The 2014 MET Meeting, held in Spain, allowed translators and editors to learn, network and boost well-being over four fulfilling days, writes Francesca Matteoda

Healthy linguists
After a rather intense Friday morning, most people had signed up for off-METM lunch groups: for the uninstructed, these are informal lunch or dinner groups for discussing specific topics. They are usually limited to a maximum of six people, so that all attendees can take part in the discussion, and subject areas vary greatly. Examples this time included mindfulness, using the Pomodoro Technique, and the pros and cons of bringing up children as bilingual. However, 23 people had decided to attend the yoga session for translators and interpreters led by yours truly. This was the first yoga session offered at a MET meeting and was a great success. In fact, I have already been unofficially booked for a yoga session at METM15, to be held in Coimbra, Portugal, in the autumn. As one of the participants pointed out at the end of the general meeting held on the Saturday, the conference programme is very intense and we spend hours on end sitting on uncomfortable chairs, getting only a few breaks during the day. The possibility of attending a yoga class in the middle of the day, in which you stretch out your muscles and learn to disconnect, relax and just breathe, is a very welcome one.

After lunch, Friday’s programme continued with parallel sessions. One was on mentoring, held by Jackie Senior and ITI’s Sarah Griffin-Mason, while the other was a panel on health for editors and translators, comprising a presentation by Kelly Dickeson on the use of a walking workstation (or treadmill desk). Before the talk, I had thought it would be impossible to walk and type at the same time, but now I know better because, although it was not feasible for Kelly to bring her desk to METM, she showed us a video of herself walking at 2km/hour and typing without falling off the treadmill. I was in charge of the second part of this panel and my talk was about the benefits of sitting on a Pilates ‘fit ball’ instead of a chair. This concluded with a demonstration of some exercises you can do on your ball when you are not working.

Learning and networking
Two more parallel sessions took place after a coffee break; these came under the headings of ‘Research’ and ‘Promising practices’. The day was rounded off by the first plenary talk by Dr Christiane Nord, a scholar specialised in translation pedology, who spoke on the topic of ‘Localising functionalism for a global audience’.

An informal reception was then held, which offered attendees an excellent opportunity for networking. After this, some joined off-METM dinner groups while others got table (thanks to Sarah Griffin-Mason), which was full, and plenty of other people expressed an interest in joining the Institute too.

In the afternoon there were more parallel sessions for a full list of the sessions, please see www.metmeetings.org/en/program-681), including a highly engaging talk by Celine Cavallio on a volunteer experience editing texts on alternative medicine in India, accompanied by breathtaking slides of the Himalayas.

The second plenary was given late on the Saturday afternoon by Martin Roberts, ex-Reuters foreign correspondent and translator. He presented a very engaging and entertaining talk entitled ‘Lessons learned from a career spent adapting the translated text to the target audience in the news business’, including amusing examples of ‘difficult’ translations. These included the name of the Spanish village Castillula Matajudíos, which in 2014 was held a referendum as the inhabitants wanted to change the name of the Spanish village Matajudíos… Matzujudíos literally means ‘kill Jews’. Enough said?

Naturally, the result of the referendum was positive and the town has changed its name to Castrillo Mata de Judíos to eliminate any anti-Semitic references.

Time to socialise
The conference officially ended with the closing supper, held at a local restaurant called Las Viandas, where we had the entire top floor to ourselves. The meal, also included in the conference fee, was absolutely delicious and washed down with superb Spanish wine.

Although there were no more conference activities, on the Sunday morning many of us went on a two-hour walk up to the chair of Philip II, translating it… Matajudíos literally means ‘kill Jews’. Enough said?

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Finally, although I learnt a lot at METM14, I must say that the best part for me was the social side. Working as a freelance translator, away from home (I’ve been in Madrid for almost 14 years now), can get lonely sometimes, and the opportunity of spending three days surrounded by English-speaking people who work in the same business as I do, and therefore don’t think ‘Oh no, here comes the weird language freak’ and who also often share my very British sense of humour (which is not at all appreciated in Sunny Spain), was absolutely delightful.