Introduction

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'Should we arrange a "Translating and the Computer" conference next November, or should we wait a year?' This is the question which always confronts the planning team almost as soon as each conference is over. The arguments in favour of holding the conference annually are several - keeping up the continuity, the momentum even, keeping up to date with developments in more than one rapidly-changing field, providing a focal point for many useful contacts between people who might not otherwise meet. But there are counter-arguments - the risk of wearing out one's welcome, of raking over ground that , has already been thoroughly raked over, and of running out of fresh topics for discussion, or fresh angles from which to view these topics - and sometimes the balance seems fairly even. In the end, so far anyway, the arguments in favour of an annual conference, held in London in November, have almost always prevailed.

Here, therefore, are the Proceedings of the 6th 'Translating and the Computer' conference. A glance at the list of speakers and a more thorough examination of the list of participants will reveal the continuing international flavour of the conference - in both cases, a large proportion have come from abroad. Presumably this is because this conference performs a special function not fulfilled by any other conference in quite the same way. It is perhaps appropriate here to pay tribute to the part played by Aslib itself in bringing the conference to the notice of so many people in such a wide variety of countries.

The chapters which follow are the virtually unaltered texts of the papers presented to the conference participants

in November 1984. However, when it has been possible to provide more up-to-date information or to rectify minor errors of fact etc. these changes have been made after consultation with the contributors.

A conference can be the victim of its own success - the larger the number of people present, the larger the auditorium and the greater the distance some of them will be from the platform. This year's papers inevitably contained a number of visual aids, some of which were quite detailed (I am thinking in particular of those shown by Hugh McGregor Ross), and, even if one is ideally placed to see the screen well, there is never enough time to take everything in before the image vanishes. Publications such as these <u>Proceedings</u> provide an invaluable opportunity, for conference participants and non-participants alike, to assess the papers, and especially the visual aids, at leisure.

Another way in which a conference can be the victim of its own success was revealed by the Parallel Sessions on the afternoon of the first day. Two principal assumptions lay behind the adoption of this procedure: the first was that by dividing the participants into smaller groups, it would be possible to achieve something like a workshop atmosphere and foster a greater degree of participation, especially from those who might be reluctant to speak out in a plenary session. The second was that not everyone would necessarily be interested in all three topics and participants would appreciate the chance to go into a subject in a fair amount of depth during a two-hour session.

In the end, as those who were present at the conference will know, each of the three parallel sessions was attended by the maximum possible number of participants, many of whom said that they would have liked to attend at least two of the sessions and some all three! At least these <u>Proceedings,</u> which contain reports of all the parallel sessions, will allow participants to find out what they missed.

In conclusion, I should like to thank everyone concerned in the conference - the planning team, the organisers, the speakers, exhibitors and participants, for what I hope was a useful and stimulating event. In particular, I should like to express my thanks to the rapporteurs, firstly for allowing their arms to be twisted, and secondly for doing their job with skill, conscientiousness and above all willingness. They made my task as editor not only easier but enjoyable.