

## **Introduction**

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The title of the twelfth Translating and the Computer conference – Applying technology to the Translation Process – accurately reflected the contents of the papers. The translation process nowadays is seen as not just the actual converting of the words in a document written in one language into a written document in another language; the translation process really starts, or should start, at the stage of drafting the document, and then cover aspects such as whether it is in electronic form or hard copy. Then that original document has to be conveyed to the translator – electronic methods are now commonly available, but hard copy still presents its problems, with Optical Character Recognition offering only a partial solution at best. And does the translator resort to full Machine Translation (still in only a few cases, it would seem), or, as nowadays seems more likely, to machine assisted human translation, where it appears that genuine progress is at last being made? Can this be because at long last real live human translators are now working with these systems, and point out the practical as opposed to the theoretical advantages and disadvantages? And once the translation has been completed, even if it has been produced by an old-fashioned steam typewriter, it is of no use until it has been conveyed to the user, customer, reader. Here too, technology plays a very large part. This year's conference included two papers from different parts of "Europe" – one on the computerised document flow control program for the European Parliament, and one, from the European Commission in Luxembourg, on what seems to be a promising way forward for the

handling of vast amounts of translation work which follows a uniform pattern and differs only in certain details. It can be no coincidence that large organisations with an enormous translation turnover are giving the lead here. They have both the motivation and the resources to carry through projects of this kind, and other, smaller organisations with more limited resources can learn from these experiences what can be done in this area.

Despite the above-mentioned general advances in the technology of communication, I have to admit to readers that not all the papers presented at the conference reached me for editing, in any form, whether electronic or hard copy. This is why references will be found in the discussion reports to speakers and papers which do not appear in the list of contents. No-one regrets this more than I do, but sometimes it is precisely because speakers have used the aids made available by modern technology to present their communications using slides, overhead projectors, and even videos, without these being accompanied by anything more than the briefest of speakers' notes, that there is not, and never has been, a paper in the true sense of the word for me to edit! All the same, I am confident that readers will find sufficient material to interest them, whether they were present at the conference or not.

This year's conference laid a certain amount of emphasis on what we used to call Eastern Europe, though I gather it is now preferable to speak of Central Europe, and although we have had visitors from that area at all the previous conferences, it gave us particular pleasure to welcome our visitors this time, knowing that they now felt they could come and go as they pleased (and as funds permitted) and that they could participate fully in the developments which are going to affect the entire European region, and of course the world at large. We shall undoubtedly be seeing more of them in future.

As always, I am sure I speak on behalf of us all when I pay tribute to the hard work done prior to the conference by the planning committee, with its membership drawn equally from the Aslib Technical Translation Group and the Institute of Translation and Interpreting which currently has its headquarters at 318a Finchley Road, London NW3 5HT, but will almost certainly be moving in the near future. The practical organisation of the conference is in the hands of the Aslib conference organisers, and my thanks go to them too. Last but not least, I must express my appreciation of the stalwart team of discussion rapporteurs who not only perform their task with maximum efficiency but (so they assure me repeatedly) with willingness too.