

# THE NORTHWEST LINGUIST

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## WELCOME

The Northwest Linguist is a publication created and distributed by NOTIS, the Northwest Translators & Interpreters Society. As an organization, we strive to promote the recognition and advancement of the professions of translation and interpretation, provide information which will assist newcomers to the profession, and enhance the abilities of established practitioners. We hope this newsletter will help us pursue these goals.

This winter, after having shared our articles exclusively in an online blog for a few years, we are excited to reintroduce our print publication, The Northwest Linguist! With your help and contributions, we look forward to continuing this service.

Read on to learn about what NOTIS has accomplished this year and how you can get involved in the upcoming new year. We have also included a special-topic article by one of our candidates for the 2019 Board of Directors.

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Read about our 2-day event in honor of International Translation Day

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See a snapshot of our year and photos from some of our events

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Learn about dragomans and how they influenced the history of translation

# INTERNATIONAL TRANSLATION DAY 2018

by NOTIS Board Member Alicia McNeely

Two years ago, the United Nations declared September 30th International Translation Day, and in 2018, NOTIS celebrated that weekend with a two-day event!

On the first day, we hosted the NOTIS Language & Job Fair, where professionals and students were able to meet and network with several organizations who offer a range of opportunities, from local interpreting jobs, to contracts with an internationally based translation agency, to volunteer opportunities with the Northwest Justice Project to provide interpreting for refugee populations. The Northwest Literary Translators even set up a booth to promote their creative work and sell their published books.

In order to continue the fun, and for some of us, in order to avoid peak rush-hour traffic, we gathered for drinks and snacks afterwards. Happy Hour was filled with lots of laughs and some much-needed socialization, as we swapped work stories and travel adventures with our fellow language professionals. This time was especially valuable to those of us that work alone most of the time!

The autumnal air was crisp the next morning, as eighty translators and interpreters came together over coffee, pastries, and professional development! For translators, terminology was the initial topic of the day. Mr. Tim Gregory led a presentation that reminded us that efficiency and consistency are the main purpose of terminology organization. He also taught us about several free tools that are available to help in the often overwhelming and time-consuming effort of researching and recording terms. One of the most accessible resources that Mr. Gregory suggested was Microsoft OneNote. OneNote catalogues everything that is uploaded, including scanned documents with handwriting on them. With proper exploration and practice, this often-underutilized product in the Office Suite could be a translator's answer to merging and quickly searching through his or her assortment of vocabulary spreadsheets, bilingual documents, and even scanned source texts scribbled with annotations.

Next up, Mr. Roger Kohn and Ms. Jackie Leader from Tousley Brain Stephens law firm kindly donated their time to discuss legal issues freelancers often face, such as what types of businesses we can own and how to write and enter into contracts with our clients. Their main piece of advice, above even the most minute details, was to record everything at all times. If you have not documented in writing where your money is going, and which services you agree to provide, it is as if the agreement never existed!

Meanwhile, many interpreters chose to attend two sessions regarding medical interpreting and interpreting in high profile, high pressure situations with Ms. Hiroko Ishii, who has interpreted for prestigious clients such as Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Bill Clinton, Mother Teresa, and the Dalai Lama. Thanks to experiences such as these, Ms. Ishii learned and shared with us that in preparation for an intense interpreting assignment, it is vital to watch and listen to videos of people for whom you are going to interpret. If you do, you will have a sense of which words they like to use most often and the cadence of their speech, which will help you provide a better rendition when it is your turn to interpret what that individual has just conveyed. Also, during her workshops, Ms. Ishii challenged attendees to consider the side effects of extended and all-day interpreting assignments, as well as the importance of taking days off to decompress and study.

After a delicious lunch of bánh mì sandwiches, all attendees came together for an ethics presentation by former ATA president Caitilin Walsh. Mixed in with a few witty quips and a bit of humor only interpreters and translators would understand, Ms. Walsh analyzed various codes of ethics within our field and how these compare to an individual's moral code. She shared several scenarios in which colleagues had to juggle their personal moral beliefs with their professional code of ethics. She then called upon the audience to give our input regarding whether or not interpreters in various real-world examples had properly observed their code of ethics. Attendees were encouraged to think critically about how we

would respond in certain situations where our moral beliefs might conflict with our code of ethics. She concluded her engaging talk with a reminder that “we need to be mindful that [what one does as an individual] reflects upon us as a profession,” and that we are all in this together.

We concluded our day with a translation and interpreting agency discussion panel in which representatives from Academy of Languages, Universal Language Service, and King County Superior Court graciously participated. After sharing a bit about each of their organizations, the speakers shared ideas on how to achieve harmony between freelancers and project managers by being able to tactfully give and receive feedback, as well as general tips and tricks within our industry. Workshop

participants were able to submit questions and receive feedback on a range of topics from advice on getting started in the field, such as joining relevant organizations like NOTIS and getting certified, to ways of building a steadier income stream, like working in remote interpreting. Finally, all of our panelists encouraged freelancers to view contracting agencies as teammates in the industry and to leave lines of communication open at all times.

NOTIS strives to provide rewarding events, workshops and presentations for its member base. We look forward to offering another exciting International Translation Day event next year, and welcome any suggestions about subject matter you would like to see presented in 2019. Please feel free to e-mail us at [info@notisnet.org](mailto:info@notisnet.org).

## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Have a brilliant idea for a workshop? Know an amazing speaker who might be interested in presenting for NOTIS? Interested in helping to organize opportunities for professional development? Please contact:

- **Interpreting Workshops:** María Luisa Gracia Camón at [graciacamomml@gmail.com](mailto:graciacamomml@gmail.com).
- **Translation Workshops:** Elise Kruidenier at [twodoortranslation@gmail.com](mailto:twodoortranslation@gmail.com).
- **Northwest Literary Translators:** Shelley Fairweather-Vega at [translation@fairvega.com](mailto:translation@fairvega.com).
- **Online Webinars:** Lindsay Bensten at [lindsayb.translation@gmail.com](mailto:lindsayb.translation@gmail.com).

Have a knack for party planning? Enjoy setting up or tearing down festive get-togethers? To get involved with NOTIS social events, please contact Maria Farmer at [marsmiley@me.com](mailto:marsmiley@me.com).

For more volunteer opportunities and to learn about all of NOTIS's committees and divisions, visit our website at <https://www.notisnet.org/Committees/Divisions>.

## UPCOMING EVENTS : DECEMBER 2019

**December 15:** Making Tough Decisions: Ethical Decision-Making for Interpreters in Health Care [registration full]

**December 15:** Interpreting for OT/PT/Speech Therapies [registration full]

**December 15:** Becoming a Super-Fast Freelance Translator and Coping with Technology in a Constantly Evolving World! [OPEN]

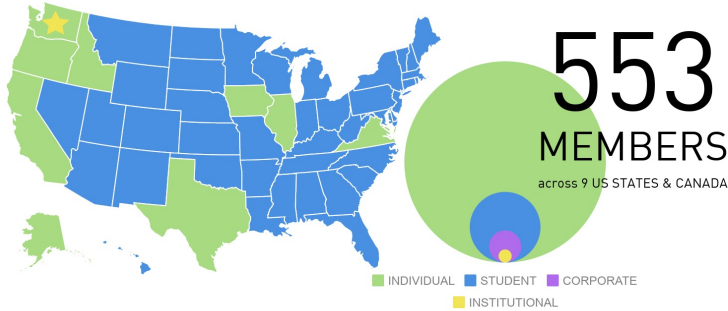
- Register online to participate in the live webinar,
- **OR** sign up to watch a recording which will be available to view until January 15, 2019.

**December 20:** Translating Comics and Graphic Novels [OPEN]

For more information or to register for an event, visit our website at <https://www.notisnet.org/NOTIS-events>.

# A SNAPSHOT OF OUR YEAR : NOTIS 2018

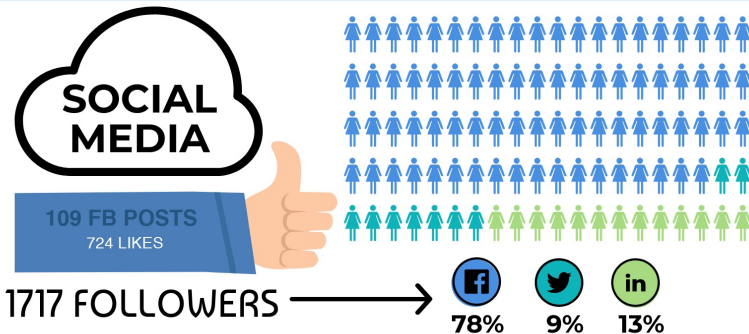
## MEMBERSHIP



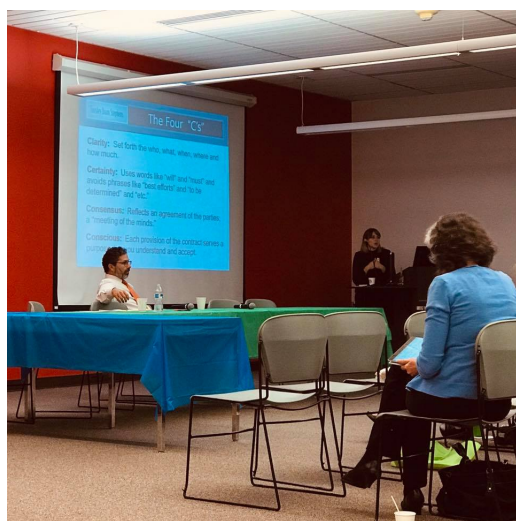
## EVENTS



## INVOLVEMENT



NOTIS Summer Picnic : August 2018



International Translation Day Events : 2018

# DRAGOMANSHIP : AN INTERPRETING INSTITUTION IN OTTOMAN EMPIRE-ERA TURKEY AND A BRIEF LOOK AT THE MULTICULTURAL OTTOMAN EMPIRE

by NOTIS Board Member Candidate Pinar Mertan

Until I was asked to do some research about two months ago for a seminar for court interpreters, I had no idea there was a semi-official job definition of interpreting under the name of 'dragoman' in Ottoman Empire-era Turkey. As a Turkish-born person and a recently registered interpreter, I was surprised that I had missed this information. So when I was asked to contribute to NOTIS' upcoming newsletter, I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to introduce our society (and myself) to this interesting topic. For this research, I relied heavily on Professor Nathalie Rothman's studies in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*; the *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*; the *New World Encyclopedia's* "Ottoman Empire" chapter; *Public Diplomacy and the Translation Office in the Ottoman Empire* by Berna Kamay; *Encyclopedia.com*; *Teachmideast.org*; *The Diplomatic Trinity* by Associate Professor Aykut Gürçağlar; and "The Role of Dragomans in the Ottoman Empire," an article by Elvin Abbasbeyli, an interpreter himself, on ALLC.net.

## What is a Dragoman?

"In the history of interpreting, a Dragoman was a man who acted as a guide and an interpreter in countries where Arabic, Turkish, or Persian was spoken" (Oxford Dictionary). The word *dragoman* is "tercüman" in Turkish, and the Ottomans used the word "tercüman" to refer to interpreters. This word originated from the Syriac language and passed into Arabic (Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies, 119).

## The Ottoman Empire and Its Subjects

The Ottoman Empire was a multiethnic, multireligious monarchy founded by the Turks in 1299 that lasted for over 600 years. The English word *Ottoman* is the Anglicized form of the Turkish *Osmanlı*, meaning 'associated with Osman' (Teachmideast.org-Ottoman History With Resources). It survived until the end of

World War I and was dissolved by the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

Ottoman society was quite cosmopolitan. The Empire's subjects came from many different ethnic and religious groups. At its height, the Ottoman Empire included modern-day Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Egypt, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, some of Arabia, Lebanon and a considerable amount of the North African coastal strip (BBC-Ottoman Empire, History.com-Ottoman Empire). The largest ethnic groups were Turks, Arabs, Greeks, Slovenians, Serbs, Albanians, Ruthenians, Wallachians, Moldavians, Croatians, Armenians, Laz, and Kurds. Ottomans dealt with minorities by letting them self-regulate. Non-Muslim religious groups were called *millets* and had the autonomy to regulate their own affairs with fairly little interference from the Ottoman government. The main millets were the Jewish, Greek, and Armenian ones. By the 19th century, there were 14 millets. These groups were spread across the empire. Often, there was little contact between different millets (New World Encyclopedia).

## Official Language

The official language of the empire was Ottoman Turkish, an administrative language consisting largely of Turkish grammar, with Anatolian Turkish, Arabic, and some Persian vocabulary. Ottoman Turkish belongs to the Oghuz group of Turkic languages. Ottoman Turkish was written using Arabic script. Ottoman morphology and syntax was primarily Turkic, using the order of subject-object-verb. It was primarily a written language, and today, it is no longer spoken (Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire, 322-323). After the Turkish Republic was founded, the Arabic script was replaced by the Latin alphabet.

## Emergence of the Dragomans

In his article "The Role of Dragomans in the Ottoman Empire," Elvin Abbasbeyli writes that "the Sublime Porte and Western diplomatic missions in the Ottoman Empire needed individuals fluent in both Western and Oriental languages." According to the Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies (p.121-122), institutional efforts to educate interpreters began in the mid-16th century. The most significant dragoman in the Ottoman Empire was the dragoman of the Sublime Porte, also known as the Grand Dragoman. At first, bilingual converts were employed, and they were imperial civil servants. By the 17th century, Greek Orthodox families in the Fener District of Istanbul changed this. Greek dragomans had an advantage in education and understanding of Ottoman structures. In the Ottoman hierarchy dragomans ranked very highly, and the job had some advantages, such as tax exemption. The title of Dragoman of the Sublime Porte was passed from father to son. In 1821 a Translation Office was established where Muslims began to learn foreign languages, and the Greek families were expelled from this profession completely.

Western ambassadors and merchants also employed dragomans in their relations with the Ottomans. Those dragomans were chosen among the Latin Catholic families of the Galata area of Istanbul. But since these dragomans were Ottoman and were not fluent in Western languages, the European countries decided to teach and employ their own citizens. The Venetians led the way by sending young language students to Istanbul to learn Oriental languages. Those "Giovani della Lingua" or "Jeunes de Langues" became dragomans in relations with the Ottomans. The French followed suit by establishing a school named "L'Ecole des Enfants de Langues" in 1669. The graduates would be employed as missionaries or dragomans by their government (Gürçağlar, "The Diplomatic Trinity," 3-5).

## Dragomans' Role and Contributions

According to Professor Nathalie Rothman, "Dragomans are often known as diplomatic translators, but their responsibilities and roles went much further than being mere interpreters."

Dragomans had diplomatic, consular, and commercial roles and they even served as pilgrimage guides and spies (Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies, 119).

Dragomans' importance to the Ottoman Empire peaked when the empire reached its widest territorial reach during the 15th and 16th centuries. They served as important intermediaries between the Palace and non-Turkish-speaking subjects well into the 19th century. Although most of them were the Empire's own people, some of the imperial dragomans were from foreign countries (Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies, 120-121).

Dragomans took assignments at different offices in many regions. They performed their job by interpreting in consecutive and in whispering modes, and they held a wide range of diplomatic, commercial, and consular duties in other Ottoman cities. It is known that Venetian dragomans served as official emissaries and recorded their diplomatic missions in writing. The Venetian dragomans in Istanbul were probably the largest group of these professionals, but by the 17th century, all foreign embassies in the Ottoman capital had at least one dragoman (Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies, 120-121).

The dragomans enjoyed a legal status called *beratlı*, which means 'holders of a patent'. Their numbers, privileges, and responsibilities were all listed in imperial charters granted by the Sultan to other countries (Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies, 122).

As Professor Rothman notes, "Dragomans wrote some of the earliest works on the Ottoman-Turkish language." Their contributions lasted through the 20th century, and their impact went far beyond diplomacy. Their writings about Ottoman society and culture were a huge contribution to the philological study of early Ottoman texts. They also translated several extended Ottoman chronicles. Their position in the Ottoman Empire and their connections with Ottomans and foreigners alike let them build strong ties with political elites. Having access to valuable knowledge allowed them to write about Ottoman language, history, arts, sciences, theology, music, and

botany, to name a few (Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies, 123-124).

### Translation Office

In 1821, the Translation Office was established and served more as a school by preparing young men to serve abroad as embassy secretaries. Some of these later became ambassadors, foreign ministers, and even grand viziers. The office became part of the Foreign Ministry when it was organized in 1836 (Encyclopedia.com) and became a channel of the intelligence network. Documents in foreign languages were translated and stored in the archives of the Translation Office before going to the higher offices. The Translation Office employed primarily Muslim officers, rather than non-Muslim or Greek dragomans, many of whom later became prominent statesmen (Kamay, *Public Diplomacy and the Translation Office in the Ottoman Empire*, 3-6).

For a generation, the Translation Office was one of the best sources of Western education in Istanbul. This

office continued being an important place to begin a career, and it was in operation until the empire came to its end in 1922 (Encyclopedia.com).

### RESOURCES

Professor Nathalie Rothman's works in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies*

*Public Diplomacy and the Translation Office in the Ottoman Empire* by Berna Kamay

*The Diplomatic Trinity* by Aykut Gürçağlar

"The Role of Dragomans in the Ottoman Empire" by Elvin Abbasbeyli

*Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*

*New World Encyclopedia*

Encyclopedia.com

Teachmideast.org

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Northwest Linguist accepts and welcomes contributions of articles about all aspects of translation, interpreting, issues related to these professions and NOTIS events.

These may include:

- Approaches to translation
- Interpreting skills
- Legal issues for translators and interpreters
- The business of translation and interpreting
- Computer Assisted Translation Tools
- Summary & tips learned at a recent workshop

Articles are limited to about 1,000 words. Please note that all submissions are subject to editing. Opinions expressed are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor, the Society, or its Board.

Please send submissions to Alicia McNeely at:  
**alicialynn3033@gmail.com.**

## CALL FOR CANDIDATES

The Nominating Committee is charged with finding and evaluating potential board members for NOTIS's annual elections.

**The Nominating Committee is currently looking for two at-large members to serve in 2019.**

For more information or to suggest a candidate, please contact Maria Farmer at:  
**marshmiley@me.com.**

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