15 years of the AIIC Webzine / Part 1: Quality issues and new technologies

We kick off this exploration of AIIC online publications with a review of articles on quality and new technologies.

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I’ve been perusing back issues of Communicate! - The AIIC Webzine.
My interest is partly professional and partly nostalgic; I’ve been part of the webzine team since the beginning and Editor-in-Chief since 2001[i]. I recall high points and was wondering how they would read from today’s perspective. Would they hold up? Would anything produce a deep stab of embarrassment? Would we have recorded a wee bit of history?

I won’t try to answer those questions for anyone but myself, but I do want to share some of the highlights, organized by topic, in this series of blog posts.

An old question: New technologies

Modern conference interpreting and technology are inextricably linked. As Roderick Jones pointed out in Interpreting: A communication profession in a world on non-communication (Issue 65; 2014): “Clearly, new technology is a relative term. What is new depends on when you are speaking. Simultaneous interpretation is no stranger to the introduction of new technology and the accompanying controversies, and is even in a way a child of new technology.”

At the other end of the timeline, our attention to so-called new technologies began with Vincent Buck's interview of physicist-turned-interpreter Panayotis Mouzourakis (Issue 3; 2000), who noted: “The Internet has brought about a revolution in the way information is distributed and accessed. Documents are increasingly available in electronic form only. And multimedia, such as video and audio, are making their way into the meeting room. All of these new developments are likely to have a considerable effect on the way interpreters work in the future.”

That future is now and the comparison merits a read. Let us know if you note any similarities or differences.

For a list of AIIC webzine and blog articles on new technologies click here.

Quality: What is it and how can you recognize it?
When it comes to quality issues we again encounter thought-provoking temporal bookends.

Eduardo Kahane opened with Thoughts on the quality of interpretation, an extensive and probing review of factors that come into play when examining quality (Issue 4; 2000). He eases into his considerations with this: “Granted, users and interpreters agree on certain quality criteria, but significant differences remain as to nuances, and especially as to the very essence of the elusive concept of quality; quality for whom, assessed in what manner?”

Ten years later we published the results of a survey of AIIC members (704 responses) carried out by Franz Pöchhacker and Cornelia Zwischenberger. In their introduction, the authors declare: “We see the question of the interpreter’s function and role as inherently linked with the issue of quality, since conference interpreters’ perceptions of the nature of their task will ultimately shape their performance.” Read more in their Survey on quality and role: conference interpreters’ expectations and self-perceptions (Issue 53; 2010).

Reference to Bühler’s 1986 study[iii] in both articles opens the possibility of comparing results and viewpoints over time.

For more articles on quality and related matters click here.

[i] AIIC launched its first website in October 1998. The following April Vincent Buck, site designer and webmaster, floated the idea of an online publication. The AIIC Council approved a project to establish a webzine with an independent editorial voice. The initial team consisted of Vincent Buck, Silke Gebhard, Jean-Pierre Allain and myself. The first issue came out at the end of 1999, and I took on the job of Editor-in-Chief at the end of 2000.


The AIIC webzine and blog welcome submissions from both members and non-members. Subjects: interpretation, translation and other topics related to the language professions. Proposed articles will be judged on quality and relevance. Contact Luigi Luccarelli.

Recommended citation format: