

Session 3:

Summary of the discussion

The discussion began with a delegate asking about the cost of access or a long-term subscription to the termbanks that are available. The answer was that use of Termium involved only telecommunications costs, currently about \$12 per hour, although the Canadian government was keen to see the introduction of a 'cost recovery mode'. A version on CD-ROM would be available soon, costing about \$1,200-1,500, possibly on a subscription basis. LEXIS was available by subscribing to buy the microfiche, priced at about DM 50 per set (production costs only). Mr Landry added that Termium was also available on microfiche, with the possibility of selecting fiche on specific subjects.

Brian McCluskey asked about companies storing their glossaries in LEXIS, and was told that although this used to happen (e.g. Demag, Bayer-Leverkusen), the firms concerned now had their own terminology projects.

Pamela Mayorcas put various questions to the speakers. Mr Landry replied by saying that the electronic mailbox in Termium could be used for batch queries, messages and comments. If there was no ready answer to a query, a telephone number was given, on which the enquirer could seek further assistance. Wolfgang Nedobity answered the question on classification systems by saying that the one selected would depend on the subject fields required; for example, the *Root Thesaurus* published by the British Standards Institution (BSI) concentrated on technical subjects, and was not so good for the social sciences. A thesaurus guide was available from a publisher in Germany, and Infoterm contained an internal file of references to thesauri, which could be consulted.

Jean Gordon, of NATO, asked if there were any copyright problems with LEXIS. The answer was that if the information was given free of charge, there

was no problem. The EEC, on the other hand, had paid high fees to publishers for the right to incorporate their dictionaries in Eurodicautom, and had had severe restrictions imposed.

Alain Landry said that the Canadian government's legal services were being consulted about the areas of the termbank that could be sold without any difficulty; it seemed this could be done, as long as the purchaser did not publish the material acquired by this means.

Professor Sager spoke of plans to transplant Eurodicautom to the United Kingdom, but added that the legal position was complex.

A delegate from Canada then asked about criteria for reliability coding. Professor Sager said this was felt to be the weakest point of termbanks. The Siemens system, for example, used '0' for a term with no foreign-language equivalent, another for an unverified term, etc., which would not work on a reversible database.

Erika Hoffmann said that LEXIS used a '+' sign for a standardised term that was absolutely reliable. Alain Landry said that Termium had three categories: correct; to be verified; to be avoided.

Wolfgang Nedobity added that Eurodicautom had a 'code de fiabilité', although it depended only on the completeness of the record.

The next question was from Tony Hartley, who asked for details about the use of graphics in the various systems. Erika Hoffmann said that as far as LEXIS was concerned, that was no more than a project. Termium had about 200 graphics features, said Alain Landry, although they were expensive, as each had to be designed separately.

A delegate from Siemens then asked how terminologists were recruited, and what qualifications they had to have. Erika Hoffmann replied first: at the Bundessprachenamt would-be terminologists first had to have experience as translators, and were then given on-the-job training in their new specialism. Having a translating background ensured that they understood the needs of the people they were providing terminology for. Mr Landry agreed with this point, adding that things were rather different in Canada, where two universities offered degrees in terminology, and where some terminologists had no knowledge of translating. Professor Sager added that Geneva University ran degree courses in terminology, and that the university translating courses in the United Kingdom also covered this important area.

The next question was about CD-ROM, and the chances of it being accessible to individual translators. Jean Gordon, also speaking from the floor, said she had recently seen a demonstration of a CD-ROM database, which would run on an IBM PC (either XT or AT) under MS.DOS version 3.2 with either dual floppy disks or a hard disk, plus a Philips CM 100 compact disk reader and interface card. The disk reader cost BF 74,000; a laser printer was needed to print out material from the database.

The final question was from Peter Long, who wanted to know whether universities in the United Kingdom were not calling for a UK termbank, given

the importance of terminology. John McNaught replied that this was in fact the case. In 1980 people in the language world had been contacted about the creation of just such a termbank. Interest had been expressed, but no money had been forthcoming – and without money nothing could be done. An attempt had been made to set up a consortium of companies to run the project, but had failed. The only hope was to get the Government interested.

Professor Sager said that sooner or later the BSI would extend its glossaries to form a terminological database like those of the French and German standards bodies, AFNOR and DIN. The *Root Thesaurus* had been a hopeful beginning in 1981; it was now available in several languages, but only in paper form. Nothing more had been done, and there seemed to be no firm plans for further developments.

RAPPORTEUR

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