New Master’s Degree in Translation and Interpreting Offers Choice of Paths for Language Specialists

The University of Illinois is very proud to announce the debut of the Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting program of study. “Our new MA in Translation and Interpreting seeks to train students for the competitive and evolving job market by offering students the education and practical experiences that will give them the knowledge, skills, and tools to work at the highest levels of the field in a variety of jobs,” said Elizabeth Lowe, director of the Center for Translation Studies, through which the program is offered.

Two unique course formats were designed to accommodate both those who may be focusing on professional work and others who are able to pursue advanced study in the more traditional manner. Students pursuing the online version of the program will complete individual courses consecutively, while those on campus take a few courses simultaneously.

An internationally diverse and accomplished array of faculty representing teaching- and research-focused centers across campus and offering instruction in 37 languages have aligned to share their expertise through the offerings of the Center for Translation Studies. Students in the new MA program choose from one of the following specializations: Translation for the Professions, Literary and Applied Literary Translation, and Conference and Community Interpreting.

Yajie Zhang is a member of the first cohort of students who began the on-campus program in August. Zhang, who is fluent in Chinese, English, and Japanese, came from Taiyuan, China, to the University of Illinois to pursue a bachelor’s degree in Earth Sciences and is thrilled about staying in Champaign-Urbana to pursue the MA in Translation and Interpreting.

“I love this community, the small size of my classes, and our great faculty!” said Zhang, adding that he really appreciates the practical aspects of his current classes. “I hope that software localization and subtitling can be a part of my future career.”

Eliot Sharpe Valadares, who lives in Tallahassee, Fla., where he teaches Spanish at a public high school, chose the online option for the MA program at CTS. Sharpe Valadares said he feels the University is “doing a wonderful job of supporting and helping online students grow professionally as well as academically.” He said he aspires to work within the growing area of Brazilian-American relations.

With only a few other master’s degree programs in translation currently available in the United States, Lowe anticipates interest and enrollment in the MA program at Illinois will grow quickly. Please visit www.translation.illinois.edu/programs/masters.html for a complete list of program requirements and application information.
Brazil in Frankfurt 2013

The Frankfurt Book Fair is one of the biggest literary marketplaces in the world, where it is reported that over 200,000 people attend, representing publishers, literary agents, writers, translators, and cultural entrepreneurs from around the world.

Brazil was the country honored at the 2013 Fair (October 9-15). In addition to the large Brazilian presence at the fair—with a stunning “forum” showcasing Brazilian writers and their translators in exhibits made up of the pages of books—Brazilian culture was splashed all over Frankfurt for weeks with art exhibits, films, theater, readings, and lectures.

Over 100 Brazilian writers and their agents, translators, and interpreters were at the fair, along with representatives of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, National Library, diplomats, and artists. Among the writers included were those who were censored, jaled, exiled, and sometimes tortured during the period of the military dictatorship, alongside the newest generation of young writers, in some cases literally the children of the dissident writers of the dictatorship. These contemporaries are engaged in protests of their own against political corruption, police violence, and the lack of support for basic education and health services for the poor, concerns that have sparked street protests in Brazil beginning in June 2013. A “manifesto” was circulated by one of the featured authors at the Fair, Joao Paulo Cuenca, asking his colleagues to take a public stand on these issues.

This is an extraordinary moment for this Portuguese-speaking nation of over 200 million citizens of many racial, ethnic, and linguistic origins, including African Brazilians, descendants of immigrants and refugees from all nations, and indigenous peoples. Now, Brazilian writers can openly register protest without fear of reprisal. Their voices are fresh, innovative, and globally engaged; they represent not only Brazil’s rich regional traditions and landscapes, but also the big world in which they travel. Cuenca’s latest novel, one of those featured at the Fair (The Happiest Ending for a Love Story is an Accident, tr. Elizabeth Lowe, Tagus Press, 2013), is a story set in Tokyo about a young Japanese salary man who falls in love with a Romanian woman who has overstayed her visa and works as a waitress in an exotic dancing nightclub.

What marked this event was the focus on translators. I was privileged to be invited as an honorary member of the Brazilian delegation to the Fair as the translator of several of the writers featured there. In the panels in which I participated the focus was not just on the writer but on the role of the translator as cultural agent. The writers, literary agents, and publishers present acknowledged the agency of the translator in the process of international cultural exchange. Without the translator, literature does not travel. Because of the translator’s work, new voices are heard, cultural exchange is stimulated, and literary works from far reaches of the planet become part of mainstream world culture. The slogan of this fair was “Brazil, a land of many voices.” All of us, in whatever capacity we contribute to the cultural mix, are part of this vital chorus.

Online Program in Applied Literary Translation Illustrates Global Access to Translation Education and Work

Anna Fitzgerald, one of three students selected to participate in the Applied Literary Translation Certificate program at Illinois this academic year, typifies the sort of student and the reach of the program its founders envisioned. Fitzgerald, who graduated from Montana State University in 2001 with a BA in French, lives in Pont-Saint-Esprit, France, where she is self-employed as a translator. While she concentrates on technical documents in her current work, Fitzgerald had been searching online for an opportunity to develop additional expertise—one that, she said, “will give me practice with literary translation as well as contacts for future projects”—when she discovered the program at the University of Illinois.

Begun in fall 2011, the online Applied Literary Translation Certificate Program is coordinated by the Center for Translation Studies in conjunction with Dalkey Archive Press. Its purpose is to nurture a beginning literary translator who has not yet published a book-length translation.

Enrollment is limited in order to provide meaningful interaction with Dalkey Archive editors. Each student is also assigned a faculty mentor whose task is to cultivate and assess the student’s technical translation skills.

Fitzgerald is currently writing translation samples of contemporary French novels until one is selected for full-length translation.

Jeffrey Castle, a University of Illinois alumnus and recipient of a certificate in translation studies who resides in Urbana, and Alexandra Forman, who holds degrees from both Brown and Yale Universities and lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, are fellow students in the program.
Along with Dr. Elizabeth Lowe, director of the Center for Translation Studies (CTS), Chris Higgins, associate professor in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership and affiliate faculty of both the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory and CTS, was the co-director of a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute for College Teachers titled “The Centrality of Translation to the Humanities: New Interdisciplinary Scholarship.”

Held this past July at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the institute considered translation as “a scholarly craft and a cultural dynamic” and examined its “historical, philosophical, political, and poetic dimensions.” The institute provided an introduction to translation studies and examined case studies on 20th century inter-American literature, the Bible, Sigmund Freud, and the poet Rainer Maria Rilke.

The University of Illinois was represented by Higgins and Lowe, as well as Richard Layton and Joyce Tolliver. In addition, College of Education doctoral student Maria Cynthia Anderson served as program coordinator.

The institute featured a dynamic visiting faculty, including renowned translators Gregory Rabassa, Suzanne Jill Levine, and David Rosenberg; leading translation studies scholar Rainer Schulte; and Adam Phillips, the noted psychoanalytic essayist and editor of the New Penguin Freud. According to Higgins and Lowe, though, “it was ultimately the interest and expertise of the summer scholars that drove the collective inquiry.”

Faculty from a variety of institutions and at all stages of their careers applied to participate in the institute and 22 were accepted, along with three advanced graduate students. The institute was designed for scholars from across the humanities and humanistic social sciences—for example those who teach history, literature, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, religion, and multi-disciplinary core humanities courses.

The event helped fill a unique need for scholars like Stacey Alba Skar, who applied because of the overall emphasis on translation, as well as the case study on Inter-American literature. “I have several published Spanish-to-English translations, but I had never studied translation theory,” said Skar, who is a faculty member from Western Connecticut State University. “I had also recently developed a new course on Spanish translation, although I had no background in translation pedagogy.”

Higgins and Lowe were interested in getting the NEH grant because, in their view, translation has typically been either misunderstood or understood too narrowly, with its complexity and importance often overlooked. “Throughout higher education, teaching and research is being shaped by translation in fundamental ways, but the work of the translator often remains invisible and unappreciated,” Higgins explained, adding that on some campuses, tenure and promotion committees are reluctant to count translations as contributions to scholarship.

“Whether we like it or not, texts are transformed in translation. To treat the translated text as a simple stand-in for the original is to overlook both possible distortions in meaning and the ways in which new aspects of a text come to light only through translation,” Higgins said. “Done well, translation is a productive process.”

Higgins and Lowe thought that an institute of this sort would help establish the humane significance of translation and highlight a concept that has the potential to spark rich, interdisciplinary work in the humanities. 

Participants gather at “The Centrality of Translation to the Humanities: New Interdisciplinary Scholarship” last summer.
In Every Language Enters into Exclusive Partnership with Center for Translation Studies

In Every Language has entered into an exclusive partnership with the Center for Translation Studies at the University of Illinois. Beginning this semester, one student in the Master of Arts in Translation and Interpretation program will engage in a year-long internship with In Every Language in vendor management. This year’s student is Mayilu Diaz de Leon.

“This isn’t like any other internship,” said In Every Language CEO Terena Bell. “We’ve had interns before, but with the new program that the Center for Translation Studies offers, we’re actually able to do something innovative.”

Diaz de Leon—and interns to follow—will not be working in translation, but rather in the business of translation. “Traditionally, the decision of choosing a translator has been fairly arbitrary,” Bell said. “The focus of this internship will be on quantifying the unquantifiable—on removing the possibility of error from that choice in order to provide even more assurance to clients whose materials simply don’t allow room for any chances.” Diaz de Leon will be fine-tuning a translator point metric In Every Language already has in place, implementing it for even the rarest of languages.

Elizabeth Lowe, director of the Center for Translation Studies, feels the partnership will enhance students’ practical grasp of the translation professions. “This internship with In Every Language is an exciting opportunity for University of Illinois students of translation to learn the business of translation, an important aspect of the field that is generally not understood well by beginning translators or by the general public,” she said.

In Every Language is the only American provider represented on the international trade board for translation companies and clients. The company is an internationally-recognized, professional provider of translating, interpreting, and localization solutions in over 180 languages.

Meet a CTS Alumnus

Just a few minutes into conversation with Christopher Eager, a May 2013 recipient of the certificate in translation studies and MA in Spanish, who also possesses a bachelor’s degree in Language Studies with a concentration in Spanish from the University of California–San Diego, one can easily discern the high level of organization and dedication that is propelling him on his academic journey. While squinting in the bright autumn sunlight drenching the patio of the Foreign Languages Building on campus, Eager described how he wound up pursuing a PhD in Spanish.

While in high school, Eager said he showed aptitude in math and computer science, but when he thought about what he might study in college, the joy he’d found in taking Spanish classes influenced his choice of major. Comfort with the other two subjects, however, have served him well.

A large part of the CTS program, said Eager, is learning to use computer-assisted translation—something he absorbed naturally.

“I definitely learned the benefits of being methodical [in translation],” he said. “The work is about being precise and consistent, learning all of the theory, plus taking cultural experience into account.”

Originally from Fullerton, Cal., Eager moved to Urbana in the autumn of 2011, settling in for an extended period of study and research that he hopes—economy willing and credentials in order—will eventually lead to a position teaching for a university. Meanwhile, he is involved in Spanish linguistics research at Illinois with professor Jonathan MacDonald. Of note, Eager also has a Foreign Languages and Area Studies Fellowship to learn Quecha, the most widely spoken Native American language.

Eager possesses an abiding respect for the way the in-depth study and practice of translation has enhanced his ongoing study of linguistics. “Translation hones your language skills,” he said. “It reinforces your ability to speak another language.”
Joyce Tolliver is associate professor of Spanish, Gender and Women’s Studies, and Translation Studies. Her research focuses on gender, sexuality, and discourse in Spain since the 19th century. In addition to teaching, her research is guiding work on two books, the first tentatively titled *Family Troubles: Spain and the Philippines in the Late Modern Empire* and the second called *Writing Counterfeit Subjects: The Representation of Passing in Spain.*

Tolliver is one of the founding members of the executive committee that put forth the structure for the Center for Translation Studies at the University of Illinois. “I thought it was really important for Spanish to be included for the proper development of the program,” said Tolliver. “I wanted a course in Spanish/English translation to be available for both advanced undergraduates and graduate students.”

Three prerequisite courses must be taken in order to enroll in Spanish/English Translation (TRST 412). “I think there’s a lot of background one needs in Spanish in order to begin translating,” said Tolliver. “We focus much less on the practical and more on the theoretical [in TRST 412],” she said, in order to ensure students have this solid grasp on the comprehension of Spanish.

Students traveling this path toward command of translation skills for either the Certificate in Translation Studies or the kindred master’s degree have impressed Tolliver with their dedication. “The students tend to self-select,” she said. “They tend to be really great students, really interested in language and culture and how they come together.”

Tolliver is praised by CTS director Elizabeth Lowe as “a very good partner of the Center,” and Tolliver extends that credit to the various units throughout campus that have provided interdisciplinary support by allowing their faculty to invest time in teaching for the Center.

“I can’t believe how dizzyingly quickly the Center for Translation Studies has progressed,” said Tolliver. “We have measurable success with the certificate program and a really respectable cohort of master’s students. We have more work ahead in converting courses for online pursuit, and I would like to eventually see our certificate program progress to a concentration of study. It is so clear that translation has a place at the heart of campus initiatives for global perspective and understanding.”

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**It’s Time to Register!**

**SPRING 2014**
- TRST 400: Translation in the EU
- TRST 404: Bilingualism and Translation
- TRST 405: Commercial & Technical Translation
- TRST 410: Translation Theory & Practice
- TRST 440: Translation Studies Capstone
- TRST 501: Applied Literary Translation
- TRST 541: Community Interpreting

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**What We’re Reading**

*The Only Happy Ending for a Love Story Is an Accident* by J.P. Cuenca, translated by Elizabeth Lowe (Tagus Press at UMass Dartmouth; novel, 2010 / translation and afterward, 2013): University of Illinois Center for Translation Studies director Elizabeth Lowe has translated from the Portuguese a contemporary novel by one of the highest-profile young Latin American writers, J.P. Cuenca. In a tale set in Japan, a troubled relationship between Shunsuke, a salaryman, and his poet father, Mr. Okuda, is overlaid upon a series of bizarre events that read like a crime novel. Easily read in an afternoon, the story will transport readers to Tokyo in the near future and impress with a mastery of words matching the skill of Haruki Murakami.
Scholars and Mentors Collaborated at Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center’s Summer Research Lab

By David L. Cooper

The new Workshop in Literary and Scholarly Translation from Slavic Languages welcomed 12 participants working with six mentors during the first week of the annual Summer Research Lab hosted by the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center (REEEC), June 10-14. The workshop was organized by Sibelan Forrester of Swarthmore College and David Cooper of U of I’s Slavic department in its inaugural year and brought PhD students and postdoctoral scholars from a variety of disciplines together to work on literary and scholarly translation projects from a range of Slavic languages.

Workshop participants began their mornings with lectures on translation theory, practice, and research by workshop mentors, as well as an informational talk on publishing by Jeremy Davies of the Dalkey Archive Press, an introduction to the Slavic Reference Service, and a library guide prepared for the workshop. One to two additional hours were spent each day in consultation with their assigned mentors on their work in progress. Afternoon hours were free for additional consultation with mentors or other participants, research in the library related to the translation project, and, of course, intense work on translations. The week was capped Friday afternoon with a celebratory dinner punctuated by readings of excerpts from translations.

Workshop participants expressed their appreciation for the library staff and the intense attention to their projects provided by the mentors. This year’s mentors included Brian James Baer and Joanna Trecziak of Kent State University; Ellen Elias-Bursac, an independent scholar and translator formerly of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and Harvard University; Amelia Glasser of the University of California–San Diego; Sibelan Forrester; and REEEC director David Cooper.

Translation projects included recent Bosnian, Russian, Slovak, and Slovenian novels and stories; Polish and Russian poetry; post-Soviet drama; articles from Ukrainian Orthodox Church periodicals from the 1920s; Olha Kobylianska’s stories from the same Ukrainian 1920s; Anton Chekhov’s medical case studies; and Soviet scientist Aleksandr Chizhevskii’s Solar Terrestrial and Ionization studies.

Since the advent of more communicative-style language instruction in the latter 20th century, translation has been largely absent from the foreign language curriculum. But translation is a high level language skill, and specific training and practice in translation can benefit not only literary translators but also scholars working with vernacular sources. REEEC is pleased at the successful launch of this new program and the opportunity for professional training it provides and looks forward to continuing the workshop in coming years.

Funding for the workshop was provided in part by Department of Education Title VI and Department of State Title VIII grants.