Machine Translation Update

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PC Study

The report on PC-based MT systems that ATA commissioned last year is not to be missed by anyone seriously considering the purchase of an MT system to run on a personal computer. Researched and authored by L. Chris Miller, it provides exhaustive coverage of all the features offered by each of the twelve PC products available in the United States at publication time (one more has appeared since then). Starting with the pricing structure, language pairs available, and hardware requirements, the report goes on to explain source text requirements, pre-editing capabilities, translation modes, format of the postediting screen, format of the printout, retention of format codes, dictionary power, facilities for dictionary updating, and the dictionary codes that can be supplied by the user. It also provides useful information about the vendors and indicates the type of user to which the product is geared.

A full page of narrative is devoted to each product. In addition, the specific features that they offer—no less than a possible fifty-five of them—are compactly summarized in a centerfold spreadsheet (*Playboy* should be so lucky!) and the language pairs are also presented in chart form. Each item of information was double-checked with the vendor, and most were independently verified by ATA's contractor.

Those who saw the articles on MT in the January issue of *Byte* magazine should understand that the *Byte* coverage was entirely different. Prepared earlier in 1992, it is less up to date and is intended to offer only a brief summary of the gamut of MT products. The ATA study, on the other hand, examines the PC products in depth and provides a wealth of material that did not appear in *Byte*.

The complete study is available from ATA Headquarters for $7.50, or $2.00 for the charts.

ATA and the AMTA

People have asked about the relationship between the Association for Machine Translation in the Americas and the ATA. The interests of the two associations are parallel and complementary. Whereas ATA is a 501(c)(6) trade association whose purpose is to promote the profession of translation, AMTA is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational association whose purpose is to bring together users, developers, researchers, sponsors, and others interested in MT to study, evaluate, and understand the science of machine translation and to educate the public about the principles involved. The purpose of AMTA is in alignment with the objectives of the ATA Committee on Machine Translation, which were formulated in 1986. AMTA, however, is in a position to provide a specialized service to ATA and fill an unmet need. Because it can obtain grants for educational purposes, it can go the extra mile(s) and offer indepth programs of benefit to ATA members that are beyond ATA's resources to develop.

The AMTA logo is a triangle, and one of its three sides represents translators. By coincidence, 98 translators have joined AMTA, amounting to slightly over one-third (35%) of its total membership of 280. Of these, 53 state that they are also members of ATA. On the commercial side of the triangle there are 13 corporate members, of which 9 are MT vendors (4 of them also corporate members of ATA), plus 14 individual members who are associated with MT companies. Making up the third and last leg of the triangle are 3 institutional members, a good number of not-for-profit MT developers and academic researchers, and MT- watchers from other walks of life.

In San Diego, AMTA's MT Evaluation Workshop and Showcase on November 2 and 3 provided ATA members with an unusual and stimulating opportunity that would not otherwise have been available to them. The two-day intensive program on evaluation brought together the world's experts on the subject: 40 speakers from 10 countries. It would have been beyond the capabilities of ATA to develop a concentrated program of this magnitude on the single subject of MT evaluation. Nor could ATA, as a 501(c)(6) association, have obtained funding from the National Science Foundation. A large number of ATA members attended this event, as well as the joint ATA/AMTA seminar on "MT for Translators."