

## Introduction

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'Lots of information flowing to and fro - very successful', one participant said of Tools for the Trade. Ranging more widely than any Translating and the Computer conference since 1978, it updated two of its predecessors in the series, focussing first on machines assisting people (more Machine Aids for Translators) and then on people assisting machines (more Practical Experience of Machine Translation).\*

The key difference is that in machine translation (MT) the computer offers translations of whole sentences, although for most purposes it will need human help if its output is to be usable. This definition apart, the border between MT and machine aids, still fairly clear in 1978, is now quite blurred. Both use machines to aid translation, after all, and MT is seen increasingly as one more tool, particularly in large organisations.

So MT will surface from time to time among the machine aids of the first day reported in these proceedings. Julie Harnett gives a journalist's overview of the aids, wide-ranging and up to date. Going into more detail, Horace Mitchell describes IBM equipment. Wyn Price traces the development of computers and communications and discusses the role of the National Physical Laboratory, including some MT history.

Then the focus shifts from what the tools are meant to do to what three translators actually do with them - and what another does without them. Peter Barber, covering a wide range of aids, explains the benefits of handling

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\* The proceedings of the Translating and the Computer conferences are listed on p.xi.

translations electronically. Concentrating on word processing, Robert Clark updates his 1980 paper in this series, while Geoffrey Samuelsson-Brown tells how to exploit the machine's glossary functions. But is the word processor really necessary? Even without such 'pretty-picture-making facilities', says John Hayes, translating a million words a year may, as it were, be as easy as ABC.

The second day looks again at machine translation, although since MT is more attractive when integrated with other aids, the latter crop up again and again, nowhere more strikingly than in the comments of translation user Peter Walker. After remarks on terminology from Juan Sager, Ian Pigott gives a concise but comprehensive survey of new developments in MT, with eleven language pairs now being offered by major suppliers.

Four practical MT systems new to the conference series, if not to the literature, were introduced during the day. ALPS offers a range of aids from word processing to MT (specifically, interactive MT); Merle Tenney canters through the literature in support of their approach, while Russell Bateman deals in more detail with the MT side. Spanam, one of the most successful practical systems, is presented by Muriel Vasconcellos. What, one wonders, is in her 'bag of tricks for making fewer but more strategic changes' when post-editing? Ralph Hawes unveils another promising system, Logos, of which the German-English version is available on a standard word processor, and user Klaus Tschira reviews experience with the first installation. Lastly, TITUS 4 translates special textile abstracts: A.A. Streiff notes that some of the restrictions placed on the writers of the abstracts are being eased.

The Weidner system is represented by a paper on the suppliers' successful MT bureau service in Chicago (Henrietta Pons), and a discussion by customer Ulla Magnusson-Murray of operational experience of Weidner at ITT.

The last novelty was 'rapid post-editing' of Systran: the editing of only the most glaring errors. This, Elizabeth Wagner points out, needs a high level of linguistic and technical knowledge, confidence, and preferably skill in word processing. Luckily, word processing is popular: 'translators are not at all "afraid of computers", as is sometimes claimed'.

Quite so. It was in fact a positive interest in computers that led to the first Translating and the Computer in 1978 and has kept the series flourishing, as described by Barbara Snell in these proceedings. Held in London every November, the conferences are a co-operative effort, with Aslib, The Association for Information Management, doing the professional conference organising, while the Translators'

Guild and Aslib's own Technical Translation Group supply the contacts and knowledge of the field that generate the programme. A lively multidisciplinary audience, typically from some twenty countries, is another major factor, as the discussion reports make clear.

I would like to end with two thank-yous. The first goes to the Commission of the European Communities, which, as in 1981, gave generous financial support. Without it Tools for the Trade would have been either much less interesting, or too expensive for many of the participants. The second goes to Elizabeth Lowry-Corry, Aslib's Conference Organiser, who retired just after the conference. Our gratitude for her skill and counsel through five demanding conferences goes with her to her new life, which, we have no doubt, will be as full and creative as the old.

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