

TRANSLORIAL

JOURNAL OF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION



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BY L. SCHWARZENBERG

A SMALL YET DIVERSE WORLD

The 2008 ATA Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida drew a diverse crowd and positive reviews from NCTA attendees. Poolside receptions, balmy weather, and great workshops were enjoyed by all. BY KAREN TKACZYK, FARAH ARJANG VEZVAEE, AND RENATE CHESTNUT

Orlando has its Perks

There were fewer people attending the ATA conference in Orlando than last year in San Francisco, but that did not detract from the experience for me. I thought the ambiance was lively and positive, and the selection of presentations was appealing. The receptions and breakfasts were all held outside by the swimming pools. I really enjoyed that burst of warm weather, particularly because I had driven through a snow storm in the Sierras to catch my flight to Orlando.

Now, about the conference being held in Orlando: a lot of people said they were skipping this year's conference because the location was unappealing and there were people there who clearly couldn't stand Disney. However, there were also a number of attendees whose families were at the parks during the day as evidenced by preschoolers wearing princess tiaras and discussions about enjoying Epcot. I popped over to the shops once to buy souvenirs for my children, and that was the extent of my exposure to Disney. It is the case, though, that I didn't eat as well as I did last year!

Professional development may be the main purpose for the conference, but half the fun for me is the time spent with people with whom I have something in common. Aside from the obvious multicultural living that many in our profession experience, there are smaller links that turn into lovely memories. One of the invited speakers for the French division, Sandra Smith (translator of Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française*), had taught the Diploma in French that I took while I was studying for my Ph.D.

in Cambridge. That was a real blast from the past, and we had a lovely time chatting about that university and city. I met two other chemical translators, which is always worth noting, as there aren't that many of us! Then there were the 'only at ATA' conversations I had, like saying, "I'm from Scotland," while swimming laps in the pool at 7 am, then the follow-up question being, "Do you work in Gaelic?"

One thing I am continually surprised by is the number of attendees who don't even glance at the sessions for tracks for languages they don't work in, or areas outside the scope of their daily work. LSP and teaching



track sessions can provide valuable insight into what clients and bosses want from translators. Interpreting and literary track sessions are often very interesting, even if we have no intention of

interpreting or translating a novel. The Varia sessions can be the most surprising: Sanskrit was represented this year. Personally I have enjoyed technical sessions the Japanese division provided in the last two years that were given in English.

So, it was exhilarating to be at the conference. I came home motivated, raring to follow up on all my new contacts and put new ideas into practice.

See you in Manhattan! *KT*

A Wonderful Spirit

This year, in addition to having beautiful weather in Orlando and poolside outdoor activities, I felt that the ATA conference was more fun and diverse. An eclectic group of language professionals from Europe to Africa, South America, and Asia gave a wonderful spirit to the 49th annual conference. I normally attend the welcome reception where I meet many new contacts as well as old friends and colleagues and this year it was better than ever.

Every year I worry about missing many sessions and presentations that I like because too many good things are happening at the same time. Over the past couple of years the conference organizers have arranged recordings of many sessions on CDs and DVDs which are available at the ATA's website for purchase. This year every hour of listening to the presentations counts as one point of continuing education for active members of ATA.

Another favorite part of the conference for me is always the Exhibit Hall. Here I can see many of the companies with whom I have worked for many years and it is great to put a face to all the email communications. Most translation agencies offer a token of their gratitude to the translators with a pen, a gadget, or a gismo of some sort when you stop by their booths.

The conference always ends with a dance which is a lot of fun. Unfortunately, I could not attend the dance this year as I was extremely tired. After the last session on Saturday, I had an early dinner and decided to take a nap before going to the dance but when I woke up, it was past 11



p.m. and too late to start the evening. Half an hour later when I went downstairs to get a bottle of water I saw some friends who were coming back from the dance party. They sounded quite jazzed up and said they had had a great time. I was still too tired to regret it at that moment but later on when I heard so many great things about the professional dancers and great DJ, I regretted that I hadn't set my alarm or waited one more night to rest. Oh well, there's always next year. *FAV*

Time Management Tips

The session at this year's ATA conference in Orlando from which I benefited the most was a two-part presentation on time management titled, "Taking Control of Your Time: If Not Now, When?" The talks were presented by Dr. Thea Döhler and they were some of the best-structured, entertaining, and useful conference sessions I've ever attended. Dr. Döhler is a successful business consultant in Germany, and her connection to the world of translation, which helped her tailor her presentation to our community of continuously time-challenged freelance translators, is through her husband, a prolific English-German translator.

It seemed as if Dr. Döhler knew about all of my very personal time-management shortcomings, but it quickly became apparent that the other attendees were struggling with the same issues. Most of us seem to feel that there's never enough time to deal with everything on our schedules, from paid work to administrative tasks to continuing education to housework, family, friends, volunteer work, exercise and hobbies.

Dr. Döhler invited us to look at our personal time environment, at our roles and functions, as well as the demands and constraints we experience in our particular situations in the areas of work/productivity, family/relationships, personal health/relaxation/hobbies, and personal growth/spirituality. When we know where we spend our time, and which parts we would like to change, we can establish goals that help us manage our time more successfully. Setting goals—breaking tasks down into smaller parts, prioritizing, scheduling individual tasks, and then checking our progress—allows us to use our time more effectively.

We were reminded to pay attention to our individual biorhythms when scheduling particular activities—not everybody experiences the same peaks of "performance potential" in the morning or late afternoon, and to take regular breaks—the suggestion was 10 minutes every hour.

"Time stealers" are distractions that keep us from working most effectively. Dr. Döhler encouraged us to keep a daily time diary in order to identify these small but disruptive interruptions. Even a very short interruption requires a subsequent "ramp-up" time to get us back to the previous level of concentration. In addition to self-discipline (avoiding unnecessary browsing on the Internet, checking e-mail only at specific times), we can schedule "quiet times" for concentrated work, during which we turn off the phone and automatic e-mail notification, turn away visitors, and close the door to our office.

Some other ways in which we lose time include spending too much time on non-essential activities; attempting to do too much without clear priorities; poor desk management; and ignoring one's internal clock and personal performance rhythm. Dr. Döhler reminded us about the Pareto principle, or 20-80 rule, that also applies to personal time management: 80% of all important work gets done in 20% of the time spent working. Time planning methods include: writing things down, making realistic estimates of time requirements of projects, and allowing for time buffers. Eight minutes of planning save 1 hour of

time. Specific suggestions from Dr. Döhler were: delegate, deal with e-mails more efficiently, learn to say "no," and bundle tasks.

This presentation offered me many "Aha!" moments. I had known before that my time management was seriously underdeveloped, but now I have a much better idea of where my weak points lie. I left with a list of resolutions and I have been taking small steps towards better management of my time. I know this will be a never-ending battle, but I'm glad I had this help in getting started. For those who would like similar help with their time-management skills, check out books by David Allen, the "personal productivity guru," who recommends very similar ideas for getting on top of your workload and achieving "stress-free productivity." *RC* ✓

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Paula Dieli (top) and Tuomas Kostianen (bottom center) promoted the NCTA in Orlando.



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