

Elizabeth Slesinski Reflects on Internship at Global Wordsmiths

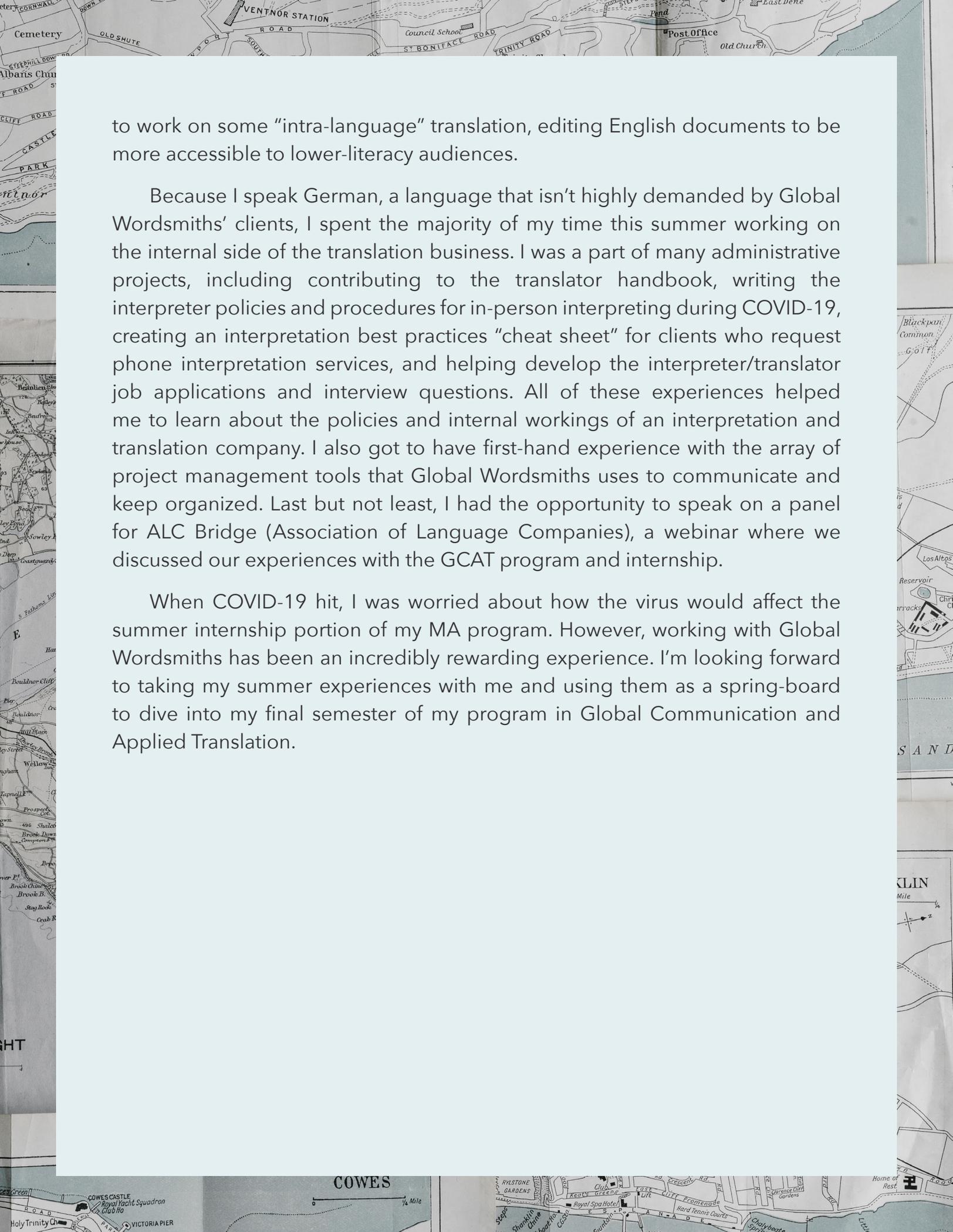
Global Wordsmiths is a women-run interpretation and translation non-profit based in Pittsburgh. They use their profits to finance initiatives such as providing free translation and interpretation to other non-profits and help service providers build or improve their language access policies and procedures. I was very lucky to have had this summer internship opportunity with a company that has such a wonderful mission!



Because of COVID-19, my summer internship was done remotely. In some ways, it was challenging to not be in an office dynamic and working in person with the Global Wordsmiths team, but in others, this internship provided a realistic look into the industry- even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of work by freelance translators is done remotely.

While the GCAT program focuses solely on translation, Global Wordsmiths provides not only translation services but interpretation services as well. During the internship, I was able to attend a two-hour interpreter training with some of their newly hired interpreters. This training was both interesting and eye-opening. There were points about interpreting that I never would have thought about previously, such as how even something so small as talking in the first person can make a big difference in how well an interpretation session goes.

Throughout the summer, I worked on a wide array of tasks and projects, learning about various roles within the company. I translated documents from German into English as well as English into German. One of the most important choices a translator must make is selecting a specialty or domain. Having real world work in some fields, such as education, was a great first step in narrowing down what domains I'd eventually like to focus on. I also had the opportunity



to work on some “intra-language” translation, editing English documents to be more accessible to lower-literacy audiences.

Because I speak German, a language that isn’t highly demanded by Global Wordsmiths’ clients, I spent the majority of my time this summer working on the internal side of the translation business. I was a part of many administrative projects, including contributing to the translator handbook, writing the interpreter policies and procedures for in-person interpreting during COVID-19, creating an interpretation best practices “cheat sheet” for clients who request phone interpretation services, and helping develop the interpreter/translator job applications and interview questions. All of these experiences helped me to learn about the policies and internal workings of an interpretation and translation company. I also got to have first-hand experience with the array of project management tools that Global Wordsmiths uses to communicate and keep organized. Last but not least, I had the opportunity to speak on a panel for ALC Bridge (Association of Language Companies), a webinar where we discussed our experiences with the GCAT program and internship.

When COVID-19 hit, I was worried about how the virus would affect the summer internship portion of my MA program. However, working with Global Wordsmiths has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I’m looking forward to taking my summer experiences with me and using them as a spring-board to dive into my final semester of my program in Global Communication and Applied Translation.