

The TRANSLetter

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A Publication of the Society of Translators & Interpreters of British Columbia (S.T.I.B.C)

The opinions and views expressed in the articles published in The TRANSLetter do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fenella Sung, C.Crt.I., C.T.

Dear colleagues,

Why Court Services Branch Cannot Hear Our Voice

Many of you who work for the Court Services might have undertaken the contract renewal process these days. I am not sure how you feel but one of our members, Karin Reinhold (C.Crt.I, C.T., English⇔German) openly expressed her frustrations at the treatment through her article “**Service Contract (Court Interpreters) – Enough is Enough!**”. I also understand that some of you have chosen to personally write to the Court Services officials expressing your dismay and frustrations that the pay of court interpreters has not been revised for 14 years. The hourly rate for qualified court interpreters (meaning court interpreters certified by STIBC and graduates of the Vancouver Community College (VCC) Court Interpretation program) was \$35 in 1992 and today at 2006 it remains \$35.

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Perhaps some of you may remember, STIBC together with VCC started a dialogue with Court Services Branch in 2002 to discuss issues and challenges faced by court interpreters. The dialogue evolves to become a yearly or half-yearly meeting with Court Services Branch officials who are in charge of court interpretation. Hourly rate of course has always been at the top of the agenda on our side, followed by cancellation policy. However, despite regular meetings it seems that our suggestions have fallen on deaf ears. We were assured, time and again, that we “will be consulted on the reforms that are being contemplated for the Court Interpreter program”, yet the latest round of contract renewal once again subjects our certified court interpreters to the same hourly rate and working conditions set some 14 years ago.

If we want our voice to be heard, I think we need to organize ourselves and start to do something. I would strongly encourage all of you who work within the Court Services system to write to the person-in-charge to strongly express your concern so that our voice is no longer ignored by Court Services. You may want to address your letter to:

Mr. Wayne Willows
A/Director, Corporate Planning & Program
Services
Ministry of Attorney General
Court Services Headquarters
6th Floor, 850 Burdett Avenue
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1B4

And please also c.c. your letter to the
Attorney General:

Honourable Wally Oppal
Attorney General of British Columbia
P.O. Box 9044, STN Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E3

If you wish to, please send an electronic version of your letter to STIBC at president@stibc.org so that we can follow up with Court Services next time we meet.

Please remember, the more of us writing in, the stronger our voice will be. I sincerely hope that our voice can be heard this time through the letter writing campaign to Court Services!

S.T.I.B.C. has Come of Age!

As you may know, 2006 marks the 25th anniversary for the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia.

As the Society has grown tremendously both in size and stature, we have to express our most sincere gratitude to the Society's founders, who brought to fruition 25 years ago the vision of a professional society for translators and interpreters.

We should also give special thanks to our predecessors, including all the past presidents, board members and volunteers who tirelessly devoted their time and talents for the betterment of our profession during the time span of a quarter-of-a-century.

I am proud to say that S.T.I.B.C. today is not just a professional organisation; it is a family where we all share a very special and unique bond, regardless of the tongue we speak, through the practice of our profession.

In preparation for our Silver Anniversary, we would like to take stroll down memory lane to look back at some of the events that shaped S.T.I.B.C.'s history and compile a chronology of S.T.I.B.C. highlights in the past 25 years.

If you have anything (be it an idea, some stories, a collection item or two, even documentation) to share with our membership or contribute to the collective memory, please contact Robin McGuire at the office. We would love to hear from you!

The Board also welcomes suggestions for celebration so please let us know if you have any brilliant idea for the celebration in respect of our Silver Anniversary.

Further Branding S.T.I.B.C.

As S.T.I.B.C. outreaches and tries to forge and strengthen relationship with government departments, business groups, public institutions and other professional organizations, one of the challenges we face is to establish our professional identity and enhance our visibility.

In view of this, the Board has launched a logo development campaign and a graphics artist is retained to assist us in the work.

Since the logo is an integral part of our identity as presented to all those outside our profession, for sure your input will be consulted when the artist has finished his work. It is expected that the new logo will be applied on our website as well as future marketing and printed materials.

In the meantime, the board will continue to pursue opportunities that enable us to enhance the identity and visibility of S.T.I.B.C.

In closing, I would like to share with you this favourite song of mine:

"Climb every mountain, search high and low,
Follow every byway, every path you know.
Climb every mountain, ford every stream,
Follow every rainbow, till you find your dream!"

Hope every one of us will continue to pursue our dreams and reach out for the stars, as our predecessors achieved 25 years ago!

ATA Conference – A Synopsis

Esther Vitalis, C.T.

The 46th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association (ATA) was held from November 9-12, 2005 in Seattle, Washington. The closeness of this city to Vancouver (Can.) assured a generous representation of STIBC (Society of Translators and Interpreters of B.C.) members. The Seattle Centre Westin Hotel gave us a good discount, and many of us also shared rooms to further extend our money. The excellent layout of the hotel helped in taking in a lot of presentations.

The Welcome Reception on Wednesday, from 6.00 to 7.30 p.m., was a fabulous event, as always. It was a great opportunity to meet old acquaintances and make new contacts.

The Opening Session was held in the morning of Thursday November 10th, when candidates for the election of officers for the year 2006 were presented. The keynote speaker was Andy Abbar, with Microsoft since 1991; his work involves internationalization of Microsoft products. He is currently based in Paris, France, as a localization expert. His talk was most interesting. After the opening session, we had an opportunity to chat with members of the Board. It was a good opportunity to touch base with some of them regarding matters that concerned us.

One of the sessions I attended was "Epilepsy: History and Terminology". Maria Rosdolsky, a former physician, whose specialties were neurology and psychiatry, gave this presentation. In her presentation, Maria Rosdolsky summarized the understanding of epilepsy and its interpretation, also its treatment and, last but not least, related terminology. She talked about the types of seizures, diagnosis, possible causes, and the role of genetic factors. As for treatment, there are various drugs now available that reduce the frequency of seizures; at the same time, other new drugs are required for controlling the side effects of the drugs used for the treatment. Over time, as more and more information has become available on epilepsy, terminology relating to it has changed. Besides having some knowledge of the illness, a good translator needs to know both the old and new terminologies.

"Anomalies of the Mental Health Interpreter" was presented by Janet Erickson-Johnson, certification manager for Language Line Services, and another successful graduate of the Monterey Institute of International Studies. She has played a lead role in the training of medical interpreters in the U.S. In her presentation, she first clarified the role of a medical interpreter, i.e. that of a conduit, a clarifier, a culture broker and an advocate.

She explained in what way a mental health interpreter's role is anomalous. In this field a medical interpreter is required to be more flexible than most interpreters about role switching to achieve a smooth interaction between health-care provider, interpreter and patient.

Another health-related seminar was "Moving from Cure to Care: The Challenges of Palliative Medicine", presented by Dr. Richard S. Lane, medical consultant for CCCS (Cross Cultural Communication Systems, Inc.). The presenter talked about the development of palliative care, the decision making concerning the patient and the caregiver's distress about depletion of family resources. We also heard about the fact that patients do not always receive the care they need, and that their wishes are not always honored. There was a comparison made between palliative care as practiced in one of the American states, and also elsewhere, such as Canada and England. Palliative Care is now a recognized specialty. It means advanced care planning for patients with a serious and life-threatening illness. In this field, issues to be considered are psychosocial, financial/legal, decision making (ethics) and aspects of bereavement. In this type of care, communication skills and cultural sensitivity are essential. In addition, the role of the traditional physician is most important.

The seminar titled "Tool Box for the Medical Translator" was given by Alain Cote, Director of Linguistic Services, Janssen-Ortho Inc.

The purpose of the seminar was to provide some direction to beginners as well as to experienced medical translators. Although the presenter concentrated on the French-English combination, he referred to other language combinations also. The presentation focused on Canadian markets, with information on American and European ones as well. Information was provided on study programs (university, accreditation, continuing education), sources of work, the importance of exchanging information, and the challenges of the profession. A Conference on Medical Translation in Canada will take place in Montreal on May 8th, 2006. The organizer of this conference is the Translation Group - Rx&D, for mainly English-French translators. At the end, we were given an excellent guidebook containing lists of manuals, dictionaries, specialized books, periodicals, Websites, and other interesting and useful information for medical translators.

A quite entertaining presentation was "Interpreting and Translating: From the Fall of the Iron Curtain to EU Enlargement." Lise Katschinka, a freelance interpreter, technical translator (business, law) from Vienna and conference interpreter, was the presenter. Her responsibilities in the field of international translating are numerous. She is a member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters;

she served as Secretary-General of the Association of Austrian Translators and Interpreters for 20 years; and she is Vice President of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), just to mention a few. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the free movement of language professionals from country to country began, as there was a great need for translators. However, translators came from various professional groups, such as school teachers, lawyers and other professionals. As a result, the level of their language knowledge, as well as their experience, varied quite a bit. NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and later the unification of Germany, the end of the communist system in Central Europe, and so on, would create more and more need for people with good language knowledge to help communication. At the beginning, translators would use handwritten notes; then came the mechanical typewriters (it was often necessary working day and night to finish an assignment); there were not enough dictionaries available, and some of the translators had to work from their home while the whole family was having dinner nearby. Also, training courses began for translators working in numerous language combinations. Computer-based training materials became available. With the establishment of the European Union, the workload in translation grew even more. The migration of professional people across borders, people looking for jobs, and also criminals, money launderers, etc. created an ever-growing need for well-qualified interpreters (knowing at least three languages, two active and one passive). For the same reason, the harmonization of the legal language of the various member countries was also necessary.

The above is just a short summary of a most interesting presentation.

During the conference, yoga classes were available at 6:00 am every morning, for the conference participants. In the evening, there were social events, such as the Medical Division's "Dessert Reception" and similar receptions for other divisions. Also, FIT (Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs) had a table and some of its members were available to supply information on how to join the Federation.

As a secondary point, Seattle has points of interest worth seeing. One of those is the Elliott Bay Book Company, which a group of us went to explore at the end of a "working day". My thanks go to the member who invited me to join the group for that adventure. What a gold mine that bookstore was! Afterwards we went to a Spanish restaurant called "Andaluca" to finish the day, where we had the most exquisite seafood.

ATA's 2006 conference has been scheduled for New Orleans next year. A lot of us wondered whether, with Hurricane Katrina there this year, the conference would go ahead. Hotel representatives from that city appeared one day bringing their promotional material. They assured us that there is no change in the plan. They will be ready for the ATA conference next year.

Fair Market Prices and How To Quote

Have you ever responded to requests for translation services by e-mail? As freelance translators, we often work in isolation and our work sometimes comes from a request for translation services which is sent to us via an e-mail. This article deals with my own personal experience and is intended to open up a discussion among translators on the topic of translation services with an agency and on the rates offered when using CAT such as TRADOS.

As an independent translator, I often get e-mails from agencies trying to recruit my services. One of these agencies had an ad which read : "To respond to a major international contract, XXXXX is looking for an additional 40 translators familiar with TRADOS Workbench for the next one to two years. Spheres of translation are 80% from English into French, 15% from French into English and 5% from English into other Inuit and Western European languages. Each translator could be assigned up to 250,000 words.

If you would like to be considered for some assignments, you must forward your "releasable" résumé by email to HR@scriptservices.ca no later than Tuesday May 17, 2005. Each applicant must include a sample of his or her work, showing the original text and the translated version. This ad appeared quite promising, as it stated that each translator could be assigned up to 250,000 words.

I complied with all the requests for information. I was also enticed by sentences such as this one : "The overall rate are still being negotiated and will vary with the types of text to translate from précis and memos to Cabinet to legal material and contracts. I can assure you that the rates paid are the best on the market and if approved by XXX you will enjoy that contract."

To make a long story short, I also had to pass a security clearance with the Government of Canada.

However, when the contract finally materialized, the rates were not quite as exciting as they had been drummed up to be.

Below is an excerpt of the contract:

SCHEDULE "B" – Prices

For all work duly authorized by the Authorizing Department, the Contractor will be paid:

for translation services: for new text, a firm rate of CDN\$0.18 per word; for pre-translated text parsed through the Terminology database, a firm rate of CDN\$0.06 per word for each sentence with a 100% match, CDN\$0.09 per word for each sentence with a 75% match, and CDN\$0.12 per word for each sentence with a 50% match.

Obviously, the rate offered was much lower than \$0.18 per word when CAT tools came into play. The Agency claimed that the prospective income

could range between \$40,000 and \$100,000. However, the use of CAT tools took away all the benefits of increased productivity and effectively reduced significantly the rate paid.

As every experienced translator knows, even in the case of a 100% match, a sentence may have to be reworked, depending on the context. The rate of CDN \$0.12 per word for each sentence with a 50% match could cover a large number of occurrences. In that case, the actual overall rate paid seemed to hover around \$0.12.

Moreover, the Agency had set a quality model and the translator was supposed to correct errors on the basis of that model. Again, although I do not dispute the need for a translator to produce professional work, this editing comes on top of the usual proofreading and is another step that is usually not included in the translation service provided by a freelance translator. As a rule, a translation delivered to clients is a final version, unless there are mistakes pointed out by the client. But generally, the delivery of the product is considered final. Another point, which is sometimes debatable, is the quality of edits. As all translators have experienced, not all edits are justified. However, here again, the manager of the agency was inflexible. The Client is always right and she was the Client. In order to assess the degree of professional competence of that “top translation agency”, I went to their Web Site and was disappointed by the linguistic quality of their display. I must admit that was the last straw and it was a major factor in my decision to refuse this contract.

The representative of the agency claimed “I can guarantee you that with the advent of CAT, rates at .24, .22 or even .20 a word are things of the past.”

This sentence set me on a quest for information. In the Translation Business Practices Report GSDTI published in August 2004 by the World Bank, which involved 51 respondents, for the English into French Language pair, in approximately 50% of cases, the rates quoted varied between US \$0.16 – \$0.18 per word. That was equivalent then to \$ 0.24 - \$0.27. Moreover, in 20% of cases, the rates were above that amount. In other words, in 70% of the cases the rates were superior to \$0.24 per word.

In that report, although most companies were in favour of CAT tools and would make it mandatory for their translators to use CAT, there was no mention of discounting heavily the rates because of TRADOS or other computer-assisted translation tools. In my opinion, when a translator acquires a CAT tool, such as TRADOS, he invests time and money in order to deliver a better product while increasing his productivity. Have you personally experienced requests from your clients asking you to heavily discount your rates because you were using TRADOS? And what kind of discount was then involved? Let us use this article as a basis for a forum among translators to pool our resources together in order to find out what the current market prices are. Please send any comments to tts@focalpoint.org.

Message from TRANSLetter Editor
Pascaline Denblyden, C.T.

Wow! Thank you to all of you who sent articles for the Newsletter. Some may be published in the next issue due to space constraints. But keep on sending them! This makes my job much easier and broadens the scope of the Newsletter. You'll read articles about Court Interpreting Contracts, job costing, the ATA conference and many other informative articles. Keep your Society alive, get involved, send us your thoughts and anything that you feel might benefit your fellow members. If each of us stay in our little corner, we'll soon be eaten up by large multinational translation companies. So network, don't be afraid to share, to get together, or to send questions to the Translators community at large. This Newsletter is your forum. I am just the messenger.
So long...

TRANSLetter Information

The TRANSLetter welcomes articles about translation, interpretation, terminology and language-related issues. We also welcome contributions in the form of letters, short bio's, etc.

The next submission date is:

Monday, April 24, 2006

TRANSLetter Volunteers:

Editor.....Pascaline Denblyden

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Lucrecia Simon

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MailingSTIBC Member

Volunteers

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Production.....Robin McGuire

Office Administrator

Walaiporn (Ellen) Laocha,

Associate Member

Robin McGuire (Office Administrator) has taken on the challenge to walk 60 kms and raise \$3,200 in the "Weekend to End Breast Cancer" in August. To learn more, contact Robin at the STIBC office.

**Annual General Meeting
Saturday, May 27, 2006**

Best Western Chateau Granville

1100 Granville Street

Vancouver, BC

Registration: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Workshops (more information to follow)

Lunch: 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Daily Soup

Sandwich

Fruit Cup

Tea/Coffee

\$10 (GST/Gratuity included)

Registration for lunch will be mailed with AGM package

Registration for meeting: 1:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Each member will receive (1) drink ticket for the reception, please ask for it when registering.

Meeting: 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Reception: 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

STIBC's 25th Anniversary Cake Cutting

Join the STIBC Board of Directors for 2007/2008

Please contact the STIBC office for nomination papers

REFERRALS

DECEMBER TO FEBRUARY

Foreign Language to English

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Arabic | 8 |
| Chinese | 289 |
| Farsi | 53 |
| French | 14 |
| German | 13 |
| Hindi | 18 |
| Indonesian | 8 |
| Japanese | 22 |
| Korean | 36 |
| Polish | 25 |
| Punjabi | 34 |
| Russian | 18 |
| Serbian | 4 |
| Spanish | 128 |
| Ukrainian | 3 |
| Vietnamese | 11 |

HAPPY EASTER!

*The STIBC office will be closed from Friday,
April 14th to Monday, April 17th*

ENGLISH OF TOMORROW - EU ANNOUNCEMENT

The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the European Union rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, the British Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5- year phase-in plan that would become known as "Euro-English".

In the first year, "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy.

The hard "c" will be dropped in favour of "k". This should klear up konfusion, and keyboards can have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with "f". This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan If zis mad you smil, pleas pas on to oza pepl.

Service Contract (Court Interpreters) – Enough is Enough!

Karin Reinhold, C.Crt.I, C.T.

Last week, I received the new Service Contract for Court Interpreters from the Attorney General's office. No changes have been made to the pay schedule or the cancellation policy, which means that for the next two years we will be working under the same conditions as imposed on us 14 years ago! I do not know of any other profession whose members have worked according to absolutely static conditions for over a decade. I do not believe that anybody else would accept this unconscionable situation.

I have been working as an interpreter and translator (German-English) for almost two decades, have two related university degrees in this field and comply with all continuing education requirements. I take pride in the services I am providing for my clients and love to work in Court because it is a nice change to the sometimes lonely and tedious translation work in front of the computer. However, I find that it is an insult to our profession for the government to ignore our need to make a decent living when the cost of living keeps rising at a steady pace. Most interpreters are self-employed and do not receive any fringe benefits at all. How are we supposed to keep providing time-consuming professional services and at the same time make ends meet without compromising quality?

A typical example of this would be when we have to drive to a court location within the 32km range, which in Vancouver can sometimes easily take an hour, and then finish in just under two hours. We will have actually spent four hours for our two-hour minimum of \$70.00! Well, in my opinion this is just not economically feasible anymore.

A recent article in *The Globe and Mail* highlighted the system's shortcomings in more detail - professional interpreters can no longer afford to work for Court Services in Ontario so untrained bilinguals are hired instead. These people rarely have any understanding of the complexity of court proceedings or know anything about the high ethical standards that interpreters have to adhere to. In my view, this situation does nothing to further our profession's reputation.

Apart from the static pay schedule, the cancellation policy leaves much to be desired. Many times have I been booked for trials spanning over several weeks just to receive a phone call from Court Services on Friday afternoon before the scheduled proceedings the following Monday, adjourning or canceling the trial altogether. The date has been noted in my calendar for a long time and other lucrative work has been turned away, only for me to receive a cancellation payment of 4 hours at \$35.00 per hour! This scenario is known all too well to active court interpreters and Roger Barany has come up with some ideas to create a fairer policy.

He feels that the policy should deal with multiple-day or multiple-week trials by giving the interpreter longer cancellation notice (which is usually impossible due to last-minute settlements, etc.) or a higher cancellation fee in lieu of notice. In the absence of adequate notice, it is suggested that interpreters receive up to 5 days of cancellation fees at a rate of 4 hours per day to cover the first week booked, and a further 4 hours per week to cover subsequent weeks booked, up to a certain maximum, say 4 weeks.

There are a couple of other issues I would like to raise: For longer, mostly highly technical trials, for which simultaneous interpreting is required, we should request two interpreters working in shifts as is the case in conference interpreting. It is impossible to concentrate properly for more than half an hour, especially when the subject matter is complex as is usually the case during arguments, expert testimony or submissions. Many times, judges and lawyers simply forget that we are human beings and not just automatons that can be turned on and off.

So what can we do about this situation? First of all, let me remind you that we have a union (CanTIG¹) – a more or less dormant one, but a union nevertheless. I would urge all interpreters to join and become more active in its activities. Once we have enough members, we will have the strength to force the Attorney General to the bargaining table. In the meantime, let us bombard Court Services Headquarters with as many letters of complaint as possible. Always remember that we are providing essential professional services, which are, unfortunately, not honoured in an appropriate manner.

During these last few days, while I have been letting off steam and discussing this situation with other members, I have heard a lot about the fear of “being blacklisted”; they cannot possibly blacklist all interpreters because court proceedings would come to a standstill. This time around, I owe it to myself not to accept this contract any longer.

¹ For more information on CanTIG, please contact Ted Hobrough at the Language Bureau, 604-263-9923, or at ted@thelanguagebureau.com