Communicate in 2002: Backwards and forwards

The AIIC webzine enters its third year with feature articles on workplace research and renewed energy to inform the interpreter community.

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Published: February 5, 2002 Last updated: December 2, 2015

With this issue Communicate! enters its third year. When we set out to create a webzine in late-1999, our aim was to present conference interpreting and the language professions to a wider audience. We certainly had our own members in mind, but we also knew that our association had its own printed Bulletin that is sent quarterly to all members and we did not want to duplicate it. With Communicate! we hoped to create a broader “forum to learn, share and get involved with other stakeholders in the conference industry.”

Over two years and 15 issues we have published feature articles and news items on a variety of issues in a dozen languages. The most popular among them (“Applying to AIIC: A Primer”) has now been consulted more than 7000 times. Our recent article “Advice to Students Wishing to Become Conference Interpreters” has been consulted nearly 6000 times in its two versions (English and French) in barely 5 months. And many other articles on research, court and legal interpreting, quality in interpretation, web searches, training and organising teams of interpreters have proven very popular, as have our book reviews.

Every article we publish is in fact a forum and readers are invited to leave their thoughts by clicking on the “Add Your Comment” link at the bottom of the page. We hope that even more of you will do so in the coming year.

We start out this year with a major article on research into our own profession. Back in the early 1990’s, AIIC was faced with a challenge from the US Federal Trade Commission. At the time the FTC undertook an investigation of several translator and interpreter associations to see if they were setting or recommending rates for members. And they decided that even establishing basic working conditions was a form of setting rates and should be eliminated. AIIC had long ago set such working conditions because our colleagues knew that such conditions were necessary to both quality and the health of interpreters. We knew that they were necessary and justifiable, so we decided to fight and in the end we won – we kept our rules governing team size, hours of work and related questions.

But in the process, we realized that too little empirical research had been done on the matter. AIIC decided to fund a research project on work load and asked our Research Committee to design and carry it out. In this issue we present the results.

This is but one example of how AIIC has organised its activities into “projects” in recent years. In fact Communicate! readers have already been introduced to several of those projects, such as the
Business Organisation of Interpreters (October 2000 and January/February 2001) and Training (September 2001). They have gotten a brief glimpse of the VEGA project, which aims to introduce our profession to those just beginning, in the article “First Freelance Contract at the United Nations – New York” in our previous issue. In this issue we continue the “First Contract” series with an introduction to the Council of Europe. In 2002 there will be more to come on these and other fronts.

In our second issue of 2002 we will be going back to the issue of multilingualism which we covered in extenso in our last issue of 2001. This time we aim to broaden the discussion and take a look at the growth of what has become known as “Global English.” In June we will have our friends from the AIIC Private Market Sector back with more about their work on business organisation. In September we hope to provide you with some compelling stories of life experience from interpreter colleagues. And in December we will preview the events to take place around the AIIC Assembly.

This list, however, is not exhaustive and there are bound to be other matters treated as they arise. And it should be said that not all of our articles are about AIIC or written by AIIC members. In the past we have presented articles by non-interpreters and we will continue to do so. Last year we were happy to be able to publish an article by a student looking for input to a research project and happier to be informed that she received many useful replies. Anything is possible – all the more so with your help as active participants of our Communicate! community.


Luigi Luccarelli is Communicate's Editor-in-Chief

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