

Professional certification

Part 1: What is it? Do I need it?

By Ann C. Sherwin

The first part of a two-part feature, this article reviews the different credentials that are available to translators and interpreters and examines the importance of being certified. Part 2, which will appear in the next edition of CATI Quarterly, will review the available ways to become certified and provide useful sources of additional information on the organizations that offer translation and interpretation credentials.



If you provide language services as a free-lance, one question is inevitable: "Are you certified?" the caller wants to know. Most of us, after a spoken or tacit "No, but ____," must fill in the blank with something like "I can certify my translations," or "translators in this country are accredited, not certified," or "interpreter certification is not available in that language."

Often the caller is simply looking for assurance that we'll do a good job. Or maybe a supervisor has mandated the use of "certified translators," with

only a vague concept of what that means. Or an immigrant has unwittingly transformed the need to obtain certified translations of his documents into a search for the elusive "certified translator." Since it is unethical to say one is certified if one is not, we take a deep breath and launch into the script that fits the occasion.

If you're ATA-accredited in all the language pairs in which you offer service, you may soon be able to drop this script from your repertoire. In the next ATA election, the ballot will include a proposal to amend the Bylaws, replacing the term "accreditation" with "certification." This is one of several changes that

the ATA Board resolved to pursue on the recommendation of Michael S. Hamm, an expert in the field of voluntary certification, who had been commissioned to evaluate the ATA program. But unlike the many changes already in place or scheduled to take effect in 2004, this one requires a vote of the membership. In the executive summary he submitted to ATA, Hamm offers this explanation:

Programs that evaluate the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals are typically referred to as certification bodies in the

credentialing world. Accreditation bodies usually evaluate organizations, systems, or entities other than people. Unfortunately, referring to this

process as accreditation is sending a mixed message.... Clarification of this terminology will benefit ATA as well as its certificants and other stakeholders.¹

I urge active ATA members to vote for the proposed amendment.

But the real issue underlying the questions in the subtitle is, How can we present ourselves in the best possible light (with due attention to ethics), so that potential clients will have confidence in our ability to perform the needed tasks and be willing to pay our price?

¹The entire document is on the Web at www.atanet.org/bin/view.pl/24113.html.

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The CATI Quarterly

Editor

G. David Heath

The *CATI Quarterly* is a publication of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters, a nonprofit organization to promote the recognition of translating and interpreting as professions in the Carolinas. Opinions expressed herein are the author's and not necessarily those of the Editor, the Association or its Board of Directors.

Would you like to submit an article or write a letter to the editor?

Reader submissions are welcome. Suggested length limits are:

- Articles 1500 words
- Reviews 500 words
- Letters 300 words

Submissions become the property of the *CATI Quarterly* and are subject to editing.

For details, see the "Submission Guidelines" at:

www.catiweb.org/guidelines.htm

If you have questions or would like to submit an article, please contact the editor, G. David Heath, at:

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The state of translation in today's economic climate

By Mike Collins



Today's economic climate is fraught with challenges for the translation industry. Margins are shrinking and demands are increasing. Many translators have seen traditional

client bases collapse, business practices change, and competition stiffen incredibly. Nevertheless, the overall demand for quality translation remains

strong, and translators should be proactive in educating their customers, pursuing opportunities in new business sectors, and reassessing their skill sets, processes, and options.

Most of us will agree that competition has gotten tougher over the last few years. Customers who once accepted quotes without question now dicker over every half cent. Continuous pressure is being applied to translators and agencies to do more, faster, and for less. This pressure is coming from above (our customers) and below (the translator pool itself).

The current economic climate has fueled an increase in the pool of

Today's economic climate is fraught with challenges for the translation industry. Margins are shrinking and demands are increasing. Many translators have seen traditional client bases collapse, business practices change, and competition stiffen incredibly. Nevertheless, the overall demand for quality translation remains strong.

available translators. Many professional in-house translators have lost their jobs and are now on the freelance market. Others have lost long-term clients and are aggressively hunting new ones. In addition, out-of-work bilingual professionals often turn to translation work as a way to pay the bills while they are looking for permanent

work, or even as a second career. This increase in the labor pool has the inevitable result of applying downward pressure on rates. In short, it's a buyer's market out

there right now.

As for our customers, they are reassessing almost every aspect of how they do business with their suppliers, including quoting, technical demands, required services, and payment terms.

Clients and potential clients are asking more and more frequently about the possibility of using computer programs instead of people to meet translation needs. In this age of automation, it is not surprising that medium- to large-size enterprises look to the computer to address their translation requirements (and the associated costs). I have

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From the CATI President (continued)

"Professional Certification" by our founding member, Ann Sherwin. The latter article reviews the different credentials that are available to translators and interpreters and examines the importance of being certified.

Please let us know what you think of this new electronic-only format. If you would like to contribute to the CQ, please refer to the submission guidelines on the CATI website.

I look forward to seeing you on June 7 in Charlotte. Remember, we

have a group dinner planned for Saturday night.

Sincerely,

Jackie Metivier



From the editor's desk

Focusing on what's important

By G. David Heath

Welcome to the *CATI Quarterly* in its new, electronic-only format. As reported in the last issue of *CATI Quarterly*, this big change in format and delivery has been debated at length by the CATI Board of Directors.

Recently, the Board took into account a study of other professional association "best practices." This study showed that some of the most innovative professional associations now provide electronic-only downloadable newsletters along with "printer-friendly" versions of the main articles. Faced by rising printing and mailing costs, the time had

come to bring the *CATI Quarterly* into line with current practices. The costs that are saved will help CATI avoid raising membership fees and will be better used on other member benefits.

I hope that you enjoy reading the new *CATI Quarterly*, and I would, of course, appreciate your comments.

So much for format and delivery.

Now let's focus on what's even more important: content.

By far the most important requirement for any association's newsletter is content that is relevant to the most-crucial issues faced by its

members. Our primary concern is to bring you articles and news that are especially relevant to today's environment.

To launch this new electronic *CATI Quarterly* we have brought you two articles that are exceptionally relevant to the current state of the translation and interpretation business today: "Professional certification," by Ann Sherwin, and "The state of translation in today's economic climate," by Mike Collins. Sincere thanks are due to both authors for these outstanding contributions to the new *CATI Quarterly*.

I would welcome your comments and input on any of the issues raised by these articles, and I hope that you enjoy reading the new *CATI Quarterly*.

Professional certification (continued)

And of course, for buyers of our services, the other side of the coin is, How can I be reasonably assured of contracting with someone capable of meeting my or my client's needs?

In preparation for this article, I invited members of ATA's Translation Company Division and others to respond to an informal survey about professional certification and its role in their selection of translators and interpreters. While the number of responses (9) was not statistically significant, the respondents represent a good cross-section of buyers of T&I services with varying degrees of insider knowledge, some of whom are also practitioners. I was primarily looking for insights that would validate, clarify, or modify impressions I had formed over 20 years of reading and working in the field. I was gratified to find

that my impressions were validated, and I gathered a wealth of commentary from which to draw for the article. My thanks to all who took time to respond.

What is professional certification?

The most concise, on-target definition of a "certified" translator or interpreter came from Pat Newman, a past president of ATA and long-time translation manager for a science and engineering laboratory. Let's take it as our working definition: "One whose interpretation or translation competence has been tested and approved by a professional association or governmental body." Though the ATA credential is currently called "accreditation," it falls within this definition. Therefore, for purposes of this discussion, please understand "certification" to include ATA accreditation.

A key element of any professional certification is testing. Most respondents to my survey, if they did not mention it explicitly, cited credentials here and abroad that are known to be based on testing. Some also named training as part of the equation, but two respondents mentioned only training in their definition of "certification." Training can take the form of community education courses or one-day conferences and seminars, which, though useful, come only with a certificate of attendance or completion. Training may be offered by an employer as preparation for work in a particular company or agency. But even if we rule out these kinds of training, we are left with the question, Does a degree or certificate in translating or interpreting from a recognized institution of

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CATI members volunteer their expertise at educational summit

On February 22, 2003, the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals held its Hispanic Educational Summit at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. Seven CATI members — all professional Spanish interpreters — volunteered their time and expertise to assist with bilingual communication. Over 650 Hispanic middle school students from 70 different schools throughout North Carolina attended

the event. The objective of the summit was to encourage Hispanic students to stay in school, excel in their studies, and pursue higher education. The recent immigrants who speak only Spanish were the target students in need of Spanish interpreting services. Some of the topics CATI's interpreters covered were Staying in School, Gang Prevention, SAT Success, and Preparing for Scholarship Opportunities.

Jackie Metivier, the CATI President, provided the simultaneous interpretation for the keynote speaker, Honorable Treasurer Rosario Marin. Mrs. Marin's speech was very emotional, and her story struck a chord with many of the students present. Mrs. Marin came to the United States from Mexico as a teenager. Once she overcame the language barrier, she focused on her education, despite the fact that her mother only expected her to become a bilingual Secretary. Today, Mrs. Marin's signature appears in the United States currency. What a fabulous role model!

This event gave CATI an opportunity to demonstrate that interpreting is a career the students can consider for themselves, taking advantage of their fluency in Spanish and burgeoning ability to understand both cultures.

The NCSHP would like to thank Alice Bolaños, Ginny Dropkin, Yasmin Metivier, Jackie Metivier, Laura Price, Maria Lourdes Sain, Lucia Wilberding, and Marcela del Villar for contributing their time and expertise to this worthwhile cause.



At the summit, from left to right, Maria Lourdes Sain, Lucia Wilberding, Jackie Metivier (CATI President), and Yasmin Metivier

Professional certification *(continued)*

higher learning constitute professional certification?

I asked Dr. Michael S. Doyle, of the Department of Languages and Culture Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, whether graduates of his department's long-established Certificate in Translating program or its new M.A. program in Spanish Translating and Translation Studies could be considered "professionally certified." This was his response:

When I think of a "certified translator," it is definitely along the lines of "ATA-accredited." For me, earning an academic or workshop certificate simply means that the institution's requirements (course work, grade-point average, etc.) have been met for that particular certificate. We say that our certificates in translating serve as preparation for taking (no guarantee of passing, of course) the ATA accreditation exams. But to be certified or accredited as a professional translator goes beyond the

coursework and institutional requirements completed. It entails such recognition by a professional certifying or accrediting agency or association, just as occurs with accountants, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals.²

²Except where otherwise noted, all direct quotations in this article come from e-mail correspondence with the author in April or May of this year.

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CATI Conference scheduled for June 7

CATI will be holding its annual conference on June 7, 2003, in the Fretwell Building on the UNC-Charlotte campus. As many as 100 participants from North and South Carolina, including students, professional translators and interpreters, and other language professionals are expected to attend.

Presentation titles include "The Role of the Interpreter/Translator in the Workplace" (Christian Degueldre), "American Higher Education and Translator Training" (a report on the state of translation-related educational programs in the US by Dr. Mike Doyle), "Professional Liability in the Field of Translation" (Ann Manning and Mike Collins), "Listening Comprehension Techniques used by Interpreters" (Christian Degueldre), and breakout

sessions on the topics of how to start a translation/interpretation business (Maria Rodriguez), the translator as an intercultural interface (Renate Sieberichs), and taking the state and federal certification examinations (Luis Concha). The keynote speaker will be Christian Degueldre, an interpreter well-known for his insight into the profession and his skill as a presenter.

The CATI conference offers us as language professionals, many working as independent contractors, an opportunity to network with our peers, compare notes on the industry, and keep up to date with the latest information in the field. Conference activities will begin at 8:00 a.m. with registration and check-in, and end with a reception at 6:00 p.m., and a social at the

Holiday Inn at 7:00 p.m. All day Saturday, attendees will be able to pick and choose from a wide array of multilingual technical dictionaries and reference works offered for sale by i.b.d., Ltd., the well-known New York bookseller. Registration fees include lunch and refreshments between presentations.

For participants who have signed up in advance for the ATA accreditation examination, it will be held following the conference on Sunday, June 8, at 10:00 a.m.

Please see the conference schedule on page 7 for the locations and times of specific events.

**This is your conference –
be there!**

Other upcoming events

American Translators Association 44th Annual Conference Pointe South Mountain Resort, Phoenix, Arizona, Nov 5-8, 2003

Plan now to attend ATA's Annual Conference. Join your colleagues for a rewarding experience in Phoenix, Arizona. The conference will feature:

- Over 150 educational sessions offering something for everyone
- The Job Exchange where individuals promote their services and companies meet translators and interpreters
- Over 50 exhibits featuring the latest publications, software, and services available
- Opportunities to network with over 1,200 translators and interpreters

from throughout the U.S. and around the world

- And much more!

Preliminary information, along with the Registration Form, will be mailed in July to all ATA members.

This conference is sure to be a valuable opportunity for translators and interpreters to network and to build on their professional knowledge.

Get together with a colleague so you can share a room, and sign up early. It is always fun to have a large CATI contingent at these conferences, and this year should be no exception.

Hope to see you there!

Federal Court Interpreter Certification Oral Examination in Spanish

Registration is now open.

Register by June 21, 2003.

For more information, call (916) 263-3494 or register online at:

www.cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish

Registration is open to any candidate who has passed the Federal Court Interpreter Written Examination.

North Carolina Office of Minority Health Spanish Interpreter Training Schedule

Please see the CATI website for the complete 2003 schedule.

CATI 2003 Annual Conference UNC Charlotte Schedule of Events

Saturday, June 7, 2003

8:00 am		Registration/check-in	Fretwell Lobby
8:30 am		Welcome, General Announcements	Fretwell 113
9:00 - 11:00		"The role of the Interpreter/Translator in the work-place" Christian Degueudre	Fretwell 113
11:00 - 12:00		"American Higher Education and Translator Training" Dr. Michael Doyle	Fretwell 113
12:00 - 1:30		Lunch	Cone Center
1:30 - 3:00		"Professional Liability in the Field of Translation: Reports from the Translation and Corporate Perspectives" Michael Collins and Ann Manning	Fretwell 113
3:00 - 4:00		"Listening Comprehension Techniques used by Interpreters" Christian Degueudre	Fretwell 113
4:00		Afternoon Break	Fretwell Lobby
4:30 - 5:30		Small Sessions (Concurrent)	
	1A	"The Translator as an Intercultural Interface" Renate Sieberichs	Fretwell 113
	1B	"Sweating Out the State and Federal Certification Exams" Luis Concha	Fretwell 116
	1C	"How to begin Interpreting and Translating as a profession" Maria D. Rodriguez	Fretwell 118
5:30 pm		CATI Annual General Meeting	Fretwell 113
6:00 pm		Reception	Fretwell Lobby
7:00 pm		Social	Holiday Inn

Sunday, June 8, 2003

10:00-1:00		*ATA Accreditation Examination	Fretwell 113
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* To register for the ATA Accreditation Examination please go to www.atanet.org to obtain application or call Maggie at (703) 683-6100.

Please note: Candidates must be members of ATA for a minimum of four weeks prior to the exam. The standard deadline for exam registration is two weeks prior to the exam date.

i.b.d. Ltd. will be present to sell dictionaries.

Professional certification (continued)

Dr. Virginia Benmaman, Director of the M.A. Program in Bilingual Legal Interpreting at the College of Charleston (South Carolina), has a similar perspective:

Our programs are academic; that means academic graduate credit is awarded upon successful completion of either program. Our exit examination in the M.A. program offers two options:

The first is a passing grade on an official court certification test, i.e. the consortium or the federal interpreting examination, or one that is specific to a court jurisdiction.

The second option is taking the exit examination at our institution. This examination includes a written part that tests much of what has been taught in our courses and an oral part, similar to the format of the court certification exams. This second option *only* allows the student to graduate with an M.A. degree. It is not a court certification examination. We do not offer a certification exam as part of the program. If the student opts for the first choice, that student can graduate with an academic degree and official court certification.

So while it is possible to exit the College of Charleston program as a “certified” court interpreter, it is not by virtue of having completed the training but by virtue of having passed a test given by an independent certifying body.

Some buyers of language services regard passing the U.S. Department of State examination as a valuable professional credential. The test for translators is at least as hard to pass as the ATA accreditation test. The State Department also has tests for escort (consecutive) and conference

(simultaneous) interpreters, the latter requiring a higher level of skill. However, these tests are given only to candidates for actual employment or contract work in the department.

Furthermore, and more importantly, the State Department does not certify any translators or interpreters, according to Shuckran Kamal, Senior Arabic Language Translator in the department’s Office of Language Services. After describing the testing levels for various positions in the department, Kamal emphasized once again that “passing the test does **not** (repeat **not**) mean certification.”

I should point out that governments in the United States are not generally in the business of certifying people. They may test candidates for employment or contract work in a particular department or agency, as in the case of the State Department, but certification is normally awarded by independent professional organizations. A notable exception in the area of language services is court interpreter certification. But even the government-sponsored court interpreter certification programs are administered with the help of independent bodies under contract.

While some translation companies test and “qualify” or even “certify” their subcontractors, these credentials are of limited value in the general marketplace. That is not to deny their value as means for a translation company to determine whether a potential subcontractor meets its standards. Michael Collins of Global Translation Systems, Inc., in Chapel Hill, NC, says his company uses a short test of its own to screen applicants. “We do not really use the term ‘certified’ with translators or interpreters who do work for

us, unless they are court-certified interpreters,” says Collins. “In some cases, when asked by a client to supply the credentials of a given translator, we may indicate whether that person was certified/licensed in another country or possesses accreditation of some kind.”

One more aspect of our working definition of a certified translator or

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interpreter merits attention: “One whose *interpretation or translation* competence has been tested...” Cer-

tificates of language proficiency, or credentials for foreign-language correspondents or teachers, for example, are not translating and interpreting credentials, even if translating or interpreting was included in the test.

Do I need it?

If you already have all the work you need and want, a wealth of satisfied clients who keep coming back and sending you referrals, you probably don’t need professional certification. Collins offers this view:

If a translator lists ATA accreditation, it is a plus because it indicates a personal investment by that person in his or her profession. However, the decisive factors are a person’s experience and how well he or she does on a short test given by us. After that, the translator’s work is subject to review by our editors, and that work must maintain a consistent quality standard for us to continue employing him or her.

In fact, most survey respondents mentioned experience, especially in the relevant subject area, as a critical factor in their decision to try a given translator or interpreter for the first time.

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Professional certification *(continued)*

For beginning translators and interpreters, this is not welcome news. Suffice it to say that certification helps establish your credibility as a professional. The less experience you have, the more important credentials become, and in some cases they can be decisive. “For languages where ATA accreditation is offered, we do not consider any translator who is not ATA accredited,” writes Richard Paegelow, Managing Director of Inline Translation Services, Inc., Glendale CA.

Dr. Jiri Stejskal, president of CE-TRA, Inc., also prefers ATA-accredited translators, if accreditation is available for the given language; if it is not, active ATA members are preferred over associate members. “For others, including translators living abroad,” says Stejskal, “certification by CTIC [Canadian Translators and Interpreters Council or NAATI [National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (Australia)] is preferred; otherwise the decision is based on their résumé rather than a certificate.”

Newman looks for references from

clients in the same general business as hers, ATA accreditation, college degrees in translation or interpretation, State Department credentials, a résumé showing long experience in the subject areas she is interested in, and sample translations with both source and target language versions given.

Most respondents mentioned formal education and training as a factor in deciding whether to try a new translator

or interpreter, though some placed less emphasis on it. We have already established that training alone does not lead to certification, even if it results in a certificate. But training may be a prerequisite for taking a certification test — e.g. the two-day training required by the Consortium of the National Center for State Courts Interpreter Certification Program — and it is likely to help in any testing situation. Beginning in January 2004, candidates wishing to sit for the ATA accreditation test will have to meet eligibility requirements that combine educa-

tion and training with experience. The higher the level of education, the less experience is required. Sounds like Catch 22, doesn't it? You need experience to get certified, and you need certification to get experience. But there is hope. Translator and interpreter training is

Sounds like Catch 22, doesn't it? You need experience to get certified, and you need certification to get experience. But there is hope.

a relatively new development in the U.S. Many of us got our start in the field just by diving in and doing it, thanks to a mentor, encouraging employer, or trusting client. Nevertheless, certification is a worthy goal for anyone serious about advancing in the profession, and especially the newcomer.

Ann C. Sherwin is an ATA-accredited German-English translator in Raleigh, NC. She can be reached at:

translator@asherwin.com.

“Professional certification, Part 2: How do I get it?” will appear in the next edition of *CATI Quarterly*.

The state of translation in today's economic climate *(continued)*

been placed in the position numerous times of having to explain the difference between careful human translation and unedited computer translation, with varying degrees of success. Some companies are not asking at all, but rather simply instituting pushbutton translation solutions for their web sites and intranets.

The technical demands being placed on translators and agencies are increasing steadily as well. Companies are now routinely asking for glossaries or translation memories along with delivery of a project. They are less and less willing to accept work in anything other than final format, and less and less willing to pay extra for such format-

ting. In the area of localization, translators are expected to know more and more about translation-related programming issues (double-byte enabling, special characters, other localization issues).

In the area of quoting and bidding, many customers are beginning to ask for more detail on pricing: how much for translation, editing, formatting, etc.? Their goal is a transparent quoting process that will allow them to identify areas where savings can be made, and to make sure they are not paying for anything they don't need. While this may make sense to corporate accountants, uneducated clients often make poor choices in an effort to save money. A translator who is

unwilling to forgo editing and formatting as part of his/her process risks losing a job to another who agrees to do so, with all the ramifications that has for the quality of the end product.

Speaking of bidding, another business trend has finally made it to the world of translation: the reverse auction.

In reverse auctions, a client contacts potential suppliers and asks them to meet on the web at a certain time on a certain day to bid on a project. You submit an opening bid some days in advance, then

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The state of translation in today's economic climate *(continued)*

register and sign in, and read the lengthy terms and conditions. After a short tutorial on how to use the system, you are ready for the auction.

At the appointed time, the participants log in. During the live auction, bidders can only see the opposing bids or the current lowest bid, but do not know who they are bidding against. Opening bids are placed, then the players reduce their bids until no one can go any lower. The lowest bidder wins. (There is invariably a terse statement to the effect that cost is not the only issue that will decide the award; however, it is difficult to see what the other criteria could be, since the only input bidders have into the process are their bids.)

In the recent past, two clients (one new, one old) approached us with large potential projects. The projects were both in Interleaf, and as we are one of few agencies who can still work in that native format, I felt good about our chances. We carefully worked up our opening bid and submitted it. We began the auction with confidence, but became disillusioned as we watched the bids sink to nearly half of our original bid. I could not escape the impression that the jobs were going to the most desperate bidder.

So, the competition's tougher, the demands are greater, and some clients are trying to replace us with machines, but at least we're still getting paid on time, right? Well...

A few years ago, the standard wait time for payment was around 30 days, with a few chronic latepayers. Translation agencies, which have always been notoriously undercapi-

talized, were often the slowest, while larger corporate clients could be counted on to pay their bills within a month or so.

As the economic climate has worsened, this has changed considerably. Most large corporations have lengthened their payment cycle to 45 days - that's 45 days after receipt of invoice. Add a week on each end for processing and mail delivery, and you are looking at 60 days.

Some very large corporations have changed their supplier relations completely. They will deal directly with only a handful of 'sub-tier contractors,' who in turn deal directly with all the smaller service providers (that's us). This relieves the large corporation of the burden of negotiating terms with a zillion mom and pop suppliers and also has the effect of making the sub-tier contractor the bad cop in the game.

The sub-tier contractor's service agreement with its suppliers invariably states that it will not pay you, the supplier, until it has been paid by the large corporation. What this means is another 10 to 15 days added on to the payment cycle.

For the freelancer working for an agency, it gets worse. To all of the above, add the fact that the aforementioned undercapitalized agencies are often unable to pay contractors until they themselves have been paid for the job (especially in the case of large projects). This means that at least another week or so is added to the payment cycle as the agency waits for the check from the corporation's sub-tier contractor to clear the bank. If we do the math, we will come up with the roughly 75 days that many translators are waiting for their payment.

Doing business in difficult economic

times is always tough. No one can say whether any or all of these trends are permanent or passing. Larger business entities will always attempt to reshape the business environment in their interest, regardless of whether it is good or bad for their smaller suppliers.

However, it is not our purpose here to debate the merits of these trends; they are real, they are not going away any time soon, and our only choice is how we elect to deal with them.

To start with, slow business periods can be an ideal time to take stock, refocus, and learn new skills. For instance, those who have gotten by for years without advanced software can take the opportunity to learn what's out there and how to use it. It doesn't cost a thing to do Internet research to see what's available, and many companies offer free trial or demo versions of their products to play with. As we noted above, companies are looking for these skills. Why not work to give the customer what it wants, and add to our skill set at the same time?

Translators and interpreters who have seen business fall off in their traditional area of expertise can try developing knowledge in another area. While the high-tech and IT sectors have suffered greatly in the last two years, the medical/pharmaceutical industry is booming. The need for local court, school, and medical interpreters and translators is still great. Take that quiet day to read the business pages and see who's doing well and why, and think about how you can fit in.

One thing dedicated language professionals have going for them is that the requirement for quality in translation is inescapable. A translation buyer's staff may not be able to read translated documentation,

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The state of translation in today's economic climate *(continued)*

but its customers can and do. It behooves us to keep sending the message that translation is not a commodity, but a professional service. Different lawyers and doctors within a firm or practice charge differently depending on their expertise and experience. Clients pay for the individual's skill, not for a standard unit of lawyering or doctoring. The same should apply to translators.

All of this is small consolation if the cupboard is bare, however. For many, prospering in today's economy will take every ounce of flexibility and resourcefulness they can muster. Nevertheless, it is never a bad thing to take some time for personal and professional self-evaluation. No business or professional can grow without a long-term goal and a plan for meeting it. There may

never be a better time than now to make those plans and start putting them into effect.

Mike Collins is the President of Global Translation Systems, Inc., an agency established in 1992. He has a Masters Degree in Slavic Linguistics and is a former Fulbright scholar to Yugoslavia. He also currently serves on the CATI Board of Directors.

We would like to hear from you!

If you would like to comment on any of the ideas expressed in this newsletter, please write the editor, G. David Heath, at:

infoexact@mindspring.com

A selection of letters to the editor will be published in future issues of *CATI Quarterly*.
