

TACuology Corner

**1989 CRIT Translation
Weekend, SUNY Binghamton,
June 23-25, 1989**

The fourth annual Translation Weekend, organized and hosted by the Center for Research in Translation (CRIT) at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton, was held on June 23, 24 and 25, 1989. A good-sized group of about 40 people attended: free-lance translators, academic translation programme teachers and directors, translation

studies students, SUNY computing center people, language teachers, and a few staff members of US-based inter-governmental organizations involved in traditional and machine translation (Pan American Health Organization, United Nations).

The first day of the weekend, Friday June 23rd, was devoted to sittings for the ATA accreditation exams in various language combinations.

Foreign Language and Translator Training Technologies was the theme for Saturday morning and afternoon. After opening remarks and words of welcome by Professor Marilyn Gaddis Rose and Gabriela Mahn, the morning session began with a comprehensive presentation on machine translation (MT) and machine-assisted translation (MAT) by Dr. Muriel Vasconcellos of

the Pan American Health Organization. Assuming, quite correctly, that most translators would at this stage benefit from more familiarity with MAT, i.e. computer-assisted human translation, Dr. Vasconcellos initially described the configuration of a typical translator's workstation, i.e. types of personal computers, memory, disk drives, monitors, and other peripherals (printers and modems). She then went on to discuss other machine aids, i.e. word-processing packages, facsimile machines, scanners and optical character recognition devices, and lexical data bases. A number of participants shared their own experience with these devices and packages.

See TECHNOLOGY, p. 22

TACnology

Continued from p. 21

Moving on to MT, i.e. translation generated by computer with or without human intervention, Dr. Vasconcellos described the varying degrees of translator involvement in the MT process, depending on the particular system being used. In virtually all cases the crucial phase is post-editing, where a professional translator revises the computer's raw output. This is a special skill that requires training in order to intervene efficiently and sparingly as possible. The usual temptation, often in reliance on human translation output as well as on the heavily, which slows down the entire process and may not be justified by the final use to which the translation is put. She gave a few examples of "quick-fix" post-editing, whereby structural problems in the raw machine output could be quickly fixed up with minimal manipulation to produce a quite serviceable, although perhaps not always elegant, translation. MT is not appropriate for all texts or for all needs. Texts that are available in machine-readable form and whose translations serve mainly informational purposes, need not be highly "polished" and are not to be published are good candidates for MT. She recognized that it was often difficult for translators and managers to adopt a multi-standard approach, i.e. varying degrees of polish, but unless one does, MT is not practical. Both translators and consumers have to be educated to the advantages, procedures and limitations of MT.

After lunch prepared by CRIT, the Saturday afternoon session consisted of 3 presentations. Josette Coughlin of the Georgia State University translation programme spoke on new interactive video and laser optic technology she was using for interpreter training and demonstrated a portable, cordless interpretation sound system that allows virtually any conference room to hold a multilingual meeting. Patrick Lafferty of the Georgetown University translation programme spoke about a Lotus 1-2-3 based scheme he had devised for

analysing which characteristics (i.e. grade-point average, study abroad, major in college, etc.) of incoming students could be used reliably to predict good performance in the translation programme, and about the usefulness of BITNET, an academic electronic mail system, for sending messages and documents at minimal cost between most American and many foreign universities. Michael Sellers of Boston College spoke about an intriguing Macintosh-based French language test he had developed for a beginning highschool course, along with some interactive videodisc programs based on a popular immersion method of teaching French.

Translating Women Authors was the theme of the remainder of the weekend. On Saturday evening six translators read from their translations of works by authors writing in Dutch, Spanish, Latvian, Japanese and Swedish. Sunday was devoted to a workshop for translators of works by women authors.