

# Subtitles for good

Carlos de Pablos-Ortega reveals how UEA undergraduates are supporting charities via a volunteer interpreting project

The SAMM Support for Access to Audiovisual Media project was conceived in 2016, following a successful translation project by Cristina Alonso Parker at the University of East Anglia (UEA). Cristina had engaged her Translation Studies students as volunteers to work on short stories by little-known writers such as Mike Robb and Douglas Volgreen. I started to think how my Audiovisual Translation (AVT) undergraduates could gain

a similar experience of using authentic video materials and professional subtitling software. SAMM began as a complement to modules on Technical Tools for Subtitling, and Dubbing and Technical Tools for Media Accessibility, which teach the fundamental principles and challenges of AVT, and how to apply this knowledge to practical tasks.

The basic idea was for students to provide volunteer AVT services to charities and non-profit organisations, giving support to those organisations while enabling students to work on genuine materials. One of the project's key objectives was to enhance student knowledge of what is required for AVT, such as assessments of space and time constraints, condensing the text, and translation of culture-bound elements. Because they are working on genuine materials, students must respond in a professional manner, developing an understanding of professional standards and norms, and translational ethics. This practical experience helps them to become sensitised to clients' needs, and also sharpens their linguistic skills in ways that artificial situations cannot.

## PRIZEWINNERS 2018



OOLALET's annual awards have been held in their current form since 2000, recognising outstanding achievement in its exams and in the field of languages more broadly. There was a record 17 awards and 14 prizewinners in 2018 (both Marion Langston-Nutting winning both the Susan Tolman Award for best Law candidate and the Susan Tolman CPD Prize of £200 for best overall candidate in the Diploma in Public Services Interpreting).

The inaugural award for best candidate in the new Real Lives exam was won by Alex Siding (p.12). Captain Alex Gobbi and Major Matthew Baylis received MVO awards for language achievement. Estelle Seargeant was among those rewarded for top marks in the Diploma in Translation, winning the Schlegel Ober-Stift for best group entry, and Leona

Caspe gained the NIPS Award for best results in the Diploma in Fellow Interpreting. Among the special awards in the field of languages, the Threlford Memorial Cup was awarded to the Young Interpreter Scheme (p.12), and the David Crystal Trophy to Frank Gardner (p.12), with SAMM gaining a Special Commendation as runner-up. Aaron Zeltz won the new Nick Buzan Award for a young CIOL member – a cash prize of £500 to enable the winner to participate in a project supporting international understanding. Aaron submitted a proposal to teach English in the Maria refugee camp in Lesbos through the charity Better Days, and will report on this work in The Linguist later this year. [Wat.ciol.org.uk/awards](http://wat.ciol.org.uk/awards) for a full list of 2018 award winners.



As participant Bea Cornea remarked: 'I really enjoyed the SAMM project as I was able to practice subtitling outside designated academic hours. As someone who is especially interested in a career in subtitling, this project provided me with invaluable experience, which hopefully I will be able to use in my future. I now am very comfortable with the subtitling software WinCaption, a skill which I can add to my CV.'

### Charitable aims

Supported by the UEA Alumni Fund, SAMM takes advantage of connections made through the Year Abroad programme, including links with charities in Latin America. Our work with SOP (Supporting Kids in Peru), for example, involves translating and subtitling film clips designed to help children access education in the USA. We subtitling an online toolkit for use by social workers in global charities and NGOs, aiding their understanding of child abuse in developing countries.

According to project leader, Amy Travis: 'SAMM has been instrumental in advancing Child Protection Toolkit's vision of preventing child abuse in international charities. Translation, subtitling and dubbing are very expensive services, especially for a still-flourishing charity. Yet these services are exactly what is needed to make CPT's training videos and resources useful to a larger audience and truly achieve the goal of preventing and stopping child abuse.' SAMM will save the charity more than \$15,000, she added.

UEA students also work with Bonera Link, a Norwich-based cooperative supporting fair and sustainable banana and pineapple traders. The charity raises awareness of the poor living and working conditions faced by plantation workers and small producers in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean. Our students have translated their films into French and Spanish, and created English subtitles for Deaf and hard of hearing audiences.

Our work with the Deaf community has grown since SAMM's inception, and we now have a number of projects with local museums. At the Wyndham Hermitage Museum, a small site run entirely by volunteers, student subtitles enable Deaf visitors to engage with historical excavations. Deaf attendees at the 2017 Oystre, Rome and Twelvet Education conference were able to access the film Travellers Time. The slide set on the road via SAMM subtitles.

Such work enables our AVT students to be part of both a local and a global scene, bringing a great sense of achievement. They can too proud that, through their volunteering, they are making a valuable contribution to society, whether through their translations or their intellectual and linguistic abilities.

### Unique challenges

When subtitling, students must overcome many hurdles, from the technical constraint of using a restricted number of characters (30 words per line) and the space of the spoken word (140-180 words per minute), to the



**AT THE AWARDS** Carlos de Pablos-Ortega (center) with student volunteers (left) and David Calvo-Caspiello (right). Executive Ana Corbis introduces a video message from Prince Philip (below) and arrives active at the event in central London

linguistic demands of translating culture-bound terms such as 'bank holiday' and 'afternoon tea'. The speed also varies according to the audience the subtitles are designed for, including Deaf viewers, foreign language users and children.

Conveying the general meaning, cultural nuances and the subtleties of the language within these limits is very challenging. As with any form of translation, the subtitler needs to master both the language being translated and their first language, but they also have to learn how to handle the software specific to audiovisual work. Several SAMM graduates are now working within the industry, using their translating skills and the subtitling expertise gained from their course and volunteer work.

We continue to grow and currently have 35 volunteers, from an initial group of six in 2016. We are also working with new organisations and now have students from the University of Alcala in Spain collaborating with us. Being recognised by CIOL with a Special Commendation gave students a great sense of pride, and will act as a springboard for others to join the project. See [sammpjeat.org](http://sammpjeat.org) for further details.