

History of the German Language Division

by Helge L. Gunther

The formation of the German Language Division (GLD) within ATA dates back to a meeting of 29 German translators and interpreters at the 1996 ATA Conference in Colorado Springs. The initiative was taken by Claudia Kellersch who guided the Division (to be established) through its initial stages as the Acting Administrator.

At the suggestion of Peter Krawutschke, President of ATA at that time, a kick-off meeting, chaired by Claudia Kellersch, was held in April 1997 in conjunction with the Southwest Regional Conference in Austin, Texas. Two committees were formed at this meeting, one to develop a German Language Division homepage, and the other, the San Francisco Conference Organizing Committee, to arrange German presentations, a division meeting, and a social event at a German restaurant during the San Francisco ATA Conference in 1997. Preliminary bylaws were developed during that year with Edith Losa serving as the first Acting Assistant Administrator to be later succeeded by Ruth Zimmer Boggs. Several committees were established, among them the Literary Committee chaired by Ingo Stoehr, the Sci-Tech Committee chaired by Nicholas Hartmann, and the Website Committee chaired by Michael Metzger. All but the Website Committee were abandoned over time because their functions seemed to overlap with other ATA Committees. The duties of arranging presentations and other activities during the annual ATA conferences were later assigned to the Assistant Administrator who would then make the appropriate arrangements with the help of a supporting team.

The first newsletter of the Division was published as the *Mitteilungsblatt* in October 1997 with Marga Hannon as the editor and Frank Dietz and Ann MacFarlane as proofreaders.

The establishment of the Division was officially approved by the ATA Board of Directors in November 1997, and the division's tentative bylaws were modified and approved by the membership attending the Annual Meeting of the Division held during the ATA conference in San Francisco in 1997. Claudia Kellersch and Ruth Zimmer Boggs were elected for a one-year term as the Administrator and Assistant Administrator, respectively, of the now fully established division.

Between the ATA Conference in San Francisco (1997) and the ATA Conference at Hilton Head (1998) communication with the membership was maintained by two further editions of the *Mitteilungsblatt*. A call went out for a name of the newsletter. The suggestions which were submitted included: A bis Z, Der Silbenstecher, Die Schlagzeile, Forum - The Newsletter of the ATA German Language Division, GLD-Exchange, Interaktiv, The Germata Newsletter, Wort für Wort. The name Interaktiv, suggested by Petra Bargmann, was chosen by the majority of the German Division members attending the Annual Meeting of the Division on Hilton Head and became the official name of the division's newsletter. The newsletter was initially sent out by mail through ATA headquarters as a black-and-white hard copy. After the March 2001 issue the delivery mode was changed by majority vote at the Annual Meeting to an electronic format (PDF) which, however, would still leave members the option to receive the newsletter as hard copy by regular mail. This move significantly reduced the mailing costs, at the time one of the major budget items, and also allowed for printing the newsletter in color. The size of the quarterly newsletter increased over the years from an initial 8 pages to 24 pages per issue.

In 1999 communication between GLD members was further enhanced by the establishment of an e-mail listserv at Yahoo!Groups, which is open only to members of the German Language Division. Since its inception a total of 18,000 messages (as of April 2004) have been posted on this list dealing with everything from translation queries, information about upcoming events, and other exchanges of potential interest. As of October 2007, the total number of messages reached 48,348.

Yet another avenue for announcing the activities of the German Language Division became available with the development of the Division's website. Information on the site is available in German as well as English and is linked to ATA's homepage.

Membership in the Division has doubled from the 368 members in May 1997 to 764 in November 2003. The German Language Division thus was the fourth largest of the thirteen ATA Divisions (September 2003), exceeded only by the Spanish Language and the Interpreters Divisions, and by a small margin by the French Language Division. As of October 2007, the membership in the GLD has increased to 1264 members.

The accomplishments of the division can be attributed to the many volunteers devoting countless hours in support of the division's activities. Space will not allow listing everybody here who deserves recognition but a list of the major contributors is given below.

Administrators

1996-1997	Claudia Kellersch (acting)
1997-1998	Claudia Kellersch
1998-2000	Helge Gunther
2000-2004	Dorothee Racette
2004-current	Frieda Ruppaner-Lind

Assistant Administrators

1996-1997	Edith Losa (acting)
1997-2000	Ruth Zimmer-Boggs
2000-2002	Mike Magee
2002-2006	Jutta Diel-Dominique
2006-current	Ruth Gentes Krawczyk

Newsletter Editors

1997-2001	Marga Hannon
2001-2002	Christiane Bohnert
2004-current	Rainer Klett

Newsletter Co-Editors

1999-2002	Manfred Winter
2004-current	Roland Grefer
2006-2007	Astrid Kaeser
2006-current	Abigail Dahlberg

Editorial support and proofreading

1997-1998	Petra Bargmann
1998	Thomas Hannon
1999-current	Janice Becker
2002-current	Susanne van Eyl

Newsletter layout

1998-2000	Karin Wuertz-Schaefer
2001-2003	Karen Lawliss
2003-current	Rainer Klett

Webmaster

1997-2003	Michael Metzger
2003-current	Michael Wahlster

Listmaster

1997-2003
2003-2004
2004-current

Michael Metzger
Jost Zetsche
Christoph Niedermair

Our thanks also to the staff at ATA Headquarters and members of the ATA Board who have encouraged the formation of the German Language Division and have supported its activities over the years.

(Updated October 2007)