THE NATIONAL TRANSLATIONS CENTER

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ABSTRACT: A description is given of the National Translations Center, its history, collection, services and funding. Its relationship to other sources of translations is discussed. The involvement of the Special Libraries Association in the current financial problems of the Center is described, and possible courses of action in behalf of the Center are mentioned.

I. THE NATIONAL TRANSLATIONS CENTER: WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT ISN'T.

The National Translations Center (NTC) is the largest institution in the United States for information concerning translations into English from the world literature in the natural, physical, medical and social sciences. Note the plural form of the word, Translations in its name. The Center deals only with translations; it does not engage in the activity of translation.

NTC is a unit of the John Crerar Library in Chicago, funded in part by John Crerar, in part by libraries which purchase its publications and services, and, until recently, in part by the National Science Foundation. Operation of the Center costs about \$150,000 per year.

Private companies, individuals, trade organizations and government agencies all contribute translated documents to the NTC. Many organizations donate all of their translations; a few industries are exceptionally well represented in the collection because active research and development organizations within the industry have discovered that useful translations are available at NTC, and they contribute more in the same field. The name of the contributor of each translation is removed before the translation is processed, so that competitors cannot identify each other's contributions and fields of current interest.

The number of translations now available at NTC is over 200,000 of which over 17,000 are patents. In addition, there are records of the location of another 200,000 available from other sources. These translations into English are from 36 languages, with a majority from the Soviet Union, Japan, Germany, Italy, and various east European countries. About 5,000 translations were contributed to the Center last year; 13,000 were cataloged and

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indexed. The value of the translated material is estimated to be about \$25 million.

All of the translations at NTC, and all those it learns about, are indexed by author and source of original publication (journal citation, patent number, etc.) These indexes enable the staff to answer about 9,000 inquiries a year.

When a copy of the translation exists at NTC, it is supplied, for a fee, to the requester. When another source of the translation is known the source is identified for the requester. When no source is known, the requester is so notified.

One very important part of NTC service is the publication of the now-monthly Translations Register-Index, which lists the newly-available translations by subject, and by the source of original publication (citation). A subscription to this periodical will keep one abreast of newly translated information in his science or profession.

II. HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL TRANSLATIONS CENTER.

NTC has evolved into its present important role from a small start in 1946 when the Science-Technology Division of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) began to collect and catalog unpublished translations. It was then, and still is, a cooperative effort, in that those who use the collection also contribute to it.

In 1968 SLA relinquished its sponsorship to the John Crerar Library. At that time, partial funding was obtained from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and there was no reason for SLA to be a middleman between NSF and John Crerar, the operating agency.

Interest in the Center has grown to the point where many organizations are now represented on an Advisory Board which offers guidance to the Center staff. These organizations include: American Chemical Society, American Geological Institute, American Institute of Chemical Engineers, American Institute of Physics, American Library Association, American Mathematical Society, American Nuclear Society, American Patent Law Association, American Society for Information Science, American Translators Association, Association of Research Libraries, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, Instrument Society of America, Medical Library Association, and Special Libraries Association.

It was understood that NSF funding would not continue indefinitely, and some steps were taken toward making NTC self-supporting. However, NSF funding was abruptly terminated last fall, so the Center is now operating at half-staff, and Translations Register-Index is published half as frequently as in 1972.

III. HOW NTC RELATES TO OTHER SOURCES OF TRANSLATED MATERIALS.

NTC is a primary locating service for translations. It sells copies of those in its collection. It knows about an equal number elsewhere, and refers requesters to the appropriate source which might be:

A. Independent/Commercial Translators.

Many independent/commercial translators send NTC a notice of the translations that they have made, and which are available from them. NTC includes a record of these in its indexing system.

B. National Technical Information Service (NTIS).

This agency of the U. S. Department of Commerce is the source of many translations paid for by the federal government, including those of the Joint Publications Research Service (JPRS) which is a very active translating agency. NTIS is also working toward self-support, but is presently heavily subsidized. Translations are a small part of the NTIS collection, and, as is true of government reports and other items in its collection, saleable items are sought out for announcement and indexing; some items thought not to have a market are never announced. Translations which are announced in NTIS Government Reports Announcements are indexed by author and subject, but not citation, in Government Reports Index. NTIS has no patent translations; translations made by or for the Patent Office are sent to the National Translations Center. Not all other government agencies send their translations to NTIS, either. One agency regularly sends its translations only to England for deposit.

C. Technical Information Center of the Atomic Energy Commission (TIC).

The TIC arranges for translations of books, journals, and other publications of AEC-wide interest; it acquires translations, both AEC and non-AEC sponsored, within the subject scope of Nuclear Science Abstracts (which it publishes), and attempts to decrease duplication of translations by coordinating translation projects carried on by the Commission and its contractors. Copies of TIC's

translations are sent to NTIS for sale, and catalog cards for them are sent to NTC, the Central Intelligence Agency, and CID-Transatom in Luxembourg. NTC includes a record of these in its indexing system. TIC announces all in-process and completed translations in the USAEC Translation List. AEC contractors are expected to contribute their translations to TIC, and many also send a copy to NTC.

**D. British Library Lending Division (BLL)
formerly the National Lending Library (NLL).**

The BLL collects translations into English produced by British government organizations, industry, universities and learned institutions. These are listed in BLL Announcement Bulletin. They are indexed at the BLL, but no published index is available. BLL cooperates with NTC in notifying it of translations in its system, and by providing copies of approximately 80% of its translations to NTC for incorporation into the Center's collection and indexes. The other 20% are incorporated into the NTC index only.

E. Others.

Some cooperation in notification of translations available is also carried out with the National Research Council of Canada, the European Translations Centre in the Netherlands, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in Australia, and the Indian National Scientific Documentation Centre in Delhi.

**IV. WHY THE RIO GRANDE CHAPTER OF SLA BECAME INTERESTED IN THE
FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE NATIONAL TRANSLATIONS CENTER.**

Many members of the Rio Grande Chapter of SLA, which covers New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of southwest Texas, are employed in scientific or technical research establishments. We encounter requests for translations of foreign materials as a regular part of our daily work. We find searching for the existence of translations time consuming and often frustrating, especially when we are looking for a translation of something several years old. We decided that we would like to talk about our problems with others who have the same experiences, and so set up a Regional Workshop on Translation Services in Libraries, which was held in April, 1973. Knowing the value of NTC, we asked its director, Mrs. Ildiko Nowak, to participate. We then found out about the funding cut (no travel money!). We paid her expenses, and she did attend the workshop.

The fifty-eight participants were really concerned with NTC's plight, and urged the Chapter, as organizers of the workshop, to bring this situation to the attention of SLA. At the last workshop session there were several proposals for action. I acted as recorder of those suggestions, and with the Chapter's approval, followed up in presenting the matter to SLA's Board of Directors and Advisory Council at the annual conference in Pittsburgh in June.

We asked specifically for the formation of a special committee on translation problems, to focus the efforts of concerned members on the maintenance of the National Translations Center and on related matters.

That committee was appointed in August. Its chairman is Betty Brociner of MIT Lincoln Labs. Other members are Elizabeth Kraus of Eastman Kodak, Evaline Neff from the Rochester Regional Research Library, Calla Ann Pepmueller of Sandia Labs., and myself. Other members or consultants to the committee may be added. The chairman is in touch with NTC in the persons of William Budington, Director of the John Crerar Library, and Mrs. Nowak.

V. WHAT NEXT?

The SLA Special Committee on Translation Problems will meet, and will consider possible solutions to the financial crisis at NTC. Among the possible solutions will be these suggested by the regional workshop participants:

- a membership system for NTC
- higher charge for publications and services
- publicizing the problem
- publicizing the Center
- increasing the input of federal government
- sponsored translations to NTC
- contractual arrangements for translation handling and/or indexing.

I would be happy to hear your suggestions; I would be happier still if you went back to your libraries and found all the translations you've had made but haven't previously shared with anyone, and bundled them off to NTC for their collection ... and if you will pick up an order blank and subscribe to Translations Register-Index, which you will find an invaluable help with translation searching, and helpful for current awareness of foreign literature, too.