

Global Watchtower™

Globalization in Practice

"There must be some way out of here, said the joker to the thief,
There's too much confusion, I can't get no relief.
Businessmen, they drink my wine, plowmen dig my earth,
None of them along the line know what any of it is worth."

"All Along the Watchtower" by Bob Dylan



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[GALA 2009: Communities on the Web and Beyond](#)
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GALA, the Globalization and Localization Association, kicked off the language conference season with its first-ever event last week in Cancun, Mexico. The organizers encouraged the speakers to think “big” and address technical and business matters from the perspective of the industry at large, not just from their own corporate or personal view. They generally delivered on this request and participants in the largely interactive sessions discussed the rapid transformation of the industry and the need to prepare for profound changes at both enterprise and functional levels. Besides the usual but valuable discussions about doing business, which technologies to use, and how to deal with perennial issues, talk of community within the language industry and beyond took center stage.

- **Online communities exert great power, for the better.** [Craig's List](#) founder Craig Newmark keynoted the event, emphasizing that the site's original intent to connect people in a virtual but strong community has survived despite its gargantuan growth and challenges like user fraud and abuse. He noted the site's growing international presence and looked to the audience of language specialists for guidance. The attendees were interested in his advocacy of “personal diplomacy” and “bottoms-up democracy” outside his work at Craig's List. In another session, Reinhard Schäler described the efforts of the [The Rosetta Foundation](#) and the crowd to empower minorities and populations in developing countries with access to information regardless of economic and political considerations.
- **The language service community begins to coalesce.** Over the last seven years, the language industry has balkanized into a variety of associations with overlapping mandates and memberships. At this conference, GALA reached out to fraternal organizations to mend the fractures. In a plenary hosted by our own Don DePalma, this veritable Who's Who of the industry focused on the challenges and opportunities for the industry. Panelists included Michael Fritz of tekomp, Hans Fenstermacher of GALA, Arle Lommel of the Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA), Reinhard Schäler of the Localisation Resource Centre, and Jiri Stejskal of the American Translators Association (ATA), with Marla Schulman of the Association of Language Companies (ALC) joining the discussion.

During that panel discussion and in sessions that followed, participants suggested convening representatives from associations to work towards eliminating fragmentation, combining conferences, and, importantly, developing a declaration of a human right to information in any language. While de-fragmenting the landscape and joining forces for bigger events are not new ideas, they gathered momentum in light of the rapid pace at which the industry is changing and a newfound willingness to cooperate. Overall, there was a sense of great anticipation as to what the near future may hold for GALA conference attendees and the language services industry as a whole.

- Company: ATA, CETRA, Craig's List, GALA, LISA, LRC, Rosetta Foundation, tekomp
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