



## From the President

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## Republic of Letters

**In the 14th century,** the focus of intellectual life shifted from the traditional university centers to the dissemination of knowledge across a much greater geographical and social spectrum. The invention of the printing press radically changed the way in which knowledge was distributed, and it led to the move away from the communication of knowledge at local levels and toward truly international communication via what became known as the Republic of Letters.

The Republic of Letters began as a network of private correspondence among influential thinkers during the Age of Enlightenment, and eventually evolved into a network of academic journals and other periodicals, such as the one you are currently reading. Knowledge disseminated in this manner is typically mediated through an editor or another controlling figure. In recent history, the population of this imaginary Republic has embraced new communication channels that do not require a mediator, such as Internet forums, blogs, and similar discussion groups.

In the 18th century, the Republic was limited to those who spoke a common language. In the 21st century, the Republic spans the globe. Through our work as translators and interpreters, we make this possible. We facilitate the communication and dissemination of knowledge around the world.

In the last issue, we looked at how we can promote the recognition of the translation and interpreting professions to those outside of our industry. Let us now look at the second objective stated in ATA's bylaws; namely, to promote the communication and dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of translators and interpreters.

This objective is not as clear-cut as

the first one, as it is not obvious what kind of knowledge is to be communicated, or whether it should be shared with the outside world, among translators and interpreters, or both. The one thing that is clear is that translators and interpreters are to benefit from it. What kind of knowledge would benefit us, and how do we go about communicating it? The bylaws

7. Conducting any and all other activities designed to further its objectives and promote the general welfare of the Association and its members.

As members of ATA, we benefit from the knowledge that is communicated and disseminated by our peers via *The ATA Chronicle*, ATA's website, *ATA's Newsbriefs* (our monthly

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provide some guidance. Article II b tells us that we shall strive to meet the Association's objectives by:

1. Publishing periodicals, bulletins, notices, glossaries, dictionaries, reports, and any other publications that may further its objectives.
2. Holding periodic meetings.
3. Supporting programs of accreditation and certification for translators and interpreters who meet specific standards of competence.
4. Maintaining membership in professional organizations in related fields.
5. Working actively with universities, foundations, government agencies, and other organizations in such matters as the training and continuing education of translators and interpreters.
6. Supporting a system of mutual assistance for its members, including a reference library, a consultation service, and the like.

e-newsletter), *ATA News and Notes* (our weekly e-mail about upcoming activities), as well as through educational events such as the Annual Conference, professional development seminars, and ATA's Mentoring Program. On the division level, we benefit from the highly specialized knowledge of our colleagues via division newsletters, conferences, and electronic forums.

We also communicate our knowledge to the buyers of our services, which benefits us as well as the buyers. Consider Chris Durban's brochure *Translation: Getting it Right* and its sequel, *Translation: Buying a Non-commodity*, co-authored by Chris Durban and Alan Melby. These publications help buyers make informed decisions, and we benefit by working with an educated client. Clearly, the benefits do not come just from being at the receiving end of this knowledge. We will achieve the greatest benefit when we also contribute to the knowledge that is shared among the citizens of the Republic of Letters.

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