATA conference.

Finally, here are some of my Twitter stats:

- Handle: @language_news
- Followers (people who follow me): 11,000
- Following (people I follow): 5,496
- Most frequently viewed tweet for December 2016: Always amazed by how much English has crept into German-language advertising. We do have a perfectly good German word for "shops." #austria pic.twitter.com/czTFqwgB2b

Happy tweeting!

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.
Reanimating Dead PDFs for CAT Tool Use

BY ANNETT BROWN

Basic “low-tech” tips for addressing OCR conversion issues commonly encountered with complexly formatted files (PC and Mac)

Those who know me might be baffled to see an article of mine in the Resource Review section, of all places. After all, far from being an innovator or early adopter of the latest and greatest in the tech world, I need to be nudged quite a bit before I give any new utility a serious look. But speaking to quite a few colleagues over the past 18 years about being a freelance translator, I know I’m not the only tech-averse translator out there.

Fortunately, I tend to make up for some of my lack of software savvy in other ways (e.g., by being a high-speed alphanumeric typist, keyboard short-cutter, and formatting wizard of Word documents). This has allowed me to devise my own alternative approach to addressing various frustrating issues we translators often encounter: image-based texts (i.e., dead or flat PDFs) that were poorly converted by optical character recognition (OCR) utilities.

The scope of this article will be confined to complexly formatted files. In other words, if you handle nothing but plain, single-column text files, you might not have reached the level of annoyance needed to keep reading. Conversely, many legal, medical, and technical translators will know what I’m talking about: dead PDFs containing texts over multiple columns along with various headers, footers, footnotes, side margins, imbedded images, graphics, tables, etc. What about files full of stamps, stickers, and handwritten insertions? And for some additional sanity-robbing kicks, the files are often scanned crookedly.

Generally speaking, OCR conversion issues become most infuriating when they completely thwart the benefits of CAT tool use. However, providing an exhaustive review here would go beyond the scope of this article. Much has already been written about the good, the bad, and the ugly of OCR technology by authors far more tech-savvy than I am. My own method hovers at the lower end of the sophistication continuum and involves:

1. Cutting/pasting text blocks from the PDF into a blank Word document
2. Saving the Word document as a PDF file
3. Converting the PDF file back into a Word file using OCR technology
4. Cleaning up the converted text
5. CAT tool translation and reformatting

STEP 1
If OCR tools worked perfectly, this step would hardly be needed. But the reality is that the text to be converted by OCR is often not very conducive to CAT tool use. Instead, I spend an extra couple of minutes and use Acrobat Reader (PC/Mac) or Preview (Mac) to take screenshots (aka snapshots) of the PDF text blocks. Then I paste them into a blank Word file in the order in which I will want to handle them later. I typically start with headers and footers, omitting any duplicates, followed by side margins and then the main text, while omitting handwritten and other barely legible text. Tables come with their own learning curve. The converted outcomes are hard to predict and there’s no one-fix solution. More often than not, I take individual screenshots of each table column and continue handling the text column by column (see below).

One major advantage of this approach is that flowing text will end up as flowing text. This is particularly helpful when dealing with journal articles where the main text is frequently interrupted by page/section breaks, images, graphics, footnotes, etc.

Another advantage is that I can straighten crookedly scanned text at this point. While this is not an issue for the human eye, OCR software tends to be able to handle no more than a few degrees of “crookedness.” You can adjust the pasted-in screenshot objects either by turning the green rotation handle at the top of the object or by right-clicking (whether on a Mac or PC) ➔ Format Picture ➔ 3-D Rotation, and then adjusting the Z-axis by however many degrees upward or downward as necessary.

STEP 2
Save the Word file as a PDF file. On the “Save As” screen, Mac users click on “Format” in the bottom section and PC users click on “Save as type”; then, Mac/PC users both select “PDF” from the drop-down window.

STEP 3
Convert the newly obtained PDF file back into a Word file using your OCR utility. I wholeheartedly agree with Jost Zetzsche in that the best OCR conversion solution out there may be the one offered through Wordfast Anywhere, which is available for free online. Wordfast Anywhere actually uses the server version of ABBYY, but benefits from some additional proprietary cleanup routines that ultimately produce better outcomes than ABBYY per se. Unfortunately, this comes with a big caveat. Due to clauses in their non-disclosure agreements with clients or...
agents, many translators often find themselves unable to use this tool. The same caveat exists, of course, for other popular cloud-based services.

Instead, I routinely use either ABBYY FineReader Express Edition for Mac or ABBYY FineReader 10 Professional Edition for PC. Neither of these products deliver top results, but by tweaking the inputs and outputs it’s possible to eventually end up with CAT-friendly text files.

**STEP 4**

Now that you have your Word file, let’s do some cleanup work. This is where blindly knowing a multitude of keyboard shortcuts will come in handy. For a summary of some pertinent shortcuts and additional links, see the table on page 36.

**Substep 4.1**

In the past, I foolishly decided to work with converted text that looked great, only to find out later that it took me longer to fix the remaining issues than to reformat everything from scratch. Unless some of the more complex text was converted particularly well, my preference these days is to get rid of most of the formatting. This will also leave you with far fewer tags to deal with and can be done by various methods. Mine is to select the text and then copy, delete, and re-insert it as unformatted text, all by using shortcuts that allow me to keep my hands on the keyboard.

Mac: Command+A ➔ Command+C ➔ Command+X ➔ Control+Command+V ➔ Select “Unformatted text”

PC: Ctrl+A ➔ Ctrl+C ➔ Ctrl+X ➔ Ctrl+Alt+V ➔ Select “Unformatted text”

Alternatively, if you wish to force the text you’re pasting in to match the text around it, use Option+Shift+Command+V on a Mac, or right-click “Paste Options,” “Merge formatting icon” on a PC.

**Substep 4.2**

PC users can rejoice for the following options, which are not (yet?) available for Mac users. Much of the post-cleanup can be done with utilities such as TransTools (aka Translator Tools) or CodeZapper. A small fee may apply. These utilities simplify the cleanup by providing consistent spacing, removing incorrect line breaks, hyphens, or rogue tags, and handling a number of other annoyances created by OCR utilities. I have TransTools installed on my PC and find it quite useful. However, since I work mostly on a Mac, I perform some of these tasks “semi-manually.” Here are a few tips if you find yourselves in similar shoes.

**Much has already been written about the good, the bad, and the ugly of OCR technology by authors far more tech-savvy than I am.**

- **Creating Consistent Spacing:** My formatting philosophy prescribes that the final document should never contain more than one single space at a time. If I need larger spaces, I use tabs. If my OCR-converted document ends up containing numerous consecutive spaces, I remove those with the help of the Find/Replace command by simply entering the maximum amount of continuous spaces found in the OCR-converted file (lets say, nine spaces) and replacing those by a single space. Then I consecutively remove a space from the top field (i.e., eight spaces, seven spaces … down to two spaces), each time replacing them by one space. Too cumbersome? The process takes only a few seconds, but can be replaced by a relatively simple macro (Mac: click Tools ➔ Macro ➔ Record New Macro; PC: click View ➔ Macro ➔ Record Macro).

- **Removing Line Breaks (Hard Returns):** Go to Find/Replace by pressing

  Mac: Shift+Command+H

  PC: Ctrl+H

  Then type “^p” into the top field and a “single space” in the bottom field. Then perform Find/Replace as needed. Check each instance individually. (Make sure you stay away from the “Replace All” option!)

- **Managing Line Spacing:** Irrespective of what the OCR tool might produce in terms of line spacing, I generally find managing line spaces in Word cumbersome. If I have the time, I go to the paragraph settings by pressing Option+Command+M (Mac) or right-clicking on paragraph (PC) and adjusting the spacing.

If I’m under serious deadline pressure, I simply insert an empty row between paragraphs and increase/decrease the font size as needed by pressing

Mac: Command+“[“ or Command+“]“

PC: Ctrl+“[“ or Ctrl+“]”

- **Hyphenation:** I’m not aware of any magic trick that will solve all hyphenation problems instantly. The thing is, of course, that some hard hyphens will be legitimate, others not so much. Technically, a spell check of the source language will flag those words, but with a long document it might be too time consuming to fix all instances this way. It may be faster to use “Find/Replace” to look for hard hyphens and replace any inappropriate ones with “nothing.” Soft hyphens (aka non-breaking or optional hyphens) shouldn’t pose any issues in your CAT tool.

- **Tables:** As I alluded to earlier, the conversion of tables can be a bit dicey and may well deserve an article of its own. Sometimes the results are great, other times a lot of doctoring is required. In the latter case, I tend to convert each column separately and then piece the table back together, occasionally converting the table to text and back to a table. (See Table on page 36.)

- **Spell Check:** If you haven’t done one yet, now is a good time.

**STEP 5**

At this point, your file should be ready to be imported into your CAT tool. Once your translation is done, you’ll need to reformat the text to match the source. But unencumbered by a lot of underlying formatting issues, I find this process to be rather smooth. I typically prefer to incorporate tables (with or without visible gridlines) to text boxes or columns. And once again, my ability to resort to an arsenal of shortcuts saves me a lot of time—but that’s another topic altogether.
LIMITATIONS

Needless to say, there are instances where neither the most sophisticated software nor the smartest tricks will produce a meaningful outcome within a reasonable timeframe. In my experience, the worst culprits here are documents that have been faxed more than twice (usually discernible by multiple fax transmission headers). The time it takes to fix, for example, a plethora of incorrectly converted vowels might just not be worth it. The same goes for fax transmissions that have vertical lines cutting through the main text. If the problems affect only a paragraph or so and you’re set up for speech recognition, it might be worthwhile to dictate the problematic text into your Word file. I have done so successfully several times, but I generally try to stay away from the most awful fax transmissions out there.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE A GEEK!

I have been using this approach for nearly two years now. It virtually allows me to have it all. In most cases, there is no need to forego the use of your vast CAT memories/glossaries and other CAT tool benefits just because you’re dealing with dead PDFs. You will easily make up the extra time spent up front by leveraging the many advantages of your CAT tool! Who says you have to be a geek? Even novices can reanimate dead PDFs and boost productivity, income, and job satisfaction.

NOTES

Annett Brown is an ATA-certified German–English translator. Academically trained in linguistics in Germany, Russia, and the U.S., she started out as a part-time freelancer in 1999. In the intervening years, she earned a BA in psychology and, while employed with a pharmaceutical company, an executive MBA in project management. Armed with her in-depth knowledge of various functions within a pharmaceutical company (e.g., production, packaging, quality control/assurance, regulatory/medical affairs, marketing, etc.) and special knowledge regarding the handling of controlled substances, she has been a successful full-time pharma/medical freelance translator since 2009. Contact: transbrown@aol.com.

Jost Zetzsche is chair of ATA’s Translation and Interpreting Resources Committee. He writes the “GeekSpeak” column for The ATA Chronicle. He is also 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.

Summary of pertinent shortcuts for both Mac and PC and additional links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Shortcut for Mac</th>
<th>Shortcut for PC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straightening the screenshots</td>
<td>Either by turning the green rotation handle of the object in either direction or (more precise) by right-clicking ➔ Format Picture ➔ 3-D Rotation and adjusting the Z-axis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert text to unformatted text</td>
<td>Command+A ➔ Command+C ➔ Command+X ➔ Control+Command+V ➔ Select “Unformatted text.”</td>
<td>Ctrl+A ➔ Ctrl+C ➔ Ctrl+X ➔ Ctrl+Alt+V ➔ Select “Unformatted text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paste text to match the text around it</td>
<td>Option+Shift+Command+V ➔ Right-click “Paste Options,” “Merge formatting icon.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing breaks at the end of each line (hard returns)</td>
<td>➔ Shift+Command+H</td>
<td>➔ Shift+Ctrl+H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➔ Enter “\p”</td>
<td>➔ Enter “\p”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➔ Leave blank</td>
<td>➔ Leave blank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➔ Click “Replace”—do not click on “Replace All”</td>
<td>➔ Click “Replace”—do not click on “Replace All”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting the line spacing</td>
<td>Option+Command+M ➔ then adjust the line spaces</td>
<td>Right-click “Paragraph,” then adjust line spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert table to text</td>
<td>Select the table or portions thereof ➔ go to Table tab ➔ select “Convert” ➔ “Convert Table to Text”</td>
<td>Select the table or portions thereof ➔ go to Layout tab; under Table Tools, click “Convert to Text.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert text to table</td>
<td>Insert separator characters (e.g., tabs) ➔ select the text ➔ go to Table tab ➔ select “Convert” ➔ “Convert Text to Table”</td>
<td>Insert separator characters (e.g., tabs) ➔ go to Insert tab, ➔ select “Convert Text to Table.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record a macro</td>
<td>Got to Tools tab ➔ Macro ➔ Record New Macro</td>
<td>Go to View ➔ Macro ➔ Record Macro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To learn more shortcuts:

To create your own keyboard shortcuts:

To create your own keyboard shortcuts:
American Translators Association
58th Annual Conference
Oct 25-28 2017 ★ Washington DC

You belong where over 1,800 dedicated translation and interpreting professionals connect globally.

You belong where you can tackle current challenges, collaborate with industry leaders, and help shape the future of your profession.

YOU BELONG AT ata58★

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 CONNECTED
now by using #ata58
You can’t register until July, but you can join the conversation on social media using #ata58!

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 10,000 members!
www.atanet.org/conf/2017/advertise

ENGAGED
PASSIONATE
INSPIRED
YOU BELONG HERE

★ GET STARTED AT WWW.ATANET.ORG/CONF/2017 ★
Practice, Practice, Practice!

Practice tests, which are available in every language pair in which the exam is offered, are an often overlooked and under-utilized resource for preparing for the exam.

There’s an old joke in which a tourist asks a New York police officer how to get to Carnegie Hall. The cop’s reply: “Practice, practice, practice!” That could also be the answer to the question “How can I improve my chances of passing ATA’s certification exam?”

Practice tests, which are available in every language pair in which the exam is offered, are an often overlooked and under-utilized resource for preparing for the exam. Because practice tests are actual exam passages that have been retired, candidates can use them to get an idea of the sort of text they will see on the exam and prepare accordingly.

Unlike exam results, where candidates are provided with a pass or fail notice as well as information about their overall numerical score, practice tests are returned with markings and feedback. The candidate receives the marked text, together with a point breakdown by error category and brief explanations of any marked errors that aren’t self-explanatory (such as misspellings). This feedback can be quite helpful to prepare for the actual exam.

At $80 per test for ATA members ($120 for nonmembers), the practice test costs a fraction of the actual exam registration fee and is well worth it for candidates who aren’t sure if they’re ready. Even seasoned translators taking the exam for the first time can benefit from taking a practice test.

Here are a few tips for using the practice test:

- Allow plenty of time. Practice test grading turnaround depends on volume and other factors, so candidates should allow up to eight weeks to receive results. You’ll also need to plan ahead. By the time you register for an exam sitting, it’s probably too late to get practice test results back.
- Read and follow instructions carefully. This includes not just the translation instructions that are part of the practice test passage, but also information about how to take and submit the test.
- Take the test under exam conditions. Try to set aside 90 minutes of uninterrupted time and translate the passage in one go. Use only print reference material and online resources that have been cleared for the computerized exam.
- Consider the feedback you receive carefully. The comments your receive may tell you the areas where you need to focus. For example, do you need to proofread more carefully? Should you work on target-language grammar or usage?
- Upgrade old tests. If you requested and paid for a practice test more than a year ago and never got around to translating it or having it graded, ATA Headquarters will send you a current version of the passage for the same language pair upon request for no additional charge.
- Get other practice as well. The practice test is intended primarily as a way to practice taking the exam. Practicing your translation skills is a secondary benefit. Look for ways to practice translating, perhaps with others in your language pair who are also preparing for the exam.


David Stephenson serves as chair of ATA’s Certification Committee. Contact: david@stephensontranslations.com.
EDUCATORS WANTED.

Your students aren’t working to fill credits. They’re arming themselves with knowledge and skills that can save lives. Flourish as an educator working with small class sizes, outstanding technology, smart colleagues and truly driven pupils. This isn’t academic or theoretical — you’re teaching functional, practical skills to people who want to learn.

Bring your talents to a place where success is defined by the safety of our nation. Become a CIA Foreign Language Instructor.

For additional information and to apply, visit: cia.gov/careers

Applicants must have US citizenship and the ability to successfully complete medical examinations and security procedures, including a polygraph interview. An equal opportunity employer and a drug-free workforce.
When in the office, NSA language analysts develop new perspectives on the dialect and nuance of foreign language, on the context and cultural overtones of language translation.

We draw our inspiration from our work, our colleagues and our lives. During downtime we create music and paintings. We run marathons and climb mountains, read academic journals and top 10 fiction.

Each of us expands our horizons in our own unique way and makes connections between things never connected before.

At the National Security Agency, we are inspired to create, inspired to invent, inspired to protect.

U.S. citizenship is required for all applicants. NSA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and abides by applicable employment laws and regulations. All applicants for employment are considered without regard to age, color, disability, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, or status as a parent.

NSA has a critical need for individuals with the following language capabilities:

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Farsi
- Korean
- Russian
- And other less commonly taught languages

APPLY TODAY