

How the Translation Industry is Like the Movie Industry

Kevin Hendzel

*The secrets of the translation industry
that nobody seems to say out loud,
and why you need to know all of this to find plenty of work*

OK, first things first. Nobody goes into translation or interpreting to get rich or famous. We have no klieg lights, Botox injections or Rodeo Drive. Joan Rivers could not care less what any of us wear.

Having said all this, there are some surprising similarities between the translation industry and the movie industry. The industries share a basic commercial structure and philosophy that drive employment and hiring. Most workers in our industry are freelancers who are hired for specific projects. Ditto for the movie industry. We sell talent. So do they. There are many small, independent companies in the translation industry, just as there are many independent movie studios. Most companies in both industries are inherently conservative, which is why the same actors tend to get a lot of the work (sound familiar?). In both industries, actual performance and expertise count more than formal education. Once you are “discovered” in our industries you can get very busy indeed. Yet it’s very hard to break into the perceived “inner circle,” at least initially. Resumes are far less important than reputation, and what you actually produce is most important of all. Not surprisingly, hiring in both industries is driven principally by referrals. But success in translation, just like success in Hollywood, is not really about “who you know,” although that’s important for getting in the door. It’s about being good and having others (clients and translators alike) know this about you.

Translation companies are inherently conservative. The majority of translation companies are small boutiques run by translators themselves. Several of the larger companies have evolved from smaller translator-run operations. These companies have invested heavily to attract and retain clients. Translation companies spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on marketing, sales, travel, proposal development, presentations, contract negotiations, etc. The translation market is extremely competitive, with over 20,000 companies, agencies, and sole proprietors in the U.S. alone. It’s possible—in fact quite common—for a translation company to spend \$15,000 - \$20,000 to compete on a contract or bid opportunity involving dozens of competitors and to lose it in the last competitive round. These are out-of-pocket costs that are not recoverable. The result is zero work for your company, and zero work for your labor force. Even when bids are

successful, the relationships that a company develops and maintains with clients are only as good as the quality, reliability, and consistency of the last translation it has submitted or the last interpreting assignment it has completed. So the process of hiring a freelance translator or interpreter for any job is essentially a risk assessment. Is this person really good enough for me to risk this relationship on? If the new translator bombs a translation and we find out too late in the process to rescue it in the editing stage without missing the deadline, is it really worth the value of our relationship with the client? The answers to the last question, inevitably, is “no.”

Risk-aversion = referrals. This persistent risk aversion is the reason that work tends to be concentrated among the same group of translators and interpreters (46.9% of SLD survey respondents reported having “too little work,” while only 14% reported that they “turned down work”). This also explains why referrals and word-of-mouth are so essential to companies hiring new translators and to translators who are attempting to build a reliable clientele in the industry. According to the same survey, a whopping 67.2% of respondents report that most of their work comes from “word of mouth,” while 58% specifically cite “colleague referrals” (more than one response was permitted). So,

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SlavFile is published four times yearly.

Letters to the Editor, short articles of interest, and information for the calendar are invited. Submissions become the property of SlavFile and are subject to editing.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or of the Division.

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Subscription to SlavFile without other membership benefits: \$15 in USA and Canada and \$20 elsewhere.
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FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Alex Lane

It's still August as I write this, but if my perception of time since the conference in Phoenix is any indication, in no time at all it'll be October and we'll all be heading to Toronto for the Association's 2004 Conference.

The first conference session aimed at the Division membership is a panel early Thursday afternoon that, personally, I don't want to miss. The session format is a panel of four experts, who will discuss how real-world Russian<>English medical glossaries are created (SL-1). In the time slot immediately following, Kostya Lakshin will deliver a new installment of last year's popular and informative "No Translation Needed!" session (SL-2).

On Friday, SLD-oriented sessions start in the morning with the entertaining and educational "Double Jeopardy" game show (put together by Larissa Kulinich, who makes the production look easy) that so many folks said they missed when it didn't appear at last year's conference in Phoenix (SL-3). This year's Susana Greiss lecture (SL-8) will take place after lunch on Friday, and will feature Paul Richardson, publisher and editorial director of *Russian Life* magazine and president of Russian Information Services, a publishing company he founded in 1990. You can find more information about his lecture, "Translating Russia," below.

I'll take the floor immediately after Paul's lecture with a presentation that describes a map of the "Runet," or Russian Internet (SL-4), and my presentation will be followed, in turn, by a much-anticipated session by Elena E. Bogdanovich-Werner on the difficulties encountered by native English speakers when they use Russian (SL-5). I don't doubt I'll pick up some good pointers from Elena.

The annual SLD Dinner will take place on Friday night, with full details to be provided elsewhere in this issue. Finally, on Saturday, we'll bring the conference to a close with the Division's annual meeting (SL-6) followed immediately by a post-meeting session devoted to reviewing the conference (SL-7).

In the time periods between SLD-related sessions, I hope to be able to take advantage of the conference site and huddle with Division members in an impromptu manner to discuss anything and everything of interest to us.

It's looking to be a whirlwind four days in Canada. I hope to see you all in Toronto!

SLD administrator Alex Lane lives in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, but wrote this while on assignment in Houston. He can be reached at words@galexi.com.

The Slavic Language Division Presents
Our 7th Annual Susana Greiss
Distinguished Guest Lecture

Translating Russia

Paul Richardson
Russian Life Magazine

Russian Life magazine, the successor to *Soviet Life*, is arguably the most ambitious attempt to present post-Soviet Russia to American readers in a form that this audience can digest and understand. *Russian Life's* mission, like ours, is translation—the translation of a culture that at times can appear very alien to Americans. Language is critical to the mission. As we all know too well, the cultural and linguistic cannot be separated cleanly. Richardson, Publisher and Editorial Director of the magazine, will address the challenges of translating murky Russian reality into something understandable, as well as interesting, to Americans, with digressions into the worlds of US and Russian publishing, strange business deals and, of course, vodka. See page 3 for a sample of *Russian Life*.

SAMPLE COLUMN FROM RUSSIAN LIFE

Edited by Greiss Lecturer Paul Richardson

by lina rozovskaya

[lost in translation]

This May I spotted a curious book in a Moscow bookstore. The softcover yellow volume promised 97 sayings by the Russian president in just 200 pages, covering everything from олигархи (oligarchs) to Всевышний (God Almighty), from маньяки и шпионы (maniacs and spies) to пьяницы и матерщинники (drunkards and *matershchinniks* [those, who overuse Russian mat – extremely rude language]), from дойная корова (milkcow) to карманы Гусинского (Gusinsky's pockets). Intrigued, I put out 78 rubles for Пўтинки. Краткий сборник изречений президента (Первый срок) – *Putinki. Concise Collection of President's Aphorisms (First Term)*.

President Putin's dictums, just as those of President Bush, have entered everyday speech. Linguists and speech writers argue that most Russians like the way their president speaks and do not mind his occasional use of slang or even inappropriate language.

The president first revealed his taste for a strong word (крепкое слово), when, at the beginning of his career as state leader, he promised to “wet” terrorists in the “outhouse” (мочить в сортире), or when he suggested to a critical French journalist that he come to Moscow to get circumcised (сделать обрезание).

Unfortunately, politicians' aphorisms are often lost in translation. However, while to an English-speaking Russian *Bushisms* (бушизмы) present mainly a grammatical challenge, *putinki* offer a different kind of challenge to outsiders. Highly metaphoric and allusive, they often defy translation as a неперевоидимая игра слов (untranslatable wordplay).

Last fall, at a press conference in Yalta, after Russia's signing of the Agreement of Common Economic Space with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, Putin was asked if this agreement meant a return to the USSR. His reply was: “Это полная чушь, несурьиза, сапоги всмятку.” (“This is total nonsense, absurdity, soft-boiled boots.”) The word всмятку is usually applied to eggs – яйцо всмятку is a soft-boiled egg. By applying it to boots, Putin gave a colorful, if difficult to translate, image of complete idiocy.



Some of the dictums quoted in *Putinki* stand a good chance of becoming proverbial. For instance, commenting on Russians' eagerness to find scapegoats (найти козла отпущения) Putin waxed thus: “У нас есть старинная русская забава – поиск виновных.” (“We have an ancient Russian pastime – searching for people to blame.”) Or there was this: “Если мозги утекают, значит они есть” (“If

there is a brain-drain, that means they are there [in the first place]”).

One basis for this book is that the president's political philosophy could be said to reside in his aphorisms: “Люди простят все, кроме вранья” (“The people will forgive everything but lies”); “Проси больше, дадут, сколько нужно.” (“Ask for more, they will give you what you need.”); “Вертикаль не абсолют” (“The vertical [of power] is not an absolute.”) If that is the case, then these quotes at least show a distinctly pragmatic politician.

While all quotes in the book are meticulously dated and attributed to a printed source, they are, of course, presented out of context and could be said to be taking a point too far. As the president, who once called himself a раскрученный бренд (a well-advertised brand) once said about a biography of him, “Я вообще не знаю, что там можно написать. Я бы лично про себя столько не смог написать” (“I do not know what could be written there. I personally could not write so much about myself”).

But, as long as there is a president and a semblance of a free press, there will be books about him. And, back in 2001, Putin was quoted as saying “Парафразирова Марка Твена, могу сказать: информация о кончине свободной прессы в нашей стране сильно преувеличена.” (“Paraphrasing Mark Twain, I can say: 'reports about the death of the free press in our country have been greatly exaggerated.'”)

Only time will tell whether that statement will hold true four years from now, when (and if) Пўтинки (Второй срок) - *Putinki (Second Term)* is published.

BEGINNER'S LUCK

*Liv Bliss (perennially novice translator)
Lakeside, Arizona*

*I know when to go out,
And when to stay home.
Get things done.*
David Bowie, "Modern Love"

Continuing Education," which showcased Nicholas Hartmann, both ended up—depending on how you read them—pointing us away from the same place, a place that this Beginner's Luck column, and its predecessor, aims to help you avoid. It is Stagnation Alley, a locale that the liveliest, happiest, translator visits, or at least peers into, once in a while.

Scott described a Good Translator whose work rapidly declined in quality ("There's no such thing as a Good Translator. Only good translations") and Nicholas outlined his persistent efforts to maintain and improve his "ability to understand technology and write accurate, idiomatic English." The Good Translator with feet of clay could have been a gal whose interest flagged, taking her manifest talent down with it, simply because she wasn't renewing herself under the pressure of churning out the work. And if Nicholas had written my last Beginner's Luck with his own ideas on Keeping It Fresh, I know his suggestions would have had me nodding in hearty agreement.

My last column focussed mostly on lifestyle choices. This one will offer a few—a very few—more concrete notions. As always, if my esteemed readers have additional ideas they'd like to share, that would be most welcome.

Here's an approach that Nora Favorov suggested to me almost two years ago—and probably thought I'd never get around to mentioning:

"One thing I frequently find rewarding is to find an article that's been translated by a Russian into Russian from the English-language press. I find this a good way to pick up new usages. Such translations can be found through a link on smi.ru, labeled ИноСМИ о России (found in the left-hand column labeled СЕРЕВЬЕ СМИ). Once you've found the Russian-language version of the article, if it's from the NY Times or Washington Post it's easy enough to go to those sites and find the English-language original."

To this I would only add the US newspaper web addresses (www.nytimes.com – "Register Now" at the top right, and www.washingtonpost.com – "Register Now" at the top left), reassure you that registration is free and as far as I can tell spamless, and let you know that the articles are of course all dated, so you don't have to drown in a sea of e-newsprint.

There are many other free ways of following the news in Russian that don't have the advantage of Nora's parallel-text approach but can still be useful, not only for information but also to keep you up-to-date on changes in terminology and (gulp!)

It's strange how things work out sometimes. In *The ATA Chronicle* for June 2004, Scott Brennan's brief commentary on continuing education and the feature "Profiles in

grammar. Here are some of them: www.gazeta.ru, www.svoboda.org, www.lenta.ru, www.izvestia.ru, www.pravda.ru, and www.echo.msk.ru/daynews.html.

On the same general subject, http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/slavic/resources/russia_links.htm is a veritable cornucopia of Russian realia links, including a slew of news sites. Another is www.russnet.org/archive.php, which is youth-focussed and not quite so interested in serious late-breaking news. There are innumerable other portal-type sites of that kind, so please forgive if I've omitted your own favorite/s.

One word of warning: it's news to no one that parts of the Net are a war zone, so keep your virus protection updated or enjoy the consequences. Some months ago, I mistyped www.rambler.ru (yes, I should have gone in via the bookmark...) and ended up on "ramber," which promptly tried to drop the Netsky virus onto my system. Also, some addresses die or fall very sick, leaving their fans in misery (the glorious, searchable Dostoevsky concordance at www.karelia.ru/~Dostoevsky/dostconc/alpha_e.htm was barely limping along for a while, but seems to be well again now), others are hijacked (www.multitrans.ru once went porn for a blessedly brief span), and others go through fascinating changes (www.russianhistory.org seems to have gone permanently porn, and, no, I'm not going to review it here, thank you very much). Word to the wise.

The more adventurous might prefer to use TV and webcasts to help keep their skills honed. Next best thing to being there, I'd say. Earlier this year, Paul Gallagher broached this subject on SEELANGS (the Slavic and East European Languages and Literature List, which itself is a fun place to be: <http://seelangs.home.comcast.net>). Paul had recently found, on his DirecTV system, the Russian news broadcast "Vesti," and had discovered that the broadcasts (subtitled) were produced by WNYE New York (www.wnye.org) and picked up by one of his local stations. Another SEELANGER chimed in to say that RTV-1 in New York produces daily news segments that can be viewed on its web site, www.russianalliance.com. And earlier, Dr. Bogdan B. Sagatov, eLearning Curriculum Director at the NCS Center for Language and yet another SEELANGER, had announced that the Russian Language Mentor site now has "a substantial Russian Listening/Reading Library" (<http://russianmentor.net>, "Materials," "Developing Language Proficiency—Listening"). It's intended for the training of college-level students, but that could be just the ticket for some of us: "The library consists of 500 . . . news reports . . . used to teach transcription and translation. For each report there is the original audio text, ranging in length between 2 and 7 minutes, a complete transcript, and a parallel translation. An excellent format for developing both listening and reading comprehension. WARNING: Be prepared for frustration with the audio texts if your audio tool needs upgrades or if you don't have high-speed

Internet access.” Finally, Nora has recommended www.webtelek.com as “a great gateway to Russian (and other former Soviet and European) radio and TV sites.”

But you may already be enjoying Russian TV news and entertainment, audio clips, or whatever: if so, tell us where and how. Inquiring minds want to know.

For a rather silly but enjoyable experience, try the Virtual Slavic Club, “for students of all ages,” at http://russianmentor.net/VSC/IndexVSC_1.htm. The blurb for the section “VSC e-creativity 101” says it all: “Don’t just sit there, looking into the distance, dreaming and ruining your health. Do something about it! Get off your butt and get involved! If only virtually!!” I couldn’t have said it better myself, albeit with fewer exclamation points. One linguistically useful section there (aside from the Vanity License Plate Challenge, which omits my own personal favorite, CMO 3 TE) is *Зеркало*—*The Mirror*, “a parallel anthology of classic Russian poetry.” This is the literary variant of Nora’s suggestion, a chance to look at someone else’s creative translation choices and sharpen your own wits in the process.

Critiquing other people’s translations isn’t necessarily a game; it can be a valuable learning tool. A colleague of mine loves being given editing assignments. She is so enthused by what she learns—positive as well as negative—from other peoples’ approaches that it didn’t take her long to convince me that she really has a point. But, since a newcomer translator will often be unwilling to second-guess more experienced colleagues, a safer way to do this—although you won’t get paid for it, but it’s not all about the money, is it?—is to pick a favorite author and study the translation of said author closely. Time was when we had to buy a Penguin Parallel Text to do that, but now you can do it for free with the Internet/local library approach. Take Nabokov, for instance: his entire oeuvre is available on the Net in Russian, and he’s of particular interest because he wrote original material in both Russian and English and also translated a lot of his own writings (*Mary; King, Queen, Knave; Glory* . . .). It’s fascinating to watch the consummate stylist (who was known to opine that a *real* reader must always have a dictionary close by. . . a source language dictionary, he meant) in the process of cheating when translating his own works. Perhaps more on that in a later column, perhaps not; I’ve found that few writers are more polarizing than dear old Vladimir Vladimirovich, and I’m not sure I need the grief. The Friends & Partners site, at <http://fplib.ru/literature>, also offers translations for some of the poems posted there (though, oddly, never the one I’m looking for).

So there you have a mere sampling of ways to steer clear of Stagnation Alley in the privacy of your own office. I’m always open to ideas, though, so do tell me what I missed. And, yes, I know: all this is Russocentric. But I’m a from-Russian translator, so them’s the breaks. I’d be more than glad to publicize similar pointers for other languages, if you’ll pass them on to me. Or something similar may appear under other rubrics in future issues. You never know.

* * *

Finally, since there’s a general buzz about the results of the Great SLD Survey (see elsewhere in this issue for details), I thought I would end this column with my two cents’-worth.

One big thing I noticed was that there seem to be many newcomers looking for information and guidance. And are those folks ever in luck! For starters, Rut Simcovich had an article on exactly that—“Starting Out”—in the May 2004 *ATA Chronicle* and of course there was our own Susana Greiss’ two-parter for newcomers in the October and November/December 2003 *Chronicle* (you’ll find these three articles at www.atanet.org/chronicle/pastissues.htm).

The Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society, an ATA chapter, has an enormously useful, information-dense site (www.notisnet.org), with links to outside resources and some fine articles. I could happily spend all day there, but I’d recommend starting with a click on “About Translation and Interpretation” on the left side, then going to the “NOTIS White Papers,” which include pieces on client education and on key translator skills.

It’s also worth casting an eye on past SlavFiles. Go to www.americantranslators.org/divisions/SLD/slavfile.htm, where you can check out the articles in each issue and then go to the left side of the page to download any previous SlavFile that piques your interest.

In case anyone could use a content summary of Beginner’s Luck—which is as newcomer-friendly as I know how to make it—here it is:

- Summer 2002: Introduction to the column, with thumbnail bio of yours truly
- Fall 2002: Real-life ethical dilemmas (client management)
- Winter 2002/3: This translator’s 20+ favorite web sites
- Spring 2003: Reader feedback on ethical dilemmas
- Summer/Fall 2003: Translator freebies plus some things worth paying for
- Winter 2003/4: A fake advice column about real problems
- Spring/Summer 2004: Avoiding translator burnout, part 1

And, since there is a big, wide, wonderful world outside the ATA and even the SLD, you might also like to look at Accurapid’s *Translation Journal* (www accurapid.com/journal), which abounds with excellent pieces on the practicalities of our beloved industry—all hail, Gabe Bokor and everyone else who works so hard to make this such a splendid resource. And my second choice in this category would probably be Serhiy Onoshko’s Translation Directory (www.TranslationDirectory.com/articles).

* * *

With ideas for future columns, information or advice for your colleagues, offers to take the column over—temporarily or permanently—so you can offer fresh insights or broaden the emphasis beyond Russian, or just to share whatever’s on your mind, you can reach me at bliss@wmonline.com.

MEDICAL INTERPRETING IN THREE CULTURES

Irina Markevich

For 11 years I have been working as a Russian <> English medical interpreter for various hospitals and medical offices of the State of Massachusetts. Three years ago I joined the Massachusetts General Hospital (“Mass General”) and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Interpreters teams, which offer services in 168 foreign languages. Working for these hospitals has proven to be the most rewarding experience of my career as a medical interpreter. I found myself surrounded by people of various medical professions completely dedicated to all aspects of high-quality patient care. This experience inspired me to expand my horizons and learn another language so I could help more than one community.

The work of Spanish interpreters fascinated me. Because of the characteristics of the different communities, Spanish medical interpretation tends to provide more variety with respect to medical situations than does Russian. Spanish interpreters are routinely needed in the areas of labor/delivery, pediatrics, and venereal disease treatment; they assist female patients who have been raped or battered, as well as patients suffering from AIDS and drug addiction—situations that the Russian interpreter scarcely ever encounters. Another thing that fascinated me was that the patients were from virtually every Spanish-speaking country of the world and differed in culture, dialect, and way of life.

So, I decided to master Spanish, went back to school, and completed a Bachelor’s degree in it. Aside from my course work at the University, I participated in several programs that took place in Valencia, Spain, where I studied at the University, lived with Spanish families, and improved my conversational skills. I also went through an internship program at Mass General that gave me the opportunity to work closely with Latin American patients, learn about their cultures and traditions, master different dialects, and be mentored by excellent Spanish <> English interpreters until I felt ready and secure working on my own.

There are tremendous demographic differences between the Russian and Latin American populations. The first important factor is age. While most of the Russian-speaking patients are between, say, 65 and 90 years old, the Spanish ones are all ages, and most of them are young. An interpreter is likely, for example, to work with young mothers bringing children to a Pediatric Unit. OBGYN, Labor/Delivery, and Prenatal Care Units are filled with young women from Latin America who either know only a tiny bit of English or do not understand anything at all.

Another difference is family status. Considering that most of the Russian-speaking patients are elderly, there are numerous widows and widowers among them; at the same time, one can meet couples who have been married for over 50 years. The Spanish-speaking population is much younger. In Spanish interpreting, I have worked with many teenage girls giving birth as single mothers, as well as with young traditional families consisting of a very loving mother, father, and children.

In general, since the Russian population is older and more likely to suffer from serious ailments, Russian patients tend to be

more gloomy and pessimistic, while Hispanics are more cheerful, smiling, and, if not optimistic, at least fatalistic. For that reason, an interpreting session in Spanish is apt to be a more cheerful experience for the medical interpreter.

A further major difference between Russian and Latin American patients involves education. The average Russian-speaking patient has a university degree and is quite knowledgeable about a number of subjects, including medicine. On the other hand, university degrees are considerably rarer among the Hispanics a medical interpreter encounters, and some patients have been to school for only a few years, if at all. The more educated and cultured patients tend to come from the countries of South America rather than from Central America.

Although education and income level are usually closely associated, the incomes of Russian- and Spanish-speaking patients seem to be about the same, because most of the former are retirement-age and receiving SSI. Many of the Latin American patients also receive various subsidies. The majority of Hispanic patients require Free Care Services, which are provided by the hospital, whereas Russian patients are covered by either Mass Health or Mass Health in conjunction with Medicare, which gets them better coverage and more convenient access to prescription drugs. Most Hispanic patients can receive prescription drugs at no charge only at the hospital pharmacy, where they have free care.

The attitudes of medical personnel to the two different populations are more or less the same. The Russian patients, however, tend to develop closer relationships with their physicians, initiate social conversations, tell jokes, and give them gifts for the major holidays. Quite often, physicians have considerable respect for those patients who have had successful careers in science, medicine, and engineering. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for a former Russian doctor (or even a non-doctor) to feel that he/she is more knowledgeable in medicine than his/her own physician, and this may lead to an unpleasant situation, with the interpreter in the middle.

In contrast, Hispanic patients are very appreciative, respectful, and trustful of their doctors. They do not question treatment plans and are easy to deal with. Doctors treat them with care and kindness, but may be paternalistic. Often, Spanish-speaking patients have very little familiarity with the formal Spanish names of illnesses or simple medical terms. For example, the word “diabetes” would not mean much to them. In such cases, clarifications by interpreters are invaluable. Often, in order to facilitate communication, the interpreter might say “sugar in your blood,” which would be more meaningful to the patient than a translation of the term the doctor used. In general, it is common for Spanish interpreters to use language with adults equivalent to what Russian interpreters would use talking to children. Another classic example is the verb “to urinate.” If a doctor asks a Hispanic patient whether he/she had urinated and the interpreter interprets it literally, the chances that the patient will know what the doctor is talking

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JEZIK U TOKU: Croatian Pairs Approved!

Paula Gordon, Editor for South Slavic Languages

Congratulations to translators working in Croatian: The ATA Board of Directors has voted to add Croatian>English and English>Croatian to the ATA Certification Program!

This event represents a major milestone in an ongoing effort by a group of translators, many of them ATA members, who are dedicated to distinguishing what some call the “successor languages” (and what others point out were precursors as well as coevals) of Serbo-Croatian: Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian. I use “distinguishing” not in the sense of differentiating, but in the sense of recognizing and dignifying the languages as “working languages”—with enough practitioners and commercial demand in each one to merit exams for evaluating the skill and talent of translators working in them.

We’re told that it’s been five years since a language pair was added to the ATA certification program. I know of at least three other pairs “in process,” that is, language workgroups in various stages of the new-language-pair-introduction procedure, most of which started work before we did. The fact is that establishing a new language pair is pointless unless it is supported by translators working in these pairs, and I believe this is what has set us apart. There has been, from the very beginning, overwhelming support from translators of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian for instituting these credentials. Although each participant has his or her own complex set of motives, there are two traits I feel confident in attributing to everyone who has been involved in this initiative: pride in the translation profession and the absence of complacency, i.e., the attitude that “things”—including oneself and one’s skills, knowledge, working conditions, and compensation—can always be improved.

So, while acknowledging that an initiative of this sort cannot succeed without those few deeply involved volunteers who interpret and discuss complex written procedures into the wee hours of the night, send endless streams of tedious unsolicited emails, and incessantly hound anyone who seems to be “in charge,” congratulations are sincerely addressed to the many translators who leapt at the chance to join the initiative, filled out questionnaires, participated in discussions of strategy, spread the word to their colleagues, and generally stuck around for more than two years with a hopeful and helpful attitude. And they weren’t idle during these years—degrees were pursued, other certifications were obtained, skills were honed, translations were tweaked, and babies were born. Thus the pool of certification candidates has grown in quality and quantity.

So, dear colleagues, congratulations! I hope you will take advantage of this new opportunity and challenge, and I wish you success!

The “fine” print: **Candidates may currently order practice tests for Croatian>English and English>Croatian. Examinations in these combinations will be available at all exam sittings when the new exam year begins in 2005. All inquiries should be directed to the ATA Certification Program (see www.atanet.org/certification for details of the program, including eligibility and continuing education requirements).**

Work continues towards fulfilling the requirements for establishing Bosnian/English and Serbian/English pairs in the certification program. For more information about the initiative, visit the ATA-SSLI list on Yahoo!: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ATA-SSLI>.

SLD Annual Banquet:

**Friday, October 15, 2004
8:00 P.M.**

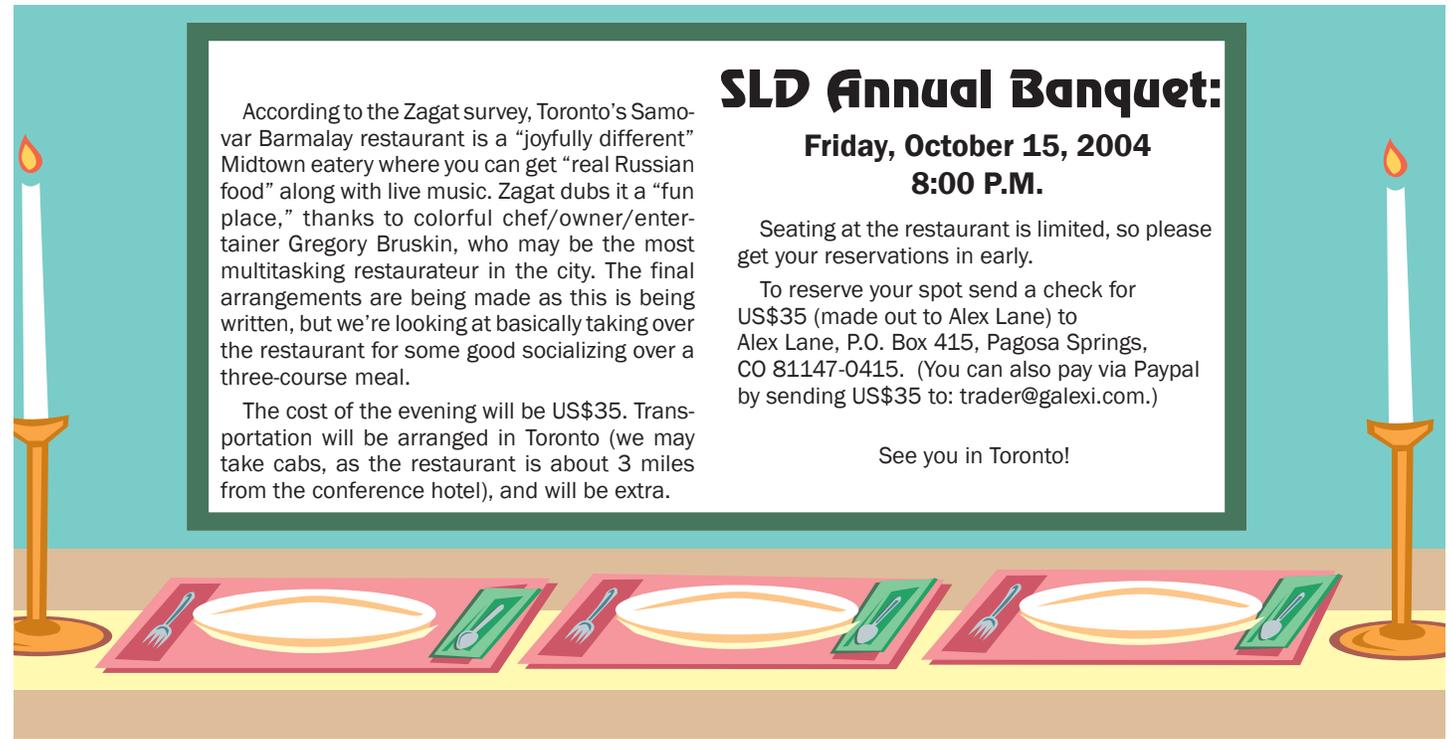
Seating at the restaurant is limited, so please get your reservations in early.

To reserve your spot send a check for US\$35 (made out to Alex Lane) to Alex Lane, P.O. Box 415, Pagosa Springs, CO 81147-0415. (You can also pay via Paypal by sending US\$35 to: trader@galexi.com.)

See you in Toronto!

According to the Zagat survey, Toronto’s Samovar Barmalay restaurant is a “joyfully different” Midtown eatery where you can get “real Russian food” along with live music. Zagat dubs it a “fun place,” thanks to colorful chef/owner/entertainer Gregory Bruskin, who may be the most multitasking restaurateur in the city. The final arrangements are being made as this is being written, but we’re looking at basically taking over the restaurant for some good socializing over a three-course meal.

The cost of the evening will be US\$35. Transportation will be arranged in Toronto (we may take cabs, as the restaurant is about 3 miles from the conference hotel), and will be extra.



SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

The other day I received a R<>E Biological Dictionary I had agreed to review for the *ATA Chronicle*. I had only been thumbing through it for a little while when I found an error, the use of a non-existent English word as a definition. I realize that it is generally unfair to reject someone or something because of a single gaffe in the first few minutes of acquaintanceship. On the other hand, there are some betrayals so fundamental that a relationship can never recover from them. Let me put it to you: would you ever again trust a dictionary that defined the Russian *сука* (bitch, female dog) as the putatively English *dogess*?

I take seriously my self-imposed role as monitor of how the American popular media portray the Russian classics. Recently I found another telling example. Who'd have imagined that an advertisement for diarrhea medicine would make use of a reference to *War and Peace*? I have on my desk just such an advertisement, clever and appalling at the same time. Under the general heading "Chance of reading on vacation" is a picture of a 19th century-looking volume of *War and Peace* in English, below which is a caption that reads "1 in 46." Below this is a picture of a package of diarrhea medicine, with the typical instructional verbiage on the carton; below this is written "1 in 3" and finally in somewhat larger letters "Pack Wisely." Once again, my favorite novel in the world is portrayed as one that an English speaking reader has a vanishingly small chance of completing, despite the best of intentions. There may even be a covert allusion to logorrhea. I hope Lev Nikolayevich is not paying attention too closely up there. What would he make of it all? Although, come to think of it, he did liken literature to a disease that achieved its effects through "поражение" (infection), but I doubt he had this particular disease in mind. What gets me is that I am certain that this is considered an ad that appeals exclusively to high-brow audiences.

On a much more encouraging note, did everybody notice a particular translation of *Anna Karenina* at the top of the paperback bestseller list? Are you also aware that Oprah Winfrey, the TV talk show host, is solely responsible for this? Overwhelmed with appreciation, I wrote her the following letter, which ATA Headquarters agreed to let me send out on Association letterhead.

Letter to Oprah

Dear Ms. Winfrey:

I am writing to express gratitude to you on my own behalf and on behalf of Russian literary translators, and indeed all translators. I have heard it said that you and your program are the most powerful progressive influence on public opinion in America. Now that I see *Anna Karenina* at the top of the bestseller charts, I am convinced of it. This astounding fact in itself is sufficient to earn you the undying gratitude of all those devoted to the Russian literary classics.

However, there is more! By selecting a single translation of the novel and requesting that all those participating in your book club read it, and not some other, you have put the revolutionary idea before the public that all translations are not created equal: some indeed may be better than others. A thoughtful few may even begin to suspect that translation is itself an art and not simply a mechanistic skill like wiggling one's ears. This is an idea that we have been trying to get across to our clients for years.

I am the editor of *SlavFile*, the newsletter of the Slavic Languages Division of the American Translators Association, to my knowledge the only U.S. publication whose target audience consists of Slavic translators. We plan to publish a copy of this letter in the *SlavFile* to express our appreciation in a public way. Should you or a member of your staff wish to reply, we would be very pleased to publish that letter as well. In addition, if you ever need information about translation and interpreting, please don't hesitate to contact us at the American Translators Association.

Thank you once again.

Sincerely yours,
Lydia Razran Stone
Editor, *SlavFile*

Continued on next page



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Lydia,

Thank you for including the news item about my humble self. I'm very intrigued by your feisty funky spunky plucky English. [I thought the definition of] "horny" was especially well written. Lapidary. For the ages. The way reference works are supposed to be. For "feisty" by the way, and near synonyms, I like *задорный*.

Re: Sergio Viaggio. Albeit with reservations, one takes Mr. Viaggio's point — one often made — about the desirability of poetic talent in translators of poetry. But his remark about Boris Pasternak having "'translated' Shakespeare and Goethe without knowing a word of English or German" is completely inaccurate. Pasternak was of course fluent in German from a very young age, to the point of adopting Berlin-specific slang out of an interest in linguistic "mimicry," and his letters in English to Stephen Spender and T.S. Eliot make it quite clear that he had a sophisticated command of English as well, although his English syntax was certainly peculiar and "foreign." Mr. Viaggio may have been thinking of Pasternak's practice in translating Georgian poetry with the aid of interlinear glosses.

Best wishes, Tim Sergay [tsergay@columbus.rr.com]

From time to time, when I read the news from Russia, I am struck by a somewhat “off” English usage in reported speech. I then amuse myself with trying to figure out what the original Russian word was and how the English rendering could be improved. It occurs to me that this could be turned into a kind of reader participation game. In the following excerpts from a report on Khodorkovsky’s trial, the underlined portions seem to me not to be the best choices for rendering what I infer to be the intended meaning. What do you suppose the Russian original was and how would you have translated it? Please send your suggestions to Lydia at lydiastone@verizon.net.

1. From Khodorkovsky’s reply to hearing the charges against him: “I have understood what I am charged with. I would like to express my attitude when there is an opportunity to do that.”

2. The accused’s father’s sarcastic reaction to these same charges: “I told my son, ‘You must be really cool since you managed to commit so much crime in such a short period of time.’”

The responses to our SLD survey contain requests for the *SlavFile* to place more emphasis on technical translation and on the actual “nuts and bolts” of producing a decent translation. Here are two particularly difficult Russian sentences (of the interminable species found in Russian technical writing) that appeared in recent jobs sent to translators of our acquaintance. How would you have translated them? We will publish all suggestions sent to the email address above as well as the translations arrived at with much wailing and gnashing of teeth by the original translators.

1. Эти внутренние состояния в форме более или менее общего недифференцированного самочувствия, очевидно свойственны уже растительным организмам и простейшим, лишенным нервной системы, а в форме дифференцированного самочувствия и развившихся на его почве путем последовательного дифференцирования сложных проявлений самоощущения, достигающих высших сознательных процессов, свойственны более сложным организмам, в которых благодаря разделению труда между различными тканями, все эти субъективные проявления составляют исключительную принадлежность нервной системы.

2. Наличие же в арсенале исследователей эффективно экспрессирующихся в условиях чужеродного генетического окружения (чаще – в кишечной палочке *E. coli*) клонированных генов фракции I чумного микроба, «мышинного» токсина, пилей адгезии (*adhesion pili*), пестицина (*pesticin*) и других создает реальную базу для проведения широких исследований по конструированию нового поколения вакцин против чумы, основанного на технологии рекомбинантной ДНК.

If this new feature appeals to you, send us your own challenging sentences! Of course, examples in languages other than Russian are welcome.

MORE FEISTY ENGLISH ПО-РУССКИ

Raphy Alden

Editor: Raphy Alden, whose SLOVIST interpreters’ column many of us miss so much, continues to contribute to intercultural understanding by translating another 50 words from Lydia’s feisty English list (see last issue of SlavFile). Comments on individual translations or terms are more than welcome.

1. clumsy—badly coordinated, awkward in either the physical or metaphorical sense: неуклюжий; неповоротливый; неловкий; безрукий; топорный
2. clunky—large, squarish and awkward, the opposite of streamlined; not necessarily negative, for example of shoes: тяжелый, большой, неуклюжий, громыхающий
3. cocky—conceited, overly pleased with oneself, overconfident: самоуверенный, вытыкалистый, дерзкий
4. comfy—(very) comfortable, usually used for familiar and beloved items (shoes, chairs): удобный, комфортабельный, уютный
5. corny—banal: избитый, банальный, заскорюзлый, косный
6. cozy—warm, comfortable and welcoming, homey: уютный, удобный, укромный
7. crabby—irritable, bad-tempered and negative, either acutely or chronically: брюзгливый, раздражительный
8. crafty—underhanded or devious: коварный, лукавый, хитрый
9. craggy—of facial features or personality, rugged, rough hewn: грубоватый
10. scrappy—bad, horrible in any sense: дерьмовый, дрянной, паршивый
11. creepy—weird, eerie, stemming from the sensation of insects crawling on the skin: бросающий в дрожь, жуткий, противный, страшный
12. cruddy—of poor quality or dirty, in the past used to refer to dried semen and sexually transmitted diseases: грязный, сальный
13. stummy—poor in quality: грязный, отвратительный, захудалый, мерзкий, ничтожный, отвратительный, убогий
14. crunchy—crisp; loving nature, i.e., the kind of person who lives on granola: свежий (person), хрустящий (food)
15. crusty—old and irascible: закорстелый, застарелый, сварливый
16. cuddly—either liking to cuddle (like some babies) or conducive to cuddling (like polar fleece): ??????????
17. cushy—soft, pleasant, undemanding, often describes a job that is a sinecure: легкий и хорошо оплачиваемый, тепленькое (местечко)
18. cutesy—intentionally, self-consciously and/or excessively cute, always negative: жеманный, кокетливый, вычурный

Continued on page 17

Russian>English Certification: Sample Test, Candidate Errors, and Grading Decisions

Lydia Razran Stone

This article is an expanded version of the third in a series of articles published under the *Certification Forum* rubric in the *ATA Chronicle* providing examples of certification exam errors. Because of the extreme interest of this topic to some of our members, it was decided to reprint the entire article here, restoring the cuts that space limitations compelled in the *Chronicle* version.

This article cites actual candidate errors and suggested error values in accordance with the current (1, 2, 4, 8, and 16 point) grading scale and the grading guidelines flowchart published in the September 2002 issue of the *ATA Chronicle*. The passage chosen for this analysis was Passage A, the general passage, in 2001-2002.

From the exam papers of 23 candidates, I selected a variety of errors that seemed representative and interesting. These errors had been identified by the original graders and evaluated in accordance with the previous (major and minor error) grading system. Errors were compared to an acceptable model slightly modified from the English translation prepared by William Keasbey, who, up to his death in 2003, was Language Chair of the Russian-to-English graders group. Error points in accordance with the current system and classifications for the sample errors were determined after consultation with Jim Walker (current Russian-to-English language chair), Marina Aranovich (current English-to-Russian language chair), and Nora Favorov (a Russian-to-English grader). I myself have been a Russian-to-English grader for 10 years. [To our knowledge, this is the first time that SLD graders have been identified in print. Those of you who are unhappy with the new certification system

SLD survey factoid #1

Our income derives from many sources, but for a majority of us the bulk of our income comes from T/I agencies (27% receive 75-100% of their income from agencies and 23% receive 50-75%). Government agencies appear to be the next most significant source of income.

and wish to contact someone about it should be aware that graders had nothing to do with its adoption and have no more power to alter it than any other ATA member.]

The table below presents the original Russian passage sentence by sentence: one acceptable English translation of each original, excerpts from candidate translations containing errors, an error category for each error in the excerpt, and suggested error points. Where discussion seems in order, it is presented in the comments column for each error. Error code abbreviations are expanded the first time they appear and a complete listing of error codes, including those not encountered on these exams, follows the table.

Excerpt from Test	Error Category	Error Points	Comments
Sentence 1: Чрезвычайный съезд в защиту прав человека получил отклик, и заметно, что сегодня к правозащитникам относятся по-разному.			Acceptable English: The Extraordinary Congress in Defense of Human Rights evoked a response, and it is easy to see that today people have varying attitudes toward the defenders of human rights.
1a ...toward defenders of human rights vary <u>widely</u> .	A(ddition)	1	Very minor error included here to show example of addition.
1b The <u>coming together of remarkably large numbers</u> ⁱ of people for the <u>defence</u> ⁱⁱ of human rights.	i. MU (misunderstanding of source text) ii. SP (Spelling)	i. 16 ii. 1	i. Since this error distorts meaning and occurs in the first, topic sentence, completely contradicts what is said in the remainder of the passage, and involves the mistranslation of two words, 16 error points would be justified. ii. British spelling no longer acceptable.
1c ...received a response and <u>it's</u> noticeable	R(egister)	1	Contraction inappropriate; very minor error .
1d ...it is noticeable that today the human rights defenders are <u>treated differently</u>	MT (Mis-translation)	4	The Russian word can be translated either as: <i>have an attitude toward</i> or <i>treat</i> depending on context. Nevertheless, the remainder of the paragraphs goes on to talk about attitude rather than treatment.

Sentence 2. Кто видит в них героев, кто—«юродивых».		Acceptable English: Some see them as heroes and some as crackpot idealists.	
Note: the Russian term «юродивые» in the original is very difficult to translate here. The literal translation is <i>holy fools</i> , or <i>fools in Christ</i> . The strictly Christian connotation is not appropriate in the context and is much less common in English than in Russian. Furthermore, the quotation marks around the original Russian word suggest that the term is not to be taken literally. Some indication that these activists are being thought of as “crazy” but not literally insane, as well as the suggestion of devotion to a “sacred cause,” were considered to be essential to an ideal translation.			
2a ...as <u>insane</u> ...	T(erm choice)	2	See above.
2b ...as <u>freaks</u>	MU	4	While the difficulty of translating this term should incline graders to leniency, it seems clear that this candidate, as well as the one in excerpt 2d, has confused the word <i>юродивые</i> , with <i>уродливые</i> (monstrous, freakish, deformed), justifying the higher number of error points.
2c <u>Someone</u> ⁱ sees them as heroes, <u>someone</u> ^{i—ii} “ <u>crazy</u> ” ⁱⁱⁱ .	i.U(sage) ii.U iii.T	2 2 1	There are two usage errors here: the use of <i>someone</i> rather than <i>some</i> and the failure to repeat “as.” The use of “ <i>crazy</i> ” misses the implication of idealistic (see discussion above).
2d ...as monsters	MU	8	In English the word <i>monster</i> not only implies freakish, but also terrible and threatening, which distorts the original meaning more than <i>freaks</i> in 2b.
2e ...some as “in Christ”	MT	8	In this context “ <i>in Christ</i> ” has an indeterminate meaning for the English reader and the connotation of fool is lost.
Sentence 3. Нынешние борцы за наши права уже не отчаянные диссиденты прошлой эпохи, отважно рисковавшие свободой и даже жизнью.		Acceptable English: Contemporary fighters for our rights are no longer the desperate dissidents of the past epoch, who courageously risked their freedom and even their lives.	
3a ...are <u>not any more</u> ⁱ <u>despairing</u> ⁱⁱ dissidents	i.U/AMB(i-guity) ii. T	4 2	i. The phrase “not any more” is not only a violation of usage, but ambiguous; it is not clear whether this means <i>are no longer the despairing</i> (correct) or <i>are not any more despairing dissidents than anyone else</i> . ii. <i>Despairing</i> and <i>desperate</i> are related but not identical, and <i>desperate</i> seems to be the implied meaning here.
3b ...desparate	SP(elling)	1	
3c ...daring dissidents.	T	1	There is a subtle but real difference between <i>desperate</i> and <i>daring</i> . One can be <i>daring</i> in any situation, but <i>desperate</i> implies <i>daring</i> because of the near hopelessness of the situation.
Sentence 4. Они теперь объединены в организации и действуют открыто.		Acceptable English: Now they are united in organizations and operate openly.	
4a ...now united in <u>an</u> organization...	MT	4	The implication that all human rights activists are now in a single organization distorts the meaning, but with minimal consequences for the passage as a whole.
4b ...and working <u>freely</u>	MT	2	Acting <i>openly</i> (for everyone to see) and <i>freely</i> (without anyone stopping or controlling you) are clearly different, though the two are related in the real world.

Sentence 5. Почему общество в основном безразлично к тому, что у нас понимается под «борьбой за права человека».			Acceptable English: Why is society mainly indifferent to what is understood here to be "the struggle for human rights"?
5a Why is the public basically indifferent to an issue <u>that do we perceive</u> as "fighting for human rights?"	SY(ntax)	8	This sentence sounds extremely strange in English, almost to the point of being incomprehensible. The very minor punctuation error with the question mark inside rather than outside the quotes is subsumed in the 8 point syntax error.
5b Why ⁱ the ⁱⁱ society basically indifferent to what we understand as "i ⁱⁱⁱ fight for the ⁱⁱ human rights"?	i. SY ii. 3 U errors	8 1+1+1	i. Omission of the verb is an egregious violation if anything is. ii. Two insertions of <i>the</i> when it should be absent, and one omission when it should be present.
5c ...to <u>those among us who understand themselves</u> under the "struggle for human rights"?	MU	8	Meaning misrepresented but not catastrophic for the passage as a whole.
5d ...that society is mostly <u>impartial</u> to	T	4	Meaning is more than obscured but consequences are minimal.
Sentence 6. Да потому, что подавляющее большинство людей воспринимает предмет такой борьбы как что-то очень далекое от собственных повседневных мучительных проблем.			Acceptable English: Well, it is because the overwhelming majority of people perceive the object of such a struggle as something very far from their own daily agonizing problems.
6a ...the <u>notion</u> of such a struggle	T/MT	4	
6b ... <u>pressing</u> problems.	MT	4	
6c ...the <u>suppressed</u> majority of people	MU	8	Consequences more than minimal. but less than catastrophic for the passage.
Sentence 7. Обыватель, даже просвещенный, скорее всего скажет, что правозащитники протестует против чеченской войны, помогают беженцам, горой встают за тех, кого преследует спецслужбы, охраняют гласность.			Acceptable English: An ordinary person, even an enlightened one, is likely to say that the defenders of human rights protest against the Chechen war, help refugees, stand up for those who are persecuted by the special services, and defend openness.
7a ... <u>and standing as a wall</u> ⁱ for those followed by ⁱⁱ special services	i. L (too literal) ii. U	8 1	i. Eight points for literal translation of an idiom whose counterpart does not exist in English (includes Usage error: "as" rather than "like" a wall). ii. Omission of <i>the</i> .
7b ...those <u>victimized</u> ⁱ by the <u>authorities</u> ⁱⁱ .	F(too free) F	2 4	
7c ... <u>make heroes</u> ⁱ of those <u>who pursue</u> ⁱⁱ the special services	i. MU ii. MU	8 8	Major distortion of phrase meaning brought about by two separate misunderstandings.
Sentence 8. И добавит, что все это важно.			Acceptable English: They will add that all this is important.
No errors selected.			
Sentence 9. Однако для основной части населения, которая вынуждена выживать в унылой беспросветности нужды, на первый план выходят другое.			Acceptable English: However, the majority of people, who have to survive under dismal conditions of relentless poverty, have more pressing problems to worry about.
Note: This sentence is rather more freely translated here than would be ideal; however, no alternatives that captured all the meaning and read smoothly in English were found.			
9a ... <u>something else is coming on the first plan</u> .	L/U	8	Literal rendering of idiom that has no such counterpart in English, including usage error.

Sentence 10. Люди озабочены жильем; работой, возможностью прокормить и выучить детей; ценами на лекарства и услуги врачей и тому подобной прозой.			Acceptable English: People are concerned about housing, work, the ability to feed and educate their children, prices for drugs and medical services, and other such prosaic matters.
10a ...and other such things	O(mission) or F	4	Omission of prose or prosaic or any equivalent.
10b ... <u>medicament's</u> prices	MT	4	Word doesn't exist in English, though its meaning can be inferred.
10c ...and other such <u>stories</u> .	T	4	Wrong connotation of <i>prose</i> .
10d ...and their <u>quotidiana</u>	R	4	This word has the correct meaning but is so obscure and strange in context that it justifies a higher number of grade points than would typically be given to a register violation.
Sentence 11. Можно сказать, что существует пропасть между теми, кто борется за свободу слова и теми, кто борется за кусок хлеба.			Acceptable English: One can say that there is an abyss between those who fight for freedom of speech and those who fight for a piece of bread.
11a ...struggling to make a living.	F	2	While the meaning is nearly the same (<i>fighting for bread</i> suggests a rather more dire situation), there would seem to have been no reason justifying not translating this phrase literally.
11b ...those who fight for freedom of speech, and those	P(unctuation)	1	
11c ...fight for the freedom word	MT/L/U	8	The use of <i>word</i> rather than <i>speech</i> and the lack of a preposition after freedom make the meaning very difficult to grasp.
Sentence 12. И обе стороны глухи друг к другу.			Acceptable English: And both sides are deaf to each other.
No errors selected.			
Sentence 13. Никакие перемены невозможны, если не удастся доказать «глухим», что хлеба им без действительной свободы слова не добыть.			Acceptable English: No changes are possible unless one succeeds in convincing the "deaf" that they will not be able to obtain bread without real freedom of speech.
13a No changes are possible until the "deaf" can be proven that.	SY or T	4	
13b <u>Any</u> ⁱ types of change are <u>impossible</u> ⁱ if it is not <u>successful</u> ⁱⁱ to prove to the deaf.	i. U	4	
	ii. U/SY	4	

Error classifications found in the table:

A—addition
 AMB—ambiguous
 F—too freely translated
 L—too literal
 MT—mistranslation
 MU—misunderstanding of source
 O—omission
 P—punctuation
 R—register
 SP—spelling
 SY—syntax
 T—term choice
 U—usage

Other categories not represented in this table:

C—case
 D—accents
 FC—false cognate
 G—grammar
 ILL—illegible
 INC—incomplete passage
 IND—indecision, more than one option
 ST—style



The following letter was written in response to the ATA Chronicle version of the R>E certification article, which appeared on page 43 of the July 2004 issue.

Hi Lydia,

Nice job on the certification piece in the July *Chronicle*. It's important that this information is out there and available to the

membership, particularly those who seem to have perpetual questions about the process.

I did have a couple of quibbles with the suggested translations. One of the quibbles has slowly grown into what I think may actually constitute a bit of an error, but you are the better judge about whether that is true, or I'm just being (characteristically) too obsessive about it.

The Russian original is, Можно сказать, что существует пропасть между теми, кто борется за свободу слова и теми, кто борется за кусок хлеба. The suggested translation is, "One can say there is an abyss between those who fight for freedom of speech and those who fight for a piece of bread."

The problem with the English sentence is that it doesn't feel as though it conveys the intent of the Russian. My sense is that the translator is attempting to stretch the word "abyss" to cover a concept and connotation that is absent in the English term "abyss" because of the sheer emotional power of the term. My guess is that no native speaker of English would likely use "abyss" in this way to convey the original concept. The problem is that the term "abyss" in English carries the connotation of something very deep and foreboding; a void, if you will. So we speak of "falling into the abyss," or "disappearing into the abyss." The emotional weight of this term implies a huge vertical drop. It has a "vertical" meaning. If the context of the sentence were something vanishing into a hole, or the fear of coming up on a ledge with a sharp dropoff into a void, it would be perfect.

It seems to me that the intent of the Russian is different. The intent of пропасть is to imply a major separation between two viewpoints. The Russian has "horizontal" meaning, for lack of a better term. Example: Пропасть между поколениями is "generation gap." English has these, too. Examples:

Medical Interpretation *Continued from page 6*

about are very small. Knowing this, interpreters do not wait for a puzzled look but immediately use the term "peed." Conversely, if a Russian interpreter working with an adult were to ask, «вы сегодня писали?» instead of «вы сегодня мочились?» it would be perceived as totally inappropriate and embarrassing. If I were interpreting for a 70-year-old Russian man and the doctor asked (as he very well might) if he had peed, I would still use the term "urinate" to avoid awkwardness.

Usually, I have a very good relationship with both the Russian and Hispanic populations. It is just as interesting for me to listen to WWII stories from Russian patients as stories of the rain forests

1. It could be said that there is a chasm between those who fight for freedom of speech and those who fight for a piece of bread. OR
2. It could be said that there is a gulf between those who fight for freedom of speech and those who fight for a piece of bread. BUT NOT
3. It could be said that there is an abyss between those who fight for freedom of speech and those who fight for a piece of bread.

The reason the first two work is that both "chasm" and "gulf" have distinct usage and meaning in English to illustrate the differences between two viewpoints. "Abyss" not only doesn't work in my view, it creates in the reader a sense of a deep hole (vertical) rather than a major separation between two views (horizontal). It points in the wrong way. My guess is that this is why it doesn't really scan very well. "Chasm" certainly carries the same emotional magnitude as "abyss," and it enjoys the benefit of actually being used that way in English, too.

My other observation, FWIW, is that there is a whiff of source-language interference in the sentence, "Contemporary fighters for our rights are no longer the desperate dissidents of the past epoch, who courageously risked their freedom and even their lives." There is a small bump in the road in the phrase "dissidents of the past epoch." Although it is possible to use "epoch" in English in this way, the term carries a lot of heavy baggage in English that it doesn't carry in Russian—in English it's much more commonly used to convey very long periods of time, as you know. My view is that simple is better: "Contemporary fighters for our rights are no longer the desperate dissidents of the recent past, who courageously risked their freedom and even their lives."

Perhaps these are just quibbles, but I thought it would be fun to think them through.

Kevin Hendzel

Editor's/author's Note: We agree that Kevin's versions sound better; we simply used the English model that was originally used (a synthesis of versions produced by graders) for grading. We require an acceptable, not the best, English translation on certification tests; since abyss is given the definition of gulf in Webster's Third, and there is no real error in the other sentence, we find our model acceptable, if not ideal. Of course, Kevin's versions would be graded correct as well.

of Central America, the beauty of Machu Picchu, or the dictatorship in Cuba. I love all of them and give a hundred percent of myself in order to provide them with good interpreter service. Overall, I find the Spanish-speaking population to be tolerant and easy-going in their attitudes to both medical staff and interpreters, while Russian patients can be more demanding and may tend to complain.

I would advise new interpreters to be friendly to all patients but to stay neutral. Step in when you notice that the medical staff is having difficulties with the patients as a result of cultural differences and offer your help in clarifying matters.

Irina can be reached at imarkevich@hotmail.com.

The SLD Survey: A Preliminary Report

Nora S. Favorov, Associate Editor

Lydia Stone, Editor

Jennifer L. Guernsey, Copy Editor

As we hope (!) you are aware, the SLD has been conducting an on-line survey of its members to ascertain the profile of our membership, identify market trends within Slavic T/I, find out what tools we use to translate and interpret, and to elicit suggestions for improving the *SlavFile*. Slightly more than a third of our members have responded to the survey to date.* In addition to painting a fascinating portrait of our membership—a portrait we will share with you in this and subsequent issues of *SlavFile*, at the conference, and on our website—these responses provide the richest source of reader feedback we have had in nearly a decade. We were particularly gratified that 28 members offered to play a more active role in the SLD.

A few factoids from the survey about the makeup of our membership are sprinkled throughout this issue of *SlavFile*. These percentages are not final, as we hope more members will take the survey before it closes October 10th. Our readers made many comments about the *SlavFile* and other SLD-related matters, and we would like to share with you a summary of those comments and our responses. Many of the improvements we hope to make depend heavily on you, our members (see “*SlavFile* Wants YOU,” p. 18). The small number of survey respondent comments that did not fit under any of the rubrics below will be addressed in a future issue.

Slavicizing the *SlavFile*

Comments regarding language coverage all expressed the same desire: more coverage of Slavic languages other than Russian (SLOTRs). We agree. In the past, we have literally swooped (to use Paula Gordon’s term) down on anyone who we thought might be interested in being *SlavFile* editor for one of the SLOTRs and dragooned him or her into service. We are proud to say that we now have editors for Czech and Slovak (Judy Yeaton), Polish (Urszula Klingenberg), South Slavic (Paula Gordon), and Ukrainian (Vadim Khazin).

However, we must have the help of our membership. We have repeatedly, in print and in person, requested articles from translators we know work in SLOTRs, but have met with limited success. So, SLOTR speakers, we ask—nay, implore—you to contribute or solicit articles on your language for *SlavFile* and/or to contact the appropriate language editor to find out how you can help.

Although in the past we have been reluctant to reprint articles from other publications, in the interest of expanding our coverage of SLOTR translation issues, we are now willing to reprint English articles from other publications that have been nominated by *SlavFile* readers—at least until we reach critical mass in terms of minority representation. We would be very

grateful if those making suggestions would also secure reprint permission.

One respondent wanted to see more short, bilingual pieces in SLOTRs. If an item is short, it is more likely that we can publish it in both English and the source language, but as our membership is currently constituted, it simply does not make sense to publish articles of significant length in anything except English and Russian (which 83% of respondents know well enough to read). Since 17% of respondents do *not* know Russian well enough to read, we will also limit the amount of Russian text that appears in any given *SlavFile*.

More of the Nitty-Gritty!

Employment and Business Advice

There was significant interest in seeing more career development information in the *SlavFile*—tips for beginning translators, job opportunities, advice on finding work, translator resources, or as one respondent put it, “More ‘nuts & bolts’ ideas about earning money in the translation field, about marketing, dealing with agencies & clients, etc.” In response to this suggestion, we conceived the idea of having a series of articles—or, if possible, a regular column—devoted to these topics and written from the standpoint of employers of Slavic translators. Kevin Hendzel of ASET has agreed to write the first column, which starts on page 1 of this issue. Feel free to suggest topics and invited authors for this column. Please note, however, that we are forbidden by law from discussing actual payment rates in a public forum.

Next, regarding job offers, *SlavFile* publishes job ads at no cost and reprints news of current openings that are brought to our attention. Unfortunately, the number of such ads has always been quite small. If any ambitious work-seeker would like to compile a list of language service companies and other agencies that employ substantial numbers of Slavists, we would be happy to publish it and provide free issues of *SlavFile* to be distributed to employers as a way of promoting our policy of printing want ads at no charge. The contacts you would gain in the course of obtaining the information, not to mention the information itself, should be invaluable.

Finally, we would like to make sure that all readers know about the ATA on-line Services Directory, where ATA members may list their credentials and specialties. Profiles can (and should) be updated regularly. This Directory can be accessed at <http://atanet.org/bin/view.pl/18756.html>. You will need your ATA member number to input or revise your listing.

Translation Tools

Our readership would clearly like to see more articles in *SlavFile* devoted to terminology issues, translation tools (software such as TRADOS, dictionaries, Internet-based resources, fonts), glossaries, and real-life war stories involving difficult terminology. We agree, these subjects are either insufficiently cov-

* If you have not yet completed the survey, it is not too late. We will leave it open until October 10th.

Go to: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=22405501597>

ered or of such high interest that no amount of coverage would be excessive. Once again, we are going to respond to this set of comments by asking readers to contribute more in these areas (see “*SlavFile* Wants YOU,” p. 18).

We would love to have a regular (or even irregular) technology column, especially one with reader questions and expert answers. A technology columnist could request free review copies of software from the companies that produce it, a nice benefit.

The same goes for dictionaries. Of course, all readers are welcome to review beloved or hated dictionaries they already own. However, if you see one you would just love to have, but at a price out of your comfort range, what is the harm in requesting a review copy? Reviewers for the *Chronicle* are provided with such copies all the time.

While the *SlavFile* is a great place to discuss terminology, it is of limited use to anyone with an urgent need. According to the survey, the Yahoo Russian Translator’s Club is the group the most respondents working in Russian turn to. ProZ appears to be a popular terminology resource not just for Russian, but for other Slavic languages as well. Yahoo also features a number of language- or subject-specific groups. Judith Yeaton recommended groups used by Czech translators in her column in our last issue (Spring-Summer 2004). We would love to have members working in any language write an article for *SlavFile* about their experiences with on-line groups. Anyone who would like to send us interesting samples of terminology discussions from one of these sites would be almost certain to find him- or herself the author of an article.

For a number of years Raphy Alden wrote a very popular column for the *SlavFile* called the “Slovist,” in which he described the interpretation challenges he encountered in his work and how he met them, asking for reader suggestions. Unfortunately, Raphy no longer interprets enough to generate sufficient material for such a column. If there is an interpreter out there who would like to take over, you are on. We (the editors) would also be willing to coordinate compiling such a column if a number of interpreters submitted one or more challenges for each issue. Even a single challenge could be published. Don’t feel submissions have to be lengthy. Everyone loves to read something that’s short and interesting. In general, we would like to place more in our pages on interpreting.

As for translation challenges, a couple will be presented in the *SlavFile* Lite column in this issue. We hope readers will be moved to respond to these and submit their own.

Finally, what better way is there to demonstrate to the Slavic translation community that you are expert in a particular topic than to publish a glossary or selections from one (or a list of expanded abbreviations) in the *SlavFile*? Interpreters!—do not leave the word list you were given or yourself compiled for your last job in your hotel. Get permission from your employers to have it published in *SlavFile*, and both you and they will get public credit as experts. When we are offered long glossaries, we will publish a sampling of terms and put the rest on the web site for easy printing/downloading. Obviously, glossaries for Slavic languages other than Russian are vigorously encouraged.

Help for Newcomers

Ask, and ye shall receive. In addition to Liv Bliss’ regular column, *Beginner’s Luck*, see *Some Advice for Newcomers*, p. 19. The hoped-for additional coverage of employment and business advice and translation aids should also be of particular interest to newcomers.

Personal Profiles and “War Stories”

Although a few respondents wanted to see fewer profiles and “war stories” in our pages, most seemed to want more of this sort of thing. We consider profiles a way for people relatively unknown to other members to introduce themselves. Beyond their entertainment value, profiles can facilitate networking among members and enable referrals. Profiles may be initiated by the profilee, so please do not be shy about submitting one. In addition, we have published some interviews with prominent translators and interpreters and are quite willing to publish more. If you would like to interview some leading light in our profession, please write us with your idea.

Long, Short, Silly, Serious?

Issue Frequency/Length

A few respondents expressed the desire that the *SlavFile* come out more frequently but be shorter. In each of the last two years, we have published only three issues, of which one was super-sized. This is not the result of our having adopted a new policy, but a function of unexpected problems in the schedules of those of us who put the *SlavFile* together. As production bottlenecks persisted, more and more material accumulated, and it just seemed to make sense to take advantage of the efficiencies offered by a double issue. In general, we recognize that it is preferable to have four 16-page issues per year. Unfortunately, chances of having more than four issues a year are virtually nil given the scheduling problems we already have. Realistically, the only way to achieve that would be to have paid staff, which we cannot afford as a division and which would change the nature of the publication.

Article Length

All comments having to do with length were opposed to it, at least in the *SlavFile*. It is a little difficult to tell whether length *per se* is the problem, or whether the objection is to articles that are not only long, but also boring or unimportant. We will monitor article length somewhat more closely, but more importantly we hope to make the *SlavFile* content increasingly relevant to our readership.

Tone

Several respondents expressed a desire for more humor, pictures, quizzes, movie reviews and a bit more visual interest, including color. Some complained that the text was “boring,” that they wanted less “administrative stuff” and less “abstract babbling that has nothing to do with real life.” Our most scathing critic wrote, “The writing has the thick, dead quality you find in academic prose.” Another wanted fewer “cute” articles that “create a sense of ‘clique.’” Yet another noted that sometimes “certain ‘regulars’ appear to be patting themselves on the back too much.”

We have tried to inject some humor into *SlavFile*, most notably through the *SlavFile Lite* and *Beginner's Luck* columns, and are certainly willing to incorporate additional humorous anecdotes should readers provide them. Regarding visual interest, we will look into adding more color and will add it if it proves feasible. As for pictures, photographs don't reproduce well. We are happy to publish relevant cartoons with appropriate reprint permission, but permission is notoriously difficult to obtain. Use of clip art is limited in part by space considerations, but more by time considerations—our editorial staff is stretched pretty thin, and hunting for clip art is low on the priority list. If you are a clip art devotee, consider helping *SlavFile* find some to liven up our pages. We would also be thrilled to publish original illustrations or, even better, cartoons from any amateur artists among our membership. For the physical requirements for art submissions, please contact Galina Raff at the coordinates on the masthead.

Regarding “administrative stuff,” as *SlavFile* is the primary vehicle of communication between SLD leadership and SLD members, there is a certain amount of technical or administrative information that must be conveyed. But we hope that our readership responds to our pleas for contributions to make the content more relevant (and thus less “boring” and “babbling”). The more members who are involved in *SlavFile*, the less likely an impression of “cliquishness” will be created. For a categorical rejection of cliquishness on the part of SLD staff, please see the lead article (with the “cute” title “Geeks not Cliques”) in the Fall 2000 issue of *SlavFile* on the ATA website.

Continuing Education

Five respondents brought up the new continuing education requirements, either complaining about their misguidedness or suggesting ways translators should be allowed to earn continuing education (CE) credit. The tone of some of these comments seemed to imply that the SLD has taken a stance endorsing the current Continuing Education Requirements. There is no mechanism by which a Division officially endorses or fails to endorse Board decisions. No poll has been taken of the membership, so even an informal endorsement is not possible. *SlavFile* Editor Lydia Stone is indeed a member of the Certification Committee, but that organization did not initiate the new requirements, and she has been arguing since they were introduced for diversifying the ways in which these requirements can be fulfilled. We have already published one letter from members opposed to the new requirements and would be happy to offer our pages for a forum. Because of the months between issues, it would probably be better to have the discussion on the Internet and then publish highlights in the *SlavFile*. We would suggest as a possible venue the Yahoo Russian Translators Club (even if some participants do not work with Russian). An official invitation to join can be obtained by contacting either Lydia or Nora at the email on the masthead.

We would be happy to provide space in the newsletter to anyone spearheading an effort to provide additional ways for CE credits to be earned, or to anyone with suggestions for fulfilling requirements, especially those that are convenient and low-cost.

In short, remember that this is *your* division and *your* newsletter. The best way to bring about the changes you'd like to see is to become involved. If you've compiled a glossary, consider sharing it; if you've discovered a great resource, write it up; if you fell into a terminological trap while interpreting, tell us your war story.

And if you haven't done so, take the survey!

MORE FEISTY ENGLISH *Continued from page 9*

19. daffy—silly, foolish, giddy, probably with a tinge of affection: глупый, легкомысленный, ненормальный
20. dandy—fine, good, often used ironically; foppish: щегольской, пижонский, классный, превосходный
21. dewy—aside from basic meaning, fresh, pure, and innocent: наивный, простодушный, чистый
22. dicey—risky, dangerous: ненадежный, рискованный, опасный
23. diddly—vanishingly small, insignificant: ничтожно маленький, незначительный, пустяковый
24. dingy—dirty, dim, and/or squalid: тусклый, выцветший, грязный (грязноватый), закоптелый, обтрепанный
25. dinky—small and insignificant: несущественный, пустяковый
26. dippy—foolish, slightly insane, eccentric: рехнувшийся, сумасшедший, чокнутый, спятивший
27. dishy—of gossip, sensational; British slang: attractive, good-looking: привлекательный, соблазнительный, аппетитный
28. dithery—nervously irresolute: проявляющий нерешительность, проявляющий неуверенность
29. ditsy—foolish, giddy, superficial: ветреный, пустой, легкомысленный
30. dodderly—feeble and shaky with age: нетвердый на ногах, трясущийся, дряхлый, немощный
31. dodgy—evasive; unreliable, unsuitable; requiring very skilled handling (British): изворотливый, ловкий, хитроумный
32. dorky—stupid, inept, lacking social skills: глупый, неспособный, неумелый
33. doughty—stouthearted and courageous, old fashioned: храбрый, мужественный, смелый, бесстрашный, твердый, решительный
34. dotty—eccentric, mildly crazy: не в своем уме, тронутый, рехнувшийся
35. dowdy—lacking in style or taste or even slovenly, particularly of a woman's appearance: безвкусный, немодный, неряшливо одетый
36. draggy—lethargic, unenergetic: занудный, скучный, тягмотный
37. drecky—of inferior quality, trashy; from Yiddish word for excrement: дрянной, дешевка, барахло
38. dreamy—given to daydreams; soothing and serene; wonderful: мечтательный, успокаивающий, чудный, сладостный

Continued on page 23



SLAVFILE WANTS YOU!

Or to put it another way:

Потребни сте Славфајлу!

SlavFile chce VÁS!

SlavFile potrzebuje CIEBIE!

SlavFile потребує ТЕБЕ!

SlavFile мае патрэбу ў Вас!

Slav-fajl ve bara vas !

Potrebni ste SlavFileu!

SlavFile Vas Kliče!

SlavFile vas zove!

"SlavFile" се нуждае от ВАШАТА помощ!

Ты нужен «Славфайл»!

We want to broaden *SlavFile's* coverage in order to make *SlavFile* as relevant, useful, and enjoyable as possible for our readers. But we can't do it without your help! Contributing could be as simple as dashing off a brief email or as involved as writing a regular column. Every one of our readers has valuable experience to share. Bear in mind that any column or article counts as two (and possibly more, the issue is being debated) continuing education credits for certified translators. Our contact information can be found in the masthead on page 2.

Here are some specific ways in which you can help to improve YOUR newsletter:

- **SLOTR us.** Suggest articles on Slavic languages other than Russian (SLOTR) for reprint. Write an article on a SLOTR-related topic. Submit a SLOTR glossary for publication.
- **Tech us out.** Write a one-time or regular technology review column. (Potential added bonus for you: free software to review.) Send your opinions on the software that you use to the editors for use in a compilation column.
- **Advertise us.** Compile a list of language service companies and other agencies that employ substantial numbers of Slavists so that you or we can contact them to inform them of our free job advertisements. (Added bonus for you: Your own job hunt will benefit greatly from the knowledge and contacts you gain in the process.)
- **Give us the biz.** Write a column or send us your anecdotes regarding your successful (or less than successful) marketing techniques, where and how you find work, qualities of a good translator or a good agency, or any other aspect of the translation business.

- **Challenge us.** Send the editors your translation or interpreting challenges, or write a column or a series based on such challenges.
- **Tell us about yourself.** Send in a profile of yourself and/or ask your colleagues to do the same. (Added bonus for you: Networking and referral opportunities.)
- **Ensnare us in the Web.** Write about your experiences with any Slavic-related on-line discussion groups.
- **Wow us with words.** Send us your glossaries: any topic, any Slavic language, any length. Get your employer's permission first, if necessary. (Added bonus: you and/or your employer will be recognized for your expertise in that field.)
- **Review for us.** Write a regular or one-time review of a dictionary or other work of interest to Slavic language professionals. You can either use a set dictionary review template or be as creative as you please. (Potential added bonus: free review copies of dictionaries.) Send us your own informal opinions of the dictionaries you have used.
- **Let us know what's out there.** Write an article discussing what translations are being published from Slavic languages, in any or all fields.
- **Give us an interview.** Interview a prominent interpreter or translator for publication. (Added bonus for you: you will make yourself known to a successful professional and get your name before other translators.)
- **Recruit for us.** Ask your talented colleagues to share their knowledge with the *SlavFile* membership by writing an article.
- **Decorate us.** Send us original illustrations for publication. Find clip art for our pages.
- **Humor us.** Send us humorous anecdotes, puzzles or quizzes. Find us suitable cartoons and obtain reprint permission.
- And finally, **Talk to us.** Don't wait nearly a decade for the next survey! Send us your suggestions, comments, and opinions at any time.

TRANSLATOR WANTED FOR RUSSIAN SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

We are looking for a translator for a science fiction novel entitled "The Genome" by Russian author Sergey Lukyanenko from Russian into American English. The word count of the Russian source text is 92,000 words. Translation work is scheduled to start in October 2004 and our deadline for translator applications is October 1, 2004.

We invite interested translators to apply. Applicants will be asked to do a free five-page sample translation. We would also require each candidate translator to indicate the time projected for completion of the whole novel and the rate to be charged.

We will notify all candidates of our assessment of their translation samples and, after one has been selected, make specific and detailed agreements with the chosen translator based on mutual requirements and specifications.

Please send a letter of application, including a resumé, references, and a list of previous work, to the following address:

GS Translations & Interpreting
Attn: Mr. Gilles Sarrailhé

e-mail address: gs@gstransint.com
telephone: + 31 20 419 08 24
fax: +31 20 419 08 25

SOME ADVICE FOR NEWCOMERS

The Editors

The editors of *SlavFile* consider serving the needs of newcomers as central to our mission. However, there is no simple answer to the question, “How do I get started as a translator and/or interpreter?” Nevertheless, we have cobbled together some pointers and helpful sources of information that we hope will be particularly useful to newcomers.

First, we have four pieces of advice for newcomers. **One**, get yourself a mentor—you can learn more about the ATA mentoring program and apply to participate by contacting Ms. Courtney Searls-Ridge at courtney@germanlanguageservices.com. **Two**, if you possibly can, attend ATA conferences. **Three**, attend the conference with a mentor (more on this below). **Four**, read our regular feature for translation neophytes, “Beginner’s Luck” by Liv Bliss.

While we of course want newcomers to feel welcome in general, we would particularly like to ensure that they feel welcome at their first conference. In our Spring-Summer 2004 issue, you can find Irina Markevich’s impressions of her first conference (available on the SLD website at <http://www.americantranslators.org/divisions/SLD/slavfile.html>). SLD functionaries have for the last several years invited newcomers to meet with us a few minutes before the Conference Welcome Reception on Wednesday evening, so they do not have to enter the crowd without knowing anyone. However, not everyone gets to the conference in time for the start of the reception. We will try to find an additional time when conference newcomers can meet with SLD veterans. We ask newcomers who would like to participate to contact Lydia or Nora so we can work out a suitable time.

The best way to attend a conference is with a mentor. However, some first-time attendees may not have a mentor, and some mentors may not attend the conference. We therefore plan to set up a conference mentor program. If you are an SLD and conference veteran who would like to meet and spend some conference time with a newcomer, or if you are a conference first-timer (or even second-timer) who would like a mentor, please provide the editors (contact info on page 2) with your contact information, working languages, and anything else you deem relevant. We will then attempt to match mentors with mentees. Since time is so short, we may not succeed in having a full-fledged conference mentor program this year. We will do what we can now and promise to get started earlier next year.

Those fledgling translators who are lucky enough to attend a conference should be sure to read the conference program thoroughly. There, in addition to SLD sessions listed on page 2, you will find a listing of sessions in other divisions targeted at newcomers or of special interest to them. We particularly recommend the “ATA Orientation for First Time Attendees” on Thursday at 11:00 a.m., the “Skill Building Seminar for New Mentors and Mentees” on Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. (\$15), and “Preparing to Take the ATA Certification Exam” on Friday at 3:30. The Translation and Computers Division is offering a number of “introductory” presentations as well.

We would also like to recommend a few particular *SlavFile* articles aimed at those new to the profession. After a year of our begging and searching for someone to write a dedicated newcomer’s column, Liv Bliss stepped forward. Her regular column, “Beginner’s Luck,” was first published in our Summer 2002 issue. Liv has worked in the field for more than 20 years, most recently as a project manager for a major language services company, but was starting out again as a freelancer. In her first article, Liv wrote, “You can email me about anything that’s on your mind (bliss@wmonline.com). If you have a question that I can’t answer, I’ll throw it out to your colleagues in the next issue.” Newcomers, here is your forum; it would be wonderful for both you and our newsletter if you would use it. If you would prefer more immediate answers, we suggest joining the Yahoo Russian Translators Club (just email Lydia or Nora for an invitation) or the appropriate online group for your language and starting a newcomers thread. We will be happy to publish excerpts from such newcomer discussions.

In this issue’s “Beginner’s Luck,” Liv mentions several other past *SlavFile* articles that are of particular interest to newcomers, so we won’t repeat that information here. But there is one more article worthy of note. When we last surveyed our membership eight years ago, we found that some members trying to get started in the profession were feeling frustrated about lack of success and disgruntled about employers requiring various types of technical knowledge and/or experience. At that time, Lydia asked Laura Wolfson, then a very young translator and interpreter who was “making it” in spite of no technical credentials, to write some advice to those newcomers for the *SlavFile*. Though many things may have changed since then, there is nothing in her advice (in the September 1996 issue) that needs any kind of updating. We will post it on the SLD website as a supplement to this *SlavFile* issue.

We hope that these recommendations prove helpful to SLD newcomers, particularly those planning to attend their first conference in October. We are looking forward to meeting you there!

SLD survey factoid # 2

Survey takers were given a list of 10 ways to categorize their status and could check more than one option. The most frequently selected option was “full-time independent contractor” (51.8%), followed by “part-time independent contractor” (32.4%). The next highest percentage was 10.8%, shared by T/I company owners and private teachers/tutors (as opposed to university-level educators—7.2%).

Letter From Prague

Judith Yeaton, Editor for Czech and Slovak

A Golden Age for translators in Golden Prague? I haven't actually found any translators here who will accept this as a reasonable description of the current situation, but then, Czechs do tend to be more skeptical than, say, your typical American.

After working as a translator in the States, the first difference I noted after I arrived in the Czech Republic was the sheer volume of translation work being done here. And in one of my languages, at that! Czech and Slovak, combined with Russian and the occasional Hungarian, have kept me reasonably occupied over the past couple of decades, but ever since Plenum ceased cover-to-cover translation of Russian scientific journals, there has never been a time when I could assume a steady stream of work for months in advance. The volume and steadiness of work is probably the biggest difference between the situation I'm familiar with and the one prevailing here.

Entry into the European Union has vastly increased the need for translators to render the country's laws and regulations into English, the official language of the EU, and the laws of the EU, the "acquis communautaire," into Czech. Building codes, pharmaceutical testing regulations, veterinary inspection procedures—everything has either been or is scheduled to be translated in the near future. Even before formal entry into the EU on May 1st of this year, the government had hired 140 translators for work in Brussels, initially new university graduates, more recently experienced professionals. Americans, however, can forget about participating in this particular bonanza: this is for European Union citizens. The situation for a foreign translator wanting to work in the CR, even on non-EU work, is in general complicated, requiring applications and forms and statements and a letter from your landlord. If you remember where Kafka chose to set *The Trial*, you'll understand.

As for government contracts—those relating to NATO commitments, for example—some agency owners speak bitterly about how contracts for translation are awarded, with fat envelopes figuring prominently in some of the better stories, but there is also a burgeoning private market requiring translation services here in its efforts to attract international investors, customers, and renters. Walk up Václavské náměstí—the major boulevard with the mounted statue of St. Václav/Wenceslaus familiar from televised scenes of demonstrations and then celebration in 1989—and you'll notice today nearly as many translation agencies as sausage and beer kiosks. Translators complain, of course, that neither the agencies nor their clients can tell the difference between a high-quality job and a hack job, and that they are certainly not willing to pay for something they cannot perceive, with the only question most clients ever ask being, "What's your lowest rate?"

You can also notice the stacks of translated titles in the bookstore windows (nearly as numerous as the agencies and kiosks). Harry Potter is there, of course, along with the latest general non-fiction bestsellers: Agatha Christie, Ed McBain, Sue Graftonová—in fact, nearly the entire canon of Anglo-American mystery/detective literature. Dick Francis is translated by Jaroslava Moserová, former surgeon and dissident, now a Senator. (Rudolf Schuster, the past President of Slovakia, writes mysteries; he does not translate them, as far as I'm aware.) Almost any

book mentioned in the U.S. news will show up on the shelves in short order. The quality seems to be high—familiar authors "sound" as I remember them sounding in English. Do you want to know what Madeline Albright sounds like in Czech? Just like she sounds in English, with the addition of the "hačky a čárky," the "hooks and little lines" of Czech spelling.

Many of these bookstores have good-sized to large sections devoted to dictionaries. Most, of course, are for the thousands of people studying foreign languages in preparation for the new opportunities entry into the EU is expected to bring, but just on "Václavák" alone there are at least four stores with respectable technical dictionary sections. Sometimes I decide which to check first on the basis of how hungry I am—they offer different levels of café service for browsers. After years of relying on half-a-dozen well-worn volumes, it's been a continuous feast ever since I arrived, even without the Viennese coffee and pastry.

Whenever I begin to get carried away by my vision of a Golden Age within the hearing of Czech translators, someone is sure to bring up the matter of rates. Sure, there's lots of work, even literary translation work, available. But available at 50 Kč per normostrana, or standard page, for fiction. (One normostrana = 1800 total characters, including spaces.) This works out to about a penny a word, certainly not a munificent rate. There is also the matter of actually receiving payment, as publishing houses generally pay only about a third of the agreed, low price upon delivery, with the rest being due on publication. Over optimistic publishers have been known to declare bankruptcy (leaving their translators with no hope of ever seeing their money), only to reopen again almost immediately under a different name and with a different catalogue.

Technical translations from agencies pay 3-4 times as much as fiction, which is still low. *The Yellow Pages* (actually, *Zlaté stranky*) no longer advertise their rates as frequently as they once did, but when they offer 250 Kč per page (and practically instantaneous turnaround, of course), you can guess what the translator is receiving. As everywhere, though, direct clients pay better than agencies. Experienced translators make more than the cited average national salary, but, since this average is inflated by a few very high salaries, it is considerably more than most people earn. It seems freelance translators here surely must work harder than the average employee, judging from the number of hours some of them can be reached via Internet for "just a quick question," but the potential for a very decent income from translating certainly exists and at least some people are making it.

In fact, from the number of days a month and number of hours a day full-time translators work, not to mention those who do a full day's work and then come home to polish off a few pages, whatever they make must seem only like the just reward for a difficult job. And so I've nearly given up trying to convince anyone else that they are living in a Golden Age here; but as I stroll up Václavák with my new geological dictionary under my arm in the early evening, with the sun blazing off the gilding of the National Museum's dome at the top of the boulevard, it's plenty golden enough for me.

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How the Translation Industry is Like the Movie Industry *Continued from page 1*

not surprisingly, it turns out that translators rely on other translators' opinions, experience, reputation and performance in selecting talent.

Marketing strategy: What works; what doesn't. Here are three fairly straightforward principles to keep in mind in any marketing strategy targeting the translation industry:

1. **Expertise:** You must be able to deliver.
2. **Visibility:** People must know who you are.
3. **Relationships:** People must know that you can deliver.

Principle 1. Expertise: You must be able to deliver. Competence really does count. The reason "competence counts"—and the reason this is the most important point—is that most translation businesses are built on referrals, but sustained through relationships. This does not mean that all translators and interpreters who are busy are necessarily producing the very best work in the industry (more on that later). It simply means that most translators and interpreters are perceived to be sufficiently competent to meet their clients' needs.

Don't try to spin plates on your head. Actors like to regale potential clients with tales of their broad, rich, and extensive experience. "I can do comedy and drama, have done off-Broadway, some commercial work, voice-overs, dance, spin plates on my head; anything you need." Many translators do this too. "I can work in any field," is a common claim. "I can work from or into my native language with equal ease," is another. "I am fully multicultural in all my languages."

The truth is, those of us outside the movie industry can see how an actor claiming to "do anything" comes across as a bit too ambitious, if not amusing or borderline desperate. Agents know this too, of course. With a few notable exceptions—just enough to prove the rule—the best actors do not "do everything." They specialize. The same is true of the best translators and interpreters.

"Know thyself." Do not claim expertise you do not have. Please. Know exactly what you can do, and know exactly what you cannot do. Use a standard of excellence to define your capabilities. In other words, be aware of what you are good at, focus on that, and leave the other fields to your colleagues. Remember that over-claiming just makes you look like the plate-spinning actor. In our promotion of ATA and the profession in interviews on national TV and radio, reporters and producers are most surprised to learn how much translators and interpreters must know about the world—how expert we really must be in highly complex fields—to do our jobs well. "Know thyself" and thy limitations—in following this axiom you are paying due respect to your colleagues whose strengths are your weaknesses.

Be thorough. Explain all of your skills and expertise in excruciating detail—years of experience, training, education, software expertise, knowledge of formats, etc. There is no such thing as "too much" information, particularly in this hyperlinked age where online memory is cheap. Sell yourself on facts and expertise, on work that you have actually done, subjects you have truly mastered over many years. This approach is far superior to providing long lists of subject areas you may have done just

once. Are you really better than your colleagues in these one-time areas? Unlikely. Besides, if the list grows too long, it begins to look like plate-spinning again.

Principle 2. Visibility: People must know who you are.

There are several ways to improve visibility quickly and dramatically. The first and most valuable is to register your information at all the major translator/interpreter association and commercial sites on the Internet. The ATA site (www.atanet.org) provides an on-line searchable database of translators and interpreters (www.americantranslators.org/tsd_listings/) that is used hundreds of times a day by translation companies and direct clients to find and hire talent. This is an important benefit of your ATA membership. Those of us on the ATA PR Committee promote this site to the national news media and potential clients at every opportunity. ATA members also report that the site has been an important source of work (according to the SLD survey, 53% of the respondents reported obtaining work from the ATA site). A few helpful points to remember:

1. You must go to the site and supply information yourself—ATA does not do it for you.
2. Be sure to update your contact information if it changes.
3. Remember that the information fields on the on-line form are limited in size, so in keeping with "be thorough"—it is vastly more efficient to provide a web link to your web site and provide all your information there for potential clients to review.
4. If you are a member of an ATA local, regional, cooperating or affiliated group, register with the on-line searchable directories of each organization.
5. If you are a member of another translator or interpreter group (AIIC, NAJIT, etc.) be sure to register with their on-line directories.

The rest of the web. There are several dozen translator and interpreter sites on the Internet that are visible to direct clients and translation companies, and new ones seem to pop up with great regularity. The most popular sites for translators and interpreters that include searchable databases and various job-posting boards and response systems include ProZ (www.proz.com), Aquarius (<http://aquarius.net>), Translators Café (www.translatorscafe.com) and Translation Zone (www.translationzone.com). Be aware that many of the popular venues also attract non-professionals from around the world, and rates quoted on the boards may surprise (and dismay) you. If you focus on the professional sector of the market and deliver top-quality work, you will find these sites to be helpful in bringing work your way.

What about resumes? Translation companies, just like agents in Hollywood, are absolutely inundated by a tidal wave of unsolicited translator and interpreter resumes, e-mails, phone calls, business cards, letters, and packages from translators seeking to improve their visibility. This, of course, is the least likely marketing technique to work in industries driven by "word of mouth" and "colleague referrals." Why do translators (and actors) continue to do this?

There are several reasons. It's easy. It's non-threatening. It can't hurt. It's possible to reach out to a lot of companies. It sometimes works.

In fact, it sometimes works quite well. In cases of rare languages and special expertise, there is value in simply appearing in as many company databases as possible. However, in most of the commercially-viable language pairs and subject areas where competition is most intense, it is essential to stand out from the crowd if your goal is to consistently improve your total volume of work.

Principle 3. Relationships: People must know you can deliver. Note that this statement is distinctly different from, "you have to convince people you can deliver." The gold standard for "knowing you can deliver" is a referral from a colleague with first-hand experience with your work. Interpreters rely on referrals of this type for an immense amount of their work. Colleague referrals are built on what colleagues know about you—it's why they are so powerful. They reduce risk for the client.

Prove it. One area where translators and interpreters are surprisingly different from actors is in the "prove it" category. Actors have been known to cause bodily harm to their colleagues as they scramble over their heads in a mad dash to be the first to jump in front of agents, producers, and casting directors. They can't wait to prove it. It sometimes seems that translators don't want to do this at all. When asked to present their translations for review or commentary—particularly in front of potential clients or colleagues—many translators become wide-eyed and very quiet. Some claim they have "no time," or suggest they have "nothing to contribute." Some are reasonably concerned with client confidentiality, although there are obvious ways around this (translate open-source samples for a presentation, or discuss common terminology issues that contain no proprietary information). **The reason this behavior is so surprising is that demonstrating one's competence is the very best marketing you will ever do in the translation industry. Period.** It puts your name and work out there for examination by clients and colleagues alike and shows what you are capable of producing. "Proving it" obviously includes live presentations at conferences or workshops, samples provided directly to clients or developed in consultation with clients, as well as virtual discussions in cyberspace or any event where translators gather. Look, actors are no dummies. They know that their careers are in the hands of agents and casting directors. Our careers are in the hands of a wider audience (translation companies and direct clients), but that potential audience also includes our colleagues, whose referrals are so valuable to building and sustaining a practice. Why pass this up?

Sole practitioner. Translation is, by nature, a solitary profession. One reason translators may be reluctant to reach out to their colleagues is that they are used to working alone. This may also cause them to discount the importance of editing and the value of collegial relationships. Translators who do not cultivate close working relationships are simply at a comparative disadvantage in the market. It's difficult, if not impossible, to overstate the importance of skilled editors and reviewers in advancing a translator's expertise. Nothing was more important to my own professional development than the scrupulous editing of

material I translated for published journals over many years. I can't imagine ever coming close to competence without having the expertise of my colleagues informing my translations that passed across their desks. When I became a reviewer myself about fifteen years ago, I was very surprised to discover that 1) many translators with decades of experience who had been working in isolation had simply been making the same mistakes for many years (and were none too happy to learn about this from me, frankly) and 2) translators in the commercial market would claim to be "too busy" or "not interested" in reviewing or proofing each other's work. How could they pass up the opportunity to learn from their colleagues? In my experience, nothing substitutes for the full-text review of colleagues' work. This is so much more valuable than Q&A about terminology on the mailing lists or translator boards for the simple reason that we sometimes don't know what we don't know: We ask questions about terminology we don't know, but forget about the material we think we do know—but in fact don't.

Who, me? Working in isolation tends to breed nervousness—a sneaky, uneasy sense that perhaps our translations may not measure up, or that we will make a mistake (confession: I get nervous giving presentations, too). Resist the temptation to hide from the public; take every opportunity to be part of the professional community—present with a colleague, tackle a subject that you are especially proud of mastering, participate in discussions on the public boards. This is also an act of generosity, as we all learn from your expertise.

"Yes, but..." Any discussion of marketing techniques will inevitably lead to protests that despite good visibility, participation in on-line discussions and even attendance at conferences, translators can be left behind: many clients buy poor translations, many good translators can't find enough work, and some of the work is fleeing to lower-cost locations. It is true that the best translators are not always busy, and the market can be cruelly inefficient. Here is a final principle to keep in mind:

The translation market is inefficient—hence, it does not define quality. Major movie releases can pull in hundreds of millions of dollars worldwide and still be recognized as works of utter drivel. In the movie business, commercial success is unrelated to quality, creativity, or originality. The market does not define quality. In the translation industry, the market doesn't define quality, either. Is this claim inconsistent with the argument that "expertise" is critically important? Not really. In the long run, one cannot succeed without expertise. But expertise alone is often not enough. This is because market inefficiencies, driven by clients who do not understand translation or their own needs, can sometimes frustrate or defeat expertise, or reward mediocrity. A common refrain among translators in the ATA continuing education debates last fall was: "I have many satisfied clients, so I must be good." Not so. Just as \$100+ million of worldwide ticket sales is not going to make "Independence Day" into a modern-day film classic, the tens of millions of dollars spent on MT purchases is not going to transform the resulting semantic train wrecks into works of art. In fact, the situation is even more disturbing. It turns out that a significant

number of clients are quite delighted to pay for machine translation because it's relatively cheap, fast as lightning and perceived to be "good enough." Some clients are happy with regurgitated proto-English scrawled on the back of a bar napkin. Some customers even tolerate 15-second dead zones from an interpreter booth.

These are the inherent perils of relying on client feedback as the sole standard for professional excellence. Sometimes clients "don't know what they don't know" (in the case of MT) or are just happy to get whatever they can (in the case of the bar napkin). Being human, some clients are simply too embarrassed to confess to an excellent interpreter who has helped them in so many other situations that his or her written translation doesn't make any sense in English. Often these clients quietly seek help from translation companies (or other translators) in what we call "bail-outs," where translations obviously produced by non-native speakers have to be rescued or "bailed-out." The end client breathes not a word of this to the original producer of the work for much the same reason that many of us have trouble challenging our own physicians, hairdressers or car mechanics—people who often see us at our most vulnerable. These relationships can be charmingly complicated. Clients have a special bond to interpreters who are often their lifeline in a new and confusing culture and admire translators who help decode their documents. Clients value and need us in ways that create and nurture a certain culture of forgiveness in some situations. In our industry, which lacks a long-term, rigorous professional training path or board certification or licensing procedures, this is probably a good thing (as long as your expert colleagues are around to bail out the client—see "bail-outs" and "referrals," above). The alternative is a system where it would be virtually impossible for beginning or even intermediate translators and interpreters to get any work at all in the industry until they achieved a true level of advanced professional competence—even mastery. The end result is that the "masters" in our industry—the true experts with decades of extensive experience who regularly turn down work—end up appearing to completely dominate the industry. It's true that the work tends to cluster around translators with the most experience and visibility. But the industry is far too large and diverse for this clustering to be exclusionary. It might be more accurate to say that, in most cases, the translators and interpreters with "too little work" have yet to appreciate the critical importance of expertise, visibility, and relationships to their commercial viability and success in the market. Without them, it is virtually impossible to succeed.

The author wishes to extend his most sincere thanks and appreciation to Lydia Stone, Nora Favorov, Lillian Clementi, and Marian Greenfield for their exceedingly valuable observations, suggestions, and insight on this article.

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MORE FEISTY ENGLISH *Continued from page 17*

39. dressy—elegant or formal in dress, or an occasion requiring such dress: модный, изящный, стильный, элегантный, нарядный
40. droopy—sagging in dejection or exhaustion: впавший в уныние/подавленное настроение, упавший духом
41. drowsy—sleepy, dull with sleepiness; of a time or location: dull and uneventful: вялый, дремлющий, сонливый, сонный, усыпляющий
42. ducky—excellent, fine; often used sarcastically; *That's just ducky*: прелестно, чудный, отличный
43. dumpy—short and stout, lacking grace, particularly of a woman: коренастый, крепыш, приземистый
44. dusky—aside from basic meaning, dark of complexion, generally used either euphemistically or ironically: смуглый, темный
45. dusty—aside from basic meaning, outmoded, stale: серый, затхлый, черствый, устаревший, старомодный
46. earthy—heartly, natural, uninhibited, unadorned and simple in style: житейский, земной, простецкий, неподдельный, простодушный, радушный, искренний, сердечный
47. edgy—original meaning: high-strung, nervous, too easily irritated; new meaning: innovative, on the "cutting edge": резкий, раздраженный, раздражительный, передовой, технически прогрессивный
48. feisty—spirited and lively, especially of a small or elderly person: бойкий, напористый, живой, энергичный
49. fidgety—with many nervous movements, habits or behaviors: неугомонный, беспокойный, вертлявый, суетливый
50. finicky—overly exacting in one's demands or tastes, frequently with regard to food; also, overly scrupulous: придирчивый, привередливый, разборчивый, мелочно-требовательный, обстоятельный

SLD Survey Factoid # 3

Over the past 5 years, respondents have seen an increase in work in the following fields: medicine/public health (40.2% of respondents), law (28.7%), and government (federal—not immigration) and immigration tied for third place with 23%. At the same time, however, 20.9% of respondents have seen a decrease in work in government (federal-not immigration)—the top response when members were asked "In which fields have you seen the amount of work go down." The next most frequent responses to that question were Business/Finance/Banking and Education, both chosen by 16.4% of respondents.

SlavFile

Newsletter of the Slavic Languages Division
of the American Translators Association
225 Reinke's Lane
Alexandria, VA 22314

Congratulations Croatian <> English Translators!

Two new language pairs have been added to the ATA Certification Program: Croatian into and out of English. This achievement reflects the dedication, perseverance and optimism of many translators working with Croatian. With the addition of the two Croatian pairs, there are now a total of 26 language pairs in the ATA program. Because certification is a serious matter, a number of hoops have to be jumped through to add a language. Many attempts to add pairs to the program have failed. ATA knows it cannot run a certification program without translators to choose passages and grade the exams. It also must be demonstrated that there will be an adequate number of test-takers to make a given pair worthwhile. Not long ago Paula Gordon, who spearheaded this effort, was a new kid on the ATA block, asking questions about how one would go about establishing certification for the languages of the former Yugoslavia. She stuck with it and found many interested in joining the effort. The dedication and drive of Marijan Bošković and David Stephenson, who now serve as English>Croatian and Croatian>English Language Chairs, respectively, were especially crucial. In addition, much has already been achieved toward the introduction of Serbian<>English and Bosnian<>English. We hope further congratulations will follow. See Paula's article in this issue of *SlavFile* for more information about the Croatian exams and the initiative in general.

SLD Banquet 2004 in Toronto:

See details on page 7.