

THE CIAP BULLETIN

INTERPRETASIA

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EDITORIAL

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According to the Chinese calendar, *Interpretasia* has now completed its first cycle. Over the past twelve years, CIAP has contributed actively to making the Asia-Pacific conference market more professional.

Clients are more demanding, and rightly so. They have come to expect high standards in all spheres of conference organisation. CIAP now receives more requests for interpretation in Asian languages and has taken up the challenge of bridging the communication gap, providing high-calibre teams of interpreters. Be it for an ITTO/FAO Consultation on Forestry in Cebu, a World Bank meeting on Scaling up Poverty Reduction in Shanghai, or the AIDS Conference in Bangkok.

Providing a team that performs well is always a challenge. CIAP ensures that its teams are truly professional, bound by a code of ethics that is recognised the world over. This inspires confidence in our clients, as can be seen by the increasing number of conferences for which CIAP has provided interpreters these past few years.

This issue of *Interpretasia* covers lessons learned from the AIDS Conference held in Bangkok in July and discusses professionalism as defined by professional conference interpreters.

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ACCESS FOR ALL

Thailand hosts the biennial International AIDS Conference

by Jean-Pierre Allain

From 11 to 16 July 2004, 20,000 participants from all over the world gathered in Bangkok for the 15th International AIDS Conference, organised by the International AIDS Society (IAS), the Thai Government and UNAIDS. The venue, Bangkok's Impact Convention Centre, was well chosen to provide access to all delegates, as it offers dozens of meeting rooms, offices and several large exhibition spaces, in addition to numerous catering outlets, wide access roads and plenty of parking space.

Simultaneous interpretation

To allow participants of different languages access to information and to the personal experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS, a total of 34 interpreters were provided by CIAP and Walter Keiser, the consultant interpreter¹ who had organised interpretation for previous AIDS conferences. Interpretation was offered by IAS at the plenary and scientific sessions from English into French, Chinese, Spanish and Thai. In addition, there were meetings organised by ministries and agencies in Thailand with some interpretation between Thai and English.



Providing quality simultaneous interpretation cost-effectively was no easy matter. Given the large number of participants, it was considered impractical and too costly to distribute headsets to all of them. In the plenary hall, all speakers were required to speak in English so that only



Children at the AIDS Conference, Bangkok, July 2004

¹ Walter Keiser, based in Geneva, is a member and co-founder of AIIC

delegates who did not understand English needed to get headsets to listen to interpretation in Chinese, French, Spanish and Thai. Although this option provided some savings by reducing the number of interpreters and headsets required, a large number of participants felt that they were being denied access as they did not speak English and were unable to share their experiences and communicate their concerns in their own language.

Plenary sessions were held in the Arena, a covered sports stadium with a capacity of 14,000 people, which was packed to the roof at the opening and closing ceremonies and at some other plenary sessions. The interpreters' booths were placed inside two of the VIP rooms high up in the stands, very far from the rostrum. Two TV monitors were installed in front of each booth, one showing the speaker and the other the screen projections in the hall, to provide the interpreters with a view of some of the proceedings. While this is not ideal, it is certainly better than having no view at all.

The second largest meeting room with 1,400 seats was used for scientific sessions. Working conditions here were excellent, with the interpreters sitting in mobile booths at the back of the room facing the rostrum and two large screens. AV-Teknik Event Engineering Sweden AB did a commendable job installing and operating the visual and sound technology in all the venue areas, a huge undertaking. Braehler ICS Singapore provided the simultaneous interpretation system, while Conven-Tech Co. Ltd., Bangkok (Braehler's representative in Thailand) supplied the booths and handled the distribution and collection of headsets.

Organising teams

The challenge for CIAP was to arrange for interpretation at some 15 symposia and satellite sessions during the conference, each organised by a different company, NGO or UN agency. These were two-hour sessions held at lunch time or in the evening, over five days. Some also required interpretation into Russian and Arabic. CIAP provided the SI equipment and headsets for each meeting, including the technicians and staff to distribute and collect headsets.

CIAP's consultant interpreter worked for many weeks, corresponding

The conference would have provided greater 'access for all' had the participants been able to speak their own language with simultaneous interpretation into English as well.

the very last minute, requiring a constant recalculation of costs. There was also the arduous task of collecting payment from individual meeting organisers, each of whom have their own financial rules for invoicing and payment.

The consultant interpreter also had to ensure that documents for each meeting were given to the interpreters, so that they would at least be familiar with the issues to be discussed. This is an essential prerequisite for quality interpretation.

Lessons learned

At an event where many delegates do not speak English there must be clear signs indicating into which languages interpretation will be provided. Headsets were to be collected and returned at dedicated, centralised desks but, since these were far from the meeting rooms,

many journalists and participants complained that there was no interpretation.

Moreover, while it is true that the plenary sessions may be conducted in English only with interpretation into other languages, the conference would have provided greater 'access for all' had the participants been able to speak their own language with simultaneous interpretation into English as well in all meetings. Communication and understanding

among nations and peoples can only be improved if *all* delegates are allowed to participate equally.

Despite the difficulties mentioned, there were no hitches with interpretation. Organisers, equipment providers, staff and interpreters all cooperated towards a successful event. ■

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Protesters at the AIDS Conference in Bangkok

with each meeting organiser, ascertaining exact needs, submitting quotations and coordinating the equipment needs with Braehler, AV-Teknik and ConvenTech. The elusive goal was to come up with one consolidated cost estimate for one additional team of interpreters that could service all these disparate meetings and to share out the total cost fairly among the various organisers. This was all the more difficult as requests for interpretation came in at different times and even at

INTERPRETING: PERSPECTIVES ON A PROFESSION

by Luigi Luccarelli

Being a conference interpreter does not mean that I interpret only for “conferences”. Under the influence of wise teachers, I have always understood simultaneous and consecutive to be commensurable techniques for the practice of interpreting in general. After all interpreting is the key word, and whether I find myself in an interpreter booth, at a seminar table or before a banquet hall crowd, I think of myself simply as an interpreter.

Much of what the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) — to which all CIAP members belong — has accomplished over the years is profoundly relevant to interpreting in the broadest sense. Ethics offers a perfect example and the founders of our association were wise in placing professional secrecy at the heart of our rules. I once had the opportunity to experience first hand the significance of this. I was approached by a law firm about an assignment, and after we agreed on the provisions of my contract, I was asked if I had any problem in signing a confidentiality agreement. “None at all,” I responded. “In fact, my professional association has a clause on secrecy in its Code of Ethics.” I could virtually hear the lawyer’s ears prick up as he asked me to fax him a copy. It wasn’t long before he called back to say that, having read the AIIC Code of Ethics, he did not consider it necessary for us to enter into any other agreement on confidentiality.

Internal regulation, with ethical tenets at the core, is a major component of professionalization in any field. Any erosion of essential ethical principles is thus a move toward *deprofessionalization*. As interpreters, we must maintain our fundamental precepts for the good of all, including our clients, and AIIC does well to emphasize that anyone applying for membership makes a commitment to abide by them just by signing the application form.

When I talk to students and others interested in becoming interpreters, I often hear that the desire to help others communicate is one of their principal motives. When I talk to colleagues, I commonly hear that among their most vivid memories are assignments in which they felt that the dream of being cultural intermediaries came true. I know that such memories take pride of place in my mental scrapbook.



The interpreter with Prime Minister Aznar of Spain and President Bill Clinton of the USA

Re-reading our Code of Ethics I find many elements that implicitly aim at assuring communication. Confidentiality fosters trust, so necessary to good communication. The integrity (and yes, even transparency) underlying the commitment not to accept work for which one is not qualified or more than one assignment for overlapping periods of time also engenders trustworthiness. Elements on collegiality help to weave the fabric of team work which is so essential to our trade and has helped make interpreting a very egalitarian profession in a world where hierarchy usually reigns.

Good communication is also dependent on the qualifications of the interpreter (thus the importance of professionalization). And it will be contingent upon the conditions in which competent interpreters work (thus the inclusion of a clause on working conditions in our code). I believe that interpreters must work with the aim of assuring inclusive communication and that most of our employers ask us to do exactly that. As intermediaries, we stand between people to connect, not to separate, them. I would like to think that we will work in situations in which communication leading to greater understanding is possible, if in no other way than by the transmission of accurate, complete and un-coerced information.

At times we can broaden understanding by tossing aside qualifiers which seem to imply specialization but are often no more than sales gimmicks. A *bilateral* interpreter, for example, would seem to offer the advantage of working for both sides or between two languages — but what interpreter does not? *Instantaneous interpretation* would seem to be the latest advanced technique, but conference interpreters have been doing **simultaneous** interpretation ever since the Nuremberg trials. *Accredited* interpreters would seem to come with a guarantee (although “*accredited* for what?” would always be an appropriate question), but were they reviewed by peers with deep roots in the profession or just shined-up by a commercial entity intent on marketing them?

In the end *interpreting* and *interpreter* are the essential words, no matter what adjective may precede them, and I hope that they will always evoke an image of *communication* and *communicator* in those who hear them. Professional conference interpreters need no further adjectives to denote expertise. Professional consultant interpreters can help guide you to them and ensure you get the communication you need. ■

Luigi Luccarelli is a freelance interpreter and interpreter trainer. He is also Editor-in-Chief of *Communicate!*, a web-based journal on the practice of interpreting sponsored by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (www.aiic.net). This article was adapted from his column in the Sept/Oct 2004 issue of the magazine.

RECENT MEETINGS FOR WHICH CIAP ORGANISED INTERPRETATION

Codex CCMMP Meeting,
Auckland, April 2004



International Conference of New and Restored Democracies, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, September 2003

World Bank Conference on Scaling Up
Poverty Reduction, Shanghai, May 2004



APEC CEO Summit, Bangkok, October 2003



Interpreters team at ICOM 2004 Seoul, October 2004,
organised by ConvEx Korea, Inc.



ITTO/FAO Consultation on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, Cebu City, March 2003



Third World Water Forum, Kyoto, March 2003



UITP Metropolitan Railways Committee, Hong Kong, February 2004

SOME INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY

2004

Seoul	Oct	ICOM - Intl. Council of Museums General Assembly
Shanghai	Oct	7th Ministerial Meeting of the International Network on Cultural Policy
Beijing	Sep	World Economic Forum (WEF) - China Business Summit
Bangkok	Jul	15th International AIDS Conference
Bangkok	Jul	Global Fund Partnership Forum
Seoul	Jun	WEF - Asia Strategic Insight Roundtable 2004
Hong Kong	May	CISAC - International Confederation of Societies of Authors and Composers Assembly
Shanghai	May	World Bank Conference on Scaling Up Poverty Reduction
Hong Kong	May	UITP Metropolitan Railways Committee
Kuala Lumpur	Apr	ITTO Sustainable Management of Forests - Private Sector Experiences
Chiangmai	Mar	WTO - World Tourism Organisation - Committee on Sustainable Development of Tourism
Cebu City	Mar	ITTO/FAO Consultation on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management
Kyoto	Feb	Intl. Symposium on Monotheism, Peace and War

Delegates at the PAN International Strategy Meeting, Penang, March 2004 ▼



▲ A Maori welcome at a Codex Meeting in Wellington, March 2002

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WHAT IS AIIC?

Founded in 1953, **AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters)** is the only worldwide association of professional conference interpreters. AIIC has over 2,600 members in 89 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, the World Bank, NATO, the European Union and many business organisations as the only representative of professional interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpretation.

AIIC sets professional standards and working conditions accepted worldwide. Together with the International Organisation for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical and Health Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpretation and ISO 4043 for mobile booths for use in conference rooms without built-in facilities.



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WHAT IS CIAP?

Conference Interpreters Asia Pacific (CIAP) is a network of consultant interpreters, all members of AIIC, who live and work in the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1990, CIAP provides teams of conference interpreters for simultaneous and consecutive interpretation at meetings of all sizes.

Its members advise conference organisers on language requirements, choice of conference venues, technical equipment, seating arrangements and so on, and recruit teams of interpreters suited to the needs of a conference. CIAP also provides written translations of conference documents.

CIAP associates can provide simultaneous interpretation teams for English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and other languages.



CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS ASIA PACIFIC

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*There are CIAP Associates in several cities in Asia-Pacific.
For the consultant interpreter nearest to you, please see the
list of names and contact numbers provided in this issue.
Website: www.ciap.net*