

# TRANSLORIAL

JOURNAL OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION

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**Facsimile of *Translorial* vol. 1, no. 3 inserted between pages 8 and 9.**

General interest articles are available online at [www.translorial.com](http://www.translorial.com).

**TRANSLORIAL** is a publication of NCTA, a nonprofit organization for professional translators and interpreters.

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**Layout/Pre-Press**

Flight 19..... [www.flight19creative.com](http://www.flight19creative.com)

**Images** Yves Avérous, Raffaella Buschiazzo, Judit Marin, Olivia Sears, Alex Tsai, iStock-Photo.com.

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**YOUR TURN!**

*Translorial* is always looking for contributions and opinions. Articles can maintain your ATA certification and grant you a free "plug" both in the Contributors section of this page and on the *Translorial* archive page of our website. Send your ideas and/or comments to [editor@ncta.org](mailto:editor@ncta.org). Submit articles now for upcoming issues. ✓

contributors

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## letter from the president

# A CHANGE OF SEASON

BY TUOMAS KOSTIAINEN

I am writing this on a rainy Finnish summer day—a good opportunity to catch up with this and some other unfinished tasks, even though I would rather be kayaking on the lakes or biking in the woods and feeding the local mosquitoes. However, by the time we get to read this issue of *Translorial*, it's already September and time to get back to work.

As always, after the more quiet summer period, we can look forward to several exciting NCTA events. At the September General Meeting, we will hear about translation research and what's going on at Monterey. Later in the fall, we will have two workshops, Medical Translation and Trados for Beginners. And, of course, the ATA Conference will be this year in Orlando on November 5-8. Yes, it's far away, but you can see Donald Duck.

However, the big event for most of us will be the NCTA anniversary celebration in October (for details, see the announcement on page 16). I hope you have been reading the old *Translorials* that have been supplementing *Translorial* this year. I have really enjoyed them. These first *Translorials* offer us a nice window to the lives of our colleagues 30 years ago and to

the first steps of our organization on its way to become the largest ATA Chapter. Many things have changed in the lives of translators and interpreters—much as the look of the publication has changed, while some others less so, such as the need for client education. Come to celebrate NCTA's past, present, and future with us, and to meet old friends and colleagues. Don't miss this party.

Since I haven't been able to resist occasional references to my *dolce vita* in *Italia* during the past year, I feel obliged to let you know that time flies and my year there (and the *dolce vita* with it) has come to an unavoidable end, and I will be back in California a few weeks before this *Translorial* hits your mailbox. We had a wonderful year in Italy, and it again made me realize how lucky I am to have a profession like this. There aren't very many professions that can give the same level of freedom to choose the place and time of your work as that of a freelance translator.

Of course, my year wouldn't have been as wonderful without the support of the NCTA Board. I want to thank our Vice President Yves Avérous and the rest of the Board for going the extra kilometer and a half to cover the tasks that I wasn't able to do while I was away. Thank you.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the upcoming NCTA events! ✓

## continuing education points: how to

Workshops offer an affordable and local way to accrue Continuing Education (CE) points. All ATA-certified translators now need to accrue 20 CE points during each three-year period in order to maintain their certification (see <http://www.atanet.org/certification/>

[guide\\_education\\_points.php](#)). Many options are available to fulfill the requirements. If you can't come to every General Meeting, take a workshop or two each year. Just two four-hour workshops a year will give you more than enough points, at less than \$100 a year. TK

Item	Points per 3 years	Notes
ATA membership.	2	Maximum allowed per 3 years is 2 points.
NCTA General Meetings.	12	4 General Meetings (1 point each) per year for 3. years
Published article on translation/interpreting.	2	Maximum allowed per 3 years is 4 points (2 points per article).
NCTA workshop.	4 or more	One 4-hour workshop would be enough for the needed 4 points. Maximum allowed number of points is 10 per year.

## BOARD REPORTS

### At the April Board Meeting

- Reviewed attendee responses to Legal Translation and Interpretation workshop.
- Discussed upcoming CAT/NCTA collaboration for a Poetry in Translation workshop.
- Discussed progress of the 2008 NCTA Directory 2008 in PDF format.
- Advertising in *Translorial* offered to Kiva in exchange for use of their conference room for the association's Board meetings.
- Approved Treasurer's proposal to set up online banking with Wells Fargo and set up a QuickBooks online account.
- Reviewed approach to recruiting NCTA members to volunteer for special Board projects requiring extra assistance.
- Discussed May General Meeting and possible presentation by Crimson Languages.
- Approved summer picnic on the premises of Peritus Precision Translations.
- Reviewed proposed action items from new Board member in charge of Marketing and PR outreach.

### At the May Board Meeting

- Considered proposal to establish student class of membership.
- Heard report on status of shifting merchant accounts to user-friendly PayPal.
- Approved proposal to provide the Board with online viewing access to NCTA accounts so they can track their budgets.
- Reported on progress with rolling membership process and administrator's feedback and suggestions for overall process.
- Discussed possible assistance in the creation of a southern California chapter.
- Reviewed proposals for Medical Translation and Quality Assurance workshops.
- Reviewed this year's marketing goals and marketing tools.

### At the June Board Meeting

- Noted receipt of ATA chapter rebate; reviewed transfer of CDs to Wells Fargo.
- Reported on potential sources for recruiting new members.
- Reviewed plans for upcoming ATA certification examination workshop.
- Discussed plans to hold NCTA's 30th anniversary party.
- Finalized plans for annual Board retreat. ✓

# THE FALL

BY NINA BOGDAN, EDITOR

I will begin by thanking Steven Goldstein for all his hard work and continuing support while I settle in to my new position of responsibility as editor of *Translorial*. In one of my forays into the world of science fiction, I saw the oddly disturbing film *Cloverfield* and I realized that I felt a bit like that rather clumsy monster from the deep—flailing about, wreaking havoc, and frightening people, all the while thinking that it certainly can't be me causing all this chaos so it must be all these other guys running around frantically who are the problem.

In line with the theme of science fiction, our feature story this month is Hany Farag's description and explanation of the Interpreting Machine, which is science, but no longer fiction. To complement this feature, we have included the first of my two-part series on government recruitment efforts in the field of language support. The irony of millions of dollars being spent on equipment to minimize human participation in interpretation while there continues to be a notable lack of federal government coordination in hiring linguists was not lost upon me. It seems so typical in this day and age that most of our financial resources and efforts are going in the direction of mechanizing and standardizing while ignoring the bountiful human resources around us. In the drive for efficiency and standardization, the "humanness" of language is left behind.

For relief from such concerns, we turn to poetry and offer Anne Milano Appel's coverage of poet and translator W.S. Merwin's talk at the Center for the Literary Arts as well as Norma Kaminsky's report on professor of poetry Sidney Wade's workshop on the art of poetry translation.

Judit Marin and Curtis Draves report to us about the CHIA and NAJIT conferences respectively while Ramiro Arango provides his perspective both on the history of NCTA and his experiences in the translation community over the years. Once again we are including a special insert of a past *Translorial* issue as we continue our coverage of NCTA's 30th anniversary. Mark your calendars for the upcoming celebration of this event in October. ♥

# WELCOME

The following members have joined NCTA between April 1 and June 30, 2008:

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## UNI-CODES

Find the key to the two letter codes that designate each new member's working language at <http://snipurl.com/1giws>.

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As you may already know, *Translorial* is trying to archive the greatest part of its 30 years of editorial content via *Translorial.com*. Thanks to the help of a few volunteers, we now have 5 years of content online, but *Translorial.com* is currently seeking a team leader and also needs help to log the articles. We are using

one of the most popular blogging platforms in the world, Wordpress, to keep our archives in check—because blogs are the easiest databases of written content you can find. If you join our team and help us, you will learn how to use that platform. So email us now at [publications@ncta.org](mailto:publications@ncta.org) and get in on the action! YA

# DOES UNCLE SAM REALLY WANT YOU?

The commercial world of translation and interpreting can be a harsh taskmaster for the independent contractor. In this two-part series, we ask: Is the government any better? BY NINA BOGDAN

Part I: NCTA member Farah Arjang's attendance at a U.S. Government/ATA-sponsored conference yields little more than questions.

Those who choose to work as freelancers may revel in a life of no bosses, no mandatory business attire (every day is casual Friday!) and the freedom to work at 2 AM, but they are also at the mercy of demanding agencies that care only about the bottom line and non-paying customers who disappear as soon as a job is delivered. Linguists also frequently find themselves to be convenient targets of misplaced blame (everyone knew that it was really that pesky diplomat who misspoke; not the interpreter), and of comments such as, "If you're such a good translator, why do you need a dictionary?" or, my all-time personal favorite, "You're a translator? That's a pretty easy job, right?"

## Recruitment efforts

In view of such instability and lack of appreciation, when an entity as large and prestigious as the U.S. government puts out a call for language support, the hearts of many an independent contractor may well flutter in anticipation of steady work, a lovely lucrative contract, or even a regular salary. After all, why should Blackwater contract employees be the only ones to take advantage of government largesse?

The unfortunate reality is, however, that the U.S. government has made absolutely no progress in developing any kind of coherent federal policy that addresses the need for unified standards and, by extension, a reasonable application process for language-related jobs that would eliminate duplication of effort and streamline the process of creating a national professional corps of linguists. In addition, the government makes what can only be described as half-hearted and lackadaisical attempts to recruit linguists.

Every agency worth its salt now has its own website—the FBI, the NSA, the USDS and the NVTC. When visiting these sites, hopeful linguists are met with heartfelt



statements encouraging them to apply but if the process is, in fact, initiated, months may go by before there is any response or acknowledgement at all. Once started, the application process for any government linguist position is lengthy, intrusive and grueling. This may be a necessary evil given the work in question but government applicant recruiters are unforgivably coy when they are asked for clarifications.

## Conference in D.C.

This fact was brought home to Farah Arjang, an English<>Farsi/Dari interpreter and translator, at a conference geared toward recruiting language professionals and held jointly by the U.S. government and ATA in Washington, D.C. in April of 2008. As an independent contractor Ms. Arjang was hopeful that such a conference would provide all the information necessary to help navigate the application process for winning a contract with a government agency, ideas on how to write proposals, or a discussion about the topic of working for the government on a contractual basis. After all, the FBI, NVTC, Department of State, District of Columbia Superior Court, U.S. Postal Service and the IRS were all represented. Unfortunately, information provided was limited to "the government telling the outside world, namely translators and interpreters in this case," general information about the organizations themselves and "nothing beyond" what is already available on agency websites.

Questions about the application process

frequently revolve around the issue of dual citizenship and how this affects the applicant's chances in getting a security clearance. According to Ms. Arjang, discussion of this issue "was avoided even though it was brought up several times" and although the question was never answered directly, Ms. Arjang felt that it was clear that only people willing to give up other citizenship would have a chance of getting any work. Jeffrey Robinson, Director of the NVTC, said that for people with dual citizenship "opportunities [are] very limited." Such an answer to what is really a very key and fundamental concern, begs the question—why encourage linguists to spend their hard-earned dollars on travel, accommodations, and the conference to find out: exactly nothing?

This frustrating indifference, combined with the lack of coordination among agencies, makes an already cumbersome and inefficient process torturous at best. Perhaps worst of all: although every government agency requires the applicant to pass a language test, no government agency acknowledges any other agency's certification. In Part 2, we explore this issue further. ✓

Read the full version article online at [translorial.com](http://translorial.com)

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## POETRY TRANSLATION: AGONY OR ECSTASY?

Translators and poets met at our latest workshop in May to explore the topic of poetry translation and, perhaps, to dispute Robert Frost's dictum that "Poetry is what gets lost in translation." BY NORMA KAMINSKY

Sidney Wade, professor of translation and creative writing at the University of Florida in Gainesville, a poet and translator of Turkish poetry, was the presenter at this workshop held at the Mechanics Institute. Under her guidance participants actively and enthusiastically explored a number of issues relevant to the art of translating poetry. Professor Wade began her presentation with the assertion that there is a great need, as well as an excellent reception, of poetry in translation.

### Age Old Questions

During the course of the workshop some of the topics discussed were: Is the translation of poetry possible? Should the spirit or the words of a poem be translated? How does the translator deal with rhythm, rhyme, and form in a different language? Will the music of the original language be lost in the translation? Is translation really an "imitation," as Robert Lowell conceived it? Must the translator be a poet herself in order to translate poetry? And, on a more technical note, "What the devil is a trot?" Well, the only question that was answered in any definitive way was the last one (a trot—also known as a pony or mule—is a literal word-for-word translation, the first rough draft to make sure the translator

understands the basic meanings of all the utterances in the poem). The many other questions were all subject to debate, opinion, nuances, and a lot of "depends."

For example, there was no consensus regarding the use of footnotes to explain culture-specific meanings and connotations; some participants thought that notes are essential to convey the meaning, while others found that notes interrupt the flow of the poem. There was clear agreement, however, about the idea that a translation of a poem must be able to stand alone as a poem itself, regardless of the translator's decisions in terms of meanings, form, rhyme, and so forth. The translated poem should have a music of its own even if this music will, perforce, sound different from that of the original poem. Despite the lack of definitive answers, or perhaps because of this absence, varied opinions were expressed, and some opinions were even changed.

After refreshments graciously provided by Rafaella Buschizzo, two courageous participants followed the presenter in reading their own poem translations into English and in hearing constructive criticism from the group. The interaction and exchange of ideas between poets, translators, and those who practice both arts was



Professor Sidney Wade listening to comments from workshop attendees

especially fruitful, as it brought to the table differences and similarities in approaches, perspectives, and practices.

The workshop was fun but, more importantly, the gathering was inspiring for all participants. It was also very meaningful that the Center for the Art of Translation (CAT), oriented exclusively toward literary translation, and NCTA, with a more technical and commercial orientation, could join efforts and make this event a success. The event was possible largely thanks to CAT's founder and president, Olivia Sears, and, of course, it would not have been such a success without the vibrant participation of all attendees. ✓



Workshop participants exchange opinions about poetry translation

## FALL EVENTS

### Medical Translation Panel

SATURDAY OCTOBER 25, 1-4 PM  
MECHANICS' INSTITUTE LIBRARY,  
57 POST STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

This workshop will include a panel of speakers who will discuss business, regulatory and linguistic aspects of medical translation. The presenters will be Norma Kaminsky, Karl Kaussen, and Kai Simonsen. In the business section Norma Kaminskiy will discuss freelancing and terminology research resources for the medical translator. Karl Kaussen will cover linguistic aspects including the concept

that the translator's primary functions are the acts of deciphering the message and rendering the information. On regulatory issues, Kai Simonsen will give a brief overview of the key requirements for labeling in major international markets, and how these requirements impact the work of translators and language service providers.

### Trados for Beginners

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 12-4 PM  
MECHANICS' INSTITUTE LIBRARY,  
57 POST STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

The presenter of this workshop will be Tuomas Kostianen, NCTA President. Tuomas has given many Trados workshops both for beginners and advanced users. ✓

## A TALK BY W. S. MERWIN

On April 15, poet and translator W. S. Merwin was the featured speaker at the Center for the Art of Translation's Lit & Lunch program. BY ANNE MILANO APPEL

In its announcement, CAT described W.S. Merwin as follows: "One of the most influential poets of the late-twentieth century, W. S. Merwin has won innumerable honors including the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Well-known for his poetry since the 1960's, he is also one of America's most recognizable translators, working with Spanish, Latin, and French poetry [and I would add, Italian]. An environmental activist in Hawaii, where he lives, his recent work has been influenced by themes of environmental preservation and deep ecology."

### What is Poetry?

Speaking to a packed house at the Minna Gallery in San Francisco, Merwin began by talking about the impossibility of making a translation, and about the impossibility of writing poetry in general. "Poetry is not about what can be said," he told his audience -- prose is about that. Poetry, instead, is about what can't be said. With regard to impossible ventures, he gave the example of the bee: any scientist will tell you that the bee can't fly. But since the bee doesn't know that it is scientifically impossible for it to fly, it goes on flying blithely, not caring that its fragile wings should not be able to support its weight in the air.

Translation, too, is impossible. Musing about the impossibility of substituting a word in one language for that in another (the French word "pain", for example, means a very specific kind of bread to a Frenchman, it can't be anything else), Merwin went on to reflect on what gets lost or left behind in the process. In his view the decision on what gets left behind is, or should be, a rational one. Generally speaking, it is the formal aspects that are dispensed with. Rhyme for example. While some languages, like Italian, naturally lend themselves to rhyming, English just doesn't have that many words that rhyme. To force English to rhyme is to create a tension that doesn't exist in the original poem.

Talking about the advice given to him early on by the poet Ezra Pound (while

decrying Pound's anti-semitism, which he is glad he was unaware of at the time), Merwin reported that Pound counseled him to write on a daily basis: "You should write every day. You should practice it." Pound also told him that he should translate and that he should get as close to the original as he could: to maintain "the greatest possible fidelity of the original, including its sounds." The impossible again! Still,

*"Poetry is not  
about what can be  
said ... poetry,  
instead, is about  
what can't be said"*

there's the bee who keeps flying... The value of translation is that it sharpens a writer's awareness of the possibilities of his own language. By translating, Pound pointed out to him, you learn English better. In the end, Merwin said, the poem you produce is and isn't yours: "it is your work, and it isn't your work".

### Dante's Purgatorio

Merwin went on to read several poems, including one by William Stafford about translation, entitled "Walking the Borders". Finally he came to the subject that had drawn me (one of the dantisti he referred to) to attend the program that day: his translation of Dante's Purgatorio. Explaining why he had chosen the second section of Dante's poem, the one that generally gets the least attention, Merwin said (as he also states in his Foreword to the work) that it was partly because "only Purgatory happens on the earth, as our lives do, with our feet on the ground, crossing a beach, climbing a mountain." Despite his fascination and reverence for the Commedia, Merwin exhibited a droll sense of humor in referring to Beatrice, whom he described as never missing an



Poet and translator W.S. Merwin

opportunity to lecture Dante the pilgrim. "Beatrice was a big disappointment", he told us, adding that she always struck him as "Thomas Aquinas in a nightie".

Though he did not say so, perhaps the fact that the Purgatorio is about hope (absent in the Inferno, while the Paradiso is about fulfillment) accounts in part for Merwin's choice. After all, he had "even lectured on Dante and demonstrated the impossibility of translating him", as he writes in the Foreword. And yet the bee goes on flying: "Translation of poetry is an enterprise that is always in certain respects impossible," Merwin continues, "and yet on occasion it has produced something new, something else, of value, and sometimes, on the other side of a sea change, it has brought up poetry again." It has emerged *a riveder le stelle*, "to see once more the stars," as Dante would say. ✓

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## MEETINGS



After the traditional New Member Orientation session opening our General Meeting, and a review of NCTA's current activities by Events Director Raffaella Buschiazzo, SCORE speaker Katherine D. Sullivan took center stage.



Secretary Stafford Hemmer reprised his role as MC; Administrator Steve Goldstein stopped for his last bow before handing the floor over to Katherine D. Sullivan.

# SCORE WITH BEST BUSINESS PRACTICES

**SCORE volunteer Katherine D. Sullivan speaks at the NCTA May 2008 meeting about how to start up and successfully run a small business.** BY RAFFAELLA BUSCHIAZZO

The spring General Meeting took place on May 10, 2008 at the LGBT conference center in downtown San Francisco. Association Secretary Stafford Hemmer opened the meeting at 1:30 p.m. after the customary orientation session for new members presented by NCTA Vice President Yves Avérous. Stafford provided the latest news, promoted the new membership directory, talked about the full calendar of events that the Association offers regularly—upcoming workshops and monthly happy hours in Oakland and SF—and transmitted his enthusiasm about the major event of the year that we are preparing for the fall: the celebration of the NCTA's 30th anniversary. A survey was also sent to our members in order to get their suggestions regarding this event.

## SCORE

We are always looking for useful topics to present to our members (please feel free to contact us with hints at [events@ncta.org](mailto:events@ncta.org)), and for this meeting we got in touch with the local chapter of SCORE ([www.score.org](http://www.score.org)), Counselors to America's Small Business. SCORE is a non-profit organization dedicated to the formation, growth, and success of small businesses, provid-

ing free and confidential public service through 389 chapter offices and 10,500 volunteer counselors with over 600 business skills.

We contacted Katherine D. Sullivan and asked her to present an overview of best business practices. K.D. Sullivan has volunteered with SCORE-San Francisco since 2000 and served as Chapter Chair. She is an internationally recognized authority on proofreading, as well as an authority on entrepreneurial business. She is the author and coauthor of a number of books including *Go Ahead...Proof It! A Cure for the Common Word*, and of the upcoming *In the Driver's Seat: A Roadmap to Freelancing*. She recently sold the proofreading and editorial agency she founded, and is currently creating three new businesses.

## Best Business Practices

The presentation highlighted six main topics and provided an overview of what you need to set up a business and maintain it. The first step, according to K.D. Sullivan, is to develop a business plan to help clarify your ideas, get organized, provide a roadmap, and make a scorecard to measure your success. As she pointed out, it is better to make mistakes on paper than with

money! A business plan should include a definition of the product to sell, the target market, how to reach it, evaluation of the competition, how to operate and to structure your business, how much money you need, what the success factors are, and when you expect to make a profit.

Every business involves legal definitions and requirements. K.D. Sullivan explained how you should consider liability, tax basis/filings, profit allocation/distribution, and management allocation. She underlined the legal differences between employees and independent contractors and provided several guidelines to keep contractor status: Retain control of your work, look like an independent business meaning use a fictitious business name instead of your name, maintain a separate bank account only for your business, obtain licenses and permits necessary for your profession, carry a business insurance, don't accept employment benefits and a few others.

Another must-have when you have your own business is insurance. K.D. Sullivan suggests having liability insurance above all to protect you from errors you may make.

Our speaker then discussed the issue of bookkeeping and noted that when she



Editor Juliet Viola was at the welcoming table where Editor Michael Helm met Nina Bogdan.



## A SUNNY SPRING PICNIC

BY SHARLEE MERNER BRADLEY

It was a beautiful day in June for NCTA's Annual picnic. Instead of a public park venue, Dagmar Dolatschko graciously hosted us at the new office of her translation services company, Peritus Precision Translations, at the port of Redwood City, on the Peninsula, south of San Francisco. Situated in an office park right on the Bay, on the ground floor of an attractive building, the office was all set up to receive members and their families for an enjoyable and relaxing afternoon. Wide-open French doors gave onto a lawn just across the road from the Bay, letting in a pleasant breeze and views of passing boats.

Dagmar, Raffaella, her husband Marc, and Paula arrived an hour before the beginning of the event to set up tables for the food supplied by our hosts and more brought by the international crowd. We enjoyed delicious dishes from Egypt (baklava), Korea (kim chee), Spain (tortilla española) and Italy (vegan beans), among others. There were also many trays with all sort of fresh fruit: Giant strawberries, juicy

pineapple, cherries, slices of cantaloupe and watermelon.

NCTA members and their families who attended included Raffaella Buschiazzo, our efficient organizer, and her husband Marc, Paula Dieli, Michael Schubert, Yves Avérous, Norma Kaminsky and her friend Jeff, Sonia Wichmann and her daughter Elena, Jacki Noh and her boyfriend Robert, Luba Chernov, Renate Chestnut, Hany Farag, Daniel Kim, Bob Killingsworth, Robert Brara with his wife, Sharlee Bradley and her friend Fred Avilez, and many others. It was also very nice meeting part of the Peritus "Crew" Madhura Barwe, Simone Fresinger and Yiman Liu who joined the event. Good to see new faces at our events!

Everything was perfect: excellent company, great food, beautiful venue. Small groups of attendees took advantage of the warm weather and went for a short walk exploring the surroundings.

If you missed the picnic this year, there'll be another one next year! ✓

was running her business, automatically-generated reports, created when using accounting software, helped her break her activities down into subcategories. This made it easier to know on which areas of her business she needed to focus more. K.D. Sullivan discussed types of deductions we have the right to make and recommended using a business credit card to keep track of expenses. This simplifies bookkeeping enormously.

K.D. Sullivan continued her presentation by talking about marketing. The concept behind marketing is the same as it was years ago when she started her career—it is an ongoing process to grow your business—but naturally the means have evolved. The Internet offers ever easier and cheaper ways to promote your business. When she started creating her Web site, she looked around and picked up whatever she liked on the Web and adapted it to her business. Email is another way to market your business.

Our speaker concluded her presentation with a discussion of ways to finance your business in order to expand it. Micro loans are good types of financing, whereas credit cards are highly discouraged.

I would like to sincerely thank K.D. Sullivan on behalf of the NCTA for having very successfully covered material sufficient for several multi-hour workshops in a single and very engaging presentation. ✓





## THE RISE OF THE MACHINE

**How close are we to the reality of a Star Trek-type of Universal Communicator? The U.S. Government is making a serious effort to get us there. BY HANY FARAG**

In the December 2007 issue of *Translorial*, Paula Dieli, in her article about Machine Translation (MT), concluded that MT is no longer the funny substitution of words in one language for words in another and that MT, according to Google, is based on a data-driven approach. MT also combines linguistic typology, phrase recognition, translation of idioms and isolation of anomalies. However MT does not have to be limited to one form of implementation centered on documents and word files. If it is combined with a system that converts natural speech of one language into text, with the output text fed into MT for translation to another language, and the translated text is then converted back into speech, we will have an automated speech translation system. This is, as I prefer to call it, an Interpreter Machine (IM).

Automated speech translation, as seen in films like *Star Wars*, is interesting but fictitious. So why do linguists need to know about the Interpreter Machine? The answer is: because the Defense Advance Research Project Agency (DARPA), a part of the U.S. Defense Department, is working on it quite seriously. DARPA is responsible for the development of new technology for the military and while its focus since its creation in 1958 was on military

applications, many R&D by-products have found their way into ordinary life, resulting in significant changes in how we live. It is hard to imagine how the Internet would have been invented without DARPA's work on networks and hypertext markup language. Historically, most technology breakthroughs that have occurred were first made in R&D for space and defense. In regard to the IM, R&D is moving along quickly and the results are periodically evaluated by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

### First efforts after 9/11

Following the events of September 11, 2001 and the military offensive in Afghanistan and Iraq, a new strategic language demand materialized. To help American forces communicate with the local population, DARPA initiated the TRANSTAC program (Spoken Language Communication and Translation System for Tactical Use). By late 2006, two models of Interpreter Machines became available for use. IBM developed MASTOR, a Multilingual Automatic Speech Translator, while the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) produced IRAQCOMM. Both machines are currently being utilized in Iraq. The Interpreter Machine achieves its objective by inte-

grating three technological functions: Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), followed by Machine Translation (MT), and finally Text-to-Speech Synthesis (TTS). Each function has existed independently for some time, but the IM is credited with combining these three technologies into one cohesive whole. It is likely that synergy resulting from cooperation in MT, ASR and TTS will positively impact each individual technology and its application.

### What is ASR?

Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) is the process of converting a speech signal to a sequence of words by means of an algorithm executed in a computer program. This ASR algorithm is based on a statistical model called the Hidden Markov model (HMM), which is helpful in analyzing pattern recognition in speech, as well as in handwriting, biometric data, and other applications. The performance of speech recognition systems is evaluated in terms of accuracy and speed. Nowadays, ASR, as used in commercial dictation applications, exceeds 95% accuracy. In field-oriented applications, ASR performance is enhanced through speaker adaptation, microphone adaptation, end-of-speech detection, distributed speech recognition, and noise suppression.

In the last few years, ASR applications have included voice dialing, call routing, simple data entry, preparation of struc-

tured documents, and content-based audio search. As we all know, large-scale customer service is based on interactive voice response, which is quite successful in a controlled environment. In the IM, the speech recognition function is performed in a realistic and uncontrolled environment. Accuracy must be higher, since errors will be propagated through the consecutive functions in MT and TTS.

## Synthesizing speech

After ASR produces text, the MT function begins and in its usual routine will translate text from source into target language. However, there can be a marked difference between written and spoken speech, depending on language, and, in some cases, as in Arabic, the differences can be significant.

Once the translation is completed, the output in the target language is fed to the Text-to-Speech synthesizer. TTS has a long history: more than two centuries ago, an acoustic mechanical speech machine was built to model the human vocal tract. Computers were later used to synthesize speech. Successful synthesizers produce an output that is both intelligible and closely resembles human speech.

There are two fundamental approaches in TTS technology: Concatenate synthesis and Formant synthesis. In simple terms, Concatenate synthesis work is based on a large database of stored speech samples while Formant synthesis creates a waveform of artificial speech. Many websites offer demo samples allowing people to synthesize a short volume of text into natural speech. People can choose gender, as well as a speaker accent, for example, producing English with a German, French, or even a "cowboy" accent. Commercial software programs synthesize speech to user requirements adequate for video clips, power point presentations, games and entertainment. The Interpreter Machine model built by SRI includes a TTS function by Cepstral, a company known for providing spoken delivery of information. IBM's MASTOR is a software application that performs real-time bidirectional translation. Software may be embedded in various platforms and operating systems, including PDAs, PCs and laptops.

Another language-oriented program from DARPA is called GALE (Global

Autonomous Language Exploitation). This program attempts to address the lack of qualified (U.S.) linguists and analysts who know strategically important languages like Mandarin and Arabic. GALE's objective is to develop a software program by 2010 that will be able to translate Arabic and Mandarin with 90 to 95% accuracy. The focus of GALE is to translate, transcribe, distill, and extract actionable information, filtering through huge volumes of foreign media to define what actually needs to be translated by humans.

Before GALE, MT accuracy was about 55% on structured text, and 35% on structured speech. One year later, the accuracy on Arabic structured text climbed to 75% of 90% of documents tested. Speech accuracy increased to 65% on 80% of the

## *GALE's objective is to develop a software program by 2010 that will be able to translate Arabic and Mandarin with 90 to 95% accuracy.*

segments tested. The ultimate goal is 95% accuracy on 95% of documents and 90% on speech segments.

## The Machine in Iraq

The Interpreter Machine delivered to Iraq enables the process of having the spoken English of service personnel translated automatically into Iraqi Arabic, and to have the spoken Iraqi responses translated into English.

In the summer of 2007, six research teams comprising university labs and vendors participated in evaluations of the IM. These were conducted in a lab-controlled environment, in the field, and in offline mode. Pre-recorded audio files were fed into the IM. Fifteen Marines and 10 Arabic speakers took part in the evaluation session which centered on determining how many pieces of information a Marine would be able to retrieve from foreign language speakers while interacting only through the Interpreter Machine.

According to the military, the evaluation was a huge success, with 160 scenarios being run over the course of one week. The test and evaluation conducted by NIST provided DARPA with statistically significant data that identified TRANSTAC systems improvements over time. The evaluation measured system capability in speech recognition, machine translation, noise robustness, user interface and efficient performance on a limited hardware platform. Outdoor evaluation included background noises.

The results of this effort go far beyond just the Arabic language. Once the technology is fully developed, DARPA hopes to be able to develop an automatic translator system in a new language within 90 days of receiving a request for that language.

In theory, based on public information about the IM, the following is envisioned:

- When a human interpreter is faced with a word or phrase he or she does not completely understand, the interpreter's response is to ask for clarification or repetition. The IM can minimize errors by establishing a level of certainty and also apply this rule: Don't guess, just ask.
- The IM should provide a level of speaker recognition to reflect input gender and number of speakers in corresponding unique output channels.
- Sensitivity should be measured by change in output (translated speech) compared with a change in input (spoken language), even if the message content is the same.
- The benchmark of IM functionality and performance should be in comparison to a human interpreter whose response is spontaneous and reflexive. It is possible to count how many times the interpreter will intervene to correct the IM when they are working as a team.

## Future developments

Will the interpreter machine meet expectations in the battlefield? Can the machine be used in other fields? Can the IM application complement instead of compete with a human interpreter? What about European efforts such as the TC-Star project? Or Beijing's offer of automated speech translation in the 2008 Olympics?

Good questions all, but this is another story. ✓

# THE TRANSLORIAL TOOL KIT

**The Tool Kit is an online newsletter that comes to its subscribers' mailboxes twice a month. In *Translorial*, we offer a quarterly digest of Jost's most helpful tips from the past season.** BY JOST ZETSCHE © 2008 INTERNATIONAL WRITERS' GROUP, COMPILED BY YVES AVÉROUS

## Similis for Free

Lingua et Machina (<http://www.lingua-et-machina.com/>), the maker of the TEnT Similis, is offering its tool for free in a limited yet functional version. I have praised Similis in the past, in particular for its term extraction capability in the languages it supports (English, Dutch, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and French) where it achieves a much higher accuracy than any other tool that I am aware of. It is also a full-fledged translation tool with a translation memory and dictionary component. However, it is by no means a small download and installation. The limitations of this free edition include a block on most features concerning data exchange (TMX, Trados, CSV) and you can process only the first 10,000 words in each document.

## Microsoft Reaches Out

Most of you will have read about the Language Portals that Microsoft has opened in German, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Korean, and of course English at <http://www.microsoft.com/language/en/us/default.mspx>. After being a little irritated that they are construed so they don't work correctly in Firefox or Opera, I spent some time actually looking at the content and liked some of it a lot. For instance, you can search terms from English to 100 languages or language variants within the Microsoft glossaries (the search URL is <http://www.microsoft.com/language/en/us/search.mspx?sString=TERM&langID=XX-XX> for tools like IntelliWebSearch), or you can download the style guides for 35 languages (which many of us had anyway, but it's nice to get the latest version). What I liked as well was the fact that there are links to non-Microsoft events and websites (I missed one to the Tool Kit, though ;-). It's also positive that the language portals in the different languages are not translations of each other but original portals (including blogs, target country-specific

events and website links) in the respective languages.

And there are some attempts at "crowd-sourcing." There is a terminology feedback link for all the languages and the Windows Live Terminology Feedback Project for 38 languages allows users to comment on terms that are to be included in future projects. Let's see how that shapes up. So far (at least in German) there has been fairly little participation but I can certainly see that overall this is a positive move.



## AutoStart Juggling

For most experienced computer users, how to control the programs that are started automatically when you boot your computer is old news. But there is a relatively new and completely free program offered by Microsoft for any version of Windows that gives you a fairly good overview of what these culprits are that make your computer so sluggish: Autoruns for Windows (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb963902.aspx>). What I like about this program is that it is really very easy to install and use, and it gives some information about what the processes and programs do that are started automatically. And if the explanations sound too cryptic, you can always check <http://www.sysinfo.org/startuplist.php>.

## Anyone Certified Out There?

The Institute of Localisation Professionals (TILP) is offering the first certification

level (of three) for localization professionals (CLP)—see <http://www.tilponline.org/clp.shtml>. The prices for participation vary radically according to the country where you live (in Africa and South America it's 200 Euro, in Western Europe and North America 800 Euro, and in Eastern Europe 500 Euro). Considering that the admission fee includes free freelance/translator editions of SDL Trados and Alchemy Catalyst (worth about 1300 Euro on their own!) along with the 10 online localization modules, a four-day onsite class, and SDL Trados certification, it's something that you might want to consider. It's especially tailored to those who are "beginners and those who are interested in learning about the work, the processes and the tools and technologies used in this fast paced and innovative industry" (quote from their website) and who live in or close to one of the countries where the onsite classes take place, i.e., Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Spain, or the United States.

## OmegaT

You think they named OmegaT (<http://sourceforge.net/projects/omegat/>) as they did to appease both the little- and big-endians? Be that as it may, there is a nice and interesting article on OmegaT on Corinne McKay's blog (<http://thoughtson-translation.com/2008/04/11/omegat-a-free-and-very-useful-tent/>). Corinne is an avid Linux user and she stumbled on OmegaT (again) after she had issues with Wordfast and Heartsome. Now she raves about the simplicity and speed of OmegaT. OmegaT is probably the best-known open-source TEnT that runs on Java, i.e., is supported by Windows, Mac, and Linux computers. A real boost to the OmegaT community was the recent adoption of the tool by at least one language team at Sun (read at <http://tinyurl.com/5ojn2r>), partly in preference over Sun's own open-source TEnT Open Language Tools (<https://open-language-tools.dev.java.net/>). ✓

**THE TRANSMUG REPORT**

**SLEEPY HOLLOW**

With 86 members registered on its list, one would think that TransMUG has more than enough members to host lively discussions on ones experience as a translator on a Mac. When they sign up, the new members always sound eager to participate, but in the end, rare are those who initiate a discussion. Maybe it's because may of us are already members of MacLingua and get enough techie talk there to abstain on our own list or maybe we are too busy to bother.

Still, I would be glad to see little debates on the virtues of using a laptop as your main computer, for example, or comparing Parallels and Fusion for the best virtualization experience, now that the competition has heated up again.

Besides making discounts available to its members on hardware, software and books, TransMUG offers one thing no other Mac linguist lists: real Mac user group meetings 4 times a year, generally just before the NCTA general meeting at 11:30 a.m., at the friendly 3 Dollar Bill Café, on the ground floor of The



Center. For our next meeting on September 13, our main door prize will be Freeway 5

Express, a smart web design tool to create your site following desktop publishing principles rather than coding principles.

Among other issues, we will discuss the re-launch of .Mac under the MobileMe brand. This is a much bigger deal than it may seem. Between the closed service that is Microsoft Exchange for the enterprise on one hand, and the ever-evolving ad-sponsored Google Apps on the other hand, Apple is bringing some Mac goodness with the sleekest web applications on the market. Now, the \$99 plan is starting to look like a good deal. Discover why, tell us about your experience with the switch if you are a former .Mac member, or why you would still stay away from MobileMe, when we meet next Saturday, September 13, at 11:30 a.m. at the 3 Dollar Bill Café (see page 16 for directions and details). *YA*

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## THAT WAS THEN, CONT.

We continue our look back at some of the defining moments of the early NCTA. From child organization to a model local translators association—an early member takes us down memory lane... BY RAMIRO ARANGO, NCTA CLASS OF 1980

Belonging ... It's not exactly easy to remember (correctly and in good detail) things that happened some 30 years ago, no matter how healthy one's memory still seems to be. But it's not exactly easy either to ignore Steve Goldstein's kind and honorable invitation to try. Then again, it's not exactly easy to forget the general feeling of goodwill associated with NCTA. I know—a good feeling towards an association? Well, I don't have to think about it twice: the answer is certainly yes.

Despite NCTA being basically the organization that propelled me to the little fame I may enjoy today among translators in the U.S. (at least by the now old-guard), I keep finding that whenever I think back on it, it's people—not organizational issues—that come first to mind: from the time in 1980 when I went high up in the Wells Fargo Bank building to visit the President (wow!) of the translators association, who turned out to be none other than the cheerful and joke-telling Tom Bauman, all the way through the farewell lunch—complete with presents!—bestowed on me by a very nice group of members in 1986, it was definitely a winning situation for me. There are several names that keep going through my mind, but I'm hesitant to name them lest I forget as many ...

But another thing that I can't forget is the emotion I felt in belonging for the first time to an association of my brethren in my very first year in the U.S. as an adult (I had been born in the United States, but moved away with my family when I was five). As with every other newcomer from Latin America, I was working as a waiter in a café, although also studying at San Francisco State College (now SFSU); all that, plus the fact that at the time I was just an into-Spanish-only translator made it all the more exciting in my head (I can now gloat of into-English translation—with native-language editing—and two-way interpretation between English, Spanish, and Portuguese). What with all that organizing, Translorial editing, inter-

esting meetings, and lovely reunions at members' houses, it was a most defining part of my life—unbeknownst to me at the time, of course ...

To jog my memories of those times, I've just dusted off a folder with a few old *Translorials* I've kept ever since, and surely there we are: Fred Schodt in all the glory of his cartoons; Edith Fried with her precise, to-the-point articles on language and translation; Ilse Sternberger showing her erudition; Inés Swaney, always a leader on matters interpreting; Hélène Riddle,

*I can't forget ... the emotion I felt in belonging for the first time to an association of my brethren...*

María Boden, Alcides Rodríguez-Nieto, Lesley Salas (with whom I translated a very interesting and enduring series of musings about translation by world-famous authors), and my very own name splattered all over them (maybe that's why I kept those few copies) as Vice President, a position that kept me engaged and involved. I keep thinking I could boast more of having been nominated for President just as I was leaving California, but then the breaks; I had to go East, young man, to New York, and then back to Colombia, and then to Brazil, and now back to the chain gang, as it were, my Colombia. And even though I said I wouldn't mention names because there were too many to remember, well, there are some I just can't leave out: Lucy Wait (whom I still correspond with), Grace Mendoza, Alexander Shkolnik, Deolinda Adao ... Later on I made the acquaintance of Tony Roder, who was very active in FLEFO, that legendary, model translators forum on CompuServe.

But for all of the people, there were seemingly as many translators' issues worth mentioning, because we lived through

all of them: the merger with ATA, the mingling with agencies' representatives, the Directory and the Telephone Referral Service, the concerted outreach effort, and the constant connections with other associations such as PEN, the California Court Interpreters Association, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and others. And, of course, our many activities, which always included having worthwhile speakers and topics at our meetings: from how to sell oneself, manage our taxes, and write contracts, to the intricacies of literary translation, court interpreting, and more.

Of course, the way ATA conducts these kinds of activities nowadays, and the way these events have grown ever since, may seem to dwarf our early efforts in our eyes. But for NCTA at the time—a child organization managed by beginner officials—it was quite a building effort in the days when translators associations in the U.S. were scarce and inexperienced.

On this, the 30th anniversary of NCTA, I want to congratulate you for having kept alive the spirit of those days through all these years, and for further building on that projection of a model local translators association that you are perceived to be. And, with it, my wish to give back a little of all I received from you. Thank you! ♥

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## REPORT FROM THE “BURGH”

The NAJIT conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was a huge professional and social success. BY CURTIS DRAVES

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) conference was held this year on the weekend of May 16-18 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

My colleague and I, Fanny Suarez, went to the conference together as representatives of the California Federation of Interpreters (CFI). CFI is both a professional association and union for legal interpreters statewide. The NAJIT board asked us to bring our video of the Romero Senate Hearing from last fall. A result of the strike in LA courts, the hearing is full of very articulate testimony from some key figures in Los Angeles legal circles about the importance of quality interpretation in the field of criminal justice.

NAJIT scheduled long skills-building seminars on Friday. Since I organize continuing education for CFI, I popped in

to hear a few minutes of just about every session the whole weekend. On Friday I spent most of my time at Agustin de la Mora’s seminar on consecutive note-taking. Language-specific instruction for several languages other than Spanish (Korean, Russian and Vietnamese)—a dire need in the world of court interpreting—was also provided. Talks on Saturday included “Interpreting in the Diplomatic Arena” by Jacki Noh, a comparative analysis of criminal law and semantics for a variety of often debated terms by Sandro Tomasi, a presentation on Mexican Spanish by Dennis McKenna, a talk by Alexander Rainoff about proverbs, and a harrowing slide show on meth drug labs.

The weekend has a friendly community feel and I’m glad I attended! ✓

Read the full version article online at [translorial.com](http://translorial.com)



Above, a view of the “Burgh” at night and members of the interpreters’ community socializing between sessions at the NAJIT conference.

## THE APRIL CHIA CONFERENCE

The California Healthcare Interpreting Association holds its 8th Annual Conference BY JUDIT MARIN

The theme of this year’s Conference was “From Grass Roots to Redwoods: the Growth of Healthcare Interpreting in California.” Elizabeth Nguyen, CHIA’s newly elected President, welcomed the nearly 215 attendees and spoke of the challenges facing the health care community. The conference took place at the Holiday Inn in Costa Mesa and was hosted by the Los Angeles Chapter headed by co-chairs Lourdes Cerna and Nick Arce. The conference program offered a rich variety of seminars and workshops covering a wide range of topics.

On Friday, April 11th, there were two afternoon seminars: “Expanding Our World: Interpreting for Languages of Limited Diffusion” and “Evaluating Current Interpreting Training Models: Developing a New Educational Paradigm.” The first seminar was led by Janet Erickson-Johnson and Linda Joyce who presented a session

about challenges faced by the health care community due to the dramatic increase in numbers of immigrants and refugees. In addition, Tatiana Vizcaino-Stewart, Marylyn Mochel, and Fatima Nunez de Jaimes offered a comprehensive seminar for health care interpreter trainers. Two more workshops completed the first day of the Conference: a session on interpreting in the mental health field and a separate session on interpreting in correctional facilities and other dangerous settings.

On Saturday past CHIA Officers were honored at the General Membership meeting and the day continued with 17 more workshops.

As always the annual CHIA Educational Conference served as a great venue for learning, networking, and celebrating our profession. ✓

Read the full version article online at [translorial.com](http://translorial.com)



Attendees and presenters at the 8th Annual CHIA conference which took place in Costa Mesa last April.

# TWO EVENTS YOU DO NOT WANT TO MISS!

## FALL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2008 • 1:00 PM THE CENTER • 1800 MARKET ST. ROOM 400 • SAN FRANCISCO



Special Presentation by Professor Anthony Pym  
from the Rovira i Virgili University in Tarragona, Spain

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TRANSLATE FAST? *Some findings from empirical research on translation processes*

Industrial work conditions and new translation technologies have made time-on-task a key element in much translation work. We have to work faster, and speed has thus become a factor in many quality equations. An indirect result of this change is the growing body of empirical research on translation processes, mostly using think-aloud protocols, screen-recording, keystroke recording, and eye-tracking. We will review the main findings of the research in several areas: the way translation strategies change under time pressure, the actual productivity of translation memories, the time and quality benefits of using data-based machine translation, the proliferation of errors in translation memories, the new kinds of revision processes that are required, and the measurement of acceptable error. The research projects are mostly European, on a number of language pairs, usually involving small numbers of subjects and with questionable generalizability. Our survey should nevertheless lead to one fundamental questions: When time is the key, can we still talk about translation as communication?

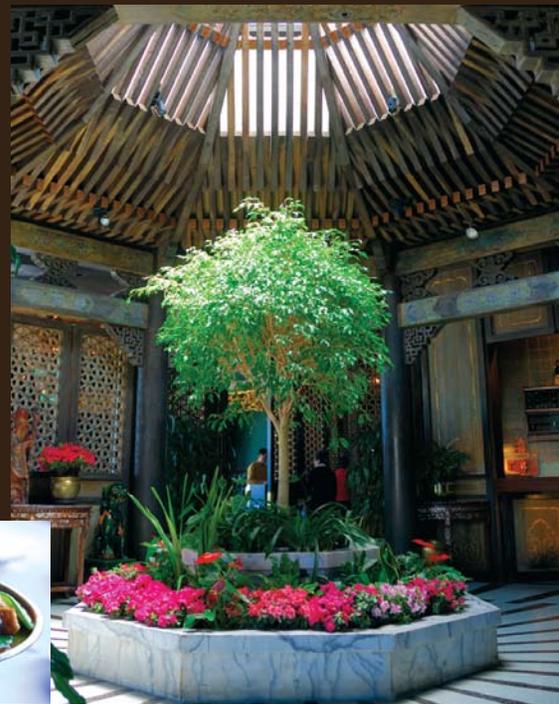
Program also includes the traditional New Member Orientation, Networking sessions, and table of healthy snacks.

The Center is located at 1800 Market Street, @ Octavia. The Muni metro lines J, K, L, M, N, the F streetcar, or Muni bus lines 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 21, 26, 47, 49, 66 and 71 all run within 5 blocks of the Center, many run within 1 block. You may also take BART to SF Civic Center, then transfer to Muni Metro or F lines, or, with the U.N. Plaza on your right, follow Market St. up just past Octavia St. By car, from the Bay Bridge or the Peninsula, once in the City take the 101 North-Golden Gate Bridge direction, Octavia Blvd. exit. The freeway ends on the other side of the street from The Center, which is on the left hand side. Limited street parking available. Please be considerate of neighbors and do not block driveways or park in blue or white zones. Free childcare available by reservation. Call the Kidspace Coordinator by February 6th at (415) 865-5553. For more information, visit [www.sfcenter.org](http://www.sfcenter.org) or call (415) 865-5555.

Our speaker, Anthony Pym is head of post-graduate translation programs at the Rovira i Virgili University in Tarragona, Spain, and Visiting Professor at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He holds a doctorate in sociology from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He has worked as a technical translator for some 15 years. His main research work has been on sociological approaches to the study of translation, especially with respect to the use of translation technologies. He has written or edited 15 books and over 130 articles in the field.

## NCTA IS 30! *Come celebrate at the* **EMPRESS OF CHINA** SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2008 • 6:00 PM 838 GRANT AVENUE • SAN FRANCISCO

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, NCTA returns to its roots (the founding meeting of the association happened at a Chinese Banquet!) in the most appropriate of locations: Empress of China! Come enjoy the ambience, a varied menu, and fantastic views of the Transamerica Pyramid, downtown, and the Bay from the 100-person room reserved for NCTA. If good food and great company are not enough, there will also be door prizes and other surprises. Check your mailbox this month for your invitation and RSVP to reserve your seats quickly!



### 2008 CALENDAR

September 22	Monthly Happy Hour, San Francisco
October 25	Medical Translation Topics Panel, San Francisco
October 27	Monthly Happy Hour, Oakland
November 5-8	ATA Annual Conference, Orlando, FL
December 6	NCTA General Meeting, San Francisco

See <http://ncta.org/calendar.cfm> for up to date information.

NCTA  
Attn: Juliet Viola, Administrator  
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NCTA is a Chapter of the American Translators Association.