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ATA Asks Members To Opine on Machine Translation

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Consider this an engraved invitation. You are hereby invited to take part in a very important happening. ATA is launching a broad survey of the membership to find out what translators *really* think about machine translation (MT) and how best the Association can serve them in this dynamic new area that is already having a major impact on the profession. *You have chance to make a difference.* Don't look now, but the survey is being distributed to you though the courtesy of the *Chronicle* as the centerfold in this issue. Please read the background below and then get out your ballpoint pen. Your participation counts: your voice will be heard, and your vote will serve as the basis for future ATA policy.

Translator interest in machine translation has reached a new high with the advent of software packages that virtually any language professional can afford to buy and install on his or her home office personal computer. At the same time, we hear more and more about MT systems actually being used, especially in large-scale operations that produce materials for localization. These two trends—the appearance of affordable MT software for the PC and the use of MT for large projects—were reported in a recent article in *Byte* magazine which generated a flood of questions and a brisk debate among translators. The time has come for ATA to take a fresh look at its role vis-à-vis machine translation and ask how best it can meet the needs of its members. Despite all the ink-letting, in reality very little is known about the thoughts, needs, desires, and concerns of the *majority* of translators in ATA. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to chart a clear course.

In response to this need, the Committee on Machine Translation has prepared the MT Attitude Survey that you see in your centerfold. The Board of Directors made the decision to run it in the *Chronicle* in order to reach the entire membership. In a nutshell, the survey intends to find out what you really think of MT, what related kinds of linguistic software you would ideally like to have, and what you want ATA to do for you in this area.

Tabulation of the results will be entrusted to a special panel to be appointed by the President of ATA, and the final report will be published in the *Chronicle*. This process will give you full voice in shaping the issues that affect you, and the result will provide a blueprint for the work of the Committee on Machine Translation and for ATA as a whole.

So we urge you to get out your pen, mark your answers thoughtfully, and send in your questionnaire—the sooner the better. The deadline for receipt of responses is **July 31, 1993**. In name of the future of the profession, *go for it!*