



NOTA BENE

Vol. XXVI, No. 1

January/February 2003

ATA Accreditation Exam

Saturday, June 21, 2003, 10:00 am
Kent State University
Satterfield Hall, Janik Drive

To take the exam, you must be a member of ATA for at least 30 days before the exam date. You must register for the exam at least two weeks before the exam date. You can find the ATA Accreditation Exam registration form, with complete rules and information (the exam costs \$130), at this link: <http://www.atanet.org/accred.htm>

For directions to Satterfield Hall, go to this link: <http://imagine.kent.edu/directions/kent/building.asp?Building=39>
At the bottom of that page, click on the "N", "S", "E", or "W" buttons to find driving directions no matter where you are coming from.

See New Accreditation Policies on page 3

Isabel Framer

First Certified Court Interpreter in Ohio

As mentioned in an article in the Fall 2002 issue of *global horizons*, Isabel Framer is Ohio's first court interpreter to become certified. Because Ohio does not have a court certification program yet, she was sworn in via a unique ceremony on October 9, 2002, by Oregon Supreme Court Justice De Muniz over the telephone as an Oregon certified court interpreter. After the Oregon oath, Judge Ted Schneiderman of the Summit County Court of Common Pleas administered the oath for Ohio.

Congratulations, Isabel!

Survey Results

I would like to express my gratitude to the 31 members who completed the NOTA survey. Your answers will serve as a guide for the NOTA executive board. We will respond in more detail in the next issue.

Margaret Nevits, Programs

Welcome, New Members:

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In this Issue:

President's Message	Pg. 2
New ATA Accreditation Policies	Pg. 3
Get Your Name in the Paper – and Help Your Profession	Pg. 4
Go West, Young Translator: Why You Need to Be in Phoenix	Pg. 5
Tax Tips for Translators	Pg. 7
Minutes	Pg. 8

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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:	\$20.00/yr
Corporate/Institutional:	\$30.00/yr
Student:	\$10.00/yr

For membership information, please contact Dr. Leland Wright at the above number or write to:

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Kent, OH 44240-0994

President's Message

I would like to take this time to wish you all a Happy 2003 and lay out a few goals for the coming year.

NOTA currently has 100 members.

Our Christmas party was attended by a record 40 people, which I feel is very exciting. Attendance continues to grow at the Translators Discussion Group, which meets every second Thursday of the month. Many of you can unfortunately not attend on Thursday, but perhaps as schedules change you might find time to eventually join us.

The Executive Committee has been brainstorming on how to get NOTA and the translation and interpreting professions in the public eye. Margaret Nevits has been busy compiling the results from the survey we recently sent out via e-mail and hopes to get some good ideas for future programs. We are currently in negotiations with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to organize a pro bono translation of a welcome guide for foreign guests. If all goes according to plan, we hope to invite the press to attend the presentation ceremony. We are also trying to find a date to invite Courtney Sears-Ridge to attend a special meeting about organizing a local Mentor/Mentee program. As it is designed, the program shouldn't take up a lot of your time and I hope you will all consider possibly being a Mentor or even being a Mentee. Everyone has a little of both in them.

I would like to thank Manfred Mondt for his tireless work as President over the past 8 years. I have some large shoes to fill indeed. I would also like to thank Huili Shi for hosting the summer party and Waltraud Knudsen for hosting our annual Christmas party. If attendance continues to grow we might have to look for an alternative location, so if any of you has use of a party room where we can hold next year's party, please let me know.

I have received a lot of positive feedback about my many e-mails; however, communication is a two-way street. I welcome any ideas or suggestions and encourage you to contact me at js@jill-sommer.com or any of the other Executive Committee members to tell us how we're doing.

Jill Sommer

14 NOTA members attended this year's ATA Conference in Atlanta, GA. In addition, 15 current KSU translation students, 2 KSU graduates, and 1 KSU faculty member who are not (yet) NOTA members also attended the Conference. Quite a large contingent from Northeast Ohio. And everybody had a great time!

New ATA Accreditation Policies that Took Effect in November 2002

By Celia Bohannon, Deputy Chair, ATA Accreditation Committee

(Article from ATA Chronicle 8/10/02)

Examination Format

Beginning with exams offered at the ATA Conference in Atlanta, the ATA accreditation examination consists of three passages of approximately 225–275 words each. The passages present common translation challenges that may vary from one language combination to another. The level of difficulty is comparable to the level that professional translators would expect to see in their daily work.

One passage is mandatory for all candidates. This general text is written for the educated lay reader in expository or journalistic style.

Each candidate must also choose between two elective passages, one from the domain of science/technology/medicine and one from the domain of law/business/finance. These passages

have the character of typical texts within these domains but should not contain specialized terminology or require mastery of a particular field.

Under the new policy, a candidate should only complete two passages: the mandatory general passage and one of the two elective passages. If a candidate does not follow instructions and translates both elective passages, the ATA accreditation program staff will arbitrarily select one of the two for grading. A passage that is substantially incomplete is not graded.

An examination receives a grade of Pass if the translation of the general passage and one elective passage meets the standards established by the ATA accreditation program.

Point Marking System

Accreditation exams taken at the ATA Conference in Atlanta and all subsequent exams will be graded according to a point marking system. The grader will identify errors by category according to the long-established Framework for Standardized Error Marking. The grader will assign 1, 2, 4, 8, or 16 error points for each error. This scale reflects experienced graders' judgments about the relationships among different types of errors and about what sorts of errors might be allowed in a translation that meets ATA standards. Criteria include whether a target-language reader would certainly recognize the error and how serious the consequences would be in the context of the passage.

One of the main advantages of the new point system is that our grading will now reflect five different levels of seriousness for each error, rather than only two. The two grayscale bars below illustrate this important difference between the old and new systems.

Old system:



New system:



In addition, under the new system a grader may award quality points for specific instances of exceptional translation. (Quality points are not awarded for overall “artistic impression.”) Each exceptionally good rendition may be awarded one quality point, up to a total of three quality points per passage.

Examples of renditions earning quality points include

- choice of a particularly felicitous word or phrase
- exceptionally skillful casting of a sentence or sentences

- target-language rendition that precisely mirrors ambiguity in source text

Any quality points are subtracted from the error point total to yield a final score. A passage with a score of 18 or more points receives a grade of Fail.

Although the use of points may impart a certain impression of objectivity, it is in truth still subjective. In no way is the score on each passage meant to be a percentage. An error score of 20 for example, does *not* mean that 80% of the passage is

correct. The error score is simply a number that, along with the error scale that generates it, embodies the graders' understanding of translation quality and accreditation standards.

The ATA Accreditation Committee firmly believes that these changes, along with those they build on and others still to come, will strengthen the accreditation program and enhance the stature of the credential it provides.

Get Your Name in the Paper—And Help Your Profession!

by Amanda Ennis

Have you ever opened your daily newspaper and come across something like this?

“The suspect was interrogated in his jail cell. Through a translator, he maintained his innocence and claimed his brother had actually committed the crime.”

What did you do about it? Roll your eyes? Gnash your teeth? Mutter a few words about woefully stupid journalists and keep reading? Or did you just shrug and say, “Oh, well, no one out there really has a clue about us anyway”?

Allow me to suggest an alternative: write a letter to the editor of the newspaper to correct that ignorant journalist's mistake. You'll help eradicate common misconceptions about our profession and get the satisfaction of seeing your name in black and white, too! People do read those letters, and you'll gently teach each one of them the difference between a translator and an interpreter—maybe the journalist will even get it right next time!

“But I haven't the foggiest idea of how to go about it,” you might object, wringing your hands anxiously. “What do I say, and how do I say it?”

Fear not. Here are a few key ideas (with a grateful nod to **Neil Inglis**, who presented many of these ideas in “Ten Hot Tips for Writing LTEs and Translation-Related Journalism” at the 2002 ATA Annual Conference in Atlanta):

- **Be witty and to the point**—write no more than 175 words, broken up roughly as follows:

-1st (very short) paragraph: Identify the article you wish to comment on.

-2nd paragraph: Praise *something* about the article, if possible, before beginning your criticism of the parts that are inaccurate or misleading. Do not go on and on about your qualifications. Mention them in passing, if at all. Make sure your comments relate directly to the article—do not go off on tangents!

-3rd paragraph: Try to end your letter on a philosophical, optimistic, or forward-looking note. If possible, end with a twist: something humorous or unexpected.

- **Avoid common letter-writing pitfalls.** Do not say anything that makes you look quaint or eccentric. Do not spend 150 of your 175 words beating the reader over the head with your qualifications. Do not write about internal ATA issues—that will just bore the reader. Above all, do not engage in hand-wringing and self-pity! Take pride in your challenging work. Your insightful translations give your clients a huge edge in the global marketplace! Think positively.
- **Have someone else look over your letter before you send it.** Two pairs of eyes (or more) are better than one, and someone else might have just the turn of phrase you need to spice up a sentence or punch up a paragraph!
- **The expert is always from out of town.** Try getting friends from across the country (or across the world) to respond to an article. This flatters the newspaper editors (“Wow, here's a letter all

the way from Australia! People in Australia read the Cleveland Plain Dealer?!”) and increases the chance that the letter will be printed.

Now, let’s look at a real example published in the Financial Times of London on December 31, 2002. In this article, titled “Lost in the Translation,” Paul Taylor reviews voice recognition software, but he also makes some dangerous comments about translation and translation software like the ViaVoice Translator:

“In the years since comic books and TV programmes such as Star Trek introduced me to handheld communicators, vehicle navigation systems and stun guns, I have been surprised how many sci-fi toys have made it into the real world.

I was always particularly impressed with those devices that achieved instant and simultaneous translation between English and some alien tongue...

...I can certainly imagine finding the translation feature [of the ViaVoice Translator] useful in a tricky situation...

I must admit that for a moment I remain cynical about real-time, voice-driven translators. What is already clear, however, is that it is just a matter of time before this sci-fi concept, like so many others, becomes part of our everyday world.”

In my mind, these comments indicated a serious lack of understanding on the writer’s part, so I sat down at my keyboard and shot off a letter to the editor that was printed in the January 4, 2003 Financial Times. The editors broke my letter up into six short paragraphs, but you can see how I applied Neil Inglis’ tips:

“Sir, While Paul Taylor’s reviews of voice recognition software were informative, his visions of “sci-fi toys” that can produce even moderately successful machine translations are light years away from becoming reality (“Lost in the translation”, December 31).

The reason is simple: computer-based translation technology employed by the ViaVoice translator and others of its ilk is based upon primitive word-to-word or phrase-to-phrase matching that is no more advanced than a cheap tourist phrase-book.

In contrast, professional (human) translators bring their considerable talents to bear on concepts, not mere words, to craft effective and culturally appropriate messages in other languages.

Translation is a complex and creative process far removed from the mindless sausage-machine approach employed by today’s automated tools.

Perhaps Mr Taylor is right that “it is just a matter of time” before accurate real-time interpretation and translation devices become a fact of life.

However, I sincerely doubt that any FT readers, in this galaxy at least, will live long enough to see his prediction come to pass.

It was a real kick to see my name in print, and hopefully, thousands of Financial Times readers got the message that machines are nowhere near replacing any kind of intelligent human translator. This was my first attempt ever to write a letter to the editor relating to translation, and I was pleasantly surprised by my immediate success! The same can happen for you, but getting published is like playing the lottery—you can’t hit the jackpot if you don’t try!

“Go West, Young Translator: Why You Need to Be in Phoenix”

by John Shaklee

There are three reasons to attend the 2003 ATA conference in Phoenix. One: To address top government officials on the importance of translation. Two: To relearn basic professional skills from other seasoned language mediators. Three: Pure and simple fun. As Montesquieu once said, “Great lords have their pleasures, but the people have fun.”¹

Imagine an open forum where impassioned colleagues meet with senior government officials to address the current translation shortage. This is exactly what happened in Atlanta at the 2002 ATA conference. CNN reporters and over 400 conference participants jammed into a Hyatt ballroom to attend “Translation and Terrorism: A Town Hall Meeting.” This is the first time senior

representatives of the US law enforcement and intelligence agencies have appeared before the professional translator and interpreter community to discuss issues of language and national security, elaborate on current programs and propose solutions. Members of the panel included the Chief of the FBI's Language Services Section and the Assistant Director (Language), Office of the Secretary of Defense. At issue were the following questions: Could 9/11 have been prevented? How serious is the translator shortage? What is the potential impact on national security?

According to facts presented at the meeting, it remains unclear whether 9/11 could have been prevented. The National Security Agency obtained information that alleged something significant would transpire on September 11. Because of translation delays, the information did not surface until after the attacks. Is there a translation shortage in the US? Yes, intelligence and law-enforcement communities lack qualified interpreters and translators in Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Farsi, Uzbek and other critical languages. "There are over 200 million speakers of Arabic in 25 countries, and 40 million speakers of Pashto, Dari, Farsi and Uzbek, yet there are only 614 students studying these latter languages anywhere in U.S. high schools, colleges or universities. Less than 1% of all foreign-language students study critical languages"²

What is the potential impact on national security? There is clearly a translation backlog. Perhaps you were one of the brave ones who stepped up to the mike at the forum to express your concern over the government's failure to support the teaching of languages of lesser dispersion. It's an open secret that government translators and interpreters are paid far less than others in the private sector. One after another, fellow ATA members questioned, cajoled and pleaded with the panel with the camera lights glaring. What a target audience, held in rapt attention to your every word!

Reason number two: learn from colleagues at more than 100 sessions available throughout the weekend. I attended a helpful session called "Professionalism 101" by Betty Howell and William Skinner, two successful translators.³ They explained the business practices necessary to present a consistent and professional image to clients, the community and to fellow word smiths.

Howell urged the audience to translate first, then examine the problems afterwards, to increase your translation speed. Skinner places // around unknown words, continues with the text and then researches afterwards. This strategy helps you view the document as a whole, rather than words in isolation. Both advised the audience to negotiate a translation deadline before agreeing to one. For example, you might ask if a Monday 8 a.m. deadline would work instead of Friday 5 p.m. This frees up an additional 48 hours to review and revise your work. When you have to refuse a job, say, "I'm sorry, my production schedule won't allow me to meet your deadline. May I suggest (name of colleague)? I will be open for work on XXX dates." Notify clients by e-mail if you go out of town and refer them to a colleague who can help in your absence. Dealing with clients in this manner keeps your options open. This also lets them know you may be available the next time, even if you can't take the job right now.

Reason number three: fun. My dear friend Jill Sommer and I visited "The World of Coca-Cola," a pantheon dedicated to the world's most popular soft drink.⁴ At the "Tastes of the World" display, we tested dozens of horrid and yummy soft drink flavors not available in the US. Afterwards, we meandered over to Underground Atlanta where a wispy diviner told our fortunes with tarot cards. I am pleased to report that my business future looks bright.

After a year of hard work, fly off to sunny Arizona. Although CNN may not be there, who knows what other notable event may take place? Attend a few sessions and profit from your colleagues' expertise. Cut loose and escape the confines of the hotel to sample the local cuisine. Or, do as I did and prepare a workshop. Find a buddy and share what you know. See you in Phoenix.

¹ Wright, Edmund. *Chronological Dictionary of Quotations*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, 1994.

² Translation and Terrorism: A Town Hall Meeting. 43rd Annual Conference on the American Translators Association. 6-9 Nov. 2002. Hyatt Regency Hotel, Atlanta.

³ Bill Skinner info@williamskinner.com, Betty Howell, betty@tbhinc.com

⁴ World of Coca-Cola www.woccatlanta.com

Tax Tips for Translators

by Waltraud Knudsen

In January, we start to receive all those forms we need for our tax returns and begin gathering tax records. Our recordkeeping and the financial decisions we made during the last year will play a critical role in determining how smooth or unpleasant tax time will be.

In general: declare all your translation-related and other income, but don't overlook any deductions. Since we freelancers not only pay Federal, State and Local taxes, but also our entire Social Security tax (employer and employee share), about half of what we earn above a certain free amount will go to the tax authorities. The standard mileage allowance for 2002 is, for instance, 36½ cents. A detailed written record of all business-related car trips can amount to a substantial tax deduction. So watch for and record every penny you can legally deduct. Just remember: a \$10 deduction may be worth \$5 in tax savings.

Do you intend to take the **Home Office deduction**? With the recent changes in the tax law, this might no longer be such a good idea if you intend to sell your home in the near future. If your home has appreciated in value when you sell it, the profit that applies to your home office (as a percentage of the total square footage) will be taxable as business property, while the profit on your private home – up to \$250,000 for singles and \$500,000 for married couples – will be tax-free. And this is no longer a once-in-a-lifetime deduction limited to people of a certain age. Anybody is eligible. Of course, if you are renting or if you intend to live in your home for a long time to come, the home office deduction is probably still a good deal, especially since we don't know what future changes to the tax code will bring.

With more retirees and fewer workers in our society, Social Security does not seem so secure anymore either. Everyone should put something away for retirement. In the past, a Keogh and/or regular IRA were a good way for the self-employed to save and get a tax deduction at the same time. But the taxes on the money in these accounts are only deferred and will be due when we take the money out. A few years ago, the new **Roth IRA** was introduced, and this is a great deal for anybody. The only catch is that you cannot take the tax deduction for the initial amount you invest in a Roth IRA, and you cannot take the earnings in these accounts out within the first 5 years without a penalty. However, for all the years to come, the money in your account will accumulate and – hopefully – double, triple, quadruple, and when you are ready to take it out, the entire amount will be totally tax-free! What a deal! There is also no minimum amount you have to take out at a certain age. If you already have a regular (traditional) IRA that lost a great deal of its value due to the recent stock market slump, now might be the time to convert it to a Roth IRA. But you will have to pay income tax on the entire amount if you took the tax deduction when you originally contributed the money to your IRA account. If you were never eligible for the deduction in the first place, tax will only be due on the earnings, which might have eroded somewhat. If you can afford to pay the tax, convert your regular IRA to a Roth IRA. The market will not stay low forever, and once your account is on the rise again, you will congratulate yourself for making a smart decision.

Errors and Omissions Insurance

A number of members expressed an interest in Errors and Omissions Insurance. Margaret Nevits got in touch with one of the account executives of the insurance company. He suggested that anybody interested go to their Web site www.ata-ins.com for additional information. You can apply on-line if you wish, or you can call their toll-free number (888) 219-8122, and they will fax you an application. Should you visit this site, hit this link: http://www.ata-ins.com/pl/ata_presentation.ppt. This is a presentation that the insurance company arranged for the ATA Conference in Atlanta. It discusses the legal liabilities translators and interpreters may face.

NOTA Executive Committee Meeting – January 22, 2003

In attendance were Jill Sommer (President), Amanda Ennis (Secretary) and Lee Wright (Treasurer/Membership). Treacherous weather conditions and illness prevented the other Board members from attending.

Items of business were as follows:

- 1) Thirty-one NOTA members responded to the **survey** that was sent out several weeks ago. We would like to thank everyone who responded and let you know that we will be implementing as many of your suggestions as possible over the coming months. Thanks to your input, we will be adding the following new sections to the newsletter: "Member Spotlight" (a short interview with a NOTA member), "News at Kent" (a blurb on events at Kent State University relating to translation and interpretation), and "Member Events" (a cornucopia of members' good news: birth of children, wedding, receiving a degree, becoming accredited, receiving an award, etc.).
- 2) Changes are in the offing for the **NOTA Web site**. The site will be overhauled, and we hope to move to a "self-serve" system where members can input their own address and subject area changes to keep all contact information as current as possible. We definitely want to post the NOTA BENE newsletter on the site, and we may add a "News" page as well. We will also look into setting up a NOTA member forum on eGroups where members can post queries and help each other with terminology or general translation/business issues.
- 3) We are making progress on this year's planned **pro bono translation project** for the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame**. Jill and Amanda are going to meet with Rock Hall officials in early February to work out the details of what materials will be translated and the languages into which they will be translated. Stay tuned for more details.
- 4) There is a **new date for the ATA Accreditation Exam**. Due to a time conflict with an exam sitting in Pittsburgh, the NOTA exam sitting will now take place at **10 AM on Saturday, June 21, 2003**, at Satterfield Hall (Janik Drive) on the campus of Kent State University. Amanda will be proctoring the exam. Please direct your inquiries about the exam directly to ATA Headquarters; **NOTA does not** handle exam registration.
- 5) **Courtney Searles-Ridge** has indicated that she would be interested in attending our September 2003 dinner meeting to talk about the **ATA Mentoring Program** and its possible application at the local chapter level.
- 6) Lee Wright is putting the finishing touches on the **new edition of the NOTA Member Directory**. The directory will be mailed out to members by the end of February.
- 7) The **International Science and Engineering Fair** is coming to Cleveland in May 2003. ISEF needs **volunteer interpreters** to work the week of May 11-17 in four-hour or eight-hour shifts. You will be helping high-school students communicate with judges and organizers and performing a valuable service! We hope to turn this into a major opportunity for NOTA press coverage and public outreach and education. You should have received an e-mail about this event from Jill Sommer. If you never received the original message or have mislaid it in the interim, please contact Jill at js@jill-sommer.com. We're hoping for a large NOTA turnout!

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

We welcome all contributions to this newsletter!
If you have a story that you believe would interest our readers, please send it to
Waltraud Knudsen at w.knudsen@juno.com

Because the new membership directory will be mailed to our members shortly, we did not list any address changes in this issue.