



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### FEATURE STORIES

**NAJIT Certification**  
Front Page

**Development of the  
Certification Exam**  
Page 5

**Mandarin in the  
Legal Arena**  
Page 8

**Requiem for an  
Interpreters Office**  
Page 13

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Message  
from the Chair**  
Page 2

**Board Meeting Reports**  
Page 3

### MEETINGS

**Getting Organized**  
Page 7

### CONFERENCE REPORT

**Community Interpreting  
Comes of Age**  
Page 12

### TRAINING REPORT

#### CCIO

Page 10

## NEXT ISSUE

Members in Action

Recommended  
Reading

# NAJIT CERTIFICATION EXAM IS BORN

Mirta Vidal

A year ago at our annual meeting, the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI) reported that we were close to signing a contract with Measurement Incorporated, Inc., an assessment company, to help us develop an interpreter certification exam for NAJIT. We projected then that it would take a little over a year to create the exam. With nearly half the participants at this year's annual meeting signed up to take the pilot test, it is fair to say that the exam is well on its way to completion.

I would like to thank everyone who agreed to take the pilot test. By doing so, you are participating in one of the most important phases of test development, that is, putting the scoring items to the test in order to determine if they are in fact useful tools for establishing a person's knowledge and level of competence for the task. This is a crucial step in the process of creating the final certification instrument, and by taking part, you have made a very important contribution not only to the exam development process but to the profession as a whole.

The NAJIT exam will mark the first time that our profession has the means with which to confer a credential on those it considers qualified and sufficiently skilled to perform the work. It is not limited to providing possible entrance to one or another agency or court, but is designed to test the individual's ability to perform well in a variety of settings related to the judiciary—whether in or out of court, in civil or criminal matters, or doing oral or written translation.

In this sense, our exam is unique and unprecedented. From now on, interpreters will be certified through an instrument created by their peers and not imposed on them by any governmental or employment entity or subject to budgetary or other requirements. NAJIT's will be an exam which we, the profession, control completely, from contents to methodology to funding, which we can give as often as we like, in as many languages as we see fit, answering to no one's conditions but those imposed on us by our own membership and the interpreting community at large.

It would take a great deal more time to detail the strengths of this benchmark exam, and I hope that eventually we publish a complete report of its development. Permit me simply to highlight some of the reasons why we feel the exam meets the high standard of excellence that has characterized NAJIT's approach to the field since its inception.

The exam grew out of a survey conducted several years ago in which some 80 percent of the membership favored certification by the profession. It has been created jointly between NAJIT's Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation and Measurement Incorporated. All decisions have been made through intensive consultation and exchange in both directions to ensure that it meets the psychometric requirements and reflects the real world of language transference in which we work. Before arriving at the final version of the exam, many meetings were held, first to develop a blueprint, then to write the test items, then to review those items to ensure that they were appropriate and relevant to the profession, and finally to prepare the pilot test.

*Continued on page 4*

## THE NAJIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cristina Helmerichs D., Chair  
Austin, Texas  
helmerichs@najit.org

M. Cristina Castro, Treasurer  
Portland, Oregon  
castro@najit.org

Holly Mikkelsen, Secretary  
Monterey, California  
mikkelsen@najit.org

Judith Kenigson Kristy  
Nashville, Tennessee  
kenigsonkristy@najit.org

Steven T. Mines, J.D.  
Austin, Texas  
mines@najit.org

Executive Director  
Arlene Stock,  
Dynamic Management  
New York, New York  
headquarters@najit.org

*Proteus*

Proteus, published quarterly, is the official newsletter of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, Inc. 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3025, New York, NY 10176.

Editor: Nancy Festinger. Address submissions to [proteus@najit.org](mailto:proteus@najit.org) with attached file. Submissions preferred in Microsoft Word with no indents between paragraphs. All submissions subject to editorial review. Reprinted material is not accepted. **Deadlines for copy :** Winter Issue Jan 1; Spring Issue April 1; Summer Issue July 1; Fall Issue Oct 1. Annual subscription rate: \$16.00, included in membership dues. Online edition and archive available at:

<http://www.najit.org/proteus>

The opinions expressed in articles and editorials of Proteus are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Association. Postmaster: Send address changes to NAJIT, 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3025, New York, NY 10176.

Copyright 2001 by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, Inc. Graphic design by James Mowrey. Printed by Scranton Printing Co. 614 Mulberry Street, Scranton, PA. 18510.

Address requests for reprint permission to [proteus@najit.org](mailto:proteus@najit.org)

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Now on the heels of the 2001 Annual Meeting and Educational Conference, the Board is actively working on the 2002 Annual Conference, to be held on May 17th, 18th and 19th in Phoenix, Arizona. NAJIT hopes to continue building on the successes of the Chicago conference, attended by more than 250 people. The piloting of the NAJIT certification exam was one of the primary achievements of this conference. The NAJIT Board wishes to publicly thank all those people who graciously gave of their time to make the conference and the test possible.

In order to continue providing the membership with interesting and valuable conferences, it is of utmost importance that we begin gathering materials and presenters for next year's events. The deadlines are quickly closing in on us, so if you wish to present a paper, organize a roundtable or propose an idea for the 2002 conference, please contact the Chair at [helmerichs@najit.org](mailto:helmerichs@najit.org) as soon as possible.

The Board is also challenging all members to become more active in the association's activities. We need to increase our outreach to court interpreters and translators working in languages other than Spanish. One of the goals the Board has set is increasing NAJIT membership, and we put this challenge to you. If each member were to recruit one new member a year, by 2004 NAJIT's membership would grow exponentially. We need to reach out not only to our colleagues but to the rest of the legal community. As we develop and expand our training and educational activities, NAJIT will be looking to you, the members, for our experts and teachers. If you are at all interested in participating in these activities, please contact [headquarters@najit.org](mailto:headquarters@najit.org). Thank you for all your support and interest.

Cristina Helmerichs D.  
Chair, Board of Directors

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS (March 1, 2001 through May 31, 2001)

Albritton, F., Kinston, NC  
Alonso, Adolfo, Bend, OR  
Alvarez Przygoda, Suzanne, Vienna, VA  
Amar, Susan, Ocean, NJ  
Amaya, Allan, Brooklyn, NY  
Anderson, Brigitte, Three Forks, MT  
Aragon, Martha L., Washington, DC  
Aranda, Louis, Brooklyn, NY  
Asteinz, Jose, New York, NY  
Bamberg, George, Madison, OH  
Benemann, Carlos, Ferndale, CA  
Biryukova, Nadia, Bellevue, WA  
Boitsova, Ksenia, Washington, DC  
Burton, Helen, Portland, OR  
Cardone, Sandra, Rocky Hill, CT  
Chen, Shan, Honolulu, HI  
Combs, Ralitsa, Streamwood, IL  
Eubanks, Patricia, Pacific Grove, CA  
Ferry, Thelma, Corpus Christi, TX  
Gentes, Gaye, Boston, MA  
González, Eduardo, Kearney, NE  
González-Hibner, Melinda, Boulder, CO  
Harnum, B., Yellowknife, NWT, Canada  
Hejazeen, Rania, Farmington Hills, MI  
Hepp, Anne, Montrose, CO  
Hernández, Herlinda, Indiana, PA  
Huizar, Belen, Los Angeles, CA  
Idris, Salaheldin Mohamed, New York, NY  
Keller, Linda Aurora, Chicago, IL  
Klaver, Ellen, Niwot, CO  
Kopczyński, Karolina, Easthampton, MA

LiPuma, Raquel Herrera, Oakton, VA  
Marks, Selma, New York, NY  
Meline, Jayson, Idaho Falls, ID  
Monteagudo, Mary Ann, Lima 11, Peru  
Nasief, Sonia, Norridge, IL  
Negrón, Sandra, Ecorse, MI  
Nelson, Kyoko, Lake Oswego, OR  
Ness, Karen E., Seattle, WA  
Ore, Beatriz, APO, AE  
Ortigas, Rosario, Jensen Beach, FL  
Paoletti-Schlep, Johann, Portland, OR  
Paz, Sylvia, Allentown, PA  
Peral, Gildardo A., East Chicago, IN  
Ramirez-Ray, Esmeralda, Greeley, CO  
Renna, Marcela A., Overland Park, KS  
Rodríguez, Bibi, Raleigh, NC  
Rodríguez, Magali, Chicago, IL  
Roldán, Martin A., Falls Church, VA  
Rosado, Tony, Albuquerque, NM  
Serrato, Rosa, Columbus, WI  
Smith, Michael, New York, NY  
Solari, Miguel A., Forest Hills, NY  
Stromberg, Sean, Boulder, CO  
Sunnness, Jennifer, St. Paul, MN  
Symister, Ana, St. Thomas, VI  
Tong, Geoffrey, Minneapolis, MN  
Trupiano, Kimberly, Gainesville, FL  
Ullah, Muhammed Ikram, New York, NY  
Welch, Mari, Broomfield, CO  
Youssef, Magdi, Apex, NC

# NAJIT Board of Directors: Summary Reports

April 10, 2001

The NAJIT Board of Directors held its regular meeting by conference call. The first item on the agenda was the need to expand the variety of articles appearing in *Proteus*, particularly with a view to appealing to non-Spanish interpreters. The Board members agreed to work harder to recruit authors, and the idea of altering the no-reprint policy was discussed.

Judith Kenigson Kristy, SSTI liaison, reported on the progress of the certification exam. All exam items have been submitted and reviewed, and the final version of the pilot test is being compiled. Everyone is eager for the administration of the pilot test in Chicago on May 25. Much remains to be done before the actual certification exam is given.

In response to a previous suggestion that NAJIT adopt a more long-term budget perspective, Treasurer Cristina Castro presented a budget with projected outlays for next year, including conference expenses. After reviewing it, the Board agreed that projections of membership growth, revenue and expenses were reasonable. It was acknowledged that many items are difficult to predict, however, especially for areas in which there is no history, such as the NAJIT certification exam. The Board will continue working to provide a longer-term view of NAJIT's financial situation.

The issue of links to the NAJIT website was raised, as a corporate member had requested a free link in the "sites of interest" section. The Board agreed to allow the link, but noted the need to establish a more comprehensive policy on this matter. A related issue, the online membership directory, was discussed as well. There has been a long-standing controversy about the credentials claimed by members in their listings, and NAJIT Webmaster David Mintz has been urging the Board to establish a policy. Cristina Castro has been working with David to formulate this policy, and the Board agreed on an appeals process in case members are dissatisfied with the decision on their listings. The Board agreed that the hard-copy directory should be phased out in favor of a downloadable, printable version of the online directory (in .pdf format), but one more hard-copy version may be printed as soon as the credentials problems are resolved.

Final preparations are under way for Chicago. The conference has been widely publicized, and hopes are high for a healthy attendance. In the meantime, Arlene will be visiting potential sites for future conferences in San Jose and Phoenix.

May 27-28, 2001, Chicago

The NAJIT Board of Directors met at the conclusion of the Annual Conference. The Board welcomed SSTI Directors Mirta Vidal, Alexander Rainof, and Carmen Barros, and Mike Bunch, Vice-President of Measurement Incorporated. They reported on the status of the NAJIT certification exam and the pilot test.

The written pilot exam will be scored by machine, and a meeting will be held in July to score the oral pilot exam.

Out of the presence of the SSTI Board and Mike Bunch, the NAJIT Board discussed the contract between SSTI and MI, drafted by Arlene Stock, which the board approved. It also reappointed the SSTI Board of Directors and renewed NAJIT's contract with Dynamic Management so that Arlene Stock can continue her excellent work in the day-to-day operations of NAJIT.

The Board reviewed a letter regarding recent developments in Maricopa county, Arizona, and voted to write a letter to the appropriate authorities regarding reported changes which threaten the county's support of professional interpretation in its courts.

The Board also discussed the 2002 NAJIT Annual Conference planned for Phoenix for May 17-19, 2002. The program should be set by December 1 so that publicity can begin as early as possible. Board members agreed to begin inviting speakers now so as to have a better idea of program contents. If possible, the conference will feature two full days of educational sessions in addition to pre-conference workshops.

**Holly Mikkelson**  
Secretary, Board of Directors

*[Summary reports supplement board meeting minutes, which include only action items.]*





## NAJIT CERTIFICATION IS BORN

Continued from page 1

The SSTI Board's functions included, among other things, creating the blueprint, overseeing the writing process, reviewing the materials as they were generated and approving the final version. To create test items, SSTI invited twelve highly qualified individuals in the field of interpretation and translation. Item writers and reviewers included five PhDs, four university professors, three full-time federal court staff interpreters (including two chief interpreters), two linguists, one United Nations editor as well as translators and court or conference interpreters holding federal court and State Department certification and ATA accreditation. Represented in the group of exam developers were seven Spanish-speaking countries: Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Spain. Four were native English-speakers. Some of them were new to the association and subsequently joined; others were long-time leaders of NAJIT and several of them are here among us today. One, whose materials were of very high quality and required many, many hours to produce, donated her work. Others received only a nominal fee for their services.

In addition, the project staff in the research and development division of Measurement Incorporated consisted of editors, bilingual content specialists, a Web designer, two PhD psychometricians, two full-time administrative assistants and a Project Director. For the pilot testing of the oral portion, MI produced compact discs through a professional recording studio and hired four professional voice talents. Exam printing and scoring will be handled in-house by MI's printing division. This includes test booklets, answer booklets and related administrative manuals. The machine-scored portion of the written exam will be handled by MI's information technology division.

This entire exam, apart from the actual writing of the items, could never have happened without MI's Project Director, Donna Merritt, not only because of her knowledge and expertise, but also because of her interest in learning about our profession, reviewing the pertinent literature, and becoming organically identified with it. While many of us devoted time and energy, we owe Donna our heartfelt gratitude for her devotion, patience and good humor, for making sure that we could come to Chicago with the test we promised you only a year ago.

Many others have labored selflessly and for long hours to make this a reality. Those who wrote and

reviewed the exam have made the most important contribution. I would like to thank the NAJIT Board for their continuing support of the project and their confidence in us. Most importantly, I want to thank the membership, who trusted us to carry out the mandate to develop a national certification exam for judiciary interpreters and translators. With your financial contributions, which covered the initial expenses of exam design; your participation in the survey, which helped us prepare the blueprint; your willingness to take the pilot test, and your continuing encouragement and enthusiasm for the project, you are truly the creators of this exam as well as its beneficiaries.

We now move into final development, but much work remains to be done. While we have covered our expenses so far, the exam has not yet been paid for, and the bill will soon come due. We are in the process of soliciting grants, but we ask that you continue to lend your generous support by sending your 100% tax-deductible contributions along with your NAJIT dues, or at any time that you can come up with a little (or a lot of) extra cash, so that we can finalize the exam and make it available to the general public.

This is NAJIT's exam only in the sense that we created it. Unlike many other exams, this one is intended for the profession as a whole. We hope that every person who aspires to become a professional judiciary interpreter will look to this exam in the same way that future lawyers look to the Bar and doctors look to the Medical Boards. We are on the threshold of that historic moment and we should all take great pride in our accomplishment.

*[Mirta Vidal is president of the SSTI Board of Directors. An earlier version of this report was read at the NAJIT Annual Membership Meeting in Chicago on May 27, 2001.]*



# Development of the Judiciary Interpreter & Translator Certification Examination

Michael B. Bunch

Development of the Judiciary Interpreter & Translator Certification Examination is a joint effort of the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, and Measurement Incorporated. The events leading up to the decision to develop such a test have been well documented in previous NAJIT publications.

In March 2000, the NAJIT Board issued a request for proposals for the development of a written and oral test. Measurement Incorporated submitted a proposal and was subsequently awarded a contract for test development.

Since May 2000, MI has been working closely with members of the SSTI Board and other NAJIT members to design, develop, and field test the certification examination. At the 22nd annual meeting (May 24-27, 2001), we administered field test forms with the help of the NAJIT membership. By the October/November 2001, an operational form of the exam will be ready.

NAJIT's certification examination is task-focused. We surveyed the membership to gain data not only about the range and scope of tasks performed by court interpreters and translators, but also of the frequency, importance, and criticality of each. We have defined frequency as the time spent in an activity, relative to all activities. Importance is defined as the degree to which ability to complete a task is required for success. Criticality is defined as the level of harm associated with performing the task poorly.

Given the level and context of performance, the SSTI Board agreed that the level of language proficiency should be post-college; i.e., at a level comparable to that of the Graduate Record Examination. We have used the Breland word corpus to locate graduate level words for vocabulary and have avoided using words actually used on the GRE. Passages are written/selected to be at the college+ level.

SSTI and MI have worked closely every step of the way. NAJIT members have been involved in review and approval of test blueprints, item writing, and item review. During the annual meeting in 2001, NAJIT members participated in the pilot test. In July, SSTI and NAJIT members scored the written and oral portions of the tests.

For test development, we have meticulously followed Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, published in 1999 by the American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. Particular attention was paid to Section 14, which describes the development of credentialing exams (14.14 - 14.17):

14.14 - The domain covered by a credentialing test should be defined clearly and justified in terms of the importance of the content for credential-worth performance in an occupation or profession.

14.15 - Estimates of the reliability of test-based credentialing decisions should be provided.

14.16 - Rules and procedures used to combine scores on multiple assessments to determine the overall outcomes of a credentialing test should be reported to test takers, preferably before the test is administered.

14.17 - The level of performance required for passing a credentialing test should depend on the knowledge and skills necessary for acceptable performance in the occupation or profession and should not be adjusted to regulate the number or proportion of persons passing the test.

Figure 1 illustrates the full cycle of test development events, emphasizing the number of times that NAJIT members, SSTI board members, and MI staff have interacted to assure a valid, reliable test.

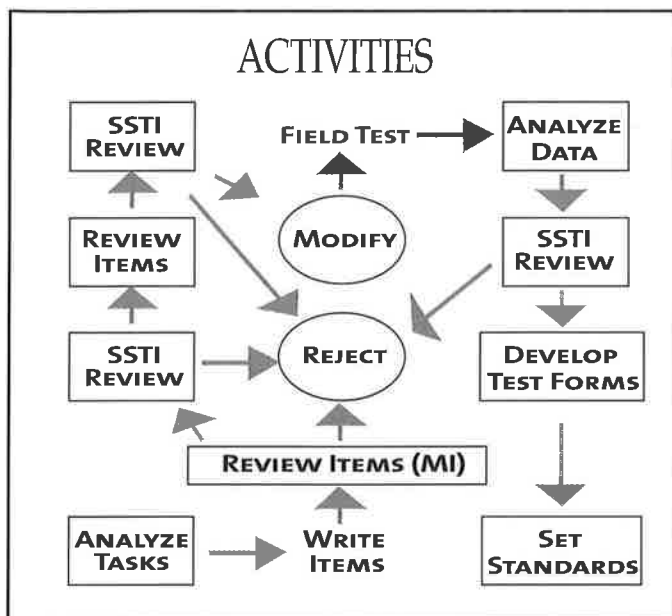


Figure 1. Cycle of test development activities

In the summer and fall of 2000, MI staff met with the SSTI Board and NAJIT members to establish a test blueprint. This blueprint reflects the initial survey as well as additional input from members. The test includes a section with questions and answers in English, a parallel portion with questions and answers in Spanish, a section for written translation of English into Spanish, a parallel section for written translation of Spanish into English, and an oral component consisting of sight translation, consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation.

The English portion of the test contains GRE-like word meaning exercises, reading comprehension, and grammar and syntax (a revise and edit piece). This section also contains ethics based on the canon of ethics' preamble and articles. The canon will be printed in the test booklet.

The Spanish multiple-choice section will be just like the English section, except for the omission of ethics questions. Idioms and proverbs in this section are in context, with the idiom or proverb expressed in English and responses in Spanish.

The written translation consists of a one-page document, passage, or other piece of writing and two lined pages of paper for the examinee to write the Spanish translation. This portion of the test is just like the English to Spanish portion, except the stimuli are in Spanish, and the responses are in English.

For the oral part of the exam, examinees are given three tasks:

**Sight Translation** An English document to read, analyze, and then translate orally into Spanish; a Spanish document to read, analyze, and then translate orally into English.

**Consecutive Interpretation** An oral stimulus. Questions are in English, and answers are in Spanish. The examinee responds orally, interpreting bi-directionally.

**Simultaneous** Stimuli are presented to the examinee, who responds orally as the stimuli are presented. This portion has two parts, for bi-directional simultaneous.

All oral stimuli are recorded on high-quality CDs and presented through earphones. Responses are recorded onto tape for scoring at a later time. Scorers do not know the identity of the examinees.

[Michael Bunch, PhD, is Vice President of Measurement Incorporated.]



## COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

Charleston, South Carolina 29424

**Spanish: The Department of Hispanic Studies at the College of Charleston is seeking an Assistant Professor of Spanish in a tenure-track position to begin August 2002.**

Candidates must possess a Ph.D. in Spanish with substantial experience in interpreting, or an M.A. in translation and Interpretation with experience in court interpreting. Evidence of effective teaching and native or near-native fluency in Spanish required. Responsibilities include teaching in the graduate program in Bilingual Legal Interpreting, and some administrative duties in the program. Successful candidate will also be required to teach undergraduate language courses in the Department of Hispanic Studies. Interested candidates should send a letter of application, curriculum vita, transcripts and three letters of recommendation to Dr. Andrew Sobiesuo, Chair. All materials must be postmarked no later than November 30, 2001. MLA interviews. The College of Charleston is an Equal Opportunity/ Affirmative Action Employer and is a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts (COPLAC), a national alliance of leading liberal arts colleges in the public sector. To learn more about the College of Charleston and the Bilingual Legal Interpreting program visit our websites at

<http://www.cofc.edu> and <http://www.cofc.edu/legalint>.

# Getting Organized: Lessons to be Learned

Hildre Herrera

At the recent Chicago conference, I interviewed two people who are involved in interpreter representation.

Jorge Carbajosa is a Cook County state court interpreter and one of the organizers of the Interpreters Working Group (IWG), a small group of interpreters organizing to attain professional representation in the Cook County state courts. In Cook County all interpreters are state employees. The working group is seeking to increase pay rates and define the position. "It has been a difficult and slow process," commented Mr. Carbajosa, referring to a two-year effort to coordinate the working group's participation in the Communication Workers of America Union, which is associated with The Translators and Interpreters Guild and has experience in other states, such as New Jersey.

Mr. Carbajosa suggests that other states take up similar efforts: "I recommend that all interpreters organize—whether it is with the union or not, it does not matter. I recommend that interpreters raise professional standards and push for certification." He added, "Communication, information and knowledge are the keys to making a better living as an interpreter, being more professional and improving our working conditions." Mr. Carbajosa discussed the different options for working as an interpreter in Chicago: one option is part time, freelance employment; the second is becoming a court interpreter in Cook County, with a pre-requisite of attending a one-month training program, offered twice a year. The interpreter then becomes a state employee. For the rest of Illinois, interpreters can contact any of the courthouses which hire independent contractors. The pay, however, is quite low. Some interpreters work with private agencies, which pay more, but it is very difficult to make a living this way.

Rick Kissell, President of the Translators and Interpreters Guild, described the Guild's functions and activities. A labor union for freelance translators and interpreters, the Guild is a nationwide local of the newspaper guild which represents journalists and others working for newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Chicago Sun-Times*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. I asked him what the importance of the Guild is for interpreters. He replied, "Primarily it is the ability to have a voice at the workplace so you are not acting as a single individual dealing with a court administration. You have an organization behind you which behind it has the power of organized labor in the AFL-CIO."

I asked about what could be accomplished in states such as Hawaii, where there is no organization. "What I would do first of all," he said, "is talk to the Hawaii Newspaper Guild. There is a local of the journalists' union in Hawaii. They are sufficiently well-organized, they have an office, they have paid staff. It would be a situation similar to Chicago, where when the court interpreters in Cook County state courts decided to unionize, they went to the newspaper guild and were referred to the Chicago newspaper union. They started working with the professionals on staff here in Chicago, with their attorneys, and started examining their legal situation. They started talking to each other about their present employment status: were they independent contractors, were they employees? Did they want to change that? What was on people's minds? That is the first thing to do—talk to each other, and find out what people would like to change about their jobs. If everyone is happy, then fine. But if there are things that are universally of concern, then they need to talk about what specifically they would like to change, and then talk to the newspaper guild. The Guild has translators as well as interpreters, we have people who work in the courts, in hospitals, at conferences, and we have people at different stages of their careers. We offer some entry programs. There is an e-mail list where people can ask questions. Plus there are the standard things that you need to offer, such as low-interest credit cards. Courts, as much as they would like to deny it, are political institutions. That means that at some level you need political power to influence that, and one of the groups in the society with that kind of power is organized labor."

*[Hildre C. Herrera is a Spanish-English interpreter and translator as well as a language teacher who lives and works in Honolulu, Hawaii.]*

For more information and updates about the Interpreters Working Group, see their website:  
<http://communities.msn.com/CookCountyInterpreters>

For more information on how to join the Translators and Interpreters Guild,  
call 1-800-992-0367



# Mandarin in the Legal Arena

Judith Shapiro

I have been a legal interpreter of Mandarin Chinese since the early 1980's, when I returned from three years' teaching in China. Before then, I had studied the language at the undergraduate and graduate levels for seven years. My first husband was Chinese and he spoke little English, so I often found myself in informal interpreting situations, which I discovered I greatly enjoyed. After several interpreting stints with the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations and International Visitors' Program, I was invited to work in federal court in Manhattan, where a senior interpreter listened to the quality and accuracy of my courtroom interpretation through headphones. Eventually I left New York, but the high stakes, slice-of-life dramas, gratitude of the person needing the interpreter, and my fascination with cultural and linguistic differences have kept me working in the courtroom year after year.

Many times I have appeared in court prepared to interpret, only to discover that a different dialect or even language was actually required. Although the various dialects share a written language, Mandarin (also called standard Chinese), Cantonese, and Fujianese (sometimes called Fukienese, Fuchow, or Fuzhou, after the dialect spoken in Fuzhou city, the provincial capital) are mutually unintelligible. Shanghainese, or Shanghai dialect, is also entirely distinctive, but most people from Shanghai speak excellent Mandarin, so it is not normally a problem to find a suitable interpreter. Incidentally, the word "Mandarin" is a Western term that Chinese speakers of English have adopted. In Chinese, the word for the dialect is *guoyu*, which means "national language."

Few interpreters are equally comfortable in more than one dialect, and more than one interpreting assignment has not gone forward because the attorney or clerk neglected to ascertain which dialect was needed, or because the person requiring the interpreter was unable to communicate his or her needs. Ever since I was called on a job that required Thai because the contractor had confused Thailand and Taiwan, I have learned to ask them to double-check that the language required is indeed Mandarin.

Fujian province, on China's southern coast, is the

source of much of the immigrant-smuggling activity that eventually ends up in the courts, but there are exceedingly few qualified interpreters of the region's dialects. Since all mainland Chinese are technically required to learn Mandarin in school, Mandarin is a lingua franca, and sometimes Mandarin is the next best choice for those from the Fujian area. However, if the defendant or witness is poorly educated, a very challenging situation arises, where communication may be effective in one direction only. That person may easily understand the interpreter's Mandarin, but his own Mandarin may be so heavily accented that the interpreter will have trouble deciphering it. In such instances, the case has to be continued until an appropriate interpreter can be located.

Another set of language issues arises when Taiwan is involved.

The dominant language of Taiwan is Mandarin (brought over from the mainland when the Kuomintang retreated to the island in 1949), although the accent is slightly different.

Taiwanese is the local dialect, again unintelligible with Mandarin. However, when court personnel request a Taiwanese interpreter, they usually mean a Mandarin interpreter (almost all Taiwanese have learned Mandarin in school). While a person born in Taiwan may not speak Mandarin well and may actually require a Taiwanese interpreter, sometimes court personnel request

Taiwanese simply because they assume that is the name of the language spoken in Taiwan.

What is often more problematic than finding the right dialect, however, especially for a Mandarin interpreter whose experience is primarily from one or the other side of the Taiwan Straits, are the usage differences which have evolved with the political and cultural separation of China and Taiwan. These are analogous to the differences between British and American English, although with the increased interaction across the Straits and the rapid economic development of the mainland, these usage differences are diminishing. When I was first working as an interpreter in the early 1980's, it was still common for mainland Chinese to refer to their spouses as their *airen* ["love-person"], a gender-neutral phrase favored by the





communists. For a person from Taiwan, however, the phrase evoked an illicit relationship and was usually greeted with embarrassment or hilarity. Now words meaning "husband" and "wife" are the norm in the People's Republic of China. (Once, an attorney referred to the PRC as the "Republic of China"—a political gaffe to mainland ears, for it seems to legitimize the government of Taiwan.)

Romanization of Chinese names poses particular challenges in the legal context, often even more for court personnel than for the interpreter. There are several commonly used romanization systems for Mandarin, and a Chinese-speaker can usually tell whether someone is from Taiwan (where apostrophes and hyphens are commonly used) or the mainland (where x, q, and z first letters are common). For example, a Chinese name could be romanized as differently as Chang Ts'ui-hsin or Zhang Cuixin. The interpreter would read them as the same name, but even so might not be certain how they are pronounced or written, since the tones are not indicated in either romanization system. (Even if the tones were known, more than one written character may be indicated.) It is clear, however, that the first name is a Taiwan name, the second a mainland name. Speakers of Cantonese and other dialects use different romanization systems, and one clue for the interpreter as to whether Mandarin is really the best choice lies in how the name is spelled. For this reason, court personnel would be well advised to spell the defendant's name for the interpreter over the telephone when contracting for the assignment.

In some cases, the person in question may never have chosen a romanized name. The romanization used on the docket sheet may have been provided by an arresting officer, court official, attorney, or interpreter. Sometimes the Chinese name doesn't seem to follow any accepted romanization system at all. An interpreter may be better versed in romanization than the person providing his or her name. As a final complication, some Chinese reverse the order of their names when they move to the U.S., changing the family name, which in Chinese comes first, to the U.S. order by placing it after the given name. In our example, the name would become Ts'ui-hsin Chang or Cuixin Zhang. With all possible spellings and word orders, court records often become confused. Even if court personnel get the right name, they usually don't pronounce it in a way that the person whose name is being called can understand it. Once, I was asked to sort out which of five Chinese men in the holding area was the man with the court date, since the guards had simply rounded up all the Chinese in the cell block and brought them to the courtroom.

As a highly context-specific language, Chinese poses special challenges for any interpreter. When the stakes are as high as they can be in the legal arena, linguistic issues are particularly vexing, often requiring the interpreter to ask for clarification or to correct the interpretation on the record. For the interpreter to understand the

context from the beginning of the assignment, it is important, if at all possible, to learn the broad outlines of the case and the likely content of that day's interpretation.

For example, the huge number of homonyms in Chinese can be quite a problem. There are a relatively small total number of sounds in the language, with many possibilities of how to write the characters and many possible meanings attached to them. An interpreter may need to ask for clarification, especially if the defendant or witness has given a very short answer and the interpreter does not know the background or context of the case. This exercise becomes even more complicated if the defendant or witness does not speak standard Chinese. Regional accents affect pronunciation, including the tones, which provide crucial linguistic differences in meaning. Time frames, too, pose special challenges. Often, words denoting future and past tenses are omitted, so it is not clear when something has already happened, is happening now, or may happen some time in the future.

Perhaps most consistently vexing is the matter of pronouns. In Chinese, the pronouns meaning "he," "she" and "it" (and "him" and "her") are all pronounced identically as *ta* (first tone), while written differently. If the interpreter does not know the sex of the person mentioned, the only way to interpret the sentence is to use the phrase "he or she" or "him or her." Similarly, English words, particularly for family relations, may be too general: the word "sister," for example, has two possible interpretations in Chinese, one of which means "older sister," the other, "younger sister." Words for brothers, cousins, aunts, and uncles, are similarly specific. There is no neutral choice. Before rendering the interpretation, the interpreter must ask permission to find out more about the family's birth order and kinship details.

Certain legal phrases are quite confusing for speakers of Chinese, particularly that opener much favored by attorneys, "Isn't it the case that..." I have found that the best way to interpret such sentences is to make an affirmative statement, and tag the end, "Yes or no?" [*shi bu shi?*] If the question is interpreted literally, the witness or defendant may become confused and even answer in a manner quite opposite to that intended.

Another common problem for interpreters is finding the correct register for idioms. In one federal case, a defendant said, *wo hui dasi ni* [lit: "I will beat to death you"]. In Chinese, this common phrase is analogous to "I'll beat the living daylights out of you," rather than "I'll kill you." At stake was the matter of whether a "lethal threat" was made. If so, the defendant stood to receive a significantly heavier sentence.

An interpreter of Chinese often sees cultural differences and misunderstandings poignantly demonstrated. Many cases would not end up in the courtroom were it not for such miscommunications. Sometimes it is a matter of the defendant misunderstanding the arresting officer, as when an officer asks a sidewalk vendor to move

along and the vendor fails to understand. Or it can be a matter of the defendant's lack of understanding of the U.S. cultural and political context, as when a young man with a learner's permit practiced his driving skills by driving around the Pentagon parking lot, thinking it a nice quiet place to practice turning, backing up and stopping, but ending up in traffic court.

A deeper cultural difference is sometimes displayed when a defendant who believes, rightly or wrongly, that he or she is innocent is offered a plea bargain. Culturally, the admission of guilt implies a loss of face wholly unacceptable to a defendant who holds fast to the rightness of his or her own view. Such a person may be willing to undergo great inconvenience, with repeated court appearances and substantial expense, rather than acknowledge a misdemeanor, pay a small fine, and get the case over with as a Western defendant might agree to do.

Another such difference has to do with levels of trust among Chinese friends and relatives, a difference that often leads to incredulity from attorneys, judges, and juries, and sometimes to unwarranted suspicions that the defendant or witness is not revealing all that he knows. For example, a Chinese person might do a favor for an associate without questioning why the favor was being asked or seeking to learn about the circumstances surrounding it. Such a favor might seem, in the Western context, to be huge, such as an out-of-the-blue request to drop everything and come to a certain place to do something, no questions asked, or to write out a check in a certain way, or to lend a large sum of money. It is not uncommon for a Chinese person to hold large amounts of cash, to lend that money to a friend without asking for a receipt, sometimes without even asking why the money is needed. I have often encountered the skepticism of an attorney or judge who cannot believe that the Chinese person would be so generous or unquestioning in providing help to someone else.

People always ask me about the response I get when, as a Caucasian, I introduce myself as a Chinese interpreter. Those needing interpretation generally react with delight that help has arrived from such an unexpected quarter. There may even be an advantage in not appearing to belong to a Chinese community, as people perceive that I am unlikely to be politically involved or to embarrass them by knowing their associates.

*[Judith Shapiro is an interpreter in the Washington, D.C. area, where she teaches global politics.. She is author of "Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China" (Cambridge University Press, 2001)]*

## TRAINING REPORT

### The First Community and Court Interpreter's Workshop in Ohio

Marta Domínguez

A community and court interpreters' workshop was held at Kent State University on May 5, 2001, co-sponsored by the Institute of Applied Linguistics (IAL) of Kent State and the International Institute of Akron. The event was coordinated by the Community and Court Interpreters of the Ohio Valley (CCIO) planning committee. Dr. Gregory M. Shreve, IAL director, welcomed the participants and introduced students pursuing master's level work in French, German and Spanish translation studies. The IAL generously hosted the event, volunteering space, equipment and financial backing for the endeavor.

The International Institute of Akron, a non-profit institution with 85 years' experience and 200 members with proficiency in 54 languages, assists immigrants, refugees, and other foreign-born individuals to adjust to life in the U.S. and interact with governmental agencies. Executive director Maxine Floreani described its activities.

The Honorable Donna Carr, from the Ninth District Court of Appeals, was the first speaker, and her topic was "The Importance of Court Interpreters Understanding Their Roles." She reviewed the legal concerns affecting non-English speaking defendants in the pre-trial, trial, and appeal stages of court proceedings and highlighted the importance of the court interpreter and the problems that arise when proper protocol is not followed.

Ann Hass, director of clinical social work at Akron General Medical Center examined answers to the question, "What do Health Care Providers Expect from the Interpreter?" Focusing on the difficulties medical practitioners face when patients don't understand English, she noted the importance of precision in obtaining informed consent, accurate medical and social histories, ascertaining medication and herbal usage and determining health care beliefs.

Sergeant Richard Johnston, Supervisor for the Summit County Drug Unit, addressed criminal and police issues in his talk, "Interpreters: Their Impact and Role During the Investigative Phase of a Case." Johnston discussed the need for interpreters upon arrest as well as for witness interviews and undercover investigations.

Attorney Duard D. Bradshaw, board member of the Ohio Hispanic Bar Association and member of the National Hispanic Bar Association spoke on "The Need

Continued on page 18

# ASTM INTERPRETATION STANDARD

Teresa Salazar

The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), an organization roughly equivalent to Europe's International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which sets standards for business, government and society, approved a guide to language interpretation services on March 10, 2001. More than three years in the making, the Standard Guide for Language Interpretation Services is now available to the general public.

*F2089-01 Standard Guide for Language Interpretation Services* was drafted by ASTM Subcommittee F15.34 on Language Interpreting, part of Committee F15 on Consumer Products. The committee was comprised of thirty members in the field of language service, including practitioners, professional organizations (NAJIT among them), commercial language agencies and academic institutions.

The Standard consists of fourteen double-column pages, covering the many factors to be considered when contracting or providing quality language services. It provides the user with a list of reference documents, terminology and definitions, and descriptions pertinent to the field. In addition, it outlines the appropriate standard working conditions for successful interpreting services in different settings. In the future, whenever anyone asks an interpreter to provide written proof that standard working conditions in the field of interpreting require (among other things) a second interpreter for lengthy assignments, the interpreter will be able to provide a copy of the ASTM Standard.

Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of *F2089-01 Standard Guide for Language Interpretation Services* may do so through ASTM, 100 Barr Harbor Drive, PO Box c700, West Conshohocken, PA 19428-2959. Fax inquiries may be directed to 610-832-9555. E-mail may be sent to [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org) and the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org) may also be consulted for information.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

NAJIT invites proposals for papers and three- or six-hour interactive pre-conference workshops on any topic related to court interpretation and translation, including but not limited to:

- Interpreter training
- Specialized terminology
- Interpreting languages other than Spanish
- Legal translation
- Computer technology for interpreters and translators
- Tape transcription and translation
- Interpretation and translation theory
- Cross-cultural issues
- Self-study and skill enhancement
- Research techniques
- Professional concerns (i.e., employee vs. independent contractor status, financial planning, etc.)
- Ethics

Language neutral proposals are encouraged. NAJIT regrets that it cannot waive registration fees or pay expenses or honoraria for conference presenters.

**The deadline for submission of abstracts is September 1, 2001.** Abstracts should include title, duration, and language of presentation; an abstract in paragraph form of less than 150 words; and your name, title or position, telephone, fax and mailing and e-mail addresses; and a biographical sketch in paragraph form of less than 150 words and your curriculum vitae.

Submit abstracts to [headquarters@najit.org](mailto:headquarters@najit.org)

San Francisco State University

College of Extended Learning

[www.cel.sfsu.edu](http://www.cel.sfsu.edu)

## Legal/Court Interpretation

*Courses fall 2001*

### ► Intro to Legal/Court Interpreting

(Spanish/English) 3.6 CEU

### ► Sight Translation 3 Units

### ► Consecutive Interpretation I

3 Units

### ► Simultaneous Interpretation I

(with Lab) 3 Units

► **FREE**  
**Career Advising**  
**& Information**  
**Session**

Sat., Oct. 20, 10 am-12 noon  
No reservations necessary.

### Spring 2002 admission info

#### Admission exams:

Sat., Nov. 17 (reservation deadline is Nov. 8)

Sat., Dec. 15 (reservation deadline is Dec. 6)

Go to [www.sfsu.edu/~testing](http://www.sfsu.edu/~testing) or you may register in person.

#### For Test Information:

SFSU Testing Center, Admin. Bldg., room 152, main campus,  
19th & Holloway Avenues. Or email [testing@sfsu.edu](mailto:testing@sfsu.edu)

Call (415) 405-7770

For More  
Information

SFSU Downtown Center

425 Market Street (at Fremont St.)  
1/2 block from Embarcadero BART/Muni  
San Francisco, CA 94105-2406





## CONFERENCE REPORT

# Community Interpreting Comes of Age

Holly Mikkelsen

Community interpreting is rapidly maturing, as evidenced by the third conference of Critical Link (<http://www.criticallink.org/>), an international organization founded to promote the profession. The conferences are held every three years, attracting interpreters, interpreter coordinators, policy makers and scholars from all over the world. This year's event was held May 22-26 in Montreal, a beautiful and historic city known for its concern for language rights. The theme was "Interpreting in the Community: The Complexity of the Profession," and the logo depicted an acrobat or dancer flexing her body.

This year's conference featured a different keynote speaker on each of four days, in addition to several pre-conference workshops that were more practical in nature. The topics of the keynote addresses give an idea of the scope of the conference: 1) "Interpreting Indigenous Languages: Practices and Principles" by Marco Fiola, a Canadian interpreter working on a PhD at the Sorbonne; 2) "Dialogue Interpreting and Ethics: On the Impact of Communicative Genres" by Cecilia Wadensjö, a Swedish scholar who specializes in the linguistics of interpreting; 3) "Sign-Language Interpreting: An Integrating Factor for the Deaf; Related Issues and Training" by Philippe Séro-Guillaume, a French sign-language interpreter who teaches at the Sorbonne; and 4) "Community Interpreting Comes of Age: Growing Pains and Triumphs," which I presented. This conference, like the first two Critical Link events and unlike many other such gatherings, brought together sign- and spoken-language interpreters and scholars for fruitful discussions, a welcome development that injects new energy into all of our work.

Many thorny issues in community interpreting were aired openly and debated vigorously both at educational sessions and informal social gatherings. These include telephone interpreting, certification programs, standard-setting efforts, working conditions, payment of interpreters, and the interpreter as cultural broker. Interpreter trainers presented their curricula and discussed the difficulties of providing quality training to multilingual student bodies with limited administrative support and budgets. Those who train judges, doctors and other professionals in working with interpreters also shared their ideas.

One of the most interesting presentations was a round table discussion called "The Evidence for Health Care Interpreting," in which researchers described studies they and other scholars are carrying out to examine the consequences of poor quality interpreting in the medical setting: costs are higher in the long run when patients are not provided with professional interpreting services, because patient dissatisfaction and misunderstanding lead to poor compliance and follow-up. The hypothesis is that it costs more later to treat these patients when they ultimately develop more serious conditions. Documenting these higher costs will bolster efforts to ensure that health care facilities provide trained, professional interpreters for their patients. (Similar studies in the legal sphere might achieve similar results.)

In the area of judiciary interpreting, Erik Hertog and colleagues involved in the Grotius Programme reported on efforts to set standards for interpreters throughout the European Union. Sarah de Mas shared the work she is doing in the Fair Trials Abroad project to educate the legal profession in Europe about the importance of quality interpretation. Court interpreters in Malaysia, Japan, Australia, Canada, the United States (Yrma Villarreal of Chicago), Denmark, and Israel reported on trends in their countries. And several interpreters from international courts gave presentations on the work they do; Dr. Christiane Driesen, chair of the AIIC Court Interpreting Committee, presented a paper on the similarities and differences of interpreters' work in national and international courts and tribunals.

The proceedings of this conference will be published by John Benjamins. The next Critical Link conference will be held in Stockholm in 2004. Mark your calendars, and start saving—it should be a good one.

*[Holly Mikkelsen is a NAJIT Board Member and the Director of the International Interpretation Resource Center at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California. She is a state and federally certified court interpreter in Spanish.]*

# Requiem for an Interpreters Office

1985 - 2001

Unlike most articles interpreters will read in professional journals, this piece has little to do with the advancement of interpreter practice in the judicial setting. Rather, it is intended as a warning bell for interpreters who seek full-time employment in a court system. What follows is the experience of just one office, but it illustrates a troubling trend, so interpreters take note: the prognosis may be grim for your professional future if you sign on with a court system in the throes of management upheaval.

This story takes place in Arizona, whose population is clustered in two large urban centers, Phoenix and Tucson, creating a big-city vs. small-town mindset, which will come into the picture later. The Arizona state court system is different from that of many other states. In the absence of a centralized administrative office in the capital with satellite courts scattered throughout the state, each county administers its court according to its own plan. The number of judges is proportionate to each county's population. This decentralized system also means that in the more populated counties, judges are selected differently from the way they are chosen in the smaller districts.

## Early Years

Phoenix experienced a population explosion in the 1980's. As a result, in Phoenix's Maricopa county, the court faced an increased demand for all services, including a growing need for more Spanish interpreters.

Prior to the late 1970's, no qualification standard existed for state court interpreters in Arizona—or for that matter, interpreters in most other state courts. In Maricopa county, up until 1978, "interpreters" were bilingual law library clerks sent to "help out" when needed in the courtroom. That year an examination began to be administered, although the way it was scored left a great deal to be desired as to validity and reliability. By the early 1980's, the structure of the qualifying exam had been streamlined, professional interpreters were hired and the quality of interpreter services rose appreciably.

## Standards Established

By 1985, the county had three staff interpreters and a pool of five qualified freelance interpreters. In parallel with the work carried out in California and nationwide from the mid-1970's, after the passage of the Court Interpreters Act in 1979, the Phoenix staff interpreters set to work on establishing standards, creating a professional organization and drafting proposed legislation to set a

minimum competency level for court interpreters. In Maricopa county, these efforts were successful: an Office of the Court Interpreter (OCI) was created, with a chief interpreter position and a body of rules and regulations written and approved by the bench.

Statewide, however, attempts at improvement were met with resistance. The Supreme Court feared that "big city" (the counties in which Phoenix and Tucson are located) standards could not be met by "the small towns" (the remaining 13 counties in Arizona). The legislation proposed by the interpreter's association was rejected as impractical. Fear of a statewide qualifying examination was an important factor in this lack of support.

---

In this world of the tail wagging the dog, staff interpreters have no recourse.

---

At the time, training opportunities were nil: Arizona had no training program for interpreters in its three universities or in any of the community colleges. The University of Arizona's Summer Institute was created in the 1980's, but that program was brief (several weeks) and expensive. By the mid-1980's, the issue of state certification was put on the back burner.

The interpreting department at the Superior Court in Maricopa county had by this time earned a national reputation. The office administered its own written and oral examinations and the court respected the qualification procedure. Interpreter salaries were the highest in the state. The professional atmosphere attracted people with the right stuff. Unlike California and many other states, the majority of the practicing interpreters in the Superior Court were not freelancers brought in piecemeal. The office was managed like a firm: a judge would enter an order appointing the OCI to a case, and the senior interpreter would assign an interpreter for each need (defendant, witness, victim). In criminal matters, each interpreter had his or her own caseload, appeared before specific judges only, and managed any out-of-court contacts related to the case.

## Administrative Changes

By 1986, the administrator and the presiding judge who had overseen and supported the steps taken by the Phoenix staff interpreters were both gone, the former to retirement, the latter to the federal bench. Then came a

change in administration at the Superior Court that would impact interpreter practice for the rest of the century. The new administrator and presiding judge showed scant interest in maintaining the standards previously agreed upon. Over the next few years, the court administrator re-classified many positions. The law library director, chief probation officer and chief conciliation services counselor—earlier on a level equal to that of the court administrator—now came under his direct control. Court administration continued to micro-manage technical areas which had previously been left to the judgment of experienced practitioners. The Office of the Court Interpreter was no exception. The chief interpreter position was eliminated and a judicial administrator, three levels below the court administrator, was appointed to take over interpreter supervision. He devoted the rest of the decade to augmenting interpreter staffing levels and removing any self-determination on the interpreters' part.

#### **Staff Interpreter Input Unwelcome**

Court administration eliminated the role of staff interpreters in administering the written examination, setting their own interviews, orienting new judges on interpreting issues, evaluating interpreter practice, discussing policy as it affected their practice, and recruiting potential staff interpreters. By the mid-1990's, court administration side-stepped the county's human resources department and created its own in-house department for personnel matters. This department was charged with interpreter recruitment (although many other positions continued to be recruited through the county system). Under their aegis, the number of qualified interpreter candidates plummeted: in just three years, the number of applicants passing the written test was reduced by more than half. Senior interpreters believed this was because the court's human resources department failed to identify and attract competent practicing interpreters from other jurisdictions. Staff salaries were not increased proportionately with those in comparable settings.

Beginning in fiscal year 1999, staff interpreters had begun to look elsewhere. Six interpreters obtained federal certification. Better pay, better procedure, and a better life elsewhere moved 6 of the staff of 15 to resign within a 13-month period.

By 2001, four presiding judges had taken office since the Office of the Court Interpreter had been created. The fourth one's mission was to eliminate all delay in criminal trials. Defense and prosecution counsel were warned that no continuances would be granted without sufficient justification; trial judges no longer had the power to grant continuances beyond a certain point; certain cases were automatically sent to a cadre of carefully-selected jurists who examined the lawyers requesting the continuances in another courtroom. Trials delayed by the

unavailability of an interpreter accounted for less than one percent; still, the administration was troubled by the scarcity of new interpreters for the Superior Court.

#### **More Reshuffling, Job Description Altered**

Last month, the Office of the Court Interpreter was reshuffled in the organizational chart once again—this time, ironically, to Human Resources. While changes in administration are not infrequent here (in 20 years, we have been supervised by 14 different judicial administrators), this change is different. The court administrator and human resources director have created a new position, called a "staffing services manager." The position has been filled with a person who holds a graduate degree in language, whose work experience includes banking and teaching Spanish to the CIA. This new manager's mission is to hire more interpreters, or to be precise, to "fill interpreter positions." The oral exam (in use to qualify interpreters since the 1980's) is now waived. The new applicant must only take a written exam (a multiple-choice language competency test) and have an interview. The requirement in the job description, that the interpreter have at least one year of paid professional experience, has been waived.

The first goal has been achieved: four new people have been hired. None has any experience in interpreting, translating, or anything to do with law or the courts. Staff interpreters who devoted years to achieving their current proficiency, either through academic training or nose-to-the-grindstone practice, have been told that none of it matters: the new hires will be paid at the same level as they. An underlying theory—interpreting outside the courtroom requires less skill than interpreting inside the courtroom—has taken root. "Para-interpreters" are now doing interviews on which counsel and client base decisions at trial.

In this world of the tail wagging the dog, staff interpreters have no apparent recourse. The state association has no influence over practice in the field. No statute, rule of court, or policy is in place stating that interpreters need any qualification other than the avowed ability to speak Spanish.

For many years, we worked hard to create a professional practice that many judges took for granted as the norm. No one on the bench now remembers how interpreters struggled back in the seventies: most of the new judges were in high school then. Speed is now of the essence in all things judicial, and the Office of the Court Interpreter has all but in name been dismantled.

Let us have a moment of silence.

*[The author's name has been omitted by request.]*



# Where Shall We Meet Again?

Sandro Tomasi

Quite a few postings on courtinterp-L, the NAJIT e-mail discussion list, commended the Board for its choice of Chicago for this year's conference. But when the dialogue turned to Phoenix, Arizona, the site of next year's convention, the choice of venue drew many comments, both pro and con.

David Mintz called Phoenix a "dreadful dump." Cristina Castro seconded the sentiment, having served a "25-to-life sentence" as a resident. But others were quick to point out some of Phoenix's attractions and the fact that it has pleasant climate in May.

Soon other cities were suggested as attractive conference sites. Arguing that "as expensive as U.S. travel is, we might as well go somewhere exotic," María Lozano suggested La Paz, Cozumel, and Morelia (all in Mexico) as future sites. The list kept growing: Seattle, New Orleans, the Hague... Margaret Redd suggested a mini-cruise in the Caribbean. Edward Bujosa believed that "with the kind of attendance we get at NAJIT conferences, organizers might be able to leverage a reasonable price from a cruise line."

Janet Bonet reminded us that far away places might be too expensive for the average independent contractor, especially since freelancers lose work. She praised NAJIT's conference site rotation system as logical: "East coast, west coast, central, north and then south rotation makes sense so those who have a hard time going even moderate distances get a chance to mix with colleagues once every couple of years."

To this thread, Board secretary Holly Mikkelsen responded that "the board does entertain proposals for locations, and we like to hear everyone's ideas." Noting that the complications Bonet mentioned were real, she said, "we have to pick locations that accommodate as many members' needs as possible so as to achieve high attendance." She also noted that the Executive Director "has to look at a lot of factors: how good a deal a hotel is willing to give, what's happening in the city during May, whether there's a convenient airport with lots of connections, whether there's a large contingent of local interpreters who would likely attend and help with publicity, logistics, etc." As far as keeping costs down, Mikkelsen said, "The board is actively seeking sponsors to underwrite the conferences and make them more affordable to our members. Any ideas you have along those lines would be most welcome."

Here are mine, as posted to the list.

## New York City

Among New York city's many resources are the United Nations, consulates and law firms from foreign countries. These experts could give language-specific seminars on legal subjects and translation issues without charging for airfare, lodging or expenses. Local associations such as the Legal Interpreters & Translators Association could help NAJIT in making these contacts and booking guest speakers.

## San Juan, Puerto Rico or Mexico City

Many people expressed concern with high airfare. However, NAJIT could contact the local courts and prosecutors and arrange for NAJIT members to receive a tour of these facilities. Local lawyers and professors could also be invited to give talks. This could occur the day before the pre-conference workshops; members wanting to attend such events would pay an extra fee. The extra fee, in turn, could be used toward a scholarship fund for those deserving members who lack sufficient funds to attend the conference.

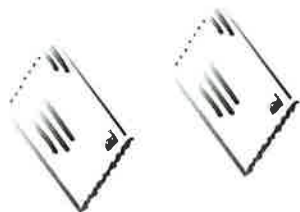
## Monterey Institute, University of Charleston, or Cal State

Holding a conference at one of these institutions would lend NAJIT's support to academic programs in interpreting and translating. A conference at such a place would provide direct marketing for these institutions, not only during the conference, but before and after by means of brochures, programs, newsletters, etc. Also, the institutions could provide guest speakers to hold seminars on language issues at the conference.

*[Sandro Tomasi is Chair of the Professional Development Committee of the Legal Interpreters and Translators Association, based in New York. ]*

Information on how to subscribe to courtinterp-L can be found at NAJIT's website: [www.najit.org](http://www.najit.org)

## Letters



Re: Election Results

I felt that this year's slate of candidates offered a wider choice of priorities and perspectives than any previous set of nominees for the Board...And yet, I voted for none of them. Why?

I have always felt that the time permitted for the membership to vote is insufficient. I have the utmost confidence in NAJIT management. But I do not have the same degree of confidence in the postal service. Our organization is mailing over 1,000 ballots all across the country at the busiest time of year for the USPS. And personally, if I get the ballot five days before it has to be postmarked, that is not enough time. Many tax-related tasks have December 31 deadlines. What if one wants to make an informed choice? What if the blurb provided by the candidate does not offer sufficient information? What if one wants to consult with colleagues who know the candidates better? At the end of the year, frankly, there just isn't enough time.

Voting is a sacred duty in any context, and all the more so in an association that represents one's professional affiliation. As someone unable to consider serving on NAJIT's board, I have the highest respect for anyone willing to give up his most precious asset—time—to do so. And should I not at least offer these people, who are sacrificing so much, the courtesy of my vote?

I will always try to vote. But if NAJIT values my vote, if NAJIT wants to be sure my vote will not be disqualified, there is a solution: extend the voting period. Give the membership six weeks to decide. And do not have the return deadline coincide with the end of the calendar year. Push it back to January 31st.

I am sure the Board agrees that it should do everything in its power to facilitate voting and ensure a high turnout. This is a simple proposal that I urge the Board to take seriously.

Daniel Sherr  
New York, NY

## In Memoriam

### Lucia Conti

Lucia Conti died in Italy on April 4 of this year, at the age of 37. A well-known conference and court interpreter and translator, she practiced her profession with passion and dedication. She started a career as an anthropologist (she held a Master's degree from the City University of New York) and did field work in the Amazon region before beginning to interpret professionally. She was a longtime member of NAJIT, TAALS and ATA and greatly contributed to the founding of the New York Circle of Translators (a chapter of ATA), of which she became president in 1998. I had the good fortune of working with her often and of having her as a dear friend. I am sure that all those who knew and admired her will miss her and mourn her untimely death.

*Anna Saxon-Forti*

### Jerry Torgerson

Longtime NAJIT member Jerry Torgerson died peacefully in his sleep on May 3, 2001 in Everett, Washington. He was the first Lao interpreter certified by the Office of the Administrator for the Courts in Washington state, and for many years the only one.

An interpreter of Lao and Thai, he had retired from the pastoral ministry and turned to interpreting and translating full time for Municipal, District, and Superior Courts in nine counties. He also interpreted for administrative law courts, Immigration Court and the Federal District Court in Seattle and Tacoma. He traveled to Oregon, Idaho, Iowa, Alaska and Virginia for interpreting and translating work and did regular translating work with companies and agencies around the world via the internet. Born in 1938, Jerry was a member of NAJIT as well as of WITS, the Washington Interpreters and Translators Society. He held certifications from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (1992), the Washington state courts (Office of the Administrator for the Courts, 1993) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (passed English written and oral and Lao oral examinations, 1999). His friends and colleagues at NAJIT mourn his passing.

## Items of Interest

**August 30-September 1, 2001.** Copenhagen, Denmark. Third European Society for Translation Studies Congress. The theme is "Claims, Changes and Challenges in Translation Studies." <http://est.utu.fi>

**September 14-15, 2001.** The Granada Suite Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia. "A Civil Law Suit in the United States and Latin America." A nine-hour translation seminar conducted by two attorneys, Thomas L. West III and Daniel Giglio. [www.intermark-languages.com](http://www.intermark-languages.com)

**September 20-23, 2001.** Slavonice, Czech Republic. Slavonice International Translators Conference. [www.scholadus.cz](http://www.scholadus.cz)

**September 29, 2001.** International Translators and Interpreters Day.

**October 8-10, 2001.** 2001 Competitive examinations for Spanish-language translators/précis-writers, editors and verbatim reporters. Deadline for application is August 3, 2001. Address: Examinations and Tests Section, Specialist Services Division, Office of Human Resources Management, Room s-2575-E, United Nations Secretariat, New York, NY 10017. Fax: (212) 963-3683.

**October 31-November 3, 2001.** Regal Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, California. 42nd Annual Conference of the American Translators Association. [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)

**November 29-December 1, 2001.** Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain. I Encuentro Internacional de Estudios de Filología Moderna y Traducción. Registration begins October 10. [secfm@sinf.ulpgc.es](mailto:secfm@sinf.ulpgc.es)

**December 1, 2001.** The written portion of the Spanish federal court interpreter certification examination is scheduled for this date. The oral portion is tentatively scheduled for March 2002. [www.cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish](http://www.cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish) To be placed on the mailing list for information and self-appraisal materials, call (916) 263-3494 or e-mail [fcice-spanish@cps.ca.gov](mailto:fcice-spanish@cps.ca.gov)

**May 17-19, 2002.** Sheraton Crescent Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona. 23rd Annual Meeting and Educational Conference of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators.

## Legislative News

### CALIFORNIA

#### SB 371 Passes Senate

On May 21, the California Senate voted 21 — 13 (6 absent, abstaining or not voting) in favor of SB 371, the court interpreters' bargaining rights bill sponsored by **BACI-CFI**. The bill now moves to the Assembly. Nearly 800 interpreters have signed on to the Campaign for Bargaining Rights already and hundreds of interpreters across the state are actively working to pass SB 371. To get more involved, email [bacicwa@aol.com](mailto:bacicwa@aol.com) or call 415-421-6833 in northern California; email [silviabarden@aol.com](mailto:silviabarden@aol.com), or call 562-944-1300 in southern California. Visit [www.baci.org](http://www.baci.org) for more information.

#### Negotiations Continue

Since January of this year BACI-CFI, sponsors of the bill, have been involved in discussions with the Judicial Council (JC) to resolve issues regarding an appropriate employment system for court interpreters through the local courts or the state judiciary branch. The JC, not in favor of interpreters becoming employees of the state judiciary branch, wants the courts to retain discretion to classify interpreters as employees or independent contractors.

#### California Court Interpreters Association

The CCIA testified in favor of SB 371 at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings.

#### Follow the Bill

To follow the bill, go to <http://leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>



#### Special offer for interpreters and translators:

Santillana is offering its *Diccionario del español actual* at a special price of US\$124.95 and free of shipping charges. Contact Verónica Cervera at 1-800-245-8584, extension 127, or via e-mail at [veronica@alfaguara.net](mailto:veronica@alfaguara.net).



## TRAINING REPORT

Continued from page 10

for Equal Access to the Legal System," remarking that many recent immigrants to the U.S. do not understand the adversarial nature of our judicial system, its central role within our culture, or the rights and guarantees that this system provides.

Natalya Mytareva, language services coordinator of the International Institute of Akron and CCIO's vice-president, led a thorough discussion of "Serving the Limited-English Proficient," touching on the reasons why interpreters are needed for accurate communication and the legal requirements when using interpreters—particularly the need to justify the expense of interpreters, where to find them and ways to work with them effectively.

CCIO President Isabel Framer, who together with Ms. Mytareva coordinated the workshop, focused on the "Standard, Training and Certification of Court Interpreters." She discussed interpretation at local, state and federal courts and the need for skill development,

proper qualifications, and ongoing education.

Ms. Mytareva concluded the day's proceedings by summarizing "The Challenges of Interpreting in Medical and Social Services Settings." She quizzed the audience and offered exercises on simultaneous and consecutive interpretation and a perceptual test that afforded participants an opportunity to discover their level of acculturation and understanding of American culture.

Well-planned and enlightening, the workshop was attended by over 50 participants at all levels of expertise, from students to seasoned professionals. Perhaps its most important aspect was its groundbreaking role for the additional work that will follow. The next workshop is planned for September 22, 2001 and will focus specifically on developing interpreting skills in legal and medical terminology.

*[The author, an interpreter and translator, is studying for her Master's degree at The Institute of Applied Linguistics, Kent State University.]*



is a web site that:

- ☐ Randomly lists interpreters and translators in a comprehensive online index.
- ☐ Contacts lawyers, convention centers, and others through aggressive advertising.
- ☐ Creates a web page for you and/or links to your existing web page.
- ☐ Offers you a business e-mail account.
- ☐ Keeps you informed of relevant events and continuing education information.
- ☐ Allows you to update your own web page at any time.

### \*Special Offer\*

Register now for a six month or a twelve month membership and receive three additional months at the end of your subscription period.

Six month membership at \$90.00 U.S. Dollars

Twelve month membership at \$150.00 U.S. Dollars

(This limited time offer is subject to change without prior notice.)

Phone: (619) 975-7921 Fax: (619) 334-9473  
Cellular: (619) 850-8279

To register log on to  
**www.InterpretersIndex.com**

# Opportunities: Requests • Offers • Suggestions

A note from the NAJIT Board of Directors: This page has been created for members to share concerns, information and support regarding problems and projects related to NAJIT and the profession of court interpreting. We hope it will become a regular feature of *Proteus*, stimulating and empowering members to take an active role in reaching our common goals, but you need to send in your requests and contributions to make it work. This page will be published on the website as well.

To start the ball rolling, the NAJIT Board has a list of "Opportunities" available for you! Please look the requests over, then fill our the "offers" section below, fold and mail to: National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, Inc., 551 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10176, or contact us by E-mail at [OFFERS@najit.org](mailto:OFFERS@najit.org)

To add your request for help or information, or to propose and seek volunteers, please contact NAJIT at the same mailing address or E-mail your request to [REQUESTS@najit.org](mailto:REQUESTS@najit.org). Requests will be reviewed by the Board and included as space permits.

## REQUESTS

WHO WANTS HELP	WHAT THEY ARE ASKING FOR
NAJIT BOARD OF DIRECTORS	We need a name and format for this page. Send us your ideas!
	Help from people who have knowledge about grant research and writing;
	Input about the kinds of documents members want NAJIT to develop and make available for education, persuasion, publicity, etc. We will have a workshop for writing some of these monographs at the conference. What do YOU need? Example: When and why to use team interpreting, Guide for interpreter coordinators, Consecutive or Simultaneous?, Email directly to <a href="mailto:kenigsonkristy@najit.org">kenigsonkristy@najit.org</a>
	Fundraising ideas, volunteers for fundraising committee. A raffle during the Annual conference was proposed to raise funds. Some ideas for such a raffle and/or silent auction were: dictionaries, office items, phone cards, interpreting equipment, etc. Suggestions are welcome.

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

Please Return Requests • Offers • Suggestions to :

**NAJIT**

551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3025  
New York, NY 10176-3099

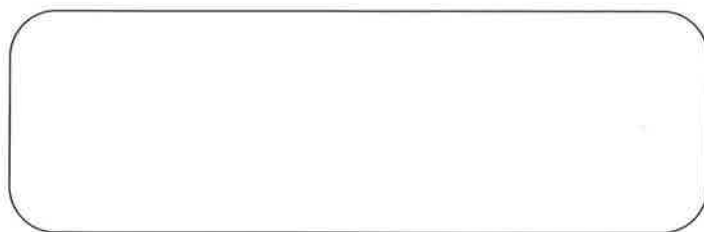
[offers@najit.org](mailto:offers@najit.org), [requests@najit.org](mailto:requests@najit.org), [suggestions@najit.org](mailto:suggestions@najit.org)

**Yes! I want to be involved in NAJIT's growth and progress!**

## NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Ph. (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Business Ph. (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Pager/Cellular (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ I want to work on a **fundraising committee**
- ☐ I have **great ideas for raising funds** ; here are a few:
- ☐ I can help with **grant research and /or grant writing**, or I know someone who can.
- ☐ I will **donate an item or find donors of items** for a fundraiser. Item/donor:
- ☐ I can't help right now, but **please put my name on a list of Helping Hands** for future projects.
- ☐ I'd like to have **the following monographs available** to distribute to clients



## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Home Ph. ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Business Ph. ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Pager/Cellular ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Web Site \_\_\_\_\_

Languages: \_\_\_\_\_

Credentials:

\_\_\_\_ Federal Court Certification      \_\_\_\_ State Court Certification: From which state(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ ATA: What language combinations? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Department of State: Escort \_\_\_ Seminar \_\_\_ Conference \_\_\_

Academic Credentials: \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you **DO NOT** want to be listed on NAJIT's Web site \_\_\_\_\_

I was referred to NAJIT by \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a language instructor at a college, please indicate which one. \_\_\_\_\_

I am an interpreter \_\_\_\_\_ translator \_\_\_\_\_.

*I certify that the above information is correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.*

*I agree to abide by the NAJIT Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities.*

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## PAYMENT SCHEDULE

MEMBERSHIP YEAR: JANUARY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31

Dues (Outside U.S.A. and Territories, \$15 Additional.)	Active \$95	Student** \$40	Organizational \$175	Corporate \$300 with Hot Link, \$100 without Hot Link to Web Site	Associate \$75
Suggested Voluntary Contribution to the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation, Inc. (Fully Tax-Deductible)	\$35	\$10	\$65	\$100	\$25
Total	\$130	\$50	\$240	\$400 w Link \$200 w/o Link	\$100

\* NAJIT reserves the right to validate applications for student membership on a case-by-case basis.

## PAYMENT METHOD

\_\_\_\_ Check or Money Order (payable to NAJIT)    \_\_\_\_ MC    \_\_\_\_ VISA    \_\_\_\_ Amex

[illegible]

Card Number

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_ \$\_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date Amount

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

(REQUIRED FOR CREDIT CARD PAYMENT.)

**PLEASE RETURN  
COMPLETED  
APPLICATION AND  
PAYMENT TO:**

NAJIT

551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3025

New York, NY 10176-3099

Phone 212-692-9581

Fax 212-687-4016

headquarters@najit.org

<http://www.najit.org>