

SOMI has a new, not to mention blue, website

By Renée Palermo, Web Administrator

Early this year you may have noticed a big change in the SOMI website. We decided it was time to redesign. The SOMI site now has a new look and feel, more usability and a new interface allowing our new membership database to be searched dynamically by anyone on the planet.

The blue is a bit surprising to some and was meant to be temporary but it turns out that many people actually like it, so it will stay that way, at least for the time being.

The site has seven pages:

- “Home,” the home page of course, shown at right.
- “About SOMI,” listing SOMI’s officers, board members, goals and mission.
- “Membership,” giving info on how to become a member and linking to our newly revised appli-

cation form in a printable version.

- “Resources,” providing links to sites of interest to interpreters—a work in progress still needing your suggestions.
- “Training,” listing classes, workshops, and SOMI forums that help interpreters acquire a leading edge on their skills.
- “News,” where newsletters like this one are posted.
- “Interpreters,” a page that will help you find an interpreter for any of the languages represented by our membership population. Since this is linked to our database it has our most updated information.

The interpreter page has the potential to be of great



value to our members, because it allows interpreters to be contacted directly by clients.

SOMI’s new web and email addresses are as follows:

www.sominet.org
info@sominet.org

Please feel free to send your comments or suggestions regarding the website. To see others’ comments, see Website Feedback on page 3. (To view an interactive color version of this newsletter, visit:

<http://www.sominet.org/sominews.htm>)

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JUNE FORUM

Pre- and Post-natal care

Thursday, June 24, 2004

6:00 - 9:00PM

*Providence Hospital
 Pinard Foyer*

(Details on website)

SOMI Member Gets Book Published!

Given the unique and intimate nature of the work interpreters do, we are familiar with the phrase, “I could write a book.” Now one of SOMI’s own has! SOMI would like to extend an enthusiastic congratulations to Lorane Alisa West, a Spanish interpreter whose book **COLOR: Latino Voices in the Pacific Northwest** is being published this May through Washington State University Press.

The book is a cutting-edge work of short stories, each consisting of a single page. Each story is written in English as a loosely translated spoken mono-

logue from the immigrant’s perspective, which gives it a stronger sense of immediacy. While the general idea for the book stems from her work as interpreter, no story represents a given individual’s specific experience, so this is a work of fiction rather than biography. In addition to enjoying wide readership among fiction lovers, it is the author’s hope that medical professionals will read this book and gain another perspective on health care delivery and other matters of cultural interest.

West’s book “COLOR” is now available at Amazon.com.

Lorane Alisa West is a law school dropout with a degree in Swedish Literature and graduate education in Literary Fiction. She has lived in Finland, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and lived and worked for three years on fishing ships as a Russian interpreter. She worked for several years at the Northwest Immigrants Rights Project and is a certified Doula (labor support). After years as an agency interpreter and free-lance translator, she now works at the University of Washington Medical Center and writes fiction in her spare time.



Welcome Back Thu-Van!

SOMI is very pleased to announce that Thu-Van Nguyen, who was last year's president, has accepted the position of Committee Chair for Professional Development. As committee chair she will serve on the Board of Directors. We are happy to have her leading Professional Development and know that we can count on her sound judgment as a participant on the SOMI Board.

Thu-Van is working on improving SOMI's training offerings and preparing to set up a schedule of SOMI forums touching on topics that will be of direct value to interpreters in their daily work. The schedule will be posted on the SOMI web-



site as soon as dates, locations and presenters are confirmed. Be sure to visit our website periodically to check for new information or updated information as it becomes available.

So far this year SOMI has had the following events:

January

Ovarian & Prostate Cancer, presented by Dr. James Cunningham, M.D. Oncology, PacMed Clinics

March

Leadership Workshop, presented by Ann MacFarlane, Executive Director of NAJIT, Former ATA President

April

Communicable Diseases & Blood Borne Pathogens, presented by Rebecca Schirle, Health & Safety Coordinator with Public Health of Seattle & King County

If you have an idea for a forum topic or any other suggestions regarding Professional Development, please contact Thu-Van at (206) 619-6158.

SOMI would like to extend our warm appreciation to the volunteers who work so hard to make the forums happen by arranging speakers, booking space and providing food and refreshments. Special thanks to:

Cathy Morrow, Phuong Hong, Leng Taing, Lisa Jaffee, and Cristina Paget.

Leadership Workshop Recap

By Lorane Alisa West and Renée Palermo

On March 27, some 50 interpreters and translators from SOMI, WITS and NOTIS came together for a joint training in practical leadership presented by Ann MacFarlane, Executive Director for the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) and former President of the American Translator's Association (ATA). Ann is a dynamic speaker and trainer well versed in leadership building. In this workshop, Ann gave countless tips on practical leadership and how to more effectively run a volunteer organization such as SOMI.

During the interactive portion of the workshop, participants put together a wish list of changes they wanted to see in their organizations. This was done anonymously so that people could express their views and opinions freely. There were many common threads. Several people mentioned providing professional support such as ongoing training, but also more advocacy on behalf of interpreters in the community. Some mentioned that creating an environment that is welcoming to new members and ideas was what they wanted. To accomplish these and other goals, we need increased participation.

In another exercise Ann asked the attendees to spend 3 minutes with someone whom they didn't know to try to find out 10 things that they had in common with each other. It was surprising to see how successful most people were.

Ann also pointed out how cliché it has become to shake hands and exchange names when we meet someone new. Oftentimes we hear the name but rarely can we remember it a short time later. This is because it was only stored in our short-term memory, which lasts only a few seconds. Ann suggests repeating the other person's name to yourself several times to help it stay in your mind.

Volunteering for SOMI

Ann MacFarlane reminded us that as volunteers for our organization, we do what we do out of love. We enjoy our work, we care about our profession, and know that our voice needs to be heard in the community. We welcome you to join in our efforts.

SOMI has plenty of tasks to keep volunteers busy. You can choose the amount of time you want to spend and

the type of responsibility you take on. For example, let's say you would like to get involved; you don't have much time but are planning on attending the next forum. You could volunteer to be the greeter. All you would need to do is show up and be ready to welcome people as they arrive. On the other hand, if you would like to become more involved, there are other opportunities to serve on any of our standing committees: Membership, Administration, Professional Development, and Public Relations. If you have special skills, like computer experience or fundraising, that you think might be valuable to SOMI and you are willing to share them, we want to hear from you.

If you would like to get involved by sharing your point of view and participating in SOMI's decision-making process, please visit one of our board meetings. And remember, as an Active member of SOMI you are eligible to hold a board position, nominate candidates for office, or run for office yourself.

To request more information, please send an email to info@sominet.org.

"Oftentimes we don't remember a person's name even right after meeting them."

What's up with DSHS?

By Renée Palermo

In an effort to bring you updated information about what the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Medical Assistance Administration (MAA) have planned for the future of interpreters, I have been corresponding with Tim Roth, Program Manager DSHS/MAA. As you may know, the DSHS brokerage contracts were open for bidding in past months and the new or reselected brokers have been chosen. Specific contract details are still being negotiated. Hopelink will remain the broker for King County and Paratransit for Snohomish County. (For more information or to review the brokers selected for other areas, see the press release at: <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/mediareleases/2004/pr04128.shtml>)

For the most part, Roth was cautious and hesitant about giving any information about what is being planned regarding procedural changes. I got the feeling, however, there were some things in the works as he mentioned that drafts and proposals needed to be signed and any changes would need to be approved by budget authorities. I asked him if there were any plans to provide payment to interpreters for no-shows and cancellations, since this is obviously one of the more frustrating cutbacks that interpreters have had to deal with since January 2003. Roth said that he did not want to give any information until negotiations were final. However, in a letter that he sent to SOMI president, Mario Flores, in late January 2004, he explicitly stated, in a section titled, *Regarding*

subsequent changes planned, "The rate will be one half hour for both the no-show and cancellation categories." Also in January, MAA sent out an email to several agencies announcing that they were planning to "begin partial payments to interpreters for client or requester no-shows and client or requester-canceled appointments." The existing contracts terminate the end of June, so any new changes should go into effect in July.

I asked Roth what he would say to interpreters right now who have been waiting many months to find out what is going to happen with DSHS and how it will affect their profession. He said, "Hang in there!"



New Member Count Rising

SOMI would like to offer a warm welcome to the following first-time members:

New Affiliate Member:

Ann MacFarlane, Russian Resources International

New Corporate Members:

Andrew Sell, LogistiCare

Sabrina Morales, Healthcare Interpreting Solutions

Shawn O'Riley, Hunter College

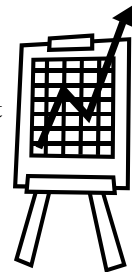
New Active Members:

Kenneth Barger, Maricela Camacho, Elsa Clark, Jose Delgadillo, Jose Derteano, Allendy Doxy, Niria Galan, Carmen Guerrero, Ana E. Herrera, Ola Imam, Emilia D. Lopez, Rosa

Molina, Paul D. Natkin, Alida Patino, Rita Pavone, Ernesto Padiangco, Colombia E. Perez, Joan Ramos, Olga Adriana Rivera de Zepeda, Maria Rodriguez, and Luz Maria Rydalch.

SOMI is its members.

New members account for approximately 30 percent of our membership population at this time. SOMI appreciates your support and we look forward to learning more about each one of you. If you haven't attended a forum yet, we encourage you to do so. It is a great way to meet your colleagues and gain important knowledge about your field. Forums are free, and food and beverages are provided. See you soon!



Website Feedback

Since the new website has been up, SOMI has received several emails from members reporting problems or just telling us what they like. Here are a couple of examples:

HELP! I cannot view your website because I don't have the Microsoft Java Virtual Machine! Is there any other way I can get information from your site? I am a medical interpreter (Spanish) working in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Emilia D. Lopez

As it turns out, a few people who were not allowing Java applets to run, due to security precautions perhaps on their work computers, could not navigate the SOMI site. The site has been updated, removing the Java code to avoid this from happening in the future. If you use our site regularly you may have noticed that the buttons look a little different. Now you know why.

Thanks to Emilia for letting us know about her difficulty viewing the site, thus allowing us to attend to the problem.

The next email was sent to tell us what one member thought about the new website:

Dear Colleagues,

I just now looked at the revised website and the changes are great!! Now it is much more useful and a great forum to get information, etc. And the design gives it a lot of potential to do even more! You have done a great job!! Thank you!!

Regards,

Kathy Guttromson

Society of Medical Interpreters

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*Your organization
of interpreters,
for interpreters,
by interpreters.*

**Visit our website at:
www.sominet.org**



Society of Medical Interpreters

Newsletter editor: Renée Palermo

SOMI Goals:

- To provide training and continuing education opportunities for interpreters.
- To establish and maintain a professional code of ethics and standards of practice for medical interpretation.
- To promote active communication between service providers, ethnic communities and the interpreter community.
- To research, gather and disseminate information, including current events and policy involving and affecting the interpreter community.
- To provide a supportive network for the interpreter community.
- To promote awareness among healthcare service providers and the community of the value of interpreter services.