A Labor Of Language

Building The Global Preservation Community Through Funded Translation Projects

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**Abstract – Translation of digital preservation documentation into other languages is an invaluable tool for global knowledge exchange in the field. In this panel, professionals working on translation projects in the preservation field will discuss the value of translation, what best practices around these projects look like, and methods for sustainably supporting translation efforts without reliance on volunteer labor.**

**Keywords – documentation, translation, metadata, labor**

**Conference Topics – community, exchange**

1. Introduction (Heading 1)

In the constantly evolving field of digital preservation, documentation around best practices, and global standards provides a crucial tool for institutions as they develop their preservation workflows; it’s also vital for the cross-institutional exchanges, partnerships and projects that support and strengthen the field. However, language barriers severely limit the accessibility of this documentation. Additionally, when translation projects do occur, they often rely on volunteer labor, placing additional burdens on bilingual preservation professionals who hope to make documentation accessible beyond the hegemony of English as a global language.

This panel will present a discussion with translators and partners on translation projects in the preservation field. Speakers will each briefly present on recent projects translating preservation documentation, with an emphasis on preliminary planning, workflows, and presentation/information exchange, before entering into a discussion of best practices and sustainability to support translation projects and more broadly within the field.

Rebecca Fraimow and Lorena Ramírez-López will discuss the NEH-funded translation of documentation around the PBCore cataloging standard into Spanish. Topics will include the process of writing translation funding into the grant, decision-making around direct translation versus re-creation of example documentation in different contexts, and the process of outreach and website development to ensure that Spanish-language users are able to access the documentation.

Pamela and Juana will discuss some relevant issues related to the process of translating technical documents such as the suitability and credentials of the translator vs. the misconception that any native speaker can do the translation; the difference between translating different types of documents, in particular, those related to digital technologies; the importance of good writing skills in the target language and ability to adapt writing to the different variations and nuances of the target language (Spanish in this case). All facts considered, the discussion makes emphasis on the costs of a translation project when utmost professional standards are expected, and also reminds the importance to include texts from other languages to English as part of diversifying efforts in the profession. Finally, we will discuss the importance of prioritization and selection of content to be translated for major impact and usability, as documentation can have embedded practices and workflows, whose translation can imply an assumption that these practices can be implemented in any context, regardless of language and preservation methods used.

By entering into an open discussion of the labor involved in translation projects and best practices for ensuring useful outcomes, the panelists hope to provide valuable examples for ensuring the sustainable continuation of this work in the future and further open up possibilities for global exchange within the field.