

## **Session 2: Summary of the discussion**

Barbara Snell of Translation Services, Gloucester, asked why online data interchange (ODI) had not taken off; was it perhaps due to the popularity of fax or because ODI had been too little publicised? In response, David Hickman explained that, in the past, telecommunications had been the province of the technical experts alone and that it was only since the advent of the desktop PC that modems had been usable and affordable.

Nevertheless, modems were still difficult to use because of the complex technology involved and because they were not user-friendly. Also, as Barbara Snell herself pointed out, data could only be exchanged by those ready, willing and able to transmit and receive. Fax was more accessible but was not suitable for transmitting large amounts of data.

Mary Carroll of the Language Consultancy Carroll and Sharpe, Berlin, asked for more information about bulletin boards. Peter Barber explained that a bulletin board was a popular software program, usually within an MS-DOS operating system, and that it emulated a commercial mailbox system. Pamela Mayorcas of Translation-Terminology-Management (Europe) commented that CompuServe of the USA operated a bulletin board system to which some ITI translators were already connected. She pointed out some of the problems that might arise within the translation community in terms of 'them' and 'us' if translators in the more affluent nations were connected up to such a system while their counterparts in the less affluent nations were not.

Mike Garrido of Rank Xerox asked how the speakers viewed ODA (Office Document Architecture), which was likely to be the next document standard. As the speakers felt unqualified to reply, Dimitri Theologitis of the EC Commission in Luxembourg commented that the Commission was looking forward to being able to save documents as ODA. Peter Laurie felt that this area encapsulated the whole problem of standardisation which was of ongoing concern to translators: for commercial reasons,

manufacturers tried to include features that other manufacturers did not have. Returning to the first question about modems, he commented that all that translators wanted was a user-friendly system, and that standardisation had to happen before translators would use telecomms to any significant extent.

Brigitte Lorenz of CERN, Geneva, asked about SGML (Standardised Generalised Mark-up Language). According to the speakers, this concept was not known in the UK, but Iain Urquhart of the EC Commission said that it was used in the Commission and was similar to ODA.

Pamela Mayorcas asked a question about character sets. David Hickman replied that this again was a question of standardisation: standards were talked about but not adhered to. Dimitri Theologitis mentioned the problem of handling Greek within the EC. The IBM and ISO character sets differed; the EC was looking to ISO, and particularly to ISO 8859 as the way forward; it wanted standards and adhered to them but then found itself out of step with the rest of the world. Peter Laurie confirmed that standards went against the grain with manufacturers; the large computer manufacturers paid lip service to standards but put a tweak in at the last minute so that their customers would stay with them.

Trevor Holloway of Tradwise Plus mentioned the problem of Macintosh, which could not be copied despite attempts by Microsoft to do so with Windows. Chris Flint of Interlingua, explaining the problems encountered by Interlingua where translators usually had PC disks while their customers wanted Mac disks, asked what conversion software could be used. David Hickman was not aware of software specifically for this purpose but recommended the use of normal file transfer. Peter Barber suggested the use of global search and replace for diacritics that did not convert. A macro could be set up to cope with a series of such operations.

Pamela Mayorcas asked what the charging structure should be if freelance translators were asked to meet highly sophisticated telecomms requirements. Peter Barber felt that customers' requirements had to be reasonable and that, if translators were providing an extra service, the price had to be geared accordingly. As a general guideline for this and other extra services provided by freelancers, he suggested that translators should not overcharge for an expected level of service.

## **RAPPORTEUR**

Beryl Wood (*née Rice*) 8 Heverwood Road, West Kingsdown, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 6HL.