Center forms Partnership with Trial Court

The Translation Center recently was awarded a grant of $70,000 from the Administrative Offices of the Trial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to develop a training program for court interpreters and to teach introductory Spanish to court employees.

In 1994, the Supreme Judicial Court appointed a commission to study racial and ethnic bias in the court system. The commission found that “the most pressing need of the court system” was to find ways to “serve the increasingly large number of people whose primary language is other than English.”

At the same time, Edwin Gentzler, Director of the Translation Center, was proposing to develop a training program for court interpreters, centered at the Translation Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, but in future years made available at other university campuses in the state university system.

Senator Stan Rosenberg and Representative Ellen Story were very helpful in facilitating communication with the Administrative Offices of the Trial Court, the agency responsible for providing interpretation services in over 250 different courts throughout the state.

While the state has a certification exam administered by the Office of Court Interpreter Services, because of budget cuts, the exam has not been offered for four years.

In a series of meetings with Mary Jane Moreau, Director of Planning, Lynne Reed, Executive Director of the Trial Court, and Chief Justice Irwin, it became apparent that the university could provide valuable services.

“The University of Massachusetts Amherst is the only state university that has graduate programs in languages other than English,” according to Gentzler. “We are already teaching advanced language courses in many different languages. Our faculty members have great skills in developing educational materials, authoring exams, and teaching students. It is a natural partnership.”

The Trial Court will provide funds to hire a visiting professor of interpretation studies and a teaching assistant to teach introductory Spanish to court employees. The university will provide project supervision, author certification exams in several languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian, Vietnamese, Russian, and Khmer, and provide classrooms, books, and resource materials.

The goal of the project is to develop a large pool of certified court interpreters and to increase the ability of court employees to answer concerns of non-English speaking citizens. In addition, many minorities will have the opportunity to develop marketable skills, enabling the state to better use the valuable resource of its diverse ethnic population.

An advisory board including Songren Cui, Robert Rothstein, Lucy Nguyen, and Juan Zamora has been established to advise the Translation Center.

Rapid Business Growth

During the Spring semester 1996, the Translation Center continued its rapid growth, with June 1996 our best month to date. The first six months of 1996 saw the Center handle 112 jobs (vs. 41 during the first six months of 1995), and the average size of each job increased to 12.5 pages (vs. 8.7 pages per job during 1995). The complexity of each job also continues to increase, as more clients are requesting layout help and camera-ready copy. The Center is moving quickly toward one-stop shopping, providing clients with both translation and publication services. Most importantly, we are happy to report that the Center is enjoying the benefits of many satisfied customers returning and/or increasing their business. To meet clients’ demands,
the Center has added a new PC work station and hired a Research Assistant in Translation and Computer Technology. Highlights of recent projects include:

Translation of multiple documents for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services into both Kanji, for written presentation, and Romanian, for oral presentation, during meetings in Japan. Translations included talks, written agreements, logos, business cards, slides, captions, and greetings.

Translation and camera-ready copy of eligibility forms for the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) into Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese, and Haitian.

Translation of a diabetes brochure for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) into Khmer and Haitian.

Translation of Asthma brochure for Chaning L. Bete Co., Inc. (Deerfield, MA) into Khmer, Arabic, Polish, Romanian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean.

Simultaneous interpretation in Russian and English for U.S.-Russia Partnership Foundation three-day conference at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Partial list of new clients

- Smith College Art Museum (Northampton, MA) Easthampton Dye Works (Easthampton, MA)
- Millitech Corporation (S. Deerfield, MA)
- Crown Labs (New York, NY)
- Kaiser Permanente (Amherst, MA)
- Microcal Software (Northampton, MA)
- Titeflex Co. (Springfield, MA)
- Children’s Hospital (Boston, MA)
- National Evaluation Systems (Amherst, MA)

In addition, many recent clients are contracting for additional services with the Center, including Yankee Candle Co. (S. Deerfield, MA), Northfield Mt. Herman School (Northfield, MA), Microcal Software (Northampton, MA), CAC Language Services (Worcester, MA), Data General (Westboro, MA), Joseph Curren Associates (Springfield, MA), Howard Green and Associates (Westport, CT), and BASF Bioresearch Corp. (Worcester, MA).