

AUSIT

Volume 32 < Number 4 > SUMMER 2024-25

INTOUCH

MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS



AUSIT's new National President

... presents his strategic vision for the organisation
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AUSIT Translation Competition

Meet 2024's winners
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AUSIT National Conference 2024

A report on the T&I industry's peak event of the year
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Metacognitive Translator Training

Book review
< page 9

Plus more ...

... including the Paul Sinclair Award for Outstanding Contribution to AUSIT 2024; another AUSIT Stalwart: our third National President, Mary Gurgone; and profiles of two more AUSIT members

< In Touch

Summer 2024-25

Volume 32 number 4

The submission deadline for the Autumn 2025 issue is 20 February
Read our [Submission Guidelines](#) [here](#)

T&I editor

Hayley Armstrong
intouch@ausit.org

Content editor + design and production Helen Sturgess

editor@ausit.org

Cover image

Attendees enjoy refreshments during a break at the AUSIT National Conference 2024 (see pages 6-8)

AUSIT contacts

Suite 154
16 Beenleigh Redland Bay Road
Loganholme
QLD 4129
Telephone: 1800 284 181
email: admin@ausit.org

www.ausit.org

Access *In Touch* online:

www.ausit.org/in-touch-magazine/

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders past and present.

< Editorial Committee

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Letter from the editors

In our last issue of 2024, we bring you:

- a report on AUSIT's 37th National Conference (pages 6-8, plus see cover and photos below)
- our new National President's strategic vision for AUSIT's future (pages 4-5)
- a seventh 'AUSIT Stalwarts' interview: the

organisation's third National President, Mary Gurgone (pages 14-17)

- a selection of T&I-related summer reading tips (pages 12-13)
 - a new perspective on the role of metacognitive skills in translator training (page 11)
- ... and more – and we wish you all a very enjoyable summer,

Hayley and Helen



Some highlights from the Dinner and Awards evening at the AUSIT National Conference 2024:

Organising Committee members Fatih Karakas and Jess Shepherd did a great job as emcees for the evening; spot 'Miss AUSIT 2024' in the conga line (for an ...



... explanation go to page 7, column 1 – 'Conference Dinner'); and this group from Aboriginal Interpreting WA was one of many to gather in front of the AUSIT logo for a souvenir photo



Contributions welcome

Do you have a T&I-related experience, idea or tip you'd like to share with your peers, a book you'd like to review, or ... whatever it is, get 'in touch' and we'll take it from there:

- take a look at our [Submission Guidelines](#) *
- email any questions to the editors or an Editorial Committee member *
- check the submission date for the next issue *
- go for it!

* this page, first column



Member organisation Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs International Federation of Translators



News in brief

(a review of T&I-related items that have appeared in the media since the last issue of *In Touch* was compiled):

20 Sep: Aboriginal interpreters want greater role abc.net.au/listen

25 Sep: Reddit is bringing AI-powered, automatic translation to dozens of new countries [Yahoo! Finance](http://Yahoo!Finance)

25 Sep: Aussie Influencer's Fijian Tattoo Translation Leaves Her In Tears 10play.com.au

25 Sep: Meta will use AI to create lip-synched translations of creators' Reels [Yahoo! News](http://Yahoo!News)

26 Sep: Research shows 94% of event planners consider AI for translation itbrief.com.au

30 Sep: GOOGLE TRANSLATE AND THE FUTURE OF THE ROMANI LANGUAGE thenorwichradical.com

02 Oct: Lost in translation: Entering the world of Murakami miscellanynews.org

04 Oct: Inuit MP at centre of language row in Danish parliament northweststar.com.au

08 Oct: Words of wisdom: Live caption translator Sunflower AI wins Best New Idea in Best in Tech Awards startupdaily.net

10 Oct: Multilingual NSW Academy launch invests in State's diversity nsw.gov.au/media-releases

11 Oct: The Vegetarian by Han Kang: A Nobel Prize, a Rochester press, and a translation controversy rochester.edu

16 Oct: Han Kang's Nobel win spotlights role of translation in expanding literary horizons koreatimes.co.kr

21 Oct: How does abortion translate? Ballot measures are a challenge for interpreters [Arizona Capitol Times](http://ArizonaCapitolTimes)

21 Oct: With AI translation tools so powerful, what is the point of learning a language? [The Conversation](http://TheConversation)

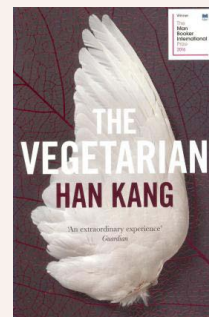
24 Oct: Home Affairs personal data compromised in ZircoDATA hack cyberdaily.au

27 Oct: Australia grapples with Auslan interpreter shortage amid calls for

government to do more to incentivise profession abc.net.au/news

28 Oct: Here are the winners of the 2024 National Translation Awards lithub.com/

4 Nov: Dutch publisher to use AI to translate 'limited number of books' into English theguardian.com/books



4 Nov: Translator of Korean literature on the tricky task of conveying writers' words in English scmp.com/lifestyle

Image: the cover of Deborah Smith's English translation of Han Kang's Nobel Prize-winning novel, *The Vegetarian*

11 Nov: The people cracking the world's toughest climate words bbc.com/future

11 Nov: 'It gets more and more confused': can AI replace translators? theguardian.com

12 Nov: Phoning It In brownpoliticalreview.org/

14 Nov: Present, future of domestic literature presented to foreign media korea.net

18 Nov: Concern Over Reported Artificial Intelligence Use to Translate Books pen.org/press-release

19 Nov: Sweden's Nuanxed Promises Fast, Accurate AI Book Translations publishersweekly.com

20 Nov: Microsoft Teams gets interpreter tool that uses AI to clone your voice, make you speak foreign languages financialexpress.com

20 Nov: Microsoft's AI language interpreter could be boon for cybercriminals san.com

21 Nov: Taiwan novel makes history winning US National Book Award en.rti.org.tw/news

23 Nov: Surrealism, cafes and lots (and lots) of cats: why Japanese fiction is booming theguardian.com/books

25 Nov: Norway launches Jon Fosse prize for literary translators theguardian.com/books

5 Dec: Court interpreting: Lords committee urges Mahmood to halt procurement process lawgazette.co.uk

11 Dec: 'It's Just Language': UK Lords Blast Lack of AI Use in Court Interpreting slator.com

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Our Profession, Our Future: A New Vision for AUSIT

Dear Member,

As your new National President, I want to ask you something: Why did you become a translator and/or interpreter? Beyond the technical skills, what really drives you?

For most of us, we love our job because we enable understanding across cultures. We enjoy what we do, but it's tough work sometimes, and we often face assignments alone.

This is where AUSIT comes in. AUSIT is so much more than just a collection of committees – we're a *community* united by a shared passion, and dedicated to maintaining the highest standards in T&I.

When you participate in your professional association, you're not just supporting an organisation. You are among colleagues who really get what you do and what challenges you face, and you have the rare chance to play a part in shaping the future of your profession.

But I have some bad news: our profession is not in a good state. The challenges we are facing now are huge and complex – there is the disruption of the sector caused by the advent of AI, there are the tough working conditions and stagnant pay, and there is the fact that not enough people know what we do and why it's important.

We need each and every translator and interpreter to step up to these challenges now. The best way you can help solve these issues is to work with AUSIT. Together we can realise a new vision for the future, by: making our budget more sustainable (Finance); better demonstrating our value among practitioners (Visibility); and perhaps most crucially, building more meaningful relationships with stakeholders (Influence). These three goals make up the strategic vision I have for AUSIT – a vision which I believe is essential for our survival and growth as a profession. Let me explain why.

1. Finance – Investing in AUSIT's Future

The healthier AUSIT's finances are, the better we can serve our members. In the 2023–24 financial year, AUSIT's revenue increased to \$284,313 (8.9% up from the previous year). However, our expenditure rose to \$372,579, resulting in a deficit of \$88,266. Each year the deficit has grown larger.

AUSIT *does* remain financially healthy, with sufficient cash reserves to support its operations. However, an exponentially increasing deficit is not sustainable in the long term.

Cutting costs is one thing, but more importantly, we need to consider how to use our resources more effectively. Every dollar saved or earned directly supports our professional development (PD), advocacy and support services.

Once we balance the budget, we can start thinking about how to best make use of the cash reserves to further the profession. This money, after all, comes from members. In my view, it should be reinvested into the membership.

However, this cannot be done until the deficit is defeated.

How You Can Help Your Local Branch With This

- Suggest new revenue streams or cost-cutting measures.
- Share your experience or expertise in finance.
- Help develop projects with AUSIT that could generate income.



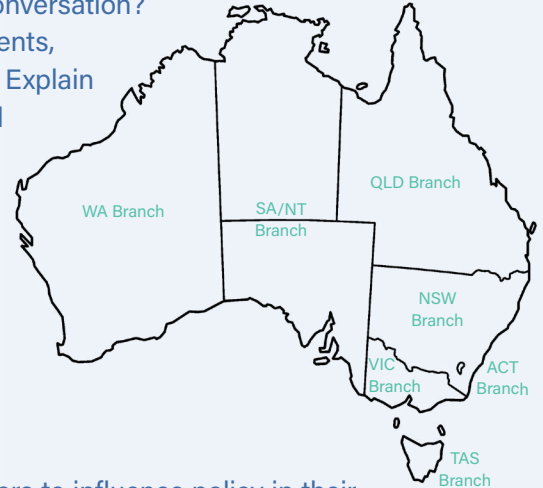
2. Visibility – Bringing AUSIT into the Spotlight

Right now, many T&I practitioners don't fully understand what AUSIT offers them. We need to change this. Some don't see the value of joining a professional association, while others are unaware we even exist. We know many colleagues work in isolation – why not reach out to them and start a conversation?

You could talk about the resources AUSIT provides: PD, networking events, industry updates, and advocacy for better pay and working conditions. Explain that AUSIT isn't just selling a membership, we're offering a professional support system. It's less about value and more about fostering a sense of belonging – and that's something money can't buy.

How You Can Help Your Local Branch With This

- Tell your colleagues about how AUSIT has supported your PD.
- Post about AUSIT events and activities on social media.
- Talk about AUSIT at events attended by translators and interpreters.



3. Influence – Growing AUSIT's Reach

A professional association should be able to use the voice of its members to influence policy in their interests. But despite our incredible members, AUSIT's voice in the industry right now is smaller than it should be, and we're struggling to have the impact we know we're capable of. While other professional bodies command attention and drive change, we're often left on the sidelines.

It's not that our members aren't extraordinary – they are. We simply need more hands on deck. We're a community that's passionate about making a difference, but commitment isn't just about good intentions – it requires action. We need members to build relationships with stakeholders that actually work with T&I practitioners on a daily basis. This is the best way to ensure AUSIT is at the table when decisions are being made that affect our profession.

How You Can Help Your Local Branch With This

- Introduce people who work with T&I practitioners to AUSIT.
- Talk about AUSIT in professional circles and at industry events.
- Take up or create networking opportunities to find new collaborators.

Why You Should Get Involved

This is your opportunity to do something extraordinary – to expand your professional network, gain leadership skills and boost your career. By working with AUSIT, you're part of a community that's reshaping the T&I profession. Every small action creates ripples of change, and we need passionate professionals like you to drive that change.

We do understand, though, that time is precious and life is busy. Whether you can offer a single hour, a valuable contact or a brilliant idea, your contribution matters. Big or small, every input has the potential to create meaningful progress. Think about the diverse ways you can get involved:

- Want to network? Join your local branch committee.
- Tech savvy? Assist with our digital communication strategies.
- Have industry connections? Help build strategic partnerships.
- Got research insights? Contribute to our PD resources.

Your profession needs you. Are you ready to make a difference? Reach out to your local branch today and ask how you can get involved – just click on your branch on the map above to email them.

Our profession is changing. With your help, we can be ahead of that change.

With warmth and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Gene Fordham".

Carl Gene Fordham,
AUSIT National President

AUSIT National Conference 2024

21–23 November, RMIT University (City Campus), Melbourne, on Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung country



There were a record 505 registrations for AUSIT's 37th Annual National Conference – theme: *Linguistic equity and access: translating and interpreting – connecting our communities and the world* – and related events. *In Touch's* Editorial Committee have put together this overview of another highly successful and well attended conference.

photos by Matthew Georges, Encore Collective

DAY 1 (THURSDAY)

The conference, held over three sweltering (≈37 °C) days, was opened by AUSIT's outgoing Acting National President Erika González and RMIT's Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Ralph Horne, with a video welcome from the Honourable Julian Hill MP, Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs.

The three-day program of keynotes, roundtables, presentations, workshops and more explored a wide range of subthemes, from how AI can power information access to educational partnerships and collaborations, and from bridging language diversity via plain language and translation to translation as a creative practice. And it all kicked off even before the opening, with a program of free events: open-to-all language-specific meet-and-greets and an info session by the union that supports T&I industry members, Professionals Australia; plus several workshops reserved for conference attendees.

Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture 2024

This year's JBML – delivered by Ali Mond (Assistant Secretary for Migrant English and Language Services, Dept of Home Affairs) – touched on the activities of the Department and

the T&I sector's issues. What made it special was that Ali shared her personal history. Hearing about her formative years, her family, and where her love for languages and the multicultural society comes from, attendees could truly believe that she cares about our industry, giving us hope for positive collaboration between the T&I sector and the Department in the future.



an insightful and thought-provoking summary of how AI is currently being used in T&I.

Forensic linguist Alex Bowen, Aboriginal Interpreting WA (AIWA) co-Chairs Robert Nanala Tjapaljarri and Valma Banks, and senior T&I practitioner Valda Napurrurla Shannon Warntaparri, co-presenting on 'Understanding our cultural way: Aboriginal interpreting on country with our people and our cultural protocols', welcomed all attendees – whether Indigenous or not – who work in the T&I space. Valda used a particularly striking analogy of the NT's balancing rock formations, Karlu Karlu (the Devil's Marbles), to illustrate how Indigenous T&I practitioners must find a way to balance cultural protocols and AUSIT's Code of Ethics to keep their communities safe.



Welcome Drinks

As usual, it was great to catch up with old T&I friends – and make some new ones – over drinks and canapés on the Thursday evening.

Some of Friday's sessions

The audiovisual stream was particularly well received. All three presenters – Nicholas Angiers (A.I. Subtitle Translation: Pitfalls & Pratfalls),

DAY 2 (FRIDAY)

Keynote speakers

International Keynote Dr Holly Ann Silvestri (head of the T&I program at the University of Arizona and chair of a committee advocating for fair and ethical AI in interpreting), speaking on 'Adoption of AI Principles in Interpreting', gave





Above: Wadaiko Windo taiko drumming ensemble set the pace of Friday evening for attendees, who later took it to the dance floor. Below: outgoing Acting President and Organising Committee Chair Erika González (far right) with the gathering of First Nations practitioners (photo: Lavinia Napaltjarri Heffernan)

Andy Lima (*Creative Synergy: Collaboration between Interpreters and Directors in Film and Audio Production*) and Patricia Roseberg (*Subtitles: A unique approach to translation*) – were very engaging, and there wasn't enough time to get through all the questions!

The short play 'A date with impartiality' – based around the ethical principle of impartiality – was written and performed by Road is Liquorice, a group of practitioners from different disciplines. Featuring characters including 'Impartiality' and 'Advocacy', it was creative, clever and amusing and, for some, a highlight of the conference!

Conference Dinner

Attendees agreed: it was a great night! The entertainment – mesmerising undulations from Turkish belly dancer **Desert Rose**, plus stirring Japanese taiko drumming from **Wadaiko Windo** – followed a meal of top tastes to match the quality of the company around buzzing tables. A fun highlight was the crowning of outgoing **Acting National President Erika González** as **Miss AUSIT 2024** (a reference to the volunteers' sashes)! And as usual, many of us took the chance to let their hair down to the multicultural DJ set (the brief: a song in each language registered!), filling the dance floor with energy and enthusiasm until the evening came to a close.

During dinner, the winners of the **AUSIT Translation Competition 2024** were announced (see page 10).



First Nations practitioner presence

This year's conference saw the highest number of Australian First Nations attendees to date, highlighting the important role they play alongside T&I practitioners for non-native languages. On the Friday, outgoing Acting National President Erika González and her colleagues from RMIT's **Ngarara Willim Centre** hosted them at a special welcome gathering.

DAY 3 (SATURDAY)

Keynote Speaker

Listening to **Susan Greenaway**, a Senior Adviser in the federal Department of Health and Aged Care, speaking on '**Multilingual Health Communications**', NAATI Indigenous Interpreting Project Officer **Lavinia Napaltjarri Heffernan** was struck by the similarity between her and her colleagues' childhood experiences

and those of migrant and refugee children, with both groups growing up interpreting for non-English-speaking relatives.

Some of Saturday's sessions

Although **Wei Teng** – in his exploration of the use of community reviewers in translation processes titled '**Yes. We should work with them, but in what way?**' – made it clear that he had no answers, he struck a chord with translators who have sometimes struggled to find a balance between the reviewers' feedback and requests and their own approaches to translation.

In their session '**Language Services Program Framework Development: lessons learnt**', **Angel Bogičević** and **Melanie Nicholls** strongly recommended to language service providers that they should support the interpreters and translators who they employ or contract to gain NAATI certification.

continued overleaf



AUSIT NEWS (continued)

continued from previous page

AUSIT National Annual General Meeting

The NAGM 2025 took place on the Saturday after the conference closed. The minutes are available on the AUSIT website (Members Only area).



Thank you for making it happen!

On behalf of all the attendees, a huge 'Thank you!' to this year's **Organising Committee (OC)**: Erika González, Jess Shepherd, Fatih Karakas, Elvira Bianchi, Ken Nagato and Karine Bachelier.

The OC, in turn, would like to extend its thanks to **this year's sponsors**, listed **here** on AUSIT's website; to **OzParty Events**, for their professional assistance in delivering the conference; and to the **many AUSIT members who volunteered** to help out in a variety of ways throughout the event.



AUSIT National Conference 2025
will be hosted by the ACT Branch
Watch this space!

Paul Sinclair Award for Outstanding Contribution to AUSIT 2024

AUSIT's prestigious **Paul Sinclair Award** is presented to a member (or group of members) that has 'demonstrated a commitment to high performance and striven for excellence in their activity that has benefited AUSIT' and/or 'displayed leadership' and/or 'been an inspirational role model for the profession.'

This year, it was awarded to **Dr Jim Hlavac**, in recognition of his leadership as Chair of AUSIT's Ethics & Professional Practice Committee since 2021, and his distinguished contribution to T&I scholarship and industry. You can read Jim's full citation **here**. The award was presented to Jim at the National AGM in Melbourne, by our new National President Carl Gene Fordham.



Translating and Interpreting

Are you interested in upgrading your certification level or gaining a new specialisation?

Are you a certified practitioner but never received formal education in Translating & Interpreting?

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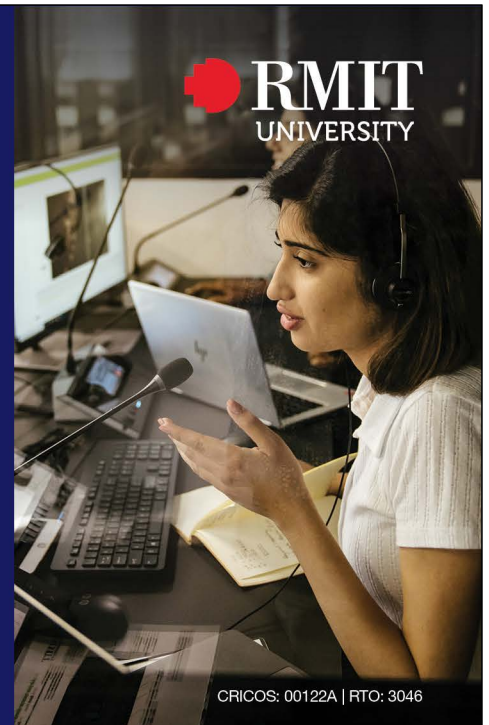
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- taught by experienced practitioners and trainers, NAATI certified conference interpreters and/or AIIC members
- delivered in a purpose-built interpreting lab with soundproof ISO compliant booths
- offered in the following languages paired with English: Chinese (Mandarin), French, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

The curriculum is adapted to the contemporary changing realities of the conference interpreting industry and fully integrates the use of new technologies enhancing the work of interpreters, and also focuses on new modalities (e.g. Remote Simultaneous Interpreting). Are you already a qualified and certified interpreter? Are you interested in taking your skills to the next level? Enquire today about the possibility to receive credits for prior learning and/or experience for up to one year.

For detailed information about our T&I program and courses, please visit:

mq.edu.au/department-of-linguistics/study-with-us/translation-and-interpreting-program

Contact us via email translate@mq.edu.au or call (02) 9850 6782



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AUSIT Translation Competition 2024

Each year, AUSIT stages a translation competition for its student members, plus students and recent graduates of its **Educational Affiliate** institutions.



image: istock.com/mustafahacalaki

The focus languages vary from year to year. Of the five languages proposed this year, the organisers – AUSIT’s Education Committee – were able to go ahead with four: Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.

For Thai there were plenty of volunteer assessors ... but too few contestants, while Mandarin Chinese received so many entries, an ‘honourable mention’ was awarded in addition to a winner.

Congratulations to all five (see below). Their prize is free registration to two AUSIT PD

webinars. We asked each of the five what winning this comp (or in Luna’s case being an ‘honourable mention’) means to them:

Ken Nagato: *Winning this competition boosted my confidence as a newbie practitioner with a little grey hair. It provided valuable recognition and feedback from more experienced peers.*

Seung Eun Yang: *I’d like to dedicate this award to my daughter – my greatest source of support and a fantastic teammate in Australia – who paved the way for my journey into the world of translation.*

Emma Yeung: *I often get imposter syndrome so this was an absolute surprise and a boost to my confidence. I’m ready to do more translations*

and live my dream as an all-round linguist!

Jhonny Pedraza Patino: *This win honours my dedication to the profession and to understanding languages and cultures. It also reflects the exceptional training I received from the T&I program at Macquarie University.*

Luna Lu: *For me, receiving an Honourable Mention encourages me to pursue excellence in translation and reminds me of the power of language to connect people across cultures.*

A huge ‘Thank you!’ to the experienced translators who volunteered to assess the entries in each language.

JAPANESE winner	KOREAN winner	MANDARIN winner	SPANISH winner	MANDARIN honourable mention
KEN NAGATO	SEUNG EUN YANG	EMMA YEUNG	JHONNY PEDRAZA PATINO	LUNA LU

Metacognitive Translator Training: Focus on Personal Resources

by Paulina Pietrzak (2022)

reviewed by Dr Vera YZ Gu

Book cover reproduced
courtesy of Palgrave Macmillan



This highly insightful exploration of translator education introduces a fresh and much-needed perspective on the role of metacognitive skills.

By emphasising personal resources such as self-regulation, self-assessment and self-reflection, Pietrzak redefines the way translators can approach their development and the challenges they face in a fast-evolving industry. This holistic view moves beyond the traditional focus on language and technical skills, acknowledging the critical importance of psychological and cognitive processes in shaping competent, adaptable professionals.

One of the greatest strengths of Pietrzak's work lies in her exploration of metacognitive

awareness and its direct impact on a translator's career progression. She effectively demonstrates that skills like self-reflection and self-regulation not only improve the quality of translation, but also enable translators to adapt to new market realities. This adaptability is increasingly necessary in today's rapidly shifting technological landscape, where machine translation and computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools are becoming ubiquitous. Her analysis of these skills within the context of the broader demands of the industry, including localisation and post-editing, is particularly relevant and timely.

Moreover, Pietrzak's exploratory study on the self-perceived personal resources of translation graduates provides practical insights into the relationship between metacognitive awareness and professional satisfaction. The study's findings suggest that graduates with stronger metacognitive skills are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern translation market, making these skills crucial not only for immediate translation tasks but also for long-term career success. This practical angle strengthens the book's appeal to both scholars and practitioners in the field.

In addition to her theoretical contributions, Pietrzak offers educators practical strategies for integrating metacognitive training into their curricula. She advocates for a transformative learning approach that encourages students to engage deeply with their own learning processes through structured opportunities for self-assessment, monitoring and reflection. This empowers students to take control of their own professional growth and adapt to the increasingly competitive translation market.

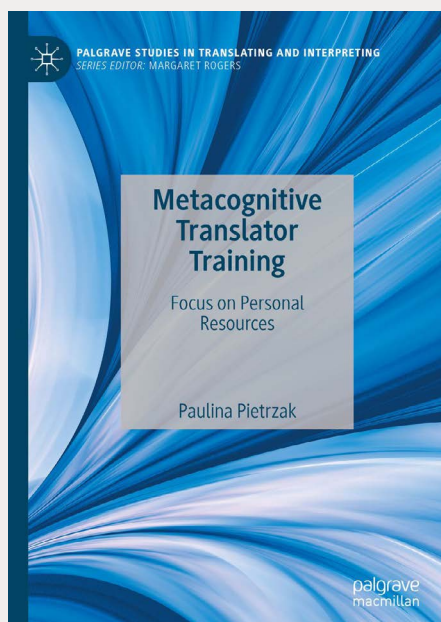
One area for potential improvement could be integrating technology into metacognitive training. While Pietrzak touches on the impact

This holistic view moves beyond the traditional focus on language and technical skills ...

of technology, a deeper exploration of how metacognitive strategies can help translators manage the cognitive demands of machine translation and CAT tools would further enhance the book's relevance. Given the increasing prominence of these tools in the translation industry, understanding how to balance technological efficiency with cognitive strategies could provide even more practical support for both students and professionals.

Overall, *Metacognitive Translator Training* is a thought-provoking and valuable contribution to translation education. Pietrzak's forward-looking approach challenges traditional models and provides both scholars and practitioners with actionable insights on how to develop adaptable, reflective, and self-aware translators in a rapidly evolving field.

Dr Vera YZ Gu holds a PhD in applied linguistics, with a focus on T&I studies, from Monash University. Her research interests lie at the intersection of linguistics, T&I and cognition, with the aim of enhancing T&I pedagogy and practice. Alongside her academic pursuits, Vera is a professional translator and interpreter proficient in Chinese/Mandarin and English, with specialised training in conference interpreting.



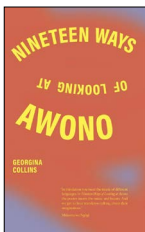
Summer reading suggestions



It's that time of year – soon, most of us will be able to take some time off to relax, refresh and recharge. With this in mind, our **Editorial Committee** has again drawn up a list of T&I-related summer reading. The volumes we've included range from page-turning adventure fiction and dystopian mystery to reflections on the many ways one poem can be translated, and from witty, wise essays to cutting-edge research.

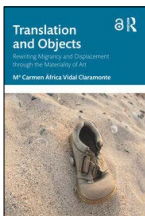
image: Creative Family/Shutterstock.com

... unique ... incendiary ... cross-cultural insight ... lucid insight ... triumphant ... propulsive, beguiling ... taut, highly topical ... powerful ... unputdownable ...



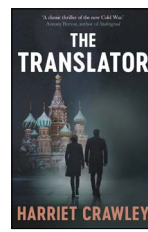
***Nineteen Ways of Looking at Awono* (2024) by Georgina Collins**

A unique anthology centred around a poem by award-winning Cameroonian writer, Jean-Claude Awono – ‘*Le Poème de Yambacongo*’ (Yambacongo’s Poem) – and nineteen very distinct translations of that poem from around the globe. Inspired by *19 Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* by Eliot Weinberger, this collection highlights the diversity of Englishes in existence worldwide, with each translator rendering Awono’s poem in their own form of English including Nigerian Pidgin, Jamaican Creole, Shetlandic, and ‘Sesotho-fied’ English.



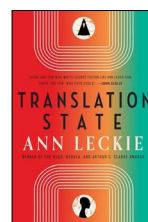
***Translation and Objects: Rewriting Migrancy and Displacement through the Materiality of Art* (2024) by María Carmen África Vidal Claramonte**

This book shows how meaning is displaced through the materiality, texture, smells, sensations, and forms of moving objects.



***The Translator* (2024) by Harriet Crawley**

A taut, highly topical thriller, set in Moscow and centred on a devastating Russian plot to sabotage the undersea communication cables linking the US to the UK. Also, a passionate love story between two people determined to stop this cataclysmic act. Written by an insider: Harriet Crawley lived in Moscow for many years, working in the energy sector at a time of exploding wealth concentration and increasingly violent political repression.



***Translation State* (2023) by Ann Leckie** – shortlisted for the Hugo Award for Best Novel 2024

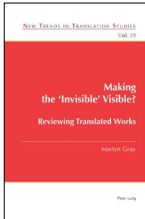
The mystery of a missing translator sets three lives on a collision course that will have a ripple effect across the stars in this powerful novel from a Hugo, Nebula and Arthur C Clarke award-winning author. Masterfully merging space adventure and mystery, and a poignant exploration about relationships and belonging – a triumphant new standalone story set in Leckie’s celebrated Imperial Radch universe.



Some women translators of the past (2024) by Marie Lebert

After being anonymous or hidden behind a male pseudonym, women translators began to sign their translations with their real names in the 16th century. This AUSIT member's e-book contains short biographies of 58 women translators from the 16th to the 20th century. Most of them were also writers, and many were also trailblazers for women's rights, and fought for gender equality and education for all women.

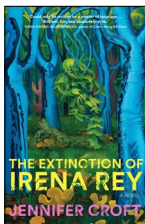
(Marie's article on seven of these translators appeared in our [October issue](#).)



Making the 'Invisible' Visible? Reviewing Translated Works (2024) by Martyn Gray

An examination of some of the criteria against which translated fictional and non-fictional works are assessed. It not only provides a novel cross-cultural insight into reviewing practices, assessing how translations are reviewed differently in the United Kingdom, France and

Germany, but also compares how reviewers for different platforms assess translated works, from a popular platform open to reviews from the general public, through mainstream broadsheets and cultural supplements, to specialised literary magazines.



The Extinction of Irena Rey (2024) by Jennifer Croft

From the International Booker Prize-winning translator and Women's Prize finalist, a propulsive, beguiling novel about eight translators and their search for a world-renowned author who goes missing in a primeval Polish forest. Croft's hilarious, thought-provoking second

outing is a brilliant examination of art, celebrity, the natural world, and the power of language. It is an unforgettable, unputdownable adventure with a small but global cast of characters shaken by the shocks of love, destruction, and creation in one of Europe's last great wildernesses.

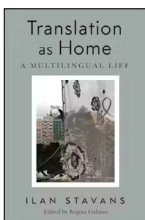
(You can read [Elvira Bianchi's review](#) in our [July issue](#) [here](#).)



Educating Community Interpreters and Translators in Unprecedented Times (2023) edited by Miranda Lai, Oktay Eser and Ineke Crezee

(Co-edited by AUSIT member Miranda Lai.) T&I educators from around the world discuss changes to teaching, assessment and practice that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a comprehensive picture of educators' responses to challenges and opportunities.

(You can read [Ron Witton's review](#) in our [April issue](#) [here](#).)

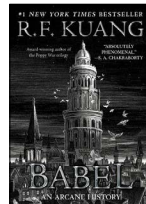


Translation as Home: A Multilingual Life (2024) by Ilan Stavans

A collection of autobiographical essays that eloquently and unequivocally make the case that translation is not only a career, but a way of life, dealing with Stavans's three selves: Mexican, Jewish, and American. The volume presents his recent essays, some previously

unpublished, addressing the themes of language, identity, and translation and emphasising his work in Latin American and Jewish studies. It also features conversations between Stavans and writers, educators, and translators, including Regina Galasso, the author of the introduction and editor of the volume.

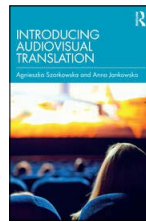
(You can read a [review of this book](#) by [Jemma Ives](#) in our [next issue](#).)



Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution (2022) by R.F. Kuang

– winner, Blackwell's Book of the Year for Fiction (2022) and the Nebula Award for Best Novel (2022), plus a New York Times Bestseller

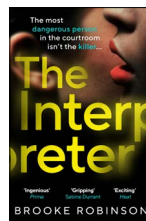
Oxford, 1836. The city of dreaming spires. It is the centre of all knowledge and progress in the world. And at its centre is Babel, the Royal Institute of Translation. The tower from which all the power of the Empire flows. Orphaned in Canton and brought to England by a mysterious guardian, Babel seemed like paradise to Robin Swift. Until it became a prison ... But can a student stand against an empire? An incendiary new novel from an award-winning author about the power of language, the violence of colonialism, and the sacrifices of resistance.



Introducing Audiovisual Translation (2024) by Agnieszka Szarkowska and Anna Jankowska

A user-friendly textbook offering comprehensive insights into all facets of audiovisual translation and media localisation. This comprehensive guide spanning seven chapters begins by introducing audiovisual translation (AVT), goes on to explore the historical backdrop, and

highlights the distinctions from traditional written text translation. The authors expertly navigate you through the primary AVT modalities: interlingual subtitling, dubbing, voice-over, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, live subtitling, and audio description.



The Interpreter (2024) by Brooke Robinson

Single mother Revelle Lee is an interpreter who spends her days translating for victims, witnesses and the accused across London. Only she knows what they're saying. Only she knows the truth. When she believes a grave injustice is about to happen, and a guilty man is going to be labelled innocent, she has the power to twist

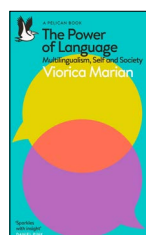
an alibi to get the verdict she wants. She's willing to risk it all to do what's right. But when someone discovers she lied, Revelle finds the cost might be too high ... and she could lose everything, including her son.

(You can read [Daniel Collado Sanz's review](#) in our [April issue](#) [here](#).)



Drunk On All Your Strange New Words (2022) by Eddie Robson

Lydia works as translator for the Logi cultural attaché to Earth. They work well together, even if translating his thoughts into English makes her somewhat wobbly on her feet. She's not the agency's best translator, but what else is she going to do? She has no qualifications and no discernible talent in any other field. So when tragedy strikes and Lydia finds herself at the centre of an intergalactic incident, her future work prospects look dire – that is, if she can keep herself out of jail! But Lydia soon discovers that help can appear from the most unexpected source ...



The Power of Language: Multilingualism, Self and Society (2024) by Viorica Marian

An acclaimed psycholinguist reveals how language shapes our brain – and moulds the way we look at the world. Why should we learn more than one language? Can it change the way we think? Does it have the power to transform how we see the world? Drawing on cutting-edge research and theory, delivered with wit and

lucid insight, psycholinguist Viorica Marian explores the ways in which the mind uses multiple languages and how, in doing so, we can open the doors to unique forms of creativity, brain health and cognitive control.

AUSIT stalwarts: Mary Gurgone

interviewed by Annamaria Arnall



Italian–English T&I practitioner and educator **Mary Gurgone** was involved in the founding of AUSIT. She was our third National President (1991–93), and in 1995, one of the first three members awarded an AUSIT Fellowship. **Annamaria Arnall** – also an AUSIT Fellow and past president – met Mary at the first AUSIT Conference in 2002 (where she greatly admired Mary’s presentation on the future of T&I in the global marketplace). The two have been friends ever since, and met up recently to conduct this interview over a coffee.

Above: Mary (left) and Annamaria conclude their interview with a selfie (City Beach, WA, 24 September 2024)

Annamaria: Mary, I welcome you to this AUSIT Stalwarts interview. Most AUSIT members know you best as a NAATI director, but many of us also remember that you were there, present and influential, at the beginnings of AUSIT. What a large and impressive arc!

To enable the readers of *In Touch* to understand the early history of the profession in Australia today, I suggest we travel backwards from 2024.

Currently you’re chairing the Association for Culturally Appropriate Services. It seems a broad role, involving much more than just languages. What led you there?

Mary: What led me there was that I’ve taken a very strong interest in the area of aged care recently. The last 25 years of my mother’s life, I was her carer – firstly because of physical issues, and then because she suffered from dementia. Once she had dementia, she went back to her primary language, and I observed firsthand the

... I didn't know what they were on about ... but I knew that I was on the wrong side of the fence ...

isolation and the lack of services for people whose language is not English; this is overwhelming for the elderly.

It’s already difficult to get language services for people who *can* stand up for themselves, but for the elderly with dementia, who are often not able to do so, it becomes quite an overpowering burden.

Culture includes treating a person in a way that is culturally appropriate, and also the language component as an intrinsic component and expression of that culture.

I really took an interest professionally when I was running Fortis Consulting, a company that my son and I established. Over 10 years it became a national company. One of the things we did was, we won some major contracts in the

aged care sector, and developed some fantastic training programs in that sector. So, aged care and language and cultural issues became part of my professional life as well as my personal life, because language and culture is part of me. I’ve always had a very strong commitment to language and culture, so it all came together.

Annamaria: I know and admire your strong commitment. I always wondered what it stemmed from, where the motivation was coming from. What started you off?

Mary: I think ... if I go back to the beginning, I was born overseas, like many people in our industry. English was my third language, really, because I’d had dialect, then I learned Italian, and then I came here, and I learned English. Those were post-war days, when being Italian

From left: Mary Gurgone (then National President), Uli Priester (National President 2006–07), Luciano Ginori and Bob Filipovich (first and second National Presidents, 1987–89 and 1989–91), and AUSIT Fellow Adolfo Gentile, gathered at Macquarie University, Sydney in December 2012, during AUSIT's Jubilation 25' National Conference



was not particularly well regarded. Now, as you know, everything Italian is good: the food is good, the fashion is good, the place is good to visit; but in those days we were the enemy who were on the wrong side of the fence during the war. A kid of six, I didn't know what they were on about, clearly, but I knew that I was on the wrong side of the fence. You knew that you were being excluded, even though you didn't quite know why.

Therefore, I really got it right from the word go, as a child. A real passion for language and culture, because I realised that language and culture hold the message of who you are. People either accept who you are, and therefore you've got harmony and peace in the world, or they can't stand any difference, and you have war and disharmony.

So, I had a very strong commitment from a personal point of view. This overflowed into the things I studied: I studied language, went into language teaching, before going into the public service, into policy, where I was looking at ways that inclusion and exclusion work, and how we can have policies that provide the right sort of inclusivity for people who are different from others, whatever that difference might be. Whether it's, you know, religion, colour, language, et cetera, which are all part of culture as well.

Annamaria: Looking at some old photographs in the AUSIT archives, I can recognise your face. Were you already working in the public service in the late '80s, early '90s?

Mary: Well, in those days, I was in the Training and Further Education [TAFE] area. At Perth Technical College I was coordinator of the translation programs. I established the first translation courses in TAFE, and the first nationally accredited ones. When I had my kids, I took a year off from language teaching and turned my attention to interpreting and translating as a bit of a part-time activity during my leave. I started an arts degree in interpreting and translation at the Edith Cowan University. I dabbled in interpreting and translating work.

I didn't do it full time, because obviously you can't when you've got babies, but I enjoyed it. When I went back into teaching in the TAFE system, I said: 'This is an area that clearly is required for a country which has so many people from so many diverse cultures.' So that's how it started, from that kind of passion and interest in language and culture, which spilled over from personal into professional.

And so, I was there right at the beginning of AUSIT. I was a member of WAITI [the Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters, Inc.] at the time. A few of us, from professional associations right around the country, would get together. Specifically, those of us who were educators too would gather as participants and organisers of the annual Conference of Interpreter Translator Educators' Association of Australia – I remember one meeting was led by Jill Blewett from South Australia. It was at one of those meetings that I first met Adolfo Gentile. We all talked and said, 'Look, we really need a national voice, because it's easy to pick us off while we're so

little. If we have a national voice, we've got a better opportunity to be heard.'

I was part of the push, together with many leaders in associations around the country, led by Jill Blewett. We said, 'Let's do it! Let's set up a national interpreting and translating association.' And so AUSIT was born in 1987. There were three or four of us from Perth at the time. I think Dagmar Dixon and Heather Glass were there from WA, I can't remember who else. Certainly we were all of the mind at that time that it was a good thing to have this national voice. Later, once AUSIT was established, there were a lot more pushes and pulls in different directions, but at the beginning there was full agreement across Australia – in all the professional associations – that we should have a strong national voice and unite. And, of course, Lou Ginori was there. We voted him in as the first national president because he was in Sydney, and we felt it was important to have a bigger city leading the charge, a city where there was likely to be a larger number of interpreters and translators to support.

INTERVIEW SERIES: AUSIT STALWARTS (continued)

Image: the photocopied newsletter mentioned by Mary

continued from previous page

Annamaria: You did it without any internet. You had to just have telephone conferences?

Mary: Exactly. We had just telephone conferences and paper-based correspondence. In fact, it wasn't until I became president in 1991 that I established the first national newsletter. I've got a copy of an old newsletter somewhere here – not one of the very first ones, just one I happened to have around. I wanted to show you because you may recall the old-fashioned photocopiers of that era.

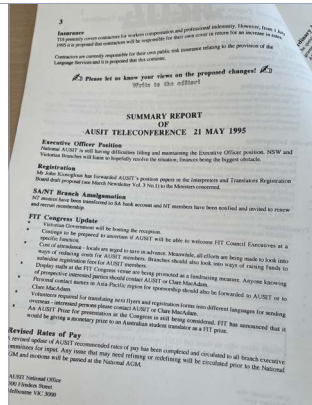
In 1991 I said, 'I know it's hard, but we can't have a national body without communication that is regular, with our members. Whenever we hold a committee meeting, we make decisions, the members need to know. Let's have a regular newsletter!'^{*}

My local federal Member of Parliament at the time was Stephen Smith. I went and met him, obviously to congratulate him and introduce myself as the National President of the Institute, and tell him that I was excited about how we might be able to collaborate – and he ended up allowing us to use his office for the printing and photocopying of our national newsletter. You can imagine, I was over the moon!

We also needed a national office, so we were fortunate that the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia [NLLIA] was established around that time, with a visionary CEO, Jo Lo Bianco, who generously offered AUSIT an office to work from in Melbourne. This was essential, as a lot of our documentation was being lost with changing office bearers.

It was David Connor who said to me: 'I'm happy to help keep an eye on things. We'll employ someone for just a few hours a week, which is all we can afford, and I'll keep an eye on things.' It was wonderful. Once a month, we had a meeting at that office in Melbourne. I'd come all the way from Western Australia – leave TAFE college at 3.30 or 4, catch a plane – the 'red eye' special – to Melbourne, stay

^{*} This newsletter was for communicating regularly with members about AUSIT matters, and is distinct from the journal established by Bob Filipovich in 1990, which covered professional T&I matters locally and globally, and wasn't specific to AUSIT and its members.



We had just telephone conferences and paper-based correspondence ... it wasn't until I became president ... that I established the first national newsletter.

there Saturday, until Sunday evening, come back to Perth, start work on Monday!

The regular executive team meetings were so important, because I realised that without that teamwork and communication with the committee, it just wouldn't have worked. So, it was just a fantastic thing from my point of view, it was really important. Because people like Barbara McGilvray and David Connor were on the committee. I mean, how blessed were we! Able to pull together, see what we needed to do, and get on and do it.

From being an organisation with no regular communication when I started, by the time I finished, we had a newsletter; we had a national policy that we called Invisible Interpreters and Transparent Translators that we launched at the NLLIA, supported by CEO Jo Lo Bianco; we had our AUSIT Code of Ethics approved nationally. This was led by one of our West Australian guys – Doctor Harry Blackmore. He worked with Terry Cheshier and Barbara McGilvray and Sandra Hale; they all contributed towards the development of our very first Code of Ethics. Because Harry was a psychiatrist, and his professional association had an excellent code of ethics, he was able to use that as a template which we could adapt and adjust to the needs of interpreters and translators, and this worked really well.

During my presidency we were selected to host the triennial FIT Congress in Melbourne in 1996. AUSIT, which – when I started – had really nothing except the annual AGMs and teleconferences, had become an organisation that was known internationally. Also, during

that time, we had our first contract from the federal Department of Immigration. We were lobbying them on a number of issues that were clearly undermining the wellbeing of interpreters and translators, and I got an actual contract for AUSIT to look at equivalency issues – language equivalency issues for languages that had limited diffusion in Australia, and therefore we needed to look at ways by which we could still have people who could work in those languages.

Annamaria: That's so difficult, because for these practitioners, it's impossible to make a living.

Mary: Yeah, that's exactly right. And, as we both know, the Department of Immigration had so many other things to worry about, besides interpreting and translating. Just the same, we started to have some influence. The Department saw that we could contribute, so we had our first agreement with them – that was the first time we were taken really seriously. Although we were still a small, fledgling organisation, we were respected by the Department and by the Minister. The Minister would meet with me regularly to look at some of the issues, such as registration. He was willing to consider what might be able to be done. We didn't get very far – as you know, there were various struggles, both internal and external, over government regulation of the T&I profession – but the reality is that we were being listened to and considered. AUSIT grew in those three years to have influence, and it was wonderful to see that.

Annamaria: In practical terms, how did you do that? You had your children; you had a full-time job – or was it a part-time job?

Mary: I had a full-time job. I was blessed, of

Image: a 2002 clipping from the WA Branch newsletter (which Harry Blackmore used to put together) shows the WA Branch Committee – chaired by Mary – hosting a visiting Queensland member, Annick Bouchet

course, with good people on the committee, all wonderful, sharing the burden. People like David Connor, how could you do without him? You know, in a world where technology was not necessarily in the same frame that it is now, but we still depended on technology, how would you do without someone like David Connor, who was working at Telstra and knew everything that needed to be known about how we could best leverage communication systems, and had his heart and soul in interpreting and translating? On top of that, my husband and I, we've been married 50 years now. I mention that only in the spirit of saying that if ... what if we didn't know how to support each other? We probably wouldn't have lasted. One of the things that we did is support each other. He was definitely very supportive, and took over the kids when I went away for the weekend once every four weeks, for the AUSIT Committee meetings. I suppose many people are blessed with good partners, and I certainly am.

Annamaria: I understand that there are quite a number of permanent positions now, mostly for interpreters in hospitals and the like, but for big-demand languages only. From the perspective of a young professional, who happens to work in a language of lesser demand, could you give some advice on what other direction could they possibly branch out in today's climate, here in Australia?

Mary: Well, the number one thing has to be, in my view, whether you're aligned. I always say to people, if your heart, head and gut are aligned, you're going to be able to take the difficult times. Because, hey, do you know anything in life that's worth having, that isn't going to come with some difficult times? That's life, right? It's not so much ... you can't say, 'I really want to be an interpreter, translator, but because I can't be that, I'll put up with this other thing.'

I've always done things that have integrated interpreting and translating with what I've been doing. For example, my journey started with my love of language and culture, and my love of language and culture brought me to interpreting and translating. It brought me to teaching. It brought me to managerial roles where I was in charge of languages and culture, in charge of

interpreting and translating, because I had a passion for those areas. And it brought me also to the policy area. I said, 'How can I have the right framework that supports those things that should be supported?' Unfortunately, it doesn't happen by accident. You have to push for policy changes and legislative changes to ensure things like equal opportunity, to ensure things like the right to an interpreter or translator, and so on.

Annamaria: In the past – the recent past – our competitors were human beings. Now we're up against artificial intelligence. How do we cope with that?



Harry Blackmore Annick Bouchet (QLD) Mary Gurgone Younghi Newman Rossana Perino Jean Page

Mary: It's a big task. You're right, but that's where we need the passion and the commitment. Because if you're passionate and committed, then you'll do what needs to be done, you'll learn enough to understand where the opportunities lie. Once you can define the problem, you can also define where the opportunities are.

What if those opportunities are the things that you can contribute to, and feel that you're giving what's right for that time? That's what happened to me. I do think as the world moves – AI is one area, but I suspect there are lots of things – there's change in everything. The world of work changes so much all the time that if people cannot adapt and do something they're really committed to, I suspect that staying in the one lane for 30 years of one's life – which was possible perhaps, you know, 40 to 50 years ago – I don't think is necessarily going to work in this day and age. I think there's much more hopping about. Not in a negative way, but in a very positive way, I must say – you've got to be creative. You've got to say, 'What, where, who am I?' and be true to yourself. That alignment

of head, heart and gut. And at the same time, you can integrate interpreting and translating into almost in anything, can't you?

Annamaria: I'd like to end this conversation by returning to the role you've played most recently, and are perhaps best known for in the professional community. What are your reflections on your recent tenure on the NAATI Board of Directors?

Mary: Being on the Board for six years, I had the opportunity to do things that started as dreams – dreams which are in the notes I wrote when we brainstormed together in the early days of the AUSIT Committee. We recognised the need for improved professional development processes, improved processes for growing translating and interpreting as a credible profession. Through the NAATI certification system we were able to do those things.

Another area which I was passionate about – which, again, I was so blessed to be able to be part of during those years with NAATI – was having Aboriginal languages come in under the umbrella of interpreting and translating.

I think what allowed those things to happen was not only the flexibility shown by NAATI, but also the financial situation. NAATI grew substantially, and could afford to do more for the profession – and not by charging practitioners, but because so many people who wanted to migrate to Australia were doing NAATI tests [to get points towards their application]. We could use that as an income stream to support our local professionals, which then, I think, gave us more strength as a profession. If you have a body that is struggling to survive financially – as had happened for some time with NAATI, before my time there – unfortunately, with the best intentions in the world, it's difficult to advance. I was blessed to be part of a fantastic board with good things happening there.

Annamaria: The right person at the right time. It's great to close our conversation with notes of satisfaction. Should we attempt a selfie to commemorate the occasion?

Mary: Let's! [see page 14]

Do you know a longstanding member who has made significant contributions to AUSIT and/or the T&I profession? Would you like to interview them for this series? Just get 'in touch' with one of our editors or an Editorial Committee member (see page 2), and we'll take it from there.



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- Building Contract
- Building Contract Disputes
- Environment and Planning Laws
- Mortgages & Charges
- Guarantees & Indemnity
- Commercial Lease
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- District Court Litigation
- Supreme Court Litigation
- Federal Court Litigation
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- Advance Health Directive
- Wills
- Enduring Power of Attorney
- Enduring Guardianship
- Probate
- Letters of Administration

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- Criminal Law
- Traffic Offences
- Superannuation
- Personal Injury
- Employment Law
- Companies
- Taxation



ANDREW WONG

LL.B (Hons), BComm,
Barrister-at-Law
(Lincoln's Inn)



SHARON MO

LL.B, B.Sc. (University of
New South Wales)



ANGELO BERBOTTO

LL.B (Hons), LLM
(University of London)



AMANDA HUANG

Bachelor of Arts,
Diploma of Conveyancing



02 8003 3338



Shop 7, 108 Queens Road
Hurstville NSW2220

Shop 5, 210 Pacific Highway
Crows Nest NSW2065

Shop 262, 2 Potter Street
Waterloo NSW2017

Member of the AUSIT Students' Committee

In this series on the range of roles held by AUSIT's members, we've covered 13 roles to date. If you're currently studying T&I, this one may be of interest to you – in 2024 AUSIT formed a new committee, the Students' Committee. Here we interview **Xuran Guo**, a founding member and the new chair.



Hours/month: 5	Voluntary? Yes	AUSIT member for: 1 year, 4 months	Time in this role: 1 year, 4 months
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Other AUSIT roles to date: none, this is my first AUSIT role

Q1. What does being on the Students' Committee involve?

When I first joined the Committee, I handled some basic tasks. For example, when our team organised the first Student Meet-and-Greet, I helped create the questionnaire, collect participants' questions, and compile data into Excel sheets for analysis after the event. Over time, I became involved in other activities, such as creating PowerPoint presentations, sending email to stakeholders, presenting briefly during meetings, and eventually chairing them. I now support new members in their roles as well, and since agreeing to this interview, I've moved into the position of Chair. We were a new committee this year, which was a challenge, but we had a mentor from the National Council, Echo, who was incredibly supportive – she helped us connect with several speakers, including for the NAATI event and the upcoming webinar in December. Nicola, the National Education Coordinator, has also guided us, invited speakers and been a speaker, and attended most of the online Meet-and-Greets; and the National PD Coordinator, Epperly, and Michele from AUSIT's admin company, Office Logistics, have both also been really helpful. Echo will mentor us next year too, so I'll be able to grow into the role.

Q2. Why did you decide to join the Committee?

I joined the Committee right when I began my T&I master's program at UNSW, because I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the T&I industry in Australia, expand my professional network, and connect with people who share similar career goals. I also saw it as an opportunity to give back to the T&I community and apply my skills in a meaningful way.

Q3. What skills or qualities are needed in this role?

It requires a basic understanding of the T&I industry. Organisational skills are beneficial, as they help in managing tasks more efficiently. Public speaking skills are also useful, as we organise the Meet-and-Greets and invite industry experts to share their knowledge, giving committee members the chance to present during webinars. It's crucial to be a confident communicator who can guide discussions, keep meetings on track, and create an inclusive environment. Teamwork is essential – not only does it foster collaboration, but it also boosts productivity. However, more than any specific skill, a willingness to contribute to the committee and support students is most important.

Q4. What advice would you give to someone thinking about taking on this role?

Although this is a voluntary role and doesn't demand a lot of time, it's crucial to know how to balance committee responsibilities with your studies and personal life, especially when commitments overlap.

Q5. How has being in this role contributed to your personal and/or professional growth?

It has taught me how to organise and chair meetings effectively. I've developed skills in preparing agendas, managing discussions, and guiding team members to accomplish our goals. This role has also deepened my understanding of the T&I industry through interactions with guest speakers, who share invaluable professional insights. Most importantly, I've connected with many like-minded committee members, made meaningful friendships, and gained experience in leadership that will be valuable in my future career. This has given me the confidence to take on the position of Chair, and as a result I'm sure I will continue to learn and grow over the coming year.

MEMBER PROFILES



NAME:
Translator or interpreter (or both):
Language(s) and direction(s):
Location:
Practising as a T/I since:
Member of AUSIT since:
Main area(s) of practice:

ADAM BARTLEY
translator
Russian, German, Dutch>English
Cairns, QLD
2001
2014
legal, technical, medical, literary

RAO CHEKKALA
both
Telugu<>English
Sydney, NSW
2021
2021
legal, medical, technical, immigration

Q&A

Q1
How did you come to be a translator and/or interpreter?

Q2
Tell us about a project you have worked on that was especially interesting or challenging (within the bounds of confidentiality of course).



A1
While in academia (teaching and researching in Latin and Ancient Greek) I spent some time as a post-doctoral fellow in Germany, where I acquired German thanks to the generosity of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Similar adventures led to my learning Dutch, and I picked up Russian via family connections. It was a small step from teaching and translating ancient languages to translating these modern ones. After 15 years abroad, I returned to Australia with my family and focused on modern languages. For modern texts, it helped that I had worked in finance and the public service before doing my PhD, as this left me with the language and idioms used in finance and law at my fingertips. Research with a colleague on ancient medicine helped with modern medical texts, and my bachelor's degree in mathematics, physics and geology has (finally!) proven its worth when working with technical texts.

A2
If you'd asked me whether there was going to be much demand for my ancient languages, I would have laughed. However, when a PhD student at Oxford needed over 100,000 words on the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, Latin paid my bills for a few months, as well as giving me a chance to put into action hard-earned skills that I'd been considering part of a 'past life'. Another early job involved a European seller of homewares who wanted to use Latin as a universal language for stock control. Working out terminology for seagrass placemats was a challenge. My thanks go out to the Vatican for its modern Latin dictionary.

A1
I love my native language, Telugu.* I initially studied engineering, and was an engineer for 41 years. The language of my education and employment was English, but I also wrote Telugu stories and poetry for magazines – in India as well as in Australia – and worked as a radio presenter in Telugu, for Radio 2TripleO in Sydney and also for the internet-based Telugu One Radio. When I heard that some employers require interpreters and translators to have NAATI recognition, I studied at TAFE NSW and TAFE SA to attain the requisite qualifications, became a NAATI-certified translator and interpreter, and have been working as such for the last few years.

A2
Accuracy is one of the key tenets of the AUSIT Code of Ethics. Interpreters are required to transfer not only meaning between two languages, but also tone and emotions. In one student visa hearing, the tribunal official was asking questions which I interpreted from English to Telugu, but the student was sobbing instead of providing answers – that was quite challenging. In another incident, the judge asked the defendant to provide the full form of an acronym he'd used to name a software company he worked for. I'm familiar with the company in question, and know what the acronym stands for, but the defendant gave an incorrect, funny answer. Since – as in interpreter – I'm required to be accurate and impartial, I controlled my amusement and interpreted the incorrect answer provided by the defendant. That was interesting.

* Spoken mainly in eastern India