

TA Group Report to SoA Man Comm

September 2022

Membership

1. Overall TA membership: **845**
2. Associates: **97 (including 16 students)**
3. Members: **748**

Who are we and what do we do?

The aim of the TA is to **advocate for the rights and needs of literary translators** - a literary translator being anyone translating literary texts, such as fiction and non-fiction, children's literature, but also academic writing, graphic novels, plays, screenplays and anything else that requires the skills and expertise of a literary translator. You can also join the TA as an **emerging literary translator**.

The activities of the committee vary **in response to issues raised by the wider TA community**, and the particular **skills and interests of committee members**. As such, a considerable amount of time and thought has been given to developing and **improving diversity and inclusivity** in both the TA and the SoA. A **working group** has been set up to continue this work, alongside the committee's other commitments. Two other working groups were also set up to look at **theatre translation** and **film rights**, with the aim of developing guides for translators. These are currently the committee's three ongoing areas of focus.

The Committee aims to be a safe space for discussion where all members can share their experiences and concerns. The agenda helps to structure the discussion with regular items and space to discuss other topics raised by members.

Make-up of the current committee:

The committee has **8 elected members** who serve for **three years** from the AGM in November. The committee appoints **two members as Co-Chairs** who serve for **two years each**, with a one-year overlap - meaning that no new co-chairing team has to start from scratch. The current Co-Chairs are Sawad Hussain and Rebecca DeWald. The TA is a member of CEATL (the European Council of Literary Translators Associations) and the current representative is a co-opted member of the TA committee.

Read more about the **current committee** [here](#).

Stats:

Years of experience: between 1 and 32 years (average of 14 years)

Age: 31 to 67 years (average of 45)

6 out of 8 committee members mainly translate literary texts

Genre specialisms: range from literary fiction to historical fiction, YA, history, anthropology, art and architecture, academic translations and non-fiction

Geography: half the committee members are currently based in Scotland (Edinburgh and Glasgow), others are in France, London, Cambridge and the North of England

3 committee members identify as having a disability, chronic health condition and/or mental health condition

The ethnic background of those committee members who replied to this question were: Asian (Indian), White, White British, White Scottish, Pakistani, White Scottish-Norwegian, White German

6 committee members identified as she/her

Get to know the TA Committee

This is what the current committee members say about why they joined the TA committee and what they are passionate about:

“I stood for the TA committee firstly, because I had relevant experience of serving in other Societies and I wanted to bring that to another organisation. Secondly, I'm passionate about the translator being recognised, being paid well, and finally ensuring that the text being translated is correct and of a very high standard.”

“Two areas particularly interest me: I would love to see more constructive conversations about the relationship between publishers and translators. And for all literary prizes awarded to translations to be shared (not necessarily equally) between the writer and the translator.”

“I joined the TAC as I felt it would be one of the most powerful means I had bring up issues of inclusivity and accessibility, and to work towards change in these areas.”

“Ensuring access to events for translators all around the country, hybrid and online attendance options, fair pay and bringing translators together to discuss terms to prevent publishers and agencies exploiting translators.”

“I wanted to learn more about how it works, and more importantly to make sure that the opinions/voices of other translators of colour were being heard.”

“I’m most passionate about getting more people involved, and increasing awareness of how we can support them. The rights of the translator (being assigned copyright, royalties, etc.) is something I really want to see improved.”

“I was initially asked and put forward by my Scandinavian colleagues initially. I felt that I wanted to give back something to the association that has helped me so much over the years. And also because I firmly believe in getting the best possible rights and contracts for translators, so that has always been my main focus. And have learnt so much in the past four years. Very grateful to have been part of the committee, even if it was a bit stressful at times.”

“I have been working as a professional translator for over a decade, but I still felt like an impostor when I first joined the Society of Authors, as most of my translation work is academic and non-fiction, with only a bit of fiction mixed in. But I’m glad colleagues and peers encouraged me to join the TA and the Committee, as it made me realize that translators can come in all different shapes and sizes, and they are all just as valid.”

The TA is **currently advertising for two committee positions** (deadline for expressions of interest Friday 23 September 2022). Applicants need to send a brief statement - no more than 250 words - on why they want to join and what they can bring to the committee. Nominations do not need to be supported by any other TA member. Applicants must be a Full Member and not an Associate.

If we receive more nominations than places then we will hold an online ballot in the autumn. The successful candidates will be invited to attend the hybrid TA committee meeting on Thursday 27 October (2-4pm) and the results will be confirmed officially at the online TA AGM on Thursday 3 November.

How we work

Meetings are held quarterly; usually in February, May, September and November on a weekday for 2 hrs. All meetings are held **online as the most accessible and inclusive way** for members to meet. We recognise that meeting in person is also valuable so up to two meetings a year will also be **hybrid**, streamed from the SoA offices in London (committee members are reimbursed for travel expenses).

Most of our work is done in between meetings, when the committee stays in touch by email. Some emails will be for information only and others will be for action. The Co-Chairs and TA Co-ordinators will always tell committee members if a response is needed and give a clear deadline.

Statements and Campaigns:

This is an exciting time in translation, with a number of campaigns coalescing to raise the profile of literary translators:

- The **#TranslatorsOnTheCover campaign**, initiated by translator Jennifer Croft and author Mark Haddon in response to the International Booker on International Translation Day 2021 (30 Sept), has received over 2,600 signatures to-date and has been widely covered in the media
- The **Nielsen BookScan report**, conducted for The Bookseller, has quashed the myth that only 3% of books published in English are translations: in fact **11% of fiction sales revenue is generated by the sale of translated books**
- Translator **Frank Wynne** was the first translator to become **chair of the International Booker Prize jury 2022**, which was won by Geetanjali Shree and Daisy Rockwell for *Tomb of Sand* (Tilted Axis Press), the first translation from Hindi to win the prize
- The TA also leads campaigning activity around translator visibility and working conditions - initiatives like **#namethetranslator**, for example, have become a steady feature of social media campaigns
- The TA has conducted a **survey** on payment and working conditions for **bilingual Readers Reports for publishers**. The survey received 143 responses and will form the basis for further campaigns.

In the current year, we have also helped draft an **open letter in support of Ukrainian writers, illustrators and translators**, and facilitated its translation into Ukrainian and Russian.

The committee has been intentional about raising the profile of the Translator's Association on Twitter, using the hashtag **#TAonTwitter**. The social media representative is currently a rotating position, changing every three months. So far, it has only focused on Twitter, but future committee members can develop the role as they see fit, using other platforms such as Instagram and Tiktok to talk about translation issues. In addition to increasing visibility, the aim is to foster more conversations around translation where individuals feel they can bring issues to the committee to address at a organisational level. (eg: payment for book blog tours, etc.)

Events:

The TA is one of a number of organisations on the **Steering Group** organising events each year at the **London Book Fair's Literary Translation Centre** - one of the most attended stands at the LBF. Out of the 11 sessions on offer, the TA organized the sessions 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Author-Translator Relations' - which was **the most attended LTC event overall** - and co-organized two events with English PEN on 'Pitching and Access in a Post-Pandemic World'.

TA Co-Coordinator Catherine Fuller and former TA committee member Rosalind Harvey are organizing an interactive talk exploring translations contracts as part of **International Translation Day 2022** (29 and 30 September 2022), with many other past and present committee members also participating.

We are currently in the midst of organization the **TA@Home Festival**, a week of events centred on translation, intendeds as much for writers to understand more about the business of how their work is translated as it is for translators to learn about writers and publishers. The events will take place between **31st October and 4 November 2022** and feature the following (**confidential until the official programme announcement**):

Monday 31 October

Readers Reports Survey

2.30-3.30pm

Tuesday 1 November

Industry Insider - The Business of Translation

SoA Contracts Team

10-11.30am

Wednesday 2 November

Disability, Neurodiversity and Translation

2.30-3.30pm

Thursday 3 November

1.30pm - 2pm AGM. A brief lunchtime AGM followed by an event

Afternoon Tea with Frank Wynne, in conversation with Rebecca DeWald

2.30pm - 3.15pm