



**Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association**  
*Cumann Aistritheoirí agus Ateangairí na hÉireann*

# ITIA Bulletin

**2015/3**

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**Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association**  
*Cumann Aistritheoirí agus Ateangairí na hÉireann*  
19 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Ireland

| Tel.: +353-1-8721302 | Fax: +353-1-8726282 |  
| Email: [itiasecretary\(a\)eircom.net](mailto:itiasecretary(a)eircom.net) | Web: [www.translatorsassociation.ie](http://www.translatorsassociation.ie) |

## Editorial

In the Bulletin we aim to keep our readers abreast of as many interesting and relevant topics from as far afield as possible, so, just for balance, this issue contains much home news and indeed inside (the ITIA) news, as we throw a little light on our very own members. Whilst in our CPD courses we try to offer as much practical help as possible to those bravely wishing to start out on a career in translating and/or interpreting, in our new column, Members' Corner, the interview with ITIA Professional Member and Certified Translator Spanish to English, Patricia Medina de Hawkins demonstrates how sometimes it is serendipity that can start you on your career path.

Coming up next year is the 30 year anniversary of the ITIA, founded way back in 1986 - fugit irreparabile tempus! Members of the Executive Committee have been discussing possible events but we would very much like to get ideas from you, the members. If you have any ideas or suggestions please send an email to Mary Phelan at [chairperson@translatorsassociation.ie](mailto:chairperson@translatorsassociation.ie)

Also at home, we are keeping a keen eye on current court proceedings between an agency here who is questioning the awarding of the tender for Gardai interpreting to another agency - neither renowned for their rates of pay! Watch this space.

Anne Larchet & Adam Brozynski  
Co-Editors

## MEMBERS' CORNER

*In our new column, Annette Schiller, ITIA Professional Member (PM) and Chair of CPD Committee interviews our PM and Certified Translator, Patricia Hawkins de Medina, who recounts her unorthodox professional beginnings in the world of legal interpreting and translation*

**Q:** How did your career as an interpreter and translator begin?

**A:** Sheer chance catapulted me into the world of translation. It was the month of January, in Granada, and I had just commenced a year-long post-graduate course at Granada University.

One evening, sitting in the draughty lobby of the small hotel, where the university had found me lodgings, I noticed two policemen (the infamous grises) approach the receptionist. They murmured something to him and he waved towards me and beckoned me over to the desk. The police knew there was an extranjera in the hotel (me) who spoke Spanish fluently and they needed an interpreter to assist in the interrogation of three Germans they had caught breaking and entering, a very serious offence back in those days.

I smiled nicely, from sheer relief probably, and said I would. A refusal would have been out of the question. One of the Spanish chaps I had been chatting with in the lobby said he would come with me, and I was glad of the support. The comisaría was down the street from the hotel, and there I was being escorted by two grises in the pitch dark. It was 11 p.m. and I didn't leave the comisaría until 4 a.m. The questioning was slow and grinding. The comisario asking in Spanish, I relaying to the

Germans in English, the Germans talking among themselves in German, then replying to me in English and I back to the comisario in Spanish. It was as good as two months' training in a school for interpreters!

*It was as good as two months' training in a school for interpreters!*

I dare say if I had not been there the police would have been inclined to speed up the process - in their own way!

Anyhow, a statement was written up and signed, I left, and I don't know what happened to the trio of Germans after that. Probably deported.

Money was not mentioned at any point in the proceedings. But, being in the good books of the Spanish police was worth 10 kilos of gold. Some six months later, when the time came to apply for what was then called the permanencia to allow me to register and remain in Spain, I took myself to the appropriate police department in Granada. Who should be there but my friend the comisario I had assisted that night. He spotted me, rushed over to attend me himself, I didn't even need an application, and he told me to just come back two days later and my permanencia would be waiting for me all stamped and sealed!

So, that was my introduction to the world of interpreting.

I was employed later on by a Spanish law firm, and remained with them for a few years. However, before that I worked as a tour guide on the Granada run, which combined with my main duties on the hospitality desk in a 5-star hotel. It may be hard to imagine but back then it took almost four hours from Málaga to Granada, on a bad road, particularly during the winter months. Our American clients had probably never seen anything quite like it. After hours of sight-seeing (and shepherding) we had to face the same

gruelling journey back, disembarking the weary travellers at their hotel at 10 or 11 p.m. Having lived and studied in Granada I was the candidate for the job and I do have good memories of that time.

On foot of that job I subsequently worked as a P.A. to the Italian project manager on the construction of a 5-star property. He was a terrific employer, yet his previous P.A. had left as it seemed he and she quarrelled all the time! I found we got along famously. A little Irish wit, nerve and humour can take you a long way. Much of my day was spent liaising between him and the foreman up on the site. A whole new vocabulary, a whole new world. And the vocabulary on the site between project manager, foreman and men was not always construction-related...I also discovered that the best lunch to be had for miles around was in the workmen's ramshackle on-site canteen, and early in the day the foreman would drop by the office and whisper to me what the cocinero was preparing for that day.

As the building started to take shape my duties began to include conducting inspections within the building by visiting engineers, officials and potential buyers from abroad.

In due course I went for interview to a new law firm from the north of the country which was opening a local office. They were only interested in how well I could write Spanish, and the interview consisted in the dictation of a legal text to me as I typed, with the dictating solicitor looking over my shoulder. He read the typed text, looked at me over his glasses, smiled and said: "Can you start next week?"

**Q:** Name the most important "thing" that helped your career.

**A:** Having a university degree, particularly in Spanish. A further post-graduate year at the University of Granada (Spain). Being employed for a few years by a Spanish law firm.

**Q:** Favourite type of text?

**A:** I only translate legal texts, which generally do

not make for fascinating reading, so there are no favourites. It has crossed my mind now and then to try literary translation. I took the literary translation paper when I sat the Diploma in Translation examination many years ago. I am too aware that literary translation is very poorly paid, and nowadays few of us can indulge in a labour of love.

**Q:** Do you work in a team or on your own?

**A:** I have worked for decades with my Spanish associate, Teresa. She translates into Spanish and I translate into English.

**Q:** How do you / did you find clients?

**A:** They found me! As I was employed back then by a firm of Spanish solicitors, other solicitors and/or their clients visiting our law firm for meetings and negotiations would see and hear me. It was also my job to interpret at meetings held in the office. Having the documents relating to the meeting to hand well in advance and being briefed by the lawyer or lawyers conducting the proceedings meant one was prepared. At first it was quite daunting to be seated at the head of a table with six, eight or ten people and interpret while keeping them all in the loop. Great training in self-confidence and assertiveness, not to mention stamina.

My employer, the senior partner, would warn any visiting parties, half in jest, that there was to be no 'head-hunting' to lure me to their firms, but I could and did accept work from those other solicitors and/or their clients. This meant moon-lighting after work until I had enough clients to go it alone. I can remember having to buy an electronic typewriter – the most sophisticated equipment available then – and it cost the equivalent of 750 pounds, more than a desk-top would cost nowadays!

Just to also add that once I became self-employed (after I got married) I had one very interesting assignment as the interpreter on the filming of the documentary 'Death on the Rock', the Thames TV documentary about 'that

shooting' in Gibraltar in 1988.

**Q:** Is it really necessary to specialise?

**A:** In my opinion, a resounding yes. In fact I think it is unethical to attempt to translate something in which you have no knowledge or expertise, or maybe never even heard about. I know I couldn't translate texts about farm machinery, nuclear physics, medical research, cattle breeding, washing machines, Tudor architecture, or even brochures/advertising. A bad idea to be a jack of all trades and master of none.

*I am too aware that literary translation is very poorly paid, and nowadays few of us can indulge in a labour of love.*

I think one can maybe specialise in a couple of related areas. I translate legal texts, but I could also translate, for example, a psychologist's report (these often go hand in hand with court cases and the like), but then I have a deep interest in psychology.

**Q:** How important is the client perspective?

**A:** In the legal field the client wants a competent, clear and accurate translation.

**Q:** How do you convince a client that you are worth your salt/better than the competition?

**A:** It isn't a beauty contest. As the majority of clients out there have no idea what translation means or the often pain-staking work involved, it is not my place to educate them. Nor would I have the time. Besides, particularly nowadays, all the client seems to be interested in is 'bueno, bonito y barato' and not whether I am qualified, capable and competent. In general, because I have my own clientele, the convincing situation does not arise. Also, lawyers generally do have an understanding of the translation process, unlike the general public.

**Q:** Very often these days, we never get to see or

meet the client, all communication is done by email or phone or skype. Is that a good or a bad thing?

**A:** I have met many of my clients, some I haven't. It is not strictly necessary to meet the client in person, but it can be helpful from a networking viewpoint. You can be in a client's office and s/he may introduce you there and then to a colleague, another lawyer, or to a client who happens to be there at the time, and ....there you have a new client! Make sure to hand out your business card all round, or give them two each to pass on to others.

**Q:** What is the worst / best thing about being a freelance translator / interpreter?

**A:** The best: being one's own boss. There is no 'worst'. It's a question of temperament and one must have the discipline to sit down and put in the hours. I don't mind working alone, I quite like it, but many would prefer an office environment. Many people are not cut out for being freelancers in anything.

**Q:** What major changes have you noticed in the world of translation / interpreting since you started out?

**A:** I fear the profession has fallen into disrepute, due mainly to the proliferation of macro-agencies (and I hasten to add there may be some excellent and ethical agencies), and non-professionals with no qualifications who pose as translators and interpreters. One has only to glance at any translation-related site on the internet and note the torrent of spammers and scammers either offering their services or seeking translators to work for them. Worse still are those calling themselves translators who offer to translate for 1 cent a word or less. Many are quite bare-faced about it and say it's a good way to make some quick pocket money. It is a fact that certain agencies or 'translation companies' outsource translations (for example, Spanish/English/Spanish) to places like India.

Given that clients in general have no idea of what

translation involves many will take the cheapest option available, with nefarious results.

**Q:** Is it possible to have a good standard of living as a freelance translator/interpreter?

**A:** It was, particularly a decade or more ago. For someone starting out today in the profession I am not so sure. Graduates and those new to the profession would need to have a day job, perhaps a part-time job, until they can build up a clientele. In any case it is a good idea to work for a company engaged in the business in which you intend to specialise. For example, if you intend to specialise in translating civil engineering texts, then go abroad to the source language country, get a job with a civil engineering firm which has clientele/colleagues in English-speaking countries. Stay with them for a year translating their documents, doing their English correspondence, dealing with phone calls. The training will be invaluable. As you go along you will be able to build up glossaries, terminology banks, have access to their reference material, ask them questions.....

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*This article from the Cork Examiner gives us a comprehensive picture of how taxpayers' money is spent*

## Courts Service pays over €1m for interpreters

Monday, May 11, 2015

by Gordon Deegan

Yoruba, Cebuano, Lingala, Iloko, and Tagalog are some of the obscure, exotic, and far-flung languages spoken by those accused of offences before the courts here last year.

The Courts Service, in response to a Freedom of Information request, confirmed the bill for providing interpretation services for 68 languages in the courts last year totalled just over €1m. The lion's share of the fees was paid to translation.ie or Forbidden City Ltd, which received 832,324.

According to the Courts Service, Polish was the language interpreted most often last year in the courts when interpreters were required on 2,151 different occasions — accounting for 28.8% of the 10 most popular languages last year. This was followed by the demand for Romanian interpreters who were required 1,367 times in court.

The other languages to feature in the top 10 were Lithuanian (14.8%), Russian (9.9%), Mandarin (4.5%), Latvian (3.4%), Vietnamese (2.6%), Portuguese (2%), Arabic (1.7%), and Czech (1.5%).

*in the years from 1997 to 2008 there was a 30-fold increase in the need for the use of interpreters in court*

Yoruba is spoken by the Yoruba people who live in southwest Nigeria and southern Benin and total around 35m, while Cebuano is the largest native-speaking population of the Philippines.

Lingala is a Bantu language spoken throughout the northwestern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Iloko and Tagalog are both spoken by millions in the Philippines.

Other languages that were interpreted in the courts last year included Zulu, Yue Chinese, Vietnamese, Uzbek, Urdu, Thai, Tamil, Somali, Pushto, Panjabi, Nyanja, Moroccan Arabic, Mongolian, Kurdish, Hindi, Georgian, Estonian, Cantonese, Bini, Bengali, Armenian, and Amharic.

Interpreters were obtained on 7,475 occasions from contracted suppliers by the courts.

A spokesman for the Courts Service said the organisation, “as a public service provider, was challenged over the past two decades to meet the challenges of increased ethnic diversity in a positive and proactive way”.

He said: “Such diversity has seen us provide for interpretation of the spoken word in up to 210 different languages and dialects over the past 20 years.

He confirmed that “in the years from 1997 to 2008 there was a 30-fold increase in the need for the use of interpreters in court”.

He said there has been a steady decrease in recent years, due to a decrease in inward migration, less demand for the services in court, and a public tendering process delivering value for money and quality standards.

The spokesman said that in March 2013, following an open tender competition, the Court Service entered into contracts with three companies to provide interpretation services to the courts.

The spend in 2014 represented a 16% fall on the €1.2m spend on interpretation in the courts in 2013.

The costs in 2014 and 2013 compares to a spend of €3.6m in 2008 and €3m in 2009.

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Irish Examiner

Original source: <http://tinyurl.com/n98zmom>

*This article indicates which agencies are in receipt of some taxpayers' money*

## Translation service brings legal action against Garda Commissioner's after interpreter contract awarded to rivals

PUBLISHED

13/04/2015 | 16:50

A translation service has brought a legal challenge to the Garda Commissioner's decision to award a contract for the supply of language interpretation services to a number of rivals.

Gardai require interpreters when dealing with non-English speaking people and has used Word

Perfect Translation Services since 2007 including under a Department of Justice and Law Reform framework agreement for such services.

Word Perfect says earlier this year, following a tendering process, the Garda Commissioner awarded the contract for translation services to Forbidden City, trading as Translation.ie, Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin; Language Training and Translating Ltd, t/a Context, Oranmore, Co Galway; and to Natalia Cotov, t/a Accord Translations, Oldtown, Co Dublin.

*...conflict of interest in Ms Cotov's Accord Translations getting the contract because she is married to [...] the son of former Garda Commissioner Pat Byrne.*

Word Perfect says this has been done in breach of EU public procurement regulations.

It also claims conflict of interest in Ms Cotov's Accord Translations getting the contract because she is married to, or is the civil partner of, a Garda Mick Byrne who is the son of former Garda Commissioner Pat Byrne.

Word Perfect says the current Commissioner failed to exclude Ms Cotov's company from the competition or, at a minimum, failed to ensure the alleged conflict or potential conflict was removed. Alternatively, there was a failure to explain how the conflict was removed.

Word Perfect is seeking orders under EU public procurement regulations that the award of the contract be set aside and/or permanently suspended. It seeks that Word Perfect instead be appointed or alternatively a new tendering process should take place.

It says the contract is worth €5m over four years. It provides for face-to-face interpretation services in all Garda divisions though not over-the-phone interpretation.

The case was admitted to the Commercial Court on Monday (April 13) by Mr Justice Brian McGovern, on consent between the parties.

Word Perfect says in awarding the contract to the rivals, the Commissioner failed to comply with EU regulations and general EU law including by failing to provide adequate reasons for the decision to select the preferred bidders.

It is also claimed there was a failure to treat all bidders equally and that Word Perfect was discriminated against. The decision to award the contract to the rivals was taken in breach of Word Perfect's legitimate expectation, it says.

In affidavits, Word Perfect's chief operation officer, Agim (Jimmy) Gashi, says there were a number of serious flaws in the tender process.

He also says the Department of Justice framework, under which the service was previously provided, was a very competitive way of procuring services and ensured the best available price is obtained for the State.

This is in contrast to the way the Garda Commissioner is currently procuring services which does not involve a competitive process and results in the payment of "over-inflated and historic prices", he says.

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Original source: <http://tinyurl.com/kpfylj9>

## ANNOUNCEMENT

*Our PM and Chair of the Certification Committee, Miriam Watchorn, alerted us to this article which hopefully will foment a little solidarity amongst our profession*

Dear Colleague,

Something is rotten in the state of translation publishing.

Translators who translate for the publishing industry are losing copyright to their work in alarming numbers.

Research shows that translators' copyrights are "rustled" out of their hands one third of the time in trade and commercial publishing—and eighty percent of the time in university-press publishing.

(See Copyright “Rustling” in English-Language Translation: How Translators Keep (and Lose) Rights to Their Work—Data from Translations Published in 2014; <http://tinyurl.com/lzpz2cm>.)

Some of the biggest copyright offenders in that research also happen to be the biggest publishers of translations in English—Europa Editions, Atlantyca (through its licensees in the U.S., Scholastic Publishing, Papercutz, and others), Skyhorse Publishing, New Vessel Press, Columbia University Press, Yale University Press, Bloomsbury, and Routledge—to name a few.

Copyright rustling is not inevitable. It is not “standard industry practice.” It is not necessary for the translator-publisher relationship to function nor does it help publishers “afford” to publish translations.

Let’s cut through the nonsense. Copyright rustling is a symptom of translators’ lack of negotiating power and of publishers’ willingness to exploit that weakness to their own advantage.

Show your support for the radical idea that what translators write for publication belongs to them. Sign the petition at <https://www.change.org/p/publishers-of-english-language-translations-put-a-stop-to-copyright-rustling>.

Momentum is building. We recently passed 650 signatures. Won’t you add yours? And, if you’ve already signed, won’t you share your concern about this issue with your colleagues?

What No Peanuts! is asking is simple:

- We call upon copyright-rustling publishers—and especially upon 2014’s biggest rustlers—Atlantyca (Scholastic/Papercutz), Bloomsbury, Cambridge University Press, Cistercian Publications, Columbia University Press, Duke University Press, Europa Editions, Fordham University Press, Glagoslav Publications, Hackett Publishing, HarperCollins, Harvard University Press, Ignatius Press, Karnac Books, New Vessel Press, Palgrave/McMillan, Princeton University Press, Routledge, Rowman & Littlefield, Skyhorse Publishing, Stanford University Press, SUNY Press, Syracuse University Press, University of Chicago Press, University of Toronto Press, William B.

Eerdmans, Yale University Press: Stop taking translators’ copyrights away from them. Negotiate fair contracts in which you recognize what rightfully belongs to the translator.

- We call upon translators: Refuse to allow publishers to take your copyright. Negotiate whatever terms you like for the lease of your rights, but take copyright off the table. There is no legitimate reason for a publisher to own your copyright. If you won’t take action for yourself, then do it for your colleagues. You owe it to them to stop being the moral equivalent of scabs. Cultural work is still work, and acquiescing to unfair and exploitative workplace conditions hurts everyone.

- We call upon translators’ associations: Your lack of direct action is not neutrality. By remaining silent or playing politics, you have chosen a side. Individual translators cannot wield the power you can to influence publishers to change bad policies.

What else you can do:

- Read “Something Is Rotten: Let’s Put A Stop to Copyright Rustling” at <https://nopeanuts.wordpress.com/resistance/stop-copyright-rustling>

- Write copyright-rustling publishers and ask them to change their policies. (Addresses are listed in the report - <http://tinyurl.com/lzpz2cm>.)

- Retweet the messages sent by No Peanuts! using the hashtag #CopyWrong

- Send your own Tweets about this issue to your colleagues and use the hashtag #CopyWrong. (Addresses are listed in the report - <http://tinyurl.com/lzpz2cm>.)

- Blog about this issue

- Bring this issue up on translator forums, on translator mailing lists, and at conferences and meetings of the translator associations you belong to

- Demand that translators’ organizations do their jobs and advocate for translators against “rustling.” Silence is not neutral

- When you see reviews of translations in print publications or publicized on Twitter, Facebook, on blogs or elsewhere, find out whether the



translator's copyright has been rustled. If it has, say something!

Mutual respect always. Copyright rustling never!

HELP US REACH 1500 SIGNATURES

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## Worth-a-click

**UK government taken to court by Afghan interpreter over assistance scheme**

<http://tinyurl.com/qjlluub>

**Trauma takes toll on interpreters in confronting cases**

<http://tinyurl.com/omg6dxd>

**A Somewhat Existential Argument against Translating for Peanuts**

<http://tinyurl.com/pj2my9g>

**Merkel's Remark On 'Criminal' Annexation Omitted In Russian Translation**

<http://tinyurl.com/nars7fw>

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## What's hot, what's not

### What's HOT...

Austria's broadcaster, ORF, decided to be more all-inclusive by providing International Sign for both the semi-finals and grand final of the Eurovision Song contest.

### ...What's NOT

Job advertisement on UK website : Bi-lingual paralegal (English/Polish) specialising in personal injury. Role would include assisting with translation and interpreting work (no qualification in translation required); and there would be other duties. No further comment!

## Joining the ITIA

The *Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association* is pleased to welcome new members to the association. We currently have the following categories of membership:

- Professional
- Associate
- Affiliate
- Institutional
- Student
- Honorary

**Professional Membership** is awarded to translators or interpreters who meet the strict criteria of the ITIA based on qualification and level of experience.

Applicants must also achieve a PASS in the annual Professional Membership Examination (translator or interpreter) set by the ITIA.

**Associate Membership** may be granted to holders of a third level qualification in translation and/or interpreting and/or languages or to holders of a third level qualification with relevant experience.

**Affiliate Membership** is generally availed of by people with a professional interest in translation and interpreting, by those with a general interest in these professions or by professionals from other sectors who wish to work in the area of translation or interpreting and do not currently have a specific qualification or experience in the area

**Institutional Membership** is available to bodies that do not function as commercial agencies, for example university centres for translation and interpreting studies or cultural institutes. Application documents for Institutional membership are currently being prepared.

**Student Membership** is available to persons undertaking undergraduate studies in any discipline or those undertaking postgraduate studies in translation or interpreting.

**Honorary Membership** is awarded by the ITIA AGM to persons in Ireland or abroad who have distinguished themselves in the field of translation or interpreting.

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**New ITIA Associate Members May 2015**

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**PATRICIA BADOT**

French to and from English

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**MAŁGORZATA HRYNCHAK**

Polish from English, German

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**ANA LESSA**

Portuguese from English, Spanish

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**VERONICA O'NEILL**

English from French, Italian

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**ANTHONY LEVALLOIS**

French from English



## Contacting the ITIA

### Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association

Cumann Aistritheoirí agus Ateangairí na hÉireann

Address:	19 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Ireland
Telephone:	+353 87 6738386
Email:	<a href="mailto:secretary@translatorsassociation.ie">secretary@translatorsassociation.ie</a>
Web:	<a href="http://www.translatorsassociation.ie">www.translatorsassociation.ie</a>

### ITIA Bulletin

Co-Editors: Adam Brożyński | Anne Larchet | [theitiabulletin@gmail.com](mailto:theitiabulletin@gmail.com) |

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### ITIA Executive Committee: 2014–2015

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