

An all-round success

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



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Mediterranean Editors & Translators (MET) held its tenth annual meeting (METM14) 'Innovation and Tradition: Mining the Human Resource' at San Lorenzo de El Escorial, about 50km north of Madrid, Spain, from Thursday 30 October to Sunday 2 November 2014.

I had the pleasure of helping to organise the 2014 meeting, and then of attending the conference and even participating in a health-specific panel (more on that later).

The meeting was held at the Euroforum conference centre (www.euroforum.es) and participants also had the possibility of booking a room at the venue. I was one of those who opted for this, and can highly recommend the conference centre for future professional events.

Packed programme

MET meetings (METMs) usually have the following format: two half-days of workshops plus one and a half days of presentations in parallel sessions. This one was no different. It kicked off after lunch on the Thursday with a choice of various three-hour workshops covering practical statistics, using IntelliWebSearch, corpus-guided decision-making, and grammar, while on the Friday there were more statistics, several IT-related workshops and a fascinating anatomy workshop on the nervous system, held by Dr Philip Bazire (who has also presented excellent workshops on the anatomy of the thorax and on the skin at past METMs). There were also some more grammar mini-sessions on active and passive voices, dangling participles, etc.

Healthy linguists

After a rather intense Friday morning, most people had signed up for off-METM lunch groups: for the uninitiated, 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 (rather 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 pedagogy, 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

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together informally and went out to try the local delicacies. The weekend was blessed by glorious weather, so most people were able to eat outdoors at 9pm!

Saturday's programme started at 9am with sessions on 'Promising practices' held in parallel with a knowledge update panel. These were followed by a very short General Assembly during which elections to the MET Council were held.

A delicious lunch was included in the registration fee, and was held at the Euroforum venue. We had an ITI



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 Cavallo 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 Castrillo Matajudíos, which in 2014 held a referendum as the inhabitants wanted to change the name of their municipality. Obviously, when reporting this, it is necessary to explain why someone would want to change the name, hence the need for

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translating it... *Matajudíos* literally means 'kill Jews'. Enough said? Naturally, the result of the referendum was positive and the town has changed its name to Castrillo Mota 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,

led by Tom O'Boyle. For those of you who are not familiar with the area of El Escorial, the place is dominated by an enormous monastery, which was built during the reign of Philip II. It is rumoured that he would walk up to this viewpoint to watch the building works on the monastery. There is no proper 'chair', but someone has carved a seat out of the rocks, which is where the sovereign supposedly sat while supervising construction. Regardless of whether or not he actually did this, the views are spectacular and well worth the gentle hike.

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!



Clockwise, from left: El Escorial is dominated by a 16th-century monastery; Francesca demonstrates the benefits of a Pilates 'fit ball' during her talk; one plenary presentation tackled how to translate the name of a Spanish village