

## **Introduction**

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In previous years, when I served on the planning committee for these conferences, we always endeavoured to see that the programme included a fair proportion of papers which were either low-tech or almost completely non-technical. A glance at the contents list for this year reveals that such considerations no longer need to be taken into account by the planning committee. Technology is part of the stuff of everyday life of translators, or at least of those who attend the Translating and the Computer conferences, and/or read these *Proceedings*.

Session 1 plunged us into the thick of things; as Brian Forsdick said, it is perfectly possible, even desirable, to manage a large-scale translation project or projects using project management software. The translators working on such a project would be greatly helped if the translator's workbench described by Patricia Thomas were available already. However, since it is still under development, it is in the interests of all translators to cooperate by responding to the questionnaires and making their views known. To judge by the third paper of the first session, in Siegrun O'Sullivan's ideal world, software translators would be cooperating with systems development from the earliest stages, so as to prevent frustrating and costly reworking of the translations. Translators in other fields might also like to be involved at an early stage too, but this rarely happens, in my experience.

Two of the papers in Session 2 complemented each other, with Nigel Cassar and Nicole Walls describing the development and implementation of terminology aids in two United Nations organisations, while Gerry Brace of the Institut Français du Pétrole showed us how modern dictionaries are compiled.

I for one eagerly await the publication of the new IFP dictionary – on paper, on disk, online, all is possible. Or is it? Technically yes, but from the copyright standpoint, both translation and the compilation of dictionaries bristle with problems, according to Jeremy Phillips. It would appear that just as Molière's Monsieur Jourdain had been talking prose all his life, we translators have been infringing copyright. Luckily none of us seems to have been thrown into the Tower, or fined.

The discussion which followed this session was unusually wide-ranging, reflecting the diversity of topics covered. To dictate or not to dictate translations? To assign or not to assign copyright? These were recurrent themes which continued to exercise the minds of the delegates long after the formal discussion had ended.

Session 3 covered two types of hardware – Howard Petrie's survey of DTP, something which no longer seems as daunting as it once did to the average translator, and Joan Day's account of what CD-ROM can offer the translator. It was generally agreed by all those present, I felt, that it was marvellous idea in theory, but that what has so far been on offer fails to meet the requirements of most of us. What we seem to want is tailor-made CD-ROMs. Or else the promised  $\times 10$  density CDs will contain so much information (at what price?) that every translator will be satisfied, perhaps. Fred McKenzie's presentation of the DX remote dictation system, appearing in this session rather than session 5, made us feel like jet-setting executives. It was another item in the To Dictate or Not to Dictate debate; the replay and sophisticated correction facilities might go some way to meeting the non-dictators' wishes.

The two papers given in Session 4 described machine (or machine-assisted) translation systems which are already up and running. Ron Fournier and Larry Rogers for Lexi-tech and Patrick Little of Philips Kommunikations Industrie were convinced that this is the only way to handle very large volumes of technical translation within a limited timespan.

The final session contained only one paper, that of Dr. Henry Thompson on the realities of speech recognition: 'How rosy a future?' was the question he asked. To judge by this paper, the answer must be 'slightly rosy'. I for one was interested to discover that the real difficulty when one is hearing a language one does not know well is to spot where the breaks between the words come, which is not necessarily when the speaker makes a pause, however infinitesimal. Machines have the same problem too, so it looks as though it will be many years before interpreters are replaced by little – or even big – machines.

Part of the theme of the previous conference, the tenth, was to look back over the past ten years, but no sooner have we done that than we are looking forward to the next decade, and even beyond, as is only right and proper. After all, the end of the next decade will bring us to the threshold of the twenty-first century, when the dream described by Barbara Wilson in her introduction to the first session will no doubt be realised. Her ideal translator's workstation is a chaise longue on which the translator reclines, and produces the translation by merely

thinking of it. Perhaps it's not so remote a prospect either. The next conference will certainly tell us what progress is being made in that direction, and in many others.

1989 was the year in which the Institute of Translation and Interpreting\* passed the 1,000-member mark. No-one can now deny that the ITI, together with the members of Aslib Technical Translation Group, as a sizeable body of translation practitioners, represent a force to be reckoned with. Manufacturers, take note!

My thanks, as always, to all those concerned with the preparation of the Conference, Aslib, ITI and the rapporteurs, whose contribution I regard as invaluable.

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