

ATA to Sponsor Study on MT for the PC

by Muriel Vasconcellos

To judge from the flood of inquiries that pour into the Committee on Machine Translation, sometimes as many as three a day, machine translation (MT) for personal computers is a hot topic. Now that several translation packages are available for PCs and finally within the reach of independent translators, ATA members want to know what this technology can do for them, the kinds of software and the language combinations that are available, and the criteria that should be used in assessing the relative usefulness of the many products that are coming on the market.

This is an area in which solid information has been lacking. New PC-based systems seem to make their appearance from one day to the next. Because of the rapid changes taking place in this area, the Committee on MT has not been able to provide ATA members with the same thorough background that it has given them on mainframe-based MT systems--to which, paradoxically, most translators have had little if any access.

In view of the urgent need for information and perspective, ATA has commissioned a study that will: survey the current MT offerings for PCs; provide a checklist of criteria that translators can use for drawing comparisons between these products and determining which ones might be of interest for their particular applications; and go through the paces of a typical benchmark exercise.

The study will be conducted by L. Christine Miller, who heads a small software consulting firm in the Washington area and brings to the task an unusual combination of experience in both mainframe and PC-based MT systems. She will present the results of her study at the upcoming 33rd Annual Conference in San Diego on Thursday, November 5, and she will also survey the offerings in this area on Wednesday, November 4, as part of the pre-conference seminar, "MT for Translators."

The following products are already slated for inclusion in the study: GTS, PC Translator, Translate, Translation Assistant, XLT. **Chronicle readers are encouraged to submit the names of any others they may be familiar with, or any advertising they have seen, together with the vendors' address if possible, and also to share with Ms. Miller any experiences they have had.** Material should be addressed to her at 2020 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., #234, Washington, DC 20006; CompuServe 70303,314. □