Introduction

Things like the iPad take away a lot of the stuff that people don’t like about computers. People use their iPads because it instantly turns on, has great battery life, and doesn’t behave like a traditional computer. People generally don’t have to worry about maintaining their iPads. You don’t have to restart it to install updates every week, download the latest virus definitions, or run a cleaner to magically improve the computer’s performance. It’s a worry free device. Cody Fink

The advantages of tablets for interpreters are obvious: they are small and light, they don't take up much space in in your bag or in the booth. Noise - a well-known issue with traditional laptops - is no issue at all since they have neither a fan nor a built-in keyboard. Lastly, they are truly mobile devices because of their battery life. However, tablets also have their weaknesses: no real multi-tasking, no access to Java-based applications, no Flash plug-in on the iPad, just to name a few. All things considered, though, tablets make a lot of sense for interpreters, both in the booth and on the go. In short, they can be an "infallible information butler" (term coined by free-lance colleague Anja Rütten).

Are you a staff or freelance interpreter working for the European Institutions? Contact me for a supplement to this manual with more specific tips and tricks.

Which tablet is the best?

The answer, as so often in life, is: It depends. Apple's iPad was the first modern tablet, but there are several platforms now and many companies that offer tablets:

- **iPad** and its operating system iOS arguably form the most polished and most intuitive platform right now. There are hundreds of thousands of apps written specifically for Apple's tablet. Apps are purchased through Apple's own App Store and are vetted before they are made available to the public. The company from Cupertino offers tablets in three sizes (8, 10 and 12 inches). You can opt for the WiFi-only model or buy one with an integrated cell phone module that allows you to connect to the internet wherever you have a cell signal. In addition to the latest and greatest iPad generation, Apple also sells the former generation at a reduced price. Another way to save money is to buy refurbished devices: they are tested and certified, and they come with a one-year warranty.

- **Android** is Google's mobile operating system. Tablets are available in various sizes and form factors, big or small, with or without a keyboard, from known manufacturers such as Samsung or Asus. Android is a bit more flexible and open. It will, for example, let you connect USB thumb drives (see Accessories section). The selection of apps is good, but there are fewer tablet-specific apps and they are on average not as polished as iPad apps.
• Microsoft were among the first, about ten years ago, to push "tablet PCs" - but they were a flop. When the iPad was introduced, the Seattle company took a while to wake up to the tablet revolution, but they now offer touch-optimised devices under the Surface brand. The main selling point from an interpreter's point of view is most definitely the excellent Surface pen. Surface devices, and other Windows-based tablets from Samsung et al. aren't "real" tablets, in my book. But the fact that they run the full Windows operating system makes them very good hybrid devices for those who don't want to commit to iOS or Android.

As you can see, tablets have come a long way. (For a bit of a laugh, look at this history of tablet computers.)

So which device should you get? If you already have an iPhone, get an iPad (you can reuse almost all of your apps and the two work together seamlessly). Similarly, if you already have an Android smartphone, you might want to get an Android tablet. Other decision factors include the app store (Can you get the apps you want or need?), the form factor (tablet size, hybrid options with keyboards) and the configuration (e.g. storage space: If you want to sync lots of audio and video or games, get more storage).
Tablet habits

Regardless of which device you use, there are a few things to bear in mind before you take the plunge and ditch your bulky laptop for a sleek tablet.

Always on

This should come as no surprise: In order to get the most out of your tablet, you need reliable internet connectivity. If you often find yourself without a WiFi network, consider buying a tablet with a 3G/4G/LTE module, which will take you online wherever you have cell reception. Alternatively, you can get online with these methods:

1. **Tethering**, i.e. using your smartphone’s internet connection for your tablet. On the iPhone, the feature is called **Personal Hotspot**, but its availability depends on the version of the iPhone operating system you have and on whether your mobile provider is willing to let you use it. Most Android phones offer the same functionality out of the box or after installing a tethering app, as do modern Windows phones. The gist of it is that your phone needs to be able to act as a WiFi hotspot.

2. **Turn a cable-based internet connection into a wireless one.** There are several small devices out there that can do this, particularly those made by D-Link. I have used both the D-Link DIR 505 and the RavPower Filehub with much satisfaction. Just plug in the Ethernet cable and the little box will create a WiFi hotspot for you. More information is available here.

3. **Use a mobile access point**, like the Option Xyfi or the Huawei mobile broadband products. They are basically stripped-down mobile phones that provide you with ubiquitous wireless internet access.

4. Modern iPads and some Android devices will accept cable-based Internet connections through a USB-Ethernet dongle (like this one). Please verify the compatibility with your device before you buy.

Embrace the cloud

Emailing files back and forth between your tablet and your PC or synchronizing them is a pain if you have to do it constantly. You can set up an account with Dropbox or another cloud-based service for your data. But don’t forget about **security**: keep sensitive information out of the cloud, protect your data and back it up **regularly**. “There is no cloud, just other peoples’ computers.”
Lock it down

Something you carry around all the time should be protected with a password, PIN or other security mechanism:

- **iPads** can be locked with anything from a four-digit PIN to complex pass phrases. Combined with the excellent **TouchID fingerprint reader** you get security and convenience.
- **Android devices** also provides several options, from a simple PIN to swipe patterns and even face recognition!
- **Windows 10 "Hello"** also lets you authenticate with face recognition or fingerprint reading.

Many apps will even let you choose an app-specific password to protect your data. Again, be very careful with sensitive data that you might have to handle in certain meetings.

Keep the charge

Always on? Yes, unless you run out of juice. Make sure you always bring a charger and the necessary cable(s). Apple has a useful **overview page for batteries**. You may want to consider purchasing an additional battery pack (like the **Tylt Powerplant** or the **Joos Orange**) for emergencies.

- Reduce brightness or set it to adjust automatically (in the settings of your device). Set your tablet to automatically switch off the screen and lock itself when not in use for a few minutes.
- Turn off mobile data when you’re on WiFi and vice versa (you can use the iPad **Control Center** or **Android’s notification drawer** for this). The same holds true for Bluetooth. If you do not need connectivity at all, activate Airplane or Flight Mode.
- Force-closing apps in the background is **NOT** necessary to save battery or speed up the device. The operating systems take care of that.
- Want more battery tips? **Here you go**.

Less is more

Your tablet is no full-blown computer. Pushing it to the limits is fun, but you should also be aware of the device’s limitations and make do with less. Read the manual (**iPad user guides**, **Android support**) and turn to the web for tips and tricks. Check the accessories section of this manual for interesting gadgets.

Frustration resistance

Two technologies that are - for better or worse - important elements of the Internet as we know it are Flash (used mainly for video and interactive content) and Java (for rich web applications). They do not work on some mobile devices. One possible workaround involves using a remote desktop app such as **AlwaysOnPC** which gives you a full (Linux) computer in the cloud - complete with a browser that supports both Flash and Java.
The iPad Interpreter

This section of the manual covers tips, apps and other information specifically for iPads.

Tips and tricks

- You probably know that you can change the device language of your iPad. This is useful when you're learning a new language: set your iPad to that language and pick up new vocabulary along the way.
- Interpreters usually write in different languages. To make sure you don't get unwanted autocorrect suggestions, go to the Settings.app > General > Keyboards and add software keyboards for all the languages you want to use on your device. Pro tip: If you touch-type, you can even mix and match the language and the layout of the keyboards, such as using QWERTY for French instead of AZERTY.
- Whenever you encounter text, say, when reading an online article in the Safari browser, you can tap on a word to select it and then tap "Look up" (or "Define", as it used to be called). This will bring up a little window with definitions and translations from the iPad's built-in dictionaries. To adjust which dictionaries you see, go to Settings.app > General > Dictionary.
- If you find yourself typing certain bits of text over and over again, consider turning them into a "shortcut". Instead of typing your home or office address, you can just type a short word like "aad" and the iPad will automatically expand it to your full address. (Go to Settings.app > General > Keyboard > Text Replacement)
- The iPad offers a handful of gestures and swipes that make navigating the device much, much faster. Swipe in from the top down to show the notification screen with Spotlight search. Swipe in from the bottom up to show the "Control Center", the quickest way to toggle airplane mode, wifi and bluetooth, adjust brightness and volume and many other things. If you have multi-tasking enabled in Settings.app > General > Multitasking, you can swipe in from the right to show apps in an overlay or have two apps side-by-side in a 75-25 or 50-50 configuration.
- PDF is a very useful document format, but did you know you can print to PDF on your iPad from any application that has a print button? It's as simple as tapping on the Print button in the Share menu and then using two fingers to "zoom in" or "enlarge" the print preview. This will give you a preview window of the PDF, and using the Share button, you can then share or save it.
- The Safari web browser has a handy "Reader Mode" built in. With a tap on the five-line icon at the left of the address bar, you can clean up any article page and get rid of ads and other distractions to be able to focus on the actual article.
- Reading a long article or document in Safari? Looking for a particular word or phrase? Just type the word you're looking for into the address bar and go to the bottom of the list of results: you should see "On this page" there.
- We all have a few websites that we use all the time. Did you know you can add such a website to the home screen for quick access? In Safari, navigate to the page you want, tap the Share button and tap "Add to Home Screen". Voilà!
• Your iPad can read text to you, even in various languages. Within Settings.app, go to the Accessibility section and then to Speech. You can activate Speak Selection and/or Speak Screen. If you need more options, try a dedicated reader app like Voice Dream Reader.

Handling files and documents

The iPad can display all common file formats out of the box: PDF, Word (docx), Excel (xls) and others. However, if you want to edit files or create new ones, you need dedicated office applications. Microsoft's Word, Excel and PowerPoint are available for the iPad (free for basic use, subscription required for advanced features like change-tracking).

There is no traditional file system (like the Explorer on Windows or the Finder on the Mac), so you should definitely consider installing a file management app. Readdle's "Documents" is one of my favourite apps for meeting preparation, which includes downloading, reading and annotating my material. And you can get your files into the app by using the "Open in"/"Copy to" extension in other apps or by browsing the web in the built-in browser.

That browser can even save a full webpage as a PDF file. "Documents" also let's you connect to cloud services (such as Dropbox or Google Drive) or other web-based storage, like FTP or WebDAV. Once you've set them up, you have the option of setting one or more folders as "sync folders" that will automatically synchronise their content back and forth between the device and the remote storage. All the familiar operations like moving, copying, renaming or (un)zipping are possible here, even drag and drop with your finger.

But "Documents" is not only great for managing files and folders, it is also very powerful when working with PDFs. You can highlight text in various ways, add digital post-it notes, search quickly within one document (or in all the documents you store within the app), use a document's table of contents to navigate around and get an overview of all highlights and annotations that you made in a given file.

If you want a file manager with even more functionality, take a look at GoodReader. In this app, you can also access your email and download attachments from individual messages. And if you have a PDF document with highlights, annotations and notes, you can export all of them into an email or text file and use it for preparation or as the basis for a glossary.

Terminology and glossaries

The use of glossaries and the way of doing terminology work is very personal and different for each and every interpreter. From random pieces of paper to lists or tables in Word documents, from vast Excel spreadsheets to databases with lots of detail: there's something for all of us.
Excel

Spreadsheets are still very popular among interpreters for glossaries. If you're one of them, you can download Microsoft Excel, Apple Numbers or Google Sheets. All of these spreadsheet applications provide ways to collaborate with other interpreters online - a great way to share the workload for a long conference or distribute terminology according to working languages in a team. For more on shared online terminology, read Leonie Wagener's excellent write-up.

Airtable

If you want to take your glossary game to the next level, try a database app like TapForms or Airtable (available for iOS, Android and on the web). Airtable is a very intuitive hybrid of a spreadsheet and a database, and it deals with large amounts of terminology easily. And here's what I like: In addition to simple text, you can also have file attachments for individual glossary records: an image from a PowerPoint slide for context, an audio file to get the pronunciation of a difficult term right, or video of how a machine works. The possibilities are endless.

Interplex

Interplex, in short, is a glossary management tool you can use on your Windows or Mac computer, your iPhone (free; to consult glossaries) and your iPad (to consult AND edit). If you edit your glossaries exclusively on the iPad and you want to import your Excel or Word lists, you just need to download the free iPad Helper version onto your PC. When you store your glossaries in Dropbox, you can even keep them in sync across all your devices. Unlike full-blown terminology management software, which is primarily aimed at translators, Interplex is easy to use both for entering terms and looking them up before or during the meeting. It is essentially a database that will hold all your glossaries and provides you with a quick and always-on search functionality (great for, say, a fisheries meeting), even across several glossaries at the same time. You have a lot of flexibility with language columns - you can use colours and if you don’t need a given language in a meeting, just deactivate the respective column. Printing is available with several options. If you work with Arabic, Chinese or Russian, Interplex will handle that too, since it is based on Unicode. You can read more on the AIIC website. Both Peter Sand, the interpreter and mastermind behind Interplex, and Eric Hartner, the developer, provide great support for users and the desktop software will alert you when an update is available. There is currently no dedicated Mac version of Interplex, but you can still use it on your Mac by following Eric's instructions. Interplex on the desktop lets you import (and export) Word and Excel files. Note that you have to have Microsoft Office or Open Office installed on your PC for this to work. For more information, you can consult the Interplex help function. Once you have your terminology in the software, store to Interplex database on Dropbox to be able to sync with your iPhone and/or iPad.
Using the iPad as a digital notepad

People keep asking me if I have ever used an iPad as a digital notepad for consecutive. After all, there are a few things that could potentially go wrong: empty battery, software issues (with the app in question or the entire operating system), hardware issues (water and coffee are dangerous goods, after all), distracting notifications... You get the idea. But yes: I have done it. In fact, I have been using my iPad almost exclusively as my interpreting notepad for several years now.

And it all started with a big mistake on my part: One day, for a consecutive assignment, I forgot my paper notepads at home and had to get some paper from a copying machine. Also, I had brought only one pen, and not several, as I would usually do. Guess what happened next: After just a few minutes, the ballpoint pen was definitely out of ink. Luckily, I had my iPad in front of me for referencing documents. So I grabbed my stylus, fired up the note-taking app and got going. And I survived. It was actually not as scary as I had imagined.

Intrigued? Why don't you give it a try? The perfect hardware combination for this is an iPad Pro with an Apple Pencil. But unless you already own those two, don’t go out and buy them just to see if digital note-taking is for you. Instead, work with the tablet you already have. If you don’t own a stylus yet, borrow one or buy an inexpensive option. For example, Wacom’s Bamboo styluses are very affordable and widely available.

Incidentally, Wacom also provides a free note-taking app: Bamboo Paper. Like almost all note-taking applications, it works with the familiar notion of notebooks organized on a shelf or in a library. When you open up Bamboo Paper, you’ll see one or more blue notebooks that you can rename to your liking. Tap on a notebook to open it. At the top of the screen, choose your favorite writing utensil (e.g. ball pen or felt pen), stroke width, and writing color. An eraser is also available. Now you’re good to go!

I don’t recommend taking interpreting notes straight away. Instead, you might want to start slowly by doodling to get a feel for how the app works. Move on to jotting down a shopping list or short text, and when you feel more comfortable try taking notes for a short test-style speech from Speechpool or the European Union Speech Repository. If you get hooked, then digital note-taking is probably for you. Great note-taking apps for iPad are Notability and Noteshelf. They both integrate with lots of styluses, including the Apple Pencil, and they support cool stuff like audio recording.

Scanning

Many professionals strive to “go paperless,” but few actually achieve it. While I doubt that it is possible to go fully paperless, there are things you can do to reduce the amount of paper in your life while taking advantage of electronic workflows. For interpreters, especially when they travel for assignments, receipts, invoices and other random pieces of paper can be a hassle. They tend to get lost, damaged or ruined. Why not make a digital copy in seconds by simply using the camera that’s already built into your smartphone or tablet? And why take just a
snapshot when you can use a dedicated scanning application like Scanbot? Open the app store on your device, download the app for free, and give this option a spin now.

The whole process couldn’t be simpler: Pull out the piece of paper you want to digitize and place it on a flat surface (ideally a darker one, to increase contrast). Then open Scanbot and take a picture. Unlike the normal camera app, Scanbot provides tips for obtaining a really neat result, prompting you to move closer to the original or adjust your perspective. Once you have snapped a shot of one or more pages, Scanbot recognises the borders of the document and crops the photo to the right dimensions - and it does that well. If necessary, you can manually adjust the picture’s colour (including black-and-white and grey options), adjust the frame (or “crop”) and rotation, and then save it. This leaves you with a digital backup that you can email, print or archive in either PDF or JPEG format. Scanbot integrates with all major cloud services, like iCloud, Dropbox and Evernote, and even uploads automatically if you want it to.

No need to truck all those loose pieces of paper home from a conference so you can “deal with them later”. Just scan the bits with interesting information or useful terminology that you want to keep. As a staff interpreter, I use Scanbot to prepare my expense claims for “missions” (business trips). By scanning receipts and invoices as I go along, I am often ready to file my claim while travelling back home.

If you’d like additional features such as text recognition, searching in your scanned documents or smart naming templates, consider upgrading to Scanbot Pro. The scanning feature also finds its way into business applications like FreshBooks that will help you keep track of receipts and bill clients for expenses. Some of these apps can extract information from scans and enter it into their database, making your life even easier.

**Mac and PC companion apps**

While you don’t have to connect your iPad to a traditional PC or Mac anymore, doing so has a few benefits (quicker backup and recovery, for example). Apple’s iTunes software has come a long way since it was first introduced in 2001. Back then, it was used to manage music on an iPod. Today, you can also use it for managing apps, books or video, syncing contacts, calendars and e-mail or backing up your iPad. If you find iTunes too confusing or you want to explore your iPad even more, why not check out iMazing or Instashare.
The Android Interpreter

This section of the manual covers tips, apps and other information specifically for Android tablets.

Tips and tricks

- What I particularly like about Android are widgets - little windows that give access to content or functionalities of apps. For example, widgets allow me to show a handy list of all current items on my to-do list. They can also display the time, the calendar, the weather or what's in your email inbox.
- Another really cool feature of Android is USB-OTG ("on the go"). It allows you to connect USB drives and other accessories to your device with a simple adapter cable. So whenever a speaker comes rushing into the booth minutes before their speech with the slides or manuscript, all you need is the adapter cable: connect it to your Android tablet, pop in the thumb drive and copy over the file. Simple!

Handling files and documents

Most Android tablets already come with a file manager or at least a "Downloads" app pre-installed, but those default apps are often confusing, too limited in their functionality, or both. After some research, I decided to stick with Clean File Manager and have been quite happy. It lets you manage files, add folders, zip and unzip files, just to mention a few handy features. You can add folders that you need often to the "Bookmarks" section in the left sidebar, which I find very useful. Lastly, you can connect your cloud storage accounts, such as Dropbox, and access them from within the app.

With Clean File Manager, however, you may not necessarily be able view all kinds of documents. And in general, Android tablets can have issues displaying common file formats out of the box: PDF usually works fine, while productivity formats like Word, Excel or PowerPoint may require you to download one or several applications. In any case, having dedicated Office applications on your device, always comes in handy. Some Android tablets come with a pre-installed Office package such as Polaris or Kingsoft, but I recommend you go with Google (Docs/Sheets/Slides) or Microsoft (Word/Excel/Powerpoint) - both packages are free to use for basic functionality. If you want additional features like "Track changes" in Word, you need a paid Office 365 subscription.

One more tip: Get Adobe Acrobat Reader. The app itself is free and can be used for reading and annotating PDF documents (highlighting, underlining, bookmarks and more). And then there are some additional features that you can activate through in-app purchases, on of them being PDF-to-Word conversion.
Terminology and glossaries

While using tables in Word or Excel spreadsheets for terminology is an option, I am not a fan of doing that. I think databases are more up to the task - and Memento Database is a tool I have been recommending to Android tablet users for a while now.

First and foremost, Memento is a general-purpose database app for Android devices that you can use to catalog and manage various types of information, like books in a library or wines in a cellar. Creating a new library is very easy - use one of the existing templates or just start from scratch. When creating a glossary, you can not only use text and other fields (maybe a rating to indicate the reliability of your term), but also add images. Libraries in Memento can be synchronised with your Google account. That's not only a great way to backup your data, but also allows for sharing terminology online with colleagues. (In Google, your glossaries are stored as spreadsheets. If you want to know more about collaborating on these with others, read Leonie Wagener’s excellent article on the AIIC website.) Another way of getting your lists online is to register for a Memento account. This lets you store your libraries on Memento servers where others can subscribe to them.

On top of that, each entry can be “starred” to create a list of favourites, which comes in handy for building a list of terms that are particularly important or hard to memorize. And for direct access to your glossaries, just place a shortcut (direct link) on the Android home screen.

What does Memento cost? The app itself is free, but offers an in-app upgrade that gets rid of ads and removes limits on synchronization with Google and the number of encrypted libraries you can have. For more information, take a peek at the user manual.

In terms of reference apps, I suggest you try out dict.cc and Linguee, both of which also let you download language packs for offline use.

Handwriting and digital note-taking

Intrigued? Why don't you give it a try? If you don’t own a stylus yet, borrow one or buy an inexpensive option. For example, Wacom’s Bamboo styluses are very affordable and widely available.

Incidentally, Wacom also provides a free note-taking app: Bamboo Paper. As almost all note-taking applications, it works with the familiar notion of notebooks organized on a shelf or in a library. When you open up Bamboo Paper, you’ll see one or more blue notebooks that you can rename to your liking. Tap on a notebook to open it. At the top of the screen, choose your favorite writing utensil (e.g. ball pen or felt pen), stroke width, and writing color. An eraser is also available. Now you’re good to go!

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Companion apps

While Android devices can be used without ever connecting them to a PC, most handset manufacturers provide companion apps with a wide range of functionality (backup, synchronising media/contacts/email, firmware updates) - two examples are Samsung's Kies and Sony's PC Companion/Bridge for Mac.

I recommend you also take a look at AirDroid and Instashare. To transfer files from your computer to your tablet, you can also just connect both with a USB cable. The device will automatically be made available as an external drive on Windows. To get the same result on Mac, download the free Android File Transfer tool. Please be careful when doing this so you don’t delete important system files!
Bits and pieces

Security

When going through the "tablet habits", you may have asked yourself questions about data protection and privacy. Being connected at all times does not mean you should connect to any dodgy and possibly insecure public WiFi network. Look into VPNs that provide a safe connection to the internet wherever you are. Also, check if the website you are on establishes a secure connection with your device. If a given app handles sensitive data, try to find out if it transmits your data through a secure connection.

Having all your files in the cloud is very convenient but you will sometimes receive documents or other information which are confidential or classified. Do you want to entrust some web company with that information? Let’s take Google as an example: They can back up your device and your files, so if you ever lose or replace them, you’re back on track in no time. However, law enforcement (and, possibly, bad guys) can use forensic software to gain access to your information without even having to touch your tablet.

At the end of the day, you will have to make informed choices about security versus convenience - which also includes respecting any relevant rules that your employer has in place.

What if you misplace or actually lose your tablet? As an iPad user, you can use the “Find my iPad” feature to retrieve your device. As an Android user, Google also has a built in Find My Device Feature or try the Lookout app.

Accessories

Protection

Smart devices can be expensive, so protect them accordingly. Go to your favourite online or offline store and see what they have. You’re bound to find something you like because the choice is almost confusingly huge: smart covers, display protection films, pouches, clip-on covers or fully integrated keyboard covers that will turn your tablet into a notebook.
Keyboards

Whenever you want to write longer texts, consider connecting your device to an external keyboard. This is usually done wirelessly via Bluetooth, but using an USB-On-the-go cable or an iPad USB connector, you can connect USB keyboards to your tablet.

Stylus

“If you see a stylus, they blew it.” That’s what late Apple founder Steve Jobs (in)famously said when introducing the iPhone to the world. But the company has changed its mind and now makes a rather excellent stylus: the Apple Pencil, which, however, is only compatible with iPad Pro devices. For all other iPads and for Android devices, there are loads of great options.

Miscellaneous

There are very interesting gadgets beyond the ones mentioned above:

- thumb drives specifically made for Android or iPad for quick file exchange and expanded storage,
- wireless flash drives,
- iPad adapters for SD cards or to connect your camera via USB,
- and much, much more.

Fine print

A big thank-you to my colleagues who have contributed their insight, feedback, questions, app tips and much more - especially Jeremy Martin, Michael Thorelli, Brian Huebner and Pierre Libotte. I would also like to thank each and everyone who has attended my talks, presentations, webinars and workshops over time - I have learned so much from you!

Image sources

- Tablets by the window, Martin Voltri
- The Human Hamster Wheel, Lee
- Write on Tablet, David Lankford

Contact

- For any question, correction, criticism, or other comment, you can contact me via my website, https://www.adrechsel.de/.
- For a steady stream of tips, articles and discussion related to using tablets for interpreting, you can find me on Twitter as @tabterp or join our Interpreter Technology Group on Facebook.