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# A proposed translators and interpreters school at New York University

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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**A PROPOSED TRANSLATORS  
AND INTERPRETERS SCHOOL  
AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>**

Before I could proceed to conjure up a Translators and Interpreters School at NYU Downtown, which may grow out of Translation Seminar courses that are being conducted there now, it was meet that I have the privilege, as I have had, of hearing out Dr. Daniel van Acker, at the luncheon, on current plans of the New York Metropolitan Chapter (NYMCATA) of the American Translators Association with respect to the Translator Center and Library Foundation, which originated some two years ago in plans for the Jose Asensio Casa del Traductor, thereafter emerging as the New York Translator House and Library and now progressed to the point of becoming a Foundation; also of hearing the panelists who preceded me, professor Jean-Paul Vinay, on translator courses at Montreal, and professor Stefan F. Horn, on the language work at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

For the record it must be pointed out that New York long ago did pioneer work in this field. In 1940 and again in 1941, Language Service Center, under my direction, gave translation courses to a total of about 100 students, in preparation for United States Civil Service Translation examinations; in 1945 Lewis L. Sell put forward a strong plea for professional translator training in a brochure entitled, "A University and Collegiate Syllabus for the Formation of the Professional Polyglot Technician".

It is common knowledge that by the time World War II rolled to a close the American Government had learned from its experience with the Office of War Information, the Office of Strategic Services, the Council of Inter-American Affairs, considerable relating to global aspects of contemporary international relations per se, and at the same time not a little respecting language and languages as an instrument vital in such relations. Thus, in and since World War II, the United States Government, groping its way, has achieved something like a mature approach in matters linguistic, whatever the distressing errors and inadequacies. On the other hand, American Industry, although it too has made progress on these lines since World War II, has dragged its feet as compared to Government.

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(1) A Presentation by Lewis Bertrand, Instructor, Spanish Translation and Portuguese Translation Seminars, NYU School of General Education, delivered at the 4th Annual Meeting of the American Translators Association, St. George Hotel, Brooklyn, N.Y., November 23, 1963

## JOURNAL DES TRADUCTEURS — TRANSLATORS' JOURNAL

The capacity of Washington D.C., if not of Government, to appraise language needs, however erratic and sporadic, is reflected in the Foreign Service Language School maintained by the State Department; in the direct or indirect Government sponsorship of the Georgetown University language school represented on this panel today; in creation in Monterey, California, of the Army Language School; in the formation by the Modern Language Association of America of a Center for Applied Linguistics at Washington 36, D.C. These activities have their roots in Washington and may therefore be deemed to be directly or otherwise linked to Government.

In impoverished contrast, New York, home of the United Nations, center of America's finances, pipeline through which streams a large part of the country's international trade, commerce, communications and intellectual exchange, has no school so far for professional language training. *Eo ipso*, by virtue of this very fact, American industry may be adjudged backward in language matters compared to the United States Government.

This lag between Industry and Government should be taken as cue for the creation of a Translators and Interpreters School at New York University. The School may be envisaged in terms of an outflowing from the work of the American Translators Association and that of the NYU Saturday School of Languages.

The Saturday School, which was started in 1955, is principally the handiwork of its far-sighted and energetic founder and director, Professor Mendor T. Brunetti. Organized as part of NYU's Division of General Education, the Saturday School of Languages now gives courses in such fields beyond the conventional as Arabic, Polish, Chinese, Swahili, Hindi, Urdu, Japanese, Turkish, Indonesian, Korean. In the fall of 1960, Professor Brunetti, seconded by Dr. Alexander Gode, President of the American Translators Association and Adjunct Professor of Languages at NYU, introduced translation seminars in Russian, French and German. At a later date Spanish and Portuguese were added, and more seminars are presently in the offing.

In the few years that NYU has held its Translation Seminars total registration may have come to about 100. This supplies a groundwork on which formation of a Translators and Interpreters School can now be urged. A first step forward from the translation seminars would be coordination of the existing and proximate seminars among themselves and coordination also of the entire program with the general requirements of the University, all with a view to offering students, to begin with, a schedule of courses leading to a One-Year Certificate in Translation.

Creation of a One-Year Certificate would probably open the way to a Two-Year Certificate and perhaps, in time, to a B.S. or B.A. in the Translation Arts.

The School of Translators and Interpreters would take a broad-front approach, in keeping with the endeavors initiated over two decades ago

by New York language practitioners sensible of the community's needs in this context. It would equip itself with the specialized physical endowment its purposes demand: for one thing, it would provide itself with the equipment needed for training in simultaneous interpreting. For another, it would build the selective library required by practical language work as distinguished from erudite research.

The School would take a constructive interest in the organizing of glossaries for particular languages and fields of activity, and would make these glossaries available as well as take steps leading to their publication as dictionaries.

The compiling of glossaries suggests the possibility of the School collaborating with NYU computer departments in advancing machine translation. The School will, we may anticipate, necessarily envisage the day that it will have to prepare trained linguists to become the programmers and editors when the translation machine comes closer home.

As the first global approach of this kind in the New York area, the School will seek ways, too, of assisting its graduates or undergraduates to find employment. Employers in the metropolitan area would be informed of the School's work and learn to open doors to its certificate-holders. In Geneva I was able to observe that the United Nations regarded Geneva University's School of Interpreters as good recruiting ground for temporary or permanent additions to its language staff; and in Munich I noted that students at the *Sprachen - und Dolmetscher-Institut* found positions with such organizations as the European Coal Community; today the European translator and interpreter schools must surely be assisting in the filling of language positions in the European Economic Community.

NYU's Translators and Interpreters School will, I surmise, place graduates in Government and International Agency posts, too. Probably, though, it will set its sights initially toward private enterprise and educate big industry to consider NYU certificate-holders for language trainee and language-expert positions. Personnel officers today are themselves mostly university trained and will undoubtedly view with favor a language applicant presenting a Translators and Interpreters School certificate, especially in the not remote instance where the person casting the deciding vote on the applicant is him or herself an NYU graduate.

Milton R. Stern, assistant Dean of NYU's Division of General Education foresees adult education as an imperative must for all by 1964. There is evidence on all sides — the Saturday School of Languages supplies it in abundance — that languages hold a peculiar fascination for the adult. Since translation chiefly calls for skill in only a single facet of any acquired language, namely decipherment of writing or print, the courses at the Translators and Interpreters School will further recommend themselves as an added attraction in adult education.

As a first step toward meeting the broader aspects of professional training in this field, by its very establishment the NYU School of

## JOURNAL DES TRADUCTEURS — TRANSLATORS' JOURNAL

Translators and Interpreters will render a notable service to industry, the professions, Government and the International Agencies, and in so doing will be filling a need hitherto woefully neglected in the New York area.

It is altogether fitting, moreover, that this be done by an educational institution which has been first to respond to the community's needs in many fields and possesses a history which has time and again proved how deservedly it carries the name of New York University.

The views I have expressed are spoken in my own name and are advanced with no authority whatsoever. Nevertheless, I earnestly hope they may receive consideration by the officers of the University and that steps will be taken at an early date to inaugurate the One-Year Certificate courses.

The current flows steadily toward recognition of practical language work as a profession. The growth of the American Translators Association, of its local affiliates : the New York Chapter, known as NYMCATA ; the Spanish Division, known as Publicistas y Traductores, and the project now launched in new guise as the Translator Center and Library Foundation ; as also the interest demonstrated by the 100 students who have already taken the Translation Seminars at NYU, cogently point in the same direction.

NYU will hasten the day when translation is an acknowledged profession as soon as it creates the first University Translators and Interpreters School in the New York area.

