

Summary of discussion on
Finding Qualified Trainers

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Towards the end of the symposium, Ola Furmanek (Wake Forest University, United States) raised the question of the recruitment of qualified trainers. She wondered whether the solution was to attract industry specialists or to train applied linguistics/translation/communication scholars to teach localization.

She underlined how difficult it was in the United States to find localization practitioners combining a willingness to teach and a serious scholarly interest. She also stressed that academia seemed reluctant to hire technical specialists, as professional training is generally seen as pertaining to vocational schools. Ola Furmanek added that this situation was changing in the United States, but she saw another problem emerge, as she wondered whether there were enough qualified instructors to teach localization. She explained that her own institution had failed to hire a full-time translation/localization specialist to fill a tenure-track position, adding that few localization specialists seem willing to transmit their experience. She saw this as another reflection of the university/trade relationship, wondering whether this could be related to Frank Austermühl's earlier comment about industry-university cooperation (in which he asked whether the exclusion of translation scholars from localization conferences could not be compared to that of translators in localization projects), or if other factors were worth exploring.

Quoting a comment by Daniel Gouadec about the declining rate of students willing to engage in teaching, she asked whether other institutions also faced a similar situation.

Tim Altanero (Austin Community College, United States) took up this discussion and said that he had hired trainers in adjunct positions for several reasons. He stressed that he valued industry experience more highly than academic preparation, but that industry specialists generally held highly paid positions that restricted their availability. Short-term courses and team-teaching were relatively successful in order to attract such specialists, allowing them to teach while retaining their current positions.

Altanero added that, although his college needed another full-time faculty member, it was unable to compete with industry salaries. Further, hiring a localization specialist for a full-time position would require the candidate to retool to be advanced, and to hold a Ph.D. The exact nature of that Ph.D. was seen by Altanero as a can of worms he was unwilling to open.

Altanero further considered that localization as an academic career was at its very beginning. For him, this meant there was a poor understanding of what a localization specialist would do about the ancillary activities of a professor, such as publishing. He saw academe as being stuck in the “traditional” publishing outlets, and lacking scholarly publications in the field of localization.

He added that one of the most insidious problems facing localization professionals was the academy itself, which is broken down into small units unable to accommodate a field such as localization, which is largely meta-linguistic and straddles over the borders of traditional individual language departments, computer sciences, business and other fields.

Altanero concluded by saying that small steps were being taken to address the situation and that, while there was still some way to go in order to establish the field, the future looked exciting.