

Session I:

Summary of discussion 2

In the chair: Barbara Wilson

(1) Anne Naphine asked where training was available on word-processing systems other than WordStar; Nélide Depiante replied that courses were organised by the University of Manchester, among others. Commodore Croft suggested that learning to use a dedicated word processor was easier and more straightforward than using a personal computer running WordStar.

(2) Professor Stanforth pointed out that software was now available to convert the BBC Microcomputer into a multilingual word processor, possibly obviating many of the difficulties Commodore Croft had mentioned in his paper, and Patrick Corness, from Lanchester Polytechnic where this software had been developed, offered to provide additional information for anyone interested.

(3) A gentleman from Finland, commenting on the difficulties of coping with Norwegian characters which Commodore Croft had described, pointed out that Finnish had an even larger character set than Norwegian but that perfectly adequate systems were available in Finland. Commodore Croft would, he felt, have been able to avoid makeshift solutions and gained better results if he had purchased a system in Norway.

(4) This raised the whole problem of translators working into languages foreign to the country where they purchased their equipment. Commodore Croft replied that translators working in the UK were usually obliged to buy their equipment there for, as Nélide Depiante pointed

out, it would be difficult if not impossible to obtain technical support in the UK for equipment or software purchased on the Continent.

(5) Tom Evenson asked if there were any examples of co-operation between translators pooling information on computer and word-processing systems, and/or sharing the cost of equipment. Professor Benoît Thouin, from Ottawa, said that cost-sharing (bulk-buying) schemes existed in Canada. As for information pooling, he suggested that translators' associations could play an important part here: members should contribute information to their associations and expect their association to provide an information service and to act as a pressure group influencing manufacturers to respond to translators' needs. Pamela Mayorcas-Cohen pointed out that before trying to exert pressure on manufacturers, translators would have to agree on a set of specifications. The Chair, Barbara Wilson, and speakers agreed that these could perhaps be hammered out at Association seminars. It was pointed out, by Nélida Depiante, that this might be difficult because translators had very different requirements.

(6) Dr Alan Melby, commenting on Commodore Croft's paper, stated that WordStar was outdated. Better word-processing packages for microcomputers were now available; for example, IBM had recently converted its dedicated word-processing software to run on the IBM Personal Computer. Other companies were producing similar products, with the result that microcomputers were now rivalling dedicated word processors. Commodore Croft and Nélida Depiante commented on the possible difficulty of using any microcomputer keyboard which did not have the labelled function keys normally available on a good word processor.

It was pointed out that WordStar had been designed for CP/M machines of 64K or less, and that if it were old-fashioned that was because it had been designed for machines that were old-fashioned. In any case an improved version was now available. The better word-processing packages which had been mentioned required a much larger memory.

(7) Returning to Alan Melby's comment on the new IBM Displaywrite software, several speakers pointed out that although this had been announced, it was not readily obtainable. One translator working in Paris (Sarah Kaulback) had purchased English Displaywrite and Displaycom software in England because it was not available in France, but was then refused assistance by IBM in France when she experienced difficulties with the latter. Manufacturers should be made aware of the problems of people working in or into another country's language, and offer more co-ordinated international support. Another translator (Julie Slade) had been told by IBM that Displaywrite was not available to run on the PC in

England and had been assured by IBM that their dedicated word processor was a better buy.

(8) Julie Slade added that she was collecting information on translators' experiences with word processors for the Translators' Guild, and would be grateful for any contributions.

(9) Andrew Evans warned that the dividing line between dedicated word processors and microcomputers was becoming very hazy and might soon disappear. Having tested several systems at the Commission of the European Communities in Luxembourg, he reported that translators found the Wang word processors excellent; another word processor tested, the Olivetti ETS, had been found less satisfactory, but was acceptable because it could be linked up to the more powerful Wang system.

(10) Tom Evenson suggested that since research was the most time-consuming part of the translator's work, word processing was in fact less important than personal information systems and information retrieval, and more attention should be paid to these aspects.

RAPPORTEURS

Emma Wagner, Reviser, Commission of the European Communities, PO Box 1907, Batiment Jean Monnet, Luxembourg.

Andrew Evans, Translator, Linguiste de Liaison Informatique, Commission of the European Communities, Bâtiment Jean Monnet, A1/062A, L-2920 Luxembourg.