My fellow readers,

I am glad to “meet” you again, in this latest edition of the IAPTImes. As we start 2014, I think this is a great opportunity to look back and reflect on our accomplishments during 2013.

Considering the success of the first IAPTI international Conference in London, I think it has been a brilliant year for our association. Unfortunately, I didn’t make it to the conference, but I was really happy to read about how well it was received by the T&I community. Modern technology enabled me to stay abreast of most of what was going on there! Sometimes it felt like I was right with you in London! Not only was the volume of blog posts, tweets, and Facebook posts incredibly high, but they also conveyed the excitement and joy of the participants.

If you want to learn more about the conference, you will find a summary in the News from the Board section, including some pictures! In this issue, you will also find some advice on how to set up a successful translation business by Loek van Kooten. In the Meeting other IAPTI members section, you will have the pleasure to learn about Tess Whitty and to know how she ended up in the translation profession. Finally, in the Our stars section, Laila Helmi will share some insights into her life as an interpreter.

Happy reading!

Luciana E. Lovatto
Newsletter Editor
One piece of advice I’d like to give is to be strict about your payment terms and credit lines. Around 2000, I had this huge client with whom I’d been working already for 3 years or so: a very trustworthy company in the IT industry. This company, that employed about 25 people, had always paid their bills on time: a stable company, one would say. And this stable company finally gave me the dream assignment I’d been waiting for.

In those days, I was still actively outsourcing work to other translators (I still do this on special request; I just don’t advertise for it anymore), and this was a text that had to be localized to six languages or so. The total value of the job was about 21,000 Dutch guilders, say 8,500 euro. But in those days we had far more purchasing power in Europe, so you may think of it as 21,000 euro regardless. However, on the 30th day, the client had not paid. No sweat, it happens all the time, so we just sent him a reminder. And another one. And another one. Finally, when the client was three weeks late, we decided to call him.

The phone however was not picked up by the client. It was picked up by an answering machine. During office hours. At a company employing 25 people. My world fell apart. It turned out the company had gone bankrupt, just like that. They knew they were going bankrupt, and they were now dragging us with them by unscrupulously ordering translations while they knew they had only so many weeks left. They also knew very well that we were just a two-man company. Still they kept on ordering.

The best part was that most of the job was outsourced, so about 18,000 guilders still had to be paid to the translators. We could cover about 15,000 by going in the red, but yes, the remainder had to be postponed. Contrary to our client, we decided to put all our cards on the table and send a mail to all translators explaining exactly, and I mean exactly, what happened. Two of them were new to us and said they wanted their money nonetheless. We completely understood and paid them on the very same day. The remaining translators had been working with us for years already (in fact one of them was my co-head of the Benelux chapter: Filippo Rosati!) and literally told us to stop whining and just send them new work already, so that they could generate more income for themselves and we could fill the gaps with other gaps and survive. We’re still very grateful for that and these translators became friends for life.

Within six weeks, all the translators had been paid. The IT company in question had now officially been declared bankrupt, and more than three years passed until we got an official notification saying that the bankrupt client had been able to pay the tax office, the bank and a few other gigantic companies that were swimming in money already, but that for a small company like ours 0 guilders were left… even though the receiver had secretly sold our translated software to a third party, that charged a mere 10,000 euro per license or so. “Well, sue me!” the receiver literally told us. That’s when I learned that the law and justice are really two very different things.

The bank had saved us, but at what price? We had to speak two hours with them, we had to hand over lists of items pledged for three years to come and we couldn’t buy a house for the next three years either. It’s important to realize that business is war. Make sure that your clients pay on time, make sure that your clients can pay on time and always judge from a worst-case scenario: never lend more than you can lose. That means introducing credit lines. If a client goes over that credit line, they will have to pay in advance. If your client doesn’t want to pay in advance, it means they don’t have the money to pay in advance.

Some people find this scary. I found it scary too. What if the client decides to go to another supplier if you stick to your guns or confront them with credit lines, especially if said client is your only client? But let me ask you: what good is a client if they don’t pay? How much turnover will that client generate for you in the end? Zero. Nada. Nothing. So why keep them? You’re a translator, not a bank.

Get rid of defaulters as soon as possible. Be quick, merciless and relentless about this. Because if they go bankrupt, they won’t pay your bills, and they won’t give a damn about how you solve your problems, no matter how much they liked you. Try to explain that to the mouths you have to feed. You can’t. So as you are responsible for them, you’d better act like it.
News from the Board

Looking back on our first international conference  
(London, United Kingdom, 2013)

As shared with the T&I community in the previous edition of The IAPTImes, the IAPTI Board decided to pay tribute to our 2,000 inspiring colleagues in the UK who were resisting – and who would choose to abandon the profession before working for CAPITA – by organising our First International Conference in the UK. This appreciation was clearly shared by the 200 delegates who joined us, as evidenced by the moving standing ovation for Madeleine Lee and Eileen Ford when they finished their presentation.

The feedback we received was excellent: from the presentation by our keynote speaker (Professor Mona Baker), to the bold roundtable on rates where we discussed this important aspect of our profession openly and freely (i.e. professional fees), the varied and highly professional sessions with renowned translators and interpreters, and the inspiring closing session with T&I guru, Marta Stelmaszak.

Some colleagues mentioned that the conference’s programme was too tight: there was so much to choose from and not enough time!

We want to thank Diana Coada and Marta Stelmaszak, Chairwomen for the conference. You did a terrific job! We also want to thank the Organising Committee for their logistical support. A huge thank you goes to our sponsors, and to the 200 colleagues who were part of our first international conference, which was a real party of knowledge, networking, sharing, and fun.

There is an excellent review of the conference on Christine Schmit’s blog, as well as links to other reviews.

Are we now resting, enjoying the aftertaste of a job well done? Yes, we are enjoying the memories, but no, we are not having a rest. The date and location of the 2014 conference have now been announced. Have you marked your calendar? If not, you still have time: September 20-21, Athens, Greece.

2013 is over. We are very satisfied with our work through the year and are already working hard on several projects, which will continue to ensure that our association’s objectives will be met. We hope to see you along the way, travelling this path with us!

May 2014 be an outstanding year for you, on both a personal and professional level.

IAPTI Board
“Given the calibre of those involved, it will be no surprise to hear the whole thing was impressively well organised with nary a hitch in the smooth running.”

Charlie Bavington, French > English Translator

“Having grown in numbers over the past four years the association has been up and running, and now with members in 59 countries, its president, Aurora Humarán, and her team decided it was time to get together properly and have a “non-mild” discussion about what’s going on in our industry and what we can do about it.”

Nikki Graham, Spanish > English translator

“The whole atmosphere of the conference was incredibly positive, which certainly had to do with the fact that the attendees were almost exclusively freelance translators and interpreters, which created an instant feeling of being part of a community.”

Christine Schmit, German, Spanish, English > French, Luxembourgish translator

“I invite all of my freelance interpreter and translator friends and colleagues who want to thrive in this new economy to acquire the necessary tools and resources to win. IAPTI is an essential resource. I encourage you all to submit a membership application and to attend next year’s conference. I can assure you that you will be inspired by the talent and energy of this new group of young interpreters and translators. As a member of IAPTI you will be in a better position to flourish in our industry. You will love the atmosphere of an IAPTI conference where everybody is like you: an individual translator or interpreter trying to deliver an excellent product in exchange for excellent pay.”

Tony Rosado, English > Spanish conference interpreter.
Meeting other IAPTI Members!

Tess Whitty is an English-Swedish translator, who never thought that one day she would get involved in this profession. However, due to some events in her life, she embarked on this career and never looked back!

Why did you choose translation as a career?
Despite the fact that I love writing and languages, it never occurred to me that I could become a translator until I moved to the US and was trying to find a more flexible career while taking care of our young ones. With two masters in marketing and business communication in the baggage, and intensive studies of 6 languages, I ventured into a translation career upon a suggestion from a friend and I have never looked back. I love using my brain, my language and writing skills and the creativity and having a flexible schedule and being my own boss are definite benefits.

How did you specialize in finance, IT and technology?
I specialize in IT, software and marketing/business communication thanks to my education in marketing and my professional experience from the IT industry. During my 10 years of translation, the focus has slowly shifted toward medical software and pharmaceuticals and I am currently taking classes in medical translation.

What was the most rewarding experience you have had in your career?
I cannot single out one specific moment, but seeing the ads that I have translated in magazines always give me a kick. It is also very rewarding to translate for humanitarian causes and be a little part of improving the world. Positive feedback and testimonials always make my day and once I could make the father of the bride shine on the wedding by translating and recording a speech that he held in Swedish for his new Swedish family.

What are your future goals?
I have been quite happy for several years with the way things have been, but right now I am looking for ways to develop my business, both when it comes to clients and business direction but I am afraid the plans are not detailed or advanced enough yet to go into detail.

What do you do when you are not translating?
I am very active and try to balance all the time I spend sitting in front of the computer with physical activities such as running, skiing, yoga, hiking and such. The rest of the time I spend with my family and friends, and I love to travel. I am also an avid reader of both Swedish and English books.

If you weren’t a translator, what would you be?
That is a difficult question and I have not thought much about alternatives since I love my job so much, but perhaps something creative that would help people.

What is the best book you have read?
The book that has helped me most with my career as a translator is “How to succeed as a freelance translator”, by Corinne McKay. It is too hard to single out one book among fictional literature. I read every day, and there are so many great books. I especially love good stories about someone, real or fictional, with a good life message. I am not much for detective stories or mysteries, but I did love the Swedish Millenium series, by Stieg Larsson. I also loved all of Astrid Lindgren’s books for children, both when I was young and to read them for my children.

I’ve read in your blog that you have children. Is it difficult for you to find a balance between your role as a translator and as a mom?
Yes and no. Having children was one of the main reasons I became a freelance translator, so I could be at home with them and be there for them. The flexible schedule is ideal for that. That said, every coin has two sides, and the flexible schedule can also be draining, since that means I often work evenings. Now that the children are older and go to school for full days, I can balance my schedule better. I think that the work-life balance is always a challenge for a freelancer, but with experience it becomes easier. The best thing I have learned during these years is the ability to say no, and the knowledge that I will not lose good clients even if I am not always available.

Tess Whitty’s IAPTI Profile: https://www.iapti.org/terese-whitty/
Interview with Jenny Sigot Müller
Conference interpreter and author of the novel “Entre deux voix, Journal d’une jeune interprète de conférence”

Apart from what we can infer from its title, what is Entre deux voix about? Entre deux voix is the story of a young interpreter, Sonia, who has just graduated. She discovers what conference interpreting is really like. Each conference for her represents the opportunity to learn more about others and herself. Throughout the book, she tries to find her own voice, both on a professional and personal level.

Who should read your book? Anyone really; people who enjoy languages, whether they are language professionals, students, or whether they just want to find out more about this relatively unexplored, fascinating profession.

What were the rewards and challenges of writing the book? Writing the book made me reflect on conference interpreting. It gave me the chance to see it in a different light, to question many preconceived ideas and to be more insightful. I enjoy observing all details of everyday life. Any dialogue can be a source of inspiration. I very much enjoy this creative process of imaginative writing. After the publication of the book, many colleagues contacted me to tell me that they could identify with my main character, Sonia. I was very touched by all the kind words I received. As for the challenges, as in everything you do, you need to be disciplined and remain focused.

Any advice to those pursuing a career in interpreting? They should enjoy every minute of it. One of my professors once told me: “Every conference is a new story to be told, new memories that will accompany you later.” I am grateful for having chosen this profession and I have never regretted my choice.

The author
Jenny Sigot Müller grew up close to Saumur in France. At an early age, she discovered a passion for French literature as well as English, German and Russian literature. As a teenager, she acted in many theatrical productions, which gave her another perspective on life and of other people.

After studying classes préparatoires (hypokhâgne and khâgne) in Nantes, she graduated as a translator from the ETI (École de traduction et d’interprétation) in Geneva, and later as a conference interpreter in Zurich (Dolmetscherschule Zürich). Since 2005, she has been a conference interpreter, based in Zurich, and a translator at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL.

In 2009, she became a member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC).

At a great diversity of conferences, she lends her voice to speakers coming from different backgrounds and embodies her new role, the role of her life, that of a conference interpreter.

Back cover of “Entre deux voix”
“How far would you go for love?” is a frequent question. But how far would you go for hatred? How far? Sonia Clancy, a young graduate conference interpreter, has everything it takes to succeed. She is motivated, serious and she has a gift for languages. But that was without counting on a detail or rather a person who would cross her path.

Very quickly, the booth, her workplace, turns into a glass cage and behind her oppressive walls, Sonia risks losing her voice at any time.

First novel written by Jenny Sigot Müller, “Entre deux voix” opens the doors of a conference interpreter’s booth, this confined space unknown to the public where everything becomes possible, even the unthinkable.

“Entre deux voix, Journal d’une jeune interprète de conférence” is available as a hardcover book and also as an ebook in the Amazon Kindle store and Apple iBookstore.

More information under http://www.entre-deux-voix.com
Time to laugh!

Please confirm receipt

You’re a translator when... the strangest things happen to you

Funny animated anecdotes about translating

http://youreatranslatorwhen.tumblr.com/

IAPTI’s new partner!

IAPTI Annual Conference in Athens, Greece! September 20-21, 2014 Join us for an unprecedented event under the lights of the Acropolis! #iapti2014
Confessions of a Conference Interpreter

I would love to start this article with the words “Hi, my name’s Michelle and I’m a conference interpreter,” but I’m afraid that would prompt readers to want to start patting me on the back consolingly and proffering tissues. Although, come to think of it, maybe adopting a “True Confessions” tone in this article is not such a bad idea, since it would fit quite nicely with the topic I plan to address: professional identity as seen by a conference interpreter.

Many readers will recognize this topic as being related to the theme chosen for InterpretAmerica’s recent summit, of which IAPTI was a sponsor, and which I used as inspiration. But instead of tackling the question of professional identity by looking at what a conference interpreter is, I have decided that it would be more interesting to address the question the other way around, and look primarily at what a conference interpreter is not - or at least what I am not. Only once I’ve come clean about all of the things I cannot do will I look at what it is exactly that I do do for a living. After this, I will attempt to draw some conclusions for readers to take home (hopefully this promise of a take-home message will encourage you to stick around until the end!).

PART ONE - WHAT I AM NOT

I am not a language teacher. Strangely enough, my passion for languages and my love of teaching have not come together to make me a good language teacher. I know, because I have been fortunate enough to have had many an excellent teacher over the years, and I can’t do what they do. I have never been able to come up with engaging, creative ways to explain the intricacies of a foreign language to learners.

Also, I simply don’t have the oodles of patience that a language teacher needs. I just have to look at the earnest, eyes-not-rolling-to-the-heavens face of my Portuguese teacher, as she happily explains to my thick self (for what is probably the seventeenth time) the difference between futuro do conjuntivo and infinitivo pessoal and why I can’t just use fizermos and fazermos interchangeably, to know that I can’t do that. For a language teacher, patience is not a virtue, it’s a survival tactic.

I am not a community interpreter. This is because, quite frankly, I’m quite sure no courtroom or hospital would have me. I am one of those conference interpreters with one “active” language (English) and several “passive” languages (French, German, Spanish, Dutch, and maybe even Portuguese one day). I can only interpret into English from all of the other languages I speak, but not the other way around. A fat lot of use that is to anyone in a communicative situation requiring someone to work both ways between two languages, as is the case in community interpreting...

[Continue reading at http://tinyurl.com/mku62xs]
Acting as a simultaneous interpreter for her mother, it seems that Laila was bound to be a translator. Moreover, she has become a role model for her interpreting students!

If I were to capture my beginnings as a translator in a nutshell, I’d say that I was born to be a translator. My mother, being a German in Egypt, often needed my help switching between two languages – and a simultaneous interpreter was born. The move to professionalism was a major decision, however. As Robert Frost says, the road not taken was not an easy road. Throughout the years when I practiced interpretation, I encountered many challenges but also enjoyed rewarding moments of success.

When you work as an interpreter, you usually team up with one or more translators. Conferences, in particular, that include several speakers and last at least one full day, cannot be carried off by just one translator. And “teaming up” is exactly what you need to do. There needs to be harmony and full understanding between the two or three translators working together in the same booth. After all, you may need to step in at any moment to relieve them, just as they may need to save your neck at any moment. On one occasion, I remember a speaker started improvising, and was suddenly reciting old Arabic poetry to prove a point. With my mouth stuck to the mike, my hands were waving to my partner in the booth, who luckily enough was a connoisseur of Arabic poetry. He took over and the speaker’s point was made.

As a simultaneous interpreter you need to be fast, accurate and alert. You can’t stop at a word and wonder “Now how shall I translate that?” If you stop, you lose the thread, and that’s when panic can set in. The best advice here is to simply move on, and just keep focused on bringing across the main gist – the core meaning. This sounds easier than it is, though. Not all speakers remember that there is a translator somewhere trying to keep up with them. Some speakers rush at turbo speed through their papers, while others mumble into their beards. The worst case scenario is when you end up with a stuttering, incoherent speaker. The audience start turning to the glass behind which you are “hiding,” throwing daggers at that failure of an interpreter who can’t seem to put a sentence together!!

There are also some bright moments: In addition to the satisfaction of finishing a smooth chunk of translation, it is always great to observe that the audience received the information completely accurately. Translating their comments and questions when they take the floor is a wonderful indicator that you have done a good job. It is also a great moment when the audience laughs at a joke you managed to bring across: you become that “missing link” between the speaker and the listeners, and their laughter is music to your ears. Though the translators cooped up in their booths are often forgotten, there are speakers who do remember to thank you. On a personal level, it has always been rewarding when some of my students attended, listened in to the translation and later came up to me and said, “I want to be like you!”
Browsing the Web

Blogs

A Word in Your Ear
This videoblog endeavours to shine some light on interpreters, without breaching the strict confidentiality that comes with our profession.
http://www.youtube.com/user/Lourdesaib?feature=watch

Sentence first
An Irishman’s blog about the English language: its usage, grammar, styles, literature, history, and quirks.
http://stancarey.wordpress.com/

Translationista
Writer and translator Susan Bernofsky loves to blog about all things translation.
http://translationista.blogspot.com.ar/

Journals

L’Écran traduit : Traduction audiovisuelle
L’Écran traduit – revue sur la traduction et l’adaptation audiovisuelles [“The Translated Screen: a journal on audiovisual translation and adaptation”] is published by the French association of audiovisual translators (ATAA). L’Écran traduit is a free, online journal (directly available on the journal website, and downloadable in .pdf format). The articles are mainly in French.
http://ataa.fr/revue/

Translation & Interpreting
Translation & Interpreting is a referenced international journal that seeks to create a cross-fertilization between research, training and professional practice. It aims to publish high quality, research-based, original articles, that highlight the applications of research results to the improvement of T&I training and practice.
http://www.trans-int.org/index.php/transint

Articles

Bravissimo! The Interpreter as Performer
A couple of weeks ago someone sent me a link to a video from Spain of a talk show host conversing with a student who had called in to the program. The host asked the viewer what she was studying, and the young woman answered “traducción e interpretación” (translation and interpreting).
http://najit.org/blog/?p=1643
Technology: What’s up?

f.lux makes the color of your computer’s display adapt to the time of day, warm at night and like sunlight during the day.

It’s even possible that you’re staying up too late because of your computer. You could use f.lux because it makes you sleep better, or you could just use it just because it makes your computer look better.

More info: http://justgetflux.com/

Awesome, cloud-based, integrated software and tools for small businesses. It includes Invoicing, Accounting, Payroll, Payments and more, plus Personal Finance Software, too.

More info: https://www.waveapps.com/

Cobian Backup is an application used for back ups, that will help you to safeguard your data.

More info: http://www.cobiansoft.com

Ecofont software saves ink and toner by leaving small holes in the letters. These holes are never visible on screen and on paper our brains ignore them. Besides saving on ink, Ecofont software saves paper by printing without unnecessary images, or by printing only a small selection from a long email conversation (richtext).

More info: http://www.ecofont.com
Upcoming seminars and conferences

2014 IAPTI Annual Conference
September 20-21, 2014
Athens, Greece
Organizer: IAPTI
More info: Coming soon!

FIT XXth World Congress “Man vs. Machine? The Future of Translators, Interpreters and Terminologists”
August 4-6, 2014
Berlin, Germany
Organizer: International Federation of Translators
More info: www.fit2014.org

Subtitling and Intercultural Communication. European Languages and Beyond
February 27, 2014
Siena, Italy
Organizer: Università per Stranieri di Siena
More info: www.unistrasi.it

BP14: International conference for freelance translators and interpreters
May 2-3, 2014
Budapest, Hungary
More info: www.budapest14.com

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