

# ECHOES

EPITA

El Paso Interpreters & Translators Association



## President's Message

By Valeria Delmar

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I can hardly believe this is the last ECHOES issue of the year! The holidays are upon us and we at EPITA are busy planning upcoming festivities and events. There's only one thing missing, and that is you!

We would love to see more of our members at our meetings and events. We are constantly planning for events that will serve to educate, advance, or inspire our members, and we would love to hear straight from those to be benefitted. To this end, please don't forget to take a look the EPITA Pinwall section where we are announcing some details about upcoming events you simply can't miss.

Happy translating and interpreting,

Valeria B. Delmar  
President

## Contributions

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[epitanet.org](http://epitanet.org)

**United Nations Interpreters**

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## ABOUT ECHOES:

### WHAT IS ECHOES?

ECHOES is published monthly by the El Paso Interpreters and Translators Association (**EPITA**)... read more on page 5.



Picture: dogalzirve.org/

## United Nations Interpreters: An insider's view – Part II

By SHEILA SHERMET *I ata-divisions.org*

Published: October 26, 2017

Like most people, I associated the United Nations with New York City and the General Assembly. Indeed, after passing the staff interpretation exam and the interview, I just assumed that I would be offered a job in New York. Rumor had it that everyone had to start at headquarters to get a more comprehensive understanding of the UN. Imagine my surprise when human resources called and asked if they could make me an offer in Vienna, Austria. At the time, I vaguely knew that the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) was in Vienna and that was pretty much the extent of my knowledge.

Now, having worked in Vienna, Geneva and New York (my current residence) over the last 15 years, I believe that I have a better grasp of how the substantive work of the UN is distributed over the four main duty stations. Here is how it works, starting with New York.

The first week of the General Assembly (GA) in September, what we call the “high level week” when heads of state and government address the assembly, is really just the beginning of a session that typically lasts until Christmas. The agenda for the GA consists of hundreds of items – far too many for a body of 190 members to cover in three months. They are therefore divided by theme to be covered by six major GA committees. The First Committee, for instance, deals with all disarmament related issues, including nuclear weapons, conventional, small arms and light weapons, all the way to chemical.

The Second committee deals with finance and development issues, the Fifth with the UN budget, the Sixth with legal matters, ranging from international treaties to human rights law. A number of bodies that meet outside of New York then report to one of these committees (because they report to the GA), according to the topic.

The Third committee, for example, deals with social and economic development, which covers a wide range of subjects. Thus, both the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs report to it.

Much of the substantive work of the UN is done in one of the three duty stations outside NY, i.e., Geneva, Vienna or Nairobi. I often compare my working at three UN duty stations to Goldie Locks and the Three Bears. Remember?

One chair was too small,  
one too big and one just right?  
One was a great place to live, but  
the work involved the same six  
topics all the time.

Another was a boring city but  
the work was interesting.  
One had a lot of variety  
but also a lot of stress and  
unpredictability. You get the  
picture. So, I lived in Vienna for  
almost five years. For my family,  
it was the best duty station in  
many regards. Our three boys  
were ages 18 months, four, and  
nine years old respectively when  
we arrived. It is a great place to  
raise kids.

For instance, every park has  
different playground equipment  
and there is a free pool for kids in every district (what you  
can afford when you don't spend all your money on B-52  
bombers). Vienna is the opposite of New York in that all  
"collective systems," be it public transportation or health  
care, provide excellent service. There are no subway delays,  
the airport never shuts down for snow, and the power  
never goes out because of a storm.

I could go on and on about what a livable and affordable  
city it is. Turning to the work, Vienna is a more a technical  
duty station. It covers nuclear non-proliferation, narcotic  
drugs and outer space. UNCITRAL, one of my personal  
favorites, is the UN body that works on International  
Trade Law addressing topics such as insolvency, electronic  
commerce and secure transactions.

*"Much of the  
substantive work  
of the UN is done  
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outside NY, i.e.,  
Geneva, Vienna or  
Nairobi."*

These meetings and their documents are both legal and technical in their detailed focus. Geneva is the center for human rights – with the Human Rights Council based there. It conducts the "Periodic Universal Reviews" of member states' human rights records. I personally loved working for the human rights treaty bodies, which oversee implementation of the many human rights conventions such as Rights of the Child or Political and Civil Rights (considered the most important). The CD (Conference on Disarmament, which negotiates

disarmament treaties), UNCTAD (trade and development) and the International Law Commission (International Treaty Law, Humanitarian Law, etc.) are some of the other substantive bodies that meet in Geneva.

The area is beautiful with the Alps as a backdrop to life. Because it is expensive, people live scattered in towns around Geneva and across the border in neighboring France. It was my favorite duty station from the point of view of the work. Nairobi deals with biodiversity and the environment. It is a smaller duty station and colleagues tell me that about 40% of the work is travel – mostly around Africa and the Far East. I have not

experienced it yet personally – but there is still time!

The teams of staff interpreters in the four duty stations vary in size. Geneva and New York have some 20 interpreters in the English booth alone, with all languages accounting for well over 100 staff members; whereas Vienna and Nairobi are smaller, where all six booths are staffed with a total of some 20-25 interpreters.

In the next part of this ongoing article about working at the UN, I will address client needs and expectations and how that impacts our interpretation techniques.

# EPITA PINWALL

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

November						
sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December						
sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

January						
sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

*Our next EPITA meeting will be on*

**Thursday, November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

The Community Room of the El Paso Police Department West Side Regional Command Center at 6:00 PM at 4801 Osborne Dr, El Paso, TX 79922

**\*Special Guest**

**Mr. Ray Mancera**

El Paso Law School Initiative Learn about the latest efforts to bring a law school to El Paso and the implications for our T&I community!

*EPITA Annual Holiday Dinner*

**Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

P.F. Chang's at Sunland Park at 5:30 PM

*Regular EPITA meetings*

**Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

The Community Room of the El Paso Police Department West Side Regional Command Center at 6:00 PM at 4801 Osborne Dr, El Paso, TX 79922

**\*Special Guest**

**Mr. Neal McDonnell**

Improving Client Connection and Communication via Facebook & Social Media

*Upcoming events...*

February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018

Jorge Dieppa - Continuing Education Seminar

The Community Room of the El Paso Police Department West Side Regional Command Center at 6:00 PM at 4801 Osborne Dr, El Paso, TX 79922



## NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

**NOVEMBER** - 01 Ralph Garcia

**DECEMBER**- 13 Josefina Font  
16 Elieth Salazar-Alpizar  
22 Estela Balderrama  
23 Victoria Alicia Garcia



# EPITA INFO

## 2016-2017 EPITA OFFICERS

<b>President:</b> Valeria Delmar	contact@alinguafranca.com
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<b>Corresponding Secretary:</b> Vacant	To be announced
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## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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## ABOUT ECHOES

ECHOES is published monthly by the El Paso Interpreters and Translators Association (**EPITA**). For information regarding membership contact the Membership Chair. For newsletter contributions, contact the Editor, Rosa Alva Garcia. Deadline for submission of articles and news is the last Saturday of the month.

**EPITA** is an association that promotes ongoing education and development of translators and interpreters.

**EPITA**, through its meetings and workshops, supports accreditation and certification programs, and engages in outreach.

Individual annual membership: \$30.00

## Mission:

### WHAT IS EPITA?

The goals and objectives of this professional association are: The advancement, protection and benefit of its members. To elevate the status of its members and to advance their interest. EPITA, since its inception, has found that interest in interpreting and translating has increased along with the need for continuing education. We offer monthly mini-workshops on current topics of interest and an annual conference. Participants come from a wide area surrounding El Paso, TX.

## P.O. BOX:

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## For More Information

Visit Us at:

**[www.epitanet.org](http://www.epitanet.org)**