



NOTA BENE

Vol. XXVI, No. 1

April 2008

ATA Certification Exam

May 24th, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Satterfield Hall
Kent State University

NOTA Executive Committee Meeting

January 17, 2008

The Executive Committee met on Jan. 17, 2008 at Cindy Hazelton's house.

Present were: Lee Wright, Amanda Ennis, John Shaklee, Reinhold Federmann, Jill Sommer and Cindy Hazelton

Jill reported that the annual holiday party was very successful, and she thanked John for organizing it.

NOTA will present a continuing education workshop entitled **The Business Side of Translation** on Saturday, Feb. 16, 2008 at the Hudson Library from 1:00 – 4:30 PM. Cost will be \$10 for NOTA members and \$20 for non-members. Potential topics will include business etiquette and ethics, invoicing methods, OCR software and accounting software. John will find several gifts to raffle off as door prizes.

The website needs to be updated to include registration forms for our upcoming continuing education workshops on February 16 and May 16. Jill will speak to Michael O'Flaherty about doing this.

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NOTA Executive Committee Meeting

March 19, 2008

The Executive Committee met at Reinhold Federmann's home. Present were Jill Sommer, Amanda Ennis, Cindy Hazelton, Lee Wright, John Shaklee and Reinhold Federmann.

The following topics were discussed:

One-Day Seminar on May 16:

Jill announced the one-day seminar for high school foreign language teachers and guidance counselors to be held on May 16 at Kent State entitled *Translating and Interpreting : Careers for the 21st Century*. Guest speakers will include Corinne McKay from Boulder, Colorado and Lillian Clementi from Arlington, Virginia, who will speak about translating. John Shaklee and Natasha Curtis will speak about interpreting. Professors from the Kent State translation program will discuss training and computer programs for translators. The cost of the seminar will be \$40.

Cindy will mail out registration forms to all the public school systems in northern Ohio. Special thanks to Lee Wright for compiling the mailing lists. The profits of this seminar will be split between NOTA and the IAL.

OFLA Conference:

Cindy and Jill will speak on Translating and Interpreting at the Ohio Foreign Language Assoc. Conference in Cincinnati on April 5, 2008.

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NOTA BENE is published by the Northeast Ohio Translators Association, a chapter of the American Translators Association.

Other newsletters are welcome to reprint materials from NOTA BENE, provided they acknowledge the source and send us a copy.

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NOTA membership fees:

Individual:	\$25.00/yr
Corporate/Institutional:	\$35.00/yr
Student:	\$15.00/yr

President's Message

This will most likely be the last issue of NOTA BENE. We are unable to find someone willing to volunteer to publish the newsletter, which is sent out four times a year. From now on we will be sending out announcements via e-mail.

I'm appalled at our members' lack of willingness to help. I have asked time and again for help and am constantly being brushed off with "I'm too busy" or "Oh, I'm not worthy." We desperately need your help or the group is going to have no choice but to disband. The Florida chapter has already disbanded for this very reason. In the past few months, I have asked people to be our newsletter editor (it only comes out four times a year and isn't very long) and our webmaster (I'm too busy to keep doing it myself, and the designer we hired last year is too expensive to keep having him do things) and to consider running for the Executive Committee. Each time I have been turned down. The Executive Committee meets four times a year. The webmaster would need to update one or two files every couple months.

In the past NOTA has provided an annual ATA exam plus all kinds of workshops and the Medical Conference last year, events, which would also fall by the wayside in the future. Members would have to find their own venue for getting certified, and certified members for getting their continuing education credits.

I've been the president for six years and am slowly burning out. It's been a one-man show most of the time, and I can't keep this up without the help of the members. Most of the people on the Executive Committee have been officers for several years now – and some have held the position through numerous terms. When I took over as president I had never held a position on a board before. **If I can do it anyone can.** Being a member of the NOTA Executive Committee – or our webmaster or newsletter editor – really does not take up that much time. However, no one seems able or willing to help. I urge you to look deep into your hearts and consider running for a position on the Executive Committee. When the elections roll around in June and we have no candidates, we will have no choice but to disband, which will be a real shame. It's time to give us a break and step up.

Jill Sommer

When I took over as the newsletter editor on a temporary basis (9 years ago!), I had never done a newsletter before and it seemed scary at first. But like Jill says above: if I could do it without any prior experience, so can you. I will be glad to help you get started.

Waltraud Knudsen

NOTA Executive Committee Meeting, 1-17-08 - continued from Pg. 1

NOTA and the IAL are co-sponsoring a one-day workshop called **Translating and Interpreting: Careers for the 21st Century** for high school language teachers, guidance counselors and superintendents. It will take place on Friday, May 16 at Kent State University. Amanda will research wording required by local school districts for giving CEU credit for attendance. Lee will access the Ohio Dept of Education's directory and print address labels for our mailing. Cindy will continue to work with Françoise Kenney to line up speakers for the workshop.

Cindy and Jill will speak about T & I careers at the OFLA annual conference in Cincinnati on Friday, April 4. They will use this opportunity to promote the May 16 workshop.

Jill announced that we still need a replacement editor for the NOTA BENE. Waltraud has offered to

continue helping, but we need someone to take over the job.

Jill also reported that we need to set up a nominating committee to find candidates for our upcoming elections in November.

Lee reported that we currently have 122 members, 65 of which also belong to ATA. The 2008 membership directory will be mailed out soon.

Reinhold reported that we have \$4,771 in the treasury.

Jill read a request she received from a Connecticut prison inmate, asking us to make a donation for her educational costs. The Board voted to reject this request.

The next Executive Committee meeting will be on March 19 at Reinhold Federmann's home.

NOTA Executive Committee Meeting, 3-19-08 - continued from Pg. 1

Web Site:

We are having many problems with the NOTA web site, including repeated hacking incidents and spam attacks. The Executive Committee approved Jill's motion to switch from UplinkEarth to a new ISP.

Nota Bene:

Jill discussed the issue of finding a new editor for the NOTA BENE. The next issue is ready to be sent out, but we will not be able to publish future issues unless a member volunteers to help put it together for mailing.

Membership Report:

Lee reported that we now have 112 members, including two new members. The Executive Committee thanked Lee for our new membership directory format.

Treasurer's Report:

Reinhold reported that we currently have \$3,518.61 in the treasury.

Jill would like to get a NOTA credit card, to be held by the Treasurer, for NOTA expenses. Reinhold will check into the best deal for getting a card.

Membership Participation:

The seminar on business practices was cancelled due to low enrollment.

The Executive Committee discussed the problem of the lack of participation by members. We are trying to decide what the members are interested in, i.e., social events, professional development, marketing via our online database, etc. Current Board positions will expire this year, and we would like to get some new members on the Executive Committee.

Certification Exam:

The next ATA Certification exam will be given on May 24 at KSU at 10:00 AM.

Next Meeting:

The next Board Meeting will take place on May 21 at Lee Wright's home.

Googling Machine Translation

By Paula Dieli

Mention the words "machine translation," and a translator's thoughts will range from job security to the ridiculously funny translations we're able to produce with so-called online translation tools. Should we be worried that machines will take over

our jobs? Paula Dieli thinks not, and explains why in this report.

I recently attended a presentation on "Challenges in Machine Translation," sponsored by the

International Macintosh Users Group (IMUG), at which Dr. Franz Josef Och, Senior Staff Research Scientist at GoogleResearch, presented some of the challenges Google is facing in its machine translation (MT) research, and how some of these challenges are being addressed. Excitement about successes in machine translation research initially came to a head back in 1954 with a report in the press regarding the Georgetown University/IBM experiment which had used a computer to translate Russian into English. Since then, over the past 50 years, we have continued to read about the great advances that will be possible in “the next 20 years,” but these great advances never came to pass. When the Internet came of age, online translation tools surfaced and we translators amused ourselves by seeing what crazy translations we could come up with by entering seemingly simple phrases.

The Linguistics of MT

So why did the research never produce anything really viable? It was based on a linguistic approach; that is, an analysis of the structure of a language followed by an attempt to map it into machine language such that one could input a source language text and out would come a wonderful translation in the target language, albeit with a few minor errors. As we all know, a language is filled with so many cultural, contextual, idiomatic, and exceptional uses that this task became virtually impossible, and no real progress has been made with this approach in the past 50 years.

Dr. Geoffrey Nunberg, Adjunct full professor at UC Berkeley, linguist, researcher, and consulting professor at Stanford University, had this to say at a recent NCTA presentation: “I asked a friend of mine, who is the dean of this [MT] field, once, ‘if you asked people working in machine translation how long it will be until we have perfect, idiomatic machine translation of text ...?’ they would all say about 25 years. And that’s been a constant since 1969.”

The Data-Driven Approach

In recent years, MT researchers have begun to take a different approach, which can be loosely compared to the work you do as a translator when you use a tool such as SDL Trados WinAlign or Translator’s Workbench. That is, you use a data-driven methodology. As you translate, you store your translations in a translation memory (TM), so that if that same or a similar translation appears again, the tool will notify you and let you use that translation

as is, or modify it slightly to match the source text. The more you translate similar texts in a particular domain, the more likely it is that you will find similar translations already in your TM.

Similarly, if before you began to translate a weekly online newsletter of real estate announcements, for example, you searched the Internet for already existing translations in your language pair and then aligned them and input them, via WinAlign, into your TM, you might find that much of the work had already been done for you. Imagine now if you were to input 47 billion words worth of these translations. Your chances of being able to “automatically” translate much of your source text would certainly increase. This is the approach that Google is taking.

Google’s goal, as stated by Dr. Och, is “to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.” Now before you go thinking you’re out of a job, their data-driven approach has proven successful only for certain language pairs, and only in certain specialized domains. They have achieved success in what they call “hard” languages, that is from Chinese to English, and from Arabic to English in domains such as blogging, online FAQs, and interviews by journalists.

Dr. Och reported that their reasons for progress were due to “learning from examples rather than from a rule-based approach.” He admits that “more data is better data.” He went on to say that adding 2 trillion words to their data store would result in a 1 percent improvement for specific uses such as the ones described above. They see a year-to-year improvement of 4 percent by doubling the amount of data in their data store, or “corpus.” The progress reported by Dr. Och is supported by a study conducted by the NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) in 2005. Google received the highest BLEU (Bilingual Evaluation Understudy) scores using their MT technology to translate 100 news articles in the language pairs mentioned above. A BLEU score ranges from 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest) and is calculated by comparing the quality of the target segments with their associated source segments (a penalty is applied for short segments since that artificially produces a higher score).

Challenges and Limitations

So what are the limitations of this data-driven approach? When asked by a member of the audience if Google’s technology could be used to translate a logo, Dr. Och instantly replied that such a translation

would require a human translator. It's clear that Google's approach handles a very specific type of translation. Similar data-driven MT implementations can be used to translate highly specialized or technical documents with a limited vocabulary which wouldn't be translated 100 percent correctly, but which would be readable enough to determine whether the document is of interest. In that case, a human translator would be needed to "really" translate it.

The Google approach described above deals with a tremendous amount of data and a very targeted use. It works only for some languages—German, for example, has been problematic—and in order to improve in more than just small increments, human intervention is required to make corrections to errors generated by this approach. One example that Dr. Och provided—the number “1,173” was consistently incorrectly translated into the word “Swedes”—confirms that a machine can't do it all.

And if you think for a minute about the amount of Internet-based data being generated on just an hourly basis, it's great to have machines around to handle some of the repetitive (read: uninteresting) work, and let us translators handle the rest. That still leaves plenty of work for us humans.

Alternative Technologies

There are other approaches to MT, including example-based technology, which relies on a combination of existing translations (such as you have in your translation memory) along with a linguistic approach that involves an analysis of an unmatched segment to a set of heuristics, or rules, based on the grammar of the target language. Some proponents of this approach concede that large amounts of data would be needed to make this approach successful, and have all but abandoned their research. Once again, we can see that any approach that relies even partially on linguistics has not met with a reasonable level of success.

Other advances occurring in the MT arena include gisting and post-editing. MT can be used successfully in some settings where the gist of a document is all that is needed in order to determine if it is of enough interest to warrant a human translation. There are also MT systems on the market that produce translations that require post-editing by human translators who spend (often painful) time “fixing” these translations, correcting the linguistic errors that such a system invariably produces. While this may not be the translation work

you're looking for, I know of at least one large translation agency that provides specific training for this type of post-editing to linguists willing to do this kind of work. This is another example that shows that while machines play a part, there is still a role for human translators in the overall process.

Still other advancements include the licensing of machine translation technology based on a data-driven approach, which can be tailored to work with existing translations and terminology databases at a specific company. As with the Google solution, such technologies typically work on a limited set of languages. However, if they can help translate some of the less interesting, repetitive information out there, with more information being produced at a continually increasing rate, have no fear; there will still be plenty of work for human translators to do!

The Road Ahead

Where does that leave us? From the typewriter to word processors to CAT (Computer-Assisted or Computer-Aided Translation) tools and the pervasiveness of the Internet, our livelihood has been transformed, in a positive way. We are more productive and able to work on more interesting translations than ever before.

I encourage you to embrace technology; understand how it is helping to make information accessible, and learn how technology can help translators do the work that only humans can do.

More information

The calendar of the International Macintosh User Group (IMUG) upcoming presentations can be found at <http://www.imug.org>.

You can get the official results of the 2005 Machine Translation Evaluation from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) at http://www.nist.gov/speech/tests/mt/doc/mt05eval_official_results_release_20050801_v3.html

***Paula Dieli** is a freelance French to English translator. She previously worked as a software engineer and manager in the Silicon Valley and in Paris, France. She enjoys practicing her Italian with her family in Italy and often travels to France. She holds a B.A. in Computer Science and French from the State University of New York and an M.A. in Translation from Kent State University, where she also taught French.*

This Article was reprinted with permission of the Northern California Translators Association and its quarterly journal Translorial, in which this article first appeared.

ATA 48th Annual Conference – San Francisco

A First-time Attendee's Experience

by Hélène Viglieno

A few weeks ago, I was fortunate enough to attend the ATA annual conference for the first time. Seeing that I was so pleased with the whole experience, a colleague asked me to write a brief article describing it. Something, perhaps, that might help some of NOTA's newest members decide whether or not they should attend the next ATA conference, or something that might encourage our more settled members to reconnect with their international colleagues and listen to a couple of interesting and sometimes unexpectedly funny workshops for three days.

First of all, I have to tell you that I am very new to the profession of freelance translation. I seriously got into this trade a little less than a year ago. I have a mentor, as is very much encouraged by the ATA mentality, and she has been a tremendous help in guiding me through the intimidating task of all that pertains to translation. So, you can understand how intimidating, in my mind, attending a huge conference with a couple thousand professional and experienced translators, who all knew each other and everything about their trade, seemed to me. Of course, the reality of it was a bit different. After some hesitation, I decided to join in the fun.

Well, it was definitely the right decision! Upon arrival, I quickly realized that, no, not everyone knew each other, and that many were just like me, first time attendees walking around clueless and wearing their name tag embellished with the bright pink ribbon betraying their status! The ribbon is actually a great way for you to let the "world" know you're totally new at this, and inversely, it is an equally great way for others to know that here is a first-time attendee who could use a bit of friendliness. It's a little bit like a pass to introducing yourself left and right, and/or letting others introduce themselves to you. An ice-breaker, if you will.

I happened to be sharing a room with two kind ladies who were definitely not first-time attendees. This, I recommend. It was really nice to be given advice and tips about how the conference goes, what comes next, what to do for lunch, dinner, etc. The second thing I recommend is attending the workshop especially held for first-timers. It is filled with tremendously helpful information, from the "secrets" of the tag you wear around your neck to the especially relevant workshops and sessions one should attend as a first-timer. This

year, the workshop was presented by Amanda Ennis and Jill Sommer, who both did a fantastic job.

Once you're a bit more settled, you can start browsing the conference schedule to select which workshops you wish to attend. There are many of them, pertaining either to your language(s) or to other aspects of the profession. Some of them, as I've mentioned earlier, turned out to be quite entertaining as well. Workshops are a great way to learn new things or refresh your memory about old ones. What I appreciated even more than the educational aspect was the sense of community one gets from these. Most workshops have a question/comment period at the end, and this is when everyone gets a chance to express themselves. As a result, lots of interesting things come out, and you definitely get the feeling that you are not alone and that we are all dealing with the same issues (more or less). For me, this part of the conference was truly a plus since it made me feel closer to my colleagues and less isolated as a whole.

Translators spend most of their working time alone, staring at a lifeless screen all day. Attending the conference is the perfect opportunity to establish new friendships and fruitful contacts and reconnect with old ones. For me, it was key in making me understand that, in the end, my colleagues are people just like me. It may sound strange to some, but it was very helpful for me.

Lastly, attending the conference is a great way to get away from your routine, hop on a plane and end up in a totally new environment. San Francisco is a wonderful city, a perfect place to host an annual conference. Ok, you missed San Francisco. No big deal, next year, you can come and lounge by the sunny pools of Orlando (don't forget to attend a couple of workshops). In November, for us "Northerners," it's priceless!

All in all, the ATA annual conference was a wonderful experience. Now that I have (hopefully) convinced you to attend next year, here is my advice for first-time attendees: try to stay at the hotel the conference is held at, try to share a room with an "old-timer," (preferably of your language pair, but it's not necessary) and last but not least, **enjoy yourself!** You are not the only one who's clueless. And trust me, you won't be clueless for long!

ATA Awards Scholarship to NOTA Member

During the 2007 ATA Conference in San Francisco, the ATA, acting through the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation, awarded the JTG Scholarship in Scientific and Technical Translation or Interpretation to NOTA member Cheryl (“Mack”) McKay, who is now completing her degree in the Translation Studies MA program at Kent State University. Ms. McKay, who specializes in Spanish→English translation, plans to enter the fields of marketing, communication, and business development after graduation this year. As her final project for the degree, Cheryl is preparing an English translation, critical analysis, and detailed terminology database of a 5,000-word Spanish text dealing with multilateral, hemispheric trade talks in Latin America. The Spanish title of this case study document is *América Latina en las negociaciones comerciales multilaterales y hemisféricas*, and it discusses a wide range of aspects involved in multilateral trade talks held by the member nations of the World Trade Organization. (NOTA member Lee Wright is serving as Cheryl’s case study advisor.)

The award includes a \$2,500 stipend for the current academic year. The AFTI scholarship has been underwritten since 2001 by JTG Inc., a language consultancy firm that supports homeland security, intelligence, and global business with cross-cultural communications needs. JTG Inc. was founded in 1995 by ATA Past President Muriel Jérôme-O-Keeffe.

Applicants for the scholarship must be graduate or undergraduate students enrolled or planning to enroll in a program leading to a degree in scientific and technical translation or in interpretation at an accredited U.S. college or university. For those who might be interested in submitting an application, complete details about the requirements and the process can be obtained at http://www.afti.org/award_JTG.php. The national award committee will announce the name of the winner by the end of this year, and disbursement of the award will be made at the beginning of the fall semester.

While celebrating NOTA's thirtieth anniversary, NOTA honored founding member **Leland D. Wright** and near-founding member **Waltraud Knudsen** at the Annual Meeting for their many years of dedication to the Northeast Ohio Translators Association. Both members have devoted an extraordinary amount of time and energy to the organization and have been actively involved for thirty years. Lee has been a member of the Executive Committee for almost thirty years, while Waltraud held the position of chapter president for four years and treasurer for six years and has been editing and publishing the newsletter for almost ten years. We appreciate all the work of these members and all the other founding members of this group. We hope you enjoyed the small tokens of our esteem. Thank you.



Left:
Lee Wright and
Jill Sommer



Right:
Waltraud Knudsen
and Jill Sommer

We Welcome the Following New Members:

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