AB 5: It’s Not Just in California

The recent passage of Assembly Bill 5 (AB 5) in California, which implements the stringent “ABC Test” embodied in the Dynamex decision and mandates classification of translators and interpreters as employees, is already disrupting our profession in California. Translators and interpreters in California have reported receiving notices from language services companies saying that they will no longer use California-based service providers in response to the new mandates classification of translators and interpreters. Notably, companies/agencies to classify translators and interpreters as employees. Such treatment is counter to the desire of the majority of ATA’s members and runs counter to long-standing practice in our industry. ATA issued a statement against the inclusion of translators and interpreters in the scope of AB 5 prior to its passage.1 ATA has now issued a similar position paper advocating for an explicit exemption for professional translators and interpreters.

In addition to ATA, the American Association of Conference Interpreters, National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, and Association of Language Companies have all issued position statements in favor of an explicit exemption for translators and interpreters from AB 5.

The Coalition of Practicing Translators and Interpreters of California (CoPTIC) was founded to advocate for an exemption from AB 5. CoPTIC has hired a lobbyist and is holding meetings with interested stakeholders throughout the state to inform them about the implications of AB 5 and to promote grassroots efforts in favor of an exemption. ATA is actively supporting the efforts of the Coalition, and I encourage all members of ATA to get involved.

As predicted, other states, such as New York and New Jersey, have now begun legislative initiatives to implement the ABC Test based on the California model.

1Continued on page 4
FEATURES

6 Call for Nominations
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!

12 Member Opinions: Discussion on Opening ATA’s Exam to Nonmembers
In the November–December issue, the Board encouraged members to submit their opinions, both pro and con, regarding opening ATA’s certification exam to nonmembers. Member feedback is important to the discussion, so share your thoughts!

19 Watch Your Back for a Recession
I’m not an economist, but it’s hard to miss the rumblings in the financial press that the U.S. (or even the world) economy may be headed for a recession. As a business owner, the best time to start planning for a downturn is last year, but if you haven’t done that, let’s start planning now!

22 Dilemmas of an Upwardly Mobile Translator
There’s no doubt that if you’re too busy for a long period, then it’s time to raise your rates. There’s also no doubt that, as a tool, increasing rates can be a fairly blunt instrument.

24 Three Pedagogical Tools to Take Your Online Translation and Interpreting Courses to the Next Level
Demand for online education continues to grow in the U.S. and is globally “on track to become mainstream by 2025.” In this article, three experienced instructors involved in the design of online translation and interpreting curricula share tips for creating an online community that encourages students’ reflective practice and enables structured student interactions.

29 Profile of ATA 2018–2019 School Outreach Contest Winner: Denise Fisher
When ATA Member Denise Fisher was invited to speak to graduate students in a Japanese interpreting class at the University of Michigan, she had no idea that her experience would eventually lead to a fee registration to ATA’s Annual Conference in Palm Springs.

31 2019 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. This year’s recipients are...

Looking for Member News and Humor and Translation? These columns are found in the Chronicle-Online edition: www.atanet.org/chronicle-online!
ATA Membership: Invest in Yourself

The profession is facing some challenges. Marketplace pressures to increased regulatory activities are affecting independent contractors. ATA can help. Don’t go it alone.

The new year means it’s time to renew your ATA membership. Membership renewal notices have been mailed. You can also renew online: http://www.atanet.org/membership/renew.php.

In the past year, ATA has stepped up its member benefits, webinars, and advocacy efforts. ATA now offers exclusive discounts on over a half dozen of the most popular tools. The savings alone will go a long way toward covering your ATA membership. In 2019, ATA started offering a free monthly webinar to all ATA members. (The featured webinar is highlighted in Newsbriefs.) On the advocacy side, ATA is teaming up with other organizations to protect the interests of translators and interpreters. (See President Ted Wozniak’s column on page 2 for more information.) By being an ATA member, you benefit from strength in numbers. ATA members can do more together than a person off on their own.

ATA membership is an investment in yourself. You’ll cover your ATA dues by getting just one job from your member-exclusive profile in the ATA Directory of Translators and Interpreters. Over 60% of the membership reports getting a job from their online directory listing.

As part of that investment, ATA offers access to resources and colleagues that can help you become a better translator and interpreter. As an ATA member, you have access to membership in any and all of ATA’s 22 divisions. ATA divisions offer specialized information and networking connections. The ATA Chronicle provides a wealth of knowledge, including additional links to reliable resources for an even greater breadth and depth of information. Newsbriefs, ATA’s semi-monthly e-newsletter, provides timely media features and news related to the Association. And, ATA webinars bring a variety of affordable learning opportunities to you.

Renewing your membership is a smart business decision and an investment in yourself.

Speaking of learning opportunities, ATA membership gives you the discounted registration rate on the premier professional development and networking opportunity in the profession, ATA’s Annual Conference. Join ATA and save on your conference registration—the savings alone just about cover your membership dues.

The benefits add up to a positive value proposition. Renewing your membership is a smart business decision and an investment in yourself. If you have any questions about your membership and the benefits available to you, please contact Trish Boward, ATA membership assistant, at Trish@atanet.org 703-683-6100, ext. 3001.

Thank you for your support and membership in 2019. We look forward to serving you in 2020!

FROM THE PRESIDENT
Continued from page 2

to visit their website or send an email (CoalitionPTIC@gmail.com) to learn more. Support their efforts if you believe that translators and interpreters should have a choice in their classification as independent contractors or employees.

ATA recognizes that some members, in particular community interpreters, may work “full time” for a single hiring entity and therefore should be classified as employees. Anyone who feels they should be classified as an employee can file a complaint with the California Labor Standards Commission or the Employment Development Department and make their case. But the vast majority of our members are indeed independent contractors and wish to be classified as such.

I strongly encourage our members in California to support CoPTIC’s efforts for an exemption and to contact their state assemblypersons and senators. Just as the passage of AB 5 in California is serving as a model for other states, gaining an exemption in California will also serve as a model and make it easier for professional translators and interpreters to be exempt from being classified as “gig economy” workers in other states. Members in New York and New Jersey are also encouraged to contact their state legislators now, explain why mandatory classification is so harmful to you, and urge them to specifically exempt translators and interpreters from mandatory employee classification. I ask all other members to be on the lookout for similar legislative efforts in their states and to inform me if similar legislation is proposed. We can only protect our profession by showing a united front and through grassroots efforts to educate our state legislators.

NOTES
FROM OUR MEMBERS

ATA SOCIAL MEDIA

33,633 | FACEBOOK FANS
15,600 | TWITTER FOLLOWERS
8,137 | LINKEDIN MEMBERS
2,391 | INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

FEATURED FACEBOOK POST

American Translators Association
December 13
Hilarious literal translations from different languages
“We brought to you today some of the most hilarious literal translations from all across the languages of the world to give you a sense of how beautiful languages can be. Don’t forget to share your favorite and if you have other examples, do kindly share them.”
Read on—https://bit.ly/36RlG8x

TOP TWEETS

New Visas Help Afghan Interpreters Who Risked Their Lives for U.S. Troops | Washington Examiner:
https://washex.am/2S5Xyuv
DEC 13 / @ATANET / #1NT #XL8

The Language You Speak Influences Where Your Attention Goes | Scientific American:
DEC 11 / @ATANET / #1NT #XL8

¿Cómo se siente hoy?
As the Spanish-speaking population grows health care professionals are increasingly looking to translators to help communicate with their patients.

An Introduction to Medical Spanish
Communication and Culture
Robert O. Chase and Clarisa B. Medina de Chase

The fifth edition of this popular beginner-level textbook contains specialized medical vocabulary, basic grammar, and colloquial terms as well as customs and communication styles.

Features:
• New topics including muscles, pediatrics, heart disease, neurologic exams, and zika
• Online self-correcting exercises and supplemental material
• High-frequency vocabulary lists

Yale UNIVERSITY PRESS
yalebooks.com
Call for Nominations: ATA Directors

The 2020 Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to announce the call for nominations from ATA’s membership to fill three directors’ positions (each a three-year term). Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting of Voting Members on Thursday, October 22, 2020, in Boston, Massachusetts.

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 the box below 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.

2020 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 2, 2020. 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 nominations, 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.

Become an ATA Voting Member!
Apply for Active Membership Review

Who is eligible to become a Voting member? ATA Associate members who can demonstrate that they are professionally engaged in translation, interpreting, or closely related fields may be eligible for Voting membership. The qualification process, called Active Membership Review, is free and online!

Why should I become a Voting member? Voting membership opens doors to your participation in the Association—take part in ATA elections, volunteer for Division and Committee roles, and increase your professional networking possibilities.

Check it out at www.atanet.org/membership/memb_review_online.php.
Annual Treasurer’s Report for 2018–2019

The sun has been shining on ATA for a few years now, financially speaking, allowing us to make quite a bit of hay. Our **unaudited** figures for the most recent fiscal year (2018–2019), which ended in July, however, indicate that cloudy weather is on the horizon. Membership is stagnant and has even declined a bit. Conference attendance has been trending lower and isn’t expected to improve this year. At the same time, baseline expenses have either remained unchanged or continued to rise, which we need to address through budgeting.

It’s not all bad news, though. Overall, ATA’s financial situation remains sound. We’ve taken advantage of the positive results from the past five years to provide a cushion for just this type of situation. Surplus funds have been prudently managed and invested so that we have money available for rainy days.

The upshot is that we don’t need to panic, but we do need to be vigilant and aware of our financial reality moving forward, especially when making decisions that affect the budget.

**Revenue and Expenses**

For the 2018–19 fiscal year, **Total Revenue** (See Figure 1 on page 8) was just $3.07 million, while our **Total Expenses** (See Figure 2 on page 8) came in at $3.24 million. The result ($-169,104) is our first negative **Change in Net Assets** (before investment activities) in over five years.

**Revenue**

In terms of ATA’s main revenue streams, **Membership** ($1.85 million) was down (-2.5%) from a year ago, while the **Conference** ($826,829) in New Orleans brought in substantially less money (-20.2%) than the one in DC. In a distant third place, **Certification** revenue ($284,235) was actually a bright spot, up 12% from 2018. This increase resulted from a combination of more test-takers sitting for the exam.

**Year-on-year Review**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017–18</th>
<th>2018–19</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>9,616 (10,358)</td>
<td>9,210 (10,004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$3.28 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
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<td>Total Assets</td>
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<td>Total Liabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference Attendance</td>
<td>1,344</td>
<td>1,377</td>
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For comparison’s sake, a year ago our net assets grew by $290,070, mostly because the conference in Washington, DC made more money than the one in New Orleans.

Year-on-year, things are likewise moving in the wrong direction (see table below). Total revenue dropped (-6.6%) from $3.28 million to $3.07 million, while total expenses continued to rise (+8%) from $2.99 million up to $3.24 million. The main culprit on the expense side was **Supporting Services** (i.e., our overhead).

**Overall, ATA’s financial situation remains sound, but we do need to be vigilant and aware of our financial reality moving forward, especially when making decisions that affect the budget.**

**Treasurer’s Report**

**John M. Milan**

john@milanlanguageservices.com

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before the testing fee rose on January 1, 2019, and the higher fee now in place during the second half of the fiscal year.

A few other noteworthy items in the revenue department include:
- *The ATA Chronicle’s* already meager revenue ($24,985 in 2018) fell to just $10,146 in 2019. In our current format, it’s unlikely to bring in much income, which means that it must now be fully subsidized by membership dues.
- Fewer webinars this fiscal year meant that their revenue was lower (-38.5%), with only 418 people paying this year, compared to 697 people a year before.
- On the positive side, two seminars were offered this year, resulting in a big jump in revenue, from $9,490 to $38,514.
- **Other Revenue** was also up, 34% for the year, with every item yielding positive results. Income from the “Certified Interpreter” credential rose by 27%, royalties from professional liability insurance also rose by 27%, and revenue from ATAware shot up by 121%.

**Expenses**
ATA’s single largest outlay this fiscal year was **Supporting Services** (i.e., salaries, administration, officers, volunteers), at $981,339, up 28.8% from a year ago. Much of this increase came from **General/Administrative** expenses, including $81k in website redesign, $42k in programming costs, and $12k in IT security. In addition, fewer staff hours were allocated to program services, resulting in a big jump (48%) in **Overhead**.

Spending on **Public Relations/Marketing** expenses was also higher, in part through efforts such as attending the New York Book Fair. Spending on **Volunteers/Governance**, though, was actually down (-45%).

The **Annual Conference**, normally our biggest expense, cost considerably less than a year ago, at $882,413 (-14.2%). A less-expensive event is one of the pluses of smaller-city venues. However, they also tend to bring in less revenue, as was the case in New Orleans, which negates the lower cost.

After that, our next three expense categories were: **Certification** ($450,734), **Membership Services** ($379,578), and *The ATA Chronicle* ($231,445). The most significant increase was in the **Certification Program**, where expenses were up 16.4%, with exam grading costs rising by 58%.

**Other Revenue** was also 34% higher year-on-year with the roll-out of new marketing efforts aimed at trying to bring in more members.
MAJOR PROGRAM RESULTS

ATA funds a variety of programs, some of which generate income that helps defray their costs. Most, however, are funded through membership dues.

When the Annual Conference has been held in major metropolitan areas, it has not only tended to pay for itself, but also contributed to ATA’s bottom line. However, the 2018 conference in New Orleans and last year’s conference in Palm Springs were smaller affairs. So, while they have covered their direct costs, they haven’t produced surpluses to help offset the overhead needed to organize them.

Likewise, Certification and Professional Development generate a bit of revenue, which ends up covering some of their respective costs. Other programs, though, such as Divisions, The ATA Chronicle, and Publications, are essentially just membership benefits, which means that they don’t produce a significant amount of income.

Our programs’ financial results for FY2018–2019 are presented in the
bar chart in Figure 3 on page 9. The yellow-colored section in the bars represents the gain or loss for each program. To understand the chart, look at the Certification Program on the far left. It brought in $284,235 in revenue, incurred $450,734 in expenses, and thus ended the year at $-166,499. This difference has to be subsidized by membership dues. On the other hand, the Conference nearly broke even, generating $826,829 in revenue versus $882,413 in expenses, resulting in a small loss.

**ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND NET ASSETS**

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

The headline figure from our Statement of Position (balance sheet) for FY2018–2019, which can be found on page 11, is a (-6.7%) decline in Total Assets, from $3.07 million a year ago to $2.86 million this year. Our Total Liabilities also fell during this same period (-5.8%), from $1.53 million to $1.44 million, mostly as a result of a drop in membership.

The good news, though, is that what ATA holds in cash, investments, etc., is still worth much more than it owes to others. In fact, this difference, which on the Statement of Position is recorded as Net Assets, did decrease a bit, from $1.55 million a year ago to $1.43 million this year, but it’s still a healthy number for an association our size.

An important component of our sound situation comes from ATA’s Investments. As mentioned at the outset of this report, we have continued to sock money away during the good times to prepare for the uncertainty that lies ahead.

For instance, at this time a year ago, we had $1.07 million invested in equities and fixed income. Now, these conservatively managed funds are up to $1.27 million. We also have $1.13 million held in cash, which we have been able to draw on for improvements to the Association that include association management software at ATA Headquarters and a website upgrade and redesign. These instruments conform to ATAs investment policy, which seeks to protect our capital. And we now have a strategic reserves policy in place to help the Board make decisions about when and how to use the funds at our disposal. Details of our investment allocation are presented in Figure 4 on page 9.

**LIABILITIES**

As usual, there is not much to report on the Liabilities side of the ledger. Things tend to stay fairly constant from one fiscal year to the next. The biggest percentage change year-on-year this time around occurred in Short-term Payables, which dropped from $67,399 at this time in 2018, to $0 right now, because of payment timing issues. Payables are cleared out once checks are issued for payment, so this figure can vary quite a bit depending on the dates selected.

In any case, the takeaway with respect to ATAs liabilities is that things are pretty much the same as they have been, and that is just fine.

**LOOKING AHEAD: ATA60 AND 2020**

The 2019 Annual Conference in Palm Springs was a departure from the model that ATA has followed in recent years. With the event in a smaller city, at a conference center rather than in a conference hotel, the expectation is that costs will be lower, but overall attendance is expected to be lower as well. Once we have the final numbers, we’ll see whether this model is financially feasible moving forward.

Around 1,350 people attended ATA59 in New Orleans in 2018, while nearly 1,800 people came to ATA58 in Washington, DC. For the conference in Palm Springs, we budgeted much more conservatively, expecting around 1,150 people to attend. Preliminary figures indicate that we have already exceeded that estimate, with attendance actually surpassing the 2018 conference in New Orleans.

Looking ahead, ATA finds itself in a comfortable financial position for now, but as an association, we are trending in the wrong direction. A number of challenges lie on the horizon. While the language services market as a whole is growing, technology continues to modify the role that translators and interpreters play in it. Consolidation among companies in the sector is affecting market dynamics, and price pressure for freelancers is very real. In addition, trade wars, Brexit, and other economic factors have increased uncertainty in the global economy. For all these reasons, continued, prudent, financial management is a must.

One of ATAs financial goals is to ensure that we have sufficient funds on hand to cover at least six months of operating expenses. In addition, we need to be able to make improvements to the Association’s technology and overall structure in response to an evolving marketplace. Our decisions in recent years have put us in a favorable position to do so. ♦

**NOTES**

1. All figures are rounded off unless otherwise indicated. Rounding differences may arise in totals. Adjustments by the auditors will likely result in minor changes, though they are not expected to be material.
2. Peak membership during the respective fiscal year is in parentheses.
3. Final registration from New Orleans versus latest estimated figures for Palm Springs.
Preliminary Consolidated Statement of Activities (with overhead distribution)
July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Y/Y Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REVENUE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>$1,853,848</td>
<td>$1,091,565</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification</td>
<td>284,235</td>
<td>253,870</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronicle</td>
<td>16,146</td>
<td>24,985</td>
<td>-39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>826,829</td>
<td>1,035,842</td>
<td>-20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dev - Seminars</td>
<td>38,154</td>
<td>9,490</td>
<td>292.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Dev - Webinars</td>
<td>15,176</td>
<td>31,170</td>
<td>-50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>3,074</td>
<td>4,682</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other revenue</td>
<td>25,919</td>
<td>22,282</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>3,061,740</td>
<td>3,183,886</td>
<td>-3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| EXPENSES              |            |            |            |
| Program Services      |            |            |            |
| Certification         | 456,734    | 387,101    | 18.4%      |
| Chronicle             | 231,445    | 254,108    | -9.7%      |
| Conference            | 882,413    | 1,028,922  | -14.2%     |
| Divisions             | 105,108    | 130,900    | -19.7%     |
| Membership Services   | 379,578    | 272,347    | 39.4%      |
| Prof. Dev - Seminars  | 56,030     | 8,313      | 573.6%     |
| Prof. Dev - Webinars  | 54,663     | 61,875     | -11.7%     |
| Publications          | 95,534     | 91,314     | 4.6%       |
| Total Program Services| 2,255,505  | 2,234,085  | 0.9%       |

| Supporting Services   |            |            |            |
| Salaries & Benefits   | 397,874    | 267,687    | 48.6%      |
| General & Administrative| 438,974 | 340,209    | 27.6%      |
| PR/Marketing          | 41,852     | 31,373     | 33.4%      |
| Officers & Directors  | 87,704     | 81,152     | 8.1%       |
| Volunteers & Governance| 22,935 | 41,783     | -45.1%     |
| Total Supporting Services| 981,339 | 762,204    | 28.8%      |
| Total Expenses        | 3,236,844  | 2,997,089  | 7.5%       |

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS BEFORE INVESTMENT ACTIVITY & EXTRAORDINARY ITEM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTRAORDINARY ITEM</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Y/Y Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net INCOME</td>
<td></td>
<td>-286,797</td>
<td>-159.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dividend/Interest
Realized (loss) Gain on Investments
Unrealized (loss) Gain on Investments
Total Nonoperating Activities

Extraordinary Item:
Sue Withrow Trust
Total Extraordinary Item

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NET ASSETS - JULY 1, 2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Y/Y Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NET ASSETS - JUNE 30, 2019</td>
<td>$1,546,690</td>
<td>1,428,457</td>
<td>-7.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preliminary Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
as of June 30, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Y/Y Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and Cash Equivalents</td>
<td>$1,463,539</td>
<td>$1,799,933</td>
<td>-15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Receivable</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid Expenses</td>
<td>61,885</td>
<td>53,442</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Current Assets</td>
<td>1,525,423</td>
<td>1,913,394</td>
<td>-19.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| INVESTMENTS                 |            |            |            |
| Equity                      | 571,413    | 538,113    | 5.2%       |
| Fixed Income                | 703,416    | 526,930    | 33.5%      |
| Total Investments           | 1,274,829  | 1,065,143  | 19.7%      |

PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

| Property and Equipment      | 554,293    | 552,290    | 0.4%       |
| Less accumulated depreciation| (102,744) | (147,165)  | -6.6%      |
| Net property and equipment  | 51,550     | 80,725     | -36.1%     |

| OTHER ASSETS                |            |            |            |
| Deposits                   | 13,016     | 13,016     | 0.0%       |
| TOTAL ASSETS                | $2,864,818 | $3,071,918 | -7.6%      |

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

| CURRENT LIABILITIES         |            |            |            |
| Short-term Payables         |            | 67,399     | -100.0%    |
| Deferred Accounts           | 1,357,342  | 1,431,082  | -5.2%      |
| Total Current Liabilities   | 1,357,342  | 1,498,481  | -9.4%      |

DEFERRED RENT - NONCURRENT

| NonCurrent Liabilities      | 79,026     | 94,147     | -16.1%     |
| Total NonCurrent Liabilities| 79,026     | 94,147     | -16.1%     |

TOTAL LIABILITIES

| TOTAL LIABILITIES            | $1,436,363 | $1,592,628 | -9.8%      |

COMMITMENTS

| NET ASSETS - UNRESTRICTED    | $1,428,455 | $1,546,690 | -7.6%      |
| Total Liabilities and Net Assets| $2,864,818 | $3,071,918 | -7.6%      |
Discussion on Opening ATA’s Exam to Nonmembers

The November–December issue included an announcement that the Board voted to postpone a decision to open ATA’s certification exam to nonmembers. This was followed by the answers to some frequently asked questions concerning the issues involved (http://bit.ly/FAQ-Decoupling). Here are some responses we received after members were encouraged to submit their feedback.

But don’t let the conversation stop here! As an ATA member, your voice is important, so please send your comments. The next issue will feature an argument in favor of opening the exam. Stay tuned!

Facts and Opinions on Decoupling ATA’s Certification Exam from Membership

By Robert Sette, CT
ATA-certified (French>English, Italian>English, Portuguese>English, and Spanish>English)
Denver, Colorado

ATA’s certification exam has always been a valuable membership right that is proudly held by many ATA members, and it has greatly benefited members and the Association. Last August, ATA’s Board of Directors postponed its decision to decouple the Certified Translator (CT) credential from ATA membership to January 1, 2021. Based on significant member input, the Board has prepared a Bylaws amendment to be presented to ATA Voting members at our 61st Annual Conference in Boston, Massachusetts (October 21–24, 2020).

That amendment, if passed, will effectively remove from the Bylaws the right of ATA members to take ATA’s certification exam and to hold the CT credential, making it possible for any individual in the U.S. or abroad to take the exam, and upon passing, to be “ATA-certified” without being an ATA member. As the ATA 61st Annual Conference in Boston approaches, all Voting members of the Association must thoughtfully consider whether we should relinquish this right as members and remove it from our Bylaws.

BACKGROUND: THE HAMM REPORT

In 2000, association executive and certification consultant Michael Hamm
delivered a report to ATA’s Board. In that report, he mentioned the possibility of separating ATA’s credential from a membership requirement. He also mentioned that the most well-respected credentials are administered by an independent body, not a membership association.

In the end, he made nine specific recommendations designated “A” through “I.” Not one of those recommendations specifically mentions decoupling certification from membership. Recommendations “A” and “B,” however, are significant. They refer to first conducting a strategic planning process (which never occurred), and second, establishing a formal body to govern “all credentials offered by the Association.”¹ (This independent body was never created.) Neither the independent body nor a strategic planning process were even mentioned in the summary ATA prepared and posted on its website in 2001, entitled “Executive Summary.”² For many years (apparently until early 2018, when former ATA Director and Treasurer Gabe Bokor made it available on his website), the report was deemed confidential, and that highly edited “summary” was what was available to the membership. The full Hamm report seems to have only been made available on ATA’s website in mid-2019.

**CREDIBILITY OF OUR CREDENTIAL**

The prime justification that ATA has stated for decoupling certification is to “enhance the credibility” of our credential. Unfortunately, there is no current, specific, or validated evidence that decoupling would serve this purpose. Yes, Michael Hamm says that membership-based credentials “typically have less credibility and impact in an industry/profession... than freestanding national professional certifications,” but he goes on to say that “some freestanding national professional certifications have easier testing requirements” than ATA’s credential at the time of his report, 20 years ago, in 1999–2000.³ Hamm did not qualify ATA certification (then referred to as “accreditation”) in a negative light. In fact, it was then-ATA President Ann Macfarlane who, in reference to ATA’s credential, stated that “in the world of voluntary certifications, a member-based credential may be perceived as a second-rate credential”⁴ (emphasis added). Hamm made no such assertion.

There is no logical link between separating our credential from Association membership and enhancing its stature. Nonmember certified translators would not have any vested interest in promoting ATA, attending its functions, or contributing as speakers, writers, or mentors. The difficulty of verifying fulfillment of continuing education requirements would certainly increase, and that would most definitely not enhance the credibility of our credential.

**If the overall aim of ATA’s Board is to enhance the recognition of our credential, then there are various concrete steps that can be taken to do so.**

In a nonmember certified translator scenario, the enforcement of ethics matters, once adjudicated, would have no “teeth,” and an individual would be free to claim ATA certification without fear of sanctions being levied, other than removal from ATA’s list of certified members. Even now, with the available sanction of suspending membership, it’s difficult and time-consuming for ATA Headquarters staff to pursue individuals who fraudulently claim ATA certified status.

The bottom line with regard to credibility is this: ATA certification is already one of the top translator credentials in the world. It’s well-respected by professionals, educators, and clients, and even by Michael Hamm. There is no evidence of other credentials that have soared in stature simply because of removal of an association membership requirement.

**FINANCES**

The Bylaws amendment to be presented to the membership later this year, as passed by the Board at the 2019 ATA Annual Conference in Palm Springs, states in part: [...] Whereas allowing nonmembers to take the ATA certification exam is expected to increase market demand for the exam, resulting in additional revenue to the Association [...] This statement cannot be supported. ATA has not determined the nonmember pricing for the exam or for maintaining certification. Additionally, ATA’s Board has stated that there is only “anecdotal” evidence of nonmembers wanting to take the exam. No market research has been done. No survey of the membership asking how many certified translators would remain if they did not have to maintain ATA membership. With stated per-exam expenses of $500 to $600 and a current member exam fee of $525, any claimed additional revenue would be minimal. The net result would even likely be negative, based on the increase in administrative work at ATA Headquarters required by any substantial increase in exam numbers, and any decline in membership dues revenue from members who choose to leave while maintaining their certification.

Additionally, in ATA’s fiscal year ending June 30, 2019, a loss of approximately $170K was recorded.⁵ Although it has been stated that the Association is still financially healthy, this is not the time to upset our financial apple cart with all of these unknowns, and the claim of “additional revenue” is aspirational at best. In fact, if the Association were to record a loss in the current fiscal year, as is predicted to happen, that would violate the pre-conditions for decoupling established by ATA’s Board.⁶

**IS RESTRICTION OF TRADE AN ISSUE?**

One rationale proposed by ATA for decoupling is the concern that nonmembers may file lawsuits, claiming that they are restricted from working as a translator by the requirement to join ATA to sit for our exam. There are two aspects of this argument that discredit this rationale. First, ATA certification is a voluntary credential, not a license to practice a profession. As such, no barrier to entry can be
claimed. Second, ATA has stated that of the estimated 55,000 working translators in the U.S., approximately 2,000 hold ATA certification, which amounts to 3.6%. Additionally, our exam is offered internationally, and with global estimates of the number of working translators exceeding 500,000, ATA-certified translators represent less than 1% of the global translation workforce. Courts would entertain restriction of trade claims if the number of certified individuals were 25–30% of the practitioners of that profession. Our numbers are infinitesimally small compared to that threshold, so this threat is practically nonexistent, and this justification for decoupling is consequently irrelevant.

WHAT CAN—AND SHOULD—BE DONE TO ENHANCE OUR CREDENTIAL?
If the overall aim of ATA's Board is to enhance the recognition of our credential, then there are various concrete steps that can be taken to do so. For example, promotion of the credential among business and industry associations, through a speakers' bureau, fact sheets provided to translation users, such as university foreign student admission offices, or perhaps a separate, dedicated website for the certification credential and its benefits directed specifically at translation buyers/users. Engaging ATA-certified translators, external stakeholders, educators, and clients is a key component needed to determine the strategic next steps for our credential, and I welcome the fair and open dialogue ATA is now supporting.

Lastly, many solid, beneficial, and lasting improvements have been made to ATA's Certification Program in the years following (and truly because of) the Hamm report. Grader training has been expanded, and quality and consistency improvements have been implemented across language combinations.

CONCLUSION
As we move forward toward a membership vote in Boston this fall, I stand firmly against opening our valuable credential to nonmembers, based on the unproven and erroneous arguments put forward as justification by ATA's Board to date. I look forward to engaging discussion through the fora provided by ATA and in other discussion venues.

NOTES

Opening the Exam:
Too Many Unknowns
By Jessica Hartstein, CT, CI
ATA-certified (Spanish>English and French>English), Credentialed Interpreter Legal (Spanish)
Houston, Texas

Members, this is your chance to vote and let your voice be heard! When you decide whether you want to open ATA's certification exam to nonmembers, there are several factors to consider.

CREDIBILITY
First, let's consider why ATA wants to open the exam to nonmembers and whether doing so would achieve ATA's goal. The main rationale for opening the exam to nonmembers, as stated in The ATA Chronicle and other ATA forums, is to enhance the credibility of the Certification Program.

Question #1: Does the ATA Certification Program have a credibility issue? Among my clients and colleagues, I've found that ATA's Certification Program is very well-respected. Being ATA-certified has opened numerous doors for me professionally, and I suspect that's true for many of you as well.

Even if there were a credibility issue (which I don’t think there is), what are some other potential solutions? I would think the best solutions would have something to do with the nature of the exam itself. For example, time constraints, passage length, passage difficulty, preventing cheating, consistency of the grading process, and the qualifications of the candidates. No such changes are being presented along with decoupling, so the exam results themselves wouldn't become more respected by opening the exam.

Do your clients know that ATA certification is only available to members? Would they find it more credible if nonmembers took the exam?

Question #2: Would opening the exam to all translators around the world drive more clients to you? The FAQs on decoupling published in the November–December issue of The ATA Chronicle say that more certified translators would increase the recognition of the profession. If Harvard doubled the size of its graduating class, a degree would be less valuable for each Harvard graduate. Harvard would create more alumni telling others about their school, but eventually the graduates themselves would not be as respected as they are now. The FAQs on decoupling indicate there are around 40,000 U.S.-based translators who are not ATA members, and, according to the Translators Association of China, as of 2012, there were an estimated 640,000 translators worldwide. Per ATA’s website, we offer the exam in 10 countries worldwide (seven of them in Spanish-speaking countries), but they could be held anywhere.

USING THE HAMM REPORT AS THE BASIS
Question #3: Does the Hamm Report clearly state that opening today's exam is the correct course of action? I recommend you read the entire 21-page Hamm Report, as it’s the basis for ATA's
desire to open the exam. When you do, you’ll see that opening the certification exam to nonmembers in its current state is not what Michael Hamm recommended back in 2000.

In his conclusions, he listed nine action items, none of which were opening the exam to nonmembers. His action items included a myriad of operational and exam improvements, many of which have been implemented to the benefit of the program. He recommended separating the Certification Program into an independent body “with minimal involvement from the Association” (this hasn’t been done). He recommended this because it “is an important issue in terms of achieving recognition from external stakeholders such as government agencies.”

He also recommended adding eligibility requirements for exam-takers to prevent people with no educational/professional translation experience from becoming certified translators (something I’ve witnessed since eligibility requirements to register for the exam were removed in 2017).

ATA removed the eligibility requirements because the pass rate hadn’t improved. However, Michael Hamm’s recommendation wasn’t about the pass rate, it was about the credibility of the program being adversely affected when non-translators pass the exam. He stated that eligibility requirements “help inform stakeholders of the proposed level of the examination.” A lack of eligibility requirements could tell the public this is an entry-level exam. I’ve researched other professional certification (and licensing) exams, and every other professional exam I read about has eligibility requirements. Without them, people who are not serious about the profession will have the same credential, and that lowers credibility. Is it time to bring eligibility requirements back?

Question 4: Will decoupling today’s exam improve credibility in the eyes of government agencies? In the report, Hamm considered opening the exam to nonmembers to be a “critical marketing issue.” He mentioned that “membership requirements are a major ‘turn off’ to external stakeholder groups that are evaluating the credibility of certification programs” and that “government agencies are particularly uncomfortable with these rules when they are asked to recognize or endorse a certification program.” He didn’t back up these general statements—no peer-reviewed publication was cited, for example. He also didn’t speak to anyone outside ATA about our Certification Program, so we don’t even know if any specific external stakeholders or government agencies care about decoupling or what policies they would change in response. His statements were made 20 years ago, when he recommended ATA create a three- to five-year strategic plan. Now it’s time for us to decide for ourselves what ATA should do next.

TOO MANY UNKNOWNS
There are many unknowns, so much so that it seems too risky to press on without doing more research.

ATA also hasn’t surveyed current membership about decoupling, and doesn’t know how many certified members would leave if membership was no longer required to maintain certification. Losing experienced members hurts ATA.

I’m so thankful for the volunteer graders generously sharing their expertise and time and making our Certification Program so strong. ATA has not published the results of any well-executed survey of graders to know how many of them would be demotivated from volunteering in this new scenario. (Some graders have already publicly and privately stated they would leave the program.) The Spanish language pair would likely be the most affected by the increased demand. Could our graders, ATA Headquarters staff, and the Ethics Committee really handle the
increased demand for all language pairs, especially if we lost a significant number of graders? Just one language pair losing key graders could make the whole program lose credibility.

The cost of the exam and renewal fees for nonmembers has not yet been published. Without survey/market research/cost numbers to plug into equations, the financial impact is still unknown. A bigger ATA is a stronger ATA from which we all benefit. According to the free decoupling webinar ATA presented in October, 25% of all new members join ATA to take the exam.1 Think about how losing those 400+ new members year after year will look for us 10, 20, or 30 years down the road.

WHAT DO OTHERS THINK?
Recently, I reached out to some ATA colleagues from different language pairs, different parts of the country, certified and not certified, men and women, and simply asked, “What do you think about opening the exam to nonmembers?” These colleagues are currently supporting themselves through translation work, they actively participate in ATA, and none of them hold leadership positions. Eighty percent told me that they were against opening the exam, and the other 20% were undecided. I thought this was compelling because I had never talked to these colleagues about ATA politics before, so I truly wasn’t trying to skew the results.

AMA AND ABA DON’T ADMINISTER BOARD/BAR EXAMS
ATA has mentioned that you don’t have to be a member of the American Medical Association (AMA) or American Bar Association (ABA) to take the board/bar exams. However, these associations don’t administer the board/bar exams or issue licenses.

VOLUNTARY CREDENTIAL
ATA certification has always been a voluntary credential, a way to stand out. No law requires the use of ATA-certified translators, and most translators working today are not certified. Therefore, it’s not a barrier to entry, and we’re not illegally controlling any supply.

The legal concern might make more sense if ATA is pursuing legislation that would require the use of ATA-certified translators across the U.S. Is that happening? If so, members ought to know.

RELEVANT CASE STUDY
Just a few years ago, the International Council on Systems Engineering decided to add a membership requirement to its certification program. ATA is looking at going in the opposite direction with decoupling.

LEADERSHIP
I wholeheartedly believe ATA leaders are committed to our organization and do their jobs/volunteer work with the best of intentions. We’ve all benefited from their contributions. I have a common goal with our leaders: wanting a strong ATA and Certification Program. Questioning whether opening today’s exam to nonmembers would achieve that goal shouldn’t take that away.

Question #5: Should ATA leadership’s first priority be our members, who have a lot to lose if this doesn’t go well, or the tens of thousands of translators who haven’t joined us? The FAQs state that opening the exam would benefit the entire industry, but no specific evidence has been presented regarding how. Members deserve some concrete evidence regarding how this would directly benefit them before removing a beloved member right that makes ATA so strong.

CONCLUSION
I appreciate that the Board will allow us to vote on this matter, as the Bylaws list taking the certification exam under its list of Member Rights, next to the rights to vote, hold office, and serve on the Board of Directors and all committees of the Association.

There are lots of ways to improve the credibility of ATA that don’t involve decoupling, and I would like to be a part of a solution. I hope you will join me. We could enhance the credibility of the Certification Program and ATA brand by working with external stakeholders and government agencies to better inform them of the strengths of our members and our current program. We could also do more public outreach to increase the recognition of the industry and work harder to retain and attract members.

We want to hear from you!
Members are encouraged to submit their opinions, both pro and con, regarding opening ATA’s certification exam to nonmembers (also referred to as decoupling) for publication in The ATA Chronicle. While it may not be possible to print all submissions, equal space will be provided for dissenting opinions. Please send to jeff@atanet.org.

Note: In keeping with standard ATA editorial policy, submissions must include the author’s name, which will be published. Anonymous submissions will not be accepted for publication.

NOTES
With chapters in over 100 countries, the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) is one of the largest professional associations dedicated to corporate communications in the world. Officially created in 1970, IABC has roots in the original American Association of Industrial Editors founded in 1938.

IABC attracts writers and communicators who work within the fields of human resources, training, public relations, marketing, advertising, government relations, and investor relations. As the field has become more international, and as companies and corporations expand their operations around the globe, translation and interpreting has become increasingly important to the world of corporate communications. IABC has published articles from ATAs Public Relations Writers Group in their trade magazine that is distributed worldwide.

The challenges involved with managing communications for multilingual workforces and audiences was the topic on the minds of the thousands of IABC members who gathered in Vancouver, British Columbia in June 2019 for the World Conference of IABC. ATA was there to help answer their questions. With the help of three other local ATA members—Ana-Maria Zuniga, Masaka Fujiware, and Olivia Ocana-Quintana—ATA hosted a table at the conference that provided both fun gift items (beer coasters!) and advice.

As opposed to providing an explicit session on translation and/or interpreting with a limited audience, this time ATA decided to reinforce its relationship with IABC by hosting a table. This approach allowed us to provide more direct and specific advice to the thousands of attendees at the conference. It was fascinating to learn of the various scenarios that these direct clients face in terms of translation and interpreting.

Many of the people involved in human resources deal with multilingual staff in overseas operations that require not just translation for multilingual training manuals, but also voice talent for videos that will be played to staff worldwide. Human resource departments are often also tasked with finding interpreters for visitors to their company. Advertisers and marketers have very specific needs in terms of translation that are often best suited to transcreation and multilingual copywriting. Conversely, speed is the most important factor for clients working in the fields of public relations and investor relations, and many of them are looking to machine translation to help solve their issues—often with disappointing results.

Our ATA member volunteers staffing the table were able to provide solutions
for attendees in terms of explaining how to best use machine translation, the growing field of transcreation, and the ABC’s of translation and interpreting in general. Although there were a few ATA members among the attendees (thanks for saying hi!), the vast majority of attendees had very little understanding of foreign languages and translation/interpreting in general. They were all deeply appreciative of the materials we were able to provide, including *Translation: Getting it Right!* and *Interpreting: Getting It Right!*.

Being able to connect with the actual users/buyers of translation/interpreting services has been the strategic approach of ATA’s Public Relations Committee for several years.

Being able to connect with the actual users/buyers of translation/interpreting services has been the strategic approach of ATA’s Public Relations Committee for several years. Helping these people understand the keys to successful translation/interpreting projects benefits not only the buyers, but also us as translators and interpreters.

Although the cost of hosting an information table at a professional trade conference may be prohibitive for individuals, it can be something for corporate members within ATA to consider. Individual members can always attend the conference as speakers or regular participants and use their networking skills to make direct connections with the end users of translation/interpreting services. Here are a few tips to keep in mind in that case:

1. **Rehearse an elevator speech.** You don’t need to start with the speech. It’s often easier to break the ice by asking someone a question or providing a comment. Then explain who you are.

2. **Take advantage of the breaks.** If you’re there as an attendee, you really will not have much of a chance to communicate during the sessions. But the coffee breaks provide an ideal time with which to approach people. It can also be advantageous to skip some sessions and hang out in the lounge area where other people are taking a break and tend to be in a more receptive mood.

3. **Take advantage of social media.** Find out if there is an app for the conference and be sure to download it and start using it before you arrive. Make use of any conference hashtags as well or create your own.

4. **Sit in the front row.** If you’re going to attend any sessions, make sure you sit in the front row where it will be easy for you to ask questions and perhaps add your own perspective on the session. If you found a speaker particularly helpful, contact them directly afterwards and consider collaborating.

5. **Eat in the hotel.** It may feel a little lonely, but you are at this conference to make connections. There are guaranteed to be other conference attendees who are also faced with the prospect of eating alone at the hotel. You can provide good company and good information.

### Notes

2. ATA’s print and digital outreach campaign began in January 2016. To date, 22 articles have appeared in more than 140 professional and trade publications. Take a minute now to find out more: http://bit.ly/ATA-PR-Articles.

David Rumsey is a past president of ATA (2015–2017). In that position, he was in contact with several key players within government and industry and has provided sessions on translation and interpreting at the International Association of Business Communicators, Society for Technical Communication, the Globalization and Localization Association, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and U.S. Interagency Language Roundtable. He has been featured on CNBC and PBS’ *Nightly Business Hour*. Since entering the profession in 1990, he has worked on all sides of the industry, including as a project manager at two U.S.-based agencies, a project manager for localization efforts at a large software firm, and as a freelance translator since 2004 from his home near Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Contact: davidrumsey@outlook.com.
Watch Your Back for a Recession

If a recession is in fact coming, what can you, as a freelancer and a business owner, do to prepare?

I’m not an economist (far from it!), but it’s hard to miss the rumblings in the financial press that the U.S. (or even the world) economy may be headed for a recession. After a 10-year bull market, we’re in a bit of a “what goes up must come down” situation, and as a business owner, the best time to start planning for a downturn is last year, but if you haven’t done that, let’s start planning now!

This topic has been marinating in my mind for a while, and it came to the forefront when I listened to a recent episode of The Freelancers Show podcast on recession-proofing your business.

Side note: I both understand and dislike the term “-proofing” (future-proofing, recession-proofing), because you can’t really “-proof” against something as uncertain as the future, or a recession. And I think it can create a false sense of security to say “my business is now recession-proof,” when in reality that’s not possible. However, I understand why people use that term, so let’s go with it.

A HELPFUL EPISODE OF THE FREELANCERS SHOW

The Freelancers Show—hosted by a rotating panel of information technology guys—is one of my favorite non-

translation business podcasts. The hosts and topics are generally really interesting, I think it’s good to get perspectives from another industry, and I find a lot of their advice appealing because it’s for nerds. It’s straightforward, non-salesy stuff for people who work in nerdy industries. The host of this recession-proofing episode, Reuven Lerner, a Python programming trainer, is one of my favorite panelists, and his strategies are often surprisingly applicable to translators because he works with a lot of international clients.

A better cash cushion in your business is a healthy thing to have.

STEP 1: BUILD UP YOUR SAVINGS

So, if a recession is in fact coming, what can you, as a freelancer and a business owner, do to prepare? I recommend you listen to Reuven’s podcast episode, and I’ll elaborate on a few of its suggestions here, with a few of my own.

- If business is good for you right now, start building a cash cushion. If the recession comes, you have a financial buffer. If it doesn’t, you still have a financial buffer and you can reinvest it in your business, or decide that life is short and it’s time to go to Hawaii for a month. Either way, a better cash cushion in your business is a healthy thing to have.

- How much is “enough” in savings? That’s a tough one because it depends on the specifics of your situation. By how much could you cut your living expenses in a pinch? How much debt do you have? Who else relies on your income? Ideally, I think a year of living expenses in the bank is a good cushion. In reality, you have to balance the many moving parts of your financial situation.
WATCH YOUR BACK FOR A RECESSION continued

With the caveat that I’m not a financial advisor, here’s an example. I aim for about a $10,000 cushion in my business savings account; much less than a year of living expenses. However, I feel that it’s sufficient for my situation. My husband and I paid off our mortgage a number of years ago and are now completely debt-free, and our house has approximately doubled in value since we bought it in 2004—that opens up the option of taking a pretty large home equity loan if we needed cash. We have a decent amount of long-term savings in retirement accounts, but because of our big push to go debt-free (which we both agree was worth doing), we probably have less liquid cash than many two-income families do. However, we have a lot of financial flexibility if we need it: we have one kid who will go to college next year (all the money for that is in a 529 account), and thus will no longer live with us full-time. If we did some improvements to our house, we could rent it for probably $2,500 a month. I already have a job where I can work from anywhere. My husband has an in-house job but works in information technology, so theoretically he could find a remote job.

And let’s say that we: a) needed to cut our living expenses, and b) wanted to go on an adventure. We could do something out-of-the-box like move to Thailand for a year, where one can rent a quite nice one-bedroom apartment for, let’s say, $1,000 a month, while simultaneously renting our own house out for a lot more than that. Realistically, we both love traveling, and we could probably find a place in a really inexpensive country where we could even live without working if we rented our house out. That opens up a lot of options.

On the flip side, if you have a big mortgage, car loans, credit card debt, student debt, a spouse who is not employed, your elderly mom in the garage apartment, and three kids in elementary school, you’ve got a very different situation. That’s a pretty big ship to reroute if the economy goes sour. In that case, you might aim for more like 75–100K in savings. Everyone’s mileage varies, but hopefully those examples help.

STEP 2: CONSIDER YOUR CURRENT CLIENTS

In the podcast episode, Reuven makes the point that recessions don’t hit every business sector equally, or perhaps even at all. For example, the dot-com bubble really only affected tech companies. At the time of the 2008 recession, I was doing a lot of legal translation. Business volume during that time: never better! Some sectors of the translation industry make money “coming and going” so to speak, and are probably relatively immune to a recession.

But you want to look at your current client base and identify clients where you might be classified as “the fat” if that client had to “trim the fat.” Reuven uses the example of teaching in-person training courses. He anticipates that if there’s a recession, his smaller clients may stop hiring in-person trainers altogether (so he’s developed more robust online offerings), or they may bring trainers in for shorter courses.

In our profession, I would be looking at clients who are hiring a translator because they want to, not because they have to. If you’re translating a client’s blog because they think it’s fun to have it in multiple languages, that might be an expense they would look to cut if needed. If you translate for architecture or construction companies, they could be some of the first to be hit by an economic downturn.

Some sectors of the translation industry make money “coming and going” so to speak, and are probably relatively immune to a recession.

STEP 3: CONSIDER WHAT THRIVES IN A RECESSION

Even in a serious recession, there’s still business to be found. Reuven provided
a great example of this during the podcast. In a tight job market, many people are looking to build up their professional skills so that they’re as marketable as possible for the smaller number of jobs that are available. Recessions are a great time to expand into teaching and training, or to offer services like copywriting and web design that help freelancers market themselves.

Recessions are also a great time to beef up your own career skills. When you don’t have a ton of work, you have another advantage: time. If you have that robust savings cushion and can afford to take a hit on your paying work, a recession can be a great time to go back to school, pursue a new specialization, or retrain for an aspect of the language professions you’ve always been interested in, whether that’s software localization or conference interpreting.

**STEP 4: START CASTING A WIDER NET?**

When you have a thriving business, it’s easy to get complacent. But when a recession hits, you’re stuck kicking your (nonexistent) marketing engine into gear. Better to start revving it up now so that the groundwork is in place when/if you need new clients. Examples of this would include:

- Starting to attend client-side conferences to get to know the players in your target business sectors. Perhaps you can even start replacing some of your lower-paying clients right now.³
- Expanding the circle of translators and interpreters who know you, which is not only fun, but increases the possibility that they will think of you when they’re giving referrals or looking for someone to partner with. I’m doing that in my own business. For a long time now, I’ve turned down basically every non-ATA speaking invitation I received, but now I’m starting to accept some of those since I have more time. This appeals to me personally, and it’s also a good way to spread the word about my online courses and books to new people.
- If there’s a job search portal for your target business sectors, join it. For example, I belong to Devex⁴, which focuses on the international development sector. I’m not looking for an in-house job, but I like to keep an eye on which entities are hiring because it indicates that they’re on solid financial footing.
- The run-up to a potential recession is also a good time to think about diversifying. If you’re interested in running a multi-pronged business—which not everyone is—now may be a good time to launch another arm of your business.

**You want to look at your current client base and identify clients where you might be classified as “the fat” if that client had to “trim the fat.”**

**FINALLY: TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR FIXED EXPENSES**

A sudden business downturn can hit very hard. For example, I expect to make almost exactly $100,000 from translation this year (which makes it easy to calculate percentages, etc.), and I earned $18,000 from one client and $17,000 from another, both of which are entities that could theoretically take their translations in-house if they assigned them to a bilingual staff person, which I know for sure that they have. Of course that’s not a great option—they’re happy with my work and their bilingual staff have other jobs and aren’t professional translators, but it’s still possible. And that’s 35% of my income for this year.

To keep that kind of hit from becoming a catastrophe, it’s good to:

- a) build a savings cushion (see above), and b) carefully review any fixed expenses you have in your business. Reuven gives the example of having salaried employees who he had to lay off during the 2008 recession. If you have employees, especially if you live in a country where you’re legally obligated to pay them severance if you lay them off (one month per year of service is not uncommon in some places), that’s something to consider. If you rent an office (which I do), that’s also something to consider. For example, I would probably not take out a year-long lease on a desk space right now. I would go for month-to-month if at all possible, and if not then something like six months. If needed, I could (perhaps at the cost of my mental health!) give up my desk space and go back to working from home.

Readers, other thoughts on this? How concerned are you about the possibility of a recession? What are you doing to prepare?

**NOTES**

2. You can learn more about Reuven Lerner here: https://lerner.co.il.

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By Simon Berrill

Dilemmas of an Upwardly Mobile Translator

The future is where we need to look if we want to find reasons to continue to be upwardly mobile as translators.

Freelance translation is full of decisions. Shall I take this job? Shall I reject that one? How much should I charge? Should I raise my rates? And all decisions have consequences. If you ask for too much, the client might go elsewhere, but if you ask for too little, you might get offered something better. And if you take this, you haven’t got time to take that.

My decisions of the past year all seemed to come home to roost in the two weeks after I came back from my summer holiday. First, I seemed to lose a good client. It wasn’t a badly paying agency I had been wanting to get rid of for ages, it was a direct client with interesting translations that I had been working with for years. From my point of view, the only problem was that my relationship with the client dated from a time when I hadn’t charge direct clients enough. Since I realized this, I had been steadily increasing my rate with them, and it was now approaching what I would charge a new client, although they were still getting me a little cheap. Unfortunately, they didn’t see things the same way.

Surprised that the client hadn’t sent me their regular monthly translation, I asked them why. And they finally admitted it: “We’ve found someone cheaper for the regular stuff. It’s not you, though. We really like your work.” As if that made things any better. All I could do was remind them that I would still be there when they needed quality translations and wonder where I would fill the gap in my monthly schedule.

That same day, I had some more bad news. Another translator for whom I had done a big translation job earlier in the year told me he wasn’t going to be able to pay me and was filing for bankruptcy. I still don’t yet know how much I’ll eventually receive, but I stand to lose a four-figure sum. To make matters worse, the job had been split with a colleague, who is also liable to lose a large sum of money. Even though the red flags are really only apparent in hindsight, I cursed myself for not being more careful. But at the time I took the job I probably wouldn’t have listened to inner voices warning me of the possible risks—there wasn’t any other work around at the time.

The problem is that many clients are simply not willing to pay the kind of price needed for a quality translation, and some will just run away if you ask for it.

Nor was there anything else around when I took another job I should have turned down in the summer. Working directly in an online platform is always a recipe for disaster, and I know it full well. In this case, doing so made it impossible to check my translation properly for mistakes, and, sure enough, it contained some. The end client was unhappy, although fortunately the colleague who had sent me the work was more understanding. She at least realized what I had been up against. This time I did get paid, but it can’t have done my reputation any good, and it certainly didn’t help my blood pressure.

Achieving the Right Effect

The link between these three stories is the effect of raising rates. There’s no doubt that if you’re too busy for a long period, then it’s time to raise your rates. There’s also no doubt that, as a tool, increasing rates can be a fairly blunt instrument.

I quite rightly raised mine for all agency clients and one or two other clients at the beginning of last year. It had the
desired effect: demand dropped, mostly on the agency side, and I was no longer continually turning work away. But what I hadn’t done was to find enough new clients to fill the gap left by the agencies who were dropping me. So, there were times last year when I had no work at all. This is something I’m not used to after having been almost constantly fully booked for a couple of years. And when work got slack, I took jobs I shouldn’t have touched, like the ones I’ve mentioned.

It’s at times like these that I need to be reminded that positive things can happen. Fortunately, one or two of those also came along in the same post-holiday fortnight. First, I had an inquiry from a potential new client in one of my specialty fields: wine. As I usually do, I asked how the client found me, to which he replied, “I just googled.” That is fantastic news, because so many of us with websites sometimes wonder if the investment is worthwhile. There’s a temptation to think websites are mere vanity projects designed to project our egos onto the internet, but with little practical use. But here is real evidence that if someone keys in something like “English translators specializing in wine in Spanish,” they will find me. However much work arrives or doesn’t arrive from this particular potential client, the fact that he could find me in that way gives me hope.

**CHARGING FOR QUALITY**

Then there is the question of quality. I want to provide quality because, beyond the satisfaction it gives me, I have no doubt that providing quality is what can help human translators stand out from machines. Obviously, though, quality comes at a price. The minimum I need to provide top quality is to be paid enough to employ someone to review my translations, because, for me, having my translations reviewed is the only way of providing a really polished document. The problem is, especially in a country like Spain where quality isn’t really part of the culture, many clients are simply not willing to pay that kind of price, and some will just run away if you ask for it.

So, when I had an inquiry from a direct client who came to me via a colleague for a website translation, I quoted two prices: the “premium” price, with revision, and the “standard” price, without. It’s a tactic I’ve sometimes used before that’s designed to stop clients who would balk at the higher price from simply going elsewhere if their budget doesn’t stretch that far. I always say that I recommend the premium option and explain why. Often, though, clients ignore my advice and choose the cheaper one.

**What I hadn’t done was to find enough new clients to fill the gap left by the agencies who were dropping me.**

But this time, my prospective client made a different choice. “I prefer the highest quality option,” he said. “This job isn’t urgent.” It was almost like finding that unicorns exist. Because, in darker moments, I wonder how many clients actually care about quality at all and whether it wouldn’t be possible to make a living churning out low-quality translations as quickly as possible at low prices. In fact, it probably would—for now. But the problem for translators trying this tactic is that machines can already do more or less the same thing, and they’ll soon be able to do it better. So, coming across a client so clearly in the market for quality and ready to pay for it was another reason to be optimistic.

**CHARGING FOR THE LONG-TERM**

Then, another new direct client appeared in my inbox. He had a short translation that needed doing. The only thing was, he needed it that same day. My dilemma was to quote him a price. This time, double pricing was not an option. Apart from anything else, there wasn’t going to be time for anyone else to revise my work, so I needed to quote a single figure. But how much? I took a few minutes to think because there were various considerations. This looked like a client who could pay a reasonable rate and one I would like to keep for future work. But that also meant I needed to make sure I didn’t undercharge with the first job. Doing the job the same day wasn’t going to be a problem, but at the same time I wanted to ensure the client appreciated my effort. Normally the translation would cost a minimum fee, which represents thirty minutes of work for me. But what if I took a bit longer than that and charged for an hour?

That left the issue of the urgency of the job. To be honest, by charging for an hour, I was already being well rewarded. But I wanted the client, who, to be honest, didn’t seem all that well organized, to realize that they wouldn’t just be able to snap their fingers and expect me to jump every time. So, I decided to inform them that normally I charge extra for rush translations, but at the same time would do them a favor by waiving the charge because it was our first job together. That way, I earned a very satisfying rate for the job and the client enjoyed a discount. It really was a win for both sides, and, I hope, the start of a good future relationship.

**LOOKING FORWARD, NOT BACK**

As I’ve already suggested, the future is where we need to look if we want to find reasons to continue to be upwardly mobile as translators. It’s not an easy process. There are misjudgments, setbacks, and temporary reverses. But as soon as we let these situations lead us into negative, short-term thinking—as soon as we fail to find ways of learning from them and moving forward—we’re on the road to nowhere.

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Three Pedagogical Tools to Take Your Online Translation and Interpreting Courses to the Next Level

Effective online teaching must adapt content delivery to specific learning environments and the changing needs of students.

Demand for online education is increasing in the U.S. and is globally "on track to become mainstream by 2025." As the availability of online courses continues to grow around the world, especially at the college level, instructors are increasingly finding new ways for their students’ learning experience to be meaningful and pedagogically sound.

In a recent Chronicle of Higher Education article, Margaret Brooks outlines two distinct camps in today’s academia: those who oppose online education and truly believe that “face-to-face teaching is always better,” and those who advocate that “online courses intrinsically benefit students’ learning experiences, and are the intellectual equivalent of traditional courses.” Brooks also proposes a third group, which takes into account the changing ways we as a society interact with the world through technology and recognizes that students use the internet for virtually anything. She then lists eight reasons why colleges should “proudly and without apology” offer online courses, including one that speaks more directly to the pedagogical framework of the online translation and interpreting courses being discussed in this article: “we want to teach our students to do independent research.”

In this article, three experienced instructors involved in the design of online translation and interpreting curricula share tips for creating an online community that encourages students’ reflective practice and enables structured student interactions. They discuss three specific tools they use in asynchronous online instruction, including rubrics, a process-oriented discussion forum, and the multimedia platform VoiceThread.

Rubrics can be used by students to assess their own performance based on the instructor’s expectation and the specific assignment at hand.

Self-assessment rubrics

This section discusses multilingual courses designed for an online certificate in professional translation and interpreting, including rubrics as an essential component of self-assessment and autonomous reflective practice. The course design is based on a process-oriented, skill-building approach to translation and interpreting training, with a focus on students learning to assess their own performance in various assignments.

Before going into more detail about rubric design and use, some important information about the framework behind the online certificate courses is in order. Courses are asynchronous, which means that anyone can participate at different times, with no real-time encounters/courses. Unlike in self-paced learning, such as is done with Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), students taking the certificate’s asynchronous courses are expected to meet assignment deadlines weekly. However, they still get to decide when to interact with content and complete their assignments within the set timeframes.

Even though many of the learning activities in the multilingual online courses are performed in English, courses rely on language-specific reviewers to give periodic feedback to students, providing them with essential linguistic assessment as they move forward to increasingly complex tasks. The program’s broad mix of cultures and languages enriches the learning environment, since students exchange different views about translation strategies, equivalence, and cultural and linguistic specificities.

Rubrics can be used by students to assess their own performance based on the instructor’s expectation and the specific assignment at hand. According to Dannelle Stevens...
Rubrics should contain some common features. These include the instructor’s expectations, different components (e.g., in the case of dialogue interpreting: interpreting skills, language, delivery and ethics/standards), and a detailed description of acceptable and unacceptable levels of performance. The importance of rubrics in guiding students in reflective practice cannot be underestimated since they provide not only a clear picture of patterns of recurring issues that need to be improved upon, but also a snapshot of amazing accomplishments that inspire students to continue developing their skills.

Another tool that goes hand in hand with rubrics and can be implemented as a reflective practice instrument is the discussion forum.

In terms of rubrics design, some things to consider include the following questions: “What is the purpose of this task?” “What are the skills required for the exercise?” “What should students see in their performance that reflects the highest achievement?” and “What should students be able to identify that reflect an unacceptable level of performance?” Figure 1 on the right is an example of a “holistic” rubric used in translation exercises. Note that there are no levels of acceptable or unacceptable performance, since the purpose of the task is for students to step back and think critically about the process they have just gone through, including the analytical and subliminal states they were under when performing translation.

DISCUSSION FORUMS AS REFLECTIVE TRANSLATION PRACTICE TOOLS

Another tool that goes hand in hand with rubrics can be implemented as a reflective practice instrument is the discussion forum. Discussion forums have been a core component of online courses for decades. They foster student engagement and are primarily used for discussing readings or specific topics. However, they can be applied to a variety of additional purposes. This section demonstrates how such forums can be implemented for students to discuss their individual translation process and compare their individual approach with their peers.

This specific design was implemented in a specialized online English>French translation course as part of an online translation certificate that combined non-language-specific and language-specific courses. In this course, once students had submitted their weekly translation assignment, on which they worked individually and received personalized instructor feedback, they were required to discuss, in the online forum, challenges related to the text they had just translated. In their posts, students were asked to:

- Identify and qualify each challenge they wanted to discuss.
- Share resources that helped them solve the issue, such as extra-linguistic information, parallel texts, bitexts, or specialized databases.
- Evaluate the authority of said resources.
- Justify their translation choices.

To obtain full credit, the rubric called for students to submit a minimum number of reflective comments and respond to

Rubric for Written Translation Reflection/Self-Assessment

As you work on your translation and think about the process, please include some of the following in your reflection as appropriate:

Translation Process:
- How did you find the translation for the most difficult word/term/phrase?
- How did you know your translation of the most difficult word/term/phrase was correct?
- Did you think about the audience as you were translating?

Translation Tools and Resources:
- Which tools did you use to help you in your translations (dictionaries, glossaries, online searches)? Please be specific and name your sources.
- Did you ask someone/an expert for help? Please be specific.
- Did you post a question to a translators’ forum or group on Facebook or other listserv?

Translation Unit/Challenge:
- Which word or term was the most difficult word/term/phrase (took you the longest to translate)? Why? Is it technical? Be specific and please provide a back translation into English if focusing on a Language Other Than English (LOTE) term.
- Is the word/term/phrase culturally specific?

Translation Strategies:

Translation Quality:
- Did you proofread your target text after you finished?
- Did you use Spell Check in Word or another spelling tool?

Time Spent on Translation:
- How long did it take you to translate this text?
- Do you feel your linguistic skills in the source and target languages played a role in how long it took?

Translation Discovery:
- What new thing did you learn while you were working on this translation?
- How did you feel when you were done?
- Were you satisfied with the result?

Improvement Plans:
- Do you need to take more high-level classes in LOTE or English to improve your linguistic performance?
- Do you need to take high-level writing courses?
- Should you improve your general knowledge?

Figure 1: Rubric for Self-Assessment

Cristiano Mazzei—Fall 2019
THREE PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS TO TAKE YOUR ONLINE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING COURSES TO THE NEXT LEVEL continued

a minimum number of peers, asking for clarifications and critically evaluating the pros and cons of their peers’ strategies.

Figure 2 below shows an excerpt from a thread discussing the translation of an acronym (FERPA) in a university employee manual. In this thread, Student A indicates where she found her French translation and gives her opinion about the authority of the web resource she found online, although she doesn’t explain to her peers why it qualifies as a reliable resource. Student B details her step-by-step translation strategy (i.e., what she did)—leaving the original acronym in English and inserting a footnote with an explanation. However, she doesn’t justify any of her decisions. Student C explains and justifies her entire step-by-step process: 1) she states that she looked for extralinguistic information about the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) on the U.S. Department of Education’s website, 2) points out that multiple French-language websites leave the acronym FERPA in the body of the text while explaining what the law is about, and then 3) explains her own strategy, backing it up with contextual information about the end user(s) of the translation.

In this design, the instructor’s role is mainly one of an observer, making sure that netiquette is applied and that discussions are progressing in the right direction. The instructor’s intervention is limited to providing a few comments and replying to the occasional student-to-instructor question. Progress, in the form of depth of critical and analytical thinking, happens through peer emulation and social comparison. Students choose peers as a yardstick to measure their own behaviors. In other words, students with the strongest analytical skills influence others as the semester advances.

The benefits of such a discussion forum are multi-pronged. Students can use comments to later reflect on their practice, methodologies, strategies, and entire processes. As such, the online forum represents an introspective tool, probably more efficient than think-aloud protocols, especially since students have time to look back and select the most appropriate items for discussion. Second, the forum also works as a collaborative tool to collectively, and critically, think about a variety of approaches to solve a common challenge. Finally, students can save weekly discussions on their computers to later build their glossaries or lists of reference materials.

VOICETHREAD: A MULTIMEDIA ENGAGEMENT TOOL

VoiceThread is an application that works exceptionally well for student engagement and allows students to select their preferred media for interaction. In contrast, many tools in learning management systems (LMS) are based on reading, typing, and one-way presentation of multimedia content. For example, in a discussion forum, students and instructors can post videos and sound files, but they cannot respond to another person’s video with a comment or video of their own, often having to use their own audio or video capturing program to upload such media. VoiceThread changes this. Instructors and students can create video, audio, and text-based and slide-based presentations that become a living base from which everyone can contribute, adding their own video, audio, text comments, or slides. Playback doesn’t have to be linear, and replies can be threaded. (See Figure 3 on page 27.)

Because of the richness of its features, VoiceThread can complement or replace a traditional discussion forum. In the example given in Figure 3, it was used to replace the discussion forum for assigned readings in a multilingual, semester-long course. In previous semesters using traditional discussion forums with threads, students had to write at least one post and respond to at least two of their classmates’ posts per reading. There was a simple rubric for such posts and replies, and while students generally met the rubric, discussion was rarely substantial and engaging. Student contributions seemed rushed, ill-prepared, and the product of a get-it-done mentality.

In the courses that used VoiceThread, one student was responsible for leading the weekly discussion on the reading(s)

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Example: Translating “FERPA” into French

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pour FERPA, j’ai indiqué : Loi américaine sur les droits à l’instruction et la protection de la vie privée des familles. J’ai trouvé cette traduction sur plusieurs sites, et notamment celui-ci, qui m’a semblé être une bonne référence en la matière : [URL1] (<a href="http://www.ed.gov/About/Laws/FERPA">http://www.ed.gov/About/Laws/FERPA</a>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J’ai aussi pour ma part utilisé FERPA avec une explication en pied de page.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>En ce qui concerne la traduction de FERPA, j’ai d’abord recherché l’signification de cette loi, très bien décrite sur le site du Ministère de l’Éducation [1]. Plusieurs sites proposent des traductions similaires de FERPA en français, en expliquant la signification de la loi et en laissant le terme en anglais, avec un acronyme (one mentioned: [Student2]). J’ai choisi de traduire de la même façon (traduction en français suivie de l’acronyme anglais) et de sa signification, avec la signification en italique étant donnée que le texte s’adresse à un nouvel employé francophone venant travailler dans une université américaine, qui dira donc connaître les acronymes couramment utilisés dans l’université.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 2: Excerpt from Student Online Discussion Forum
and was required to post a video or audio commentary lasting at least 10 minutes. Other students then had to reply to the lead discussion with at least one video, audio, or written comment.

A big shift occurred in those courses. Students prepared for the discussions, often reading from several pages of notes. They replied to multiple posts by classmates and logged into a single VoiceThread discussion on multiple days to contribute more. In one course, a student created her own VoiceThread discussion, unprompted, after watching a video she found independently, and most of her classmates replied.

Instead of making teaching goals fit technology, instructors should make technology fit course learning objectives.

Students engaged with the readings in different ways, posing new questions, enhancing their posts with references to other materials, and discussing their own experiences as interpreters. The attitude among students was one of gratitude and respect, even when opinions diverged. A majority of students wrote that the readings and discussions were their favorite part of the course and where they learned the most.

While there are many advantages to using a multimedia application like VoiceThread, it’s important to mention the few downsides. It sometimes failed when students were recording their responses, leading to frustration and repeated attempts. Also, when students went to VoiceThread without going through Blackboard Learn®, the LMS used in the course, grading integration didn’t work. Perhaps most importantly, reviewing all the students’ posts takes much more time than skimming through discussion forum entries. That said, the discussions generated by the students didn’t require full monitoring. Depending on the group, instructors could skim the posts or “audit” by randomly listening to some.

Another helpful use of VoiceThread for online interpreting classes in particular was for source videos created by students. In a course on simultaneous interpreting, students used VoiceThread to create weekly speeches in English that were then used as source videos for their classmates’ interpreting practice. Students needed to use another device or program to record their interpreted rendition, but it was easy to use VoiceThread to create videos as source material—something that’s not easily accomplished in other programs because of the video upload time.

Making Technology Work for Instructors and Learners

Effective online teaching must adapt content delivery to specific learning environments and the changing needs of students. In an asynchronous environment, students don’t sit down in front of their computers at set times and for fixed durations every week, like they do in a traditional classroom. Nor do they gather at the same time with peers to have discussions. This is why instructors, instead of making teaching goals fit technology, should make technology fit course learning objectives, including building online communities of connected learners, teaching students to do independent research, and giving them the tools to reflect on their translation and interpreting practice.
This article illustrated a few tips for making pedagogically sound use of existing tools and emerging technologies. Hopefully, it has provided readers with ideas to make their own online teaching environments work for their learners.

NOTES
7. Parallel texts are original, untranslated texts written by native speakers discussing a common topic with a similar communicative function in their native language.
8. Bitexts are “a collection (usually electronic) of texts in two languages that can be considered translations of each other and that are aligned at the sentence or paragraph level.” http://bit.ly/Bitexts.
12. For more information on Blackboard Learn, visit www.blackboard.com.

Laurence Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo is a translator, interpreter, translation studies scholar, and translation curriculum designer who runs her consulting firm, Into French Translations. She has been teaching translation since 2013, translating and interpreting for 30 years, and is certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters as a core-certified health care interpreter. She has held positions in academia and the private and public sectors in the U.S., France, Germany, Djibouti, and Québec. She is also a reviewer for international translation studies journals. She has an MA in translation and a PhD in translation studies from the Université de Montréal. Contact: laurence@intofrenchtranslations.com.

Elena Langdon, CT is an ATA director. She has worked as an interpreter and translator since 2000. An ATA-certified Portuguese>English translator, she is also certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters as a core-certified health care interpreter. She has a master’s degree in translation studies from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and has been teaching interpreting and translation since 2005. A past chair of the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters, she currently helps produce webinars for ATA. She loves learning to use new technology, and her current focus is remote simultaneous interpreting. Contact: elena@acolalang.com.

Cristiano Mazzei has a BA in translation and interpreting from Unibero University in São Paulo, Brazil, and an MA in translation studies from the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst. He has been a practitioner and trainer of translators and interpreters for many years. He is currently the director of translator and interpreter training at the UMass Amherst. He is certified by the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters as a core-certified health care interpreter. He is also certified as a court interpreter by the National Center for State Courts, a certified U.S. State Department translator and interpreter, and a certified translator and interpreter in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. Contact: cmazzei@umass.edu.
Profile of ATA 2018–2019 School Outreach Contest Winner: Denise Fisher

This year’s ATA School Outreach Contest winner shared the inside story of a freelance interpreter with students at the University of Michigan.

A TA Member Denise Fisher, a Japanese<>English interpreter and translator based in Orient, Ohio, is the winner of this year’s School Outreach Contest. She won a free registration to ATA’s 60th Annual Conference in Palm Springs, California, for her photo taken during a visit to the University of Michigan, where she spoke to graduate students in a Japanese interpreting class about her profession.

LIVING HER DREAM: LEARNING JAPANESE AND LIVING IN JAPAN

Ever since Toyota opened a large manufacturing facility in Georgetown, Kentucky, Denise—a Kentucky native—was fascinated by Japanese culture and had the desire to learn the Japanese language. But neither her high school nor the college she attended offered Japanese language classes. When she discovered that her college, Morehead State University in Kentucky, offered an exchange program with a Japanese university, she immediately applied. Denise was accepted and went off to Osaka to study at the Kansai University of Foreign Studies. During her exchange year, Denise managed to break free from the circle of international students participating in the program and make friends with Japanese students. Denise says this was the key to learning the language and getting to know the culture from the inside.

After her time abroad, Denise returned to the U.S., finished her college education, and started to look for ways to go back to Japan to meet up with her friends again and continue her language training. A career fair in Boston, focusing on people speaking both English and Japanese, helped her land a job with an American company looking for a sales representative in Osaka.

“The beginning was really rough,” Denise says. “Many times, I came home at night, crying and feeling lonely.” Since she had impeccable pronunciation in Japanese, native Japanese customers wouldn’t slow down or explain anything when talking to her. “It took me hours to write the sales reports due on Mondays.” But developing her language skills and knowledge of the culture helped Denise lay the foundation for her later work as an interpreter.

A CAREER IN JAPANESE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING

As a part of her sales representative job in Japan, Denise also began interpreting occasionally, bridging the language gap between American company representatives and local employees and customers. Since she had no formal training in interpreting, she had to learn it on the job through lots of practice, self-study, and hard work. After 10 years in Japan, she returned to the U.S. and continued her career as an in-house interpreter and translator at Honda R&D Americas, Ltd. Since May 2006, Denise has been working as a freelance translator and interpreter for automotive company clients and suppliers in the automotive and aerospace industries. She is based in Orient, not far from Ohio’s capital city of Columbus.

Denise has shared her professional expertise with colleagues at ATA Annual Conferences. At the 2017 conference in Washington, DC, she participated in a panel discussion about the automotive industry as a major source of work for Japanese language professionals. She enjoys the networking opportunities that ATA Annual Conferences provide. In addition to her active participation in ATA, Denise is a member of the Japan Association of Translators.

PRESENTING TO INTERPRETING STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

In January 2019, Denise received an invitation from Professor Yoshihiro
Mochizuki to give a guest lecture at the University of Michigan. Denise and Yoshihiro had met the year before, in Columbus, where they both held workshops for members of the Japan Association of Translators—he on translation, she on interpreting. Yoshihiro wanted her to share her experience working as a freelance professional interpreter with the students enrolled in his new course on Japanese interpreting.

Denise began her presentation by talking about how a professional interpreter is expected to behave. After explaining the different modes of interpreting, she provided an overview of the equipment that interpreters traditionally use. She shared photos of various portable equipment and what a typical booth setup looks like. She concluded her presentation with information on tools for terminology management and led a Q&A session.

Denise was pleasantly surprised by the active participation of the students, who had a stream of questions for her: Had she ever found herself in the work scenarios she had discussed, and how had she handled these situations? Is there a certain personality type that’s more suited to the interpreting profession?

Denise enjoyed the animated discussion during her presentation. Students also approached her after the class with more questions, and some asked to exchange contact information.

**GETTING INVOLVED IN THE SCHOOL OUTREACH EFFORT**

Initially, Denise had thought that ATA’s School Outreach photo contest was only for ATA members presenting to young children. It was Yoshihiro Mochizuki—not only a professor at the University of Michigan but also administrator of ATA’s Japanese Language Division—who suggested she participate in the contest with the photos he took during the lecture. Thanks to his tip, she submitted her entry and won the contest, getting her a free registration to ATA’s 60th Annual Conference.

Denise thoroughly enjoyed the conference in Palm Springs. “The conference was even better than I imagined. The location was scenic, the weather was perfect, and there were a lot of educational sessions and networking opportunities.” Her favorite session this year was “From the Stage to the Booth: Acting Tips to Improve Your Interpreting,” presented by Javier Castillo. “There was a lot of overlap between his lecture and my own lecture. I would love to collaborate with him on a joint session at a future ATA conference!”

Join our efforts! The 2019–2020 School Outreach Contest is now open and the winner will receive free registration to ATA’s 61st Annual Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, October 21–24, 2020. For more information, visit www.atanet.org/ata_school/school_outreach_contest.php.

Tell Us Your Story!

If you visit schools to speak to students about translation and interpreting, we would love to hear from you—whether or not you decide to submit a photo to the contest. Email School Outreach Coordinator Meghan Konkol at meghan@fr-en.com with a description of when and where you presented and let us know about your memorable experience. You can read other School Outreach stories here: http://bit.ly/outreach-stories

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**Need Some Tips for Your School Outreach Presentation?**

No problem! Just visit ATA’s online School Outreach Resource Center. Our goal is to give you quick, convenient access to material you can use in making presentations about the translation and interpreting professions. The material is organized by grade level. Each level includes What to Say, How to Say It, Extra Credit, and Presentations.

- Tips on speaking to elementary school students
- Tips on speaking to middle school students
- Tips on speaking to high school students
- Tips on speaking to college/graduate students


**Tell Us Your Story!**

If you visit schools to speak to students about translation and interpreting, we would love to hear from you—whether or not you decide to submit a photo to the contest. Email School Outreach Coordinator Meghan Konkol at meghan@fr-en.com with a description of when and where you presented and let us know about your memorable experience. You can read other School Outreach stories here: http://bit.ly/outreach-stories

**Birgit Vosseler-Brehmer, CT** is an ATA-certified English<>German freelance translator based in Germany, specializing in technical, business management, and document translations. She is a member of ATA's School Outreach team. Contact: bvb@bvb-translations.com.
The Master of Arts in Translation program (both onsite and online) offers concentrations in Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

The PhD in Translation Studies program is designed for students who have an MA in translation or a foreign language, or a master’s degree in any other discipline with prior experience or training in translation.

The translation programs at Kent State have produced over 500 graduates since the Institute for Applied Linguistics was founded in 1988 under the direction of Greg Shreve, professor emeritus of German translation. The programs began with degrees in Spanish, German, and French, and later added Russian and Japanese, and most recently Arabic. The MA in Translation program now graduates more students than any other Arts and Sciences program at Kent State. As of this writing, it is the only U.S. translation program offering degrees from the bachelor’s to the PhD level, and the only U.S. program offering a full graduate degree in Arabic translation.

Moreover, the translation programs at Kent State have—through the impact of their graduates and faculty members—made tremendous contributions to the translation and interpreting professions as a whole, particularly in regard to their unique emphasis on translation theory and practice, and translation as a profession and academic discipline. In addition, numerous Kent State graduates and faculty members have made significant contributions to ATA as Board members, committee chairs, and division administrators.

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
Kent State University Translation Programs
(Past President Caitilin Walsh gave the Gode Medal presentation at ATA’s 60th Annual Conference in Palm Springs. Here are some excerpts from the presentation. Erik Angelone, associate professor of translation studies and coordinator of Kent State’s new online MA in Translation program, accepted the medal on behalf of Kent State’s translation programs.)

The American Translators Association is honored to recognize the translation programs at Kent State University with the 2019 Alexander Gode Medal. The Bachelor of Science Translation program offers concentrations in Arabic, French, German, Russian, and Spanish. This is a pre-professional program designed for students seeking the more professional focus and interdisciplinary breadth that the BS degree offers, with the inclusion of a minor or double major or certificate to develop the skills needed to use translation in a professional setting. It introduces the basics of translation theory as it applies to the actual practice of translation.
Alina Bronsky was included in the lists for both Publishers Weekly’s Best Books and the Los Angeles Public Library’s Best Books for that year. His works have been long- or shortlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award.


The Ungar German Translation Award may be bestowed biennially in odd-numbered years for a distinguished literary translation from German into English that has been published in the U.S.

**UNGAR GERMAN TRANSLATION AWARD**

Tim Mohr

Tim Mohr is the recipient of the Ungar German Translation Award for his translation from German into English of *Sand*, by Wolfgang Herrndorf (New York Review Books Classics, 2018).

*Sand* is set in North Africa in 1972. While the world is reeling from the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, a series of mysterious events is playing out in the Sahara. Four people are murdered in a hippie commune, a suitcase full of money disappears, and a pair of unenthusiastic detectives are assigned to investigate. In the midst of it all, a man with no memory tries to evade his armed pursuers. Who are they? What do they want from him? If he could just recall his own identity he might have a chance of working it out. This darkly sophisticated literary thriller, the last novel Wolfgang Herrndorf completed before his death in 2013, is, in the words of literary scholar and Germanist Michael Maar, “the greatest, grisliest, funniest, and wisest novel of the past decade.”

Wolfgang Herrndorf (1965–2013) studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts, Nuremberg. After graduating, he moved to Berlin, where he worked as a magazine illustrator. In 2001, Herrndorf joined the art and writing collective Zentrale Intelligenz Agentur, eventually contributing to their blog, *Riesenmaschine* (Giant Machine). He published his first novel, *In Plüschgewittern* (Storm of Plush), in 2002. This was followed by a collection of short stories, *Diesseits des Van-Allen-Gürtels* (This Side of the Van Allen Belt) in 2007, which received the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize Audience Award. In early 2010, he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. His novel *Tschick* (Why We Took the Car) was published just months later and would eventually be translated into 24 languages.

Herrndorf committed suicide in the summer of 2013. His posts on *Arbeit und Struktur* (Work and Structure), the blog he started after receiving his cancer diagnosis, have been published as a book of the same name. An unfinished sequel to *Tschick*, *Bilder einer großen Liebe* (Pictures of Your True Love), was released in 2014.

Tim Mohr is a New York-based translator and writer. In 2007, he received the Three Percent Award for Best Translated Book for his debut translation, *Guantanamo*, by Dorothea Dieckmann. In 2011, his translation of *The Hottest Dishes of the Tartar Cuisine*, by Alina Bronsky, was included in the lists for both Publishers Weekly’s Best Books and the Los Angeles Public Library’s Best Books for that year. His works have been long- or shortlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award.

Mohr has also collaborated on best-selling memoirs by musicians Gil Scott-Heron, Duff McKagan of Guns ‘n’ Roses, and Paul Stanley of KISS.


*The Ungar German Translation Award may be bestowed biennially in odd-numbered years for a distinguished literary translation from German into English that has been published in the U.S.*
2019 AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION STUDENT ATTENDANCE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ATA’S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

(American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation President Geoff Koby, who is also an ATA Board director, presented scholarships to recipients at ATA’s 60th Annual Conference in Palm Springs. Here are some excerpts from his remarks.)

New this year, the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation (AFTI) awarded five $500 scholarships to students or recent graduates of translation or interpreting studies programs to partially defray the cost of attending ATA’s 60th Annual Conference.

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.

This year’s scholarships were funded from donations made in the name of Past President Edith Losa. The recipients are:

Nick Cook
University of California, San Diego Extension
Professional Certificate in Translation and Interpretation (Spanish–English)

Gretchen Delfin
University of California, San Diego Extension
Specialized Certificate in Translation (Spanish–English)

Maria Delgado
University of California, San Diego Extension
Certificate in Translation (English–Spanish)

Carol Lujan
New York University
Master of Science in Translation (English–Spanish)

Samantha Vila
Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey
Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretation (English–Spanish)

Applicants interested in applying for this year’s scholarships 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 or interpreting studies. Recent graduates must have completed their program within 12 months of the starting date of the 2020 ATA Annual Conference (October 21–24, 2020). For more information, visit: www.afti.org.

2020 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 2020 include:

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

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

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

■ The Lewis Galantière Award is given for a distinguished book-length literary translation from any language, except German, into English published in the United States. The award is bestowed biennially in even-numbered years.

■ 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.

Like Two Porcupines Making Love—VERY CAREFULLY!

This was likely the best answer (and certainly the cleverest) response I read on a large cork board located in the registration area at this year’s ATA Annual Conference in Palm Springs. The board contained one main question to which attendees were encouraged to respond: “Do you use machine translation (MT), and how?” Here are some of the other comments (and some comments on the comments) attendees shared:

- “Integrated in my computer-assisted translation tool. Pre-translation when nothing is found in translation memory. It needs very careful review.”
- “To quickly get the gist of a paragraph. As a quick dictionary when I forget the target word in my native language.”
- “For IT messages and informational messages.”
- “Out of curiosity! The robots are coming whether we like it or not. We should know what MT is good or not good for.”
- “To check genders (but we heard that’s not 100% accurate...)”
- “For kicks.”
- “To get a good laugh.”
  - ↑ That
- “To enhance the skill of human linguists to reason over language and content and produce quality documentation of complex interactions.”
  - Irony, surely?
- “To show how it does NOT work and can never replace the high quality professional work I do.”
  - APPLAUSE
- “Never for any serious kind of translation work! For laughs—to get the gist of some Facebook posts and the likes only!”
- “To show how algorithms can’t make the mental leaps that humans can! #vigoroustranslation #popthequestion”
- “As a chainsaw, not a scalpel (i.e., only for a very rough job and not for anything delicate).”
- “For the post-edited MT output of popular TV subtitles—at first I was incredulous that the domain would process well with MT—the results were surprisingly good!”
- “As seldom as possible.”
- “When I’m working on a translation in Adobe and need to understand the target or match it up with the source.”
- “For triage—tells me at a glance what the topic of an article is. Will sometimes line-edit MT output if the nuance of the source isn’t important.”
- “I don’t... yet!”
  - Me too!! Dinosaurs rule!!
  - Talk to me!
- “Only when requested by the client.”
  - Then educate the client on MT, computer-assisted translation, and the difference between the two... and on human translation.
- “Like using a lever to move heavy rock—you have to do the same amount of work, but you can distribute it more intelligently. You don’t have to exert the brute cognitive force of creating words ex nihilo.”
- “I don’t—is that wrong of me?”
  - Not at all—very smart of you!

Why aren’t we as adventurous in finding new and better ways to work with machine translation as a resource as we are with other resources?
I thought it was very interesting to see some outside-the-box ideas in the comments (and the comments on the comments). I liked the idea of using MT as a quick aid to know where to place text in a document if you can’t read the language, or for gisting, or as a quick terminology resource. I also like the mention of different MT strategies for different projects and, again, I admire the porcupinous approach (you just learned a new word!).

These are all voices of professional translators, which implicitly makes them important and reflective of a professional reality, but here is my hope. I hope that next year and the year after, and the year after that, that there will be changes in the answers on similar cork boards. There will surely always be the “dinosaur”-like answers (I’m actually quoting a word from one of the comments rather than using a descriptive term myself). And there will also always be those answers that reflect the typical post-editing approach (editing one suggestion from one MT engine) as the chosen way to use MT. Percentages might shift a little toward the latter, but generally speaking those two voices are going to stay unchanged. But I long for more outside-the-box ideas.

I hope to see answers like using not one but several MT engines simultaneously (or several suggestions from one MT engine), or using auto-complete to just use fragments of MT suggestions, or using your termbase or a glossary to automatically correct or flag MT suggestions, or using your translation memory to give an MT match a reliability rating (or vice versa); or using voice recognition to work alongside and together with MT, or, or, or. (And here neither I nor anyone else knows what could possibly follow those open-ended “or’s.”)

The data generated by MT is a resource that can be used with varying levels of success along with other resources. In fact, it can be combined with other resources. One thing that sets translators apart from others is the creativity we use to produce our translations. Why not use that same creativity in the ways we approach our work? This work by definition is so diverse (after all, there’s nothing that can’t be translated), and that very diversity requires different approaches for every translator, and maybe even every project.

I want us to be creative in the way we use our resources. Think about the ways in which we use and maintain our termbases. While it’s true that, overall, we probably don’t use them enough (“too tedious and therefore too expensive to create and maintain”), we have very individual approaches to using them, even as to what kind of data we’re entering, how we’re using the data, and what our hopes are for it. Few professional translators would argue that terminology work is useless or has a nefarious purpose, even though it’s sometimes underused. It’s laughable to even think that way. When I talk to translators about terminology maintenance, I generally get only two responses. One is the slightly embarrassed admission that “I’m not using it nearly enough, even though I should,” and the other is “I love it and I can’t imagine how I could work without it.”

Now, there is no value in a terminology database per se. There is value in what we make of it. And while this is not a perfect parallel to MT engines, the “what-we-make-of-it” part of it is. Why aren’t we as adventurous in finding new and better ways to work with that resource as we are with other resources? (Which, as in the case of termbases, might mean that many don’t use it.)

Here are some thoughts that might help us. First, we need to understand that every situation is different. While it’s great that large companies train their MT engines and therefore have no problems with erratic terminology in the MT output, that’s not the case for the vast majority of translators. There are many translators working for TransPerfect and Lionbridge on the supplier side or Microsoft and GM on the buyer side, but many more do not. This means that the experience of one kind of translation doesn’t necessarily “translate” to another set of experiences. We need to really understand this when we talk to each other about MT, and any technology.

Then there are real differences in language combinations. While neural MT has leveled the playing field a little bit when it comes to the quality of languages that are syntactically very different, and were therefore a difficult nut to crack for previous kinds of MT, it has not solved the problem of low-resource languages, for instance. (I regret not asking for the language combination of those who responded to the MT question on the cork board at the conference.)

Then there is the kind of technology we use, both through MT and through the environment via which we access the MT (aka “translation environment tool”).

■ Is the MT adaptive or not?
■ Am I allowed to use certain kinds of MT?
■ Does my translation environment tool or my external plugin allow me to access one or several suggestions and, if so, how?
■ Do my terminology management, termbase, and MT suggestions “talk” to each other?
■ And so on and so forth

One of the reasons I’ve been very insistent on using the term “translation environment tool” is that “environment” comes with the concept that all kinds of features are available and can be used to the user’s liking. It provides wide open rooms that I can decorate as I like. I think it’s the job of the technology vendor to keep it that way and even broaden that approach. It’s our job to pick and choose our tools within those environments and become excellent at using them. And maybe even find a way to use a tool that is uniquely your own, because there might be no other colleague who uses it quite the way you do.

Jost Zetzsche 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. Contact: jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.
Is Remote Simultaneous Interpreting the Next Big Thing?

Just like many interpreters and translators, I’ve been thinking about the future quite a bit. Not just about the future of our profession, but the future of work in general and about where we, as practicing linguists, can find our long-term place in a world already dominated by artificial intelligence and amidst the threat (and perhaps opportunity) of machine translation. An area I find particularly interesting is remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI). It’s an area I believe offers great opportunities for interpreters in the years to come, and we will have to work out exactly how it will, well, work. Allow me to elaborate.

As a seasoned court and conference interpreter, I travel a lot, and while some of it is enjoyable, some of it can be a drag, keeps me away from home, and is bad for the environment, as I usually have no alternative to air travel. Oftentimes, I find myself wondering if it’s necessary to fly 1,000 miles round-trip for an hour-long court hearing. Could this be done remotely? What about conferences?

The answer is, yes, it can be done, and the technology is certainly available and quite robust. What remains to be seen is whether or not RSI will be widely adopted. I’ve tested many platforms and find several of them to be excellent, with Voiceboxer, based in Denmark, being my current favorite. This Scandinavian company has designed a platform that’s elegant, simple to use, works beautifully, and offers great customer service. As RSI is gaining more traction, major interpreting industry players such as the International Association of Conference Interpreters have published their position papers on remote interpreting, and I’ve enjoyed reading about the direction of this new technology and what still remains to be done. Here are some of my thoughts:

I think it’s important that interpreters and technology providers have a nuanced conversation about what we each need to be successful.

Some Interpreters Won’t Like RSI:

While change is good, it can also be hard, and in my experience RSI is more challenging than in-person interpreting because you have the added layer and potential challenge of technology. (I’ve had a lot of things go wrong, but have also had many very smooth RSI days.) Ideally, RSI would be provided in a real interpreting hub, in an actual interpreting booth, with your interpreting partner by your side and onsite tech support (the event audio and video would come to you remotely). However, the vast majority of assignments I’ve done have been from my home office (there’s controversy about whether this should be done at all) with my booth partner in a different city or country. Some of the best interpreters I’ve approached about teaming up with me to do RSI have politely declined, and I don’t blame them. Some just don’t want the uncertainty of not having tech support by their side, don’t want to learn how to use RSI platforms, or are simply uncomfortable with new technologies, all of which are legitimate reasons. However, as RSI gains in popularity, this would mean that they would be excluding themselves from a relatively significant part of the interpreting market. I see e-sports (yes, video games) as particularly well suited for RSI.

Working Conditions Are Key:

Just because your work is done remotely doesn’t mean our working conditions should suffer. These conditions should stay the same, or perhaps we should even take the opportunity to improve them. For instance, we still need to insist on minimum fees, even if the event is short, as we bill for our time, which should be compensated the same whether we provide the service remotely or in person. We also need to push to guarantee availability of tech personnel to troubleshoot, ensure we get the breaks and audio quality we need to not damage our hearing (“just turn it up louder” is not a viable solution), and need to discuss who is responsible in case of technical issues, among many other topics. There is much left to be figured out, and now is the time to demand what we need. I recently turned down an assignment because the client only wanted to pay for an hour when that one hour was blocking the entire morning slot. You need time to test and be ready at least 30 minutes ahead of time, just like you would in a traditional conference interpreting setting. I insisted on the minimum fee of three hours and didn’t get the assignment, but hope I did some client education along the way.

This column is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors. Ideas and questions should be directed to judy.jenner@entrepreneuriallinguist.com.
Another time I had a client insist we use Skype to interpret a major e-sports event. I informed them that we would need a proper RSI platform to make it happen in a professional manner, and that we wouldn’t rely on technology that’s barely stable enough to talk to my parents on the weekend. They didn’t see the need for it, so we didn’t work together, but maybe they will come around. I’m happy to keep on pushing for good working conditions and hope colleagues will join me.

Technology Matters: There are some fantastic platforms, and I expect some consolidation in terms of how many RSI platform providers there will be in the next few years. I think it’s important that interpreters and technology providers have a nuanced conversation about what we each need to be successful. We need each other to make RSI work, and it’s a growing field that can benefit us all. It’s key not to be afraid of technology or reject it altogether, but providing some constructive criticism and feedback to RSI platform developers is also a good thing.

What’s your experience with RSI been like? I would love to hear your thoughts.

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

NEW CERTIFIED MEMBERS

Congratulations!

The following members have successfully passed ATA’s certification exam:

English into Chinese
Xiongwei Shen
Fullerton, CA
Bing Qi
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

English into Spanish
Marco Diaz
San Diego, CA

Arabic into English
Lucinda Wills
Pasadena, CA

Chinese into English
Fang Gann
Sioux City, IA
Steven W. Langsford
Ann Arbor, MI
Ben Murphy
Washington, DC
David Wise
Riverside, CA

French into English
Sonja Swenson-Khalchenia
Washington, DC

Spanish into English
Arielle Weisman Depaz
Fairfax, VA
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You’ve decided to take ATA’s certification exam. You’ve worked professionally as a translator for several years and you’ve taken (and passed) the practice test in your language pair. You’re confident in your language and translation skills and you’re ready to tackle the actual exam. Congratulations!

Have you also considered the extra-linguistic skills you’ll need to succeed, especially for the computerized exam? As many certification exam proctors can attest, exam candidates often overlook some or all of these skills. These skills are just as important as the ability to spot and avoid translation pitfalls or check spelling without the help of a computer program. Below are 12 extra-linguistic (read: not language- or translation-related) skills you should practice and perfect before taking the exam.

1. Know How to Focus Under Pressure: Test anxiety is real, and it can be debilitating. Translators who work perfectly well in their normal work environments can crack under the pressure of testing conditions. We all work in a way that’s different from a testing environment. When you take the practice test, simulate the exam environment as much as possible so that the conditions on exam day don’t throw you for a loop. On the day of your sitting, practice relaxation techniques before you start to keep your brain focused during the exam. West Virginia University has an excellent guide on anxiety that includes techniques for reducing test anxiety before and during your exam.

2. Know Your Computer: This skill may sound obvious, but it might surprise you how many people borrow a friend’s computer or are working on a brand-new computer. Make sure any necessary keyboards for your language pair(s) are installed, you have a PDF viewer (such as Adobe Reader) installed, and your computer has a USB port. If you use other hardware, like a mouse, make sure it’s compatible with your computer and you have everything ready to use it properly. Frantically troubleshooting IT issues on exam day will not set you up for success.

3. Know How to Insert, Remove, and Save to a USB Flash Drive: For the computerized exam, your files are saved to and transferred using USB flash drives. After making sure your computer has the necessary port (see above), make sure you know how to connect, open, save to, and eject a flash drive (YouTube). You’ll save your working files to a flash drive (not your computer) during the exam, and your files will be sent to the grader using the flash drive.

4. Know How to Generate a PDF: For grading purposes, exams are saved to PDF rather than a word processing file format (in this case, .rtf). PDF files are handy because they’re harder to modify (e.g., accidentally adding or deleting a word is impossible) and easy to view on computers with the necessary (free) software. The most common way to save a file as a PDF is to “Print” it as a PDF. Instructions for doing so can be found online for both PCs and Macs.

5. Know How to Save Your Work: This point may seem like a given, and it should be, considering how much we work on computers. It’s easy to get distracted by the exam environment and be so engrossed that you forget to save. But even after reminding exam takers at regular intervals to save their work to the USB drive, at the end of the exam, not only have some people not saved their documents even a single time, but the USB drivers they were given were not even inserted into their computers. Save at regular intervals using a keyboard shortcut and be sure to familiarize yourself with the difference between Save and Save As.

6. Mac Users: Know How to Disable Spell Check in TextEdit: Exam candidates must complete their exam using a word processor without a spell check feature (WordPad on PC, TextEdit on Mac). The Mac program TextEdit does have a spell check feature that needs to be disabled for the test. To disable, go to Edit > Spelling and Grammar > Check Spelling While Typing. If there’s a check mark next to this option, spell check is active. Click the option to disable it. Navigate back to the option to make sure it has been disabled (the check mark will have disappeared). Make sure to do this before the exam starts and before you create your first file.
7. Know How to Change Input Sources and Switch between Keyboards: If you require a keyboard with accents, a different alphabet, or a character language, make sure your input keyboards are loaded and that you’re familiar with how to toggle between these keyboards on your computer (PC, Mac). Make sure you’ve loaded and tested your keyboards ahead of time. You don’t want to hope that a proctor knows which keyboard you need and how to add it to your computer during the exam.

8. Know How to Manage Your Time: Exam candidates have three hours to translate two out of three passages. Ideally, you’ll give yourself enough time to do the following: finish the first passage and set it aside; finish the second passage and set it aside; go back and review the first passage and set it aside again; review the second passage and set it aside again; take a mental break during which you sit quietly and clear your mind; then finally do a final proofreading of both passages. You won’t have enough time if you spend an hour and a half on the first passage. If you finish early, consider sitting quietly for longer, reading a news article, or doodling on your scrap paper to clear your mind before rereading your passage a final time. You don’t get extra points for finishing early, so use the full time you’re given wisely.

9. Familiarize Yourself with the Exam Instructions: Apart from the exam passages and passage-specific instructions, nothing exam candidates receive in the exam room is new information. Everyone receives all instructions via email prior to the exam sitting. Knowing the instructions backwards and forwards before your sitting will help save precious time on exam day. In case you’ve forgotten something, the proctors go over the instructions again before the exam starts. If you know them already, you can spend that time working on the relaxation techniques described in the second link provided at the end of this article.

Frantically troubleshooting IT issues on exam day will not set you up for success.

10. Know which Websites and Applications Are Allowed... and Which Aren’t: ATA has strict guidelines about what websites are permitted during computerized exams. Sites with interactive features (e.g., forums, email, social media), private groups or listservs, and sites with machine translation capabilities (Reverso, Google Translate, DeepL) are all strictly prohibited. Proctors are on the lookout for these types of websites and for candidates who are looking up strings of words rather than just single words. ATA provides a list of explicitly permitted websites. You can (and should) conduct online research when necessary, verify the spelling of tricky words using online dictionaries, and otherwise use your computer as you normally would, provided you aren’t accessing computer-assisted translation tools or translation memories.

11. Know How to Connect to a New Wi-Fi Network: Candidates who take the computerized exam have access to a Wi-Fi network to access approved online resources. Have you ever connected your computer to a Wi-Fi network somewhere other than your office? Does your computer have security settings that restrict public network access? If they do, or you aren’t sure, take your computer to a café or library and practice connecting to the Wi-Fi network. If you have problems, troubleshoot them before exam day.

12. Know How and When to Restart Your Computer: You’re sitting in the exam room and suddenly your computer won’t recognize the USB drive provided, you can’t connect to the Wi-Fi, or a program you’re using is on the fritz. A lot of simple IT issues can be resolved simply by restarting your computer. Before you spend unnecessary time trying to figure out how to solve an issue, try restarting your computer first, and make sure your work is saved before you do.

The average pass rate for ATA’s certification exam is around 20%, which means that only one out of every five people who take it pass. While nothing can guarantee that you pass the exam, solid professional experience and a firm grasp of the extra-linguistic skills discussed above can increase your chances of success. For more information about the exam, visit ATA’s Certification Exam page.

NOTES
7. “How to Save a PDF File,” www.wikihow.com/Save-a-PDF-File

Ben Karl. CT is an ATA-certified French>English and Mandarin>English translator specializing in financial, business, and marketing content. He serves on ATA’s Membership Committee. He has an MBA from the University of Nevada, Reno. Contact: ben@bktranslation.com.
ATA wishes to thank all of our sponsors and exhibitors for helping to make this conference such a success!