

# ITI Peer Support Group – how was it for you?

Nine former participants of ITI's PSG give their view of what it's like being a mentee, explaining the benefits it affords as regards career advancement and networking

ITI's Peer Support Group has been running for four years, and yet some ITI members are still unaware of its existence. Following on from the description of it written by Nick Rosenthal in the Nov/Dec 2006 issue of ITI *bulletin*, here are some comments from former participants.

Next year's course starts on March 5, 2007. Application forms should be submitted by February 15 to be in time for next year's intake. For more information, contact Parveen Mann at [membership@iti.org.uk](mailto:membership@iti.org.uk).

## What attracted mentees to the ITI course?

'I was looking for advice on how to get my freelance career off the ground, and for a sense of belonging, as I could not get to ITI events at the time.'

**Alison Quayle, PSG 2003**



Colin Hurst



Alison Quayle

'I was aware that although I had taken distance study courses in translation, in preparation for the Diploma in Translation, I knew little about the practicalities of working as a translator or how to start out.' **Cathy Dobson, PSG 2004**

'I heard about it at last year's ITI conference from a colleague who had also only recently come into our industry, and her praise was fully justified.' **Colin Hurst, PSG 2006**

'When I saw the PSG programme, I thought: 'I don't need all that! I just want to translate, why do I need to worry about marketing, equipment and making a business plan? What does that have to do with translation?' Yes, I was that

naive! I had little idea what was needed to be a professional freelance translator and PSG was a real revelation in many ways. I realised that being a successful translator requires much more than just translation!' **Monika Llewellyn, PSG 2006**

## What are the mentors like?

'Extremely helpful but also forthright in their comments



Cathy Dobson

**'Had I not joined the scheme, I think I would be learning a lot of things the hard way and experiencing a lot more frustration, disappointment and isolation getting my new career off the ground. The scheme helped me to develop a sense of professionalism and gave me the confidence to pursue this career.'**

**Cathy Dobson, PSG mentee in 2004**



Rosemary Black

when they needed to be... offered a mass of invaluable information and contacts... committed and helpful. I was impressed with the structured approach the organisers had taken in designing the course. ... generous with their time, attention and advice ... frank with their advice and opinions on all the topics and I found their views and experience useful. ... helpful and patient; their individual attention has made a huge difference to me.' **(CH, Betti Moser (PSG 2005), AQ, Rosemary Black (PSG 2006), ML**

## Is the scheme expensive?

'Provided you can dedicate the required amount of time to the course, so as to complete all the assignments and really join in the discussions and exchanges, the PSG is incredibly good value for money.' **BM**

'The PSG forum is great value for money.' **Sarah Jones, PSG 2006**

## What about the content?

'...effective, useful exercises, directly related to becoming proficient as a translator.' **CH**  
'Anne Hulme's telephone

tutoring brought us up to speed on dealing with customers, and her vital "Getting Paid" unit helped clarify the procedures.'

**Sarah Griffin-Mason, PSG 2006**

'I learned how to run my own business, create a suitable CV, market my services, develop a specialist subject, choose appropriate IT equipment and use OmegaT translation memory software.'

**RB**  
'Stimulating and enjoyable exercises, and contact with my fellow mentees was very encouraging. Along with the networks, I found it one of the most valuable benefits of ITI membership.'

**AQ**  
'Michael Benis's advice on all things technical – from chairs to web hosting – was fantastic, Nick Rosenthal's business nous and constant enthusiasm helped us hone our business plans and marketing strategies, and Marc Prior's add-on OmegaT project showed us the basics of what TM has to offer using a free, downloadable, translation memory package.'



**Monika Llewellyn**

**'Along with the networks, I found the PSG one of the most valuable benefits of ITI membership'**

[www.iti.org.uk](http://www.iti.org.uk)

**'The PSG has increased my knowledge of the business, given me a new sense of professionalism, a new sense of ambition and even more enthusiasm for my chosen career. Providing an informal, yet professional, environment for meeting colleagues and making friends it has also given me the confidence to start making full use of what the ITI has to offer and to become an active member of the translation community.'**

**Rachel Empringham, PSG mentee in 2006**



**Rachel Empringham**

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/PSG-Alumni>.' **AQ**

'It is encouraging to hear when colleagues get the breaks they are looking for, but also reassuring to know that some of the concerns I have or challenges I have faced are not that unique. My career is in its early stages, but I have gradually built up translation experience through pro bono work and have one regular (paying) client now. Offers of work



**Betti Moser**

**What do the mentees see as among the main things that they have learned?**

'I am now more professional, but above all more confident.'

**RB**  
'I had access to focused, expert advice about writing a CV, promoting myself, how to price and negotiate jobs, where to look for work, what equipment I needed and ways to gain experience from the outset of my career. It also gave me insight into what working as a freelance translator involves.'

**CD**  
**Were there difficulties?**

'A colleague made the point that no one says getting into translation and interpreting is going to be easy, but no one says it is going to be impossible either... I don't think the PSG is a magic wand or offers quick-fix solutions, and progress depends on one's own action ... you have to be willing to put in the initial work and to persevere with getting started.'

**CD**  
'The most demanding aspect was committing the time to benefit fully from the scheme. Time is needed to carry out research, complete

the tasks, actively participate in the online discussions, process the (sometimes) overwhelming number of emails and organise the wealth of information received. Meeting this challenge, however, has proved rewarding.'

**Rachel Empringham, PSG 2006**

**And after the course?**

'Initially I and others at the same stage of our careers met virtually via the e-group, but I have since met many of my fellow course participants and mentors face to face at ITI events. This social aspect is almost more useful than the structured modules, and I hope that it will be the beginning of a good network of colleagues and friends.'

**RB**  
'This year I've launched a Yahoo group called PSG-Alumni, where PSG members can keep in touch with each other (and some of the mentors) after their group ends. We have had some lively debates on topics including volume discounts, copyright, pro bono translation and marketing. Any former PSG members who haven't joined yet can sign up at



**Sarah Jones**

are also beginning to come in as a result of the steps I have taken to improve my CV and to market myself.'

**CD**  
'Since completion of the module, I have joined the OmegaT user group forum (and created translation memories from my work), as well as some ITI subject networks and the PSG-Alumni forum. It's reassuring to know that my "e-colleagues" are still only a mouse-click away!'

**SJ**  
'Best of all, I've since gained two new translation clients through contacts made on the PSG.'



**Sarah Griffin-Mason**