

for distribution at conferences. Some authors do not even notice that their article has been published electronically.

As always, some questions remained unanswered (or were answered only in part):

- If an author has been proven to be fraudulent, how long do you exclude him or her from submitting papers?
- What are good methods to review the reviewers?
- If authors suggest reviewers (or suggest excluding certain reviewers), is it wise to follow their suggestion? At least one case was known where the suggested

reviewer wrote only favourable reviews on the papers in question.

We cannot expect a three-hour workshop to provide answers to questions that have not been solved in the many large conferences that have been held during the past decades. In any case, there are plenty of topics left for a future workshop.

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METM09: Translation, editing, writing: broadening the scope and setting limits

Mediterranean Editors and Translators Meeting 2009, Barcelona, 29-30 October 2009

This report is a story about blurring distinctions between language support services. Translating and editing, editing and technical writing, teaching English for specific purposes and training academics in public speaking: members of Mediterranean Editors and Translators (MET) are typically engaged in hybrid activities. Something else they have in common is that they offer English language support to non-native speakers, mostly in the Mediterranean area. MET was set up five years ago to meet the professional development and networking needs of these multifunctional language professionals. With its annual meetings and workshop programme, the association is providing a lively forum for peer-to-peer training among English language consultants of the hybrid type.

The theme of this year's meeting in Barcelona – translation, editing, writing: broadening the scope and setting limits – was a clear reference to these mixed activities, and the opening panel discussion, “Defining roles in writing support services: a look at the full spectrum” was highly pertinent to the theme. The panel, composed of a teacher of academic writing, a translator, an author's editor, a medical writer, and a biomedical scientist who has moved to science communication, presented a wide range of services, from teaching authors how to write academic

articles, to translating for academics and giving them their own “voice” in English, to doing a major overhaul of a poorly drafted paper, up to writing on the author's behalf. The panel explored the scope and limits of each type of service, and considered some of the challenges that may arise when hybrid services are offered.

Pricing

When providing such services, language professionals have a market to follow. Whereas translation rates are usually fixed – although they vary between one geographic area and the other – pricing editing jobs is more problematic because the quality of texts may differ enormously and clients may have diverse expectations. This issue was addressed by a panel on the dynamics of pricing editing jobs. Should pricing be by the word or by the hour? And in either case, how much should one charge? While the number of words is an objective measure, a word rate for a poor-quality text could be very unprofitable. The panelists explained what works best for them and why, suggesting websites that give price indications and sharing their own rates with the audience.

“Non-native” editing

What the editing of texts by non-native speakers of a language entails was entertainingly explained by Joy Burrough, an author's editor based in the Netherlands. In a lecture with props (among which a tiny Union Jack, a lab coat, clogs, an academic cap) she illustrated the diverse roles of an editor. First of all there's the native reader of English, who looks for an appropriate story line and knows what native-speaker readers expect. Then there's the subject-expert reader, who's familiar with the appropriate jargon, knows what the target reader expects, and can suggest more substantive improvements than just language correction. The copy editor checks the text with great attention to detail and improves its readability. The translator, who translates the text from broken English to proper English, recognizes and corrects transfers from the author's native language and globalizes where necessary. The acculturated reader empathizes with the author and is familiar with the



Subgroups discussing sensitive language: how correct is correct enough?

author's writing culture. And finally the teacher educates the author by giving feedback. All of these roles turn the language professional into a "composite editor". Burrough also pointed out how important it is to have the author's trust and be their friend.

Journal editing

Another session focused on aspects of the editing and production of science journals. It started off with a talk about quality assurance in translation as practised at a bilingual medical journal, *Deutsches Aertzeblatt International*. This was followed by two presentations on plagiarism, particularly the microplagiarism or "copy-paste writing" often encountered in English-language journals from countries where English is not the first language. As the speaker of the first of these talks, Dado Ćakalo (secretary and copy editor of *Archives of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology*) put it, "Authors who are not native speakers tend to resort to non-selective copy-pasting to overcome insecurity in producing texts in English."

I followed this up with a sequel to Mary Ellen Kerans' presentation at the EASE conference in Pisa, where we discussed what a copy editor can do when detecting more or less serious degrees of plagiarism in manuscripts already accepted for publication. While the emphasis in the EASE presentation was on educating authors and teaching them to interweave information from different sources without copy-pasting, here I underlined the importance of educating journal editors and publishers so as to ensure that papers with plagiarism don't get accepted in the first place.

Also of interest

Other highlights for editors were a presentation on sensitive (non-biased, inclusive or "politically correct") language and a talk on ergonomics for pain-free computing. The programme also included literary and historical threads, especially in its two plenary talks. Literary translator Peter Bush spoke about re-translating the classics and his own recent translation of the *Celestina*, the great Spanish novel by Fernando de Rojas published in 1499, which had been translated into English many times before. The historian Thomas Glick discussed the importance of translation in the spread of scientific knowledge in the Middle Ages, explaining how ancient science came to western Europe through translation and how those early translations (from Greek into Arabic and subsequently from Arabic into Latin, Hebrew, and Romance vernacular) were produced. The historical thread was pursued further by a panel discussion on issues and approaches in translating historical texts.

The meeting proper was preceded by a workshop day offering a choice of eight workshops on punctuation in English, correct citation practices, corpus-guided translation and editing, strategies to increase readability, and study designs in medical research, to name a few. You may want to take a look at the full programme plus abstracts on the website, www.metmeetings.org. Next year's meeting, METM10, will be held in Tarragona, Spain, on 28-30 October. Any chance of seeing you there?

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Do you recognise these editors?

Now that the newsletters from past conferences have been scanned and uploaded onto the EASE website, we can bring you a "blast from the past" every now and then – a challenge of recognition. On-site print production being what it was in the 1980s and '90s, photographs derived from these newsletters are not going to be up to the standards of today's high-res digital output. You'll be able to see them better on the website – look under "Meetings and Courses – EASE Conferences".



Holmenkollen, Norway, 1985

(left) Stephen Lock and Ole Harlem

(right) Nancy Morris and Nadia Sloe

