Meet the best-kept secret on the interpreting Internet

Maybe you’ve already stumbled across it. Maybe you’re one of the few people who have already been tipped off about it by a colleague or acquaintance. Or maybe today will be the day that you discover w

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I’m referring of course to interpreting.info, the new Q&A website run by and for the global community of interpreters. Until just a few days ago, the site was in beta testing mode and had only been accessed by a few dozen interpreters: those who had been actively recruited to bootstrap it as well as their friends, colleagues, neighbors and the odd innocent bystander who got swept up in the effort. This week, the site has been opened up to Google – and therefore, to the world – and so it’s time to check out what it has to offer.

By interpreters, for interpreters

A quick look at the interpreting.info “About” page tells us this:

This is a free, community-driven Q&A website about interpreting, i.e. spoken language translation. The target community for this site is composed of professional or occasional interpreters, interpreting students, their trainers but also buyers and users of interpreting services and other stakeholders in the conference industry, such as event planners, convention centres, standardisers and equipment suppliers. We invite each of them to contribute their questions and answers to the site.

The FAQ page goes on to explain:

There are many types of interpreting: business, community, conference, court & legal, escort, public service.

There are also many categories of interpreters from full-time freelance or staff conference interpreters doing simultaneous or consecutive interpreting at international events, to non-expert language brokers. This Q&A site hopes to be of service to all of them.

For me, there are two fundamental aspects that make this new resource so interesting.

Firstly, interpreting.info is aimed at all types of interpreters. This means that it will hopefully contribute to breaking down some of those artificial, at times self-imposed barriers between different types of interpreting practitioners.
Secondly, the site (which is sponsored and hosted by AIIC) is 100% community-moderated. That means that all participants on this collaborative website can edit and moderate the questions and answers – yes, that means you, too! You don’t need to ask for anyone’s permission or have any sort of special status to join in the moderation.

Meet the enlightened guru pundit

If you take a look at the list of users, you’ll be sure to find a few familiar faces from around the social media. My own user profile shows that I have asked eight questions, given 19 answers, earned myself 910 karma points and been awarded 11 badges. Apparently, my fellow users have decided that I merit the titles of Enlightened, Guru and Pundit, among a few other choice epithets. The badge I really want to earn, however, is Necromancer, mostly because I think it sounds cool.

The karma point and badge systems, as I understand them, are meant to foster the sense of community amongst users as well as reward those who make an effort to offer valuable information to their peers by granting them extended moderation rights.

Now the fun starts

I have already learned a lot from interpreting.info just during the bootstrapping effort. I asked a few questions about training that got answered by fellow trainers, one about iPads apps for the booth that was answered by a techie interpreter colleague, plus a few others that were just niggling questions of mine, which garnered some insightful replies.

Even more interesting has been to see the type of questions that other users ask – and the wealth of information that is offered in response! Now that the website is open to the broader community, I look forward to checking in to see what new contributors have to offer.

In closing, let me just share with you the best bit I have found so far on interpreting.info. The question “What are the best interpreter bloopers?” has received 16 answers so far. While some of the answers will be amusing only to interpreters (with our particular sense of humor), one of the answers is so funny that I still laugh out loud every time I read it. But I won’t give it away here: you’ll have to go explore interpreting.info yourself to find out what it said …

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