

TACnology Corner

A Visit to Bravice

For some time now the Committee on Translation and Computers has been receiving inquiries about the MT products that were being marketed by WCC (formerly Weidner and known in the U.S. since 1987 as Worldwide Communications Corporation). It will be recalled that WCC's MicroCAT made history in 1983 as the first MT system to be offered on a PC. The translation software was available in a number of European language combinations on both MicroCAT and MacroCAT (the latter on VAX computers). However, in September 1988 the WCC office in Deerfield, Illinois, unexpectedly closed its doors. Since then, many users of the software have been anxiously awaiting further news.

When I knew I was going to be in Japan, I made arrangements to visit Mr. Takehiko Yamamoto, president of the parent company, Bravice International, Inc., with two main purposes in mind: first, I wanted to reiterate ATA's invitation to him to speak at our Conference in Washington next October, and second, I hoped to learn more about the firm and its plans for the future.

On the morning of Monday, April 24, Veronica Lawson and I, strangers in Tokyo with maps and umbrellas in hand, arrived at Bravice headquarters and were greeted warmly by Mr. Yamamoto.

The conversation began with assurances from Mr. Yamamoto that Bravice stands ready and willing to provide technical assistance to current WCC users. Inquiries are handled by facsimile, and messages may be sent to the attention of Mr. Izar Carlos Jatob, manager of support services, at the following address:

Bravice International Inc.
Shibako Bldg. 3, 2-27-8 Shiba
Minato-ku, Tokyo 105, Japan

Facsimile: (03) 5476-5020.

Voice: (03) 5476-5081

Moreover, Mr. Yamamoto did not rule out the possibility of a site visit in the event of a hardware problem or major difficulties with the user's dictionary.

More important, however, Mr. Yamamoto announced that a new PC product, yet to be baptized, is currently being test-marketed and will be released in the fall of 1989. It runs on XT- and AT-type (AX) machines under MS-DOS and requires a minimum of 640 K main memory and a 10 Mb hard disk. The first language combinations to be offered will be French-English and English-French, with Spanish-English and English-Spanish to follow shortly. Written in the C programming language, this product is the end result of development work begun over three and a half years ago in Tokyo. With faster performance, new word-processing software, new linguistic rules, improved handling of discontinuous idioms, simplified and more user-friendly dictionary updating, and in general greatly enhanced dictionary management, it bears little resemblance to the old MicroCAT. The new word processor allows the posteditor to select the preferred gloss from a series separated by diagonal slashes—for example, *hope/expect/wait for*, after which the word processor "remembers" the choice that was made and automatically eliminates the unwanted alternatives throughout the rest of the text.

The new Bravice product will be made available at minimum cost to anyone who has paid for the WCC code. The products will each have a core dictionary of over 10,000 entries; in addition, the purchaser may wish to buy field-specific dictionaries, of which 28 are currently available, ranging from 8,000 to 12,000 entries apiece. Up to nine of the field-specific dictionaries can be consulted in a given translation run; the sequence in which they are looked up is specified by the user. Thirty units will be offered to past customers for beta-testing. There will be a marketing center in the U.S. and another in Europe. Initial support will include a free one-day lecture.

Bravice also has a Japanese-English system which has been on the market since August 1985 and sells for US\$4,800 (¥630,000) with the word processor and US\$3,800 (¥500,000) without. It has a basic dictionary of 50,000 entries with possibility for the user to expand the total to 100,000. It requires a 20 Mb hard disk. Subject-specific glossaries are available for 27 subject areas, for a total of 190,000 entries. Sales are reported to be brisk.

A system from Japanese to Korean was introduced on the market in 1986. Under development are English-Japanese (due to be released this year), English-Chinese, English-Korean, and Korean-English. The expected dictionary size for each of these pairs is 45,000-50,000 entries. All the products will be for AX machines, and Bravice has decided to stop selling code for the VAX.

The European language pairs about to be released correspond to System I. This is gradually being phased out in favor of System II, which is being used for the Oriental pairs and also for English-German and English-Norwegian. System II is based on lexical-functional grammar (LFG), and the algorithm is more efficient. Any number of glossaries can be specified for a given translation run.

Yet another product in the works is Toolkit. This is a translation "engine" consisting of the linguistic tools for developing MT for any language pair. It comes with an English parser, a core English source dictionary, and a transfer component. For other source languages the client uses the tools provided to create the parser. The system is ready and lacks only the documentation.

Bravice, capitalized today at US\$6,800,000 (¥880,000,000), was established in 1971 as a consulting company for Japanese industry in Brazil. Three years later the Bravice School of Languages was opened, in connection with which the company started to get involved in human translation. In March 1979 Bravice became a customer of Weidner by buying the Spanish-English and English-Spanish software, and it went into the business

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of translation service. In December 1982 Bravice bought a majority of shares in Weidner Communications Inc., and in January 1988 they bought the remaining equity. They have now abandoned translation services and are devoting all their efforts to MT development and marketing

The May/June issue of *Language International* has also published an interview with Mr. Yamamoto. And yes, ATA members will have a chance to meet him personally at the Conference in October.

**Muriel Vasconcellos, Chair
Committee on Translation
and Computers**