

Translation in the 21 Century: The Need for a New Model

Closing remarks given at the 1st NYU Translation Day Symposium, New York University 10/1/16

By Ken Kronenberg

Colleagues and friends, thank you for inviting me here. My intention is to explore the environment of translation today, focusing on the economic and technological changes of the last decade or so.

Some of these changes have come upon us so subtly that we barely see them, the way we don't pay much attention to the air we breathe. But when that air changes enough that we can't breathe it anymore, we *have* to pay attention to it. We have to figure out what the changes are and what they mean, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of the generations that will follow us. And so I want to consider how the atmosphere of translation has changed over our professional lives, and what these changes portend for our future and the futures of our younger colleagues. Among other things, I will look at why the once-inspiring vision of ourselves as independent contractors and proprietors of autonomous small businesses is counterproductive.

The most obvious change in translation as a whole is that it is bigger business in the twenty-first century than it's ever been. Billions of dollars are pouring into the industry. But, as most of us know, translators are getting less and less of it. Many of us are anxious about our futures, if not already struggling to earn a living. There's a paradox there, and we need to understand it. We can't deal effectively with situations that we don't comprehend.

Here's an example of what I mean about this massive change. Maybe you've been following the saga of TransPerfect, the largest privately owned translation company in the world. According to Katia Savchuk in *Forbes*, TransPerfect is "on track to reach \$1 billion in revenues by 2019," and if sold might be worth even more than that. Despite its record earnings, however, TransPerfect is in trouble. The company's co-CEOs, Elizabeth Elting and Philip Shawe, were engaged when they founded TransPerfect in 1992. But they are now on such bitter terms that the company is on the brink of a forced sale. The crisis has afforded us a glimpse into some aspects of Big Translation that are usually shielded from the public eye.

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Looking Ahead to NETA's 2017 Annual Conference

by Suzanne Owen

At NETA's annual conference this past May, attendees heard practitioners and academics speak on a wide variety of topics in translation and interpreting. For the first time ever, our conference was held at UMass Boston, which provided a spacious venue and gave everyone the opportunity to attend student presentations.

The Conference Committee has already been hard at work preparing for the 2017 conference. Mark your calendars: our 21st annual event will be held on **Saturday, May 6**, once again at UMass Boston.

The theme of the conference is **Translation & Interpreting as Access: What We Provide Matters** and the conference itself will feature four different tracks:

- (1) translation,
- (2) interpreting,
- (3) auxiliary/technical services and
- (4) student presentations.

The varied sessions will offer opportunities to hear speakers address current, industry-relevant topics as well as engage in panel presentations with ample time for questions and discussions.

We are honored to welcome **Christopher Larkosh** from UMass Dartmouth as our keynote speaker. Chris is an Associate Professor of Portuguese at UMass Dartmouth and has a particular interest in issues of culture and translation, having authored over twenty articles in renowned translation studies and journals. He will explore the

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Two NETA members and four others resign publicly from IAPTI

By Catherine V. Howard

On November 1, 2016, I and five fellow staff members of the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI) resigned from our positions and from the association. Two of us, Maria Karra and myself, are also members of NETA. Because of the special relationship that began to develop between NETA and IAPTI, I would like to explain our reasons for this resignation.

For more than a year, various IAPTI staff members attempted to open up discussions with its Board members about reforms they thought were necessary to ensure that the association was living up to its [avowed mission](#) to be “a venue in which to establish a dialog, without censorship and without conflicts of interest, with the aim of promoting effective professional ethics.” Those of us who urged reforms were especially concerned about commercial conflicts of interest within the Board and committees; the Board’s lack of transparency about crucial legal and financial matters affecting members; the failure to follow the [association’s publicized bylaws](#) or inform members about changes; and the Board’s refusal to let staff or ordinary members take part in any decision-making, discussions about policy, or even elections. As discussions about the letter expanded over the year, three of us wrote a lengthy analysis about checks and balances lacking in IAPTI’s structure, which, if adopted, would bring it into line with the law and with standard practices among professional T&I associations.

Unfortunately, such efforts over the year to discuss these issues with the Board and the entire IAPTI staff met with increasing resistance that escalated to censorship, hostility, threats, and polarization among staff members.

Over the year, five staff members resigned individually in protest against the Board’s reactions. After a final fruitless meeting with the Board and its lawyers, six of us, including the president and vice-president of the Ethics Committee, realized that we had exhausted all avenues for attempting to engage in dialogue

with the Board about meaningful reforms. When our posts in the members’ forum were deleted, we decided that the only way to alert members and other T&I professionals to the contradictions within IAPTI was to go public with our resignations.

We posted a group letter of resignation in IAPTI’s Facebook forum for members as well as in several public sites: in [Translator’s Notes](#), in [PatentTranslator’s Blog](#), and in [IAPTI’s LinkedIn page](#). Although the last site is open to any translator or interpreter (not just IAPTI

members), we were expelled immediately and our letter was deleted. However, a sympathetic moderator readmitted us and we reposted the letter along with a protest against the censorship.

Since our letter was published, IAPTI’s Board and lawyers have threatened us, both publicly and privately, alluding to “legal consequences” of our actions and how it may seek “appropriate remedies.” However, because everything in our letter is either factual (and can be independently verified) or are statements of our beliefs (which everyone is entitled to), we have nothing to retract and will not be intimidated.

When our posts in the members’ forum were deleted, we decided that the only way to alert members and other T&I professionals to the contradictions within IAPTI was to go public with our resignations.

I posted the letter in the NETA forum because of NETA’s special relationship with IAPTI. In January, 2015, NETA published an [open letter of support for IAPTI](#) and its president after a vindictive agency owner sued them in Argentina for having circulated a negative blog post about him. Among other things, NETA’s letter affirmed the right to freedom of expression as articulated in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. Other ties united our two associations: for instance, the president of IAPTI’s Ethics Committee, Maria Karra, gave a talk at NETA’s 2015 conference, both NETA and IAPTI contributed to each other’s conferences, and some people were members of both associations. It is therefore deeply troubling that IAPTI and its president have now made efforts to deny that same freedom of expression to the signatories of the letter.

This entire episode has been difficult and exhausting. However, it has made me realize how very unusual and special NETA is, with its visionary independence from agencies and conflicts of interest, the Board’s absolute transparency and openness with all members, and our ability to discuss, debate, and even disagree with each other with civility and respect. I now treasure NETA more than ever.



How to Edit Your Profile Fields on the NETA Website

by Diana Rhudick

If your name and contact information are included in NETA's online directory, be aware that these may be harvested by anyone using the web. The instructions below explain how to hide specific fields in your profile, which will of course also become hidden to potential clients.

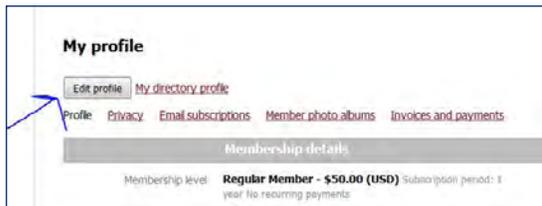
Log in
Click on



View profile in top right.



Click on gray box to left, Edit profile.



Click on Privacy in the middle in maroon.

This page lists each field of your profile, and gives you the option to make each field visible to anybody, members only, or nobody (No access). You can also click or unclick "Show profile to others" near the top.



The email field is about 9 down on the list, so you can select "No access" for it, then click Save at the bottom.



Looking Ahead to NETA's 2017 Annual Conference

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ways in which "translation has shaped the cultural landscape of the region, from the colonial encounter of English settlers with the Wampanoags and other indigenous groups, through the period of Transcendentalism and Emerson's translation of the Bhagavad Gita, up to our multicultural present of diaspora communities and linguistic and cultural diversity and its political implications, as exemplified in the struggles for same-sex marriage legislation in the Commonwealth and other New England states with recent political struggles of court interpreters."

We are equally honored that **Barry S. Olsen** from InterpretAmerica will be joining the conference as our endnote speaker. Barry is a conference interpreter with over 15 years of international-level experience and he is also the co-president of InterpretAmerica, an organization whose aim is to serve as a national and international forum for the interpreting profession and whose mission is to raise the profile of interpreting. Barry will be speaking on the future of interpreting.

This year a separate room for exhibitors and time slots for hands-on training and information will help attendees learn more about work opportunities and new technology. As always, the conference will offer many opportunities for networking with colleagues and companies who are interested in meeting and working with translators and interpreters and other freelance language professionals.

Early registration for the conference is scheduled to start in November and discounted early-bird rates will be available through March 1. Information on early registration will be sent via email and will also be available on NETA's website at www.netaweb.org. Please visit and like NETA's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Netaweb/> and the conference Facebook page (available [here](#)) for more information and updates as the conference draws closer. We look forward to seeing you on May 6!

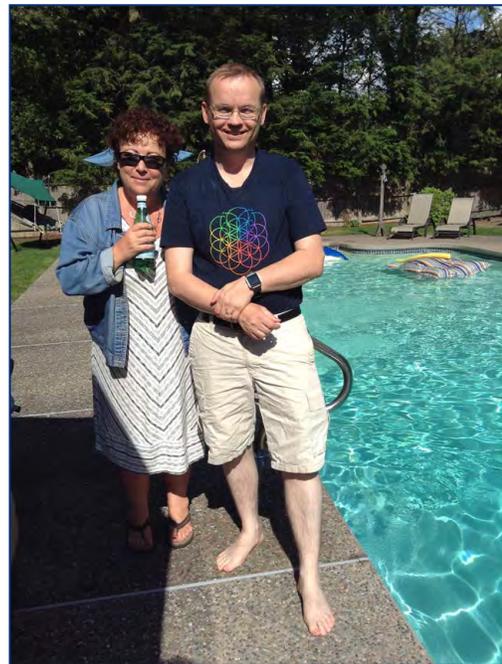
Neta's Annual Summer Picnic was held in August, 2016

by Marian Comenetz

NETA Board member Alice Wolfe was our hostess for this year's summer picnic, which took place on a beautiful-weather August 7 in a glorious setting. Alice's large backyard is perfect for large gatherings. It offers the choice of ample seating under an awning just behind her house, with a grill right nearby, or ample seating, open or protected, all around a large swimming pool. Colorful flowers grace the entry to the pool area. Close to 30 spirited NETAs and their family members and friends took fullest advantage of the opportunity

to chat about all manner of things (including translation and interpreting, of course), partake in a variety of excellent food and drink offerings, and just plain relax. It was especially nice to see some "newbies" present. We certainly hope they were made to feel welcome. And active children contributed to the happy energy of this annual event.

Alice's years of experience organizing large events was on full display. She attended to every detail, and her grilling was masterful, too! She made the hosting role look effortless. NETA thanks Alice for welcoming us to her home for a highly successful summer gathering.



NETA's 2016 Translation Bash

NETA Monthly Meeting, September 2016

By Marian Comenetz

For the last 10 years, NETA has been celebrating International Translation Day with a translation workshop that we call a "translation bash". International Translation Day originated as a tribute to St. Jerome, the bible translator and patron saint of translators and interpreters. Beginning in 1953, when the International Federation of Translators (FIT) was established, St. Jerome's Day—as it was then called—was marked in ad hoc fashion. In 1991, the Public Relations Committee of FIT launched the idea of an International Translation Day to promote the translation field.

The weeks of preparation and email exchanges leading up to NETA's 11th annual translation bash bore fruit on September 24, when a solid number of eager participants, ranging from students to full-fledged experienced professionals, gathered to dig into a text they had previously translated.

Diego Mansilla, this year's Spanish group leader, had compiled a very lengthy list of potential pitfalls and straightforward errors to be avoided, which he reviewed with the Spanish-language participants at a rapid-fire pace. That list may well have been informed by the mindset Diego has developed now that he is, as we learned, an ATA grader of English<Spanish. Diego then followed up with a remarkable second list, that one consisting of possible correct options for each sentence to be considered. Diego emphasized all the while that there were still further options, too, and that the final decisions for the bash were to be made by the group, not by him. Since Spanish-language bash participants hailed from Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Argentina, and Cuba, not to mention two or three native English speakers from the United States, there was no dearth of topics for discussion. Close to two hours of deliberation yielded satisfying results for approximately two paragraphs of text!

The smaller language groups were not to be outdone, however. Even though only two or three individuals participated in French, Russian, and Italian, respectively, none of those groups apparently got past paragraph three (out of six that were proposed) due to the degree of intense consideration given to each aspect of the text. In some cases, debate about one point ensued for 20 minutes or more.

After about two hours, all four bash groups came together for

an overview of particular challenges each of them had encountered. It has always proven worthwhile to hear to what extent any given challenge is unique to a particular language pair and to what extent challenges overlap between languages. For example, both the French and the Spanish groups had to contend with the decision to use their equivalents of "we" vs "one," and the decision was not necessarily the same. The Italian group needed to consider whether this year's text, which in fact was the transcription

of a TED talk originally presented orally, should be rendered in more or in less formal written style (one participant suggested that in Portuguese that decision would have been even more vital); in Spanish, on the other hand, that factor was not at play. Lastly, the Russian group decided that the word "thrill" in the phrase "the thrill of being right" had to convey

some sense of drunkenness!

As is traditional and just for fun, the bash concluded with the reading of one paragraph of the text in each of the languages represented.

When all is said and done, this year's bash attendees exhibited full engagement, energy, and enthusiasm.

Great thanks go to Diego, Spanish group leader, and Lesley Andrews, our hostess at CELOP, both of whom are NETA board members.



Mind the Gap: Teaching Culturally Situated Interpreting

NETA Monthly Meeting, October 22, 2016

By Marian Comenetz

Steady rain and heavy traffic did not keep people away from NETA's October monthly meeting. In fact, attendance was happily high.

For the last six years, as one element of her upper-level Japanese translation class at Boston University, our speaker, Anna Zielinska-Elliott has included an interpreting component. Having felt intimidated as a young student at a summer language camp in her native Poland, she recognized the need for students to develop confidence in stressful situations where they need to be able to speak up. Her goal now, as she described it in her abstract for this talk, is to teach students "to nimbly negotiate and mediate cultural differences while improving their linguistic awareness and enriching their vocabulary."

Clearly, the context in which interpreting is done is of the essence. There are many situations where total fidelity to each point is *de rigueur*, and there is little room for fluctuation. Such is the case for medical settings, where accurate and complete doctor-patient communication is required and where a code of ethics underlies all professional interpreting encounters. In such scenarios, while the interpreter may, on occasion, have to take on the role of cultural mediator, she is largely a conduit for the doctor and the patient. In legal settings, too, there is little room for fluctuation. Trained court interpreters have at their command an extensive range of legal terminology in addition to a full understanding of formal court procedures. They provide, for the record, an accurate rendition of precisely what is said by all parties involved.

Prof. Elliott makes no claim to producing polished medical or court interpreters who are workplace-ready. Rather, she uses examples from less formal contexts in order to improve students' listening comprehension and vocal output, introduce them to a practical skill, and encourage students to "think creatively between languages as they must make quick

judgments as to what to translate, what to leave out, and whether some cultural repositioning of information is necessary."

One of the video clips that Prof. Elliott included in her talk was a scene from the 2003 movie *Lost in Translation*, where a film director gave lengthy and increasingly intense instructions for how an actor was to portray a brand of Japanese whiskey. It was obvious in the extreme that his interpreter was not up to the task as she rendered long streams of speech in a few short words. She was the example not to emulate! Other video clips shown at NETA's meeting showed groups of three students (speakers of Japanese and English plus an "interpreter") in Prof. Elliott's class attempting to meet the challenges that she provided for them in

**Our speaker,
Anna Zielinska-Elliott
recognized the need
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scenarios such as getting from point A to point B in an unfamiliar city, a job interview, renting an apartment, simple business negotiations, and more. Some of these were attempted with preparation, some without. Clearly, when possible, it is wise to prepare for interpreting assignments.

Cultural differences can play a major role in interpreter-mediated interactions. Prof. Elliott provided several cases from the Japanese context. For example, the Japanese term "filial piety" (direct translation) need not be rendered directly in

English as it is not culturally meaningful and can be understood in various contexts: young people might be expected to show their devotion to their parents by getting a cheaper phone plan. In an entirely different context, interpreting a speech at a wedding can be especially tricky. In Japan, weddings are seen as ceremonies in which families are getting married. It is customary for the parents of the bride or groom to significantly underestimate the qualities of their daughter or son, whom they portray as being in some way incapable or inadequate, and to then sing the praises of the future husband or wife, whom they portray as being very special and highly accomplished. It is polite to humble oneself and praise the other person and his/her family. However, the playing-out of this custom could be quite perplexing or even embarrassing to the uninitiated English-speaking bride or groom and parents. A last example: What might be seen as an innocuous comment about chopsticks by an English speaker could represent a taboo in Japan because of a Japanese custom involving the use of chopsticks at funerals. Understanding and respecting cultural differences can make all the difference.

Certain things need to be made known in advance. A client needs to know that the interpreter does not take sides and that he will

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The New England Translators Association's
20th Annual Conference:

Successful Collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Boston

By Diego Mansilla. This article originally appeared in the ATA's Chronicle Newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

Opportunities for partnerships between professional translator and interpreter organizations and institutions of higher learning abound. The U.S. alone has over 40 professional organizations, and these professional organizations co-exist with over 60 university-level translation and interpreting programs.

This past May, the New England Translators Association (NETA), a large regional group associated with the ATA, took advantage of such an opportunity when it co-sponsored its 20th annual conference with the University of Massachusetts Boston. The conference was held in cooperation with the university's Latin American and Iberian Studies Department and the College of Advancing and Professional Studies Translation Program. The event was a rousing success. The only disappointment was the realization that this type of partnership could have begun sooner!

This article summarizes how this event came together. NETA hopes to inspire other professional organizations to organize similar events in collaboration with educational institutions.

Planning Stages

The initial idea was the result of a conversation between Ken Kronenberg, one of NETA's most seasoned and influential members, with one of the newest members, graduate student Adel Fauzetdinova. Why don't we reach out to translation and interpreting students in the area? Why don't we offer them a space within NETA's traditional conference schedule to share their research and interact with professionals?

After that initial conversation, we decided to explore the possibility of using university facilities as the venue for the conference. This possibility had been explored years ago but the idea was abandoned because of the high rent the university charges. We decided to investigate again, and we learned that the university applies different rates if the buildings are rented to university vs. non-university events. The solution was clear: make it a collaborative event.

Using a college or university as conference venue offers some significant advantages. Here are a few examples:

- Location! Many colleges and universities offer beautifully landscaped, convenient locations. UMass Boston overlooks the ocean, which made the conference memorable. Thanks to the continuing growth of the student body, new buildings are being constructed, and one of these modern facilities was used for the conference. The great venue made the conference even more enjoyable.
- Students were invited to the conference and were eager to attend. Volunteers are always needed for this type of event, and the students were happy to assist.

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translate whatever is said. But if a potential customer shows a picture of his new baby to a business client who then says he has no interest whatsoever in seeing baby pictures, how does the interpreter deal with that? It is common sense not to be rude. A business deal can depend on it!

Some of Professor Elliott's points for students of interpreting:

- Translate meaning, not just words;
- Be sure to use first and second person (with occasional exceptions);
- Learn by practicing;
- Interrupt a speaker when phrases to be interpreted are too long;
- Ask if you don't know or understand something;
- Build trust between yourself and those you are working for; proving that you are competent allows you to ask for clarification freely;
- Determine whether and/or to what extent it is appropriate to imitate the affect of the persons for whom you are interpreting;
- Be a cultural broker, (only if necessary);
- Adjust to the situation; and
- Keep the goal of the encounter in mind

Professor Elliott records practice encounters; then students watch and discuss them. Some have said that they get discouraged along the way, but in the end, they generally become more confident, overcome their reticence, and have fun.

Aside from the inherent necessity of rendering content completely and accurately, rendering only the bare bones makes things less interesting: there are no cherry blossoms!



Successful Collaboration with UMASS Boston

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- The university helped to promote the event, placing posters on campus and running ads on the closed circuit TV network and on its website.
- In our case, the co-sponsoring university was able to offer a discounted rental amount.
- The college or university has a team of experienced technical personnel on site who can help out with the logistics the day of the conference.
- The event was visible to the university community. In fact, some students joined the conference because they just happened to be there at the right time and saw the signs.
- In comparison to other venues, a larger, learning-oriented space promotes an upbeat atmosphere and positive interactions among participants.

Knowing each side's aspirations, values and needs is instrumental when setting common goals and designing a roadmap to achieve them.

university, from different points of view. (See the list below). This helped academic and administrative personnel to quickly grasp that the proposal was in fact good for both parties. The spirit of collaboration was beginning to materialize.

Collaboration: Means and Ends

The organizing committee concluded that collaboration between NETA and UMass Boston would not only be a good way to organize this conference, but collaboration itself also could provide a wonderful central theme for the entire conference. We wanted to explore this topic from both practical and theoretical points of

view, using the various perspectives of professionals, students, and professors.

The goal was to provide a place in which opportunities for reflection and mutual understanding could emerge.

A call for papers was issued, which was posted on NETA's website and sent directly to several colleges and universities in and near New England. The selection committee included both professional translators and teachers of translation. Many students made submissions, and a vetting process resulted in five excellent student panels on the day of the conference.

Approaching the University Administrators

Once it became clear that we wanted to bring industry and education—working language professionals and members of the academic community—together under the same roof, the conference committee at NETA had to approach the university administrators with a concrete proposal.

It always helps to have a direct relationship with someone who works at the university. One or more participants with close ties to both organizations is ideal. One of the members of the planning committee both teaches at the university and is a member of the NETA Board of Directors. In any case, knowing each side's aspirations, values and needs is instrumental when setting common goals and designing a roadmap to achieve them.

We approached the university administrators with a clear idea of the objectives for the conference. The committee worked in advance to generate a list of possible benefits to the

Each panel was chaired by either a translation studies professor or by an experienced professional translator. After their presentations, the students received valuable feedback from peers, professors and professional translators.

Benefits

Whatever the specific theme of a conference or event, all participants stand to benefit from a collaborative approach.

For professional organizations:

- An opportunity to review the organization's goals.
- Potential broadening of the membership base by means of the inclusion of academic translators and students.
- Opportunities to connect with other area organizations which are already connected to the university.
- Possible use of the educational institution's facilities at a low cost.
- Assistance in conference preparation and organization by members of the university community.
- Increased publicity for the event as a result of website and e-mail blast advertising by both the professional organization and the university.

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- Potential growth of the organization's prestige due to a larger and more inclusive event.

For individual professional translators and interpreters:

- A venue for sharing expertise with students as well as active professionals.
- Opportunities for new collaborative projects.
- A chance to influence the development of the field of translation at its roots.
- Exposure to innovative approaches to technology and translation techniques.
- Learning about teaching technologies which may be useful to professionals as well.
- The creation of mentorships and internships.
- A broader perspective on new developments in the fields of translation and interpreting.

Many of the post-conference survey comments from professional translators and interpreters emphasized the enthusiasm generated by the synergies between industry and academia.

For college professors:

- Opportunities to align instruction and adjust teaching methodologies to practical problems.
- Opportunities to learn about students' needs and preferences.
- Opportunities to elevate individual professional academic profile as a result of taking part in conference organization or speaking at a successful event.

For students:

- Exposure to real-world, practical aspects of paid translation and interpreting work.
- Concrete application of the broad theoretical concepts learned in class.
- Opportunities to present one's work and receive high-quality feedback.
- Opportunities to explore future job possibilities.
- A place to meet other students, something which may be especially appealing to students enrolled in online study programs.
- Opportunities to meet with and learn from more experienced translators.
- Possible academic credit for attendance and for helping to organize the conference.

For the college or university:

- Greater exposure to current and future translation students.
- Increased prestige of the institution and the department.
- Possible collaboration with other schools, companies and institutions.
- Opportunities for the cross-promotion of related programs.

Praise for the outcome

Comments from students were very positive and elaborate. Here is one quote that summarizes many others:

I wanted to formally thank you for the opportunity that you presented the class and myself with yesterday. I spoke to many different people yesterday and thoroughly enjoyed every single workshop I attended. I learned so many new things and new techniques. Translation is a field where it definitely benefits all parties to work together and collaborate. I'm so happy that you allowed us to work in groups in class because it taught me that there could be alternate ways to translate a text, and it allowed me to learn from fellow colleagues. It was fascinating to see how everyone collaborated and networked amongst each other.

Many of the post-conference survey comments from professional translators and interpreters emphasized the enthusiasm generated by the synergies between industry and academia.

Selecting a Keynote Speaker

One important decision was the selection of the keynote speaker. Should the speaker be an academic or a professional? For this year's conference, NETA decided to invite a scholar as keynote speaker and a professional interpreter as the endnote speaker. Both speakers were asked to address issues that would be of interest to all parties.

The keynote address was given by María González Davies: Collaborative and Situated Translator Training: Moving Towards the

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Profession. A translator herself, María González Davies teaches at the University Ramon Lull in Barcelona, Spain. Her professional areas of interest include translator training, the role of translation in foreign language acquisition, and children's and young adult literature.

María González Davies, an internationally recognized expert in translator training, used the example of Spain to show how collaborative and situated learning can enhance the field of translation, both on its academic and professional sides. Her talk included:

- A history of the development of the translation industry and translation training in Spain and the European Union.
- Proposals on how the two sides might better come together through Collaborative and Situated Learning. These educational styles could benefit not only students in training, but also the industry itself, by providing hands-on experience, which enhances the "the capacity of learners to think and act like professionals," and fosters communities of practice.
- Background information on current trends in translation training programs, within the framework of Collaborative and Situated Learning. High Simulation involves bringing real-world materials into the classroom. Authentic Profession Work allows students to be exposed to current professional experience. Inviting professionals to participate in classes is a way to combine both of these approaches.

The endnote speaker was Cristiano Mazzei. His presentation was Interpreters, Identity, and Performance. Cristiano is the director of the Translating & Interpreting Program at Century College in Minnesota.

Cristiano's presentation highlighted the following:

- The difference between interpreting and translation with an emphasis on the immediacy of the former.
- Two types of interpreters: invisible, the so-called angel interpreters, and the licensed practitioner, who is more easily able to establish a distance between himself (his own ideas and beliefs) and his client.
- Interpreters used to be trained to be invisible, but today the profession is moving towards recovering the visibility of interpreters. This

promotes understanding of the complexity of the profession and the psychological imprint its practice may leave on an interpreter.

Challenges

- Even among event planners in an established professional organization like NETA, everyone experienced a learning curve in terms of adjusting to a new venue, broader participation in the various planning committees, and the variety of points of view and working styles.
- Some professional translators worried that the level of conference presentations would be lower due to the involvement of students, though the high quality and the complexity of the student presentations proved this concern to be unwarranted.
- Increased time was required for session scheduling to ensure that presentations appealing to various groups of participants were offered during each time block.
- Speakers needed to ensure that their presentations would be interesting to a more varied and diverse audience, one composed not just of currently active language professionals.
- The conference date had to be chosen with the academic calendar in mind, resulting in some limitations.
- Generally, planning for this conference was more time-consuming than for some previous NETA conferences.

The Human Factor

Important as the presentations are, the quality and usefulness of the information presented in workshops and lectures is secondary to the main reason why most people go to conferences: to interact in person with other professionals. It is important to schedule enough unstructured time so that people can enjoy each other's company.

Low-stress activities should be put in place to facilitate interaction and networking, especially for students who may feel intimidated by the accomplished professionals in the room. ATA Conference organizers do a great job presenting the first time attendee with opportunities to mingle, and some of those activities are easily adapted to a smaller-scale event. Giving students roles in the conference can help break the ice and reinforce a sense of community and respect. For example, students can help attendees find their way to the rooms, solve minor technical issues and conduct short interviews with presenters.

Collaboration and Technology

Information technology has greatly increased opportunities for professionals to connect with others in their field. Distance-learning programs in translation and interpreting already take full advantage of electronic tools for communication, group work, and networking. Many of these techniques can be put to excellent use during

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Successful Collaboration with UMASS Boston

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conference sessions. For instance, we used Poll Everywhere software to survey attendee responses submitted via mobile phones.

Participants not only received information from the presenter, but also learned interesting facts about other participants and the group in general. Everybody was more engaged in the presentation due to the expectation generated by immediate results and the relevance of the information. Anytime technology is used in a group with widely varying technology skill levels, the opportunity arises for more tech-savvy members of the audience to assist their peers.

Collaboration Can Lead to New-Found Respect for Language Professionals

As a first experience of this type, NETA's 2016 conference proved to be a success. NETA and the University of Massachusetts Boston have already agreed to collaborate on the 2017 conference.

The 2016 conference brought to light some of the differences between the academic world and the professional world. At the same time, the conference revealed that the two groups have much in common and are in fact dependent on each other. Today's students are tomorrow's translators, and today's theoretical research eventually reaches the world of language professionals. In addition, it is vital for translation and interpreting instructors to stay in close touch with current professional practices and environments.

The academic world, through teaching and research, contributes to the visibility of translators and their work. Sometimes this ultimately "translates" into respect for professional translators and interpreters. Therefore, it is beneficial to both students and professionals in the language industry to create and participate in joint conferences.

Today's students are tomorrow's translators, and today's theoretical research eventually reaches the world of language professionals.

Reflections on the 2016 American Translators Association Conference

By Diana Rhudick



San Francisco was a great location for the ATA's 57th annual conference in early November. The weather was warm and sunny nearly all week, and the hotel sat right by the bay with pretty views of the Bay Bridge. This was only my third ATA conference, as I'm still processing all the information I gathered at the last ATA conference I attended in 2008 in Boston.

My strategy this time around was to attend a preconference workshop, or "AST Day" in the new lingo, plus Saturday conference sessions. The workshop I attended was "Putting the Zing Back into Marketing Materials," presented by the ever-knowledgeable Grant Hamilton, the man behind the French translation workshops that started out as "Translate in the Catskills" but now take place in different locations worldwide. Mr. Hamilton put us through our paces improving lots of "OK" English translations of French ad copy, while pointing out some very useful guiding principles and typical pitfalls along the way. His main theme was that when we work with advertisements, we're translating an emotional response to words, not the words themselves.

Right next door to our workshop was an AST by NETA board member Diego Mansilla on preparing for the ATA English>Spanish certification exam. Judging by the bevy of beautiful ladies who followed him outside the classroom to have their picture taken with him, I believe Diego's presentation was a great success.

Then it was on to the Saturday sessions. Some highlights:

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Reflections on the 2016 ATA Conference

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Most fun session: Improv Comedy for Translators and Interpreters

Presenter Lorna Silva had us jumping up and down and making funny noises, while also providing a history of improv, both in the US and in Latin America.

Most confusing session: Breaking the Mold: Throwing out Translation for an Intimate Look at Source Material

We were shown a good deal of really useful comparisons of what French websites say and what English websites say on similar topics (ski resorts, tourist offices), but the pace was so swift I couldn't draw any meaningful conclusions.

Saddest to see it cancelled session: Unexpected Meanings in Legal Spanish (Tom West)

Several sessions are cancelled at every ATA conference; it's unavoidable with such a huge

undertaking. But Mr. West is one of my translation heroes, so I was sorry to miss the opportunity to absorb some of his vast stores of knowledge on legal Spanish concepts.

In exchange for the hefty conference admission price, you get a welcome celebration, business practices happy hour, job fair, brainstorm networking, yoga and zumba classes, and a final conference dance party. You get none of that, though, when you buy a Saturday-only ticket. But for a mere \$265, I had access to five time slots on Saturday, each offering at least 13 sessions. I never made it to the Exhibit Hall, featuring more than 50 exhibitors, but I heard it was excellent.

For lunch, NETA's own Bruce Popp had once again organized the annual NETA gathering at the conference. We had a solid turnout of 11 Netans, including founding member Isabel Leonard who lives outside San Francisco now. We were fortunate to have a waiter who was studying photography take our group shots (below).

They say you can recoup your admission price with just one new client gained at the conference. I wouldn't know about that, but attending the conference offers the easiest networking you'll ever experience. Practically all you have to do is make eye contact with someone, and he'll want to exchange business cards.

All in all, I believe ATA conferences are worthwhile. You're in contact with the heartbeat of our profession and all the latest trends and technologies, you can unchain yourself from your desk to mingle with fellow humans, you can practice your networking skills, you learn new things (hopefully) in every session, and you also get ATA credits. I even had a celebrity sighting when Judy Jenner walked into the Starbucks where I was having breakfast across from the hotel.

For all those interested in attending next year's big event, it will be held in Washington, D.C.



NETAns at the 2016 ATA Conference.

Thanks to Bruce Popp initiative, NETAns gathered for lunch one day at the ATA Conference held at the beginning of November in San Francisco. In the photo above, starting from the front left: Diana Rhudick, Isabel Leonard, Howard Clark, Tapani Ronni. On the right: Judy Lyons, Lebzy González, Sarah Baiz, Bruce Popp, Mary Lou Bradley. In the photo to the right, starting from the front left: Diego Mansilla, Bruce Popp, Judy Lyons. On the right: Rudy Heller, Tapani Ronni, Howard Clark, Isabel Leonard, Mary Lou Bradley.



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Like about one million other corporations, TransPerfect is registered in Delaware, a corporate tax haven—our very own Panama. This is a state with relatively lax regulations on business and business-friendly courts, including a special one, the Chancery Court, which hears and decides on corporate matters.¹ It was there, as their relationship deteriorated, that the two TransPerfect CEOs sued each other for control of the company, and where, in August 2015, the chancellor appointed a custodian to sell the firm, citing “dysfunction between them” and “irretrievable deadlocks,” which if continued, would irrevocably harm the company.²

An initial group of about seven hundred TransPerfect employees (supporters of Shawe) then got together. Their intention was to protest the sale and to challenge the authority of the court to require it. And here—at the intersection of big business, power lobbying, and politics—is where things start to get interesting. The new group hired a political strategy firm called Tusk Ventures and formed a lobbying organization called Citizens for Pro-Business Delaware.³ The campaign manager for the organization at that point was Chris Coffey—a managing director at Tusk. In other words, it is probably safe to assume that whatever it was at the outset, Citizens for Pro-Business Delaware was now a Tusk operation.

Here’s what you need to know about Tusk Ventures: It is dedicated to helping companies gut regulation on business. Its stated purpose is to help companies “fight off unwanted regulatory aggression.”⁴ Gutting regulations that get in the way of unfettered profit-making has been a major focus of corporate lobbying over the past 40-plus years.

In 2015, for example, Tusk successfully beat back an attempt by Mayor Bill DeBlasio to impose some regulations on Uber’s growth in New York City.⁵ I’ll

**Some of these changes
have come upon us so
subtly that we barely see
them, the way we don’t
pay much attention to
the air we breathe.**

touch on the “Uberization” of translation shortly, and how the growth of what is euphemistically called the “gig” or “sharing” economy harms the interests of working people, including translators.

In July 2016, under Tusk’s guidance, several hundred like-minded business executives⁶ joined Citizens for Pro-Business Delaware and hired a PR firm in Baltimore [KOFA Public Affairs] to implement a campaign in Delaware.⁷ But while the campaign mimics a grassroots effort, including direct mail, newspaper ads, door-knocking, and canvassing at the Delaware State Fair, lobbying elected officials, and other such activities, it is anything but.⁸ The Tusk strategy is to create seeming grassroots campaigns that are in fact organized

1 Leslie Wayne (June 12, 2012). “How Delaware Thrives as a Corporate Tax Haven,” http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/business/how-delaware-thrives-as-a-corporate-tax-haven.html?_r=0

2 Katia Savchuk (July 20, 2016). “Court Sanctions TransPerfect Cofounder Phil Shawe For Lying Under Oath, Destroying Evidence,” <http://www.forbes.com/sites/katiasavchuk/2016/07/20/court-sanctions-transperfect-cofounder-phil-shawe-for-lying-under-oath-destroying-evidence/#293bceb68eb1>.

3 Citizens for a Pro-Business Delaware (May 23, 2016). “Citizens For A Pro-Business Delaware Launches Major Grassroots Campaign To Prevent Government Overreach In The State,” <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/citizens-for-a-pro-business-delaware-launches-major-grassroots-campaign-to-prevent-government-overreach-in-the-state-300273189.html> and Jeff Mordock (June 22, 2016). “Delaware court orders TransPerfect sale,” <http://www.delawareonline.com/story/money/2016/06/21/delaware-court-orders-transperfect-sale/86183404/>. Interestingly, Rudy Giuliani, a chief backer of and apologist for Donald Trump’s presidential campaign, has seen fit to give his opinion on the ruling, “a very intrusive ruling in terms of the free market.” This again underscores the short distance between economics and politics.

4 <http://tuskventures.com/about/>

5 Bradley Tusk (November 4, 2015). “Creating the Uber Voter,” <http://tuskventures.com/journal/creating-the-uber-voter/>.

6 Fred Lucas (August 15, 2016). “Free Speech and Free Enterprise at Stake as Estranged Couple Collide Over Company,” http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/08/free_speech_and_free_enterprise_at_stake_as_estranged_couple_collide_over_company.html.

7 Fred Lucas (August 15, 2016). “Free Speech and Free Enterprise at Stake as Estranged Couple Collide Over Company,” http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/08/free_speech_and_free_enterprise_at_stake_as_estranged_couple_collide_over_company.html.

8 Citizens for a Pro-Business Delaware (July 21, 2016). “Citizens For A Pro-Business Delaware To Attend Delaware State Fair To Rally Support For TransPerfect,” http://www.bizjournals.com/prnewswire/press_releases/2016/07/21/NY52217. See particularly Bradley Tusk (November 4, 2015). “Creating the Uber Voter,” <http://tuskventures.com/journal/creating-the-uber-voter/> for Tusk’s role in a pro-corporate “grassroots” campaign: “Look at some of the regulatory and advocacy fights companies like Uber have faced. When the DC City Council in 2012 tried to shut us down, **we** were able to rally over 50,000 local residents to send unique emails to individual Councilmembers to oppose anti-Uber legislation.” [emphasis added]

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from the top down and are completely consistent with corporate interests.⁹ This campaign is in the interest of one owner of *TransPerfect*—and his corporate brethren who want to see the Chancery Court weakened for their own reasons.

TransPerfect exemplifies Big Translation. It is a crucial example of how our profession has evolved out of the small translation bureaus and agencies that older translators cut their teeth on, and that are still the mainstay of many of our professional lives. As we have seen with a myriad other industries, translation is consolidating rapidly, a move that always benefits owners who extract wealth from the company, but never employees.¹⁰ Rampant consolidation, however, is not the only difference between translation then and translation now. Other new business models are crowding in as well.

One is the translation portals of the so-called “gig economy.” Uber and its imitators exploit the potential of just-in-time hiring for particular tasks. Workers provide their own equipment,

⁹ There’s a photo of a Tusk operative leading a group of TransPerfect workers before canvassing: Jeff Mordock (September 17, 2016). “TransPerfect workers lobby Delawareans,” <http://www.delawareonline.com/story/money/2016/09/16/transperfect-workers-take-fight-delawares-doorsteps/90411750/>.

¹⁰ One example is the sale of Corporate Translations (CTi) to RWS Group in November 2015. Once an agency universally respected by its translators, it paid relatively well based on word count. But in June 2014 it sent a mailing to its translators under the heading “We’re Making Some Changes! GOOD NEWS FOR EVERYONE.” From then on, they noted, “Service requests will now be offered to you at a flat rate,” that flat rate often being lower than the rates previously offered. Given the timing, one might well ask whether the new pricing system (at translators’ expense) was not intended, by the owners wishing to cash out, to boost the bottom line and make CTi a more attractive takeover target.

The Tusk strategy is to create seeming grassroots campaigns that are in fact organized from the top down and are completely consistent with corporate interests

their own insurance, their own vacations, and so on; the company provides... an app. This arrangement greatly favors the company. The system is centralized. The workers are scattered. This gives the employer—that is, the app owner—the final word on how the work is to be done and pretty much everything else, including pay. In an Uberized economy, people are pitted against each other for gigs.

If that sounds familiar, it’s because in some ways translation has been Uberized for decades. But the amount of venture capital pouring into these new schemes is enormous,¹¹ and that’s because new technologies and the apps through which they operate have taken an old principle to a whole new level of profitability—but not for translators.

A good example is Steps—a mobile phone app that claims to be “More Uber Than Uber.” Steps fulfills at least one of the criteria set forth by TAUS, the Translation Automation User Society, which seeks to turn

translation into an automated commodity: an on-demand utility like water that can be turned on and off at the tap. Bite-sized texts arrive sporadically throughout the day on the translator’s cell phone.

To its customers, the company advertises a “standard” rate of 13 cents a word (there are also “basic” and “premium” rates).¹² But the page for translators introduces us to a certain “Sarah Smart,” who has translated 6199 words and made all of \$277.68. *That’s 4.5 cents a word!*¹³ The owners of the app apparently keep *8.5 cents of every 13 they bill for*—almost two-thirds. It’s easy to see how opportunities like Steps might tempt young translators just starting out, or translators in poorer regions where opportunities are scarce. But, as more experienced translators know full well, these gigs are a dead end. No matter how much work “Sarah” does for this translational equivalent of Task Rabbit, neither her skills nor her income is likely to improve. “Sarah” personifies the underclass in a new business model of translation in which a corporation enriches itself on the efforts of a steady stream of low-cost, interchangeable, and disposable workers.

Note that this company’s sole apparent contribution to the translation

¹¹ A Google search for “translation,” “automation,” and “venture capital” turns up seemingly endless hits. See, for example, Laura Kolodney (May 21, 2014). “Smartling Raises \$25M to Help Companies Translate Anything Digital,” <http://blogs.wsj.com/venturecapital/2014/05/21/smartling-raises-25m-to-help-companies-translate-anything-digital/>; VCNews Daily (August 9, 2016). “SmartCAT Closes \$2.8M Seed Round,” <http://www.vcnewsdaily.com/smartcat/venture-capital-funding/tvbrjdjgry>; Erikka Askeland (June 23, 2013). “Lingo24 targets Silicon Valley as source of funds,” <http://www.scotsman.com/business/companies/tech/lingo24-targets-silicon-valley-as-source-of-funds-1-2973837>.

¹² <https://www.steps.com/how-it-works/pricing/>.

¹³ <https://www.steps.com/translators/more-uber-than-uber/>.

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process is a mobile phone app. This technology gives it, like Uber, almost unlimited control over the way profits are distributed, especially as Stepes's translators are not protected by labor law. We have no idea how large a footprint such gig portals have—or what their ultimate effect on translation will be. But these matters are worth examining seriously from the perspective of how they affect working translators.

Non-traditional translation portals like Stepes are not the only places where supposedly innovative technologies are encroaching. Translators are strongly encouraged to use “translation memory tools” (TMs). According to their inventors and the agencies that often compel their use, these technologies are our best hope for achieving the speed, uniformity, and responsiveness that corporate clients demand. Translators who don't accommodate themselves to that reality, we are warned, will be left behind.

Translation memory tools were initially sold as aids to help translators work more productively and therefore to live more securely and comfortably. And they have plenty of features that are a boon to translators. However, they have become mechanisms by which those who control the flow of work enrich themselves at the expense of translators—a pattern of appropriation seen over and over in the American economy. One senior translator I know estimated that he could make 50% more if he could use translation memory tools only on his own terms. Unfortunately, his agency clients insist that he use them on *their* terms. Where is the differential going? To the client? To the agency? We have no way of knowing. Certainly not to the translator.

And then there is machine translation. It's worth noting that it is no longer a rarity. That's another big difference in today's translation landscape. In one 2016 survey, US agencies claimed to use it in 16% of projects.¹⁴ Yet TAUS, in its guidelines for training post-editors of machine translation (PEMT), talks about achieving not excellence in translation, but “good enough” quality.¹⁵ If “good enough” becomes any sort of benchmark, how can our linguistic sensibilities not be blunted?¹⁶ In such an environment, post-editors

14 ALCUS (2016). “2016 Industry Survey: Executive Summary,” [https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/alcus.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Files/alc_survey_16\(exec-summary\).pdf](https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/alcus.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/Files/alc_survey_16(exec-summary).pdf). An astonishing percentage, if true and generalizable. It should be noted that ALCUS sent 1,657 questionnaires to agencies worldwide. The overall return rate was 13%, but the completed response rate only 6.7%.

15 TAUS (November 2010). “Machine Translation Post-editing Guidelines,” <https://www.taus.net/academy/best-practices/postedit-best-practices/machine-translation-post-editing-guidelines>.

16 See Sharon O'Brien (2002). “Teaching Post-editing: A Proposal for Course Content,” <http://mt-archive.info/EAMT-2002-O'Brien.pdf>. The paper is peppered with caveats about quality.

will likely become members of the translation underclass already inhabited by “Sarah Smart”—poorly paid, poorly respected, and very likely bored out of their wits. I suspect that they too, like Stepes's translators, will be young people just getting their feet wet. What a terrible thing to do to them.

At the 2011 NETA Conference, I asked presenter Alon Lavie, then president of the American Machine Translation Association, whether there was anything about editing machine translation “that would enable

translators to develop the higher skills needed to translate more demanding material?” He responded, “I don't think there's anything; *but I'm not sure there's anything in TM either.*”¹⁷

If Lavie suspects that translation memory tools don't develop higher skills, others in the industry must as well. If translation memory tools using other people's TMs made their users better translators, their use could be justified on that account. But there's no evidence for this, and we know how quickly skills

deteriorate when they are not challenged.

Translation becomes not so much the product of a skilled individual interpreter, but anonymous work, mediated by technology in such a way as to make translators largely interchangeable.

Wherever we look we can find similar efforts to short-cut whole translation—in effect, to deprofessionalize it. Crowd-sourcing platforms, machine translation and post-editing, data mining of language corpora, translation portals that turn translators into cogs in corporate machines—all these exert downward pressure. They limit what we can charge for our work, how we are allowed to do it, how much we enjoy it, and whether our skills will evolve. And make no mistake: these developments hit commercial translators the hardest.

17 <http://www.kfkronenberg.com/What%20is%20translation.pdf>.

Translation memory tools were initially sold as aids to help translators work more productively and therefore to live more securely and comfortably.

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Meanwhile, agency profits are soaring. And they *are* soaring. A few years back, Nataly Kelly of Common Sense Advisory, a market research company for the translation industry, wrote to me that “it is not uncommon for profit margins to exceed 30%.”¹⁸ TransPerfect’s Elizabeth Elting is estimated to have a net worth of \$390 million;¹⁹ she recently bought a house in Bridgehampton for \$11.5 million. How many underpaid translators do figures like these imply?

More dispiriting still, the lowered agency rates we have all observed cannot all be attributed to new technologies and “market pressures.” At a New England Translators Association luncheon in Vermont in December 2013, a former president of the ATA reported that she overheard some agency heads at an agency conference bragging about their record profits—as they traded tips on persuading translators to accept lower rates.²⁰

Commercial translation work in the global economy is supposedly plentiful. But it is counterbalanced by the abundance of

Translation becomes not so much the product of a skilled individual interpreter, but anonymous work, mediated by technology in such a way as to make translators largely interchangeable.

needy translators who, required to work faster and faster to maintain an adequate standard of living, can easily be pitted against each other.

I do not deny that there remain niches where specialist translators can prosper, but the changes in our industry are turning it into one where the few prosper while the many do not. If you listen to the pundits of the ATA, however, you’d never know it. As average translator incomes decrease, more and more of us fear for our futures. Yet some of our most influential colleagues meet these all-too-reasonable worries not with solidarity and encouragement, but

with criticism, shaming, and denial. The “solutions” they offer leave many of us out in the cold, or come with strings. I am speaking in particular of the so-called Poverty Cult.

That term was coined in 1996 by Neil Inglis, now a senior reviser at the International Monetary Fund, at a regional conference of the ATA. His original speech seems not to be available online, but according to Kevin Hendzel, these are the “Seven Deadly Sins” of Poverty Cult members as Inglis defined them:

... envying the success of others; gloating over the failure of others; a pervasive sense that it is better for everybody to fail than for a few to succeed; a sickly squeamishness where the subject of

money is concerned; shabby gentility, more shabby than genteel; a widespread conviction that it is better to have a little and be secure than to take a gamble and risk losing everything; and last, and very much least, *schadenfreude* mixed with sour grapes.²¹

Well.

That’s a comprehensive condemnation, all right.

But who on earth is Inglis talking about? Certainly not the intelligent and generous colleagues I’ve worked with over the last twenty-plus years. Was translation *ever* full of people so feckless, so fearful, so envious of other people’s success that they believed it was “better for everybody to fail than for a few to succeed”? I doubt it. The Poverty Cult is a straw man, a distraction from the reality that there will never be “room at the top” for everybody, and that there are real drawbacks to the corporate view of translation, both for translators and for the world at large.

Inglis’s broadside implies that if we are unhappy in any way with our circumstances, it is our own fault; that we are individually and entirely responsible for our own successes and failures; that any reservations about the pursuit of money at any cost is somehow reprehensible, and that “shabby gentility” is something to be ashamed of, especially

¹⁸ E-mail from Nataly Kelly on 11/15/2012. This figure is also contained in Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetzsche (2012). *Found in Translation*. New York: Perigree.

¹⁹ See Katia Kavchuk (June 21, 2016). “Inside The Nasty Corporate Divorce Between Ex-Lovers Who Built A Company Worth Nearly \$1 Billion,” <http://www.forbes.com/sites/katiasavchuk/2016/05/25/liz-eltig-transperfect-engaged-cofounders-phil-shawe-corporate-divorce/#7b0125ed2c2e>; Aaron Elstein (November 16, 2014). “The TransPerfect storm,” http://www.craigslist.com/article/20141116/PROFESSIONAL_SERVICES/141119882/the-transperfect-storm. In 2016, Elting made the *Forbes* list of richest “self-made” women, coming in at #36 (<http://www.forbes.com/self-made-women/list/#tab:overall>). Shawe’s fortune is undoubtedly similar.

²⁰ E-mail communication 11/15/2012 on the NETA forum by an attendee at the luncheon, later corroborated by another attendee.

²¹ Kevin Hendzel. “The Seven Virtues of the New Translation Era: Building on the Rubble of the Shattered ‘Poverty Cult,’” <http://www.ncta.org/?15>

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in comparison with corporate glitz. Above all, Inglis implies that there are no legitimate reasons to question the corporate worldview, only *schadenfreude* and sour grapes. I'm going to call this vision the "Prosperity Gospel," both in contradistinction to the "Poverty Cult" (from which it purports to save us), and because its tenets are passed off as articles of faith by its proselytizers. Chief among them is the insistence that translators are autonomous "small business people," free to enter into contractual arrangements *on their own terms*. But in a landscape dominated by translation behemoths and Uber-style portals, this model of the independent yeoman translator is a mirage. It hasn't been true for years—except perhaps for the few translators working directly for corporate clients. And while that route might sound enticing, there are good reasons, as you will see in a minute, for confident and self-respecting translators to embrace other ambitions.

Problem one with the Prosperity Gospel, then, is that it is a fundamentally elitist creed that accepts only one definition of success. And it denies the reality that there is not enough "success" in twenty-first century translation to go around. Worse, it blames as hapless and whiny the individual translators who either fail to go for the gold, or—perhaps worse—choose not to try.

That investment in blaming and shaming is problem two. The Prosperity Gospeleers do not consider why some translators who manifestly lack neither intelligence, ability, or will might choose not to follow their precepts; they simply deride and dismiss them.

In a 2014 article titled "The frugal translator," financial specialist Chris Durban tells us how earnest, hard-working translators "routinely" illustrate to her the mentality of the "poverty cult," and how she tries to help them achieve success. Here are two examples of her suggestions. The first:

Want some respect from your clients?
Buy a suit and wear it.

and the second:

Travelling first class to a client industry conference to mingle with participants en route (and be able to work in peace and quiet on the way) doesn't even pass the laugh test.²²

I don't doubt that Durban means well. But the reality—unhappily—is that not all translators have opportunities to attend conferences in their areas of interest. And even those who do—if they're paying off student loans, carrying private family medical insurance, providing and caring for their children—may really *not* have the money for first-class seats. The laugh test? It's not really all that funny. For many of us, it is definitely the better part of valor to choose Macy's

over Armani. Durban herself tells us that "Responses often range from 'No way, too expensive!' to 'Great idea; I found one at the flea market for a pittance' to 'That would be faking it; it's not who I really am. And I don't have that kind of money.'" She considers all these pathetic excuses.

I'm not sure why it's so hard for her to grasp the reality that not everyone is a member of the one percent, or even the top ten. But a lot of people seem to have that problem, so I will comment instead on her dismissal of the objection, "That would be faking it; it's not who I really am."

The point here is that Durban doesn't seem to care. On the contrary. She's telling us precisely that (except for those of us who are corporate by conviction) we have only two choices—to be a great pretender or a

loser. The Prosperity Gospel as purveyed in translation presses us to identify not with our own individual realities, whatever they may be, but with roles and realities established in the corporate mold and in the corporate interest. It dangles before us the glittering image of first-class flights and designer suits, while dismissing as trivial people's honest efforts to do fairly by the people, ideas, and values that matter to them.

The "Prosperity Gospel" thus has a dual function. It purports to instruct and inspire. But it is also a vehicle for aggrandizing the success of a narrowly defined elite while relegating everyone else to the margins. Despite the manifest reality that some translators do manage to mold themselves to corporate specification (and in so doing earn better than average incomes), the vast majority of us will continue to work for agencies or in less money-driven settings.

This is the third problem: The Gospeleers tacitly accept without protest the overall lowering of compensation and prestige in the industry as a whole. They offer no objection

Problem one with the Prosperity Gospel, then, is that it is a fundamentally elitist creed that accepts only one definition of success

²² Chris Durban (February 17, 2014). "The frugal translator," <http://www.iti.org.uk/news-media-industry-jobs/the-pillar-box/list-by-date/566-the-frugal-translator>.

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to dwindling or manipulated rates, to dubious technological shortcuts, to Internet portals that are a race to the bottom. They offer only invidious comparisons between the “premium” and “bulk” markets, and implicitly between elite translators and everyone else. Their lifeline is extended only to those willing to subordinate themselves to the corporate ideal. Collective resistance?

As Durban might say, it doesn't pass the laugh test. Better to identify with corporate interests and grab what you can; in a corporatist meritocracy, you sink or swim on your own. Is this an offering in good faith to struggling colleagues? Is this what we want for the rising generation of translators?

Yes, it is true that the prosperity ideology stresses the need to master one's subject, understand one's limitations, and perfect one's craft. It's a hard one to disagree with that. But those goals will never be met unless people work in contexts that value mastery, understanding, and skill—contexts that, as we have seen, are increasingly difficult for translators, especially young and inexperienced ones, to find.

A quote from Kevin Hendzel: “Great translators—the ones who really stand out—have had their translations mauled, picked over, dissected, disemboweled, examined, edited, published, revised and amended by their translation colleagues, editors and reviewers, sometimes for years.”

Well, maybe that's how it was for Hendzel. But the method that he describes will not help most of us learn new skills or improve old ones. What it teaches—especially when we're young—is to kiss up and kick down. It teaches us to submit our own judgment to someone else's condemning judgment, to be cogs in someone else's machine. If we decline, we are whiny failures. The Poverty Cult rhetoric, in other words, does more than just instruct. It is an authoritarian ideology that teaches people their place. It glamorizes those who succeed on *its* terms and shames those whose frame of reference is different. As we shall see in

a moment, it is the leading edge of a corporate creed that actively justifies the funneling of wealth upward. It supports an economy whose most important product is income inequality, where the many live an increasingly precarious existence so that the few may fly first class.

And so to Problem Four, clearly illustrated in a 2014 piece by David Jemielity, another financial translator and the head of translations

at the Swiss Banque Cantonale Vaudoise. Jemielity unwittingly presents us with a terrifying underside of the Prosperity Gospel, which I will illustrate with his help, a case study of my own, and a counter-example.

“Specializing: A ticket to the high end of the profession?” is more than just another sermon on the importance of specialization. Jemielity also considers how translators can make themselves maximally useful in a business setting. But what he advocates as “contributing ideas and solutions” is predicated entirely on complete identification with corporate interests. One of his hypothetical situations—intended, no doubt, to be witty—will give you a sense of what I

The “Prosperity Gospel” thus has a dual function. It purports to instruct and inspire. But it is also a vehicle for aggrandizing the success of a narrowly defined elite while relegating everyone else to the margins.

mean. He writes:

For our purposes, let's say the language you're working on is English, the meeting is about a bank's quarterly results, and the group at the conference table is casting about for solutions to a tricky passage concerning the increasing number of bad loans the bank has underwritten. A translator who is truly specialized in the field will give the CEO *tons* of different ways to talk about this uncomfortable thing that the CEO doesn't really want to talk about (because it might send the share-price down). He'll have it all on the tip of his tongue: “You don't like ‘bad loans’?” “How about ‘impaired’ loans?” “‘Distressed’ loans?” “‘NPLs’?” “Oh, so you don't want the focus on the loans at all? We could say ‘increased loan-loss allowances’, or ‘asset-quality concerns’ (although that's broader), or ‘credit-risk provisions’ ... Something even more vague? OK, how about just saying ‘higher provisioning needs’?”²³

This passage is revealing, and very disconcerting. In 2008, the world financial system nearly imploded because banking institutions deliberately and systematically made mortgage loans to people they knew couldn't repay them. They then sold these, sliced up and repackaged, to other banks, abetted by crooked ratings

²³ David Jemielity (August 18, 2014). “Specializing: a ticket to the high end of the profession?” <http://www.iti.org.uk/news-media-industry-jobs/the-pillar-box/list-by-date/639-specializing-a-ticket-to-the-high-end-of-the-profession?show=1&limitstart=>.

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agencies that gave these “financial instruments” the AAA stamp of approval. Arcane financial euphemisms like “subprime mortgages,” “residential-mortgage-backed securities” (RMBS) and “collateralized debt obligations” (CDOs) helped confuse the public—and to some extent the bankers themselves—about the scams being perpetrated. They contributed to the 2008 financial collapse in which more than 6 million Americans—real people—lost their homes. Many of them may never recoup their losses. In parts of the country, homelessness is on the rise while repossessed and abandoned houses fall apart, empty and uncared for. The dollar amount of lost assets is probably unknowable.²⁴

Yet a scant six years later, Jemielity is proposing that part of the skill set of a really desirable financial translator is the ability to offer bankers *tons* of euphemisms for bad loans. I’m pretty sure that I’m not the only one here who is not ambitious to become an expert linguistic manipulator and prevaricator, or to help the world’s financial institutions paper over bad decisions or, at worst, rob people of their homes and savings. Skilled rendering of complex financial material is one thing. But does a translator have to identify blindly with illegal financial maneuverings and corporate stock-prices to a point bordering on collusion? That sounds like a seriously “toxic asset.” And a risky one.

So what is the draw?

Obviously there’s a lot of prestige in being a translator at Jemielity’s level. He depicts the goal seductively, and makes clear that we’re not all going to achieve it. “If we don’t perform well in [Board] meetings—if we don’t generate options and solutions—we won’t get invited back. Executive Board members are *busy*.”

But when we *do* get invited back—wow! What an ego boost to be sought after by *important and busy* people! Until we start to think about what our labors actually accomplish. But we don’t have to be working for big banks to encounter the ethical dilemmas that “success” can breed. Here’s a painful example from my own practice.

Back when I was struggling to establish my own clientele, I caught a break. A friend recommended me to a patent firm. Between 2004 and 2010 I translated some 50 patent applications for them. The pay was great: \$0.20 per word. Each patent brought in between \$500 and \$1500, and many were in the same “family,” so I could do them very efficiently. I thought I had it made. Then one day the lawyer I worked with called and asked me to change a phrasing. I looked at the German and at the English and told him that I really didn’t think the sentence could be interpreted the way he wanted. He insisted, and

²⁴ See Lawrence Mishel and Teresa Kroeger (2016). “Superb income growth in 2015 nearly single-handedly restored incomes lost in the Great Recession,” http://www.epi.org/blog/superb-income-growth-in-2015-nearly-single-handedly-restored-incomes-lost-in-the-great-recession/?mc_cid=8b95767143&mc_eid=1c8b70bbc2. The 2015 gains benefited only the top 5% of earners -- especially at the top. Most -- but not all -- in the bottom 95% continued to lose ground.

after a disagreeable private struggle, I made the change. The end of the story, as I’m sure you can guess, is that despite my six years of unblemished service, the firm never contacted me again.

That encounter disturbed me deeply. I quit doing patent translation, in part because I never wanted to be in that position again, and I could

see that when financial stakes are that high, ethical conflicts are inevitable. But focused as I was at the time on expanding my business and making money, it took me several years more to recognize that I had missed the

What an ego boost to be sought after by *important and busy* people! Until we start to think about what our labors actually accomplish.

larger lesson in the debacle: When you work for a company like that, you are useful only to the degree that you identify with its interests.

Theoretically, Jemielity’s imaginary translator might have reminded the bank executives *ever so tactfully* that in the long run it’s better to account honestly for one’s mistakes. But somehow I don’t think that he or she would have been invited back.

Betsy Benjaminson sure wasn’t. Benjaminson is a Japanese translator. She was working on documents relating to the so-called “unintended acceleration” problem in Toyota cars that may have killed as many as a hundred people in the late 2000s. These documents made clear that Toyota executives knew that software problems were likely involved, not mats or driver error as they purported in their PR. Benjaminson blew the whistle on the company’s systematic cover-up.

There’s a lot of pressure, external and internal, on us translators to close our eyes to the implications of what we do. It’s a job. We want to do it well. We need to earn our livings. But where does a translator’s ethical responsibility lie? When does public good trump a nondisclosure agreement? Ultimately, Benjaminson couldn’t square the money she

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was earning with the loss of life. The cost to her career has been high—agencies, obviously, no longer hire her. But she knows that her decision saved lives, and that her integrity is intact. There is a lot to think about in her story—and in Jemielity's.²⁵

Can we suppose that the wordings in financial source documents back before 2008 were evasive enough that even super-high-level financial translators didn't really have a clue about what was going on? If that's true, that vaunted "specialization" may not count for all that much. Perhaps more likely is that the translators handling such material for the banks identified

25 Asher Schechter (February 15, 2104). "Car Trouble: Toyota vs the Whistle-blower From Israel," <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/business/premium-1.574389>. An excellent and very revealing interview with Benjaminson conducted by Rogel Alpher on TLV1 may be heard at <http://tlv1.fm/journeys/2014/04/07/rogel-alpher-with-the-toyota-whistleblower-betsy-benjaminson-journeys/>.

Here is a thought experiment: It's late 1953, and you've just landed your dream job, translating for the PR firm Hill and Knowlton. There has been growing evidence of a possible link between smoking and cancer and other diseases. Tobacco companies seem to accept that there is a link. But Hill and Knowlton proposes to the industry a massive multifaceted PR campaign to cast doubt on these findings, including foundation and funding of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, which historian Robert N. Proctor has called a "triumph of deception in the guise of research." **You've signed a non-disclosure agreement -- but you have this knowledge.** We know in retrospect that worldwide about 6 million people died annually from smoking-related lung cancer and other diseases, about 400,000 in the US alone. In addition, both of your parents are heavy smokers. **As a translator, citizen, and son or daughter, what would you do?**

See Robert N. Proctor, PhD (1996). Review of Philip J. Hilts, *Smokescreen: The Truth Behind the Tobacco Industry Cover-up*, *JAMA*; 276(12):998. doi:10.1001/jama.1996.03540120076040, <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=408415>

Proctor covers the deception and fraud in depth in Robert N. Proctor (2011). *Golden Holocaust*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/05/tobacco-book-golden-holocaust-robert-proctor>

<http://www.who.int/tobacco/media/en/TobaccoExplained.pdf>

with their employers so completely that it never occurred to them to think about the implications of the documents they were helping to mold. Supporting that supposition is the fact that I have never seen, in what passes for translation journalism, a single article, or a single critical discussion, of those implications in a real-world context. Yet those fraudulent CDOs and RMBSs were peddled all over the world, and surely translation was involved somewhere in the peddling.

That is the kind of thing I mean when I say that the Prosperity Gospel enables the siphoning of society's wealth to the top. Jemielity's scenario is just one example of how translation may be appropriated into helping banks and other wealthy

corporations expand their profits at the expense of everyone else. The Prosperity Gospel can't be held responsible for the profiteering of the big banks and financial institutions, but it does validate a mindset that sanctions it.

Interestingly, many of the Prosperity Gospeleers are financial translators. In their identification with Wall Street, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, they mold themselves in the image of the very corporate institutions that mandate austerity for the world's poor so that the world's wealthy may flourish. And by encouraging others to do the same, they transform the profession of translation—intentionally or not—in that image.

So what can working translators do to resist and counter these trends, and to ensure that our next generation will be able to find fulfilling work at living rates? For one thing, we need a clear and reliable understanding of how the new translation industry works, and how it connects with the economic and political realities of the larger world. I have tried to make a start on this in my examples of TransPerfect, Stepes, and the Prosperity Gospel. Documents from translation industry sources need to be studied carefully and skeptically. This means "political" analysis of the practices and ideologies promoted by such organizations as TAUS, the ATA, and others. It means close attention to and critical scrutiny of the mergers, controversies, and technological developments written up in trade newspapers and magazines, press releases, and so on. We need to share our insights in well-reasoned, well-sourced papers and articles, and to consider and discuss them. Unless we strive actively together for a keen and watchful understanding of the forces shaping the industry, we will be left in the dark, and unable to act in our own interest.

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We want to do it well.**

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Crucially, we must fight the tendency to blame and shame ourselves for circumstances over which we have little or no individual control. But where we *do* have a measure of power, we must exert it wherever we can—by ensuring, for example, that young translators are encouraged to learn on whole translation, and not on the piecemeal output of translation memories. They need to be able to seek advice from old hands without invidious comparisons or fear of humiliation, “mauling,” or “disembowelment.” They need to be able to explore according to their own lights, and to discover what

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kind of translators *they* are. We, their mentors, must remain ever mindful of the purposes to which our work is put, and foster a community that supports and honors courageous colleagues like Benjaminson who refuse to let translation be reduced to an ethically empty exercise.

We need to create networks of solidarity

among working translators—groups of thoughtful individuals who together can resist the efforts of the industry to coopt us into cogs or atomize us into fragments, and who can fight collectively for a more equitable distribution of respect and of profit. Although there will always be a “business” aspect to what we do, we must escape the conventional “small business” mindset that imprisons us in isolation and so magnifies our powerlessness. We must reject the Prosperity Gospel, which encourages us to identify with the very corporations responsible for plummeting incomes and the progressive degradation of our work. We must occupy translation in a new way.

How to do that is an open question that awaits our attention. What *is* clear is that it must be a collective effort. Unless we join forces and fight for the survival of whole translation and equitable pay, those who follow us will enter a profession hollowed out, emptied of all intrinsic worth.

By Kenneth Kronenberg

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NETA Board Meeting Minutes, August 1, 2016, via Skype

Attending remotely:

Lesley Andrews, Elena L.-Fortier,
Ken Kronenberg, Antje Ruppert,
Crystal Zhong, Maiyim Baron

• Conference Topics

Based on the treasurer’s report, we had a loss for conference of a bit more than \$2000, but further inspection reveals that the Q3 profit and loss comparison file shows a loss of \$6242.80. Diana will explore this discrepancy with Crystal.

The consensus was that we can reduce spending for next year in the areas of speaker fees and airfare. The board decided that stage and/or wireless microphones are needed and would not provide significant savings if cut.

In addition to keynote and endnote speakers, we had 10 speakers (4,2,4) in 2015 and 14 speakers in 2016 (5,5,4), not counting the speakers on the academic side. Because hotel rooms cost twice as much as in the previous two years, Elena agreed to see if there are less expensive options in the area.

A few members reiterated that attendance was likely down from last year due to the later date of the conference. The 2017 conference will be on the first Saturday in May as usual, so we expect higher attendance numbers.

Food prices were lower in 2016 than the year before, due to the elegant 40th anniversary lunch. It was felt that the UMass caterer fee of \$12.50/pp was reasonable. Lesley agreed to handle catering orders for next year and to request two lunch tables to avoid long lines.

Diana agreed to email Diego, asking him to sign contract; we are awaiting confirmation of that being done.

Keynote speaker Prof. Larkosh has not been notified of the date. Elena is thinking about a theme for the conference, possibly involving who the clients are, and is not sure how well this speaker fits in with the theme.

There was some discussion on the extent to which the ConfCom should vet the content

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of a keynote speaker's presentation. In general, the committee should underline the need for a talk with broad appeal.

Elena has offered to chair the 2017 conference.

Montserrat does not wish to be right-hand person again. Diana asked board members to suggest potential conference committee members for Elena to call on.

Attendee rates have been the same in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Board members are mostly in favor of keeping the same rates for 2017.

Diana suggested that the board draw up a conference budget, or some guidelines as to how much might be spent for things like airfare.

The board will stress paying attention to expenses and going local, when possible. Crystal and Diana will provide the confcom with budgets for the last three conferences as a guideline for expenses.

Historically, NETA has given speakers free conference admission, paid speakers for

their talks, and paid for their transportation and hotel.

Speakers at the ATA conference get no such compensation. Elena said that NETA is very generous with our speakers, and others agreed. We are committed to paying \$500 to our keynote next year, assuming Larkosh is keynote, but we should try to bring down rate for keynote, endnote to \$300/\$150. We decided that speakers should continue to get free admission.

Diego and Ken felt that students should have to join NETA at \$30 if they are on a panel, but the board decided they should merely be encouraged to join.

Several board members continue to feel that it is not worth the effort to find exhibitors, with Maiyim dissenting. However, Elena agreed to contact 2016 and 2015 exhibitors and ask if they would like to return. The idea is also to invite CAT-tool companies and give them a conference speaking slot to demo in addition to exhibiting.

The board confirmed Ken's June suggestion to continue to seek sponsors for coffee breaks, reception, etc.

The board felt it was worth the effort to have a book table again next year.

There was not much interest in Prof. Reyes Coll-Tellechea's (UMass Boston) idea of seeking big corporate sponsors (like banks); she indicated she might be willing to work to get such sponsors.

Minutes compiled by Diana Rhudick

NETA Board Meeting Minutes, September 24, 2016

Present: Lesley, Maiyim, Joan, Antje, Diego, Diana

Guest: Catherine Howard

AGENDA

- Treasurer's report
- Membership
- Website
- Conference
- Monthly programs
- Yahoo Groups, social media, publicity initiatives
- Other:
 1. Institutional nonprofit memberships
 2. NETA brochure
 3. Mission statement
 6. Software discounts
 7. Potential collaboration with MassAHEC

Treasurer's report

July's net loss is because we paid the treasurer's accounting fee related to time

spent on the results of conference expenses. These fees are paid quarterly. Crystal will separate expenses from PayPal into categories. There was an overall loss of \$2,130 compared to last year, but there was an increase in membership following the conference. We lost 70 members but gained more. Crystal also implemented the senior membership category.

Membership

Antje thinks a lot of new members were students. Diego pointed out that our goal is to get new members and the conference seems to have accomplished that. Nonetheless we need to address the loss of 70 members since last year, a third of our membership. Perhaps a certain percent try it out and then drop off. Maybe we should develop a questionnaire about why people are dropping and send it out with our last notice. Keep in mind needs of new members. Some become members for the wrong reasons, namely the expectation that they will get more work through NETA. They don't understand the function of a professional organization.

Website

Scott mentioned that a lot has changed with our hosting site. It now offers mobile-responsive templates. Scott gave us an estimated

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design template cost of \$300. Marian and Diana will ask to have him show its advantages over our present design. Upgrading is a one-time fee, while maintenance stays the same. Joan moved, Diego seconded that we authorize the \$300 to develop a new design template.

An online directory used our online membership list for spamming members. Our newsletter once a year would explain that people can hide any part of their profile to make that spamming impossible, and we will send an email with the same information once a year.

Conference

Elena Langdon has agreed to chair the 2017 conference.

Diego has signed the contract for the conference for next year, to be held on May 6. Parking and printing fees are to be discussed. Will get about 20 parking tickets for free, presumably for people setting up. Otherwise the fee will be \$6 for the day. We will have to make a deposit in February for the venue. There were problems with the speaker volume and noise interference that will have to be addressed. Lunch will be served in two lines on either side of the room to reduce the long lines of this year. We could also move tables out from the wall to allow access on both sides. This will be discussed with Sodexo. This year we had increased expenses due to paying speakers' travel expenses from far distances. Also we had lower attendance, possibly due to unfamiliarity with the new venue and perhaps the late date. We agreed that we don't need to break even on the conference but we also agreed to have a modest increase in attendance fees. The increased attendance fees are as follows:

Early member online registration: \$105

Regular member online: \$125,

Member day of conference onsite: \$145

Non-member early: \$140

Regular non-member online: \$160

Non-member day of conference onsite: \$180

Student : \$50.

We should encourage those presenting papers at the conference to join NETA, but not require it. Sponsorship: we will not change the sponsor categories, but increase prices for different levels.

Sponsor materials \$120. We voted not to pay for travel and hotel expenses for speakers. Honoraria for panels are \$50, for regular speaker \$200, and for keynote and endnote speakers \$300-500.

Admission to the conference would be free.

We will move the registration away from the elevators and add a few more tables. We will ask for more students volunteers.

Monthly Meetings

For those attending meetings remotely, we have had some problems. People need to have a microphone headset. Should we say that when sending out a notice about meetings?

Social media guidelines: Elena and Petra have not yet drafted the social media guidelines.

MassAHEC

We should continue our cooperation.

Nonprofit Institutional Memberships

We decided that we should stick to our policy of not having any institutional memberships, either nonprofit or for profit. We could have a NETA member agree to take on the task of handling relations with nonprofit educational institutions. We can add information about their events to the section on the website called Local, National and International Events with a link to their websites. Such institutions include Middlebury College, Boston Public Schools, National Center for Interpretations (U. Arizona) and others.

Brochure

It costs a lot of money to make a brochure, but we have been asked about one. Catherine offered to make a trial brochure.

Monthly Meetings

2016-17 dates: 9/24 (bash with board meeting), 10/22, 11/19, 1/28 (with board meeting), 2/25, 3/25 (with board meeting), 4/22.

Mission Statement

Change the wording on the website.

The New England Translators Association is a professional organization of translators and interpreters whose mission is to:

- 1) Promote the recognition of translating and interpreting as a profession;
- 2) advocate for the rights and interests of professional translators and interpreters;
- 3) promote professional and social relations among its members;
- 4) organize and support the training of translators and interpreters through lectures and courses; and
- 5) provide a medium for collaboration with persons in allied professions.

Software discounts

We decided that we would not get involved in trying to negotiate software discounts because that would imply our endorsing particular products. Catherine pointed out that ProZ and many other organizations offer discounts that she would be willing to let us know about.

The next board meeting is January 28, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Sax, Secretary