

INTERPRETASIA

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EDITORIAL

Dear Reader

The key to the success of a multilingual conference lies in securing professional interpreters with the requisite experience and training (see *INTERPRETASIA* No. 2, June 1994).

But smooth and comfortable communication also depends on a second component: proper equipment and skilled technicians.

This third issue of *INTERPRETASIA - the CIAP Bulletin* is devoted to the technical "do"s and "don't"s of planning simultaneous interpretation for a successful convention.

With our best wishes for your event.

The Editors

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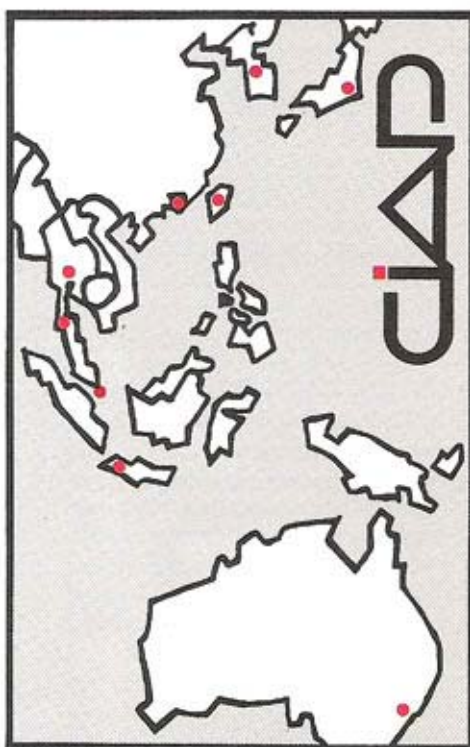
TO BUILD ...
OR NOT TO BUILD?

Jean-Pierre Allain presents the interpreter's views on SI booths

What exactly is an interpreter's booth? What goes into its design? Architects and builders of conference centres or conference rooms frequently have to tackle such questions.

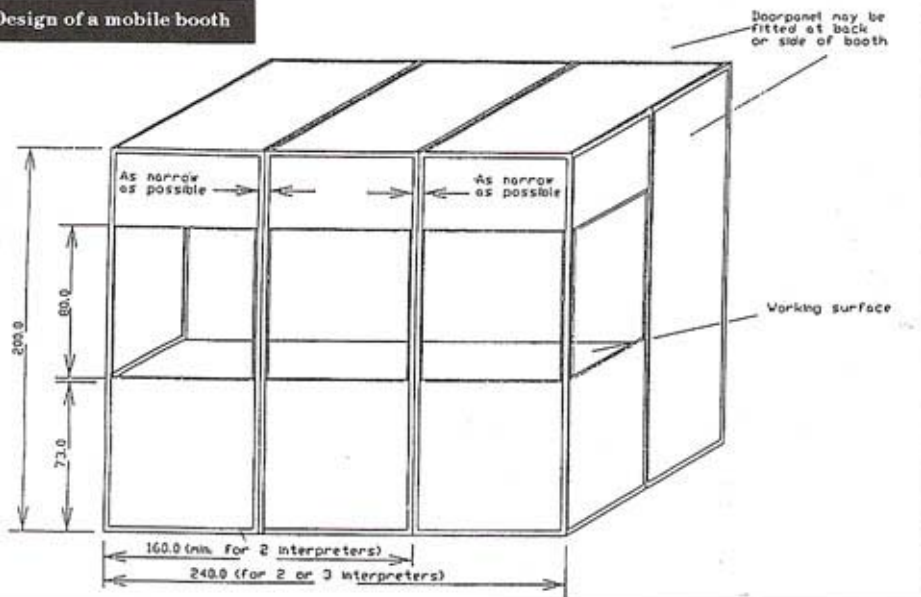
An interpreter's booth is the work place where a conference interpreter performs his profession. Conference halls typically have several fixed booths, usually located at the back or the side of the hall. They are designed to meet three requirements: (a) to provide efficient two-way communication between interpreters and delegates; (b) to create a comfortable working environment enabling the interpreters to maintain the intense concentration required for their work; (c) to ensure acoustic separation between the different languages spoken simultaneously;

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (*aiic*), through its



Technical Committee, has worked together with the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) to develop world "Standards for Booths for Simultaneous

Design of a mobile booth



Interpretation" ISO 2603 for fixed booths, and ISO 4043 for mobile booths. It has also assisted the International Electrotechnical Committee to define Standard IEC 914 for simultaneous interpretation equipment. These standards are now widely used by manufacturers of equipment and booths, as well as by builders of convention facilities.

Fundamental requirements

The minimum size of an interpreter's booth should be 3.20 metres wide, 2.40 metres deep and 2.30 metres high. It is of paramount importance for the interpreters to see the rostrum, the screen and the speaker in order to follow the proceedings and understand what is said. If the rostrum and screen are more than 30 metres away from the booths, TV monitors may be required in the booths to complement the direct view. Did you know that it is very hard to see a speaker at a rostrum or a screen more than 30 metres away? Or that it is almost impossible to follow a speaker talking about slides or diagrams on a screen set at an angle of more than 45 degrees from the booth the interpreter is in? These are details often unknown to most architects and builders, who have never been inside or used an interpreter's booth.

Conference interpreters do very demanding and concentrated intellectual work. Therefore, they need a constant supply of fresh but not cold air to get enough oxygen to their brains. The size, and particularly, the height of the booth is important to ensure an adequate volume of air. There should be windows between contiguous booths so that interpreters can communicate with their colleagues in the other booths. Lighting is very important too: small spotlights with dimmers focused on the working surface are useful; bright light from the ceiling is not. The table should be at a normal height of 73 cm and must be large enough to accommodate the interpreters' control panel plus a lot of conference papers.

Of equal importance is the sound quality interpreters receive. Any word or sound not heard may result in missing the meaning of part of the



Side view of a booth (Audipack)

speech and interrupting the train of thought. Interpreters need to receive clear sound, slightly louder than normal, without any interruptions or distractions.

Mobile versus fixed booths

Mobile booths have the advantage that they can be set up in any room and in different positions according to the room layout. One of their drawbacks, though, is that sound insulation is not as good as in fixed booths and they are usually smaller. Fixed booths are definitely preferable in rooms that are frequently used for meetings with simultaneous interpretation.

The *aiic* Technical Committee has assisted planners and builders of conference centres for several decades. For instance, the brand new state-of-the-art Suntec City Convention and Exhibition Centre in Singapore was advised by a member of the Committ-

ee on the location and characteristics of booths to be installed for the new convention facilities. He suggested that mobile booths and equipment be used on the very rare occasions that simultaneous interpretation would be needed in the large hall that can seat 12,000 persons. Fixed booths and equipment could be built into the many other smaller meeting rooms that the new centre will provide. This would save a lot of money and architectural headaches.

For optimal facilities, contact *aiic* members

In most cases, however, *aiic* members are not informed of plans to build a new convention centre or conference rooms in a hotel. Whenever they know about such plans, they will approach the owners, builders or planners of the new venue and offer *aiic*'s services in the planning of interpretation facilities.

Planners of convention centres or conference facilities in hotels in the Asia-Pacific region are invited to contact the *aiic* Technical Committee through the Editorial Office of this publication. Our aim is to help build optimal facilities to attract more conferences while providing interpreters with a work environment where they can perform at their best. After all, who knows best about the needs of an operating theatre than the surgeon?



CONFERENCE VENUES

HONG KONG AS A MULTILINGUAL CONFERENCE VENUE

Socorro Browning reports why the future looks brighter than ever

Surprisingly, perhaps, Hong Kong did not become a venue for major multilingual conferences until the early '90s. Many meetings had been held there, but few required simultaneous interpretation

By 1989 Hong Kong already offered all the facilities expected of any major modern conference city in a rich, multi-cultural Asian setting; yet something seemed to be lacking. Was it that there were not enough meeting venues, hotels were expensive, and professional interpretation services were an unknown quantity with which conference organisers did not want to deal? Or was it that Hong Kong was not a member in its own right of many intergovernmental and other international organisations, and therefore could not host conferences?

With the completion of the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, various other conference centres planned and 1997 approaching, members of the Hong Kong convention industry started to make a concerted effort to attract more events to Hong Kong. The authorities also removed uncertainties about the future of professional organisations with the promulgation of the Basic Law for the future HK Special Administrative Region. This law states that *professional bodies in Hong Kong can continue to be members of international organisations, participate in their activities, and invite international conferences to take place in Hong Kong.*

The Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA) successfully initiated several measures to enhance the city's ability to serve the convention and exhibition market, acting as a clearing house for local associations with little experience of the international conference circuit. Bidding for international meetings can be daunting! Furthermore, the availability of professional conference interpreters came to be recognised as an essential component in the effort to attract multilingual meetings to Hong Kong.



The HKCEC extension

The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre: an immediate success

The purpose-built Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, officially opened at the end of 1988, provides comprehensive and flexible facilities to accommodate conventions of any size from 10 to 8,000 participants. It has two main halls of around 9,000 sq. metres each, plus convention rooms and theatres. The Hong Kong government recently allocated HK\$4.8 billion to extend the HKCEC, which will more than double its capacity by mid-1997.

The Hong Kong Cultural Centre: easily accessible

The Hong Kong Cultural Centre, where two large theatres seat 2,100 and 1,700 people respectively, offers a number of highly versatile halls equipped for a wide range of gatherings, and includes simultaneous inter-

pretation (SI) facilities. Centrally located on the Kowloon Peninsula, the Centre is within easy walking distance of several first class hotels.

Pacific Place: the "Place to be"

When Pacific Place opened in 1990, its promoters claimed that it was *"the place to be"*. It turned out to also be *"the place"* for conferences and meetings.

It does not have its own fixed SI equipment, but mobile booths and excellent equipment can easily be hired in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Stadium and Sports House: a super-venue

The re-development of the Hong Kong Stadium, which seats 40,000 people, and the construction of the Sports House next to it, have provided the territory with a new super-venue, which is used for sports, concerts, live mass performances and meetings.

Facilities at the Sports House include a lecture theatre and meeting rooms of various sizes, some of which are provided with fixed SI equipment.

The Future

Twenty major conventions have already been confirmed post June 1997. As a senior government official said: *"to actually experience Hong Kong does a great deal to dispel the notion that 1997 is a full-stop. It isn't; it's just a comma. What better way of convincing people of this than encouraging them to come here for tangible evidence of the continuing success of Hong Kong as a major international city?"* □



A conference room at Pacific Place

CIAP has been associated with nearly all the major multilingual conferences held in Hong Kong during the last few years

GEARING UP FOR YOUR MEETING

Simultaneous interpretation (SI) equipment is usually hired separately from the interpretation services. The following points will help you ensure that the equipment you hire is adequate:

- To avoid technical hitches, your equipment supplier should provide the **whole system**, including all microphones, amplifiers and receivers with headsets. Hotels usually offer meeting rooms equipped with flip charts, a slide projector and hotel microphones **free of charge**, which is fine for single language meetings. But for multilingual meetings, this can lead to problems, as hotel microphones feed into an amplifier that is usually not compatible with SI systems.
- The equipment supplier should provide **experienced technicians** to operate the system **throughout** the conference rather than leave it in the hands of untrained operators. The technician must have a full view of the room and be easily accessible to the interpreters in case of difficulty.
- To enable speakers to move away from the rostrum, e.g. to show slides or transparencies, a **lapel or neck microphone** should always be provided. Ideally, to encourage discussion, there should be at least one microphone for every two delegates to avoid loss of time and confusion passing microphones around.
- There must be **as many receivers as there are delegates**. The receivers should be distributed **before** the meeting starts to allow



all participants to speak any of the official languages, and avoid a general stampede for receivers when someone speaks an unusual language. Some all-too-frequent communication breakdowns occur when:

- after a long and interesting speech, the speaker eagerly invites questions, only to find he cannot understand them because he has no receiver. By the time a receiver is found and tuned, the dynamics of the discussion are flat;
- nervous or shy participants cannot operate the microphones and give up, discouraging others;
- hostesses take too long to arrive with microphones and impatient participants do without, or the mike comes on in mid-sentence, which can be misleading;
- inexperienced technicians unwittingly exclude the rostrum or

panel from the wired "loop", so the speaker and panelists cannot hear the interpretation.

- Make sure you have the **right number of booths**. The rule of thumb is: number of booths = number of official languages, including English. A meeting with English, French, Spanish and Arabic, for example, will require four booths. Booths should meet international standards particularly for **ventilation and lighting** and should be positioned so that the interpreters can see the rostrum and the screen.
- Each booth must have one or more interpreter consoles, with individual controls for the microphone, and a headset and small reading lamp for each interpreter. Each interpreter has a different hearing level, and should be able to adjust his/her own volume independently with sufficient leeway to increase it if required. Please remember that there are always at least two interpreters per booth.



CIAP associate, M.C. Streuli (right) working with C. van der Meulen

The **Consultant Interpreter** will be pleased to discuss all details with you. Interpreters enjoy their work and are keen to help. But without a reliable SI system, there is precious little they can do. Try asking a broker to work without a phone and screen! CIAP consultant interpreters are happy to recommend SI equipment suppliers in Asia, since the team's performance depends on the quality of the equipment and the skill and experience of the technicians.□

Adapted from the "aie checklist for hiring SI equipment"

SOME RECENT MEETINGS FOR WHICH CIAP HAS ORGANISED TEAMS OF INTERPRETERS

5 CIAP associates: from left: M. Pastor, S. Tejpar-Dang, C. Pouget-Alderton, J.P. Allain, S. Browning



Bandung	Ministerial Meeting of the NAM Coordinating Bureau
Bandung	Commemoration of 40th Anniversary of Asia-Africa Conf.
Singapore	ISO Technical Committee on Lifts
Kuala Lumpur	Bausch & Lomb Contact Lens Symposium
Bangkok	World Forum on Drug Demand Reduction Strategies
Singapore	42nd IOMTR Congress
Macao	Autologous Blood Transfusion Seminar
Beijing	Polmet '94 : Pollution in Metropolitan Environment
Tokyo	XIXth IOSCO Annual Conference
Singapore	World Economic Forum
Beijing	Pacific Rim Forum
Bali	NAM Ministers of Agriculture Conference
Hong Kong	UITP Subcommittee on Electrical Installations
Kuala Lumpur	International Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect
Jakarta	NAM Ministerial Conference on Debt Issues
Hanoi	Global Leprosy Elimination Meeting
Hong Kong	Conference on Television Markets in Asia
Bali	International Apparel Federation Conference
Hong Kong	Asia-Pacific Seminar on Public Toilets
Bangkok	French Regional Seminar on Roads
Bali	New York Life International Sales Conference
Hong Kong	Insolvency and Banking Law Seminar
Hong Kong	Swire Pacific Group Press Conference
Hong Kong	TRANSDELTA : Pearl River Delta Conference
Hong Kong	Cathay Pacific Press Conference



CIAP associate R. Setton (2nd right) with fellow interpreters at NAM meeting in Bali

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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 world-wide association of professional conference interpreters. has over 2,500 members in 65 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, 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 interpreting.

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

ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONALE DES
INTERPRÈTES DE CONFÉRENCE **aiic** INTERNATIONAL
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CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

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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. CIAP was established in 1990 to provide conference interpretation services to the growing conference industry in the region.

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 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 eight cities in Asia-Pacific. For the consultant interpreter nearest to you, please consult the list of names and contact numbers provided in this issue.