

www.aatia.org

# The Letter

of the Austin Area Translators  
and Interpreters Association

July 2002

## Bylaws amendment on ballot

### Nominations due for 2003 board

PREPARATIONS ARE UNDERWAY for the September election of the 2003 AATIA Board of Directors. Elected candidates will take office in January.

Marian Schwartz will chair the Nominating Committee. Anyone wishing to run for office or nominate a candidate should contact Schwartz at [schwartzm@sbcglobal.net](mailto:schwartzm@sbcglobal.net) or (512) 442-5100 or AATIA Secretary Laura Vlasman at [lvlasman@earthlink.net](mailto:lvlasman@earthlink.net) or (512) 891-9207.

Potential candidates must be active AATIA members in good standing. The deadline for submitting nominations is August 3, 2002.

In addition to electing officers, members will be asked to vote on a proposed amendment to the Association's bylaws. In recent years AATIA Boards of Directors have used e-mail to conduct "virtual discussion" of issues that required attention between Board meetings. However, the bylaws were last amended in the early 1990s, long before e-mail became widespread, and they contain no provision regard-

ing such exchanges, the resulting decisions, and recording of those decisions.

Since electronic communications are now a reality, the current Board of Directors feels it is necessary to modify the bylaws to allow future Boards to conduct discussions and make decisions by e-mail or other means of distance communication that may eventually become available.

#### Other board meeting highlights

The Board adopted a policy on dues payment by members who join AATIA late in the year. Under the new policy, any new member who joins after October 1 will be exempted from dues payment for the following calendar year. It has been the practice of some recent Boards to reduce or waive dues for those joining in the last three months of the year, but the policy was never formalized. The new policy will not necessarily apply to membership in AATIA special interest groups.

In addition, the Board scheduled ATA accreditation exam sittings (morning and afternoon) for December 7 and decided to hold AATIA's fall social gathering on September 28 to coincide with International Translators Day (September 30). Details and venue will be announced later. ★

## July 13 meeting

### Wear your colors

AATIA'S T-SHIRT DAY will enable members to show their colors at the next general meeting. A plentiful supply of shirts will be available for purchase for those who don't yet have one.

Marian Schwartz will speak on "The Translator and the Target Language: English Style and Usage." Her translation of *The Billancourt Tales*, by Nina Berberova, was published by New Directions last fall. Her current projects include new translations of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Olesha's *Envy*. She is the current president of the American Literary Translators Association. ★

## Website marketing scheme targets

### AATIA members

AT LEAST ONE AATIA MEMBER recently received a phone solicitation from a company offering a special website design "deal" as a demonstration in advance of an October AATIA meeting presentation.

The agent said that "someone at AATIA" made the referral and that he wanted to sign up 10 members before the presentation in October.

President Harvie Jordan said that no such presentation had been scheduled, saying, "This sounds like the same marketing a company was doing a few months ago claiming endorsement by ATA. After ATA headquarters learned of this, the company was told to stop using any reference to ATA."

Jordan stated unconditionally that "AATIA has not endorsed the product," and asked any other members who may be called to get the name of the person calling, name of the company, phone, and address and send them to [president@aatia.org](mailto:president@aatia.org). ★

### Proposed amendment to bylaws (in italics)

Article IV: Board of Directors

Section D. Meetings and Quorum

1. The Board of Directors meets at least quarterly. Four members of the Board of Directors constitute a quorum. When consensus cannot be reached, a majority vote of those present is binding. No proxy voting is allowed.
2. *Should a matter arise between regularly scheduled meetings that requires a decision by the Board of Directors, the president may call a special meeting of the Board of Directors to deal with the matter, or the officers may discuss the matter and come to a consensus via e-mail or other means of distance communication. Any decision made by e-mail or other means of distance communication will require ratification by the Board of Directors at its next meeting and, if ratified, will be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.*

# Austin Area Translators & Interpreters Association

<http://www.aatia.org>

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## Membership statistics

At the June board meeting, Director of Membership Traci Andrighetti reported the following statistics (as of May 25):

Active members	134
with business listing	14
Associate members	4
Business members	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>
SpanSIG members	67
MCISIG members	16

## In case you hadn't noticed

THE AATIA WEBSITE UNDERWENT A FACELIFT and reorganization last month, the first major change since the site debuted in April 1997.

Interim Webmaster Mike Conner provided the design, which features improved navigation and a new color scheme. Conner described the new design as "evolutionary, not departing very far from its traditional look." The site was originally designed by Roberto Quiroga. ★



## Welcome new members

AATIA extends a hearty welcome to the following new and renewing members:

### **Lisa E. Bland**

5001 Bull Creek Rd. #123  
Austin TX 78731  
lisab310@yahoo.com  
512-458-3356

Primary language: English  
Linguistics, education, business, documents, general medical, training materials, transcripts, audio/video scripts, miscellaneous  
French>English  
Italian>English  
German>English

### **Tania Fisberg Cannon**

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281-870-9312

Primary language: Portuguese (Brazilian)  
Interpreter, Translator  
Portuguese>English  
English>Portuguese  
Spanish>Portuguese  
Spanish>English  
Hebrew>Portuguese  
Hebrew>English  
Marketing and sales, public relations, electrical engineering, energy and fuels, oil and gas, hospital and laboratory services, nursing and personal care, psychiatry, public health, occupational health and safety

### **Patricia Caron**

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Primary language: English  
Translator  
Arts and humanities, general medical, sciences, social sciences, correspondence, documents, transcripts, instruction manuals, training materials, audio/video scripts  
Spanish>English  
English>Spanish

### **Jonathan Cole**

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512-933-9340

Primary language: English  
Translator  
Fine arts, history, literature, marketing and sales, recreation and travel, education, politics and international affairs, correspondence, audio/video scripts  
Spanish>English

### **Marguerite Delacroix-Storm**

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www.translationfrench.com  
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Primary language: French  
Translator  
Fine arts, history, literature, correspondence  
French>English  
English>French

### **Randy Gordon**

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Primary language: English

### **Olga M. Mencke**

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Primary language: Spanish  
Translator, Interpreter  
Spanish<>English  
Spanish<>English

### **Steven T. Mines**

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Interpreter, Translator  
Spanish<>English\*  
French<>English\*  
Portuguese<>English\*  
French<>Spanish  
Portuguese>Spanish  
Portuguese>French  
Business and consumer law, civil and

criminal law, economics, environmental sciences, human resources, intellectual property law, international affairs, international law administration, public administration, transcripts  
English<>Spanish\*  
Portuguese>English  
French>English  
French>Spanish  
Portuguese>Spanish

### **Mr. Philip M. Morris**

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Translator  
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German>English  
Dutch>English  
Swedish>English  
French>English

### **Sirikarn Peters**

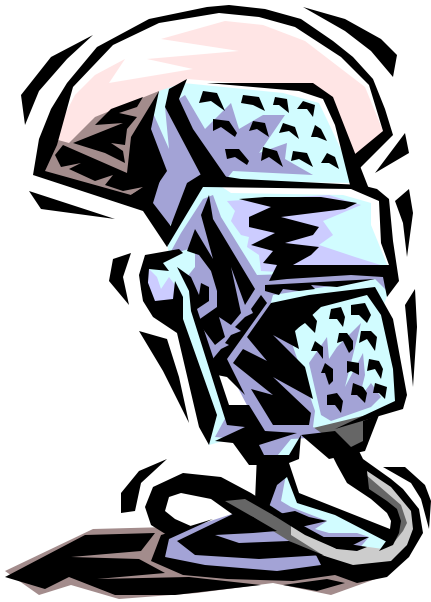
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Primary language: Thai  
Interpreter, Translator  
Thai>English  
English>Thai  
Geography, communications, management, public relations, recreation and travel, agriculture, food technology, public health, human resources, education  
Thai>English  
English>Thai

### **Theodore Quester**

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English  
Translator  
Arts and humanities, literature, public relations, communications, marketing and sales  
French>English  
Spanish>English  
Italian>English



# ON THE EDGE

by Tony Beckwith © 2002

**I**F YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE EDGE and looked down into the abyss, you simply have no idea. My roommate, Larry, for example, had no idea. He once told me, in all seriousness, that he was down to his last thousand dollars and felt nervous to be so near the edge. *His last thousand dollars?* Good grief, that's not even close!

I, on the other hand, had been living right on the edge for quite some time. It had all happened so easily, somehow. Oh, I knew all about living within one's means, of course. My parents had advised me on that before I left home. Like that rather mysterious rule about leaving a little on your plate as a sign of politeness to your hostess, apparently you were supposed to leave some of your salary in the bank every month and not spend it. It sounded simple enough but nobody had ever explained exactly how (or why) to do it.

Anyhow, for quite some time, each month had found me a little short of funds. So I talked to the lady in accounts and she made me sign a voucher and advanced me a few pesetas against my next month's salary. It made all the difference to what she called my "cash flow" and, since it was my money to begin with it never occurred to me that I'd have to pay it back. So the next month I took another advance, and then another, and another, until finally I was drawing a whole month's salary in

advance. It would appear that I was actually living far beyond my means. Well, one day the lady in accounts told me I'd have to pay back everything I owed before she could give me any more money. Which meant that I'd have to get through a whole month with no salary at all. That's what I mean about living on the edge!

The following Saturday morning I was in my kitchen, standing around with my other roommate, Juanín—a prince among roommates, by the way, who had already lent me a fair bit of money of his own. We were with some friends who hadn't managed to go home after the party the previous night. Some had actually been there for several days. We were drinking coffee and eating the soggy oranges and lemons we'd fished out of the dregs of the sangría (following yet another excellent bit of parental advice: citrus is *so* good for you). And then, just like in the best of stories, the phone rang.

A lot of movies were being made in Madrid in the mid-sixties, many of them low-budget productions shot with unknown actors of all nationalities, then dubbed into various languages. The phone call was from a friend who worked in that business—he was looking for voice talent to dub a series of movies into English. The project was to begin immediately, he needed about seven voices, and the pay was, by my standards, astronomical. I returned to the kitchen and broke the news to the assembled talent that, if they were interested, they could all be in the movies. We unanimously agreed to toss out the old sangría and make a new batch immediately, as it was obviously time to celebrate a truly historic reversal of fortune.

We worked at night and on weekends in a studio in the old part of town. It was an ancient, musty old place and I loved it. The movies were all sliced up

into short takes, each one with just a few sentences of dialogue. We were all assigned a part, and had to study the mouth movements of the actor or actress we were dubbing so as to try to say the English words in such a way that it looked as though they were being spoken by the person on the screen.

We stood in the darkened studio, the script and the microphone in front of us. On the director's signal the projectionist ran the clip. As the scene flickered on the screen we watched and listened to the soundtrack. The actors might be from Turkey, or Latvia, or anywhere. Some spoke their lines in their own languages, which were usually unintelligible to us, but some tried to speak in English and that was even worse.

Then the soundtrack was turned off, the mike was turned on, and the clip ran in silence. As each character's mouth moved we spoke our lines, trying to make the words fit and give them the right tone and inflection. The scene was then shown again, but now it was in English and we could all judge how successful our efforts had been. It wasn't easy, and we sometimes recorded a seemingly endless number of takes before the director was satisfied.

Some weeks later the job was finished. I paid my debts and still had a little left over. We naturally threw a party to celebrate, and in addition to the usual circle we also invited everyone at the recording studio. Remembering some advice my father had given me about keeping doors open after you walk through them, I also invited the lady in accounts, whose name was Graciela. Good friends are important if you're inclined to live your life on the edge. ★





### Member profile

## Michel Meunier

By Johnathan Cole

A NATIVE OF FRANCE now living in Houston where he runs his translation business, France-West Translations, Michel Meunier gave advice to freelance translators at the May AATIA meeting.

Meunier came to the U.S. in 1967 and moved to Dallas in 1982, where he began translating. In 1992 he founded MITA (Metroplex Interpreter and Translator Association).

He joined AATIA in 1989 and was accredited by ATA (French>English, English>French) in 1990. His specialty is technical manuals dealing with machinery. He occasionally interprets within a technical environment, e.g., at a plant where a group of French workers are learning to operate a machine.

His main recommendations for beginning translators were as follows:

- Return all phone calls. This gives you a good reputation.
- If you can't accept a job, recommend someone else you trust. Agencies appreciate it, and the person you recommend will likely return the favor in the future.
- Always deliver good quality work on time.
- Send an invoice with the translation. Agencies Meunier has worked for

told him that sometimes translators take six months to send an invoice. If you send work electronically, attach the invoice as a separate file. His own invoices include the following essential information: date, invoice number, title of translation, number of words, shipping costs, and when payment is due (upon receipt, 30-60 days, etc.).

- Make bookkeeping a priority. Photocopy every check you receive; the agency that paid you may have disorganized records and ask for information about payments you received.
- Get accredited as soon as you can. It is a great marketing tool and legitimizes your business. Accreditation is very effective for attracting clients who search the ATA online database.
- If you want to earn a living at translation you must ultimately treat it as a business endeavor. Meunier said that he is not in the business of translating, but rather in the business of making money, and the service he supplies is the translation.

Meunier also gave some tips regarding the use of technology for translating. He keeps computer glossaries for each agency or client that he works for. He uses two separate monitors linked to the same computer. He can shift the display between the two monitors so that one shows his work in progress and another shows his glossaries or other reference information. Although it may seem like a luxury, he said it is actually very efficient.

He cautions new translators to always take the good with the bad and accept that there will be times when the work is slow in coming. As far as getting paid, he hasn't had too many problems but he's occasionally been stiffed, for example when an agency goes bankrupt. When companies have financial problems, he said, the translator is always the last to get paid.

Finally, he said that an important part of working as a translator is to network, network, network until you die—and then keep on networking, because you never know what may happen afterwards! ★

## May meeting highlights

THE MAY MEMBERSHIP MEETING featured a profile of AATIA member Michel Meunier [see profile, left] and a lively discussion of President Harvie Jordan's recording of a National Public Radio report on the U.S. military's use of machine translation, which served as a lead-in to the Forum topic: "When should things get lost in translation?"

Attendees pointed out that it is sometimes necessary to add or leave out things, simply because languages have different structures and parts of speech (e.g., Russian has no definite or indefinite articles). Sensitivity to stylistic considerations and cultural connotations will also sometimes lead the translator to make slight modifications when rendering ideas in the target language.

The speaker for the meeting, Kristina Kargl, is employed as a communication and translation specialist for the North American Development Bank in San Antonio. Her presentation centered around proofreading techniques for translators. Kargl identified three essential elements of proofreading: basic grammar and style review (typos, gender/number agreements, formatting errors), content review (meaning errors, omissions, overall tone and style) and readability review (smooth flow and understandability in the target language, unnecessary redundancies).

Her five basic rules of proofreading:

- Know your weaknesses!
- If in doubt, consult a dictionary, grammar book or another knowledgeable person.
- If you translate into your second language, always have a native speaker review your work.
- Be open to suggestions for improving your translation.
- Proofreaders (and editors) are not infallible.

Those who missed the meeting may contact Kargl at [kkargl@nadb.org](mailto:kkargl@nadb.org) to request her handout, which contained many more useful proofreading tips.

—Laura Vlasman, Secretary ★

## Stupid Interpreter Tricks

# Temperature Conversion

J Henry Phillips © 2002  
*interpreter@PortugueseInterpreter.com*  
*www.PortugueseInterpreter.com*

INTERPRETING WOULD BE DULL indeed if all it involved were changing one language into another. Thanks to the metric system, however, interpreters can rise to the invigorating challenge of unit conversion.

Units of mass, length, time, or their derivatives—weight, area, volume, velocity, and acceleration—convert when multiplied by one. It's true that sometimes you have to write "one" in slightly unusual form, and multiply by "one" more than once to get the result, but any child can multiply by one.

Multiplication by one is easier said than done, however, when you are trying to keep up with the rest of the conversation as a simultaneous interpreter. As the speaker describes in detail the advantages of his company's 11,000-m<sup>2</sup> plant, the interpreter can take pencil to paper, recall that there are 2.54 centimeters to an inch and 144 square inches to a square foot, and set up the multiplication by one:

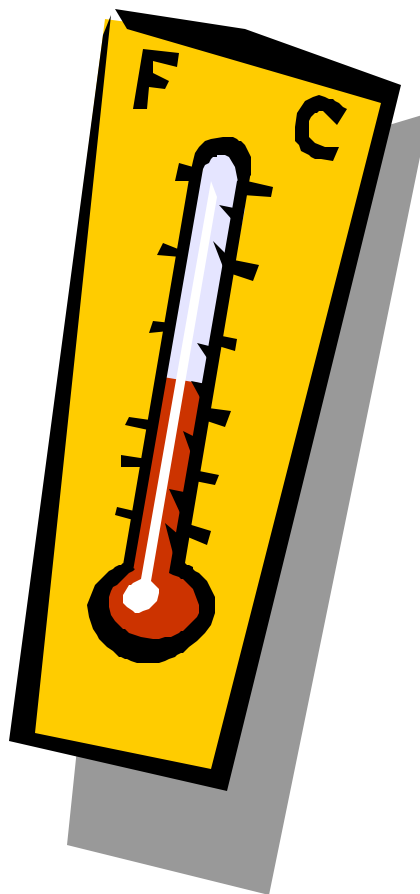
$$(1 \text{ in}^2/6.45 \text{ cm}^2) \times (\text{ft}^2/144 \text{ in}^2) = \text{ft}^2/(6.45 \times 144 \text{ cm}^2), \text{ or } \text{ft}^2/929 \text{ cm}^2,$$

which is clearly one, since the square inches cancel out, and one times one is one. The interpreter cheated a little by squaring 2.54 before putting it in the first denominator, but this is understandable, because the speaker has by now embarked upon a detailed enumeration of the various fixtures and fittings that make his plant so wonderful, and the interpreter doesn't want to waste any time on conversion.

Because every linguist knows that "centi-" has something to do with a hundred, and that a hundred times a hundred has something to do with four zeros, the interpreter multiplies this first "one" by a second "one" just as simple, to get:

$$(\text{ft}^2/929 \text{ cm}^2) \times (10,000 \text{ cm}^2/\text{m}^2) = 10,000 \text{ ft}^2/929 \text{ m}^2 = 1$$

At this point we can look at it as an equation or as a fraction, and junior high algebra tells us that it is okay to multiply or divide both sides of the equation (or by arithmetic, top and bottom of the fraction) by the same thing, and since the speaker has already asked for the next slide in his presentation, we'll go ahead and divide numerator and denominator by just plain 929 and conclude that there are



11 square feet in a square meter. Well, almost. By now the speaker is going over the financial details of the next slide with his laser pointer, and members of the audience will generously overlook the extra 34 in<sup>2</sup> per m<sup>2</sup> as insignificant.

Satisfied that the interpreter has at least gotten them into the ballpark, they refocus their rapt attention the bouncing ball of the laserpointer as the wondrous financial details are unfolded before them. Pretty stupid trick, huh?

Of course it is much easier on the interpreter to have decided beforehand to—as soon as the speaker starts talking about square meters—add a zero to the integer and slap on an extra 10 percent tip.

For the benefit of metric-speakers in the audience, the interpreter conversely plans to move the decimal point one place to the left and then shave off an extra tenth whenever English-speakers brag about their 121,000-ft<sup>2</sup> facilities and nonchalantly describe to the audience yet another 11,000-m<sup>2</sup> factory. Child's play.

Unfortunately, no such cheap trickery will work when the speaker inside a meat chiller at a packing plant explains to the metric-speaking tour group that the ambient temperature is 30 degrees Fahrenheit. No amount of multiplication by one through chattering teeth is going to explain to the metric-speakers just how cold it is in there. For that you have to add and subtract.

Forget the complicated formula they tried to teach you in school—it is not a do-it-in-your-head formula at all and will only distract you from the speaker's message. The important thing to remember is that in English culture the distance between ice and boiling water is divided into 180 tick marks (212°F – 32°F), whereas metric-speaking cultures use only 100 tick marks to divide up the same difference. To find the ratio of one subdivision to the other we simply divide 180°F by 100°C, simplify the fraction and voilà: 9°F = 5°C, so °F/°C = 9/5 and °C/°F = 5/9. "I knew that," I hear you say, "but how does that help me finish interpreting the explanation so that I can get out of the meat chiller?" It was at this stage that Al Bork said, "When he goes up or down by nines, you go up or down by fives." Suddenly everything clicked into place.

What Albert really meant was this: "you know the freezing point of water in both systems, and the ratio between them stands as 9 to 5, so when he is nine tick marks away from that point your equivalent will be only five tick marks away. In the case in point the

difference was only about half of 5, since 30°F is only a couple of fine degrees below freezing or—as near as anybody could feel—a single coarse degree below 0°C. Minus one was the magic number that finally got us out of the chiller, only to have a much more practical example when we got to the freezer.

Physics students and interpreters are concerned with the freezing point of water, but packing plant personnel only care about the freezing point of meat—and to them anything above -10°F is too hot. The temperature inside the freezer was a crisp -20°F or (you guessed it!) about -29°C. Standing in that temperature gives the interpreter excellent incentive to memorize a few other equivalences from which to quickly extrapolate using that 9-to-5 ratio. Forty below zero is the same in both systems, so when you are shivering at -20°F, that's 20°F warmer than where the two curves meet (a little over two nines) so the corresponding Celsius temperature would be a little over two fives warmer, or just a tad warmer than -30 °C.

In the more comfortable ranges, once you have memorized 16°C as 61°F and 40°C as 102°F, you can work off those numbers both ways to convert temperatures without losing the rest of what the speaker is saying.

When standing next to liquid nitrogen or molten steel, it is a comfort to realize that the more extreme the temperature the less you have to worry about the 32°F scale difference in the freezing point of water between the two systems. For the temperature of a star's surface in degrees Celsius, for instance, you can safely double the number, then knock off about 10% of the result, but astronomy audiences tend to prefer their temperatures in degrees Celsius anyway. It is still a comfort to know that in this range, the arithmetic is not all that different from conversions between square feet and square meters. ★

## Of Bottom-Feeders and Bleeding Edges

by Frank Dietz © 2002

EVERY FEW YEARS, your trusty old computer has to be replaced by a trusty new one. This is the right time to look at the state of technology, assess price-to-performance ratios and decide what you as a translator really need.

If you are not using a resource-hungry translation memory program such as Trados Freelance Edition or frequently work in desktop publishing programs such as FrameMaker, your computing needs are on the low end, and you can save money by buying a refurbished computer that represents last year's state of the art. Just make sure you receive a decent warranty, and spend the money you saved on a nice monitor and a really good office chair.

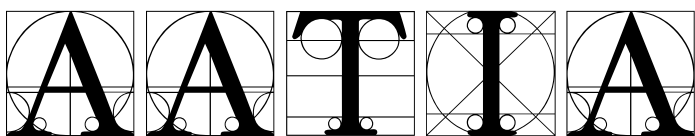
The average user should probably look at a computer equipped with one of the slower Pentium 4 or Athlon XP chips, Windows XP Home Edition (unless you have steady clients demanding use of a Mac, I would not recommend an Apple, as so many translation-relevant programs, such as CD-ROM dictionaries, are not available for it), 256 MB of RAM, a 40-GB hard drive and a CD-RW drive (nice

for backups and exchange of large files). Get at least a 17-inch monitor and spend some time checking how it displays the type and size of text you will be staring at for hours every single day.

On the bleeding edge you can spend some serious money on the latest tech gizmos, but few features are really relevant for a translator's work. DVD drives let you access reference works on DVD, but there are relatively few software titles that use that medium so far (so everyone is using DVD drives to watch movies). If you need to test graphics-intensive software (in my case, computer games), a good video card is a must. Flat panel LCD monitors are great space-savers on your desk, but are still rather expensive. DVD-R drives that let you record DVDs are still too pricey.

If your "old" computer is still relatively new, you might consider networking it with the new one, particularly if that will allow you to share a broadband connection. There are situations when two systems can be useful, for instance while testing a translated program and writing up a bug report. Just don't allow your house to turn into a computer museum. Dusty IBM ATs and malfunctioning TSR-80s really serve no useful function anymore. ★





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*AATIA WELCOMES VISITORS to the Austin History Center at 9th & Guadalupe on the 2nd Saturday of odd-numbered months for general meetings and even-numbered months for board meetings.*

#### EVENTS IN AUSTIN

- Jul 13 10 a.m. SpanSIG meeting  
1–4 p.m. AATIA member meeting
- Aug 10 10–12 noon. MCISIG meeting  
12 noon. MCISIG networking lunch  
1–4 p.m. AATIA board meeting
- Sep 14 SpanSIG meeting and AATIA member meeting
- Sep 28 International Translators Day party
- Dec 7 ATA accreditation exam sittings

## Sit for ATA exam in December

MORNING AND AFTERNOON SITTINGS of the American Translators Association accreditation examination will be offered on December 7, 2002, according to AATIA Director for Professional Development Ezequiel Quijano.

Candidates must register for the exam with ATA headquarters. See the ATA website [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org) for info about the exam and registration details. ★

## Thanks to volunteers

THE AATIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS expressed heartfelt thanks to Jane Chamberlain for her years of work handling the job referrals fielded through AATIA's voicemail system.

Steve Zaveloff has volunteered to assume the coordinator position for this task, with the able assistance of Merry Wheaton, who will handle Spanish-language enquiries. ★



“Um...the speaker just told a joke that can't be translated... please, everyone laugh, or I'll be in big trouble!”