

NETA NEWS

July, 1976 issue. The NETA News is the newsletter of the New England Translators Association. This issue was prepared by Isabel Leonard and William J. Grimes, Hingham, MA.

JUNE MEETING

Russian Roundtable (see enclosure)

The sometimes opaque but always challenging passage selected by Alicja Kawecki for the June Translation Roundtable resulted in a number of interesting versions produced by the dozen or so participants. Alicja has prepared a "composite" translation from these versions, incorporating the best passages from each. This version, enclosed herewith, is still open for comment. It is hoped eventually to produce a set of "model translations" by the NETA.

In July the Roundtable will be in French, conducted by Isabel Leonard. The French text for translation is also enclosed with this issue of the News.

Business

The first item of business was to install the following persons in office:

President : William J. Grimes
Vice President : Alice Berglund
Secretary : Rudolf Heller

The terms of office are one year, after which time elections will be held again. Rudy is abroad for the next month, and secretarial duties are being taken care of pro tem by the outgoing officer in that post, Isabel Leonard.

Alice Berglund will take over responsibility for the NETA News beginning with the next issue.

Jean Stilson reported on the Dictation Workshop. Her written report follows below.

Bob Silverman brought up the possibility of establishing an area catalog of library dictionary holdings, in addition to our personal inventory in the Dictionary Pool. Silverman will investigate feasibility and report.

Discussion of the Kroha Letter

In preparation for the discussion, a copy of ex-ATA director Rudolf Kroha's challenging letter to the Guild of Professional Translators had been enclosed with the May issue of the News. Those present addressed themselves to various points raised in the document.

Kroha paints a picture of university professors being parties to a plot to grind out translators for whom there is no market, or one in which they will

receive only starvation wages. It would appear that Kroha is generalizing on the basis of his experience with certain West Coast translation schools, such as the Monterey Language School. At a previous NETA meeting devoted to translator training, we heard from an MLS graduate who was quite bitter about the fact that she and many of her cohorts had been unable to obtain translation work because of the impractical nature of her training. Translation schools per se are very rare in the United States, and it is important to distinguish between primarily academic programs offering, say, a degree in German literature, and primarily vocational programs which offer an implied promise of subsequent employment. The Monterey Language School may have its problems, but it is grossly unfair to tar the entire academic profession with the same brush.

Robert Abilock, local representative of Ad-Ex, discussed some aspects of the Translation Workshop, a translator-training program designed to train technical translators by means of a correspondence course, currently being advertised and developed by this firm. If their command of the source and target languages is judged competent, the students in the Translation Workshop will prepare translations of technical material and their work will be corrected and criticized by professional translators -- all by mail. Mr. Abilock expressed the view that there is such a severe shortage of qualified technical translators that (1) Ad-Ex cannot find enough to meet its needs and (2) competent translators have more work than they can handle, and will therefore not be afraid of creating competition for themselves through participation in the Translation Workshop.

Kroha says that ATA President Roy Tinsley is contemptuous of the struggling translator, and does not defend better pay for the free-lance translator. When asked how they felt about the idea of a minimum fee for translations, the group tended toward the view that the answer to how much to charge for translation work depended on the translator's sense of his/her own worth and the nature of the translation in question. There was no consensus on the idea of a floor for translation rates. Most of those expressing opinions wanted to retain the right to raise or lower their rates to fit the situation.

Kroha condemns the ATA accreditation program as a mere intellectual exercise. The accreditation program must be supported

ted if it is to have any meaning. It will do no good, however, if all ATA members are accredited if the Consumers of translations have not been educated to look for the "ATA accredited in..." after the translator's name. ATA should make known the existence of the program, possibly by articles in the journals of the Special Libraries Association and the Society for Technical Communications, possibly by advertising the Professional Services Directory by printing the ATA Headquarters number in the Yellow Pages.

Kroha feels the ATA is "manipulating market forces". The idea of any such manipulation being possible was judged rather ludicrous by the group.

Indeed, those present questioned Kroha's less-than-ethical behavior in quoting Dr. Tinsley out of context, and from a private letter without permission. It was also felt that printing such a letter as the lead article in Professional Translator was a (perhaps unwarranted) assumption of endorsement by the members of the Guild. Nor were any opposing views from Guild members to be found in the same or subsequent issues -- were they censored out, or were none received? By printing such a letter the Guild has violated its own tenets as expressed in its strict code of ethics. (No Guild members present rose to dispute this view.)

WORKSHOP IN DICTATING EQUIPMENT

reported by Jean Stilson

Should you or shouldn't you? Make the big switch to using dictating equipment in your translating business, that is. Several NETA members that do -- including two recent "converts" -- and some who don't (yet!) found themselves together Saturday, May 15, under the gracious hospitality of NETA members Mr. and Mrs. Awquatty in Belmont to have it out. The following report represents some of the main gleanings from this very fruitful afternoon, in which conversation went on unabated for an incredible five hours.

What kind of translating work is best served by the use of dictating equipment? Of the five translators at the workshop who use such equipment, four translate finished copy into English for transcription by a second party, an invaluable asset known as a typist-transcriber. A fifth translator works from English into another language and dictates his copy slowly; in replaying the tape, he simultaneously edits and produces his final copy. All translators work primarily with scientific/

legal/commercial texts; no-one was present who could speak for or against the virtues of using tapes in the area of literary translation.

What machine to use? Of the great variety of machines on the market, the most satisfactory office model appears to be the Sanyo Memo-Scriber, which may be purchased at such discount stores as Markline in Waltham and Cambridge for about \$200 and, it was felt, is every bit as good in performance as the Sony model retailing about \$400. One desirable feature offered by the Sanyo Memo-Scriber is that of the speed control, which enables the listener to speed up or slow down the playback as desired, to pass over slow passages or catch that all-important swallowed syllable. A variety of other features that have more than endeared themselves to their users may be found on various models: hand control, foot control, erase at fast forward, and the newest, a whistle signalling the approaching end of a tape. The ubiquitous Stenorette models do not prove to stand up at all well under the constant usage given them by a full-time translator.

Battery-powered models are also invaluable for making every word count [no comment on the pun] while travelling or -- perish the thought -- on that sandy beach in the Virgin Islands. Taking down notes, e.g. in libraries, is also one of the many uses for a portable model. In addition to the office model discussed above, Sanyo also makes a battery-powered model, and experience with Sony and Panasonic machines has also proved satisfactory (*although one member is very unhappy with Sony's Wakefield repair facility - Ed. Note*). The horror over the mess produced by batteries which have unbeknownst run down is one factor to take into consideration as far as relying exclusively on such machines is concerned.

What kind of tapes are best? Experience seems to point to 60- or 90-minute tapes as the most reliable. Longer ones tend to snap under repeated use -- a nightmare for the all-thumbs translator. Sony and Advent tapes received a high mark for performance as well as endurance.

Cartridge-type machines were too new on the market for anyone present to have accumulated any experience in this area.

The other, equally if not more vital element in making this system work effectively is the typist-transcriber. If your present typist, who types from rough drafts, does not/will not transcribe from tapes, how do you go about finding a new one? In placing ads in local newspapers (the only place you should) it is best to pay for a few extra lines and be excruciatingly specific as to what will be required in skills, educational background, experience, geographical location (i.e., within easy pick-up and delivery distance). This cuts down the process of selection significantly.

Those translators who have been using tapes for quite a while have found administering a typing test well worth while, as well as a sample tape with an introductory set of instructions.

Although each tape will start out -- ideally -- with a general set of instructions regarding set-up, incorporating instructions into the taped translation itself can be handled in a variety of ways. Samples of tapes by five different translators were most instructive in identifying those dictating techniques most apt to be conducive to harmonious dictator [?!!]/dictatee relationships. What became known as an "authoritative" tone of voice came across most clearly. Finding the best distance from the microphone might be cited as another essential. Given the above, not even a nasty cold can prevent one's words from coming across loud and clear, as one sample tape demonstrated. Each translator has found his own viable system for inserting additional instructions in the tape for the typist. One very efficient method is to use the magic word "typist!", follow this with the instruction, given in a different, perhaps conversational, tone of voice, and then conclude with the work "continue!" Most of those present found themselves sympathetically (or unsympathetically) typing along mentally, in the attempt to determine what system might be most comprehensible.

Other miscellaneous gleanings: it is best if the typist has the foreign text before her. This is a help not only in setting up the final copy but also in facilitating the transferral of terms common to both languages or items such as formulas, which can then be typed directly from the foreign text. Once the work becomes familiar, much of the menial work of transliteration of non-Roman alphabets, tables, and repetitive items can be left up to the typist entirely. Who is responsible for supplying paper, ribbons, etc? There was no consensus on this point, although most felt it was probably up to the typist. Rates vary from \$3.50/hour to \$6.00/hour or /1000 words for final copy. Some thoughtful employers provide \$4/hour pick-up and delivery time.

One important detail stressed is the desirability of having one's typist sign a form as an independent contractor, which releases the translator from any employer obligations such as income tax and unemployment liability. Conditions for this independent contractor arrangement (in Massachusetts at least) are that the typist (1) does work for more than one client, (2) makes her own hours, and (3) works at home. Form 1099 must be filed if the typist earns over \$500 from you in

one fiscal year.

Is the time, effort, and expense involved all worth it? Quite unhesitatingly, those now using the system reply in the affirmative. Not only do one's thoughts not get entangled in those mortal enemies called typewriter keys, but, as one recent convert candidly admitted, all things being considered her output had increased three-fold. Enough said. Who's next?

Comment from I. Leonard

Unfortunately I was not able to attend the Workshop (though I am told one of my tapes was played, so I was present in magnetized form, as it were). I cannot, therefore, refrain from putting in my two cents' worth.

One does not have to be a slow typist to benefit from dictating -- I am right now belting along at 75 wpm, and still find my output to have increased, since one can speak at between 100 and 160 wpm.

The problem of "what to spell and what not to spell" does not seem to have been discussed. I believe the typist must know how to spell principal/principle, supersede, transistor, etc. and should quickly learn common scientific words such as abscissa and electrolyte (which once came back "electrolight"). He/she should be able to handle unfamiliar words made up of common Greco-Latin roots so that if there were a word "antiparametricalism" it would come back correct. Spellings for the following examples must be written on the copy or spelled out: "xylyl" (sounds like zylil), dyskinesia, amenorrhoea. Much time can be saved by giving an instruction like "change all -ique endings to -ic (French) or all -aan endings to -ane (Dutch).

My experience has shown that the typist must have a university degree or equivalent level of education. Not only will your educated typist be able to spell, but he/she will have a better learning ability, be able to improve on table layout, be able to carry out such instructions as "typist, please change "capacity" to "capacitance" throughout where electrical but not where volumetric", and so on. Typists have been known to correct the speaker's lapsi linguae. As a minimum requirement, the typist attached to the free-lance translator has to cope with formats and terminologies that often change from job to job. He/she must also understand that dictated "vector alpha" is transcribed $\vec{\alpha}$, and so on.

By the way, the reason I keep writing "he/she" instead of "she" is that some of the best typists I have known have been men.

Finally, the greatest benefit I have observed to stem from dictating is that the quality as well as the quantity of the output improves; a spillover effect is that speed of articulation improves in self-generated speech.

The "Russian-English Translators Exchange" is a monthly publication of the Guild of Professional Translators. It concentrates on matters of particular interest to Russian translators. Each issue contains reviews of dictionaries and glossaries and of related publications, many of which are available directly from the Guild.

A special feature of each issue is a Terms Exchange, wherein Guild members send in queries as to the meaning of particular terms. Answers, occasionally tentative, others backed by source citations, are provided by other translators and published in succeeding newsletters. A section called "Offerings" provides translations of terms not found in standard dictionaries.

Articles of interest to Russian translators can also be found in RETX. Recent issues have featured a spirited exchange on the root meaning of the Dostoyevskian character name Smerdyakov (whether related to Russian *smertj* (death) or to French *merde*), a quotation from *Izvestiya* on the transliterational difficulties experienced by the Chinese when transliterating the name Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, and a quotation from Marx-Engels on unrequited love.

Tentative plans are that those members attending the ATA Convention in California, August 2-8, will report on that convention if they can get themselves unscrambled in time. Doubtless we shall be dictating as we waft over the Sierras!

For September, Charles Parsons has kindly agreed to come and speak to us. I can think of no-one who has made a greater contribution to "organized translator-dom".

LETTER TO EDITOR (Beatrice Patch)

...Your News Notes are good. I go along in absence with the majority on joining ATA if NETA is able to remain an "individual" -- also agree that ATA really tries to create an image or a face which one rarely looks at in the mirror. As to "nitty-gritty" work I have felt that it has not helped many of us...

My standard definition of a good translator is the following: "An individual with a thorough knowledge of the source language, a flawless grasp of the target language (usually his or her native language), and a curious layman's interest in learning about an infinite range of subject areas". It is the third of these qualifications that I shall discuss here.

In my opinion, one area of translator training that has been completely neglected in the United States is the showing of technical films describing manufacturing processes, the operation of various machines, explanations of physical and chemical processes through the aid of animation and other techniques, etc. The ironic part of this situation is that although we translators must often pay relatively high prices for our reference works and dictionaries, many of these films are available free of charge from industry, which uses them for publicity purposes.

Admittedly this program would be of interest to a rather limited number of NETA members. I feel, however, that it could be administered with minimal

difficulty by someone in our group who is a librarian or works in the audiovisual field. Ideally, such an arrangement would involve the use of a small screening room, projector, and a few chairs, once or twice a month. Costs of returning the films to the sources, who usually send them free, would be shared by the participants.

As the NETA film programs progress, the films can be reviewed for quality and content, and information on where and how to obtain them would be made available in the ATA Chronicle, so that ATA chapters could run their own film shows based on others' experience. The suppliers of such films might hear of this program and seek us out, thus resulting in a very useful cross-fertilization.

I do not envision viewing films with foreign-language sound tracks, mainly because there are not enough persons who share a language in common to make it worth while. Nor do I think that entire NETA meetings should consist of film screenings; the films should only be shown at separate get-togethers or as part of a more extensive meeting program.

Aside from their invaluable function as teaching aids, these industrial films are often photographed with great skill and imagination, and contain scenes of great beauty. I have particularly in mind

JULY MEETING
Tuesday, July 13, Harvard Science Center, Room 110 (near Memorial Hall, facing Harvard Yard - same place as June meeting). Translation Roundtable: 7 pm; Meeting Proper: 8:15 pm. Building is air-conditioned. Meeting will be a showing of technical films - see article this page.

August

September

a film on glassmaking which would have fascinated anyone, not just a technical translator with a client in the field of glass.

I would like to hear from the following:

- someone who is a librarian (or has a good relationship with one) and can make a 16 mm sound projector and screening room available twice a month for this program;
- someone with experience in a film society;
- someone who has the equipment and space available because they themselves collect classic or silent films, etc. and could share them with us.

For the July meeting, we have a projector and projectionist available at low cost from Harvard University; however, I feel it would be best to develop a resource within NETA.

(MAINLY) SPANISH BOOKS
(Isabel Leonard)

Spanish translators have a pleasant surprise in store for them when they write for the catalogs ("green sheets") of Imported Books, 3013 Rolinda St., Dallas, Texas USA 75211. Most books on the list are in Spanish (literature, children's, cookery, etc.) but of interest to the beginning technical translator are a good number of introductory technical books in Spanish (e.g. *Tecnología Profesional para el Electrotécnico*) and school-type textbooks (e.g. *Anatomía, Fisiología e Higiene*). For the technical translator one can find (if one looks hard -- unfortunately they are buried in everything else) such books as *Sportivnaya Terminologiya* (R-E-F-G, indexed from R only) and Glossary of the Oil Industry (SE-ES). A section labelled "French and German" I found disappointing: the books listed were either too elementary or too well known to be of interest.

What's best about this company is that it has a slight price edge over the east coast, and it's run by what sound like real people: they reply to your questions and they ship out fast (of three items I ordered on April 6 I received one on April 16 and one on April 17, mailed book rate). They will sometimes comment on the worth of a dictionary in the catalog, and their judgments seem trustworthy -- I have agreed with those I was able to crosscheck. It would be helpful if they could sort their listings by fields of interest. It would also be helpful if they could do what no catalog does to my knowledge, and list

the number of terms in a dictionary instead of the number of pages. In an age of electronic calculators this should not be difficult.

I have picked out some items from their most recent lists (received June 11) which may be of interest to NETA members.

Arco Motor Vehicle Dictionary, SE-ES, Roberto F. Lima. Typo & content excellent. Can serve as tech. dict. Cloth 16 x 23 cm 362 pp c. 1962-69. Arco Pub. Co. NY. \$12.50. (*This one was recommended to me by Pauline Marzollini, Fort Wayne, Indiana, who works as a translator for an automotive company. I have not seen the dictionary myself - IAL.*)

Diccionario Inglés-Español. Esp.-Ing. de Medicina by Torres. The bible of foreign med students. Cloth. 15x21 cm, 714 pp, c. 1961-68. Ed. Alhambra, Madrid. \$21.00.

Elsevier's Oilfield Dictionary in Five Languages. J. Moltzer, Eng-Fr-Sp-Du-Ge. Cloth 15x22cm, 162 pp, \$19.50. (*Elsevier's price on this per Sept/74 cat. is US\$18.50 and has doubtless risen since - IAL.*)

Vocabulario Inglés-Español de Electrónica y Técnica Nuclear. John Markus. Eng-Sp only. Dictionary. c.1973. Marcombo Barcelona. 17x23cm, 189 p, \$10.00.

Diccionario de Electrónica, Radio y TV. English-Spanish. Illus. Pb.14x21cm, 199pp. Minerva, Mex. \$3.50.

Diccionario de Medicina. Dr. E. Dabout. Pb. 14x19cm, 839pp, Sp. only. Ed.Nacional, Mex. \$5.00.

Dictionary of Modern Business. Spanish-English, Eng-Span. Louis A. Robb. The BEST in its field. Indispensable to the translator and person doing important Spanish correspondence. Cloth 14x21cm, 610 pp, Kramer Wash.DC \$23.50. (*I have heard this opinion elsewhere, too. - IAL.*)

Careers in Foreign Languages --A Handbook. June L. Sherif. A most useful and informative book. Pb. 13x22cm, 228pp, c.1966-76, Regents NY (in English), \$2.95.

FREE GLOSSARIES (*William J. Grimes*)

A free "Glossary of Plastic Terms" is available from Edward A. Gilbertson, General Sales Manager, Kemlite Corp., P O Box 429, 101 N. Republic Avenue, Joliet, Illinois 60434. Apart from the fact that the title is offputting (is a plastic term one that flexes to the writer's will?) and that it begins with a FOREWARD, it's quite useful, 11 pages long, and above all free. We have lots more free-glossary info. but no more room this issue.

LETTER FROM LONDON (Isabel Leonard)

My visits to England are usually made at the translation-ebb seasons of Christmas and the "long vac", so my recent trip was the first opportunity in many years to contact translating circles in London.

English translators come in two very distinct types: technical translators, who may join the Translators Guild, and literary translators who may join the Translators Association, although according to the terms of reference of these organizations, either kind of translator may apply for membership in either. The TG is part of the Institute of Linguists, whereas the TA is a subsidiary organization within England's Society of Authors.

It was not until a couple of hours before arriving at a wine and cheese party given by the (literary) Translators Association that I found out that they regard technical translation as a slightly inferior branch of the profession! Talking to people at the party, I gained the impression that, although England and the U.S. are alike in that few literary translators work full-time at this profession, English translators tend to be professional authors doing translation "on the side" (or vice versa) whereas in the U.S. (someone please correct me if I am wrong!) literary translation is done in hours snatched from the busy day of the college professor. Everyone I met wanted to know how much money American translators made, but I fear my answers disappointed them. Their impression, gained from lavish lunches and dinners whenever their American publishers come to London, is that we are rolling in rivers of riches. I was lucky enough to meet the one technical translator at the party, who turned out to be former translator of *Interavia*, a multi-language publication which was held up to us in our translating-school days as a model of what technical translation should be.

The Translators Guild had no "events" that week, but I did collect some information on it. Entrance to the Guild is by examination only -- quite a stiff one, they say. It consists of a three-hour General Translation into English (which sounds similar to the ATA accreditation test) plus a letter to be written in the foreign language, plus a three-hour Technical Translation into English, plus, for candidates without formal qualifications in their subject, a Specialist Knowledge paper in the chosen field. Reference materials are permitted in the first three but not the fourth (Specialist) section. We in the ATA undoubtedly have some catching up to do -- I was informed privately that a number of TG members were forced out when the more rigid examination system came into effect.

The TG has a newsletter, periodic meetings, and a referral system. The

latter works as follows: file cards are kept by the Secretary on the qualifications and availability of members, and recommendations are given to companies, etc. who call with specific translation needs. (And they do call -- two such inquiries came in during the short time I was sitting in her office.) To those in the NETA who want to start such a system, I would say that the TG Secretary has hard evidence for the linguistic and subject-specialty attainments of the people she recommends, which we do not.

The TG also has a formal grievance procedure e.g. for the case where an agency refuses to pay a translator on the grounds that his work is poor, and an informal system whereby the members can pass on warnings about fly-by-night agencies and client companies about to go bankrupt (yes, they have fly-by-night agencies there too; also envelope-to-envelope agencies, which they call "post-office agencies").

Last but not least, encouraged by Alicja Kaweck's talk on the Polytechnic of Central London, I paid a visit to this temple of learning, collected its catalog, and through the kindness of one of the professors was allowed to browse in the dictionary section of the library. Never had I seen so many technical dictionaries in one place -- everything you might find in MIT, Adler's, Foyle's, Dillon's, and Blackwell's put together, and more. My intended 10-minute visit turned into two hours as I scribbled notes.

I have with me some written information to supplement the above impressions; this can be copied/lent to any interested NETA member.

TOOL TERMINOLOGY (William J. Grimes)

How often have you been faced with translating a long list of tools on a purchase order, or in a foreign manufacturer's literature? You may know a Phillips screwdriver from a hex wrench, but what are chain nose pliers, NEMA plugs, or finger tweezers? You can answer all these questions and a great many more if you have the Jensen Tool Catalog, available free from Jensen Tools and Alloys, 4117 North 44th St, Phoenix, Arizona 85018.

Jensen specializes in tools for electronic assembly and precision mechanical work, and if you do any of that sort of thing for a living or as a hobby, and I am one who does, the catalog will be more than just a reference work.

The feature that distinguishes the Jensen from any old tool catalog with pictures and captions is the glossaries provided throughout, with explanations of the various types of screwdrivers, machine screws, etc. Pages headed "Jensen Tool Tips" provide metric conversion tables, the chemical compositions of well-known plastics, and even the names of the tools in German, French, Spanish, Russian, and Italian.

Write to the address shown above, asking for Catalog 674.