

# AURORA BOREALIS

## Annual Conference in New Orleans 2006



*Sheraton New Orleans – Conference Center*

About 41 Nordic division translators turned out for the ATA Annual Conference in New Orleans in November of 2006. Here's a summary of what occurred:

### 1) New Officers

Tiina Fallini introduced herself as the new assistant administrator.

Thor Truellsen is the new administrator. He was unable to attend the conference.

### 2) Swedish<>English certification exam

We now have enough signatures to create exams in both directions. Thanks to all who signed on to support the program.

The next step is to recruit a set of graders for the exam. Each language combination test has at least 4 graders. Each test is graded by 2 people, a third grader is used if the verdict of the two original graders is not unanimous. A fourth grader is used in the event that a candidate request an independent review. *[Ed: This step has now been completed.]*

It will probably take about another year before the graders are recruited and complete training. All graders for all languages receive the same training to select passages and to score tests. This assures uniformity within the ATA.

Graders serve a 2 year minimum term. Ideal candidates are certified in another language combination, have extensive work experience or academic background. As translators become certified, graders are recruited from their ranks. Any suggested graders should be forwarded to Thor at [ttviking@yahoo.com](mailto:ttviking@yahoo.com).

### 3) Budget

The budget for the ATA divisions has been restructured. Now a member can join as many divisions as he/she pleases at no additional cost. However, this means that financial control is in the hands of the central ATA board. Current Nordic division members are encouraged to get their friends to join the division and boost our numbers.

#### 4) Suggested future conference ideas

- Working with US agencies vs. Scandinavian agencies.
- Working as an interpreter in Scandinavian languages
- Danish medical terminology (Morten Pilegaard?)
- Working with EU documents and EU online resources (Kaj Rekola?)
- Swedish authorization process explained (David Kendall?)

#### 5) Newsletter ideas

- Need contacts at sister organizations for Finnish (Irja Frank); Danish (Dee Shields) and Norwegian to learn about upcoming events in Scandinavia and dictionary reviews

#### 6) Listserve

- Our group is too diverse for a single listserve.

#### 7) Overseas excursion

- Iceland may be a possibility. Vigdis Eriksen may be a good contact. Norway is another possibility. Small weekend affair, perhaps in conjunction with the University of Iceland. Small session on Icelandic languages? Interested parties should

contact Thor Truelson  
ttviking@yahoo.com

#### 8) New Webmaster

- Margareta Ugander's health has prevented her from fulfilling her duties as webmaster.
- Tuomas Kostianen will act in her place.

#### 9) Additional comments

- Tuomas invited everyone to join conference in SF next year.
- Kaj Rekola has lots of good ideas for post/pre conference events.



*Dee Shields and Tess Whitney enjoy dinner at Gumbo Shop with the Nordic Division.*

## **Meet a translator – your new administrator**

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*Name:* Thor Truelson.

*Where are you based?*

I am based in Minneapolis; however, my dream is to live in Seattle.

*What got you started in translation?*

I always had some talent for languages, even when I was little and listened to my grandparents speak Swedish. This then spread to the study of Spanish and German when I was in high school, and later on French, Russian, Portuguese, Dutch and more Swedish in college. My family was in the restaurant business and employed a lot of Mexican workers and so I was put to work by my

dad interpreting various projects from the time I was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I was (and still am) a competitive table tennis player, and during and after college I was invited and had chances to go train and compete in Sweden and Belgium. About two weeks after graduating, I moved to Sweden to play fulltime. After a few years, with lots of time spent in Europe, I sent my name out to some local translation companies in the Twin Cities. I didn't know much about the business, but knew that I liked languages and felt that this was the best fit for me. One day a local medical interpreting company needed a Spanish interpreter for an appointment and they called me out of the blue. I went there and did the job and then they started giving me lots of interpreting work. It took a couple years to break into the translation game. That was harder. I did some small projects, but as time went by, I honed my skills and I got more work. People got to know me.

*Language combinations and specialties?*

I work from Swedish and Icelandic into English. I also do a bit of Russian and Spanish, but not that often anymore. As far as specialties, I like sports and food-related materials, of course, but also law and natural sciences. I think I have dabbled in a little of everything since my two working languages are of rather lesser diffusion.

*What is the best thing about being a translator?*

The freedom. I am incapable of sitting at a desk all day when there are so many fun things to do. Subsequently I work at night.

*What is the worst thing about being a translator?*

Trying to budget life with an irregular cash-flow.

*What is the toughest assignment you have had?*

I have had a few. A robotics job I did last summer still stands out.

*What would you say to beginning translators?*

Be careful and don't try to go for too much in terms of subject matter difficulty or tight deadlines. If you deliver a poor translation for a client even once, it will be a long time, if ever, before they call you back.

*What do you see as the benefit of the Nordic Division of the ATA?*

The Scandinavian countries are small, and their immigrant communities are no longer very visible in the US, but they are extremely enlightened and economically influential societies on an international level. This cannot be ignored. We need the Nordic Division to keep ourselves visible and highlight the importance of niche languages in the translation market.

*What would you like to accomplish as the new administrator?*

First of all, I want to get the Swedish<>English certification exams up and running. The petition was finished months ago, but we're still missing graders for the English into Swedish exam. Most of the native-speaking Swedes want to become certified first and then maybe grade later on. But in the meantime, no graders = no test. I also want to have more workshops and events for us at the Annual Conferences. Right now there isn't that big of a draw for the Scandinavians. We should be able to offer up at least a couple of things for each language so that everyone can find it worthwhile to attend. After the Swedish exam is up, I want to establish a Norwegian one.

When putting together the Swedish exam, I heard a lot of interest in having a Norwegian one. I don't translate Norwegian myself, but I think it's good to have. With increased certification opportunities and events at the conferences, our status will thus be elevated, and more and more Nordic translators will take stock of that and get involved.

*Do you have any outside interests and hobbies?*

Table tennis. I play and coach. I also do yoga and physical training to support this. I also like traveling, cooking, music (Euro Techno) and just stuff). I have a 15 year old son and a 4 year old daughter. I teach Swedish at my daughter's preschool once a week.

## **Colleague Reviews**

We asked a few of the attendees what they thought of the conference. Here are their answers:

The New Orleans conference was the second ATA event I've attended (the first one being the Financial Translation conference in NJ in spring 2005). It was exciting to be at a much larger translators' event than those I'm used to in Sweden and the UK (and great too to have good documentation so that I can catch up on some of the sessions I missed).

Being in New Orleans was quite something too. I had my doubts about New Orleans as a venue before the conference but afterwards I was glad that the ATA had decided to stick to its original plan. It felt worthwhile to be able to contribute in a small way to the massively complicated task of rebuilding the city.

One aspect of the conference that interested me a lot were the sessions on certification (among others, a question and answer session for candidates for certification) and the discussion on the possibility of certification for Swedish.

In Sweden, the two translators' organizations aren't directed involved in the certification process (which is usually referred to as "authorization" in Sweden). This is administered instead by a government agency, Kammarkollegiet (The Swedish Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency), which organizes an examination once a year, consisting of three papers – a legal text, an economic/financial text and a general text. More information (including sample copies of old exam papers) is available on [www.kammarkollegiet.se](http://www.kammarkollegiet.se)

However, regardless of the form of the examination, a lot of the issues that come up are similar, for instance, how to make the examination session a relevant test of skills (while not having access to the Internet which is now one of our basic tools of the trade), how to strike the right balance between fairness and keeping the process relatively simple, and how to find good graders and what qualities they should have (over here the papers are checked by two graders, one Swedish native speaker and one English native speaker).

All in all, it was a very worthwhile experience and I hope I'll be able to make it to San Francisco in 2007!

—David Kendall

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It was with great anticipation I sent my registration fee to ATA and booked my flight to attend the 47th Annual Conference in New Orleans. Not only would the conference in itself be a new experience for me but as a newcomer to the field of translation, I was wondering what I would learn from people already in the field.

What I found was very inspiring – the people were very professional, passionate about what they do, and very willing to share all that they had learned along the way. The courses were well planned and relevant to people who are just starting out, as well as, people who have been in the business for years. Some of the topics I found particularly helpful were: “Business set-up and success” – it was not a theoretical overview as one would expect but rather a discussion led by a person who has done just that; and “Public Relations as a Money-maker” – this is an area we sometimes underestimate and I learned a lot from the speakers. I also learned a lot about how to make better use of my computer when translating and with technology

## Scandinavian Translation Workshop Results

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As in the past, we spent 90 minutes translating 3 short passages from Swedish, Danish and Norwegian into English. It's a great opportunity to learn from other translators and explore your own "style". As usual, with all the input from the audience, we never seem to have enough time to translate all of the passages, but we did manage to complete the Swedish and Danish passages. See our common solutions below:

### Swedish > English Sample Text (Dagens Nyheter 8/24/06)

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**VÅRA MYNDIGHETER** är visserligen inte direkt styrda från regeringskansliet men de visar i allmänhet att de vet hur vindarna blåser. Och det är i grunden inte fel - ett lands regering ska kunna räkna med att dess politik omsätts av myndigheterna i konkreta beslut. Dock inträffar det inte så sällan munnen säger ett, men menar ett annat. Så har de varit rätt länge vad gäller flyktingar och asylsökande. Sverige för en generös politik, säger regeringen - men nickar tyst bifall till en allt hårdare praxis.

constantly changing, what could be more relevant? In short, the sessions gave me a complete picture and I was energized by it all!!

For me, it was an experience well worth the time and money because it gave me a unique insight into the business, the industry, and the people who I hope to call my future friends and colleagues.

See y'all in San Francisco!



*Enjoying dinner at Gumbo Shop with the Nordic group.*

Inte konstigt alltså att Migrationsverket slog till bromsarna när människor i Libanon började söka visum till Sverige, de kunde misstänkas för att vilja stanna eftersom det är krig i Libanon. Asylansökningarna från libaneser skulle behandlas restriktivt, tyckte verket. Och det gör de, väntetiden på beslut uppges ha blivit fyra veckor i Damaskus, där dessa ärenden sköts eftersom någon svensk representation inte längre finns i Beirut - säkerhetsläget där gjorde det nödvändigt att lämna också det tillfälligt förstärkta konsulatet.

**MEN DET SER TROTS** allt illa ut att på detta sätt försöka hindra människor att resa från krigets Libanon till Sverige. I går ryckte regeringen ut och förklarade att Migrationsverket gjorde fel. Visering ska inte användas som ett flyktingpolitiskt instrument enligt den ansvariga statssekreteraren Charlotte Svensson

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While our public agencies may not be subject to direct control by the Government Offices, they usually indicate which way the wind is blowing. Fundamentally, this is not wrong – a country's government should be able to count on its policies being translated into concrete decisions by public agencies. However, often what is said is not what is meant. This has been the case for some time for refugees and asylum-seekers. The government says Sweden has a generous policy, while tacitly approving increasingly tougher practices. Therefore, it's no surprise that the Migration Board slammed on the brakes when people in Lebanon started applying for visas to Sweden; they could be suspected of wanting to remain in Sweden because of the war in Lebanon. The Board felt that asylum applications from Lebanese should be processed restrictively. And that's what they are doing. Waiting times for decisions are reported to be four weeks in Damascus, where these cases are handled, since there is no longer a Swedish presence in Beirut. The security situation there made it necessary to leave the temporarily fortified consulate.

Nevertheless, it still looks bad to try to prevent people from leaving war-torn Lebanon for Sweden. Yesterday, the government intervened and declared that the Migration Board had made a mistake. According to State Secretary Charlotte Svensson, visa processing should not be used as an instrument of refugee policy.

## **Danish > English Sample Text** (Politikken 27/8/06)

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AT DET er lykkedes festivalen Images of the Middle East at få de inviterede deltagere til at møde op få måneder efter, at Danmarks image i Mellemøsten har lidt alvorlig skade, er en glædelig nyhed og et udtryk for, at festivalens mange kunstnere har ønsket dialog frem for konfrontation. Som noget nyt har dette års festival sat litteratur på programmet. I den anledning har man fået oversat og udgivet en række tekster i antologien 'Broen - litterære billeder fra Mellemøsten'. Anmeldelserne af bogen har været overbevisende: Teksterne er af høj litterær kvalitet af en artikel i Berlingske Tidende i går så det ud til, at de litterære kriterier ikke havde stået alene. Bogen er nemlig sponsoreret af det saudiarabiske Kingdom Holding, som styres af et medlem af den saudiarabiske kongefamilie. Artiklen hævdede, at selskabet havde betalt udgivelsen, dog på den betingelse, at der ikke var israelske forfattere med i bogen.

Politiken kan imidlertid i dag fortælle, at sagen tilsyneladende stiller sig noget anderledes. Det er ikke Kingdom Holding, der har stillet krav om, at der ikke må være israelske forfattere med i

bogen. Da man ikke kunne skaffe dansk finansiering, fik man i 2005 den islamiske uddannelsesorganisation, ISESCO, til at finansiere bogen, og som det er kutyme, kunne ISESCO kun støtte et rent islamisk projekt, men accepterede, at systemkritiske forfattere kunne bidrage.

Man så mene, at det er for dårligt, at løven ikke vil hvile med lammet, og at man således ikke kan få både israelske og islamiske forfattere i samme antologi. Det er dog givet, at pragmatisme og kompromisvillighed er vigtige dyder i arbejdet med at skabe dialog på tværs af kulturer. Formålet med antologien er at skabe bro mellem Mellemøsten og Danmark, ikke fred i Mellemøsten. Det er da ærgerligt, at man ikke kan få alle stemmer med i koret.

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The fact that the Images of the Middle East festival managed to get the invited participants to show up a few months after Denmark's image in the Middle East suffered serious damage is good news and a sign that the festival's many artists opted for dialog over confrontation. As a new item, this year's festival added literature to the program. To that end, a series of texts were translated and published in the anthology "The Bridge – literary images from the Middle East." Reviews of the book have been enthusiastic: According to an article in Berlingske Tidende (Danish Daily Newspaper) yesterday, the texts are of high literary quality, not solely based on literary criteria (?). The book is namely sponsored by the Saudi Arabian Kingdom Holding, which is managed by a member of the Saudi Arabian royal family. The article claimed that the society covered publishing costs, provided that no Israeli authors were included in the book.

However, in Politikken (another Danish daily) today the issue appears to be somewhat different. It isn't Kingdom Holding that stipulated that no Israeli authors could be included in the book. Since Danish financing couldn't be obtained, in 2005 the Islamic educational organization ISESCO was approached to finance the book. As is customary, ISESCO could only support a purely Islamic project, but accepted that authors critical of the government could contribute

What they mean is that while it is unfortunate that the wolf cannot rest with the sheep, both Israeli and Islamic authors could not be in the same anthology. However, it is obvious that pragmatism and willingness to compromise are important virtues for creating cross-cultural dialog. The purpose of the anthology is to build bridges between the Middle East and Denmark, not peace in the Middle East. It is a pity not to be able to hear all sides of the story.

## **New Orleans: The Katrina Tour**

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While I normally devote a section of the newsletter to practical, workplace issues, e.g. ergonomics, insurance, working with PDFs (Edit>Copy to Clipboard, then Paste the contents in a Word doc!) etc., the few of us that took the "Katrina Tour" of New Orleans were so moved by the experience that I felt I should share a little bit of what we experienced.

We boarded a small van near the edge of the Mississippi River in the French Quarter of New Orleans. Contrary to popular belief, New Orleans was not flooded by the Mississippi river; rather it was the result of Katrina's storm surge overwhelming the complex system of levees that are spread throughout the city. These levees pump water back out to Lake Ponchartrain thereby keeping the city dry but below sea level. The French Quarter is not only the oldest part of the city, but it is also on the highest ground. This makes sense, since when the Spaniards arrived (yes, the city was founded by the Spaniards), most of what they would have been facing was swampland and wetlands. Overtime, as the city continued to grow, the wetlands gradually gave way to urban development, and the city's natural buffer against the sea disappeared.

Fortunately for us, the French Quarter suffered the least amount of damage from Hurricane Katrina. Most hotels, restaurants and shops in the French Quarter are still working well, including the Sheraton Hotel, where the ATA conference was held.



*A botanical garden being repaired... slowly*

As we moved out of the French quarter and into downtown, our guide, a native of New Orleans, gave us a personal description of the disaster. At the very beginning of the storm, on Friday, the weather center predicted a low-level hurricane, something most residents were used to. By late Sunday, when the hurricane had gained force, and the mayor ordered the evacuation, many of the residents were unable to exit the city. The bumper-to-bumper line of cars stretching for miles, which you cannot exit once you enter (even for a restroom break), dissuaded many residents. Instead, our guide, like many people, took shelter in one of the large downtown buildings, which can usually withstand high-level hurricanes. They spent a hair-raising Sunday night listening to the hurricane blow out hundreds of windows from office buildings around town – strewing the furniture and computers on the streets below. But when Monday morning came, they found a new surprise: the city streets were flooded. The people in the downtown buildings and hotels, etc. were essentially trapped inside – with no power, no television, and very few supplies. Most people arrived only with a few items, if any, for what they thought would be a simple overnight stay. Panic, fear and anger quickly developed within a few days.

Eventually, people fled the hotel and tried to find a way home or out of the city. Debris and

glass from the hurricane filled the streets making walking very difficult. Chaos and crime was the general rule. Help didn't arrive in the city for almost 5 days. When buses did eventually arrive to evacuate residents, they were quickly overwhelmed as people scrambled aboard to get out of town – wherever the bus was headed. Families and children were separated, and many people still have yet to return.

Gawking at the downtown hotels and skyscrapers which were essentially gutted, our guide explained there were still 1000 people unaccounted for. Many schools have been permanently destroyed. We saw the Hyatt hotel and city hall, and office buildings with 20+ floors with their windows destroyed. The Super Dome, home of the New Orleans Saints, which underwent \$230 million in repairs. It was one of the clearest signs of "recovery" by the city.

The bus then headed out of downtown and into the other 90 square kilometers of damage. Entire suburbs had been completely flooded, with street after street of deserted houses. Looting has become a serious problem in all sections of the city, rich or poor, as professional burglars from around the country, descended on New Orleans to pick through the abandoned houses. Messages for family members and warning threats were spray painted on several houses.

The city is facing a challenge to get people to rebuild. As our guide explained, the decision to rebuild is not as easy as it sounds. Given that every house on your block, indeed for many blocks around, is also flooded, is it worthwhile to rebuild your house if no one else does? Also, with no housing in the city, the city is facing a

serious shortage of construction workers. Who will build your house?

The flooding also destroyed much of the construction equipment needed to rebuild the city. We passed one of the few Home Depot stores that had reopened. However, there were very few supermarkets and other retail stores that had reopened. They too are waiting for other people to move back in before they reopen the stores. Entire malls were destroyed - as were auto-malls and car dealerships. Over 750,000 cars were destroyed by Katrina.



*A residential street destroyed by flood*

Which brings us to another challenge facing the city: the clean-up. Several miles out of town, towards the coast, we passed one of many "clean-up" sites, where debris, cars, and other items were fed through huge grinders creating small pellets that could be used for - what else - landfill. With no place to put the debris in the city or in surrounding communities, the pellets are being used to fill in the wetlands - reducing the extent of the city's natural buffer against future floods.

Before returning to the French Quarter, we toured the infamous "Ninth Ward", which received the bulk of media coverage during the disaster. Although there are a few blocks of newly built, colorful homes, courtesy of Habitat for Humanity, much of the area is still largely destroyed with little hope of recovery.

Our guide emphasized that much aid is still needed in other parts of the city that were also destroyed. Although residents of these other areas are relatively richer than the residents of the 9th ward, many are still unable to get their insurance claims paid. While many insurance policies cover hurricane damage, few cover flood damage.

*New 9<sup>th</sup> ward homes from Habitat for Humanity*



It was clear by the time the tour ended that the Katrina story is far from over. It may take years or even decades before New Orleans fully recovers. And it is sure to be a different city that it was just a few years ago. What was most obvious however, was that the culture of the city was not really destroyed with the floodwaters. The culture and spirit of New Orleans is housed by its residents and their fun-loving, open and artistic approach to life. It's this attitude that has attracted visitors from around the world and will continue to do so in the future. I strongly recommend a visit in the future.

—David Rumsey

## Calendar

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### **26 March 2007**

Norsk faglitterær og oversetterforening  
Annual meeting 2007  
Høyres Hus, Oslo

### **April 23, 2007**

Dansk Translatørforbund  
General Meeting  
Hotel Kong Arthur, Nørre Søgade 11, 1370  
København

### **May 4-6, 2007**

Sveriges Facköversättarens Annual Conference  
Quality Hotel Växjö,  
[www.sfoe.se](http://www.sfoe.se)

### **October 31-Nov 3 2007**

American Translators Association  
Annual Conference  
San Francisco, California USA



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