



The long view: AIIC and remote interpreting

Conference interpreting is at a technological crossroads. Now is the time to make informed decisions and influence the future of the profession.

Private Market Sector Standing Committee, Communications officer.

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Whether we like it or not, there is a revolution taking place. The advances in remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) technology are the biggest technological changes for the interpreting profession since the development of simultaneous interpreting equipment.

In March 2018 AIIC issued a [position paper on Distance Interpreting](#), acknowledging this reality. The statement calls for a consideration of evidence that will set standards for working conditions that provide for both quality of interpretation and interpreter wellbeing.

Guiding change

Klaus Ziegler, in an interview with Lourdes de Rioja for her blog, “[A Word in Your Ear](#)”, says that interpreters need to come to terms with the change:

One of the biggest challenges we have is to overcome our usual practice... it is difficult for us to understand that things have changed all around us. Society has changed. The demand for communication in our society has changed. The way that events are set up nowadays has changed... We can't be the only ones that say that everything needs to be the same as thirty years ago.

For this reason, AIIC set up the Taskforce on Distance Interpreting (TFDI) to ensure that the profession could continue to ensure high professional standards and protect the interests of its members.

The TFDI developed the [AIIC Guidelines for Distance Interpreting](#), published in January 2019, to give guidance to interpreters, the profession as a whole, and those involved in organizing interpreted events. The Guidelines specify that interpreters should be physically located with their team members, even though remote from the event; and this location should comply with basic professional standards. They provide specific recommendations covering physical, technical, and contractual aspects of RSI, and include a checklist for interpreters to consider when negotiating conditions for contracts involving RSI.

Until recently, Ziegler says, the RSI environment has been technology-driven, with businesses seizing the opportunities that relatively cheap high-speed communications technology presented.

“Now its on us to really have an influence on the future development of these solutions, to make them as appropriate as possible to suit our own needs,” he says.

Starting a conversation

A number of regional events – in London (at the [January 2019 PRIMS meeting](#)), the Hague (November 2018), Cairo (September 2018), Athens (February 2019) – have fueled animated discussions and given AIIC members a chance to get up to speed on what they need to know to be able to make the right choices, and play their part in influencing the future of the profession.

Video coverage of some of these presentations and discussions have been put [online for AIIC members](#). AIIC pre-candidate Tatiana Kaplun has also contributed [a lively account of her impressions of the RSI training at the Hague](#) in November 2018, on the [AIIC Blog](#).

There is clearly a lot of interest, concern, and need for more information on this contentious topic.

Client demand & new blood

Increasingly, clients are going to request remote interpreting services, not necessarily to replace traditional on-site conferences. A flurry of new needs is mushrooming on the market: businesses where simultaneous interpretation was either too expensive or technically impossible are exploring the possibility of opening up to multilingualism. Examples include webinars, NGO meetings, company board meetings and many more.

We are already seeing interpreting courses at universities putting more emphasis on remote interpreting. They are doing so, in part, to meet demand: students expect to be trained in the latest technology, especially since they know that this a growth area and will be part of their professional career.

If AIIC is going to attract this new generation of professional interpreters, we will also need to recognise the changing realities of our technological environment. AIIC has a definite role in making sure that professional standards are maintained whatever the modality.

AIIC's [Private Market Sector \(PRIMS\) Standing Committee](#) represents the interests of interpreters working in the private sector and coordinates PRIMS events and activities.

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