

TACnology Corner FOR FRIENDS OF THE USER-FRIENDLY...

This space will be offering news and views on the subject of translation and computers. Electronic data processing is now, beyond question, a factor to be reckoned with in the professional lives of translators. With each passing month, more ATA members join the ranks of translators who use computer software in their work, be it in the form of word processing, term banks, or machine translation. Through this column we plan to share up-to-date information and insights with you. We will also be eliciting your comments on some of the many issues that the technology poses.

But first, a brief report on the events at Albuquerque...

TAC Sessions Draw Record Turnout

In keeping with the large attendance at the convention as a whole, the TAC sessions attracted a large turnout, reaching a peak on Thursday morning, October 8, of approximately 200.

The first session focused on "User Experience." In this vein, Bale Bostad, a translator from the U.S. Air Force's Foreign Technology Division (Dayton, OH), reported on recent experience with "raw" machine translation accessed directly on-line by end-users. Muriel Vasconcellos (undersigned) compared the experience of postediting Spanam, the Spanish-English MT system developed by the Pan American Health Organization (Washington, DC), with traditional revision of human translation. And finally, the role of user feedback in MT development was emphasized by Joann Ryan (Washington, DC) in her review of the Systran experience. A paper by Josette Coughlin (Atlanta, GA) addressed the oft-debated issue of "artificial intelligence" and machine translation.

"User Needs" was the topic of the second session, on Thursday afternoon. Scott Bennett, in charge of development of the Metal German-English system at

the University of Texas (Austin, TX), cited the importance of software being adapted for users, instead of vice versa, and listed ways in which end-users can contribute significantly to MT research.

Tim Rowe, of TII Translation Services (Vienna, VA), reported MT configurations that are marketed by his company. The response of term banks to translator needs was dealt with by Peter Gawn, representing the Department of State of Canada (Ottawa), who spoke on the wide-ranging services offered by Canada's Termium, and by Alan Melby of Brigham Young University (Provo, UT), who described packages running on AT-type machines for use by independent translators. Dr. Melby announced the development of MicroMATER, a standardized format for the exchange of terminological records between PCs.

The session on Saturday, October 10 opened with a report by Moïse Lévy, also of the Canadian Secretary of State (Ottawa), on an ongoing trial of English-French MT using the Logos system.

All sessions were moderated by Astrid Johanson of AT&T Bell Laboratories (Murray Hill, NJ).

Bouquets for Astrid Johanson

With the wrap-up Session on Saturday, Astrid Johanson completed four years as chair of ATA's Committee on Translation and Computers. Astrid presided during a period of explosive progress in the technology available to translators, and she saw to it that these advances were brought to the knowledge of the membership on a timely basis. Under her leadership, sessions devoted to computer applications have expanded to occupy a full day and a half on the convention's annual program. The presentations have been varied and stimulating, while at the same time serious and well-prepared. And what is perhaps most important, opposing views have been treated with an even hand.

Look for the TACnology Corner in future issues of the **Chronicle** to learn about TAC plans for the next convention, a TAC lexicon proposed for adop-

tion by ATA, configurations offered by different vendors, and publications and happenings of interest in the field of translation and computers.

--Muriel Vasconcellos

Chair, Committee on Translation and Computers