

## Translation and interpreting conference in Australia hits 25-year mark

The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) is the national association for the translating and interpreting profession. It was founded in 1987, and on December 1-3, 2012, in Sydney, it celebrated 25 years of representing the translation and interpretation industry in Australia. For the occasion, more than 300 delegates gathered from every part of Australia.



Attendees gathered for the biennial AUSIT conference in December 2012.

International guests and speakers also joined, turning this event into an international meeting place.

And AUSIT indeed proved to be a meeting place for all professionals involved in the industry, gathering an eclectic crowd of people with diverse experiences and interests. Many facets of the translation and interpreting world were covered during the conference.

Although not traditionally involved in the field, the keynote speaker proved an opportune choice as a preamble to the

conference. Don Watson, an Australian national figure known for being former Prime Minister Paul Keating's speechwriter and adviser, talked about the decay of public language and set the tone for the whole conference by highlighting some of the more abused words of today's management lingo. He pointed out that language can have terrible consequences when turned into abstraction, which was illustrated by a dramatic incident in the Australian state of Victoria in 2009. While a dangerous

bushfire was developing, the authorities used ambiguous descriptions that failed to convey the level of danger the population was in. Many deaths could have been prevented if the warnings had been made in plain, understandable language.

The eclectic mix of presentations, ranging from community interpreting, to translation education, Australian Sign Language, translation technology, subtitling, literary translation

and crowdsourcing, meant that there was something for everyone. While some attended a session on the translation of Russian addresses in English, their Japanese colleagues were simultaneously learning about Japanese complex sentences. Jost Zetzsche also joined in remotely to encourage translators to claim the machine translation (MT) territory. Due to an ever-increasing production of content we will soon be facing a shortage of translators. Therefore, unless translators embrace technology, they will not be able to cope with the high demand. In short, there is only one impossible response to MT: ignore it! Some of the main presentations were consecutively interpreted into Spanish, German and Chinese by volunteer interpreters and students.

The final plenary sessions looked into the future of our industry. While Renato Beninatto gave us his forecast for the next 25 years to come, Aline Remael from Artesis University College introduced an absorbed audience to audiovisual translation and "media accessibility" or translating movies for the blind and visually impaired.

What to remember about the Australian translation and interpreting community is that it is made of amazing people who make cross-cultural communication possible. With 2% market size in Oceania, it is a small community, but "small is beautiful" to quote Sam Berner.

A mix of thought-provoking presentations and language-based jokes, the AUSIT Conference was a success. The next conference will be held in December 2014.

— Sarah Forget

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