TRANSLATION AS AN ART

HOW TO GET YOUR WORK IN A MUSEUM
Treasurer’s Report
There tends to be a lag between when an economic shock takes place and when its effects are generally experienced. As such, while our finances still look fairly solid in this report, it’s essential to bear in mind that rockier roads lie ahead.

Call for Nominations: ATA Officers and Directors
Do you know someone who would make a good potential candidate for ATA’s Board of Directors? If so, ATA’s Nominating and Leadership Development Committee would like to hear from you. Any ATA member may make a nomination. Here’s your chance to help shape the future of the Association!
How Did Your Work Change in 2020?

Given the many challenges 2020 presented, members of The ATA Chronicle Editorial Board reached out to their colleagues (both interpreters and translators) and invited them to answer the following question: How did your work change in 2020?

The Demands of On-Demand Interpreting

In a time of increased professional isolation with interpreters working from home, here’s some light on the challenges and rewards of the essential work of on-demand over-the-phone interpreting.

Translation as an Art: How to Get Your Work in a Museum

Museums have evolved from rather stuffy places to lively multimedia experiences with exhibitions on anything from art and photography to fashion, film, and music. Here are some examples of the types of projects you might encounter when working for museums, including some challenges you’re likely to face.

2020 ATA Honors and Awards Recipients

ATA and the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation present annual and biennial awards to encourage, reward, and publicize outstanding work done by both seasoned professionals and students of our craft.
FROM THE PRESIDENT

TED R. WOZNIAK
president@atanet.org

A Problem with Membership Classes

Our membership structure no longer serves our Association as intended. There are too few Active members and too many Associate members.

In basic terms, Active membership is intended for citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. who are professionally engaged in translation or interpreting. That describes the vast majority of our members. The Corresponding membership class is for persons who are professionally engaged but do not meet the U.S. requirement (i.e., non-U.S. professional translators and interpreters). In contrast, Associate members are supposed to be individuals who are not professionally engaged in translation or interpreting (T&I) but who wish to further ATA’s objectives.

Are you professionally engaged in T&I but still an Associate member? How many Associate members do you know who are not professional practitioners? Probably very few. I don’t know any. However, of the 8,831 total members as of June 20, 2020, less than one-third, 30.4% to be precise, are Active members. Associate members comprise 52.7% of the total membership and Corresponding members another 6.9%. How many Associate members meet the “U.S. person” and professional engagement criteria? I would hazard to guess almost all of them are professionally engaged and that most also meet the U.S. requirement. Yet they are not Active members. They cannot vote, run for elected office, or serve on standing committees. There are far too many individuals who could become Active members, and thus be able to vote and play a greater role in ATA, but who fail, for whatever reason, to become Active members. I, and several past Board directors, think this is a problem.

Or is it? I guess that depends on how one views ATA in terms of what kind of an association one thinks it is (or should be). Is ATA a “professional association” designed to promote the T&I professions as we state in our mission statement? Or is it a “trade association” intended to promote the T&I industry? Is it a “guild” formed to promote and protect its members?

A “Brief” History of Membership Requirements

When ATA was established, its membership requirements and procedures were very “guild–like.” In the 1959 draft “constitution,” there were only two membership classes: Members and Associate Members. Members had to be professional translators, defined as “any person who had made their living, or a major part of their living, by translation for at least one year.” “Interested persons” could become Associate Members. Membership was granted by approval of a three–person membership committee elected by the members, and subsequently ratified at the next regular membership meeting. As I do not have a full copy of the original Bylaws, it’s unknown if these provisions were in effect in 1960. But it does show the intent that membership would be controlled much like a medieval guild.

The 1961 Bylaws show a similar structure and process. There were three membership classes: Active, Associate, and Honorary. Any person of “good moral character” who was actively engaged in translating or interpreting was automatically eligible for Active membership. Associate membership was for those not eligible for Active membership (presumably solely because they were not actively engaged in T&I and not because they were immoral) but who were interested in ATA’s objectives. Any non–member deemed worthy could be nominated to be an Honorary member. (By 1981, the non–member requirement had been eliminated so that existing members could become Honorary members.) New members had to be investigated and approved by the Membership Committee (peer review by three to five Active members). By 1965, the requirements for Active membership were changed slightly to include adherence to the Code of Professional Ethics, but still required professional engagement, endorsement by two Active members (or evidence of three years’ professional experience), while Associate membership was still for ethical persons interested in ATA’s objectives.

Peer review (or approval by “Masters” to use guild language) notwithstanding, it’s clear that the intent from the beginning was for professional practitioners to be Active members, while persons who were merely “interested” in T&I were to be (non–voting, non–governing) Associates.

Professional engagement remained the sine quo non for Active membership, and thus the ability to play an “active” role in ATA and its governance, until the early 1980s. As early as 1971 the passing of an examination was discussed as a requirement for Active membership, even though no such examination existed.
at the time. Prior to 1982, a new member could join as an Active member based on professional engagement and the endorsement of two Active members. That began to change by 1982, when a “basic level certification examination” was included in the Bylaws as an additional third eligibility requirement for Active membership. The requirement for endorsement by two Active members had also been dropped by 1982. In 1988, peer review in lieu of passing the “accreditation” exam was added as a path to Active membership.

Somewhere down the line, all new members joined as Associate members, and only after passing the examination (or more rarely, peer review), could they “advance” to Active membership. But far too many never do even though they’re fully qualified.

Thus began the slow but inexorable process of creating a two-tier system of membership, with an increasing disparity in the relative size of the Active and Associate classes. This resulted in the situation described above.

So, What’s the Problem?

It’s neither right nor proper for such a large number of professionals engaged in T&I to not have a voice in ATA’s governance. This was clear at least as far back as 1995, when Peter Krawutschke, then chair of the Bylaws Revision Committee and president-elect, wrote: “Over the past year, it became clear to most members on the Bylaws Review Committee that Associate members should have the right to vote on matters of the Association, and we will present this request to the Board on March 18.” A proposed amendment to the Bylaws that year would have extended voting rights to Associate members. Although a majority favored the amendment 262–232, it failed to meet the two-thirds requirement. A second attempt, offering two options to allow Associate members to vote, failed the following year.

Based on a desire to expand the franchise, a proposal to automatically classify Associate members as Active member after three years of membership was proposed, and failed, in 2017. There has obviously been resistance from current Active members to expand the electorate over the years.

One could also legitimately ask if efforts to expand the franchise with an eye toward increasing voter participation are not exercises in frustration and doomed to fail—at least in relative terms. Increasing the number of eligible voters would likely increase the number of ballots cast in absolute but not relative terms. Many members simply don’t care who ATA’s officers and directors are. Many don’t even care about contentious Bylaws amendments, as is evidenced by the still-relatively low turnout on the recent decoupling amendment.

Is it right to deny the vote to the majority of practicing translators and interpreters in ATA simply because they may choose not to exercise that right? Is it right to deny ATA the ability to use the expertise and volunteerism of so many professionals as chairs or members of committees simply because they don’t have a certification exam in their languages or haven’t yet passed a mid-career examination? (On a related note, since when is competence, which is what our exam tests, prima facie evidence of being professionally engaged, which is the primary requirement for Active membership?) I say no, and past ATA Boards have agreed with me.

In addition to the question of “rights and privileges,” recent Boards have discussed whether the current membership structure meets our members’ needs and wants. A majority of individual members don’t attend the Annual Conference and don’t require continuing education credits since they’re not credentialed. Many members, especially those without a certification exam, join and remain in ATA for no other reason than because their clients see it as a sign of professionalism. This last viewpoint has been documented in numerous member surveys. For such members, just being a member is all they want and need. Is it right to charge members who use little or none of ATA’s resources the same dues as members who avail themselves of most of the benefits of membership? Is there a more equitable solution that would not only continue to meet the needs of members who are more engaged, but would also meet the lesser needs of “mailbox” members—and possibly attract additional practitioners who are somewhat skeptical of the benefits of membership?

What about newcomers to the profession who have less financial resources and a much smaller client base than established practitioners? Is there a place for part-timers, or even “hobbyists” in a “Supporter” class? Is there a structure that allows us to put most or all of the “professional practitioners” in one place, and all of the “interested parties” in another?

The Governance and Communications Committee began asking these questions and looking for answers back in 2018 when I became chair. That work has continued, on and off, for almost three years now, and a report and proposal will soon be shared with the Board. If approved by the Board, the framework will then be opened for member comment and debate. We hope that there will be sufficient discussion over the next 12 months or so that will allow a final proposal, incorporating member feedback, to be presented to the Board in due time for a member vote in 2022.

NOTE

1 There is very limited availability of past Bylaws, especially versions predating computers and the internet. The timeline and dates used above are pieced together from the limited sample of Bylaws, articles, and other material that could be scraped together by ATA Headquarters on short notice. (If any “senior” members have full and dated copies of past Bylaws, especially from the 1960s through the 1980s, please send me a copy!)
A New Year, a New Start

It’s a new year, and with it comes a time of reflection, as well as fresh and exciting opportunities. If 2020 taught us anything, it was the ability to accept new challenges and adapt accordingly. Hopefully 2021 will be, in many ways, different than last year, but I think we can all agree that we learned a lot about ourselves and our businesses. We also learned a lot about how our Association can step up to serve us even during the most challenging of times.

• When COVID–19 disrupted our plans to hold our Annual Conference in Boston, we pivoted to a fully virtual conference model that attracted over 1,500 attendees.1

• When we saw how swiftly and significantly the economic crisis affected so many of our members, the Board quickly approved a motion not to raise membership dues this year and to offer members the ability to renew in two installments.2

• When we witnessed what can only be described as a powerful time to reflect on the racial divide in our country, ATA issued a statement3 on racism and inequality, reiterating that we stand by our members and colleagues who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

• When our members in California were fighting for their right to remain independent contractors after the passing of California Assembly Bill 5, we stepped up and supported4 efforts to provide protection for professional translators and interpreters in Assembly Bill 2257 (Worker Classification: Employees and Independent Contractors).

• When health care interpreters were not treated as essential workers or provided personal protective equipment, we signed on to support a best practices guide5 with other national associations to promote safer working environments.

We’ve come together again and again to step up and meet these challenges head on as an Association and as colleagues. And while it’s certain we’ll be called to do the same in 2021, we’ll do so by looking forward to new opportunities to adapt and grow.

As we look ahead this year, we’ll be planning ATA62 as a hybrid conference (both in–person and virtual). Yes, a hybrid conference is another first for ATA, but we know we can pull off a new model with great results, and I look forward to the challenge of planning this year’s event. The call for proposals is now open, so please submit your session proposals by March 1. At this time, the plan is to offer virtual attendees a selection of streamed, live sessions offered at the conference venue in Minneapolis.

While we’ve learned a lot about who we are as an Association over the course of 2020, we still have a lot more to understand about who our members are and what they want from a professional association. As immediate past chair of the Membership Committee, we’ve worked the past few years on increasing member benefits and creating greater value for our members. But we want to hear from you. We want to know how we can best serve you. So, we’ll be asking you questions related to the member benefits you enjoy and what you would like to see more of. We’ll also be asking you about ATA’s advocacy efforts and how you would like to be represented by ATA at various levels.

Please watch your inbox for the Membership Survey and the new ATA Compensation Survey and complete them during the window when they are available. By providing more information and insights, you allow the Board to get a better picture of who we are as an Association, what’s going well, and what areas can be improved in the future.

Here’s to a year of growth in 2021!

NOTES

2 To help those members who find it difficult to pay membership dues in full at this time, ATA is offering an installment plan in 2021. Renew online to choose this payment option. Visit: http://bit.ly/ATA-member-renewal.


FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

MADALENA SÁNCHEZ ZAMPAULO
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@mszampaulo

If 2020 taught us anything, it was the ability to accept new challenges and adapt accordingly.
The New Year, New Look, and Board Meeting Highlights

The new year brings hope and opportunity. For ATA, it also brings a new look. The new ATA website will be online shortly. You’ll find it visually appealing, the content completely reviewed, and with better navigation. We have more to do with the directories. In addition to the website, the new year brings a new look to The ATA Chronicle. This year marks the 50th anniversary of ATA’s flagship publication. We look forward to recognizing this milestone throughout the year.

Typically, the Fall Board meeting would have been held in conjunction with the Annual Conference. Instead, the Board met virtually a week after the conference, October 31 – November 1. Here are some highlights.

Opening the Certification Exam to Nonmembers
The Board rescinded the previously approved motions to open the certification exam to nonmembers. The decision followed the failure of the proposed Bylaws amendment clarifying the rights and privileges of membership.

Reimagining Membership
The Board continued its discussion on changes to the membership structure, including looking at tiers of benefits and services. The Governance and Communications Committee, led by President-Elect Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo, is charged with rethinking/restructuring membership and strengthening the value proposition of ATA membership.

Investigating a National Registry and a Basic Credential
The Board approved establishing ad hoc committees to investigate and make recommendations on the establishment of a National Registry of Individual Translators and Interpreters and a basic ATA credential for translators and interpreters.

New Committee Chairs
The Board approved the appointment of the following Committee chairs:
- Advocacy Committee: Lorena Ortiz Schneider
- Certification Committee: Michèle Hansen
- Chapters Committee: Yolanda Secos
- Divisions Committee: Daniel Sebesta

Thank you to the outgoing chairs for all their time and work for ATA: Ted Wozniak (Advocacy), David Stephenson (Certification), Tony Guerra (Chapters), and Percy Balemans (Divisions).

ATA Monograph Series
The Board approved Translation in Transition: Bridging Human and Machine Intelligence as the next volume in the ATA Monograph Series. The Series, published by John Benjamins, is a peer-reviewed scholarly publication. Recent volumes include The Evolving Curriculum in Interpreter and Translator Education and Innovation and Expansion in Translation Process Research.

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.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WALTER BACAK, CAE
walter@atanet.org

ATA Petitions CDC to Include Interpreters
Following the release of the U.S. COVID-19 Vaccination Program recommendations, ATA and 20 other language organizations and associations petitioned the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to explicitly include on-site medical interpreters among the listed examples of health care personnel eligible for Phase 1 vaccinations. Twenty other organizations co-signed the ATA letter. You can read the letter on ATA’s website: http://bit.ly/CDC-petition.

Be Sure to Renew
Don’t go it alone. ATA provides a community and a professional home. If you haven’t already renewed your membership dues for 2021, please do: www.atanet.org/renew.
This annual report reviews ATA’s performance during its most recent fiscal year, from July 2019 to June 2020. These results are reviewed by independent auditors, and any material adjustments will be addressed in future reports. To get a sense of how the Association is doing over time, we begin with headline figures from the past three fiscal years. (See the table below.)

Like every organization, ATA has been adapting to our new reality. Though many financial impacts have yet to be fully felt, the most significant one so far has been the decision to host a virtual conference. This was a major leap, with financial implications, given that this event normally accounts for about one-third of total revenue for the year.

ATA Headquarters staff and volunteers plan and work on this event year-round, in a structure that cannot be turned off and on. In fact, given the uncertainty in the first few months of the crisis, the Association was actually planning both an in-person and a virtual event, thereby requiring even more time and energy than normal.

Yet, a fully virtual conference has been held, and we dealt with a lot of unknowns. For instance, we didn’t have good data on how many people might attend, what they would be willing to pay, how much value members might place on a virtual event, or even what types of challenges (technical and otherwise) we would face throughout. As such, from a financial perspective, this conference was a learning experience, and if, after all the expenses have been recorded, it breaks even, we should consider it a success.

As mentioned in previous reports, there tends to be a lag between when an economic shock takes place and when its effects are generally experienced. This tendency is significant because ATA’s two most important sources of revenue (conference and membership dues) are clustered in the second half of the calendar year. As such, while our finances still look fairly solid in this report, it’s essential to bear in mind that rockier roads lie ahead.

Revenue and Expenses
During our most recent fiscal year (July 2019 to June 2020), ATA recorded $2.94 million in Total Revenue, while incurring $3.04 million in Total Expenses. The result was a negative Change in Net Assets (before investment activities) of ($99,796). (See Figure 1 on page 9.)

Even though the Association’s bottom line was negative for the fiscal year, it actually improved year-on-year because certain expenses were kept in check by the pandemic and economic crisis. Our biggest source of revenue continues to be ATA Membership dues ($1.80 million), though it fell -2.9% from a year before. Next in importance is the Annual Conference, which, in Palm Springs, brought in $868,391, up 5% from New

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Table: Year-on-Year Review

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>9,616 (10,358)</td>
<td>9,210 (10,004)</td>
<td>8,831 (9,802)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$3.28 million</td>
<td>$3.08 million</td>
<td>$2.94 million</td>
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<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>$2.99 million</td>
<td>$3.20 million</td>
<td>$3.04 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
<td>$286,797</td>
<td>($121,302)</td>
<td>($99,796)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Assets</td>
<td>$3.07 million</td>
<td>$2.86 million</td>
<td>$2.73 million</td>
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<td>Total Liabilities</td>
<td>$1.59 million</td>
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<td>$1.29 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference Attendance</td>
<td>1,344</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,503</td>
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</table>

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Orleans ($825,401). All other sources lagged behind, with Certification ($197,916) generating ~30% less revenue year-on-year as a result of fewer exam sittings in 2020.

The good news is that Total Expenses were also down ~5.3% year-on-year. (See Figure 2) Program Services ($2.07 million) accounted for roughly two-thirds of all expenditures, after overhead allocations, and were ~7.9% lower than the previous fiscal year. Certification expenses ($305,531) were down -31% because fewer exams were offered and graded. Supporting Services accounted for the next biggest outlay, at $967,046, which is essentially unchanged from a year before. These services include salaries/benefits, general/administrative expenses, Board meetings, etc. The only noteworthy increase in spending was on PR/Marketing (up 26%). This increase was the result of cooperation with the Coalition of Practicing Translators and Interpreters of California on legislation related to California Assembly Bill 5, as well as slightly higher PR consultant fees and new spending related to graphics for International Translation Day.

**Figure 1**

*Breakdown of Total Revenue*

July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020

- Membership (1,800,545, 60%)
- Certification (197,916, 7%)
- Chronicle (9,048, 0%)
- Conference (868,391, 29%)
- PD—Seminars (0, 0%)
- PD—Webinar/Podcast (33,090, 1%)

- Publications (3,117, 0%)
- Other Revenue (23,257, 1%)
- Dividend/Interest (30,570, 1%)
- Gain/(Loss) Investment (14,264, 1%)

**Figure 2**

*Breakdown of Total Expenses*

July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020

- Certification (305,531, 10%)
- Chronicle (241,226, 8%)
- Conference (854,925, 28%)
- Divisions (117,782, 4%)
- Membership (372,863, 12%)
- PD—Webinar/Podcast (56,222, 2%)

- PD—Seminars (25,456, 1%)
- Publications (94,110, 3%)
- Salaries (415,254, 14%)
- Gen & Admin (406,261, 13%)
- PR/Officers/Governance (145,531, 5%)

**Figure 3**

*Financial Results for ATA Programs (Rounded to the Nearest Thousand)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Surplus (Loss)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>197,916</td>
<td>-107,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>241,226</td>
<td>222,178</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
<td>25,456</td>
<td>117,782</td>
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<td>PD—Seminars</td>
<td>25,456</td>
<td>(23,319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD—Webinars</td>
<td>33,090</td>
<td>56,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>3,117</td>
<td>94,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>868,391</td>
<td>854,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>372,863</td>
<td>1,427,682</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Certification shows positive net funds available ($1.43 million) from membership dues, which are used to finance most of the Association’s programs. While the figure at the bottom of the next bar over shows that the Publications program is running at a $90,993 loss. Notice that certain programs such as the Chronicle and Divisions are almost entirely subsidized by dues. Other programs, including the Conference and Certification, actually generate revenue that helps offset their costs.

**Major Program Results**

As noted in my last report, ATA programs tend to run at a loss for the fiscal year. The most recent results are presented in the bar chart in Figure 3. The figures at the bottom of each vertical bar represent that program’s annual net gain or loss. For instance, the bar on the far-right side (Membership) shows positive net funds available ($1.43 million) from membership dues, which are used to finance most of the Association’s programs. While the figure at the bottom of the next bar over shows that the Publications program is running at a $90,993 loss.
During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, the **Conference** was the only program whose revenues covered its total expenses. However, efforts have been made to generate more income from **Professional Development** (seminars and webinars), and the expectation is that these programs will become more self-sustaining in the years to come.

### Assets, Liabilities, and Net Assets

In terms of ATA’s longer-term status, it remains a mixed bag. For now, though, we’re still on fairly solid financial ground overall.

The headline figure from our Statement of Financial Position (balance sheet) for FY2019–2020, which can be found on page 11, is a **(-4.7%)** decline in **Total Assets**, from $2.86 million a year ago to $2.73 million this year. **Total Liabilities** also fell during this same period **(-10.4%)**, from $1.44 million to $1.29 million, mostly as a result of a gradual decline in membership.

The good news, though, is that what ATA holds in cash, investments, etc., is still worth much more than it owes. In fact, this difference, recorded as **Net Assets—Unrestricted**, remained nearly unchanged—from $1.43 million a year ago to $1.42 million this year. This is still a healthy number for an association our size.

### Annual Conference

The 2019 Annual Conference in Palm Springs turned out better than expected. We knew it would be a smaller affair since it was being held at a resort hotel a bit farther from the large population centers where ATA hosts most of its conferences. Fortunately, the Association’s planning and hard work paid off, as we not only covered all direct and indirect costs, but actually recorded a small surplus ($13,466) when all was said and done. On the whole, it should be viewed as a success.

The two pie charts in Figures 4 and 5 show where the conference generated its revenue and how that money got spent.

As noted under Figure 4, **Registration** is obviously the main source of revenue, but ATA also brings in money from exhibitors, Advanced Skills and Training (AST) courses, sponsorship, and even some advertising.

It’s clear from looking at Figure 5 that **Overhead** at ATA Headquarters is clearly the largest slice of this expense pie, but bear in mind that staff work on the conference year-round to make it happen.

Other essential costs include everything from Wi-Fi to insurance, speaker honoraria, conference software, and other similar expenses. Food and beverage costs, which cover breakfast and the Welcome Celebration, are typically built into the overall event price and go toward paying for the physical conference space and breakout rooms.

In the end, the Palm Springs conference generated a total of $868,391 in revenue, versus a direct cost of $524,076, more than paying for itself. In fact, the surplus from the event fully covered overhead ($330,849), as noted in Figure 5.

Turning our sights on the 2020 conference, the biggest financial concern all the way through the summer had been the perceived burden of canceling the Boston in-person event outright and/or early because of contractual penalties that had been estimated at around **$450,000**. Fortunately, thanks to the hard work of ATA Headquarters, that contract was renegotiated, allowing the Association to reschedule the event in Boston for 2025. In exchange, all penalties were waived for the 2020 event.

For years now, we’ve noted that when an Annual Conference does well, ATA does well financially as a whole. The virtual event in 2020 was no different. Our reasonable expectation was that this conference would at least break even. As of this writing, that appears to be the case. In addition, it has served as an excellent learning experience and point of reference for future hybrid/virtual events.
Looking Ahead: COVID-19, Economic Crisis, and Budget

As mentioned at the outset, economic crises normally involve a certain lag time until impacts are fully felt. The figures reported here are through June 2020. As such, they don’t yet reflect the total financial impact on membership and the conference. What these numbers do demonstrate, though, is where we stood halfway through this unprecedented calendar year.

As of this writing (October 2020), ATA has savings and investments in excess of $2 million, with roughly $750,000 of that in cash. These figures imply that the Association has a financial cushion for the next few months as this crisis impacts our industry and ATA in particular. However, we’ve already started drawing down on those cash reserves, in large part because of cash-flow issues related to the virtual conference.

Two trends that preceded the current crisis may be exacerbated by it: declining membership and smaller or even negative net income from the conference. We continue to monitor membership numbers. For now, we expect at least a 5% drop year-on-year. The conference, for its part, is more of a mystery since we have no previous experience with virtual events of this size. The prudent approach, then, is to assume that breaking even would be a financial success.

The Finance and Audit Committee has met multiple times in between Board meetings to discuss these issues and consider their impact on the budget for the coming fiscal year (2020–21). We expect the Association to incur manageable losses. Our most likely scenario forecasts a negative change in net assets on the order of $225,000 for the upcoming fiscal year (2020–21). That would come on the heels of the $99,796 loss ATA experienced during the fiscal year ending in June 2020.

Therefore, theoretical conversations about streamlining the Association, reducing overhead, and lowering expenses will need to become practical implementations in the
Preliminary Consolidated Statement of Activities (with overhead distribution)
July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>YOY Change</th>
<th>YOY Change %</th>
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<tr>
<td>REVENUE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>$1,800,545</td>
<td>$1,853,848</td>
<td>($53,303)</td>
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<td>Certification</td>
<td>197,016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>9,048</td>
<td>10,146</td>
<td>(1,098)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>866,391</td>
<td>826,829</td>
<td>39,562</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dev - Seminars</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,514</td>
<td>(8,514)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dev - Webinars</td>
<td>33,090</td>
<td>19,176</td>
<td>13,914</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>3,117</td>
<td>5,674</td>
<td>(2,557)</td>
<td>-45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Revenue</td>
<td>23,257</td>
<td>44,619</td>
<td>(21,362)</td>
<td>-48.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>2,935,365</td>
<td>3,082,740</td>
<td>(147,375)</td>
<td>-4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Services:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>305,531</td>
<td>448,151</td>
<td>(142,620)</td>
<td>-11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>241,226</td>
<td>230,471</td>
<td>10,755</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>854,925</td>
<td>876,771</td>
<td>(21,846)</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
<td>117,782</td>
<td>104,942</td>
<td>12,840</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Services</td>
<td>372,863</td>
<td>379,169</td>
<td>(6,306)</td>
<td>-1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dev - Seminars</td>
<td>25,456</td>
<td>55,498</td>
<td>(30,042)</td>
<td>-54.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dev - Webinars</td>
<td>56,222</td>
<td>54,497</td>
<td>1,725</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>94,110</td>
<td>95,202</td>
<td>(1,092)</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Program Services</td>
<td>2,066,115</td>
<td>2,244,501</td>
<td>(178,386)</td>
<td>-7.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supporting Services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salaries &amp; Benefits</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; Administrative</td>
<td>406,261</td>
<td>408,777</td>
<td>(2,516)</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>53,035</td>
<td>41,852</td>
<td>11,183</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers &amp; Directors</td>
<td>73,772</td>
<td>87,704</td>
<td>(13,932)</td>
<td>-15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers &amp; Governance</td>
<td>10,724</td>
<td>23,536</td>
<td>(12,812)</td>
<td>-54.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Supporting Services</td>
<td>967,046</td>
<td>959,142</td>
<td>7,905</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Expenses               | 3,035,161 | 3,204,043 | (168,882)  | -5.3%        |

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS BEFORE INVESTMENT ACTIVITY & EXTRAORDINARY ITEM

| Dividend/Interest           | 30,570    | 40,476    | (9,906)    | -24.5%       |
| Realized (Loss) Gain on Investments | - | (16,667) | 16,667 | 0.0% |
| Unrealized (Loss) Gain on Investments | 14,264 | 26,662 | (12,407) | -46.9% |
| Total Nonoperating Activities | 44,834 | 50,871 | (6,036) | -11.9% |

Extraordinary Item:

| Sue Wittrow Trust           | -         | -         | -          | -100.0%      |
| Total Extraordinary Item    | -         | -         | -          | -100.0%      |

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

|                    | (54,962) | (70,432) | 15,470 | 22.0% |

NET ASSETS - JULY 1, 2019, 2018

|                    | 1,499,534 | 1,569,966 | (70,432) | -4.5% |

NET ASSETS - JUNE 30, 2020, 2019

|                    | $1,444,572 | $1,499,534 | (54,962) | -3.7% |

John Milan, CT is the treasurer of ATA and chair of ATA’s Finance and Audit Committee. He is also an ATA-certified Portuguese>English translator. He is an economist, writer, and lecturer on the business and economics of language services. He was an adjunct professor of economics in São Paulo, Brazil, for 10 years. He has been involved in the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters (an ATA chapter) since 2005, spending eight years on its board of directors, serving as president from 2013–2016. He has an MS in applied microeconomics from Ohio State University and degrees in international political economy and Spanish from Indiana University. john@milanlanguageservices.com

coming months. The Board and the membership, as a whole, should be prepared for some tough conversations, which will be necessary to ensure ATA’s continued financial success.

NOTES

1 As a nonprofit, ATA’s change in net assets indicates earnings or losses during the fiscal year.

2 ATA allocates part of its overhead to programs, such as the conference, certification, divisions, etc., based on the number of hours that Headquarters staff spend working on them. This allocation provides a more accurate view of their actual cost.


4 This is a good place to point out that the charts, graphs, and statements included in this report were all prepared by ATA’s very competent and much-appreciated accounting and finance manager, Kirk Lawson. Please thank Kirk for all his hard work the next time you get a chance.
Call for Nominations: ATA Officers and Directors

The 2021 Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to announce the call for nominations from ATA’s membership to fill the positions of president-elect, secretary, and treasurer (each a two-year term), as well as three directors’ positions (each a three-year term). Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting of Voting Members on Thursday, October 28, 2021 during ATA’s 62nd Annual Conference in Minneapolis!

Under ATA’s Bylaws, all Active members of ATA are eligible to run for elected office. Active members are those who have passed an ATA certification exam or who are established as having achieved professional status through an Active Membership Review (see sidebar for more information on this process), or through the Credentialed Interpreter program (http://bit.ly/ATA-CI-designation). Active members must be citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. Other member categories are not eligible to serve as officers or directors. However, any member may submit a nomination. Members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee are not eligible to run for elected office.

2021 Nominating Form Online

Members may make a nomination using the relevant forms online (www.atanet.org/elections.php). Nominations should be submitted as early as possible so that the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee can fully consider proposed candidates. The deadline is March 1, 2021. Submit the form at the elections page referenced above, or email, mail, or fax the completed form to:

David C. Rumsey
Chair, ATA Nominating and Leadership Development Committee
American Translators Association
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA
Fax: +1-703-683-6122
Email: Walter@atanet.org

If you plan to put names forward for nomination, please contact the potential nominees first, explaining your intention and the fact that a nomination does not guarantee a formal invitation to run for office. If a nomination is not put forward by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee to ATA’s Board of Directors, an individual may still petition to be added to the slate of candidates by submitting the nomination in writing along with the signatures of at least 60 voting members endorsing the nomination. The petitions must be received by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee no later than 30 calendar days after first publication by the Board of Directors of the names of the candidates proposed by the committee.

All ATA officers and directors serve on a volunteer basis: please do not nominate colleagues who express serious concerns about service, or who have conflicting priorities.
How Did Your Work Change in 2020?

One thing 2020 certainly demonstrated is the resilience and adaptability of translators and interpreters.

It was quite a year. Given the many challenges 2020 presented, members of The ATA Chronicle Editorial Board reached out to their colleagues (both interpreters and translators) and invited them to answer the following question: How did your work change in 2020?

The stories they share here speak of professional and personal struggle—as well as some bright spots—while navigating the “new normal” of a global pandemic. A common theme throughout is resiliency in the face of unprecedented global health and economic crisis. Despite the chaos 2020 brought, the year provided opportunities to connect, learn, adapt, and grow as professionals. We hope the following will serve as a reminder of the strength to be found in the translator and interpreter community.

Many thanks to The ATA Chronicle Editorial Board for coordinating this article: Jost Zetzsche (chair), Paula Arturo, Lois Feuerle, Ben Karl, Barbara Inge Karsch, and Ted Wozniak.

Katharine Allen
Bishop, California

In 2020, remote interpreting saved our livelihood while eroding a decade of gains in working conditions.

Before the pandemic, most remote interpreting in the U.S. existed in health care, emergency services, and the financial world and was dominated by over-the-phone (OPI) and video remote (VRI) consecutive interpreting. Remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) was a budding area on the conference side of our profession. Start-up platforms were slowly gaining inroads, designed to preserve good sound and provide virtual booths for team interpreting.

In two short weeks in March, onsite interpreting shut down all over the world. Multilingual communication moved online. The result? Existing OPI, VRI, and RSI platforms, after an initial dip, experienced huge surges in demand. Remote work offset some of the losses interpreters suffered, but the learning curve has been steep. The surge has degraded working conditions, especially for RSI where the explosion of meetings over web conferencing platforms not designed for interpreting has forced interpreters into endless patchwork hacks that strain sound, cognition, and brain function. But like it or not, remote interpreting is here to stay.

As we come out of the pandemic, now is the time to be loud, squeaky wheels to
They can use the latest neural machine translation systems for non-critical translations that don’t have to be linguistically “perfect” and edit the machine translation output themselves. Interpreting training is booming. And although some translation direct clients are learning about neural machine translation, they still need our services.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught me directly is to always be prepared for change. I wasn’t expecting my online health care interpreting training to start booming during the pandemic, but that’s exactly what happened. Fortunately, I had updated my one-on-one online training to focus on VRI, which meant I was already prepared to help my students nationwide during lockdown.

My take on the business impact of the pandemic is that local onsite interpreting is picking up slowly, with many health care providers still not comfortable with VRI because of their specializations.

Interpreting training is booming. And although some translation direct clients are learning about neural machine translation, they still need our services.
Instead of “going with the flow,” I found myself being more active and proactive, researching new avenues, working hard but enjoying the process, and feeling alive and grateful. New challenges are invigorating—what’s there not to like?

expect will soon enhance my translation business while also providing a potential new pillar outside of the translation industry. Yet, despite the extra leisure time, 2020 was exceptionally chaotic and I looked forward to its close.

Anne-Charlotte Giovangrandi Palo Alto, California

As a California–based English–French translator working exclusively with agencies, when I first heard of California Assembly Bill 5 (AB 5) in 2019, I was terrified. By January 2020, my fears had materialized: my two largest clients were demanding I incorporate to keep our relationship. I adamantly refused, choosing instead to advocate for an exemption alongside the Coalition of Practicing Translators and Interpreters of California, a nonpartisan nonprofit advocacy group.

Surprisingly, the year started strong, thanks to additional projects from regular clients who accepted my sole proprietor status and supported my fight against AB 5. And then the pandemic hit.

After an abysmal April, I got a brief stint in videogame localization, a sector that definitely benefited from the lockdown. Luxury products, on the other hand, did not, and my regular translations of high–end jewelry catalogs vanished. However, as a medical translator, I also started receiving many projects related to COVID, including guidelines, press releases, and medical staff training. I even gained two clients, who initially contacted me for a COVID–related project and now send me projects regularly. Another positive impact of the pandemic for me: when a major communication platform moved their annual conference online, I got to translate the subtitles of their keynote speeches. So, overall, I feel lucky and grateful!

Ben Karl Long Beach, California

Last spring, a friend of mine said that despite all the challenges 2020 lobbed at us, she found it very easy to count her blessings. I couldn’t agree more. I’m very thankful for my health, my family, my home, and my work.

Last March, less than six months after moving to a new city in a new state and just when I was getting a feel for the lay of the land, we were ordered to shelter in place. I didn’t have to transition to working from home, but I did have to transition to an entirely home–based existence, my usual outlets outside having suddenly closed their doors.

With few places to go and terrified that my clients would disappear, I threw myself into my work and nearly burned out in the process. Thankfully, my clients are all doing well and I’ve even managed to find some new ones. I’ve found a new work balance where I’m no longer afraid they’ll stop calling, which has been very powerful for me.

2020 was full of silver linings and I’m looking forward to an even brighter 2021.

Anwar Martinez New York City, New York

Times have changed considerably. I know I’m stating the obvious, but I would have never thought in a million years what 2020 had in store. As I had recently begun my career as a translator and interpreter, my vision of the future didn’t include a global pandemic that was going to shut down entire cities across the world.

I’m based in New York City and work for a Catholic religious order of men dedicated to educating young people, especially those who are disadvantaged. Suddenly, I found myself wondering if I should count myself among the disadvantaged as my work began to steadily decrease as the number of COVID–19 cases increased.

Fortunately, my studies as a graduate student not only kept me busy but provided me with a community of like–minded individuals who were going through similar experiences. This renewed sense of purpose became one of the driving forces that has helped me navigate the murky waters of the pandemic. Hopefully the situation will improve, since translation and interpreting remain at the heart of what I do and who I am.
Janis Palma
San Antonio, Texas

I was on my way back home from a week of work at the U.S. District Court in Corpus Christi, Texas, when I heard the news on public radio: San Antonio was going into lockdown due to the pandemic.

I had no idea what that meant other than having to do some grocery shopping as if a hurricane were about to hit. It was March 20, 2020, and there was no way for me to know back then how long this stay-at-home order was really going to last or how my life’s priorities would never again be the same.

Finding isopropyl alcohol became a quest. That everyday item on drug store shelves became as scarce as work in the courts and regular income. Overnight I lost track of my colleagues, my friends. Everyone was too busy finding disposable gloves and face masks or figuring out how to use remote platforms to start a whole new way of making a safe living away from COVID-19.

I gave up waiting for the courts to call or the unemployment office to answer my calls. I finally decided to apply for my Social Security benefits and just stay home. I still miss my friends!

Tony Rosado
Chicago, Illinois

My life was affected in 2020. The loss of family members, diminished income, stress, and uncertainty were all present. The biggest change, however, occurred in my professional life.

As an interpreter before the pandemic, I averaged 300 days per year on the road. Assignments included trips to all continents and practically every state. I lived out of a suitcase, ate at restaurants, and slept in hotel rooms. I loved my lifestyle. All of this ended in the spring as conferences were postponed, trips canceled, confinement orders issued, and my work disappeared. I haven’t left my place since March 16. A lack of income and uncertainty about the future were exacerbated by a constant stream of email and social media postings heralding the end of my profession and the triumph of distance interpreting.

I had interpreted remotely for about two years, which gave me the peace of mind to set my priorities. I fired bad clients, got closer to the best ones, and discovered a never seen attitude of collaboration among my colleagues worldwide. Interpreters have adapted to the circumstances because we’re problem solvers. I still miss in-person work but, having learned new skills and selected quality clients, I’m confident I’ll make it during and after this crisis.

Svetlana Ruth
Portland, Oregon

A memorable year, 2020 presented many challenges, tested my strength, and taught me—a medical interpreter and trainer—how to stay in business.

While many interpreters saw a significant decrease in hours, I had the opposite experience. My interpreting hours didn’t change and I had many new opportunities and various assignments. I was busier in 2020 than any year before. Several factors helped significantly to achieve this outcome:

• Having a strong positive long-term relationship with an interpreting agency.
• Having optimal working conditions (e.g., no school-age children at home).
• Keeping up to date with compliance requirements.
• Having the necessary technology already in place at home with reliable internet.
• Having the support and inspiration of colleagues, who encouraged me to expand my field of work and referred me to new services. (That’s how I added a third job as a contact tracer to my 2020 résumé and created a few workshops for interpreters.)
• Following my business plan to continue offering training courses even to smaller groups.

Instead of “going with the flow,” I found myself being more active and proactive, researching new avenues, working hard but enjoying the process, and feeling alive and grateful. New challenges are invigorating—what’s there not to like?

Carol Shaw
Garland, Texas

On December 31, 2019, I made my first-ever business New Year’s resolution: to make it a point to learn new skills in 2020. Then COVID-19 happened.
It started with a phone call at 10:00 p.m. on a Friday night. One of the five school districts for which I work needed some documents translated before an emergency board meeting the following night. Was I available? I was and continued to remain so.

For the next several months, school–related translation requests arrived every workday and at least once on weekends. Deadlines were tight as districts tried to keep worried parents informed. While the pandemic forced clients in other fields to slow down, I was still working seven days a week.

I had to learn to interpret online for my schools—and teach their staff how to do so. This triggered greater involvement in the Interpreters and Translators in Education Workgroup (www.iteworkgroup.org) and other interpreter forums.

By late summer, school requests were nearly back to normal and business picked up for other translation clients. But I’m accepting more remote deposition assignments now. I’m also taking advantage of every online conference time allows.

Upon the initial shock of the pandemic declaration and the stay-at-home orders back in March, some of my direct clients’ services turned essential and so did my freelance translation services.

I was hardly prepared for the flood of rushed projects that arrived in my inbox overnight. Project managers were now working from home—like me—dealing with their own pandemic situations and adjusting to remote working and unconventional schedules. They contacted me around the clock.

While adjusting to the new work-normal, I’m fortunate to be able to rely on exceptional colleagues to help with some of my projects, to discuss the translation of the emerging terminology, and to find emotional and professional support.

Since March, I’ve translated and edited thousands of words related to COVID-19 or resulting from the pandemic. Consequently, my normal workload increased significantly, even requiring me to work 12-hour days to meet the surge. Very quickly, I had to draw resilience to face the challenges the pandemic was creating for the world and me.

While adjusting to the new work-normal, I’m fortunate to be able to rely on exceptional colleagues to help with some of my projects, to discuss the translation of the emerging terminology, and to find emotional and professional support. Furthermore, recognizing that my translation services are now even more essential for my clients to serve their Spanish-speaking communities motivates me to stay committed to providing high-quality services.
My work as an over-the-phone health care interpreter began several years ago but has expanded considerably since the pandemic restrictions took effect in March 2020. Before the pandemic, I devoted most of my working hours to face-to-face medical interpreting for Italian patients. On a busy day, I would typically help two families as they navigated the U.S. health care system. Since I’ve been working from home due to the pandemic, I’ve found that I can help many more people in a day, and for that I feel privileged.

The work is challenging in ways I hadn’t expected. For those considering working as an over-the-phone interpreter or who are already engaged in this type of work, let’s review some pros and cons.

Working Conditions
Of all the gig work available, over-the-phone interpreting is probably one of the most flexible. Language services agencies in the U.S. are recruiting interpreters of all languages paired with English. To qualify, you’ll need to take an evaluation test conducted over the phone or online that will be graded by a bilingual agency representative. The test will feature typical questions or brief conversations you might encounter while interpreting for clients.¹

Once you pass the test and sign on with the agency, you’ll need to have a dedicated phone line, a computer with reliable internet coverage, as well as a headset, notepad, pencil, and a quiet room in which to work. The agency will provide information and a training session on how to use their online platform to access their call center.

Calls for your language pair and area of expertise will be routed to the phone number you designate. Your phone will typically display the name of the agency when an interpreting call is coming through. You can log on and off from the call center whenever you choose and block off your schedule according to your availability. The agency will provide information and a training session on how to use their online platform to access their call center.

Calls can last anywhere from one minute to a few hours. (My longest call was 157 minutes.) My guess is that the average call is about 10 minutes.

My personal goal for each day I work is to reach 70 minutes of actual interpreting time. It can take anywhere from three to nine (!) hours to achieve this goal. (Perhaps I would be more consistently employed if my language—Italian—were more widely used.) I tend to log on to the call center Monday through Friday from

Remuneration
In my experience, I’ve found that there’s no need for invoicing. The agency’s call center keeps track of all the calls and the total duration, and payment is generated automatically. At the end of the pay period, I receive a check (or direct deposit) for the hours I worked. For my own purposes, I keep a record of my phone time each day and check it against the call center log (available on the agency’s website), but I’m happy to let the agency handle all the paperwork. They pay me by the minute for the time I’m actually interpreting on the phone (not for the time I’m logged on the system). There’s no minimum pay. If a situation comes up where I’m put “on hold” during a call while the agency/client checks on something, the agency does pay me for that time.

Timing
Calls can last anywhere from one minute to a few hours. (My longest call was 157 minutes.) My guess is that the average call is about 10 minutes.

My personal goal for each day I work is to reach 70 minutes of actual interpreting time. It can take anywhere from three to nine (!) hours to achieve this goal. (Perhaps I would be more consistently employed if my language—Italian—were more widely used.) I tend to log on to the call center Monday through Friday from

¹ The test will feature typical questions or brief conversations you might encounter while interpreting for clients.
The rest of the night! I couldn’t fall back to sleep for an adrenaline rush and we me and my husband into That 30-seconds jolted both who needed an extra pillow. to interpret for a patient in the middle of the night way after being awakened Again, I learned this the hard way, so I need to take these extra calls. to your phone even when you’re not logged on if there aren’t enough interpreters available to handle the call volume. Others will alert you with a text or email that calls a phone close by so I can answer quickly and then jog back to my desk and switch to my headset while the coordinator is setting up the call. I’m pretty adept at this maneuver, but I’ve missed many calls by misplacing the phone, pressing the wrong buttons, or waiting until the third ring. After burning an omelet, I learned not to cook anything while logged on to the call center! Not only am I on a rather short leash when I’m logged on, but if I have any other firm time commitment (webinar, dentist appointment, maintenance worker coming, etc.), I need to log off well in advance so as to not be interpreting on a call and have to bow out in the middle. I usually allow 30 minutes as a buffer in those circumstances.

Topics and Terminology
The bulk of my calls are for medical providers and their patients. They run the gamut from appointment scheduling to x-ray consultations. I get a lot of speech, occupational, and physical therapy sessions. Nurses call from the patient’s bedside when administering pain medications or when doctors are making rounds or need to review informed consent forms. I’m called upon to explain the preparations before surgery or to go over discharge instructions. Visiting nurses call with questionnaires to determine if a patient is eligible for home health care. Staff from the emergency department or recovery room call and have me interpret the questions they ask to determine if a patient is “oriented." (These questions include: “Do you know where you are?” “What year is it?” or “What season is it?”) The non-medical calls I receive tend to be for all types of customer service desks: banks, credit cards, airports, employee hotlines, hotels, and insurance companies. I get an occasional legal call for hearings with workers’ compensation judges. I never know what the next call will be, which I find exciting and stimulating. I stay close to my computer so I can quickly look up new words online. I build glossaries on different topics so I can refer to them the next time a similar call comes through.

Confidentiality
Another piece of equipment you’ll need is a paper shredder. Much of the information that’s shared is confidential and needs to be destroyed after the call. Sometimes, by chance, I’ll interpret for the same caller from one day to the next. They’ll recognize my name and voice and expect me to magically pull up their information from the previous call, but I explain that this isn’t possible—for their own good. This detail is something that should be highlighted in a pre-session, but it’s not always possible to wedge a pre-session into these calls. The interpreter is often conferenced into a call that’s already underway and is expected to seamlessly blend in without missing a beat.

Required Training
Agencies prefer to hire over-the-phone interpreters who have completed some sort of training. (For example, completion of the Bridging the Gap program.) For high-volume languages, agencies prefer candidates with over three years of experience paired with training and, ideally, certification. Given that there may not be enough training resources available for rarer languages, agencies may be willing to consider a candidate with volunteer experience.

Recruitment
When applying to an agency, send a detailed résumé and a copy of your certification(s). This helps the agency determine how best to use your skills. Every year of your tenure with an agency, reach out to the vendor manager and send an updated résumé.

An experienced, reliable, and competent on-demand interpreter will be a natural choice for any scheduled
over-the-phone assignments with an agency. The vendor manager will match the skills of an interpreter with the requirements of the client and the nature of the assignment, so the more the manager knows about you the better.

I never know what the next call will be, which I find exciting and stimulating.

Evaluations

“Calls may be monitored for quality and training purposes.” You may have heard this phrase while waiting on hold for customer service. Over-the-phone interpreters occasionally do get monitored. I’ve done some work as an evaluator where the goal was to provide constructive feedback to the interpreters. Some of the skills evaluators hope the interpreter demonstrates during the call include accuracy, interpreting in the first person, providing clarification (using the third person), effective turn-taking, using the proper formality register consistently, avoiding adding information not said by the callers, using standard grammar, and politeness. For scheduled calls, punctuality is obviously also important.

Client feedback is also shared with the interpreter. Agencies will try to honor the client’s request for a preferred interpreter when calls are scheduled in advance. Some agencies have feedback forms the interpreter can fill out to report positive or negative experiences, which can be very helpful. For example, there was a time when a certain obscene caller kept getting routed to my phone. By reporting him, I got the attention of the agency staff and together I think we’ve managed to discourage his harassment.

A Happy Ending

I want to leave you with this anecdote from a recent call. I was interpreting for a nurse—let’s call her Naomi—who was at the bedside of a patient, whom we’ll call Paola. During the call Paola’s voice was extremely raspy and weak, so it was difficult to understand what she was saying. The first intelligible words I heard (in Italian) were, “It’s time for me to die.” Naomi responded immediately with a caring tone and reassurances that she was there to help Paola feel better. Paola had just come out of the operating room and was waking up from the anesthesia. All this was explained to Paola through me.

I used my most warm and friendly voice to match Naomi’s tone. Paola sounded so despondent, vulnerable, and weak. She was in pain so Naomi increased her intravenous pain medication. When Paola wanted to use the bathroom, Naomi explained that there was a catheter in place.

Paola still sounded miserable and repeated that it was “her time.” I could tell that Paola’s mouth was so dry she could barely speak. When Naomi offered ice chips, Paola didn’t respond. At this point I intervened and explained in English to Naomi, “That’s a cultural thing. Italians are not real fans of ice chips. Do you have one of those little wet sponges on a stick you can use to moisten her lips?” When Naomi offered one, Paola responded favorably.

Eventually, Paola’s voice got clearer and stronger and she uttered more hopeful phrases about “wanting to get better.” It was a remarkable transformation from being “ready to die” to being “ready to live”—and I helped!

NOTES

1 You can practice medical terminology using training videos available on YouTube. Search for “Doctor patient conversation in English” or “Medical Interview.”

2 A pre-session is a short explanation of how the interpreting session will work. The interpreter should make it clear that the content will remain confidential and that everything will be interpreted. This is also the time to remind the client to speak in short chunks, allow pauses for interpreting, and that the interpreter will speak in the same person and may intervene when necessary.

3 I want to thank Simon Nazir, global resource manager at CETRA Language Solutions, for much of this information about training, recruitment, and evaluations. Simon has more than 10 years of experience in recruitment that includes more than four years in the language industry. In his current role, Simon is responsible for developing sourcing strategies to attract and retain qualified contractors (translators and interpreters) aligned with the company’s strategic objectives, and executing those strategies across the business units. This includes sourcing, vetting, on-boarding, and providing support after activation.

4 For more information on the Bridging the Gap program, visit https://bit.ly/bridging-training.

5 Training is available through Cross Cultural Communications, which offers a free webinar series entitled The Remote Interpreter, delivered by the authors of the forthcoming textbook of the same name (Danielle Meder and Tatiana Cestari). Visit www.interpretertraining-online.com/tri-webinar-series.

Linda Pollack-Johnson, CT is a freelance translator and interpreter. She is a Core Certification Healthcare Interpreter (Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters). An ATA-certified Italian>English translator, she is a member of ATA’s Italian Language and Medical Divisions. She is also a member of the Delaware Valley Translators Association (an ATA chapter). She has mentored many aspiring translators and interpreters, proctored numerous certification exams, and given many ATA School Outreach presentations. pollackjohnson@verizon.net
Museums offer knowledge but they can also provide entertainment and distraction, especially during hard times like we’re experiencing now. In the past decade or so they have evolved from rather stuffy places to lively multimedia experiences with exhibits on anything from art, photography, and fashion to film, music, and science and technology. The accompanying texts are no longer limited to labels and catalogs, but may also include audio guides and interactive quizzes, and promotional material such as websites and online newsletters.

What I like about translating for museums is the subject variety. Over the years, I’ve translated material related to fashion, photography, gemstones, theater, history, modern art, and even Star Wars. These were all subjects with which I was already more or less familiar, either because I specialize in them or because I was interested in them. Star Wars was the exception, as I had never seen any of the movies, but this was easily remedied by finally watching them.

Obviously, as with any translation, you should only accept translations on subjects with which you’re comfortable, but since museums usually aim for a wide audience, most texts aren’t too specialized.

Another thing I like about this type of translation work is how you sometimes discover cultural similarities rather than the cultural differences we translators are used to. When translating an audio guide for a local German museum, for example, I discovered several local customs that sounded very familiar because they are also known in the Netherlands.

Preparation and Research
In an ideal world, the client will provide you with lots of reference material and, once you’ve finished the translation, you can visit the museum to check whether your texts work in the actual setting. Unfortunately, the world usually isn’t that ideal. The reference material is often limited, the quality of the visuals may be so bad they’re barely usable, and the translations often have to be ready before the exhibition is set up. So, even if you live close enough to the museum to actually visit, you probably won’t have an opportunity to do a walk-through to check your translation before an exhibition opens.

How much information you receive also depends on who you’re working for. If you’re working directly for a
museum and have access to curators, they’ll usually be able to provide you with all the information you need and answer questions. However, I’ve also done translations for a company that specializes in museum audio tours, and they weren’t always able to send me everything I needed. The same can apply when you’re working via a translation agency.

Regardless of whether you work directly for a museum or via an agency or another company, you should always ask for reference material, such as visuals, previously translated texts on the subject, texts from other exhibitions, information on the target audience, glossaries, and style guides. This will provide you with as much background as possible about the subject of the exhibition and help you determine the appropriate style and register.

Visuals are the most important resources. Most of the time the client will be able to provide visuals, but if not, there are other ways to find them. If you’re translating for an exhibition that’s already open, your first resource, if available, is the museum’s website. If you’re lucky, it will contain detailed photos of the exhibition, sometimes even 360-degree panorama photos or videos that lead you through the exhibition.

If there’s no website, Google Maps can also be a great resource for photos if you’re translating for an existing exhibition or if the exhibition has already been staged somewhere else. Look up the museum and click on Photos. Here you’ll find photos from visitors (and sometimes from the museum itself). These photos are usually not categorized, so you may have to browse a bit if you’re looking for something specific, but they can be incredibly useful. And they tend to be very recent: you’ll often find photos that have been taken just hours earlier.

**Types of Texts**

The type of texts you need to translate may vary. Some exhibitions only have panel texts and a catalog, while others will also have an audio guide or other multimedia. In some cases, you may be asked to translate the website and other promotional material as well.

**Labels:** Labels describe the individual items on display, which is why it’s essential to have visuals of these items. One of the first exhibitions I translated all the labels for was a fashion exhibition about Jean Paul Gaultier. The client did have visuals, but they turned out to be tiny thumbnail photos that didn’t show much detail. This made it really hard to translate some of the descriptions, especially since Gaultier is known for using unusual materials and techniques that really have to be seen to be understood.

For example, one dress had a “velvet cassock opening to reveal an icon.” Again, it turned out to be, very literally, a velvet cassock with two “doors” that opened to reveal a religious icon.

**Audio Guides:** When translating audio guides, make sure the text will be easy to follow when listened to. This means that you shouldn’t use long and/or complicated sentences. Be careful, however, not to use too many short sentences, as this will make the text sound too “staccato” when read aloud. Once you’ve finished your translation, always read it aloud to check how it sounds. (This is always a good idea for any type of translation!)

 Ask for a map of the route that listeners of the audio guide will follow. Instructions in audio guides are usually fairly straightforward (e.g., “turn left,” “take the stairs to the second floor”), but sometimes they can be a bit confusing, especially when the audio guide is for an old building or castle with unusual rooms and passageways. In that case, it helps if you can check out a map to see the exact location of that door or passage visitors will have to go through.

It’s also a good idea to check if the text is going to be used for the audio guide only or whether it will be printed or included in a multimedia guide as well. Audio guides used to be available on special hardware that was only available at the museum, but these days, especially in COVID times, museums are switching more and more to apps that can be downloaded on smartphones. These
Exhibition Catalogs: Catalogs usually contain a number of articles or essays, plus sections such as a biography/timeline about the artist(s), author biographies, image captions, a list of exhibited works, acknowledgements, and an index. The articles can be quite academic, in-depth texts, which might be challenging if you’re not familiar enough with the subject, so always make sure you’re up for this part of the translation project.

Promotional Texts: Sometimes you may also be asked to translate promotional texts for the exhibition, such as the website and newsletters. For these texts, you may have to use a different, more commercial style designed to attract people to the exhibition.

Tools of the Trade
I know many people don’t see any use for computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools when translating more creative texts, but I’ve found them very useful for numerous museum projects. One example was a project where the museum catalog was basically a copy of all the panel texts in the exhibition, so my CAT tool helped with consistency and saved me a lot of work. Another example was when I was asked to update an audio guide I had translated years before. The client did provide a file with tracked changes, but it was a lot easier to simply use my existing translation memory. And then there are the many times when a client has updated the text after I’ve already started working on it.

Another advantage of using a CAT tool is that I can leverage my years of experience. For example, I can import the various term bases I’ve compiled over the years for appropriate projects. I can also use a concordance search to easily search translation memories from previous projects on similar subjects.

COVID-19 and the Future of Museums
Unfortunately, museums all over the world have had to close during lockdowns and many are struggling. Some smaller museums have even closed permanently. There are also fewer international exhibitions, as travel restrictions make exchanging artworks between international museums more difficult. This may mean less translation work.

On the bright side, continuing professional development has become easier thanks to various online options. Museums are offering online lectures and tours of their current exhibitions, sometimes for free on their YouTube channel and sometimes for a small fee. So, you should use these opportunities to increase your knowledge. Also, please support your favorite museum if you can, because art is important, especially in difficult times like these!

Percy Balemans graduated from the School of Translation and Interpreting in the Netherlands in 1989. After working with a translation agency as an in-house translator for a few years, she served as a technical writer and copywriter, information designer, web editor, and trainer for an information technology company. Translation, however, has always been her real passion. In 2007, she established her own business as a full-time freelance translator, translating from English and German into Dutch, specializing in advertising (transcreation), fashion and beauty, art, and travel and tourism.

contact@pb-translations.com
The American Translators Association is honored to recognize Sue Ellen Wright as the recipient of the 2020 Alexander Gode Medal. Sue Ellen has been a member of ATA for over 35 years.

Sue Ellen earned her PhD in Germanic languages, literature, and linguistics in 1971 from Washington University in St. Louis. In addition to her graduate work at Washington University, she studied at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Universität Frankfurt/Main as a Fulbright Fellow.

Sue Ellen has always balanced work as a freelance translator and a college professor, first at Baldwin Wallace College, Cleveland State University, and most recently at Kent State University. She retired from teaching translation at Kent State University’s Translation Program in 2020, leaving behind a legacy of achievements:

- She and her late husband, Leland D. Wright, Jr., and several other Cleveland-based translators founded ATA’s third chapter, the Northeast Ohio Translators Association, in 1977.
- Together with her husband and other collaborators, Sue Ellen pioneered the use of computer-based approaches to manage terminology and support translation.
- She was a member of the original development team for the LISA TBX (Termbase eXchange) standard, which is now the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard ISO 30042:2019.
- She is the co-compiler (with Gerhard Budin of the University of Vienna) of the Handbook for Terminology Management and the author of many articles on applied terminology management in industry.
- She has written numerous articles outlining the role that the ISO’s Technical Committee 37 plays in a variety of venues, including translation and localization, translator training, and knowledge resource management.
- She chaired ATA’s former Terminology Committee.
- Her numerous (and often humorous) presentations at ATA Annual Conferences over the years have had an impact on several generations of translators and interpreters.
- Far from resting on her laurels, Sue Ellen continues in many capacities in her “retirement”:
  - She is active in the national and international standards community (ASTM International and ISO), chairing several committees and convening proposals related to translation technology and terminology applications.
  - She also participated in the initial development of ASTM F2575-06, Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation, and is also a member of the ASTM effort to create an evaluation metric for annotating translation errors.
  - Sue Ellen continues to be an outstanding, warm, and welcoming teacher and mentor to hundreds of students at the undergraduate, master’s, and PhD levels. In the past, students have been regularly invited to the Wright home for meals, hired as pet and house sitters, and made to feel part of the family. A former student sums it up nicely: “She has always been my model and mentor, and I have her to thank for my career. Dr. Wright sparked my love of translation and terminology that has kept me going for almost 25 years.”
  - For these reasons, Sue Ellen’s nomination as a recipient of the Alexander Gode Medal was unanimously supported.

The Alexander Gode Medal, ATA’s highest honor, is named for ATA’s founder and guiding spirit, who was the first recipient. The medalists represent a record of achievement in a variety of linguistic fields, including not only translators and interpreters, but also lexicographers, theorists, association leaders, and institutions. This award may be given annually.

Alexander Gode Medal
Sue Ellen Wright

ATA Past President Caitilin Walsh delivered the following remarks during ATA’s 61st Annual Conference.

Lewis Galantière Award
Michael Meigs

Michael Meigs was awarded the 2020 Lewis Galantière Award for his translation from Spanish into English of Dolores Redondo’s novel All This I Will Give to You (Amazon Crossing, 2018). Michael has also translated Redondo’s newest novel, The North Face of the Heart (Amazon Crossing, June 2021).
2021 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 2021 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 ATA Dynamo Award recognizes a person or entity that has worked in a particularly energetic way to benefit ATA and/or the language professions. This award is given in odd-numbered years.

The ATA Mentoring Award recognizes a person or entity that has provided outstanding mentoring to the next generation of translators and interpreters, either through the ATA Mentoring Program or another channel. This award is given in odd-numbered years.

The ATA Rising Star Award recognizes an early-career translator, interpreter, or entity that has already “made a mark” on ATA and is seen as having great potential to positively impact ATA and the language professions in the future. This award is given in odd-numbered years.

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

The Marian S. Greenfield Financial Translation Presentation Award is offered by AFTI to recognize an outstanding presenter of a financial translation session during ATA’s Annual Conference. The award may be given annually.

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 may be 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 given biennially in odd-numbered years.


All This I Will Give to You, an international bestselling thriller, centers around novelist Manuel Ortigosa, who learns that his husband Álvaro has died in a car crash in a remote region of Spain. Manuel discovers that his husband of 15 years was not the unassuming man he thought. Redondo, the acclaimed author of the thrillers of her Baztán Trilogy, wrote a vivid mystery that examines deep-seated conflicts in contemporary Spain.

Manuel’s gentle husband turns out to have been a titled aristocrat, the head for the past three years of one of Spain’s most powerful and guarded families, to whom the grieving novelist is an unwelcome and dangerous intruder. Álvaro’s death is revealed to be a murder. With two unexpected allies, a rough and stubbornly suspicious retired policeman and a generous-spirited priest, Manuel establishes a picture of Álvaro’s past, double life, and mysterious death. In the shadows

2020 American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation Student Attendance Scholarships for ATA’s Annual Conference

In 2019, the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation (AFTI) launched its new Conference Attendance Scholarship, awarding five scholarships to students or recent graduates of translation studies programs to help defray the cost of attending ATA’s Annual Conference. The scholarships are funded from donations made in the name of Edith Losa, who served ATA as president-elect and then president from 1991 to 1995.

(Geoff Koby, president of the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation, delivered the following remarks during ATA’s 61st Annual Conference.)

Due to the hardships resulting from the pandemic, the three scholarships awarded in 2020 cover the full cost of attending ATA’s 61st Annual Conference.
of ancient nobility and arrogant privilege, Manuel unravels a web of corruption and deception that may be as fatal to him as it was for the man he loved.

Author Dolores Redondo’s Baztán Trilogy, set in the Basque Pyrenees, has sold more than 1.5 million copies in Spanish. Twice nominated for the Crime Writers’ Association’s International Dagger Award and a finalist for the Grand Prix des Lectrices de Elle, Redondo was the recipient of the 2016 Premio Planeta, one of Spain’s most distinguished literary awards, for All This I Will Give to You.

Michael Meigs translates literature from French, German, Spanish, and Swedish. Since 2008, he has written and published almost 800 theatre reviews in the online journal CTX Live Theatre. The American-Scandinavian Foundation awarded him its 2011 translation prize for his English rendition of extensive excerpts from The Dean, by Swedish poet and novelist Lars Gustafsson.

Michael served as a diplomat with the U.S. Department of State for more than 30 years. He has graduate degrees in comparative literature, business, economics, and national security studies. He is a board member of Gilbert & Sullivan Austin and a member of the American Theatre Critics Association, the American Literary Translators Association, and Swedish Translators in North America. An ATA member, he is also a board member of the Austin Area Translators and Interpreters Association.

The recipients are:

**Ahmed Alhuseiny**
- A freelance English>Arabic translator who received his MA in translation from Kent State University in May 2020.

**Laura Rodríguez**
- A Spanish<>English translator who will graduate from Kent State University with an MA in translation in May 2021.

**Terrence Wissick**
- A Japanese>English translator who will graduate from Kent State University with an MA in translation in May 2021.

In the future, AFTI would like to expand its scholarship program, both in terms of the number of scholarships given and—assuming we return to a full in-person Annual Conference—the amount of the scholarship. Doing so will make it possible for more students to attend.

Many of us have suffered a drop in business. Therefore, I would like to ask you to donate to AFTI’s scholarship program—perhaps not now, but when you can. Simply go to www.AFTI.org and click on the Donate button. Or keep us in mind for when business picks up again. You can also donate to AFTI when you renew your ATA membership.

Founded in 1997, AFTI is a 501(c)(3) foundation affiliated with the American Translators Association. AFTI—ATA’s charitable arm—supports activities, education, and research in support of the translation and interpreting professions. AFTI promotes this objective by bestowing awards and scholarships, as well as sponsoring conference attendance and presentations.

The Lewis Galantière Award is bestowed biennially in even-numbered years for a distinguished book-length literary translation into English from any language except German. It honors distinguished ATA founding member Lewis Galantière (1894–1977). His translations from French drama, fiction, poetry, and scholarship enriched cultural life during the middle decades of the 20th century and are still being read today.

**HOW TO APPLY FOR THE 2021 SCHOLARSHIPS**

Applicants interested in applying for scholarships in 2021 can be full-time or part-time students at the undergraduate or graduate level. All students must be enrolled at a two-year or four-year college or university in a program in translation, interpreting, or both, leading to an academic degree or certificate. Recent graduates must have completed their program within 12 months of the starting date of the 2021 ATA Conference. For more information, visit: [www.afti.org](http://www.afti.org).
There are a lot of good reasons to use a contact form. It doesn’t have to be totally impersonal if you set it up well. Done right, you can make a contact form that’s beneficial for both your clients and your translation or interpreting business. Here are a few reasons you need to use a contact form on your website, followed by some tips on how to get it right.

1. It’s the most convenient way for clients to get in touch with you. When you have a way for clients to reach you directly via your website, you take away additional steps from the equation. The fewer the clicks and hoops clients have to jump through, the more likely it is that they will reach out to you about their next project.

   If you’ve ever searched a website and had trouble finding how to contact someone, you probably got frustrated rather quickly. And if you did find the information easily but the only option to contact the business was one you would rather not use (like a customer service chat instead of a phone number to call), you probably wished they had provided more options. Your clients feel the same way.

   Everyone likes options, especially if they allow for different ways to get answers to questions. One of your options should be a contact form. It’s easy, convenient, and it's right there on the page.

2. There’s little to no room for error. If a client has to copy/paste your email address or dial your phone number, there’s a chance they might not copy the address fully or they might accidentally dial the number incorrectly. With a form, your clients can simply fill it out and hit the “submit” button. Easy peasy.

   The form lands right in your inbox with a subject line of your choosing, and you can get back to them pretty quickly. In addition, a contact form gives clients a sense of having taken immediate action once they submit their request via your website. They very quickly check off one more item from their long to-do list. By making the process easy for them, you’re already helping to solve their problem, one step at a time.

3. It’s also easy for you. When a new inquiry lands in your inbox via your website contact form, it tends to look a bit different than a typical email. You won’t risk missing it among all your other email, as the subject line is always the same. In fact, with most forms, you can set the subject line to be something that stands out to you. Figure 1 shows how the subject line of my contact form appears in my inbox. You can then gather the information you need from the form to craft a friendly email to the potential client.

   While I do suggest making every interaction with a client specific and personal to them, creating email templates to have on hand will also save you a lot of time!

How to Get Your Website Contact Form Right

1. Keep it simple and straightforward. It’s important to keep your contact form simple and straightforward. Don’t take up a lot of your potential clients’ time. Ask for the pertinent information you’ll need to get back to them quickly and get the ball rolling so you can talk to them about how you can help solve their problems with the services you provide. (Tip: Ask for two ways to contact them. If you contacted them via email but didn’t get a response, you could try calling them a few days later to follow up.)

   By the same token, leave out any unnecessary information. Remember that you don’t need to have your entire preliminary conversation with a client through your contact form. Just get the basics right and you can add and request information as the conversation unfolds after the initial contact. Figure 2 shows how my current contact form appears on my website. It’s...
simple, easy to complete, and doesn’t go into lots of detail. I let the client provide as much or as little information as they feel comfortable in the “How can I help you?” field.

2. **Ask for initial information only and leave the lengthier conversation for your follow-up message.** A contact form allows you to gather pertinent information about your client. But again, your form should be easy to complete. A no-brainer.

Once you have an idea of the potential project or assignment your client has in mind, you can follow up by sharing a little about your services and experience, as well as your availability. At the same time, you can request additional information from the client that you’ll need to either prepare a proposal or decline the project if it doesn’t seem like a good fit.

Or, if you really want to make an impression, you can offer to schedule a discovery call to see if what you provide fits what they’re looking for. Include a link to your open appointments by using a service like Calendly or Acuity. This shows the client that you’re a serious professional while giving you additional time to do some research about their organization or background before you meet.

3. **Make it work for you!** Be sure to include a section on your form that clients can complete with more information about the project up front. This can help reduce some of the back-and-forth email later. Again, fewer steps equal an easier process for the client and for you!

Of course, you can include as many or as few questions as you like, as well as a place for clients to upload documents. I personally don’t use the document upload option because I don’t want sensitive files to be sent through my website contact form, especially with current privacy laws. But this is a decision that you should make for your own business.

One item I always tell fellow translators and interpreters to add to their contact form as a required piece of information is something like “How did you hear about my services?” This helps you easily track where your new clients come from. Did they find you through a referral? Did they come across your website after conducting an online search? Did they find your name in a professional directory? These are all possible options when searching for service providers, and it’s important to know how clients find you so you build upon what’s working! This very simple question can help you plan your marketing strategy for years to come.

Finally, I think it’s important to meet clients where they are. If you know your clients prefer to talk over the phone than via email, then include your phone number on the contact page. I’ve even seen some translators in Europe offer their WhatsApp number because the app tends to be so widely used there and many people feel comfortable communicating this way.

Whatever contact methods you decide to utilize on your website, make sure one of them is a contact form. The easier it is for potential clients to reach out to you, the more likely it is they will!

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**Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo, CT** is ATA president-elect and chairs the Governance and Communications Committee. She is the owner of Accessible Translation Solutions and a Spanish>English and ATA-certified Portuguese>English translator. She served as chair of ATA’s Membership Committee (2018–2020), Public Relations Committee (2014–2018), and administrator of ATA’s Medical Division (2011–2015). She has a BA in Spanish from the University of Southern Mississippi and an MA in Spanish from the University of Louisville. She is also a consultant for the University of Louisville Graduate Certificate in Translation. You can read more of her articles on her blog at www.madalenazampaulo.com/blog.

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“Business Practices” will alternate in this space with “The Entrepreneurial Linguist.” 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.
(More) Advanced Human-Computer Interaction for Translators
A Conversation with Samuel Läubli and Nico Herbig

Still on a high from the conversation I had a few months ago with Lynne Bowker, Vassilina Nikoulina, and Sharon O’Brien about “Women and Machine Translation”¹, I had another idea after I read about Nico Herbig’s² work on a much more hands-on interface for post-editing (see links at the end of this piece) and Samuel Läubli’s³ ideas about more meaningful integrations of machine translation (MT) in the translation process. I reached out to them and—spoiler alert—it turned out to be another really great conversation.

American software company to train domain–specific MT systems. The goal was to increase translator productivity: the company was continually localizing more than 180 software products from English into 30+ languages at the time.

Initially, I was naive enough to think that I would be able to interact with the translators who used our pre-translations to get suggestions for improving the MT systems, but the company used multiple vendors who, often through additional sub-vendors, chopped up and distributed translation jobs to freelancers around the globe. I soon realized that MT quality wasn’t the most pressing issue, even with the rather disfluent output that phrase-based systems produced at the time. At least that output could be deleted, compared to “exact matches” that were locked (i.e., uneditable) in the computer-assisted translation (CAT) tool.

I also saw how translators were tasked with translating strings from software user interfaces without any means of seeing what that interface looked like. MT wasn’t (and isn’t) necessarily good at translating “MENU,” but neither were professional translators if they didn’t know whether it was part of a navigation component or a description of an item in a virtual restaurant.

After two years, I was left with the impression that the way in which the translation industry builds and uses technology was just broken. So, I moved back into research—perhaps a bit naive again—with the hope...
that I could gain a better understanding and then make things a bit better.

**Nico** I studied computer science and am currently working at the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI) in Saarbrücken, Germany. I spend most of my time on the Multi-Modal Post-Editing of Machine Translation (MMPE) project, which is funded by the German Research Foundation. Within the project, which is also the primary focus of my PhD, we investigate a broad range of explicit input modalities like handwriting or speech input to simplify the post-editing process. However, we also look at multi-modal implicit input, such as measuring pupil diameter or skin conductance to estimate cognitive load during post-editing. As this topic is at the intersection of human–computer interaction and language technologies, we work in tight collaboration with research departments lead by Antonio Krüger, chief executive officer of the DFKI and scientific director of the cognitive assistants department, and Josef van Genabith, scientific director of the multilinguality and language technology department. To retrieve input from domain experts, we ran our studies with professional translators. TMs are great at providing (partial) translation suggestions in the form of fuzzy or exact matches, but CAT tools are currently not too creative in utilizing these matches: they just display them to the user. In this talk, we take a look at how machine translation (MT) technology can ingest fuzzy matches to generate better and more domain-specific translation suggestions, or transform exact matches to comply with context-dependent linguistic requirements in the target language. We also discuss who’s to blame about the fact that these features are not yet available to professional translators.”

Naturally, we would all be interested in finding out who’s to blame, but also whether you see widespread changes in a number of translation environments on the immediate or mid-term horizon. If so, what kind of changes, and will they be easily embraced by translators?

**Samuel** When you think about it, TMs produce so many inadequate suggestions. Even exact matches often aren’t too exact. Think about linguistic properties that are implicit (or undefined) in the source but explicit in the target language, such as choosing the appropriate pronoun forms for informal and polite address when translating from English into German. For example, “you” will be translated as either “Sie” (formal) or “du” (informal). But an exact match for “You can win fantastic prizes!” that results in “Gewinnen Sie fantastische Preise” (“Win you fantastic prizes!”) on the target side really isn’t that great in an informal context. Since the level of politeness can be controlled within, and partial translations incorporated into, neural machine translation (NMT), these “exact matches” could be adjusted automatically. However, the NMT system will need an indication of the desired level of politeness to adjust the match.

Since most CAT tools don’t integrate but merely connect to MT systems, they only...
send very basic information, typically the source segment to be MT-ed alongside two language codes. If CAT tools were that loosely coupled with translation memories and term bases (TBs), you would never see features like real-time subsegment matching or predictive typing. So, if you’re asking yourself why MT doesn’t update as you edit a target segment or doesn’t respect the very terms displayed in the CAT tool’s terminology pane, it’s not because MT can’t do that, but because the CAT tool doesn’t send it to the MT system.

Jost Let me interrupt you briefly (we’re still interested in who’s to blame!). I think what you just said sounds a little too pessimistic regarding TMs and the current use of adaptive MT. On the latter, I agree with you that much more needs to be done, but between SDL’s adaptive MT, Lilt’s MT, and ModernMT’s implementation in a number of CAT tools, there’s some progress, right? And your examples on the weaknesses of TM matches make sense on a theoretical level, but I’m not sure how much of that is practically applicable when using project-specific TMs.

Samuel I absolutely agree. There certainly is progress being made. However, the idea of adaptive MT is currently centered on post-editing. For example, if the engine suggests an incorrect term, it will (hopefully) learn to avoid that mistake once the user has corrected it. But why does the system need to make a mistake in the first place? If the user works with a TB, the MT engine could (and can’t, technically) use correct terms right away. If the user works with a project-specific TM, the MT engine could (and again, can’t, technically) learn from the exact and even fuzzy matches in that TM before it provides a suggestion for the first segment. MT systems shouldn’t just adapt only when the user corrects mistakes. They should adapt to project-specific resources upfront.

So, if you’re asking who’s to blame that modern MT features aren’t available to translators yet, it’s clearly the CAT tool manufacturers. I don’t really see changes in widespread CAT tools on the horizon, which really puzzles me. Then again, this may be a chicken-and-egg problem: are these features unavailable because translators aren’t asking for them, or are they not asking for them because they’ve never seen them implemented in a tool? Personally, I could well imagine that translators would embrace changes like neural fuzzy repair and NMT output toggles for things like honorifics to express politeness or other linguistic aspects as long as they’re easy to use and well visualized. But with fundamental design choices dating back to the 1990s, widely used CAT tools aren’t exactly a prime example of effective, user-centered data visualization.

Jost That sounds like a perfect segue into what Nico is doing with his concept of the Multi-Modal Post-Editing of Machine Translation. Nico, I got really excited about your post on Kirti Vashee’s blog and the links to articles and videos you provided at the end of the post. A number of years ago, I wrote an article about a tactile approach to translation, and while I certainly didn’t have all the tools in mind that you’ve made available, this was very similar to what I was thinking. The MMPE project includes computer interaction via the keyboard/mouse, touch, voice, and handwriting—what a great idea! A few questions come to mind. Is it correct to say that this seems to be quite language-specific since voice and handwriting only work for a select number of languages? And, will your prototype make it into existing translation environments? Or, to rephrase the last question, what would have to be done for that to happen?

Nico Indeed, post-editing requires very different interactions than traditional translation. We’ve seen a change from “production,” where all text has to be entered manually, to “supervision,” where the
task changes to capturing and correcting mistakes, as well as manipulating and recombining useful suggestions. Naturally, this change already started with TMs, but the better MT gets, the more we move away from the production paradigm to supervision and collaboration with the machine. For example, we don’t question that a mouse and keyboard are very good tools for production. However, we believe that other modalities could be very helpful for the changed interaction pattern in post-editing—not as a substitution for mouse and keyboard, but as a complement. This is what we’ve been exploring in the MMPE project. For example, we found that a digital pen and finger touch input are very well suited for deletion and reordering operations.

Regarding your question on language support, I would say that the transcription of handwritten text or speech input works well with many languages. You just need to exchange the underlying machine learning model with one that was trained on data in the target language. One would, of course, need to also define the speech commands in other languages, but we tried to keep our code rather flexible by having the commands in separate files outside the source code. Further studies would be needed to say for sure how well it works with other languages and to explore changed interface layouts for, say, right-to-left or logographic languages.

What will need to be done to integrate such modalities into existing CAT tools? That’s a good question. It depends a lot on the input modality. Most computers have an integrated microphone, and now with the pandemic, many people probably also own a headset. So, for speech input, the CAT developers can basically start integrating dictation and also speech commands. For example, memoQ is already offering an iOS app that transcribes your speech input and sends it to their CAT tool.

Pen and finger touch input could also be integrated rather soon. Many laptops now have touch screens, and tablets are becoming increasingly common. In general, I believe that with higher quality MT output, post-editing on tablets might become doable, especially with good handwriting, touch, and speech support. But I assume the market is currently too small for CAT companies to invest in this. Other modalities we’re currently exploring, such as eye-based interaction (e.g., you look at a word and say “delete”) or mid-air gestures (e.g., point at a word and do a hand gesture to delete), are interesting from the research perspective, but no one has these tracking devices in a standard office. So, I believe it will take a long time until we see something like this in commercial CAT tools, if at all.

That makes sense, but what I had in mind was whether it would somehow be possible to use MMPE or aspects of it and essentially connect it to existing translation environments via an application programming interface or some other mechanism. Otherwise, I think that translators would have to wait an awfully long time for existing tools to implement it. Also, I’m not sure I completely agree that the interface you’re proposing isn’t necessarily suited for TM-based work.

Integrating aspects of the MMPE project into existing CAT tools is probably not that easy, which is why we also chose to start from scratch. As Samuel already said, many CAT tools still follow outdated design patterns, making them look more like spreadsheets and not like modern websites and applications. For example, consider handwriting. We rely heavily on the MyScript application programming interface here, which is working great and could also be integrated into existing CAT tools. But if you try to handwrite into the small space that most translation environments provide for
In TMs, one part of the sentence might be perfectly matched while another part isn’t matched at all. If you then need to insert 10 words, typing or maybe dictation are great, but handwriting and finger touch input might be less helpful in this setting. However, for low-quality MT, you might want to re-translate larger portions of the segment as well, where again typing and dictation are probably better than other modalities. So, I would rather say that the new modalities show their benefits for highly matching segments from TM or high-quality MT because they allow you to very quickly change the few remaining mistakes, like quickly grabbing a few words and moving them somewhere else. Here, you produce less and supervise the machine more.

Why are we stuck with the concept of post-editing one MT suggestion? Why are we not, for instance, looking at how we could harvest several MT suggestions simultaneously by using mechanisms like auto-suggest (which would mean that we don’t even have to look at the various MT suggestions—we just see what matches our keystrokes)? Also—and I think that Samuel already alluded to this—why don’t we look at a closer integration of our three most important resources (TM, MT, and TBs) with each other and achieve better results that way?

Indeed, we’ve been asking ourselves the same thing. Therefore, we’re currently adding multiple MT proposals in MMPE, where we penalize similar MT outputs. No one wants to see almost the same suggestion three times, since a normal post-edit of a single suggestion would be quicker than that. But we believe offering multiple high-quality and diverse outputs might help. Especially for shorter sentences, a translation very similar to what you aim for is most likely among the suggestions. For long sentences, however, mentally processing multiple suggestions might just take longer and be more cognitively demanding than directly post-editing a single suggestion. At least this is what I would expect now. We’ll know more when we run a study on this.

In parallel, we’re also looking at more interactive ways to post-edit, where you click on parts of the MT suggestion you don’t agree with and get alternatives. I believe that this, in combination with touch input and handwriting, could really be a nice approach to post-editing and could also work well on tablets.

Nico brings up an important point. Showing too many alternatives could lead to cognitive friction. The prototype of Liit offered both what you refer to as auto-suggest—a single suggestion for word, phrase, or sentence completion that adapts to the
user’s input, rendered as ghost text—and multiple word or phrase translation alternatives presented in a dropdown menu. The latter were used so rarely that they didn’t make it into the final product.

However, regardless of how suggestions will be visualized, it’s vital that they combine all the resources available to translators: TMs, TBs, and MT. Jost, I like your idea of using multiple MT engines for auto-suggest. At TextShuttle, we’re using a technique called Diverse Beam Search to produce diverse translation variants with a single engine. The rationale is that even MT engines from different providers typically produce very similar translations for many sentences. And because NMT systems always generate multiple translation variants behind the scenes as they generate a target sentence, enforcing variability comes with almost no computational overhead. It’s easy to generate multiple translation variants for a given source sentence with a single NMT system, but as long as CAT tools don’t query and visualize them, there’s no way for professional translators to take advantage of them.

Thank you so much for this, Nico and Samuell! It feels like we could continue talking about this for a long time. But it seems even more important at this point that translators start considering some of the things we’ve discussed, and that tool developers start a dialogue among themselves to see whether they can implement some of the changes mentioned here. Or maybe there’s even a team of developers that will read this and say, “Yeah, there are so many good ideas in this that I think I can build something new and interesting and become super-rich selling it!” (Well, the latter is not going to happen, but the former might).

My biggest take away from our discussion is that just because we think we’ve found a widely accepted way of working, doesn’t mean that we couldn’t and shouldn’t be questioning it on a continuous basis and, well, making it better. All this excites me greatly, partly because it goes to show that professional technical translation (and by “technical” I mean to include virtually everything non-literary) is alive and well, and even as research tries to find better ways to facilitate it.

Jost Zetzsche, CT is chair of ATA’s Translation and Interpreting Resources Committee. He is the author of Translation Matters, a collection of 81 essays about translators and translation technology. jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com

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

NOTES

2. You can find Nico Herbig on Twitter at https://twitter.com/nico_herbig.
3. Samuel Läubli is on Twitter as well: https://twitter.com/samlaeubli.
The idea that some juries, judges, and English speakers, in general, are more prone to distrust witnesses and defendants with heavy accents didn’t come as a surprise. I occasionally hear passive-aggressive comments or uncomfortable jokes about someone’s accent behind closed doors. However, knowing that interpreters can also have accents, I became increasingly intrigued about the possible effect of accent bias when assessing the credibility of a witness.

It seemed that more thorough research on the topic was in order, so I read as many studies and articles on it as I could. The literature on the subject confirmed that there is often distrust of people with certain regional or foreign accents. Several authors hypothesized that it was due to negative stereotypes.

One study in particular caught my attention. Instead of focusing on socio-economic factors that contribute to accent bias, this study focused on the difficulty of understanding words pronounced by non-native speakers and the impact that this can have on the speaker’s credibility. Researchers designed an experiment where subjects listened to statements read by people with foreign accents and decided on the truthfulness of the information. During the first phase, they corroborated the hypothesis that people tend to distrust foreign accents and give less credibility to their statements. During the second phase, the researchers tried to counterbalance the negative impact of accent bias by telling the subjects of the study that the speakers were only reading the statements off a script. Participants were able to correct their behavior when the accent was subtle, yet statements were still perceived as less credible when the accent was heavy.

Again, I found myself wondering if an interpreter’s accent might also undermine the credibility of a non-English speaker for whom they are interpreting. I couldn’t help but think how ironic it would be if this was the case, especially since individuals often choose to communicate through interpreters so their statements will be received without any language barrier interference.

After reading studies indicating that foreign accents could affect the credibility of a witness, my question now was how to combat accent bias inside courtroom settings.

Looking for Solutions

During the online seminar I attended, one of the viable solutions offered was to have judges address the issue in the jury instructions. While jury instructions may be a good start, it seems unlikely that jurors will set aside their conscious or unconscious bias simply because a judge adds
a couple of remarks on the subject. Besides, trials are not the only court setting where accent bias is present.

Often judges, court staff, and attorneys must deal with people with a noticeable foreign accent, and accent bias is often present during their interactions with limited-English-proficient (LEP) individuals. Mandatory courses with topics that include unconscious bias against foreigners are more likely to have a long-term positive effect, at least amongst stakeholders such as police officers, victims’ advocates, caseworkers, court staff, attorneys, and judges, who often deal with language access and LEP individuals. Juries need to understand that regionalisms and accents are irrelevant when deciding the veracity of a statement. Saying pee-can instead of puh-kahn is how someone learned how to say “pecan,” depending on where they learned English. It has nothing to do with the likelihood of a false statement.

Another solution would be to bring together different associations and government entities that often work with people of different ethnic backgrounds and have them put together an accent bias awareness campaign. These organizations could, for example, emphasize the advantages of diversity. Foreigners come to this country not only because they’re looking for a better way of life, but also because they can contribute to this country’s growth by working in fields of specialization that need them.


Sandra Dejeux has a BA in international studies and an MA in Spanish translation and interpreting. She is licensed as a court interpreter in Georgia, a Texas master licensed court interpreter, and a certified health care interpreter. She is actively involved in the profession through her role as chair of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators’ Bench and Bar Committee. The former director of Fort Bend Language Access, she currently provides freelance interpreting and translation services for courts and law firms in the Houston metro area. She also offers online training for legal and medical interpreters. translations@sdrtranslations.org

Interpreters are a vital part of ATA. This column is designed to offer insights and perspectives from professional interpreters.

The Bostonian, New Yorker, and Midwestern accents are vestiges of our Irish, Italian, and Spanish immigration to the U.S. in the 19th and 20th centuries. Mexican, Nigerian, Chinese, or Vietnamese accents are the product of new patterns of migration.

If all else fails, we must remind people that our accents are part of our identity. Discriminating against a person because of the way they speak is as shameful as discriminating against someone for the color of their skin. Furthermore, accent bias is a form of national origin discrimination, which has no place in a courtroom. Many people didn’t learn English from birth. Perhaps they were not exposed to it until they were adolescents or adults, and learning a language after childhood increases the chances of having difficulty speaking it without an accent.


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ATA Certification and COVID-19 Redux

As most of you are aware, ATA certification exam sittings were temporarily suspended in 2020 and will continue to be unavailable in early 2021. (You can learn more about that decision by reading the May/June Certification Forum by David Stephenson, “COVID-19 and Certification.”) So, what has the program been up to in the meantime?

The realities of social distancing and stay-at-home orders are motivating the Certification Program to consider ways to alleviate similar situations in the future. One obvious focus is on ways to administer the exam remotely (i.e., allow candidates to take the exam from home). With the pandemic, ATA has spent more time and resources exploring these options. We’re finding that exam logistics and security options have improved in recent months. The “silver lining” of the pandemic, perhaps, is that it once again put at-home testing at the top of our agenda. We have researched platforms, interviewed vendors, and tested several options. We haven’t found the right solution for us yet but are working hard to get this implemented in 2021.

Other significant program activities last year included grading practice tests, preparing new exam passages, and developing and conducting continuing education for the graders. As one of the Chinese>English graders, I attended our most recent training events in October and November, which, like so much else last year, were offered remotely rather than in person. Designed and led by our longtime grader trainer and expert Larry Bogoslaw, those Zoom sessions informed us graders of the ongoing improvements to our highly detailed and regarded exam grading rubrics, flowcharts, procedures, and rules. Larry is constantly reviewing these tools and processes to ensure the program is applying best practices consistently and fairly across all the language pairs we test.

Speaking of online offerings, conferences and other events that have been moved online are still eligible for continuing education points (CEPs). An approved live, online event counts for CEPs under Category A, with the same points awarded and the same restrictions as a live, in-person event. Anything recorded and reviewed at one’s leisure may also count, but under Category B. An example of this would be the ATA58 recording recently made available for free to the membership. If you already passed the exam, any downtime you might be experiencing now might be a good time to earn CEPs!

For more information about CEPs, visit https://bit.ly/ATA-CE-points.

One aspect of the program that remains unaffected is the practice test. In the absence of exam activities, this is a great time to take one or more practice tests. These are retired exam passages that the candidate purchases online, translates, and returns for grading and feedback. Because the certification exam itself is not returned, the practice test is the only way we can provide feedback to candidates, so it is highly recommended. For more details, visit http://bit.ly/ATA-practice-test.

As we round the corner of this pandemic and head into a new year, the Certification Program is looking forward to returning to our former activity levels and offering a more convenient testing model to our members. Stay tuned!

NOTES


Jim Jones is a freelance translator for Chinese, German, and Spanish into English. He is also an editor, illustrator, and cartoonist. He serves as the language chair of ATA’s Chinese>English certification exam. He has an MA in linguistics and is currently studying for a second MA (English composition). han4yu3@gmail.com
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