

NWTN Academic Liaison Program Report

June 2021

Although a recent survey, conducted among committee members by our new Communication Officer, Marjolein Thickett, identified “catering for the next generation of linguists” as a less urgent priority, it is important to note that the aim of our involvement with the academic world is not limited to increasing our student cohort. It is a mutually beneficial relationship from which we gain more than new members.

This year again, despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic, we were able to deliver our information sessions to university students.

Student event: University of Manchester

The first one, organised as usual with the help of Dr Anna Strowe, lecturer on the Master’s in Translation and Interpreting Studies course at Manchester University, took place online on 3rd March 2021. The event saw the launch of a promotional video to introduce the network and some of its committee and events team members, and edited by Annie Woodson of Triple Dot Makers. The video was well received by the audience and will be added to the Website. Based on the past success of the format, a panel of network members was recruited for the event. This year again, volunteers quickly responded to our call, and we were able to present a diversified panel in terms of experience, background, specialisations and skills (both translators and interpreters were represented). They were: Sue Leschen, Joanna M Case, Michaela Pschierer-Barnfather, Alison Watt, Kat Slater and Sarah Bowyer. The panel was invited to answer questions about their experience of the network but also of their freelancing career. The questions had been forwarded to us by Dr Strowe as part of the broader programme organised by the university. Students were also invited to submit questions in advance and at the end of the session. Feedback from both Dr Strowe and the Students was extremely positive.

A couple of students were unable, through no fault of our own, to join on the day, but we were able to redirect them to the corresponding UCLAN event held on March 17th, two weeks later, and organised by Janice Crossfield.

Student **event:** **UCLAN**

For the UCLAN event, we liaised closely with Kirsty Heimerl-Moggan, the course leader for the MA in Interpreting and Translation course, to ascertain their requirements and the event was constructed around them. The event was held over Zoom and took the format of the NWTN video, followed by a presentation and then a final Q&A session.

Several NWTN members, both translators and interpreters, generously gave up their time to be on the panel for the event: Deborah Borderiau, Belinda Grace, Mike Hanson, Heidi Kerschl and Agnieszka Kwiecien. This meant that we had a good cross-section – wise “old” heads and newer members of the profession, expertise in several language combinations and specialist subjects. We were also fortunate to be able to call on the knowledge and enthusiasm of our former chair, Heidi Kerschl, who delivered a highly informative presentation on the importance of networking, with a particular emphasis on how the NWTN can help in this.

The session ended with a Q and A session which generated lively discussion.

The feedback we received from the student attendees and their tutors was very complimentary.

We now have an effective formula for future events of this kind and we hope very much that the next one can be delivered in person in Preston.

Student memberships in numbers

This year, 18 new student members joined our network. Our Membership Officer informed us that most new student members are from Manchester Uni, but there are others from further afield (including the Open University and even Monash).

However, we also lost 14. The problem seems to be that few students choose to upgrade from their free membership when they have to start paying the yearly fee for full membership (only a couple of people upgraded this year).

The benefits of the academic collaboration for NWTN

In exchange for our informative sessions, and beyond (though not undermining!) the influx of new student members who joined our ranks this year (a warm welcome to them!), our academic partners have lent their expertise by running workshops and seminars, and even organising lively debates during our popular Working Lunch chats.

In July 2020, Dr Rebecca Tipton, lecturer in Translation and Interpreting Studies at the University of Manchester, held our first online workshop for Interpreters, "Take Note! An online note-taking workshop for interpreters". The event sold out very quickly and was a great success.

In September 2020, for our Boost Day event "MT-PE: Magic Wand or Menace?", Dr Maeve Olohan (University of Manchester), presented an overview of MT-PE, focusing on the now dominant Neural Machine Translation (NMT) technology.

In March 2021, Dr Anna Strowe joined our Working Lunch chat to discuss ethics in translation, and what makes us "qualified". This conversation was inspired by the controversy around the translation of Amanda Gorman's poetry, and Dr Strowe's academic approach allowed us to delve deep into the underlying complexity of our profession and status.

Finally, in April 2021, for our "Overview of CAT tools", Silvia Terribile, a postgraduate researcher from Manchester University gave us an overview of the benefits of using CAT tools.

Needless to say, there are mutual benefits to be had from such cooperation with the academic world and we look forward to building on this fruitful collaboration in the years to come.

Katell Sevellec

Academic Liaisons Officer

Janice Crossfield

Academic Liaison person for UCLAN