

www.aatia.org

2001 UN Interpreter exams announced

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS have been announced by the United Nations for recruitment of English, French, and Spanish interpreters. The examinations will be held January 9 and 10, 2002 in New York, Geneva, and other locations according to the number and location of qualified candidates invited to take the examination and the availability of necessary technical equipment.

The purpose of this examination is to establish a roster from which present and future vacancies for English, French, and Spanish interpreters will be filled. In view of the current special needs of the Organization, only candidates who have certain language combinations will be considered. English interpreters must have perfect knowledge of English and excellent knowledge of French and Russian. French interpreters must have perfect knowledge of French and excellent knowledge of English and Russian and/or Spanish. Spanish interpreters need perfect knowledge of Spanish and excellent knowledge of English and French.

The announcement and application forms can be obtained from our website: www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm. ★

Give a hand

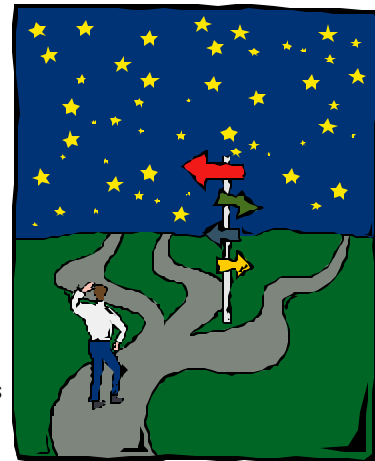
Coordinators are needed now or in the near future for several key association volunteer positions. Members interested in coordinating all the activities or helping out with one or more tasks handled by the Social Coordinator, Voicemail Manager, or Webmaster may obtain job descriptions from any AATIA board member. ★

November 10 meeting

Ethical dilemmas

Get Maurine McLean's take on the problems translators and interpreters face in resolving ethical dilemmas. Long-time members will recall her well-received July 1996 discussion on a similar topic.

Door prizes will continue to say thanks to attendees, and a brief round of announcements, the usual high-quality networking and tempting refreshments will cap the afternoon's events. ★



Write-ins elect Jordan President for 2002

THE FOLLOWING AATIA ELECTION RESULTS were reported by the Tellers Committee, composed of Elisabeth Joffrain and Ria Vanderauwera:

President

Patricia Thickstun27
Harvie Jordan (write-in)65

Secretary

Laura Vlasman89
Nereida Zimic (write-in) 1

Director of Communications

Esther Diaz92

Director of Finance

Laura Spencer91

Director of Membership

Traci Andrighetti92
Tony Beckwith (write-in) 1

Director of Professional Development

J. Henry Phillips37
Ezequiel M. Quijano55

According to Joffrain, 95 valid yellow ballots were cast. A total of 144 ballots was received, but 49 were the invalid white ones, which were not counted.

Congratulations to the winners and sincere thanks to all candidates for agreeing to run for election!

—Laura Vlasman, Secretary ★

Austin Area Translators & Interpreters Association

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CoA

A COUPLE OF MEMBERS REPORT NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES:

J. Henry Phillips tradutor@swbell.net
Efrat Schwartz efrat@austin.rr.com ★

Welcome new members

AATIA WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

Donelle Barnes

1700 Red River
Austin TX 78701
dbarnes@nursing.utexas.edu
Primary language: English

Piedad C. Domínguez

11005 Andenwood Dr.
Austin TX 78726
leosanpia@aol.com
512-918-0411
Primary language: Spanish (Latin America)
Translators, Interpreters
English>Spanish
General medical, health and social services, docu-
ments, instruction manuals, public information

Florencia Canales Grauer

2002 Barton Parkway
Austin TX 78704
DGrauer@austin.rr.com
512-326-1572
Primary language: Spanish
Interpreters, Translators
Spanish<->English
Correspondence, documents, employee hand-
books, instruction manuals, product manuals,
public information, education, human resources,
health administration, housing administration ★

Member stats

At the August board meeting, Database Coordinator Joan Tuttle Vargas reported the following statistics:

Active members	150
with business listing	16
Associate members	11
Business members	6
Total	183
SpanSIG members	79
MCISIG members	14



AATIA members present T-shirt to Danish translator Dee Shields in August. L-R: Ingrid Lansford, Shields, Pat Thickstun, and Harvie Jordan.

From the President

MANY OF US HAVE BEEN INSPIRED to reach out to loved ones and friends in this time of sadness, uncertainty, and anxiety.

Dee Shields of Denmark, a new friend of AATIA [see photo above], visited with some members on August 28. After returning to Denmark, she wrote the following on September 1:

"Thank you so much for the wonderful reception you gave me Tuesday. What a great time I had meeting with you in such a beautiful setting. Thank you also for the beautiful T-shirt. I'll be showing it off on Tuesday, when our translators association will be taking part in a relay race."

Less than 2 weeks later, she sent messages of condolence from her colleagues and was called upon to translate announcements for the PA system at the Copenhagen Airport for a moment of silence showing sympathy for Americans.

During the second week of September, we received reports from friends of AATIA and members who were working in Washington DC (Stephen Mines, Ruth Boggs), visiting New York (Ben Maya), and working in New York (Marian Greenfield, Laurie Treuhaft).

Laurie Treuhaft, who assisted us in launching our first regional conference, translates Spanish and French at the United Nations and her twin daughters attend the UN International School.

On September 26, she wrote, "We are all right, just very shocked and depressed, as is everyone in the nation. I keep having to look south to see the smoke to believe that the World Trade



Center, which really defined the southern tip of Manhattan, is no longer there.

"Of course, everyone in New York is only two degrees removed from being personally affected. My cousin worked in No. 7 World Trade Center, escaped about 15 minutes before he himself [might have become] a victim

and witnessed the first tower collapsing as he was walking home over the Brooklyn Bridge.

"On Saturday, we babysat for some twin friends of my twins; the parents had to attend the funeral of one of the victims (they were taking comfort in the fact that his was one of the bodies that had actually been identified). The neighbor of one of the French translators here lost her husband, and it goes on and on.

"The UN, being a prime target itself, was evacuated the day of the attack and closed on the following day. It took us nearly two hours to go ten blocks to get Layla and May at school, and another 9 hours to get home that day. We could see men in soot-covered suits who had walked all the way uptown. For days, I felt as if I were in a movie or on television in some faraway place where things like this actually happened, but not in New York!

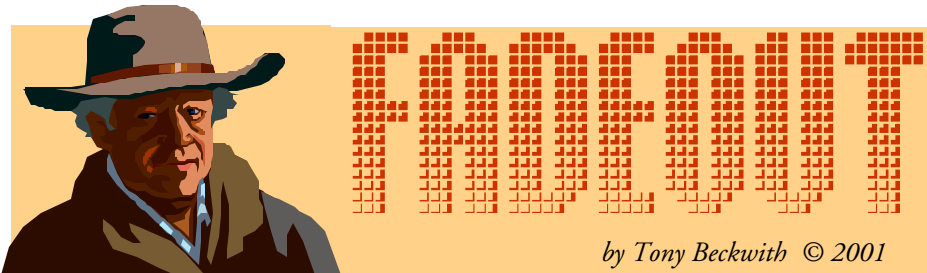
"We told our girls as little as possible but enough to explain the chaos and all the emergency vehicles they saw around them that day. As far as I know, they know nothing of the terrorist attack by the planes, only that the World Trade Center collapsed and some firefighters died. That was upsetting enough to them. Layla's kindergarten class had made a memorable trip to the firehouse last year, and we used to call the Twin Towers the "Twin Sister Towers," so they had a real personal relationship to them. They turned 6 in August and are now in first grade....

"It means so much to me now that my friends in Texas remember me."

I found comfort in all the messages from our friends and colleagues and was inspired by Salman Rushdie. He wrote the following:

"[T]o live by the security experts' worst case scenarios might be to surrender too many of our liberties to the invisible shadow warriors of the secret world. Democracy requires visibility...Don't be terrorized. Don't let fear rule your life. Even if you are scared."

—Patricia Thickstun ★



WE WERE IN MIRANDA'S BACK GARDEN, whiling away the time with a flagon of bitterly cold Australian white wine. In the fading light of a warm afternoon, a figure appeared, as if from nowhere.

He was known as Fades, which was short for "Fade-away." He had a real name, but everyone called him Fades because of his extraordinary ability to appear and disappear as if by magic, fading in and out of peoples' lives with never a warning or an explanation. He was an old friend of Miranda's who'd invested a little too heavily in the mineral boom, then lost everything in the Lightning Ridge stampede. She introduced John and me as friends from Europe who had just arrived in Sydney and were about to go traveling in the outback, taking odd jobs where and when we found them. "Like you, Fades," said Miranda, her pretty eyes twinkling, "they're looking for something different to do for a while".

"Jackerooing?" said Fades. "Beauty! I'll be in that one." And so began our journey together. Two weeks later we were living at Kelly's Hotel in Finlay, a very small town perched on a vast, flat plain, with not much of anything in view all the way to the horizon. It was a well-worn establishment, not very expensive of course, with creaking stairs and dark wood-paneled walls, and a faint aroma of dust and homesickness.

Fades could talk his way into anything, and it wasn't long before he found employment for us all at a milk-

processing plant in a nearby town. The plant bought milk from surrounding dairy farms and produced casein, or powdered milk. We clocked in after sundown and worked till dawn. John worked in the 'wet room' wearing Wellington boots, a rubber apron, and rubber gloves. Fades, who'd always wanted to drive a truck, spent the night collecting milk all over the moonlit countryside in a long, shiny aluminum tank on wheels.

"Jackerooing?"
said Fades.
"Beauty! I'll be
in that one."

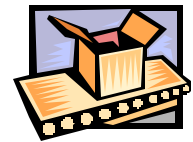
My job, in the 'dry room,' was to bag up casein into fifty-pound paper sacks and stack them onto pallets. I toiled in a vast, hanger-like warehouse, with pallets stacked on top of each other as far as the eye could see.

The casein was pumped to my station through a large pipe that emerged from high up on the end wall, then rattled and thundered all the way to where I stood. The pipe angled down into a chute that ended in a conical device with a shutter that allowed me to control the flow in moments of extreme panic.

I placed an open sack under the chute and shook it around a little to get the powder filling evenly. When I thought it weighed fifty pounds I slipped another sack under the chute, then dragged the full one six feet to my left and hoisted it onto the scales. Checked the weight. Added or subtracted casein. Leapt back to jiggle the other sack that was filling up at an alarming rate. Hefted the first sack over to the industrial sewing machine. Folded the top in a special way, then ran it through the slot to stitch it closed, trying not to think about

stitching my fingers to the sack in a ghastly, gory mess. Heaved it over and laid it on a pallet. Then raced back to remove the sack that was now overflowing, and slip another one in place under the chute. That's what I did, over and over again. All night long. All alone in that enormous place. I thought I would go mad.

And so it went for a couple of weeks, by which time we were all in desperate need of some relief, for I wasn't the only one whose sanity was threatened by my work. So, on Saturday afternoon we went to the horse races. Fades put his entire paycheck on a dark horse called *Español* and watched it romp home at twenty-five to one. True to form, he vanished some time during the night and we never saw him again. Since he was the only one with a car, John and I were forced to resign from the casein factory and our brief career as jackeroos faded to a close. ★



German tall tale in translation

INGRID LANSFORD WILL DISCUSS her translation of a mid-19th century German tall tale about travel to Texas (including New Braunfels) and California and will solicit help with several problems at the next LitSIG meeting 1-3 p.m., Saturday, December 1, at Michele Aynesworth's home, 4191 Travis County Circle (SW Austin). Newcomers are welcome. For directions, call 512-899-9653. ★

CATCH THAT BUG!

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IN MY SECOND ARTICLE of the “Sidelines for Translators” series, I would like to talk about software testing. This is a field relatively few translators seem to be familiar with, but one which can be interesting and lucrative (maybe I should write a book entitled *Software Testing for Fun and Profit*).

I am, of course, talking about a very specific form of software testing — the testing of foreign-language versions. Software developers traditionally have sizable QA (quality assurance) departments or hire external firms specializing in finding those pesky bugs (for some nice computer folklore about the term bug, see www.jameshuggins.com/h/tek1/first_computer_bug.htm). However, QA departments are usually not capable of language testing. There is an important distinction to be drawn here between functionality testing and language testing. All language versions have to be tested for their functionality, in order to see whether the program doesn't crash or freeze, works with the appropriate hardware and does what it is supposed to do. The functionality testing of foreign-language versions is often handled by the QA testers, who know the program so well that they can use it without having to read what each button or menu item says.

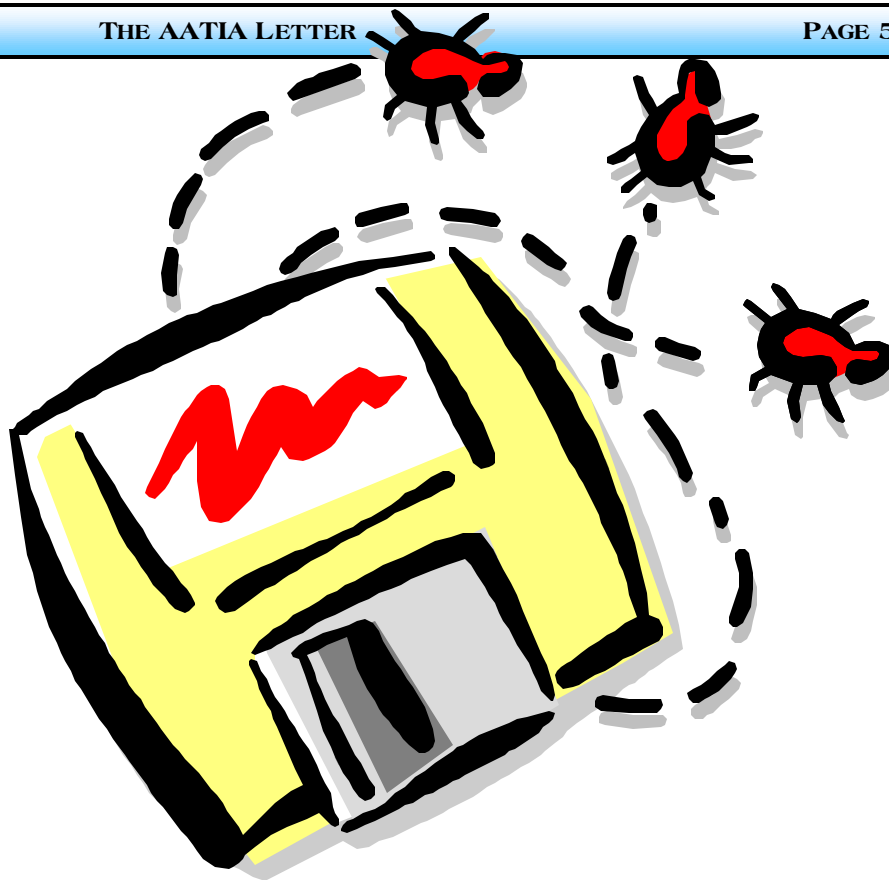
On the other hand, these testers are unable to determine whether the proper text has been assigned to each interface element, whether text is cut

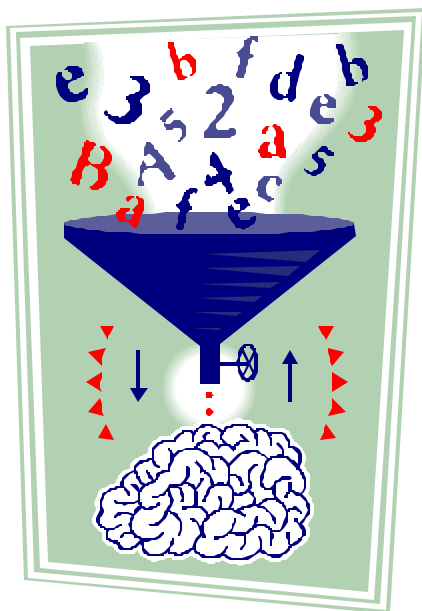
off, or whether special characters are missing. This is the realm of language testing. In some cases, a translator will go through the program, in others (for instance with computer games, which are often difficult to play) a QA tester will use the program while being watched by a translator. Any problems found during testing have to be recorded in a “bug list,” which might be a simple text document, a spreadsheet, or a specialized database.

What does it take to be a language tester? Well, first it helps to be in geographical proximity to software companies (saves on airfare). Then, you should be thoroughly familiar with the operating system (in some cases that means the foreign-language version of the OS) being used in testing. In the case of Windows-based applications, you should use the MS glossaries available at <ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/developr/msdn/NewUp/glossary/>. Furthermore, you should be familiar with software interfaces in your target languages. You also have to be meticulous in your record-keeping and should be able to write very clear instructions for the programmers who

have to fix the bug. Writing “the letter é is missing” is definitely less useful to them than “in the text box X the letter é is replaced by a black square in the first word of line 2.” Remember that the program might contain thousands of text strings, so be as specific as possible. You might also be asked to rewrite or shorten text strings and to translate texts that were “forgotten” when the program was sent to the original translator, so bring some dictionaries and glossaries along.

I have done all kinds of software testing, from working in-house at a computer game company, to traveling on-site, receiving CDs in the mail, and even offering complete packages of translation plus language testing to software companies, and I always found it to be very interesting work. You might want to consider this as a useful sideline and a potential gateway to a large and expanding market. ★





AATIA database in perspective

by Jane Chamberlain

THE BLURB IN OUR DIRECTORY

touts AATIA as “one of the largest and most active associations of professional translators and interpreters in the country.” To the casual observer looking for manifestations, two facets of our organization present themselves: the newsletter and our referral systems. Both exist because we’ve been blessed with members not only skilled, but phenomenally willing to work long hours. Fortunately, we’re also blessed with heroic visionaries who work hard at tasks bearing less visible fruit. However it may be due in considerable part to these two benefits that approximately two hundred professionals are happy to fork over \$35 each year.

THE AATIA LETTER speaks for itself: it demonstrates on every page that a consummate craftsman regards AATIA highly enough to donate long hours to provide a forum for it (He will probably censor this statement, but I hope he lets it pass; it needs saying). The database responsible for the organization of membership records, the print and on-line member directories, and the telephone referral system, however, is less obvious to the naked eye. And because it’s transition time

again, it behooves us to make a short review of our history.

The AATIA database was born in the early nineties, when a long-suffering Albert Bork managed membership records with a word processor. To relieve him and enable the creation of indexes of language pairs and subjects, the group created a database.

Marian Schwartz, then Secretary, headed the committee. She remembers that determining what data to collect took almost a year. “We met and met. We wanted a lot of information and didn’t feel that broad categories would be useful. Something more subtle was needed to give an accurate picture of what people did.” There was a long list of more than 100 topics to be agreed upon, international disparities to be standardized, and privacy issues to be researched, not to mention software to be conquered. They had software, Alpha Four, and they had Fabio Massina, who knew how to use it.

Marian did all the data entry herself, since the software had a high learning curve and it was hard to move data between computers back then. They managed to put out directories in 1993 and 1994 using this system; however the software was complicated, and Fabio had left town. When Nelda Gaydou became Secretary late in 1994 and assumed responsibility for the database, although the software could be installed on Nelda’s PC computer, it wouldn’t return the data in the same way it had done on Marion’s Macintosh. During this period the data were transferred to FoxPro 6.2, but no directory was published in 1995.

Ria Vanderauwera was elected Membership Director in 1995 and the database fell under her care. She also coordinated telephone referrals, handling calls from clients seeking translators and interpreters, all told, a very heavy responsibility. During Ria’s tenure the data were migrated once again, this time to Microsoft Access. Difficulties continued in finding members who knew how to manage the data, and there was talk of hiring a consultant, but in December 1995, although the database wasn’t functional, Ria

published a word-processed membership list with contact and language-pair information only. Ria turned the database over to Sandy Voertman in March 1996, and she was aided by Alexis Takvorian and Howard Simms. Ria continued to coordinate telephone referrals for about two more years.

Sandy was elected Membership Director for 1997 and, although the work was fraught with difficulties (her procedural manual was entitled *The Database Monster*), she managed to produce directories in both years. When she moved to Illinois in 1997 it was necessary to find someone else to take over her duties.

Jane Chamberlain, a Mac-user, had experience in FileMaker Pro and offered to migrate the data into this software, which she claimed would be more flexible. Everyone agreed things couldn’t get much worse, so her offer was accepted in summer 1997. It was decided that the Database Coordinator would be an appointed rather than an elected position, under the supervisor of the Membership Director.

Migrating the data from Access wasn’t easy. “A database field can be likened to a child’s piggy bank,” Jane explains. “You pour the data in through the slot, then take it out

Database 101

OUR DATABASE IS “RELATIONAL,” which means it’s a combination of linked data sets. Relations between the Main, Translator, and Interpreter records are established through a field (data slot) with the same name and contents in all three segments. The Main segment contains the data you see in the “Profile” section of our directory; the Translator and Interpreter segments produce our indexes. Anyone who’s been confronted with the AATIA questionnaire knows that this database contains not merely contact information but intricate categories of information that allow translator to parade their wares in a most advantageous way. ★

through the bottom when you're ready to spend it. Only this bank was like the ones that don't have a bottom aperture; you had to get the data out through the slot with a knife, and it didn't always let you take out what you put in." This resulted in truncation of many fields. After getting the downloads as complete as she could, she typed in missing data from old directories.

Once migrated, the database worked efficiently in FileMaker. Although there was the occasional label-printing problem or software crash, overall the software functioned smoothly during Jane's three-year tenure, allowing her to publish directories in 1998, 1999, and 2000, develop additional features to facilitate internal operations, and improve the relationality of the three segments.

Also serving as telephone referral coordinator after Ria retired, Jane developed a system for faxing clients a complete list of all members in a given category, which is often not feasible when giving information by voice. This system also enables us to get our organizational information out into the business world in more durable form and make a pitch for businesses to purchase our directory.

In spring 1999, Jane began searching for someone to train as her successor. Joan Tuttle Vargas began helping with data management; fortunately, moving data from one computer to another was no longer difficult. Joan shared the burden of directory production in the spring, and in early summer 2000 she installed the FileMaker software, which is biplatform, on her PC and took charge. Joan has managed the database for a little over a year and claims that the 70-page manual Jane prepared has been effective in passing on the necessary knowledge. Joan recently passed this responsibility to Crysol Villarreal for the coming year. We'll be looking for a manager again in fall 2002, and urge anyone with interest and expertise in this area to volunteer for this interesting and essential function.

Looking back, Marian points out that few who have worked on the databases would contest: "Any system that requires so much energy on the part of one person must be flawed." Alexis Takvorian echoes her sentiment: "Unless someone takes full responsibility for it, any system will fail."

The database is experiencing growing pains once again; the focus of new efforts is to correct the responsibility flaw by designing a system which enables members to update their own records on the Internet, which would cut down on the hours spent entering and updating member data. An outside volunteer, Andrew Coulson of Vignette Systems, is studying our data to see whether the current version of Microsoft Access, which is accommodated on more Web servers than FileMaker, could be made to serve our needs as effectively as FileMaker has done over the past four years. ★

July member meeting highlights

Schedule C secrets revealed

SEPTEMBER MEETING ATTENDEES picked up some useful tax tips from Lisa Bargsley, a certified public accountant specializing in tax accounting and financial planning for small businesses.

Bargsley walked participants through steps involved in filling out Schedule C and explained the ins and outs of various deductions available to self-employed individuals, including the home office deduction and automobile and telephone expenses. She stressed the importance of staying abreast of changes in tax laws and keeping up-to-date financial records in order to make accurate quarterly income tax payments and avoid penalties.

For those who missed the meeting, Director of Professional Development Ezequiel Quijano has a limited number of copies of Bargsley's handout. Bargsley can be reached at lbcpa@io.com or 250-0027. ★

August board meeting highlights

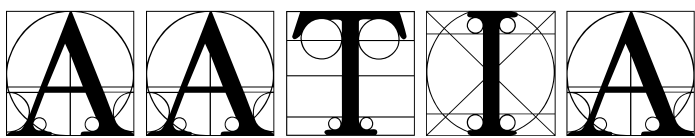
Board supports certificate proposal

THE BOARD ENDORSED A PROPOSAL presented by Esther Diaz at its August meeting for co-sponsoring a certificate program in translation and interpretation at the University of Texas Professional Development Center.

A similar course, also coordinated by Diaz, has been offered in the past at Austin Community College. Diaz is proposing to relocate the course to the UT Professional Development Center in an effort to improve administrative support and increase instructor pay. She will take responsibility for organizing the course and recruiting instructors, a number of whom are expected to come from the ranks the AATIA membership. The Association's financial role will be limited to reimbursing, on a case-by-case basis, instructors' expenses for copying and course materials not covered by the University. If the proposal is accepted, the courses will get under way in Fall 2002.

Director of Membership Traci Andrighetti reported that Phase I of the website upgrade project has been completed. However, the Association's new internet service provider will be Hostway.com, not Jump.net, as reported in the September issue of THE LETTER. It was decided not to contract with Jump.net for financial reasons. Completion of Phase II of the project (member self-management and updating of directory profiles) has been pushed back somewhat owing to delays in converting the member database from its current format to Microsoft Access. The new projected completion date is March 2002.

The Board learned with regret that Eric Brooks will resign as AATIA Webmaster as of December 31, 2001. Esther Diaz (newly elected as Director of Communications for 2002) will initiate a search for an member with some expertise in information technology and/or programming to take over the webmaster duties. ★



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<http://www.aatia.org>



AATIA welcomes visitors to the Austin History Center (AHC) at 9th & Guadalupe on the 2nd Saturday of odd-numbered months for general meetings and even-numbered months for board meetings.

EVENTS IN AUSTIN

- Nov 10 10 a.m. SpanSIG meeting, See *Nñ* for location.
Info Harvie Jordan 444-8537
1-4 p.m. AATIA regular meeting, AHC
- Dec 1 1-3 p.m. LitSIG meeting.
- Dec 8 10-12 noon. MCISIG meeting, AHC
12 noon. MCISIG networking lunch
1-4 p.m. AATIA board meeting, AHC
- Jan 12 AATIA regular meeting and SIG meetings

Translators needed for handwritten historical documents

NORTH CAROLINA TRANSLATOR ANN SHERWIN wrote about the following translation opportunity:

“An auction house for whom I have done work over the past two years has asked for referrals to Spanish, French, and Hebrew translators who can do similar work: transcribe and translate handwritten letters from historical figures (the German ones are usually from the 18th and 19th centuries). *If you are experienced* [italics added] at transcribing old Spanish or Hebrew handwriting and would be interested in occasional assignments of this type, please e-mail me ASAP at translator@asherwin.com. ★

Homer Simpson, wordsmith

GRAMMARIANS EVERYWHERE LET OUT A COLLECTIVE “DOH!” at the news that Homer Simpson’s immortal exclamation has become a legitimate part of the English language.

The Oxford English Dictionary’s online edition defines “doh” as “expressing frustration at the realization that things have turned out badly or not as planned or that one has just said or done something foolish. Also implying that another person has said or done something foolish.”

It is one of 1250 new or revised entries posted on the OED website that will be added to the next edition of the print dictionary. ★

FOR SALE NEVER USED

MS Windows 98
MS Office 2000 Standard

- Word
- Excel
- Outlook
- PowerPoint

&

Microsoft Office 2000
manual published by Que

\$350.00

Contact Harvie Jordan
<hjc@texas.net>