

Working as a translator for the publishing industry: Survey results

This document presents the preliminary results of a 10-question survey focusing on translators working for the publishing industry.

The survey was conducted in May and June 2010. Answers have been received from 93 people. The statistics of the answers are presented below in tabulated and graphical form.

Most questions contained an open ender option; the present dot deal with the answers received there. Some of these answers may be included in further survey reports or incorporated into other analyses of the publishing industry.

Further surveys may be conducted in the future, to separate the impact of various important factors (target language; geographical location; subject field, etc.). The present survey has nonetheless clearly indicated the importance of the subject – and much more. Some of the open-enders have confirmed that in several countries the generally prevalent conditions for working with publishers are so unfavorable that professional translators cannot pursue a professional career working exclusively with this type of clients. Other answers have confirmed that this is also clearly reflected in the quality of published translations in some markets.

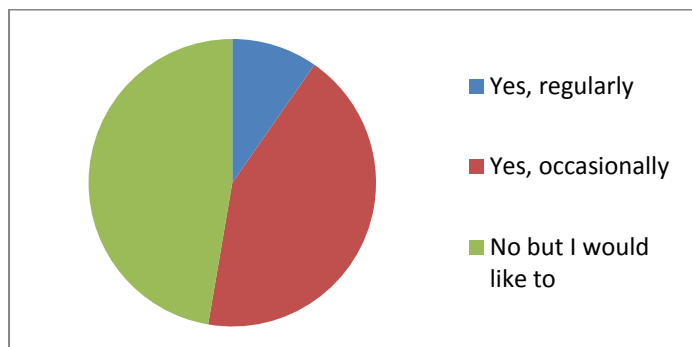
Since the general perception of the general public about the translation profession is based primarily on published translations, this situation has far reaching consequences on translators' general livelihood in those markets. Improving the situation in that segment is of the utmost importance.

The survey results have also shown that many the working conditions are particularly bad for one's first book translation. One of the contributing factors is a lack of proper knowledge about the market reality, the applicable regulations, and the recommendations of various associations safeguarding translators' and authors' interest. Sharing one's experience with other professional translators should therefore be strongly encouraged. Dialog with other stakeholders – authors, publishers, etc. – is also indispensable.

An analysis of the publishing industry, from a translator's viewpoint, will be presented on June 26, at 16:00 CET, in the framework of an open webinar organized by the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI, www.iapti.org); the details are given on the last page of this document. And now, let's see the survey results.

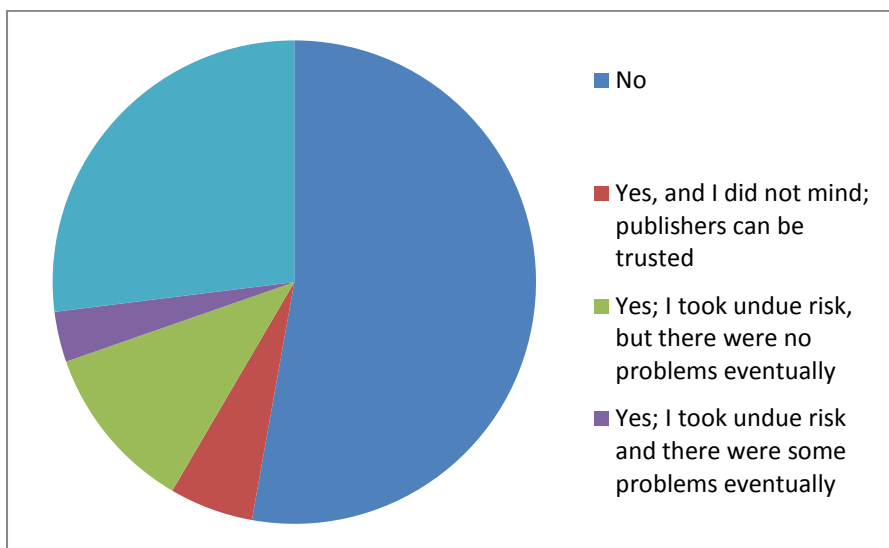
1. Have you ever translated a book for a publisher?

Yes, regularly	9
Yes, occasionally	40
No but I would like to	44
No and I am not interested	0



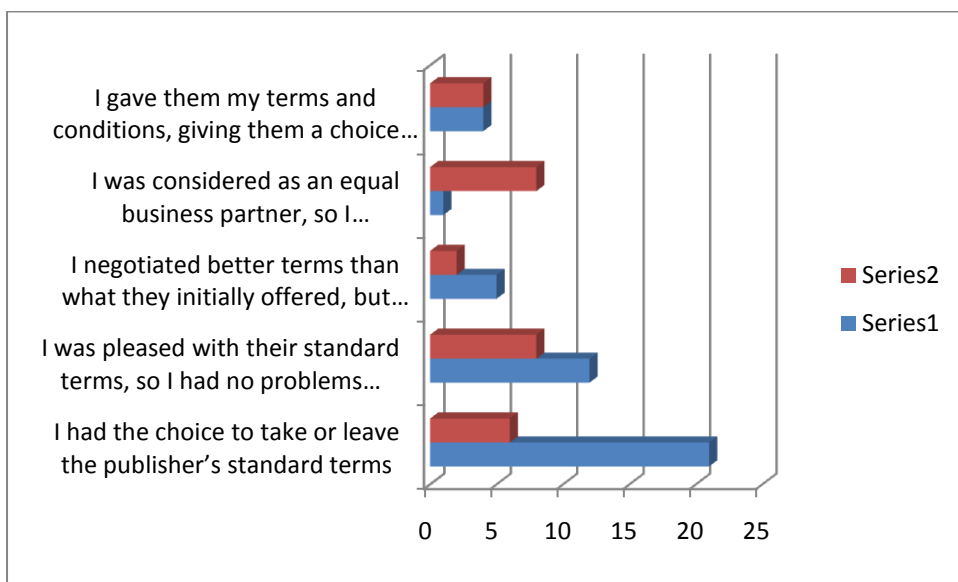
2. Has it ever happened that you started to work on a book translation for a publisher without a contract?

No	47
Yes, and I did not mind; publishers can be trusted	5
Yes; I took undue risk, but there were no problems eventually	10
Yes; I took undue risk and there were some problems eventually	3
Other (please specify)	24



3. In the negotiations of the terms with the publisher...

	First book	Last book
I had the choice to take or leave the publisher's standard terms	21	6
I was pleased with their standard terms, so I had no problems with accepting them	12	8
I negotiated better terms than what they initially offered, but the negotiated terms were still not advantageous for me	5	2
I was considered as an equal business partner, so I negotiated the fair terms	1	8
I gave them my terms and conditions, giving them a choice to take or leave them	4	4
Other (please specify)		



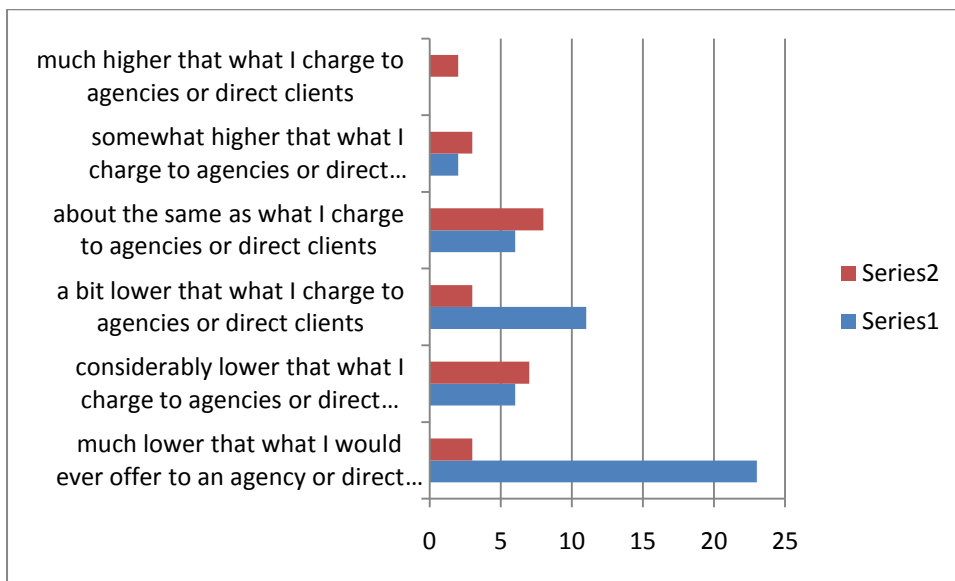
Series 1 = For the first book

Series 2 = For the last book

Comment: fewer replies and a marked improvement of the negotiating position for the last book.

4. The fee for the translation...

	First book	Last book
much lower than what I would ever offer to an agency or direct client	23	3
considerably lower than what I charge to agencies or direct clients	6	7
a bit lower than what I charge to agencies or direct clients	11	3
about the same as what I charge to agencies or direct clients	6	8
somewhat higher than what I charge to agencies or direct clients	2	3
much higher than what I charge to agencies or direct clients	0	2
Other (please specify)		



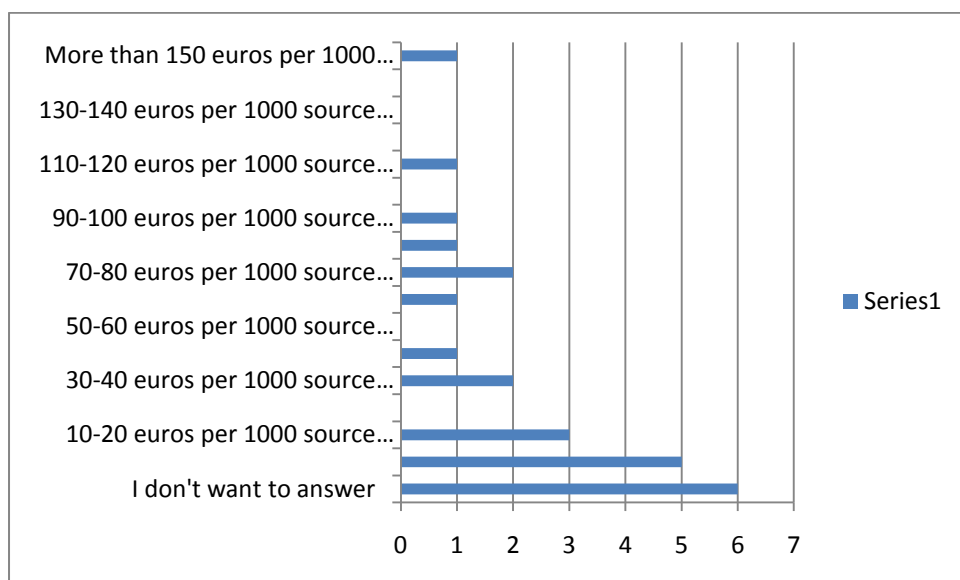
Series 1 = For the first book

Series 2 = For the last book

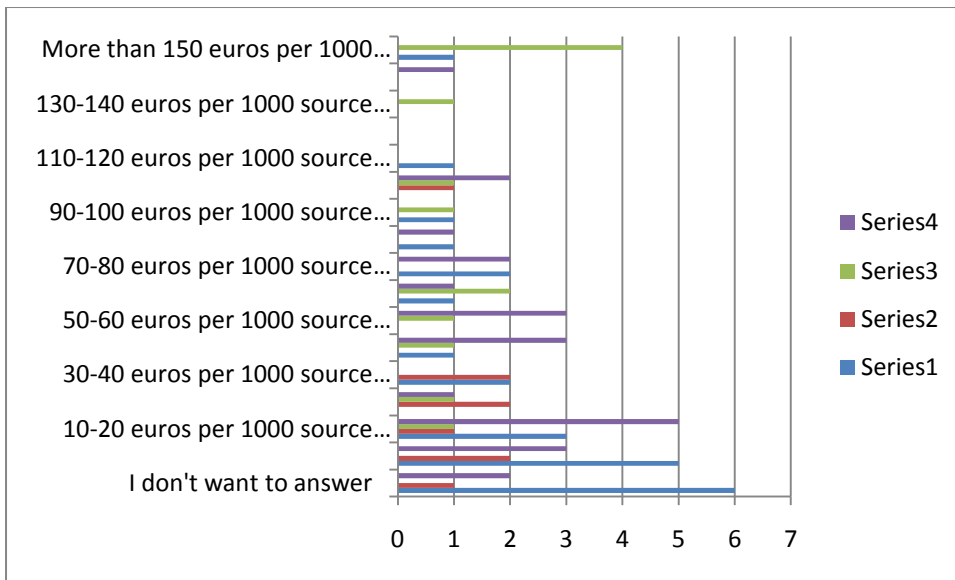
Comment: fewer replies and a marked improvement of the negotiating position for the last book.

5. Approximately how much did you charge per thousand source words (in euros; (please make rough conversions if necessary) for the translation...

	First	Worst paid	Best paid	Average
I don't want to answer	6	1	0	2
Less than 10 euros per 1000 source words	5	2	0	3
10-20 euros per 1000 source words	3	1	1	5
20-30 euros per 1000 source words	0	2	1	1
30-40 euros per 1000 source words	2	2	0	0
40-50 euros per 1000 source words	1	0	1	3
50-60 euros per 1000 source words	0	0	1	3
60-70 euros per 1000 source words	1	0	2	1
70-80 euros per 1000 source words	2	0	0	2
80-90 euros per 1000 source words	1	0	0	1
90-100 euros per 1000 source words	1	0	1	0
100-110 euros per 1000 source words	0	1	1	2
110-120 euros per 1000 source words	1	0	0	0
120-130 euros per 1000 source words	0	0	0	0
130-140 euros per 1000 source words	0	0	1	0
140-150 euros per 1000 source words	0	0	0	1
More than 150 euros per 1000 source words	1	0	4	0
Other (please specify)				



Series 1 = For the first book



Series 1 = For the first book

Series 2 = For the worst paid book

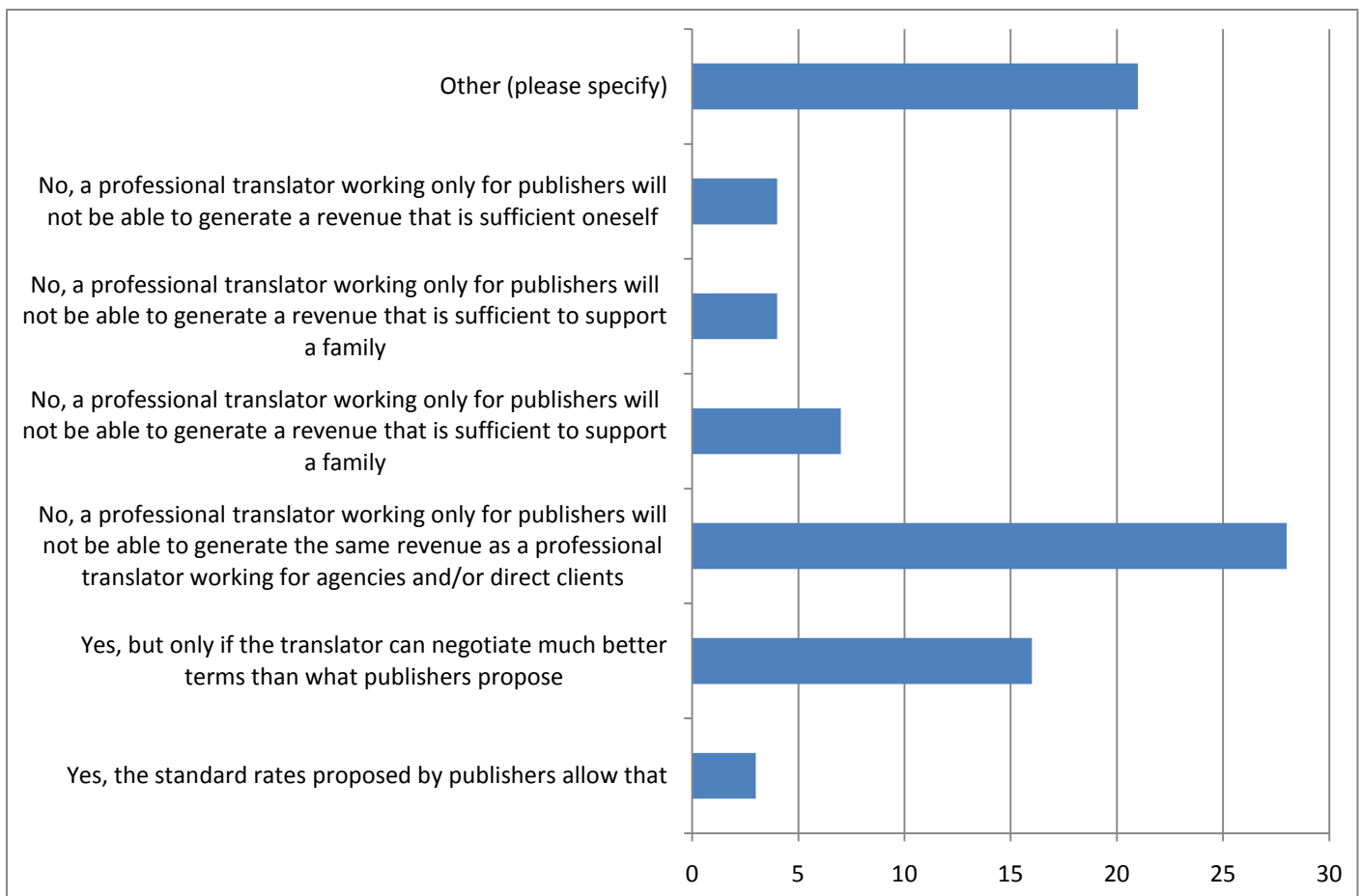
Series 3 = For the best paid book

Series 4 = Average of all books

Comment: Relatively few replies. The data indicate that the first book is often worse paid than subsequent ones.

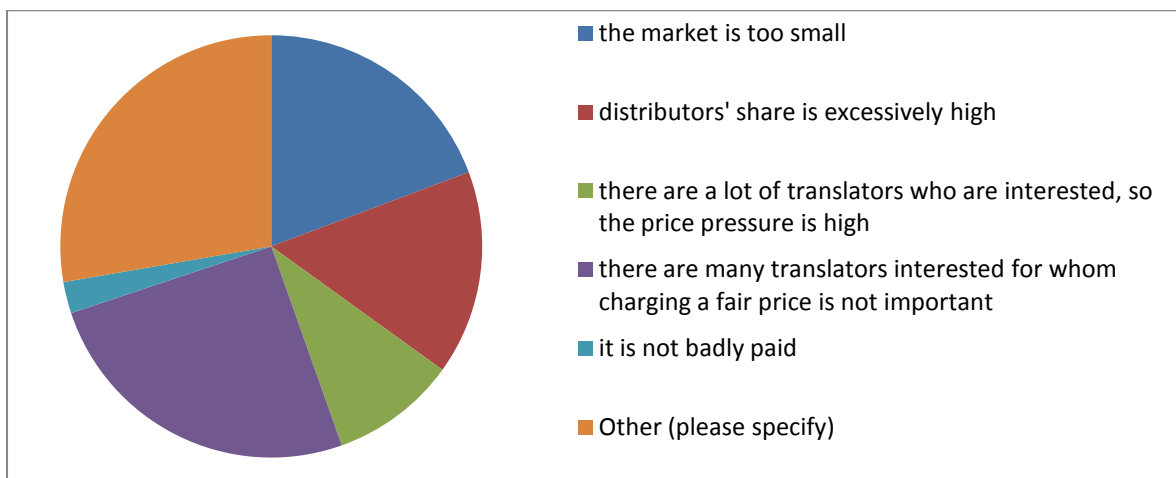
6. Is it possible for a professional translator to make a fair revenue from book translations in your market?

Yes, the standard rates proposed by publishers allow that	3
Yes, but only if the translator can negotiate much better terms than what publishers propose	16
No, a professional translator working only for publishers will not be able to generate the same revenue as a professional translator working for agencies and/or direct clients	28
No, a professional translator working only for publishers will not be able to generate a revenue that is sufficient to support a family	7
No, a professional translator working only for publishers will not be able to generate a revenue that is sufficient to support a family	4
No, a professional translator working only for publishers will not be able to generate a revenue that is sufficient oneself	4
Other (please specify)	21



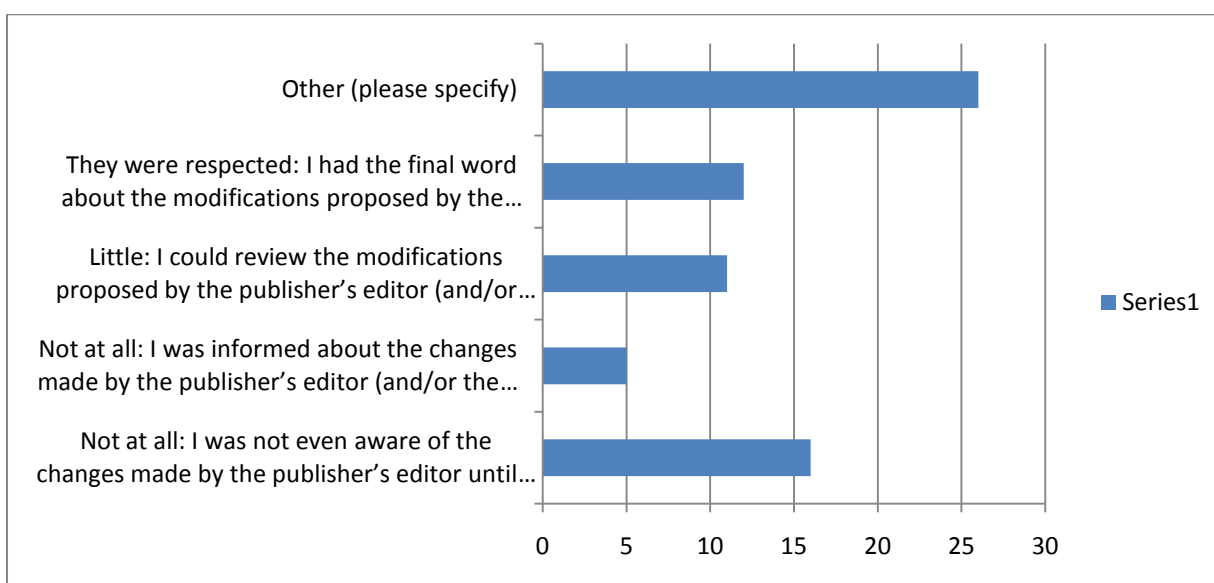
7. Translation for publishers in my market is usually badly paid first and foremost because...

the market is too small	16
distributors' share is excessively high	13
there are a lot of translators who are interested, so the price pressure is high	8
there are many translators interested for whom charging a fair price is not important	21
it is not badly paid	2
Other (please specify)	23



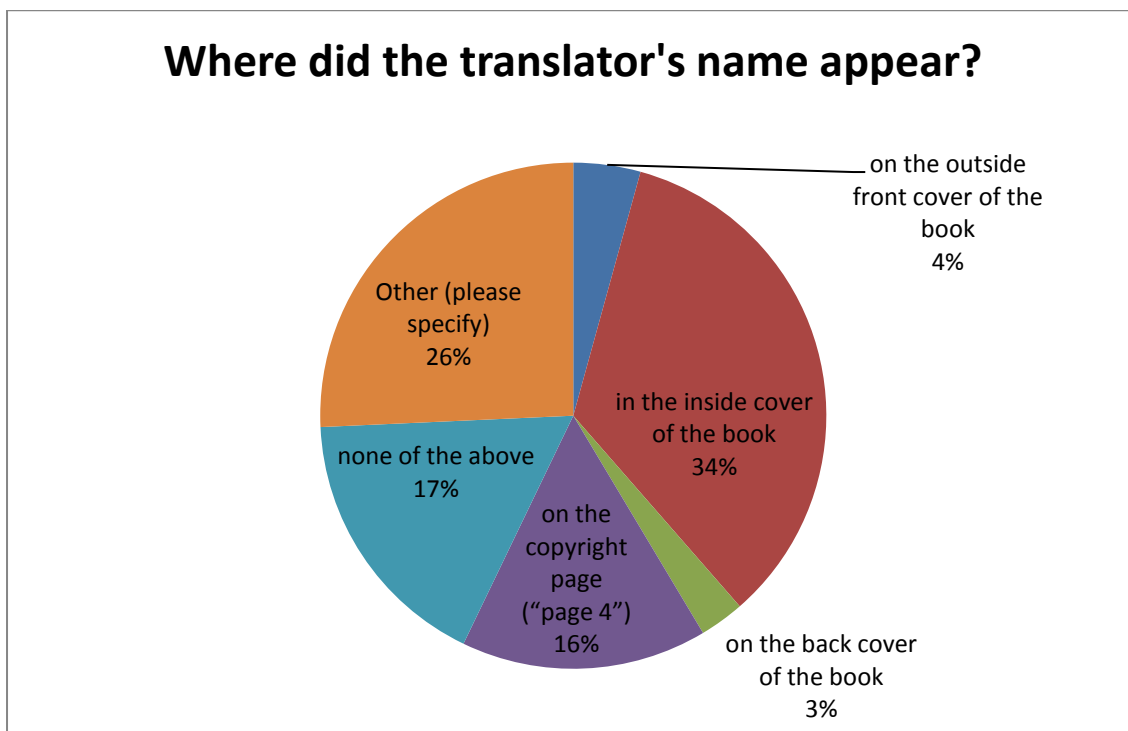
8. How much were your “integrity rights” respected?

Not at all: I was not even aware of the changes made by the publisher’s editor until I saw the book in print	16
Not at all: I was informed about the changes made by the publisher’s editor (and/or the original author) before the book came out but I was not consulted	5
Little: I could review the modifications proposed by the publisher’s editor (and/or the original author), and we could discuss the points, but the final word was theirs	11
They were respected: I had the final word about the modifications proposed by the publisher’s editor (and/or the original author)	12
Other (please specify)	26



9. “Paternal rights”: The most prominent place where your (the translator’s) name appeared is...

on the outside front cover of the book	3
in the inside cover of the book	24
on the back cover of the book	2
on the copyright page (“page 4”)	11
none of the above	12
Other (please specify)	18



10. If you have any other comments, an own experience to share in detail, or suggestions on how to improve the situation of translators who work for publishers, please share. Feel free to disclose your identity or keep your anonymity.

21 comments received; a selection may be published in a subsequent report.

Webinar on the publishing industry

Many thanks to Aurora Humarán for suggesting the inclusion of questions related to translators' intellectual rights (questions 8 and 9) and to everyone who participated in the survey.

Details of the IAPTI webinar are available at <http://www.aipti.org/ourforum/calendar.php?action=event&eid=39>.

The webinar is open and free – feel free to share the link with any colleagues who might be interested.

www.aipti.org

ASOCIACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE PROFESIONALES DE LA TRADUCCIÓN Y LA INTERPRETACIÓN
Por un ejercicio ético de la profesión

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS

Webinar

Saturday
May 29,
2010
4-6pm CET

IAPTI presents the
2nd free webinar

Topic: **The Publishing Industry**
Speaker: **Attila Piróth**

Program details:
[http://www.aipti.org/
ourforum/calendar.php](http://www.aipti.org/ourforum/calendar.php)

Registration: info.request@aipti.org