

Where Writing and Translation Meet

By Deb. Kramasz, Member, Twin Cities Chapter

You already know the value of considering translation early in the document development process, but have you ever thought of writing and translation as parallel processes? Translation is writing across languages. It involves research, document processing, project management, and adapting a text to another audience. Just as developing an English document may take months as it crosses the desks of subject matter experts, sales and marketing managers, and editors, so does producing translations. Documents to be translated can go before a translator, editor, subject matter expert, proofreader, in-country reviewer, and client before a final version is ready for distribution.

The view of the translator-writer model has come a long way since 1790 when Sir John Denham described a translator's writing abilities:

Such is our pride, our folly, or our fate
that few, but such as cannot write, translate.

(Cited by Tytler, 1790, p. 5, Eugene Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating*, 1964, p. 145)

On the contrary, translators must be very good writers. In fact, I've noticed an interesting growing trend: the fields of writing and translation are merging. Today, STC publications announce translation conferences such as the annual meeting of the American Translators Association (ATA). Likewise, translation firms now exhibit and present at STC conferences. Additionally, the 2003 president of STC's Twin Cities chapter is the principal of a translation firm, Prisma International.

Writers are learning about translatability issues, while writing curriculum is being added to translator training programs. For example, translator and professor Maria-Luisa Arias-Moreno advocates for writing as part of the translator curriculum at the University of Guadalajara in Jalisco, Mexico. Also of interest, translation courses were recommended for literary writers in the fall 2002 *Ruminator Review* published at Macalaster College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. In this issue, author Brigitte Frase wrote, "Ideally, writing workshops should require translation exercises. ... You return to your own work with a refreshed and more finely tuned imagination, a subtler understanding of forms and a better ear." The Université du Québec's development of the first B.A. degree in Translation *and* Professional Writing signals both the value of these merging fields and that this trend will only spread.

When you write, whether to create an instruction manual or novel, you are engaging in a language activity related to translation and terminology. As the Canadian Translation Sectoral Committee has put it, "...the borderlines that once clearly separated the skills of various language professions seem to be gradually fading."

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